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PUTTING ONE'S CAREER ON HOLD: an Investigation in the Non-Economic Activities of Spouses of Indian Knowledge Workers in the Netherlands

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Introduction

Over the past 10 years, the Netherlands has become increasingly interested in mounting its brain power within its borders. Instead of maximising stocks of gold and silver, the country now invites highly skilled workers and immigration policies have moved in that direction. Dutch corporations suffered from a shortage of high-skilled workers in the Netherlands because the country does not seem to produce enough computer engineers, analysts, programmers and IT specialists to meet the needs of the high-tech labor markets. In order to solve this problem of this (private-) sector, they allow Dutch businesses to hire high-tech workers from other countries by granting particular visas that allow individuals from other (non-EU) countries to temporary work in these 'high-skilled occupations'. Such 'knowledge worker visas which are tied to a specific employer allow for a few years employment of a foreign national and also the possibility of his/her permanent residency and naturalization. What is more, these knowledge workers are also allowed to bring their spouses and children who are offered so-called dependent visas.

High-skilled migrants (men and women alike) from India are particularly welcomed with the hope that they contribute to national development goals by increasing Dutch productivity through enhancing the national pool of skilled people. Indian corporations also have their branches in the Netherlands and bring their own staff to the Netherlands under the same visa regime. Though most Indian migrants in the Netherlands are male and single, some highly skilled single females too have availed of this opportunity to spend a few years in the Netherlands working in the IT sector or related services (in banks for instance). What is more, family migration has also taken place. Wives of high-skilled male Indian nationals more than their husbands arrive as 'dependents' and not as 'workers' in their own rights, alternatively defined by researchers as 'ex-pat wives', 'trailing spouses', 'linked movers' or 'family relocation managers'. Most previous research has focussed on high-skilled Indian men working in the Netherlands and more general existing literature on non-'working' Indian female migrants in other host-countries describe such women as either passive subjects of family reunification or as being involved in reproduction of ethnic boundaries and gender roles. Even though these 'female migration strategies' could be seen as a kind 'back-linking' and provide 'emotional Indian citizenship' to these women that enables them to create a niche for themselves within the community itself, these female non-economic strategies in the host countries are never seen as possible brain gains for the Indian nation (Cf. Rayaprol 1997).

In general existing research recognizes that gender (as well as class and ethnicity) do play roles in differentiation of migration processes. After evaluation of relatively recent migration studies, Anu Kõu and Ajay Bailey (2014: 114) summarized that the sectors that international migrant women typically occupy, are highly regulated by the state (Raghuram 2004; Iredale 2005) and that as a result female migrants particularly are found to encounter post-migration deskilling challenges (Kofman 2012). Furthermore, this 'trailing wife effect' persists irrespective of the skill level of the female partner (Ackers 2004). Kõu and Bailey (2014: 114) compared these women with non-migrant professionals and concluded like Becker and Moen (1999) that 'wives by and large scale back on their career, particularly when starting parenting'. Moreover Willis and Yeoh (2000) added that 'as migration decisions are often made within a household, positive migration outcomes – particularly for female partners – rely on both professional career and family life' (Kõu and Bailey (2014: 114). Yet Gonzales Ramos and Verges Bosch (2013) added that we also should include the prevailing social values and supportive institutions in our approach to female migration. Therefore Kõu and Bailey (2014: 114) recommend that 'different capitals, social and professional networks and institutional regimes form the context in which migration

processes are carried out to co-create different cultures of migration'. In other words if one genuinely wants to understand the migratory aspirations, experiences and outcomes of (highly-) skilled non-working Indian married women in the Netherlands one does not only have to go back to consider their pre-migratory strategies but also analyze pre- and post migratory settings 'beyond the work place' (Cf. Kofman and Raghuram 2005: 149-154).

This paper's focus is on shifting gender regimes within Indian relatively affluent families in India and in The Netherlands, i.e on changes in culturally and normative familial and work roles and transformations of familial relations. Against the background of these cultural settings the paper analyzes and evaluates the non-economic activities of Indian educated urban middle class women in the Netherlands. It argues that though the movement of these women is associational (through their marriage to Indian knowledge workers in the Netherlands), these women nevertheless migrated voluntarily with their own set of aspirations and expectations. As will be illustrated shortly, in the migration culture considered in this paper, there is the simultaneous experience of dependence and autonomy, of constrain as well as unwinding both the result of regulatory regimes and practices , and the limits and opportunities these provide to these Indian married ex pat non working women (and often mothers) in the Netherlands. I further argue that among all the non-economic activities acted upon by these Indian ex-pat women and considered in this paper, 'back-linking' to relations and family ties (mostly to parents and in-laws in India) albeit in different ways is of great consequence for a successful balancing of these possibly contradictory migration experiences among these women. These female strategies provide 'emotional citizenship' (i.e. a sense of belonging to India) to these women that plays possible roles in decisions of Indian families to stay put in the Netherlands, return to urban India or move on to other (European) countries. Besides, this back-linking and other non-economic activities, greatly favour the development of a more secure, knowledgeable, skilled, autonomous and independent woman and accompanying female identities than these expatriate Indian spouses possessed before they moved to urbanized Netherlands.

