4 Frustrations and alliances

The politics of migrant funding for Muslim education in central Gujarat

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At the edge of a village in central Gujarat, in the middle of farms, a large complex stands out from the landscape. It is an educational institution that includes classes from kindergarten to twelfth grade, with Gujarati-medium and English-medium schools, an education college, a student hostel, and a planned science college. I was sent here by a leader of an NGO in the city of Ahmedabad who suggested that I visit Udai Institute, and specifically to meet D.S.,[1] the founder and headmaster of the institute, who would be able to tell me everything I needed to know.

I had arrived in central Gujarat to conduct research on the ways in which transnational flows of resources might be used to fund Muslim organizations. I had read that this region is well known for its long history of international migration, that remittances are a crucial part of the local economy, and that some religious and social organizations in the region receive various forms of financial, moral and social support through these transnational networks. I had also read about religious politics in Gujarat, about violence against Muslims and their social and political marginalization, and about some efforts started by local Muslim organizations to improve this situation. Might these organizations seek alliances with transnational migrants and other international actors to support their efforts? What would their experiences be? These were some of the questions that guided my research.

Asking around about possible research locations, I was told about Udai Institute, based in a village of central Gujarat. The director, D.S., was happy to learn that a student had come from the Netherlands to investigate the position of Muslims in Gujarat, and during our first meeting he talked with me for hours, first in his airy office and later while showing me around the premises and introducing me to teachers and other staff members. He treated me as his student: he answered all my questions with extended explanations, and when my notebook was full he took a new one from his drawer and gifted it to me so that I could continue to take notes on what he said.

During my first meeting with D.S., however, one question was not answered, and as I found out later it was also better not asked: how was all of this funded? In fact, the only moment he fell silent was when I asked about money. He looked at me with a puzzled expression for a few seconds, perhaps wondering why I was interested. He gave a vague response before continuing on to another subject, and

a repeat question did not generate new information. Walking around the school buildings, I saw no sign of notice boards to commemorate donors either (unlike those seen in many other institutions in Gujarat, as I explain below) – there was only a small announcement regarding an educational foundation in Delhi that had sponsored the construction of a part of one of the school buildings, and one mention of an international development bank that had provided aid. It was after visiting the institute repeatedly and developing greater rapport with D.S. that he gradually told me more about their financial affairs. It then became clear to me just how sensitive the subject was, and why.

Initially I was concerned about getting the correct numbers, but gradually my interest in the financial details gave way to curiosity about the political mechanisms that made the topic of funding so sensitive, and about the ways in which he presented the institute to me and to others. When D.S. invited me to stay at the student hostel on his premises, I accepted the invitation and stayed there for a week, visiting classes, following the routine of the students, and visiting his office whenever I could. Much later, when writing about this fieldwork, I tried to read his words as performances, as ways of presenting himself both to me and to those who might read my writings.

This engagement with the educational institute and D.S. led me to think about the broader category of 'transnational funding' as fraught with contradictions and complications. With this chapter I aim to contribute to efforts to study experiences of financial connectivity from the perspective of a remittance-receiving region (Gardner 2008, see also Faist 2008). While most discussions about the 'transnational' (e.g., Glick Schiller and Georges 2001, Levitt 2001) highlight the perspective of migrants and other mobile figures, we still know very little of the experiences and emotions of those who stay at home but are nonetheless embedded in transnational networks. Here I demonstrate that different kinds of social contexts generate different kinds of discussions about the potential of transnational financial flows. For local people connected to a school as supporters, partners, teachers or parents, the idea that a school receives donations from abroad is seen as a positive, carrying a connotation of success and wider recognition. But in other contexts, the receipt of funds from abroad by a Muslim-run organization presents problems and challenges, especially when confronted with directives by the Indian government that attempt to regulate 'foreign contributions', which may particularly target their organizations. This chapter sheds light on these ambiguities, highlighting how the reception of foreign funding generates status and a feeling of accomplishment in one social context, while in another context – that of government regulation – these positive feelings are overshadowed by anxiety and frustration.

Contrasting meanings of transnational funding

Discussions about globalization in India have taken place on distinct registers, where different connotations are attached to the broader category of 'abroad'. These include, first, discussions about neoliberal development regimes and

international financial arrangements that link India to foreign investors (Münster and Strümpell 2014, Searle 2016); second, discussions about social movements that may be linked with wider networks of political activism (Lerche 2008, Smith 2008, Østergaard-Nielsen 2003); and third, work on transnational migration and remittances (Vertovec 2004, Kapur 2010). While these debates rarely intersect, such distinctions are not always so clear in the field. The Udai Institute is funded in a variety of ways – through bank loans, various kinds of non-profit organizations, and individual donors – and their funding resources are based within India and abroad. Considering the difficulty of obtaining concrete data on funding (as explained above), I do not make claims about their precise sources in this ethnography. Instead I focus on the contrasting meanings of 'abroad' (in Gujarati '*bahar*', literally 'outside') and how these emerge in different kinds of social interactions.

