

Love and Sexuality in a Gujarati Village: Men and pre-marital relationships

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Abstract

Studies of marriage and sexuality in India have generally focused on girls or women and although men are central to these relationships, they are often ignored. This thesis concentrates on this gap in the literature and focuses on how masculinities are shaped by the negotiation of love and sexuality, particularly in pre-marital relationships. The few studies of masculinity that do exist have typically focused on urban men, whereas the focus of this thesis is on marginalised men in rural central Gujarat.

For men, life stages and rites of passage are a significant feature governing their lives and aspirations, and so how these are negotiated within the secrecy of pre-marital relationships in contrast, and conflict, with a public normative discourse of marriage is a defining feature of this thesis. This research contributes to a better understanding of the different discourse and practice that men utilise in their approach to pre-marital relationships and how this reflects divergent attitudes towards women and notions of love and sexuality.

The thesis is based on ten months of ethnographic fieldwork alongside the conducting of 38 interviews with men from the Muslim, Christian and Tadpada communities. The analysis highlights the significance of male peer solidarity that exists during a liminal period of relative freedom for young men during the transition between adolescence and the responsibilities of marriage and manhood. Pre-marital relationships are framed as transgressive within a public normative discourse; in actuality multiple performances of sexuality are presented by young men dependent on context and audience. The consequences of discovery for transgressive relationships are typically discussed in terms of their effects on female transgressors, yet this research aims to explore the consequences that such a discovery has upon young men, particularly in relation to the distinctive, yet inter-related, notions of credit and honour.

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1 Masculinity, love and sexuality in India

1.1 Background

Whilst in recent years the study of gender relations in India has flourished, there has been a shortfall of research on men and masculinities. This thesis attempts to redress a lack of empirical studies on male sexualities, providing as it does an insight into narratives through which young Gujarati men make sense of love and sex in the context of pre-marital relations. Focusing on young men belonging to three different low-status communities in a village in rural Gujarat, this research explores two local categorizations of pre-marital relations- 'time pass' and 'true love'- to discuss different forms of masculine gendering. Pre-marital relations are a means to perform styles of masculinity to oneself and to others on multiple stages. While among themselves young men develop and practice cross-sex relations, which run against the grain of local norms of kinship and morality, in front of the 'samaj' (which refers to a caste based community situated in a specific location of the village) they uphold mainstream or 'traditional' arrangements concerning sex and marriage. This is emphasised by the continual prevalence of arranged marriages within norms of samaj exogamy and hypergamy, as well as caste endogamy. The notion of a shared male experience is a significant element that features throughout this thesis whether it is through the re-affirmation of hetero-normative boundaries; the learning and experimentation in young, male sexuality; the careful guarding of taboo practices; or the boasting, teasing and competition over sexual encounters. This male solidarity is a characteristic of a liminal period of young men's lives during which they experience relative freedom prior to entering into marriage and the added responsibilities of family life.

This thesis is situated within the broader literature on masculinity informed by the work of authors such as Connell (2005) but it also draws on some of the burgeoning literature on south Asian masculinities, especially the ethnographic research of Osella and Osella (2006). While this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of masculinities situated in rural, northern India it does

so through considering a broader conceptual framework that includes the work of Foucault (1984) on discourses of sexuality, Abu-Lughod (1986) on notions of honour, Goffman (1959) on gender performance and Appadurai (1996) on modernity. These are significant concepts that are used to explore notions of masculinity, sexuality and love within the localized context. Debates on a globalising ideology of love and marriage (Giddens 1992; Hatfield & Rapson 1996) have recently drawn a significant degree of anthropological attention, but this thesis has aimed to situate the empirical narratives within the south Asian ethnographic field (Abraham 2002; Ahearn 2004; Trawick 1992; Twamley 2014).

Further, within the research on masculinity, there is often a focus on livelihoods and the material means of production, and although this is certainly an important feature of men's lives, alongside that of family and kinship relations, there is also a need to address questions of sexuality and love that inform men's daily lives and provide insight into broader understandings of gender relations. There has often been a scholarly focus on female sexuality and marriage, which has significant implications for childbirth, health and gender inequality across India. However, men are also central to these relationships, but are often invisible within such studies.

In light of the events that have occurred in India over recent years, in particular the gang rape of a female student in Delhi in December 2012 (in the midst of my fieldwork), which received considerable global attention, the importance of, and need for, researching notions of masculinity, sexuality and love within the Indian context are further heightened. In 2013, there were over 100,000 reported incidents of sexual violence against women throughout India¹ and these figures appear to be increasing annually. Although this research does not

¹ According to the Indian National Criminal Records Bureau (2013), which reported 33,707 incidents of rape (an increase of 35.2% since 2012) and 70,739 'assaults on women with intent to outrage her modesty' (an increase of 56% since 2012). Whilst a proportion of the annual increases may be a result of an increase in the reporting of crimes, these figures still present a significant rise and overall number of incidents of sexual violence against women.

directly focus on the themes surrounding sexual violence, a discussion of the different discourses and practices of masculinity and sexuality, and how these are embedded within cultural and normative practices, may inform this wider debate. The narratives of violence towards, and objectification of, women that are portrayed by some men within this thesis are indicative of the problematic and embedded nature of patriarchal views and practices in Indian society.

These may be further exacerbated by a sense of 'thwarted masculinity' experienced by certain men as a result of their economic, social and cultural status and position both within their community and, perhaps, more broadly in terms of their rural context outside of the economically developing urban areas.

Narratives of love and sexuality are a pervasive part of cultures. Epic tales of love and tragedy thread through the myths and religions of cultures that stretch across the world; the dangers of sexuality (typically women's sexuality) are often embedded in origin myths recounting the first transgressions of a people in need of stronger rules and codes. Love stories are the most enduring of cultural narratives; they range from trashy erotica to majestic classics, and all that lies between. In the modern age of mass media and the innovations of communication and technology, love retains a significant focus in newspapers and magazines, TV programmes and films, and within the broad realm of the Internet. Furthermore, love is a significant ingredient of people's lives from the defining moments to the everyday mundaneness of gossip, shared discourses and knowledge of love, which are produced and re-produced within societies defining ideologies and pervading cultural spheres from gender relations to class, religion to the family.

Love may well be a universal and physiological emotion (Jankowiak and Fischer 1992), yet the meanings, perspectives and practices attributed to love are culturally embedded. While there may be some familiar traits of love across cultures, there are also likely to be broadly divergent and culturally contextual elements both within and between societies. This thesis by no means intends to illustrate such a cross-cultural contrast or to articulate, as others have attempted, whether there is a homogenising global ideology of love (see

Giddens 1992; Hatfield and Rapson 1996). Instead, this research is firmly situated within the discussion of the sexual culture and ideology of love that exists in a Gujarati village; the ordinary everyday discourses that exist in such a hinterland and which often stays ignored in academic research in India. Whilst some research has indeed focused explicitly on narratives and understandings of love in various parts of India (Abraham 2002; Trawick 1992; Twamley 2013), such research has typically been situated within the urban and middle classes and there has been, as yet, little exploration of themes and patterns of love and sexuality in the rural areas.

Within the village context, the concepts of masculinity, sexuality and love will be focused specifically on exploring the discourse and practice of men within pre-marital relationships. My use of the term 'pre-marital relationship' is significant both in terms of this research and within the lives of the men with whom I spoke, as marriage forms a definitive and essential rite of passage in the lives of men. However, pre-marital relationships do not consist of a singular category or definition as they typically adopt two divergent paths. These two forms of pre-marital relationship are called time pass and true love, although it should be noted that some men abstain from such relationships all together. This thesis explores the different attitudes and practices that constitute these divergent forms of relationship and how these inform a broader understanding of gender relations within this village context.

Marriage assumes significance as a transition from boyhood to manhood, a fulfilment of social expectation and a strengthening of kinship and caste ties. Parentally arranged marriages are the norm within India and, as such, they form a significant barrier for the continuation of pre-marital relationships. Discovery of pre-marital relationships by other members of the community have significant consequences. Research in India has commonly discussed the impact this has on the female transgressor, but there is also a significant and detrimental effect on men's lives and aspirations. This thesis attempts to address this imbalance in ethnographic research in India.

Empirically, the research is grounded in a single village in the central districts of the western Indian state of Gujarat. Within this village, the research focuses specifically on men from three low status communities, or 'samaj'. The term 'samaj' loosely translates to mean 'community' and is a more appropriate and encompassing term to use than caste, for example. Whilst the term 'community' is too vague (it could be applied to the whole village), 'caste' is too narrow in that, for instance, Muslims are not typically considered to be part of the caste system. Instead, 'samaj' is used by the villagers themselves to distinguish and denote different groups within the village based on their shared identity, which is predominantly based on caste, kinship and religion. The reasons for focusing on the marginalised, rather than the dominant, samaj are twofold. Firstly, prior research on masculinity and love has typically focused on urban middle castes and classes, which have a more privileged position within society and so there is a need to explore how these concepts of masculinity, love and sexuality are negotiated at the lower levels of society and in rural contexts. Interestingly, the focus on lower status samaj has showed that some of the most rigid restrictions in terms of love, sexuality and marriage were found amongst the Tadpada samaj, which is contrary to that of other research conducted in India: for example, in the relative sexual freedom and common practice of love marriages that exists amongst Dalit communities in Tamil Nadu (Rao, 2014). Secondly, my personal and academic interest is motivated by the study of those individuals and groups who are in the marginalised and subordinated positions of society as, for me, such research has the potential for greater significance within broader notions of social inequality and power relations. Therefore, the three samaj that form the main focus of this research are that of the Christian, Muslim and Tadpada and it was through the process of spending extended periods of time with the men from these samaj that this research is able to draw out and explore the themes of sexuality and love at the heart of their narratives.

1.2 Research questions

This research is guided by the following overarching question:

What are the experiences, perspectives and narratives of sexuality and love in pre-marital relationships for men in a Gujarati village?

Four sub-questions were designed to explore the key themes of this main question:

1. How do young men learn about sexuality and love?
2. How do men in a village context perform, negotiate and conceal pre-marital relationships?
3. How do notions of honour and reputation influence understandings of love and sexuality and how do these, and other factors, relate to the consequences of discovery for men in pre-marital relationships?
4. In what ways, and to what extent, do men conform to, or subvert, normative discourses of love and marriage?

These questions were approached through adopting an ethnographic methodology, which entailed spending ten months in the field. Throughout this period of fieldwork participant observation, informal conversations, establishing rapport and relationships began to build a sense of context and familiarisation with certain key elements and themes within men's lives that would prove useful in shaping and re-shaping the focus and aims of the research. Through such an iterative approach and the engagement of men within the Christian, Tadpada and Muslim samaj, the research established the themes of love, sexuality and pre-marital relationships that form the main focus of the 38 semi-structured interviews, or life narratives, conducted during the second stage of the fieldwork period. It is, however, important to emphasise that the basis for this research are male narratives of love and sexuality and so care should be taken when basing analytical claims on such evidence.

1.3 Structure of thesis

Following this introductory section, Chapter 2 outlines the methodological approach adopted by this research. The chapter serves to discuss the qualitative nature of the data collection process with the particular focus on the use of ethnographic methods as the foundation from which interviews were able to explore, in more depth, certain significant elements and themes within men's lives. These methods allowed for an iterative approach to fieldwork so that the data led the research aims and focus rather than vice versa. Therefore, the research questions were re-shaped through discussion with the men and this resulted in a re-conceptualisation of the main themes of enquiry, which threads into the data analysis stage. The chapter also describes the process and criteria for the selection of the research location. Finally, the chapter explores the ethics and positionality of the researcher in conducting this fieldwork and the significance of anonymity and confidentiality when exploring potentially harmful subjects, such as those discussed in this thesis.

Chapter 3 aims to provide an overview of the research context and location. Initially, this is rather broadly situated at the national level of India, before providing a more regional focus on the state of Gujarat. A section on the social relations of caste attempts to outline the significance of this within the lives of individuals and groups and while caste is not one of the main empirical themes of this thesis, it is difficult to proceed in this context without providing some contextualisation as to its relevance in social life. The remainder of the chapter provides a description and discussion of the research village, considering the main influences, facilities and services at the local level before focusing specifically on the three samaj that form the focal point of this research: the Tadpada, Muslim and Christian samaj.

Chapter 4 provides an overview and introduction of the key conceptual framework that threads throughout the empirical chapters and which is elaborated in greater depth through the analysis of male narratives in relation to sexuality, love and pre-marital relationships. The chapter begins with a

discussion of masculinities in the context of India, drawing on the significance of life stages for men and the notion of a liminal period before marriage. Closely, inter-related to gender relations and masculinity, are the concepts of sexuality and love, which are discussed next. Whilst these concepts can, and in fact often do, have whole books devoted to their definition, this thesis is particularly interested in how these concepts operate in the context of men's lives within a Gujarati village and thus this chapter serves as an introduction for how sexuality and love will be utilised within the analytical chapters. The chapter does, however, attempt to understand the concept of love in more detail with regard to several key themes in the Indian context, namely that of honour, modernity and marriage.

Preceding each of the empirical chapters, are a set of character profiles that intend to provide a greater insight into the identities, backgrounds and personalities of the key informants whose narratives are discussed within the following chapter.

Chapter 5 is the first of the three analytical chapters and can be broadly divided into two parts. The first considers how boys and male youth learn and develop a sexuality that conforms, on the whole, to societal expectations of gender roles reinforced through the family and peers, and influenced by both traditional and modern discourses. While at times these may conflict or appear contradictory, these discourses serve to support the notion of multiple performances of sexuality, and masculinity, for men within the village, often dependent on the audience and spatial context. An interesting sub-theme within this part of the chapter is the notion of homosexuality and the role this, at times, plays in young men's development of sexuality. The second part of the chapter begins by taking a closer look at the initiation of pre-marital relationships and the almost ritualistic tendencies of such a routine that draw on a shared cultural knowledge and understanding. The remainder of the chapter focuses on the nature and performance of the two forms of pre-marital relationships, that of true love and time pass, as described by young men.

Chapter 6 expands on certain themes and distinctions drawn from the previous chapter to consider the strategies employed by men in conducting these secretive pre-marital relationships. Notions of space and time become increasingly significant as men strive to conceal these taboo relationships and so an emphasis is placed on whether an individual is successful at maintaining secrecy or not. Significantly, the chapter focuses on the notion of secrecy as a relative concept, so it becomes a matter of secrecy from whom? When discovery of a pre-marital relationship occurs within the wider community a range of consequences for the men are likely to ensue, dependent upon the samaj of the transgressor and the degree of transgression. An essential contribution of this research is to focus attention on the consequences that men experience as a result of such transgressions and how this may impact on their futures and that of their family. Particular attention is paid in this chapter to the Indian notions of honour and credit, and how this relates to the consequences for discovery of pre-marital relationships.

Chapter 7 is the final analytical chapter and focuses on how the process of marriage, one that is an essential rite of passage for men, impacts upon the discourse and practice of pre-marital relationships. The chapter explores how, despite a couple's discussion of the possibilities of elopement, they typically conform to societal expectations and norms, which results in the end of their relationship of true love so as to comply with the parentally arranged marital process. The chapter proceeds to consider the pain, tension and helplessness this may cause some men, whilst acknowledging that many also accept arranged marriage as the most appropriate form of marriage. However, this traditional form of marriage is not entirely beyond societal pressures and change, as the remainder of the chapter discusses, and in some cases certain men are even able to subvert this social norm in favour of a love marriage, which extends a certain form of pre-marital relationship into the socially sanctioned institution of marriage.

Chapter 8 provides the overall conclusion and discussion for this thesis, whilst drawing attention to potential avenues for future research along similar themes and lines of enquiry.

2 Methodology

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline my methodological approach, the theoretical and practical considerations that led to its development, which are an essential aspect in the conducting of academic research. After a discussion of the theoretical backdrop for using a qualitative, and more specifically ethnographic, methodology, this chapter proceeds to consider the practical elements of conducting research, beginning with the process of establishing a suitable research location. Data methods, sampling techniques, their strengths and limitations, are discussed with a particular emphasis on the iterative nature of fieldwork and how such an approach can often lead- as is the case with this research- to the transformation of research questions. The final two sections address and reflect upon the ethical considerations and implications of the research and how the data was collated, coded and analysed in preparation for, and alongside, the writing stage.

2.2 Research design and methodology

Qualitative research 'is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced or produced' (Mason, 1996, p. 4) and, as such, this provides the basis for a suitable methodological approach to my research, which has aimed to explore significant practices and discourses of men's lives and the meanings and perspectives through which they perceive such phenomena. Qualitative methods are generally understood to be interpretive by nature, a means through which to search for meaning (Geertz, 1973) in the social world that the researcher is immersed. Interpretivism is typically seen as an alternative to a positivist approach to knowledge (Bryman, 2004) and is one that is strongly based within a social constructionist epistemology. It provides a means through which to attempt to understand human behaviour and through that social action, often within a specific social and cultural sphere. For Bryman, interpretivism in practice is threefold in that it requires the researcher to

provide 'an interpretation of others' interpretations' (2004, p. 15) and then to further interpret this in regard to the concepts and theory of a particular academic discipline.

As the production of knowledge can be understood as the outcome of social interactions and processes, ethnography provides a particularly useful methodological approach in the generation of such knowledge. An ethnographic methodology is indicative of an anthropological approach to knowledge that 'is always something produced in human interaction, a two-way process of constructing a particular vision of a certain set of cultural experiences and practices' (Lamb, 2000, p. 244). It is through these interactions and encounters that an ethnography is able to begin to understand and interpret certain social phenomena and their relevance to people's lives. Therefore, '[i]n an anthropological situation, the ethnographer, willing or not, must form part of the context of performance, part of the audience, and sometimes, part of the act' (Trawick, 1992, pp. 24–5). In this sense, there is a need for the ethnographer to develop a reflective process to understand how his or her position within the field may influence the collection of data and the relationships developed with participants (section 2.5).

In conducting an ethnographic study, it is important to be aware that the researcher is not necessarily, or wholly, in control of the research project or the forms of knowledge generated (Trawick, 1992). Often, as Trawick notes, it is not the surface or the 'mask' that interests the ethnographer but what lies beneath, 'the deep wellspring' (1992, p. 89), which allows the observer to explore what is really going on. However, instead of viewing this process as one of surface and depth, one that naturally leads the researcher to constantly question and be intrigued by all that we hear and see, we should consider this as a 'turbulence of confrontation, with ourselves as part of it,' (ibid, p.90) and which forms an understanding of culture as interaction. Culture, therefore, becomes a central tenet of anthropological studies and is often referred to in terms of what is regarded as its normative aspects, i.e. 'the behaviors which are counted normal, correct, desirable, in its particular cultural tradition' (Keesing, 1958, p. 40). It

then becomes possible to consider and explore how individuals and groups conform or deviate from such norms and the implications this may have within the cultural context. Although, of course, such contexts are often complicated offering 'a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures' (Geertz, 1973, p. 10), which the researcher must attempt to untangle. Fieldwork, however, is not an entirely isolated process but builds on and generates new avenues of enquiry through theory and previous studies, so that it becomes an iterative process, which seeks to delve deeper into the understanding of social phenomena (Geertz, 1973; Willis & Trondman, 2000).

In conducting such a methodological approach the ethnographer must be particularly careful, however unwittingly, not to fall in to the trap of ethnocentrism. Naturally, '[a]ny act of "writing culture" is therefore necessarily partial, fragmentary, and biased' (Lamb, 2000, pp. 244–5), yet there should be an attempt to minimise the generalisations and stereotypes that may appear when framing the complexities being explored. In the context of conducting research in India, this may be through the articulation of gender relations or the caste system; the framing of institutions of marriage and kinship; the portrayal of normative discourses of love and sexuality; or the juxtaposition of tradition and modernity with the former as representative of backward gazing into the past and the latter as indicative of progress. For Connell, emphasis should be placed on 'the presence of the ethnographers and the charged social relations they bear: the colonist's gaze on the colonized, the power relations defining who is the knower and who the known' (2005, p. 34).

There have been a number of criticisms laid at the feet of the qualitative methodological approach, notably its subjectivity, difficulty to replicate, problems of generalization, and lack of transparency. However, reliability and replicability (at least in the positivist sense) are not applicable to qualitative research as researchers are not seeking, nor are they able to, reproduce similar responses or data sets (Wolcott, 1995). There does not exist a truly objective form of research or methodology and so it then becomes a matter of being aware of bias and transparency in order to articulate a sense of position and

perspective and how this may influence or impact upon participant's responses. Of course, this should not lead the researcher down the slippery path of the 'hermeneutical circle' (Denzin, 1989, p. 141), where there is no end to the interpretive process and reflexivity. Instead, whilst this research acknowledges the issues involved in adopting such a methodology, it is the most appropriate and suitable approach for seeking to understand, and answer, the research questions.

2.3 Research location

The decision to conduct my research in India, and more specifically in Gujarat, stemmed from an informal development course led by Indian activists that I attended for one month in the summer of 2010 (a year before I started my PhD). At this point I was considering the possibility of applying to do a PhD and so this course, and the themes and social issues it explored, served to inspire my decision and momentum towards such an application. It was during this course that I learned, in greater depth, about the communal conflict and tensions between the Hindu and Muslim communities and in particular, the genocide that occurred across large parts of Gujarat in 2002. This piqued an underlying interest in notions of identity, constructions of the 'self' and 'other', and manifestations of power and inequalities that lie at the heart of such representations. My PhD proposal, therefore, was based on these themes with Gujarat as the spatial focal point. This remained the main subject of my research, reading and methodological consideration throughout the first year of my study.

Towards the end of the first year of my PhD, I embarked upon a scoping visit to Gujarat in order to discuss my research with academics and NGO workers in Ahmedabad, as well as establishing a research affiliation to the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai, which amongst other benefits would facilitate my research visa application. As well as providing invaluable insight into the social, cultural, political and economic context within which my research was embedded, it also provided a means for gathering information about possible

locations for research, at least in a broader sense. As a result of this trip, I was able to develop criteria for village selection and narrow down the geographical location in which the village would be located. The broad criteria for determining an appropriate village for my fieldwork included a medium sized population of around 3-5000 in order to produce a demographic that consisted of several different castes and included a sizable Muslim as well as a Hindu population, and which would also contain notable institutions, such as the village panchayat. In terms of location, I did not wish to choose a village that was too remote, peripheral or culturally isolated (such as the district of Kutch in western Gujarat) from this notion of Gujarat as both an economically progressive state, but also one replete with communal tensions and inequalities. As a result, I chose the central districts of Anand and Kheda as potential locations for my fieldwork site. These economically developing, agricultural districts are well served by infrastructure and connected to nearby cities, and are also areas that experienced considerable communal tension in 2002; all attributes relevant to the focus of my research at that time.

These criteria provided a sufficient starting point for my final selection of location when I returned to Gujarat a few months later to begin the main period of my fieldwork. The first week of my fieldwork was spent at the Institute of Rural Management in Anand so as to discuss my research with academics that were familiar with the surrounding area and villages. Inevitably, this period can be a frustrating one as meetings often result in dead ends, but through a friend of an administrative member of staff at the university, who worked for an NGO that provided services within villages, I was able to begin to visit potential locations. While the first few villages were not suitable for a variety of reasons (size, demographics) my contact called a friend of his who lived in a village just over the border into the Kheda district and arranged a meeting. With a population of a little over 4000 spread throughout a hierarchy of castes and religious communities, including Hindu, Muslim and Christian, and containing different classes from wealthy landowners to landless labourers, this village appeared suitable for my fieldwork. A more in depth description of the village and its inhabitants is provided in section 3.3.

Before I could begin my research, I had to attain official permission and access to the village. In achieving this, the initial contact I made in the village (for anonymity, I shall call him Bhavesh) was invaluable and agreed to act as my interpreter and research assistant, although he soon also became a close friend and confidante. Permission to conduct research in the village had to be sought through the village panchayat and required the signature of the sarpanch, which proved a smooth and simple process. It was through Bhavesh that after one month (during which time I was commuting to the village by rickshaw on an almost daily basis), I was able to find a house to rent in the Christian community from a family who now lived in Ahmedabad. This greatly facilitated and accelerated my immersion and familiarisation within the village and in accessing potential research participants.

2.4 Data collection methods

The main fieldwork period was nine months and consisted of two main stages of data collection. The first stage of ten weeks was focused on developing relationships within the village; familiarisation with the social, cultural, economic and political context for the research; understanding people's daily lives and routines, their interactions and personalities; and involved a general immersion and exploration of the village as a physical and social space. Throughout this stage, data collection was predominantly achieved through ethnographic observation and 'participation' in village life through the process of living within the community. While this ethnographic data collection would continue throughout the full period of time I spent in the village, the final five months also involved conducting a series of semi-structured interviews with men from the different samaj. These two methods will be discussed in turn within the proceeding sections.

When conducting fieldwork, one of the major difficulties is to determine 'how much data is enough?' While one can stay in the field for years and perhaps still not have a 'complete' sense of understanding of the themes of research they are

undertaking, there is a balance to be made between constraints of time and money on the one hand, and having sufficient data within which to sink one's analytical teeth on the other. For Wolcott, there is an emphasis on the importance of having an intimate knowledge of the field area and subjects in order to 'be satisfied that even our conjecturing is well informed' (1995, p. 83). Of course, one can never fully comprehend human behaviour and thoughts, yet it is 'not necessary to know everything in order to understand something' (Geertz, 1973, p. 20). This process of data collection becomes further complicated when the research focus and questions shift considerably during the fieldwork stage, as was the case in my research.

2.4.1 Ethnographic methods

The first phase of my main fieldwork was almost wholly reliant on a 'participant observation' approach to data collection. Ethnographies are understood as being primarily based upon participant observation, which 'involves immersing yourself in a culture and learning to remove yourself every day from that immersion so you can intellectualize what you've seen and heard, put it into perspective, and write about it convincingly' (Bernard, 2011, p. 258). As well as contributing considerably to the data collection process and providing a closer understanding of the field, participant observation enables the researcher to establish and build relationships with potential research subjects. This also reduces the impact of one of the main criticisms levelled at this method, which is the problem of reactivity, i.e. that people will change their behaviour when they know they are being researched (Bernard, 2011). This is actually part of a broader issue, which is the effects of an audience on what people say and do and therefore '[a]ll accounts must be interpreted in terms of the context in which they were produced' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 102). As much as a qualitative methodology is accused of bias, so is the process of conducting ethnographies, although the same argument is retained here: namely, that there is no research that is without bias. Instead, one must attempt to understand the context for such interactions during fieldwork and to use further data collection methods (such as interviews), as well as speaking to larger numbers of people

in front of different audiences (or no audience apart from the bare minimum) in order to enable the researcher to develop and check their inferences and analysis (ibid).

Geertz (1973) refers to the notion of a 'thick description' in defining ethnography, which he illustrates through his distinction between a twitch and a wink, and the different layers of meaning and situated knowledge that support it. For Hammersley and Atkinson this involves 'a significant development of the ordinary modes of making sense of the social world that we all use in our mundane lives, in a manner that is attuned to the specific purposes of producing research knowledge' (2007, p. 4). Therefore, there is a sense of striving to understand and interpret people's lives within the fieldwork and research context, and so it is essential for the researcher to spend a significant and prolonged period of time immersed among the research subjects in order to establish and maintain a rapport that will enable individuals to speak relatively openly and candidly about the themes being researched.

The building of rapport with men within the village is, therefore, an essential part of this methodological approach, both in terms of establishing relationships in order to conduct meaningful interviews with participants and as a means of collecting data and developing contextual knowledge. This process was easily facilitated within the Christian samaj where I lived, as many young men would visit my house out of curiosity and I was quickly able to establish the places in the community where young men would meet and talk in the evenings. An invitation to a Christian wedding shortly after I arrived in the village enabled me to have contact with most of the young men within the samaj and eating and dancing with them aided in developing a good, light-hearted relationship. In the evenings I would often walk with my interpreter through the village stopping to talk to a number of men (both young and old) who I soon became familiar with, spending time around certain shops and stalls where men would come after work in order to relax with their friends. It was through these unstructured and informal conversations and observations that I was able to develop an

understanding of the village context (and beyond) and particularly that of men's lives in relation to social, cultural and economic influences.

Access to research subjects is a constant consideration and pressure during the fieldwork period, not only in the ethnographic stage, but also in the conducting of interviews. Gatekeepers tend to hold a key role in facilitating such access and often it is through a process or a series of individuals that access is acquired. To provide an example from my fieldwork, in order to access the (typically and relatively self-isolated) Muslim samaj there was a series of contacts utilised. It began with my Christian interpreter who through the process of my research re-connected with an old school friend in the Tadpada samaj, who, when he was young had farmed fields adjacent to the Muslim samaj, which- alongside his friendly and open character- had led to him befriending a Muslim family that provided the connection for him to facilitate the introductions for my research. Of course, there is always the risk and possibility that the gatekeepers will desire to show their community in a positive light and thus may seek to control access or block off certain lines of enquiry (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). While these gatekeepers, who were typically older men, did indeed direct me towards certain individuals, usually their sons or other relatives, once I began to speak to the younger generation I was able to access all members of the group, regardless of their reputation and although at times I was warned by the elders that a certain person was 'not good', I was never restricted in terms of access. Recording extensive, descriptive and organised field notes is also essential in ensuring that observations and insights are not missed or forgotten through the passage of time and the dulling of memory (Bryman, 2004; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Jeffrey, 2010). Therefore, when I was not conducting research or performing household tasks, I would spend the time writing my field notes from the previous days.

Another important aspect of ethnography is the sampling method adopted in order to choose with whom to speak and, conversely, whom to exclude. My methodological approach adopted a theoretical or purposive sampling technique (Mason, 1996). I identified three samaj that I wished to access, based

on a desire to focus on members from low social status communities and to provide an interesting insight, and potential contrast, in the context of a supposedly 'developing' Gujarat. I also chose three communities that were potentially highly divergent in terms of identity and practice, in that they were from the three main religions established in the region, namely Hindu, Muslim and Christian.

A further, and significant, point for the sampling criteria is that my research focused wholly on men. Again, this reflects a research interest in the study of masculinities, but also is related to issues of access in terms of being unable to speak openly to women within a community that does not typically allow cross-gender interaction outside of the family or samaj. As Shah notes in his village research in central Gujarat, 'being men, [we] could not get to know women to the same extent as we knew men. We had of course no problem in meeting old women and young girls. As regards other women, I had distinct difficulties on account of being unmarried' (1979, p.35). On a slight side note, this did not prevent me from having some conversations with girls and women across the samaj, yet it was clear that I would have struggled to produce any in-depth data or been able to conduct detailed interviews in such a fieldwork context. Within the samaj, men were selected typically based on their age as I was interested in speaking to, and subsequently interviewing, young men who were in the process of conducting pre-marital relationships or were about to be, or had recently been, married. However, I also spoke to men in their late twenties and thirties (and a couple in their forties) to provide a broader insight and the possibility of a different perspective as to the impact the themes of love, sexuality and masculinity have on individual's lives.

The final point I wish to highlight with regard to conducting an ethnographic study is the iterative nature of data collection, so that 'ideas are used to make sense of data, and data are used to change our ideas' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 159). There is a sense, therefore, that while conducting ethnographic methods the researcher should be constantly reviewing their research position and themes in light of new material and insight drawn directly from interaction

with the research subjects and through which recurring patterns or underlying themes may be determined (Wolcott, 1995). As such an approach is typically an exploratory and open-ended one, 'the initial interests and questions that motivated the research will be refined, and perhaps even transformed, over the course of the research' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 3). This became the case in my research as the focus and weight that men placed and emphasised on the themes and narratives of pre-marital relationships, and the attendant social and cultural issues that arose as a result, meant that I shifted the focus of my research away from communal identities and structural inequalities and towards these participant-led themes. Therefore, the ethnographic stage of my fieldwork was invaluable, not only in establishing contacts and the context for my research, but also in re-shaping and transforming the research questions towards the dominant preoccupations of the young men I had best access to, and how these would subsequently be explored through interviews.

2.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

The next stage of data collection, which would span the final five months of fieldwork, was the conducting of interviews. Whilst some refer to informal conversations and establishing relationships as forms of interview within ethnographic research (Bernard, 2011; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), I am referring to interviews in the more traditional sense. Therefore, the informal conversations and the building of rapport with a number of men from across the different samaj provided a solid basis for the initiation of the interview stage. Through establishing key contacts, or key groups of contacts, across the different samaj I was able to both approach these men directly with the request for an interview and also access further male participants through these initial contacts.

One of the main logistical challenges in conducting interviews was finding an appropriately private space within which to speak to the interviewee about what were potentially very sensitive subjects. I was able to interview men from the Christian samaj within my home and so, with the shutters closed and voices

kept relatively low, this afforded some degree of privacy from neighbours and there were few interruptions. However, when interviewing men from the Muslim and Tadpada samaj, my house was no longer a suitable location. Firstly, men would often be reluctant to enter another samaj, particularly in the evenings when most of my interviews were conducted (after men had finished work), and secondly, it was also a fairly long distance to travel, especially from the Muslim samaj. It was not appropriate to interview most men in their homes as other family members would be present and this would seriously inhibit the topics men could openly speak about. Therefore, and with only a few exceptions, the majority of men from the Tadpada and Muslim samaj were interviewed in the fields around the edge of their community (which also enabled me to interview some men on their own fields so that they could simultaneously keep a watch over their crops). For the most part, this worked well, although at times there was frustration as my presence, if spotted, tended to draw other villagers eager to see me and thus inhibiting the subject matter that could be covered whilst they remained.

In all, I conducted 38 interviews with men aged from 18 to 44 (the majority being aged between 18-29) from across the Christian, Tadpada and Muslim samaj. The majority of men I approached with an interview request were happy, at times even eager, to assist in the research process, although as would be expected there were a minority who did not wish to participate for reasons of shyness, time constraints, suspicions about myself as a foreigner or for other, undisclosed, reasons. The structure (or semi-structure) of the interviews (which lasted anywhere from 1 to 6 hours with an average of around 2.5 hours) was based on the life narratives of the interviewee, beginning with memories of their childhood and school days, moving on to discuss work and employment, marriage, their family and community, thoughts on religion and identity. However, whilst I allowed men to speak openly and freely on the subjects they wished to discuss, it was soon apparent that one of the main topics that almost all men wished to discuss with me was that of pre-marital relationships and love. This built upon the themes that had already emerged throughout the early months of my stay in the village and so naturally, as my research progressed

and transformed, I increasingly focused on this aspect of the life narrative in order to build a deeper and broader picture of what these themes meant for men's lives. The success of such interviews depended, to a great degree, on the rapport established between the parties, including my interpreter who was present for all but a couple of interviews (which I was able to conduct in English), and the ability of the interviewer to allow and encourage, and at times divert, the flow of the narrative through effective probes and prompts (Bernard, 2011). At certain times, interviews were conducted in the presence of friends of the interviewee, who had expressly agreed to their presence and for whom it did not appear to have a negative influence on their ability to narrate about their lives; after all, these peers had already heard these narratives before and in fact were often a source of encouragement or prompting if they felt that their friend had forgotten to mention a certain aspect of their stories.

Of course, there are criticisms levelled against the interview as a method, particularly that '[p]eople are inaccurate reporters of their own behavior' (Bernard, 2011, p. 184). Thus, interviewees have a stake in how they present themselves and their narratives to the audience (in the case of my fieldwork, that included the interpreter and myself) and so interviews are naturally reflective of social encounters. In this context, it could be argued that interviewees may seek to impress a foreign researcher with an emphasis on particular aspects of their lives or through embellishing their narratives. It is therefore important to distinguish between the narrative accounts provided by the participants and actual events. Narratives should not be taken at face value, but should reflect an acknowledgement that they are the re-telling of events and experiences by the participant. As such, they are liable to misrepresentations, exaggerations and embellishments and this is perhaps particularly true when discussing narratives of sex and love. That is not to say that these narratives do not provide insightful and useful empirical evidence as to the attitudes and practices of young men- only that one must take care when making analytical claims based on narrative evidence.

2.5 Ethics, positionality and social relations

Throughout the period of fieldwork I was acutely aware of the issues of ethics and positionality within the village and with the participants of my research. Throughout the fieldwork period there was a need for strategic planning and reflexivity on the part of the researcher. As Wolcott states, '[m]aybe we are better off to recognize and confront the fact that, however well intended, our work cannot, and need not, transcend being a human endeavour, with attendant costs as well as benefits' (1995, p. 149). Research is not conducted 'in some autonomous realm that is insulated from the wider society and from the biography of the researcher' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 15) and as such researchers should be aware of the impact they, and their research, may have in the field. Before I was able to begin fieldwork I underwent the process of, and received, ethical approval from the University of East Anglia.

One of the main, and oft-cited, issues to consider in fieldwork is that of one's positionality within the field setting (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Scheyvens & Storey, 2003). The obvious identity markers of being white, Western and male produce immediate impressions within the village where I lived and conducted my research. Typically, I was perceived to be wealthy and also of Christian religion, a marker that was no doubt further embedded by taking up residence in the Christian samaj. My interpreter initially attempted to find a house for me within the Patel samaj, where he thought I would feel more comfortable due to the higher standards of living they enjoy. However, living in the low caste Christian samaj was preferable for my research focus on lower social groups, access to which would have been more problematic if I had been living in, and therefore associated with, a higher caste.

Above and beyond the clear physical markers of my identity, there was also the need to explain my presence in the village. In response to this, and upon meeting people for the first time, I was candid and open about my role as a researcher and whilst I did not elaborate in great detail about the focus of the research (predominantly because in the early stages this was still very much

open to development and change) I also did not conceal my intention to learn about the lives of men within the village context. I would endeavour to answer any (and there were often many) questions about the UK and myself as honestly as I could and this reciprocity in terms of social interactions helped to establish solid relationships with a number of individuals, which would serve my research well in the latter stages. This is a similar sentiment to Shah who described, during his research in a village in central Gujarat, that while '[i]t was not always possible for us to give material benefits in return for what we received from our village friends, but we felt satisfied when we could give what we thought was truthful information and knowledge about the world' (1979, pp. 36–37). One common question, usually asked within the first thirty seconds of conversation was about my marital status, which upon my reply that I was single (at the age of 28 no less), typically elicited an emotive response, and which in a small way began to direct my thoughts and research questions down a certain route towards understanding the significance marriage plays in individual's lives.

While concerns are often raised in academic discussion about the nature of power relations between the researcher and the researched, particularly as a result of ascribed identities, power is not so one-dimensional as to be always held by the western academic. As Henry states, power is dependent 'upon the many positionalities that either actor inhabits, power shifts both temporally and spatially throughout the research process' (2007, p. 71). In this sense, power may be perceived to be held by those who control access to a community, or it may be related to an individual's identity, position or status within the village (i.e. a member of a higher caste or the panchayat), or it may be related to cultural markers of respect and power, such as age and gender. Ultimately, power in this sense is relative to the individual's approach to fieldwork, so that if one does not assume to wield any control over others but instead seeks to engage with people on an equal footing and to encourage a two-way interaction, then notions of power are reduced and meaningful relationships can be established for both parties.

Following an understanding of positionality and social relations throughout fieldwork, there is the need to develop a strategy for the application of ethical practices of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality. In conducting ethnography and living within the field site for a prolonged period of time, it is not usually possible to gain informed consent from all individuals that one comes across on a daily basis, albeit not all interactions will be useful in terms of the themes to be analysed and written about later. However, as a researcher, there is a responsibility to inform people of who you are and your intentions and certainly, when conducting interviews, verbal consent was gained from all participants at the outset. This consent was verbal, rather than written, as I was informed (by my interpreter and other researchers) that people would be wary of signing forms for fear of what implications it may have; a concern related to the bureaucratic context of state institutions. As it turned out, participants were also rather dismissive and surprised at the notion of consent and would typically laugh at the spiel I would produce at the start of each interview, saying 'no problem, no problem'. There was also no issue for any interviewee with the interview being recorded. Whilst some researchers advocate that participants should be reimbursed for their time (Bernard, 2011), I felt that such an approach would hinder the research process and alter the motivations of those interviewed to one of monetary gain. Instead, I believe that the ability to exchange information about different cultures and to establish relationships based on this reciprocity, alongside the Gujarati cultural emphasis on the importance of meeting a 'guest's' needs and requirements, were sufficient within this interview process.

When dealing with sensitive subject matter, as is the case in my research where participants are disclosing information that, if discovered, could have serious consequences for their lives, issues of confidentiality and anonymity are significant ones. Alongside ensuring the privacy of the interview, I have also maintained the anonymity of research participants throughout my data collection and recording, initially allocating code numbers to participants before generating pseudonyms during the writing of the thesis. Furthermore, I have also refrained from including the name of the village in this research and have

ensured that descriptions are fairly broad and general in the hope that this further protects the identity of those who participated in the research. Apart from the interviewee and myself, the only other constant person present was my interpreter. When discussing his role as interpreter, research assistant and general facilitator/fixer, I was very clear in the need for maintaining confidentiality of those people we would speak to, which he agreed to and understood. Being a highly educated, intelligent man and having undergone training with the Jesuit Society, he readily understood the role he was to undertake and the conditions that must be applied. With regard to the employment of my interpreter, I maintained a careful record of the number of hours he worked with me and I provided remuneration for his efforts at a very good local rate, in agreement with him. My interpreter's sociable nature, understanding and awareness of others and the situation, as well as his contacts and knowledge of the village context, were invaluable in contributing significantly to the data collection process, not to mention ensuring that my stay in the village was an enjoyable one.

There are, however, certain issues with conducting research predominantly through an interpreter (rather than having a comprehensive grasp of the language). This is particularly so in the translation of certain Gujarati terms into English, especially those that may have complex and/or multiple meanings. For example, the word 'prem' was translated to mean 'love' in a broad sense of the definition to encompass a range of different meanings, including romantic love and more casual relationships based predominantly on sex. This perhaps ignores a more subtle emphasis on a range of words that may articulate these differences in meaning. During the process of translation, some of these original words and meanings may not have come across clearly into English. However, other language was utilised to distinguish between different forms of 'prem'. For instance, the clear distinctions drawn from the terms 'true love' and 'time pass'. The use of these English words in common speech (other examples include 'eve teasing' and 'credit') provides an interesting insight into cultural influences on the discourse of love. However, this research has not sought to pursue a detailed focus on the origin of such words, nor has it delved deeply into the

original Gujarati words for love, which is a shortfall of this research and one that would be remedied in future methodological approaches.

2.6 Data analysis

After the completion of my fieldwork and return to the UEA, I began the task of organising and transcribing, coding and analysing the large amount of data that I had collected. The initial task involved the transcription of the interviews and the uploading of the data into NVivo, which was the primary means through which the data was organised, coded and thematically analysed. During the transcription process, I was simultaneously making notes on broad themes that appeared to be emerging from the data during this early organising stage. Once the data had been collated into the NVivo programme, I began to generate a larger number of more specific codes which allowed the data to be coded into categories (i.e. marriage) and sub-categories (i.e. age of marriage; type of marriage; rituals and process; etc.). This inevitably was an iterative process 'involving repeated returns to earlier phases of the analysis as evidence becomes more organized and ideas are clarified' (Dey, 1993, p. 239). So, the process of coding related the data to the conceptualisations constructed about that data, with the codes producing the links between the two (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). This, then, allowed for the identification and articulation of themes and patterns, divergences and contradictions. Alongside the interview transcripts, my field diary provided further data, not only on male narratives thematically relevant to my research questions, but also in producing a significant amount of contextual information and insight that is essential when writing and describing a particular culture, society, physical space and how individuals interact within this context and between one another.

The process of analysis continued throughout the writing stage, as concepts and themes continue to be articulated, revised or generated through the process of writing and the emergence of a central thread. However, during this stage one must be careful not to lose the sense of narrative flow through the creation of separate coded segments that chop apart the long, often complicated

reminiscences in favour of this thematic analysis (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Instead, a balance must be drawn between the importance of generating and understanding themes and patterns within the data, whilst at the same time maintaining the integrity and context in which individuals have narrated about their lives.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach adopted in order to fulfil the aims of the research. An ethnographic approach was the most appropriate and effective means through which to explore and understand important themes in the daily lives of men within the context of a Gujarati village. Such a methodology allowed for a relatively open-ended approach that, whilst having certain themes and criteria to explore, allowed the research questions to be driven by the participants. Thus, in the case of this research, the questions were transformed through the significant, and repeated, emphasis placed on pre-marital relationships and the impact and role these played in individual's lives. If the methodological approach was too prescriptive then there was a danger that the research would reflect the researcher's own perspectives and interests with all of the attributive bias and ethnocentric assumptions this would entail. At all stages of the research process, it was important to adopt an iterative approach whether that was between concepts and theory, concepts and data, or theory and data in order to effectively reflect on the shifting nature of research and the emergent themes and threads that are articulated in the final thesis.

This chapter has highlighted the process, criteria and contacts that enabled the successful selection of a research location, an important element of the fieldwork stage. Within the early stages of fieldwork, the emphasis was placed on establishing relationships with potential participants, building rapport, beginning to familiarise and understand the research site, and participating in the daily life and events of the village. At the same time, logistics of access, research permission and finding a place to live were comfortably negotiated. The second half of the fieldwork consisted of a continuation of participant

observation, but was predominantly focused on the conducting of life narratives of men across the three samaj. Ethics and the researcher's identity and social relations within the fieldwork context were important considerations prior to, and throughout, the fieldwork stage and this has been discussed in length within this chapter. Finally, once the fieldwork was completed the lengthy process of organising, transcribing and coding the data ensued in order to allow for analysis, which drew out the themes and patterns, consistencies and divergences, and that formed the focus of the analytical chapters of this thesis.

3 India, Gujarat and the village: situating the research context

3.1 Introduction

India is often seen as a country that is undergoing significant and rapid change, yet it is also one that is full of contradictions. Whilst India competes in the geopolitical nuclear weapons and space programmes, many of its population number among the poorest in the world; global influences of fashion and media contrast to a strengthening of traditional values and processes of Sanskritization; migrants flood in and out of the country and its cities swell with people from across the region and the globe, yet nationalist right wing politics and communal tensions have continued to play a strong role. The strong notion of the Indian joint family has, in certain areas, become threatened by the processes of urbanisation and modernisation characterised within the expanding middle classes, some of whom are now organising their lives through a nuclear family (Dwyer, 2000). Within this broad brushstroke of national context, gender relations provide an interesting feature of social relations.

Increasing numbers of girls are attaining higher levels of education, attending university and obtaining employment in a wide range of sectors, even after marriage. However, India is still a strongly patriarchal society in which the majority of women are expected to obey their fathers, brothers and husbands and women's responsibilities are primarily to the family and the household. For many families that experience economic constraints, it is the son's education that remains a priority reinforced through the institution of marriage in which the girl will inevitably leave the family home to occupy that of her husband. I remember one conversation I had with a young woman who was a fellow PhD student, studying gender relations at TISS in Mumbai. She told me that it was only in recent years, since she had left her family home to continue her education (and facilitated through the gender focus of her studies) that she had come to realise how dominant her father was within the household; how he had controlled both her mother and herself, imposing his will on all aspects of their

lives. She told me that upon her next return home, she was now able to understand and confront this situation and speak openly to her father for the first time. For many women, however, this ability to confront dominant norms of male power still remains improbable. Furthermore, as the high profile case of the gang rape of a female student in Delhi in 2012 highlighted, violence against women remains a strong and persistent feature across much of Indian society.

Men, of course, form the other half of these gender relations. Boys and men often hold a more privileged position within society than the majority of women, yet there are also different expectations, pressures and responsibilities that they must negotiate. While some men are able to benefit from the increased economic opportunities brought about since the neo-liberalisation of India's economy in the early 1990s, many men still exist on a subsistent and unreliable livelihood. Pressures to provide for a family are exacerbated by an increasing emphasis on material consumption linked to status, so that those that can afford the latest mobile phone or fashion or motorbike are often held in higher esteem among their peers as being a more 'successful' man. Not all men occupy a privileged position within society, and indeed may often be subordinate to others or themselves the victim of discrimination and violence (such as the young male friend of the female victim in Delhi). Furthermore, to attempt to understand the perpetrators of violence against women, one must also attempt to understand the social conditions and pressures under which such men exist in contemporary India. These broad themes of masculinity and gender relations provide the backdrop from which this research attempts to understand how men negotiate their lives with a particular focus on sexuality and love.

While this introduction is necessarily broad and general, the following sections attempt to situate the research in a more specific context. After a section briefly discussing the state of Gujarat, the chapter spends a greater length exploring the village context: its space, infrastructure and facilities, before describing the three samaj within the village that form the focus of this research. The next section attempts to outline my understanding of social relations within this research, with a particular focus on caste. While the main aim of this thesis is

not specifically focused on notions of caste, it forms such an important marker of identity within Indian society, and has a significant influence on social relations, including that of marriage and cross-gender relationships, that it requires further discussion here.

3.2 Social relations of caste

Srinivas provides a definition of caste as 'a hereditary, endogamous, usually localized group, having a traditional association with an occupation, and a particular position in the hierarchy of castes. Relations between castes are governed, among other things, by the concepts of pollution and purity, and generally, maximum commensality occurs within the caste' (1962, p. 3). The notion of pollution and purity is of particular significance in that a person is perceived to consist of certain coded bodily atoms and that these can be ranked according to a socially ascribed status, so that Brahmins would be considered the purest and Dalits the most polluted (Marriott & Inden, 1977). In addition, these coded particles can be transferred within substances such as food and through sexual intercourse and therefore social relations are dictated based on these exchanges as any commingling of substances would result in the pollution of those belonging to the higher caste (Gupta, 2005). Thus, individuals and groups should carefully monitor and control the exchange of substances 'through right eating, right marriage, and other right exchanges and actions' (Marriott and Inden 1977, p.233). While the most visible and commonly discussed aspect of caste are the rigid socio-economic inequalities, there are also other significant dimensions: 'it constitutes a cultural context, provides an identity marker, facilitates reference group behaviour, and regulates marriage and kinship' (Jayaram, 1996, p. 71).

As Osella and Osella state, a person's caste identity provides a significant amount of information to others about 'both that person's body- it is impure, it is low caste, it is hot and so on, and also about their character- they are impulsive, hot-tempered, interested in things of this world as opposed to high spiritual things and so on' (2006, p.11). This has further implications for gender

relations in that women are associated with heat and lack of control, particularly in terms of their sexuality, and are therefore considered lower than their male equivalents and especially so in comparison to the pure and cool Brahmin men (ibid). The maintenance of caste rules and the control over purity and pollution is, however, mainly the preserve of women, especially with regard to the safeguarding of food and maintaining the purity of the home (Dube, 1996; Pocock, 1972). As Dube states, '[t]he control over food is, at once, the protection of women from the transgression of sexual norms and a safeguard against a breach of the boundaries of caste' (1996, p.8). Furthermore, women are seen as less pure than men due to perceived differences in their sexuality that are particularly related to the periodical pollution that women experience during menstruation and giving birth, although this degree of difference in purity is greater for the higher castes than the lower castes (ibid).

Although caste is typically framed in terms of a hierarchy of varna (Dumont, 1970), which have many sub-castes, or jati, caste is not such a rigid or static structure. One significant driver of change is that of Sanskritization, that is '...the process by which a low caste or tribe or other group takes over the customs, rituals, beliefs, ideology and style of life of a high and, in particular, a 'twice-born' (dwija) caste' (Srinivas, 1989, pp. 56–57) and often refers to a group improving its position within the caste hierarchy. Often this involves a 'rediscovering' of their higher caste origins alongside the adoption of the practices of higher castes and the petitioning of state institutions by the caste association to have this higher status officially sanctioned (for example through the census records) (Rudolph & Rudolph, 1967). Furthermore, the establishment of political democracy and the development of partisan parties have often resulted in the formation of caste alliances even between those that are considerably divergent in terms of their hierarchical status, such as the Kshatriya Sabha of Gujarat. Here, a process of 'social levelling' occurred in order to improve the low caste's position whilst preserving that of the higher caste through mutually beneficial political action: 'the higher castes need numerical strength to sustain their power and status; the lower need access to resources

and opportunities that support of the higher can yield' (Rudolph and Rudolph 1967, p.100).

