MIGRATION, GENDER AND BIHARI FAMILIES

An ethnographic study on the impact of rural - urban migration on ideas and practices of gender and the family among Bihari families in Dehradun, India

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मैं: “इंडिया में, क्यों लड़कियाँ और लड़के नहीं बराबर हैं?”

बिहारी औरत: “जब तक दहेज है, तब तक लड़कियाँ और लड़के बराबर नहीं हैं।

अगर दहेज खत्म है, तो लड़कियाँ और लड़के बराबर होंगे।”

Me: “Why are girls not considered equal to boys in India?”
Bihari woman: “As long as the practice of dowry exist, girls and boys aren’t equals.
If the practice of dowry is abolished, only then girls and boys will be equals”.

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Acknowledgements

I have always been fascinated by the colours, languages and traditions of India. My choice of studying South and Southeast Asia was therefore obvious. I learnt to speak Hindi, wrote my Bachelor thesis about the Delhi gang rape in 2012 and decided to apply my knowledge of India and Hindi language skills within the Master of Arts in Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University. Even though I always had in my mind to combine South Asian studies with Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, the actual shift from humanities to social sciences was harder than imagined. In particular, the theoretical 'framing' of my research proved to be difficult. That is why I owe a number of people a big *dhanyavad* (litt.: thank you) for supporting me during some difficult moments of preparing my research proposal, doing my fieldwork in India and writing this thesis.

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बहुत धन्यवाद!

1 | Introduction

On an April morning in Hari Nagar[1], a migrant settlement in the south of Dehradun, a Bihari woman named Vimala, prepares breakfast for her family. She wears a colourful western maxi dress, her husband shirt and trousers, while her children are about to wear their school uniform. They got up late. She shouts in Bhojpuri that they have to hurry. After a quick breakfast, she drops Sandip, her 11-year old son, at his English School. Neha, her 17-year old daughter leaves for college. In the meantime, her husband has left too. He works as an electrician for a middle size company. He has a good position. Most Bihari migrants work as day labourers, doing construction work, and gather every morning at a location outside Dehradun, in the hope that they will be hired for a day or maybe even for a week. Vimala works from home for a bulb lamb factory, since her husband does not want her to work outside the house. This way, she earns a little money, but is also able to clean the house, wash clothes, take care of her children and cook Lithi Chocka, a typically Bihari dish, for dinner. After college, Neha tutors other Bihari children and helps her mom with cooking. As soon as Neha's father returns from home, dinner is served. Right after dinner, Neha's father calls with his brother in Bihar, while Neha, her brother and her mom watch a Bollywood movie before they are going to bed.

All over India, rural migrants are in someway or the other adapting to the daily routines of urban life. Lack of employment in rural Bihar causes Bihari migrants to leave their relatives and village behind in order to settle in cities such as Dehradun. Dehradun is located in the state of Uttarakhand, at a distance of 1000 km from Bihar. This journey distances them, literally, from traditional norms and values, which are generally not very supportive towards gender equality. This is especially so in the state of Bihar, which ranks the lowest among the 15 major states in India as reflected in the Gender Equality Index (Datta and Mishra 2011).

In rural Bihar, there is a strong hold of patriarchy. This creates gender inequality, especially regarding the value of daughters and sons in a family. The deep gender inequality has a number of consequences. First of all, it encourages patrilineality, which implies that the father's lineage continues only through the sons, and only they have inheritance rights. It also encourages patrilocality: upon marriage, the son of a family brings his wife into his own family, while the daughter of a family leaves her own family to move into her husband's

[1] The names of the migrant settlements and the Bihari respondents have been changed.

family. This severely affects women's ability to be economically independent (Das Gupta *et al*. 2003). Secondly, a married couple resides at the husband's home, in a joint family. This constrains woman's autonomy in the family as she, as an unrelated stranger, marries into her husband's family (ibid.). In addition to lineage and inheritance norms, economic considerations amplify families' son preferences. Sons contribute to the household, while daughters are seen as a burden because they will not 'stay'. Since sons are expected to 'stay', they can provide support to the elderly, while daughters leave to live with their in-laws (Vlassoff 2013: 5). In (rural) Bihar, the implementation of such kinship-rules is amongst the most rigid in India. Parents consider education much more important for boys then for girls. Consequently, Bihar has, with 51.5 per cent only, the lowest female literacy rate in India (Census Data 2011: State Literacy Bihar). Arranged marriages are common all over India, but arranged *child* marriages call for lower amounts of dowry, which is attractive to families who are on the whole very poor. In India, the prevalence of child marriages is 47 per cent, but the state of Bihar tops the chart of child marriages with 60 per cent (Warner *et al*. 2014: 7). In the last decade India's sex ratio cautiously shows upward improvement, from 933 females per 1000 males in 2001, to 943 females per 1000 males in 2011 (Census Data 2011: Sex Ratio). However, due to the easy availability of means to determine the sex of human foetuses, contrary to the national trend, Bihar's sex ratio dropped to 917 females per 1000 males (ibid.). In sum, gender inequality is a big social problem in rural Bihar.

How are these 'traditional' Bihari norms and values influenced by migration to an urban environment, such as to the city of Dehradun? Migration brings about changes in family composition, as migrants leave their big, joint family in Bihar to live in a smaller, more nuclear family in Dehradun (Mines and Lamb 2010). But what does this change in terms of ideas and practices regarding gender and the family? Are individual employment aspirations, as from Neha's father who is not working in his father's family business, gaining importance over the (status of the) family? Does living next to other Bihari migrants and keeping in touch with relatives in Bihar influence family decisions? How does migrants' family size change? And what is the impact of daughters, such as Neha, who gain higher levels of education, and women, such as Vimala, who earn an independent income on stereotypical gender roles? Is women's status increasing, or does son preference take a different form? In this study, I aim to answer these questions by examining how migration transforms ideas and practices of gender and the family among Bihari migrants in Dehradun.

1.1 Theoretical framework

Many scholars have dealt with migration, gender and social change in India, resulting in a variety of perspectives. In this theoretical framework, I will explain these debates in more detail. First, I will elaborate on the concepts of gender and the family. Then, I will discuss how joint family living induces son preference and a neglect of women's position. Following the explanation of gender inequality within joint families, I will discuss (internal) migration and its relevance for social transformations in India.

Gender and the family

To begin with, what does the concept of gender mean? And what is the difference between gender and sex? Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003: 10) stress that sex is a biological categorization based on reproductive potential, whereas gender is based on the social elaboration of biological sex. To put it informally, sex is biological while gender is social and cultural. Connell (2009: 10) elaborates on the social aspect and argues that gender is shaped by the social relations within which individuals and groups act. However, these social relations vary significantly between cultural environments as men and women in different parts of the world have different values, norms, customs and laws. This has evolved in different gender roles, which define specific everyday activities, practices and behaviour as more appropriate or less appropriate for either men or women. In the context of any society, common gender roles are then seen as a 'gender order' or 'gender structure' (Connell 2009: 10). Most gender orders around the world privilege men and disadvantage women (ibid.), but from a comparative perspective the gender order in India is extremely unbalanced. In India, a strong son preference exists, which causes daughters to be considered significantly less valuable than sons. This unbalanced gender order, as argued by Risman (2004), is not only embedded at the individual but also at the institutional levels of society. In order to understand the reproduction of gender (and this gender order) of India, let's have a closer look at India's social structure, the smallest entity of which is the family.

For India, the caste system and the family have been described as fundamental social institutions (Béteille 2012: 112). Caste embraces two different notions: *varna* and *jati.* The concept *varna* refers to an ideal, hierarchical design of the Indian society[2], whereas *jati* refers

[2] The four *varna's* – Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra – have lost their legal authority and also much of their social authority in India (Béteille 2012: 112). That's why I will focus in this study only on the concept of *jati's,* as they still actively exist among Indians.

to the actual social groups with which people identify themselves and on whose basis they interact with each other (Mandelbaum 1970: 14). Membership to a *jati* is by birth, and traditionally, each *jati* is associated with a distinct traditional occupation such as carpenter, barber or potter. Within his or her *jati*, each person belongs also to a certain *jati*-group, which is defined as members of a *jati* who live in the same village – the family (ibid.). Even if the family does not act in isolation from the caste system, it is the family, rather than the *jati*, which plays an active role in the reproduction of social structures (Béteille 2012: 436). In the family, parents transmit economic and cultural and social capital to their children, and by favouring sons to daughters, they reproduce the social structure of gender.

This brings me to the concept of family. Though the word 'family' is commonly known and frequently used, Pine (2012: 277) stresses that most would find it difficult to define precisely what sorts and ranges of relationships the word covers. But overall, he argues, the family can be described as: "Those kin and affines who live together in the same dwellings, share a common hearth, and jointly participate in production and consumption" (ibid.). Within anthropological writing, two specific types of family have been defined: the nuclear family (heterosexual pair and their offspring) and the joint family (at least two related conjugal families) (ibid.). In other words, a nuclear family consist only of husband, wife and their children while a joint family consists of a married couple, their sons, son's wives and children and any unmarried daughters (Mines and Lamb 2010: 9).

The study of ancient Hindu texts in the 1940s and 1950s, also referred to as 'indological phase' as it was based on literature rather than fieldwork, established the belief that the joint family was the norm in India (D'Cruz and Bharat 2001: 170). Later empirical work challenged this notion. Early Census Data indicated a much higher incidence of nuclear families than the indological phase suggested (Goode 1963), and Shah (1996) stressed that living in joint families was primarily practiced among upper castes, to argue that the poor have always lived in nuclear families (Kapadia 1956). Even today, many scholars assume that Indian families primarily live 'joint' (Mines and Lamb 2010: 9). Generally speaking, Indians in rural areas tend to live in bigger, more joint families than those in Indian urban areas (ibid.). Kashyap (2004: 343) links the importance of joint families in rural areas in India to the agrarian economy. In rural areas, agricultural businesses were primarily family based, in which extended multi-generational families could perform more work than small, nuclear families. Joint family life may seem to have many advantages, but it comes with a very unbalanced gender order. In the next section, I set forth these gender related problems with

respect to living in a joint family, which are in particular applicable to rural Bihar.

The gender order in joint families in India

India is considered a patriarchal society, which means that male members of the society predominate in positions of power. In India, patriarchy goes hand in hand with patrilineality, in which kinship-related practices, such as descent and inheritance are through sons only (Das Gupta *et al*. 2003). In rural areas, males are the ones who inherit while females have no inheritance rights in their own family, as they marry into their husband's household (also referred to as patrilocality) (ibid.). This means, upon marriage the daughter-in-law enters the family of her husband as a stranger and an outsider. She joins an unknown family as an individual who must fit in and conform to the family's hierarchy, because a woman who follows the practices and customs of her husband's family will bring honour to her husbands' family (Wadley 2010: 15). In general, honour is measured by the degree of respect shown by others (e.g. relatives, village members and caste members) (Welchman and Hossain 2005: 310). The greatest threat to family honour rest with women, in particular in females' bodies, as women embody the reproductive capacity of the family (Chowdhary 2007: 16-7). Women are thus considered as the repositories of family honour, Welchman and Hossain (2005) argue, first of their own family as daughter, and later of their husband's family as wife and mother. In the village, this is not only linked to the direct family of a daughter or woman, but also to the larger social structures such as her (sub) caste or her village community.

Women who are seen outside too often, elope or become pregnant prior to marriage can bring dishonour to their family. In extreme cases, daughters' actions can result in becoming less or even not marriageable. For many families, this is worrisome as an unmarried woman is seen as deviant. An unmarried woman who stays in her parental family is considered 'abnormal', and brings about the idea that something is wrong with her family – after all, the family was not able to find a suitable groom for her. Besides, as stressed by Das Gupta *et al.* (2010: 165), parents are under much social pressure to ensure that their daughters marry and make way for their sons' wives and subsequently incoming daughters-in-law. These issues which are all linked to the fear for dishonour emphasize control and result in adolescent daughters and in-marrying women facing severe restrictions, which are imposed by elderly male and female family members. In most cases, this implies women having to practice *purdah* (litt.: a curtain), in order to pay respect, which means that they keep their face covered when in public or around senior male kin (Mines and Lamb 2010: 77). Rural

women's mobility is restricted to the house, with hardly any access to education and employment, as this would take them outside the house. Girls or women are not allowed to leave their family home on their own, but have to be accompanied by another woman, or male relative (Wadley 2010: 16).

These restrictions result in different gender roles, in which men tend to work outside the house. Women, on the contrary, do most of the household work that includes cleaning, cooking and clothes washing. They do most of the work of looking after children and almost all of the work of caring for babies. Since in a joint family men have a joint responsibility for earning, they are also the decision-makers. Men consequently assume greater power than women in the household, and they expect their wives to be subservient to them (Mines and Lamb 2010: 77). This is incessantly communicated in daily life. For instance, when having food, men are served first, and women eat last. This sequence marks males in the house as superior and women as subordinate (Wadley 2010: 16).

The arrival of a new in-marrying woman, however, can cause tensions between the family and the daughter-in-law. Measures for reducing such tensions and chances of dishonour, are said to come with arranged marriages. Parents and other family members often prefer to choose a marriage partner for their children within their sub caste and of a similar socio-economic background (Mines and Lamb 2010: 10). Besides, marriages at young age are said to facilitate women's adjustment to their new family (D'Cruz and Bharat 2001: 169). In both cases, daughters have no say. This comes with the idea that arranged marriages are based on strategies of the 'extension' and of the 'intensification' of family relations since one marries within their sub caste (Uberoi 1993: 43). After all, in a South Asian context, belonging to a family is regarded more important than pursuing individual aspirations (Mines and Lamb 2010: 11). Appreciation for a new in-marrying woman only comes with motherhood, in particular if she bears a son. For joint families, having sons is considered critical to a family's success. If the first child is a girl, women are often pressured by their family members to continue having children until they have a son (Vlassoff 2013: 5). Childless wives are often regarded inauspicious, and childlessness can even be used as a justification by men to seek another wife (ibid.: 6).

Another factor that contributes to son preferences and the low status of women is of economic nature. In rural areas, where people depend on agriculture, only sons are the ones who work day by day on the fields, as daughters and daughters-in-law should remain inside the house. In addition, sons can make other economic contributions to their parents'

household while daughters and daughters-in-law will not be able to work. Sons can also provide old age support to their parents throughout their adult lives, while daughters can only take care of their parents-in-law (ibid.: 7). Consequently, parents who have a son will be taken care of in their old age, whereas those with daughters will not, contributing to the significant difference in value attributed to sons compared to daughters. The costs of daughters are also significantly greater due to dowry, a usually major contribution in money or kind to be paid to the family of the groom at the time of marriage. Paying dowry can cause major financial problems for families with many female children (ibid.). In extreme cases, son preferences cause families not to have any daughters at all. The widespread access to sex selective technologies (such as ultrasonic and subsequently abortion pills), allows families to determine the sex of their children and their family composition. This has resulted in a skewed sex ratio of 943 females per 1000 males in India (Census Data 2011: Sex ratio).

Thus, patriarchal norms with respect to descent and inheritance, as well as economic considerations, are causing strong son preferences and undermining girls and women's authority. The unbalanced gender order, in which women are subordinate to men, is not only embedded *within* the joint family but also reproduced *through* the joint family. But what happens to joint family living, and these traditional norms and values, when people shift place, and become 'modern'?

Outline of the academic debate

'Modernisation' is most simply described as the adoption of contemporary ideas, styles and ways. As a theory in many academic disciplines, modernisation tends to present development as a linear process, toward the 'modern' and away from the 'traditional'. This process is said to involve both social and cultural change; in particular the rejection of those aspects of traditional culture that serve as a hindrance in progress to the modern. In the context of India, successful economic reforms during the 1990s initiated this modernisation process. In 2005, India became the 11th largest economy in the world (Wilson and Purushothaman 2003). At the same time, India still had a high population growth, and an increasing number of people living below the poverty line, particularly in rural areas (Kashyap 2004: 342).

This discrepancy, with on the one hand badly paid agricultural work in rural villages, and on the other hand, an increasing demand for wage labour in urban areas, caused large-scale migration to more promising areas. Cities provide job opportunities, and depend for their growth significantly on migrant labourers. In migration studies, this lack of work in one

place and the need for labours in another place is also commonly referred to as 'push' and 'pull' factors (Castles 2002). By moving to the city, migrants hope to earn a better living than in their place of origin and can perhaps even sustain their family back home by sending economic remittances. This kind of migration is therefore primarily motivated on economic grounds. Migration implies "a demographic process that moves people between places" (Rees 2001: 7741), often "crossing the boundary of a political or administrative unit for a certain minimum period of time" (Castles 2001: 9824). I will focus on *internal* migration, which implies, in this study, the crossing of state boundaries within the republic of India. To be even more specific, I will look at migration from rural Bihar to urban Dehradun. By migrating from a rural area, which is dominated by tradition, to a more urban area, in which there is more room for the modern, migration can be seen as an attempt to escape from the traditional social structure (Osella and Gardner 2004).