This paper is part of a two-year-long research project (2013-2014) on 'Migration, Development, and Citizenship: notions of belonging and civic engagement among Indian (knowledge-) migrants in the Netherlands and return migrants in India' financed by NWO, the Netherlands. This wider project studies how skilled Indian migrants contribute to development through socio-cultural remittances, how they construe trans-/national) identity and notions of belonging, and how these processes are envisioned/influenced by government policies in these countries. Ellen Bal is the project's main applicant and the author of this paper (Kathinka Sinha-Kerkhoff) is its co-applicant with Kate Kirk as main researcher in the Netherlands and Ratnakar Tripathy as main researcher in India. Other researchers involved in this project are Sarah van het Goor – Janssen and Sara de Prie. The idea for this paper developed from the draft paper written by Ratnakar Tripathy on return migration of knowledge migrants. Tripathy who presents his paper in this panel is mainly concerned with the process of return to India of in particular male highly qualified professionals and argues that this process already starts in the host-country. About the spouses of these transient migrants Tripathy says that though it is not uncommon for them to work in the host-country,

'once a child is born, often the wife's career is forever put on hold'. Tripathy does not further elaborate on this statement as is the purpose of this paper.

After reading this statement I reflected on my own life. I am a married middle-class woman with one child and migrated away from the Netherlands to India about twenty-five years ago. Though I did not 'put my career on a hold' and was always employed in India, I do feel my migration aspirations had less to do with labour market push or pulls but were more related to non-labour market factors. Second, evaluating after all these years the 'brain gain' that I definitely acquire (d) because of my movement to India this is, I feel, less the outcome of my academic job or my professional career and networks in India but more the result of my 'non-economic activities' in this country. The result of this reflection is the approach adopted in this paper.

For empirical data from the Netherlands, I heavily relied on fieldwork carried out by Sara de Prie who did anthropological research for three months among 30 Indian expat women in especially Amsterdam and Amstelveen (de Prie 2014) and on field work among 7 Indian ex-pat married couples in the Netherlands by Sarah van het Goor – Janssen, carried out in 2013 and 2014. Transcriptions were done by Masoom Reza in Ranchi where I did the analysis reflected in this paper. Apart from my own research on Indian women in India and previous research carried out along with Ellen Bal, I also tremendously benefitted from the pioneering work on Indian migration to the Netherlands carried out by Ellen Bal in 2012 (CARIM-India RR2012/07). Furthermore I was extremely encouraged in my choice of approach as well as presentation of outcomes because of somewhat similar research by Kõu and Bailey (2014) with some equal outcomes though differently interpreted, as detailed in this paper.[1]

Urban-Urban Spatial Movements in India

Present-day urban middle class households in India are the result of rural-urban national migration flows that often started generations ago. As a result the majority of kin of such middle-class household also reside in the same or similar urbanized environment. Among the highly skilled workers employment possibilities elsewhere had often 'pulled' these migrants out of small towns and villages into cities and presently among them, the generation aged between around 18 and 38 was either born in the same city or migrated from one urban to another urban environment for purpose of study and/or employment for themselves or for their parents, children or partners. This generation is generally in search of better employment and enhanced education and 'self realization' and ready to change service even

[1] These authors drew their conclusions from 47 semi-structured biographic interviews carried out between June 2009 and August 2011. They were highly skilled Indian (and their dependants) aged 25-40 who had been living in the Netherlands or the UK for at least 1 year prior to the interview, or who intended to remain living for at least of year in some selected cities in the Netherlands (Amsterdam the capital, Eindhoven in the south and Groningen in the north). From all these 47 participants, 11 were women and 6 of them were married out of which 5 on dependent visa (Kõu and Bailey 2014: 116).

if this requires short or even (overseas) (temporary) long-distance migration. Apart from the labour market and studies there are other non-economic reasons for which this particular urban group is prepared to move however.

Often migration is thought to be influenced by labour market conditions in the origin and destination. Yet as D. Jayaraj researched in 2013, an examination of data on reported reasons in the NSSO surveys suggests that a complex interaction of both labour and non-labour market related causes induce family migration in India (Jayaraj 2013: 49). Though the type of spatial movements is not only urban-urban, among the relatively young urban middle-class household this type accounts for a majority proportion of all spatial movements (i.e. rural-urban, urban-urban, urban-rural and rural-rural). No doubt these families are on the move because of variations in labour market conditions, in particular the demand and supply of labour across locations (Jayaraj 2013: 49).

In this paper, the Information Technology is considered and though within India this sector is booming (though certainly much less so presently than a few years ago), since the last few decades it is within this urban industry that movement to other (transnational-) urban centres is utmost. Pull factors are indeed responsible but push factors as well. Actually, in the Indian IT industry there is a conscious policy of many corporations to send their employees abroad for a few years. There is a idea that in this way these workers will increase their human capital abroad and return within their working years to their own firms in India, where they contribute enhanced skills, which can be used in India (human capital), help the establishment of access to new business networks abroad (social capital), and engender financial capital and investment. Indeed, in the IT industry are widely regarded as 'a showcase for this triple-benefit formula' (Naujoks 2013: 122). Even the Government of India has high hopes of these returned skilled IT workers who are considered as '*the main* factor to turn the vicious circles of brain drain into a virtuous circulation of the factor labour' (Naujoks 2013: 121-122), i.e. a kind of circular migration that brings about 'brain gain'.

However, other factors than pull and push factors in the (IT) labour industry also induce spatial movements to urban centres abroad. Most of these factors relate to problems in everyday-life faced by the educated (upper-) middle class families in Indian cities. Jayaraj shows that urban-urban movement in India is caused largely by non-labour market related reasons (more than 63%). Whereas we can therefore not ignore labour market related reasons, an explanatory framework of urban-urban family migration will also have to include non-labour market reasons that families hold as motivation for migration abroad.