A further significant change is in the traditional occupational types related to caste. Processes of economic change and development have resulted in a 'growing dissociation with hereditary occupation' (Karanth, 1996, p. 89; Rudolph & Rudolph, 1967), albeit this typically has a greater impact on those of a higher caste who are more able to take advantage of new economic opportunities. While shifts in occupation bring different castes in closer proximity to one another, notions of purity are maintained through the 'compartmentalization' of the separate spheres of work place and home. Thus, even as modernity introduces different values and modes of behaviour, 'compartmentalization is a way for those who refuse both outright assimilation and cultural reaction to "Indianize" modernity' (Rudolph and Rudolph 1967, p.122). As Parry notes about men travelling outside of the local area, 'those at home can afford to be tolerant about his behaviour in the anonymous environment outside because abstract notions of pollution seem rather academic to most people once they are divorced from the maintenance of a local hierarchy of precedence' (1979, p. 102). For Dube, while there has been a loosening of caste rules and sanctions in recent years 'the relational idiom of food and the play of rituals, articulated by the mutual intermeshing of caste and gender, continues to be critical to the functioning of families' and '[t]he principles of caste [continue to] inform the specific nature of sexual asymmetry in Hindu society; the boundaries and hierarchies of caste are articulated by gender' (1996, p.20-21).

3.3 Gujarat

Gujarat, as an administrative state in western India, was formed in 1960, although 'Gujarat appears to have always been there, with a distinct ethos, a separate and discrete language and a particular political and social character' (Simpson, 2010, p. 1). There have been several notable studies conducted within Gujarat, particularly that of Pocock (1954; 1972), Simpson (2010), and

Breman (1989, 2007), alongside a plethora of articles following the 2002 communal violence against Muslims (see Brass, 2003; Heitmeyer, 2009). However, within the academic literature there has been little focus upon masculinities (according to Simpson's (2011) bibliography of Gujarat academic work) and only recently has there been research conducted into changing notions of love and marriage (Twamley 2013; 2014); an aspect of social relations that this research hopes to address. From those significant ethnographic studies mentioned above, certain themes can be discussed that are of some relevance to providing the regional context for this research.

Following on from the previous section's broad discussion of caste in India, it is possible to identify certain important features of caste within Gujarat. Firstly, a number of studies refer to the dominance of the mercantile and agricultural castes within Gujarati political and economic spheres (Breman, 1989; Pocock, 1972; Simpson, 2011; Tambs-Lyche, 2010). In central Gujarat, this dominant caste is the Patidars, or Patels, who have risen to their high status through their dominance of the agricultural sector. As well as a reputation as famed farmers, the Patel caste is renowned for its entrepreneurial nature and for emigrating across the world, creating a network of caste and kinship members that facilitate the arrival of further male relations from Gujarat. Therefore, the economic means available to many of the Patel caste enables them to further enhance their son's career prospects through education at the top institutes in India and abroad, although not all Patels are wealthy landowners, as Pocock reminds us (1979). The Patels are often admired by other castes for their success in business, accumulation of wealth and their capacity to travel abroad for work and study. Whilst a number of men may wish to emulate this success, there is also a sense of resentment and envy directed towards the community who are often perceived to have gained their position through nefarious means. One such means, described to me by several different men, was the manipulation of significant social and life events for a family, which entail a considerable cost, such as weddings, so that the individual would take a loan from a Patel man in exchange for land they owned. In the meantime the Patel farmer would be able to use the land for his own purposes until the loan was

repaid. However, the loan plus interest tended to be so large that a man from the lower castes had little chance of repaying and so would ultimately forfeit the land and often (to his humiliation) end up working as a labourer on what was previously his own land.

Gujarat has a population of just over 60 million with a sex-ratio of 918 (females per 1000 males) and a literacy rate above the national average². In recent decades, Gujarat has capitalised on the neo-liberalisation of the Indian economy and is commonly perceived to be one of the more advanced and economically progressive states in India. As a result, a number of young men have migrated, or travel on a daily basis, to cities for work in rapidly expanding industrial and service sectors, and an increase in competition has led to a greater significance upon the value of education as well as that of networks of caste and kinship (Breman, 2007). While these men are typically from the higher castes, there have also been some significant advances for Christian men, as will be discussed in section 3.4.1. However, for a number of lower caste men, agriculture remains the main and most important livelihood and source of income. Yet, as Breman (2007) discusses in his research of rural poverty in south Gujarat, this work is often seasonal, casual and with low pay making it difficult to meet basic needs and families will often become indebted during times of increased expense, such as funerals, births and weddings. Therefore, as Breman argues, economic development tends to exist within certain groups at the exclusion of others and '[t]he persisting poverty of those who lag behind is closely related to the leap forward made by those higher up the social scale' (2007, p.250). There is perhaps, then, a sense of thwarted masculinity for these young men who are unable to access the resources and opportunities that those of higher status have, and this may manifest within behaviours and attitudes that impact on different aspects of their lives, such as expressions of masculinity and sexuality.

² 79.31% compared to a national average of 73%. Interestingly, there has been a significant increase in the literacy rates among females: from 57.8% in 2001 to 70.73% in 2011. All statistics sourced from the Indian Census (2011)

There is within Gujarati society, as elsewhere across India, a patriarchal culture that dominates gender relations and often results in the subordinate position of women. This is typified through such Gujarati folk sayings as '[b]arley and millet improve by addition of salt, women through a beating by a pestle' and '[b]etter to keep the race of women under the heel of a shoe' (Kakar, 1989, p. 12). Whilst such attitudes have a direct impact on the role and position of females, it also provides considerable insight as to the dominant cultural position of men and what this may entail in terms of masculine traits of behaviour and sexuality. However, as this research will discuss, not all men hold to such attitudes, yet it remains a significant aspect with which to contextualise the discussion within the main empirical chapters.

3.4 Social life of the village

The village where my research was conducted is located in the central districts of Gujarat. These are generally perceived as the more developed and economically prosperous districts in Gujarat, although there are significant pockets of impoverished households and communities within this region. The village is relatively large with a population of just over 4000 covering an administrative area of 511 hectares mainly comprising of agricultural land, although there are several outlying communities, separate from the main village (see Figure 1, page 46). The village is bisected by a busy road that connects two small cities, around 15km in either direction from the village and which are reached by frequent buses and auto-rickshaws. All households have access to electricity (although there are frequent outages) and water is drawn from outdoor taps at allotted times, twice daily. The village is relatively well serviced with several primary schools (a central one and then a couple of outlying ones that service the smaller communities and the Muslim samaj) and a secondary school, which the majority of children attend up to varying ages dependent on gender, caste and household economic circumstance. Some children attend private or religious schools (such as Catholic schools) elsewhere in the area, travelling to school by rickshaw or bus. For those that wish, and are able, to

attend college (university), they must travel to the nearby cities where there are a number of colleges and technical institutions to choose from.

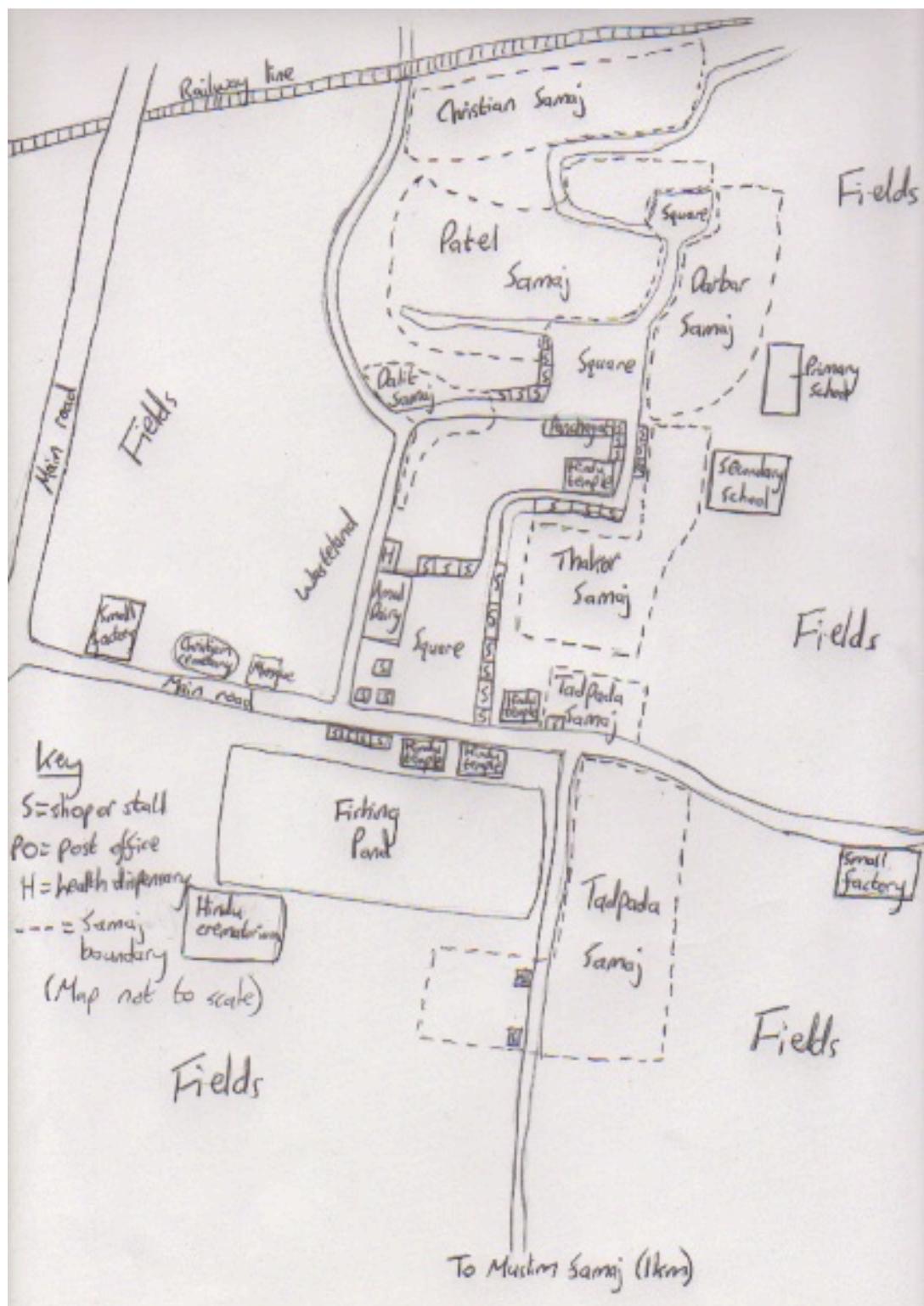


Figure 1: Sketch map of spatial layout of research village

Around the village there are a number of businesses and several small factories (mainly engineering) that offer local sources of employment for those with the right skills or contacts (usually a family member already working there). A particular economic focus within the village is the Amul Dairy Co-operative. It is a large brick building in the centre of the village where villagers, typically women, of all castes line up in the morning and evening to deposit their cow or buffalo milk, which can form a significant proportion of household income (for those without such animals, it is the main source for buying their daily milk). Alongside the main, dusty street that threads through the centre of the village are a number of small businesses, shops and stalls serving daily needs of food and basic items, a mill for grinding grain into flour, a tailor, a barber, a mobile phone repair shop, and several fast food takeaway stalls (selling samosas, for example). It is, therefore, possible to meet all of one's daily needs without leaving the village, especially if livelihoods are based locally as well. However, for those wishing to buy more luxury goods (perhaps new clothes for a festival, such as Diwali, or items for a large social event, such as a wedding) or for entertainment such as the cinema, a journey to the local cities is required. A small minority (mainly Patels) own cars within the village, a larger proportion own motorbikes, but for the majority it requires public transport, usually by shared rickshaw at the cost of around Rs10.

The three main religions in Gujarat are all found within this village with the majority of villagers being Hindu and smaller, but still significant, communities belonging to the Muslim and Catholic faiths. Accordingly, there are several Hindu temples throughout the central area of the village that are serviced daily by a priest with a number of smaller temples and shrines dotted around the area that are used more infrequently to celebrate festivals and special events. There is also a Hindu cremation grounds beside the fishing pond and a small Christian graveyard tucked away beside the road on the edge of the village. There is a small church in the Christian samaj, but this is rarely used nowadays with the community travelling to a nearby village for their weekly mass. Several mosques can be found within the Muslim community and a nearby town, which

has a large Muslim population, further serves the religious function, particularly during large festivals, such as the Tagiye.

In the village the main political institution, and the one that has the most significance for the daily lives of people, is the village panchayat, which marks the lowest level in the political tiers of the state (Corbridge et al, 2005). Rai states that historically '[a]n ideal panchayat reflected the presence of "difference" within its boundaries, marking different religions, castes and classes and insisting upon a working process by which difficult issues were deliberated and decisions arrived at that transcended the particular interests of the panchas (panchayat members)' (2007, p. 66). Furthermore, the government has established a quota system in an attempt to create equal opportunity and representation of women and those from the Scheduled Castes. In the village, this policy is represented through the role of the sarpanch, which is occupied by a young woman from the Christian samaj. However, the remainder of the panchayat is male and the sarpanch's father-in-law, who is also a panchayat member, is considered by most villagers to be the real source of power, and is typically referred to as the sarpanch by others (as well as reflecting gender norms within society, this also highlights the position and status within households where the daughter-in-law is expected to obey the parents of her husband). This provides an interesting contradiction as a member of the Christian samaj, perceived as being of low status, has assumed one of the most powerful positions in local administration, rather than the position being occupied by a member of the Patel community, as was historically the case. One explanation is that Christians have earned themselves a degree of respect and status due to their relatively high economic position and despite their humble origins. However, perhaps more telling in this instance is that the 'sarpanch' has been able to position himself alongside leading members of the Patel community often establishing joint economic, and political, benefits. In fact, many people from the Christian samaj view this 'sarpanch' distrustfully as he does little to serve their needs and often causes considerable problems for those who disagree with him.

Caste plays a significant role within village life and alongside the impact it has on the social, economic, cultural and political spheres it has a fundamental impact in shaping the physical landscape of the village. Historically, the central village space is occupied by the higher castes with lower castes living on more peripheral sites. There is a very clear segregation between the different castes, or samaj, areas so that one would cross boundaries from the Christian samaj to the Patel samaj and to the Thakor area when walking through the village; there is little inter-mixing of housing (this is a common pattern to villages throughout Gujarat, see also Breman, 2007). In the case of my village, there was only the single Brahmin household, who are not native to the village, but were encouraged to relocate there some years ago in order to serve religious and cultural functions. The dominant caste that occupies the traditional heart of the village is the Patels who, as discussed above, are the economically dominant caste in the area, owning a significant proportion of the surrounding agricultural land and growing cash crops, such as tobacco. As a result, this part of the village is characterised by two or three storey brick and concrete buildings with clean, whitewashed walls and tarmac roads (the only ones in the village barring the main transport routes) suitable for their vehicles. Inside their homes can be found a range of modern conveniences including kitchen appliances and air conditioning units that provide a clear symbol of the material wealth and status of such families.

Adjacent to the Patel samaj are the Darbars who are also a relatively high and economically prosperous caste. Like the Patels, the main source of their wealth is agriculture and they are typically recognised as landowners. Continuing out past the panchayat house one comes to another Hindu caste, the Thakors, who are lower in status but are numerically strong in the village. They typically work in a range of relatively low-level occupations, such as street vendors, drivers, labourers, and rarely attend education higher than secondary level. On either side of these relatively central areas and occupying a historically peripheral location are the low status Christian and Tadpada samaj that will be discussed in more detail in sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 respectively.

There is also a minor Dalit population that have built a series of small, rather ramshackle, homes out of various pieces of salvaged material to one side of the main village area. Their role within the village, as it has been for centuries, is to remove the rubbish and sweep the streets, to collect and remove dead animals, an activity that is seen to be highly polluting. Whilst they now receive a small remuneration from the panchayat for this service, begging is still a significant part of their household income. During Hindu festivals, such as Diwali, they will walk from house to house asking for donations and there is an expectation that leftover food from wedding celebrations is kept aside for this community.

Furthermore, and despite many individual's assertions that untouchability no longer exists in the village, I regularly witnessed members of this Dalit samaj walking in the late afternoon between houses with a dish from which they would receive the leftover scraps from a higher caste household's lunch (as also described by Pocock, 1972). This food would have been kept aside in a designated dish and then poured from a height into the Dalit's container in order to avoid any direct contact, which would cause pollution for the higher caste. It is clear from their appearance and their interactions that such members are still considered as having a very low status within the village's hierarchy.

Finally, the Muslim samaj is located over a mile away from the main village area in a community relatively isolated from the others and which will be discussed in section 3.4.3.

Alongside the physical segregation of caste within the village, there is also a social segregation. Some interactions certainly do occur across caste lines, particularly in school or through economic transactions, and individuals from castes that are closer in status may maintain casual conversations in the streets. However, I rarely observed, either directly or during conversation and interviews, inter-caste friendship groups, particularly among the younger men and youths who were the main focus of my research. Typically, they maintained friendship groups that were reflective of their identity in terms of caste and religion, age and gender. While a number of young men claimed to be on friendly terms with others from different castes, this appeared to be limited to a casual acquaintance and acknowledgement of someone with whom they

perhaps shared a class, rather than a person with whom they would spend social or leisure time. Instead, tensions frequently arose between young men from different castes due to perceived sleights or insults, or particularly as a result of attention to girls from a different caste.

3.4.1 Christian samaj

The Christian samaj provides an interesting insight into village life, identity and social change. Historically, they were a low caste Hindu community of weavers who when visiting the centre of the village would have had to carry a small bucket around their neck so as not to spit on the ground and a brush attached to their rear to sweep away their footprints. After their conversion to Catholicism by Jesuit missionaries, the samaj retained its low caste status in the social hierarchy of the village. However, with the support of the Jesuit Society and Catholic priests, and a particular focus on education, the Christian samaj has developed considerably, if not in terms of social status, then at least in terms of education and economic status. Most boys attend college (which puts them on a par with the Patel community in terms of education levels, and above all other samaj within the village) and subsequently have careers in professions, such as teaching, engineering or management. Even more telling, and rarer across this village, is that girls are also often encouraged to attend higher education institutes and may have careers as teachers, nurses or secretaries. Therefore alongside higher education levels, there appears to be a more progressive outlook towards key areas of the social sphere, such as gender relations. However, I would not wish to give the impression that there is gender equality in the Christian samaj. Married women and girls are still typically expected to perform all household chores, raise children and their behaviour vis-à-vis their male counterparts are still carefully monitored. In contrast to the other samaj, progress has been made to break down some of the patriarchal norms and barriers common in Indian society. Further, the increased attendance in higher-level education has resulted in a higher age of marriage (around mid-twenties as opposed to early twenties) for many of the men and women in this community, particularly so for the former who are still disproportionately more likely to attend university.

However, while many Christians have experienced an increased level of economic prosperity and status, they still remain tied to their low caste origins in the eyes of others. My Christian interpreter told me that when he was younger, boys from the Patel samaj would often taunt him and his friends with the highly derogative term 'dhedh', which means 'dragger' and refers to the low caste occupations of dragging away dead animals. This term also appears in Pocock's (1972) study of Gujarati society as referring to the untouchable castes, but particularly that of the weavers from whom the Christians in my community derived. For Pocock, '[t]he most convincing explanation that I have received is that the old weavers treated their cloth with size made from bones' (p.39) whereas Parry, in his study in Kangra, notes that 'the inferiority of the Weavers is sometimes attributed to their sideline as butchers' (p.88). Whatever the explanation may be, and despite conversion to Christianity several generations ago, these caste origins still hold significance for social status. However, the insulting term of 'dhedh' is rarely used these days as to do so can cause considerable communal tensions and the instigator may even be taken to court.

The improvement in the economic situation for Christians has also resulted in the acquisition of land for farming and the building of larger and more substantial homes within the samaj, although there is still a notable mix in housing type and the streets are mud rather than the tarmac surfaces found in the Patel samaj. There also remain a small number of Hindu families (around 5% of total households) within the samaj who have not converted to Christianity. They live within the community without any issues, which is a rare example of co-habitation of different identity groups, albeit this is eased by the sense of a shared historical identity that has only diverged relatively recently on grounds of religious identity. Interestingly, those who remain of Hindu faith tend to have markers of Christianity within their homes and will also attend and participate in Christian festivals such as Christmas, and likewise a number of the male Christian youth would celebrate Hindu festivals and embark on pilgrimages. Furthermore, Christianity in Gujarat has often co-opted a number of Hindu forms of ritual and practice within its broader doctrine (and alongside

more orthodox rituals such as Mass) in order to seem less alien to Indian culture and more appealing to its followers.

Living within this samaj, I was able to experience quite closely the daily lives and interactions of its members. One of the most pervasive features is the gossip, rumours and perceptions of others that circulate throughout the samaj on an almost daily basis. This is exacerbated through the permanence of households situated in the same community generation after generation, and also through the close proximity with which communities live together. Such discourses become embedded within the daily practice and interaction of people's lives within all of the samaj, but also has a greater and wider significance in terms of people's position and roles within the community, and how they are perceived and respected by others. Living in such proximity and with gossip and accusations swirling around, there are frequent and often on-going arguments and fights among neighbours, which can reach high levels of aggression (both verbal and at times physical). Economic strains, domestic dysfunction or other external pressures are often the underlying factors that contribute to this tension and frequent outbursts of aggression and abuse within the community, as Breman (2007) notes in his study in south Gujarat. At other times, the samaj almost appears harmonious during such occasions as weddings and festivals when people dress in their finest and brightest of clothes, feasts are enjoyed, music is played and exuberant dancing enfolds. In between these times of emotional release, the mundaneness of everyday existence continues.

3.4.2 Tadpada samaj

The Tadpada samaj are a low caste Hindu community that is bisected by the main road passing through the village and where the bulk of the community stretches out towards the fields and away from the central area. The houses vary from low storey concrete buildings to mud walled and iron roofed structures, built closely together with narrow mud paths providing access to the inner parts of the samaj. Goats, chickens and dogs greet you upon entry to the

samaj and livestock is often an important part of livelihood strategies for members of this caste. Different strategies are developed to provide sufficient income to meet the household's needs as only in relatively few instances did individuals have what might be termed a career or secure job, i.e. one man was a police officer, another a bus driver. Instead, the majority of men found multiple sources of income and were often dependent on agricultural labour, chopping wood or other so-called 'loose' labour that typically lasted a few days or weeks and was of a temporary, unpredictable nature. As Breman states, 'occupational multiplicity is a survival strategy, not only moving from one activity to another, but often engaging in several at the same time... [and] is not the consequence of a well-considered attempt to spread the risk, but is forced upon them by economic need' (2007, p. 209). This can place considerable strain upon men who are expected to be able to provide an income for their families that, at the very least, covers their basic needs. Some men have acquired arrangements with higher caste landholders in what Pocock (1972, p.22) describes as 'bhagidari' whereby the lower caste man would cultivate the land, grow and harvest the crops and receive a 50% share of the profits, although he would also 'be expected to bear a higher proportion of the cost of seed, fertilizer (if used), and water' (*ibid*). Whilst this arrangement is often portrayed as being of a more equal nature (than labouring, for instance), it remains a labour contract and a frequent visit by the landlord to assess and supervise progress belies the underlying social and power relations.

The Tadpada samaj is also renowned for the production of illicit liquor (the sale and consumption of alcohol is banned throughout Gujarat), a strong clear alcohol sold cheaply, in Rs5 or Rs10 measures, and predominantly to alcoholics within the village. It is produced at home and often requires the attention and joint efforts of different members of the household, including women. Women from lower castes must often contribute to the income of the household in order to support the, often, unreliable income of the men. However, wherever possible, it is desirable that the woman generates this extra income from within, or around, the household rather than travelling out into the fields where there is an increased likelihood (as culturally perceived, and to be discussed later in this

thesis) of her engaging in promiscuous behaviour. Therefore, women tend to play a significant role in the care of livestock (such as goats, cattle and buffalo that are kept close to their homes) and the production of liquor.

There is, therefore, a sense of risk and insecurity in the livelihood strategies of people within this samaj, which often results in the removal of children from education at a young age in order to supplement the household income. For Breman, '[a] lack of education and connections with providers of work and housing made the decision to leave the village a risky, or even irresponsible, undertaking' (2007, p. 372). They are, therefore, effectively held 'captive in a regime of poverty in the village economy' (*ibid*), and this, for some men, may contribute to a sense of thwarted or frustrated masculinity, whereby they seek to assert their control over other aspects of their lives, such as in their relationships with women. However, there has been a potential shift among a few members of this caste whose sons have been encouraged to attain a higher level of education (up to college) so as to move into careers such as teaching. Whether these remain the exception or become an example for emulation within the samaj is yet to be seen, but a number of men who had left school early were reflective and regretful as to their lack of education. It is not, therefore, a lack of desire for education that is an issue here, but a lack of economic means with which to support and facilitate a prolonged length of time in education for such youths.

For girls, however, it is not economic means that provide a barrier to education, but cultural rules and patriarchal structures. Girls rarely proceed past 10th Standard (16 years old), and in practice, girls are typically withdrawn much earlier for fear that they will encourage and attract the wrong attention from their male peers. This would then potentially result in issues that will affect marital arrangements, especially as the majority of the members of the Tadpada caste become engaged from a young age (often around 10-12 years old, but some times even earlier), although marriage cannot legally occur until a girl is 18, and a boy 21, years old. The Tadpada samaj still adheres to many of the more 'traditional' socio-cultural systems with a series of rules, constraints and

sanctions that ensure these are maintained (and which will also be discussed in more detail later in this thesis with a particular focus on love and sexuality).

Members within the samaj certainly adhere to the largest number of customs and rituals. For example: a man will often be expected to shave his hair off when a member of his family dies; if a man crosses the path of a widow at the start of a journey then he must return home and begin his journey again otherwise he risks ill fortune; eleven months after the birth of a parent's first son, they must sacrifice seven goats and a buffalo calf to the goddess as thanksgiving; and sex is not allowed between a married couple throughout the duration of religious festivals. The younger generations often bemoaned the extent of these restrictions imposed upon them by their elders, although they were typically loath to break such rules for fear of the consequences. A couple of young men did, however, speak of the loosening of such restrictions for their own children or grandchildren and so, again, only time will tell whether, or when, certain forms of social change may occur in this caste.

Finally, the perception of this caste by others is an interesting one as they are commonly, and rather derogatively, referred to as 'Wagris' and typically perceived to be crooked and criminals. This may be as a result of their illicit alcohol production, or because of their low caste status, or their 'loose' labour and class status, or even due to the 'tough' image they present through the coarse language they use, or perhaps, a combination of these factors. As a result, my interpreter was initially quite reticent about visiting this samaj, providing me with regular warnings about the potential risks and dangers we might experience there, but was soon pleasantly surprised (and a little humbled) by the warm welcome and reaction we received wherever we visited in this community. As a result the young men from this caste, with their willingness and eagerness to support my work and openly discuss their lives, quickly became some of the key informants for my research.

3.4.3 Muslim samaj

If my interpreter was reluctant to visit the Tadpada caste, then his anxiety was multiplied when attempting to engage with the Muslim samaj. Inevitably, such feelings were fuelled by the broader perceptions in India of the Muslim population as dangerous and threatening, particularly to those outside of their religion and community. Furthermore, they are also perceived to be a threat to the Hindu majority as a result of their virile character resulting in overpopulation fuelled by alarmist right wing reports (Anand, 2005). These fears and exaggerations have been played upon by Hindu nationalists to foster an identity politics that 'marries masculinity, nationalism, sexuality and violence' (Anand, 2007, p. 258) and which contributed to the communal violence and genocide of Muslims across central Gujarat. Although there were no Muslims murdered in the research village during the communal riots of 2002, the community existed in a heightened state of tension with armed Muslim men guarding the boundaries and receiving aid and protection from several members of other communities empathetic to their needs. As a result of the historical communal issues and their social exclusion and treatment as 'others', it is perhaps unsurprising that the Muslim samaj tends to isolate itself from the other communities and relies almost wholly on support from members of its own and neighbouring Muslim samaj. In the case of this village, the Muslim samaj is situated a considerable distance away from the main village and in fact was more closely connected to a neighbouring town, which had a larger Muslim population.

Muslims are generally considered to exist outside of the caste system as a result of their separate religion, although they are typically treated as a low status community and experience considerable degrees of discrimination. The Muslim community itself can be understood as being split into two categories: Ashrafs and non-Ashrafs. As Bhatty (1996) discusses, the former have a higher status as a result of descent from Islamic foreigners whilst the latter are alleged to be converts from Hinduism drawn from the indigenous population. These categories are often further divided into sub-castes that operate in a similar

manner to the Hindu caste system with notions of differing degrees of purity, traditional occupation types, control over exchanges of food, and endogamous marriage (Bhatty 1996). In the village, the Muslim population was of the Sunni division of Islam, and although there was also a Shi'a community in nearby areas, there is little unity between these two groups, and this further emphasises the need for care when referring to certain groups as though they have a homogeneous identity. Furthermore, the Sunni community within the research village was divided into two main groups, the Sayyad and the Pathan, which belong to the Ashraf category, with the former being of a higher status.

Similarly to the Tadpada samaj, the young men of the Muslim community often withdrew from education at a young age and girls rarely attended higher education institutions either. However, despite the low levels of education and the degrees of discrimination they experienced, the Muslim community generally were able to take advantage of having an entrepreneurial culture and often excelled in trade and retail, or in establishing small businesses; a trait that is often begrudgingly acknowledged by members of other samaj. This is perhaps aided by the almost siege mentality of the Muslim community so that they will actively support members of their own samaj in terms of their business and trade. However, despite the perceptions and practice of a united Muslim community, young men would often talk about the issues of envy and gossip that proliferated throughout the samaj causing considerable tensions for individual's lives. Muslims also typically married at a young age, generally by their early twenties, and whilst similar practices of caste endogamy and samaj exogamy exist as with the other communities, one notable difference was the ability for Muslims to marry their cousins (although there was little evidence of such matches amongst the young men I spoke with). In fact, this was often referred to by members of other samaj as a sign of the low status and degradation of the Muslim community.

The Muslim samaj is clearly differentiated through its religion, and the practice, rituals and festivals within the community. Alongside wedding celebrations that I attended, perhaps the most memorable of festivals was the Tagiye, held to

commemorate Hussein-bin-Ali, and which was a weeklong event celebrated in the central square of the nearby town. During this festival men and youths produce displays of aggression and expressions of devoutness that at times appeared masochistic. Such displays included puncturing holes in their cheeks in order to pass a thread through and which the young man would run along, and to beat their chest with razor blades removing the skin and spattering bystanders with their blood. It is, in this sense, unsurprising that the perception of the Muslim samaj is one of aggression and violence, an image that is perhaps not completely undesired by a community wishing to portray a clear message that they are strong and able to defend themselves against external threats. Women occupied a back seat in such proceedings but did participate in the dancing and singing that occurred throughout the festival.

3.5 Conclusion

India is a complex, contradictory place experiencing rapid change in some aspects of social, economic, political and cultural life whilst maintaining strong notions of traditional Indian values or simultaneously blending the two processes within a localised context. India is known for its rigid structures of caste and patriarchy, and whilst these certainly are strong cultural forces, they are also subject to change, contradiction and variance. Men generally operate within a more privileged position in society than women, although many men are considerably marginalised from recent economic opportunities and resources, while some women have benefited from increased access to higher levels of education and careers. Some caste groups have risen in status through persistent lobbying or careful formation of alliances with higher caste groups; both modernization and Sanskritization have had significant influences on caste and religious discourses and practice in recent decades. Gujarat particularly exemplifies this juxtaposition as, on the one hand, it experiences some of the highest levels of economic growth within the country whilst, on the other, it has produced and maintained a strong right wing, Hindu political identity that has now received particular traction across the country.

However, while such national and global forces certainly have a degree of influence within the social life of the village, many men are concerned with the more immediate pressures of ensuring a livelihood, maintaining strong kinship and caste relations, finding a suitable marital partner, and negotiating their needs through local governance structures. The village that is the focus of this research is generally well-connected to nearby cities, yet regular travel to these places tends to be confined to those castes that have the economic and social means through which to access higher levels of education, livelihoods and who also have a disposable income. For many, therefore, their lives are predominantly focused within the village and surrounding area in which they find the shops and services, fields and factories to meet their needs. Each of the three samaj that form the focus of this research has different caste and religious backgrounds, education and occupational aspirations, rules and norms. Yet, the men within these samaj also have a number of interesting commonalities in terms of their masculinity, sexuality and love, and how these are produced and negotiated, which will be explored throughout the remainder of this thesis.

4 Conceptualising Love and Sexuality

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce and define the main concepts that thread throughout this thesis and which provide the theoretical basis for the empirical chapters. There is a growing body of scholarly interest in gender and masculinity in south Asia (Chopra et al., 2004; Chowdhry, 1998; Jeffrey et al., 2008; Lamb, 2000; Uberoi, 2006) and regional understandings of sexuality, love and marriage (Ahearn, 2004; John & Nair, 1998; Raheja & Gold, 1994; Trawick, 1992). However, there is a clear gap in employing conceptualisations of masculinity in an attempt to uncover and interpret everyday discourses and practices of love and sexuality for men, particularly in the context of rural areas such as a village in Gujarat.

The opening section focuses specifically on notions of masculinity and these continue to thread throughout the chapter, integral as it is to the aims of this thesis. While not attempting to engage in the historical development of the concept and theory of masculinity, this chapter does draw out several themes that are important for understanding the lives of young men in India. In particular it considers male solidarity and performance in all-male contexts; the notion of 'dominant' and hierarchical masculinities; the life stages of men and marriage as a rite of passage; and the significance of honour for men's lives. The discussion then progresses to that of sexuality, where the social construction of multiple sexualities is significant alongside an understanding of how men learn and develop such sexualities. Following this, I introduce the concept of love grounded in the context of India, specifically in relation to the understandings, forms and practice of pre-marital relationships and the broader debate on tradition and modernity. While many of these concepts could (and often do) have a book devoted to their theoretical and conceptual underpinnings, histories and meanings, I am seeking here to briefly introduce these key threads

in order to further elaborate on their meanings through the empirical chapters that follow.

4.2 Masculinity

Historically masculinity in India has been studied either through the context of colonialism's influence or through the notion of semen-loss anxiety (Osella & Osella, 2006; Srivastava, 2004b). As Osella and Osella state, while men are often present in ethnographies of India, there is little attention paid 'to analysing the gendering of their behaviour and their relationships with others' (2006, p.4). However, in recent years, there has been an increase in the ethnographic focus of masculinity across a range of contexts and analytical themes. Based on 17 years of ethnographic fieldwork in Kerala among locally dominant communities, and with a particular focus on masculinities, Osella and Osella (2006) have found several themes specific to rural Hindu contexts, including 'the practice of arranging marriages between young people who are putatively strangers to each other... the valorisation of male earning... [and] the importance of generating children' (p.1). The following four sub-sections all focus specifically on the concept of masculinity paying particular attention to themes relevant for this research, including male solidarity, hierarchies of masculinity, life stages, and honour.

4.2.1 Male solidarity

Life stages and marriage are significant markers in the lives of men, as will be discussed in section 4.2.3. However, prior to marriage it is possible to identify a liminal period in which male youths experience relative freedom. Turner (1967, 1969) states that this liminal period marks one in which adult responsibilities are not yet assumed, a state in which the individuals are 'betwixt and between' different statuses. For Turner, the rite of marriage refers to 'the liminality that characterizes rituals of status elevation' (1969, p.167), whereby an individual rises from a low (unmarried boy/ celibate student) to a high status (married

man/ householder). A cultural discourse that represents norms, values and expectations for these young men still monitors and controls this transition. Yet it may also be a period of greater freedom for individuals. The ambiguity of their status provides a space to transgress social expectations and their age allows for greater movement outside of the home, providing a licence to engage in a variety of activities outside the public gaze of the community. Such a period appears in Osella and Osella's (1998) discussion of 'college culture' among Kerala male youth, who experience a greater sense of freedom during this period before marriage. Their behaviour at this stage is typified by (female) others as 'wandering around looking at girls and doing nothing' (p.191) and is typically formed around close male peer bonds. Whilst there may be greater freedom for young men, there is also a greater sense of social expectation and pressure in terms of successfully becoming a man. This may lead to considerable anxiety for some young men, who are expected to find meaningful employment and a wife. There is, therefore, a sense of competition between men and those who lack the necessary means, skills or opportunities to succeed (at least in comparison to other men) face increased pressure and anxiety.

The liminal period is also marked by an 'intense comradeship' (Turner, 1969, p. 95), among male peers experiencing a similar life stage and status. Whilst male-female relations are clearly an important defining feature for understanding gender relations, male-male relationships are equally significant. This is particularly so in the context of India where gender segregation and close surveillance reduces the opportunity for cross-gender relationships outside of the family unit, which remain uncommon. Men, therefore, spend a large proportion of their time (in school, within work or during leisure time) with their male peers and often form strong male bonds. The relationship between men within all-male contexts is a critical element in establishing certain forms of masculinity (Chopra et al., 2004), including a heterosexual orientation, attitudes and behaviours towards women, and expressions of peer solidarity, rivalry and shared behaviours. According to Osella and Osella's ethnography, these male youths often share possessions and money, and this 'intense physical contact and sharing affirm egalitarian principles, breaking down social distance'

(1998, p.191). However, these characteristics mark them as 'not yet adult or *serious*' as '[t]hey are not yet prepared to take on their full casted, social identities required by adult males in search of respect and prestige' (ibid, italics in original).

Men gather in these groups, often on a daily basis, and masculinity becomes a performance in front of a male audience. However, this performance is not necessarily a conscious act (although at times it may be) but one which is almost compulsory and socially constructed (Butler, 1990). Performances of masculinity are also changeable, relative to context and audience, subject and occasion. A young man playing cards with his friends and talking about the latest Bollywood heroines will present a different masculinity than when speaking to an older family member and a different form again when writing secret love letters to a prospective girlfriend. Furthermore, this young and unmarried man's performances of masculinity will be markedly different from those of a middle-aged married man with a respected status within the community. Yet, in all these cases, the man is still a man and exhibiting normative characteristics of masculinity recognisable, and expected, by others. Thus, from a young age, boys learn how to become men with family and peers reinforcing cultural expectations of masculinity (Higate, 2012). This typically involves the performance of manhood acts, thus entitling a person with biological characteristics to be identified as a 'man' (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). Being a boy is about being competently male and so 'learning to produce behavioural displays, of one's "essential" ... male identity' (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 142). Cornwall and Lindisfarne suggest that '[i]n practice, people operate according to many different notions of masculinity' (1994b, pp. 11–12), and in certain instances, men may also exhibit behaviours conventionally associated with femininity, or else have such characteristics attributed to them by others on account of their actions or attitudes. Men do not always act in ways that are expected of them, and may indeed 'cultivate a facade of normativity while privately acting in unsanctioned ways' (Osella & Osella, 2006, p. 19).

4.2.2 Male hierarchies

In front of all-male audiences, status often becomes a significant marker in defining relations between men. A young man may show his status through boasting and self-promotion such as telling stories or recounting incidents (of sexual conquest, for instance), or by displaying behaviours that affirm, or even hyper-affirm, certain masculine traits (such as bravery, strength, independence, entrepreneurship). Alternatively, the self-promotion can take the form of physical manifestation of material goods or through the embodiment of a certain masculinity (i.e. fashion and style, tattoos, muscular build). Such characteristics and performances may be perceived to be representative of a 'dominant' or normative form of masculinity to which men of a certain group or cultural context should aspire if they are to be interpreted, by others, as a successful man. For Kimmel (1990), characteristics of normative masculinity is the willingness to take risks, to exhibit a toughness in the face of pain, and the drive to accumulate in terms of power, money and sexual partners. While Kimmel was referring to a form of US masculinity, these traits are both significant and relevant for understanding dominant characteristics of masculinity in India. That is not to say that across cultures, or even within a culture, these traits present in the same manner, as will be discussed in this thesis with regard to different forms of pre-marital relationships (which involve a considerable degree of risk-taking, but which reflect different understandings of masculinity and sexuality). The qualities denoting the masculine self vary spatially and historically, and in relation to traits of the actor, audience and situation (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). They are 'constituted by different, often conflicting, values in different contexts' (Walle, 2004, p. 99). A young man may be expected (and even encouraged), within a particular culture, to be aggressive and competitive. He may indeed be eager to assert such an impression, whereas such behaviour may be perceived as inappropriate for an older man, whose position, maturity and power within a community are sufficient to signify his status as a man. Therefore, '[t]he process of learning how to signify a masculine self in situationally appropriate ways continues throughout life' (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009, p.283).

The construction of masculinity and its embodied and enacted practices is not fixed or frozen (Chopra et al., 2004; Connell, 2005) and whilst the ascribing of meanings by different actors may at times overlap, they also 'vary significantly in different domains of discourse' (Cornwall 1995, p.116). Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity refers to 'the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life... [so that] At any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted' (2005, p.77).

However, as Connell states, '[t]he hegemonic form need not be the most common form of masculinity, let alone the most comfortable' (2000, p. 11) and men may live in some degree of tension with this hegemonic masculinity. The system of caste in India has historically constructed a social hierarchy, which can be understood to generate hegemonic and subordinate groups. While caste is not a static phenomenon, nor does it entirely account for class status and mobility, as discussed in Chapter 3 there are certain dominant castes within an area. This form of social hierarchy plays a significant role in the interactions between men of different castes within the economic, cultural and social spheres. Men from the Tadpada samaj, for instance, are often hired as labourers on Patel fields and the power that is embedded in this economic relation between landowner and labourer will extend to cultural markers such as form of address and access to different samaj within the village. In addition, men from different samaj assume certain characteristics such as physical appearance, fashion, language and behaviour so that they are readily identifiable as belonging to a specific caste. Social stereotypes and perceptions of a particular group are often formed by other samaj, such as Tadpadas as criminals, Muslims as virile. As men form the public image of their caste, these perceptions are more specifically framed in terms of their traits. Whilst these stereotypes are, for the most part, misrepresentations brought about by anxieties and fears towards the unknown 'other', they still govern social relations within the village.

However, in the Indian context it is more accurate to understand how multiple hegemonic models can coexist (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994a) or to consider

different 'dominant models and prestigious styles' (Osella & Osella, 2006). Upper caste Brahmanical masculinity may provide one form of dominant or hegemonic masculinity as a result of the religious role and status of this caste within Indian society. However, as Osella and Osella (2006) argue, there may be an opposed, non-Brahmin, masculinity that advocates meat eating and being a successful provider for the household. Therefore, a notion of hegemonic-subordinate relations may be relevant for understanding some economic relations and socio-cultural interactions, but for others, intra-samaj relations of power may be more relevant. Further, whilst Christians are typically perceived as low caste, their high levels of education have resulted in their ability to compete for professional jobs with higher castes, thus diluting any historical sense of dependency. One must be careful, therefore, in deploying terms of hegemony and subordinate, as a more nuanced approach is required as opposed to the construction of a simplified dichotomous form of relationships.

Other nuances and forms of 'dominant' traits of masculinity may relate to different contexts and audiences, i.e. on the one hand respecting and adhering to community values and expectations and on the other conforming to an active subversion of such norms in accordance with expectations among male peers. In addition, hierarchies exist throughout society that are not only based on social differentiation, such as caste and class, but also occur within households based on age and position, i.e. between children and their father, or a boy and his elder brother. For Chopra et al (2004) 'rather than falling into "hegemonic" or "dominant" and "the rest", men live along a continuum in which certain material goals are appropriate for all and pursued by the majority' (p.16), for instance, the aspiration to marry and become a householder. Ultimately, '[h]egemonic masculinities define successful ways of 'being a man'; in so doing, they define other masculine styles as inadequate or inferior' (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994, p.3).

4.2.3 Life stages and marriage

In India life stages are represented by four successive phases: the celibate student (brahmacharya); householder (grastha); forest-dweller (vanaprastha); and renouncer (sannyasa) (Osella and Osella 2006; Lamb 2000). The lives of men do not necessarily directly reflect these stages, idealised as they are within religious narratives. Yet there is still a strong cultural significance attached to the notion of a transition between certain life stages. Furthermore, although these life stages are typically applied to upper caste men, men of lower castes may often seek to emulate these practices (George, 2006). They may also provide a broader socio-cultural framework within which to understand the significance of marriage and the taboo against pre-marital relationships. There is a strong cultural sense of the notion of a celibate student who should avoid the distractions of women in favour of preparation for marriage and the transition to the householder stage of a man's life. The duties of a householder are 'to develop the balanced practice of *dharma*, *artha*, and *kama*, or the pursuit of right deeds, money, and sexual pleasures' (George, 2006, p. 39, emphasis in original). The ability to provide is a significant marker in the transition from boyhood to manhood as it is only when a man can prove that he can earn that he is often seen as an eligible candidate for marriage (and the higher the earnings, the more eligible he becomes).

The transition between these two stages is a significant marker in a person's life as it signifies a change in status from boyhood to manhood, clearly visible in the social setting through the institution of marriage. Marriage in India marks a state of maturity and a new level of responsibility and duties for men. As such it can be commonly recognised as a 'rite de passage' (van Gennep, 1960); a socially recognised, maturational milestone in the life course of an individual, which 'marks his entry into a new and onerous status and set of responsibilities' (Osella & Osella, 2006, p. 15). In Indian society, an individual is referred to as a 'boy' until he is married when he is then considered, and referred to, as a 'man' in society's eyes. Even if a person remains unmarried into his thirties, he is still referred to as 'boy', which serves to reinforce age hierarchies and parental

control (ibid). This transition to adulthood for men occurs at different ages depending on an individual's caste and class. A man from a low caste will often leave education at a young age to begin work and will have often married by his early twenties. In the Tadpada samaj, childhood engagement, which is consolidated in marriage when the young couple reach the legal age, further embeds this. Higher castes, such as the Patels, or those with higher-class aspirations, such as the Christians, often send their children to college. In this case marriage is typically delayed until the man is in his mid-twenties and has been able to establish a career following the end of his education.

The social institution of marriage is common across many cultures, yet the form it takes, the meaning it holds, and the processes involved are often very divergent and in many ways reflect broader socio-cultural patterns: 'It is embedded in norms and values regarding what marriage should be and is' (Palriwala & Kaur, 2014, p. 4). In India, marriage is a focal point not only of an individual's life, but also of the family and often the wider community. It is seen as a significant means of social reproduction through which kinship bonds and caste alliances are strengthened and families' positions enhanced (Trawick, 1992). Further, marriage has direct implications for the continuity of families through 'inheritance and status, access to resources, labour, care and support' (Palriwala and Kaur 2014, p.4). For the father of the bride, it is a source of status and honour within the community (or across communities) and a means for increasing social capital. For the groom, it is a crucial rite of passage in fulfilling societal and familial expectations of a successful masculinity: husband, father, breadwinner, and a gradual move towards the head of the household through greater responsibility (Lamb 2000). For the bride, it is a time of real change and anxiety as she moves to her husband's home and has to learn new ways of living and build new relationships, particularly with her mother-in-law.

Pocock (1972) conducted lengthy ethnographic research into marriage practices in Gujarat during the 1950s and 60s. His research provides little focus on male gender identity and masculinity was largely unmarked in sources that came before the burgeoning of gender studies on the 1980s. Pocock's work is

useful in providing a descriptive account of marital practices in rural Gujarat rather than as a theoretical contribution to this thesis. While many of the ethnographic details of his study depict caste marital alliances particular to the Patidar community, he does outline broader marital practices and rules that are applicable across different castes and which are still relevant today. For a marriage to be socially acceptable, it must adhere to certain rules that protect the integrity of kinship and caste. Families select suitable marital partners in order to fulfil the social requirements and expectations of caste endogamy, samaj exogamy, and hypergamy. The rules of exogamy are maintained to ensure the circulation of blood and avoid the stagnation of the male line or the contraction of leprosy, 'the illness of untouchability' (Parry 2001, p.223). In northern India, this rule prevents marriage within four excluded clans, that of 'ego, his mother, his father's mother, and his mother's mother' (ibid, p.225). Pocock (1972) states that relations between people from the same village are framed as being that of brothers and sisters. However, whilst 'marriage within the village is unthinkable... it would be wrong, to suppose that, because kinship terms are used, sexual relations between castes, or even more between descendants of the same ancestor, are regarded as incestuous' (1972, p.73). Therefore, sexual relationships do occur within the same samaj despite the clear contravention of the marital rules of exogamy. Furthermore, for Pocock, marriage in Gujarat is reflective of notions and perceptions of social standing, so that '[a] man is concerned to marry with people of equal standing or to give his daughter to someone of superior standing' (1972, p.66), if he can afford to do so. Whatever the economic means of the family, a man always 'looks around for people that are good (*sārā*), worthy and proper (*lāyak*)' (ibid, emphasis in original), which therefore relates closely to notions of credit raised by men within this research.

Marriage in India is often perceived as a static and fixed institution (Twamley, 2014) and while arranged marriage remains the norm (Desai and Andrist 2010) across most parts, and for most young people, alternatives do exist. However, it is only fairly recently that some scholarly attention has highlighted the multiple narratives of love and marriage that exist within India with many previous

studies assuming a focus on the processes, rituals and social interpretations of arranged marriage. There has been, according to Uberoi (2006) and Palriwala and Kaur (2014), an increasing role for individuals to effect the decision of their arranged marriage partner as parents allow their children to accept or reject potential spouses from selected individuals that they consider to be suitable matches. However, there are also more direct challenges to marital norms in the form of love marriage and arranged love marriage. In recent years, a number of studies have drawn attention to these 'alternative' modes of marriage (Ahearn, 2004; Donner, 2002; Hatfield & Rapson, 1996; Mody, 2002; Twamley, 2014; Uberoi, 2006). As Osella and Osella argue, '[t]he relative empowerment of the young compared to 50 years ago means that they are never coerced but are persuaded to marry' (2006, p.204).

Love marriage is one in which couples choose their marital partners without the participation of parents or family. They are the result of a couple having an often prolonged and clandestine pre-marital relationship and such marriages are typically (but not always) against the wishes of at least one set of parents. For Mody, arranged marriages are 'a religious ritual, sanctified and validated by kin and community and blessed by God' (2006, p. 333) and where love is expected to grow over time. In contrast, love marriages are seen as an 'unholy union' in that they 'challenge 'natural'... caste hierarchy, and social considerations of class, status and standing' (ibid). However, in Indian law, there is no specific provision advocating a certain form of marriage, arranged or otherwise. Individuals are therefore free to choose whomever they desire as a marital partner, regardless of caste, class or ethnicity (Uberoi 2006). Mody's (2002; 2006) research on love marriages and elopement in Delhi focuses on the contradiction between the legal legitimacy of such unions and the illegitimacy they acquire in the context of society. Couples often attempt to advocate the legitimacy of their choice of love marriage by framing it in language similar to that of the arranged marriage, thus invoking the language and form of tradition within shifting notions of marriage (Palriwala and Kaur 2014). Thus, 'representing and transforming personal choice into *'social choice'* is both an

important driving force, and a problematic contradiction in the personhood of love-marriage individuals' (Mody 2002, p.227, emphasis in original).

Donner's (2002) research amongst Bengali Hindu middle class families in central Calcutta states that there are increasing spaces in which young boys and girls are able to mix, such as co-educational schools or during festivals. This causes considerable concern for parents of both girls and boys who seek to safeguard and monitor their contacts to prevent the formation of transgressive relationships. According to Donner, while any such relationship is likely to lead to a family rift as it challenges 'patriarchal concepts of reciprocity, responsibility and duty... only those matches which transgress the socially acceptable group boundaries are represented as deviant' (2002, p.88). Such a rationale is often framed in the context of the perceived differences between the different communities in terms of domestic lives, diets and religious practices and the difficulties that the bride would therefore have in adapting to her new environment (Donner, 2002). However, the dominant factor remains the maintenance of caste integrity through social, rather than individual, choice of marital partner. Therefore, a pre-marital relationship or an attempt at love marriage between the Hindu and Muslim communities would create the severest of consequences, including ostracism and the potential for violence³. Twamley (2014) constructs a spectrum for marriage in India where, at the one extreme, is the strictly parentally arranged marriage, and at the other, a Hindu-Muslim love marriage. In between lies a range of possible variations exhibiting differing degrees of choice, including the arranged love marriage, plus different combinations of partners and the degree of social outcry they would cause.

