

The Return Migration of Indian Women in Durban, Kwazulu Natal

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ABSTRACT The presence of professional women in global migration streams challenges dominant discourse on women's place in contemporary global society. They further problematize the rhetoric of Third World migrant women as representing 'lesser skilled', recipients of welfare, family migrants or 'trailing wives' and prompt an appreciation of the multitudinous ways in which their migration trajectories intersect with increasing global labour participation and the reconfiguration of family networks. By examining the transnational migration strategies of a group of married professional Indian women in Durban specifically, this paper attempts to stimulate thought on the 'place' of such women in post-apartheid South African society. A snapshot account of the historical background of Indian women in South Africa, together with the recent voices of the autonomous migration of married Indian women professionals, makes visible the agency of the women in changing historical adversity into advantage. This factor together with changing local political, economic and social conditions has seen a steady growth in the migration of such a group, between South Africa and overseas destinations of the First World in particular. The sojourn between two or more nations has implications for understanding the experience of return – migration and the roles and obligations of the married women within the natal as well as the marital household.