The traditional social structure, as earlier described for rural Bihar, is characterised, as mentioned above, by the extended family. This implies, within such an extended family, joint income responsibility, while men work on communal fields to jointly provide for their wives and dependants. As the (status of the) family is of main importance, this limits any individual aspirations. Yet migration, which tends to be undertaken by single men, or married couples, creates a physical distance between the migrants and their extended family. This results in room for migrant's individual ambitions. The migrant can choose where and how he wants to live, and work in employment of his own choice. Besides, labourers in urban areas are hired on the basis of merit, not on the basis of family ties, and wages are paid to the individual, not to the family (Goode 1963). Tönnis (2001) refers to this as a shift from a rural, traditional, "*Gemeinschaft*", world of family and community based on common roles and values, to a modern, industrial, urban, "*Gesellschaft*", world of formal values and impersonal roles. Other scholars, such as Goode (1963), Béteille (1965) and Castles (2002) also argue that migration is expected to revolutionize traditional social relationships. Generally speaking, migration is considered to be a key factor in social transformation. This is closely linked to the notion of 'de-traditionalizing', the erosion of traditional ways of life. It is also linked to the appreciation of the individual over the collective, as migration comes with a shift from a joint family to a more nuclear family. Hereby, the individual gains importance and becomes liberated from constrains of race, ethnicity, class and gender (Beliappa 2013: 22). With respect to the traditional gender structure, Alston (2014: 9) stresses that traditional village societies have well-defined gender roles and values (as I have also shown in a previous

section), whereas urban communities represent greater diversity and lesser adherence to strict and highly gendered values. Thus, migration may encourage the rescripting of gender roles within the family and offer women economic security. It can also enhance women's sense of autonomy and the respect they command in the family (Palriwala and Uberoi 2008: 23). But is this a given outcome? If the individual gains importance, is the maintenance of the family no longer important? Are sons and daughters then equally valued? Do stereotypical gender roles get questioned?

In academic literature, a few scholars emphasize that the individual gains importance to the family. Jensen's (2002) study for example examined whether labour market opportunities for women in rural India affect marriage and fertility decisions. His conclusion was based on women who work, want to have fewer children and work more steadily throughout their lifetime. In addition, Niranjan and Nair (2005) argued in a socio-demographic analysis about bout the size and structure of the family in India, that that the nuclear family is on the rise in India. This rise of nuclear families in India is doubted by a large number of scholars (Vatuk 1972, Shah 1996, Wadley 2010), who continue to see a prevalence of the joint family, and who question changes in the family structure within India. Béteille (1993), for example, argued: "The expansion of personal and professional choices does not always result in greater individualization but increases women's sense of responsibility for the consequences of their choices". This is contrary to the notion of individualisation in which the individual gains importance, but emphasizes the communal nature of a family. In a study about the increasingly lower status of females due to differential educational opportunities, Kapadia (2003: 4) argued, there has been a strengthening of patriarchal norms across all castes and classes in India. Even though education is more accessible, the privilege of education is still primarily given to sons (ibid.: 6). Ramu (1988) too, stresses that regardless of family patterns, traditional values and norms continue to operate. Beliappa (2013) raised a similar notion by arguing that in India "the self is still a collaborative project in which the family has its stake". Women in urban areas will not make autonomous choices, but make decisions in relation to their family and wider community. In other words, these scholars argue that the (larger) family remains important (ibid.).

However, the majority of scholars looked at changes within the family in India due to modernisation, including urbanisation and industrialisation, but did not take internal migration explicitly into account. As Osella and Gardner (2004) stressed, in academic literature, there is a "resounding silence on internal migration in South-Asia". Some scholars

did touch upon the impact of migration on the structure of the family in India. Patel (2005), for example, argued that in a nuclear migrant family, the 'jointness' of the larger family remained. The newly established nuclear family in the city is still connected to the larger rural family, as a 'branch' of the whole tree, residing separately in an urban environment. There, it acts like a buffer, enabling members to join the 'nuclear branch' for studies and urban jobs (ibid.). Besides, as De Haan (1997) argued in a study about Bihari migrants in Calcutta, migrants contribute significantly to the expenses of their rurally based relatives by remitting half of their wages.

These activities show that migrants increasingly orient their lives to two societies (their host and home state) and develop 'transnational' communities (Castles 2002, Palriwala and Uberoi 2008, Levitt and Jaworski 2007). I define transnational migrants as people who are connected to various places through exchange, connections and practices that transcend the national space. Subsequently, a transnational perspective highlights the connections that migrants establish between countries rather than 'space' and 'place' as conceptual tools for bounded ethnic identity (Gupta and Ferguson 1992). This is highly relevant for this study, as Coe (2011) argues: "Most scholarship on the effects of transnational migration on family life has argued that such migration results in profound shifts and dislocations in family practices and gender ideologies". While Castles (2002) and Levitt and Jaworski (2007) talk about *transnational* migration and communities, I consider these notions applicable for internal and thus trans*regional* migration as well. Especially in the case of Bihar to Dehradun, the distance and subsequent cultural differences can be compared to transnational migration. So, what is the importance of trans*regional* communities for the study of changing social structures? Castles (2002) argues that the insecure nature of migration makes migrants dependent on community solidarity, both in home and host state, in order to facilitate their migration trajectory. As a result, he further stresses, migrant communities are likely to emerge that are based on cultural and linguistic continuity (ibid.). This would imply that migration does not necessarily imply a break away from traditional patterns, but might result in the sustenance of stereotypical gender roles. So, migration is considered a key factor of social transformation, but the direction of this change is unclear, which brings me to the aim of this study.

With this study, I also aim to contribute to two knowledge gaps in academic literature. Firstly, migration's impact on gender relations has so far received only little attention (Osella and Gardner 2004). Secondly, migration is too often seen as being a male movement only,

with women either being left behind or following their men. Many scholars failed to account for the complex experience of migrant families, in which migrant women are still not perceived as equal actors to migrant men (Palriwala and Uberoi 2008: 9).

1.2 Main question

In order to examine the impact of internal migration on traditional ideas and practices of gender and the family, the main question posed in this study is formulated as: "*What is the impact of (internal) migration on ideas and practices of gender and the family among Bihari migrants?"* At an empirical level this study addresses Bihari women's and men's experiences of *(internal) migration*, changes in the structure of the Bihari migrant *family* and their ideas and practices of *gender*.

Empirical data regarding migration was gathered by examining the following: Why do Bihari families leave their family and village behind? Who decides to migrate? Is there a certain migration order or do all members of the (nuclear) family migrate at once? What are reasons for Bihari migrants to live next to other Bihari migrants or to live away from them? And what is the importance of relatives back home? All these questions provide insights into the process of internal migration from Bihar to Dehradun and enabled me to answer the first sub question "*What are modalities of internal migration?"*

As the concepts of the family and gender are interrelated, the second sub-question "*How does the structure of Bihari families change?"* and third sub question *"How do perceptions of gender change?"* can be answered by insights about (changing) family patterns, family processes and family dynamics in Bihar and in Dehradun. Besides, notions regarding education, employment, (arranged) marriages, dowry and the amount of children in home and host state were taken into account. I obtained empirical data with respect to gender and the family by exploring the following: How do family compositions in Bihar and Dehradun differ? How do task divisions regarding income, household and children in Bihar and Dehradun differ? What are the differences regarding the importance of education in Bihar and Dehradun? How and when do marriages in Bihar take place? How do Bihari parents picture the marriages of their children? How do practices of dowry in Bihar and Dehradun differ? The answers received on these questions provide valuable insights on the concept of the family and gender in both Bihar as well in Dehradun.

1.3 Field

In the past few years, I have frequently visited the North of India. Though many of these visits were for holidays, I have always tried to stay in the Hindi belt in order to improve my Hindi language skills. Therefore, I have also spent one month at the Landour Language School near the small city of Mussoorie. During the weekends I have often visited the biggest neighbouring city: Dehradun. It is one of the oldest cities in India and the provincial capital of the newly created state of Uttarakhand, located in the northern part of India. The city of Dehradun is well known for its safety and often referred to as "safe haven for students" (Pant 2002). I always enjoyed the hustle and bustle of Dehradun's city life, though at the same I was glad it was not as crowed, and hot, as in Delhi. My positive experiences with Dehradun made me choose this city as my fieldwork location. Linking up with the local NGO Astitva, who aims to empower low-income women in the south of Dehradun, I conducted my fieldwork in the south of Dehradun, too. To be more specific, my geographical field of study consisted of the migrant settlement 'Sundar Nagar', of which the southern part was locally referred to a distinct migrant settlement named 'Hari Nagar'. My focus is predominantly on 'Hari Nagar', as this settlement included an alley that was exclusively inhabited by Bihari families. Besides, the majority of these Bihari women were not working so I could visit them every day and any time of the day. 'Sundar Nagar' was a much more mixed migrant settlement, in which Bihari families lived scattered throughout the area. The fact that the majority of these migrants worked made it more difficult for me to meet them.

Since this study is concerned with migration, ideally, I wanted to "be there" at both points of departure and points of arrival (Hannerz 2003). After two months of fieldwork in Dehradun, I joined a Bihari migrant family on their two-week visit to their village in Bihar. The village of 'Simrigaon' in the district Buxar in West-Bihar unexpectedly became part of my field of study as well, resulting in a multi-sited study. My fields, the village in Bihar and the migrant settlements in Dehradun, are not just a collection of local units or a mere comparative study of localities. Hannerz (2003) argues that sites are connected with one another through a variety of translocal linkages, which applies also to Bihari migrants in Dehradun, as I will also show in this study.

1.4 Methods

Having discussed the field, I will now deal with the methods I used in this study. Bernard (2006) argues that data gathering in anthropological fieldwork boils down to two broad kinds

of activities: watching and listening. During my fieldwork in Dehradun and in Bihar I spoke, accompanied with a staff member from Astitva, a local Bihari girl, or on my own, with Bihari migrants almost every day for three months. But the kind of conversations I had with Bihari migrants in both migrant settlements varied.

In Hari Nagar, where 20-25 Bihari migrant families lived next to each other, Bihari men worked all day but Bihari women were at home all day. This implied that these women had lots of spare time and whenever I walked by they insisted that I came in for a cup of *chai*. Two of their daughters and thus second-generation migrants, Neha (17) and Aditi (16), quickly turned into my key informants. They simply enjoyed telling me about their life in Dehradun and Bihar, and introduced me to many other Bihari neighbours. However, as I saw these women every day for two months, I noticed that normal conversations worked much better than conducting interviews. There were migrants I met on a daily basis and with whom I had very unstructured conversations. There were others I met just three or four times, but conversed with on a specific topic, such as their marriage. Sometimes I spoke with a Bihari couple, sometimes I chatted with a group of five or six women together. A small shop in the middle of the Bihari community turned out to be the perfect spot for group conversations, and with so many children playing around, it was great for observing daily life too.

In Sundar Nagar, Bihari migrants were not living next to each other. Besides, the majority of Bihari couples worked there. Bihari men were working as construction workers, while women were working as domestic workers. They had strict work schedules, which resulted in less spontaneous visits from my side. As I met with these Bihari women just two or three times, I conducted semi-structured interviews, which were open ended, but followed a general script and cover a list of topics (ibid.: 210). I held the same kind of interviews with certain people I specifically wanted to talk to – *anganwadi* women, ASHA workers, medical doctors, teachers and NGO workers, both in Dehradun and in the village Simrigaon in Bihar. The initial, *anganwadi* women, are community women who provide "basic health care, family planning and maternal and child health related services" (Gupta 2000: 115-6). ASHA workers, which stands for "Accredited Social Health Activist", are also local women who are expected to create awareness on health, mobilize the community towards local health planning, and increase use of the existing health services (Bajpai and Dholakia 2011).

In the village of Simrigaon in Bihar, I also held conversations with Bihari families – but to a lesser extent due to my short two-week visit. That is why my main activity in Bihar was having conversations with Neha's family and observing Simrigaon's village life.

1.5 Ethical considerations

During my fieldwork I have encountered two ethical considerations, which appeared to be important for this study. That is the ethical problem of using very personal information and the implications of being a woman in India in building fieldwork relationships with Bihari men and women.

The challenge of using very personal information is linked to my informants group, both in Dehradun and in Bihar, as the Bihari community as well as the village I have been to are small in size and people know each other very well. In order to ensure the safety, dignity but especially the privacy of people I have worked with in Dehradun and Bihar (AAA 2009: 2), empirical data is presented by using pseudonyms. Besides, the names of the migrant settlements in Dehradun and the village I have been to in Bihar have been changed. Pictures that are shown in this thesis are selected very carefully and captions do not include the names of respondents. In addition, I need to stress that my gender enormously influenced my data. My access to other women and to youth was very good, but being a woman limited my access to men. However, I feel my data will also cover male perspectives, as I was still able to interview, interact with and observe men – even though to a slightly lesser extent.

Lastly, I want to stress that the objective of this study is not to judge certain ideas or practices, but simply to discuss how migration transforms Bihari's gendered relates practices.

1.6 Outline

In Chapter 2, 'Rural Bihar', I draw on my village life experiences in rural Bihar, complemented by village stories of Bihari migrants whom I have encountered in Dehradun. I will discuss notions of gendered space, gender roles and family agendas in rural Bihar. Chapter 3, 'Rural Bihar – Urban Dehradun' focuses on the migration from Bihar to Dehradun. I will explore various factors that lead to migration to Dehradun and examine the different experiences of migration for Bihari women and Bihari men. I will also focus on the process of settlement in Dehradun by looking at networks as social capital. The next section, Chapter 4 'Urban Dehradun' examines the implications of living in different migrant settlements in Dehradun by looking at gendered space and gender roles. In Chapter 5, 'Transregional linkages' I discuss Bihari transregional linkages. I explore various transregional practices and the impact of the extended family back home on family agendas of migrated families in Dehradun. In the last section, Chapter 6, 'Conclusion', I summarize my main findings and answer the main research question and its sub questions.

2 | Rural Bihar

It was a warm evening when I arrived at the house of Neha's family in Dehradun. Neha, who was very excited that I was accompanying her family to Bihar, was already waiting for me. Her mother was still busy preparing different dishes for our train journey. Her father was with her brother outside to arrange our transportation to the train station. Two hours later, all the food was packed and every single bag was double-checked. A neighbour of Neha's family brought us in the back of his freight moped to 'Dehradun Railway Station'. There, we met more (male) Bihari neighbours who waited with us, since our train for eastern India, the Upasana Express, was delayed. Once the train arrived, they helped to store our luggage below our berths and waved us goodbye. Our berths were in 'sleeper class', which is the second lowest tier train class and used by the majority of lower middle class Indians when travelling long-distance. I knew from earlier journeys that sleeper class compartments are noisy, dirty, hot and overcrowded. This was the holiday season, and that meant that the number of passengers was even larger than otherwise. While one sleeper compartment is actually set up for eight people, at its busiest I counted 24 passengers lying, sitting or standing in our compartment. They were, just as we, travelling to relatives in the countryside. After twenty-four hours of exhausting train travelling, we finally reached our destination.

2.1 The village of 'Simrigaon'

Simrigaon[3] is located in the district Buxar, in the western part of Bihar. The village is close to a branch of the river *Ganga,* surrounded by agricultural land and other villages. The village is small in size with just about 1500 inhabits. As in most rural areas, families tend to live in big, joint families (Mines and Lamb 2010: 9). Neha's family in Bihar is a good example of such a joint family as it consists of three nuclear families. Her family includes her grandfather and grandmother, their sons (Neha's father and uncle), their sons' wives (Neha's mother and aunt) and their four children (Neha, her brother, her niece and nephew). Normally, when Neha, her brother and parents are not in Bihar, only six people share the extended family house in Bihar.

Most families in the village live in clay houses, which seem to be cooler than brick houses, though the latter were gaining popularity among wealthier families. Neha's extended family house was a combination of clay and brick. This was common among families who

[3] The name of the village has been changed.

received financial support from family members who had migrated. In Neha's family case, her father who lives and works in Dehradun paid for the bricks of the extended family's house in Bihar. However, whether clay or brick or a combination of these two, houses tend to come with a courtyard. A courtyard is an open space and partly or completely surrounded by 'walls' (see picture 1). The courtyard is the place that is most intensively shared by all family members, as it's the place where clay stoves are used for communal cooking. Though some families have gas stoves, cooking on a clay stove with dried cow dung as fuel is much cheaper and therefore preferred. For water, hand pumps are also located in the courtyard. Families rely on these hand pumps for (drinking) water, as there are no pipe or tap water supplies. Regarding electricity, Bihar has the lowest electrification rates of the country (Singh and Stern 2013), and Simrigaon is not an exception. The village has access to electricity but power is irregularly coming and going. The lack of electricity causes life in Simrigaon to start at sunrise and end at sunset.

But the lives of female and male villagers differ, as I will show by zooming into Neha's family in more depth. I will elaborate on these differences in the next sections about gendered space, gender roles and families' agendas.

Picture 1. Two village women take a short break of their domestic tasks in the courtyard to which they are confided most of the time. © Jule Forth

2.2 Gendered space

In the previous chapter I mentioned that gender is formed by the social relations within which individuals and groups act (Connell 2009: 10). This applies also to the concept of space (Spain 2014: 582). Lefebvre (1991) argues that space is produced by those who use it every day. In other words, space reflects social and cultural norms and values. As a result, space also embodies gender relations as these are socially and culturally reproduced (Connell 2009: 11). In academic literature, this is frequently referred to as 'gendered space', which defines specific spaces as more appropriate of less appropriate for either men or women.

Chowdhry (2014) argues that space in rural North India is highly gendered. Generally speaking, women's space is predominantly the private space, which implies space in and directly around the house, while men's space is mainly in the public space, which is outside the house. How does this reflect to public and private space in Simrigaon?

Public space

In Neha's family, the women stayed indeed at home while most of the men were 'gone', only returning home to eat a meal, rest and sleep. I noticed that the villages' public space was "reserved and used almost exclusively by the male population" and "a space where the power and legitimacy of masculinity are displayed and cemented" (Chowdhry 2014: 41). Women are extremely vulnerable in these spaces, Chowdhry (2014) argues, as their presence invites attention, ridicule and (sexual) harassment. When I entered the village streets with Neha, the disdain of our presence was very noticeable. At Neha's family home, I was most of the time only surrounded by women that made me feel very comfortable, but as soon as I left the house, the large number of men who stared at us made me feel very uncomfortable (see picture 2).

