Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjms20

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To cite this article: Amrita Limbu (2022): *Badhyata* and *dukha*: emotions, labour and migration across education migration to Australia and labour migration to Qatar from Nepal, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2022.2142106

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2022.2142106

Published online: 03 Nov 2022.

JOURNAL OF ETHNIC AND MIGRATION STUDIES
https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2022.2142106

Badhyata and *dukha*: emotions, labour and migration across education migration to Australia and labour migration to Qatar from Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Badhyata (compulsion) and *dukha* (hardship) are central emotional frames that drive and characterise the migration of both education migrants and labour migrants from Nepal. Migration from Nepal, therefore, entails a compulsion, and the migration experience is often one of *dukha*. Taking the case of education migration to Australia and labour migration to Qatar from Nepal, this article examines how diverse migration conditions differently shape and influence the migrants' subjective experiences as well as that of their families. Drawing on data from a multi-sited ethnographic study conducted among Nepali education migrants in Sydney, labour migrants in Qatar, and their families in Nepal, the analysis centres around emotions attached to work/labour and migration and how it is experienced, not only by the migrants but also by the families in Nepal. In doing so, this article argues that while compulsion initially drives both types of migration, because of the difference in migration conditions and the emotions attached to future possibilities, the qualities of compulsion across the two migration pathways vary significantly, and differently structure the understanding of *dukha*.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 9 April 2022
Accepted 26 October 2022

KEYWORDS
Migration; Nepal; Australia; Qatar; emotions

Introduction

Migration, whether for education or labour is part of a firmly established 'culture of migration' in Nepal (Kandel and Massey 2002). Every year, about half a million Nepalis leave the country to take up education or employment abroad (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology 2018; Ministry of Labour and Employment 2018). But similar to broader migration scholarship, studies on Nepali migration examine the experiences and phenomenon of education migration to the Western countries like the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom (Sijapati 2010; Valentin 2015) often distinctly from labour migration to the Persian Gulf countries or the Middle East broadly and parts of Asia (Bruslé 2012; Donini 2019; Gardner 2012). In contrast, this article takes the case of education migration to Australia and labour migration to Qatar from Nepal to examine how diverse migration conditions differently shape and

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influence the migrants' subjective experiences as well as that of their families that do not migrate. To do so, this article draws on data from a multi-sited ethnographic study conducted among Nepali transnational families – education migrants in Sydney (students and/or their spouses on dependent partner visas), labour migrants in Qatar, and their families in Nepal.

In this article, I explore the migration experiences of the two migrant groups as framed by the common notion of *badhyata* (compulsion) and their experiences one of *dukha* (hardship). Drawing on the notions of 'emotion work' (Hochschild 1979) and 'affective economies' (Ahmed 2004), I show how *badhyata* and *dukha* are central emotional frames and specific cultural expressions of the migration experiences among Nepalis that drive and characterise migration of both education migrants and labour migrants from Nepal but differently structure their experiences. Focusing on the central theme of emotions attached to work/labour and/or migration, first, I examine how the migrants' experiences of work and life are shaped by the differential migration contexts as well as perceived future potentials in Australia and Qatar. Second, I illustrate how the families that remain at home experience these emotions of migrants' labour. I argue that while compulsion initially drives both types of migration, because of the difference in migration conditions and the emotions attached to future possibilities, the qualities of compulsion across the two migration pathways vary significantly, and differently structure the understanding of *dukha*.

Badhyata and *dukha*: conceptual approaches to a culture of migration in Nepal

In Nepal, (out)migration has been a historically significant livelihood strategy rooted in the notion of '*kamaune/kamauna*' (to earn) (KC 2014). Historically, migration provided an opportunity to earn cash, at a time when such prospects for cash income or employment were unavailable in the country (Shrestha 1985). But after decades of political instability, limited employment opportunities in the country, widespread disenchantment with the Nepali political scenario (Sijapati 2014), as well as loss of hope of making careers and futures in the country, prospects of *kamauna* continue to drive migration from Nepal. This same motivation is significant not only for labour migrants but as I discuss further, for many student migrants, economic motivations and long-term future security often remain significant, if not primary to their migration (Valentin 2015). Under such circumstances, education migration and labour migration are increasingly sought as alternative pathways to economic stability and social mobility, depending on existing capacity – economic capital but also cultural and social capital.

Migration from Nepal, therefore, entails a compulsion *(badhyata)*, and the migration experience is often one of *dukha*. In this article, I use this feeling of a sense of *badhyata* to take up migration to improve or secure present and future potentials among both education migrants and labour migrants. As also discussed elsewhere (Limbu 2021), *dukha* is a common articulation of everyday experiences in Nepali. *Dukha* is also commonly used in conjunction with the term *sukha* (wellbeing), and as a common cultural expression, this notion of *sukha-dukha* can refer to a wide range of feelings and emotional states related to wellbeing and hardship. While *dukha* broadly refers to suffering, sorrow, or hardship, in my study, I mostly use it to refer to hardship as my participants referred

to *dukha* not as their state of sorrow or suffering or even pain, but rather in general to the everyday hardships of life. Nonetheless, *dukha* was used in a multitude of references to work and life abroad. As I discuss in the later section, sometimes *dukha* was used in reference to migration, living away from family, or challenging financial circumstances, but often this notion of *dukha* also revolved around labour or work, mainly low-skilled work, for both education migrants and labour migrants. In this way, these broad cultural expressions of the overall emotional frames of migration are connected to the sending country conditions and a culture of migration across Nepal. Understanding the differential impacts of this widespread 'culture of migration' in Nepal across varied migration pathways remains one of my main motivations for bringing the study of education migrants and labour migrants together.