The perception of 'abroad' has historically been contested along with processes of nation-building in India, with perceptions shifting between rejection and celebration. People in the subcontinent have historically been connected to the wider world through various linkages of overseas and overland trade and exchange, but in the initial period of nation-building after independence, government policies were shaped by a protectionist form of nationalism, in which foreign investments and technologies were seen as external interventions that would disrupt the indigenous economy. Since the economic liberalization programme of the 1990s, this discourse has turned around, with foreign investment now being seen as indispensable to national development and the adoption of a range of diaspora policies that aspire to demarcate 'Overseas Indians' and their descendants as a part of the nation (Xavier 2011; see also Lessinger 1992, Walton-Roberts 2004, p. 55). In keeping with neoliberal economic policies, transnational migrants and their resources are currently recognized as an asset to economic development, and they are invited to participate in development 'as part of our effort to realise India's full potential' (*The Indian Express* 2014). The government has floated various financial schemes to attract foreign direct investments and remittances and experimented with a new kind of diaspora 'citizenship' (the Overseas Citizen of India scheme, started in 2003) – and the creation of a Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs in 2004.

However, as I will show below, this intersection between national development and overseas connectivity is complex and dependent upon various factors. A welcoming attitude towards both foreign direct investments and Overseas Indians is very noticeable in Gujarat, where migration histories have been connected with local development initiatives that have often received political support and even patronage from local government officials. This quest for alliances between local organizations and Overseas Indians has become a prime model of 'development', and is encouraged by the Gujarat state government, which set up an official cell specifically for this purpose (Mehta 2015, p. 329). Local government officials also readily affiliate themselves with such initiatives – for instance when politicians and bureaucrats support village associations that build rural infrastructure and even temples and other kinds of religious institutions with donations from diaspora

associations – by helping to arrange the required permits or even by affiliating themselves with the association during public events (see chapters by Dekkers & Rutten and Roohi, this volume).

While these ideologies and practices point to a close and positive association between the nation and the transnational, linking development with overseas connectivity, an alternative discourse views such connections as 'foreign', antinational and potentially dangerous. In 2014, a leaked report by India's Intelligence Bureau accused international NGOs of reducing India's GDP (gross domestic product) by 2–3 per cent per annum, by campaigning against government projects such as mining, dam building and oil drilling, which were seen (by the state) as integral to India's economic growth. The local branches of organizations such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International were accused of 'serving as tools for foreign policy interests of western governments' by sponsoring 'anti-development' activities, including campaigns against climate change or workers' rights (*Times of India* 2014), and they were banned from receiving foreign funds. Violence in borderland regions and in Indian cities has also been attributed to infiltrations of outsiders, terrorists from Pakistan or Bangladesh. These discussions are linked with wider narratives about (Islamic) terrorism that circulate internationally but take specific shape in India, where they become entangled with histories of Partition and with discourses of nationalism, which portray the Indian nation as a community of Hindus and Pakistan as a community of Muslims (Chatterjee 1993, Pandey 2001). In India, the NGOs of Muslims that receive donations from abroad have often been accused of representing a 'foreign hand'.

Especially since 2010 there has been intense scrutiny of foreign funding of NGOs in India, which is regulated by the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) – a highly debated law that came into force in 1976 during the period of the Emergency. Promulgated by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (1975–1977), the FCRA was meant to secure India's sovereignty by barring people and organizations of a political nature from accepting foreign contributions. Organizations 'having a definite cultural, economic, educational, religious or social programme' are allowed to accept foreign contributions, although they have to register with the central government and may be asked to provide additional information if deemed necessary (FCRA 1976). In 2010, the Act was amended to prohibit acceptance and utilization of foreign contributions for 'any activities detrimental to the national interest' (FCRA 2010). The amended FCRA strengthened the government's ability to supervise the financial accounts of any kind of (non-profit) association, by obliging organizations that receive foreign contributions to renew their certification every six months.[2] This has particularly affected associations of religious and cultural minorities as well as oppositional voices such as human rights groups,[3] in many cases curbing the receipt of funds (Doane 2016). In 2012, 4,000 NGOs had their FCRA registration cancelled, among them many church-backed groups and anti-nuclear protesters (Menon 2012), and in 2016 the licenses of 20,000 NGOs were cancelled (*Times of India* 2016).