Picture 2. A 'main' street near the village of Simrigaon that is exclusively used by males. © Jule Forth

In Neha's family, women's vulnerability in the village's public space was reflected in a number of normative rules, which had to be taken into account whenever a woman wanted to leave the house. First of all, women shouldn't roam around. Bihari respondents in Dehradun told me earlier that *ghumne* (litt.: to wander) is considered inappropriate for women. This implies that women are expected to have a valid reason (whatever this reason may be) for leaving the house. Besides, women should not go out on their own but should be accompanied by at least another women or male relative. Thus, Neha and I went only together and always told her (grand)parents where we were going to (e.g. to the market, visiting neighbours etc.). This was all right, but we had to dress appropriately. In spite of temperatures up to 45 ℃, we had to cover our bosom by adding a scarf on top of our *kurta* and *chudidar* (a loose shirt covering elbows to knees and a legging). In addition, we also had to be back on 'time', this implied we had to return before sunset. As Neha phrased it: "Boys can go out whenever they want, but women should be inside the house when the sun has set. If you're outside when it's dark people in the village will start to gossip out you".

One day, we had been to the market in a neighbouring village and though we returned around dusk, Neha's uncle was very upset that we were out that late. Neha told me later that her uncle questioned her why we were so late and what we did, as he was afraid that villagers would talk badly about her (and thus her family). In a similar situation, we saw a number of women literally running through the fields to the village, in order to reach their home before sun set. These women were married, as only married women are allowed to wear *sarees* (a traditional Indian wrapped dress). Married women had to follow even more normative rules, as whenever they met or passed men in the village streets, they covered their head with one end of their *saree* cloth and looked down. When I asked Neha's family about these habits, neither Neha nor her relatives could tell me their exact reason for doing it. Neha said: "It's like this here in Bihar, this is the rule so we have to follow the rule". Neha's niece, Kushi (16), who lives permanently in Bihar, experienced these rules in the following way: "Boys can do whatever they want, but for girls there are so many rules. I don't like it that boys have more freedom than girls have, but I'm used to it." The local *anganwadi* woman or 'village health worker', who I spoke to in her *anganwadi* centre[4], was the only one who was able to provide an explanation for these normative restrictions. She said: "Parents are afraid their

[4] *Anganwadi* centres are are found all over India and provide supplementary nutrition, non-formal pre-school education, nutrition and health education, immunization, health check-up and referral services (Govt. of India 2013: Anganwadi centres).

daughters will spoil the good name of the family, that's why they control their daughters so much and want them to stay inside or at least near the house". Due to the notion of family honour, and the importance of family status, women remain thus most of the time at home, which brings me to the private space in Simrigaon.

The private space

In Bihar, Neha, her mother, aunt, grandmother, sister and myself were most of the time at home. In Neha's family, the private space consisted of six rooms, a courtyard (including toilet) and a rooftop. I found myself lucky to stay in one of the few houses that had a toilet. This was rather unusual as the majority of people in rural Bihar defecate in the open (Singh and Stern 2013). For women, this is considered to be problematic as they face shame and a loss of personal dignity by defecating in the open during the day, causing that many wait for nightfall to answer nature's call. Since women should not be outside when it's dark, they have to visit the fields in pairs and small groups in order to reduce the chance on (sexual) harassment. But, as argued by Doron and Raja (2015), the fields where women go to relieve themselves allow them also to escape for a moment the private space that they experience as oppressive. Why is the private space, which is predominantly used by women, characterized as oppressive?

The oppressive character of the private space is largely linked to the female hierarchy within households in rural Bihar. Young women have nothing to say, Das Gupta (2010: 165) argues, but when getting on in age, women's autonomy rises. She links this increase of autonomy to having the support of grown sons, which makes mothers ensure that their sons remain emotionally attached to them. This is often at the expense of the new daughters-in-law, who have to follow their mother-in-law's rules in order to pay her respect (ibid.). In Neha's family, this female hierarchy became apparent in the fact that Neha's grandmother told her daughter-in-law (Neha's aunt) and her daughter (Neha's niece) what and when to cook, to clean the dishes and wash the clothes of all family members. Besides, they also showed respect by touching the feet of Neha's grandmother on ritual occasions, and by eating patterns, always eating after Neha's grandmother.

In addition to the strong female hierarchy, as soon as men (related or non related) enter the house, I noticed what I would like to call a 'masculinization' of the private space. The same evening, when Neha and I returned just in time before sunset from the neighbouring village market, a special dinner, that included chicken, was prepared. A number

of men from the village would come over for dinner, and they were already sitting at the rooftop. I was not allowed to glimpse at them, as Neha whispered in my ear that they were drinking liquor. In India, the consumption of alcohol is often considered an exclusively male activity. So we, the female members of the family, had our dinner in the courtyard. Every now and then, Neha's grandmother made Neha's mother, aunt or niece check on the men if they were not short on rice, chicken or lentils. Once we finished our dinner, we had to wait until all men had finished eating before we could go to sleep, since they occupied our sleeping place. In a similar situation (but where no liquor was), guests had their dinner in the courtyard. This implied that the younger women in the household served the dinner to the guests, the men and Neha's grandmother (who was allowed to join them because of her senior age). Then, they had to wait with eating until the guests would leave, which could take up to a couple of hours, as they should not eat in presence of the guests.

In these situations, younger female family members are thus not only subordinate to the senior women, but also to the male members of the house. This indicates that not only the public space but also the private space is highly gendered. In the next section, I will examine how gendered space impacts the construction of gender identities or roles.

2.3 Gender roles

Connell (2009) stresses that a gendered division of space reflects in different 'gender roles', which define specific behaviour, tasks and work as more appropriate of less appropriate for either men or women. As girls and women are less likely to be out in the public space in rural Bihar, their gender roles revolve around activities within the domestic sphere. Stereotypical gender roles for women often imply cleaning, cooking and looking after children. Boys and men are seen as breadwinner and by being most of the time outside; their gender roles follow activities in the public sphere. Stereotypical gender roles for men are therefore often linked to work that earns them an income.

In the village, there was a very strict, stereotypical, task division among females and males. Every morning after I got up, I looked from our improvised beds at the rooftop of Neha's family over the village and noticed that many women were already taking care of cows, preparing the clay stove, cleaning the house etc. Men, on the other hand, were reading the newspaper or chatting with neighbours, before having their breakfast and going to 'work'. What did the notion of 'work' in the village of Simrigaon entail?

Employment

Most of the village men 'worked' their own fields on which they grew rice, potatoes and vegetables (see picture 3). With this work, they did not earn any money as all the harvest was used to feed their big family. Around the village, other employment possibilities were scarce, but Neha's family, for example, made some money by selling diary products (such as milk and curd) to other villagers. In addition, villagers had continued to be working in caste-based occupations. Neha's grandfather, for example, worked as a *halwai* (litt.: wedding cook), which was linked to his caste. One of the main characteristics of the caste system is that each caste differentiates itself from others by pursuing a particular occupation not performed by other castes (Vaid 2014). Thus, each caste has an assigned occupation, which is passed on through the male descent. In Neha's grandfather case, his father, and his father's father and their fathers passed on the family business of confectionery making and cooking at weddings on to their sons. But Neha's grandfather will probably be the last one who secured a stable income through this profession, as Neha's uncle seemed to have no interest in continuing the family business. Though he is just occasionally doing some construction work, his need for a regular income is apparently not that big. It remained a bit unclear to me, but perhaps the economic remittances send by Neha's father cover most of the family expenses, or Neha's grandfather still makes enough money by working as a wedding cook.

Picture 3. Village men work their own fields on which they grow local vegetables such as bottle gourd (in the foreground) and maize (in the background). © Jule Forth

And women, who stay most of the time in the private space, do they work? Most of the Bihari migrant women in Dehradun told me earlier that women in Bihar do not have a paid job. The local *anganwadi* woman confirmed this as she said: "Women in Simrigaon can work too, but the only option they have is to work in their fields. And that's only possible if they don't have to look after their children. There is no other work available for women". Now and then I encountered some women who worked in their fields. Neha's aunt and her niece, for example, are responsible for the making of cow dung, which is used as fuel for cooking (see picture 4). I asked the *anganwadi* woman about her own profession, as she was a woman with a paid job. Laughing, she stressed that she and the female ASHA health worker are the only exceptions in the village. I felt this was not completely right, as Neha's aunt was sewing *saree* blouses for other village women and earned that way a small income. Apparently, this is not considered 'real' work, as the work is located inside the house. By taking up salaried employment somewhere else, men fear that women might get exposed to new ideas, norms and values (Osella and Gardner 2004: xxxvi). In other words, men would loose control over women that frightens them. Kapur (2010), in a study about female workers in Indian call enters, argues that inappropriate behaviour in workspaces implies in particular the fear of socializing with men, as it goes against accepted gender norms and reflects poorly upon the daughter in question and her entire family.

Picture 4. A married village woman in Simrigaon mixes cow dung with hay to make cow dung cakes that are used as fuel for cooking. © Jule Forth

Thus, rural Bihar comes with very stereotypical gender roles in which women should stay at home, do housework and take care of the children while men are breadwinners and supposed to feed the family, in one way or the other. The fact that only men do salaried work was a common reason given by villagers why boy's education has long been prioritized over girl's education.

Education

In Bihar, I had planned to visit at least one school and speak to a couple of teacher about the educational situation in Simrigaon. But due to the time of the year and the corresponding summer holidays, I was not able to visit a school or to speak with a teacher in Simrigaon. But the *anganwadi* woman explained some differences between boy's and girl's education in the village: "Earlier, 10-20 years ago, girls didn't go to school at all, but this isn't the case anymore. Times have changed and the number of boys and girls within school is equal now". By speaking to a number of villagers, I noticed that many women (including Neha's mother, her aunt and her grandmother) have not been to school. Even though education is free, they had to take care of their siblings and help elder women in the household. Village men, on the other hand, had been to school; though their education was limited as they started working at a young age.

Now, 15 years later, Neha's niece and nephew as well as neighbouring children are going to school. There is a primary school located in the village, which provides education up to class eight and has mixed girls and boys classrooms. For higher education, this implies schools offering class 9 and 10, separate schools for boys and girls are located in the neighbouring town of Sarenja. Neha explained that the local government encourages girls to continue studying in class 9 and 10 by providing them with a cycle to reach their new school. Neha's niece, Kushi, is currently studying in class 10, and though she enjoys studying, she doesn't like her school: "Teachers are there, but they aren't very good. They don't check if you come to class or not, and whether you make your homework or not. Besides, we have so many holidays in which classed suddenly get cancelled without any reason". When I asked what she would like to become, she added: "I really like to study, but I know my parents won't allow me to continue studying and go to college". When I asked her for the underlying reasons she stressed that even the nearest college is too far away to go to.

Another day, I had a similar conversation with the son of the *anganwadi* woman,

Prateek (20), who studies a Bachelor degree in Physics near the city of Patna. He spoke surprisingly well English and explained Kushi's observation in more detail: "Near our village you can only study until class 10. Boys easily move to another city to go to college over there, but for girls this would be very difficult as they have to live there alone… that's simply not possible for girls because there is no control in the city". While living independently has become a common practice for young men, for young women, this is still considered inappropriate. Villagers would become very suspicious of an unmarried woman living on her own, which includes fear of socializing, dating or even having sex with men. As a result, she might not be marriageable anymore and her family won't be able to find a suitable groom. But besides lack of control, parents prefer to invest in boys as they know daughters will move away from them upon her marriage – contrary to a son, who remains with his parents for his lifetime. Prateek stressed this too when he said: "Boys' education is much more important because it's linked to the status of your family". And indeed, girls' education will eventually be linked to the status of the family-in-law, not to her family. While these specific gender roles and its corresponding educational investments already indicate son preference, the different values attributed to sons and daughters become even more evident in such a remark, which reveals what I would like to call a 'family agenda'.

2.4 Family agendas

With the concept of a family agenda, I refer to family's ideas and practices regarding the raising of children, which boil down to the expectations and duties of what daughters and sons ought to do (and not to do). Note that in India, and in particular in rural Bihar, the raising of children is a communal, extended family's task rather than only a parents' task. I'll discuss family agendas in more detail in the next sections that include marriage (including the practice of dowry), sex selectivity and the future of children.

Marriages

In Bihar (and Dehradun), I used to chitchat a lot with Neha about marriages, as her marriage was about to get arranged. This implied that her parents (and relatives) started looking for a suitable groom on the basis of "same caste, good family and same village", as Neha described her partner's criteria. The latter, same village, has to be seen as broader than the actual village, meaning rather a neighbouring village in the same district. A love marriage, in which a couple 'finds' one another independent of their parents, is according to Neha considered as

a crime' and very rarely practiced in Bihar. This corresponds well with the amount of love marriages in the village, which were zero. All the villagers I spoke to stressed that their marriage was arranged and the local *anganwadi* woman confirmed the absence of a single love marriage in the village. In addition, though they resided in different villages and districts in Bihar, none of the Bihari migrant families in Dehradun had a love marriage either.

The common custom of arranged marriages reflects also in living in a joint family. Families arrange marriages for 'extension' and 'intensification' of family relations (Uberoi 1993), in which sons stay in their family and bring their wife into their parental family, while married daughters are taking residence with their husband's family. Love marriages, based on romantic love, are seen as the pursuit of individual aspirations instead of kin intensification, and result often in nuclear family living without any family support. As there were not any love marriages in the village, nuclear families were lacking, too. In Neha's family, the implementation of arranged marriages looked (and will look) at follows: Neha's grandmother moved after her marriage into her husbands' house. The same applied for her mother and aunt, who have been brought into Neha's grandparents family by Neha's father and Neha's uncle. Neha's brother and nephew are also going to bring their future wives into Neha's grandparents house, while Neha and her niece are going to join their future husbands' families, and live with their families-in-law. Bus this is not the only difference between girls' and boys' marriage, as the arrangement of marriages for daughters and sons differs too.

The other day, I talked with Prateek, the son of the *anganwadi* woman, about marriages and in particular about the differences between girls and boys marriages. During this conversation he stressed the following: "Girls in Simrigaon don't have any choice regarding their marriage. Daughters' parents and relatives decide when and with whom the girl will marry. For boys it's different. My family will arrange a girl from a different village – she can't be from Simrigaon as we're all sisters and brothers – and then I will go with my parents to meet the girl. I won't be able to meet her alone but I can say no if I don't like her". He seemed to be excited about his (future) marriage, so I asked him whether he likes arranged marriages. Not unsurprisingly, he answered: "I really like arranged marriage because I like Hindu culture, and if my parents like the girl, I know I will like her too. But I'm glad I do have some choice, whereas many girls' marriages are still arranged without any choice".

Neha's niece, Kushi (15), is not looking forward to her marriage at all. She was rather frightened when I asked her about any plans regarding her marriage. She said: "I don't like

the idea of getting married, maybe my husband will be nice, then I might be excited but now I'm only afraid for my marriage. The idea of leaving my family and live with my family-in-law really scares me. It would be nice just to stay just with my own family, but I know that's not possible". Another niece of Neha, Kushi (16) lived in another village and got married while we were in Bihar. Her parents arranged her marriage and she did not meet her husband until the day of her wedding. She seemed scared and cried during most of the rituals, which was common according to most married women I have spoken to. All of them stressed that leaving their own family and joining their new family-in-law was very hard, but after a while, you get used to your new family. Kushi, on the other hand, has a couple of worry-free years to go. Before her parents can look for a suitable husband for her, Neha, as the elder niece, will have to marry first. While we were having our afternoon *chai*, Neha and Kushi explained to me that it's impossible that a younger girl marries earlier than an older girl in a joint family. Everybody in the village will think they can't find a husband for the older one, so they must have some problems in the family and then nobody is willing to marry the younger girl. For boys, this age hierarchy doesn't matter at all, as an older son can still be studying while a younger son is working and married.

Besides other daughters who are waiting to get married, pubescent daughters increase families' fears to lose family honour. Her physical, and more women-like, appearance can attract sexual harassment. These factors cause that marriages in Bihar are still arranged at early age. Neha's grandmother was 12 or 13 years, she could not recall the exact age, when she got married. Her marriage implied that she did not see her husband on the day of the wedding and stayed in her parental house until she got her period. Three years later, the *gauna* (a north Indian custom associated with child marriage and the actual consumption of marriage) was performed. On the day of *gauna*, she met her husband and moved in with her family-in-law. These very early (child) marriages ensured her family security, as the match was already made, while their daughter continued to learn and act to behave as a 'good' wife in her paternal family. Nowadays, ages are increasing (e.g. the niece of Neha married with 16), though most of the Bihari respondents in Dehradun (with the majority being 25-35 years old) still mentioned the practice of *gauna* in their marriage. Then, there is another factor that causes early marriages, as a common saying in the village was: "The younger the girl, the lower the dowry".

Dowry

Dowry is often seen as simply money or property brought by a bride to her husband at marriage. Dickey (2010: 205), on the contrary, states that dowry actually consists of two components. The first includes items (such as jewellery and other gifts) presented to the daughter by her parents upon her marriage. This can be regarded as her inheritance, which then moves with her to her family-in-law. The other consists of a (often major) contribution in money or consumer goods paid to the family of the groom at the time of marriage, as a 'compensation' for taking the daughter into their home. The second type of dowry is officially illegal in India, but almost universally practiced (Caplan 1984), and even larger institutionalized in the last years (Anderson 2000). Anderson (2000) argues that dowry payments have significantly risen and can amount to roughly six times a household's annual income. For families with many daughters, or in poverty, this is problematic and since dowries are lower when daughters marry young, this encourages 'child marriages'. Poor families are aware that their burden of paying a dowry at their daughter's marriage will be lower if a daughter is married at a young age (Malhotra 2010: 4).