In this article, I build on the Gulf migration scholarship, mainly on the experiences of labour and migration in Qatar and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, that have commonly highlighted issues of risk, labour problems, as well as poor living and working conditions of low-skilled workers (Bruslé 2012; Gardner 2012), and extend the discussion to show how the everyday experiences of living away from family, or the *badhyata* to migrate in itself constitutes *dukha*. I also build on the scholarship on student migration to the West, including from Nepal (Dhungel 2017; Sijapati 2010; Valentin 2015), exploring the experiences of labour migration and education migration alongside one another. As studies have shown, for the relatively 'privileged' students from better socioeconomic backgrounds, the everyday struggles and challenges, and 'downskilling' into low-skilled jobs are often a new form of experience (Sijapati 2010, 2014; Valentin 2015). This article examines these experiences of the education migrants' work/labour and migration in Australia alongside that of the labour migrants' in Qatar to highlight how, despite the common notion of *badhyata*, *dukha* manifests differently for the education migrants and labour migrants, but also for the families. To do so, I also draw on the emerging literature that examines emotions and affect in migration (Baldassar 2007; McKay 2005; Wilding et al. 2020; Wise and Velayutham 2017) and conceptually rely on concepts from broader sociology and cultural studies approaches to emotion and affect.

In the analysis, I highlight how the feeling of *badhyata* is connected to how migrants manage their emotions or undertake 'emotion work' (Hochschild 1979). As Hochschild (1979, 552) notes, individuals attempt to feel 'appropriate to the situation', and such attempts require one to alter/manage emotions according to expected and appropriate cultural conventions or 'feeling rules'. For the education migrants and labour migrants in my study, the 'feeling rules' (Hochschild 1979) that guide this emotion management with regard to how they perceive their work and migration differ according to the migration contexts and future potentials. As also discussed in Limbu (2021), my use of emotions and affect enables an examination of emotions and affect distinctly but also together. I draw on Sara Ahmed's (2004, 120) theorisation of affect defined in terms of 'affective economies' or affect as the 'accumulation of affective value over time', produced as a result of the circulation of emotions. I use 'circulation' of emotions symbolically to refer to how emotions attached to migrants' situations are also experienced by their families across distance or vice versa. This has been crucial to understand how migration is collectively experienced in the family. By emotions, I refer to the emotions named and described by my participants such as 'happy', 'sad/sadness', 'guilt', or 'regret' as well as to their accounts that depict these emotions. And I use

affect to refer to embodied sensations (McKay 2005), due to the 'accumulation' of emotions. Moving away from the standard definition of affect as a fleeting bodily sensation, I understand affect as accumulative intensities of longer duration. As such, I consider emotions separately from affect, but also affect as encompassing of or resultant of the accumulation of emotions. I also move away from the understanding of affect as precognitive and occurring prior to emotions. My use of affect as the accumulation of emotions places affect after emotions.

Education migration to Australia and labour migration to Qatar

Education migration to Australia and labour migration to Qatar from Nepal make for a unique case to examine some of the consequences of this contemporary compulsion for migration from the Global South discussed in the previous section. The case of Nepal also resonates with ongoing changes in several other countries in the Global South, where migration, whether for education or labour, is increasingly sought to expand present and future possibilities. In Qatar, Nepalis comprise the second largest group of migrants (De Bel-Air 2017), and in Australia, they comprise the third largest group of overseas students (Department of Education, Skills & Employment 2022). There were approximately 50,000 Nepalis on student visas in Australia in 2018 and also in 2019, making Australia the largest destination for students from Nepal (Department of Education, Skills & Employment 2022). During the same period, the total labour permits issued by the Nepali government to take up work in Qatar averaged around 172,000 annually (Department of Foreign Employment 2018, 2019). Taking the case of Nepal, therefore, offers a vantage point to understand the migration of two prominent and simultaneous migratory pathways within the same national group.

Likewise, education migration to Australia and labour migration to Qatar make for significant cases to analyse the experiences of migration across two diverse migration pathways. Australia, a high-income Western country, receives one of the highest numbers of international students, with an annual average of 725,000 overseas students in 2018 and 2019 (Department of Education, Skills & Employment 2022). Likewise, as one of the largest recipients of foreign workers that stands at 95 percent of the workforce (De Bel-Air 2017), Qatar makes for a good case to examine contemporary labour mobility. Besides the volume of migration, in terms of migrants' preference, Qatar is also considered to be midway between the 'cosmopolitan' and 'Western-oriented' United Arab Emirates (UAE) considered relatively 'safer' and 'less strict' for migrants and the 'stricter' countries like Saudi Arabia in the GCC making it a good case study (Chambers 2018).