Gendered Reasons for Urban-Urban Migration to Places outside India

While single highly skilled men often move as a response to variations in labour market conditions (including transfers and changes in contracts), single educated middle-class Indian women apart from study reasons, often move because of marriage. Besides, in middle-class families in urban India usually a person only gets married and begins a family when she/he is assured of a steady source of income to support a family. Mostly, it is the man in these

households who are the main breadwinners. If after formation of a new household unit, the family moves (again) it is most likely to be induced by distress and push factors (Da Vanzo 1976). Besides, as the economic stability of the household mostly depends on men more than on women in these families, work-related factors often are reasons for married men to move. Their spouses however also have reasons to desire movement, apart from the fact that they are just 'forced' to follow their husbands wherever he gets better employment opportunities.

Through their research in the Netherlands Kõu and Bailey (2014:119) acknowledge the fact that as Indian skilled married women often join spouses because of the latter's jobs, their skills and prospects for employment tend to be disregarded in the literature (Koffman et al. 2000; Lee and Piper 2003; Kofman and Raghuram 2005) or neglected by immigration laws that do not grant them access to settlement services (Iredale 2005). However, the married female co-migrants of Kõu and Bailey's study rarely perceived migration as a loss for them. Often, these women participants in their study had entertained pre-migration expectations of the move across that would gain them 'new experiences, "to *see the world*, have *international exposure*" and use the "*opportunities* to pursue postgraduate studies or advance their professional career'. Yet, while Kõu and Bailey (2014:119) recognize the gain of non-financial/economic capital that migration might entail such as the realisation of one's intellectual aspirations , living financially and emotionally independent of parents or fulfilling 'a lifelong dream to live in a Western country', I feel these authors nevertheless downplay such non-financial perceived gains presented by 'linked movers' by relating them to the labour market and to the potential this non-financial cultural and social capital has for the acquirement of (better) employment opportunities of these married women in future.

Palriwala and Uberoi (2008: 33) recognize that economic structures and differentials are only a partial and imperfect explanation for migration (Cf. Standing 1991: 164-165) and with Jayaraj (2013) highlight the acquirement of social and cultural capital as potential main motivations for spatial movement among more affluent middle class women and men. Among the non-economic reasons for urban-urban family migration Jayaraj mentions for instance those related to problems in the 'living environment' of these families, which include among others long distances or time-consuming navigations to place of work/children's educational institutions, housing problems, deficient quality of children's education, lack of security and recreation facilities, pollution, adverse socio-political climate and health factors. Besides these non-economic push factors, this movement is simultaneously induced by some features of the destination that are (perceived) as more attractive by married men and women of more affluent middle-class background alike and thus 'pull-related' (Cf. Jayaraj 2013: 51). Apart from the fact of the economic dependency of women which often leaves no choice to women than to follow their husbands to wherever he gets better economic opportunities the above-mentioned push/distress factors often make that these women actually often choose to move along with the husbands and therefore voluntarily move to places abroad that are perceived to be better in other than economic terms. Indeed such non-labour market related push factors are often so important that even women who are (part-time) employed are prepared to give their own jobs and move to a better working environment for their husbands. For these professional women the non-

economic gains to be acquired after spatial movement are perceived to be so considerable that they are even prepared to 'put their own career on hold' and 'take a break' abroad.

Increasingly, among (highly) educated middle-class urban families in India, some level of consent to 'arranged-marriage' proposals is involved where even the prospected bride is asked whether she agrees to the marriage (Cf. Kaur and Palriwala 2014: 36). As it is generally known to her that her would-be husband plans to migrate abroad, we can thus conclude that if then she still decides to marry this husband she also agrees to move with him, which could imply giving up her own studies or job. Evidently here class factors are also involved and feminist scholars have shown that class and gender always operate together and consciousness of class always takes a gendered form. In present-day middle class or relatively somewhat more affluent families in urban India there is a constant reworking of both manliness and femininity. Part of the so-called neo-modernities of Asian consumer culture, the domestic relations in these relatively affluent households have considerably changed from about the early 1990s onward: the situation of women working outside the home is a key issue in the present-day re-workings of the domestic within the globalizing new orders of this urban Indian environment. Professional women frequently have domestic helpers, either paid servants or dependent relatives; other 'working women' without servants often have an exhausting double day and only a section of these middle class women seems to espouse the housewife role, one often supported by servants or direct kin such as parents or in-laws (Cf. Stivens 1998: 5).

Researchers found that consumption apart from production is central to the constant search for and the construction of the 'new', including new identities, that is the hallmark of modernity and postmodernity (Cf. Friedman 1990). If we look at the gendered aspect of consumption among middle class women in urban India we witness the development of elaborate new femininities based on the consuming and working but beautiful, efficient, caring and earning 'typical Indian' modern woman/wife and mother in these relatively affluent urban households which according to some can even be seen as central to the very development of 'burgeoing economies'. Yet, whereas some of these household forms in booming urban areas such as Bangalore, Hyderabad, Mumbai and to a lesser extent Pune, New Delhi and Kolkata, resemble the quite monolithic private sphere on West European model, many other images of the domestic circulate which are the products of highly specific local developments in India, which prevents generalisations about gender regimes even within national and urban borders (Cf. Stivens 1998: 6 and 8).

Yet, as Sen and Stivens argued, media attention to the problems of 'working' women and the juggling of everyday lives suggests some permeability of the public/private divide. Moreover, the form of the so-called private sphere is very much the site of dialectical and contested processes in these cities, with a variety of emerging subjectivities among educated middle-class urban (working) women. Pringle and Watson (1992) argued that these subjectivities emerged in a plurality of discursive forums where women's (among other) interests are constructed in the process of interaction with specific institutions and sites. These subjectivities also emerge under conditions where women in the predominant family discourse are the bearers of the vision of family, its keepers, its producers; the family is the

bulwark against the social costs of 'modernity' (and of dissent) and the 'dangers' of fragmenting national and personal identities produced in the contemporary (post) modern urban order among the 'middle strata' where the 'autonomous and sexualised modern threatens to break this complementary dualism of public and private, male and female, tradition and modernity' (Cf. Stivens: 17). It is hardly surprising therefore that these women often face increased domestic as well as public violence and decreased domestic and public security.

