'Fitting In': Social Cohesion among Skilled Migrant Indian Women and Host Diasporic Communities in South Africa

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Abstract

Migration has traditionally been seen as a primarily male domain, particularly in developing countries. However, global practices have increased the visibility of women migrants such that the feminisation and irregularisation of migration has led to new flows of transnational migrant movements, particularly to South Africa. Attention is drawn to the growth of South-South migration, specifically focusing on Indian migrant women, as accompanying their professional spouses migrating to South Africa. Set within a social cohesion framework, this paper examines how the women attempt to find a 'fit' in a socially diverse society where distrust, exclusion and racism still prevail. This investigation is based on exploratory research using qualitative interviews conducted with married Indian women. The focus of this paper examines the reasons for their migration, their choice to migrate specifically to South Africa, perceptions of South Africa, their sense of inclusion and observes if they develop a sense of belonging to the country. Preliminary findings show that the migrants find South Africans very tolerant, but keep to themselves as the fear of crime impedes integration.

Keywords: Family migration, gender, skilled migration, social cohesion, Indian women, migrant communities

1   Introduction

Post-1994, South Africa has become an attractive destination for many migrants in the South. The Green Paper on International Migration (Depart-

ment of Home Affairs 2016:6) confirms that South Africa continues to receive high volumes of migrants from all over the world, with the figure increasing in 2011 from 12 million to 14 million in 2014. The total percentage of Indian arrivals to South Africa in 2015 was 1%. Besides traditional forms of labour migration, political and economic refugees, asylum seekers, other forms of migration such as retirement, mobility in search of better lifestyles, repeat and circular migration, has grown steadily. One of the reasons for this is the potential for growth in South Africa. The history of apartheid has created a distinctive skills shortage in the country such that after twenty three years of democracy, the country is still battling to fill. Skilled migration is considered one of the more 'acceptable' (Raghuram 2004) forms of migration and celebrated as 'professional mobility' (Butt 2014), compared to unskilled migration which is viewed in a negative light.

The intensification of migration worldwide has resulted in family systems evolving such that transnational families are an important charac-teristic of globalisation and migration. Roos (2013:147) shows that in highly skilled professions such as engineering and information and communication technology sector, the transnational family is 'a new trend' amongst India's growing middle class. India's liberal migration policy supports the temporary migration of highly skilled workers, giving rise to a growing middle class that is enticed by career-based mobility (Manohar 2013; Mani 2009; Roos 2013). A substantial body of literature has examined the relationship between gender and international migration, yet little attention has been given to the gendered experiences of highly skilled migrant women (Butt 2014; Meares 2010; Raghuram 2004; Yeoh & Willis 2005).

In the bulk of the migration literature, women are cast as appendages to male migrants, as 'losers' within the patriarchal system (Raghuram 2004). A further gap in migration studies is the vacuum in research on family-linked migration among the highly skilled (Raghuram 2004; Roos 2013). In addition, skilled migration from India, in the information and communication technology and engineering sectors, is routed particularly to the United States of America (USA) as the preferred choice. South Africa has now grown as an attractive alternate migration destination. Family reunification migration from India, where highly skilled wives migrate to join men, has been given little attention in the migration literature in South Africa. This paper seeks to examine the concept of social cohesion and how migrant families, in particular skilled Indian migrant women, negotiate a 'fit' and a semblance of belonging

in South Africa's diverse society.

The concept of social cohesion gained prominence in South Africa after the 2008 and more recent 2015, xenophobic attacks. In his 2009 State of the Nation Address, President Zuma emphasised the concepts of 'unity in diversity', 'developing a shared value system' and the 'spirit of community solidarity' as building blocks of social cohesion (Struwig *et al.* 2013:1). At the National Social Cohesion Summit in 2012, the Department of Arts and Culture stated that social cohesion was based on key pillars – diversity, inclusiveness, access and values (*Mail and Guardian* 13 July 2012). As migration related diversity has grown in South Africa, one way of developing social cohesion is through understanding how temporary migrant communities experience a sense of belonging in South Africa.

The point of departure for this paper is from the perspective of accompanying spouses, that is, Indian females who accompanied their professional husbands, who were working on temporary and permanent permits, in South Africa. I explore the experiences of these women, who are professional and semi-skilled, as they navigate settlement and integration into a culturally diverse society, one that is struggling to define what social cohesion means to South Africa. Framed within the context of social cohesion, this paper examines the reason for migration, their choice to migrate specifically to South Africa, and seeks to understand how migrant communities develop a sense of belonging to South Africa.

2   Literature Review

Globally, migration is on the increase with the number of international migrants, that is people living outside of the country they were born in, reaching 244 million in 2015 (United Nations 2016). This figure includes 20 million refugees. Migration is set to intensify and dominate with South to South[1] migration flows increasing instead of migration to the developed countries in the Global North. While Asian migration is a world-wide phenomenon (Haque 2005; Sarwal 2012), statistics from the United Nations (2016) reveal that between 2000 and 2015, Asia contributed more international

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[1] Defining the South remains contentious, problems associated with its 'definition, distinctiveness, political construction and chronology' (Bakewell 2009:2).

migrants than any other region, with more than fifty percent of all international migrants being born in Asia. Significant to this paper, is that in 2015, 16 million Indian nationals were living outside of their country (United Nations 2016).