Aside from the primary motive of education migration and labour migration for 'education' or 'work', and in general, the migrants' different socioeconomic backgrounds, considerations of the key role of policy regimes and structural differences distinguish the two pathways of migration, and differently shape the migrant experiences. One of the key distinctions between migration to Australia and Qatar rests in the provision for education migrants to transition to long-term or permanent residents, while migration to Qatar is strictly governed as temporary labour migration and offers no scope for naturalisation. Similarly, while Australian migration policies permit family migration or for dependent partners/spouses and children to migrate along with the migrant, for migrants in Qatar it is only a possibility for those employed in professional

jobs with salaries above QR 10,000 or equivalent (Hukoomi Qatar e-Government 2021). As also noted earlier, analysis of the migrants' experiences, based on these differential policy regimes and structural dimensions including the experiences of work or labour in Australia (Campbell, Boese, and Tham 2016; Robertson 2016; Wright and Clibborn 2017) and Qatar (Bruslé 2012; Gardner 2012) that this article focuses on remain largely separate sub-fields of migration scholarship.

Labour migration in Qatar and the GCC, governed by the *kafala* system, is known to largely restrict the agency of foreign workers including in terms of changing jobs or leaving the country of their own will, although there has been some loosening of the *kafala* during fieldwork in the spring of 2018 (Gardner 2012; Jureidini 2019). However, some of my participants' experiences with changing jobs or leaving the country remained largely restricted at the practical level, a point also noted by Amnesty International (2021) despite the complete scrapping of the two legal provisions by 2020. Additionally, the nature of structured sponsored migration where recruitment and job placement are organised by agents/agencies and where the employers/companies take legal responsibility for the workers have been widely reported to be exploitative to migrants, particularly in domestic and other low-skilled or low paid jobs (Bruslé 2012; Donini 2019; Gardner 2012). And, housing the low-skilled migrants in dormitory-styled dwellings or 'labour camps' has largely worked to keep them segregated from the Qatari society and city centres (Bruslé 2012). Some migrants I met in Qatar living in company-provided accommodation mentioned having to return to the residence by 8 pm or else risk being locked out. It is these circumstances that make the experiences of the labour migrants starkly different from those of education migrants in Australia.

In comparison, education migrants in Australia enjoy greater freedom and autonomy including with regard to changing jobs, leaving the country, changing their courses or university/college, in their living arrangements, and in their everyday mobility to go out or return to their residence at any time. Nonetheless, research on international students' labour in Australia also reveals exploitation and underpayment of students in the labour market (Farbenblum and Berg 2018). Additionally, several factors including financial pressures to sustain their migration as well as preference for permanent residents and other discriminatory recruitment practices push the temporary migrants to the bottom of the labour hierarchies in Australia, to the more readily available jobs in hospitality and retail that are often non-mainstream casual, shift work, late nights and weekend work (Campbell, Boese, and Tham 2016; Robertson 2016). Likewise, beyond cultural capital that is achieved through a western education, and the opportunity for young students to explore freedom, independence, friendship and cultures (Gomes 2018), for many students, obstacles to social networking including due to cultural differences and adjustment issues or living away from family make their experiences challenging, often one of loneliness and isolation (Sawir et al. 2007). However, unlike the labour migrants whose work and migration is often tied to their families' maintenance and sustenance, the students work to sustain their life and studies in Australia. By analysing how some of these different conditions of migration including potential pathways to permanent residency, provision for family migration, or work conditions, largely dictate the experiences, expectations, and imaginations of migration for education migrants, differently from labour migrants, this article makes an empirical and methodological contribution to migration studies.

Data and methodology

Data that informs this article constitute of in-depth interviews and observations, including 20 interviews with education migrants in Sydney, Australia, 21 with labour migrants in Qatar, 12 with families in Nepal, and seven key informant interviews in Australia and Qatar in 2018. The article is part of a larger project on *Migration, Emotions, and Affective Transnational Family Relations*, and the analysis presented here draws on conversations with migrants aimed to understand their experiences of work and migration as well as how the families in Nepal experience migration of their family member. The interviews with Qatar migrants' families were mostly with spouses and parents, while the education migrants' families mostly included parents. This also points to the different life stages of migrants across Australia and Qatar. The education migrants I interviewed were mostly young in their twenties, unmarried (only 5 were married), pursuing undergraduate or postgraduate studies in Australia and came from better-off families when compared to the labour migrants I met in Qatar who were mostly married (only 2 were unmarried), belonged to an older age cohort including in their twenties, thirties, and forties, and came from families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. After meeting migrants in Australia and Qatar, I met a select number of their families in Nepal, based on where the majority of families willing to participate lived, and what would be more geographically feasible – (the Kathmandu Valley in Central Nepal and Jhapa district in Eastern *Tarai*). In the next section, I take the cases of migrants who are somewhat representative of each cohort in terms of their age, socioeconomic background, and their experiences of work and migration.