Apart from these more common stress and push factors which these married women sometimes even share with their spouses as demands on 'masculine behaviour' are no less, husband and their spouses also share push factors such as defunct infrastructures, increased health dangers, costly or low quality educational and medical facilities and lack of basic amenities such as sanitation, a continued electricity supply, enormous competition, corruption at all levels in civic life, criminality, frequent strikes and public insecurity as well as (clean and safe drinking) water and housing problems. These factors push these families to move to a 'better' (i.e. easier, safer, cleaner, more predictable and quiet, consumer and producer friendly and ordered) day-to-day family 'living environment' and make that these women also do not mind following their husbands across borders, or even vehemently push their spouses to move away to a hopeful better future for themselves, their children and their husband. Women might also hope the new urban environment they move to will provide them more domestic freedom, away from sometimes oppressive or burdensome kinship relations. Besides, due to the absence of (state-) organized child care facilities, there is dependence of middle-class women employed in the public or private sector on parents and in-laws or other relatives or on paid domestic helps. Movement of these women also promises a possible escape from contradictory gender role demands as well as more public freedom and safety (thus a remedy for a personal gender-based sense of insecurity and escape from restricted spatial and time-related mobility in urban public areas).

As this new urban environment therefore promises more personal independence and space for genuine personal development and an environment in which the acquirement of paid employment is a choice rather than an economic necessity many of these spouses decide to put their own career on hold and follow their husbands whose spatial movement to new urban environments, increasingly transnational, is linked to the opportunities in the labour-market. As such family migration concern the nuclear family, movement implies leaving behind other kin, such as parents and parents-in-laws in the 'old environment'.

Third Wave of Indian Immigrants in the Netherlands: Knowledge Workers

During the last three to four decades a relatively huge wave of emigration can be witnessed of so-called knowledge and service workers from India to the industrial and/or oil rich countries of 'the West" (including West Asia) and many of the non-resident Indians (NRIs) presently in West Europe belong to this category of migrants. Apart from migration of ethnic Indian communities from Surinam, the Netherlands does not have a long history of movement of

migrants from India. In fact, migration of Indian nationals to the Netherlands came relatively late in a process during which mixing, mingling and co-existence between various ethnic groups with different languages, educational levels, skills, religions and customs became a more regular and institutionalised site in Dutch urban regions. These are mostly from Moroccan, Indonesian and Turkish origin. Compared to such other migrant groups or compared to the Indian presence in the US or in Britain, the Indian population in the Netherlands is still very small in both absolute as well as relative terms. Besides, and though efforts by the Dutch government continue, Indian nationals and ethnic Indian-Surinamese communities do not constitute one united 'Indian diaspora' in the Netherlands (Lynnebakke in Oonk 2007: 235-263).

Nevertheless, emigration of Indians directly from India to the Netherlands already started in the 1950s when diplomatic relations between Indian and the Netherlands were established, and Indians started coming to the Netherlands is small numbers. The present group of 'Indian knowledge workers' could be termed as part of the third wave of immigrants from India in the Netherlands. Early arrivals were either working at the Indian Embassy or studying at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) both located in The Hague. Their stay was of short duration, lasting mostly one to three years. During the 1960s another flow of Indians to the Netherlands began, which continued during the 1970s. These migrants were doctors, engineers, university scholars, researchers and a few business persons. Mostly were invited to the Netherlands either by various Dutch educational institutions and government agencies or by major Dutch companies like Shell or Unilever with subsidiaries in India. They were highly educated and professionally qualified persons and mostly men. Yet, one of this first-wave- of immigrants R.L. Lakhina explained that most of these migrants brought their spouses either with them or these followed subsequently from India after settlement in The Netherlands. Lakhina had added that some even married Dutch spouses and 'These immigrants come from different parts of India, speak different languages and follow different religious traditions'. Though most of this group are now retired or nearing retirement according to Lakhina they have done well professionally and now belong to the upper strata of the Dutch society in terms of their education, professional achievements, income and wealth. Most of the members of this group are Dutch nationals now and according to Lakhina 'There is a broad consensus' that these immigrants 'have added value to the Dutch economy and society'.

The second major wave of Indian immigrants to the Netherlands, Lakhina informs, came in the mid-1970s and continued to arrive till around 1985. This concerned 'a few thousand rural workers from the Indian state of Punjab' who came 'primarily in search of better economic prospects' and had 'a low level of education and few professional skills', even their language skills were limited as according to Lakhina 'They hardly spoke English or any other language apart from their mother tongue'. Yet even these Indian immigrants in the Netherlands and despite these 'big handicaps', most have found 'reasonable jobs or started small businesses and are now well settled' and many acquired the Dutch nationality. [2]