These contrasting views of 'abroad' in contemporary India invite further reflection: on the one hand, the economy has been opened up to foreign direct

investments and transnational migrant donations are welcomed; on the other hand, there is the fear of international ('Muslim') terrorism, a rejection of outside ('Western') influences on India's development and national integrity, and the consequent curbing of foreign contributions. In this chapter I grapple with these contrasting ideas by exploring how they are received and evaluated by Muslims in Gujarat, whose organizations find it increasingly difficult to receive such foreign funds. Focusing on the specific case of a Muslim leader functioning within this climate offers an opportunity to look more closely at the strategies employed to deal with restrictive government policies and an atmosphere of suspicion, but I also wish to probe a little deeper into relations between this leader and the (national) state as well as the (local) social context in which he is embedded. Here I build on Haynes's (1991) analysis of the role of indigenous elites in colonial Surat, where he argued that leadership depended on two social circles – an 'inner domain' and a civic arena. In the inner domain, leaders needed to address the concerns of religious, caste or neighbourhood groups in order to build or maintain social status and respectability among those they aimed to represent. In the civic arena, they needed to express themselves in the idiom of the rulers as a condition for gaining respect and for asserting political influence (Haynes 1991, pp. 25–27). Although the situation in the city of Surat in colonial times is in many ways different from the conditions in rural Gujarat today, this perspective offers a compelling framework to think about the way someone like D.S. manages relations with different 'audiences'. In the inner domain, the domain of the institute, he is embedded in a complex range of social relations with parents, employees, benefactors and other associates. My conversations with people in this context reveal that the receipt of funding from abroad is seen as very positive, to the extent that in their conversations they may have exaggerated the volume of foreign funding received. However, there is another important social context – one that emerges in interaction with the government institutions with which D.S. has to negotiate in order to arrange the various legal requirements to keep his institute running. It is in this realm that foreign funding has become a source of anxiety and frustration, as it is here that the volume of such funding is being restricted and regulated.

Receiving migrant donations

Kilometres away, in a different village of central Gujarat, I ask a teacher for advice about my research. She tells me that nowadays 'Muslims are going abroad like anything' and that every family that has gone abroad has been able to improve their position in society. She adds, 'They are not just helping their families, they are contributing to the community as well'. They are sending significant amounts of money to various trusts in Gujarat ('50 million rupees, 50 lakh rupees'), she informs me. One of the receiving trusts is Udai Institute, which is 'getting so many donations from abroad'.

She then tells me the story about Udai Institute, a story that was also told by others and that is well known among Muslims in the region, about how Udai

Institute was started. 'It is fascinating', she says. 'It used to be a very backward village, and now this one man, after retirement, gave his whole life to the development of this village. It has schools, it has an orphanage, they help poor people, it is very good'. He was so dedicated to the construction of a good school in his native village, she explains, that he invested his own savings and his retirement funds in the construction work. It became a tremendous success, which was recognized by other people who consequently decided to donate their own money so that the institute could grow into a large educational trust that now runs more than 10 schools and colleges. These donors included her own relatives in the USA.

In central Gujarat, development projects sponsored by Overseas Indians are widely reported in local newspapers as well as find their way into everyday conversations in the region. Such stories tell of local villages that have been sponsored by Overseas Indians, enabling various kinds of 'development', including the building of hospitals, schools and temples as well as the construction of rural infrastructure.[4] While some of these donations are from individuals or families, there are also numerous diasporic associations that have been formed to engage in such philanthropy. Such associations are usually based locally while drawing on overseas connections, and sometimes link with village associations of migrants in their countries of settlement (comparable to the 'hometown associations' described elsewhere: Caglar 2006, Mazzucato and Kabki 2009).

This idea of the Overseas Indian or migrants bringing development to the home region is thus very much part of the popular imagination in central Gujarat. While other scholars have written about a 'culture of migration' (Ali 2007), it would perhaps be apt to refer to central Gujarat as a culture of migration *and* of migrant donations. Central Gujarat has had a long history of international migration – in the colonial period to East Africa, later to the UK and USA, and more recently to destinations including Australia, Canada, and the Middle East. Muslims, however, were late to join this migration stream. While some Muslims in the coastal regions of Gujarat were sailors and traders who had long been travelling across the Indian Ocean and settling on the African coasts (Simpson 2006, Koch 2016), central Gujarat was an inland agricultural region, with no direct links with the sea. Here, outward migration was a result of colonial policies that stimulated Indian migration within the British empire through the 'free passage' of trading castes and classes, especially to the East African countries of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda (Jain 1989, p. 163). Caste networks were crucial to this type of migration, which was in this region mainly limited to the locally dominant Patel caste (who are Hindus and also the major landowning caste in the region). As a result, the figure of the Overseas Indian has been associated with the Patel community (also known as Patidars), and the practices of migrant donation in the region are mostly associated with the Patels.