One way in which some young couples are reported to negotiate the conflicting relationship between normative public demands of marital structures with the

³ In the last 12 months Hindu right wing groups, including the ruling party of the BJP, have run a campaign against what they have termed a 'love jihad' in which, they argue, Muslim men are seducing Hindu girls in order to marry and convert them to Islam (Dixit, 2014). This contributes to the ongoing nationalist discourse that aims to create communal tensions within India, directed primarily at the Muslim population. Notions of love and marriage therefore become politicized and communalized within this context.

personal narratives and aspirations of love is through the arranged love marriage (Uberoi 2006). As the label implies, this is an attempt by the couple engaged in a true love pre-marital relationship to have their relationship become a parentally, and societally, approved arranged marriage. These 'love-cum-arranged' marriages, as Mody labels them, are 'ideal for many a young couple... [as they] avoid the devastating sanctions of the couple being excommunicated' (2006, p.335). However, as Mody acknowledges, these unconventional marriages may still leave the parents open to community sanction. Twamley found in her study in the city of Baroda in Gujarat that young people 'both idealised romantic love, *and* wanted to have an arranged marriage... Young people wanted changes, but these changes seemed unclear and sometimes conflicting' (2014, p.xiv, emphasis in original). By attempting to arrange love within socially acceptable boundaries, some young people are finding ways of negotiating this conflict between love and social expectations.

'Despite new public imaginations of marriage, love/self-choice marriage has not replaced arranged marriages' (Palriwala and Kaur 2014, p.1; also Dube 1996). Many young people continue to view arranged marriage as the best and most suitable option, trusting their parents' opinions in choosing an appropriate match. Many understand an arranged marriage to be a religious union and cultural institution that retains legitimacy through approval by members of kin and the community. Further, those within arranged marriages often state that love develops slowly over time (Trawick 1992, Mody 2002) and that this is a more stable form of relationship than that of love marriage, which is commonly believed to have higher divorce rates (Twamley 2014). For the participants in Twamley's research it was the 'courtship' period between the couple's introduction and their arranged marriage where romance and love was able to develop within a "safe' parent-sanctioned space' (2013b, p. 275). Moreover, Padilla et al point to the irony of this discussion as 'even in the rich developed world the idea of entirely love-based relationships is a fiction: in regimes of choice (as opposed to arranged marriage) most people still tend to marry people much like themselves' (2007, p. xviii).

Uberoi (2006) discusses the modern conditions within India that would point to the expectation of a growing number of love marriages. Romantic love as portrayed through popular media, increasing opportunities for young people to meet and fall in love, and the economic benefits of not being required to provide a dowry (see also Rao, 2014) would all seem to support the context for a burgeoning number of love marriages. Yet, she acknowledges, 'the institution of arranged marriage has proved surprisingly robust, continuing to account for the vast majority (an estimated 90 per cent) of marriages in all communities' (ibid, p.24). While modernity may have an increasing influence within certain parts of India, as yet the complexities and vagaries of the cultural and local context indicate that there is no straightforward or simplistic notion of social change with regard to notions and practices of love and marriage.

4.2.4 Men and honour

A significant concept in Indian society is 'izzat' or honour. Honour in this sense is synonymous with a normative understanding of social morality. For Foucault, morality refers to 'a set of values and rules of action' (1984, p. 25), which may be clearly established through a doctrine, or which 'form a complex interplay of elements that counterbalance and correct one another' (ibid). But a moral or honour code also refers to how individuals relate to them, whether they comply or resist, respect or disregard the rules. In this sense there is also a distinction between how a person conducts or projects oneself in certain contexts and in front of certain audiences, for example in order to portray an image of someone abiding by the honour code or normative values. Yet, often individuals present a moral self for public view (Abu-Lughod, 1986), a front-stage discourse and performance, whilst disregarding such (or some) values when deeming themselves outside of the public view and where they are able to pursue alternative discourses. Thus, the individual has a clearly positioned sense of self vis-à-vis a normative code of honour with which he can practice and perform varying degrees of conformity and resistance (Foucault 1984).

Mendelbaum states, '[s]ocial and public opinion is the gauge of a family's honor' so that their worth or status is determined by the general perception 'held by kinsmen, neighbors and others in the social network' (1988, p. 22). Therefore, as Goffman argues, individuals as performers are often 'concerned with maintaining the impression that they are living up to the many standards by which they and their products are judged... But... individuals are concerned not with the moral issue of realizing these standards, but with the amoral issue of engineering a convincing impression that these standards are being realized' (1959, p.243). However, this thesis utilises Goffman's notion of performance rather than Butler's conceptualisation of performativity where there is no self beyond the actual performance. The former's use of a front stage-back stage dichotomy is particularly useful in theorising the multiple presentations of masculinity and sexuality whereby the actual self is resilient to performances on the public stage. Goffman therefore provides a basis for understanding and analysing masculine styles, and the narratives and practices that they engender. Significantly, this concept of honour is closely related to performances of masculinity, in which the actor's presentation of self often seeks to comply with dominant notions of masculinity (Connell, 2005). This is particularly relevant when considering how men may need to conceal certain performances in order to maintain the honour code and how this may indeed conform to separate ideas of dominant masculinity traits. However, Abu-Lughod warns of the assumption around adopting 'a Goffmanesque alienation of social actors from the cultural ideals of their society' (1986, p. 237) and that individuals may in fact 'perceive the moral standards less as norms than as values; therefore, it is a matter of self-respect and pride that the individual achieve the standards, not an obligation' (ibid).

In the Indian context, honour refers to the status and respectability of a family. As such, it can have a significant influence on a family's position in the community, their capacity for social and political power, their contribution to the community (particularly in terms of advice and decision making), and in the arranging of suitable and respectable marital partners for their children. Honour is an embodied and gendered notion in that it normatively represents

the sexual self-control of men, but also the ability of men to adhere to social expectations of a successful masculinity through the provision of a sufficient income for the household. In the lower castes, where women may have to engage in livelihood activities to support family income, threats to honour are twofold. First, there is a loss of honour for a man who is unable to be the sole provider for a household (either in the role of husband or father). Second (and closely related to the first) is the perception of an increased risk to the honour of the family due to the 'naturally' inclined promiscuous and dangerous sexuality of the female, who is no longer under the direct control of the man. Furthermore, honour is inter-generational in that a shameful act by previous generations can still be felt by the current generation in relation to the status of the family within the community. It is also representative of the family unit in that the act of one member of the family can have negative consequences for other members.

Notions of parental honour are maintained and secured through the sense that children are forever striving to repay the debt they owe their parents for having raised them (Lamb 2000). Therefore, children are expected to respect and obey their parents, to care for them in their old age and to ensure that their actions do not bring shame upon the family's name and honour. The main action that would cause such dishonour is the discovery of a pre-marital relationship, especially if it is assumed that the couple have had sex, and even more so if the relationship is inter-caste or intra-samaj. Honour in Indian society is often, therefore, encapsulated by the notion of kanyadana, which is the 'gift of the virgin' (Parry, 2001) and understood as the father's sacrifice in gifting his daughter to the world through the process of marriage (Trawick 1992). This gift should be 'pure', and so a high premium is placed on the girl's virginity (Uberoi 2006), alongside which the (often highly expensive) dowry and wedding festivities are arranged in exchange for the father's increase in social capital (Trawick 1992).

In India, the preservation of honour is the remit of men whereas women are often perceived as a liability through their potentially dangerous sexuality. The

masculine becomes imbued with positive characteristics of strength, self-control and discipline whereas the feminine is perceived to be weak and to threaten the honour code (Abu-Lughod, 1986; Chowdhry, 1998). As Desai and Andrist state, '[i]n practice, a girl does not even have to be sexually active to be labelled promiscuous. Simple contact and platonic friendships with the opposite sex can be enough to damage her reputation' (2010, p. 671). Any transgression on the part of the daughter has significant consequences for her family, and particularly the patriarch. The patriarch is responsible for controlling his daughter's behaviour and thus a transgression is seen as a challenge to his authority. It also threatens his sacred (Hindu) duty of gifting his daughter in marriage, challenges the very marital process of constructing positive alliances between two families and compromises his daughter's virtue and purity as a gift from her father (Uberoi, 2006), all of which strongly impacts upon his honour in the eyes of the wider community. In order to avoid such consequences, women were traditionally married at a young age, at which point 'the weight of virginity' lifts from the responsibility of the parents (Parry 2001). However, child marriage as a practice has weakened considerably (Uberoi 2006) and so the wedding ceremony and the act of the bride joining her husband's household occur at the same time, often when the girl is around 20 years old. Thus, 'fathers find responsibility for a daughter's virtue more burdensome' (Parry 2001, p.797).

Research (Abraham, 2002; Hindin & Hindin, 2009) has typically focused on the consequences for female transgression, and often denied any equivalent issues for men. This thesis intends to address this imbalance. Men are often perceived as gaining an increased social status among peers as a result of their sexual conquests, and even if discovered by the wider samaj, a purificatory bath removes any pollution and indiscretion (Dube 1996). Furthermore, Pocock (1972), in reference to transgressive sexual relations in his study of the Patidar caste in Gujarat, states that reactions vary dependent on the standards of hypergamy. Therefore, a man may have sex with a woman from an inferior caste without consequence, as the ablutions he performs after sex should remove any pollution. In contrast, if 'a woman were to take a lover of inferior caste, then the

mere sexual act would be sufficient to arouse the fury of her caste-fellows' (ibid, p.75). However, these views tend to ignore broader societal attitudes and consequences towards male behaviour and provide further evidence that masculinity was unmarked in these earlier studies.

In order to deter such potential transgressions communities utilise sanctions, normative discourse and institutional power. For Lutz this 'arises in the context of the goal of changing behavior that transgresses cultural norms and of duplicating behavior that exemplifies them' (1988, p. 102). John and Nair state that in India '[t]here are a multiplicity of levels at which transgressive relationships are forged, and are in turn pardoned, punished or sanctioned by the religious and caste authorities' (1998, p. 23) and which are dependent on the degree of transgression performed. Parry argues that caste sanctions are weakening and that even the boycott of an individual's enterprise has little tangible effect, amounting to no more than the 'exclusion from the life-cycle rituals of one's caste fellows' (2001, p.805). However, while the role and power (or even existence) of caste panchayats may be diminishing in this part of rural Gujarat as a result of the consolidation of political and economic power through the state's panchayat hierarchy, the former do still exist and wield some power in certain samaj, for instance the Tadpada community within the research village. Further, even where no official caste body exists to enforce such sanctions, social expectations and pressures take their place in ensuring transgressions receive certain sanctions. State institutions, such as the courts and the police, may even support and reinforce these sanctions acting outside their official legal role in order to uphold normative cultural practices. Therefore, spatial and cultural context is perhaps the significant factor in distinguishing Parry's research findings from those discussed here. While Parry rather lightly dismisses the impact on a transgressor of the exclusion from the caste's life cycle rituals, this research contends that this has a greater significance for men's lives than Parry supposes.

In India, the modesty of women and segregation from their male peers is still encouraged- although this social division may be thinning in certain spaces- and

pre-marital relationships are discouraged and publicly vilified in many cases. Societal structures of caste and kinship are significant in the surveillance, control and punishment of those that transgress, yet under the pressures of a modernising society the normative discourse is increasingly (albeit still covertly) under threat by younger generations (Chowdhry 1998). For Chowdhry, 'younger members are challenging the caste/kinship ideology upheld by senior male members by questioning sexual codes and taboos, defying demands of status, hypergamy or village exogamy, and discarding notions of honour' (1998, p.333). However, control of such transgressions is often sought through the invocation of claims of tradition, culture and honour (*ibid*). Honour then becomes a medium through which power is exerted on social relations whether through a dominant and collective discourse, sanctions or even violence, the latter being resorted to in certain parts of north India when lovers from different castes attempt to elope. It is the fear of social ostracism and bringing shame on one's family that acts as the greatest deterrent against breaching such normative practices. Chowdhry states that 'there is the very genuine fear of... (social ostracism), as the village community is united in not accepting such matches. The open taunts... (what can you say, your daughter behaved like this), are much harder to live down as derogatory epithets become permanent social fixtures to their existence' (1998, p.351). While all pre-marital relationships are considered taboo, those which further contravene the marital alliance codes often result in increased scandal and sanctions for the transgressors and their families.

For those wishing to transgress such normative codes, the individual may take recourse to a back-stage discourse and performance in order to maintain the notion that the honour code is being upheld (Goffman 1959). Chowdhry argues that 'a demarcation exists between private and public morality; morality which spills over from the realm of the private into the public impinges upon 'honour', both private and collective, necessitating drastic action' (1998, p. 341). When transgressing the public norm of honour, young men seek approval among peers for a different interpretation and meaning of what it is to be male- in this sense a performance that supports a male sexuality of conquest and risk, or

'dangerous' behaviour. There is, therefore, a possibility for multiple, often contradictory, masculinities and sexualities to exist and be performed simultaneously (Connell, 2005; Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994a). However, in order to maintain the guise of conformity to the public ideal of honour, the strategy of secrecy and concealment becomes all-important.

Secrecy is a significant aspect of this conceptual framework and is encapsulated through the negotiation and strategies involved in conducting pre-marital relationships, as reflected through the second research question. In Pocock's fieldwork, he discovered that '[t]he centre of a field, away from the high hedges, is the place for a really private conversation' (1972, p.21) and where illicit love affairs typically occur. Thus, space assumes significance in considering how couples are able to maintain and negotiate such relationships whilst ensuring their secrecy. While Twamley (2013b) refers to how young couples must develop convoluted means through which to hide their relationship, she focuses her analysis on the attitudes towards such relationships. There is, therefore, a limited understanding as to how men maintain this degree of secrecy in their relationships by utilising different aspects of village space. This is particularly relevant in rural areas where space is more closely monitored in contrast to the relative anonymity of urban areas. Furthermore, secrecy is never total, but is instead dependent on audience and context so that secrecy from parents and elders is required, whilst confiding with friends is often desirable. According to Collins and Gregor '[s]ecrecy is the most powerful social differentiator' (1995, p. 76) forming strong bonds of trust among a closed society that is 'ever vigilant and intensely conscious of itself' (ibid). Secrecy is therefore not a singular concept but consists of multiple forms enacted and performed in different spaces and at different times.

4.3 Sexuality

Foucault argues that '[t]he history of sexuality... must first be written from the viewpoint of a history of discourses' (1976, p. 69), and throughout this history,

power has had an ubiquitous relationship with the meaning, development and negotiation of an understanding of sexuality. Note here that Foucault references a multiplicity of discourses, not a singular one. For Foucault, 'power is everywhere' (ibid, p.92) and with regard to sexuality, it is a power of negation, of imposing limits and restrictions. Certain restrictions are indeed desirable within society, such as those that protect the vulnerable from exploitation (in the case of rape and paedophilia, for example), and so it becomes a matter of balance, a line drawn in the proverbial sand, between protection and constraint. In India, this has in recent years made global news through the gang rape of a female student in New Delhi and is a serious issue that permeates Indian society. A sense of male 'sexual entitlement' embedded in power and gender relations at times may subvert socio-legal restrictions in the form of this sexual violence. For Foucault, a power over sexuality is evident in the attempts to conceal 'the truth of sex' (1976, pp.56-7) through law and taboo, structure and institutions, and particularly through the deployment of marital norms, the family and juridical control, which all seek to negate and constrain the seemingly dangerous aspects of an unleashed sexuality.

Connell (1987), in her work establishing a framework for analysing gender and sexuality, considers desire as socially understood through a series of prohibitions and constraints. However, Connell also argues that such socially produced prohibitions 'would be pointless without injunctions to love and marry the right kind of person, to find such-and-such a kind of masculinity or femininity desirable' and so '[t]he social pattern of desire is a joint system of prohibition and incitement' (1987, p.112). Power is never total and so sexuality does not form a simple dichotomy between individual expression on the one hand and societal repression on the other; instead it 'is actively produced and then negotiated in a range of spaces' (Brickell, 2009, p. 64). This conceptualisation of sexuality provides a lens through which this research seeks to answer questions such as how men learn about sexuality and love, and how normative expectations, prohibitions and public discourses shape and negotiate them.

A significant criticism levelled against Foucault is his failure to account adequately for gender within his analysis (Jackson and Scott 2010). Sexuality is closely influenced by, and in turn influences, gender, but these concepts should not be mistaken for synonymous phenomena. Gender may create the fundamental basis for the social ordering of sexuality, yet it is neither wholly determinant nor univocally informative of understandings of sexuality, which in itself has a strong influencing effect on gender. In India, sexuality is closely tied to gender relations and the development of normative masculine and feminine roles within society. Osella and Osella state that '[h]eterosexuality across south Asia is presumed, carefully cultivated, strictly policed and utterly naturalized, in a reproductive-based nexus of compulsory (arranged) marriage and parenthood' (2006, p.99). In south Asia, this 'heterosexual hegemony... exists within a situation of gender segregation and alongside strong structures of homosociality' (ibid). This relates closely to the themes of masculinity discussed in the previous section, particularly that of the life stages of a man, the liminal period of relative freedom and peer solidarity, notions of dominant masculinity, and how these conform to, and police, boundaries of sexuality.

An individual is not born with an innate sense of sexuality; instead sexuality is developed and learnt through social interaction and cultural influence. This is of great significance when considering how boys learn about sexuality and how this later manifests itself in performances and perceptions of pre-marital relationships in India. A sexual identity, or sexual self, can only be formed when there is an awareness of oneself as a sexual being (Gagnon & Simon, 2005). This self-awareness of sexuality is preceded by a gendered sense of self, which 'serves to frame and shape the process of becoming sexual' (Jackson and Scott 2010, p.113). For young people, an understanding of sexuality and its associated discourses, practices and meanings are acquired through the cultural and social context available to them in the form of (often limited) education, the media and peer influence. Such development of sexualities is also gendered in that boys and girls will access different sources with different ascribed meanings and gendered roles.

Further, peer influence and affirmation does not end at the formative stage, but continues to play a significant role throughout the lives of men, particularly in relation to 'masculine performative powers [which] are often defined in the context of taunts, challenges and contests among male friends' (Geetha, 1998, p. 319). Therefore, a sense of 'dominant' masculinity, as discussed in 4.2 above, is performed through an overt and often aggressive sexuality framed in a discourse of (hetero-) sexual conquests. Sexuality and masculinity become intertwined in the formation of a self that validates manhood in the eyes of peers through physicality, toughness and daring (attitudes, behaviours and discursive practices that are easily expressed in relation to sexuality and a 'successful' masculinity). Failed masculinity, on the other hand, is frequently framed in terms of homosexuality, either in the sense of an actual sexual inclination or through a failure to meet the standards of a normative masculinity resulting in the effeminate labelling of a man (Lindisfarne, 1994). As Butler states, gender is a 'strategy of survival', which is performed repetitively and with punitive consequences for 'those who fail to do their gender right' (1990, p.190). This may be expressed through the process of embodiment, which excludes or rejects certain (feminised) traits in favour of an often valorised and dominant masculinity (Brittan, 1989).

Sexuality, then, can be understood as a series of performances through which the actors recognise various sexual identities, practices and scenarios. Butler states that whilst it is 'individual bodies that enact these significations by becoming stylized into gendered modes, this "action" is a public action' (1990, p.191) and one which the audience and actors themselves come to believe. Shared understandings and social conventions of desire and attraction, routinized behaviour and interpersonal interactions, verbal and non-verbal markers therefore embody these performances.

For Gagnon and Simon, 'all human sexual behavior is socially scripted behavior' (2005, p. 198). This notion of scripts is not intended to be fixed nor socially

prescribed. Rather scripts are 'fluid improvisations involving ongoing processes of interpretation and negotiation' (Jackson and Scott 2010, p.15). Jackson and Scott draw on Gagnon and Simon's work by arguing that '[c]ultural scenarios, the stuff of media representations, public debate and commonsense knowledge, provide a shared, or at least generally available, stock of cultural knowledge about sexuality' (2010, p.15-6). Therefore, as Schrock and Schwalbe state, media imagery, for example, is important in providing 'a repertoire of signifying practices that males can draw on to craft manhood acts' and 'a shared symbolic language for identifying certain practices as signs of masculine character' (2009, p.283). While media influence is having an increasingly significant impact on perspectives and understandings of sexuality, peer influence 'plays a vital role in collectively making sense of the sexual mores and practices deriving from generally available cultural scenarios... in validating young people's own experience, making generally available sexual information personally meaningful and developing a sense of sexual competence (Jackson and Scott 2010, p.116-7).

These scripts are not deterministic of sexual behaviour, but instead provide the shared knowledge and meaning that enable us to make sense of the sexual and which may be a significant feature in the initiation of cross-gender relationships. Whilst scripts may form a basis for shared cultural understanding, they are also reflective of a gendered performance in which men and women adopt different roles and expectations. For Brittan, these '[s]cripts provide male actors with a number of possible guidelines and uses about the meanings of their sexual conduct... [and these] can be interpreted in a variety of ways, but they powerfully influence the performance' (1989, p.61). There is not, therefore, a sense of some unified, generic script. Instead, different men perform different characteristics of a (still male) sexuality, for example by expressing a sexuality based on dominance and conquest or, alternatively, by seeking an intimate relationship with a partner.

One particular understanding of sexuality that has its roots in Hindu mythology and religion is that of the dangers of female sexuality. This has subsequently become entrenched in gender relations and media portrayals. There is a division between, on the one hand, recognising the virtues of women's fertility and procreativity and, on the other hand, perceiving the dangers of a woman's overt and 'hot' sexuality, particularly as a potential threat to the unity and cohesion of her husband's family (Lamb, 2000; Uberoi, 2006). Dube discusses how sex for women is a more serious matter as 'the act affects her internally while it affects a man only externally' (1996, p. 10). Therefore, in inter-caste sexual relations men are able to purify themselves through the act of washing whereas women are considered to be permanently polluted (Dube 1996). This has potential implications for the different nature of the consequences for men and women upon discovery of pre-marital relationships. Furthermore, sexual transgressions within a caste are considered less severe, but men having sexual relations with a higher caste can be very problematic as this contravenes the well-defined limits of hypergamy: 'Superior seed can fall on an inferior field but inferior seed cannot fall on a superior field' (Dube 1996, p.11).

Uberoi (2006, p.122) outlines two roles for goddesses in Hindu mythology, which influences a dichotomy of female sexuality in India. First is the obedient, benign and respectful goddess when paired with and controlled by a male god. Second is the independent and powerful goddess, which may be either protective or destructive in her intentions. These stories play a significant role in constructing certain notions and understandings of sexuality and gender, particularly in terms of the idealisation of the mother goddess and the ideology of devotional love (Kakar, 1989; Uberoi, 2006). Other stories, such as that of the Lakshman Rekha, which refers to a line drawn around Sita by Lakshman to protect her from danger, has come to symbolise 'the idealised confinement of the chaste Indian woman' (Abraham 2004, p.213). Thus, as Abraham states, 'control of female sexuality is at the core of both patriarchal relations and caste relations... Family, marriage and kinship structures form the primary institutions through which female sexuality gets defined and controlled' (2004, pp. 212-3). In addition, a woman's sexuality is not only perceived as dangerous

to men in creating desire and lust, but is also a source of danger for women and their families in that a violation of their sexuality will bring dishonour and shame upon them (Abraham 2004).

4.4 Love

In recent decades, academics have increasingly examined the concept of emotion as part of the social process. No longer seen as the sole preserve of individual experiences, emotions are understood as fundamentally interpersonal and socio-culturally varied (Lutz, 1988). For Lutz, '[t]alk about emotions is simultaneously talk about society- about power and politics, about kinship and marriage, about normality and deviance' (1988, p.6). As emotions are considered part of the social context, Lutz and Abu-Lughod (1990) emphasise the importance of discourse in the studying of emotions through social interaction. Such a focus then 'leads us to a more complex view of the multiple, shifting, and contested meanings possible in emotional utterances and interchanges, and from there to a less monolithic concept of emotion' (ibid, p.11). Emotional discourses are 'pragmatic acts and communicative performances' (ibid), but are also reflective of power relations and status differences between individuals and groups within a particular society.

Love is perhaps the most commonly discussed and portrayed emotion throughout history, as depicted through media, literature, drama, and people's everyday lives. Love is, as inferred in the broader understanding of emotion, a socio-cultural construction. That is not to deny the physiological attribution or effect of love, but to be aware that the meaning, significance, and interpretation of love are contextual, both spatially and temporally. Whilst it appears that there is indeed a universal emotion called love (see Jankowiak & Fischer, 1992), what it means and how it plays out in the daily lives of social relationships is dependent on the socio-cultural context. Weeks provides a useful understanding that love 'offers a language, a series of narratives, codes of behaviour, and a multiplicity of possibilities for making sense of our need for

each other' (1995, p. 176). Love can be used as an interesting lens through which to glimpse 'the complex interconnections between cultural, economic, interpersonal, and emotional realms of experience' (Padilla et al, 2007, p. ix). As such, it provides a degree of insight as to how societies are organized and understood 'as well as how individuals enact, resist, or transform social discourses of love within specific cultural and historical contexts' (*ibid*).

An important aspect in understanding love is the notion of 'self' and 'other'. Apart from purely narcissistic tendencies, love, in any of its forms, always requires an other with whom this emotion can be targeted and narrated. Of course, love does not have to be reciprocated by the other, but when it is this forms the basis for a collaborative narrative based on a temporality that typically projects this relationship into the future. Love forms a particular bond of social relations between two people, but one that is not isolated from the wider web of social relationships, constraints and expectations. Love, therefore, also becomes a performance, a mode of communication deciphered through the cultural codes of a particular society. Different phases require a different discourse or performance (Bernstein & Schaffner, 2005; Jankowiak, 1995) dependent on culture but also on individual personality and context. For instance, the contrast between the tentative nature with which an individual speaks of their attraction to another who is yet to reciprocate compared with another individual's extrovert expression of undying love in the face of the same uncertainty. Love is complex, but not incomprehensible. We may understand what a person means when they say they have fallen in love, even if we have not experienced such an emotion. This is because the social scripts of a culture, fuelled by an insatiable accounting of love in the media and popular culture, informs a particular society what love is and how it should be expressed (Giddens, 1992; Hatfield & Rapson, 1996).

While much has been written on Western ideologies, conceptualisations and chronologies of love, it seems redundant to reproduce such discussions here after stating that love is contextually specific. Instead, I will move directly into a discussion of love in India. Before I begin, however, it is important to highlight

that there are many forms of love (Dwyer, 2000), from familial to friendship, devout to material, patriotic to romantic, the latter itself having a variety of forms and guises. While there may be a sense of overlap in understandings, attributed feelings and relationships between some or all of these forms of love, there are also clear distinctions and boundaries in which transgressions would create social outcry. For the purposes of this research, the conceptual focus here will remain on romantic forms of love, but other guises may make an appearance where they provide a certain explanatory relevance. A final caveat is the oft-assumed heterosexual nature of love when discussed in the literature. Whilst not wishing to deny or ignore the presence of homosexual love in India, this research will be focusing primarily upon heterosexual love as being the dominant bond expressed throughout the narratives of the men I met. Homosexual practices and discourses will, however, form a notable aspect in the development and expression of an individual's sexuality and masculinity.

Normative discourses of love in India are largely confined to marriage and myth. In the public discourse, love should not precede a parentally arranged and community approved marriage. In the four life stages of men, love is seen as particularly harmful in the first stage (the celibate student), but receives greater acceptance for men as householders. In this sense, 'the Gods are said to fulfil all the desires of the man who fulfils his duty [of marriage]' (Orsini, 2006a, p. 7). After marriage love will grow over time, predominantly shown through the wife's devotion to her husband as a 'god', and in turn, the husband will show love to his wife and family through meeting their basic and material needs and assuming the role of protector, as head of the household. Love then is confined to the family, to the private space, and should not be expressed publicly. Couples should not hold hands in the street or kiss, or show affection in front of others, and women should not refer to their husband by his name, although there are signs that this latter practice is diminishing (Trawick, 1992). As Trawick states '[n]o one ever said that the sentiments of sexual love should not exist. Sexual pleasure... was not an evil force... [However, s]exual pleasure was supposed to be gotten only through marriage' (1992, p.94). Sex and pleasure is to be expected and hoped for in marriage, but this is a silent desire (or one whispered

to intimate friends) and not one talked about freely. Instead, marriage is perceived as the institute for social reproduction.

Yet it would be wrong to assume, or to claim, that there is no evidence or discussion of love in the public realm in India. Whilst formal education may keep a tightly censored lip on the subject, media, marketing, and particularly Bollywood films, frequently portray love, often in a variety of guises and relationships that would be considered transgressive, if performed in the real world. Nor is this a particularly new phenomenon, as evidenced in Hindu myths and stories depicting intricate relationships of love and desire (Uberoi 2006) and Hindi literature of the nineteenth century described the excitement of romantic love (Dalmia, 2006). While some may portray love and sex as publicly taboo subjects, in reality they are a common element of every day discourse for people. As Butler notes about the taboo of incest, '[t]hat the prohibition exists in no way suggests that it works (1990, p.57) and so, instead, the existence of such a taboo may actually generate a heightened sense of desire through 'virtue of the eroticization of that taboo' (ibid). Furthermore, although pre-marital relationships are viewed as transgressive, Osella and Osella raise an interesting point when they state that flirting draws young people into the understanding of a 'heterosexual hypergamy' and 'the possibilities of cross-sexual relationships' (2006, p.109), which actually serves to reinforce societal and sexuality norms.

Two separate, yet similar, studies within the context of northern India raise some of the themes of love and sexuality that are particularly relevant for this thesis. In her comparative ethnographic study among young, unmarried, urban middle-class Gujaratis, both in India and the UK, Twamley (2013a, 2014) focuses on attitudes towards love and marriage. Abraham (2002) also explores the nature of heterosexual peer networks and relationships among low income, young, unmarried youth attending college in Mumbai. Both authors discuss the significance of two forms of heterosexual pre-marital relationship, that of time pass and true love. Abraham also draws attention to a third form of cross-gender relationship: the bhai-behen (literally 'brother-sister') relationship that

denotes friendship between sexes with no romantic or sexual intention. It provides a 'safe', socially acceptable relationship and is commonly used when a boy and a girl are from the same samaj and are therefore classed as kin in a categorical, rather than literal, sense. Thus, cross-gender relationships are portrayed as either entirely platonic by categorising them as familial (bhai-behen), and often sealing them symbolically through the tying of a bracelet around the other's wrist (especially during the festival of Raksha Bandhan), or else they have clear connotations of a romantic or sexual nature. However, there is, to some extent, a blurring of this boundary with regard to true love relationships.

While the bhai-behen relationship is an interesting feature of gender relations, it is the other two forms of relationship that are of particular interest for this research. As Abraham (2002) and Twamley (2013a) both state, from interviews with their participants, time pass relationships tend to be based on sexual encounters, which are often short term in nature, with little intention of future prospects for marriage by those involved. In contrast, true love denotes a relationship based on long-term intimacy and emotional attachment where sex is not normally a feature, as the couple exhibit their intention to portray the relationship as one suitable for marriage even if, in reality, social norms forbid such a match (*ibid*). Whilst the former signifies physical attraction and lust, the latter represents an idealised love initially framed in terms of friendship (Twamley 2013) and is one of particularity in the sense that this notion of love is defined through that individual and no other. While these relationships may be framed as ones based on friendship, it is rare for romances to develop in this way. Instead, the reference to friendship belies a desire to emphasise the non-sexual basis for the relationship in sharp contrast to time pass, and in an attempt to position it more closely to the socially acceptable arranged marriage. True love is identified as a higher form of love and one that is described by those involved as comparable to the companionate form of love that is professed to develop over time during an arranged marriage. Thus, couples in such a taboo pre-marital relationship endeavour to portray their love as

respectable ensuring that the girl remains a virgin before marriage in order to maintain the honour of those involved (Trawick, 1992; Twamley, 2013a).

Traditionally, marriages were performed at a young age, especially in lower caste communities, and despite an increase in the legal age of marriage, engagement ceremonies still typically occur within childhood. However, Uberoi contends that as the age of marriage continues to rise 'a phase now exists between sexual maturity and marriage for which, cognitively speaking, there was no provision under the traditional order' (2006, pp. 25–6), thus providing more space for individuals to potentially explore and initiate pre-marital relationships. However, most of these pre-marital relationships are considered to be 'doomed romances' (Osella and Osella 2006, p.113), as participants have little intention of disobeying and dishonouring their parents.

Pocock (1972) describes in his ethnographic study of the Patidar community in Gujarat, that there is usually greater opportunity for initiating and conducting pre-marital relationships among the lower castes. This is because girls from these groups often leave the household to work in the fields or cut grass for the buffaloes in the early evenings and therefore increase their chances of meeting and flirting with boys. Households of a higher caste and class can afford to hire labourers to do the work on their behalf and so have a greater control over the female members of the family and are more likely to prevent any incident or relationship that would cause an issue for their family's honour. Therefore, castes that can 'afford to keep their girls secluded and protected tend to marry them off after puberty, other castes that require their daughters work in the fields or away from home prefer to marry them before puberty' (Dube 1996, p.14). While this aspect of gender and sexual relations is not theorised further in Pocock's work, it provides an interesting ethnographic detail, which informs this thesis' focus on pre-marital relationships, masculinity and honour.

4.5 Love and modernity

Modernity and tradition are generally framed as opposing and contradictory forces, but as Rudolph and Rudolph argue, it is more useful to analyse the variations in their meanings and 'how they infiltrate and transform each other' (1967, p. 3). In Appadurai's seminal work, '[g]lobalization does not necessarily or even frequently imply homogenization or Americanization' (1996, p.17), but can often be a localising process embedded within an historical context. The study of such processes is also an inherently complex affair and although this thesis does not aim to answer questions explicitly on processes of social change, it is clear that discourse and practices of modernity and tradition invariably have a great influence upon young men's lives. Even a cursory application of Appadurai's (1996) five dimensions of global cultural flows (that of ethnoscapes, technoscapes, finacescapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes) within the context of India over the last two decades would stress the potential influence that such flows may have on society. However, evidence of modernity, or even the process of Westernization, 'does not necessarily imply the assimilation of modern and secular values' (Rudolph & Rudolph, 1967, p. 120).

Changes in fashion or diet may occur for an individual or a group, while that individual/group firmly upholds 'traditional' or localised practices, such as arranged marriage. A new, 'dominant' cultural style may be assimilated and emulated but within a localised historical framework. Therefore, ceremonies or rites of passage are typically 'concerned with the production of what we might call *local subjects*, actors who properly belong to a situated community' (Appadurai 1996, p.179, emphasis in original). Another example of these different layers of influence can be understood through the increased access to cable television and the hundreds of channels, local, national and global, that this offers to many households. However, while people may be able to watch, and be influenced, by films, programmes and music from across the world, there has also been a resurgence in the number, and popularity, of religious TV serials, such as those based on the Ramayana. This latter influence may lead to a

strengthening of 'Sanskritic values', which 'run counter to the spread of secular and modern values' (Karanth, 1996, p. 93) and yet are equally as significant for understanding processes of social change.

Further, migration adopts a significant role in the spread of cultural influences, especially from urban to rural areas. Economic migration, both daily or for longer periods, is a significant feature of some men's lives and provides an opportunity for larger incomes and increased status. As incomes increase for certain men, so too does their disposable income. Some men contribute this money to the needs of the household or for savings. For others, it provides a means by which to enhance their social status, especially among peers, through purchasing material goods, such as clothes, mobile phones or even a motorbike (a real mark of economic success within the village). As Osella and Osella state, '[a]ccumulation and spending set performance hierarchies of manliness, which result in and are linked to forms of feminisation of those who are perceived as not playing the game or, far worse, as losing the game' (2006, p.84). Men from villages, and particularly within certain samaj (such as the Christian community in this research village), are increasingly travelling to cities for college or professional employment in order to meet higher aspirations and qualifications. The city is a landscape with which men engage daily, returning with new ideas and imaginaries of culture. It is no longer a remote place for the imagination, particularly when it is set alongside 'the rapid flow of mass-mediated images, scripts, and sensations' (Appadurai 1996, p.4). The variety of influences of the global and the local, the modern and the traditional, form a melting pot within which young men negotiate their identities, aspirations and daily lives. However, although horizons have certainly been broadened in recent years, especially for younger generations (which creates a greater imaginary of possibilities than previous generations could have envisioned), in practice such possibilities are not so easily achieved. For many marginalised men living in rural areas, access to these new resources, spaces and opportunities may be beyond their reach, which may exacerbate a sense of frustration for young men unable to match the imagined with their realities.

Within this debate on modernity, there is an increasingly large body of literature focusing on the global shifting ideology of love and marriage (Giddens, 1992; Hatfield & Rapson, 1996; Jankowiak & Fischer, 1992; Padilla et al., 2007; Wardlow & Hirsch, 2006). The broad argument is that through processes of modernity such as industrialisation, urbanisation, the rise of wage labour, a decrease in fertility rates, improvements in gender equality and women's participation in the workforce (Padilla et al., 2007; Wardlow & Hirsch, 2006) there has been an historical shift in the meaning of love and the consequence this has for wider societal norms and structures like kinship and marriage. There is, according to these scholars, a shift from a notion of relationships as forming a means for social reproduction towards a sense of attachment and intimacy, which are less instrumental and more 'romantic' (Rebhun, 2007). Although, as Padilla et al caution, '[t]his does not mean that marriage ceased to be a critical element of social reproduction but only that love and pleasure gained increasing prominence as key criteria for the evaluation of a successful marriage' (2007, p.xvii). According to Rebhun '[t]he individual begins to emerge as a major social category, and so too does the couple, and concepts of love reflect this shift' (2007, p. 115). For Giddens (1992), the conditions of modernity shift the emphasis of marital structures away from their ties to economic and kinship contracts, and romantic love develops as a form of narrative between the individual and the other. As Palriwala and Kaur state, '[r]ather than family expectations and community norms, love is to provide the basis of marriage, thereby ensuring a personally satisfying conjugalit' (2014, p.16). With the development of romantic notions of love, often fed by a popular romantic literature and other forms of media, the question of intimacy is raised and notions of sexuality become detached from reproduction (*ibid*, p.180). Over time relationships shift in their meaning and become closer to the understanding of a 'pure relationship', which adopts the traits of democracy, autonomy and equality. Parry (2001) in his research in Chhattisgarh, agrees that there is an increasing desire for marital intimacy that extends beyond satisfying marital duty, at least among the industrial urban working class. However, contrary to Giddens' formulation, Parry argues that this has been

accompanied by a decline in divorce as notions of self-sacrificing love emphasise 'a new stress on the indissolubility of [the couple's] relationship' (2001, p.817).

This view of a globalising ideology of love pushing along a trajectory towards a singular point of equality is open to considerable criticism. First, there is an ethnocentric assumption in the portrayal of love, and certain traits, as moving towards a Western understanding that is somehow more liberal, advanced and 'better'. Much of Giddens' theorising lacks empirical evidence and while others have drawn on significant ethnographic data, they tend to hedge their findings through a need to understand and highlight the importance of contextual differences and local interpretations (see Padilla et al 2007; Wardlow and Hirsch 2006). Second, the theory assumes, rather naively, that love, intimacy and the idealisation of the other is a new phenomenon across cultures whereas historical texts indicate that these notions of love have often been long established. Third, Giddens tends to portray tradition and modernity dualistically in terms of a notion of democratising love. Instead, it is not simply about an increasing individualism but about the transference of emotional well-being to someone else. Therefore, 'my' happiness depends completely on 'you' in Giddens' (1992) understanding of the pure relationship; it is more social and emotional, rather than material, and so love occurs when that dependence on an 'other' only occurs with that person. There is a sense of 'particularity' here in that 'she is the only one' and there is no substitution for her.

Another area of social life through which modernity is supposed to have had a particular influence in India is that of sexuality (Abraham 2004). Much of this sense of an influencing modernity is encapsulated within new notions of identity, often among the burgeoning urban middle classes. Extensive new products, media outlets, publications and advertisements target this rapidly growing class in order to create, then sell, a range of aspirations and identities (Dwyer, 2000; Reddy, 2006), and these have often been representative of a new expression of sexuality (John, 1998). Indian films and celebrity magazines increasingly portray new sexual discourses, providing detailed accounts of

stars' romantic lives. As Dwyer states, this 'allows readers, among whom dating is restricted, premarital sex is taboo and arranged marriages... are still the norm, to fantasize about such relationships and to learn about how they would behave in certain situations' (2000, p.194). This media 'allow scripts for possible lives to be imbricated with the glamour of film stars and fantastic film plots' (Appadurai, 1996, p. 3) and through which 'electronic media provide resources for self-imagining as an everyday social project' (ibid, p.4). The significance of mass media in this regard can construct what Appadurai calls a 'community of sentiment' (1996, p.8) where a group begins to 'imagine and feel things together' and through this shifts in attitudes and behaviours may occur. For Osella and Osella, cinema is 'a modern arena analogous to myth, a forum for collective fantasy' (2006, p.170), whereby young men may attempt to assume certain characteristics of stars or perform certain modes of film dialogue (particularly with regard to expressions of love). Osella and Osella argue that '[f]ilm has played a large part over the 20th century in kindling the desire for love and in shaping its aesthetics; we expect that television will play an increasingly important role in the 21st century' (ibid, p.205).

The discourse and practice of love within a culture is not a static phenomenon, and shifts in meaning are not only limited to relatively recent products of modernity, such as film and television. In Kaviraj's (2006) analysis of the historical changes in the Indian discourse of 'prem', he considers the strong influence of literature, particularly that of Rabindranath Tagore, at the end of the nineteenth century. Prem historically referred to broader notions of love, including parental, friendship, and compassion, but these connotations gradually fell away until the term was primarily used to describe a 'new romantic attachment between individuated selves' (ibid, p.164). This shift in discourse occurred primarily through the influence of the novel, according to Kaviraj, which 'tend to create an impression of the commonplaceness of such actions and behaviour, giving them a misleading aura of ordinariness, i.e. such things as engaging in love relationships happen all the time in novels in a society in which these things happened only rarely' (p.181). This can therefore provide a powerful example through which individuals may understand, share

and practice a different discourse of love, and which may even result in a normalisation of such practice (*ibid*). Popular novels and other written or stage genre often actively sought to create a tension 'between the individual aspiration to love and the social duty to please and obey one's family' (Orsini, 2006b, p. 236), a tension that was further embedded within cinema.

Increasingly, there is a new field of commodification of sexuality, which is seen as a signifier for modern identity and success, especially among the youth who are typically the major consumers of these new products (Abraham 2004). For example, Reddy refers to the striking change and contrast in the advertisement of condoms between the government's policy message against over-population in the 1970s and those commercial strategies of the 1990s that 'signal a new public legitimisation of consensual sexuality, highlighting the agency of men and to some extent women, and the possibility of their mutual pleasure' (2006, p. 180). Sexuality and love, therefore, become a means of expression for a modern identity, 'about the cultivation of a more individualized self' (Wardlow and Hirsch 2006, p.14-15) in relation to changing notions of intimacy and gender relations with a romantic 'other'.

While modernity and its products have an increasing influence on people's lives in India, access to such new material is not equal, with the urban middle classes having greater access than rural lower classes and castes. Moreover, modernity does not necessarily lead to liberalism but in fact can create a 'traditional backlash' through values in which communities actively resist change by re-emphasising conservative morals. In India, despite a couple of centuries of colonial rule and Western influence, and an increasing valorisation of individualism in economic life, parentally arranged marriages, within the social structures of kinship and caste rules, still dominate (Uberoi 2006). As mentioned earlier, pre-marital relationships and sex are still socially taboo and to be conducted in secret, if at all. This, at least on the surface, does not present an aspect of culture and society that is undergoing a rapid transformation

towards a more open, romantic and companionate form of love and marriage as has been advocated to be occurring elsewhere in the world.

4.6 Conclusion

Masculinity is the lens through which this thesis aims to explore discourses and practices of sexuality and love in the context of rural Gujarat. The notion of multiple masculinities that are performed in different contexts, and in front of different audiences, is important in understanding how men negotiate their roles, identities, status and ideologies in relation to others and to social norms. Social expectations and cultural norms emphasise the significance of life stages and rites of passage, particularly that of marriage, which represents a period of transition from boyhood to manhood, and a relative freedom from responsibility. Prior to this transition is a liminal period in which society expects boys to be 'preparing' for manhood and to ignore the distractions and allure of pre-marital relationships. However, it is clear that a number of male youths ignore such normative expectations in favour of initiating relationships, whether they are time pass or true love. The forming of strong male bonds that affirm and police certain 'dominant' characteristics of masculinity and sexuality also marks this period of liminality. There is, however, not a singular form of dominant or hegemonic masculinity, but different models and representations dependent on different levels of society and different contexts.

Sexuality is learnt and developed under a number of cultural and social influences- family, peers, media, for instance- and becomes closely inter-related to notions and performances of masculinity and love. Sexualities are often imbued with, and constrained by, social values but that does not mean they are restricted to them alone. Instead, individuals are likely to perform different expressions of sexuality in different contexts, and this may reflect perspectives and practices of different forms of pre-marital relationship. Love, according to normative public discourse, should develop only after marriage and should not exist in any form, romantic or sexual, before marriage. Cultural notions of honour and strong, prohibitive rules of marriage selection are supposed to

ensure that pre-marital relationships do not occur and marital ties reinforce caste solidarity. Yet, the discourse of love is not static, and has historically shifted from ancient representations in myths to images portrayed in novels and, more recently, that of film and television. Whilst not attempting to trace an in depth historical trajectory of love in India, it is apparent that at different times, love has assumed different meanings. The influence of modernity and tradition on Indian society, and particularly on love and sexuality, should not be considered as forming a dichotomy. Instead, varying influences produce contradictions and assimilations, transformations and consolidations, which are rooted in the localized, historical context. Although this thesis does not aim to analyse explicitly processes of social change, it is important to acknowledge the conditions and state of flux within which these male narratives of love and sexuality preside.

Character Profiles I

This short, preliminary section to Chapter 5 (and the subsequent profile sections at the start of Chapters 6 and 7) intends to provide some brief background information on certain key participants within my research whose recurrent or prolonged appearance merits a more rounded introduction than those who make briefer appearances. For a full table providing an overview on key identity markers for all participants in my research, see Appendix 1.

Bhavesh

Bhavesh had a difficult, impoverished childhood in the Christian samaj. He often recounted to me the hardships his family experienced, such as regularly having only one basic meal a day, there being no shoes on the children's feet and his parents being unable to pay for school trips or uniforms. So from a young age he would go out to work to help contribute to the family income and as a result he would frequently be absent from school. Looking at him now, it would be difficult to imagine such an impoverished background, as he drives one of the only cars in the Christian samaj, wears shirt, trousers and shoes, and emits an air of confidence and ease around people from all samaj, class and caste backgrounds. Perhaps this confidence comes as a result of his obvious natural intelligence, sharp wit and self-drive to be successful. But it also has, as Bhavesh himself would admit, a great deal to do with his education, particularly his time spent as a Jesuit novice.

Despite his frequent absence from school, he was a high achiever, which led to a place at a technology college. However, rather than take on the apprenticeship that was to follow, Bhavesh instead joined the Jesuit Society to start the long novitiate programme to become a priest. While meeting his future wife meant that he did not complete his training (staying only for a couple of years), this was to have a profound impact on his life. His time with the Jesuits enabled him to learn and speak English fluently (a rare ability within the village), to experience the world outside of his village and to have a higher level of

education. It also cemented his Catholic faith and opened the door to his current career as an online media commentator and reporter of Catholic events across Gujarat. His self-taught skills as a photographer and filmmaker, alongside the financial and moral support and networking of various Fathers within the Jesuit Society, has enabled him to carve a niche in this particular market in which he is recognised throughout the Catholic Society. He now travels all over Gujarat, and beyond, recording and photographing events.

The experiences, skills, determination and moral compass acquired during these years has resulted in a man, now in his mid-thirties, who is quite an unusual figure in the village context. Although he, perhaps inevitably, still holds certain perspectives that are indicative of broader societal structures, and at times seemed to contradict other viewpoints he held, he is one of the most open-minded individuals I met in Gujarat, broadly dismissing casteism, religious differences and traditional ideologies of gender both discursively, but also often in practice. In his role as my interpreter, his liberal approach, alongside his engaging personality, was invaluable in accessing the low caste Hindu samaj of the Tadpada and the often rather isolated Muslim samaj. Further, he became a very useful source for explaining the village context and cultural nuances that I would have failed to grasp without him. Finally, he was a very articulate interviewee, especially on the subject of his own love marriage.

Hadis

Hadis is 23 years old and from the Muslim samaj. He only completed his education until 4th standard (around nine years of age) when he was taken to work with his uncle in Rajasthan for 7 years. By that time his mother had left his father and moved to Mumbai. His father has a poor reputation within the samaj for drinking, womanising and not working. Hadis went to live in Mumbai for a couple of years with his mother, but then came back to the village as he was missing his father. Unfortunately, his father had not changed in nature and had sold their land for a small amount compared to its current value. Hadis began to work as a maker of saris with a group of young men in the community, but with

the advent of machinists it became less viable for such a business to remain profitable. He then found that he could make a reasonable income through gambling, but as a result of this combined with drinking alcohol, he gained a poor reputation in the samaj with mothers telling their sons not to socialise with him. He realises that despite earning good money from gambling, he also needs to have a job, which provides a better status, so he has started as a builder. Hadis holds considerable resentment towards his father, blaming him for their current plight and status within the samaj. Yet he is reluctant to leave the village, as they would lose their house to his uncle. He has, however, contributed to his own situation, not only by his behaviour and choice of livelihood, but also as a result of a series of pre-marital relationships he has had within the samaj.

Navin

Navin is 24 years old and from the Christian samaj. Self-image is important to him and he has a smart dress sense, carefully oiled hair and gold bangle adorning his forearm. It also befits his livelihood status as a 'wire man' (electrical engineer), a government job which he inherited from his father (a common practice in Gujarat where state jobs often pass on to children, spouses or other family members when a person retires or dies). As with many government jobs, this provides a good, stable income, job security and status for Navin who as a result has also been able to establish a successful side-line business, which provides a useful extra source of income to support his role as head of the household following the death of his father.

However, the seemingly positive, friendly (if a little boastful) and successful appearance of Navin belies a darker period during his childhood and adolescence. As a young boy he was kidnapped, taken to a city and held and beaten for over a fortnight before he managed to escape en route to Mumbai by train. This inevitably left him deeply psychologically scarred and as a teenager he admitted that at times he felt such uncontrollable anger, at one point attempting to commit suicide by setting himself alight. However, he survived,

and since then has become more at ease with himself, although tendencies towards self-harm continued to thread through his narratives of love.

Raheem

Raheem is from a low class family in the Muslim samaj and lives in a small house set back from one of the main roads that passes through the community. He is 26 years old, slim, with an enthusiastic and considerate nature. He was very welcoming to me and was eager to assist with my research in whatever ways he could. With the impoverished situation of his family, Raheem left school in the 7th Standard (about 12 years old) in order to find employment. He earned money through a number of different means, including cutting trees, and as a tractor and rickshaw driver, before he was invited to join a number of peers from his samaj as a painter and decorator, a job which he continues to this day. Raheem lives with his parents and has a difficult relationship with his father who is often abusive and who no longer works, leaving the sole responsibility of supporting the household to Raheem. Raheem believes his career ambitions have been constrained as a result of his troubled relationship with his father but he will not leave his mother alone or incur the tarnishing of his reputation by being perceived to abandon his parents. As a child he was not religious as his parents never instructed him nor took him to the mosque and it was only after meeting his true love partner that he began to understand and practice Islam.