The accelerated movement of people across the globe has implications for both, the host and home economies, communities, families and societies. Traditional migration theories studied the migrant as an individual, either as an emigrant or immigrant, with attention given to the countries of immigration (Faist *et al.* 2013). Scholars advocating a transnational approach to migration argued that migrants and their families continue to be part of their families' economic, socio-cultural and religious practices of the country of origin while also settling into those of their country of choice (Faist 2000; Glick Schiller *et al.* 1992; Levitt 2001; Portes *et al.* 1999). These authors assert that migrants have multiple attachments and should be understood as being part of two interconnecting worlds, where they forge and maintain 'multi-stranded social relations' linking host and home communities (Basch *et al.* 1994:6).

The increase in South to South migration demonstrates a gradual shift in the economic centre from West to East and from North to South characterised by the 'Shifting [of] Wealth' (OECD 2012: n.p.), resulting in the creation of new 'geographies of growth'. South Africa is an example of a developing country in the South. As a young democracy and culturally diverse society, social cohesion is paramount in maintaining its status as the largest economy on the African continent portraying the image of a socially inclusive society. Recent downturns in the economy, spiralling unemployment, a rising black middle class, xenophobic attacks on foreign nationals and turmoil in the education and service sectors have railroaded some of the transformative effects of democracy. Supporting this view, Struwig *et al.* (2013:2) states that some of the barriers in building social cohesion are 'institutionalised racism, 'class divisions, social fragmentation, language, spatial exclusion, sexism unemployment; crime, corruption, unequal experiences of the law and moral decline'.

One solution to building a socially cohesive society is by integrating migrant communities into its fold. The link between migration and social cohesion has been given little attention in the broader literature; more emphasis has been given to diversity and social cohesion. The lack of a precise definition of social cohesion opens up the concept to various interpretations. In South Africa, Struwig *et al.* (2013) developed a social cohesion barometer to inform policy and develop a conceptual framework on social cohesion. Other

definitions involve notions of 'solidarity' and 'togetherness' and common indicators include measures of trust and shared social norms. Developing a more inclusive society necessitates the inclusion of trust.

Putnam's (2000) widely cited work shows that general trust in people, trust in other ethnicities and even trust in people who are similar is significantly reduced in ethnically diverse communities. Putnam (2000) argues that ethnic minorities tend to 'hunker down' and withdraw from social life. Schaeffer (2011:2-3) presents four arguments as to why ethnically divided communities are less cohesive. First, we identify with others who are similar to us, but are prejudiced towards other ethnicities reducing levels of trust and willingness to integrate. Second, we associate with people like ourselves, tending towards ethnic enclaves; implying that in diverse neighbourhoods, people rarely integrate and miss opportunities for interaction. Third, the more diverse a population is ethnically, the greater the possibility of difference in ideas and agreements. Fourth, ethnic diversity brings diversity in language, making it harder to promote commonality. These arguments are not without contention and Schaeffer (2011) acknowledges this critique.

Studies by Alesina and La Ferrara (2008) and Delhey and Newton (2005) suggest that increasing social diversity has adverse effects on social cohesion and in diverse societies, generalised trust becomes difficult to implement and results in a loss of sense of community. For Stolle (2002) generalised trust is a good indicator for social cohesion. Much of the North American literature's point of departure is that diversity leads to less cohesive societies (Hooge *et al.* 2007). However, Hooge *et al.* (2007) also point out that the literature based on the relation between social diversity and social cohesion is problematic as it is mostly based on American society, which has particular race relations. The USA is an atypical Western society and other aspects of the social cohesion construct remain untapped. Hooge *et al.*'s (2007:16) study on social cohesion in European societies revealed that foreigners living in countries where they were given extensive voting rights at an early stage of immigration were more trusting of nationals. They also suggest that 'high-trust societies' paid attention to the rights of minorities much earlier, were oriented towards equality, and have egalitarian policies in place to integrate minorities into everyday life which breaks down 'tension and distrust' between social groups (Hooge *et al.* 2007:16).

In summary, the concept of social cohesion remains elusive and lacks a universally agreed definition. Common indicators of social cohesion across

research include 'solidarity' and 'togetherness' and include measures of 'trust and social norms' (Demireva 2015:2). In South Africa, the Institute for a Democratic Alternative's (IDASA) project on migration and social cohesion, emphasised integration rather than social cohesion (Williams n.d.). Jane Jenson (1998), the Canadian social theorist, was the first to elaborate on indicators measuring a socially cohesive society where all groups have a 'sense of belonging, participation, inclusion, recognition and legitimacy'. These measures resonate most consistently with the findings of this study.

