



Migrant Dreams: Indians in the Japanese Labor Market

Thursday, June 1, 2023, 10:15-11:45

The event will be held online, please register at <https://aoi.uzh.ch/registration>

Guest Lecture by Dr. Megha Wadhwa, Free University Berlin

Migration is like that grass on the other side that looks greener. Some people migrate due to a lack of choice or difficult life circumstances, while some do it as a choice for the experience. Either way, there is a desire and hope for a better life and future.

Japan, in recent years, has begun to be considered as a 'dream country' by Indians, unlike before. The population of Indians in Japan was 40,752 as of June 2022. Looking into my decade-long research on Indian migrants in Japan, I would like to talk about the participation of Indians in the Japanese labor market. This talk examines the lives of different groups amongst the Indian migrants in Japan,

namely businessmen, professionals, cooks, and women migrants, mainly the 'trailing spouses'. What was their dream image of migration? Was Japan a conscious choice, or the only option? Looking into data collected from ethnographic interviews with more than 100 Indians in Japan, I will examine the migration decisions and life trajectories of these people and reflect on how ethnicity, class and gender play a role in defining their qualifications, skills, and experiences in the process of migration – in other words, whether migration helped their dreams come true or turned them into a nightmare.

Dr. Megha Wadhwa is a migration researcher and Japanese and Indian studies Scholar. She is a Research Associate at Free University of Berlin, and a visiting scholar at Sophia University, Tokyo. Her research focuses on identity, ethnicity, race, social class, women, and skills in migration. She is the author of the book *Indian Migrants in Tokyo: A Study of Socio-Cultural, Religious and Working Worlds* (Routledge, 2021). She is also trained in fieldwork filming and her recent documentaries includes *Finding their Niche: Unheard Stories of Migrant Women* (2022). Currently her project focuses on 'Indian Professionals in Japan and Singapore: Migration Trends, Labor Market Integration and Challenges' and is a part of the research project 'Qualifications and Skill in the Migration Process of Foreign Workers in Asia'(QuaMaFA).