During my stay he was travelling back and forth to his wife's family home where she had recently given birth to their first child. This marriage, a love one, followed the long and clandestine true love relationship that is the focus of his inclusion in this thesis. This narrative of love formed the greater part of a long interview I held with him late one night in the Musim samaj, and in which he carefully and meticulously articulated his emotions, experiences and memories from this affair.

5 What's Love Got To Do With It? Male narratives of sexuality and love

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores male narratives in order to begin to unpack notions of masculinity, sexuality and love through every day expressions and performances. The opening sections consider the processes and influences by which boys form sexualities and how this subsequently shapes attitudes and practices of pre-marital relationships, and gender relations more broadly. Society generally dictates the normative roles and expectations for gender and sexuality, for instance that of patriarchy and heterosexuality, although this does not exclude the possibility of deviation. Throughout this chapter, notions of multiple masculinities inter-relate with that of sexuality. How these notions then develop throughout childhood, adolescence and into manhood are significant for understanding pre-marital relationships. Influences of social expectation and norms, peers and family, modernity and tradition, combine to shape male narratives and practices of love, which for many young men form a significant part of their daily lives. These everyday accounts and notions of sexuality and love provide insight into the practice, discourse and experiences men share, as well as the ways in which they diverge. Such narratives play a significant role in men's everyday existence, whether it be in terms of formative sexualities, male peer bonding, developing the skills and knowledge for relationships, fulfilling sexual desires, or aspiring to love. It is here that the theme of male peer influence and bonding is first introduced empirically and illustrates the significance of these male relationships in establishing certain desirable and dominant traits of both masculinity and sexuality.

The initiation of pre-marital relationships by men often follows socially scripted, almost ritualistic, processes that are heavily reliant upon a shared cultural knowledge. Once initiated, these relationships typically follow one of two forms: time pass or true love. These two types of relationship are often indicative of different male attitudes towards sex, love and women. The second

half of this chapter considers these differing approaches to pre-marital relationships and explores how they relate to certain performances and discourses of masculinity and sexuality. For instance, there are significant differences between the attitudes, language and behaviour of the two forms of relationship that reflect broader and multiple understandings of masculinities for young men within this context. One particular instance is a case of sexual violence described by one young man that appears to reflect broader societal attention on themes of masculinity, gender relations and sexuality encapsulated in recent events within India.

5.2 Learning about sexuality: traditions and transitions

From boyhood, through adolescence, and into early adulthood, boys learn how to become men (Higate, 2012). Whilst this period of learning involves preparing skills, knowledge and networks that will enable a man to perform the traditionally expected roles of provider and head of household, the development of a socially acceptable sexuality is also crucial if a man is to progress towards marriage and family life. Both are clear markers of a successful man in the Indian context. Notions of masculinity and sexuality become intertwined with understandings of performance and audience and the ability to learn a socially approved role (or multiple roles), which often entails a degree of 'rehearsal'. Individuals learn what is expected of them in terms of behaviour, language, and attitudes through affirmation and policing by family, peers and wider society (Brickell, 2009). In India, there are clear stages and transitions from boyhood to manhood with a public discourse highlighting the significance of marriage as a rite of passage, imbuing status upon individual men, not only within the household in terms of decision making and autonomy, but also in the wider community. However, as this chapter will discuss, there are other notions of rites of passage, particularly among peers who may identify pre-marital sexual activity as a significant marker of successful manhood.

A number of societal processes and influences shape an individual's sexuality. Sexuality typically conforms to certain norms reflected through gender

relations, societal structures (such as caste and class) as well as more formalised mechanisms such as political and legal frameworks. There is often a sense that individuals, and groups, are attempting (sub-consciously for the most part) to negotiate and reproduce meanings and understandings of sexuality on a daily basis vis-à-vis societal structures, constraints and normative patterns (Brickell, 2009; Connell, 1987; Foucault, 1976). The intention of this part of the chapter is to discuss some of the main strategies and means through which men develop this dominant understanding of sexuality in a village context, including the influence of peers and family, same sex eroticism, initiation and anxieties around sex. Increasingly, performances of masculinity and sexuality are being shaped by processes and products of modernity, such as media imagery, changing livelihoods, and material consumption, which provide 'a repertoire of signifying practices that males can draw on to craft manhood acts' (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009, p. 283). At the same time, historical discourses and influences, such as religious and cultural myths, practices and rituals, retain a strong grip on many individual's lives and are able to influence practices and expressions of sexuality and love (John & Nair, 1998; Kakar, 1989; Uberoi, 2006).

So how do men learn a particular sexuality, which subsequently shapes identity and behaviour? It is a fair assertion that men learn much through a process of osmosis; the semi-conscious accruing of knowledge through observation and mimicry of other, older members of the community. As Abraham states: '[b]oys and girls learn about sex and sexuality through indirect inferences from, as they said, 'here and there' (2004, p. 219). Just as there are certain roles, behaviours and expressions of masculinity, so too there are normatively prescribed manners of sexuality. However, while there is a dominant cultural expectation with regard to a certain form of controlled sexuality, there are alternative forms that are practised and performed away from the scrutinising public gaze. This produces somewhat of a tightrope requiring young men to carefully negotiate different forms and patterns of sexuality in different contexts and in front of different audiences.

5.2.1 Gender roles and play

Notions of sexuality and gender identity that become established in an individual's adult life are constructed and based on childhood experiences that are strongly influenced by family, in particular through the development of distinctive and differentiated gender roles within the household (Abraham, 2004). While this research does not delve deeply into the formation and expression of gender roles within the household, the significance of its influence on the development of sexuality of men cannot be ignored. From a young age, there is a socio-cultural preparation of boys and girls for their roles in adult lives (Jackson & Scott, 2010; Uberoi, 2006). However, one must be careful here not to fall into the overly simplified and generalised trap of social role theory as, 'gender acquisition is not smooth, harmonious and consensual' (Brittan 1989, p.23). For Brittan, 'socialization is not simply about the acquisition of roles, but rather it is about the exercise of power by one group over another group' (ibid, pp. 44-45). In the initial sense, this is the power parents (and other elders within the family or *samaj*) exercise over children and is therefore 'the process whereby children acquire an ideology which naturalizes gender' (ibid, p.45). Boys are encouraged to be strong, brave and independent in order to one day assume the role of head of their household and fulfil the masculine norms of provider and decision maker. Girls, on the other hand, learn to be obedient and respectful with an emphasis placed on household duties and responsibilities, such as caring for younger siblings and helping with the cleaning or the preparation of food. Such roles are reinforced through differentiated discursive practices, either negatively in that a boy, for example, may be teased or scolded for crying, or 'positively', through affirmation of male status and importance (whether it be through lavish gifts and sweets or statements, such as 'you will be head of this household one day'). Not all households will raise their children in this way, and not all children will assume these roles either, but this does not prevent a culturally prescribed gendered norm from materialising and having a strong influence upon society.

Alongside the differential treatment of children by adults based on their gender, there is also the importance of role-play games among children at an age when gender segregation is not so strictly enforced or monitored as it becomes in adolescence. One young Muslim man reminisced about a game he would play with a friend's sister when he was in 7th Standard (around 11 or 12 years old). In this game they would pretend to be married:

So then let us give food and then after that I would say let us go to sleep and also wife has to come to sleep and we will have sex. So for sex we would remove clothes and it was a very small penis and not getting erect much but I would go and touch her vagina and then I would tell the girl that after one month she would get a child (Gohar, 20 years old, Muslim - during interview with Sabiq, May 2013).

Such games reinforce socially prescribed gender roles and normative discourses confirming the dominance of social institutions, such as marriage and the family, and social rules that forbid sex before marriage. These games are also representative of an early 'discovery' of the 'body' and the gendered, and sexual, nature of it. As young boys assume their heterosexual and patriarchal position within society, they may come to understand the potency of the male body and how this often denies the potency of the female body (Brittan 1989). On one occasion Gohar and the girl were discovered by his uncle, whilst he was naked and on top of the girl. Fearing a strong rebuke and beating by his father if told by his uncle what has happened, Gohar narrates his surprise when his uncle instead asked: *'How much did you do? Tell me, I want to know if you were successful or not?'* This narrative creates a contradiction for analysis in that it simultaneously supports and contravenes social norms. It supports in the sense of promoting two of the important themes of Indian life (as recognised by Osella and Osella 2006): marriage and the subsequent production of children. Thus, it provides a preamble for the rite of passage for young men from that of unmarried student to married householder and indicates a process of learning or rehearsing for this marker of manhood at an early age. Yet, by playing out these roles, the two protagonists are contravening- at least theoretically at this young, inexperienced age- the social taboo of pre-marital sex (although how

aware they are of their actions and the consequences is unclear). The uncle's reaction also further contradicts the normative discourse. One would expect that he would strongly admonish the children for their actions in order to prevent any potential issues for the families. Instead, his reaction is more akin to that of a male peer who may affirm this transgressive sexuality as a 'successful' sexual conquest. The age of the young couple, their relative naivety and the relaxed character of the uncle (rather than the discovery by a parent) appear to have combined to create this particular response.

5.2.2 Peer influence

Formal sex education is rare in India with the subject of sex generally considered taboo, although certain shifts in urban areas may be loosening this notion to some extent (Abraham, 2004). It is also rare for youths to receive any direct advice or guidance from parents or older members of the community and so the main forum for any discussion of sex and sexuality occurs within peer groups (Alexander et al, 2006; Hindin & Hindin, 2009). This is typically framed as a discussion about girls and any successful interaction or experience that may have involved a member of the peer group. Speech is a significant marker in male-male relationships and especially in the form of 'banter'. Among the young men in the Gujarati village where I was located, the use of nicknames as a means to create solidarity and to evoke a shared past is a common means through which male solidarity is developed. Nicknames were typically light-hearted and referred either to a certain physical appearance when the man was young (such as 'Bhuriyo' meaning round-bellied, like a drum) or an amusing incident (such as 'cotton' for the young man discovered attempting to have sex with another boy in a cotton field). Humour and plenty of joking at each other's expense is, therefore, an important means through which these strong male bonds of solidarity are formed. Alongside these jokes and nicknames, close physical contact, such as holding hands and sitting on each other's knees, further cements these male-male relationships both features are particularly marked during this liminal pre-marital period.

As with cultures elsewhere, male youths test the boundaries, awkwardly attempting to engage with girls and copy apparently successful strategies observed from older youths and men. At this stage, sexuality is closely linked with feelings of anxiety, doubt and confusion, all of which is compounded by the social restrictions placed on public interaction with girls. When boys do find themselves in a relationship with a girl, they often find it difficult to initiate any physical sexual contact. As one informant said:

That was the age which you are afraid also to have sex. You want to have it, but it is very tight and you can't make it loose also. It is hard work and I was frightened. Now if it happens, then on the second day we would have sex (interview with Hadis, 23, Muslim, May 2013).

This man's fear of the unknown, and perhaps fear of sexual failure, reflects a broader anxiety of failure to conform to male peer expectations. However, it is clear that with experience comes confidence and so perhaps he is able to reflect on the fear and ignorance of his younger self only because of his later assuredness with women. His final statement is indicative of a significant element of masculine expression, especially between peers, i.e. boasting to achieve a heightened status within the peer group. Of course, this boast can only be valid if the peer group accept that such behaviour is a desirable characteristic of a 'dominant' trait of masculinity.

In some circumstances, a group may take pity on a hapless friend who is without a lover as was the case told by a Muslim man who, when his lover called him on his mobile, would hand over the phone to his single friend enabling him to enjoy 'sex chatting', unbeknownst to that girl. More broadly, activities such as recording conversations with a girlfriend in order to later replay them to friendship circles further serves to reaffirm not only the individual's sexuality and prowess, but also that of the group, providing clear markers as to the expectations regarding sexual expression. This is also an expression of male solidarity and it provides a sense that the act of sharing these experiences with male friends has greater significance than the actual cross-gender relationship.

There are, therefore, two significant parts to any such performance: the contact with a girl and then the relaying, in detail, of this contact to the boy's male friends.

Whilst a public discourse decries promiscuous behaviour, many unmarried young men identify sexual conquests with a strong, virile sexuality and masculinity. Often, men may seek affirmation of their sexuality in front of a male peer audience:

Bhavesh: I was just coming from work and [Navin] was standing and talking and then he started to say this to the girl. And I said 'what are you talking here?' Everyone can hear but he started talking that way 'I want to put my penis in your mouth'. It's an ice cream or what man? He doesn't mind people hearing (during interview with Navin, 24, Christian, March 2013).

Whilst Bhavesh states that 'everyone' can hear, it is more likely that he is using such a term to highlight the public space in which Navin was speaking, where there is the potential for everyone to hear. However, Navin was no doubt mindful of his audience and if there had been an elder from his samaj walking past rather than a peer, then it is unlikely that he would have talked in such a manner. Instead, he saw the opportunity to express boldly his sexuality in front of Bhavesh in a purposefully boastful and shocking statement that serves to highlight his overt sense of virility, his obvious sexual potency, his daring to speak in such a manner in a public space, and proof of his sexual control over his lover. Osella and Osella state that a display of both aggressive sexuality and romance 'stakes out arenas in which boys compete, are judged by their peers, and form themselves into hierarchies around masculine performance' (2006, p.103).

Commonly, such expressions of sexuality occur among groups of teenage boys and young men in order to conform to a recognized sexuality not only in the sharing of opinions and narratives regarding the opposite sex, but also through collective sexualised behaviour as evident in the practice of eve teasing. This is

the English phrase used to describe the male activity of watching girls and women (hence 'Eve'), sometimes conspicuously, sometimes rather less so, whereby the 'teasing' is done through the male gaze. It is an exclusively male activity, and one performed by the younger, unmarried generation. In fact, one young Christian man, Paresh, goes as far as to state that '*boys must eve tease, it is what they are supposed to do*', and so it becomes an imperative of male youth identity, a defining feature of sexuality.

I would roam here and there in the street and I would go to the Bus Stand side also and wait for the school closing time when the girls come by bus so that I could see them and feel happy inside (interview with Chitral, 19, Christian, February 2013).

We will not come home early after the college, but go to the Bus Stand and all girls will go there and wait for the bus, so us guys with the bike will go to the Bus Stand, because all the college girls come there. So there we will go and eve teasing takes place there (laughs) (interview with Madhur, 20, Christian, February 2013).

This activity represents different expressions of sexuality. The fact that typically one or more friends engage in it indicates that it is a process of affirmation of a 'hierarchic heterosexuality' (Brittan 1989) and also male peer bonding; 'an exaggeration and clear hierarchization of gender, the boy acting as aggressively active, hyper-masculine, the girl as hyper-feminine, a passive victim' (Osella and Osella 1998, p.192). It is an experience that can be shared and which retains clear discourse markers that individuals can use to achieve peer acknowledgement and confirmation of a positive, socially agreed upon sexuality (Jackson & Scott, 2010). It allows young men to 'experiment with a new subject-position: that of the potent, penetrating male, who is able to subjugate and dominate women' (Osella and Osella 1998, p.192). As such, it is often identified as a form of time pass; an activity spent with friends to while away the hours of boredom when not working or studying. It also, therefore, specifically relates to those younger men who are not in full time employment or who are still in education and who, importantly, have not yet married. This practice is closely

related to the notion of the liminal period during which time boys and youths have relative freedom to 'roam' around the community with their friends, without the responsibility that is assumed once they are married. Interestingly, eve teasing is not an incidental activity in the way that a group of youths sat around playing cards might notice an attractive woman walking past, stop to look and then comment among themselves. Instead, eve teasing is purposive and performative. It is the reason why boys and young men strategically position themselves in certain places or at certain times. As I walked through the village and the various samaj, I discovered that there were certain places where I would typically find a few male youths sitting on a low wall or a bench. At first, I merely thought of this as a suitable place to 'hang out' and chat, but I increasingly realised that this coincided with it being a good vantage point of a home of an attractive girl or else strategically positioned along a main route in order to watch several girls return from school or work. The boys would sit here for long periods of time, discussing a range of subjects, but always ready for a glimpse of the girl that was the object of their eve teasing.

As well as a recognised time pass activity, it is also a strategy for initiating contact with a girl for example by sitting for hours close to her home hoping to gain a glimpse of her, and to provide a signal of interest and exchange a smile or a glance, however fleeting. It is an expression of devotion, of commitment, of sacrificing time to show that the boy is worthy of that girl's love. I will discuss this further in section 5.3, but for now, it can be understood as an important part of growing up, of becoming a man, of learning about sexuality and how to look at and talk about women.

As can be imagined, eve teasing is often the cause of considerable issues, tensions and fights within the samaj and even between castes.

A lot of boys roam here and there, they are rowdy people, useless people. They will look at the girls and create problems through unnecessary teasing and standing in front of someone's house. I have never done that (interview with Navin, 24, Christian, March 2013).

We never sent the sisters out as all are not good to look at them in a proper way. People would have bad eyes looking at them (interview with Ajit, 25, Tadpada, January 2013).

Beside my house they have girls, young girls, and they have a problem because the boys come and sit there and eve teasing and passing comments so they have to undergo that problem. So one day the father of the girls he fought with the family saying 'you girls, why do you go that side?' and then fight went so much that he took acid, yellow cleaning liquid that burns things, but he was saved. So unnecessarily tension and there is a problem (interview with Bhavesh, 36, Christian, January 2013).

Navin's statement indicates that not all young men engage in such behaviour. It was my experience that in the Christian community, for example, there was often a division between groups of young men. First, those that were perceived negatively by the samaj as a result of their behaviour, including eve teasing as well as drinking, fighting, etc. These young men were often found sat in certain locations within the community and in particular outside of the home of the man described in the last narrative and it was not rare for arguments to ensue between these youths and other members of the samaj. Second, there are young men who were not involved in such activities, but who were respectful and helpful within the samaj. The example related by Bhavesh indicates the extremes to which this tension can push people, linked as it is to a person's reputation. A father who is seemingly helpless to prevent the loss of his daughters' honour and at the same time unable to control her movements from being seen by the boys outside, seeks a dramatic statement to illustrate this helplessness. While honour and reputation will form part of a more in depth discussion in chapter 6.3, it is important to note here the contradiction and juxtaposition of discourses in relation to male sexuality and sexual expression. A public normative discourse is often at odds with a 'private' yet commonly practiced peer discourse, and it is when the two discourses clash that tensions and problems occur within the samaj.

Further, one Christian young man, Nirav, abdicated his responsibility for eve teasing by attributing the blame to girls who, he believes, are purposefully wearing clothes that reveal parts of their body in order to gain attention from boys, and which often results in the creation of tension and fights within the village. Many girls and women within the village still dress in the traditional sari, and in some samaj (such as the Tadpada) women still place a veil over their face when in the presence of men from outside their samaj. However, this is not always the case and girls from the Christian samaj, for example, typically wear jeans and t-shirts reflecting shifts in styles of dress. This appears to be relatively accepted. Indeed, one Christian man pointed to the fact that he allows his wife to wear jeans as an indicator of household gender equality. However, it is clear from Nirav's narrative that there is still some degree of contestation about the suitability of such fashion. In this case there is a rather clear contradiction (and gendered double standard) in that the boys are enjoying watching the girls in these clothes, whilst perhaps feeling threatened by the more open sexuality expressed by the girls. The young man becomes defensive about his act of eve teasing, shifting responsibility from himself to that of the girl's choice to wear such 'revealing' clothes. In a society that often strips women of agency and choice, it appears that such agency is reinstated when it is convenient to spare the boy's guilt. Interestingly, Nirav also differentiates between the backwardness of the village male youth who comes across fewer women dressed in this manner in contrast to the 'modern' city youth for which this is all part of daily life. Thus, despite the influx of technology and modern media in village life, there is a still a sense, even among inhabitants themselves, that the village is relatively backward compared to urban areas.

5.2.3 Homosexuality and practice

Here in Gujarat we have a definition, who is man? He is a person who is not gay, like who has a feeling of man, who doesn't have a feeling of women. Here I will show you 2 guys, there was a third one but he is behaving like a man only. No, no there are 3. One for older people, one for me people, and there is another fellow for

small boys (laughs). So there are 3 categories of people who are gay. So gay is what? As a body he looks like boy, but his behaviour is like girlish. If I had to speak I would speak this way, I would do it this way, that kind of behaviour right. Behaviour comes like he's not pretending but a girl speaks a similar way. Also the feelings of having sex. I would describe this way, like a man has a giving behaviour and a woman has a receiving behaviour. So he has a man's body but he has a feeling of receiving. It is much to do with sex. A gay will not get married. You know eunuchs, kind of eunuchs? Here it is the same, we call them eunuchs also. And eunuchs are known as aunty (Bhavesh, 36, Christian, in interview with Nirav, January 2013).

Sexual orientation provides an interesting aspect and means of understanding sexual behaviour. It also plays a role in the learning of early sexual experiences for some men. Homosexual men exist outside of the social norms of sexuality in rural Gujarat, yet they are still widely recognised and accepted at a certain level. It appears that each samaj has its own homosexual male figure who, although regularly the subject of mockery, would not be socially ostracised in the same way as someone who eloped with a heterosexual partner from a lower caste would be. However, as such men are unable to marry they are perpetually referred to as 'boy' even when they are in their mid-forties. This term of reference, 'boy', acts not only to denote life status of a man, i.e. unmarried, but also as an indicator of sexual activity. Being both unmarried and homosexual, according to the public normative discourse, means that the individual must not have had sex yet, and as such the use of the term 'boy' is deemed appropriate. In this non-sexual sense, homosexual men are often bracketed into the same, un-gendered identity type as eunuchs, which also has the effect of removing a sense of the 'body', so that they almost become a neutral, sex-less and un-gendered individual. Moreover, in Bhavesh's statement '*there was a third one but he is behaving like a man only*', there is an implication that one can switch sexual orientation between being homosexual and heterosexual; between behaving like a man or not. A man can, therefore, be defined as being 'not gay', so that a normative relationship between sexuality and masculinity is juxtaposed to that of a homosexual who is referred to as a boy, but likened to a female, both in

terms of behaviour and in the perceived sexual preference to passively 'receive'. This has clear connotations, then, for normative perceptions of sexuality and sexual behaviours denoting an 'active' and assertive, possibly even aggressive, sexuality linked to masculine traits of strength and virility (Geetha, 1998).

Further, there is the attribution of homosexual characteristics to heterosexual men as a signal of failure in terms of a man's sexuality. Therefore, '[b]eing masculine need not be an exclusive identity' (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994b, p. 15) as it can involve presentations and performances that are not necessarily the sole preserve of the male (Edwards, 2006). There is an interesting distinction in the language used to refer to a person's identity in this regard with a homosexual man being described as a 'professional gay' while those men deemed to have failed in attaining the masculine norm are simply 'gay'. This then distinguishes between someone who confines his sexual behaviour to same sex relationships from someone who is heterosexual but who fails to attain the sexual expectations required of a man. So, feminine traits or identity can be ascribed to men perceived to fail to meet hegemonic notions of masculinity. Such a stigmatisation may serve to emasculate or feminise certain individuals in the eye of the (male and female) community (Lindisfarne, 1994) and is therefore closely associated with notions of reputation and social standing. It appears that being homosexual is often perceived as less derisory than acting or being perceived as having homosexual or feminine qualities. A man who fails to satisfy his wife sexually or who lacks a significant sex drive is thus called 'gay' and this 'weak' sexuality is reflective of the man's failure as a husband and therefore as a man.

Despite their low or even non-status, homosexual men play an important role in the learning and expression of sexuality for some male youths. It is widely understood that heterosexual male youths will visit homosexual men's homes to practice and experience sexual acts. While this is not true of everyone, it appears to occur on more than just a rare occasion. Rather unsurprisingly such visits tend to be clandestine, although friendship circles will often know and accept this, with some degree of teasing, as perhaps it is seen as a reflection of a

youth's progress towards sexual maturity and manhood. If it does become more widely known it is a source of gentle mocking or nicknames rather than social disgrace or ostracism.

In the Christian samaj, one young man (during a discussion of boredom and time pass in the community) obliquely referenced visiting a boy who is a tailor. In my ignorance of the different layers and contexts of the community, I would have missed the sub-textual reference if not for my interpreter's interjection and explanation. The tailor is known to be homosexual and so for this young man to state that he went and sat with him implies a sexual connotation to such a visit, as my interpreter describes:

So when people are free they would go and sit down with him and when there is a chance they would have anal sex or that boy would, sorry to explain this, but that man even tried it with me when I was that age. So he would put his hand in the pants and touch the penis and make it erection so the other guy also feels like having sex. It is foreplay, a kind of foreplay. So that man is known for that. So if someone speaks that they are chatting with that guy or sitting with him, it gives that message (in the interview with Nirav, 24, Christian, January 2013).

The young man further explained that he would visit this tailor after he had been watching blue movies. Such homosexual activity therefore becomes a means for sexual release for some young men, particularly when aroused after watching erotic material. My interpreter explains that the tailor serves this purpose, this release of sexual tension, and that it is perhaps even 'God's plan because everywhere they are found'. The 'use' of such men may be further explained by the limited opportunities for masturbation in a home with little privacy and in a culture where such acts are deemed morally derisory, and, further, by the limited opportunity for sexual interaction with girls at that younger age. This is similar to Connell's findings during his research with adolescent boys in Australia who typically attended single-sex schools and so '[i]n a gender-divided community... sexual relations with other boys were, indeed, often easier to start and maintain than sexual relations with girls' (2000,

p.108). Those youths who visit 'professional gays' are not, however, generally perceived to be homosexual. Following the comment earlier in this section, a person can switch between sexual orientations without complicating their perceived identity and this is, perhaps, particularly true at a younger age of experimentation.

Acts of same sex eroticism are also not limited to visits to 'professional gays', but materialise within sexual experiences and experimentation between heterosexual boys.

Navin: There is one field behind the bridge where they were cultivating cotton and I took one boy to fuck when we were small, but somebody saw and we came back without doing. A lot of people tease me still today about that. So people still call me cotton because that was on the field.

Interviewer: What made you feel like doing that?

Navin: That time I was not doing all kinds of girls, I never did it. But I heard about it and this thing we have to do. So that is why I took a boy, I never knew about the girl also (interview with Navin, 24, Christian, March 2013).

This narrative reiterates several points concerning the use of same sex erotic acts as a means of sexual practice and experimentation. Due to a socialised gender segregation from a young age, at least outside the immediate family, boys' social spheres are very much constrained to male peers. In such circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising that boys, upon hearing about sexual activity, either from older boys or through media such as blue movies, and at an age where sexual impulses are physiologically novel and exciting, attempt to find a means for a sexual outlet through their male peers. In this circumstance, as in other narratives I heard, the boys in their naivety were discovered, but the consequences for such prohibitive activity were restrained to that of teasing and a rather mild, almost affectionate, nickname. Same sex eroticism does not therefore necessarily constitute a homosexual identity. There appears to be a

rather relaxed approach within village communities (and such practices do seem to stretch across different samaj) about formative sexual experimentation between male children and youth, especially in comparison to the reactions and consequences for those embarking on pre-marital relationships with the opposite sex.

5.2.4 Sex with prostitutes

Sexual conquests are often required if a man is to be accepted within his peer's social expectations of masculine sexuality. However, how can one overcome the initial fear and anxiety surrounding sex, not to mention the societal constraints and general segregation and monitoring of the sexes? One answer, particularly for the young Muslim men to whom I spoke, was to visit a prostitute in order to lose one's virginity, a relatively common occurrence in the Indian context according to some research (Abraham, 2004). As prostitution is recognised as a profession, a service for sex, then there is less pressure on the boy and the prostitute adopts the role of paid tutor. It becomes the equivalent of an economic exchange whereby the act, not the performance, is related to social expectations. In this particular samaj, the young men would visit a prostitute from within the same community; the mother of one of their friends who required money to help run the household as her husband worked away from home for prolonged periods. The cost of sex was Rs150 (just under £2). This is how Hadis remembers his first sexual experience:

The very first day I went there 'look I am small but I want to come,' and she says 'no problem, come.' From my house it is just walking distance. At 12.00 I would sleep at night outside and with only half pants and at 12.00 I would move slowly to her house and I would have sex and come back. The first time I had sex with that woman, I felt so nice, it gave such pleasure. And then every day I started having sex with that woman (interview with Hadis, 23, Muslim, May 2013).

Hadis was the first of his peer group to use the services of this prostitute, although older peers within the samaj recommended her to him. For two

reasons this was the ideal scenario for a single male youth wishing to have his sexual needs fulfilled on a regular basis. First, Hadis's enjoyment of the sex coupled with the absence of social awkwardness and tension that accompanies initiating contact and relationships with girls in the village (often without the promise of sex). Second, there is a desire for both parties to maintain the clandestine nature of such encounters. The only constraint was having the economic means to regularly pay for sex with this woman, which at Rs150, is around the same amount as a day's agricultural labour. However, Hadis employed a strategy under which he received a discounted rate for bringing more custom to the woman. As a result, he began to encourage and cajole his friends into visiting the prostitute, particularly targeting those who had yet to have sex or who may have been frustrated during a platonic relationship with a girl, as Sabiq narrates:

I met with my friend [Hadis] and he said to me 'you have never experienced and at least you should experience and we have resource here so why don't you use that resource? And also you are earning a good amount of money then once in a week or once in a month Rs150 you just throw it this way and at least you will get the joy.' So I contacted that woman and I went and had sex (interview with Sabiq, 21, Muslim, May 2013).

That Hadis and Sabiq refer to the woman as a 'resource' implies that she is seen as an object that can be utilised in order to satisfy these young men's sexual desires. Seidler states that '[t]o be treated as a sexual object is not to be recognised as a human being' (2006, p. 10) and that this is embedded in the nature-culture dualism by which women, equated to nature, are perceived as being in need of subordination and control by the rational, active male. The economic nature of this sexual relationship objectifies the woman, ensuring her identity (as a member of their samaj and the mother of a friend) and economic circumstances are irrelevant. The exploitation is twofold as a result of Hadis' economic opportunism. Sabiq was fully aware of his friend's economic incentive for encouraging him to have sex with this woman but at the same time, it was

also fulfilling his own sexual needs and providing him with an initiation into, and an increased understanding of, the nature of sex:

[S]he would catch it and she would put it inside and then she would say 'push it in, push it out' (laughs)... As soon as I finished having sex with that woman I came out and I was feeling so happy, so nice, something new experience I had had
(interview with Sabiq, 21, Muslim, May 2013).

This sexual activity, and the woman who is at the centre of it, becomes a 'shared' experience. The young men in this peer group are fully aware of their shared use of this woman and rather than create any sense of competition between them, it actually creates a greater sense of solidarity. It is only through the objectification of this woman that such a shared experience can occur as it removes the potential for emotional attachment or any prospect of a relationship, other than that of sex. Sex, in this instance, is entirely equated to meeting desire and is, therefore, portrayed in terms of the physical, bodily actions required to perform sex. The woman's role as tutor is acknowledged, but there is no intimacy or sense of emotional connection as the woman's body assumes the object of an economic transaction. However, while sexual awakening or initiation through a prostitute was commonplace amongst this group of young Muslim men, it is important to note that these were the only men across the samaj who informed me that they had lost their virginity to a prostitute. In the interviews with all other men from the different samaj, sex with a prostitute was mentioned on only one other occasion, and that was during a period when a Tadpada man was working in Mumbai for several months.

5.2.5 New media and technology

Another aspect in the learning of sexuality amongst male youth is the influx and influence of new media and technology. The increased access to cable television and the Internet via mobile phones may have had an impact on understanding of sexuality and how an individual displays this understanding through

behaviour and identity. While Bollywood films have formed a significant aspect of Indian popular culture for half a century, access for the rural majority was previously limited to infrequent cinema visits and cuttings of photographs from magazines and newspapers. With the introduction of cable television to many rural households, across caste and class, not only Bollywood but also films from across India and the wider world can be watched on a daily basis and countless photos of heroines downloaded on to mobile phones. The prevalence of cable television within homes was easily observed, as upon my visit to a person's house, it was common practice, alongside the hospitality of providing water and tea, to switch on the TV. The distinctive sound of a Hindi film or music channel provided a consistent background presence throughout my fieldwork. This new media forms a focus for peer expressions and affirmation of sexuality through shared viewing and commentary with girls in the village being compared, favourably or otherwise, to movie stars and models:

When we see the girls then we will describe how that girl looks like, how another girl looks like, beautiful or not, and sometimes we compare with the Hindi heroines, 'she was smiling this way or that way' (interview with Chitral, 19, Christian, February 2013).

Abraham (2004) states that another 'dimension in the exploration of sexuality was the gratification of curiosity and sexual desire by accessing erotic materials' (p.218), particularly through the watching of blue movies with peers. While many male youths go to great measures in hiding such content on their phone from parents and older family members, a collection of photos and pornographic material affirms the male's strong (hetero-) sexuality among his peers. A common sight throughout the village in the evening would be to see a small cluster of youths huddled around a muted mobile phone, the blue glare of the screen shimmering across their faces as they lean in closely. The pornographic videos (or 'blue movies' as they are commonly known) feature predominantly western, white women and either white or Indian men, and in certain cases depict aggressive imagery. One particular video shown to me by a couple of Muslim men portrayed an Indian man pursuing and then 'raping' a

white woman at knifepoint in a rural setting. What does this say, then, about male attitudes towards women and sex? The men delighted in the deviant nature of this video, perhaps serving to confirm notions of male dominant sexuality and the sexualised commodification of women as objects to satisfy this desire and to legitimate the sexual entitlement of men. Brittan refers to how 'contemporary pornography highlights the implicit violence of heterosexual... relationships... [and] the systematic degradation of women' (1989, p.66). It further embeds the socio-cultural perception among certain men that women's bodies are subordinate to that of men and, therefore, it is within men's rights to enact control (sexual or otherwise) over these bodies. Those men that were watching blue movies were also those typically engaging in sexual relationships with girls and framing these in patriarchal attitudes of control and dominance over the objectified and subordinate female body. In these cases, pornography can be seen as a media through which such attitudes and behaviours are reinforced, especially as it is often a feature of all-male peer activity; boys share this experience, and the attitudes reconfirmed by it, together (Jackson and Scott 2010). Therefore, while in the past young men may have learnt about sexuality through older men and peers, nowadays there may be an increasing shift towards public and/or private engagement with media. One may view this as a shift away from a notion of inter-generational transfer of knowledge to an increasing influence of what might be termed a commodification of sexuality.

Perhaps, then, a further dimension could be added to Appadurai's (1996) global cultural flows in order to encapsulate a shifting 'sexualscape'; one which is influenced both by a history of discourses (Foucault 1976) and by cultural flux. This is neither a simple nor a linear process, but witnesses the production of multiple sexualities that are contested and assimilated, juxtaposed and contradicted. While condom marketing becomes more sensual (Reddy 2006), Bollywood narratives more sexualised, and fashion more embodied (with jeans and t-shirts replacing saris), society often retains a sense of sexual conservatism and frowns on those too quick to adopt seemingly modern traits. This is particularly true of rural areas where despite the influx of modern products and

media, conservative values and discourses are more strongly upheld and young people's behaviour more closely monitored and sanctioned.

5.2.6 Traditional narratives and practices

Much has been made of the influx and influence of global products on sexual identities across the world and in India. But one should not ignore the continued influence of more traditional narratives rooted in cultural and religious institutions. Increasing levels of material consumption, new Western clothes and hairstyles, sexual imagery on advertising billboards, music channels and Bollywood movies may well have a strong influence on new male youth identities of sexuality and masculinity. Yet there is often a juxtaposition with traditional narratives, rituals and imagery that still hold significant sway, especially in rural areas of Gujarat. Hindu texts and myths refer to women's sexuality as dangerous and potentially destructive, or positive and respectful when paired to a male god (Uberoi, 2006). With the 'ideal' Indian woman historically and culturally portrayed as one who is chaste, obedient, passive and treats her husband as though he were a god, it is little surprise when men position themselves as having the dominant and active sexuality within society, one that often (but not always) seeks to control the female sex (Geetha, 1998).

Further, religious discourse has a direct influence on male sexuality through a range of complicated rules and rituals. This is particularly true of Hinduism, and to a lesser extent Christianity, which co-opted many Hindu traditions in its bid for ensuring conversion was the least culturally divergent change (although the promotion of education by Christian missionaries and Jesuits has led to a greater 'progress' towards modernity for this samaj compared to a number of other low status communities in Gujarat). In the Tadpada samaj, caste rules based upon religious doctrine prohibit sexual activity during holy festivals and programmes, some of which may last as long as 30 days and infractions are punishable by hefty fines and the restarting of the religious rituals. Hindu discourse, maintained and advocated by priests, also provides an explanatory framework for those men who are failing to acquire prospective brides. In

discussion with several Hindu young men from the Tadpada and Thakor samaj, the notion of 'bad luck' has arisen in this context with a visit to their priest, confirming a poor planetary alignment as the reason for their lack of success in arranging marital partners and the prescription of a combination of charms and ablutions as remedy. Thus, young men have a religious explanation for their ongoing failure to attain the next significant life stage and so shifting, at least in the public discourse, responsibility away from their own personal deficiencies or unappealing social status. Therefore, while religious structures may be constraining in certain aspects of men's lives, it also provides a discourse with which strategically to hide potential failings, or personal flaws, in terms of sexuality and masculinity. This illustrates themes of masculinity and hierarchy raised in the conceptual chapter in which certain characteristics, status and accomplishments are valorised as portraying an idealised masculinity. This may be achieved through the acquisition of material goods or a certain high status livelihood, but it also relates to the ability to arrange a good marriage (or among certain male peer circles, the ability to have sexual conquests before marriage). The material and the social are clearly interlinked so that those with a good job, income and material assets are more likely to arrange a good marriage. Physical appearance also plays a part but does not necessarily usurp the material conditions as a basis for marriage. For those young men described above who are struggling to acquire a suitable bride, the religious explanation provides a reason to save their status in the eyes of peers- at least discursively if not in actuality.

5.3 Performances and the forming of relationships

In most cultures, learning how to form romantic or sexual relationships is often an awkward and uncomfortable experience, yet it is part of the formative process of the transition to adulthood. Whilst this section could have been included within the previous part on learning sexuality, it provides a useful link between this important formative act of initiating relationships in the romantic and sexual lives of male youth in rural Gujarat and the discussion and exploration of the forms that such relationships take in the subsequent section.

In the context of rural Gujarat, with the social constraints of inter-gender relations, caste structures, rules and pre-marital relationship taboos, this process becomes even more complicated. The risk of detection by elder members of the samaj compounds the fear of rejection and humiliation in front of peers. But despite this risk, there is a formulaic, almost scripted (Gagnon & Simon, 2005), signalling of interest and initiation of interaction with a desired girl. This is a distinctively learnt process, a societal construct, gained through observation and listening to narratives of successful performances by older peers, and through a shared cultural knowledge of sexuality (Jackson & Scott, 2010). Osella and Osella described a similar process of 'tuning' conversations in their study of young men in Kerala and which 'followed an almost stereotyped form, a standard opening eliciting an expected response' (2006, p.103).

5.3.1 A look and a smile

Several men described the performance that the initiation of interest in the opposite sex entails. It all begins with the look. In Trawick's study of love in Tamil society, the eyes hold a particular significance in that the husband 'was the one to whom the eyes were given, followed by the heart' (1992, p.95). In the context of a possible relationship between young couples, it is the return of a glance, or the meeting of the eyes, that first signals intention. The boy often initiates the look towards a girl whom he may have been observing for some time, possibly through the act of eve teasing. The boy, through his gazing, is 'giving signal' to the girl who may either ignore his attention (although that by no means deters the boy) or return his gaze and then smile. When the girl smiles, it means that '*she wants to fall in love*' (Bhavesh), she is giving the boy the signal for that. As Bhavesh states '*signal means body language, smiling, eye contact, the way she looks at you and the way she gives you a sign*' (January 2013). So without any verbal communication having taken place, a dialogue of non-verbal markers has occurred between two people reflecting a shared knowledge (Jackson & Scott, 2010) that exists in order for such gestures to be invested with emotive meaning.

However, despite this seemingly shared and universal intuition, confusion and misunderstandings still occur, particularly for young practitioners yet to fully develop their skills of interpretation of the subtleties of this performance, as one Christian man recounts:

In the college I sit in the classroom and while writing I would look at the girl, even teasing, but that girl was working and not coming. But one day it happened that in the college office I met her and she smiled at me, so I thought the signal had been given from that end. So I went and said hello to her and a kind of relation we made. But I was not sure whether it was a real signal from her or not (interview with Madhur, 20, Christian, February 2013).

As it turned out, it was not a signal and the girl soon informed him that she had a boyfriend who she was intent on marrying. The non-verbal nature of these exchanges is to ensure the preservation of the clandestine context within which the initiation of any pre-marital relationship must occur. While this, at times, creates confusing or ambiguous messages for boys, it also elevates the level of excitement with which they approach such secretive exchanges. The heightened risk of discovery, the thrill of the chase and the unknown outcome provide a greater incentive in addition to the expected benefits of success. Such performances can also add considerable status and respect to an individual's reputation within his peer group, both in terms of audacious attempts at initiating contact with a beautiful 'heroine' or a girl from a higher status background (in terms of caste and/or class) or through proudly recounting the 'battle scars' of failed attempts. Whilst success is undoubtedly rewarded by peer acclamation, there is also a degree of status achieved through the commiseration offered to those gallant failures. The male peer group therefore rewards and encourages risk and the young man who achieves a particularly audacious or unlikely success is often valorised and referred to in some degree of awe and appreciation.

For those who fail to attempt or lack the courage, there is only the sense of regret and little consolation. Therefore, there is a sense that peers assess performances, which may result in young men forming a 'hierarchical order' based on their masculine performance (Osella and Osella 1998). Those men who are able to initiate contact with a girl, or multiple girls, will likely receive a higher status in the eyes of their peers.

I was trying to eve tease so I was looking at her. She was from the countryside, a girl who stayed in the field. I was looking at her and trying to trap her, to fall in love. So that girl was a bit crooked and she got up from the bench and went to the teacher and told the teacher that I was looking at her and teasing, so I got a hammering (interview with Chitral, 19, Christian, February 2013).

Chitral deflects any responsibility of wrongdoing by shifting the blame on to the 'crooked' girl who lives in the fields, implying her rural backwardness as reason enough for rejecting his advances. This may also be a reflection of a degree of wounded pride and the sting of the 'hammering' (which typically refers to a physical beating) he received as a consequence of her informing the teacher. But interestingly, the use of the phrase 'trap her' (one repeated in other interviews) seems to reduce the girl to the status of an innocent and passive being, one that can be easily ensnared by the guiles of the boy. Furthermore, this attitude towards, and perception of, the female reflects broader cultural and gendered notions of male rational control over the subordinate female and her body. In this sense 'love' is more directly related to physical attraction and sexual desire rather than a particular romantic connotation described in the true love scenarios later in this chapter.

5.3.2 Props

Boys may adopt other strategies to engage with girls and to assist in the initiation of a relationship. Props are employed in the performance. For example, one Tadpada young man bought a girl fruit every day with the intention of seducing her to have sex with him and after the tenth day he

succeeded. The props are not simply gifts to sweeten the deal but are instead symbolic of different meanings (the wrong interpretation of which by the boy can lead to a swift rebuke and rejection). For example, to present a girl with a bar of Cadbury Dairy Milk chocolate is to declare unambiguously one's romantic intentions; the two milks flowing into one, as shown on the packaging, are commonly understood to represent the merging of two young lovers. Likewise, gifts of red flowers are symbolic of love, whereas yellow or white mark the safer ground of friendship. It is clear that the giving of gifts also serves to reflect and reinforce gendered notions of societal roles whereby the boy takes on the part of economic provider, in this sense of 'luxury' items, and the girl that of the passive recipient. In addition, this sense of a shared knowledge, possibly reinforced through product marketing by companies, such as Cadbury's, or depicted in popular media, including TV and films (Jackson and Scott 2010), is clearly expressed through the different meanings attached to these different items. These 'scripts', therefore, act as guidelines through which young men and women are able to interpret and negotiate cross-gender relationships (Brittan 1989; Gagnon and Simon 2005).

Thus, performances and the stage the actors find themselves on, while at first glance appear to be a straightforward process in the initiation of a relationship, are actually a more complex series of choices and risks and carefully considered strategies (not to mention the actor requiring sufficient courage to enter the stage). One such strategy might be initially to accept the friendship of a girl with the hope that after spending time in each other's company a romantic attachment might develop. However, there is an inherent risk in this approach, for if the girl takes the boy at face value and a bhai-behen relationship is formed, at least on her part, then there is little chance that any romance will develop within this strictly defined and platonic relationship.

The development of relationships, therefore, consists of considerable strategizing, time and money, with no guarantee that desires will be met. But this is part of the formative process whereby boys learn how to interact with girls. However, in the context of Indian culture, this learning of sexuality and

'love' is forbidden and, in terms of the social discourse, is redundant in regards to successfully finding a wife as this decision is assumed by the parents through the process of arranged marriage. So, if such a formative process is redundant, what function does it serve? Is it simply an expression of physiological desire, an innate sexual urge common to all? Or is it a reflection of shifting socio-cultural structures, an anticipation of a near future where 'love' relationships become the norm? It is likely that these processes of learning and expressing certain forms of sexuality are indicative of a common, 'private' or 'secretive' practice that provides a means with which young men (throughout the generations) can push against the grain of a restrictive public discourse that forbids pre-marital relationships. It is a liminal period of relative freedom before the young men commit to responsibilities of marriage and family, a time to explore and experiment with their sexual identity and with the burgeoning of new emotions of desire and love.

5.3.3 The role of intermediaries

Intermediaries play an important supportive role in the initiation of pre-marital relationships (Osella and Osella 1998). These intermediaries tend to be friends of the initiator and seek to promote their friend's intentions either directly to the girl or through her own friends. Thus peers become incorporated into the narrative, feeling as though they too are invested in their friend's attempts at initiating relationships. To stretch out the performance metaphor further, the friends are the backstage support reinforcing the main act, providing advice, encouragement and consolation along the way as the actor continues to learn his role.

Friends' roles are to consolidate and support the expectations of an individual in terms of their relationship towards girls. Therefore, during the activities of time pass and eve teasing, on-going discussions around the subject of a particular girl (or girls) of interest will reaffirm a hetero-normative discourse and often apply peer pressure in influencing and cajoling an individual to take action. If the individual does not have the courage to approach the girl in person

then the role of the friend often becomes one of intermediary in passing a written note, letter or poem that portrays their romantic intentions. In doing so, the friend provides the appropriate support to the individual, whilst reaffirming broader 'private' discourses around pre-marital relationships. There is, of course, an expectation of reciprocity within peer groups- an individual who is an intermediary one day will be an instigator the next, requiring similar degrees of support. While the aim may be the initiation of a cross-gender relationship, this process also actively reaffirms male solidarity within a peer group. This clearly illustrates themes of liminality discussed within the conceptual chapter. Further, some young men adopt an even greater and active role in the initiation of a friend's relationship. For example, one Tadpada man spoke of how, as a youth, he had a particular talent for memorising and writing 'shayri', short love poems, and he would provide a shayri for his friends to add at the end of their love letters to a potential girlfriend. Having such a skill also raises this boy's status in the eyes of his peers who identify him as someone that is adept in the matters of love.

At times, it may so happen that two (or more) friends are pursuing the same girl and although this generally results in a good-humoured sense of rivalry, it can naturally also create a certain edge or friction to the peer relationship. Paresh, from the Christian samaj, narrated how he and his best friend Nirav fell in love with the same girl when they were young, but the story assumed a sense of camaraderie, a shared experience, rather than a serious rivalry. They would travel to the girl's street (she was a Patel) during the Nav Ratre celebrations to watch her dance the garba; they fought together against her brother and his friends when they discovered that Paresh and Nirav were attracted to her, and they received joint punishment from a teacher for drawing love hearts about the girl. As Paresh's narrative continued, there was a real sense that the focus was about his friendship and adventures with Nirav, and the girl actually becomes a rarely mentioned side note. While in many cases, the girl does assume a significant role and focal point in young men's lives, all-male relationships also hold a great deal of meaning.

5.3.4 The 'proposal'

Alongside the strategies of eve teasing and gift buying is the important proposal. This is a central feature of the initiation of a relationship (either sexual or love) and signifies the climax of the courting process, the defining moment when the hopes of the boy are realised or rejected. Proposals can be verbalised, written in the form of poetry or a letter, but ultimately they are an expression of 'love', in the words of the proposers, and are another performative marker reflecting a shared cultural expectation as to how to initiate a relationship. Such proposals often adopt a language reflective of a Bollywood movie script, which the proposer accompanies with a dramatic persistence in order to illustrate the depths of the emotions expressed. For example, one youth proposed a total of 48 times to the same girl, recording in a book each time he had proposed as if to preserve his perseverance in posterity. A typical proposal may be worded in the following way:

I would go to the girl and say 'I like you very much and without you I can't live at all and if you don't fall in love with me I may be mad, so you understand me I am loving you very much' (interview with Mahak, 25, Tadpada, April 2013).

This may appear a rather dramatic expression of initial interest, but it can be seen as an emulation of an exaggerated expression of love common in popular Bollywood movies. However, not all proposals are quite so emotive, with some simply framing their intentions in the form, 'yes or no?' Further, while proposals may often reference a strong, emotive language of love, they may mask an underlying intention of a sexual, and less intimate, form of relationship. Either way, it is the culminate act of a performance within which the male predominantly, but not always, takes the lead. The nature of this research is to focus on male narratives of love and sexuality. However, it is worth noting that, in some instances, it is the girl who initiates contact through a smile or a proposal. The recipient boy would perceive this as a forward action, implying an underlying desire for a sexual relationship on the part of the girl.

As can be seen in the narratives shown so far, there is a great deal of performance and symbolism involved in the (attempted) initiation of relationships, whether it be the initial gaze, smile and wink, the correct coloured flowers or the appropriate chocolate, or the scripted form and drama of the proposal. This is also reflective of gendered roles, patterns and expressions of sexuality that boys learn and develop throughout childhood, adolescence and into manhood and which simultaneously mark and are marked by normative traits of masculinity. Boys exhibit a masculinity that is perceived to be a strength within society, i.e. assertive, risk taking, supportive of other men, innovative and so on. Whilst such characteristics are valorised in economic, entrepreneurial, household and public roles, in the case of pre-marital relationships they become symbolic of a transgressive and socially taboo behaviour.

5.4 Time pass and true love: expressions, narratives and forms of heterosexual relationships

A rare girl or boy you will find that is not in love before marriage, they will be having attraction, they will be having affair. It's the situation you have to accept it, you can't be like the person who says I want to get a girl who has not fallen in love with anyone. Come on man, leave it, this is not the world, you would have to go into the past century, before Christ and you may find. Or maybe the early tribals, might be but this is not the day where you talk that. You might have fallen in love, you have to forget and you have to start a new life (interview with Bhavesh, 36, Christian, January 2013).

In this section, I wish to take a closer look at the forms and expressions of 'love' and the narratives used by men to describe it. As discussed in section 4.4, it is possible to categorise heterosexual pre-marital relationships into two broad forms, 'time pass' and 'true love' (Abraham, 2002), which influence the everyday narratives of love for men in the village context. It is important to distinguish, at this point, between time pass as an activity in which young men engage with collectively, as a means by which to 'pass the time', i.e. through idly

chatting, playing cards, walking through the village, eve teasing, etc., and that of time pass as a form of pre-marital relationship as discussed in this research.