This idea of development in which migrant donations are a major source of funding for local associations, and in which migrant donations are associated with a particular caste, was a prominent aspect of my discussions with local people. Indeed, some Muslims in central Gujarat found it odd that I would want to study migration and migrant donations among Muslims, and told me to go instead to

the Patels. Or they asked me for advice on how to stimulate migration among Muslims so that they could also start supporting local initiatives in education and health care in a similar fashion. This idea – that there are *not yet enough migrants* – was voiced not only by families who were attempting to start the process of migration themselves, but also by those in leadership positions, teachers, trustees and managers of schools and social welfare associations. These interlocutors often made statements such as, 'We have more and more students in our community starting their lives abroad', but also clarified that only a few of them are in a position to financially support local initiatives for the community. These remarks about 'starting migration' and 'not enough migrants' highlight the association of migration with remittances and donations, although it also suggests that this 'model of development' might be deeply marked by inequalities.

The Udai Institute profiles itself as 'Muslim', although some of the staff and teachers of its schools are Hindu or Christian and its mission statement declares that it caters to 'students of all backgrounds'. Indeed, the institute is not dominated by any particular caste or community: students include Sunni Vohra Muslims from central Gujarat, Sunni Vohras from the coastal region of Baruch, Thakors from the nearby village of Bhalej, Memons from the coast of Saurasthra and Kutch and many other kinds of Muslims, including Diwans, Pathans and Sheikhs,[5] as well as some Christians and Hindus. The students are also diverse in terms of their class backgrounds. In the hostel I met girls from middle class families paying substantial school fees, as well as poor and orphaned children who were studying on scholarships. The parents and other visitors I met in or around the schools of the institute included shopkeepers and taxi drivers as well as wealthy businessmen and landowners.

As I got to know D.S. better, he did reveal more information about his sources of funding, besides the high school fees for those who can afford them. For example, he showed me a brochure in English that was distributed among Gujarati Muslims in South Africa to solicit their support, spoke about an alliance with a British association of Vohras (a Gujarati Muslim community), and described the institute's alliance with an organization of Memons (also a Gujarati Muslim community) based in Mumbai with overseas funding. He presented these stories as signs of support, saying that he does not like to 'ask for money' but that people from all over the world still come to the institute – 'they find us'. He pointed to me as an example of someone who had heard stories about the institute and had consequently come to see it for herself.

Most other people directly or indirectly connected to the Institute would not know how it has been funded. Still, the story of foreign funding appeared frequently when I talked to them. In these discussions, the idea of overseas donations was embedded in a narrative of success and accomplishment, where the funding 'from outside' (*baharthi*) was described as evidence of the wide support and respectability of the institute. Considering the wider regional narrative in which migrant donations have become an important available model of village and community development in Gujarat and in India, it is not hard to see the appeal of this narrated presence of 'abroad' in an educational institution in a 'village' in the interior of the region. This narrative of donations from abroad gives the project

of Muslim education a place within the wider narrative of 'development', which reflects the respect the institute has garnered among local Muslims. The quality of education is also deemed relatively high by local standards, and the institute itself is visually impressive: the clean, spacious and airy buildings contrast starkly in architectural style and size with the residential buildings and shops in the surroundings. D.S. as a person is accorded great respect, a fact that became evident while I was talking to him in his office. We were frequently interrupted by parents and teachers and by acquaintances from nearby villages and towns coming to seek his advice or pay their respects. Their conduct showed their respect: I saw men entering in a deferential manner, indicating that they hold D.S. in high esteem, greeting him with a hand on their heart and waiting patiently until D.S. addressed them. Some of the visitors had received financial or other forms of support to access health care, as the trust also distributes charitable donations to those in need – as a patron, D.S. is caught up in a wider range of social interactions with local people. The atmosphere of respect might have been enhanced by his family background – although D.S. does not present himself as such, his family is associated with a lineage of leaders as well as saints in the region.