3   Linking Social Cohesion and Migration

Walton-Roberts (2004:363) emphasises that literature on global migration is concerned with the sphere of production where the experiences of the single male migrant worker are given prominence and underplay the social production aspect of the family involving the family, the spouse and the community. This argument coheres with the bulk of the research on migration in the twentieth century which largely ignored the role of women as migrants (Morokvasic 1984), paying little attention to the women and families left behind (Boyd & Grieco 2003). Even when women became more visible in migrant research, they were typecast as 'trailing spouses' (Raghuram 2004) and appendages to their counterparts who are viewed in the traditional role as the head of household because they are males. Mahler and Pessar (2001) recognised how gender was embedded in the very fabric of migration processes and structures and are fortified in transnational social spaces.

In examining the visibility and invisibility of migrant women in migration literature Piper (2010), argued that discrepancies occurred in how the geographic boundaries of Asia, South to North and South to South are defined. While women are recognised as 'accompanying their spouses', official statistics are void of their status as independent migrants. Migrant women dominate in labour markets labelled as 'feminised domains' such as health care, domestic work, prostitution, entertainment and manufacturing (Lutz 2010; Piper 2010). The nature of this work is characterised by low wages, low status, minimal occupational mobility and security with little chance of collective organisation (Ramirez & Hondagneu-Sotelo 2009). By implication, the visibility of women in these sectors and the meaningful use of statistics remain questionable at best.

Research shows that women view out-migration as some form of per-

sonal and economic freedom, as an escape from familial and marriage responsibilities (Dannecker 2007; Piper 2008), from unwanted marriages and abusive spouses and relationships (Kofman *et al.* 2000; Krummel 2012; Piper 2010). Feminist theorists (Kofman 1999; Morokvasic 1984; Piper 2008;) redirected the lens of migration research which viewed women as victims of the 'multiple gendered dimensions' towards migrant women's agency and empowerment. This body of literature gives importance to agency by pinpointing the manner in which women make decisions and plan for their families' future well-being (Jinnah 2013; Rugunanan & Smit 2011).

Evidence shows how patriarchal norms and culture of the home country continue to shape women's understanding of their own identities. Marriage is considered central to the lives of Indians, and a rite of passage which determines ones 'gendered location' and the 'organisation of one's life' (Manohar 2013:195). Women, who move as accompanying spouses, cast off their careers to focus on their domesticated role with an emphasis on the needs of children in the host country (Yeoh & Willis 2002). The choice of having to give up their careers in some cases is not considered unusual as these women have already subjected themselves to a form of patriarchy in the family of orientation when agreeing to arranged marriages. Manohar (2013: 195) reminds us of the pressure placed on 'conforming to heteronormativity' norms of marriage and motherhood among Indian women which results in a 'fulfilled women', reinforcing Mahler and Pessar (2001) notion of the gendered hierarchies of power. Furthermore, the prospect of forsaking their careers is not unwelcomed by the women as they concentrate on their family's integration and 'fit' in a foreign country.

While a greater emphasis in the literature has been given to gender and international migration, fewer studies have paid attention to the gendered experiences of highly skilled migrant women. Research on the migration experiences of skilled women suggests varying views: some indicate that it negatively affected their careers (Hardill 2002; Man 2004; Suto 2009); leading o downward occupational mobility and a movement away from their professional life towards the family and home (Meares 2010) or to a re-domestication of women (Yeoh & Willis 2005). The focus of this paper is on the international migration experiences of skilled women who follow their husbands, regarded as professional elites, to South Africa. The women experience an intensification of domestic responsibilities or become 're-domesticated' while choosing to put the needs of their family first and

integrating into a culturally diverse country, which is not their first choice of destination. The Household Strategy Model deposits power in the household and decision making structures inclusive of men and women while combining structuralism with household analysis (Chant 1992). Male labour migration, however, is seen as an economic strategy that is encouraged by these governments and is a direct result of the labour market demands of the destination countries. When family members migrate sequentially, the male is usually the first to go, with women more likely to follow as the accompanying spouse. The extent to which women have some influence on the decision to migrate is given attention here.

4   Research Methods

This paper is an extension of research conducted by Huynh *et al.* (2013) on Chinese and Indian women migration to South Africa. The study, although small and exploratory, was unique in that it investigated two migration streams from Asian countries to Africa. South Africa attracts the largest inflow of Chinese and Indian migrants on the continent (Huynh *et al.* 2013). The primary aim was to examine their motivations for migration and to juxtapose the experiences of Chinese and Indian women in South Africa. During fieldwork for that study as a co-researcher, I became aware of a group of Indian women migrants in Gauteng who had accompanied their spouses to South Africa

This study is framed within a social constructionist paradigm which explores how meaning is created and how social members experience and understand their world (Creswell 2009). It adopted a qualitative approach to understand the personal experiences of married Indian women that have migrated to South Africa. As an exploratory study, a qualitative approach allows for greater flexibility with participants to probe certain issues and gain clarity where needed. A set of ten interviews with married Indian female nationals were conducted in Johannesburg. The sample is based on middle-class, highly skilled and semi-skilled Indian women who have migrated to South Africa as co-dependents. The interviews were collected during September 2012 to April 2013. Most of these participants were located in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, in close proximity to their husband's places of employment and established private schools.