Both understandings of these terms are used by men in the village, and throughout all of the samaj, and so context is clearly important and often fairly self-evident in understanding which use is being applied. It may also become apparent as this chapter progresses that they are not mutually exclusive terms as the pre-marital relationship usage is identified as an element or activity of the broader understanding and use of the term 'time pass', so that these relationships become a means through which to alleviate boredom and pass the time. There is, of course, a gendered dimension to this notion of time pass: it typically relates to male activity where young men are free from the domestic chores and close monitoring within the household commonly experienced by young women. Moreover, this is not the 'timepass' of Jeffrey's (2010) educated, yet unemployed, young men waiting for their economic aspirations to be fulfilled. While, certainly, some men were unemployed, time pass in this context referred to a broader, generic and un-politicised notion of male leisure time used by all young, unmarried men regardless of their education or employment status.

This section intends to elaborate on an understanding of these divergent forms of relationship, the different notions of sexuality and masculinity that they portray and the performances involved in enacting and embodying such relationships. One can make important temporal distinctions between the two forms of relationships alongside the insight this has to offer for gender relations and norms within a Gujarati rural society. Further, such relationships and the male approach to these different forms are rarely straightforward and simple, but involve a heterogeneous array of abstinence, sex, attraction, and devout love and in some cases a combination of different forms of relationships with different partners.

First, it is important to re-emphasise that pre-marital love and sex, despite the well-known perceptions of Indian culture, are indeed commonplace not only in urban areas but in rural locations too (Abraham 2002; Alexander et al 2006). As

the above quote from Bhavesh implies, such relationships are not new phenomena either, although the social and cultural conditions within which they exist are not static. Yet, whilst pre-marital relationships and sex may indeed be commonplace, they are still recognised as taboo, even by those men engaged in them (Bhugra et al, 2007). Bhugra et al state that older age groups identify the taboo nature of pre-marital sex as leading to adverse effects in terms of infertility for girls and impotence for boys as their bodies have yet to develop fully. On the other hand, the younger generation cite 'fear of pregnancy, societal pressures and parental expectations and trust' (2007, p.85) as reasons for abstinence, perhaps indicating a shift in discursive outlook, if not in the ultimate direction of the discourse. However, it is important to state that what people say and what they do, both younger and older generations, are indeed two very separate discourses. This is especially true when dealing with subjects that are socially and culturally sensitive and where an individual's reputation can be quickly marred through the wrong remark. In this sense, discourse and practice often become separated with the normative and public discourse concealing a common, yet private, practice.

As the narrative at the start of this section highlights, there is an acknowledgement that traditional expectations of a virgin bride, or an 'unloved' bride (she may or may not have had pre-marital sex), are misplaced and unrealistic. Men and women alike will often come to marriage with some degree of experience of love and relationships, and for many these can serve to create tensions and uncertainties. Men desire a wife who is 'innocent' and 'unspoilt' by another man and with whom they can assume full, and sole, bodily, and sexual, ownership. Perhaps this reflects a broader sense of male competition within society and peer groups, which often breeds envy and jealousy towards another man's achievements, whether it is within business and livelihood, or sexual conquest and love. If the newly wed wife has had, or believed to have had, prior sexual experience then this creates some tension for the new husband who may feel that she has expectations that he must fulfil and that there is a sense of unease about the unknown lover who has preceded the husband. However, at

the same time, this creates somewhat of a paradox in that the husband has often had pre-marital relationships, yet still desires a virgin bride as his wife.

The Gujarati word 'prem' broadly refers to the concept of love and while there are different connotations and words relating to different notions of love, this research and this section in particular are focusing on the form of love in pre-marital relationships. At times, the term love was used quite broadly as in the case of the extract from Bhavesh's interview (conducted in English) at the start of this section. Here, love referred to a pre-marital relationship between a boy and a girl and in this context the generality of the term is used to imply that the majority of young people will enter into marriage already having had some form of relationship whether it is of a sexual or romantic type. In this sense there are two categories that narratives of men typically refer to: true love and time pass. The former is related to romantic notions of love and has many similarities- in its expression and practice within narratives- to 'bhakti' or devotional love. In contrast, time pass can be understood as referring to a sexual relationship. In their narratives men either explicitly referred to these categories or else such references were implicit within the manner in which the language was framed. The distinction was often clearly drawn, such as in the following explanation by Bhavesh:

So here love definition is sex. You say 'hello, hi' and also she feels nice and that fellow feels nice, and when you get time or when you get opportunity you finish the job and you are over. Then you are on your way and then when you feel like you try again to please her...

So understanding of love is very limited here. Love is not that, it is after that. But also I have seen 2/3 examples in the street who have got love and then got married to the same partner. That's love. But a lot of boys and girls try to experience it, what is that, how it goes, what is that feeling? So they want to satisfy with that before the marriage so then they call it love, 'I'm in love with this fellow.' And I would ask how many times they went there and they'd say two times, boy would say, girl would not say. So it is a limited understanding of love (interview with Bhavesh, 36, Christian, January 2013).

As a married man, Bhavesh has a particular perspective on the notion of love. He contrasts what he feels to be the common, and 'limited', perception of love for young men in the village, i.e. it is actually about sex, and only rarer cases, including his own, where 'actual' love is achieved. For him, love is about personal choice, and comes after attraction as the precursor to marriage. This is a rather 'modern' perspective antithetical to the normative discourse of love slowly growing during the engagement and marital life for a couple in an arranged marriage. The use of the word love is often expressed lightly as a means through which to satisfy sexual desires before marriage, and thus becomes embedded within the performance of forming pre-marital relationships discussed in the previous section.

Actually in my life, attraction, every people come across different types of attraction. This happens but we should be careful in our lives because attraction sometimes gives us more pain. It gives us more pain, more than love. If you are attracted to someone and if in attraction, you love someone and if someone loves you then this thing doesn't become love and doesn't reach at a high level. Because attraction and love, both are very different, I believe. It's my own belief. So, in my life I felt, I passed through this type of attraction but it's not more. Actually in my college life, today also I have really beautiful, beautiful in the sense that she is just like a god for me. She really touched to my heart. Why this happened? Because she always cares, takes care for me and always thinks about me. Suppose something was happened with me, so she just cares for me. In college life I had many friends but only the one friend still I have, I'm talking about female (interview with Girish, 24, Christian, January 2013).

Girish reiterates the distinction between attraction and love commenting that in his experience attraction was a feeling associated with an immaturity, something that happened when you were young and knew no better. As one grows older there is a sense of greater awareness and of self-control so that it is no longer about physical attraction and lust but a deeper, more intimate connection with another person. This, then, to a certain extent, follows a

trajectory of the development of a boy into manhood, whereby the relative liminal freedom and immaturity of adolescence becomes the self-control and maturity of a married man with the responsibility for others. The distinction between these two forms of pre-marital relationship can be seen to be a distinction between love and sex; man and boy; maturity/responsibility and immaturity/irresponsibility; self-control and lust. Both are examples of different forms of masculinity as expressed by different male youths as will become evident throughout the remainder of this chapter.

There is almost a resentment displayed in this discourse against those who use the word 'love' in the wrong context, as if perhaps it cheapens the notion of true love. It was shown in the last section that love is used in the form of the proposal, which actually represents attraction on behalf of the proposer. However, while it is not necessarily 'love' in the romantic sense at that present moment, perhaps for some it is the promise of a future love, a declaration of future intention and feeling towards an 'other' if they were only to reciprocate in the present. Love thus becomes an aspiration, a hope, and an ideal, which must be declared primarily in a disproportionate sense to actual feeling. Coyness is not rewarded in this context, but intensity; the pouring of emotive language into a love letter or the proposal repeated 48 times. For some, this is a strategy for fulfilling sexual desire, for others it is a more genuine notion of love as a strong and eternal emotion.

For Girish, there is a distinction between attraction and love, which implies a hierarchy of 'love' or relationships, whereby attraction (and by extension, time pass relationships) are deemed as 'lower' in status than that of true love relationships. The former typifies the performance enacted by boys attempting to gain a girl's attention where the use of 'love' is a hollow expression, a formula almost carelessly used, repeated many times, and with different girls. There are several significant elements in differentiating between these two forms of love. These include the use of language to narrate these love stories to an audience and in the performance of establishing such relationships, the gender relations and notions of sexuality and masculinity that interweave and inform the male

perspective and behaviour towards the female and the temporal dimension between the momentary time pass and the eternal true love.

5.4.1 True love

She changed my lifestyle and everything. It is very tough to get her, 'get' in the sense that in friendship slowly and slowly you don't know how we can fall in love. But it was not attraction with me. This is fortunately happens with me. How I myself, how she fell in love with me and how can I fall in love with her, we don't know that thing, because this happens. We should not propose to a person. I believe that if you proposed a person, suppose you say to someone 'I like you and love you, will you marry me' and whatever it is, that kind of thing is not related with the love. Naturally it is a different thing. In attraction it is through it that part. About love, when you propose to someone it is not called love. This is stupid thing, I say... Love is a thing that suddenly happens, you don't know. It comes from your heart. It is not by mind, it is by heart. Many times you meet her per day but never you feel about her, but one day comes when you feel something. Why did this thing happen with me, but you don't know. This is love, this is love (interview with Girish, 24, Christian, January 2013).

Girish rather poetically describes the notion of true love as being mysterious, born from an unknown source, yet based on a mutual friendship, thus distinguishing it from 'love at first sight' or attraction and sexual desire. Instead, true love is a wonder to him and his incredulity at how it grew and sprung to life with his lover seems to take on an almost spiritual, ethereal quality. Love is not the outcome of a proposal, or any pre-thought strategy, but comes straight from the heart in an unexpected, inexplicable manner. This is a narrative for the benefit of the listener, as were many of the other descriptions by men of true love relationships. The influence of 'filmi' (or 'cinema style') is often evident throughout these narratives of true love in which the 'boy now takes the part of humble and ardent suitor, whose happiness (indeed whose life) totally depends upon the favours of his beloved' (Osella and Osella, 2006, p.111). In this sense, cinema provides the 'resources for experiments with self-making... They allow

scripts for possible lives to be imbricated with the glamour of film stars' (Appadurai, 1996, p.3). Using the language of cinema love songs, which depict a religious devotion (or 'bhakti'), the boy compares the girl to a goddess and he acts as the supplicant (*ibid*). There is a reversal of the 'hierarchic-heterosexual dyad' (Osella and Osella, 1998) as the male becomes subordinate to that of the female. This is not to say that his feelings are not genuine, but that such emotions are framed in a particular way so as to give the impression of a purer form of love or relationship than other instances.

While some men do relate and describe initial feelings of attraction to the girl that they fall in love with, others such as Girish attempt to omit such physical desires from their narratives, basing the development of the relationship on friendship, emotional intimacy and mutual support. In all cases, there is a clear statement from the man that no physical sexual activity occurs between the couple, further distinguishing such relationships from the lowly, almost animalistic urges associated with time pass. The aim of framing such narratives of true love in this manner is to attempt to equate the nature and status of these relationships with that of the socially conventional arranged marriage in which love develops slowly during the engagement and the marriage itself. True love narratives adopt language that is similar to notions of companionate love in which intimacy, trust and friendship form the basis (Giddens, 1992; Wardlow & Hirsch, 2006). For Derne, men attempted to legitimise their transgression of social norms by attempting to make these acts seem acceptable, 'making arguments that operate within the dominant framework for understanding action... [and] using reasoning that makes sense within the dominant framework of understanding action' (1995, p. 125). However, although men may attempt to frame such acts within the dominant framework (in this case that of arranged marriage ideals) their actions remain transgressive or suspect in the eyes of the community.

The language and discourse used within the different narratives of relationships clearly differentiates between the two understandings of 'love'. The story of Raheem (26, Muslim, interviewed in April 2013) begins when he was twelve

years old and concerns a girl who, although living in Ahmedabad, would regularly return to the village to visit family. Raheem would discover when she was returning and wait for her at the train station, before following her back to the village collecting the nut shells she would discard and receiving a string of insults from her as a result: *'I used to enjoy even those bad words from her as at least she speaks something about me (laughs). I was mad of that girl'*- the notion of having gladly lost control of your senses is shown here as being a clear indicator of someone in true love. Interestingly, this loss of control of the body, and of the heart, are the reverse of the characteristics expected of men, where discipline and self-control are important markers of manhood. It indicates a pre-transitional period of relative freedom whereby a boy or youth is at liberty (albeit in 'secrecy') to explore these emotional outlets. A recurrent theme throughout these narratives of love is that of the man suffering for his love for a girl, so that he tends to cast himself as the martyred hero sacrificing time, money and pride in the name of love. Again, this is reflective of a particular way of presenting a narrative of true love to an audience, which emphasises certain themes and emotions that often seem to mirror popular forms of romantic portrayals, such as those found in Bollywood.

In order to find a means of coming close to the girl once she had returned to live in the village Raheem came up with several strategies, including bribing her cousin with cigarettes in order to strike up a friendship with him, and to voluntarily water her father's fields. As recompense for his work the family would prepare lunch *'so I had an idea that either the chapatti or the shak would have been prepared by that girl. In the morning when they used to come with the tea I used to tell them "if you are bringing food in the afternoon, bring more," so I was thinking I would get the taste of her! A great love for that girl'*.

'For one year I worked in the field and slowly, slowly I introduced myself to the mother and father who then had a good relation with me. I left the school after 5th standard because I was after that girl.' Although this may be an excuse for leaving school at an age when many in his samaj also dropped out it does provide an indication of the depths of love that he wishes to portray and further

emphasises the themes of suffering and sacrifice that are etched throughout the narrative. Despite continuing to build a good relationship with her family members, the girl still '*used to come out and make faces when I looked at her, putting me down, saying go away*'. Yet after months of dogged attrition, slowly he developed a form of communication, first as she responded to his persistent questioning 'Kha du?' ('Have you eaten?') and subsequently at a wedding, again through the topic of food. At this point, though, Raheem had not declared his love nor issued a proposal. But still he displayed his love through action, such as carrying a double load of potatoes during harvesting so as to spare her the work. This continued until one day, when he was under the impression that she loved another boy, he was forced to press her on the matter:

'So I went to her and by then we had a good relations, so I can talk to her.

I told her "don't feel bad but the thing I am going to ask you, definitely you will feel bad, but let me ask you something. Have you ever fallen in love with someone?"

She said "yes."

So I was worried because I thought it was my friend, so I asked "where is he from?"

Then she said "he stays here only".

"From how long have you been loving him?"

"The last 10 or 15 days, I have started loving the person", she replied.

So I thought it must be that guy. So I said "now you have to tell me the name of whom you love."

She said "ok, I will tell you late" (interview with Raheem, 26, Muslim, April 2013)

Raheem's narrative has almost taken on the form of a movie script with the protagonist, and the audience, left hanging between acts by the ambiguity of the girl's responses. It was evident that Raheem enjoyed recounting this love story, carefully threading together his feelings, his sacrifices and anxieties as akin to the hero from a Bollywood script. The love story is thus split between the actual events that happened and the dramatic, enthusiastic retelling of the narrative. How close the two are, the actual to the account, cannot be ascertained, but it is in the telling that we learn about the thoughts and feelings of this particular man. Through this we can perhaps draw some insight as to the significance such narratives of love have to play in the daily life and discourse of a person. Although, of course, other aspects of a person's life have real significance, particularly livelihoods, the samaj and family, in this narrative they are subsumed by the love story. Later in the interview Raheem would talk about these other aspects of his life, but it was only during this narrative of love that he really came to life, enthusing and agonising over the various twists and turns. Therefore, romantic love (and perhaps this can be extended to pre-marital relationships more broadly) can be perceived as a script that allows men to talk about exploring their sexuality and masculinity through such narratives and in front of certain audiences. It adopts a Bollywood 'filmi' nature, as this is perhaps the main, and most entertaining, media through which young men encounter experiences and portrayals of love. The heroism and suffering of the main protagonist becomes an emotion to aspire to and so certain features become reflected in the telling of their own stories (Osella and Osella 2006).

When the answer came back from the girl, '*she said "I love you" so I was so happy and now my hair is standing up as I talk about this*'. I pick up the remainder of this narrative in subsequent chapters, as it is relevant to the themes emerging there. But as a final point to mention here, the relationship between Raheem and the girl continued throughout his adolescence and into early manhood for a duration of eight years '*and in those eight years I never touched the girl*'. This is a significant point, and one he emphasised with some degree of pride, and almost awe, at the depth of his emotional attachment to this girl; an attachment that transcended physical desire in his mind and became an eternal, spiritual form of

love. Although it seems likely that Raheem felt some sexual desire during this long period of intimacy with the girl, the fact that he chose to repress explicitly such notions of desire and lust is an interesting feature of this particular discourse of love. It is as if by acknowledging any such physical attraction, the nature of this form of 'pure' love would become tainted, somehow less meaningful, muddied by baser instincts. It is also not necessarily a reflection of the individual's character as someone of higher moral standards respecting the female body and seeking a form of equality through a purer relationship along the lines of Gidden's (1992) notion of a democratising love. In discussing his marriage (to another girl), Raheem talks of his eagerness to have sex, even risking the wrath of his in-laws to attempt to have sex on their first night, against (Islamic) social custom. In another conversation with a few friends and myself, he loudly stated that the main reason for marriage, and spending the money required for it, is for '*the woman's hole*' and so you should have sex and enjoy (from field notes, May 2013). Clearly, he is not an inherently romantic character yet the relationship with the first girl was one in which he would never think to use such crude words to describe their love. Therefore, the different notions of love or sexual attraction attributed to different girls result in multiple presentations and performances of sexuality and masculinity within the same person's narratives and perceptions.

5.4.2 Time pass

The last example in the previous section leads into a discussion of the other main discourse of pre-marital relationships, that of sexual desire or time pass. In this sense, interaction with women is a means to an end, a discourse and strategy to satisfy physical desires and to prove a certain masculine sexuality of conquest. In this set of narratives, language is used that marks women as objects, such as 'machines' and 'holes' to be 'used and thrown' (usually a reference to plastic bags in everyday speech) and as a job or task to be accomplished. This may indeed be reflective of certain normative traits of masculinity through which men seek to accumulate (sexual partners, in this context) and avoid emotional intimacy through reducing relationships to their

lowest common denominator, that of the physical act of sex (Kimmel, 1990). While at times these narratives may be framed in a discourse of true love, subsequent behaviour and attitude implies the sexual intent hidden within such strategic discourses. As some men become more experienced and confident with this approach, they drop any pretence of romance in favour of a straight proposal for sex.

Chirag narrates how he was having an affair with one girl in a different village from his own and whose friend then informed the girls' mother of the situation and he was saved from a 'hammering' only through a friend's interjection.

Chirag subsequently found it difficult to meet with his lover without her friend being present so he devised a solution:

So I trapped the other girl also, if I trap that girl then it is easy, she will not go and tell the others also, because if she goes then the other girl will say 'you are doing the same thing.' So I trapped that girl so both of them I was using. It was a nice idea as you trap that one then you also have sex with that girl so she will not go and tell (interview with Chirag, 28, Tadpada, March 2013).

Chirag narrates how he managed to 'trap' this second girl by threatening to tell her father and brother that she too was in love with someone and through this '*she came closer to me to please me so that I didn't go and tell*'. He then tells how he gave fruit and money to the girl (dropping any pretence of gift giving in the process) and so '*when I started giving money I had a command on her and 'oh, ok, we'll have sex' and then she also agreed and I continued having sex with that girl*'. This short narrative raises a number of themes about sexuality, masculinity and gender relations. First, it illustrates a particular way in which Chirag wishes to present himself to the listener: as a man in control who is resourceful and cunning in his ability to achieve sexual conquests over women. Second, his behaviour highlights the desire to present a risk-taking nature that some men adopt with regard to having relationships with girls, a behaviour that is often encouraged and rewarded by male peer approval as a successful trait of youth masculinity. A notable point related to the idea of risk-taking and masculinity is

that while the structure of arranged marriage restricts hypergamy to a bride's upward mobility, in pre-marital relationships it is often the case that men would seek women from higher castes than their own. Inevitably, this is linked to notions of masculinity and conquest, prowess and risk-taking behaviour (Geetha, 1998). Pre-marital relationships act as a form of licence in allowing men to pursue such normatively taboo relationships. In this sense, in courtship - if not in marriage - men can be hypergamous in their relationships with women. Anandhi et al discuss how young Dalit men in a Tamil village consider the enticing of upper caste girls to be a 'major challenge to their masculine identity' and a significant 'victory' if they are successful in their pursuit (2002, p. 4402). While the authors frame this assertion in terms of aspirations of marriage, the young men in this Gujarati village have no such intentions, understanding the severe consequences of such a scenario. Therefore, most of these 'reverse' hypergamous relationships are framed as time pass and can be understood as conquests that are consciously pursued as a means of subverting normative hierarchies of caste and power. Further, this links to another common trait of masculinity, that of boasting, and it is evident through the manner in which Chirag narrates these stories (and there were many more that he told me) that he is proud of these achievements, or these conquests, as they are framed. Chirag's friend, who is quick to come to his defence when the girl's family confronts him over his suspected actions, provides further evidence that peers support and re-affirm such behaviour.

Another thread in this narrative is the eagerness and intent with which Chirag seeks to develop (and portray his ability to acquire) sexual relationships, adopting multiple, and often rather coercive, strategies to attract women. Again, this desire for multiple sexual partners reflects a desire to aspire to a certain form of masculinity and sexuality that denotes virility, confidence and mastery over women. His language throughout the narrative is dismissive of women's feelings and agency, except for when they do something negative that goes against his wishes, such as informing on his sexual relationship. Instead, he tends to place the emphasis on his ability to 'trap' and control women through economic means, such as gift giving and money, but also through more devious

strategies, such as blackmail and coercion. There was little doubt that, as he narrated such stories, he was proud of his actions and saw them, as his friends perhaps did, as impressive achievements reflecting a successful sexuality and masculine prowess and no doubt this is reflected in the manner in which he retells the narrative. It is clear that this approach and attitude towards women is indicative of a patriarchal society in which the man is perceived as dominant within gender relations. Yet, as described in the previous section, not all men perceive women as objects for conquest or exert an aggressive sexuality; those in true love relationships often consider their lover to be of an equal, if not higher and exalted, status. One must therefore be careful not to assume that all male perspectives and behaviours are misogynistic and sexist. Further, while there is a sense that the man is in control and, at times, 'traps' women into such relationships, this is not to deny that in certain (and perhaps many) instances, the girl is a willing participant in such sexual, time pass relationships. However, the extent to which girls are coerced into, or freely seek, sexual relationships is beyond the purview of this research, focused as it is upon male narratives.

Hadis narrates a story that encapsulates the opportunistic nature of some men in seeking sex. He would often sleep outside his house and his friend would also come and sleep there. One day Hadis's friend had arranged for a girl from the area to visit in the middle of the night to have sex, but something happened with a relative and he had to leave the village, instructing Hadis to inform the girl not to come. However, Hadis forgot to do so. The girl arrived at the house and thinking it was her lover sleeping outside, she got inside the blankets. Hadis continues the narrative:

She started kissing me and I never shouted but realised someone was kissing me and then I also realised I had not informed the girl. If you start kissing a satan, even dead satan will get up. Once I felt like having sex I never bothered about who has come so when my penis erects it does not see who is that person or how they are related, whether it is aunty or whoever, you have to fuck. So I started fucking her. I knew that she is kissing me and doing all things, but I never removed the

quilts because then she would come to know who I am. Rather than that I was hiding her face also so she doesn't know who I am inside. That girl whilst kissing was using her lover's name, but I was not responding. I would say 'hmm, hmm'. If I speak then she will come to know that I am a different guy (interview with Hadis, 23, Muslim, May 2013).

Soon after finishing sex, the girl's aunty started calling for her so she crept out of bed and pretended to be urinating by the side of the road to avoid arousing suspicion. Due to the shouting Hadis's father came out of the house, causing him to rise out of bed and so the girl saw that she had slept with the wrong man.

In the morning she came to me when I was alone and asked 'why did you do like this?' I blamed the girl and said 'look you could have come and checked whether I am the right person or not. I was tired and sleeping and once you came inside and started holding me and kissing me, I couldn't control myself and then I was saying a few words and touching here and there, you could have removed and done that.' So she said 'ok it was my mistake, but anyhow it was a nice time, but don't tell anyone, at least not my lover, because we are in love and it would break' (interview with Hadis, 23, Muslim, May 2013).

This narrative reads like a sexual fantasy and one that has almost been drawn directly from a blue movie or perhaps an adolescent conversation among male peers of an idealised sexual scenario. However, whether this event actually occurred or not, it provides an illustrative portrayal of this young man's perspective towards sex and indeed women. Firstly, it portrays a certain opportunistic and immoral approach to sex. The betrayal is twofold, first to the girl who can hardly be understood to be having consensual sex when she is unaware of the identity of her lover, but also to Hadis's supposed friend who he seems to have little qualms in betraying in order to satisfy his sexual needs. This, therefore, contravenes the male peer solidarity that is commonly referred to within other men's narratives, but perhaps that is reflective of a lower order of friendship with this particular man as opposed to betraying a close friend from

the intimate peer circle. The narrative is very much framed in terms of a physiological imperative for having sex in that once this girl had aroused him, there was no thinking of the consequences or even of her potential kinship, instead '*you have to fuck*'. Finally, and this may well be a neat embellishment to absolve any responsibility upon his part, he is able to convince the girl that it was actually her fault, as once she had aroused him it was not possible for him to retain any self-control. Perhaps this did in truth occur, and may indicate the position the girl finds herself in: she is unable to make a scene or accuse the boy of wrongdoing as she herself was breaking the social norm by having pre-marital sex and so the consequences would therefore be more dire, for her, if the truth was discovered.

The lack of self-control is, in some ways, similar to that of the true love relationship and so indicates an opposition of the cultural expectations for achieving a status of manhood. In the case of time pass, however, this loss of self-control is greater in the sense that, unlike true love relationships, there is no physical or sexual control either. Those in true love relationships often refer to this latter lack of control when indicating the superior nature of their form of relationship. This lack of self-control and discipline is perhaps reflective of this liminal period of relative freedom for young men that are juxtaposed to the expectations of men when they become married and have a duty towards the family and household. There are, also, those youths who abstain from any such pre-marital relationship and, therefore, strictly adhere to the traditional Hindu notion of a 'celibate student' (although they may frame this abstinence in different discursive terms) that is preparing for the transition to adulthood. Interestingly, this raises questions about the dominant traits of masculinity. While in certain circles this aggressive sexuality and patriarchal control of women is commonplace and reinforced within peer boundaries, there is an alternative approach to gender relations and displays of a sexually 'controlled' masculinity that does, at least discursively, indicate an 'equal' relationship along the lines discussed by Giddens (1992). Those engaged in the latter, seemingly less common form of masculinity and sexuality, are actually positioning

themselves as morally superior to those engaged in the more common and dominant male identity.

5.4.2.1 Time pass and sexual violence

There was a small girl who was 14 years old and she sends a message through a friend's sister that she wants to love me. I say no, she is very small and my friends advise me that 'she is now small, but now just start kissing and have sex after 2 years. Girls grow like anything, man, and after 2 years you'll have it, but right now start so that no one takes and you get a fresh girl.' So I believed it was a good idea and I started that. Slowly, slowly, slowly she gets up to the age where she can have sex and she comes to this side and where there is a well where people go to toilet. I used to meet her there and for 2 or 3 minutes I would press the breast and kiss the girl and all things, but she never allowed to have sex and there was less time also. One day I started hammering the girl because she was not allowing me to do that and she was not giving me time, only 2 minutes, and my idea was only to have sex. One day I made her understand that sex is good and we both decided to have it. As soon as I removed the clothes and as soon as I inserted my penis inside and just started she shouted because it was her first time and painful. So I started hammering the girl because someone can come and see and it can be a problem. But she was not so old and suffering for the first time. So the sperm came out and it was wasted so I got very angry and very brutally hammered her and she ran away. My friends then went there and made her understand that it happens like this the first time, but it won't be a problem. Then she comes back to me again and we started having sex. Meanwhile her parents came to know that I was in love with that girl. They tried to trap me saying don't talk to our girls. I found that there was a lot of security around that girl, so I stopped with that girl. She is the most beautiful girl in the area (interview with Hadis, 23, Muslim, May 2013).

There are several threads to discuss in relation to this narrative of Hadis. First, and most significant, this case of rape (as this forceful imposition of sex should be labelled) is an extreme marker of the disregard some men hold for a

woman's body. In this case, the context of the secretive, transgressive relationship coupled with the inequality of power embedded in gender relations (and further exacerbated by the difference in age) enables the boy to ignore the societal constraints of rape (Foucault 1976; Connell 1987) in order to fulfil his sexual desires. The initial refusal on the part of the girl to submit to these desires result in Hadis' outburst of anger and violence as his male authority and entitlement is challenged. Perhaps, these frustrations of Hadis relate to an underlying frustration as to his own social position both as a Muslim (often discriminated against within Indian society), but more specifically in his position within the samaj. His poor economic status, the negative reputation of his father and his own as a gambler, which have resulted in his inability to find a marital match may contribute to a sense of thwarted masculinity, which seeks a form of control, such as through the sexual control over the female body. This thwarted masculinity may also be reflected in broader societal trends of violence towards women, such as that of the Delhi rape case. It becomes an expression of power and control over the female body for the man who frames such desires in the form of sexual entitlement.

It is difficult to determine whether time pass relationships, in general, are a reflection of this notion of a patriarchal dominance over women exacerbated in lower status groups by a sense of a frustrated masculinity. Alternatively, they could be a reflection of a period of liminality for young men during which they push the transgressive boundaries in order to explore and experiment in terms of their sexuality and masculinity. However, not all men act in this manner as a number seek to conduct true love relationships, others a combination of time pass and true love, and yet others abstain from these relationships altogether. There is, therefore, a sense of contradictory and multiple masculinities and sexualities, and although this research is unable to account definitively for the underlying rationale of these divergences among men, the discussion of the outcome of these different performances provides some insight into young men's notions of love and sexuality.

A second theme in the above narrative is the complicity of Hadis's friends in advocating his pursuit of the girl (despite her young age) and through their attempts to persuade and reassure the girl into having sex with Hadis. This shows the dominant attitude towards females held by a significant number of boys and men. Once more, male solidarity and an affirmation of an aggressive heterosexuality come to the fore of peer group behaviour. This need for peer affirmation is a means through which men constantly seek a validation of their masculinity (Kimmel 1990). Third, the desire to have sex with a virgin ('*a fresh girl*') extends outside the normative institution of marriage to encompass pre-marital relationships with little regard to the cultural significance of kanyadana or the contradiction, or hypocrisy, that the boy will one day also wish to marry a virgin. Fourth, the anger caused by the wasting of sperm is notable although perhaps the anger is less to do with the actual loss of semen and more to do with the frustration in his failure to have sex. This is one of the rare instances in which a man referred to this theme, one which is often analysed within the literature on Indian sexuality (Srivastava, 2004a). Finally, once the family of the girl began to realise what was happening it attempted to trap Hadis and placed security around the girl so that the risk of discovery became greater than the benefit of having sex, thus resulting in him ending the relationship. As we will see in chapter six, this balance of risk-taking versus discovery, reward versus consequence, is an important theme in the everyday experiences, choices and actions that men undertake with regard to pre-marital relationships.

5.4.3 Time pass and true love together

Certain men are able to switch between the two discourses of true love and time pass, almost effortlessly. Navin initially fell in love with a Darbar girl, a relationship which has lasted seven years and which he views as true love: '*One lover we should have that goes on until the day we die and the others come and go'* (interview with Navin, 24, Christian, March 2013). However, after this first love he was soon able to seize opportunities and take advantage both of his financial position and intimacy within the girl's family to initiate sexual relationships, ones which he refers to as '*temporary connections, you use and throw*'. He claims

now to have relationships with ten female relatives of the first love, who is unaware that this is happening. The language he chooses to use and the manner in which he talks about these other relationships is in sharp contrast to that which he uses for his true love:

I demand sex, sexually I will talk to the girls and with the parts only I will go on talking. So I will say 'if you are free, can I come there?' and she will say yes and I will say 'I just want to put my penis in your mouth'... I never enjoyed life up to now, but now I am enjoying vagina (interview with Navin, 24, Christian, March 2013).

Both my interpreter and myself witnessed Navin's use of such language towards his girlfriends on separate occasions. While this does verify that he has spoken to women in this manner, it may still have been a performance for the benefit of our audience and not necessarily reflective of his usual approach. This is perhaps supported by the rather negative response he appeared to receive from the girl when I witnessed this conversation. However, just as his assertion of having ten girlfriend's may be an exaggeration, these narratives reflect a certain presentation and performance of masculinity and sexuality in front of a male audience. It is another instance of a boastful narrative by a man in relation to his virility and sexual prowess in the acquisition of multiple sexual partners. It indicates a need, on his part, for seeking approval and affirmation of his hyper-sexuality and masculinity: he is more of a man than his peers based on the number of pre-marital relationships that he can simultaneously sustain. Further, these different expressions and attitudes towards relationships with different women may seem contrary to his assertions of true love, but Navin does not see it this way. Instead, the other girls become a means for fulfilling his sexual needs and providing enjoyment that he had not previously experienced in life. He clearly distinguishes between the first, non-sexual, true love and the rest of his lovers:

I love more and get more calls from the older one and it is my first love that I call and there is more communication with that. The rest are more beautiful than her

but it is not face wise, but heart wise (interview with Navin, 24, Christian, March 2013).

Navin and his true love exchange love letters and poems weekly, sharing intimate thoughts about one another when they meet. In a narrative to illustrate the depths of their love for one another, Navin describes how he self-harms with a razor blade or through placing a hot wire in the shape of the girl's initial on his arm.

It doesn't pain, in love it doesn't pain at all. This is nothing. If she says to die, I will die. This is not the first time, but more than 500 times I have harmed my hand for love (interview with Navin, 24, Christian, March 2013).

This understanding of love becomes an outpouring of emotion, a discourse that aims to imitate the sacrifices and pain experienced in the great and tragic love stories popularised through Bollywood movies and TV serials. These stories are twisted into the discourse to the extent that complete devotion can only be expressed through self-inflicted pain, as if that is the final proof of love. This is not necessarily a reflection of everyday discourses and experiences of love that I came across. While there may be a degree of embellishment to such narratives as part of the story telling process, Navin did show me clear scars on his arms where he had burned the initial of the girl's name into his skin. Nor was this an entirely isolated narrative as another man also discussed self-harm as an expression of true love. Further, even among those who are strongly against such expressions of love through self-harm, there is a sense, in their own narratives of true love, of the emotional pain they often feel when confronted with societal traditions and norms preventing the socially ratified confirmation of love (see chapter 7.2.2).

However, there is a more commonly expressed form of embodiment in relation to love: tattoos. Men have tattoos as a means to show the depths of their love. Men, from across the samaj, would acquire tattoos as an expression of status and fashion, often emulating popular celebrities that represent a culturally

exalted form of masculinity (Connell 2000), centred around the fashionable, muscular and tattooed body. Generally, tattoos for young men are of two types: those with a religious symbolism or those that represent love. The acquiring of tattoos that symbolise love creates a contradiction between the public and private discourse surrounding pre-marital relationships as this almost acts as a confession that the individual is involved in such transgressive relationships. There is, however, a sense of maintaining some degree of secrecy by ensuring the lover's name remains anonymous, either by the use of a single letter from her name, or more commonly, by having the word 'rānī' ('queen') tattooed, often somewhere on the man's arm. This latter form of tattoo serves, as one Tadpada man explained, as transferable if the focus of a man's love shifts to another girl or if he marries and finds a new 'queen'.

5.4.4 Unrequited love

In this final section, I will follow the narrative of love and tension experienced by one young Thakor man, Kundan. Kundan experienced unrequited love. His narrative threaded throughout my field notes and although contact with him was fairly sporadic and incidental, he was open in describing his situation and emotions regarding his love life. Kundan is seventeen years old and works in a plant nursery just outside of the village. Tall and very thin, his presentation of self was clearly an important aspect of his identity as his hair was carefully oiled and stylish, his clothes were clean and relatively new and the bicycle he was often seen riding had an almost childish decorative appearance with lights, side mirror and reflectors adorning its bright red frame and wheels. My first sight of Kundan was when my interpreter Bhavesh pointed out an interaction between him and a girl. Kundan was lingering to one side of the main street that runs through the village, waiting for a girl to finish buying her items from a shop. As she began to walk down to the street he also set off, casually veering in her direction as their paths crossed in order to exchange a fleeting whisper of words, before carrying on in their respective and separate directions. At this time, I learnt nothing more about the status of their relationship, whether it was a furtive plea of love on behalf of one to the other or a pre-arranged mode of

contact as part of an on-going relationship. However, not long after witnessing this interaction I came across Kundan again:

He was resting, slumped against a wall and looking very miserable. When [Bhavesh] asked whether it was to do with a girl, he replied that she had given him a bracelet indicating that he was her 'brother' and therefore could not be a lover. He said he was sad because people thought that he and this girl had been lovers when really they were only good friends and he didn't want people to think this. This story could be true, but as [Bhavesh] said (and I'm inclined to agree) it was a story of self-defence in that his feelings had been hurt but he didn't want people to know the real reason. The boy himself said he was feeling a 'tension' at the moment that he could not get rid of, and that he was thinking too much about the situation (field notes, October 2012).

Thoughts of love, projected or real, may quickly take over an individual's daily life. That is not to say that all lovers do is daydream and dwell upon their situation, but that it can become a defining feature of their existence. Thus, Kundan's slumped posture and proximity to the girl's home is indicative of his state of 'despair' towards his unreciprocated love. No doubt it is also an attempt to show the girl the pain he is experiencing as a result of her rejection in the hope that she may identify this as being representative of the depth of his true love for her. Although in this instance, Kundan was passively expressing his emotions and intentions, the next time he was more actively engaged in pursuing the girl by giving her Rs100. Once more, a boy within the context of pre-marital relationships uses money in an attempt to become more desirable to a girl.

So, expressions and emotions of love (and in this case unrequited love) are evident through episodic interspersions of passive and active discourse. While the former indicates a reflective period, either one of pre-proposal anticipation or post-proposal depression, the latter is the boy proving his sexuality (and masculinity) through actively engaging in the pursuit of love. For many, a repeated refusal on the girl's part may lead to a few weeks of contemplative

brooding, a licking of wounded pride, before moving on to the next potential lover. However, for some, it is not so easy to move past the infatuation with a particular girl and instead it becomes a much deeper source of tension. For Kundan this tension increased when the girl's parents learnt of his intentions and threatened to beat him if he continued to hang around near the girl's home.

The boy's love, initially rejected by the girl, was then subsequently and resoundingly blocked by the girl's family. Recognising his situation, Kundan's friends also tried to persuade him from pursuing this girl referring to her promiscuity as a sign of her bad nature and so being unworthy of his continued attention. However, unable to relinquish this seeming obsession with the girl, nor able to surmount the barriers placed in front of him by the girl and her family, Kundan resorted to alcohol in order to relieve the tension he was experiencing, selling his much-loved bike to pay for his increasingly costly habit. I did not meet with Kundan again so this rather sad narrative remains open. While this is quite an extreme example of how love may transform and impact upon an individual's character, it provides an insight into how narratives of love may come to dominate and transform an individual's life.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the informal learning processes and strategies for male sexuality based on the narratives of boys and men in a village context. A range of cultural and social scenarios inform the development of sexuality for young men with gender differentiated roles, 'homosexual' practice, the influence of male peers, and more recently that of new media and communication, alongside more traditional narratives of religious and conservative discourses. It is clear from male narratives that multiple sexualities and masculinities exist dependent on the context and audience to which they are performed. A public discourse seeks to conform to normative social sexualities that are influenced by marital, caste, religious and kinship structures, whereas private 'common' discourses, whilst still hetero-normative in nature, produce different understandings, attitudes and patterns of behaviour in terms of sexuality and

masculinity. The most notable divergence is between true love and time pass relationships where there are clear differentiations in terms of language, intentions and attitudes, strategies of initiation, practice and ideologies of gender. For those involved in the former, they identify their relationship as superior in status to that of the latter, and often attempt to frame discourses of true love in a similar manner to arranged marriages, particularly by paying attention to the temporality of a slow, eternal love compared to the instantaneous, and brief, physical attraction of time pass. However, the nature of pre-marital relationships is rarely straightforward and clear as to produce two easily distinguished types. Instead, some men are able to maintain both true love and time pass relationships simultaneously without feeling any sense of contradiction or conflict. Other young men suffer from the tension brought about by unrequited love. And finally there are those who abstain from pre-marital relationships entirely in favour of conforming to normative societal discourses on love and marriage.

Throughout this chapter, key themes have arisen with regard to sexuality, love and masculinity. One such theme is the importance of peer influence, affirmation and pressure in terms of the formative process of sexuality, developing relationships, and the policing of hetero-normative boundaries of both masculinity and sexuality. A second theme is that of performance through which men display particular forms of sexuality, love and masculinity (whether that is the tough, aggressive and virile man of time pass relationships or the emotionally intimate and respectful man who exhibits sexual restraint as found in true love narratives). However, both forms of pre-marital relationship are reflective, to differing degrees, of an absence of the self-control and discipline that are typical markers of a successful transition to manhood. They are, therefore, indicative of a pre-transitional liminal period for boys and young men. While not all men engage in pre-marital relationships, it is a common practice among young men in the village. Such performances also have clear implications for gender relations in Gujarati rural society, particularly in samaj where women are experiencing an increased agency to engage in public space, higher education, employment and consumption. Finally, whether it be in the

form of time pass or true love, pre-marital relationships are reflective of another significant trait of masculinity, that of risk-taking behaviour in the face of social constraints, sanctions and consequences, which push such relationships into a secret discourse that forms the central thread of analysis in the next chapter.

Ajit

Ajit is a young man (25 years of age) from the Tadpada community. Small in stature, he dresses in a stylish manner - if a little garish compared to other samaj - with gold trousers, flamboyant shirts, and heavy, thick bracelets and a gold ear stud. On his forearms are several tattoos dedicated to a previous lover or 'rānī'. He is a warm, friendly character with a smile always close by and his conversation is replete with expletives as is often the way with men from the Tadpada samaj. Ajit, like a number of men in the village, is addicted to paan masala (a chewing tobacco) and rarely goes for long before placing another wad into his mouth and sending streams of red spit into the dusty pavement in front of his house.

Ajit's family is of low class background and his childhood was hard and impoverished. He left school at 7th Standard (around 12 years old) in order to contribute to the household income, which is fairly typical for a boy in his samaj. Initially, he was responsible for a herd of goats, which he would take to the fields for grass, but which were largely lost during a heavy flood in the village some years ago. Since then he has been predominantly working as a 'loose labourer' cutting wood and performing seasonal agricultural jobs. Nowadays, Ajit has also secured an agreement with a high caste farmer whereby he cultivates the land, grows and harvests the crop, receiving half of the profits upon sale. A final source of income for the family is the brewing of illegal (and very strong) alcohol in a small hut opposite their house. In the context of Gujarat where alcohol is prohibited, there are inevitable risks with such illicit activity but typically the police turn a blind eye to this common practice once they have received a bribe. As a result of these various sources of livelihood, Ajit and his family (which now includes a young wife and child) are better off than they were, although by no means wealthy.

Chirag

Chirag is a 28-year-old man from the Tadpada samaj. Small and wiry with a look of mischief, he often wears long shorts and a white vest that shows off the several tattoos dotted across his arms. He is a neighbour and close friend of Ajit and they typically spend much of their free time together watching videos on their mobile phones and chatting. Chirag left school after only the 3rd Standard (around eight years of age) in order to look after the family's goats and has been working ever since in a variety of loose labouring occupations. He has multiple livelihood strategies including work as an agricultural labourer, a member of a band (for weddings and other events), brewing liquor and cultivating fruit. At one stage he worked in Mumbai on a temporary construction contract (workers are frequently recruited from villages for three or six month contracts in the large cities), which he described as a terrible experience: a new world with too many rules and controls. He did not understand the city life and soon grew homesick and returned to the village.

Chirag lives alone with his mother in a small house in the Tadpada samaj. His older brothers provide no financial support, which leaves him as the sole provider for his mother. He would often refer to the other people in his samaj as jealous and poisonous, causing him all sorts of problems and tensions in both business and in his attempts to arrange a marriage for himself. Chirag was very proud and eager to share his many narratives on the love affairs he has had both within the village and beyond, and it is through these that he will predominantly feature in the subsequent discussion of this thesis.

Sudhir

Sudhir, in his mid-thirties and from the Tadpada caste, is one of the warmest and friendliest of men I met in the village, often enveloping me in a bear hug within his rather sizeable frame. He is a man whose presence seems to command attention and whose bearing is one of pride. He is a large man who dresses well and wears expensive jewellery such as gold chains around his neck

and wrist plus rings on his fingers, all of which serve to denote his status and wealth. His father had held a good government job, which meant the family has a stable and relatively high income compared to most of the other families within the samaj. Sudhir completed his 12th Standard education and began to attend college, which is quite rare for someone from the Tadpada samaj. But by this time he was married and a series of arguments between his wife and sister-in-law led to him dropping out of college and moving out of the family home to another, smaller building the family-owned at the end of the street, previously used to store crops from their farm.

Despite his father's wealth, Sudhir received no support or money (not even basic household items such as pots and utensils) when he left home with his young wife and so faced a very difficult period where he was forced to find intermittent work as an agricultural labourer. In those early days they had no means with which to cook food and were forced to rely on packets of biscuits as their main sustenance. It was only with the help of his father-in-law who, seeing their situation, bought cooking utensils and grains, were they able to assume a degree of normal, albeit tough, existence. After some time, Sudhir's father relented and offered his support and so Sudhir was able to set up a small shop facing the main road in a building his father had bought from a neighbour. Starting small, over the years Sudhir showed considerable business acumen and has developed his shop into a thriving and rather substantial means of income. He is now one of the wealthiest members of his samaj. In the meantime, he started a family with three daughters and a son and is in the process of arranging marriages for his two eldest girls (the actions of one of which will present some of the main themes of this next chapter).

6 Secrecy, Risk and Discovery: Strategies and consequences for men in pre-marital relationships

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I introduced the different expressions of sexuality and the means through which they are learnt; how cross-gender relationships are established by young men before providing some insight into the two broad forms of pre-marital relationships: time pass and true love. In this chapter the focus shifts to how these pre-marital relationships are performed and negotiated through a back-stage discourse (Goffman, 1959) in the context of a Gujarati village. The aim is to begin to unravel some of the strategies utilised by young men in maintaining the secrecy of these relationships, especially in relation to perceptions of space within the village, which provides different interpretive understandings of how private and public are defined. The temporal dimension is also a significant element of such relationships and is a theme which threads throughout the narrative of this thesis. Finally, the chapter will reflect on male narratives concerning the consequences for discovery of these pre-marital relationships and the paradox this creates for men's lives. In particular, the notions of honour and credit will be explored to understand the implications these have for the daily lives of men within this village.

As discussed in Chapter 4, there are a series of societal expectations and constraints that dictate the nature of relationships between unmarried boys and girls. Firstly, the normative public discourse forbids pre-marital relationships on the grounds that an individual should not have sex before marriage. Secondly, there are clear rules around the institution of marriage, which dictate that marital partners should be selected on the basis of caste endogamy, samaj exogamy, and hypergamy. This provides the front-stage context in which pre-marital relationships are initiated, strategized and performed.

6.2 Performance and secrecy

6.2.1 Co-opting the public space: a timely risk

I will begin this section by picking up the thread of the narrative told in great depth by Raheem, of the Muslim samaj, who fell in love with a girl in his own community. As may be recalled, this relationship lasted eight years and was framed as a narrative of true love.

Now we are in love, we have communication. So she said 'it has been a long time, my parents will search for me, so you get ready and come to my house.' So I got ready and went to her house. I got a time to talk to her and said 'I want to see you alone.' She said 'I was afraid of that only. All boys ask the girl to see her alone.' I said 'no, that is not my idea, I just want to see you and tell you how much I love you, what sacrifices I have made for you in my life.' So she was testing me, 'ok if that is the thing then at 3 in the morning you come behind my house.' But I was afraid: 'If I am caught up then it can be a big problem and I may not be able to talk to you,' but she said 'that is what I want to see, how much guts you have to come to my house and how much you love me.' So I used to sleep outside and I was not covering my body so that mosquitos come and bite me and I would not get sleep and I kept my head off the cot so that until 3.00 I will stay be awake. But still I was getting sleepy, so I would get up and with the water I would wash the face and then carry on waiting...

So I decided to go and sit down there early so I would be in time for 3.00. There was a border on the way and it was very thorny and you have to jump. So I jumped over the bushes but I got some thorns in the legs and hurt myself when I landed. But then I went and sat down behind the house and waited for the girl. But inside I had fear because I was a small boy, 13 years old, and inside my heart was pressurised. It was like thinking that I am a boy and if people come to know that I am there, not a problem, but when they come to know about the girl then the whole life of the girl is spoiled, nobody will get married to her, and a problem for me too in the future.

Without shirt I went there and it was winter so I was shivering and teeth were chattering. That girl came out at 3.30 and she came closer to me and sat down beside me, so I moved away. I said 'let us keep a distance when we sit so that you don't have the impression that every boy is like that.' She said 'no problem, I have tested you and you are in love so sit closer.' We talked about the love I have for her, the sacrifices I made, school and all things are about being after her

(interview with Raheem, 26, Muslim, April 2013).

This narrative illustrates the risks that boys and men are willing to take in order to initiate and maintain these forms of secret relationships. In this case, the boy needs to prove his love through the risk he takes to meet with the girl, a risk that both actors are not only aware of, but which the girl actively creates in order to test the boy. As Osella and Osella note, the girl 'is expected to remain reluctant and reticent, so extreme behaviour is necessary on the boy's part' (1998, p.200), allowing him to play the role of 'romantic hero'- an idealised form of masculinity within this context and one that is readily available through the plethora of representations within media, especially TV and film, but also in traditional stories such as the Ramayana. Once more, this scene becomes a part of the performance of true love in which certain expectations and roles are enacted. The boy is not only proving his love for the girl but also his masculinity. For him to be worthy of her affection he must show that he has the courage of his convictions; that he is willing to sacrifice his sleep, his well being and the consequences of discovery in order to meet with her. It therefore meets normative expectations of what it means to be a man in the sense of being a risk-taker, brave and active and so this performance becomes somewhat like an audition whereby Raheem must successfully prove his worth to the girl for the relationship to progress. From the male perspective, the taboo and sanctions against pre-marital relationships may actually increase the sense of attraction as a result of a heightened perception of risk and danger (Collins & Gregor, 1995; De Munck, 1998). His emphasis on the risks; the trouble and discomfort he puts his body through in order to keep awake; the pain of the thorns on the journey; and the cold of the night while he sits waiting for the girl provide the

pre-amble of sacrifice and courage to overcome the difficulties in order to receive the reward of seeing the girl. But his sacrifice does not end there as he takes it a step further by making it clear that although the girl indicates a desire for some form of physical contact, Raheem shows his integrity and self-control by ensuring the meeting, and the girl, remains honourable. This narrative continues to resemble that of a movie script or a popular tale of clandestine love with the key themes of sacrifice, bravery, risk and the maintenance of honour that are often integral to such plots. Therefore, such fictitious narratives become reproduced in the everyday discourses and performances of pre-marital relationships.

Pre-marital relationships provide a series of logistical and communicative difficulties for the young couple, requiring considerable thought in order to develop strategies that overcome the societal barriers and watchful families that typically seek to impede any such rendezvous. There is a clear temporal dimension to this process: pre-marital relationships consume a significant amount of time, whether it be through the process of daydreaming about the girl; devising strategies to communicate and meet with the girl; discussing with friends; waiting for the girl; or actually meeting with the girl- the last of which likely occupies the shortest period of time. Thus, such pre-marital relationships often become a significant focal point in an individual's everyday life. While there are other significant time pressures on young men, notably in terms of livelihood, duties within the family and possibly within the wider samaj, pre-marital relationships assume a different significance in terms of a sense of fulfilling deeper, underlying emotional or sexual desires. These emotions are particularly heightened due to the transgressive, and therefore secretive, nature in which these relationships must be conducted.