[2] http://www.indianexpatsociety.org/static/moving_to_the_netherlands

Knowledge workers ('kennismigranten' in Dutch and in the rest of Europe known as 'highly skilled workers'), constitute the third wave and are the latest group of emigrants from India to the Netherlands. Since around 2004 Indians have been arriving in the Netherlands to work mostly in the information technology sector (IT) and related services (70 %) but also in the industrial sector (17 %) and in university training/education (5 %). Compared to other European countries (including the U.K.), till 2008 the Netherlands had the highest percentage of Indian knowledge workers. After 2008 till 2011 it stood second in this respect and apart from the Netherlands, in the United Kingdom, Denmark and Sweden Indian knowledge workers also dominate. Though the demand for these highly educated and skilled workers initially came from Dutch businesses which facilitated work and residential permits for them, the Dutch government has now put into place a certain regulation ('kennismigranten regeling') to facilitate migration to the Netherlands for this group. Policy regarding this group now also includes the provision of so-called European blue cards and a widening of the concept of knowledge workers that also encompasses scientific researchers, unpaid and paid and self-employed workers. There is also provision that allows graduates to look around for a job in the Netherlands during one year. Besides, though Indians are at the top (32 %) they are not the only ones who came to the Netherlands between 2008 and 2011 as knowledge workers. Apart from Japanese, Turkish, Romanians, Russians, South Africans, Australians and Canadians, American (13 %) and Chinese (6 %) knowledge workers were are well represented between 2008 and 2011. However not only did Indians topped during this period, this trend is likely to persist and it is expected that their number will further increase during years to come. The mean age of knowledge workers in The Netherlands is 32 (Ministerie van Veiligheid and Justitie 2013).

As detailed in this paper, urban-urban family movement because of labour market opportunities is generally initiated by Indian men rather than their spouses. This also holds true for transnational migration. In urban and urbanized regions of the Netherlands, most of the knowledge workers who arrived on a 'labour visa' indeed are men (36 %) as against 19 % female Indian knowledge workers. However these male Indian knowledge workers do often arrive along with spouses or these spouses follow after some time to form a nuclear family with or without children in urban Netherlands (most in and around Amsterdam). This united family either moves back to (urban) India after from around one to five years spent in the Netherlands, moves on to other (European) destinations or remains in the Netherlands for an indeterminate period or permanently as long-term citizens with another nationality or as Dutch nationals. The relative percentage of Indian families that permanently remain in the Netherlands (as a family or even as separate individuals) is low compared to most other nationals among knowledge workers, though among Indian men between 2005 and 2011 this was much higher among Indian men (94%) than Indian women. The latter fact might be related to mostly single (unmarried) men. Besides, even among these men the number that acquired Dutch nationality (a Dutch passport) between 2005 and 2011 was even more limited if compared with other countries. In short, most Indian families that moved from urban India to urban Netherlands between 2005 and 2011 either return to India or did move on to other

(European) countries. Most of these families stayed however minimal for a year but often a couple of years in the Netherlands, during which men were employed mostly in the IT sector and related services and their spouses were involved in numerous non-economic activities.

Non-economic Activities of Spouses of Indian Knowledge Workers in the Netherlands

All women interviewed by Sara de Prie (30 ex-pat women) said they moved to the Netherlands because of their husband's job. Such women had sometimes been employed before movement or had planned a career or further studies after marriage in India. Defined as 'tied migrants' by Geist and McManus (2011: 198) these women were thus the outcome of a process in which, 'the labor market advantages of mobility accrue primarily to one partner (most often the husband), the other partner (most often the wife) is considered a "tied mover". For the tied mover, the household gains from migration may come at the expense of her own'. De Prie indeed found that movement to the Netherlands had reduced the chances for gainful employment for almost all the women she had interviewed. Yet calling these women 'tied migrants' or 'trailing wives/mothers' (Cooke 2001) is overlooking two essential realities. First, the reality of the often burdensome and even insecure lived day-to-day (working-) life of these women in urban India as outlined above and secondly, the non labour market related opportunities a few years' stay in the Netherlands offers these women. In general such appellations denies women's own agency before and after migration. De Prie's research bears out these points. In India too, these women had been on the move all the time and some even from childhood onward as their *fathers* or husbands had been in a transferable job. After marriage many employed women had left their own job and moved to the city in which their husband was employed. At the point of movement to the Netherlands many of the spouses interviewed by de Prie had already left their job if at all they had been employed in India. Calling these women just 'tied migrants', prioritizes paid work activities (economic capital) over other forms of capital building and downplays female agency in private and public field other than the labour market. It also tells only one side of the urban-urban movement story.

As outlined above, besides labour market related reasons there are other motivations for movement. Shaila interviewed by De Prie for instance indeed agreed that she had come to the Netherlands 'purely for his, my huband's job', yet she had added, 'and I wanted an experience of travelling' and she had no problem to say in any other place other than in India though she confessed that she 'would like to stay in a place where people could speak English because it's difficult for me to lean every language. Wherever I go I do make an effort. I tried learning French now I am trying to learn Dutch. But I can't be learning all the languages all the time'. In fact, not many women interviewed by De Prie had actively tried to get jobs in the Netherlands. Very often this was caused by the fact that they first wanted to learn the Dutch language, or to explore other things, different studies, places and activities they had never done during their life in India and might have been unable to act upon in this country of their birth. Some expatriate women in the Netherlands actually had married according to their own choice and at times not even with a boy of similar regional, linguistic and caste

background. The move away from India immediately after marriage had decreased possible sanctions of kin. At times such marriages had even only materialized in the Netherlands. Some women decided on not fulfilling roles which in India are more or less obligatory, such as bearing a (male-) child. Again Shaila:

> It happens in India, very rarely, it's a very rare thing that you know of where the parents don't push their children to have [children]. I mean it has happened with me. My mother she kept on telling me why don't you have? I mean you are already forty-three why don't have? But they never pushed me, even my mother-in-law; be it my mother or my mother-in-law. My mother-in-law asked me during the first year [after marriage] and right now [but] not after it. She asked her son. He said just leave it, it is our personal matter. She has not been hurt. I don't know, but she is okay with it.