The participants were sourced through a research associate who is a South African Indian married to an Indian national. Through their business

network, the research associate was able to access the research participants for this study. The sampling method was purposive as specific criteria were selected for the participants. Snowball sampling was also used as Indian women are less publicly visible (Rugunanan 2016). The wives had mostly post-graduate degrees and could easily communicate in English, except for two of the participants. These two interviews were conducted in Gujarati and translated into English by myself. The interviews were conducted in a manner that allowed flexibility on the part of the interviewer as well as the participant and took place either at the homes of the participants or at a place of their choosing.

A semi-structured interview guide was used to probe issues around the decision to migrate, choice of destination, family relationships in the country of origin, the role of children, remittances, working experiences in India and South Africa, domestic labour in both countries, integration into South Africa, and interrogating their sense of belonging to South Africa. Data analysis was iterative, it involved a first reading of the hand written field notes and listening to the audio-taped interviews, which were transcribed by the researcher. The data was analysed using Nvivo 11 Pro software which is used to organise and analyse unstructured qualitative data. An excel sheet was created in which certain demographic and background information was captured for each person interviewed. The excel sheet was then used to write the demographics section of the analysis. In Nvivo all the interviews and the excel sheet were imported. All the interviews were given a specific case node, which was linked to the excel sheet wherein themes were identified using Nvivo. The participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study, were assured of anonymity through the use of pseudonyms, and gave permission for their interviews to be recorded.

5   Discussion of Findings

Contrary to the traditional view of 'trailing spouses' or as 'dependents' as categorised in the migration literature (Yeoh & Willis 2005; Raghuram 2004) one needs to pay closer attention to the role of skilled women in migration processes. The issue of skilled women migrating has grown in importance in recent decades given the increase in migration globally (Butt 2013; Roos 2013). The wives migrated as co-dependents as their husbands were sent by their companies to work in South Africa for a contract period. Their ages

ranged from 25 to 47 years. The educational background varied from one participant who has a diploma in hairdressing, five participants with bachelor degrees and four participants with post graduate degrees. The duration that the participants have lived in South Africa (at the time of the interview) ranged from just two months to 25 years. Six of the participants have lived in South Africa for between 0-5 years and the remaining four participants have lived in South Africa for between 9-25 years.

All ten participants were married in India. Most of the women were married in their 20s, while one was married at the age of 31. All of the women were married through arranged marriages, although the degree of freedom that the women had in choosing their partner varied. At the time of the interviews seven of the women had children. Five of the women are currently working in South Africa while five are not working. Two people hold South African citizenship and two have residence permits in South Africa. The other six participants had varied permits: one was on a study permit, two were on a spousal permits and three indicated that they held work permits. The discussion that follows first examines the decision to migrate, followed by exploring the women's perceptions of South Africa which includes settling into neighbourhoods and their impediments to integration. Thereafter, the indicators of social cohesion such as social inclusion, tolerance for others, the role of voluntary associations and how migrant communities develop a sense of belonging to South Africa is interrogated.

5.1 The Decision to Migrate

Migration literature has given prominence to the male migrant as head of the household and the view of skilled international migrants being presented as highly mobile males with little attention given to family left behind. Although the males in this sample were skilled, the women were not lacking in skills or simply accepting of circumstances as indicated by their purposeful choice of spouse selection. Arya was quite specific about her choice of husband to her father; she wanted to marry a non-resident Indian (NRI) – and welcomed the opportunity to go abroad *purely for economic reasons* (e.a.). Her husband had already been working for a company that was starting expansions into developing countries before a post in South Africa became available. Upon enquiring from colleagues about the salary scale and type of environment, they then made the decision to come to South Africa. She says: 'Everyone told him

that it is very nice, you will save a lot unless [you] are hell bent on blowing [your] salary. Because it was an English speaking country we came'. Two important points are significant here, one is the economic factor and secondly the choice of an English speaking country. Arya adds that the employing company provides better pay for those working outside of India and makes provision for improved facilities for staff in a foreign country. All of the women indicated that they followed their husbands to South Africa, in some cases forsaking good positions to abide by the dictates of tradition and custom of marriage. There was no question in any of the women's minds that they would remain behind in India, to pursue their own careers or for familial reasons. Most of the women, however, were less enthusiastic about the choice of South Africa as a destination, partly due to misinformation and lack of knowledge about South Africa.

Structuration theories (Wright 1995) recognise that migrants have some power to decide how to react to labour market demands and trends. The majority of the participants in this study indicated that they wanted to migrate out for economic reasons, preferably to Northern countries such as the USA; South Africa was not often their first choice of destination. The findings from the study support the Household Strategy Model (Chant 1992), which suggests that even when men were the primary agents of migration, the women choose to accompany their spouses even though it meant giving up lucrative employment positions. While the women may have had little input on the decision to migrate as their husbands had accepted offers for work in South Africa, the choice to work in developed countries and earn a substantially higher income provided the opportunity to increase their social mobility in the home country upon their return. Sacrificing short term goals, such as family networks for long term ones, supports Butt's (2014:8) view that migrants have a 'wider range of choices' and are making their decisions within 'highly social personal spaces', indicating strategic decision making on the side of the migrants.