In Neha's family, Neha's grandmother (75) married about sixty years ago. Speaking in Bhojpuri (translated by Neha) she stressed that by then, it was her family's choice how much and what kind of dowry the bride's family would give to the groom's family. We all had to laugh when she told that her parents paid exactly 51 *rupees* (by nowadays conversion rate less than one euro) for her wedding. We continued to talk about contemporary dowry, and she said with discontent: "I don't like that dowry gets demanded by the family of the groom. *Dada* (Neha's grandfather) used to have his own restaurant in the town of Sarenja, but we had to sell it for the marriages of our three daughters. If we would not have sold the restaurant, we would not been able to pay for all the dowry which was demanded". Another day, I met with Sobha (32), a neighbouring woman of Neha's grandmother, for a chat. I was very surprised when she stressed that her marriage had been arranged without any dowry. But nowadays, she added, a marriage without dowry is impossible. With two daughters, she started saving for their marriage already but will not be able to give more than one *lakh*[5] and some additional *saman* (litt.: things) as dowry. These 'things' vary from a refrigerator, to a cupboard and to cloths, but do not entail land, as it has to move with the bride to her family-in-law. Though all families I have spoken to consider the practice of dowry as a burden, they feel compelled to practice it, as they fear that any issues regarding inadequate dowry with the

[5] One lakh consist of 100.000 rupees, which is about 1300 Euro.

family-in-law will result in their families' status loss. This practice of dowry makes daughters even less desirable.

Sex selectivity

In rural Bihar, the practice of patrilocality induces son preferences. While a daughter leaves her family to live with her family-in-law, a son brings his wife and her dowry into his family. Besides, sons can contribute economically to their parent's household. This causes preferences for at least one son, but preferably even more.

The *angwanwari* woman of Simrigaon stressed that son preference is all over the village, as most families continue to get children in order to have a son: "If families have already two, or three or four daughters, they continue to get children with the hope the next one will be son". Shobha, the neighbouring woman of Neha's grandparents who had a marriage without dowry, experienced this herself through the pressure of her parents-in-law. In another conversation at Neha's grandparents house, she said: "My parents-in-law forced me to have more children as I wouldn't be accepted otherwise, and people would start to talk badly about my family-in-law. So even if wanted only two children, I got four children. I got two daughters first but continued to get children for sons as well. If my sons would be born first, I would have had only two children instead of four".

The local *ASHA* health worker, who helps with the children's deliveries, provides vaccines and distributes medicine, adds that this is the reason that most of the families have so many children, ranging from four up to ten. While she is only accompanying pregnant women to the government hospital for health check-ups, she knows that pregnant women go to other, private, hospitals to check the sex of their child. The *anganwadi* woman is aware of this, too, and stressed: "Many women in the village have gone to a private hospital to check by an ultrasound scan whether their child is a girl or a boy. If it's a girl, and they don't want it they can get 'medicine' for about 10.000rs (about 120 Euro) in order to have a miscarriage. This happens especially among families who already have a couple of daughters and are waiting for a son. Due to the wish of getting at least one son, the majority of women doesn't use any birth control (e.g. condoms or a coil)". She further explained that only when the preferred amount of children, and hopefully a son, was reached, women did an 'operation' (by which she meant a female sterilization). According to her, that's the most commonly used contraceptive in the village but still not extensively used, as families in the village are large by size.

Future of children

In Simrigaon, most families have between three and five children. Neha's grandparents have five; three daughters and two sons. In the village, the future of daughters is rather straightforward. Though a daughter can go to school, her main task is to learn how to act and behave like a good wife. Maintaining family status and warding off financial problems related to dowry result in daughters enjoying less education, getting married early in life, and then move to their families-in-law. The future of boys, which includes finding work and earning money, tends to be more problematic in the village. Neha's uncle, who still lives with Neha's grandparents, is occasionally working as construction worker. But Neha's father could not find a job in the village. So, for economic reasons, he migrated to Dehradun to work there as an electrician.

Prateek, who studies already elsewhere, has the same fear regarding finding a job in the village. He really enjoys village life, and would love to work here after he graduates, but he knows the chances to get a job near Simrigaon are neglectable. Even his father, who has a Master in Arts in History, is working as a farmer because there is not any other employment in the village. Prateek stressed that he doesn't want to work as farmer and will probably settle elsewhere. Men need to earn money in order to take care of their family, as a son of their parents, and a grandson of their grandparents, which causes large-scale male out-migration out of Bihar. The lack of jobs around the village of Simrigaon made Sobha's husband move to Lucknow and Neha's father move to Dehradun, while their wives 'just' have to follow their husbands.

2.5 Conclusion

My observations in Simrigaon indicate that the family one belongs to or becomes part to upon marriage, and in particular the status of that family, is considered of utmost importance in rural Bihar. Since only sons contribute to a family's status, continue a family's lineage and have rights to inherit, while daughters leave the family and carry the burden of dowry, this has resulted in a strong son preference. This is reflected in highly gendered space in and around the house. Men are largely present in the public space, while women stay in the private space that comes with a strong female hierarchy and a 'masculinization' of the private space. This gendered space and son preference reflects also in stereotypical gender roles, educational investments and family agendas. Women's lives revolve therefore predominantly around learning to be a good daughter and later wife that includes following normative rules

to bring honour to her family and later family-in-law. Men, on the other hand, are expected to go to school, work and make economic contributions to the extended family's income.

But since employment possibilities in rural Bihar are limited, this constrains a son, and later husband, to fulfil his role as 'breadwinner'. In many cases, this results in resettlement through migration to find economic gains elsewhere. Bihari's migrate not only to Uttarakhand but to all big cities in India (and even oversees). In the next section, I will focus on Bihari's migration to Dehradun and explore why Bihari migrants move to Dehradun and to which extend migration to Dehradun helps with finding new livelihood opportunities.

3 | Rural – Urban Migration

I left Bihar after two weeks. Neha's family stayed for another week but I was longing for Dehradun. On the last day, I even counted the hours in the sweltering heat. I could not wait to get on the air-conditioned train that would bring me to my own (private) room, running water and a fan! While I was glad to exchange Bihar's village life for Dehradun's city life, I could only imagine how hard it must have been for Neha's father when he had left his family and village twenty years before. He had probably boarded the exact same train, but with a general coach ticket, that had brought him to Dehradun, a city at the foot of the Himalaya. He must have been excited for Dehradun's hills and its pleasant weather but had he also been aware of the non-Bhojpuri speaking area? And the insecurities with respect to housing and employment?

3.1 Leaving Bihar

The state of Bihar, as shown by Indian Census Data of 2001, has next to the state of Uttar Pradesh the largest number of out-migrants (Census Data 2001, Migration Data Highlights). Yearly, about three million Bihari, of the 100 million inhabitants of Bihar, move from a rural area in Bihar to an urban area in a different state in India (ibid.). Most Bihari migrants move to the greater area of New Delhi or to the state of Uttar Pradesh/Uttarakhand[6] (ibid.).

In Dehradun, the capital of Uttarakhand, I have met Bihari migrants who originated from districts all over Bihar, though districts in West and Central Bihar were most frequently referred to (see map 1). Many scholars argue that in particular the Western part of Bihar is known for its long tradition of out-migration (De Haan 2002, Nangia and Kumar 2007). According to Nangia and Kumar (2007), migration from Bihar started with the rise of British and Dutch colonies like Mauritius, Guyana, Fiji and Surinam around the 1830s, which required many plantations labourers. From then onwards, there has been large-scale Bihari migration within India as well (ibid.). Based on Census Data of 1991, Nangia and Kumar (2007) provide two explanations for the high rates of male migration from West-Bihar. Firstly, West-Bihar has a high population density while the area of per capita cultivable land is rather low (ibid.: 286). This has caused, until today, an unbalanced distribution of land. As a second reason, Nangia and Kumar (2007: 289) argue that in West-Bihar, high levels of

[6] For the Census of 2001, Uttar Pradesh included the state of Uttaranchal, which was later renamed to Uttarakhand.

male literacy are accompanied by low levels of urbanization and industrialization, which results in large-scale migration from rural areas towards more industrialized zones. In other words, they argue that the lack of skilled employment induces migration. But both, de Haan and Nangia and Kumar, have only focused on male migrants. The latest Census Data of 2001 (Migration Data Highlights) shows that reasons for migration of male Bihari and female Bihari vary. The same Census Data gives 'work/employment' as the most important reason for migration among Bihari men, and 'marriage' and 'moved with household' for Bihari women (ibid.: 35). I understand the difference between these two categories as follows: 'Marriage' means that a Bihari woman moved upon her marriage to her Bihari husband who is already living elsewhere 'Moved with household', on the contrary, implies that the couple used to live in Bihar but migrates jointly to an urban area.

In the next sections, I'll examine how these Census Data relate to my findings among migrants from rural Bihar now residing in Dehradun.

Map 1. Districts of Bihar (http://gov.bih.nic.in/Profile/Districts.html accessed on 7 May 2016). Bihari migrants in Dehradun were most frequently originating from the grey coloured districts including Gopalganj, Siwan, Saran, Buxar, Bhojpur and Rohtas in West-Bihar and Begusarai and Khagaria in Central-Bihar.

'Unemployment' and 'underemployment'

In Dehradun, most of the male Bihari respondents stressed that they used to work as farmers in Bihar. However, when I asked them why they migrated to Dehradun all of them mentioned there was 'no work' in Bihar as the reason for their out-migration. I did not understand this, since they had just told me that they had worked as farmer. So, what does the notion of 'no work' for Bihari migrants entail? I'll explain this by looking at Bihari migrant families in Dehradun who owned some land in their village in Bihar (from now on referred to as 'landowning families') and families who did not own any land in Bihar (from now on referred to as 'landless families').

Most of the respondents were part of a landowning family in Bihar, but stressed that even if they owned a small plot of land, their harvest was small. Especially during the summer months, given the absence of an irrigation system, it is hard to sustain crops such as wheat, rice, maize, sugar cane and other local vegetables. Land-owning families also said that farming in Bihar is only meant for subsistence, as the harvest provides just enough food to feed the extended family. Only occasionally, some harvest surplus could be sold in the local market. Due to the subsistence character of this agriculture, landowning respondents did not refer to farming as 'real' work, since they considered real work to entail payment. I asked them about any other ways to earn money in Bihar, but landowning respondents pointed out that they could only work on other people's fields. These landowning-families refused to do so, but families without land had no other option than engaging in wage-labour for a richer landowner.

In Dehradun, I met a few landless families from Bihar, who were generally speaking from lower castes, while (small) land-owning respondents belonged to middle castes. This division still stems from the *zamindari* period, when large landowners owned most land. Though the zamindari system was officially abolished in 1952, people belonging to the upper castes remained illegally in control of much of the land in Bihar. Nowadays, landowners still exploit their landless workers, who face poor working conditions and low wages. One afternoon, I sat with the Bihari woman Kiran (25) and three of her children in front of her house in Dehradun, when she told me that her parents and parents-in-law did not have their own fields. Both she and her husband have not been to school either, as they had to work from early age on other people's fields. One-day of hard work in the burning sun would only earn them 100rs (less than 2 Euro). She told me: "What can I do with 100rs? I have four

children. With 100rs I can't do anything". Sangeeta, another Bihari woman in Dehradun put it in a similar way. Both, she and her husband had been working on other fields for a very low income in Bihar. She said: "If you have no own land, you work and work but you've just enough to eat".

These stories indicate that besides agriculture, there are not many other employment possibilities in rural Bihar. Some Bihari respondents in Dehradun tried to work as construction workers in their village in Bihar, but without much success (as Neha's uncle did, too). In one of the many chats with Vikra, a very open-minded married Bihari man; he mentioned that he had been working in a shop in his village. I asked him why he left his village but all he said was that the work in the shop had not provided him with sufficient earnings to support his (joint) family in Bihar. And except from farming, there had not been any other work available in his village. I asked many Bihari migrants in Dehradun if unemployment and underemployment were the only reasons for their migration. Many, even second-generation migrants, emphasized that they also had migrated because of 'bad facilities'.

'Social insecurities' and 'social inequalities'

Bihari respondents in Dehradun used the words 'bad facilities' to refer to the following deficiencies in rural Bihar: shortage of electricity, hospitals and colleges being far away, the lack of good teachers on schools, the absence of paved roads and corruption. At the same time, they used the term 'bad facilities' also to refer to feeling unsafe due to thieves, in particular those who call themselves 'Naxal' or 'Naxalite'[7]. When I was in Bihar, Neha's grandmother explained this in more detail, she said: "The Naxalites are thieves but target only richer people. In the night they will come to your house, steal everything and share it with poorer people. That's why I won't go to my granddaughter's wedding, since I have to stay here and look after the house. We can't leave the house unattended".

Just a century ago, Bihar was well known for its fertile land, surplus of water and mineral-rich area. Nowadays, this image has been replaced by poverty, violence and social oppression. Relative to most other parts of India, Bihar's economic development has stagnated (De Haan 2010: 122). Scholars even refer to Bihar as being 'backward' (Sharma 1995). This decline is also linked to the decline in the already low standards of governance and the corresponding notions of corruption (Singh and Stern 2005). Besides, the rigid caste

[7] A Naxalite is mostly commonly associated with being a member of the Communist Party of India.

hierarchy and remnants of zamindari rule cause social inequality. In the last decade, a new Bihar state government launched major initiatives to improve infrastructure, education, health and agriculture (Singh and Stern 2013). Yet, Bihari families in Dehradun have not acknowledged this. They continue to call Bihar a *kharib* (litt.: poor) or *bhura* (litt.: bad) society. By leaving rural Bihar, migration might help to escape these 'bad facilities'.

'Marriage' and 'moved with household'

The above-mentioned economic and socio-cultural factors apply predominantly to Bihari male migrants, as they lack employment in Bihar and are the ones who decide to migrate to Dehradun. So, what are the reasons to migrate for female Bihari respondents in Dehradun? My own observations in Dehradun indicate that Bihari women often follow their husbands, as I did not meet a single female migrant who migrated without her husband to Dehradun. Some Bihari women have migrated directly after their marriage but the majority of women followed their husband after a couple of years.

Gita (35), mother of three children, who I have frequently met in Dehradun, is an example of the latter. One day, I visited her in her small grocery shop when she told me: "I got married to my husband when he was already working in Dehradun. For three years, I continued to live with my family-in-law in Bihar, without my husband being around. By the time he finishing building our house, I had to move to Dehradun, whether I wanted it or not. I did not have a choice, I had to go there". Another women, Sunita (30), experienced the same. Sitting on the floor in her small courtyard and being surrounded by flies, she said that she had moved to Dehradun because her husband already lived there. After her marriage, she had lived with her in-laws and her husband had used to send money back to Bihar since her family-in-law had not been able to cope without such remittances. When he had wanted her to come over to Dehradun too, but she had been hesitant, he had started blackmailing her. He had threatened that if she wouldn't come to Dehradun, he would stop sending money to his parents. So she had settled in Dehradun.

These examples indicate that reasons to migrate for Bihari men and women differ. The same applies for the experience of migration.

3.2 Experiences of migration

When I was in Dehradun, Bihari men and women mentioned different reasons to migrate, faced different opportunities, and were coping with different risks and challenges. Therefore,

migration is not a gender-neutral phenomenon. From the very moment they migrate, Bihari women's experiences as migrants differ from those of Bihari men. In a study of gender dimensions of migration in urban India, Singh *et al.* (2016: 176) argue, that men and women experience migration differently due to their different migration trajectories. In Dehradun, male Bihari migrants pointed out three different migration trajectories: 'single male migration', 'solo male migration' and 'couple migration'. In single male migration, an unmarried man migrates, while in solo male migration, a married man migrates without his wife and in couple migration, husband and wife migrate jointly. Female Bihari migrants migrate only as part of a couple, in which they either migrate with their husband or follow some years later.

In the next sections, I will first discuss solo male migration, and its consequences for Bihari wives. Then, I will elaborate on couple migration for female Bihari migrants, before turning to male Bihari migrants' experiences.

Migration experiences for Bihari women

Solo male migration experiences for Bihari women

Among Bihari migrants in Dehradun, solo male migration occurred most frequently. This implies that a Bihari husband moved alone to Dehradun while his wife stays in Bihar. She would follow her husband to Dehradun 'later'. How much later varied from two weeks to a number of years. During this period, the left-behind wife stays without her husband in her family-in-law. In a study about the impact of the migration of married men on the lives of their wives left behind in India, Desai and Banerji (2008) argue that men's absence from home, and the usually scanty remittances they send, encourage women's autonomy. However, they also stress that this does not apply to women who live in extended households. These women remain subject to strict supervision, regulation and violence (ibid.: 5). Many female Bihari respondents who have been left behind as wives in Bihar told me they were very excited to join their husbands in Dehradun, as they felt very insecure with their family-in-law.

I met the young Bihari woman Kiran (22) when she just moved to Dehradun, though her husband was already working there for a couple of years. I met her and her two children when they were about to move house, to live closer to her sister-in-law, who had so far lived a 10-minute walk away. She stressed that she had been very happy to come to Dehradun because she did not have to live alone with her in-laws anymore. She said: "It was a very

violent family and I did not feel safe without my husband". Other Bihari women had very similar stories. Lalita (37) lived already with her brother and his wife for a couple of years in Dehradun, but when she got married, she had to stay for two weeks with her family-in-law in Bihar. But even during that short period of time, she did not feel safe in her husband's family without her husband. She said: "It was such a big house, and so many family members lived there, who were all the time fighting about work and money". Another Bihari woman, Malti (25), was very unhappy during the five years she had to stay with her family-in-law, too. Her family-in-law was a small family with only five family members. She said: "I didn't like to stay alone with my husband's family. I felt very unsecure because I was not allowed to go out but had to stay inside to do all the housework". When her husband built a house in Dehradun she could finally move here. She said: "I was very happy to move to Dehradun, since now I can go out and have more freedom than in Bihar".