In fact, analysis of the interviews carried out by both de Prie as well as by van de Goor Janssen demonstrates that gender regimes in expatriate Indian households in the Netherlands have changed in such a way that it provides 'a break' in the lives of these spouses of Indian IT specialists in the Netherlands. Outings with husbands (with or without children), which are rare in India, are often regular affairs in ex-pat Indian families in the Netherlands. Besides, as husbands make long days 'at work' and children are in (internationals) schools or in day-care or are not there at all even, some ex-pat Indian women perceive they have the whole day for themselves with no or not many obligations. Relatively economically quite sound these women can afford classes, trainings and travels and purchases of non-Indian consumer goods which are either not available in India or too expensive for households with an Indian rupee income. The income of their husbands also guarantees good English medium education for their children in international, British or American schools at times subsidized by husband's employer. Women often try to learn Dutch, go to see movies not easily available in India, read a variety of books available from libraries, book clubs organized by themselves or purchased in English book shops or in India during one of their often frequent visits home, go for long walks, yoga classes and many even possess and use a cycle/tandem. As they can easily afford public transport, these women are much more mobile than in India where the public transport though relatively cheap, is not easy to navigate, bothersome and even at times unsafe for women in particular. In India, these women often possessed a car but traffic conditions made its use minimal and dependency on 'drivers' had been common. The unlimited and care free mobility even at night is highly appreciated by these women as de Prie's interviews confirm.

Even the fact that there are no 'maids' in the Netherlands to help them in household affairs is not seen as a major problem among many of de Prie's informants. Though some, in particular one pregnant woman with a small child around her looked 'very exhausted', de Prie wrote in her field notes. Indeed, for a limited few the shouldering of household tasks in the absence of relatives or domestic helpers like in India, was not enchanting. Yet most women de Prie observed seemed quite proud and satisfied they had been able to decorate the house according to their own likings, apt and empowered to manage their own affairs, without interferences of parents, in-laws or dependent kin. Whereas cooking had been something left to maids in India and grocery shopping had been the duty of servants or

husbands, expatriate women interviewed by de Prie do their own Dutch supermarket rounds (or frequent one of the increasing number of 'Indian stores' in Amsterdam) and love to 'explore new dishes' and also try out some new drinks. In terms of clothing they also experiment rather than confirm to dress codes that had been forced upon them by unwritten social-cultural rules in urban India.

Shanti Nachiappan in a conference paper on *Marital Adjustment of IT Employees' Spouses* had analyzed that:

> In the hi-tech industries, masculinity is not only socially constructed in terms of 'heroic brute strength' and the male role as that of financial provider/breadwinner, but in terms of a combination of factors, ranging from market pressures and the requirements of competition, that result in a job design that requires long and unpredictable working hours, incapacitating the employees for the work of reproduction and of caring for other people.

This results as Nachiappan pointed out all 'the drugery of the domestic labour' is shouldered by the wives of these mostly male employees . However, overall, the 30 Indian ex-pat spouses were quite happy in the Netherlands de Prie concluded and felt that the break in the Netherlands had made them more independent and autonomous, able to manage affairs by themselves in both domestic and public spheres without needing others all the time. These women do a lot of 'socializing' with other Indian women, husband's (male-) colleagues (mostly Indian but also a few Dutch and their often foreign spouses), neighbours and other expatriate women these women acquainted in international schools their children attend. Often this socializing is more than in India where such interaction is confined due to distance, bad infrastructure, social restrictions and emphasis on kinship relations rather friendships. Certainly, (family-) outings along with husband (and children) are much less frequent in India than in the Netherlands as even longer working hours of their husbands in the IT business often including the weekends make these almost impossible.

Since the last couple of years in the Netherlands as Ganesh, Palriwala and Risseeuw (2005: 2-3) observed 'Calls for a roll-back of the state and for increasing individual initiative and economic competitiveness became important benchmarks in policy design'. At the same time 'Feminists were asking whether the welfare state had reinforced gender-biased models of citizenships and family that had constrained emancipator possibilities for women, migrants, and the unskilled'. Indeed, as increasingly 'the care-state' and 'caring society' is replaced by 'the new slogans of a caring economy and a 24-hours economy', many Dutch women started complaining about the contradictory demands of the state that on the one hand asked 'all citizens including women to be active in the labour market' while at the other hand these women were supposed to shoulder family care relations with less provisions made by the Dutch welfare state'. Interviews carried out by both de Prie and van het Goor-Janssen (2013-2014) with Indian ex-pat couples in the Netherlands did neither confirm the extreme drudgery felt by ex-pat (non-earning) Indian women nor the extreme work pressure felt by their husbands employed in Hi-tech businesses as described by Nachiappan.

In fact, de Prie's informants were outgoing frequenting museum, making pictures of Dutch surroundings and de Prie took some of them to a Karoake bar which they had never done in India and really enjoyed. Others liked to go for long walks (often with a dog, sometimes also not frequently seen in India) and most seemed to have quite increased their social capital due to their move from urban India to urban Netherlands. Some women had consciously chosen for 'a break' and really enjoyed that. Meenakshi for instance stays at least three months in India. Others use their 'break' to further develop skills just to increase their cultural capital and not with any possible future economic gain in mind. For instance a woman chose for singing practice on daily basis and another woman rents a building and teaches classical Indian dance. No economic gain is involved as the rent equals the fees paid by her students. Again others loved seeing new movies not available in India or were interested in photography or travelling. In fact most of these so-called non-working women were so busy that they had no time or less time for interviews with de Prie.