All interviews were conducted (by the author) in Nepali, but some participants used a mix of English and Nepali, which is quite a common practice, especially among those educated in English-medium schools. All except one in-depth interview was audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim in Roman Nepali to retain the Nepali terms/meanings. The transcribed/translated interviews were then thematically coded in NVIVO, initially by generating generic themes and later more specific codes. Because the research questions were similar across Australia and Qatar, I utilised similar codes as far as practicable. By being in the field, conducting observation and interviews, I was also privy to the emotions and intangible affective responses that perhaps said more about my participants' subjective experiences and their bonds with family. Thus, while emotions or affect did not constitute the framework for analysis initially, it was a decision made post-fieldwork during data analysis.

Badhyata and *dukha*: emotions of labour and migration across Australia and Qatar

Financially independent at a young age, Samikshya was only eighteen when she left home to pursue higher education in Australia. I had met Samikshya several times before sitting down for an interview, spending some evenings at her place, a well-furnished rented unit in Sydney, where she and a friend shared one bedroom and a Nepali couple the other. Working in Sydney gave her the freedom to return home late at night or to shop for clothes or the latest gadgets, such as an Apple Watch. But it was also easy to sense her tiredness when she returned from work, as she would quickly eat something and rest

without saying much. Unable to find work in fast-food restaurants, she had finally taken up work as a room attendant in a five-star hotel in Sydney. This was a physically exhausting job, especially to manage alongside her studies, but one that had given her financial independence living alone in a global city, away from home. During the interview, she recounted an incident when her father Harka had cried as she told him about her work and explained how she carries out her duties.

> With father, when in Nepal we would have arguments, but after coming here, he too came to know how it is here. And when I told him I work like this, like this (gesturing) – because I had not done anything in Nepal and I have to do it here, my parents must feel something, at that time my father had cried. After that I felt my father cares about me.

Engagement in low-skilled jobs has become a common way for international students to manage their lives in Australia (Neilson 2009), but working in similar jobs in Nepal is very unlikely for the education migrants who mostly come from middle-class families (also see Dhungel 2017; Sijapati 2014; Valentin 2015). Therefore, when Samikshya described the duties of her work, work that young women of her social status would never undertake in Nepal, it triggered strong emotions for her father. While it is also common for Australian students to take up work alongside their studies, as mentioned earlier, international students often end up at the 'bottom' of the labour market with low-skilled jobs, due to a combination of factors ranging from work hour restrictions limited to forty hours per fortnight, their transient status, financial pressures arising from large student loans, high tuitions and living costs (Neilson 2009; Wright and Clibborn 2017). Harka's reaction can be understood as a form of care of his daughter but also as distress that investing in his daughter's international education did not bring about upward social mobility. His emotional reaction can further be understood in the context of his daughter who 'had not done anything in Nepal' *(kei nagareko)* but had to take up a low-skilled job in Australia. This expression was commonly used in interviews by parents in reference to their children who had not done household work or any physical or manual work outside the home before migrating, a somewhat common experience of most Nepali students who migrate to the West (Sijapati 2014). As such, this amplified the parents' concerns about how they would cope in Australia. Nonetheless, the incident was a turning point in Samikshya's relationship with her father. Sharing what I describe as 'emotions of labour' made Samikshya realise her father cares about her.

As I discuss in this section, both education migrants and labour migrants as well as their families strongly voiced the compulsion (*badhyata*) in migration. But the difference in the overall cultural attitude towards migration to Australia and Qatar as well as the perceived future potential of migration made a difference in how the emotions of labour were adjusted and worked on differently across the two sites. For the education migrants from middle-class families, taking up work in Australia was a financial necessity, and their migration required them to reconcile some contradictory emotions – while often stressed by engaging in jobs they would not have taken up at home, such jobs were an avenue to achieve financial independence that they could take pride in, as well as a stepping-stone towards their longer-term success discussed further. But there was a physical and an emotional aspect of work in low-skilled jobs to address.

The account of a twenty-one-year-old student, Santosh reveals this struggle as well as the sense of compulsion to migrate. On his motivation to take up education in Australia, Santosh notes the culture of migration deeply rooted among the youth in Nepal that continues to push many to migrate:

> It's the current trend. I am not able to pass engineering or MBBS [Bachelor of Medicine] entrance examinations. And then, what else is there? You study BBS [Bachelor of Business Studies]. But then what can you do in Nepal. Again, you have to come to Australia. Instead of that, you come early, you learn something. But I have learnt a lot.

Unlike most labour migrants who migrate to provide for themselves and their family, for the students, the motivations to secure economic futures are not in the present or immediate future. But this sense of compulsion to migrate with the future in mind was similar to that of the migrants in Qatar. Santosh also voices the common sentiment of perhaps not being able to secure futures by staying in Nepal or through education, unless the education is engineering or medicine that are thought to absorb new graduates into the labour market more readily in better-paying jobs (Limbu 2021). Under such circumstances, migration to Australia was often a strategic decision, an opportunity to secure futures, but also to 'learn' new life skills that most students note in terms of improving interpersonal skills, confidence, managing emotions and finances.