This shows that husbands' absence from their homes in Bihar puts their wives in a vulnerable position. Traditionally, a husband is considered to provide to his wife physical security during illness and pregnancy, food security, income security, and protects her from violence (Sarkar 2007). So, when husbands are working elsewhere, he argues, "women who are left behind become helpless to encounter the violence committed against them and theoretically feel more insecure" (ibid.). By joining their husband, Palriwala and Uberoi (2008) argue, female migration can result in an escape of oppressive family-in-laws and traditional patriarchal norms such as obeying to the family-in-law and a strong female hierarchy (Palriwala and Uberoi 2008: 10). The migration trajectory from Bihar to Dehradun comes with a shift from a joint family in Bihar to a nuclear family in Dehradun, which gives the wife new responsibilities regarding household and children.

Couple migration experiences for Bihari women

Other female Bihari migrants did feel safe in their families-in-law and would have preferred to stay in Bihar instead of moving with their husbands to Dehradun. One of the few couple migrants was the Bihari woman Nagina (40). She used to live with her husband and big family-in-law, consisting of thirty family members, in a clay house next to a big river in Bihar. When they still lived in Bihar, her husband worked as fisherman. She was very happy in Bihar, but due to a massive flood, their house was damaged and her husband decided to shift to Dehradun. She said: "I didn't have a choice, I had to join my husband. I missed Bihar and my family a lot but after a while I got used to live with my husband only".

Another Bihari women, Khusila (30-35) moved upon her marriage directly to her husband who was already working here. When I asked her about her migration she said: “In the beginning, I didn’t want to move so far away from my family but now I’m very happy here. I only miss the closeness of families sometimes because in Dehradun everyone lives on their own.” She explained that when she was still living with her parent’s family in Bihar, she used to live with twenty-seven family members. Though they did not cook food together, they helped each other and it was one big family. In Dehradun, this extended family is lacking.

Difficulties in Dehradun for Bihari women

Most Bihari women, regardless their liking or disliking of migration to Dehradun, mentioned that city life in Dehradun is very different from village life in Bihar. As the biggest difference they stressed that they are no longer living in a joint family with many other relatives. Hence, a common saying was: “In Dehradun you’re alone”. While Bihari women are not literally alone in Dehradun – they live with their husbands and often children – ‘alone’ refers to the absence of other family members other than the nuclear family. The Bihari woman Chanda (27) illustrated this clearly. It did not matter what time I entered her courtyard, her husband was always gone for work while she was always at home. Due to the absence of other female relatives, she found her life in Dehradun very boring. She stressed that she only cooks food, cleans the house and takes care of her children. In Bihar, she said, there were at least other women in the house. Another difference that is closely linked to the change of extended family to nuclear family is the ‘individual’ responsibility of income and food. Many Bihari families struggled with the loss of communal responsibilities. The Bihari woman Kiran (27) described this in more detail: “Nobody tells you what to do here, or to stop doing something. It’s your own responsibly to have work, income and food”. Shahana, another Bihari woman with the same age experienced this likewise and said: “In Dehradun, you’re responsible for everything. In Bihar at least you didn’t have to pay rent and people were more helpful”.

In addition, Bihari migrants move to a linguistically different region. While Bihari migrants were used to speak their local language Bhojpuri, in Dehradun, the common language was Hindi. This language barrier causes many Bihari women not to feel welcome at first. Female respondents told me they receive annoying remarks by other migrants about their rural background and their Bhojpuri accent. The Bihari woman, Sangeeta (35), for example, could not speak Hindi when she arrived in Dehradun. She said: “In the beginning, I found it very difficult because I did not know any Hindi and people here don’t speak my

village language. But after some time, you learn to speak Hindi and life is getting more easy". When I was in Dehradun, I struggled only now and then with Bihari women's accent but most women were fluent in Hindi. At the same time, I noticed that Bihari families continued to speak Bhojpuri in their nuclear family, with Bihari neighbours and other Bihari relatives.

On the one hand, migration to Dehradun comes with difficulties such as a change of family composition and a new language for Bihari women. On the other hand, Bihari women also stressed that they appreciated their husbands' employment and the improved schools for their children.

Migration experiences for Bihari men

Most male Bihari migrants, regardless their migration trajectory, stressed that they liked to be in Dehradun. They stressed that facilities are better, there is more and easier work and the weather is more pleasant. Only few Bihari men I have talked to more frequent, opened themselves up and admitted they actually had a hard time leaving the rest of their 'family' behind. Family refers here both to their wives as to other relatives back in Bihar.

The Bihari man Vikra (39), for example, stressed that he actually did not wanted to go to Dehradun but he had to move to Dehradun since he had not been able to earn enough money in Bihar. He said: "I felt very bad about leaving my family, and now my parents aren't there anymore. My brothers moved to Manipur, only my sisters are still living in Bihar". He was excited to go back to Bihar during his children's summer break, but later it turned out he could not join his wife and children.

The majority of the male respondents visit their relatives on a yearly basis: sometimes with their wives (and children) and sometimes on their own. The single Bihari man, Chandan (25), works a whole year in a bulb lamb factory to save his days off. After one year, he is then able to go to Bihar for one week. He is not married yet and lives with relatives in Dehradun but was really excited when I spoke with him about visiting Bihar. In the house of his relatives, but in his own room, he told me that he likes to go back to Bihar because that is where 'family' is. Among the other male Bihari respondents, only one man was acting indifferent about visiting Bihar. The Bihari migrant Subash (45) was not excited about visiting Bihar. While we sat in front of his shop which was set up by him but run by his wife, he explained to me: "There is no difference between my family in Bihar or here, all my relatives are living around Dehradun". This quote already indicates the importance of his

social network in Dehradun. In the next section, I will discuss factors that facilitate Bihari migrants' resettlement to Dehradun which includes migrants' networks.

3.3 Settling in Dehradun

The city of Dehradun is located at a distance of at least 1000 kilometres from the state Bihar. I experienced myself that it can take 24 hours by train to reach Dehradun from the most western part of Bihar. When I returned from my two-week visit to Bihar, I told Bihari women in Dehradun about this exhausting and long train journey. They all had to laugh and explained to me that train rides back to Bihar can easily take up to three days, depending on location and accessibility of their village. So why and how are Bihari migrants moving to Dehradun in particular, and not to a closer located city such as Patna or Lucknow?

Challenges of male migration from Bihar to Dehradun

Bihari migrants are taking a leap of faith by migrating from a small, rural village in Bihar to the big urban city of Dehradun. By migrating to Dehradun, Bihari men have to leave their extended family, village and friends behind. They have to invest in a train ticket to Dehradun and adequate clothing. In Dehradun, they plan to enter wage labour even though the majority of Bihari men I have spoken to were unacquainted with both factory work and construction work. The majority has not been to Dehradun before, let alone to another city outside of Bihar. By migrating to Dehradun, they move not only to a linguistically but also culturally different region. Bihari migrants are regarded as the 'other' and face discrimination. Male respondents pointed out that some employees refused to hire them simply for being Bihari. In a study about the relation between internal migration and citizenship in Mumbai and Kolkata, Abbas (2016) argues that internal migrants in India encounter backlash against their presence due to fears that they will take scarce jobs, drain public resources, or transform the local cultural character. Bihari migrant families in Dehradun told me that in particular migrants from Uttarakhand's hills act as if they have more rights to be in Dehradun and dislike the large amount of Bihari migrants.

In addition to this kind of discrimination, proving their identity is another problem Bihari migrants face when they arrive in Dehradun. In many Indian cities, the ration card is the actual proof of identity. This card is needed for access to public services such as medical care and education but also needed for voting. Abbas (2016) argues that despite its function as a document for subsidized food enabling families to get rice, wheat, sugar and oil for nominal charges, the ration card has become "a proof of citizenship, necessary for

demonstrating legal status (and in the end, accessing citizenship rights)" (ibid.: 158). Various staff members of the NGO Astitva told me that many Bihari migrants struggled with applying for a (new) ration card. Deepa, the former director of Astitva, explained this in more detail. She said: "According to national policy, migrants aren't allowed to have two ration cards. When they want to apply for a new ration card in Dehradun, they have to proof they posses not another one. When Bihari migrants move to Dehradun, they do not know whether they stay in Dehradun (or move to another place), which makes them not cancel their ration card in Bihar. Others, who did cancel their card in Bihar, lack information regarding the procedure for obtaining a new ration card in Dehradun. Many officials who are in charge of ration cards make Bihari migrants' ration card illegally, which places migrants under pressure of these officers".

Hence, how do Bihari migrants deal with these challenges of their migratory trajectory? Bihari migrants who are already living in Dehradun can facilitate newly arrived Bihari migrants by providing specific information about Dehradun, housing and employment, ration card application but also Uttarakhandi norms and values – but prior to coming to Dehradun, migrants need to know an already settled Bihari migrant.

Migrant networks as social capital

Every male Bihari migrant in Dehradun stressed that he had moved to Dehradun because he had 'a relative' living in Dehradun. When I asked to specify this relative, the majority of men referred to this relative as 'uncle'. For me, this made it hard to distinguish between *real* relatives (which implies an extended family member) and *other* relatives (which could be a friend or villager). However, it indicates that there is contact between place of origin (a village in Bihar) and place of destination (a migrant settlement in Dehradun) which looks, as told by Bihari respondents, as follows: a migrated family in Dehradun tells their relatives in Bihar, either in a visit or by phone calls, about their life in Dehradun. Possibilities for staying and employment in Dehradun are discussed within both families. Then, a male member of the family in Bihar moves to Dehradun. He can either stay with his relatives or they help with finding a room. Relatives are also important for finding employment, since they already know employees. As soon as the migrating man has a stable job and place to stay, his wife joins him in Dehradun.

This touches upon the importance of relatives in Dehradun for new Bihari migrants. In a study about Bihari out-migration to Calcutta, De Haan (2002) argues: "People from

specific areas migrate to specific destinations because of personal contacts that are essential for successful migration". In other words, Bihari migrants migrate to Dehradun because of other Bihari migrants they know in Dehradun, which is also referred to as their 'migrant network'. Massey *et al.* (1993: 448) define migrant networks as "sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through bonds of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin". De Haas (2009: 5) puts it in a different way and interprets a migrant network as "a location-specific form of social capital". But what implies social capital? Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as "the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition". A simplified version of this means that social capital is a resource and is based on belonging to a group (either family, class or caste). It's thus not about *what* you know, but *whom* you know. Social capital and especially the corresponding resources that can be claimed, such as access to housing and employment, are an important factor facilitating the migratory trajectories of Bihari migrants. But, as explained by De Haas (2009), "the volume and the resources of the social capital possessed by a person depends on the (1) size of the network connections and the (2) volume of the (economic, cultural or symbolical) capital possessed by each of those to whom she or he is connected". That is why the size of migrant network and the number of contacts influence the trajectory of migration, and subsequently, increase or decrease the earlier discussed challenges of migration.

My observations in Dehradun indicate that Bihari migrants from middle/higher castes have a larger network, more contact with other Bihari migrants and thus seem to have a more convenient migration trajectory. The young Bihari man Chandan (25) knew before he left his village in Bihar that he was going to move in with his sister's family in Dehradun. For about seven years, he had been part of their family and contributes to household costs. In return, he got his own room and eats with them. But even more important, by linking up with his relatives in Dehradun, he got access to a larger migrant network as his relatives lived next to other Bihari migrants. Since he can rely on a large migrant network, he does not face any insecurities regarding housing or employment. Thanks to his relatives who already lived for a number of years in Dehradun, he could start working in a bulb lamp factory right away. And once he has plans to marry and settle, he will probably be able to continue living next to Bihari migrants.

On the contrary, the Bihari woman Aasha (25) stressed that it had been very difficult to find a place to stay in Dehradun, as the rents are high. It was only because of her *jeth* (litt.: husband's elder brother), who had already lived in Dehradun that they were able to find a house. By drawing upon my observations in Dehradun, it seems that Bihari migrant families from lower castes have a less extensive network in Dehradun and thus faced more struggles in their migration trajectory. Respondents such as Aasha were not able to stay with their relatives, which caused pressure for housing (and employment) from the moment they arrived in Dehradun. These Bihari migrants had to stay in temporary houses or rooms before finding a more permanent place to stay. The lesser extent of their migrant network, and subsequently the lack of access to a larger Bihari network caused that they did not live next to other Bihari migrants but next to other (non-Bihari) migrants. I will elaborate on the choices and consequences of living next to Bihari migrants or away from them in the next chapter.

3.4 Conclusion

Male Bihari's main reasons to migrate are unemployment and underemployment in Bihar and economic gains elsewhere, though social insecurities and inequalities in Bihar contribute to leaving their rural village too. Male migration comes with different trajectories; single male migration, solo male migration and couple migration. Especially solo male migration, and the subsequent husbands' absence in his family, puts left-behind wives in a vulnerable position in their families-in-law. Meanwhile, the Bihari husband in Dehradun has to cope with the challenges that come with migration, e.g. discrimination, lack of identification proof, housing, employment etc. Whether a Bihari's trajectory of migration is successful depends largely on a migrant's social capital and a migrant's network, both at place of origin as at place of destination. Bihari migrants with an extensive migrant network seem to have a more convenient migration process as they can rely on other Bihari migrants for a variety of resources, resulting in Bihari migrant families who lived next to each other. Bihari migrants with a lesser contacts in Dehradun experience a more difficult process of settling in Dehradun and subsequently end up living next to non-Bihari migrants.

Anyhow, when the husband finds a stable place to stay and has a regular income, the Bihari wife 'follows' her husband to Dehradun, regardless her own aspirations. The lack of a controlling family-in-law and strong female hierarchy can result in escaping traditional norms and values. In the next chapter, I will examine the impact of the absence of an extended family and living in a nuclear family (either next to other Bihari or away from them) on gendered space, gender roles and families' agendas in the area 'Sundar Nagar' in Dehradun.

4 | Urban Dehradun

During my stay in Dehradun, I linked up with 'Astitva'. Astitva is a Dehradun based NGO that strives to empower women from poor socio- and economic backgrounds. I started meeting and interviewing Bihari women at the office and crèche of Astitva, and subsequently visited them on a daily basis in the migrant settlements 'Sundar Nagar' and 'Hari Nagar' with one of Astitva's staff members. The fact that Astitva's staff knew both the areas, spoke English and understood my Hindi made it a big plus to go together. Additionally, I went for visits on my own as well, especially since two neighbouring Bihari families (the family of Neha and the family of Aditi) welcomed me with open arms every single time I stopped by. The two second-generation migrants, Neha and Aditi, introduced me also to many other Bihari families, which led to many new Bihari acquaintances.

4.1 The migrant settlements of 'Hari Nagar' and 'Sundar Nagar'

In many Indian cities, migrants live in migrant settlements at the outskirts of town (Alstan 2014: 8). The same applies for the city Dehradun. From the centre of Dehradun, it takes a 30 minutes *tuktuk* ride to reach South-West Dehradun. Here, a number of migrant settlements are located. My focus is on the area of 'Sundar Nagar', of which actually only the northern part is called 'Sundar Nagar' as the southern part is locally referred to as 'Hari Nagar'. Though there is no visible boundary between the two migrant settlements, both places felt very different. Every time I entered Sundar Nagar, it felt like a bustling town itself. Sundar Nagar has a daily vegetable and fruit market, various primary schools, different health-posts and a big variety of shops and street restaurants. The southern part, Hari Nagar, is a 15-minute walk from the centre of Sundar Nagar and is much smaller. To me, Hari Nagar felt and looked like an 'urban village' with a local shop here and there; such as a barbershop or a basic grocery shop. However, both settlements are located right next to the Rispana River (see picture 5), though during the time of the year that I was there the river looked (and smelled) more like an open drain. I expected migrant settlements to have slum-like conditions, what is referred to in Indian government publications as 'poorly built tenements', with 'inadequate infrastructure' and that lack 'proper sanitary and drinking water facilities' (Primary Census Abstract for Slum: 2011). But contrary to my expectations, I ran into brick houses, paved roads and electricity and water supplies. Despite proper infrastructure, housing situations in both migrant settlements were insecure.

Picture 5. Smaller and larger constructed brick houses of migrants right next to the embankment of the Rispana River. © Jule Forth

Hari Nagar

In Hari Nagar, about twenty Bihari migrant families live in and around one specific 'Bihari alley' (see picture 6). These Bihari families were from middle/higher castes and had upon arrival in Dehradun a larger migrant network. I observed that these Bihari migrants who got the opportunity, or 'access', to live next to other Bihari migrants always chose to live with the 'Bihari community' of Hari Nagar. A community, as defined by Rabinowitz (2001) is usually associated with an array of positive connotations such as solidarity, familiarity, unity of purpose, interest, and identity. In Hari Nagar these associations were, among others, reflected in a communal Hindi temple; a joint savings system of Bihari men and the tutoring by older Bihari women to younger Bihari children. In addition, as I noticed when I was with Neha's family in Bihar, neighbours call each other to check if you and your family arrived safely in Bihar.