This overall aura of respect is reflected in the stories that circulate about the funding that is sent to the school from abroad, for instance as narrated by the teacher quoted above. An alternative narrative was presented by a young Muslim, a social worker who wanted to start his own trust: expressing a sense of competition and perhaps jealousy over available funds, he wished that D.S. would publicly disclose the names of his apparently many overseas donors so that other Muslim schools and organizations would also be able to approach these donors to seek funding. D.S. himself prefers talking about other topics – about the Gandhian values of the educational institute, the importance of education for women, the inclusion of students from all backgrounds, the well-equipped computer lab in his English-medium school, and the exceptionally high results of his schools in the previous year's central board exams for tenth and twelfth standard.

Receiving foreign contributions

On another register, the association between Indian Muslims and the 'foreign' is not so positive. Pandey (1999), writing about the history of Partition in 1947 and the 'two nations theory' that separated India and Pakistan, has examined how 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' became politically constructed 'communities' and how, as Pakistan was assigned to Muslims, assertions of nationalism in India required Indian Muslims to 'prove' their loyalty to the Indian nation. This discussion is still relevant today – for example, on India's Independence Day on 15 August 2017, Muslims in Uttar Pradesh were asked to make a video recording of themselves singing the national anthem and hoisting the national flag in a *madrassa* (Islamic seminaries) in order to prove their loyalty to the nation (Srivastava 2017).

While the marginalization of Muslims in India has been widely studied and discussed (Sachar *et al*. 2006, Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012), Gujarat state has featured prominently in these discussions. Gujarat has been described as a 'laboratory'

of the Hindu nation, and many scholars of Gujarat have probed into questions of religious politics (Sud *et al*. 2011), inter-community violence between Hindus and Muslims (Spodek 2008),[6] and residential segregation (Rajagopal 2010), questioning how a region with a long history of mobility, social exchange and cultural fluidity has come to be reimagined as a religious community of Hindus (Sheikh 2010). Gujarat has been one of the main places where the exclusion of Muslims has become normalized, openly acknowledged and deemed acceptable in many contexts. Several scholars have exposed the normalization of this exclusion (Ghassem-Fachandi 2010), some probing deeper into the underlying political and economic structures that have shaped the cultural and social re-imagination of a region in such exclusivist terms (Berenschot 2012, also Breman 2002). How does this wider context of Muslim exclusion shape the meanings of 'abroad' for a Muslim leader like D.S.?

When I asked overseas Gujarati Muslims visiting their region of origin from the UK or USA about the various government schemes designed to support or solicit funds from Overseas Indians (as explained above), the question provoked puzzled responses. They were aware of 'Overseas Indian' politics, many had acquired the official status of OCI, and some were aware of the agenda of the state to lure Overseas Indians back to participate in village development, but they thought that initiatives like the 'NRG card', for example (an identity card for Non-Resident Gujaratis provided by the Gujarat state government), were not meant for them. On the contrary, these migrants felt that the government does not like 'development' when it comes to Muslims. Their efforts to develop (or 'help') their community back home were subject to suspicion and often thwarted, hindered, labelled as potentially dangerous or as anti-nationalist or even terrorist. My interlocutors said that this suspicion of Muslims and their associations had increased in recent decades. The invitation to Overseas Indians or Non-Resident Gujaratis (NRGs) to come back to India or contribute to 'development', they felt, was not directed at them.

These feelings of overseas Gujarati Muslims were most poignantly expressed when they talked about their experiences with the FCRA. As explained above, critics of the amended Act say that it has been used to curb freedom of expression and association and particularly targets those voicing progressive or minority viewpoints (Raza 2013, Bidwai 2014). Three of the 20 Muslim trusts I studied had first-hand experience with the FCRA these were the bigger and more well funded trusts I visited, and among them was the Udai Institute.

It was a transnational alliance with a large Muslim organization that had led Udai institute into 'trouble'. As explained above, the institute has some Memon students. Memons are a community of South Asian Muslims who, according to D.S., are 'very rich. . . . there are many NRIs (migrants) in this community'. Through community networks, the Institute got in touch with a Memon transnational association that was interested in supporting them. This support started with a contribution of approximately 10,000 euros and continued with sizeable donations each year. These transfers of money made it necessary for the Udai Institute to apply for registration under the FCRA.

Thereafter, several things happened. First, the bureaucratic procedures that had to be followed to comply with the FCRA took so much time that the institute had to hire a new staff member specifically for this purpose. Second, the FCRA introduced a new set of actors on the school premises – a corps of police investigators whose presence began to seriously affect functioning of the educational institute. The regular police investigations on their premises made the staff feel that they were terrorism suspects rather than an educational institute:

> *We worked with the Memons for five years, but then we ran into trouble. We had permission, but every six months we had to send a report to the government* [about] *how we had spent the money. Even after we sent our report, officers came into our premises and asked us many detailed questions. It took so much of our time that I had to hire someone specially to answer them. They made Xeroxes of all our accounts and sometimes they would go into the classroom and take a child out to interrogate it: 'Did you receive your scholarship?' They kept asking questions about how we spent the money. It was very difficult. Eventually we asked another school to please apply for* [FCRA] *registration so you can start distributing these scholarships to your students. When they got it, we withdrew*.