Several of Santosh's school friends had arrived in Sydney a year before him and had told him that his work options in Australia would be similar to theirs – often late-night jobs in the hospitality sector, telling him 'No work is big or small here'. Arriving with mental preparedness of possible *dukha*, the young students did not express as much distress in taking up low-skilled jobs. But despite being 'full of energy to take on anything', the realities of working in these jobs were often much harder to face than anticipated. When I met Santosh, he was working as a barista, a step-up from his initial role as a kitchen hand in another restaurant in Sydney's city centre. Sharing the physical exhaustion of his experience while working as a kitchen hand, he noted: 'I had never worked before, I came here and learnt everything. In the beginning, I thought my back would break, but later I got used to it'. These struggles often emotional, with low-skilled jobs are common experiences of student migration as also noted earlier, but one also linked to their long-term economic and educational achievements in the West (Sijapati 2014; Valentin 2015). And while study was important for the students, most did not necessarily associate their studies specifically to be a source of their *dukha.* Rather, giving time for their assignments and preparation for examinations amidst their work schedules was what became challenging. And it was this context of managing work and studies that was considered *dukha* alongside financial pressures.

The education migrants linked this *dukha* of student life to their end goals of migration – a secure future with professional employment and a better standard of life, potentially with permanent residency to remain in Australia. As such, the students including Santosh and Samikshya often expressed optimism about their future, one better than in Nepal. Nonetheless, mainly because of the families' huge investment in financing student migration, these *dukha* are rarely communicated to families in Nepal. Voicing the opinion of many other participants in Australia, Santosh claimed he obviously cannot tell his parents that 'there is *dukha* here'. Being open about his experiences would result in the circulation of his emotions and result in 'tension' for

his parents as seen in the case of Samikshya's father (also see Baldassar 2007; Singh 2016; Wilding et al. 2020). But such non-disclosure of everyday life situations often aggravated their hardship and loneliness leaving them grappling with emotions alone. I extend this discussion in the next section to illustrate how the families back home experience this 'silence' or emotion work.

Compared to the education migrants, those in Qatar were employed across more diverse occupations and income ranges. These varied from low-paid jobs in the construction and service sectors to mid-tier jobs in retail including at the managerial level to others in professional jobs with much higher earnings. I came across numerous Nepalis working in customer service roles in retail and restaurants in the malls in Qatar. This contrasted with students in Australia who were often hidden away from the public in late-night jobs in the hospitality and retail sectors (Robertson 2016). But the low-skilled jobs that were generally scheduled at odd hours of the day/night also provided students with the flexibility to work around their class timetables (Neilson 2009; Robertson 2016). Over time, some of my participants in Australia were able to move onto 'better' jobs including skilled, professional jobs after completing their studies, PhD scholarships, and permanent residency. In Qatar, some of the educated migrants I met working in retail, marketing, or administration had been able to secure promotions and career progression, but this type of upward mobility was rarely available for labour migrants in low-skilled jobs in Qatar (Limbu 2022).

The migrants I met in Qatar, in general, expressed satisfaction with their work and the income they were able to make, but for them, work and migration were a factual reality, an economic necessity. Even though many migrants stated that they 'enjoyed' their time in Qatar, most, particularly in low-skilled jobs, did not associate their migration or work with future potentials or even pride like the students in Australia did. Rather notions of being compelled to work abroad, in 'another's place', away from family were commonly voiced by several participants in Qatar across varied skills/income levels. Thirty-year-old Purna was working in a hotel as a front desk officer and returning home in a month when I met him. He was dissatisfied as the management neither considered him for promotion nor raised his salary. When I asked him about his plans after returning home, he was unsure:

> I might also come abroad if I get a good salary. But I don't like it. It is not *ramro* (good) to leave my *pariwar* (family) and come abroad. Because, in my mind, I don't want to come like this to another's country and work. I do want to stay home. But what to do, *badhyata*. I only had to come abroad because of Nepal's situation … In another's country, Nepalis are looked down upon, because you also know [they] don't know the work, [they have] less experience. Even if they are educated, they don't have any work experience. And then it's the same, it's not good when you have to work under others, I don't like it.

The emotional dilemma of wanting to stay home with family, yet possibly re-migrating if given a 'good salary', as well as 'Nepal's situation' highlights the recurring theme of compulsion and the 'emotion work' in migration, and in leaving families behind. The compulsion was connected to migration being a means of survival, an economic necessity, in the present and immediate future, more than long-term future potential as in the case of education migrants. Therefore, the participants in Qatar often expressed disappointment or frustration that they had to leave Nepal to find decent work and pay, leaving families behind.