Bihari families in Hari Nagar tend to live in one-storey houses (with one, two or three rooms), built from brick stones and corrugated sheets. In most cases, they had lived in Dehradun for a couple of years already and were able to 'buy' a small plot of land for 25.000 – 40.000rs (350 – 500 Euro) from their block officer. Then, they could start building their own house, often including a small separate kitchen and private sanitation. In some cases where two brothers had jointly bought a piece of land and build two houses or rooms next to each other, sanitation was shared with their relatives. Bihari families pay electricity and water bills and call their house their 'property'. To me, their landownership remained unclear as all

of them stressed that they had not registered their house at the court. According to Indian law, as explained by staff members of Astitva, this implies that they were not the legal and rightful owners of their house. Though many families stressed they have a formal record, I did not see any formal purchase agreement, which causes me to think that these Bihari families had bought their piece of land on the basis of an informal arrangement with their block officer. This means, when another or new block officer comes to charge, their purchased land record might be considered as invalid. In addition to this insecure situation, Bihari families were also worried about rumours of breaking down the migrant settlements in Hari Nagar in order to build flats. I had been told that a few years ago, some other migrant settlements in the same area were flattened for government purposes. Even if these Bihari migrant families live in a Bihari community, they face a lot of uncertainty.

Picture 6. The 'Bihari alley' in the migrant settlement of Hari Nagar. Every door opening leads to the house of one Bihari migrant family. Most houses lack a courtyard, which causes that women are largely present in the alley. © Jule Forth

Sundar Nagar

In Sundar Nagar, Bihari migrant families tend to live away from other Bihari's. A few Bihari families stay near their related families (who live some blocks away), but a majority of them live next to migrants from other parts of India. In my observation, Bihari migrants from lower castes that therefore had a less extensive migrant network meaning that they lacked access to a larger Bihari community.

Bihari families in Sundar Nagar live in rented rooms. Most commonly, they rent one room in a larger building in which their landlord and other non-Bihari migrant families live too. Even though these houses are in a good shape and have plastered walls, the rooms are small (15-20m²). Irrespective of the room's size however, rooms are multifunctional. Bihari families use one room as a bedroom, living room and kitchen, all in one. The room comes with communal sanitation and water supplies, which are used by all tenants. Rental prices vary between 500rs and 1500rs per month (10 – 25 Euro)[8], which is exclusive of electricity. Bihari families within Sundar Nagar shifted houses on a regular basis in the locality. When I asked why they moved, common reasons included: "We found a cheaper place", "we had troubles with our landlords" and "we're moving closer to some of our relatives".

The housing situation in both migrant settlements was thus 'insecure', though this insecurity was of a different nature in the two settlements. In the next section, I will look at the impact of living next to Bihari migrants in Hari Nagar or away from them in Sundar Nagar on gendered space and gender roles.

4.2 Gendered space

In Simrigaon, the village I visited in Bihar, I encountered a very strict gendered division of space. Most of the times, men were the ones present in the public domain (as in the village streets), while the women stayed at home and in their courtyard. In the village, everybody knew everybody. Abraham (2010: 214) argues that migrants' spaces in cities differ from village spaces by the degree of anonymity, as relations are more impersonal and there is less relatedness between residents of a village. How does this apply to Dehradun, and in particular to the different migrant settlements Hari Nagar and Sundar Nagar? I will first look at the public domain before turning to the private domain.

[8] Overall, Bihari men who are working as construction worker earn about 400rs (7 Euro) a day. Their monthly income comes about 10.000rs (150 Euro), though they often lack employment in the summer months.

Public domain

In Dehradun, Bihari men have to work from early morning until late evening, which implies that there is little time for 'hanging around' in and around the migrant settlements. Compared to Bihar, there are fewer men and more women in the public domain in Dehradun. This reflects in the fact that women are the ones who frequently visit neighbours, do groceries at the market and pick up their children at school. I myself noticed that while I was in Bihar, it did not feel appropriate to leave the house alone and so I did not, though nobody explicitly forbid me from doing so. In Dehradun on the other hand, I was frequently wandering through alleys and did not mind walking back to my guest family's house even after the sun had set.

Public domain in Hari Nagar

In Hari Nagar, which I earlier defined as the Bihari community, Bihari women do go out but stay predominantly in the nearby public domain: their 'alley' or 'neighbourhood'. This social space refers to "the closest public space outside of one's home and amongst non-family members" (Singh 2010: 206). Berreman (1972: 581) adds to Singh's description "an urban neighbourhood is often relatively homogeneous ethnically, and stable over time, so that interaction approximates that in the village". In a Bihari village, relatedness is often linked to people's (sub-)caste, which implies that respondents considered other villagers as their 'brothers and sisters'. In the Bihari community in Hari Nagar, Bihari migrants originate from different districts and different villages. However, the fact that you are from Bihar and speak Bhojpuri creates a certain closeness that I consider to be comparable with a village's social structure.

Pooja (18), a young Bihari woman, lived only temporarily in Dehradun as she visited her parents and uncle's family in Hari Nagar. During the rest of the year, she lived with her grandparents in Bihar. While her parents and younger siblings migrated to Dehradun a couple of years ago, the switch from a Bhojpuri school to a Hindi one would be too difficult, so she had to stay back in Bihar in order to finish her schooling. In one of our long conversations, she elaborated on the difference between going out in Bihar and Dehradun as follows: "In Bihar, my grandparents don't even allow me to visit my neighbours. If I want to talk, then I have go to the terrace [rooftop] and communicate with my friends who come out on their own terrace [rooftop]. I can meet with friends, but only directly after school. I can't first come home and then go to a friend's house. Here [in Dehradun], I'm still not allowed to *ghumo* (litt.: roam around), but I can go till a couple of houses in the vicinity and visit

neighbours. Even if it's not a big difference, I prefer being in Dehradun because it's not so strict here."

When I asked Neha and Aditi about the difference of *ghumna* in Bihar and Dehradun, they told me a similar story: "Here in Dehradun, we do have more freedom than in Bihar, but there is still a lot of social control in Hari Nagar as everybody knows everybody. Bihari families who live at the beginning of our street [alley] know who lives at the end of our street [alley] and vice versa". For me, this social control was reflected in Bihari women who asked me every single time when I walked through Hari Nagar what I was going to do. In the beginning, I thought they are just interested because I was a foreign woman, but I noticed that the Bihari women who walked through the neighbourhood got examined in the same way.

Besides, I noticed a big difference between going out alone and going out in groups. In particular, on Saturdays small groups of Bihari women went shopping to Dehradun's city centre. Neha and I also often went out to visit some of her relatives living in a different part of Dehradun, and I saw other young Bihari women taking the bus to reach college. These activities did not take place in the neighbourhood but in the larger public space. I asked Neha and Aditi about this difference and they stressed: "We're allowed to go further than our street [neighbourhood], but not alone. We have to go with people who are known to our parents and only at day time, not in the evening". When I asked them, and other Bihari women, why they are not allowed to go, for example, to Dehradun's city centre on their own, all of them stressed that 'society' (which refers here to the Bihari community) would not accept this. They also said that it was simply not considered appropriate for a Bihari woman to roam around alone, and especially not once the sun has set. Meera (25), a Bihari woman in Hari Nagar, said that she did not go out alone because her husband told her that women that go out alone and talk to many other people are very bad women. Dube (1988), in her article about Hindu Girls in Patrilineal India, explains that female and male boundary maintenance "is expressed in the construction of legitimate and proper modes of speech, demeanour and behaviour". Roaming around, going out on your own and speaking to other people are simply not considered part of a female identity. She further stressed that the importance of the 'society', and what is considered appropriate or inappropriate is imbued with "a certain givenness and appears as a part of the natural order of things" (ibid.: 19). It is within these limits, that women challenge their situation.

One day, I was having a cup of *chai* with Neha's mom. I noticed that she was very upset because Neha was not home yet. In the morning Neha had gone to college, but she

should have been home around noon. Her mom discussed with other neighbours what to do, and decided to wait for Neha. When Neha entered the house two hours later, her mom was crying with joy. Neha acted like nothing had happened as she only had some lunch with friends. Though Neha was aware that this was not appropriate behaviour, she also knew that this behaviour would still get accepted by her parents and would not have any further implications.

Public domain in Sundar Nagar

The biggest difference between the public domain in Sundar Nagar and Hari Nagar is the absence of other Biharis, and a Bihari community. Bihari families who live away from other Bihari migrants increase their anonymity and cause less social control. The non-relatedness in Sundar Nagar implies that the actions of other migrants and the actions of Bihari migrants are considered as separate. I noticed that this increased anonymity and freedom resulted in greater mobility for Bihari women. The absence of male relatives and a Bihari community meant that there were lesser male relatives/community members to be dishonoured. In addition, no neighbour would tell relatives in Bihar about any misbehaviour. I noticed that life was much more individualistic, as whenever I looked for a Bihari woman, none of their neighbours knew whether she was doing groceries, back in Bihar or simply visiting a friend. In Hari Nagar on the other hand, female neighbours were very investigative and somebody would always be aware of her absence.

On the one hand, increased anonymity breaks the strict gendered division of space in Sundar Nagar and makes it possible for these Bihari women to work. On the other hand, their work is also located *in* houses, which means that women are not that more in the public domain (as I will elaborate on in 4.3).

Clothing in Hari Nagar and Sundar Nagar

In both migrant settlements, appropriate clothing seemed to be very important when entering the public sphere. Among Bihari youngsters, western clothes and especially jeans were very popular. While boys were wearing these already, girls wanted to wear ‘modern’ clothes as seen on popular television channels such as MTV and in certain Bollywood movies too. Girls and unmarried women wore these clothes, but they always had to cover their shoulders and knees. Shorts and tank tops were therefore not allowed. I questioned Neha and Aditi why this was not allowed and they told me that they had heard that if you wear shorts boys throw stones at you. That is why they were only wearing ‘appropriate’ clothes. While they wore

western clothes at home and in the Bihari alley, when going out further than their neighbourhood, they changed into traditional clothes such as a *kurta*, *chudidar* and a *dupatta*. To a certain extent, women changed their clothes too, not with pants – I did not see a single Bihari woman in Dehradun wearing jeans – but with maxi dresses. These dresses covered their shoulders and ankles and were often worn at home or in the Bihari alley. When going out, they changed their clothes to wear a *saree* (as in Bihar) or a *kurta, chudidar* and a *dupatta* (which was not allowed in Bihar). While married women in Bihar had to cover their heads, in Dehradun, they did not cover their head by the practice of veiling.

When I first met Aditi's family, relatives from Bihar (and Manipur) were staying for some days with them in Hari Nagar. That same day, they had plans to go for a walk towards Doon University and asked me to accompany them. Aditi, Aditi's mom, her smaller sister and the visiting niece changed their inappropriate 'western' clothes to more appropriate 'Indian' clothes. Their aunt from Bihar, who was also the oldest female in the house, was already wearing a *saree,* and she made sure that the younger females were properly dressed. When we were about to leave the house, she looked at me and asked Aditi in Bhojpuri something that must have resembled: "Is she really going out like this? Why isn't she wearing a scarf?" To keep the peace, I borrowed a scarf from Aditi so that we were able to leave the house.

Later on, I questioned other Bihari women about the different clothing styles and all of them stressed: "This is the way it is". They did not seem to bother about these different clothes in their neighbourhood and greater public space, which indicates that appropriate clothing, was, for them a part of the natural order of their 'society'.

Private domain in Hari Nagar and Sundar Nagar

In Hari Nagar and in Sundar Nagar, the actual size of migrants' private domain is much smaller than in Bihar. In Bihar, families often had various rooms and a courtyard. Here in Dehradun, Bihari families had only one or two rooms and in a few cases a very small courtyard. But as Bihari men worked all day long, the private domain was predominantly a female space. This resembles the situation in Bihar, in which the private domain was a female space too. However, in Dehradun, a female hierarchy (including other female 'peers') with the husband's mother (mother-in-law) on top was lacking. In both migrant settlements, the private space was during the day a wife's space. She herself can decide what she wants do and in what order. She decided what time she wants to do groceries, and when she wants to

clean the house. The absence of a female hierarchy increased the wife's autonomy in the household. On the other hand, the absence of other peers meant that she had lesser social interaction, resulting in bareness and loneliness. In Hari Nagar, Bihari women still interacted with other Bihari women in the community, but the Bihari women in Sundar Nagar were on their own most of the day.

Besides, as soon as their husbands return from work, a similar 'masculinization' of the private space, as in Bihar, takes place. They serve them breakfast and dinner. When their husbands want tea, they make tea. When the men want to meet in one room with other men, women have to stay separate, in the other room. While Bihari women remain subordinate to their husbands, they do have more of a say in the private space due to the absence of elder females. How does this reflect in Bihari migrant's gender roles in Hari Nagar and Sundar Nagar?

4.3 Gender roles

In Bihar I came across stereotypical gender roles, which implies that husbands were seen as income earners and women were doing most of the domestic work. Bihari men also worked in their caste occupations such as wedding cook, which ideally, should be passed on to male descents. By moving to Dehradun, Bihari men lose their caste occupation. The Bihari men, Subash (45) described this situation as follows: "My brother is still working as potter in Bihar, which is also my caste occupation, but when I moved to Dehradun I could not continue working as potter. It's too difficult to set up a new business here". Other Bihari migrants stressed similar stories, such as: "My brothers and their children are working as carpenters but here in Dehradun I can't continue that profession" or "my husband used to be a wedding cook but here he is a freight moped driver".

In a study about caste in contemporary India, Vaid (2014: 392) argues that there is indeed a movement away from occupational inheritance, which means that fathers no longer pass their caste occupations on to their sons. In addition, as argued by Goode (1963), "urban areas come with employees who are hired on the basis of merit, not on the basis of family ties, and wages are paid to the individual, not to the family". This can induce positive changes with respect to stereotypical gender roles, as employment possibilities are not only linked to the male descent and are no longer tied to the (status) of the family. In the next sections, I will explore how this transformation of the labour market reflects in gender roles in Hari Nagar and Sundar Nagar.

Employment in Hari Nagar

In the Bihari community in Hari Nagar, Bihari men are still the main income earners for their family. When they first moved to Dehradun, most of them worked either as construction workers or as factory workers. These professions come with twelve-hour workdays and little income (about 6 Euro a day). Though some Bihari men were still working as labourers or factory workers, a great deal of Bihari men in Hari Nagar were working elsewhere, for example as a gift shop employee, security guard or electrician. These jobs often come with a more permanent contract and better payment but are located in Dehradun's city centre, which implies leaving early and returning home late. Some Bihari men had set up their own (small) business, such as vegetable vendor, selling *aloo tikki* (litt.: potato fritters) or a basic grocery shop.

Overall, Bihari women in Hari Nagar stressed that they did not work as they were confined to the private space for most of the time. The Bihari woman Chanda (27) completed class 12 and even started a Bachelor course in Bihar, but then she had to get married and did not manage to finish her studies. In one of our conversations she said: "Life is so boring in Dehradun. I would like to work, but I have no experience with work. I would have to learn something and only then I could do work. What can I as a woman do here? (…) My husband also doesn't allow me to work because I have to look after the children". Other women stressed very similar stories, such as: "My husband doesn't want me to work; he thinks that women should do work inside the house, while men should work outside" and "I'm not working because my husband doesn't allow me to work, I'm only doing housework and making food". In sum, women in the Bihari community were not encouraged to work, as men generally feared the economic independence of their women. Khaliq (2001:61) argues that women's economic independence would be something very difficult to accept, as when women remain dependent on men it reinforces male domination.

However, I observed a number of exceptions to this rule that Bihari women should not work. A Bihari woman in Hari Nagar ran the *anganwadi centre* and there were three different shops which were initially set up by Bihari men, but are now run by their wives. These four women were the only ones who stressed that they work. I questioned one of their husbands about his wife's employment, and he stressed that he liked the fact that his wife was earning and they had two incomes. Other Bihari women said they do not work, though they did sew clothes or prepared light wires for a bulb lamp factory (see picture 7). With respect to the latter activity, which was very popular in the Bihari community, a Bihari woman receives

50rs (less than 1 Euro) for 1000 wires that takes about one day. Both, Bihari men and Bihari women do not consider this *real* work, as it is located in the home, while *real* work comes with work outside the house. In general, women referred to their work as "timepass work", as it was done next to women's domestic household tasks. Besides, many women said laughingly that they are working as housewives. Bihari women were the ones that would go to parent's meetings at school, go with their sick child to the hospital, wash all the family's clothes, clean the house and cook breakfast and serve dinner. Bihari men did not help in the household, even if they had the time to help. The Bihari man Subash (40), for example, is often at home during the summer months as these months lack construction work due to monsoon rains. He described his situation as follows: "When there is no work, I'm just sitting home and doing nothing". Bihari men are capable of performing domestic tasks as is clear from their earlier, solo, stay in Dehradun. The father of Aditi, for example, had to stay in Dehradun while the rest of his family travelled to Bihar. When I visited him during that time, he was cleaning the house, washing clothes and even making *chai* for me. I asked him why he was not preforming any of these household tasks when his wife was there. He said: "Of course I can do these things, but normally this is Seema's [his wife] task, I'm working already six days a week [as only Sunday is his day off]". In addition, as other Bihari women stressed, it's not accepted in the 'society' that men do household tasks. Other migrants would probably talk badly about men's help in the household, as it's not their (gender) role.

Thus, in Hari Nagar, women are, in their own words "working as housewives". In some cases they perform work that entails payment but then the work is located inside their homes. Men are the families' breadwinners, and though men can perform domestic tasks, they only perform these if their wife is not able to do so.