Narrating his experiences with the inspectors, D.S. raised his voice, clearly upset. The memory of children being taken from class and interrogated most infuriated him. The experience of being a 'suspect' must have been humiliating for D.S., an elderly man who is accorded high respect within his personal network and usually gives orders rather than taking them from someone else. It was then that I realized why he was reluctant to answer my questions about the financial affairs of the trust when we first met, and why it took time for him to trust me enough to discuss the topic.

D.S. is still in touch with the other school mentioned above, which acquired FCRA registration when Udai Institute withdrew. He suggested that I visit that school too, and when I agreed he decided to accompany me there himself, where we discussed the matter further with a trustee of the school. If D.S. was upset over the FCRA problem, his friend expressed his sense of injustice even more strongly:

> *When the VHP* [Vishva Hindu Parishad] *gets support from abroad, this is* [considered] *all truly wonderful, but when we get it we have to prove that we are not terrorists!*

He added:

> *When I go to the police station, the officer has a Shiv poster on the wall, a Ganesh statue on his desk, he has a* tikka [a Hindu religious mark] *on his forehead. How can I feel that he is doing justice? Religion is good but you should not make a difference*.

This conversation about the FCRA led my interlocutors to cite other moments when bureaucrats, police officers, politicians or other powerful people had made their lives difficult. They asserted that it is not just funding that is at stake – government officials can make or break an institution by granting, delaying or declining permits or other legal requirements, and they can advance or stall the building of infrastructure. In all these instances there is the question of access. Thus, the challenge of acquiring permits to receive 'foreign' funding is just one among various causes of anxiety for the leaders. They agreed that 'only the schools that are well connected to the VHP or RSS [Hindu nationalist 'cultural' organizations] get their permits easily. Our files are delayed, or they ask for more money'.

Overall, this ethnography of transnational financial flows into Muslim educational institutions in central Gujarat points at the circulation of two distinct narratives, which emerge in different social circles. In the 'inner domain' of the Udai Institute, financial flows from 'outside' are considered evidence of their success, associated with regional narratives of 'migration', with migrants' 'donations' for village development, and with the potential inclusion of Muslims in discussions about 'migration and development'. In the more public civic arena, however, such financial flows might rather be considered 'foreign contributions' and as such seen as potentially dangerous to the nation and to national development. Following Haynes's (1991, pp. 25–27) analysis of leadership, we might ask how Muslim leaders such as D.S. navigate these different but interconnected social fields, given their need to gain respect in both circles in order to be successful.

The significance of local alliances

D.S. is not the only community leader to have started an educational institution in this region – there are other Muslim-managed institutes with similar aims, while Muslim trusts active in health or social welfare often have side activities in the field of education. The emphasis on education can partly be seen as a response to nationwide discussions about the 'backward' position of Muslims, which have focused on the lack of (access to) education of Muslims in India: enrolment and continuation rates at elementary level have been lowest for Muslims compared with children from other religious groups (Sachar *et al*. 2006, p. 244). Muslims in other regions too have been concerned about promoting modern education (Osella and Osella 2009), and with enrolling their children into high-quality formal education to attain upward social mobility (Jeffery, Jeffery and Jeffrey 2007). D.S. relates the desire for education to efforts to 'uplift the community' (similar to studies in Ahmedabad; Turèl 2007, Jaffrelot *et al*. 2012, p. 77) and to the specific history of discrimination and violence against Muslims in Gujarat. According to D.S., the interest in education among Muslims is a direct response to the 2002 riots in Gujarat. He explains that 'the riots made us realize that the government is not doing anything for us. . . . [W]e have to take care of ourselves: uplift our own community'. He goes so far to say that 'the riots made Muslims right', so they contributed to positive changes in the lives of Muslims, because the riots

made them focus on education (comparable to findings of Mustafi & Koskimaki, this volume).

During the course of my research in central Gujarat, I visited nine educational institutes set up by Muslims in the region, besides several other kinds of Muslim associations and organizations. Some of these educational institutes were no more than small village schools providing primary and/or secondary education, and such institutions were visibly poorly funded, with children sitting on the floor or in very basic temporary buildings and teachers working for very low salaries. When such schools did occasionally receive donations from a migrant visiting his village of origin, this did not generate the kind of problems I have described above – these schools are small and invisible and the donations were in most cases informal, given in cash or kind by a personal acquaintance of a trustee. The government would not be concerned with such donations – it is in the bigger institutions that the problems emerge.