Another dimension of real significance to the strategy, negotiation and performance of pre-marital relationships is that of space. Typically (albeit rather simplistically), space is divided into the private and the public. In terms of pre-marital relationships, private space (i.e. the household, where privacy is rare and there is usually somebody in situ) is a very risky and therefore less

common location for such clandestine meetings to occur. Public space, while not being without risk, often remains the only viable option for most people conducting pre-marital relationships. However, elders, kin and other members of the community carefully monitor public spaces and so for boys and men to realise the opportunity to meet with girls and women, they must do so at carefully selected times and in carefully selected locations.

There is a sense, therefore, that young couples are seeking to actively co-opt these public spaces in order to utilise them for transgressive behaviour that operates outside of a public normative discourse. While other community members and older generations are aware of the occurrence of pre-marital relationships (particularly from experiences during their own youth), there is a tendency for a growing conservatism coupled with an increase in power and position within the *samaj* that increases with age, which is often maintained through the implementation and upholding of traditional rules and boundaries. This conservatism therefore becomes an inbuilt influence against inter-generational social change. Pre-marital relationships may be understood as an expression of youthful rebellion against such constraints, yet they are reflective of a liminal period of freedom for young men prior to the responsibilities of adulthood; rather than in any sense overt attempts for social change on the part of young men, either individually or collectively. Most young men, while performing such transgressive behaviour, still conform to and advocate normative practices, especially that of arranged marriages (to be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 7). There is a distinction, then, in the discourse and practice of young men, between the commitment of a pre-marital transgression and that of contravening marital rules. The former is an expression of a risk-taking male youth validated by the gaze of his peers, but the latter contravenes an important rite of passage for the young man and his family and within the *samaj*. To violate marital rules would be a public act of defiance that would lead to ostracism; yet the transgression of pre-marital norms is a private, secretive affair. Therefore, one of the significant features of these relationships that emerge is whether men are successful performers of secrecy or not.

6.2.2 Co-opting the public space: a nocturnal stage

The central area of the village is where the majority of its inhabitants live and shop for everyday items and food (mainly women), where the main social and cultural activities occur, and where many people come to meet and talk (mainly men) at various times of the day. This would perhaps seem like an ideal place to meet for a couple, if not for the social sanctions that restrict such behaviour. Instead, barring the odd whispered and furtive exchange of words, these spaces are largely off limits, both day and night. During the day, the relatively busy streets and squares provide little opportunity for young individuals who are carefully monitored by their elders and other members of the community- the latter being quick to gossip at any hint of transgressive behaviour. At night, while the streets are much quieter, there is still the likelihood of meeting someone returning from a night shift of work or to stumble across any of a number of people who sleep outside their homes, particularly during the hot summer months. Escaping human attention there is the ever-vigilant and untamed canine presence whose barking is likely to wake half a street.

However, as one moves away from the noisy, well-lit central areas and into the darkened lanes and fields that span the distance between the village and the outlying communities, opportunities become more appealing and viable. During the day, fields are worked and lanes are travelled upon, but at night their emptiness, coupled with their darkness, allows young couples to conduct their secretive rendezvous. That is not to say there are no risks attached to such nocturnal meetings- bore holes are often opened at night for irrigating the fields, people use the lanes as toilets and cobras may provide a nasty surprise for an ill-placed foot- but many of these can be avoided with only a little consideration; and so it becomes a matter of deciding an appropriate meeting place and time, and developing contingency plans in case they are discovered en route. Often the boy and girl will take a bottle of water with them on the pretence that if they meet someone, they will be able to use the excuse of going to the fields for the toilet. Knowledge of the village space is crucial in the avoidance of raising suspicions, and individuals have to identify and negotiate a

route that avoids the potential hazards of neighbours and dogs; yet which does not take the actors too far from their respective samaj, as this would also raise suspicions if they were to meet someone.

If the stage is invariably a nocturnal one, the couple must often devise a variety of strategies in order to meet or even catch a brief glimpse of one another, as Raheem narrates:

I said to her there was one condition for me to go to work and that was for her to show me her face every morning and evening. She agreed. But if it is late night when I come home then she cannot come out but her house is close to the road and so I would hit an iron pole three times with the axe and then once I have seen her I will hit the pole the 4th time, which means I have seen her and I am going. So one day what happens is that I came back at about 2.30 in the morning, and at that time I knocked the pole, she gets up, puts on the bulb in the balcony and she comes and stands so I see her and I knock the 4th time so she goes back inside (interview with Raheem, 26, Muslim, April 2013).

This rather innovative performance encapsulates the lengths to which young couples will go in order to portray their feelings to one another. While the time spent viewing one another is but momentary, the time spent thinking and strategizing about such a plan will be greater; occupying the young man's thoughts on a daily basis, providing a focus for the end of his work shift, a slow building of anticipation as much constructed by the intricacies and ingenuity of the performance as by the actual viewing of the girl. It fits well with, and may have even been inspired by, a scene from a movie or a TV serial, as it draws upon a Shakespearean imagery of Romeo and Juliet, which has of course been imitated in many forms of media around the world. Raheem narrates how the family of the girl came to suspect that they were in love with one another and would position three male members at strategic points whenever the girl went to use the toilet so as to trap Raheem in the act of meeting her. But he would take another route and secretly pass the girl without anyone seeing and so continue to meet her, however briefly, everyday. The couple are often,

therefore, walking a tightrope between secrecy and detection, yet at the same time such transgressive behaviour, if discovered, breaches normative notions of honour and societal structures, which can have significant consequences for both actors, as discussed later in this chapter.

It appears there are an almost endless number of strategies, often carefully planned and co-ordinated, and that vary depending on a range of factors: day or night; winter or summer; within the village boundaries or elsewhere. One Tadpada man discusses how during winter he would meet with a girl in the early hours of the morning, around six o'clock, when he could tell people that he was going for a run. However, in the summer months when it is light earlier and people sleep outside, this strategy for meeting is no longer feasible. Instead, he waits until the bajri crop has grown tall and they enter inside from different parts of the field in order to cut grass for the buffaloes and then find each other, have sex and leave again.

These narratives of secret affairs stretch across the three samaj and seem to indicate a common practice among the majority of (although not all) men. Another Muslim man told me how he would meet a girl and they would find privacy in a dry water channel near to his house. Public space becomes idiomatic in the minds of these young men, conjuring up imaginaries of place that become synonymous to these transgressive narratives. These spaces, and how people think about them, are co-opted from their original, functional meaning to one that is imbued with opportunity and secrecy. Space is no longer situated in the mundane present but is reminiscent of a transgressive past or an aspirant future in which young men visualise their pre-marital relationships and associate certain places of the village intrinsically with them. For some men, this may even involve removing themselves and their girl from the village space entirely in order to ensure they have privacy away from the scrutinising gaze of the village, although this also comes with risks in terms of explaining their absence from the village, particularly on the part of the girl. A Christian man, Navin, was able to take one girl to a mountain near Baroda where they spent the night together, but this of course requires a certain economic means and license

on the part of the man to be able to afford such a trip. For some men, therefore, certain individual circumstances, whether financial or attending a higher education institute (section 6.2.4), facilitate the opportunity to leave the village space in order to enact pre-marital relationships.

6.2.3 Co-opting the public space: peer support

How 'secret' are these relationships? A number of narratives express the knowledge and support of male friends, which as already discussed in chapter five, often form a significant element in the negotiation and maintenance of a pre-marital relationship. One of the most common means through which peers support one another in their everyday performances of relationships is by acting as lookouts to enable their friend to meet with the girl without the anxiety of being found unawares by another member of the community.

So I wasn't too frightened as all my friends would watch to see if anybody was coming or not and if they come then they would let me know. So they were helping me to love the girl (interview with Sabiq, 21, Muslim, May 2013).

This reassurance is obviously comforting for the couple, but it is also reliant on the trust that friends will uphold the secret and neither accidentally, nor purposively, inform someone outside of their trusted peer group. The aim of secrecy is to create a shared knowledge, which people agree to withhold in front of a particular audience. Secrecy is therefore concerned with the ability of an individual, or individuals, to successfully maintain this concealment of knowledge from certain audiences and actors. Often, groups of friends grow up together in the same samaj, attending the same school and spending hours playing and hanging out with one another, so the friendship bonds are strong. Collins and Gregor refer to these bonds of trust formed through secrecy, especially when the secret has the potential to be 'socially explosive' (1995, p. 76). Thus, the clandestine relationship becomes 'a small secret society, ever vigilant and intensely conscious of itself' (*ibid*). In this sense, there is a strong male solidarity through which men relate to one another as brothers and by

which there are certain expectations in terms of support and confidence. These male relationships are almost as strong as familial ones and will often supersede in significance the cross-gender relationships that young men may develop.

Chirag narrated how one friend assisted him when one of his girlfriends visited the local town after fighting with her husband. She had her baby with her so Chirag brought his friend along in order to take care of the baby while he and the woman went to have sex. As a show of gratitude, Chirag took his friend for a treat of ice cream, but Chirag also said that he had recently helped his friend to marry, so there was a sense of reciprocity in this act of support. Reciprocity is an important feature of male friendships, but here it also acts as a means for reaffirming the hetero-normative, common discourse of sexuality and masculinity through the pre-marital relationship. Peer support is offered in order to facilitate and perpetuate a way of performing this notion of sexuality and masculinity as it is embedded within the group norms. This becomes an expectation both in terms of behaviour patterns and in notions of reciprocity. It is a further reflection of the 'intense comradeship' (Turner, 1969, p.95) commonly experienced during the liminal pre-marital period for young men. This reciprocity, solidarity and support among male peers embeds and reaffirms the significance of these male-male relationships in the forming and expression of certain attitudes and practices, particularly in relation to masculinity and sexuality, even if it simultaneously separates them from a mature adult identity (Osella and Osella 1998). However, although there is, by and large, evidence of male solidarity, there are certain instances when these strong male bonds are threatened either through the opportunism for sex, such as in the instance of Hadis or as a result of the discovery of pre-marital relationships and the subsequent social consequences discussed in section 6.3.

6.2.4 Beyond the village space: college life

For young men who have the opportunity to attend college, a new world of opportunity opens up through their ability to publicly meet with girls away

from the scrutinising gaze of their samaj and village. Urban space produces a different ideology of place from that of the rural village. Alongside the anonymity and distance from the village that such spaces provide, there is also a sense among young men that cities are more modern and liberal, particularly in comparison to their own villages. In this sense, modernity is understood by village male youths to represent influences in terms of fashion and material goods, but also in behaviours and attitudes; a perception that those urban youths are closer to, and therefore more knowledgeable, about certain trends. Cities often act as a conduit, or a melting pot, for different cultures and influences to merge; but that does not deny the simultaneous presence of 'traditional' or conservative discourses that continue to operate in cities, and how these processes 'infiltrate and transform each other' (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1967, p.3). Therefore, young men from the village certainly view the nearby cities as places with considerable opportunity and freedom. For some men, visits may be fairly infrequent. For others, the attendance of college, or employment, provides an almost daily access to this environment, and for constructing new perceptions and imaginaries of culture (Appadurai, 1996). Within this space, it becomes possible, therefore, for a couple to walk or sit together alone and '*share our problems, share our happiness*' as, for example, Girish (Christian) narrates in relation to the time he spends with his girlfriend whom he met at college.

Of course, such opportunities are limited to those who have the means to attend college, or who visit cities on a regular basis, and this tends to be dependent on caste and samaj. Typically, those in higher castes, such as the Patels, are the most likely to attend private education and gain admission to college. Families in this caste usually (although not always) have the financial means to fund their children's higher education, and often send their children abroad to complete their studies. While education and employment are often dependent on caste and class, at a more subtle level the opportunity for a more 'relaxed' pre-marital relationship appears to also be linked to these identity markers. However, there are some notable exceptions. As the identity of Girish indicates, Christians (both male and female), despite their low caste status, also tend to

have access to higher levels of education. Moreover, there are now instances of young men (but only men) from other low caste groups, such as the Tadpada samaj, who are beginning to aspire and to attend colleges (albeit this is still the exception rather than the norm). This may, therefore, begin to narrow the hierarchical distinction in status between different men at least on a certain level based on education and employment, if not on social status and standing. As a result, this may also provide greater freedom and opportunity for a broader number of young men in terms of cross- gender relationships outside of the village context.

Another significant feature in conducting these relationships in secret, and one that is relatively recent is the introduction of the mobile phone to Indian rural life. While individuals do not need to leave the village space when speaking to a girlfriend on their phone, in a sense they are removed virtually, so that the conversation occurs not in the physical space where they are located but in the projected imagination of the couple as they visualise the other person throughout the conversation. The use of mobile phones also drastically reduces the level of risk in that the couple are no longer required to meet in order to maintain a relationship (although it does not replace the importance of physical contact for a relationship). Further, the couple can engage in more frequent communication, either by phone call or text message, as emphasised during an interview with Navin:

Navin: I've had 16 missed calls during this interview.

Bhavesh: So mobile love we can call it. Physically you are not there, but mobile to mobile you are talking. The instruments love each other (laughs) (interview with Navin, 24, Christian, March 2015).

However, that is not to state that there is no risk attached to this activity: individuals must still find an isolated and private space in which they can safely speak; they must take care unless their phones are checked by family members searching for any unsanctioned contact; and there is the possibility of accruing a

significant phone bill which may lead to detection by parents (as was the case for one young couple, which is discussed in section 7.3.3). There is also a limitation for some couples in terms of economic means and cost. Mobile phones have quickly assumed the position of a status enhancer for individuals, especially among peers, and so many men have mobile phones of varying cost and design. In addition, they are typically very cheap to use as a result of the large competition between providers in the market. However, for those with an infrequent and low income, this may still be a luxurious expense that they cannot afford. This, therefore, is a clear example of how a product of modernity (a feature of the 'technoscapes' described by Appadurai, 1996) has influenced the practice of pre-marital relationships for young men within a rural area, and is a feature that was unavailable to previous generations who would have had to rely on the strategies already discussed in this chapter.

6.2.5 Entering the private space

This chapter has considered how young men and women co-opt the public space as a means for negotiating and performing their pre-marital relationships, as well as the extension of such relationships beyond the village space. However, there are also those men who engage in pre-marital relationships within the private space of the household. This is a riskier and more dangerous option in terms of ensuring the secrecy of pre-marital relationships and as such it seems to attract a certain type of masculinity and sexuality. In these instances, men are typically seeking sex with a woman and such sexual activity tends to take place in the woman's home, rather than in the man's. This is perhaps a means of deferring some degree of responsibility for discovery on to the woman, but also represents the bravery and risk-taking nature of a particular form of hyper-masculinity. Naturally, it will lead to significant boasting, affirmation of masculinity and status among the man's peer group if he is successful in stealing into a woman's home to have sex. Furthermore, it is not only the woman's house he is stealing into, but also in essence another man's house: either her father (or other close kin) or husband. While this may add to the thrill, perhaps it is also symbolic of an ability of one man to potentially 'take'

the honour of another through these sexual acts; and although the male relative of the girl is often unaware of this act, the man doing the 'taking' can frame this narrative to his peers in a way in which this theft is implicit. The discourse used by men in this regard is similar to the excitement or anticipation of having sex with a virgin girl. In both instances, the man is 'taking' something that does not belong to him.

It is typically quite difficult for a man to find a time during which the household is empty of other family members. Those men who discuss such narratives often speak of waiting for events such as festivals when the rest of the household is outside in the community. It was often the case in these particular discourses of pre-marital relationships that the unmarried man was having an affair with a married woman. Chirag discusses his sexual relationship with one woman:

She would call me to her house also when she has a desire to sleep with me. Her husband goes to work in Ahmedabad, she doesn't have a mother in law, she has only father in law and he also works in Ahmedabad, so both the men are working and the whole day nobody is home. She has a boy who goes to primary school and a small girl who doesn't know anything and would play here and there. Beside the houses there are a few neighbours but her nature is such that nobody talks to her, nobody bothers about her. So she will not go to somebody's house and talk, there is no relation. So I would go early morning and once they leave, I would enter into the house. I would have a cup of tea then we would fuck and then we would rest and talk here and there, and then she would cook and we would eat it. And then after lunch I would leave the house, and before leaving also another shot. So in one day I would fuck twice and then come back home (interview with Chirag, 28, Tadpada, March 2013).

Chirag has clearly been considering the household situation of this woman and the feasibility of his entering such a space without being detected. So while such behaviour is at the more extreme end of the risk-taking spectrum for enacting pre-marital relationships, consideration and minimisation of such risks still forms a clear part of male strategy. Interestingly, although the language he uses

to frame the discourse is very crude and physical- emphasising the sexual nature of the relationship above any form of intimate connection- before he has sex he will have a cup of tea and then later have lunch with the woman. First, this indicates the ingrained cultural script of the offering and acceptance of tea between host and guest regardless of the nature of their visit. Second, that there is perhaps a connection beyond that of a physical and sexual relationship.

Although he describes his visit as one in which he achieves his objective of having sex with this woman, he appears to be spending at least half of the day in her company, sharing a cup of tea and a meal with her in the process. As Dwyer (2006) notes in her discussion of Bollywood representations of love, the giving of food is culturally understood as an important marker for intimacy between two people. The preparation of a meal in this context, then, implies a greater degree of emotional attachment than Chirag would like to admit. The analogy here is to that of marriage, and a certain form of intimate sexuality, as a woman typically prepares food and gives it to her husband. Thus, while men may seek to frame their pre-marital relationship discourses as dichotomous in either being time pass or true love, there is perhaps in some instances a blurring of boundaries over which the man treads even if he discursively denies it. However, it is important to note that the different forms of pre-marital relationship are related to language, expression and aspiration. True love imagines a future with this one girl, and no other. In contrast, time pass relationships are based on the present opportunity for sex, as is the case with Chirag.

Some men appear to take the risks of entering private space to the extent that they are almost expecting detection. Bhavesh told me of an incident involving a Christian male youth that he witnessed in the middle of the night. This young man had visited a house not far from Bhavesh's home, where he knew the girl would be sleeping outside alone. There, he would have sex with the girl even as her family members were asleep inside. However, one night he was heard by a family member and fled past Bhavesh's home (who often works late into the night) with the parents following soon after. When Bhavesh stepped outside to enquire as to the problem, the girl's parents hastily replied that there had been

a thief in their house- an attempt to conceal the reality of the situation and the implications this might have for the honour and status of the family. The family of the girl is unlikely to pursue the matter further for fear of the consequences for their daughter in terms of future marriage prospects, yet the boy's actions threaten to create a considerable tension and problem for his own family and within the samaj. Whether through a heightened sense of bravado, the naivety of youth or an inability to control his sexual desires (or a combination thereof), the boy displays a propensity to risk and consequence that threatens the boundary between the private and public discourse.

6.2.6 A blurring of boundaries between the private and the public discourse

The actors involved in pre-marital relationships are often walking a tightrope, which may at times become dangerously close to blurring the boundaries between the private and the public discourse. Even putting aside for a moment the risk of discovery by family or other members of the community, one of the couple may do something that seems to attract unnecessary attention and risk. Raheem refers to how, on one day, his girlfriend brought him a cup of tea in front of other members of their samaj:

...so I got angry 'what are you doing? Everybody is looking at you and you're bringing tea for me here?' She said 'don't bother about them, I have come and taken decision to give you tea.' I said 'no, I don't mind that you come but if someone speaks ill about you then it would be a big problem and I may hammer that guy.' So she keeps the tea there and runs away (interview with Raheem, 26, Muslim, April 2013).

The symbolic and commonly understood meaning inferred by an unmarried girl bringing an unmarried boy a cup of tea, elevates a seemingly innocuous everyday event into one imbued with significance. The serving of a cup of tea outside the home has similar connotations to the serving of food, which are 'acts resonant of love and nurturance, mastery and servitude, intimacy and sharing' (Osella and Osella 1998, p.201). Context, and subtext, play a critical role in

deciphering such social performances with a cultural understanding, but this is a shared knowledge that exists within the community and so threatens the secrecy of their relationship. Her seemingly naïve concern for the implications of this gesture is certainly problematic for the maintenance of their secretive love. However, not wishing to be perceived as afraid of the consequences that may be imposed upon him by such a discovery, Raheem frames his response in an aggressive masculinity that is concerned with the consequences for another man if he were to talk ill of such an incident, rather than in the vulnerability he may be feeling for the consequences that he may face. While in private discourse, Raheem expresses the emotional intimacy and language that frame true love; when the situation threatens to spill into the public realm, he must endeavour to maintain a certain masculine image vis-à-vis other men that neither matches his previous narrative nor addresses the situation adequately.

6.2.7 The boundaries begin to crack

Despite a couple's best efforts and strategies and the support of their friends, there is still a strong likelihood that someone from outside their closed circle will discover the pre-marital relationship. In many cases it will be a member of one of the couple's family, often the mother or a sibling, who discovers the relationship. While this often results in the relationship becoming a broader family, samaj or even inter-samaj issue, on occasion it may not escalate this far. In the case of Navin, the family of his true love are aware of this relationship but have not attempted to prevent it. Instead, they appear to accept him as a suitable match for their daughter despite their differences in caste. Navin is Christian and the girl is Darbar, a middle caste and one that is higher than Navin's. This therefore contravenes the rules of caste endogamy for marriage. This produces somewhat of an anomaly in my data, but there is perhaps a simple explanation and one that Navin himself mentions. Navin has a very desirable job in a government department, which is well-paid, high status and offers considerable job security. Therefore, the assumption is that the girl's family, although of a higher caste, are lower in terms of class and so identify Navin as a potential means for improving the financial situation of the family.

Osella and Osella (2006) argue that it is often a man's ability to provide which is at the centre of his marriage chances and that this is perhaps even more so in the case of love (also, Ahearn 2004). In addition, there may be other factors involved. For example, the family having a poor reputation so that such an infringement of marital structures would not have such a significant impact on the family's honour and position. Otherwise the family would certainly risk ostracism from their caste if they were to condone such a relationship. Despite these factors, this acquiescence is still quite remarkable in the context of the societal caste structure and the inherent rules that forbid such inter-caste relationships.

While some may point to this example as a potential indicator and barometer for shifting societal practices, I would like to issue caution. It is, after all, only a singular case and one with too many gaps in knowledge to provide any further explanation. Incidentally, while the girl's family may be eager for such a marriage, Navin- despite his professed love for the girl- states that the duty and responsibility towards his younger siblings outweighs this emotion. Therefore, on his part, notions of honour and the consequences of his transgression if he were to marry this girl (and the effects this would have on the prospects of marriage for his siblings) are still constrained by societal norms and barriers. With this relatively rare exception aside, once a wider audience discovers the secrecy of a pre-marital relationship, there is usually little a couple can do but await the consequences.

6.3 When 'secret' relationships become public: discovery and consequence

When pre-marital relationships occur in a closely scrutinised environment, such as that of a Gujarati village, especially with the sensitivity associated to norms around sex, love and marriage, it comes as no surprise that discoveries of such relationships occur fairly frequently. The use of gossip and rumour in the samaj and across the wider village community is a strong discursive vehicle: not only for values of entertainment and as a means of communication among

neighbours and friends, but also as a means of discrediting certain individuals or families. These people are perhaps seen by some as exceeding the expectations of the samaj and attempting to aspire to higher social status and so envy plays a particularly influential role in samaj social life. Within the samaj, houses are in close proximity to one another, privacy is rare and neighbour's lives overlap on an everyday basis. Disputes are common and gossip is a well-oiled tool of communicating speculative and sometimes spiteful news about others. Gossip is often fuelled by the social taboo, which typically revolves around the subjects of love and sex. Transgressive behaviour is long remembered and revisited by the collective memory of the samaj, so that incidents that occurred years in the past may still be whispered in reference to a particular individual, especially if that individual were to do something else untoward or if they become too successful.

Therefore, if a couple are not caught directly, gossip based (rightly or wrongly) on suspicion may still circulate and draw enough attention to be damaging to a person. Jigar refers to the suspicions of the elders of his samaj and the effect this had on his relationship:

...some elders came to know that I was in love with that girl but unless and until they see us together then they can't blame us. It is a rule. So I was saved that time. Then I stopped meeting that girl. I started meeting her in winter at 3.00 and 4.00 in the early morning (interview with Jigar, 25, Tadpada, April 2013).

While there may not be any official sanctions imposed on the couple without confirmation of discovery, the consequences of suspicions and gossip can still be damaging to the individuals involved, especially in relation to notions of masculinity, credit and honour. In the final part of this chapter, I turn to the social and economic consequences of the discovery of pre-marital relationships. Within the public discourse sanctions are utilised to ensure individuals adhere to the social rules and expectations of the community. These sanctions are, to some extent, dependent on the samaj of the actors and so I will attempt to

highlight these divergences as I proceed through the discussion of the various male narratives.

6.3.1 Economic consequences: caste rules, fines and other economic costs

Of the three lower status samaj, the Tadpada are the most conservative in retaining and sustaining inter-generational norms through an extensive series of rules, social constraints and caste authority. This is contrary to the findings of other research in India which describes the relative sexual freedom that exists in lower status communities, such as the Dalits (see Rao, 2014). However, neither the Christian nor the Muslim samaj exhibit such strict constraints regarding the members of its community. The rules cover a range of aspects of an individual's every day life and behaviour, but are particularly extensive in regard to sex, relationships and marriage, with sanctions and limitations being a means through which to negate and constrain the dangerous aspects of an unleashed sexuality (Foucault, 1976). In the Tadpada samaj, sex takes on a significant focus of control, both in terms of the taboo of pre-marital sex, but also marital sex. For example, there are a number of Hindu festivals during which all men and women are prohibited from having sex, with the women often sleeping on the floor separately from their husbands. These festivals may last from one day to a whole month, and if it is discovered that a couple had sex during this time then the rituals have to be restarted from the first day. Women, in particular, are closely monitored and controlled in frequent displays of a hegemonic masculinity that legitimises a patriarchal system. For example, during a woman's menstruation (which according to tradition lasts for a period of ten days) she cannot prepare or touch food meant for others, she must eat separately, sleep separately, have a separate water supply from the rest of the family and is prohibited from entering any temple or shrine (Abu-Lughod, 1986; Dube, 1996; Lamb, 2000). In terms of marriage, girls are often engaged at a young age (although the actual age of marriage is increasing) and are prohibited from attending education higher than 10th Standard (16 years old). In reality, they are removed from school at a much younger age as post-pubertal girls are closely monitored to avoid any indiscretion that would compromise her and her

family (Uberoi, 2006). One Tadpada man discusses the reasoning behind the extensive number of rules:

It is to avoid disturbance in family. The rules are made to have a good life. If now and then everyone falls in love, then the girls are not safe, so that is why we have come up with the rules. Also, when we are children we get married so we don't spoil somebody's life. To avoid such things we have come up with these rules (interview with Cheran, 32, Tadpada, April 2013).

The rationale, then, for such an imposition of rules is for the protection of girls in the samaj- although it could actually be seen as a formal mechanism of patriarchal control that sustains the subordinate and 'private' (invisible) role of women in the household and the community. In contrast, the Christian samaj, while not relinquishing its sense of masculine dominance in the community, has made some significant steps in terms of allowing girls to attend college, to have a career and to have relative personal freedom, for example in their choice of clothes. The rules also support public ideals about desirable traits of masculinity that involved respect and obedience to samaj traditions and institutions, elders and family and which are exhibited through sexual self-control.

In the Tadpada samaj, the system of fines that are issued for those discovered to be having a pre-marital relationship is of particular significance for this research. It is the panch, a small group of traditionally five ('panch' literally means 'five') respected, male elders within the caste, who will call a public meeting to listen to infringement of rules and then pass judgement and punishment accordingly. As the authority within the samaj, it is these elder men that are naturally feared by the young men:

I was afraid of the panch meeting. I know that the result if the elders get together then definitely I would have to pay a fine so to be careful of those things I would meet early morning so nobody knows and I can say I went for a walk, she went to the toilet so how can you blame us? (interview with Jigar, 25, Tadpada, April 2013).

This fear is not so great as to provide a disincentive for these young men who continue to pursue their romantic or sexual desires, although it does ensure that they are acutely aware of the need for secrecy. However, it is often the case that at some point their actions will become public and this transgressive behaviour typically receives the sanction of fines. Ajit related to me how as a result of running away with a married neighbour he was fined Rs11,500 (about £110) by the panch. However, undeterred, Ajit continued with this affair and was discovered again, incurring another Rs11,500 fine. This is a significant amount of money for someone of Ajit's status who earns a livelihood primarily through selling illicit liquor and agricultural labour. His friend, Chirag, places the level of fines in the context of earnings:

The one thing I have understood in my life, I don't have a job but by hook and crook I earn Rs50 per day or alternative days I will earn money and come. But if I have sex in the same community then people would come to know definitely because we stay together, somebody would see it. Then the community would get together and fine me Rs15,000 or Rs25,000. I am struggling to earn Rs150 on alternative days so where to bring that money? It is too much for me (interview with Chirag, 28, Tadpada, March 2013).

The fines, therefore, are intended to act as a deterrent against pre-marital relationships and to support the social norms in the selection of marital partners based on rules of caste endogamy and samaj exogamy. They target a significant marker of masculine status- that of livelihood and earnings- and the affect that such large fines may have on the ability of the man to meet payments, contribute to the family's income and buy material goods for himself. The rules and fines are closely related to religious rituals and so transgressive behaviour during such times can lead to even greater fines. Ajit described how a boy and a girl who had sex during a prayer ritual were fined Rs1.5 lakh (close to £1500) for their transgression emphasising the significance placed on maintaining the purity of such religious occasions (although it was not possible to prove the veracity of this story in which this huge amount of money may be an

embellishment to reflect the nature of the transgression). The fine is paid to the goddess (or more accurately, to the priest of the temple of the goddess) of the samaj alongside a promise to no longer continue with such behaviour- a promise that held little weight for Ajit who, in his words, '*could not control himself*'. For him, the opportunity to have sex was greater than the risk of discovery. Unlike other men who either abstain from such relationships or who are in true love relationships where self-control of sexual desire is an important characteristic, Ajit finds the temptation too strong.

A further interesting point in relation to the system of fines is that they are only applicable to, and payable by, the male transgressor: the girl is never issued a fine. In certain circumstances, particularly with the discovery of inter-samaj relationships, the fine is payable to the girl's family or husband. This acts as a mode of compensation for the impact such transgressive behaviour will have on the girl and is reflective of the commonly held perception that it is the boy or man who is the active and instigating agent. Also, it serves to recompense the girl's father, who can no longer present his daughter in marriage as a virgin bride. It may also be a reflection of the male role of economic provider and so the individual who is earning a livelihood should incur the costs. However, it should not be understood that by paying a fine the boy has become exempt from any further consequences of his transgression.

Economic costs are not limited only to the imposition of fines. Across the samaj, costs may be incurred in terms of a loss of money already contributed to the arrangement of marriages. While it is often the girl's family who must provide a dowry, there can still be considerable engagement costs incurred by the groom's family. Also, in the Christian samaj, it is common practice for bride wealth to be given by the groom's family and this is typically relative to the 'status' of the bride: i.e. a woman who is qualified as a teacher will demand a higher bride wealth price than one who has not attended higher education. Discovery of transgressive behaviour during the period of engagement on the part of the boy would usually lead to its annulment and the forfeiture of any money given to the bride's family. While engagement periods may be relatively

short in the Christian and Muslim samaj, in the Tadpada community these can typically last for years as engagement ceremonies take place during childhood. Therefore, there is a much greater window of possibility for transgressive behaviour to occur during this period, particularly as it coincides with the adolescent, formative and adventurous phase of boys and girls in terms of their sexualities.

A further potential incurrence of economic cost is the impact it may have on an individual's business. This is closely related to the notion of honour and reputation explored later in section 6.3.3, but suffice to say that if one is caught in the act of such transgressive behaviour there may be a backlash if one has a business in the local area. Members of the samaj and wider community, upon hearing of the transgression (or even the rumour of a transgression) may decide that it is no longer appropriate to be associated with such a person or to be seen buying products or services from them. This is typically dependent on the nature and 'degree' of transgression and in the Tadpada samaj may also be an outcome and directive from the panch meeting. In addition, an individual's business may be affected by a relative's transgressive behaviour rather than as a direct consequence of his own behaviour.

6.3.2 Inter-caste tensions

While Chirag's explanation in the previous section for abstaining from sexual relationships within his own samaj focused on the avoidance of incurring fines, such transgressive behaviour can, however, cause a number of broader issues within the wider community and between castes. During the age when boys are trying to act upon developing notions of sexuality and relationships towards girls, boundaries will be over-stepped. However, at the stage where a relationship has yet to be instigated, such infringements are seen as relatively low level and typically policed by young male relatives of the girl, such as a brother or cousin. The male relative would issue a warning to the potential perpetrators and that would suffice to prevent any further attempts on their behalf towards the girl. It would usually be accompanied by a degree of male

posturing with little recourse for actual violence, as neither party would wish for the situation to escalate further. It is, therefore, the recognised responsibility of the male relative of the girl to 'guard' her honour and by extension that of the family in order to prevent any potentially harmful contact from developing with an incompatible boy.

On occasion the situation may escalate further and fights may take place between boys, or more problematically, between groups of boys. Although the boys I spoke to were often quick to deny any underlying inter-caste tensions male narratives often reflected different caste perceptions, hierarchies and status. For example, one Christian man who attempted to instigate a relationship with a girl from a Hindu caste stated that no fight took place between the two groups as the boys from the other caste '*thought that we were very strong so we would hammer them back*' (interview with Deven, 21, Christian, January 2013). There is a sense here of an inter-caste competitiveness around notions of strength and courage with the man (at least in the recounting of the narrative) believing that his caste had the upper hand, regardless of actual status and position within the village. There is, in this sense, a subversion of the social hierarchy of caste through the exhibiting (even if only discursively) of a greater sense of a valorised trait of masculinity, that of physical strength as a means of combating their historically lower social status. Other narratives echoed this and pointed towards the relatively common occurrence of such incidents during the daily lives of boys and youths growing up within the context of a village. Awareness, therefore, of the sensitivity of inter-caste relationships adds to how actors portray their relationships in front of certain audiences. A Thakor boy, who is on very good terms with my Christian interpreter, was clearly worried about how the latter might respond to discovering his relationship with a girl from the Christian samaj: after all, one's loyalty is supposed to be to one's family and caste. In this case, Bhavesh, who places a lower emphasis on caste (reflecting several years training as a Jesuit novice), simply laughed and attempted to learn further details, as it was a source of good gossip!

However, at times, even seemingly innocuous incidents can quickly escalate out of control. Jaideep (a Tadpada man) reflected on a story from his school days when he was in 7th Standard. One Friday he was unable to attend school as he had broken his hand. Upon returning to school on the Monday morning he had found that someone had written his name on the board alongside that of a Christian girl from the same class, implying that they were in a romantic relationship. The girl became angry with this and there was much quarrelling within the school over the matter. Two weeks passed and then the girl's mother came to the school and accused Jaideep of being '*after my girl*'. In the afternoon recess, Jaideep went home worried and told his own mother who returned to the school and an argument ensued with the girl's mother. In the evening, Jaideep's father learned of the incident, became angry and was advised by Jaideep's uncle who said, '*you take 15 men and go to school tomorrow and tell them that this fellow has not done anything and you are making him afraid and threatening him*' (interview with Jaideep, 24, Tadpada, April 2015). This group of Tadpada men went to the school the next day, but fortunately, better sense prevailed (or perhaps the numbers told) and the problem was resolved.

From a remarkably small, childish incident (whether Jaideep was to blame or not), it shows the potential for inter-caste tensions to flare up when a child's 'honour' is at stake. While this was resolved without fighting, it is evident that the situation could have escalated into a communal issue. The sensitivity surrounding inter-caste relationships ensures that the suspicions and fears of parents are played on by the smallest of incidents resulting in disproportionate responses. These responses aim to provide clear statements that the family, and often wider caste members, intend to protect their own interests; in this case, the future marriage of their children and the family's honour.

If an inter-caste relationship is discovered then the consequences can be very serious. Initial reactions may include responses such as the following:

One day I was caught with the girl and then her mother came to me and said 'next time if you are found with the girl, then we will kill you' (interview with Marut, 19, Muslim, March 2013).

While this may seem to be a case of hyperbolism and possibly the exaggerated, empty threat of an angry mother seeking to protect her daughter (and whilst in central Gujarat I did not hear of any honour killings) in other parts of India (Haryana, for example) this can be seen as a culturally acceptable response (Chowdhry, 1998). Chirag recounts another narrative in which he met a higher caste woman on a train to Khambhat and the woman initiated a sexual relationship. However, Chirag soon stopped visiting this woman due to her higher caste and wealthy status. The environment of the area was such that '*everybody has an eye on that house*' - so he was fearful of the consequences if he was discovered. This contrasts with his view about having sex with women from castes closer to his own samaj. In Chirag's perception the consequences of discovery are more drastic when they involve the influence of the wealthy and upper castes that are able to utilise state resources, such as the police, local politicians and the courts. My interpreter offers an interesting comment at the end of this narrative: '*being this community man, the problem can be a bigger problem, like he might have gone to cheat*' (interview with Chirag, March 2013). This refers to the commonly held perception that people from the Tadpada samaj are cheats or criminals: therefore if caught, the assumption may have been that such an affair was the premise for criminal activity, which would have further exacerbated an already serious situation. Chirag, once again, demonstrates a tendency to strategically evaluate the benefits, risks and consequences of having relationships with women from certain samaj. However, as will be shown in the next two sections, his foresight in this regard does not preclude all consequences for his actions.

6.3.3 Honour

'Izzat' or honour is a concept that has already been referred to on a number of occasions and which forms a significant theme within this thesis. As discussed

in Chapter 4, the actions of the children, particularly when it involves romantic or sexual relationships, can have a significant impact on the honour of the family; predominantly the male members and especially the father as head of the household (Lamb, 2000; Trawick, 1992). The father is responsible for the actions and behaviour of all the family members within his household and transgressions are a reflection on his ability to assert control and authority, which ultimately upholds or brings into question his success as the patriarch and as a man. Therefore, 'a man may be labelled 'dishonorable', or feminized as 'soft' or 'weak', when a daughter elopes and 'is stolen' by another man' (Lindisfarne, 1994, p. 85). In this scenario, the girl's action and her 'hot' or 'dangerous' sexuality (Lamb 2000; Uberoi 2006) 'are treated as an index of a man's success or failure to provide economically and compete politically' (Lindisfarne 1994, p.85). This is an essential part of a man's life in the village and so notions of honour and masculinity are closely intertwined. Once he has married, established his household and family, and secured a means of providing for them, then he can begin to be identified as a respectable figure within the samaj. He will have become a man from whom others will seek advice, who will be included in the organising of samaj events and religious festivals, and who will be treated with respect by other members of the samaj. Yet this image of respectability is contingent upon maintaining the izzat of his family and failure to do so often results in a sharp decline of status and power within the community and therefore being perceived as less of a man.

One particular narrative of Sudhir, explores several features regarding the concept of honour in this context. While this is a narrative of the consequences experienced by the father as a result of his daughter's actions, it is also reflective of the socio-economic consequences for men as a result of discovery of their own transgressive pre-marital relationships. Around six months before I arrived in the village, Sudhir's eldest daughter (17 years old) ran away with a boy from the Christian samaj. She returned after a day, but by then the damage had already been done.

Sudhir narrates how upon discovering what had happened, he sharpened two swords with the intention of killing the Christian youth as a matter of honour and that 75% of the Tadpada community supported him in this action. Whether Sudhir would have actually gone ahead with such plans of vengeance (and whether or not these were real or metaphorical swords used as a means to reflect the anger he was feeling at the time), it is clear that such acts of betrayal and transgression must elicit a significantly strong reaction in front of the samaj and wider community in order to portray a willingness to right this perceived wrong. This extends into the re-telling of the events in order to continue to portray his anger and disapproval of the situation and the probable embellishments in the narration, such as the sharpening of swords, only serves to emphasise this effect. There is a public expectation as to a certain reaction from the man who is ultimately responsible for guarding the honour of his daughter and, by extension, his family. For Sudhir, after it was discovered that his daughter had run away, it became a matter of damage control and how he performed in front of the wider audience of his samaj would be closely scrutinised to determine his character and the potential fallout from this incident. In this instance, leaders from across the different samaj (including Patels, Christians, and Darbars) intervened to prevent any potential escalation and a compromise was made whereby the Christian family paid Rs1 lakh (approximately £1000) as compensation to Sudhir. This was, however, only the beginning of the problems that Sudhir was to experience within his own samaj.

The initial reaction of the panch was to exile Sudhir from the caste, a consequence that is reflective of the severity of the transgression, and even though it was a result of his daughter's behaviour, as her father it was Sudhir who must bear the brunt of the panch decision. However, one should not ignore the consequences for his daughter who, besides the beating she received from her family, would also be the subject of gossip and insults within the samaj, and experience considerable anxiety as to her own future and potential for marriage. Her father, though, certainly became the focus of public sanctions. That he was able to mitigate these sanctions from the worst-case scenario of exile perhaps indicates the influence Sudhir had within the samaj at the time of

the incident. However, such a situation could not occur without any consequence for fear that such undesirable behaviour and sexuality may increase within the samaj. Instead a directive was issued from the panch that no one from the samaj should purchase items from Sudhir's shop. His reaction was one of anger and pain at this threat to his livelihood, which he felt was targeted out of an underlying envy within the samaj at the success of his business.

That time I got a good spirit from God and during the panch I spoke to the other people also, 'In the past such cases happened also and nobody was put outside the caste and nobody was given punishment that way, then why am I given punishment? I don't mind if you give me punishment but then in the future if someone does these things and you fail to give punishment in this way then I will kill you people. If you want my child, I can hang her on the banyan tree there, but in the future if someone does then you also have to hang them here. Otherwise, if not then I will come and each one of you I will kill. So if you agree then do that. She is a small child and made a mistake, give me a fine no problem' (interview with Sudhir, 36, Tadpada, May 2013).

It is difficult to determine whether the punishment was a reflection of envy, or whether it reflected the degree of transgression his daughter committed and Sudhir's failure to prevent it. Envy is certainly a concept that was commonly referred to by participants across the samaj and which perhaps reflects an unease at those who are able to improve their situation seemingly above that of the rest of the samaj to a point at which they almost transcend, or escape, their caste identity through their position of class and accumulation of wealth.

Through a combination of appealing to people's rational sense and precedent for previous transgressions while asserting his strength through the threat of violence, Sudhir makes his case to the community. This provides an interesting insight as to how a man frames a public discourse at a crucial time when opinion may shift in a number of directions with serious implications for him and his family. Thus, he does not attempt to defend his daughter's actions (which are commonly understood to be culturally reprehensible), but positions them in accordance to past incidents and how they were dealt with by the

samaj, while simultaneously implying that there is an underlying prejudice against him. The strong and aggressive language, both in reference to his daughter and the samaj, imposes his personal strength and reinforces his masculinity (recently brought into question by his daughter's actions) offering a fierce challenge to those who may wish to treat him unfairly. His language is supported by his position as a leading member of the samaj (in terms of age and economic status), but also by his large physique, which makes the threat more plausible. This is an attempt by Sudhir to at least partly restore some of his honour by reminding the samaj of his forceful character. Sudhir spoke of the difficulties he went through financially as a result of this punishment and that his profits have still not returned to the level they were before the incident, although they had recently started to rise.

In addition to the loss of business over a prolonged period of time, and the fine he had to pay to the panch, Sudhir also suffered from a series of other consequences. His daughter's marriage had already been arranged and Sudhir had, in the process, spent around Rs2 lakhs. Once she ran away, this engagement was cancelled and the money forfeited. This is common practice as the parents of the other prospective spouse (whether it be the boy or the girl) do not wish to have their family name associated with such behaviour, nor on a more practical level, do they wish to have their child marry someone who is known to have affairs as they may cause further problems throughout the marriage. There were a number of other instances, across the samaj, in which men's engagements were dissolved as a result of the discovery of a pre-marital relationship.

For Sudhir, the problem extends beyond that of his eldest daughter to his three other daughters and two sons. Another daughter was also engaged but this too was annulled as a result of her elder sister's actions:

So two girls had to face this problem, that girl has not done anything yet she has to go through the same pain. And I was going through that pain also, from this small

mistake the whole family must go through the pain. So the engagement was broken (interview with Sudhir, 36, Tadpada, May 2013).

Therefore, honour, or dishonour, becomes a collective label, one in which the entire family must share and which may even pass down through the generations. This is particularly true in the context of a village in which generation after generation live side by side so that the memory of certain transgressions are inherited and may dictate the position and status of the family within the *samaj* for many years to come. In Sudhir's case, it became very difficult to arrange a marriage for his eldest daughter within his caste because as soon as prospective in-laws discovered what happened to the family (and parents always enquire about the character of the family their child is to marry) they would no longer agree to such a marriage. As Parry's research in north west India describes, '[h]igh standing makes for 'good' marriages; and one good marriage follows another' (1979, p. 272). Conversely, a loss of honour is held against a family in all future marital negotiations. Therefore, the honour of a family extends beyond the village space to incorporate a broader geographical boundary based on caste lines. For Sudhir this extended as far as Baroda, which is over an hour's journey from their village. In the end, Sudhir was only able to arrange the marriage of his eldest daughter through seeking a husband outside of her caste, and by carefully creating the pretence that his family was from that same caste. This was facilitated by several fortuitous factors in that their family name was one that is common to several castes; his wealth and economic means provided significant cover in allaying suspicions of his low caste background; and similarly, his experiences of mixing with other, higher castes through business meant that Sudhir was able to sufficiently mimic their behaviours, mannerisms and speech: thus removing signs that would normally indicate his actual caste origin.

While the economic consequences of his daughter's actions certainly pained Sudhir, it was the loss of honour and respect that had the most enduring impact on his life. The former was slowly recuperating (and even when I met him he was still a wealthy man), but the latter was likely to be irrevocably damaged. He

had previously held a highly respected position within the samaj, where people would come to him for advice and listen when he spoke, and where he would have significant input into the organisation of the samaj and the arrangements for large, prestigious communal events, such as festivals. Now, he has lost this ability to offer advice for if he is unable to control the behaviour of his own daughter, how is he to be considered worthy of providing advice to others? For a man, this then indicates not simply a loss of respect within the community, but also a loss of a certain masculinity: one of control, authority and an idealised notion of how a man should be represented within a community. As Chowdhry states, '[t]he open taunts... (what can you say, your daughter behaved like this), are much harder to live down as derogatory epithets become permanent social fixtures to their existence' (1998, p. 351). Sudhir narrates how at the time he was feeling like *'I have given you everything and why did you betray me?'* Indeed, Sudhir admits that it would have been better if his daughter had never returned; the disgrace would have been less for he would have been able to disown her and then carry on with his life. Honour, therefore, plays a significant role in the behaviour patterns, attitudes and understanding of notions of love, sexuality and masculinity for men in this Gujarati village. As the final section of this chapter will explore, an individual's credit is also intrinsically connected and reflective upon a family's broader reputation and notion of 'honour'.

6.3.4 Reputation and credit

I have drawn a distinction between 'honour' as it relates to the wider family and the reputation or credit of the individual involved. While clearly these concepts are closely inter-related, I feel that it is a worthwhile distinction as it does produce different forms of consequences that impact on a man's life at different levels. Honour is indicative and reflective of a normative public discourse that relates not only to the individual, but also to a family as a collective unit. It is typically understood as having a singular meaning and interpretation in reference to this public discourse and how people relate and conform to social expectations. It is also a term that is commonly used in a negative context, so that people will discuss how a certain action or behaviour would damage a

family's honour rather than how it might contribute to a positive representation of honour.

The term commonly used in relation to reputation is the English word 'credit'. In certain ways, credit is synonymous to understandings of honour in that it is unlikely for someone to have 'bad credit' yet maintain their, or their family's, honour. However, although the distinction is at times blurred and certainly not straightforward, credit is distinguishable from honour in several ways. First, it relates directly and solely to an individual, rather than a family unit. Second, credit can be interpreted and can acquire different meanings in front of different audiences, so that one individual may sustain multiple presentations of credit in different contexts. Thus, while credit may often relate to the normative discourse of honour as publicly abstaining from pre-marital relationships, credit may simultaneously be attained through a series of sexual conquests as presented among peers through a private discourse. Therefore, notions of credit may produce a front-stage/back-stage dichotomy, which an individual will negotiate on a daily basis dependent on context and audience.

Third, a person's credit is built from a range of constructs, some of which directly relate to an individual's behaviour and character, and others that relate to broader notions of identity. Caste is a significant marker as to how a person is regarded within the wider community: for example, the Tadpada caste are commonly perceived by others to be cheats and thieves. However, while belonging to a higher caste (such as Brahmin or the economically dominant Patels) may be accompanied by a public show of respect the more widely held, covert discourse is often quite the opposite. Although some praise their economic strength and solidarity, others perceive the Patel caste as cheats and dangerous in the way they wield their economic power to gain more land through nefarious loans to poor farmers. These are broad and stereotypical perceptions of certain castes but they have real implications for every day interactions and relationships within the village. Other significant markers of identity include an individual's livelihood, income and material assets, with government and professional jobs being the most highly esteemed. Those who

have their own business are also well-respected. Alongside livelihoods and class as an indicator of a person's credit, a significant and oft mentioned element is that of behaviour and association. This often refers to young men who are occupied in time pass activities that are seen as troublesome to the community, such as eve teasing, drinking, and fighting with members of the samaj or other castes. Association with men in this group can therefore tarnish a young man's reputation in the eyes of the rest of the samaj. Walle, in his research on masculinity and sexuality in Lahore, states that '[b]ehaving like a good Muslim, confining sexual relations to marriage, providing for the marriage, providing for the family and making sure the family as a whole is regarded as respectable may thus be seen as expressions of moral normative values' (2004, p.100).

In the context of this research, the most significant aspect is the impact that the discovery of an individual's pre-marital relationship has on their credit and that of their father's credit. When Raheem's father suspects that he is having a pre-marital relationship with a girl from the same samaj he came to him to say:

'Don't do any work where I have to put my head down and walk. I should not lose credit and the day I lose my credit and that people are putting me down because of you, I will cut you into seven pieces' (interview with Raheem, 26, Muslim, April 2013).

Raheem reassures his father that he '*will not do any kind of work that puts you down*', and if he were to do so then his father would have the right to kill him. Jaideep also narrates a similar theme when he told me how one Patel girl had wanted to fall in love with him. However:

My father has a good job, so I never liked to look down and walk in the streets, so when you don't have credit you do kind of things like fall in love, go against other people and values and all things. That loses credit... So I was thinking about that credit and my father would lose credit, and I would lose credit, and I never liked to look down and walk in the street (interview with Jaideep, 24, Tadpada, April 2013).

He also explains this to the girl referring to the potential damage for both of their parent's credit if they were to be discovered having a pre-marital relationship. Thus, for Jaideep, it is not enough to abstain from sex in a relationship, as in the case of Raheem, but to abstain from pre-marital relationships all together in order to avoid any possibility of discrediting his father. Several men that I spoke with adopted a similar stance of avoiding pre-marital relationships and none referred to any sense of a traditional cultural or religious discourse as an explanation. Instead, all men cited the desire not to discredit their parents and other family members, first and foremost, but also not to have a detrimental impact upon their own reputation either. Therefore, although Lamb claims that 'the merit or demerit resulting from a man's sexual behaviour affected mostly himself, not his household, ancestors, or the continuity of his family line' (2000, p.191), the male narratives discussed in this section explicitly state how the consequences of transgressive pre-marital relationships often do relate to broader notions and consequences for credit and family honour. While the men in these narratives have referred specifically to credit, it is clear that there is an overlap between this individual notion of credit and a broader sense of honour for the family.