Like many others in Qatar, Purna expressed some reluctance at having to work 'under others' in a foreign country away from his '*pariwar*' (family). But as common in Qatar, the 'others' he worked under, or his supervisors were not local Qataris but rather nationals from other countries who had also come on work visas. In Purna's case, his senior colleagues were Indians. The term '*pariwar*' in Nepali refers to the family in general, but it is also quite common to refer to spouses as '*pariwar*'. Purna maintained a close bond with his parents, especially his father, but it must also be noted that, as in the excerpt above, when migrants mention leaving '*pariwar*', their emotions of migration are often associated to the compulsion of living away from their spouses, even when such attachments can be with children and parents. Migrating without families is not a choice for migrants (Baldassar et al. 2016), and this notion of compulsion in having to work in another's place strongly signalled the migrants' preference to live and work in close proximity to their families, rather than across distance. The restrictions and barriers on family migration renders the large proportion of Nepalis working in Qatar living single lives, away from home and family (Bruslé 2012). In contrast, most education migrants were young and unmarried looking to explore life in the West, and those who were married travelled to Australia along with their partners, so similar notions of compulsion of family separation were not voiced by the students or their partners, except for those leaving behind young children for financial reasons. Such differential policies on family reunion differently shaped the present experiences of migration for labour migrants in Qatar and education migrants in Australia.

Because of the concentration of Nepali migrants in the lower hierarchy of the labour market in the Gulf region (Donini 2019), Purna, like many other educated and professional migrants I met in Qatar, believed that Nepalis are 'looked down upon'. They hinted at their dissatisfaction at being considered together with low-skilled migrants, in a class identity not their own. A large proportion of Nepali labour migrants are from rural areas with little off-farm experience, which leaves the smaller number of professional migrants the exception within established labour hierarchies.

Therefore, while the education migrants expressed pride in their financial independence and looked forward to their futures, the labour migrants often expressed stoicism in talking about their feelings about their work and migration. When I met twenty-nine-year-old Hemant in the industrial area in Qatar, he was still at work in a large aluminium warehouse. He shared how he only came to know of the different job he was going for when he had already left his village in Eastern Nepal to fly to Qatar. He had applied through a manpower company (recruitment agency) in the nearest city of Birtamod to work in a hotel. But when he reached the manpower, he came to know that his work was in an aluminium and steel company rather than in a hotel. Upon arriving in Qatar, he learnt that his monthly salary too was QR 900 (QR 800 basic salary with QR 100 for food allowance) instead of QR 1000 that the manpower had told him. Hemant's job involved unloading the aluminium sheets and other metal stock from the container trucks and storing them in the warehouse and again loading them into trucks to transport them to companies. Hemant confessed that it was a backbreaking job, although they would have occasional free time when they did not have to load or unload goods. And the hot weather of Qatar did not help to ease his situation. When I asked him what he thought about his work, he noted the notion of enduring this work as part of 'being a man':

> I've already come here, so what to think. I have come to earn, I make a little earning, it's okay. All my friends are doing it; I do plan to do it. *Choro manche vaya pachi kamm ma ta harnu vayana ni, kam garnai parcha* [meaning along the lines of: When you are a man, you cannot lose to work, you have to work].

Hemant's account reveals a level of stoicism and emotion work in working abroad. For many whose migration is an economic necessity, as O'Neill (2007, 315) reports, 'work is work' and the 'hardship of labour … is a fact of life'. O'Neill illustrates this stoicism and disconnection between emotions and migration among women domestic migrants who do not connect their sadness to their migration, or feelings for family. Similarly, for Hemant, work, although backbreaking, was a normative part of his migration. On sharing any sense of his difficulties, Hemant replied 'No, [I] don't even tell [my] wife, I haven't shared till now'. It had been four months since he arrived in Qatar. He told his family that his work was very easy, and he was happy.

> Even if I share, my problem will remain with me. There will only be *tanab* [stress/tension] at home, they will only take *tanab* at home, they won't be able to resolve it, they will only take *tanab*, so instead of giving *tanab*, maybe my problem might solve here, I don't share anything.

Like the students, Hemant was highly aware of the economy of affect and knew that his worries would travel from him to his family if shared, but also that it would not help his situation; rather it might only generate stress on his family. So, in order to prevent this emotional burden on their families, many like Hemant simply tell their families that everything is fine. Studies have reported that migrants manage their family's emotions by not disclosing their truth about health or illness (Baldassar 2007) or hiding facts about exploitative work conditions (Yea 2015). Additionally, the cases of migrants discussed here illustrate emotion work carried out on an everyday level with regard to non-sharing of *dukha,* especially around work. When I asked Hemant's permission to meet his family in Nepal, he agreed willingly but later asked me on at least two occasions to tell his family that work was very easy, and he is happy and well saying, 'Tell them everything is good. Because if everything works out well, I will stay for two years, otherwise will return after a year, and do something of my own. My friends are working so I can work for at least one year'. While migrants engaged in emotion work as a means of caring for their families by hiding their *dukha* to prevent their families from experiencing 'tension' (Baldassar 2007), in the next section, I extend the discussion to show how emotion work does not always result in the desired outcomes.