These issues are illustrated by the case of an Overseas Indian, A.V., who had come from the United States to start a new trust. A.V. was planning to set up an English-medium school in the future, and had already started a variety of coaching classes and computer training courses for local youth. One day he and his friends were discussing the process of getting FCRA clearance. A.V. expressed his feeling that it was imperative for the trust to remain small, 'under the radar', in order to avoid problems with the authorities. He also felt it was important to highlight to everyone that his educational activities would be inclusive, not for Muslims alone. His friend added that it was important that the neighbours felt that 'this is for us too', so that they would support the initiative. Otherwise, if they felt that 'this is only for Muslims' it would create problems, he said. In the trust's founding papers, which they showed me during that meeting, the word 'Muslim' was not mentioned. In a public meeting that I witnessed, it was made clear by a local employee of the trust that their activities would be beneficial (and not harmful) to 'society', as if to neutralize the more general suspicion of Muslim activities and organizations. Still, A.V. was worried:

> *People* [like us] *do good work and still . . . they don't get it. Because you are Muslim, they think: 'Oh . . . you're gonna help the Muslim!' Come on! I want to do it for the entire community! Not doing for Muslim, not for Hindu, not for Christian. For whole humanity. Everybody. All Gujaratis. But some people don't see it this way*.

Building alliances with a wide variety of local actors is crucial for D.S. too. The significance of support from local Hindus is illustrated in a story about his retirement ceremony at his former school. On that occasion he announced that he was opening his own school, and stated that he would invest his retirement fund in the construction of a building, while also soliciting donations from the guests for the purpose. Some of his former students had surprised him by attending the ceremony or by sending monetary gifts. Most of these students were

Hindu, D.S. stressed – some had by then migrated to the UK or USA, but still they took the effort to contribute. The glimmer in his eyes as he told this story, and the time he took to tell it to me in detail, made it clear that he found their gesture significant.

Diplomacy and tact are important traits when building such alliances. When D.S. and his friend were discussing the discrimination that they faced at government offices (during the meeting described above), I asked D.S. how they respond to such experiences. First his friend stated firmly:

> *Very easy for me. I shout at them. When I applied for NOC* [a No Objection Certificate or permit], *the officer asked for more money. I told him straight that I would go to the High Court to expose him* [for corruption].

But D.S. quickly added:

> *When I go to the police station, I go alone. I don't bring anyone like this man, who is likely to start shouting. Because when you go there, you have to be diplomatic. And patient. We go and meet them regularly. Even though we are frustrated sometimes, we have to keep calm*.

These narratives reveal a range of available strategies of self-presentation that are available to Muslim leaders who wish to utilize transnational resources in this politically tense context. At a personal level there is the question of how to respond when confronted with instances of injustice – should one be confrontational or 'diplomatic'? Looking into the stories more closely, they point to several ways in which leaders might attempt to alter or diminish the perceived threat of 'Muslims' receiving 'foreign' contributions in the public domain. First, they might minimize the visibility of their organization in order to pursue their development goals without interference, by keeping the association small and operating 'under the radar', as in the case of A.V. When the organization is large and highly visible, however, as in the case of D.S., this option is not available, and ways must be found to legitimize the receipt of foreign contributions in the eyes of the outside world. One way of creating legitimacy in the eyes of the outside world is through inclusion – by stressing that they provide services 'not for Muslims only', as in the above-mentioned cases. While a Muslim identity is affirmed by organizing education along religious lines, the relevance of Hindu-Muslim distinctions is simultaneously questioned and denied, thus providing a critique of instances of marginalization and exclusion elsewhere. Another existing narrative that might be built on as a way of challenging experiences of unequal treatment by the government is the narrative of 'corruption' – an issue widely perceived in India as an important one. However, the success of these strategies is not guaranteed – hence the ultimate solution is to minimize the reliance of overseas contributions by ending financial support from a willing donor, as in the case of Udai Institute described above.

Conclusion

In other regions in India with long histories of migration, scholars have raised questions about the ways in which regional histories of social inequality might affect the ways in which remittances, migrant donations and other kinds of transnational flows are utilized (Upadhya and Rutten 2012). In the case of Kerala, Kurien has critiqued studies by economists that generalize about 'migrants' and fail to grasp the ways in which migrant financial transactions and status-seeking activities are shaped by localized social-cultural histories and community politics (Kurien 2008, pp. 211–213). In the case of Punjab, scholars have similarly questioned the assumed progressive relationship between transnationalism and 'development', by unpeeling the multilayered relationships between transnationalism and caste inequality (Taylor, Singh and Booth 2007, Singh 2013). The case of Muslims in central Gujarat draws our attention to how Hindu-Muslim politics have become embedded in these multifaceted economic and social-cultural processes.