5.2 Perceptions of South Africa

Many of the participants had a very narrow and naïve view of South Africa. Some were under the impression that South Africa was underdeveloped, with no proper infrastructure and animals roaming the streets, supporting the views of participants in Huynh's *et al.* (2013) research. Their experiences have,

however, been to the contrary. Prior to Arya and her husband making the decision to come to South Africa, they enquired from expatriates working in the country about their views on South Africa and received positive feedback. In contrast, Chetna compared to Arya, had a very narrow view of life in South Africa. She imagined that animals were still roaming the streets and thought it was under-developed and lacking in proper infrastructure. It was quite a surprise for her to come to a modern, developed country with proper roads and infrastructure, unlike 'the roads of India and poor driving habits of motorists there'.

Deepa was always keen to travel, but South Africa, as a destination, was not on her radar. When she searched the internet for information about South Africa, she found the commentary negative and very disconcerting. She says that when she came here, she realised that crime was not as bad as portrayed in the media; however one had to take necessary precautions. Chanda also had similar negative perceptions of South Africa. Her initial view was 'oh South Africa, why not some other country?' Her husband reassured her that, in fact, life in South Africa was quite similar to the USA and everything would be fine albeit the concerns about security. Chanda was anxious that the information technology sector was not as highly developed as the USA. She says: 'I never thought that South Africa will be underdeveloped. I know that it is developing country and [now] compared to India it is much more developed'.

Settling In

Most of the participants in the study lived in the upmarket areas of the north of Johannesburg such as Sandton, Douglasdale, and Bryanston. In most cases the accommodation was organised by the company concerned. For the first two years of living in the complex, Arya and her family were the only Indian family living there. Speaking about the rest of its residents, she says: 'everyone is fine, everyone is in their own world. We do not have any one-to-one interactions with anyone'. Although one resident did make an attempt; she was originally from Kenya (which has a large Indian population), but the common ancestry of having a Gujarati mother and a Greek father and the fact that she studied in Bombay, prompted this woman to reach out and make her acquaintance to Arya and her family. Otherwise, they were generally left to themselves until fellow Indian nationals working in the same company as her husband arrived. She mentioned that the Indian women, as a group, became quite friendly and used

to celebrate traditional Indian festivals such as *karwar chor* (a fast that Indian women undertake for their husbands). Another participant, Chetna, shares that in the complex they were staying in, had a number of local South African Indians residing there. There was, however, little contact between these groups. On the whole, there appears to be little contact between the participants and their neighbours. One participant explains 'we don't mingle; the neighbours don't mingle so much'. While some participants explained they did know their neighbours, the amount of contact sounded fairly limited. Comments such as 'we do, I mean I do know my neighbours, you know. We kinda say 'hi, how are you?'' show that while there is a level of friendliness there does not appear to be much contact beyond the occasional greeting. One woman went as far as saying that there was 'absolutely no interaction' between her and the neighbours and another explained 'neighbours… we hardly meet neighbours because they always in[doors]'.

It was interesting to note that there appears to be more contact when the neighbours are Indian, whether these are South African nationals or Indian nationals. One participant explained: 'Indians will be more inviting. They can invite you home more easily, compared to your next door neighbour who is white or black. From India, they would be more hospitable. I don't know. It's just human nature that we tend to attract towards the same race group you know'. The connection to Indian nationals appears to be stronger than to other people in the neighbourhoods. One woman even went so far as to link the presence of South African Indians to her feeling of home 'Lenasia is the land of Indians so you feel a little more of being at home'. Comparing the interaction that people have with their neighbours in South Africa to neighbours in India one participant explained 'no, in India it is overly social. There are times when you want your space and you don't get it. You will definitely be friends with your neighbours or at least some communication'.

Impeding Mobility

One of the indicators of the breakdown of social cohesion is the fear of crime. Literature shows that the fear of crime can have an adverse impact on social cohesion (Jackson 2004; Roberts 2010). Many of the participants choose not to go out on their own during the day because they were forewarned about the high crime rates in the city. While the company does provide a pool car for use by the wives, this is done on a rotational basis. Arya said her husband had

cautioned her about walking on her own to the malls. Chetna says that while it is relatively safe to walk on the roads in India, here she was forbidden to walk alone to the mall, which she found very isolating. Deepa lives in Sandton which is in close proximity to places of work and leisure. Something unusual for her was the lack of people walking about, going about their daily tasks; this was in sharp contrast to Mumbai, which is bustling with the continuous movement of people. Chanda also laments the lack of freedom to move around by herself or even just to go out walking at night. India provides this kind of safety that is not easily found in South Africa.