'He might be lifting stones; we do not know': affective economies and the 'tensions' of not knowing

Here, I argue that emotions, whether expressed as explicit communication or carried in tones or silences, work as an 'affective economy' (Ahmed 2004) to map on to families and generate affect. While migrants engage in hiding emotions, especially of *dukha* and/or labour, I show how emotions can still circulate and how this can create a different kind of 'tension' on the families, one of not knowing the reality of migration abroad. First, I draw on my conversation with Hemant's family followed by that of Samikshya's

family to illustrate how families that do not migrate experience the migration of their family member.

When I met Hemant's family in Eastern Nepal, both his father, Hari, and wife, Mira, wanted to know details of his work. Hari expressed doubts about Hemant's migration emphasising the need to 'see' for oneself to believe (Baldassar 2007):

> When I ask him directly, he always says everything is fine. He says I am not unwell; my company is also good; work is also good. But we cannot see that, whether it is alright or, if he might be lifting stones, lifting iron, we do not know that.

While migrants want their families to avoid experiencing 'tension' arising from their *dukha*, taking the family's perspective shows that such emotion work causes a different kind of 'tension' – one of not knowing, or of suspecting hardship. Affect evidently circulates even if unspoken, and this goes to show the limits of emotion work in care among the families, even though it was used as an important means of caring by migrants. Or, as Ahmed (2004, 127) notes, it is the lack of residence of emotions in a particular object or sign that allows emotions to 'slide across signs and between bodies'. And it is this sliding of emotions or its circulation within transnational families that accumulate affective intensities, in Hari's case, one of fear and concern. Hari, who appeared quite frail, even associated his deteriorating health to his son's migration, thus illustrating how families interpret the migrants' silences about their migration (Baldassar 2007). In the excerpt below, I also use Hari's account in the Nepali version, as, in general, it says more about his embodied responses to his son's migration than the translated English.

> *Aba k k gunaso – dukha payo hola. Harek thok maan ma ubjirahane, maan ma sankha hune.* [He might have faced *dukha* (hardship), he might have *gunaso* (complaints). Several thoughts come to my mind. I have doubts.] I think I have health problems because of that too. For me, he is my only son, when he was abroad [Malaysia] – his wellbeing – I was never at peace. And now too, it's the same, my mind is never at peace.

Hari worried about Hemant's work but also safety, especially since he chose to migrate to Malaysia initially and then Qatar. It is quite common in Nepal to hear of deaths of migrants abroad, 'returning in a box', or of accidents that leave migrants with a physical disability. Both Malaysia and Qatar have high rates of death, injuries and disability of Nepali workers (MOLE 2018). Therefore, families often harbour concerns about accidents or labour problems that are widely reported in Nepali media as well as in migration scholarship to the Middle East and Malaysia, discussed in previous sections. Hari's situation makes evident how, despite emotion work on the part of the migrants, families still harbour doubts about their situation abroad and suspect they might be facing *dukha*.

Concerns of risk and safety were not experienced by the students' families as Australia is considered to be 'safe'. But similar lack of transparency in migration situations was also expressed by Samikshya's mother and aunt, who I met in Nepal. I met Samikshya's mother and aunt in a clothing store that they owned in a busy marketplace in Lalitpur, Nepal. They similarly described her as someone who did not share her feelings or her problems with them. But as conversation turned towards sharing *sukha-dukha*, they wondered if maybe she was hiding difficulties with work or if she really did not have any such difficulties to share.

During the interview with Samikshya, I learnt that she had borrowed money from her roommate instead of asking from home. Her aunt, Saru, with whom Samiksha had lived for a long time and also helped to finance her migration to Australia, shared that she tells Samikshya 'not to work too hard, not to do *dukha* if your body can't handle it, rather focus on studies and to ask for money if you need'. But Samikshya always responds saying she has enough now and will ask if she needs anything. Saru again pondered, more to herself than to me, that they don't know if Samikshya is facing *dukha* and keeping it to herself or doesn't have any issues saying, 'We too don't ask, and she too doesn't say anything. *Nabhayera nabhaneko ya haina usle man ma rakheko* (whether there is nothing or she is keeping it to herself)'. Saru also added that in any case other relatives who were also students in Australia were managing on their own by working alongside their studies, so they assumed that Samikshya was managing. While there are expectations for students to be self-sufficient once in Australia (Singh 2016), this shows that families back home often have limited knowledge about the situation of their children. Saru highlights the often-expressed gap between knowing that a migrant family member is 'doing well' in a practical sense and not knowing about the realities of their emotional wellbeing:

> She is doing well. But we don't know what she feels within. It's not the same as seeing for yourself. She might be struggling; she has to work. For someone who had never done anything here (*kei nagareko*) [in terms of work at home or outside], when she has to do it on her own there, it must be difficult. That must be there, she has not mentioned that openly.