Some of these ex-pat women regularly experimented with new consumers' patterns along with their husband. Kõu and Bailey (2014: 119) found for instance that husband and wives often viewed their stay in the Netherlands as a 'prolonged honeymoon'. As reported by their informants, patrilocality in India provides little space for new weds to get to know and get used to each other in a private setting. Since in-laws often have considerable power in both household matters and more personal decisions, couples generally have limited choices; a situation that their informants said they or their spouses do not always appreciate. This lack of independence, Kõu and Bailey (2014: 119) concluded was sometimes a hindrance to return migration: 'In this context, independence was talked about not only in terms of parents and extended family, but also when referring to the larger community and their opinions, attitudes and tendency to gossip'. As these relatively quite affluent middle class women also did not face regular power cuts, water shortages, housing problems or traffic jams and were happy with their vacuum cleaners, washing machines, dish washers, gas connections, central heating, double glass windows, furnished apartments, clean and ordered neighbourhoods, safe play grounds for children and well-maintained parks to walk in (with dogs), fresh air, the Dutch weather and home delivery to just mention a few amenities that do not exist or are defunct in India, most of them hoped they could stay 'a few years' more in the Netherlands before ultimate return to India.

Back-Linking: a Gendered non-economic Activity to Balance Structural Dependency and Newly Acquired Independence

There is one more non-economic activity of these Indian ex-pat married (dependent/non earning) women that needs special attention. Though the move away from wider kinship relations might have provided these women with opportunities to make decisions by themselves or by her and her partner without much interference of parents, in-laws or other family members back home, most of the women interviewed by de Prie maintained regular (often on daily basis) with their kin in India. In fact 'back-linking' to family and friends in

India seems to be a major task which mainly involves these women and much less so their husbands.

Most of these women explained to de Prie that as their parents or in-laws were financially fit there was no need for them or their husbands to provide financial remittances. However, Meenakshi for instance said that as her mother was alone and she really missed her daughter and her brother lived in the UK she needed to email her at least once weekly. Sita is also in regular contact with her mother and her husband's family and makes regular trips to India. Nabha prefers simple phone calls to stay in contact with family members located 'all over the world'. Asha speaks to her mother-in-law almost daily and to her parents on a weekly basis and the latter even are on whatsapp. From a distance she tries according to de Prie to make her family part of her daily life in the Netherlands. Anjali also speaks a lot to her family, including her cousins in India and as little groups with them on whatsapp. Anjali also 'invests' in friends as it is in the corner of her mind that one day her parents would not be there anymore, after 10 years or so. If she then returns to India she needs 'some attraction' and therefore she keeps these friendships now so that she has some friends where she can fall back on if she returns to India and she had added, 'Or if you are not feeling good, you can just call them'. Devya uses skype and even has contacts with teachers of her old school and with friends she knows from nursery school. Void, G-talk and Face Time are other ways in which these women do back-linking with family, kin and friends in India. Another way of back-linking is asking parents or in-laws to come over and stay with the family in the Netherlands for a few months which does seem to happen quite a lot.

Most of the women interviewed by de Prie not only feel they 'belong' to India but also know that they ultimately will (have to) return to India. Though some prefer to extent their stay in the Netherlands for a few years more or move on preferable to an English speaking country, many of them feel that they will return to India ultimately not only because of the fact that their husbands have to return because of labour market conditions but more so because these women feel that they have to care for their parents and/or in-laws if they are too old to look after themselves. De Prie feels that these women do not see this as an obligation but as a choice. In some cases return would mean living with their in-laws as one household even. In other words though these women are happy with their newly acquired independence in the Netherlands they know that this is going to be temporary and they therefore already invest in the future through back-linking.There is more to this however. When de Prie asked Meenakshi whether she felt her identity had changed due to migration from India to the Netherlands Meenakshi had replied:

> Of course there is a very very major difference. Because India is a conservative country and you don't get to move around a lot freely. Cause uh we have to, you know, take care of everything there; so that my father-in-law doesn't get hurt sentimentally or whatever. Here I have no restrictions. I can be myself. And I have fun. I don't have to feel guilty about anything. That's the major change.

Though the interviewed women almost all indeed feel more autonomous and independent in the Netherlands than in India there is a structural insecurity as not only are most of them

financially dependent on their husband in the Netherlands but also moved on a dependent visa. Though they are theoretically allowed a job in Amsterdam, in practice only a few women are 'lucky enough' to find themselves a job as they often need Dutch language skills, an employer who will change their dependent visa into a working permit or self-employment that is judged to be of economic significance by Dutch authorities.[3] Besides, migration implies 'shifting circles of care and support' (Palriwala and Risseeuw 1996), which is very different in the Dutch welfare state than in India. Instead of kin and maids/drivers and servants in India there are crèches, unrelated friends such as the other expat mothers in the international school of these Indian women's children, the people where they might do voluntary work, day care for children and public transport or cycles in the Netherlands. However, ultimately their social security depends on their husband and they can only access these facilities provided by the Dutch welfare state because of their husband's (working-) status.

In India, if not working this security is provided by other kin apart from husband. In the Netherlands the state has taken over many functions previously carried out by the kin/family members but as this is true for Dutch women and even for their husbands, this does not count for these Indian expat non-earning women who have no other option than to return back to India in case their husband's contract ends, gets seriously ill or worse dies or desires separation/divorce. Without their husbands these non-employed women have no citizens' rights in the Netherlands. I argue therefore that back-linking provides these women with 'emotional citizenship in India' (in the absence of real citizenship in The Netherlands) which is not only is an investment in 'future return' (to be 'prepared' and which prevents 'alienation') but also is a strategy developed by these women that enables them to stay put in the Netherlands or helps them to move on as it balances this contradictory scenario in which these women are positioned due to the visa regime which provides independence based in structural dependency (Cf. Sinha-Kerkhoff 2005).