Together with crime, the lack of a safe and reliable transport system impeded the mobility of the participants the most. These factors further hamper the integration of the participants and led to them withdrawing into personal networks and ethnic enclaves. The participants felt isolated in the neighbourhoods into which they had settled. There appears to be little contact between the participants and their neighbours, beyond perfunctionary formalities. While there was more contact and a willingness to interact with Indian nationals because of the similarity in language and background, there was some attempt to interact with South African Indians, but interaction across racial lines appeared limited. These findings are similar to Rugunanan's (2016) view of insularity among migrant groups and Pillay (2008) also commented that communities showed 'increased fragmentation' rather than a tendency towards integration. The IDASA project on Social Cohesion (Williams n.d.) came to similar findings that living together in the same neighbourhoods does not result in integration, instead it requires a commitment to policies and programmes that involve the participation of both migrants and citizens in building a socially inclusive society.

5.3 A Sense of Inclusion

One of the ways of developing integration and feeling a sense of belonging to a country is by accessing food and condiments of the home country. Chetna says that she had difficulty adjusting to South African food and even the spices used by local South Africans Indians compared unfavourably with those found in the home country. Chetna visits Fordsburg, a popular suburb near Johannesburg, which has a large migrant population from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan (Rugunanan 2016). Merchants in the suburb source spices and products from these countries to cater to a growing South Asian migrant

community. Another popular place frequented for products from the home country is a previously designated 'Indian' area under the apartheid government, that is, Laudium based in Pretoria. Kavisha says that 'you feel like you are in India and everything is available'. Kavisha is quite content with South Africa, saying that they had had little problems with regard to food, given the rise in the popularity of Indian restaurants. With the increase in Indian nationals making their way to South Africa post 1994, Kavisha states that one could have 'real' Indian food because the restaurant owner is from India, together with most of his staff. Kavisha's experiences must be treated with caution as she has been living in South Africa for sixteen years; her husband is a successful business man with companies in South Africa and India, and thus her privileged position provides a different experience for her. Although Deepa strongly identifies with India as her home, some sense of familiarity abounds when she visits Durban and Lenasia, which has large settlements of South African Indian residents. Since 2000, streams of migrants from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan have chosen to settle in previously designated 'Indian' areas (Rugunanan 2016). Part of the familiarity is in accessing 'Indian' food which is readily found in these areas. In her words 'when you go to other countries it is like a mission'. Even more exciting for her was the availability of both North and South Indian spices. She says that in some cities, particularly in North India, it is difficult to find South Indian spices, and similarly so in South India, where North Indian spices are scarce; but in the South African shops, one could easily find spices from both the regions of India.

Developing a sense of inclusion and integration into a country takes place when a sense of familiarity develops. This is especially relevant when familiar foods and spices of the home country can be found. Given that South Africa has a long standing historical relationship with India, and an established second and third generation South African Indian population, makes provision for traditional Indian herbs and spices. However, a sense of the familiar cannot replace the longing for home and family. Butt (2014) states that one of the most challenging aspects of migration is the loss of valued family networks. For these participants, a longing for home is exacerbated by the lack of family in South Africa. All of the participants expressed a strong longing for their family members left behind. This was even more acute during significant festivals indicating the importance of family networks for new migrant communities. Deepa says that while she misses India, the country she was born and raised in,

the void created by the absence of her family is even more heart rendering. This feeling is most acute during celebratory festivals, and especially so during the auspicious celebration of Diwali. Even close friendship networks cannot replace family during holidays and important festivals.

Veena shares similar sentiments of longing for her family back in the home country. She is adamant, however, that she cannot return home without her husband, saying 'I am married, I have to be with my husband'. Although she would much rather prefer to return to India, she feels leaving him in South Africa would go against her values of tradition, custom and marriage. Veena does not have a sense of belonging to South Africa as she says: 'It is not my country. Because my family is [in India], everything is there. So I miss India more'. Similar to Veena, Chetna corroborates that the absence of family members and relatives has left a gap that cannot be filled by her husband's extended circle of friends, with whom they frequently socialise. The friendship circle cannot replace the familial affections that a family provides. Chetna is, however, committed to staying in South Africa because of her husband, and like Veena, feels that she does not have much choice in the matter. The pressure to conform to the heteronormative norms of marriage and motherhood among Indian women, places undue stress on the women to obey traditional practices, reinforcing the gendered hierarchies of power (Mahler & Pessar 200; Manohar 2013).

A sense of inclusion is also created when there is tolerance regarding differences, or what Jensen (1998) terms as acceptance/rejection by members in society. An overriding theme that kept appearing in the interviews is one of tolerance and friendliness. When the participants compared their experiences of South Africa to India, they found South Africans to be accommodating and more tolerant of each other. In India, there appears to be intense competition and those that do not have the requisite skills or language are made to feel excluded in society.

5.4 Tolerance for Others

Arya makes the significant comment that South Africans are 'dramatically tolerant of different types of people. In India, people are not so tolerant. When I came here my son could not speak in English, at no point did his teachers make him feel uneasy. It's not like that in India. If you go from one part [of the country] to another and you will become uneasy'. Even though she recognises

that different races in South Africa tend to socialise with their own groups and that even people from India 'have their own thing in South Africa', she still finds that people are very tolerant. Unlike in India, which she argues is not even a nation in the true sense of the word, it is one region, under one constitution, one government, but consists of 'different languages, very different ethnicities and the differences are very, very vital'. While all of this gets brushed under 'one country', the tensions are real and manifest everywhere. For Arya, there is a distinct lack of tolerance in India, such that someone from a different region will be made to feel like an outsider, even within their own country.

