



© Kamla-Raj 2007

Anthropologist Special Issue No. 2: 25-35 (2007)

Transnational Lifestyles and the Transformation of Gender Relations: Professional Indian Women in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal

Gérelene Pattundeen

*Department of Anthropology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus, King
George V Avenue, Glenwood, Durban, 4041, South Africa
Telephone: +27 31 2607332*

KEYWORDS Transnational Migration. Social Networks. Gender Relations

ABSTRACT This paper explores the possible trends of changing gender relations and identities of 30 professional Indian women in the Durban region, Kwa-Zulu Natal, engaged in transnational migrations. For the purposes of this paper, the transnational lifestyle refers to the temporary migration of the women to first world countries for several reasons including: international work experience; the long term intention of settling abroad permanently; pursuing newer enriching social experiences; and pursuing more highly paid career/work opportunities for personal gain and/or to contribute towards familial obligations through remittances. Through the use of case studies, this paper illustrates how the women have all worked for varying periods of time abroad before returning to South Africa. Some have had several working stints and have moved back and forth over a period of years and in the process created transnational “spaces” in between which they move. In this process, transnational networks have emerged and facilitated a lifestyle that challenges perceived notions of Indian womanhood and subsequently male/female relations within the local Indian community.