Conclusion: Indian Female Expats' Transient Lives in the Netherlands and Brain Gain

In her dissertation, Pallavi Banerjee examined how visa policies of the United States affect Indian transnational 'high-skilled' migrants and their families in the United States. She found that 'high-skilled' workers migrate for employment on skilled workers visas and their spouses migrate on dependent visas. This latter visa restricts the spouses of skilled workers to find legal employment in the United States or posses any kind of U.S. government issued identification in the United States as long as they hold dependent visas. After extensive qualitative methods – in-depth interviews with 85 family members among others- Banerjee concluded that 'visa regimes governs more than just mobility of the transnational subject. Visa policies reconfigure identities and notions of the self for visa holders and impose constraints on relationships, family, belonging and migration. The visas shape family structures and familial relationship for high-tech workers by reinforcing a patriarchal family form with the man and the breadwinner and the woman as the home maker. According to

[3] http://www.ehow.com/list_6930408_requirments-work-visa-amsterdam_.html

Banerjee (2013), 'This benefits the private sector labor market at the cost of the well-being of migrant families'.

Banerjee's research also shows that the spouses, mostly women, of the skilled workers who were on dependent visas felt that they were 'thrown back into a model of the traditional family where women are not valued at all outside of the home'. These women who were almost all 'forced to stay home and become a housewife against their wishes' has 'experienced a loss of dignity and self-deprecation'. They talked about 'being rendered invisible, feeling lost, and for some, suicidal'. One of Banerjee's informants had described her dependent visa as a 'vegetable visa meant to make you vegetate. Others had called it a 'prison' or 'bondage' visa and Banerjee found that these visas were so much 'psychologically debilitating' that it caused many of these families to return or break'. In her interviews with the couples in these families, 'the wives reported about obsessively doing housework as a coping mechanism to deal with their dependency' and husbands had complained about not having enough time with their spouses and children because of their work demands. These husbands also found it difficult to cope with depressed wives and some of them decided that divorcing them was the only way out which meant the end of 'the American Dream' for their spouses. Other similar research carried out in the US present similar scenarios. Bandana Purkayastha (2005: 196) concluded for instance that Asian Indian women in the US who often are highly skilled but arrive in the US as 'dependents', 'suffer from disadvantage' and the accounts of these women indicated 'the understudied dimensions of structural disadvantage that skilled non-white migrants face in contemporary America'.

Sara de Prie's fieldwork carried out among ex-pat spouses of male Indian knowledge workers and Sarah van het Goor-Janssen's interviews with Indian ex-pat couples in the Netherlands provide a very different scenario than the one that exists in US. Palriwala and Uberoi argued in their introduction to their edited volume on 'marriage migration' (defined as migration within or as a result of marriage) that it is evident that migration may encourage the re-scripting of gender roles within the family and offer women economic security and escape from subjection and persecution, as well as enhanced autonomy and respect in both the family and community. In certain cases they argued women' marriage migration may be 'the most efficient and socially acceptable means available to disadvantaged women to achieve a measure of social and economic mobility'. In other words, marriage migration might also be enabling for women, even if not gainfully employed in the host country. In this paper we took serious Palriwala and Uberoi's advice that without discounting the ubiquity of abuse and victimization, we also should look at married women's agency, their individual aspirations for migration linked to social mobility and gender aspirations. This paper therefore analyzed the transformative power of non-economic activities in particular 'back-linking' of ex-pat women and its impact on family's decisions to return to India, move on, or stay put in the Netherlands as well as that it evaluated these non-economic activities in terms of 'brain gain and brain loss'.

The concept of 'brain drain' accompanied contemporary emigration of Indian (male) knowledge workers to countries such as the Netherlands. Educated in India they leave the country to use their 'brains' elsewhere. Ratnakar Tripathy in this panel argued that it is however doubtful whether such a brain drain really exists. The economic significance of these Indian male knowledge workers to the Dutch welfare state is doubtless significant. Yet, increasingly research indicates that remittances to India are no less significant and these should not be considered in economic terms only but also encompass social and cultural remittances (Cf. Khandekar 2010: 191-217).

Most of the Indian ex-pat families do not stay on in The Netherlands and rarely get naturalized as Dutch citizens. These families either move on or return to India though often only to move away again for a next sojourn abroad possibly again to the Netherlands or any such West European destination that 'calls them'. In this paper we looked at the Indian spouses of these transient Indian families in the Netherlands and investigated the non-economic activities of these women. I in particular highlighted the 'back linking' of these women to kin in India and concluded that this is a necessary 'lifeline' these women developed to stay put, move on and even return back to India smoothly. Generally, research presents middle class working women as potent economic, psychological, and sociological forces and we should therefore wonder whether one should conclude that as most of the women here involved do not acquire economic/financial capital in the Netherlands, their move away from urban India to the urban Dutch welfare state should therefore be considered as 'brain drain'? I here conclude with a strong disavowal. De Prie concluded that many of her informants had taken 'a break' in the Netherlands and most of them 'enjoy to the fullest'. During this break, these women did new things, tried out new consumers' patterns, met new people, acquired different and new skills and could develop other talents which they never had been able to do and/or acquire if they had stayed put in urban India. Besides, and again we should listen to Meenakshi interviewed by de Prie:

> So I would say yes. There is a lot of identity change. But now when you think about it when I go back to India I have written my own self. I am still myself I don't change a lot now. Because earlier I used to think that I should dress up in a different way just to please men but not anymore. I have changed in that way. And even my parents and everyone back home are, you know. They have made their peace with it. Because they know I have changed. And they don't expect me to follow the rules anymore. So they know that I have changed. Yah it is a liberating feeling.

To conclude therefore, these women developed new identities as 'stronger' and 'more independent' and knowledgeable Indian citizens, surely to be positively reflected in the future lives of these women either in the Netherlands, any other new destination abroad or back home in India. We therefore can legitimately conclude that the stay of these expat Indian women in the Netherlands should been investigated in terms of 'brain gain' rather than 'brain drain'.

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