In this chapter I have highlighted the different meanings attached to transnational flows, which may be connected with a narrative of 'Overseas Indians contributing to national development' or viewed as 'foreign' influences disrupting the nation. While Overseas Indians have been invited by the Indian government to think of themselves as part of the 'Global Indian Family' by contributing the money they earn abroad to national development, and while foreign investors are supported by neoliberal policies that bring the national economy into closer connection the wider world, the Indian state has simultaneously made efforts to regulate 'foreign' influences via the Foreign Contributions Regulations Act and other such measures. These complexities have led to critical analyses by other scholars, who have noted a simultaneous 'opening up' and 'closing of ranks' (Roy 2006). While several studies approach these questions from a diaspora perspective (Bal and Sinha-Kerkhoff 2005, Biswas 2005), here I have asked how this complex political situation might affect organizations within India that attract and receive different kinds of funding from abroad. My data indicate that the conceptual distinction between 'overseas' and 'foreign' funds is not self-evident and is thus contextually constructed, with both frameworks potentially applicable to funds that emanate from migrants with close ties to the region.

The problems faced by these organizations with regard to the receipt of 'foreign' contributions (such as the application of the FCRA) are not unique to Gujarat or to Muslims in particular. What I found significant about the case of Udai Institute is the way in which the notion of 'abroad' acquires a complex positionality and meaning. Central Gujarat has had a long history of migration, and the most successful groups in the region have become highly transnationalized and publicize their links to the outside world (*bahar*) as a source of achievement, success and pride. This regional narrative is also available for transnational associations of Muslims. Because Udai Institute is one of the most prestigious Muslim institutions in the region, many local people assume that it is also transnationally connected like other successful organizations in Gujarat.

However, there is another significance attached to 'abroad', which reverberates with suspicions of danger, interference and potential terrorism. These negative

meanings can be attributed to any kind of oppositional voice or organization, but when it is attributed to Muslims they become enmeshed in a Hindu nationalist politics that projects Muslims as not vital to the national community and that enjoins them to constantly prove their allegiance to India. The frustration of dealing with the FCRA, and the bitterness D.S. felt about the squad of police officers interrogating students, can be understood in this light. D.S.'s hesitation to talk to me about funding might be seen as a way of dealing with this situation too, since a researcher could have been sent by the government to make his life more difficult.

In the regional setting of central Gujarat, the figure of the generous Overseas Indian has become attached to the Patel community, although others can invoke it as well,[7] while the narrative of the 'foreign' is more likely to be associated with religious minorities. In this context, Muslim leaders must find ways to navigate a variety of social fields. I have followed Haynes (1991) to highlight two distinct yet interconnected social fields, the inner domain of the institute and the public domain of interactions with government institutions, to analyze the complex and dynamic ways in which Muslim leaders in contemporary Gujarat negotiate their positions, showing how they need to carefully manage their self-presentations through the use of narratives and language in each field.

Notes

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1 Pseudonyms are used to indicate the names of institutions and people mentioned in the chapter.
2 This means that organizations such as trusts and NGOs have to provide detailed information about their donors, the amount of money received, and the purposes for which the contributions were used. If any provision of the FCR Act is contravened, the central government may authorize an inspecting officer 'to audit any books of account'. An inspecting officer has the right to enter the NGO's premises 'at any reasonable hour, before sunset and after sunrise' and may even seize records. The new FCR Act (2010) came into force in 2011.
3 Many newspaper articles and blogs have been published on this issue; examples are Bidwai (2013) and Raza (2013).
4 In a documentary film made as part of the Provincial Globalisation research programme, we show a selection of the NRI-funded development projects in one village. Footage not included in the film documents a wider variety of projects, all supported by transnational

migrants, mostly of the Patel community. See: *Transnational Village Day* (2015), directed by D. Bajrange, M. Rutten and S. Verstappen (https://vimeo.com/152026257).

5 For overviews of the diversity of Muslim communities or castes in Gujarat, see Engineer (1989) and Misra (1964).

6 Among the several human rights reports that testify to the atrocities of Gujarat in 2002 are Human Rights Watch (2002a, 2002b).

7 For further discussion of how overseas members of the Vohra (Muslim) community have remained connected to the regional homeland of Charotar in central Gujarat, see Verstappen (2017).

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