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# Redefining Indian Traditions and Creating New Spaces –Migrant Women of Indian Origin in Tokyo, Japan

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## Abstract (in French and English)

Most Indian women who immigrate to Japan do so as dependents of male immigrants, and besides, there is a small percentage of those who move to Japan on their own, either to study, work, or motivated by some other factor. As per official statistics the number of Indians in Japan in 2014 was 23,411, of which about 70 percent were male and 30 percent female. Those women, who urged on by brighter career prospects travel on their own to Tokyo, have certainly to encounter challenges. Yet at the same time they enjoy a greater measure of freedom. Women coming to Tokyo after marriage also enjoy this freedom, but they concurrently play a role in creating new spaces while continuing to abide by their Indian traditions, redefining them to suit their individual circumstances and requirements. There are also women who seek to rid themselves of certain traditions they view as impractical or inconvenient. As a respondent mentioned ‘My mother-in-law back home in India keeps insisting to follow all the traditions but she has to understand that in a foreign land it is not possible, particularly fasting. Here we don’t get any help at home and you can’t expect me to stay hungry and do all the work as well.’ Re-locating to a completely new and different environment not just in terms of language and culture but also food and housing, they have their share of struggles as much as they have the advantage of living in a safe environment. Some had stable jobs in India but on moving to Japan (after marriage) job hunting proved to be a nightmare. There is indeed possibility for those qualified in English but here again there are issues that serve as a stumbling block. While most find Japan convenient but they miss the comfort, they appreciate the peaceful environment but it also makes them lonely. In this paper, which is based on qualitative interviewing and secondary data analysis, I seek to address the lives of migrant women of Indian origin in Tokyo who cope with a diversity of situations, while at the same time maintaining and negotiating with their Indian identities. This paper also focuses on the advantages and differences of life in Tokyo in comparison to life in India.

**Keywords:** Migrant, women, India, Japan, tradition

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