Alongside the significance that a discovery of pre-marital relationships may have for a father's reputation, there are also considerable consequences for the young man involved. Ajit's narrative of his prolonged secretive love affair with a neighbour's wife has been discussed earlier in terms of the economic consequences he incurred. While this is, without doubt, a hefty burden to bear, the long-term consequences of discovery of such transgressions and their impact on the individual's credit in the samaj are perhaps more damaging. It was only when Ajit married that he finally ended this relationship and was able to reflect on the consequences it had for him. Here, he narrates one of the final conversations he had with the woman:

...because of you I fell in love, not a problem, but I have also lost my credit in the society and people now know that I fucked you and then lots of small arguments,

and she said 'now, you don't talk to me or to have any relation'. I said 'no problem, but because of you I have no credit, I lost my first wife and I also have paid sacrifice, and now you have your children, I have my child also, so now you forget things and continue with your family' (interview with Ajit, 25, Tadpada, January 2013).

Ajit remembers how at the time his parents and many other people in his samaj warned them both that what they were doing was not allowed in their caste, but as he was in love he never heeded their advice or worried about his own credit. While the rashness of youth may provide some explanation for his decision, in the context of other men's narratives of love, the characteristic of a lack of self-control and an immaturity appears to be appropriate here. Although he frames his pre-marital relationship as one of love, it appears to be closer to that of time pass discourses rather than true love. For him, the relationship with his neighbour was predominantly focused on the opportunity for sex and he does not refer to the emotional intimacy, depths of feeling or eternal notions of love that others do within their true love narratives. A further indication that this was a convenient means through which to satisfy his sexual desires is in the finality at the end of the relationship. Once he is married, he quickly ends the relationship with his neighbour because, in his words, '*when we have a machine at home, why to search for another?*' This appears to reflect his view (alongside his objectification of women) that any relationship he previously had was one that satisfied his sexual needs and once he had a socially acceptable marriage, he could have sex without the fear of social reprisal. However, this is too late to save his credit, which remains tarnished in the samaj as a result of these past transgressions. Once a person's credit is lost, it becomes very difficult, perhaps impossible, to restore. He is, in fact, fortunate to have been able to arrange a marriage, and many within the samaj might assume the girl also had problems for such a match to occur. Other men are less fortunate.

Chirag told me on several occasions that he did not have love affairs with girls from the same samaj, as that would cause significant problems for his life, in terms of fines and reputation.

If I ever did that, they will punish, I will have to pay money, but people will not call us easily. So if they are walking on the street and I am coming in the front, the other person will look down and go, the person will not talk to me. He will put me down thinking I'm an unholy man... [Ajit] still goes through, people don't call him, people will not keep relation with him. In Thakor, if I am in love with a Thakor girl then these community people know but they will think this is not from our community, this is not from our blood, it is from outside so let him fuck, there is no problem (interview with Chirag, 28, Tadpada, March 2013).

Chirag states that having sex in his own samaj would create too much 'noise' and too many negative consequences, as is the case with his friend Ajit, which is why he ensures that he has relationships only with girls from other samaj. However, while there is undoubtedly some truth in that having taboo relationships inside one's own samaj can be more problematic than those outside, there are still consequences for those who are discovered having pre-marital relationships, regardless of the caste. These relationships are, after all, still contravening the normative discourse: firstly against having pre-marital sex but, secondly, by challenging caste endogamy, which can cause considerable tensions between castes. Chirag has been having significant difficulty in attempting to arrange his own marriage, resulting in him resorting to visiting a Hindu priest who has informed him that the planets are travelling across his luck and this is what is preventing his marriage. As a result, Chirag must fast for 21 Tuesdays and wear a ring to improve his fortune. However, it appears that the explanation behind his misfortune may lie a little closer to home. Chirag recounts one attempt to arrange a marriage that failed due to the 'poisonous' words of others:

I had a good relation with the girl's side also, but when the relatives came then neighbours would say 'that he is not earning money, he drinks, he roams, he fucks the other girls' so they break the relation. So now we don't have any relation with them anymore. It is jealousy and it is poisonous, poisonous people, they give poison (interview with Chirag, 28, Tadpada, March 2013).

However, having heard Chirag narrate many tales of his sexual conquests, it seems to me that actually this is a fairly representative account of his behaviour. While he may wish to absolve any responsibility on his own part, through blaming his neighbours or through the bad alignment of planets, it appears that it is his poor credit caused by his own actions that is creating the difficulty in finding a girl to marry. When the girl's parents learn that he has been having sex with other girls, they are concerned about sending their own girl to such a husband whose promiscuous behaviour may well continue after marriage causing further pain and disruption for the girl's life. Whichever way blame is assigned, this is a significant problem for Chirag as failure to marry means he is unable to fulfil an important social expectation in the life course of a man, which represents a failure in masculinity in the eyes of the rest of the samaj.

Bhavesh refers to one man in his samaj who constantly fought with others and as a result his son was unable to marry. Knowing this man's reputation, people believed that their daughter would have significant problems if she were married into this family. It then becomes a cyclical, causal relationship in that one cannot get married because of either one's own credit or that of another family member, and so if you are unmarried at a certain age then people will assume that your family background and reputation is poor: and so it continues. Credit is then reproduced and reiterated by the samaj so that if someone comes to enquire about a person's reputation in terms of the prospects of marriage to their child, and that neighbour either does not respond or tells them about that individual's (or their family's) negative reputation then clearly this marriage will not proceed. So, if a man is to succeed and progress into the next stage of life his reputation is a significant factor. There are strategies to overcome marital problems regarding credit and honour, as mentioned in the case of Sudhir's daughter, but this still impacts on how the man is perceived, his role and status within the samaj: all important elements in understanding notions of masculinity in this context. There are also negative consequences for the credit of women who have been discovered in pre-marital relationships and which can have severe impacts on their prospects for marriage alongside the negative

attention they are likely to receive within the samaj. However, one of the main aims of this research has been to highlight that men too experience significant consequences, an aspect often missing from academic research in this field.

Moreover, such notions of credit are consistent throughout the different samaj. Dilshad refers to the impact affairs have on a person's credit, despite the fact that he had just told me about the affairs he was having. When asked about this he replied:

Only my three friends know, the other people do not know. So if they come to know I will lose the credit. I know it is bad for me... People would not allow me to enter their house because a similar way I could do it to their wives or to their daughters. I will have to face that in the future if they come to now. There would be a problem and I would lose the credit (interview with Dilshad, 19, Muslim, April 2013).

Dilshad's and many other men's decision to initiate pre-marital relationships despite the knowledge of the potential consequences if discovered and the impact this may have on their future creates an interesting paradox. It signals the strength of the back-stage discourse that promotes a shared sense of transgression, whether it be through the aggressive sexuality of time pass or the emotive discourse of true love, for male youths and men. It supports an understanding and performance of masculinity that advocates risk-taking behaviour in order to enact relationships that fulfil a desire or a need for the expression of sexuality in its multiple forms. There is perhaps a belief among men that despite the seemingly dire consequences for discovery of such pre-marital relationships, they will be able to maintain the secrecy required to keep such performances in the back-stage and so maintain a good credit in the eyes of their samaj. Therefore, significance is placed upon which men are successful in maintaining and negotiating the strategies for secrecy, and which are not.

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored men's narratives around the performance of pre-marital relationships and in particular the importance of maintaining and negotiating the secrecy of such acts. In this sense, temporal and spatial dimensions assume a heightened significance. Pre-marital relationships consume a considerable amount of young men's time during their daily lives, whether it be through daydreaming about the girl; strategizing over the best means to communicate and meet with her; discussing the situation with friends; waiting for long periods to meet the girl; and actually spending time in the company of the girl. While the last of these may in fact be the shortest of time periods, yet it is the act, which all the others are the precursor for so that it becomes the focal point of young men's attention and their discourse about these relationships. Although some men actively seek to enter the private space of households in order to meet their lover, the majority of those men in pre-marital relationships identify that this is too great a risk and instead co-opt the public space for their own back-stage discourse. For a few, more fortunate, individuals there is the opportunity to remove themselves from the confines, constraints and closely monitored village space to other places, such as urban college campuses or isolated spots away from inquisitive eyes. In all these strategies, space assumes new imaginaries within the eyes of the men enacting such performances, so that seemingly mundane spaces, such as water channels and fields, become invested with new meanings of secrecy, sex and love.

It is the secrecy that often adds an extra thrill to these relationships for those involved, drawing on different notions of masculinity as indicative of risk-taking behaviour, bravery, innovation and opportunism. Inevitably there is a common awareness throughout the community and generations that such pre-marital relationships occur. Therefore, this common back-stage discourse becomes about the ability of those who can maintain this secrecy and those who cannot. Here it must be noted that secrecy is a relative construct in that it is a matter of 'secrecy from whom?' Almost certainly friends will be aware and will often actively support an individual's pre-marital relationship, both through

discussion, encouragement and affirmation, but also through more practical means such as performing the role of lookout. Secrecy is therefore in relation to those members of the community (family and elders) who actively support and reproduce the socio-cultural taboos, rules and sanctions against those discovered in pre-marital relationships.

The consequences for discovery of pre-marital relationships are variable and dependent on the degree of transgression, the relative samaj, caste and class of the individuals and their own community's rules and sanctions. While the Tadpada samaj maintains a number of rules and sanctions for dealing with such matters through the convening of the panch, which often involve fines, there are also common consequences that relate to all samaj. Typically, there will be a financial loss if money has already been exchanged for marital arrangements, and there may also be a significant impact on business for transgressors and their family members. If the relationship is intra-samaj or inter-caste then there can also be significant and long-lasting tensions between the two households.

However, perhaps the most damaging effect of the discovery of pre-marital relationships is the impact it has on the honour and credit of those involved. In this chapter I have drawn a distinction between these two concepts with the former referring to the collective honour of a family in relation to the public normative discourse and expectations around behaviour. Thus, transgressions do not only affect the individual transgressor but their family members too, as we have seen in regard to the father, but also to the siblings, of the actions of one person. This ultimately impacts upon the status and position of a family within the community and in the more extreme sense can result in their ostracism from the samaj. It has a particular impact on men's sense of identity and masculinity as they become the source of derogatory comments and their status within the samaj is damaged.

Reputation or credit is, in many ways, a more complex construct in that it often produces multiple meanings dependent on different audiences and contexts. Therefore, while at the public level it may closely relate to normative

understandings of honour and social expectations around behaviour, among peers credit may relate to very different interpretations of sexuality and masculinity, alongside other markers of identity and criteria for 'good credit'. Finally, there appears to be a paradox by which men have a clear knowledge and understanding as to the consequences for discovery of pre-marital relationships, but many continue to engage in such performances. However, as Brickell notes 'to look closely is to notice that the regulatory and the constitutive are mutually informing' so that the 'sexuality that is controlled and yet often resists is also- in part- constituted through those controls and resistances' (2009, p. 66). Therefore, transgressions against the norms may be seen as mutually reinforcing, so that secrecy is required to protect the norm, and both norms and transgressions are being reproduced, as they need each other to exist. The experience between conformity in the face of social sanctions and norms and the potential for resistance or subversion by young men in terms of their narratives of love will be the focus of the next chapter.

Character Profiles III

Girish

Girish is a young man in his early twenties with a small build and a quiet demeanour. He was one of only a few young men in the Christian community who could speak English to a high level- a reflection of his higher education and determination at his studies. He is currently studying his Masters in Education at a college in a nearby city with the aspiration of becoming a secondary school teacher in a government school, which is a highly coveted and competitive job. For Girish, being a devout and practicing Catholic is an important part of his identity and not merely a marker of status as is the case for other young men. He prays daily, attends mass weekly and regularly refers to God and Jesus in conversation. For him, religion is a source of strength and hope and a means through which he can achieve his aspirations in life. He helps to organise and regularly participate in the samaj's 'bhajan mandali', which is when a group of men meet in an evening to play instruments and sing religious songs. Alongside religion, family plays a significant role in his life with Girish often referring fondly to his parents and siblings, showing me videos and photos, and also frequently helping out on the small family land.

Perhaps as a result of his religious outlook, participation in community events and respect to his family and elders, Girish has a negative view on many of his peers and male youths within the samaj. He believes that there is a loss of community spirit and cohesion in recent years and that it is these groups of youths and young men who are the cause, particularly through their disruptive behaviour, idleness and unwillingness to support and help the community as a whole. Girish, on the other hand, will go out of his way to help others and showed a great deal of kindness during my stay in the village, inviting me to his brother's wedding shortly after I had moved into my house and providing me with a lavish farewell meal at the end of my stay. Throughout my fieldwork we had regular conversations and I became somewhat of a confidante for him and the issues he was experiencing.

Gopal

Gopal is a young man (20 years old) living within the Christian samaj. Like many young men within this samaj he completed his 12th Standard and went on to a higher education institute- in his case an ITI (Industrial Training Institute) rather than the more prestigious college level. Gopal is now an assistant to a machine operator in a factory close to the village, which is a rather low paid and low status livelihood, but fairly secure and steady nonetheless (especially in comparison to the 'loose' labour of seasonal and agricultural workers). His aspiration is to gain the required training and knowledge to become a machine operator and maybe one day a supervisor. This would indeed raise his income and status and that of his household, which is considered to be of low class within the samaj.

Gopal is another young man who pays considerable attention to his physical appearance. Despite his relatively poor economic circumstances he dresses in jeans and a vest or modern t-shirt and carefully styles his hair each day. Gopal goes to the gym or works out on an almost daily basis to ensure a strong, muscular physique. He also has two tattoos on his arms, one for a previous girlfriend and another for his current partner, who is the subject of the love story presented in the next chapter. It seems, then, that Gopal aims to mirror the style of Bollywood heroes who are typically well dressed, muscular and tattooed. When he is not working, Gopal is often found hanging around the village with his male friends in a group that has a negative reputation among other members of the samaj for causing trouble, eve teasing and drinking. I often found them to be an interesting, lively and often warm and friendly group of young men, while understanding how their behaviour and attitudes may be disruptive to the harmony of the community.

7 Love, Marriage and Social Expectation: Conformity or subversion?

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters the nature, strategies and consequences of pre-marital relationships have been explored and an emphasis has been placed on the significance these can hold in a young man's daily life. While the importance of the male life course and particularly that of becoming a married man has been mentioned at several points, this chapter explores the narratives and context at which the confluence between these back-stage pre-marital relationships and the front-stage discourse of marital processes occur. As already mentioned, there is a social expectation that men, at a relatively young age, will marry and adopt the role of householder and provider for a wife and family and slowly assume the role of providing care for elderly parents within the family unit. As this stage approaches, pre-marital relationships become increasingly problematic and a source of tension for young men. Thoughts of eloping with their lover may surface but are rarely acted upon. There is a general acquiescence by the man to the social expectations of older family and community members and by the fear of damaging the family's honour and his own credit. In this chapter, the focus will be on true love relationships as these involve a greater emotional attachment and the particularity of love focused on one person, which potentially conflicts with the normative processes of arranged marriage. In contrast, those men in time pass relationships are, by the nature of such relationships, less concerned about the potential loss of such contact as there is little emotional attachment or sense of future aspirations of love.

A number of young men find themselves in the difficult position of being in love with a girl they desire to marry, but with the knowledge that such a decision would not only result in their ostracism from the community (and all the support this engenders) but would also have a detrimental impact on the rest of their family. Facing such a choice, most men conform to societal pressure and

accept the marital partner chosen by their parents. These pressures can cause considerable pain and tension for the young men who are struggling to negotiate their familial and caste loyalties with personal desires. However, for some men there appears to be the beginnings of a window of opportunity (albeit still narrowly defined within the parameters of social expectation and dependent very much upon the particular *samaj* one belongs to) by which it may be possible to marry the person of their 'choice' and with whom they have already had an established and loving relationship before marriage. Strategies for achieving 'arranged love' marriages and narratives on the difficulties, tensions and success of love marriages for men will form the discussion of the final sections of this chapter.

First, however, it would be useful in the context of this chapter to discuss briefly the current expectations and processes of marriage for young men in this part of India. Traditionally throughout Gujarat marriages are arranged by the parents (or other family and community members) of the young couple on the basis of social rules dictating suitable marital partners that consolidate the caste and kinship system. However, there are those who have questioned whether this process of arranged marriage would continue in the face of global influences and a modernising ideology of love. Hatfield and Rapson state that '[c]hange, then, may be expected to be slow and uneven, but relentless' (1996, p. 51). However, as was discussed in Chapter 4, there can be a dangerous tendency towards ethnocentrism with the construction of a dichotomy between a loveless, socio-economically and parentally arranged marriage and a loving, free and democratic love marriage. In reality, this presentation of marital structures is false and perhaps belies an increasing prevalence in Western academic research on the focus of romantic ideals of marriage in contrast to traditional practices elsewhere across the world. However, while many young men advocate and accept the normative discourse of arranged marriage, there are those for whom the constraints and rules that support this institution cause considerable pain in relation to their desire to marry the girl with whom they are (secretly) in a true love relationship. This chapter, therefore, seeks to unravel these narratives that surround this important stage of a young man's life, while being aware that the

majority of young men still support the process of arranged marriage.

The debate surrounding arranged and love marriage should also be placed in the context of possible influences of global media, images and products that may be causing some shifts in notions and perspectives towards love, sexuality and marriage. While my research focuses solely on the rural context of central Gujarat, and as such I have limited empirical capacity to comment on potential social changes elsewhere, it seems likely that there is some degree of loosening in the grip of traditional institutions and values among certain (middle class) groups, especially in urban areas (Donner, 2002; Hatfield & Rapson, 1996; Mody, 2002). Even within the rural village where my research was conducted there are signs of change, especially within the Christian samaj. The increasing prevalence of love marriages (albeit still a small percentage of overall marriages), as expressed within the narratives of men discussed in this chapter, is the more 'extreme' expression of a shift away from strict parental control. This is also marked by an increased agency in the right of refusal that a boy or girl may have when presented with potential partners by their parents (Uberoi 2006). An alternative compromise to love and arranged marriages is that of the arranged love marriage in which those couples in a secret pre-marital relationship are able to transform this into a legitimate arranged marriage through influencing parental choice to select the individual they desire to marry (Twamley, 2014; Uberoi, 2006).

Love marriages can be very problematic and cause considerable tension for those involved often receiving a disapproving gaze from other community members. The social phenomenon of love marriage is restricted to relatively rare cases in certain samaj and is not seen as an option for many young men in other communities. Instead, conformity to the social expectations of an arranged marriage proves too strong and ultimately overcomes personal desire to pursue a true love relationship with a pre-marital partner.

7.2 Conforming to the norm

7.2.1 Elopement? Not quite...

If a young couple find themselves in a true love relationship that is not socially acceptable in terms of the normative practices of marriage (i.e. it is inter-caste or intra-samaj), they typically have three options. First, the couple end the relationship as not being feasible in the structures of society and accept the marital partner of their parents' choice. Second, the couple accept the arranged marriage but continue with the clandestine true love relationship as an extra-marital affair. While I did come across this in several narratives within the village, one of the lovers (usually the man) was unmarried and so had fewer responsibilities in terms of the particular life stage. However, once both lovers are married, it proves particularly difficult to maintain this other relationship, especially as they are usually living in different areas (the girl having moved to her husband's home). New extra-marital affairs begin and end for some men as the opportunities arise, but the likelihood of maintaining a pre-marital relationship through the process of arranged marriage and into married and family life is unlikely. Third, and the one I wish to discuss in this section, is for the couple to elope.

This is a difficult narrative in terms of research access because, by definition, those men that have eloped are no longer within the village having moved to towns or cities to escape the attention of their families and samaj. However, it must also be noted that such cases of elopement are still quite rare and while love marriage may in many ways be considered a form of elopement, the context in which I discuss it later in this chapter is markedly different in terms of the degree of taboo transgressed by the individuals. So, elopements involving inter-caste and intra-caste couples for which there is no potential for sanctioned marriage are rare and cause a considerable stir within the samaj and wider village community. Mody's research in Delhi found that participants perceived these elopements as 'abominations' and '[t]he actions of the couple are read as evidence of callous, unthinking and irresponsible individuals expressing their

freedom and selfish lust with scant regard for their families wishes and feelings' (2006, p.335).

These sentiments were also echoed in the context of this village. People still speak of those couples that have eloped, and the narrative surrounding them, in an almost hushed voice; the scandal of the gossip still freshly conjured on the lips of community members' even years after the incident occurred. The consequences for such incidents of elopement were outlined in the previous chapter, particularly with the incident of Sudhir's daughter. I was informed that the daughter of my Christian neighbour ran away with a Dalit man a few years previously. This contravened the inter-caste taboo and did so with a man perceived to be of the lowest status in the caste system. In order to combat this disgrace to the family's honour, the father placed an advertisement in the local newspaper publicly disowning his daughter and effectively erasing her from the family name. Such a severe reaction is required as otherwise the action may result in 'the ostracism of the domestic groups of the offender unless s/he is disowned by the household' (Dube 1996, p.2)' as they will also be held responsible, in public opinion, for these 'individual acts of 'rebellion'' (Mody 2006, p.335). These reactions and consequences will clearly play a significant role in how young couples perceive the risks and rewards of elopement.

In a number of men's narratives the subject and possibility of running away with their true love was raised, but ultimately dismissed, as the consequences were considered to be too severe. Chirag discusses his thoughts on eloping with one girl he claims to love:

It is a long period and we are in love, we would die for each other. In early age also, we wanted to run away from the village so we prepared, we collected money, I left home, she also left home and then on this side we went to the field and we were just walking and then that girl advised me 'what happens if we run away today? You have two brothers and they will have a fight with my community and my community will have a fight with you and there will be repercussions and problems. There will be a police case so if we run away, a lot of problems there are

going to be. So I think it would be better if we don't run away' (interview with Chirag, 28, Tadpada, March 2013).

The couple in this instance had prepared to elope from the village but as is common in these narratives one of the couple (often, but not always, the girl) would at the last moment advise against it, producing a rational argument about the consequences of their actions. These would normally include the tension and fighting that would occur between their two families and castes, the possibility of police involvement and the impact this would have on the honour of the family. Whether the couple actually proceeds as far as preparing to leave the village or whether this is a discursive tool to indicate the extent to which the couple are willing to risk everything for each other is unclear. The latter seems more likely as the language used was very similar in a number of narratives indicating a shared language of expression from a common cultural source. Perhaps this is a final sign marking the end of their relationship as the time for marriage approaches; a final gesture of their love that provides a nod towards subversion, 'a dream of marrying the girl', as one man narrates, while ultimately bowing to societal pressure. The normative discourse, which men transgress on a daily basis in secret is typically upheld when it comes to the ultimatum between choosing to abandon the relationship or to announce it publicly through the act of elopement. This discourse becomes so interwoven within the fabric of social life by notions of kinship and caste, filial duty and religion that it becomes almost unthinkable to break. In this sense, one man framed his true love as '*like a hobby, but we don't get married to the one that we love*' (interview with Maruf, 20, Muslim, May 2013) in order to avoid the inevitable problems that would be caused. Perhaps, as Osella and Osella state in reference to young couples in Kerala, this creates 'an air of tragedy and doom' which serves to heighten the emotions experienced and shared by the couple (1998, p.200). It appears that risk taking and lower inhibitions during this liminal pre-marriage period for men does not extend beyond this secret, private world of their transgressive pre-marital relationships. Men are only too aware of their duty to their family in terms of marriage as well as the significance this has for their own lives and progression as men within the *samaj*.

These narratives imply another temporal dimension in the conceptualisation of those who are conducting pre-marital relationships. It is the sense that individuals may have future aspirations towards their partner in these relationships, particularly through language, such as notions of eternal love while simultaneously acknowledging that these pre-marital relationships have an end date. This expiry date is inevitably the stage at which they are arranged to be married. This forms a paradox between an imaginary of a future in which their hopes are projected past the constraints and barriers to a space in which they can spend the remainder of their lives with the person they love, while in the present being only too aware of the need to end the relationship in order to conform to social expectations.

For some men, whose credit is already poor in the eyes of the samaj, eloping with a girl seems a more plausible option as the impact of such actions appear less severe. Hadis has a poor reputation in the Muslim samaj as a consequence of his father's drunkenness and troublesome behaviour and his own habits of gambling and womanising. Hadis regularly bemoaned his plight that '*nobody will give me a girl officially*' (interview with Hadis, 23, Muslim, May 2013), but still refrains from the idea of elopement because one day he will wish to return to the community and this would not be possible under such circumstances. Hadis understands his predicament but is constrained by the social norms either in terms of finding an arranged marriage or through the possibility of eloping in a love marriage. Individuals are embedded within and reliant upon their community and so it becomes difficult to frame their own future existence outside of their samaj. Within these strong social relationships and kinship bonds, approval and legitimacy are important in governing individual's choices and behaviour. Notions of honour, credit and support become entangled in the idea of the community and embedded within an individual's perception of their own identity. Hadis's situation relates to his family's position and status in the samaj and ensures that they are almost perceived as outcasts or pariahs within the very same samaj, which they cannot seemingly disengage from. This creates a paradox whereby the samaj prevents Hadis from marrying by informing

potential families of his poor credit while reinforcing the constraints that inhibit his ability to elope.

7.2.2 Failed love, failed agency? Pain and angst for young men in love

In conforming to social expectations, men relinquish their narratives of true love, but this is by no means an easy process; men often experience considerable pain and frustration at this time. Until a definitive barrier is placed in the path of such a relationship, there is perhaps a sense of enjoyment of the present for these men who are dreaming of an idealised future while forgoing the reality of their situation. When the barrier does appear, the buried fears are brought to the surface as pain, anger and frustration. The following passage is the next instalment of Raheem's true love narrative at the point where his girlfriend's family are searching for a marital partner.

Her parents were searching for a boy for her so one day one boy comes who looks like a hero, a very handsome fellow, so they showed me a photo also and asked 'how does this man look?' and so I told her mother 'very nice'. I went to the girl and told her 'that boy does not look good' and was teasing her. I had a pain as they were searching for a boy and she would no longer be my lover. The next very day she said no to that boy, that he didn't look good. Meanwhile everyday at 9.00 and 3.00 we used to meet without any fail, rain or winter. Then again at night she brought one photo that parents had given her of a boy to show me. With the pain she asks 'how is this boy?' She doesn't want to get married with anyone but with the force of the family she has to get married and she cannot get married to me because we are from the same village. So it was at night and I could only see the red shirt, the face I couldn't see, but I was afraid that if she says no because of me then in the future she will not get a husband. So with taking a risk, I said that this fellow looks better than me. Next day she informs the parents that she will get married to this boy and they are arranging the date. Later on I came to know when I went that side, her mother showed me the photo of this boy she will marry, and then I realised that by looks he was much worse than me. So I was sad that my

love was going to get married to that kind of person (interview with Raheem, 26, Muslim, April 2013).

Raheem's furtive attempt to retain his relationship with the girl is indicative of the emotions he feels towards her, but it is by his own hand that the girl accepts a marital match. In this sense, an individual's actions are strongly influenced and controlled by the weight of society's expectations and the normative discourse that is infused through the everyday lives of men in this village. Duty therefore overrides love: duty to societal rules, duty to one's parents, duty to the girl and her parents, and duty to one's own reputation and future prospects. The girl in this narrative is portrayed as a passive character willing to follow the boy's advice and so it is for him to make the difficult sacrifice in telling her (or allowing her) to marry another boy. Raheem recounts the pain that they are both experiencing as her marriage approaches. On the night before her marriage, the girl offers her body to Raheem, who has not touched her in eight years, but who continues to display the role of sexual self-control expected of him within this narrative of true love. Raheem recalls his experience and emotions from the day of her marriage:

In the morning the marriage starts, the band-baja is singing songs and the more money you give to the band-baja, he will play the songs you want, so I gave money Rs1100 to the band-baja and they played sorrowful songs, and there is one Hindi song where the band-baja calls the girl to stand there. When she came I threw some Rs10 notes on her and then people, my friends and all, came to know. I used to call her Rani ['Queen'] to my friends so everybody knew I was in love with someone called Rani, but they did not know the exact person. The marriage was over and it was time for her to go to the husband's house. So they were sat down in the car and there was a plain rear glass so you could see the people sat inside. The husband puts his hand on the seat and holding the shoulder of the woman, so I didn't like. For 8 years I have not touched her and today he is touching and at night he would have sex with her. That much depression I was feeling. So from here to a bus stand I ran behind the car and everybody saw this. Then I came back quietly and sat down. My father comes and makes me understand that I should

forget things and slapped me 8 times here and there but I was in the shock so I didn't know what to do. So mother came and poured one bucket of water on me. I was in such a depression that what is that? Friends also came to try and make me understand. For the whole night I sat there. The very next day there is the custom that she comes back home. So when she comes back home, I am here only and I am told she has come so I run to the roadside, but then I realise she is no longer mine. She is calling me from the other side of the road saying she wants to embrace me and I also want to, but then I realised that her life would be spoiled so I stop and with the sad face, rather than going that side I came to my house. And that was the end of my love. From that day onwards I never spoke to the girl (interview with Raheem, 26, Muslim, April 2013).

It is difficult to know whether this piece of narrative is reflective of the real occurrence of events or a projection of Raheem's love and pain through the re-telling of this story. If it is an accurate representation, it directly contradicts the years of careful concealment of this relationship in order to protect his and his family's honour and reputation. Perhaps, with the sealing of the girl's marriage and her removal from the village, such (past) transgression can be ignored, although that seems unlikely in terms of how notions of credit and honour are constructed and quickly shaped by any form of behaviour that breaches the normative code. Perhaps, and more likely, is that the re-telling of this narrative indicates a strong performative element, one that is both romantic and *filmi* in nature (Osella and Osella, 2006); a trait reflected throughout this young man's (and other men's) narratives of love. The narrative of self-sacrifice, of not having touched the girl in eight years and of the final declaration of pain at the moment at which this love is irretrievably lost all indicate a desire to present this love story in a certain, almost theatrical way to the audience. Thus, the fond memory of past true love relationships (in contrast to the transient nature of time pass relationships) and the intense emotions experienced are retained and recalled years later, often after marriage to another woman, as was the case for Raheem. It provides a further indication as to the depths of such attachment to that one girl for whom the young man continues to have strong feelings of love throughout his life.

This sense of pain and anger at the failure and termination of pre-marital relationships is common across a number of other male narratives. When asked about how he would feel when his girlfriend is married and moves to her husband's village, Jigar responds:

At that time my heart will burn and it will be tough to see that girl leave. I will all alone cry when I miss the girl. But I can't do anything but go through that pain and I may cry also (interview with Jigar, 25, Tadpada, April 2013).

Jigar articulates the sense of helplessness experienced by men in such circumstances when he says '*But I can't do anything but go through that pain*'. Young men may feel that they have the ability to make major life decisions and control of their futures removed from their hands by the marital constraints enforced by their parents and the wider community. As already discussed, those rare cases in which individuals do attempt to enact control through elopement are punished and often result in ostracism from the community. This sense of helplessness and loss of control is embedded within the transition between life stages of boyhood to manhood, unmarried to married status, student to householder. Although boys are able to enjoy a degree of freedom during the pre-marital liminal period of youth, there is a cultural expectation that boys will assume a maturity and self-control once they are married and have assumed the role and status of manhood. For some men this conformity to cultural norms is relatively straightforward, as they either abstained from pre-marital relationships or engaged in time pass relationships with little emotional attachment. For others, it is a period of considerable anxiety, disruption and conflict. Whether this situation of failed love is exacerbated by the conditions of social flux and potential global influences within contemporary India and how this may impact on the lives of young men is yet to be fully understood.

For young men, the thought of being forced to leave their lover to marry a parentally chosen bride can lead to feelings of resentment towards their new wife:

I got married in my own caste when I was around 12/13 years old. I was in love but I got married so I always hated my wife because I was in love with this other girl. I passed out my 12th [Standard] and parents said I should bring that wife to home, and we brought. But after bringing I left this lover as both the girls I cannot love, only one of them has to be in my life because I cannot pay attention that way and it also disturbs the life. Once the wife was here then I started loving her and not the lover (interview with Marut, 19, Tadpada, March 2013).

The initial hatred Marut feels toward his wife diminishes when he adopts the role of husband expected of him by the community and his responsibilities within this role become evident. While this transference of love from his lover to his new wife may at first glance appear fickle, it is apparent that Marut must at least frame his relationship with his wife in terms of such narratives of love so as to meet the social expectation of a husband. In time, love and affection may indeed grow between the married couple but this is not always the case in such arrangements. There is perhaps a slightly dualistic way of presenting love as being, on the one hand, reflective of individual agency through pre-marital relationships of true love and, on the other, as being reflective of collective societal pressure in the form of marital love. This is perhaps a little simplistic, as many men do opt for an arranged marriage and it is not to deny the genuine feelings of love that may develop within all forms of marriage (or to assume that true love is by some means a higher or purer form of emotion). However, there is a sense developing in these narratives that there is, for those men in relationships of true love, a relinquishing of this individually 'chosen' love in favour of a societally chosen marriage. While it is impossible to know or predict whether their pre-marital relationships would have lasted in the long term, the resentment and anger felt by the young men at the lost opportunity for a happy, loving relationship is apparent in these narratives. In the face of such helplessness against overwhelming social pressures, some young men rely on other sources for strength and guidance.

7.2.3 ‘It is in God’s hands’

Girish is in a true love pre-marital relationship with a girl he met in college. While the girl is Christian and lives in a different village, her mother is from the same village as Girish meaning that she is his ‘aunty’ and his girlfriend is his ‘sister’, at least in the categorical sense. This inevitably creates a barrier against this relationship, preventing the possibility of it becoming a socially sanctioned marriage in the future. Girish explains his plight:

It sometimes happens that parents are not agreed. Sometimes people do not live far distant. Sometimes it happens that Christian boy loves Brahmin girl, Hindu girl sometimes; Hindu boy sometimes loves Christian girl. And that time parents do not agree and that time people will get love married. Without thinking about the life, about the future, they decide to get love married. So actually they are not wrong because if they love, they are free to take decision. At this age now you are grown up, you are mature so you will have to take decision yourself, you’re free to take any decision, but not any decision I mean to say, but positive decision, not negative decisions. In life if you are able to live perfectly with her, if you both settle and understand everything you can manage then it is not wrong (interview with Girish, 24, Christian, January 2013).

Girish rather articulately advocates an argument for young men and women to be able to choose to marry whomever they love, regardless of their identity. Girish believes that individuals who are mature adults should be able to make their own decisions, as long as these are positive ones. However, this becomes a matter of how positive and negative decisions are defined and by whom. While he may wish for individual and independent choice in the matter, other members of his family and the wider community may argue that a young man who thinks he is in love is unable to make clear decisions for the benefit of his future and so there are clear rules and structures in place that protect individuals within the broader kinship and caste system. Interestingly, Girish’s argument is not simply focused on his own plight, but encompasses a broader contention with marital rules for inter-caste as well as intra-samaj

relationships. He is advocating a wholesale change to the socio-cultural process of marriage and one that would provide a free choice of partner.

Throughout his narrative, Girish defers the situation from one that is his own responsibility, or something he can control, to one which '*is upon God, it is up to God... everything is in God's hands*'. As such, he and his partner pray daily for God's deliverance of a solution to their problem. Religion is often a significant defining aspect of an individual's identity, social status and relationships. However, for many young men religion is simply part of the social fabric of their lives measured in terms of festivals, enjoyment and the use of particular rituals and symbols (such as wearing a crucifix), rather than in a spiritual or ideological sense. Religion, in this sense, becomes a signifier of social status, a means through which individuals express their identity and position often through material means, i.e. donations, or embodiment, such as tattoos of religious symbols, or wearing the latest, expensive fashions during religious events. For others, however, religion holds a deeper theological meaning and becomes a source for every day reflection and engagement forming an important part of their lives and through which they often seek to draw strength and answers to their problems and barriers.

For Girish, this religious ideology provides a discursive and practical framework by which to express the problem he and his partner are facing through the act of prayer and the belief that a miracle will happen. By placing the problem into God's hands, there is a sense that Girish is deferring the helplessness he is experiencing in order to defer any decision regarding their future, i.e. either elopement or the ending of the relationship. Religion therefore (and as discussed earlier in the context of male youths failing to find prospective brides) provides young men with an excuse by which to defer responsibility for a barrier that has negative implications for their lives. Girish is, however, defiant about the normative notion of marriage:

One important thing I want to share is that we both vow that if we are not together, if we do not get married then we will never marry anyone else. It's a

promise to each other. Married life is the thing which you can share with your partner. Married life without love you cannot marry some other person. Then why do you waste your life and why do you spoil other life. Because if you are not in the mood and because your parents force, you got married with other person then that person will not be happy. So we should think twice, a hundred times before getting married. This is my opinion. Twice, a hundred even a thousand times we have to think before getting married. According to my opinion you are married not because of parents but because of you. I suggest to everyone that choose your partner yourself, don't choose your parent's preference, your parent's choice because your parents will say this is a good person who has money, car, whatever it is, they are very rich. This does not matter. This is stupid thing. We both promise that we cannot get married with other person, never I mean to say, never. I can't live without her. Because when I love her and she love me we both live as husband and wife not as a boyfriend and a girlfriend from the very day we start the journey of love. I have not proposed her, no proposal, but this thing automatically happens (interview with Girish, 24, Christian, May 2013).

For Girish, if he is unable to marry the girl he loves then he will not comply with the social expectations of arranged marriage and therefore forego his transition into a socially perceived 'manhood'. In his narrative, Girish already equates his relationship to one of marriage; their love and devotion to one another is such that there is no space to imagine the role of a parentally arranged 'other' as husband or wife. For him, love is framed in terms of particularity; it is this girl and no other whom he loves and wishes to marry. There is a considerable amount of anger that flows out of this narrative (and which was evident during the interview itself), which is similar in many ways to the outbursts of emotion and pain discussed in section 7.2.2. However, what is different here is the articulation of an alternative and subversive discourse to that of the normative one of marriage. His anger is directed at the socio-economic and parentally arranged elements of marriage, which fails to relate to the emotions of love he is experiencing. His advocacy for social change of the institution of marriage to one based on personal choice, emotional intimacy and romantic partnership is a quiet one. While he feels able to express his resentment, frustration and

perspectives to a foreign interviewer (and as he was one of the few interviewees who spoke good English, there was no interpreter present nor any risk of neighbour's overhearing), one wonders whether he will be able to express such views to his parents and others. Girish presents himself as a dutiful and loving son, which creates a further tension between his duty to his parents and his love for the girl. As Lamb (2000) notes in her research in India, there is a cultural construction by which children often feel indebted to their parents and feel a duty towards them. While this sense of duty may manifest in a number of ways, such as caring for their parents in their old age, it also ensures that children do not wish to disobey or bring shame upon their parents. This situation leaves some men feeling helpless and conflicted. In the case of Girish, it would be interesting to return to the village several years from now to determine whether he accepted the social pressures of arranged marriage or whether he and his partner found a means through which to subvert marital norms.

For Girish, love develops outside of one's control because it is equated through a greater power (that of God), which must be 'true', whereas the prohibitive structures of marriage are constructed by people and thus, in his perspective, are open to being criticised as flawed. However, although Girish relies on his dependency on God to solve the problem, he also states with a sense of melancholic realism that '*this is the life, there is no rescue, there is no escape*'. So there seems to be, once more, a disjuncture between the aspirations of an individual and the constraints and societal pressures with which men, for the most part, conform even through their often bitter but private protests.

7.3 A weakening of norms? Subversive strategies

Throughout this chapter there has been the assertion that young men conform to social pressures and expectation, relinquishing their true love in favour of the arranged marriage and struggling to exhibit a strong degree of control over their marital future. But, is this always the case? Are there not examples of young men and women defying social norms in favour of love? There are rare

examples of elopement, but these almost always result in ostracism from the samaj and so the consequences tend to act as a significant deterrent. So, what other options are available to young men hoping to establish their lover as their wife? The remainder of this chapter will discuss two such strategies found in men's narratives and explore whether they can be understood as subversive to current social norms: first and rather briefly, the arranged love marriage; and secondly in greater depth, the love marriage.

7.3.1 The arranged love marriage

I want to get married to this girl only. That girl, her sister in law is from this village and close by. She knows that we are in love and so she is my sister because she is from here. She says 'you don't worry, we will arrange your marriage slowly.' So that sister in law has already told that side that there is a nice boy who is from here and so it has begun. In my house nobody knows but slowly, slowly they will come to know, but she has started preparing. The girl's mother has said 'ok we will think about this boy also' (interview with Ishrat, 17, Muslim, April 2013).

For those wishing to extend a pre-marital relationship from a back-stage discourse to a socially sanctioned marriage, perhaps the ideal option is the 'arranged love marriage' (Uberoi, 2006). The arranged love marriage refers to a situation where a boy and girl are in a secret pre-marital relationship, but are able to subsequently become husband and wife through a parentally sanctioned arranged marriage, as referred to in the above narrative of Ishrat. For such a marriage to occur, certain conditions need to exist. First, there should be no social taboo implications for the relationship in terms of the couple's caste, samaj or class status: it must satisfy the rules of the marital process. In Ishrat's case, the only taboo they were breaking was the act of having a pre-marital relationship in the first place; otherwise they were perfectly acceptable marital choices for one another. As referred to in earlier chapters, there are degrees of transgression in regards to the normative public discourse. While pre-marital relationships are generally unacceptable, this becomes particularly true when the relationship involves two individuals from either the same samaj, different

classes or separate castes thus making the partnership incompatible in terms of marriage. In this context, it is impossible for there to be a socially sanctioned marriage between those having a pre-marital relationship, which contravenes such criteria. However, and interestingly, the potential for converting pre-marital relationships into marriage if such criteria are still met perhaps implies a weakening of the constraints over the social prohibition of pre-marital relationships.

Second, there is the negotiation required to convert this clandestine relationship into an arranged marriage. The parents of either protagonist may already have begun the process of searching for a potential spouse or may disagree with the current lover as choice for a variety of reasons outside of the rules of marriage. As my interpreter stated during this interview, '*target and planning out is very important*', but even more important is having an agent or intermediary who is able to facilitate the transition from the private to the public sphere. Ishrat's girlfriend has a sister-in-law who is fortuitously from the same samaj as him and who is willing to help negotiate their marriage '*slowly, slowly*'. It is essential in this situation that the young couple can find someone that they both trust to keep their pre-marital relationship secret, but who also has enough influence within the family to be able to guide the parents into consenting to such a match. Failure to be able to rely on such an intermediary is likely to be one of the main deterrents for other couples in a similar position.

The strategy of an arranged love marriage therefore combines young people's aspirations for an idealised romantic true love, while simultaneously conforming to parentally and socially approved notions of marriage (Twamley, 2014). If such ideals of romantic love are identified as being a product of modernity then this strategy becomes a means through which to negotiate the balance between such aspirations of modern identity and traditional values. Twamley's (2014) study in Baroda indicates an increasing prevalence of arranged love marriages in urban and middle class areas. However, in the context of the village where I conducted research, the arranged love marriage was quite rare, only appearing in this one narrative. Therefore, whether this

reflects a shift in attitudes (alike to the increased input that some prospective brides and grooms have in arranged marriage contexts) or whether it reflects strategies practised within previous generations, I am uncertain in relation to the data collected. One should also be cautious in assuming that this is an ideal that all young men are able, or wish, to aspire towards.

7.3.2 Love marriage versus arranged marriage: definitions and attitudes

Throughout this chapter the notion of a contrast between love and arranged marriage has been raised. In order to gain a greater insight into this contrast, it is important to discuss men's attitudes on this subject. Uberoi, in her research, found that love marriages were viewed with considerable suspicion as 'they undermine parental authority, threaten the basis of the social order of caste, rupture the chains of reciprocity that unite affines in relations of material/marital exchange and, in some understandings, also defy the forces of destiny that are believed to link two individuals uniquely through several successive lifetimes of partnership' (2006, pp. 123–4). This rather succinctly provides the historical and cultural context within which interpretations of love and marriage should be viewed, relating as it does to key themes that have already been discussed.

In general, a large number of young men, across all three samaj, are in favour of arranged marriage rather than love marriage. In the Tadpada and Muslim samaj, such a question tended to receive short shrift, with answers definitively stating that arranged marriage was the preference. When I attempted to probe further as to why love marriage was not possible, I was usually met with a (not unkind) laugh signalling my naivety as a foreigner and a reiteration that it is not possible. This reflects the strong normative discourse around the institution of marriage that is inherent within Gujarati society and which seeks to control the nature of relationships and kinship ties through carefully arranged marital partners. However, within the Christian samaj, where there appears to be increasing opportunities to form love marriages, men's answers were more expansive, although for the most part still in favour of arranged marriage. Men

typically referred to love marriage as unsuccessful or the preserve of those who had poor credit in the samaj and therefore were unable to attain an arranged marriage. One man stated that to fall in love was to have fun and to enjoy, but was not for marriage and those that are in love rarely end up being married to that person. However, some men preferred the idea of love marriage as being reflective of an increased sense of freedom where personal choice has slowly and quietly crept up to rival parental authority. Moreover, there appears to be a degree of ambiguity, even contradiction, in some men's responses regarding the two forms of marriage, as the following exchange implies:

Interviewer: What do you think of [Gopal's] love marriage?

Akhil: I think it is nice.

Interviewer: Would you also think of love marriage?

Akhil: I can't do that because I don't like this marriage. My mother told me that we will search for your wife so why would I do the love marriage? My parents are the main part of my life so I am always believing in them and respect them (interview with Akhil, 21, Christian, February 2013).

Akhil appears to have no issue with someone else forming a love marriage, indeed he thinks '*it is nice*', but for his own marriage he cannot contemplate any option other than an arranged marriage. Ultimately, such sentiments relate to the desire to respect one's parents and not to bring dishonour upon the family's name. Preference for arranged marriages was predominantly framed in this way rather than in reference to the importance of maintaining caste integrity as other authors have advocated (Donner, 2002; Mody, 2006). As Uberoi states, there is often a 'conflict between the lovers' duty towards their families and their desire for each other, between conformity to social norms and expectations and individual freedom of choice, between the wisdom and experience of age and the impetuousness of youth- in all, between the enduring, if supposedly now threatened, values of Indian family life and the individualist

values of the West' (2006, pp. 251–2). For Uberoi, this conflict is often encapsulated in the choice between love and arranged marriage. For some, therefore, this becomes a crossroads for Indian culture and society where in one direction the traditional structures are upheld, but in the other there are divergences towards a new conceptualisation of love and marriage. While this contrast is more noticeable in urban areas, there is the sense that such ideas and perspectives are beginning to trickle down into the discourse and practice of men of certain samaj in rural villages.

However, perhaps it is more useful to frame this discussion not in terms of tradition and modernity as polarised opposites (Rudolph & Rudolph, 1967), but through the condition in which such phenomena may represent a degree of social flux. Therefore, it is not that tradition represents a backward, draconian practice and that progress towards the bright lights of modernity is inevitable and desirable. Instead, a variety of conditions operate contiguously- merging, adapting, assimilating and, at times, conflicting. So, while changes in access to global media, material products, shifts in marketing and imagery may create new perspectives and notions of sexuality and love, these are culturally assimilated. Besides exerting different degrees of influence dependent on location, age, gender, class, etc., it is evident from the majority of men's narratives that strong attitudes towards Indian culture prevailed, particularly in relation to marriage and family. For a few men, personal choice of love and marriage is desirable. However, the majority of men still prefer an arranged marriage. Although in some (mainly urban) contexts the nuclear family is increasingly evident, in the village traditional patterns of joint families prevail as the means of social support (Dwyer 2000). It is, therefore, difficult to analytically disentangle the different elements that are combined within the notion of socio-cultural change and it is an aspect beyond the remit of this thesis. Further longitudinal research would be required to begin to unpick the various contradictions and consistencies and how this social landscape may shift in the coming years.

Bhavesh, who himself had a love marriage, articulates an interesting perspective on this debate. Half-jokingly, he would tell people that:

In love marriage you get married to your own lover and in arranged marriage you get married to the other fellow's lover (laughs)... A rare girl or boy you will find that is not in love before marriage, they will be having attraction, they will be having affair. It's the situation you have to accept it; you can't be like the person who says I want to get a girl who has not fallen in love with anyone... So in love marriage you fall in love, then you are sure that she is your own lover (interview with Bhavesh, 36, Christian, January 2013).

This is interesting as it extends the notion of kanyadana (the gift of a virgin bride) to an earlier stage prior to the marriage process. Of course, in this sense, the gift has not been given willingly, or with the knowledge of the father, yet nonetheless the man has taken it. Understanding that the social context means that many young people do indeed have pre-marital relationships and although they are not always sexual in nature, they may have involved being in love with someone else. Therefore to retain this idea of an untouched (or unloved) bride, one should seek to have a relationship with a girl and then convert this into a love marriage. For an arranged marriage, Bhavesh continues, the girl will likely have been involved in a pre-marital relationship but in order to comply with her parent's wishes and to protect their honour, she will marry the partner selected for her. The man cannot claim to have sole ownership of the woman as she has had feelings of love or lust towards another man prior to their marriage. The man may therefore feel threatened by this notion of competition against another man and one against whom he may not perform favourably. This is important in understanding the relationship of masculinity and sexuality in this social and cultural context where virtuous women are presented as chaste, loyal and respectful and so the thought of women having lovers prior to marriage does not conform to cultural notions of the ideal wife. Bhavesh further extols the virtues of love marriage:

So what I want to tell is that love marriage is also good where you have your own choice, you know the person, you know what is going to be, you spend time with the person and you know the behaviour in and out. So in marriage, life behaviour is very much important, and values, it is not the look. There was a time I was going for look, but now I realise it is not the look of the body, it is the soul, it is what you are inside. Body is to communicate, to touch, to feel something, that is what the body is. But for love, that is more than that. When somebody loves it is not the body, it is like inside two souls think this is a good partner, here I match... And in arranged marriage at the beginning it is not that but then slowly, slowly, it takes time and you have to cultivate that and you have to meet your souls (interview with Bhavesh, 36, Christian, January 2013).

For Bhavesh, the virtues of a love marriage are encapsulated in the freedom of choice for individuals, the ability to know the person before marriage, and in the compatibility of the couple built on an emotional intimacy before the commitment to marriage. This perhaps relates, to a certain extent, to the transformation of relationships that Giddens (1992) refers to in the sense of constructing a romantic relationship based on intimacy and equality. For Bhavesh, love is not based on physical attraction. He admits that at an earlier stage such attraction was important to him, but as Girish described in Chapter 5, this notion of physical attraction and sexual desire as forming the basis of relationships is one of immaturity and connected to the lower status relationship of time pass.

True love relationships, the precursor of love marriage, are discursively framed in a manner that emphasises the significance of an emotional intimacy denoting a deeper sense of feeling towards one another. In this sense, true love relationships are portrayed, by those involved, as being of a similar status to arranged marriage in the sense that they are based on a love that develops over time (rather than an instant and momentary sense of physical attraction) and which denotes compatibility of the couple. This compatibility, however, is constructed in a divergent manner. For arranged marriage, the couple is matched according to their parent's choice and societal rules whereas in love

marriage it is the individual's 'choice' that is central. I have placed choice here in quotation marks because this is a choice that is still informed and constrained by societal expectations, as it typically is across the world (Padilla et al., 2007). True love, then, is a discourse through which relationships are legitimised as reflecting a more considered approach to relationship formation (Twamley, 2014), which may provide an 'acceptable' basis for marriage. As Mody states, '[r]ather than positing an alternative justification for marriage based on love and mutual attraction, antithetical to the values of caste endogamy and religious separateness, the love-marriage couple I interviewed were keen to prove that their love was a pure, other-worldly sentiment and to disavow the allegation of lust and desire heaped upon their marital bed' (2006, p.344). However, it is worth reiterating that this acceptability only exists in certain samaj and even when this is the case, such love marriages based on true love pre-marital relationships are rarely without significant problems, which impact on an individual, and their family's, lives.