Arya mentions that people are polite in South Africa and mindful of other people's boundaries. Compared to India, people are not like that; they will intentionally step over boundaries to hurt other people's feelings. This mindfulness was something that she appreciated about living in South Africa. Bhindu also finds South Africans tolerant, especially black people, whom she describes as 'very nice persons'. She uses the taxi service regularly in Lenasia to and from her workplace and finds that 'if you treat someone with respect, they will in turn respect you back'. This has been her experience in using public transport, in particular, the black taxi industry, alluding to Arya's view that South Africans are very tolerant. Chetna reinforces this view by saying that South Africa is a welcoming country. She found it quite strange that her husband would greet the person manning the toll booth. She says 'in India, you would not say hello to a strange person. Here everybody smiles at you and they say hello. Just say hello. That itself brings a smile to your face. I have never seen that in India'.

Kavisha also confirms the view of tolerance 'the people have a lot of tolerance towards each other and it's a good nation and they have harmony within themselves. So many races and groups of people are here. They learn each other's culture and their way of living in harmony with each other. I don't see any problem as you see it'. Most importantly, being in South Africa has taught her patience and to be tolerant of other races. It has also taught her the values of being kind, humble and gentle. Arya agrees that South Africa is a welcoming country; she says that there is no 'insider' 'outsider' feeling as in Australia, where tensions between local Australians and Indian nationals have increased. She mentions that many Indian students were attacked in Australia and were told not to speak in Hindi, their home language. South Africa, however, is tolerant of different languages. In contrast, Chetna relates that she

had a terrible experience whilst working under a white colleague who disrespected her and spoke ill of her in front of colleagues. This created a sense of distrust in Chetna towards white people.

The views of the participants resonated quite strongly with me. Viewing South Africans from the perspective of migrants and appreciating that, as a society, we are quite tolerant lends credence to creating a more socially inclusive and cohesive society. According to Struwig *et al.* (2013) tolerant societies are viewed as progressive and cohesive when there is little discrimination. South Africa is fraught with discrimination and yet these migrants perceive South Africans as being very tolerant. However, even though the participants viewed South Africans as very tolerant, the migrants preferred not to integrate into broader society. Many of the participants tended to be involved in ethnic associations or religious groups of the home country. They preferred to remain in ethnic groups where similarity of language and cultural practices provided a sense of familiarity for the women. The importance of social networks and the value and meaning these networks have for the women in providing a sense of social solidarity cannot be underestimated.

5.5 *Voluntary Associations*

Arya mentions that trying to describe the Indian national community is a misconception as the word 'Indian' alone is so large. The Indian nationals living here have their own separate associations and these are based on region as well, for example there is a Bengali Association, a Marathi Mandal and the Uthar Bhar Seva Samaj to name a few. But Arya also belongs to the company network associated with her husband's work which, for example, assists with the organisation of employee's children's birthday parties or farewell parties for members returning to India. She also belongs to the ladies group in the complex they reside. Chetna belongs to a Kerala based church in Pretoria. Every three years a priest from the host church in Kerala will come and stay in South Africa. The priest travels around South Africa tending to his congregation in Cape Town, East London and Johannesburg. The priest also conducts services in the Malayalam language. The fact that a priest is brought in every three years attests to a growing concentration of migrants from Kerala in South Africa and the preservation of cultural and religious practices.

Chanda says she is part of a voluntary charity association called India

Care made up of Indian nationals who oversee the remodelling and development of schools. She says the organisation is run by people from India who are settled in South Africa, some for over 30 years. Sonal says that they are part of the Keralite community and estimates that they have over 500 members. She says they are spread across Southern Africa and from the north of Venda to South Africa. They are also found in Uganda, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Zambia.

Arya mentions that although there are eight families in Johannesburg and five more in Pretoria, working for the same company, this does not imply a strong bonding between these members. On the contrary, there is a tension between these groups which seems to stem from the regions that each family originates. It, therefore, appears that tensions from the home country seem to follow the families into the destination countries. Bhindu concurred with the sentiments of Arya, saying that she prefers not to have friends or associations with Indian nationals as they were jealous of those that were making a living here. Thus she prefers to keep to herself and mind her own business. The reason for her reticence is that when she did assist in helping a fellow Indian national, the young woman ended up taking Bhindu's job from her.

5.6 Sense of Belonging to South Africa

Time appears to influence the sense of belonging that participants have. For example Arya explained 'last December when we were going back to India for our annual holiday, I [felt very strange]. I was feeling as if I am leaving my home and going somewhere. [Living in South Africa] for four years is quite a long time'. Although Chetna had been in South Africa for five years, she does not have a sense of belonging to South Africa. She explained 'maybe it's because [we] do not have relatives here. My husband's parents also retired and moved back to India'. She further explained 'we move around with my husband's friends [quite a bit], but it is not the same as having your relatives or parents here'. Although Chetna indicates she that has a say in the decision to stay or return to India, her decision is ultimately guided by her husband's preference.

