

# Discourses on 'arranged marriages' in Germany

On the interdependency of racism and  
heteronormativity



source: <http://www.taz.de>

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# Elizabeth George: Deception on his mind

- „They'd merely been incapable of seeing them, blinded by their own preconceptions
- of what sort of woman would submit herself to an **arranged marriage** in the first place.
- She would be docile, they had thought.
- She would have no mind of her own.
- She would give her will over to the care of others
- – father first, husband second, elder brothers, if there were any, third –
- and she would be unable to take an action even when an action might have been called for.“

New York: Bantam Books, 2004, 697

# Structure

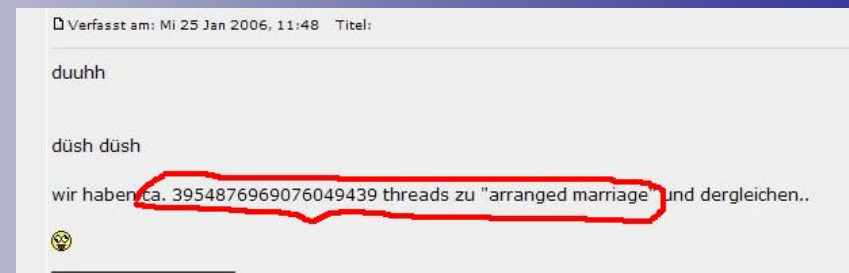
1. Why talk about discourses on 'arranged marriages'?
2. Discourses on 'arranged marriages' in Germany
3. Interdependency of racism and heteronormativity
4. Consequences for the racialised

# Urmila Goel

- researcher in cultural and social anthropology
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- visiting scholar at University of Bergen
- research interest:
  - dealing with experiences of racism
  - perspective of the racialised
  - interdependency of racism and heteronormativity

# Talking about ‚arranged marriages‘

- on the internet portal <http://www.theinder.net>
  - which is a space of young people marked as Indians in Germany
- repeated discussions about ‚arranged marriages‘
- in interviews defensive about the ‚arranged marriages‘ of their parents



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

# Lines of arguments

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

20.10.02 „Heirat oder Verkuppelung“

Also was sagt ihr zum Thema "arrangierte Hochzeiten". Ich persönlich finde das t... ja das solche Hochzeiten nur sehr selten geschieden werden, aber da zieht bei m... würden. In meinen Augen ist das ein Überbleibsel der Steinzeit der nur dem indies...

Geschlecht:   
Anmeldungsdatum: 05.10.2002   
Beiträge: 126

Nach oben   
hidden   
Shah Jahan   
D Verfas...

Geschlecht:

Abgesehen davon, dass Deine Meinung etwas merkwürdig ist, hatten wir das Th... Das es nur um Profit geht, ist doch totaler stuß.   
... hat seine guten und auch schlechten Seiten.   
... wo es besonders in den kleinstädten nun mal nicht die Möglich...   
... nkwweise der Menschen nicht ändern und das Arranged Marriage...   
... wieder die Frage auf, wie man den indischen Ruf denn im allge...   
Ich finde bei Arranged Marriage gibt es im Grunde einen Markt, wo sich Leute um...   
Und Arranged Marriage heisst ja auch nicht, dass sich Bräut und Bräutigam garrie...   
Gibt ja auch verschiedene Formen von Arranged Marriage 😊   
Ich finde das passt gut in die indische Tradition.   
Man muss sich dem ja nicht anschliessen.

hidden   
profil   
pn

Sunnyboy   
D Verfasst am: So 20 Okt...   
aha

„relict from the stone age“   
„good and bad sides“   
„there is a market“   
„different forms“   
„Indian traditions“

# Contextualise discussions in public discourses in ,Germany‘

Regierung bes  
Zuwanderungsgesetz

Mi Mrz 28, 2007 4:39 MESZ

Diesen Artikel drucken



IN ANDEREN RUBRIKEN

„Government passes more  
restrictive immigration law“

Berlin (Reuters) - Mit einer Verschärfung des  
Zuwanderungsgesetzes soll eine bessere  
durchsetzung erreicht werden.

Der am  
soll Frau  
Nachzug

The new law shall  
protect women from  
forced marriages by  
restricting family reunion

“  
...“



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

- condemnation of forced marriages
- equated with ,arranged marriages‘
- ascribed to ,foreigners‘ (in particular ,Muslims‘)
- public image of the ,other‘ constructed
- impact on/ implemented in legislation and policy

# Lines of arguments in public discourses in ‚Germany‘

- condemnation of ‚arranged marriages‘
- framed as an issue of
  - women’s rights
  - and cultural difference
- the ‚other‘ constructed as
  - homogenous
  - traditional, undemocratic, violating women’s rights, etc.
  - inferior
- the ‚own‘ constructed as
  - differentiated
  - civilised, democratic, ensuring gender equality, etc.
  - superior
- ‚our‘ task
  - to save the ‚other‘ woman from the ‚other‘ man
  - by excluding them



# What effect do the discourses about ,arranged marriages‘ have?

- establish the superiority of ,us‘
  - by setting the concept of heterosexual monogamous love marriage as norm
  - claiming it as the ,white‘ practice
- ignoring
  - the heterogeneity of ,white‘ practices
  - the complexities of ,arranged marriages‘
  - the heterogeneity among the racialised
- legitimise exclusion of the racialised
  - because the ,other‘ discriminate women

# Racist constructions of gender relations in Germany

- the ‚other‘
  - is heterosexual (homophobic)
  - has a (forced) arranged marriage
  - women are subservient
  - men are dominant
  - are guided by collective
- ‚we‘
  - are much more complex
  - act individually
  - have the right/ the obligation to interfere
  - as our norms are the universal ones

# Cultures of dominance (Birgit Rommelspacher)

- organisation of society in terms of superiority and inferiority
- network of different dimensions of power
- omnipresent, multidimensional and invisible
- no simple dichotomy of oppressors vs. oppressed
- inequality denied
- and accepted as natural
- segregation implemented implicitly
- struggle for privileges

# Stabilisation of norms in Germany

- struggle of the deprivileged
  - to escape from devaluation
  - to participate in privileges
- ‘white’ feminists and queers
  - ascribe sexism and homophobia to the racialised
- racialised elites
  - demand conformance to a fixed common culture

# Position of the racialised in Germany

- their struggles with heteronormative pressures
- framed by racist discourses
- decisions concerning intimate relationships
  - always linked to positioning in racist system
  - linked to value judgements about ascribed community
  - challenge community solidarity
- talking about ‚arranged marriage‘ in Germany
  - not primarily about heteronormative pressure
  - but also about dealing with experiences of racism
- condemnation of ‚arranged marriages‘ in Germany does not:
  - promote gender equality
  - challenge heteronormativity

# Thank you!

- „We never thought it [the murder, ug] could have been the means to an end having nothing to do with anything that we – as Westerners, as bloody *Westerners* – could possibly hope to understand.“

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New York: Bantam Books, 2004, 698

More information on [www.urmila.de](http://www.urmila.de)