Employment in Sundar Nagar

Contrary to the Bihari community Hari Nagar, in the migrant settlement of Sundar Nagar husband and wife both work outside their homes. Most Bihari men in Sundar Nagar work as construction workers in and around Dehradun. Some are working under a contractor, which means they are paid regularly, can take leave and ask for advanced payment. Men who are not working under a contractor have to find work on a daily basis. This implies getting up early, travelling to 'Rispana Bridge', which is a gathering place for construction workers, and hoping that somebody will hire you for a day, week or monthly project. The difficulty of finding work and total absence of work during the monsoon period results in a very irregular

income. Generally speaking, a construction worker earns between 300-500rs a day (between 4-7 Euro) and about 10,000rs a month (about 130 Euro). Yet, as I have earlier explained, Bihari migrants in Sundar Nagar lack a Bihari community to rely on. If the husband does not earn enough money, the Bihari women in Sundar Nagar have to contribute to the household income too. Though, as one of the staff members of Astitva explained to me, for a husband, it's very hard to admit that he is not able to earn enough money so he tries to avoid that his wife starts to work as long as possible. But, if the need for money is high, the absence of other Bihari male relatives actually enables Bihari women in Sundar Nagar to work outside their homes.

Not every Bihari women in Sundar Nagar works, but if they work, they work as a domestic worker. This work implies cleaning other families' houses in the neighbouring 'Defence Colony', which is a significantly richer area set up for retired army officers. The majority of Bihari women work daily on a part-time basis, though the amount of houses they clean and the money they earn differs in each case. Sita, for example, worked at two different houses and earned 600rs and 800rs, and thus a total of 1500rs (20 Euro) on a monthly basis. She would like to earn more, but when I spoke to her there was not much work available. Kiran, on the other hand, worked at four different places and earns a total of 4800rs (about 70 Euro) monthly. Sangeeta, another Bihari woman, worked at four different places with payment ranging from 500rs (7 Euro) to 2500rs (35 Euro) per month, 2500rs being for a double storey house. .

In a domestic workers meeting, which also included three Bihari women, we had a very informal talk about domestic work. I asked these women whether the money they earned was their money or if their husband was in charge of it. They all had to laugh and asked me indignantly: "Why should we give the money we ear to our husbands? It's our money!" Later on, Deepa, the former director of Astitva, explained that this is not always true: "Even if domestic workers say they don't have to give the money to their husband, most of them have to give their income to their husband as he stays in control. In a few cases, women don't have to give it, but then they spend all their money on household matters as the husband simply doesn't contribute to the household costs anymore". I noticed that Bihari women who work often remain responsible for food, household tasks and their children. Deepa explained that this often creates double pressures: "If a Bihari woman works, she is not only responsible for her work but she also tries to continue to fit in the frame of being a good wife. This is very hard as 'society' thinks that a working woman can't take care of her children. While she feels

obliged to work outside, she gets continually criticized for leaving the children". That is why women's working hours are commonly matched with Astitva's crèche[9] and school schedules, so a working woman can combine both her roles as a mother and an income earner.

When I was in Dehradun, Astitva's crèche was about to shut down so they organized a parents meeting to discuss the matter. Interestingly, only women attended this meeting. Though one father joined his wife, he waited outside and did not go inside. A couple of weeks later, the crèche had to close which resulted in major problems for working women, in which some even had to stop working. Their husbands, obviously, continued to work. A Bihari husband stated this difference quite clearly: "Before we had children, my wife was working as a domestic worker but now the children are very small so she has to take care of them". Another Bihari woman in Hari Nagar stressed this too: "I'm not working because of my small children, before I had them I was working as domestic worker in Defence Colony". These quotes indicate that Bihari men in Sundar Nagar tolerated the fact that their wives were working only due to the extra incomes this provided, the women's role as the housewife does not change, which in turn creates a double role (and subsequently double pressure) for these working women.

This brings me to the implications of living in Hari Nagar versus Sundar Nagar for the Bihari families concerned. Initially, I assumed that living away from other Bihari migrants and the fact that women entered the paid labour market would challenge stereotypical gender roles. But contrary to my expectations, the lives of Bihari migrant families in Hari Nagar and Sundar Nagar were very much alike. In both migrant settlements, stereotypical gender roles were not challenged, women did not enjoy more autonomy and all of them remained in touch with their relatives in Bihar (as I will show in the next chapter).

4.4 Conclusion

Bihari migrants in Hari Nagar and Sundar Nagar live in different circumstances. While Bihari migrants in Hari Nagar have enough access to live next to other Bihari migrants, Bihari migrants in Sundar Nagar lack this access to a Bihari community, causing that they have to live next to other non-Bihari migrants. This has different implications with respect to gendered space and migrant's gender roles.

[9] The creche of Astiva was set up to stimulate working women. In this way, women are able to continue working, and older children are not longer forced to skip school in order to take care of their younger sibling(s).

The Bihari community in Hari Nagar displayed a strong similarity with a Bihari village structure, which meant that its public space was also predominantly seen as a male space. Although Bihari women's access to the public space had increased in Dehradun, as they were free to move about in their neighbourhood, their access to the greater public space was still limited. It is however interesting to note that the second generation migrants were increasingly challenging their access to space by constantly (re)defining their own boundaries. In Hari Nagar, any misbehaviour is believed to not only dishonour the direct family, but also the larger Bihari community. These normative rules reflect also in the Bihari women's role as a housewife, and their employment possibilities which are limited to their homes. Bihari men, on the other hand, are considered breadwinners and are outside the house most of the time.

In Sundar Nagar, on the other hand, both Bihari men and women work. The absence of a Bihari community that could be dishonoured enables Bihari women to enter the labour market. However, the lack of other Bihari migrants to rely on forces Bihari women to engage in domestic work. In Sundar Nagar, Bihari women's access to public space has opened up and they are allowed to work outside their home, but their initial (gender) role as housewives has not changed. Thus, contrary to my expectations, the women that had entered the labour market did not challenge stereotypical gender roles and did not enjoy more autonomy, which in a way meant that the lives of Bihari migrant families in Hari Nagar and Sundar Nagar were very much alike.

In the next chapter, Chapter 5, I will explore the importance of transregional activities and its influence on Bihari families' agendas in both migrant settlements.

5 | Transregional linkages

In Dehradun, I spent most of my time with Bihari migrant women in Hari Nagar. Every day around noon, I chatted with them in front of a local shop, which was located in the middle of 'the Bihari community'. We used to talk about everything but mostly we discussed differences between lives in Bihar, Dehradun and The Netherlands. Bihari women could not stop wondering how I, as an unmarried woman, could live without my parents. I, on the other hand, was fascinated by the persistence of arranged marriages with a partner from Bihar and the large amounts of dowry this involved. It took a while before I fully understood the importance of their extended family even if they are living thousand kilometres away in Bihar.

5.1 Transregional activities

For Bihari migrants, life in Dehradun can be extremely challenging. Migrants from Bihar differ physically and culturally from the Uttarakhand population. As shown in Chapter 4, discrimination, proving their identification and insecure housing make life for Bihari migrants in Dehradun tough. Nevertheless, Bihari migrants manage to settle in Dehradun – either by living in a Bihari community or by living next to non-Bihari families. Interestingly, living next to Bihari migrants or away from them does not result in different implications for the families concerned. Bihari families in both settlements keep in touch with their place of origin in Bihar through telephone communication, sending economic remittances, back and forth travel, marriage arrangements and *mundan* ceremonies.

Such a pattern resembles "transnational migration", implying that migrants continue to be involved with their place of origin, simultaneously also becoming part of the society that receives them (Lewitt and Jaworsky 2007). As the term indicates, trans*national* migration refers to migrants who cross national borders. Nevertheless, such a transnational perspective is very useful to understand internal migration too. What is the difference between migrants who cross national borders and migrants who are moving from a rural to an urban context within their own country? The distance from Bihar to Dehradun is equal to that between the Netherlands and Italy. Corresponding, cultural differences are just as big. However, Bihari migrants migrate within the borders of India, which is why I use the word trans*regional* rather than transnational. In the next sections, I will examine the different

transregional practices of Bihari migrants in Dehradun, before turning to the impact of these practices on Bihari migrants' families' agendas.

Telephone communication

On every corner in Hari Nagar and Sundar Nagar I came across migrants who were making calls on their cell phones. The Telecom and Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI 2015) recently stated that the number of mobile phone subscriptions in India reached 1 billion, implying that (almost) every single person in India owns a mobile phone. This was not always the case as mobile phone subscriptions in India have undergone a huge transformation in only the last couple of years. When Bihari migrants started moving to Dehradun twenty years ago, possession of a phone was not the norm at all. This implied that keeping in touch with the extended family in Bihar was very limited. Migrants might have called their village once in a month by landline, and if they (and their family in Bihar) were literate, they might have sent letters. But both these activities were time-consuming and not very convenient. The recent boom in ordinary and cheap telephone calls has facilitated global linkages (Vertovec 2004), but also transformed the ways in which people maintain relationships with their place of origin.

In both the migrant settlements in Dehradun, and in Simrigaon (the village I stayed at in Bihar) every family owned at least one cell phone. In most families, the husband was in charge of the phone, which implies prioritized communication with his own family in Bihar. This can be explained with reference to the patrilineal system in Indian families as upon marriage, the wife 'belongs' to the family of the husband – which sort of excludes interaction with the wife relatives, unless the husband permits this. Compared to earlier times, in which migrants occasionally made a phone call, the possession of cell phones enables communication on a daily basis. Such an involvement brings about many advantages, as the migrant keeps abreast with all of the village events, which eases a return visit, but this also comes with downsides, such as the demand for money by members in the village or the request for more frequent visits.

Initially, phones and the subsequent phone calls were limited to the husband and his family. Meanwhile, Bihari migrant women challenged this pattern. In particular, the women that worked as domestic workers were in possession of a phone, due to the fact that they needed to be reachable to their employer(s). But during the time that I was in Dehradun, suddenly women in Hari Nagar, who were not working as domestic worker, also started

having a phone. The possession of a phone increased the Bihari women's autonomy, as she herself can decide if and when she wants to communicate with her family. But this was restricted to married women; second-generation female migrants such as Neha and Aditi were not allowed to have a phone since this would decrease parents' control. This also increases the girls' access to having contacts with other unknown boys (which is not allowed). This did not apply to male second-generation migrants, who commonly owned cell phones and even smartphones. In both migrant settlements, I became aware of the popularity of smartphones. Though migrants' family members in Bihar were not in the possession of smartphones yet, I think this is just a matter of time. Eventually, smartphones will only intensify migrants' and non-movers' contact as it enables migrants and their family in Bihar not only to communicate by phone calls and text messages, but also eases the sharing of picture and even videos.

Sending economic remittances

In both migrant settlements, I came across another transregional practice - the sending of money to the migrant's place of origin. Cohen (2011) defines sending economic remittances as "economic transfers that follow unidirectional paths from a mobile worker to her or his sending household, community and country". Bihari families in Hari Nagar and Sundar Nagar send either regular or irregular remittances back to their relatives in Bihar.

In most Bihari migrant families, the husband decides about money matters including the transfer of money to Bihar. Rahman *et al.* (2014) argue "Indian females have significantly less exposure to remittances as compared to men". Due to the fact that husbands are in charge of remittances, I noticed a tendency to prioritize remittances to the husband's family. This is, just as with phone calls, linked to the fact that the wife is seen as part of the family of the husband, in which economic interaction with the wife relatives is only allowed when the husband's family permits it. Sangeeta, a Bihari domestic worker said the following when I asked her about any money transfers to Bihar: "We're sending money every month to my parents in law because they are very poor". Sunita's family is also regularly sending money to her husband's parents. Both are not supporting their maternal family, though I am aware that their maternal families live in poverty. Other families did not remit money on a regular basis; they did so only if it was urgently needed back in Bihar. Neha's parents, for example, paid for Neha's grandmother's cancer treatments and sent money for adding the brick stone part to the house.

This touches upon the notion that the "sending of remittances are about more than the formal unidirectional flow of money" (Carling 2008). In the village of Simrigaon, everybody is aware of the fact that the father of Neha is still actively engaged with his family and his village, even if he is not living *in* the village anymore. Cohen (2011: 104) explains that 'movers' who remit, earn status through their actions in the receiving community. Carling and Erdal (2014) link the importance of this social status in particular to plans of (permanent) return and subsequently social reintegration. This is also argued by Ferguson (1999), who stressed that preparing a place (or at least holding open an option) in a rural community requires that migrants remain loyal to rural kin and allies.

But do Bihari migrants in Dehradun have plans of permanent return, or is the sustained connectedness with Bihar based on other interests? Most of the Bihari migrants were still busy with settling in Dehradun, and had not thought about any plans of return. Only the father of Aditi stressed (as a kind of afterthought) that he would like to return to Bihar. He said: "I really like Dehradun and especially the weather, but I don't like to live in a nuclear family. When I'm old, I would like to go back to my village and live there in a joint family." Though it was only one male Bihari migrant, it was a man who said this. This indicates that not only the sending remittances but also possible plans of permanent return are mainly restricted to Bihari men. Bihari women are not allowed to say such things, since they are expected to 'follow' and subsequently lack influence in these decision-making processes. The same applies for return visits, in which Bihari women accompany their husband to his family in Bihar.

Activities of back and forth travel

During my stay in Dehradun, many Bihari migrants left Dehradun to visit their village in Bihar for a couple of weeks. These so-called 'return visits' can be defined as periodic breaks made by Bihari migrants to their village to re-engage social and cultural ties with family and friends (Lulle 2014).

Most Bihari migrants travel every year or every other year to Bihar to spend some time with their relatives. They tend to travel back during their children's holidays, which are in May and June. The same months have also been developed into North India's 'marriage season' (Grover and Singh 2004: 193). Therefore, relatives' weddings were given as major reason for Bihari families in Dehradun to visit Bihar. Sangeeta, a Bihari domestic worker from Sundar Nagar, stressed: "We're going this year back to Bihar because of my sister-in-

law's daughters' wedding". Aditi's family travelled even to Calcutta, as her niece was getting married there. During informal talks with three other Bihari domestic workers, they also stressed that they were only visiting Bihar for relatives' weddings, mainly from their husband's family.

This indicates that in these travels to Bihar, the husband's family, again, is prioritized. In Neha's family's visit to Bihar, for example, this looked at follows: we stayed for two weeks at Neha's father's family and went to Neha's father's sister's daughters' wedding. When I was already back in Dehradun, I heard that they eventually also visited Neha's mothers' family for a couple of days. Besides, I found out that adolescent sons were not always travelling with their family to Bihar. But this possibility of joining or not joining was restricted to sons. Daughters have to join their families' return visits to Bihar, regardless of their own aspirations. Neha and Aditi frequently stressed that they did not like their village and would prefer to stay in Dehradun. While it would not be possible for them to stay on their own in Dehradun, as soon as their journey came closer, they seem very excited about visiting their relatives in Bihar. But Aditi's family's visit to Calcutta and Bihar was actually very remarkable. As Aditi's father did not get leave, Aditi's mother travelled without her husband but with her four children to Bihar, in which she stayed at the husband's family in Bihar. I assume that the importance of being present at the wedding, outweighed their 'travel-without-husband'.

While many Bihari families struggled with return visit's costs, which implied bringing gifts (clothes, household utensils etc.) for the extended family and making a significant financial contribution to the relative's wedding, Bihari families make great efforts to visit Bihar. Deepa, the former director of the NGO Astitva, stressed that many Bihari families take loans from their employers or lend money from other migrants to travel back home. This indicates, even if they actually cannot afford the visit, visiting Bihar and keeping in touch with their relatives is so important that it is worth paying off debts in the next year(s). On the other hand, the lack of money and loans available to Bihari migrants residing in Dehradun, might explain visits from relatives in Bihar. When I was still in Bihar, various relatives of Neha told me that they had been to Dehradun and visited Neha's family. While I did not meet them in Dehradun, I did meet other Bihari migrants' relatives, who came predominantly for holiday reasons and to visit religious places such as 'Haridwar' and 'Rishikesh'.

Marriage arrangements

Another transregional activity, and in my observations the most important one, is the arrangement of marriages between a son or daughter of a Bihari migrant family in Dehradun and a family in Bihar. As earlier discussed, the majority of Bihari migrant families in Dehradun had an arranged marriage, in which their parents and/or other family members in Bihar made their match. Many women got 'married' at a very young age, but stayed with their own family until they reached puberty and the *gauna* was celebrated, upon which the wife moved to the husband's family (see also Chapter 2).

With one or two exceptions (parents who had very small children), most Bihari parents stressed that they will arrange the marriages of their sons and daughters with a partner from Bihar. The second-generation migrants - Neha and Aditi - will marry in a year of two. I often talked with them, and their parents, about their future marriage. In one of our conversation the two young women said: "We know our marriage will be arranged, but we have something to say. In Bihar this isn't the case but here we have little influence in the choice of our partner. (…) The choice of our groom is about 60 per cent a family decision and about 40 per cent our decision. Our parents will propose somebody, and then we meet him and his family one or two times. If we really don't like him and his family, we can say no. But we can't say no too often. And we know that we have to marry with somebody from the same caste, a good family and from Bihar. The marriage will also take place in Bihar, because that's where all our family and the family of the groom is. After our marriage, it depends on our husbands where we are going to live. If he lives in Bihar, we'll live with his family in Bihar. If he lives in Delhi, we'll move to Delhi". Neha's mom largely confirmed these statements when she said: "My son and my daughter [Neha] will have an arranged marriage, as a love marriage isn't possible. But it's possible that Neha's groom lives in Dehradun or another city, but he has to be from the same caste and a good family in Bihar". Aditi's father was even aware of Aditi's wish not to move back to Bihar, he said: "I know that I marry my daughter [Aditi] to somebody who is living in Bihar, she will be so unhappy that she will die. So for my family it doesn't matter if the boy lives here or in Bihar, but same caste and good family are required. It still has to be a groom originating from Bihar".