For the participants who have only lived in South Africa for five years or less, the feeling of home appears to be quite different. Most of the participants wanted to return to India in the future. When asking them whether they planned to stay in South Africa or return to India many explained they

would return to India in the future. From comments such as 'I am going back. [When] I have enough money [then] I will go home but I will not stay here' it also becomes clear that economic reasons exist as to why these women (and/or their families) decided to leave India and come to South Africa. Upon asking one of the participants if they had any sense of belonging in South Africa she was quick to respond 'no'. The reason for wanting to return home is linked to the theme of longing for family. She is not alone in mentioning the connection between home or belonging and family, supported by the view 'because my family is there [in India], everything is there. So I miss India more'.

For those participants that have lived in South Africa for longer than nine years, Sonal developed a sense of belonging to South Africa, and says 'I would officially say that my home country is South Africa, because I have grown up mostly here. I am very comfortable here even when I go to India, I feel like a foreigner because I have never really been brought up there'. While feeling a sense of belonging to South Africa, she also identifies with her home country, especially culturally, in the 'ways we do things … respectful of the way we carry ourselves and the way we dress and the way we interact with people' deriding the western influences on Indian people. Reshma was entertaining doubts about whether she still identifies with her home country. Living for almost ten years in South Africa, the hue of India has changed somewhat, 'things have changed so much in India. It doesn't even seem like it is the same India'. Having been married for almost ten years, she has spent the majority of her time in South Africa with her husband. She says 'when you are married that is when your life changes first. Wherever you settle that feels more like your home'. She hopes to make South Africa her permanent home one day.

Chanda indicated that she still identified with India as her home country, but she also feels a sense of belonging to South Africa as she is earning money here and paying taxes, thus she feels some sort of belonging. She does not think that South Africa could ever be her home one day, as their plans were motivated by economic factors and they intend to migrate to another country before returning to settle in India at a later stage. Kavisha, having been in South Africa for sixteen years, says South Africa is a different nation since its population constitutes a significant proportion of second and third generation Indians. While she considers South Africa as her home and feels a sense of belonging to it, she is still building a house in Mumbai and will be travelling between the countries. As her husband's company is currently operational in

South Africa, they prefer to be based here at the moment. Their movements to and fro are dictated by the economic needs of their business enterprises. The views of the participants varied in what constituted a sense of belonging to South Africa. The length of time is a determining factor in the lives of the migrants. The element of return migration and transnational migration are also themes that emanated from the participants and areas for future research.

6   Conclusions

This paper begins to touch on the extent to which migrant diversity impacts social cohesion in the South African context. This paper examined the views of skilled Indian migrant women who accompanied their spouses, who were working on temporary and permanent permits to South Africa. The study makes a contribution by focusing on skilled women migrants, largely ignored in the broader migration literature. The women, skilled in their own right, comply to heteronormative norms of marriage and motherhood, while navigating the terrain of a new, socially diverse country. Couched within the context of social cohesion, this paper explored their reasons for migrating to South Africa, their experiences of settling in and to understand how migrant communities felt a sense of belonging and 'fit' in socially and culturally diverse contexts in South Africa.

The definition for social cohesion for this study includes factors such as a sense of belonging, participation, inclusion, recognition and legitimacy (Jenson 1998). The participants of this study, while feeling some sense of belonging to the country, also preferred not to participate in the broader society. When they choose to participate, they did so within the safety of their ethnic groups. Language, culture and a fear of crime were some of the determinants that impeded trust and full participation in society. The participants were, however, unanimous about how tolerant South Africans were and basic social factors like acknowledging and greeting people made an impression on them. Migrants view South Africans as socially cohesive when comparing their experiences to life back in India. The participants also preferred to volunteer and participate within their ethnic organisations, be it religious, cultural or even contributing to nation building in South Africa. Participants mentioned that these organisations were divided regionally and sometimes the tensions of the home country impacted on associations in South Africa and could affect broader integration into society. Overall, the migrant

communities seemed to 'hunker down' and remain within their ethnic circle to ease the longing for home and find a 'fit' within their communities. This however, impedes their integration into the broader society and creates a sense of distrust towards them. However, migrants working and living longer than five years in South Africa begin to develop a sense of belonging and legitimacy to the country.

The role of Indian migrant communities is under-researched within the South African context. The experiences of skilled and semi-skilled migrant women are even more under-researched in the broader migration literature. Once married, the women succumb to traditional cultural practices of regarding the male as the head of the household. Although it appears that the women have little choice in the decision to migrate and forsake lucrative employment, they choose to follow their husbands to South Africa. The women are, however, not averse to temporally migrating if this will increase their social mobility back in the home country. Thus, migration is not simply a rational economic decision made by one person; it is a purposeful strategic economic decision made by both spouses based on the economic well-being of their long term future. The theme of return migration emanating from the participants is an indicator of their strategic choices in the decision to migrate.

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