

## Journeying to the city of gold: Migration brokers and the routes of South Asian migrants to South Africa

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### Abstract

Post-1994, South Africa, as a new flourishing democracy became home to migrants from Africa and South Asia. Attracted by a sense of the economic importance of South Africa, migrants saw the country as a symbol of opportunity and hope, reinforcing their perception of it as the economic pulse of Africa. To those marginalised or displaced in their own countries, the country's political stability and economic prosperity presented a beacon for success and multi-faceted reward. South Africa shares its borders with five countries and the porosity of these borders is known to be one of the major reasons for the ease of entry. This paper describes the details of the journeys undertaken by the participants, the networks of agents and family connections, and transactional costs inherent in these high-risk journeys. While the growth in undocumented migration, smuggling networks and human trafficking, had steadily increased, the scale and intensity of these dense, operational networks stretching across continents, revealed in the participants' narratives, show a high and unexpected level of sophistication. The role of migration brokers in the transatlantic journeys of predominantly less-skilled South Asian migrants across Africa has not been given much attention. The role of migration governance in a post-pandemic period will also shed light on migration journeys to South Africa.

### Biography

Pragna Rugunanan is Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology at the University of Johannesburg (UJ). Her research focuses on the construction of African and South Asian migrant communities to South Africa and migration in the Global South. Her research interests include the sociology of migration, labour studies, family and well-being, migration and digital technologies, urbanisation, social networks and community studies. Her co-edited book *Migration in Southern Africa* has just been published by Springer Press. Her current research is titled 'Migration, Identities and Trans-continental Linkages: Studying the South Indian Diaspora in South Africa'. Pragna was part of the Editorial Collective for Gender Questions, an accredited journal with the Department of Higher Education from 2018 to 2020. She was Chair of the Faculty of Humanities Higher Degrees Committee for 2018 and 2019 and co-chair in 2020. In 2020, she was nominated for the UJ Distinguished Research Leadership Programme, a flagship programme at UJ to develop future research leaders.



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