One argument against love marriage is that they typically do not last long and couples will be divorced within a few years of marriage. Love marriages are perceived to be based on 'the unpredictability of emotions and the insecurity of a match based on attraction rather than careful choice by experienced elders' (Donner 2002, p.87). However, Bhavesh (albeit speaking from a position of bias) believes there is less divorce nowadays in such marriages and that the problems that do arise are because individuals have not understood the meaning of marriage and may have only married to satisfy their sexual needs. For him, sex comes later, but the foundation of the marriage is one of love and mutual compatibility. Bhavesh also comments on some of the problems of arranged marriages from his perspective. One issue is the large number of rituals involved in the process of arranged marriage so that three days after a girl is married she returns to her parents home for one week in order to support her through the difficult process of transition between households. However, Bhavesh argues that this is an important period for the man and woman to spend time together, talking and becoming familiar with one another. The wife returns for a further fifteen days with her husband before once again returning

to her family home, this time for one and a half months. If she becomes pregnant, then after two or three months she will return to her parents and remain until three or four months after giving birth. Again, the logic of the ritual implies that the woman may be more comfortable and at ease with her parents in these situations than with the relative strangers of her husband's family. For Bhavesh, though, this only adds to the disruption of the already awkward beginnings of an arranged marriage. In addition, he argues, that once a child is born the man will receive less attention as his wife will take more care of the child than the husband. This issue was raised in several narratives of other men who felt a degree of jealousy towards the newborn child. Bhavesh states that the wife '*forgets about what the husband requires, his needs and love*' and that this may result in him searching for love elsewhere.

In contrast, according to Bhavesh, there are no such problems in love marriage as the couple already know each other and do not require that initial period of time after the marriage to learn each other's values, attitudes and behaviour. As the process of a love marriage does not comply with that of an arranged marriage there is also no requirement for these rituals to occur and so couples tend to spend a greater time together, both initially and throughout the period of pregnancy, further embedding this sense of intimacy and companionate love. Wardlow's (2006) ethnography among the Huli people explores the notion of companionate love as the basis for a strong relationship before marriage, particularly in cultures where marital practice is characterised as a means of social reproduction. Wardlow describes that in rare cases where couples did marry for love they referred to how their relationship was 'held together by mutual affection and psychological intimacy, and who self-consciously reflected on ways to shore up this intimacy' (2006, p.73), which is similar to the cases of love marriage in Gujarat.

Bhavesh states how an argument or fight in an arranged marriage often involves the parents of the couple interceding and accusing the other half as being in the wrong and of poor character. This can create considerable tension between the couple and may cause rifts within the new family. As parents have invested in

the marriage, both materially and socially, they feel that they must defend their child and by extension their ability to choose a suitable match in the eyes of others. In love marriages, however, as both individuals are responsible for their own situation and because of the limited involvement of parents in this process, it is typical for the couple to discuss and resolve their differences. However, Osella and Osella argue that '[w]omen generally have less freedom to manoeuvre and bargain their position in the household and certainly have less chance to divorce if they choose 'love marriage" (2006, p.27). There is, therefore, no simple understanding of the debate between arranged and love marriage with proponents articulating different arguments for and against. The context of each case of love marriage holds particular significance. At the end of his long narrative, Bhavesh acknowledges that love marriages despite all their claimed virtues and freedoms are still quite a rare phenomena in the village context and many people will not accept them as a legitimate means of marriage.

7.3.3 Love marriage

Love marriage is a self-arranged marriage following a pre-marital relationship between a heterosexual couple based on true love. While this is still a relatively rare phenomenon in rural areas, there are several narratives in the village, which illustrate the experiences of young men. There is little evidence of love marriage in the older generations (at least in the narratives related during my fieldwork), which seems to imply that this is a relatively new, and slowly increasing, practice within certain areas. One narrative of love marriage from the Christian samaj is that of Gopal, who met a Christian girl from Ahmedabad. She would call him frequently and as a result incurred a mobile phone bill of Rs13,000. She used her father's money to pay this bill and became worried that the relationship would soon be discovered. As a result she asked Gopal to take her away and so in the middle of the night he met her in the train station at Ahmedabad. She brought her bags and Rs18 lakhs of her father's money. Gopal continues with the narrative:

She comes from a very rich house so with the 18 lakhs rupees we went to my auntie's house in A__ by train. When we were in my auntie's house the previous girl [before meeting his current partner, Gopal had a brief relationship with one of her friends] came to know and calls this present girl's father to tell him that his daughter was here. So now the parents of the girl came to A__ to search for her, but what we did was all the bags and money we kept in one room and we shifted ourselves to another house. Aunty was taking care of the bags and money and she told her parents that we had already left but that we had left the bags and money here and so you take these with you and go home. But her father refused because he didn't want the money, he wanted the girl, so he didn't take the money... So her father informed my aunty to tell me that I would get 70 lakhs rupees to leave the girl, and if you want some more also then I can give him. But I said 'no, that will not happen, I love her, I don't want money so I won't give her' (interview with Gopal, 20, Christian, March 2013).

Despite being from the same caste and different samaj, the large class difference between the couple's families creates a significant barrier and the source of the objection from the girl's father. Although both families are Christians, it is likely that they belong to different sub-castes. While I am unaware of the girl's full background, the Christian samaj that Gopal belongs to has its historical origins in the Hindu low caste of weavers, which may provide a further marker of social difference in this instance. It definitely does not fulfil Pocock's (1972) notion of a 'good marriage' between suitably matched, proper and worthy individuals. As discussed in section 6.3.3, it is the father's honour and reputation that is at stake if his daughter runs away, especially when it is with a poor village boy. The father would have had plans to marry his daughter to another wealthy and respectable family, probably within the same city, in order to further cement his social position as a leading member of the community. For his daughter to defy him in such a manner would cause considerable tension and potential damage to his reputation as he is perceived to be unable to effectively control her behaviour. Gopal was wise to refuse the money offered to him, as it would have been a means for trapping and accusing him of 'abducting' the girl in order to blackmail money. It is often a strategy for families to label an elopement as an

'abduction' in order to 'contest its meaning and throw it into confusion, momentarily gaining a reprieve in which they can try to turn the situation around' (Mody 2006, p.338). Practicalities aside, it also illustrates the emotions of true love that he was feeling towards the girl and the desire for them to marry.

In order to combat the attentions of the girl's father, Gopal hired an advocate to support his case. There was a further complication in that by law in India a boy must be 21 years old to marry, but Gopal was only 20 years old. When the girl's father learned of this, he filed a case against Gopal in the Gujarat High Court. Gopal, his family and the girl went to court, but the girl's father had offered to pay Gopal's advocate Rs5 lakhs to fail to represent them and to ensure that the girl was returned to her family. However, in court the girl spoke out:

The girl stood firm and said 'I am 18 years old and I am a citizen of India, I have my own decision where to stay and where not to stay.' And the judge asked her 'where do you want to live?' because she cannot get married right now. And she said 'I want to stay with this guy,' so the judge allowed her to stay, not to marry, but to stay. So we put a case that we have not got married, but she's just staying here (interview with Gopal, 20, Christian, March 2013).

The girl's determination and willingness to speak her intentions is quite notable considering her young age and gender. In addition, the judge's willingness to accept her argument is significant, as one cannot always rely on institutional impartiality in such matters. Further, it is important to mention here that the only challenge that the girl's father could apply was against the legal age of the boy for marriage as there is no legal case against love marriage or, for that matter, any prescription of legal status to the institution of arranged marriage (Uberoi, 2006).

This narrative could have been scripted direct from the Bollywood screen: a poor village boy and a rich city girl fall in love, but at every turn they must contend with the barriers and schemes of the wealthy and powerful father;

themes common in many Bollywood films (Dalmia 2006). However, this is the reality of class difference and the impact it has on the life of this young couple and their aspirations for love and marriage. The power, wealth and social position of the girl's father enable him to utilise considerable influence. In addition to the betrayal by Gopal's advocate, the village sarpanch was approached by the girl's father and offered Rs1 lakh to convince Gopal's father (who used to work for the sarpanch) to send the girl home. Gopal's father refused. These two men, whom Gopal may have hoped to look to for support, betrayed him and attempted to exploit the situation for their own financial gain. This shows a degree of naivety on the part of Gopal and his family as the advocate is known in the samaj as a crook, but perhaps with their limited means the family had little choice but to trust him. This narrative highlights how certain men in positions of power (economic and/or political) attempt to assert this power over others, reflecting Connell's (2005) concept of hegemonic and subordinate masculinities. There is a sense that with such power, men expect to be able to control other men of lower status and achieve their aspirations at the expense of others and with little challenge to their authority. When certain situations create difficulties or barriers, then these are typically removed through economic or political means of leverage. In this instance, however, the frustration of the girl's father is compounded by Gopal and his family's refusal to conform to his demands and pressures.

In terms of love and marriage, state institutional involvement seems to actively advocate and support the normative practice of arranged marriage and typically supports the parents who feel wronged by the elopement of their child. Thus, attempts are made to control a public and normative discourse of love against the perceived societal threat of alternative forms of love and marriage, despite the constitutional and legal basis for such practices. As Connell (1987, p.130) argues, '[t]he state has a constitutive role in forming and reforming social patterns.' In Gopal's narrative, this form of state intervention is evident in the involvement of the police, one of the most corrupt of the state's apparatus. The father of the girl provided the police with money to search for the couple (who were at that time in hiding). However, unable to find Gopal, they detained his

younger brother. They did not hold him in the police station (as there was no legal justification for his detainment), but in a hired house, effectively kidnapping and holding him hostage in order to coerce Gopal to return the girl. However, Gopal's father went to the police station and informed them that he would file a case for kidnapping against them at which point the police backed down and returned his brother. Gopal explains further:

So the court has already said that she could stay and there was no more case, but what happened? Her parents gave money to the police for harassment and they were doing harassment. Then the girl called her father and said 'anyhow I am not coming to your place so why the hell are you wasting so much money?' and then he said 'I have earned money, I can do what I want with it and by hook or by crook I will bring you back here.' She said 'it is not possible, I am not coming, that's all.' But it's ego, his ego was hurt so that is why he was wasting money. So I was going through a pain because brother was taken by police and I wanted to appear in the police station but I did not go ahead (interview with Gopal, 20, Christian, March 2013).

Perhaps the only unusual part of this story is that the couple, and the boy's family, were able to continue to resist the attempts of the girl's father. This does not mean that it was an easy period for Gopal and the girl. They were experiencing considerable tension, especially with the kidnapping of his brother and the requirement of being constantly vigilant in order to remain safe from her father's search. Throughout this narrative, a particularly significant factor in enabling Gopal and his lover to maintain their relationship was his family's support. If his parents had disagreed with his decision to bring the girl back then there would have been little recourse for the couple other than elopement. This would have likely ended badly (in Gopal's arrest) considering the resources the father of the girl had at his disposal. It was only through the constant support of the family in the court cases, through their refusal to accept bribes, in their dealings with the police, and by maintaining the couple's hiding in secrecy, that this relationship had a chance to succeed into a love marriage. Eventually, Gopal's family threatened to return to the high court to file a case against the

girl's family for harassment. However, despite the multitude of setbacks to his attempts, the father of the girl had not relinquished the control of his daughter.

His next step was to attempt to coax Gopal by offering him a well-paid job within his own company, after which he would arrange the couple's marriage. However, the daughter referred to the dangers of such a situation, as Gopal could be setup and killed in a machine 'accident'. Gopal refused the offer.

The father in law tells me 'ok we accept you as who you are, so you come back here, you get trained in the company and then every day's income is 10 crore.' So my wife said 'now we will not come but once we have a child then we will come,' because then he can't do anything. If she goes now, they will take her and force her not to get married to me, and make sure she gets married to another. If someone has a lot of money then they don't worry about credit because they will arrange a marriage no problem. People will easily get married to the same girl again. So it is because of money difference that he doesn't want us to marry and he would lose credit in his community.

Interpreter: He will be going through that pain that he has so much money and so much respect in the company, in the church, but suddenly she leaves and people will look down at him. So to bring that prestige back he will show off and say I spent money and brought her back. He has money so he thinks he can do everything but these people don't want it (interview with Gopal, 20, Christian, March 2013).

The perception that those from the upper classes will not be concerned about their credit or honour, as Gopal mentions, is contradictory to my findings. However, it is perhaps reflective of how someone with little resources considers the status of the higher class and that money may solve all problems. In contrast, as my interpreter adds, the father of the girl will surely be facing a great deal of problems and tensions in terms of his reputation in his community. Once this situation became public his only hope in salvaging some of his honour was through bringing his daughter back and quickly arranging her marriage to

someone else. It is in this context that money is significant as a resource. However, his money proved insufficient in dissolving the relationship between his daughter and Gopal, who insisted that they would marry by the end of the year, when the latter turns 21 years of age.

It is clear from this narrative that love marriage, while it may occur in certain samaj, is by no means an unproblematic and straightforward process. Even within his samaj, Gopal experienced a number of issues as only three of his friends continued to support him through this extremely difficult period. Other members of the samaj refused to communicate with him and parents were quick to prevent their sons from associating with Gopal in case they too acquired a poor reputation or experienced problems as a result. Therefore, even in the Christian samaj where the practice of love marriage receives a degree of social acceptability (certainly in comparison to other samaj), there is still a negative stigma or perception associated with those who pursue such an option. While he was not ostracised from the samaj, Gopal experienced a degree of negative attention and was a source of much gossip. Once the couple are married, and the attempts from the father of the girl relent, it is likely that a degree of normality will return to the family. That he has brought a girl from a higher status family (and from the city) may possibly enhance Gopal's reputation, at least among his peers. In contrast, the girl's reputation in her own family and samaj will be significantly and permanently discredited.

Gopal's narrative of love marriage is neither an isolated nor an atypical account of the process of love marriage discussed within several other men's accounts. It is also a process that does (albeit less frequently) extend beyond the Christian samaj. Raheem in the Muslim samaj and a young man from the Patel caste both engaged in love marriages and similarly encountered significant difficulties with family and community. While these instances only form a small proportion of marriages within the village, there is a sense among the younger generation that there is an increased awareness of the notion of an alternative to the normative discourse of arranged marriage. Although many young men still adhere to the institution of arranged marriage and its associated rules of caste and kinship,

honour and filial obedience, there are a few who appear to be tentatively testing these boundaries of marriage, albeit still largely tethered to the social rules of caste and kinship.

7.4 Conclusion

For a male in Gujarati society, marriage is a significant rite of passage. For a boy to become a man and to be seen as such by the rest of the samaj, this particular stage of the life course must be attained. If the boy is already in a pre-marital relationship with a partner considered taboo in the sense of the kinship, class and caste rules associated with marriage, marriage will act as a definitive barrier against the continuance of such a relationship. The option of elopement is ever present in the discourse and narratives of such true love relationships, but very rarely is this provocative act performed in practice. The consequences and impact of such elopement on both the individuals and their families, particularly as framed through an understanding of honour within the samaj ensures that such breaches of social expectation and conduct rarely occur. There is, therefore, an end date for these pre-marital relationships, which can cause a significant amount of pain, frustration and tension for the young men. Experiencing such frustration at their plight, some young men defer their sense of agency to a greater power, placing their fate in the hands of God in the hope that a miracle may enable their aspirations to be realised. It is apparent from the narratives of some young men that they would wish to seek an alternative discourse of marriage if it were available to them.

The debate between love and arranged marriage causes considerable division within the discourse and practice of young men in this village context. While the majority still adhere to and advocate the normative discourse of arranged marriage, there are those who have pursued and argued for the benefit of love marriage. Love marriages are not a radical alternative in practice, as they must adhere to social marriage rules on caste and samaj, although not necessarily class. However, they are still viewed with considerable trepidation and negativity for their sanctioning of pre-marital relationships and their disregard

of parental authority. Although in certain samaj, i.e. the Tadpada, such love marriages are not conceivable at present they do appear to be more prevalent in others, especially the Christian samaj. They are, however, not without considerable problems and tensions and are still perceived as a lower form of marriage than the arranged marriage. Perhaps, the compromise of an arranged love marriage provides the ideal solution in combining traditional notions of filial duty and marital conditions to the aspirations of romantic love that a number of young men experience.

Therefore, it may tentatively be seen that such processes are indicative of a slow change in social perceptions and norms even if the overall institution of marriage remains steadfast. This research has not aimed to provide an overview for social change in rural Gujarat; a task that would require a greater temporal array of data. It does, however, attempt to explore the every day narratives of men within this particular village context in which understandings of love and marriage are key themes. For many men it is not possible to marry their desired partner and the person with whom they may share an intimate and true love relationship, as this transgresses the social norms of marriage. However, with the narratives of love (and arranged love) marriage slowly entering the wider public discourse, there is perhaps a slight broadening of possibility for some young men to extend their clandestine pre-marital relationships into socially acceptable and public married life.

8 Conclusion and discussion

8.1 Introduction

It is only through immersion within a particular culture that one can begin, as a researcher, to understand the intricacies and complexities that are interwoven throughout a particular society and which manifest in its norms, transgressions and discourses. This research has aimed to explore the experiences, perspectives and narratives of sexuality and love in pre-marital relationships for men in a Gujarati village. While acknowledging that these narratives are not *de facto* evidence for reality- subject as they potentially are to embellishments and exaggerations- yet they provide a particular insight into certain themes of rural men's lives that are rarely explored in the current literature. There has been a particular focus as to how young men learn about sexuality and love, and how pre-marital relationships are initiated: often through a socially prescribed and shared understanding. At the heart of these pre-marital relationships is the need for secrecy, at least from the wider public audience, whilst relying on the support and solidarity of male peers to help maintain and negotiate these relationships within, and sometimes beyond, the village context. These relationships adopt different forms - typically time pass or true love - and this reflects different discourses and practices, which have particular significance for gender relations. If the pre-marital relationship is discovered, young men may experience certain consequences, dependent on the nature and degree of transgression, but which often reflect negatively upon their credit and a broader sense of honour through the breach of the public moral code. Finally, the significant rite of passage for young men through the institution of marriage was explored in relation to its impact upon these pre-marital relationships and the lives and emotions of young men, and whether, in certain cases, there is an opportunity to extend relationships of true love into a formalised and sanctioned marriage. This concluding chapter, therefore, aims to draw together the main arguments and themes that have threaded through this research, while also looking ahead to future research that may be explored.

8.2 A transgressive private discourse versus a public normative discourse

There is an apparent contradiction between the public taboo of pre-marital relationships on the one hand and the common practice of such relationships on the other. The male narratives of pre-marital relationships suggest that the public or normative discourse is disconnected from reality: yet this does not mean that such a discourse is without influence or can be easily ignored. Instead, it retains its significance through an inter-generational embedding of a moral code within the public cultural sphere, which continues to shape wider social relationships- in politics and business- supported by cultural and religious narratives, and which has power through enforcement, such as fines and notions of honour. Therefore in contravening such a discourse, individuals and groups, are engaged in transgressive behaviour regardless of the commonality of such a practice. This is a central thread that underlies and informs the analysis within this thesis, as to understand this basic relationship between transgressive and normative discourse and practice is to understand the ideologies, meanings and performances of pre-marital relationships and those men that choose not to engage in such practices. It informs strategies of secrecy; of time and space; and the intricacies of the institution of marriage and the potential for social change.

This dichotomy necessarily creates the potential for conflict and tension within the community. In order for a community, or communities, to enforce a moral code upon its members there must be a means through which to sanction transgressive acts that become public knowledge. In this sense, the consequences of actions are an inherent part of the process of pre-marital relationships and the nature of risk-taking that is evident among the men- and women- who participate in them. Although the consequences vary dependent on the degree of transgression and the samaj the transgressors belong to, they inevitably involve an impact on honour, thus drawing an essential Indian institution into the process: that of the family. While those elders who are enforcing such sanctions may have also engaged in this transgressive behaviour when younger, a growing conservatism with age, coupled with a desire to retain

positions of respect and power within the community, may ensure that men (and women) maintain and reinforce these moral codes in the face of transgressive, yet common, behaviour. Finally, sanctions may be overt in the sense of the imposition of fines or the public ostracism of an individual and their family from the samaj. However, there are also more subtle and pervasive mechanisms of sanction: such as the loss of status of a family reflected through a deterioration of social relations; the head of the household's input being excluded from samaj affairs; and the low level gossiping of the family by samaj members. As the themes discussed in this section inform many of the other threads that emerged within this research, they will be discussed in greater depth in the subsequent sections.

8.3 Performance and scripts

In the understanding of this dichotomy between a transgressive and normative discourse of pre-marital relationships, the notion of performance can be seen to be particularly useful. However, there is no singular performance but multiple ones and, as with many performances, there is typically an audience which impacts upon its nature. Therefore, as Goffman (1959) argues, performance becomes about the act of self-presentation and so in front of the public audience, or that of family, it is important that individuals give the impression that they are conforming to a normative discourse. However, away from the public gaze, individuals are able to perform these pre-marital relationships and to provide a different presentation of self in front of peers, particularly in terms of sexuality and masculinity. One must be careful, however, as Abu-Lughod (1986) argues, not to impose the same motives on all members of society, as there are some young men who abstain from these pre-marital relationships. While the audience may have a physical presence, there may also be a 'virtual' audience in the sense that performances are enacted with the explicit intention of avoiding a certain audience (i.e. family and elders) with the knowledge that the witnessing of such transgressive acts would bring about significant consequences for the couple. Context therefore dictates performance.

Further, performance is embedded within the process of initiating such relationships through eye contact and a smile, by the use of certain props or gifts, and by the discursive, and important, proposal. However, for these verbal and non-verbal markers to hold any significance for the individuals, a shared cultural knowledge must exist. While there may be a frequent confusion and misreading of signs, especially among adolescent youths, this only serves to contribute to the development of individual's understandings of sexuality and relationships with the opposite gender, inevitably supported through peer affirmation and discussion. Societal gender roles are learnt from a young age and are reinforced by family and other members of the community - as well as through broader sources, such as the media and education, and these become established in the performance of relationships as well. Thus, it is boys that will typically give gifts to the girl with whom they wish to initiate a relationship, not vice versa. This is perhaps indicative of broader gender relations whereby the male is seen as the provider for the household, the main source of income and luxury items.

Such an understanding can also be extended into different notions of sexuality and masculinity often associated with pre-marital relationships, although they adopt divergent meanings dependent on the form of the relationship.

Patriarchal notions of sexual conquest and control over women and their bodies, and subsequent boasting in front of peers, is enacted through the time pass relationship, concerned as it is with brief sexual encounters, typically with multiple partners. Time pass reflects male chauvinistic and patriarchal characteristics that often (stereo-) typify gender relations in India: women are seen as conquests (someone to be 'trapped') and objectified as 'machines' or 'holes' for male pleasure. This is in strong contrast to the idealisation of the other in true love relationships. In both forms of relationship, sex is no longer seen as solely a means of biological reproduction. In time pass, sex is a game, a conquest, an affirmation of a certain notion of sexuality for a male peer audience; in true love relationships, sex (and the female body) become sacred and idealised. In true love relationships, self-control of sexual desires and devotion to their female partner are the common aspects of such performances.

That is not to say that reproduction is no longer of importance, as family and kin retains a strong hold on Indian society - but that at this stage of a man's life, sex and love hold different connotations. There appears to be then, in India, a cleavage as a result of the disassociation between the sexual and reproduction, which may cause friction as it breaks from cultural norms and expectations. Common to both forms of pre-marital relationship, however, is the notion of risk-taking and how this may reflect normative masculine traits within society. Whilst, at times, this risk-taking nature appears to push the boundaries to an extent where the man appears to almost invite discovery, often such behaviour is carefully moderated through strategies of secrecy.

8.4 Secrecy

Closely related to the notion of multiple performances in front of different audiences is the need for secrecy for those couples involved in pre-marital relationships. With the discovery of such relationships producing strong reactions and consequences within their samaj, secrecy becomes a defining feature and therefore these relationships assume the significance of marking which men are successful performers of secrecy and which are not. A number of strategies are employed by men in order to maintain the clandestine nature of their pre-marital relationships, including nocturnal rendezvous; carefully selected and covert meeting places; or taking advantage of opportunities related to their personal circumstances such as attending college. Clearly, space and time are important elements within this strategizing. Secrecy, in the context of this research, does not relate only to pre-marital relationships but also includes other expressions of sexuality and masculinity, particularly the downloading and viewing of photos and blue movies. It is no surprise that boys and youths wish to conceal such material from the gaze of family members and so they will often go to significant lengths to ensure that these files are carefully hidden within obscure and anonymous folders upon their mobile phones, only opening them when certain that no elders are nearby.

Secrecy is rarely absolute, but is instead a relative concept. Therefore, in this sense, it should be framed as 'secrecy from whom?' It is imperative that men maintain the secrecy of their relationships from elders, community members and family - although in the case of the latter this is not always so straightforward as detection does not necessarily lead to public sanction. This is because for the family to make such discoveries public, they risk incurring negative perceptions and loss of honour in the eyes of the rest of the community for their failure, particularly for the father, in preventing such behaviour in their child. Ultimately, then, it serves their best interest to maintain secrecy, while simultaneously demanding an end to the relationship. Yet, in other instances, indignation and outrage at the discovery of such a relationship may lead to a public outcry from the family and a demand for remuneration from the family of their child's partner. There is therefore neither a straightforward nor predictable pattern to such decision-making, although if it is possible to ensure such scandal remains outside of the public gaze, the research suggests that this is the course the majority of families would adopt. However, there are also those who are actively co-opted into the secret and who will often be relied upon to provide advice, support and protection to ensure that this secret is maintained.

8.5 Peer pressure and support

The role and influence of peers is crucial in understanding the development and performance of sexualities and pre-marital relationships for men in this Gujarati village, and was a thread that recurred through many of the themes and narratives in this research. Peer groups play a significant role in the learning and forming of male sexualities. Through group behaviours, such as eve teasing, watching blue movies or time pass and 'hanging out', peer groups are able to exert a significant pressure and influence on one another in the process of making sense of sexual discourses and practices. Peers also apply pressure for individuals to conform to certain notions and practices of hetero-normativity, by regulating the boundaries and stigmatizing those who fail to meet gender and sexuality norms (Jackson and Scott 2010). This influence is not only limited to the younger formative ages of boys, but also extends into adulthood where

certain traits of masculinity and sexuality are favoured and encouraged, often accompanied by taunts and challenges that further police these boundaries. As a result, peers help shape and maintain the notion of a 'successful' or dominant male identity, which among many men may be validated through an aggressive sexuality, a physicality and toughness, and risk-taking behaviour, which typically reflects patriarchal structures of society. That is not to say that this is the only expression of masculinity and sexuality for men within the village as alternative forms were clearly represented through those narratives of true love, where men expressed their deep and strong emotions towards their partner, based on intimacy, mutual respect and trust. While this research has endeavoured to draw out the stark contrasts, both discursively and in practice, between these different expressions of sexuality and masculinity and specifically through the nature of pre-marital relationships, there is still much to explore. That there exist multiple masculinities within and across society, and that these are expressed by a single individual, is widely agreed upon. However, there is still the need for further research to explore the actualities of how this threads through, and is expressed within, the daily lives of men in different cultures.

The influence of peers extends beyond the affirmation and policing of identities into the practical support of those initiating and performing pre-marital relationships. Such support typically involves acting as a facilitator or mediator between a prospective couple in the early stages of the attempted process of initiation of a relationship; or through providing support, advice and cajolment to friends on the subject of a girl. In some circumstances, peers play an active role in maintaining the secrecy of a relationship by keeping watch during a clandestine meeting of the couple, defending a friend accused of transgressing the public discourse or even supporting a friend during the stressful and difficult process of love marriage. At times, male peer bonds appear to assume greater significance than the relationship itself, especially during this pre-marital liminal period of relative freedom where male solidarity is a particular characteristic (Osella and Osella 1998). Furthermore, the all-male audience of friendship groups creates a certain culture, not only of support and affirmation

of male identity, but also a sense of competition, and hierarchical masculinity based on status and performance and often established through the boastful narratives of pre-marital relationships. Yet peer support is not always unequivocal - especially if the discovery of an individual's transgressions by the wider community results in a scandal. In these situations, whilst some friends do remain loyal, others bow under the pressure of family to detach and distance themselves from the individual so as not to be tarred with the same negative brush. In this regard, notions of honour and credit are at the heart of the issue.

8.6 Honour and credit

Honour is an essential concept governing the daily discourse and practice of men's lives within the village. It relates to an individual and their family's status and position within a samaj and their ability to contribute to community decisions and organisation as well as playing a role in marital arrangements. Notions of parental honour are maintained and secured through the sense that their children are eternally striving to repay the debt they owe their parents for having raised them: a debt that can never be fully repaid. This notion is at the heart of the respect and obedience that children are expected to show their parents and that they should behave in a manner that would not bring shame and dishonour to the family's name. The main action that would cause such dishonour is the discovery of a pre-marital relationship, especially if this is either inter-caste or intra-samaj. Therefore, young men will typically cite the family's honour as the key reason for not engaging in pre-marital relationships and associate this with a sense of self-control, respect and obedience to their parents. For those that transgress the normative taboo on pre-marital relationships, honour is still a significant consideration and perhaps the main reason for maintaining the secrecy of such relationships. Family honour is also the main reason given by a couple for not eloping, even when the alternative is the pain and tension that results from the couple ending their relationship. For those couples in true love relationships, these narratives are often framed in such a way as to approximate their relationship to that of the process and prelude to arranged marriages, in the sense that they clearly state their respect

for one another and their sexual abstinence, which accordingly has, as its source, this cultural notion of honour.

Honour in Indian society is also rooted in the Hindu notion of kanyadana- the father's gift of his virgin daughter in marriage. Any pre-marital relationship thus breaks this tradition and prestige (regardless of whether the discovered couple have actually had sex) and directly impacts on the father's reputation, his inability to control his daughter's behaviour and ultimately his failure as the head of his household and as a man. While kanyadana refers to the daughter (and, in this instance, perhaps assumes the greater significance), a son's transgression can also result in dishonour and shame upon the family's name. A loss of honour for a family can be inter-generational in nature, permanently impacting upon the status and position of a family within the samaj.

Reputation, or credit, is closely related to normative codes of honour through public discourse and sanctions in that the breach of such rules will impact on an individual's reputation, even to the extent that they may find it difficult to marry. However, there are other presentations of reputation, as well as other factors contributing to an individual's reputation. So, while there is a public presentation of a 'good' credit, there are also multiple notions of reputation that are 'concealed' from the public space and which may have very different connotations: for example the presentation of sexual conquest to one's peers as a means to affirm one's sexuality and masculinity. Credit extends beyond behaviours associated with pre-marital relationships to encompass one's identity (in terms of caste, class, religion); occupation, income and material assets; involvement in the samaj; and attitude and behaviour towards others: all of which contribute to the overall impression other members of the samaj have of a particular individual or group of individuals. Having 'poor credit' in the samaj often results in poor relations with other members who will often exclude them from important decisions or events, or purposively ignore them when passing in the street. Furthermore, an individual's poor credit can have serious implications for their future aspirations, particularly in arranging a marriage, as neighbours are likely to inform the families of prospective brides about the

man's reputation and this will usually result in the termination of any potential arrangements.

There appears, therefore, to be a paradox in that men have a clear knowledge and understanding of the consequences for discovery of pre-marital relationships, yet many continue to engage in such transgressive performances. Furthermore, whilst other studies have focused solely on the consequences for women, this research has attempted to draw attention to the real, and often significant, consequences experienced by men as a result of the discovery of pre-marital relationships.

8.7 Samaj and caste: divergence and convergence

The caste system is a pervasive and hierarchical structure that has a significant influence on the daily lives of people throughout the village. This research has focused on three separate castes, or samaj; and whilst it has not attempted to develop an explicitly comparative study, there has been, through the process of hearing male narratives and observing behaviour from these different groups, a growing understanding as to the similarities and differences exhibited across these samaj. In relation to developing and learning sexuality, there were some differences expressed in the narratives by Muslim men compared to those of the Tadpada and Christian samaj. For instance, Muslim men discussed, in some detail, the role a local prostitute played in the development of their early sexual experiences - although it is likely that this is a reflection of this particular group's context rather than indicative of a broader trend (especially as young Muslim men from outside this particular social group did not mention similar experiences). Also, Muslim men did not explicitly refer to the act of eve teasing in their narratives, whereas it was common within those of the other samaj. This may be reflective of a different approach to women in this community, possibly related to religious practices and how women should be viewed in public. However, this is not necessarily indicative of a particular trend, but perhaps of a discursive framing of narratives in which Muslim men were not comfortable using such a term, while still actively participating in such

activities. Further research focusing specifically on such processes and behaviours may provide greater insight.

Interestingly, in relation to pre-marital relationships, there are consistent themes that arose across male narratives from all three samaj. The narratives, language, perspectives and performances of pre-marital relationships described by the men articulated a shared understanding of notions of true love and time pass. As the taboo of pre-marital relationships exists throughout society and forms a dominant public discourse, then it is perhaps unsurprising that men also adopt similar transgressive discourses and performances. Men discussed, often in great detail, the need to be successful in maintaining the secrecy of the relationship in order to prevent discovery and the potential consequences. While certain elements of these consequences may vary between samaj, most notably the fines imposed on transgressors in the Tadpada community, there was an unequivocally negative response within all three samaj to the discovery of pre-marital relationships. The most significant impact of such a discovery is the effect it has on an individual's credit and their family's honour within the samaj. Finally, this research found that there was evidence in male narratives throughout the samaj of pain, tension and frustration at the failure of their true love relationships in light of social taboos and the prescription of suitable marital partners in the arranged marriage process; albeit this pain did not overcome the fear of dishonour and ostracism that would occur if they were to elope.

8.8 The importance of time

Throughout this research the concept of time has been a recurrent theme and is a notion that is common both in the narratives of men within the village and indeed throughout their daily lives in a variety of manifestations. The temporal dimension is particularly distinctive in the framing of pre-marital relationships as either true love or time pass. In the latter, the notion is even explicit within the term itself and is the same terminology used to describe mundane male activity that occupies the hours when neither working nor studying.

Relationships of a purely sexual nature are equated to that of a hobby, something to do to 'pass the time', and which have little emotional attachment or intimacy associated with them. Therefore, they are measured as temporary or momentary, of a short time span, in comparison to those of true love where emotions and intimate connections are considered eternal. Sometimes, these time pass relationships may last over longer periods, even years, yet they remain temporally situated in the present and short term, never envisaging a future love or life with their partner, thus distinguishing it from that of true love. Furthermore, true love should develop slowly, over a long period based initially on mutual friendship and in a similar manner to how love within arranged marriages develops. Instantaneous 'love at first sight' is looked down upon as a low form of physical attraction and lust that is often associated with an immaturity and a desire for time pass relationships, rather than being synonymous with the beginnings of a true love relationship. This is not to say that men do not experience initial feelings of physical attraction towards a girl; only that they rarely articulate such desires in their narratives of true love.

The narratives of men repeatedly referred to the concept of time when discussing the performances of pre-marital relationships. Individuals spend a considerable amount of time strategizing, thinking, and discussing- alone or with peers- the possibilities and opportunities for approaching a girl, and the maintenance of such a relationship once established. Furthermore, activities such as eve teasing also require a significant amount of an individual's time and form a strategy whereby being in the right place at the right time will afford an opportunity to observe the desired girl. Such thoughts appear to occupy men's minds to a considerable extent, and as was shown through the case of unrequited love or through failed aspirations of prolonging these relationships in the face of social taboos, this can cause considerable tension and pain for the men, which may threaten to consume their daily lives. In addition to strategizing and thinking about such relationships, considerable time is spent waiting for the girl and then, typically, only a relatively small amount of time is actually spent with the girl. Such periods of time acquire added weight through the attribution of anxiety, fear and excitement that accompanies this risky and

secretive behaviour. Further, time can be measured as an expiration date on the relationship in the context of the arrangement of marriage to a more socially acceptable partner. This then becomes about understanding the future aspirations of certain young men in a present that does not permit such agency based on a past that has constructed societal barriers.

Finally, there is the notion of time as a longer conduit of socio-cultural meaning. Thus, shared and divergent practices and discourses can be understood through an inter-generational passage of time, whereby certain rules or rituals become embedded within a particular society, for instance, whilst simultaneously new influences from global media may become juxtaposed and shift certain behaviours or attitudes. Alongside a society's historical lifespan, there are the life stages through which an individual inevitably passes. These stages may belong to a public normative discourse, such as the significance applied to marriage and the formalisation of becoming a man that is imbued in such an event. However, alternative rites of passage also exist as can be understood through the affirmation of a certain masculinity following the first sexual experience. The pre-marital liminal period is typically marked by an increased degree of relative freedom among male youth in which they have an opportunity to pursue pre-marital relationships and assume the expected role and characteristics of a man within the household and the samaj. Moreover, as men age, their perspective and outlook on life also changes- often in the form of a growing conservatism- so that desires and aspirations that held significance as a youth are likely to shift and transform to reflect a different emphasis in middle age.

8.9 The significance of space

Space is an essential element for the strategies and performances of pre-marital relationships. For the majority of men, the 'private' space of the household affords the least opportunity for privacy as the confined and shared area usually has at least one other family member present at all times. Instead, men seek to co-opt the public space to suit their need for secrecy when meeting with their

partner. Such co-option often works in tandem with the temporal dimension to ensure that a space that is usually frequented during the day by other villagers is deserted at night - such as the fields surrounding the village. Such spaces become transformed in the imaginaries of the actor in that they assume a different significance and opportunity for transgressive behaviour than their usual, more mundane, function. While the majority of men utilise such strategies within the public space, a smaller number of risk-taking men enter - or invade - the private space of a household in order to engage in their relationship with a woman. The woman is often married, which perhaps explains the need for men to enter the household as there is less opportunity for her to leave the house for prolonged periods of time, especially if she is caring for young children. In this context, it seems that men are gaining extra credit (at least among their peers) for the dangerous nature of such relationships and possibly also for the sense of 'stealing' another man's possession through the act of sexual conquest, particularly as that is performed inside the man's domain.

While the majority of the relationships are located within or around the man's village (or a nearby village), there are also greater opportunities for some men who are able to leave the closely scrutinised village space and travel elsewhere either for work or for college. A college campus in an urban area provides a particular series of opportunities: not only in the increased mixing of sexes that occurs on such a campus and within classrooms without the strict surveillance of a village teacher, but also in the general atmosphere and attitudes prevalent in such spaces. Thus, cities reflect a more open, or perhaps more diluted (in the sense that communities are often more fractured and disconnected towards other inhabitants in cities), perspective towards such relationships and the anonymity of such spaces enables these young couples to meet relatively freely and talk without the fear of wider social recriminations.

8.10 Tradition and modernity: a space for change?

Tradition is not meant, here, to be synonymous with a negative perception of 'old ways' easily juxtaposed to an enlightened and therefore necessarily

'modern' alternative. Instead, it refers to the historical imperative and production (and reproduction) of certain narratives and myths, rituals and rules, perspectives and social conditions within which communities and individuals are expected to abide and live. While these may differ considerably between samaj, it has already been discussed how there are also fundamental similarities, especially in regard to pre-marital relationships and the institution of marriage. Such inter-generational discourses influence and shape the everyday lives of people through the construction of a patriarchal society supported by narratives of women's sexuality as dangerous and in need of control while simultaneously esteeming motherhood; of creating rituals, rules and superstitions that support and maintain the power of religious institutions and their holy men; the formation of the hierarchical nature of Indian society with the imposition of caste; a culture of hospitality and generosity towards guests; the embedding of family values and a sense of community within and across generations; and many more besides. This inevitably creates the context within which the proceeding discussion of themes and threads should be understood, while providing the means through which to explore and analyse the new layers of meaning and transformation that are impacting upon Indian society.

Societies and the individuals within them are not static and this is particularly so with the increasing access to modernity and its products through processes of globalisation and the influx in global media, migration, communication and materialism following India's liberalisation in the early 1990s. Whilst stressing the fact that this research is not explicitly focused on such notions of social change, its potential for impact on the discourses and practices of sexuality and love for men should not be ignored. A number of academics (Giddens, 1992; Hatfield & Rapson, 1996; Wardlow & Hirsch, 2006) have argued that the ideology of love is homogenising in an increasingly globalised and interconnected world; I would contest that any such processes must be viewed through a localised lens that also takes into account the historical discourses (Appadurai 1996) that constitute these social constructions of love and sexuality. Increased access to television and films may result in a greater

influence of global fashions and ideologies, yet some of the most popular television serials shown across India are based on traditional narratives and values from religious epics, such as the Ramayana. Therefore, presenting modernity and tradition as contradictory and opposing forces is not analytically useful for understanding the socio-cultural context of contemporary Gujarat, or more broadly, that of India.

There are signs that there is a slow increase in the phenomenon of love marriage within the village community. Although such marriages are still relatively few in number and are typically (although not wholly) confined to the more liberal Christian samaj, there is a sense that such relationships may be increasing. The evidence for this is fairly circumstantial, based on the number of young men instigating love marriages in contrast to there being little reference to such practices among the older generations. Further, there is a sense through how the narratives of these marriages are constructed and how others within the community perceive them, which implies that they have, in recent decades, become a feature of social life. However, love marriages are still perceived as a lower form of marriage than those that are parentally arranged (being seen as they are as an extension and sanctioning of a socially taboo pre-marital relationship outside of parental control), and the latter are still the dominant means of marriage for young men both in terms of personal choice and social expectation. Those young men in true love relationships typically stop short of defying traditional discourses and practices regarding love and marriage. While most may discuss with their lovers the possibility of elopement, very few actually carry out such an act citing fear of the severe consequences, not only for themselves but also for their families. Even in the traditional processes of arranged marriage, individuals are being given a greater input as to their choice of partner, while some enterprising individuals are able to construct arranged love marriages in order to achieve their aspirations of love. Although love marriages are an indication of the loosening of certain social taboos, they still must conform to societal expectations regarding marriage alliances, at least in terms of caste and samaj identity. Class identity appears to be more flexible in this regard, although it tends to result in considerable tension and problems if

large gaps in economic status exist between the two individuals. Whether such practices of choice, however constrained, will continue to expand and extend across society is a question for future research. However, there appears to be a glimmer of expectation for those men who aspire to have their true love relationships become socially sanctioned and recognised marriages.

8.11 Conclusion and further research

This research has focused on marginalised groups of men in order to address a gap within the literature through exploring how masculinity, love and sexuality are negotiated at the lower levels of society and in rural contexts. This was also motivated through a personal and academic interest in researching subordinate groups reflected through the initial topic and focus on structural violence, discrimination and identity amongst these groups. However, during the fieldwork process it soon became apparent that the young men who were the focus of this research were eager to discuss other aspects of their lives, which appeared to have significant bearing upon notions and performances of masculinities, and so the research shifted accordingly to explore these new themes.

Masculinity- or more accurately, masculinities- is at the heart of this thesis. The aim has been to explore how rural, young men relate to and perceive notions of sexuality and love in a cultural context where pre-marital relationships are publicly considered taboo. This research contributes to several important fields of study (both within and outside of the Indian context). First, men's negotiation of a front stage-back stage performance of masculinity and sexuality constructs multiple representations of how a man should act. These differ according to context and audience and while the public prohibitive norms may at first appear to be the dominant trends, it often appeared that performances in front of male peers had a greater influence on young men's development and attitudes. While this contributes to a discussion of masculinity, male solidarity and reaffirmation of identity in the context of south Asia, it also speaks loudly to the larger discussion on the study of masculinity. Certain masculine traits within the

narratives presented in this research are identifiable across the broader field of study, for example, men's risk adverse behaviour as seen through the initiation and performance of pre-marital relationships in secret. However, this research also explores the consequences if such a relationship is discovered and becomes public. While much of the current research emphasises the negative consequences for women, it often tends to downplay the effect this has on men. This thesis attempts to address this imbalance by drawing attention to the actual and sometimes quite severe consequences that discovery of pre-marital relationships may have for young men, their future aspirations and their family.

Second, and closely linked to this first point, is the particular focus that this research has had on pre-marital relationships and young men's experiences and attitudes towards love and sex. This contributes to a burgeoning field of research discussing such practices and extending into modern influences and potential shifts in marital practices (particularly the rise of the love marriage), which some academics consider to be a global shift in ideology (although this research emphasises the importance of localised factors and context). However, it also contributes to the debate on gender relations in India, especially in light of the recent focus on sexual violence. To begin to understand the underlying social and behavioural patterns for such violence, it is important to explore how men (and especially young men) perceive and relate to women in a romantic and/or sexual manner. From this research, there are clear differences between those men who idealise their partners in romantic relationships and those who see women as little more than sexual objects to be 'used and thrown'. This is a theme that requires further exploration in order to better understand this serious issue that is often prevalent throughout Indian society.

Finally, the focus on lower status samaj has showed that some of the most rigid restrictions in terms of love, sexuality and marriage were found amongst the Tadpada samaj, which is contrary to that of other research conducted in India: for example, in the relative sexual freedom and common practice of love marriages that exists amongst Dalit communities in Tamil Nadu (Rao, 2014). Further research would be required to explore in depth the underlying reasons

for these contrasting results. It would also be interesting to explore the themes of this research in relation to the dominant samaj of the Patels within the village, who through their wealth, education levels and travel abroad have often had higher exposure to global cultural influences, whilst simultaneously retaining a strong attachment to 'traditional' Hindu values. Whilst this research has focused almost solely upon the narratives of young men, there are also two broad groups of participants that are missing, that of women and older men. The study of the experiences and perspectives of these groups would certainly provide a more rounded understanding of love and sexuality, whilst also providing some scope for understanding notions of social change related to a temporal dimension but also to that of gender relations within Gujarati society.

The themes discussed throughout this thesis are significant in their contribution to understanding issues relevant to society and development studies. A study of masculinities, love and sexuality help us to understand not only the experiences and perspectives of men and the significant influences on their lives, but also, more broadly, to that of gender relations within a patriarchal society where sexual violence against women is a significant issue. Furthermore, love, sexuality and marriage can become communal battlegrounds for the construction of divisions based on religious or caste identity, such as in the contemporary case of 'love jihad', where attempts to contravene social rules of marital partner choice result in the politicisation of love with potentially tragic consequences for those involved. Whilst this research is unable to produce definitive discussions or findings regarding processes of social change in Gujarat, it does recognise the need to understand tradition and modernity, not as a dichotomy, but as a process of assimilation and juxtaposition, convergence and divergence. Perhaps, it would be useful to add a sixth dimension to Appadurai's (1996) global cultural flows in order to encapsulate a shifting 'sexualscape' that is influenced by both a history of discourses and by cultural flux.

Appendix A

Table of interviewee characteristics

Name	Samaj	Age	Education level	Marital status	Occupation
Bhavesh	Christian	35-39	College	Love marriage	Own business
Girish	Christian	20-24	College	Single	College student
Nirav	Christian	20-24	12 th Standard pass	Single	Graphic designer
Sunil	Christian	25-29	ITI	Arranged marriage	Farmer
Paresh	Christian	25-29	10 th Standard fail	Single	Factory supervisor
Chandu	Christian	25-29	ITI	Single	Factory supervisor
Deven	Christian	20-24	12 th Standard pass	Single	Machine operator
Chitral	Christian	15-19	12 th Standard pass	Single	Unemployed
Akhil	Christian	20-24	College	Single	College student
Madhur	Christian	20-24	College	Single	College student
Jival	Christian	25-29	10 th Standard fail	Single	Machine operator
Navin	Christian	20-24	12 th Standard pass	Single	Public sector electrician
Gopal	Christian	20-24	ITI	Love marriage	Factory labourer
Ajit	Tadpada	25-29	7 th Standard	Arranged marriage	Singer/farm labourer
Bhuvan	Tadpada	30-34	12 th Standard pass	Arranged marriage	Stall owner/farm labourer
Mohan	Tadpada	20-24	College	Engaged	College student
Jawahar	Tadpada	20-24	College failed	Engaged	Unemployed
Chirag	Tadpada	25-29	3 rd Standard	Single	Small business/ loose work
Marut	Tadpada	15-19	12 th Standard pass	Arranged marriage	Petrol pump attendant
Cheran	Tadpada	30-34	7 th Standard	Arranged marriage	Liquor business/ farm

					labourer
Akil	Tadpada	30-34	12 th Standard pass	Arranged marriage	Farm labourer
Jigar	Tadpada	25-29	10 th Standard fail	Arranged marriage	Loose work
Chiman	Tadpada	30-34	5 th Standard	Arranged marriage	Fisherman/ own business
Mahak	Tadpada	25-29	7 th Standard	Arranged marriage	Police security/farm labourer
Jaideep	Tadpada	20-24	10 th Standard pass	Arranged marriage	Machine operator
Sudhir	Tadpada	35-39	12 th Standard pass	Arranged marriage	Shop owner
Abdul	Muslim	20-24	10 th Standard	Arranged marriage	Labourer/ decorator
Raheem	Muslim	25-29	5 th Standard	Love marriage	Decorator
Ishrat	Muslim	15-19	12 th Standard (current)	Single	Student
Mahmo od	Muslim	40-44	9 th Standard	Widower	Farmer/ shop owner
Gohar	Muslim	20-24	7 th Standard	Arranged marriage	Shop worker
Dilshad	Muslim	15-19	7 th Standard	Arranged marriage	Labourer
Maruf	Muslim	20-24	7 th Standard	Single	Factory labourer
Hadis	Muslim	20-24	4 th Standard	Single	Labourer/ gambler
Sabiq	Muslim	20-24	5 th Standard	Arranged marriage	Mechanic
Rafik	Muslim	15-19	12 th Standard (current)	Single	Student

Glossary

Advocate - lawyer

Amul Dairy Cooperative – Large dairy cooperative across Gujarat

Arranged love marriage – a pre-marital relationship that acquires arranged marriage status

Arranged marriage – parentally arranged marital process

Ashraf/ non-Ashraf – categories for sub-groups in Muslim community

Bajri – millet crop

Band-baja – band that commonly plays at weddings, festivals and other special events

Bhagidari – share cropping arrangement

Bhai-behen – brother-sister

Bhakti – religious devotion

Bhajan mandala – religious gathering for singing

BJP – Bharatiya Janata Party, a right wing Hindu political party

Brahmacharya – celibate student phase of Hindu life stages

Brahmin – high caste Hindu group

Bridewealth – money paid to bride's family in the process of arranging marriage

Chapatti – flat bread

Crore – ten million

Dalit – low caste Hindu group

Darbar – middle to upper caste Hindu group

Dhedh – derogatory term meaning 'dragger' in reference to those who remove animal carcasses

Diwali – Hindu festival of lights

Dowry - money paid to groom's family in the process of arranging marriage

Dwija – twice born

Eve teasing – male act of watching girls or women

Filmi – cinema style

Garba – form of dance often practiced during weddings and festivals

Grahastha – householder phase of Hindu life stages

Hammering – physical beating

ITI – Industrial Training Institute

Izzat - honour

Jati – sub-caste

Kanyadana – gift of the virgin

Kha du? – Have you eaten? A common saying in Gujarat, often used as a greeting

Kshatriya Sabha – political alliance in Gujarat between a high and low caste group

Lakh – 100,000

Lakshman Rekha - line drawn around Sita by Lakshman to protect her from danger

Lāyak - proper

Love jihad – BJP campaign accusing Muslim men of seducing and converting Hindu girls through marriage

Love marriage – marriage arranged by individuals in a true love relationship

Nav Ratre – Hindu nine nights festival

Panch – refers to the caste panchayat of the Tadpada caste

Panchas – members of panchayat

Panchayat – local self-government system

Patel – high status Hindu caste

Raksha Bandhan – Hindu festival celebrating brotherhood and love

Ramayana – Sanskrit epic poem

Rānī- Queen

Paan masala – chewing tobacco

Pathan – sub-group of the Ashrafs

Prem - love

Samaj – term used to denote one's community combining caste, religion and spatial location

Sannyasa – renouncer phase of Hindu life stages

Sārā - good

Sarpanch – elected head of panchayat

Sayyad – sub-group of the Ashrafs

Scheduled Castes – official designation for historically disadvantaged castes

Shak - vegetables

Shayri – love poems

Sita – central female character of the Ramayana

Tadpada – low caste Hindu group

Tagiye - Muslim festival to commemorate the prophet Hussein

Time pass – leisure activity; form of pre-marital relationship

TISS –Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai

Thakor – middle to low caste Hindu group

True love – form of pre-marital relationship

Vanaprastha – forest-dweller phase of Hindu life stages

Varna – hierarchical caste system

Wagri – derogatory term used against the Tadpada caste

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