The Bihari woman Chandra, on the other hand, wouldn't agree with this as she said: "My oldest daughters is going to marry somebody from our village in Bihar soon. A boy from Dehradun wouldn't be possible, how can we find a good boy over here?" Another Bihari women named Gita stressed something similar when she said: "When my children are

older, their marriage will be with somebody from the village because there are only 'poor' people living here". Both women did not have many relatives in Dehradun, and as the arrangement of a marriage is considered a 'family matter', in Bihar, a larger amount of relatives can help with arranging a good match. Other Bihari women stressed that it's *kismat* (litt.: fate) whether their children will marry somebody from Bihar or from Dehradun. Only the Bihari woman Khusilia (30) put it totally different when she said: "Our oldest son has to get married in Bihar to make 'society' and the rest of the family happy, but then he will live with us in Dehradun. The wedding of our younger son can take place in Dehradun, but our daughter has to get married in Bihar again".

These stories show that Bihari parents have slightly different views with respect to their children's marriage. Yet, all of them stress the importance of remaining connected with Bihar and that it is required to have a Bihari partner. This can be linked to two issues. First of all, by looking for a suitable girl from Bihar for their son, who is probably going to live with them in Dehradun, they sustain the 'Bihari' nature of their family. Secondly, by looking for a Bihari husband (and his family) in Bihar, the migrant family remains tied with their village. Compared to a family that lives and works in Bihar, Bihari migrants can pay more dowries for their daughter, which might increase their status in their Bihari village. The marriage arrangement with a Bihari groom who works elsewhere also touches upon status mobility. Neha's parents, for example, are about to engage Neha to a Bihari man who works in the ICT sector in Delhi. The fact that Neha's family is able to pay 2 lakh (~ 2900 Euro) dowry and that her future husband has a government job, will probably bring about positive connotations for her family, both in Dehradun and in Bihar. As marriages are arranged with partners from Bihar, the subsequent practice of dowry continues to be largely institutionalized among Bihari migrants in Dehradun. Compared to Bihar, the practice of dowry has not changed.

Mundan **ceremonies**

In the previous sections of this thesis, I have not discussed any religious aspect of Bihari migrants' lives. Next to migrant's children's marriages that are still held in Bihar, children's *mundan* ceremonies are held in Bihar too. A *mundan* (litt.: tonsure) is an important ceremony for Hindu's in which children get their first haircut. In Dehradun, Bihari families told that *mundan* ceremonies were traditionally associated with only male children and with ages ranging from one to three years old. Nowadays, Bihari migrants held *mundans* for both male and female children, and the ages have increased as well. But whereas other (non-Bihari)

migrants were fine with holding these ceremonies in Dehradun, Bihari's travelled back to Bihar for their children's *mundan* ceremonies. The tonsure of Sangeeta's son was held in Bihar when he was about four years old. Apparently, a *mundan* gets extensively celebrated as she told me that her family arranged food for about one hundred family and village members.

The importance of *mundan* ceremonies reflect first of all in being another transregional practice. Besides, it is through the *mundan* ceremony that (Hindu) religion and Bihari norms and values remain institutionalized in the Bihari migrant family. And, as these ceremonies are held in Bihar, it emphasizes (again) the larger family bond between a nuclear Bihari family in Dehradun and the larger family in Bihar. As with marriage arrangements, a *mundan* ceremony is a way to show that you, though living elsewhere, still actively participate in your village in Bihar.

5.2 Family agendas of Bihari migrants

Every transregional practice that I have discussed (telephone communication, sending economic remittances, back and forth travel, marriage arrangements and *mundan* ceremonies) displays a strong connection between the Bihari migrant family and the non-movers in Bihar. This closeness between urban migrants and their rural relatives brings me to my last chapter in which I examine what the impact of these transregional activities on Bihari families' agendas in Dehradun is. I will discuss whether gender practices change by looking at sex selectivity and the future of Bihari migrant children. As there is no significant difference between Bihari families living in Hari Nagar or Sundar Nagar with respect to their family agendas, I will not make a distinction between these two areas.

Sex selectivity

I explained earlier that lineage and economic considerations such as sons' economic contributions and the burden of dowry upon daughters' weddings cause preferences for at least one son, but preferably even more. In rural Bihar, families tended to have four up to ten children. In Dehradun, Bihari's had significantly less children. Most Bihari respondents had three or four children, and some families only one or two. Some Bihari women told me that they would have had more children in Bihar, because it's common to have many children in Bihar. Sabita, a Bihari woman from Sundar Nagar, explained this in more detail: "In Bihar, all my relatives have 8-10 children so when I was in Bihar, I wanted the same amount of children. Here [in Dehradun], three children are enough. You can't find a room to stay and

the earnings aren't enough for more children". Other Bihari families, too, stressed that it used to be common to have that many children and in particular sons in Bihar, but times are changing.

In line with this, Bihari migrant families in Dehradun commonly stressed that they have no preferences regarding their children's sex, and see their sons and daughters as equal. Renu, a Bihari woman in Sundar Nagar said: "To me, girls and boys are equally important. And I never did a check-up since God decided whether he puts a girl or boy in my belly." Other Bihari women did do an ultrasound check-up, but according to them, only for health-related reasons. Whenever I asked them how they think about having daughters and/or sons, Bihari women stressed: "To me and my family girls and boys are both important but in Bihar, there is still a preference for sons". According to them, families who live in Bihar prefer boys because they can do better work while girls will only do housework. In addition, they stressed that son preference is linked to the fact that the boy stays in their family, while daughters leave to live with their family-in-law. Even though Bihari migrant families in Dehradun did not mention to me that they preferred sons to daughters, son preference is largely present and visible in their family planning and family composition.

This emerged clearly from the fact that almost every Bihari migrant family had at least one son or tried to get one son. Shanti, a Bihari woman in Sundar Nagar has three daughters but still hoped for a son. She said: "I want only one more child because it's said that after three girls, one boy will come". Rangita, another Bihari woman from Hari Nagar has one son. However, she said if her son would have been a girl, then she would probably try to get another child in the hope for a son. Apparently, this is quite common among Bihari families as Dr. Sudha Purohit, a medical doctor working in Sundar Nagar, told me. She said: "I noticed that there is still a big son preference among Bihari migrants. I have seen many Bihari parents who have two or three daughters and go for another child only to try to get one son". Many Bihari families continue to try for a son that causes a low usage of anti-conceptions in the migrant settlements. Yet, when they are blessed with one (or more) son(s), they do use them it seems.

Use of anti-conception

The majority of Bihari migrant families in Dehradun are not using any temporary anti-conception. Bihari women know about condoms, contraceptive pills and coils but do not use them. In a conversation with three Bihari women from Hari Nagar, they considered condoms

to be “a waste of money” as they are 10rs each. They also quoted stories that circulate regarding the usage of coils and not being able to get pregnant afterwards.

That is why Bihari women consider a sterilization operation as the best and easiest way to prevent getting more children. Dr. Sudha Purohit affirmed these observations as she stressed that sterilization is indeed most popular among Bihari migrants. However, she said there are actually only a few women who have had an operation, as getting sterilized is a family decision (which implies the husband’s family). She explains this as follows: “A woman can get only sterilized if her family-in-law agrees, which is in most cases only after she gave birth to at least one boy”. This is also apparent from the hospital’s requirements for sterilization, as next to the consent of the woman in question also another family member’s (e.g. husband or mother-in-law) consent is needed.

In a study about mother-in-law influence on young couples’ family planning in rural India, Char *et al*. (2010) argue: “The mother-in-law has a say on when the daughter-in-law should get sterilized and that this decision depends on the number of sons she already has”. By living in a nuclear family in Dehradun, while the mother-in-law lives far away, I expected her influence to be much less significant. Yet, Kiran’s case illustrates the opposite. Kiran already has four children, three daughters and one son. When I spoke to her, her mother-in-law visited her in Dehradun and was in the room next to us, so she whispered to me: “I think I have had enough children but my mother-in-law wants me to have one more son. (…) I have been thinking about an operation but I did not do it because my mother-in-law doesn’t want me to”. Another Bihari woman Sita, has two daughters but is still trying to get one son, too. She said: “If I would have had one son already, then I would be operated already. Two children is enough, I would have liked to have one girl and one boy”. She explicitly stressed that it’s her own wish to have a son, and not her family as she wants a son who is going to take care of her and her husband later.

Interestingly, there is no difference between Bihari women living next to other Bihari or away from them. In both cases, Bihari migrant’s families’ compositions and family decisions in Dehradun are enormously influenced by their relatives in Bihar, and in particular of the husband’s side. But even without family pressure, as Sita’s case shows, normative family compositions, which implies having one at least one son remains very important. To what extent is this extended family or ‘societal’ pressure reflected in ideas about the future of children?

Future of children

In Dehradun, many Bihari families stressed the importance of good education for their children. All of them want their children to have a good job and stable income. But when I asked to elaborate on this, it appeared this was only linked to the future of their sons. The future of their daughters was predominantly linked to getting married. However, regardless of their sex, Bihari migrant children were going to school, which was confirmed by various teachers and local ASHA health workers. Yet, as I later found out, in some cases, there is a difference between the schools girls and boys are sent to.

In an informal meeting with some ASHA health workers, who lived near Hari Nagar, they stressed the following: "It's very common that Bihari families are sending their boys to a private English school and the girls to a government school. Education is more important for boys because they will work after their education, while girls will only be housewives". Due to summer holidays, I was not able to visit a school in Hari Nagar or Sundar Nagar, but I did meet with two teachers outside the classroom. In an interview with the maths and computer teacher Shivansha, who worked at the Vedic Aryan English Medium School, he explained to me that government schools are free until class 8, while there is a fee for the English Medium school. The fee is related to the income of their parents, which implies that for a construction worker child, the fee would be around 170rs (2.5 Euro) per month. But in addition to this fee, he stressed, parents have to pay for their child's school uniform and schoolbooks. He also confirmed the earlier statements of the ASHA workers by saying: "Now and then Bihari girls are taken out of the private school and sent to a government school [which is cheaper], though boys are continuing the private school. It must be very difficult for the girls, because first everything is in English, and then everything in Hindi but it only happens with families who are overall very poor".

In addition, I noticed daughters can go to school but the learning and performing of household tasks remains restricted to daughters. If the mother is ill, for example, the daughter will stay home to take care of her mother while her son will go to school. A Bihari woman stated once very precisely: "Daughters help every day in the household, while sons study, come home to drink and eat something and goes out again". In both migrant settlements, parents do not challenge these stereotypical roles of their children. This indicates that girls can go to school, but in addition, they still have to perform domestic tasks. Besides, while education is not (that) gendered anymore, there is still a preference among Bihari parents to invest more in their sons than in their daughters. The same division applies for employment,

as I met many male second-generation Bihari migrants who did work, while none of the female second-generation migrants worked.

Second generation migrants

This brings me to my last section in which I elaborate on the futures of second-generation migrants by looking at their own perspectives. Neha and Aditi are both completing their studies; meanwhile, their marriages are about to get arranged. Contrary to the situation in Bihar, they spoke up to their parents and demanded some choice and a couple of meetings before their actual marriage. Besides, their ages with respect to their marriage have also increased. But regardless of their own aspirations of further study, work or amount of children; they probably will not be able to follow their dreams. Upon their marriage, this kind of decision will be in made by their family-in-law. As Neha puts it: "If you have a nice husband (and family-in-law) you're lucky, if not, your life is spoilt. In the end, the husband is the leader of the family, it's like that". On the other hand, she stressed that her own child, as she will have only one daughter, can choose whom she will marry. Neha said that whatever happens, she will not arrange a marriage for her daughter. Her daughter can study, work and choose her own partner. Though she secretly knows this will depend on her husband (and thus family), she has the positive hope of more opportunities for her child(ren).

For male second-generation migrants, the future looks quite different. Ray (21), for example, just finished his school and is working now and then as painter, but he also considers applying for a passport and working for a couple of years in the Middle East, or to join a college… He also has a girlfriend and will not get married any time soon. The same applies for Aarav (24), who is living with some relatives in Dehradun and working in a bulb lamp factory. It is totally up to him when he wants to get married. Only when he wants to get married his parents will start looking for a suitable wife. I asked him whether he would allow his future wife to work, and he stressed that he will definitely support her if she wants to work. He added that he would even fight with his family if they would not allow his wife to work. I am very curious if, in the future, he is going to put these words into action.

5.3 Conclusion

By looking at Bihari migrants' transregional activities such as telephone communication, sending economic remittances, activities of back and forth travel and in particular, their children's marriage arrangements and *mundan* ceremonies, urban migrants in Dehradun maintain (family) ties with their rural relatives in Bihar. On the one hand, this could indicate

plans of (permanent) return, but given the short amount of time that these Bihari migrants live in Dehradun, this cannot be argued yet. However, the sustained closeness with Bihar indicates that nuclear Bihari migrant families in Dehradun consider belonging to a larger family very important. And by arranging their children's marriages with a partner from Bihar, often even in Bihar itself, they intensify family relations even if they are not living in Bihar anymore. The importance of their family, and family status, reflects also in the on-going preference of sons (though it's not outspoken). Bihari parents highly value sons, not only by family composition but also in terms of educational investments and employment possibilities.

Last but not least, this brings me to the question of how migration to Dehradun impacts families and subsequently the life of Bihari migrant's children. Compared to Bihar, daughters enjoy more education and often get married at an older age. Besides, daughters are starting to speak up against their parents, which resulted in some choice with respect to their marriage partner. This apart, however, female second-generation migrants' lives and thei subsequent futures remain largely a family matter in which daughters' parents and extended family in Bihar are the main decision makers. For sons, life looks very different. Male Bihari children enjoyed more freedon in Bihar already, but by moving to Dehradun, this freedom seems to be enlarged due to more study and employment possibilities. The lives of male second-generation migrants in Dehradun revolve around their own choices aspirations. It is up to them if they want to continue studying, work in Dehradun or marry right away.

6 | Conclusion

In rural Bihar, the implementation of kinship-rules is amongst the most rigid in India. This is reflected in the fact the family one belongs to (or becomes part to upon marriage), and subsequently maintaining that family's status is of utmost importance. As only sons continue a family's lineage, and are expected to stay in the family, while daughters leave the family to live with their family-in-law and come with the burden of dowry, there is a strong son preference in rural Bihar. Space in Rural Bihar is highly gendered; resulting in a male-exclusive public space while women remain in the private space. The gendered nature of this space induces different gender roles. Female lives revolve predominantly around learning to be a good daughter and later wife which includes following normative rules by male relatives and elder females. Only by performing 'appropriate' behaviour will they bring honour to their family and later family-in-law. Men, on the other hand, are expected to go to school, work and make economic contributions to the family income. But low levels of urbanization and industrialization cause unemployment and underemployment for many village men. In particular, educated male Bihari refuse to work as farmers, which result in large-scale male migration from rural areas towards more urbanized environments, in which wives follow their husbands.

In migrating to an urban area, the Bihari migrant physically distances himself from his village, relatives and larger family. This causes a shift in family composition. The family changes from a joint family (in rural Bihar) to a nuclear family (in Dehradun). Especially for Bihari women, the lack of a controlling family-in-law and strong female hierarchy can then result in escaping traditional norms and values (Palriwala and Uberoi 2008). This change is considered as a key factor in social transformation, and it does, indeed, bring about changes in the family pattern as a Bihari wife in Dehradun does have more autonomy in the household. But the unsecure nature of migration causes that Bihari migrants have to depend on migrant networks, both at their place of arrival as at their place of departure. Bihari migrants with a larger network have a more convenient migration process as they can rely on other Bihari migrants for resources such as employment, housing, loans etc., subsequently, they choose to settle close to them. Bihari migrants with a less extensive network in Dehradun experience a more difficult process of settling in Dehradun, lack access to a Bihari community and have to live next to non-Bihari migrants.

These different living situations in Dehradun are also mirrored in differences in terms of gendered space and gender roles of Bihari migrants. By living in a Bihari community, women continue to be controlled by co-community members, which restricts them from working outside their house. This is contrary to the locality where Bihari families live amongst families belonging to distinct ethnicities where both husband and wife are working. On the one hand, it can be argued that Bihari women are allowed to work due to the absence of other Bihari males, on the other hand, the fact that they have no other Bihari migrants to rely on, might force them to work. Anyhow, while they begin to challenge stereotypical gender roles, their initial roles as housewives and caretaker of their children do not change. This shows that the implications for Bihari families (and their children) of living next to other Bihari migrants or to live away from them are neglectable.

In both localities, it is Bihari families' engagement in trans*regional* Bihari space that limits any greater change in terms of ideas and practices of gender and the family. Through trans*regional* activities such as telephone communication, sending economic remittances, activities of back and forth travel, their children's marriage arrangements and *mundan* ceremonies, Bihari migrants maintain ties with their rural relatives in Bihar. Bihari migrants are, just as trans*national* migrants, active in both home and host state. But, while trans*national* migration results in profound shifts and dislocations in family practices and gender ideologies (Coe 2011), trans*regional* migration from Bihar to Dehradun has nowhere near the same consequences. The sustained closeness with Bihar indicates that Bihari migrant families in Dehradun, even if they are living in a nuclear family, still belong to their larger, extended family. And by arranging their children's marriages with a partner from Bihar, often even in Bihar itself, they intensify family relations even if they are not living in Bihar anymore. The importance of the larger family, and subsequent family status, reflects also in the ongoing preference of sons (though it is not outspoken). Bihari parents still prefer sons over daughters, not only by having at least one son but also in terms of educational and employment investments.

Meanwhile, female second-generation migrants in both localities in Dehradun are starting to speak up against their parents. Compared to Bihar, they enjoy more education and have more freedom of movement. And while they still have arranged marriages, ages have increased and their demands of meeting their future husbands before their marriages are heard. I am very curious what their future will bring, and whether and to what extent their ideas and hopes of increased autonomy will be put into practice. Will these women really be

content to have daughters only, even if their families are not? Will they be able to work, even if their husbands and families are against it? Or will the norms and values of the Bihari 'society' prevail? Only time will tell…

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