Both Saru and Hari noted the significance of proximity in being able to see for oneself to believe that their children are doing well (Baldassar 2007). Even as I concluded the interview with Samikshya's family, Saru stated the 'tension' of not knowing, as she ended our conversation voicing her concerns but also hopes for Samikshya's future saying, 'It's like that, when your children are abroad, you will obviously face 'tension'. There is 'tension', but we hope she is doing well … she has to complete her studies, and then jobs, and if she secures her future, we will also be happy'. Taking the lens of emotions and affect illustrates how both migrants and families try to ensure each other's care and wellbeing, and sometimes this involves 'emotion work' in preventing emotions from circulating or to avoid 'tension'. But as the examples reveal, emotions circulate even when withheld and families do harbour 'tensions' with regard to their migrant family member, regardless of what they know about their experiences.

Conclusion

Despite coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds, both education migrants and labour migrants discussed in this article share a common and dominant view of migration as a compulsion (*badhyata*), a necessity to secure futures for themselves and the family. However, despite the prevalent notion of compulsion, this compulsion was also associated with something better and different for the education migrants, more than for the labour migrants. Western education and a form of upward social mobility, financial independence and autonomy, despite some challenges, mostly positively shaped the experiences of education migrants. More importantly, future prospects including possibilities for professional employment, prospects for higher earnings compared to

Nepal, and potentially permanent residency enabled education migrants to have hopes of a 'better' future. In contrast, migration to Qatar is primarily considered to be an economic necessity to provide for oneself and the family in the here and now. Even though some Nepalis I met in Qatar had achieved considerable success, others, particularly those in low-skilled jobs, did not have many opportunities for upward mobility (Limbu 2022). Therefore, present and future prospects of migration in Australia and Qatar differently shaped the compulsion of migration for labour migrants from education migrants.

These different qualities of compulsion also differently shaped the experiences of migration, often expressed as *dukha*. The struggles of student life in Australia were seen as a transient period of *dukha,* a transition period of a longer trajectory and a part of their journey to their end goals of migration, making their present hardship, especially with low-skilled work and financial pressures, seem like a worthwhile investment. At the same time, this temporary *dukha* was related to their status as students who worked to support their studies rather than work being the main purpose of their migration. For labour migrants, however, migration in itself was a *dukha*, particularly for those leaving behind spouses and children. They often highlighted the 'emotion work' in having to 'do *dukha*' in 'another's place' away from their family rather than optimism for the future. Such articulation of *dukha* also reveals the limitations of the Gulf migration policies in facilitating migration of the family as opposed to promoting migration of 'labour'.

Additionally, the differential understanding of migration to Qatar as risky and exploitative and Australia as safer differently shaped the emotions of the families with regards to the migrants' work and migration. For instance, in general, while families of education migrants were concerned with the low-skilled work of their migrant members or their financial situation, the labour migrants' families harboured concerns of a more serious nature, mainly about the safety and security of their migrant members in Qatar. As such, even when the migrants did not communicate their *dukha*, their families in the Nepal-Qatar cohort nonetheless experienced their family member's migration in the form of fear and worry. Taking the families' perspective illustrates that emotions circulate even when withheld, sometimes generating a different kind of emotion or 'tension' – one of not knowing. Thus, *badhyata* and *dukha*, the two cultural expressions of emotion, while common across the diverse migrant groups, manifest differently upon consideration of the migration conditions and the future potentials of migration, not only for the migrants but also for the families that remain at home.

By highlighting how emotions 'circulate' and 'accumulate' intensities, the empirical cases discussed in this article have provided an avenue to understand the 'affective economy' in the transnational family. This has been useful to understand how migration is affectively experienced by both the migrants and their families that do not migrate. Additionally, rather than considering affect as momentary and transient, I have moved towards an understanding of affect as embodied accumulative intensities of longer duration. And unlike the predominant definition of affect as precognitive and occurring prior to emotions, my use of affect as accumulative intensities positions the generation of affect after emotions. This article thus contributes empirically and conceptually to the emerging literature on emotions and affect in migration and transnational families. Additionally, beyond the binaries of migration for education or employment, the desires

to make a career or secure one's future through mobility for work and/or education also reveal the multiplicities and heterogeneities of migration (Neilson 2009). By taking the case of two types of migration, this article also contributes to the broader migration scholarship's understanding of how the everyday lived experiences of those who leave as well as those who remain compare across diverse migration contexts and policy regimes beyond labour migration or education migration, or beyond Nepal, Australia, or Qatar.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the mentorship of my PhD supervisory panel Associate Professor Shanthi Robertson and Professor Brett Neilson in completing the study that this article draws on. I also want to thank Professor Loretta Baldassar, who generously shared and discussed the use of emotions in migration analysis, following my presentation at the Conference in Newcastle NSW. Finally my gratitude to my study participants in Sydney, Qatar, and Nepal for sharing your journeys with me and the two anonymous reviewers for the helpful comments and suggestions.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This work was supported by the Australian Government. Fieldwork for the project was supported in part by Open Society Foundations as part of the Civil Society Scholar Award. The opinions expressed herein are the author's own and do not necessarily express the views of any third party.

Ethics

This research has obtained ethics approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee, Western Sydney University. Reference number H12503.

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