**Title: ‘Helping people is real Jainism’: Class privileged diasporic Jains affirm citizenship and multiple belongings through transnational philanthropy to a Jain faith-based organisation in India**

**Abstract**

The dominant diaspora-development discourse privileges rational imperatives and focuses on remittances to households while ignoring diaspora philanthropy to organisations. In India religious organisations receive significant levels of diaspora philanthropy yet the motivations and cultural meanings behind such transfers, or its transnational dimensions are little understood. I examine these themes through in-depth interviews with twenty-four Jains in UK, USA and Singapore who have supported Veerayatan, a Jain faith-based organisation established by Jain nuns to deliver welfare services in India over an extensive period. I contend that diasporic Jains display a hybrid logic of philanthropy; humanitarian ideals intersect with shared Jain religious norms to motivate giving. Support for Veerayatan is sustained through social capital; embeddedness in lateral networks of co-religionists as well as ties with the nuns in the homeland. This transnational engagement is a marker of citizenship and multiple belongings, of being British, American or Singaporean differently for class-privileged diasporic Jains.

**Keywords**: Philanthropy, Religion, Transnational, Diaspora, Jain, Homeland, India

**Introduction**

Since the 1990s transnational ties between religious/immigrant diasporas and their ancestral countries of origin have caught the attention of policymakers. Diaspora groups have become part of the ‘development mantra’ (Kapur 2004) as policymakers recognize the value of diasporas’ voluntary engagement with their ancestral homelands. The majority of official economic transfers from migrants and diasporas, US$ 689.00 billion in 2018, go to low and middle-income countries (World Bank 2019). Given the scale of these transfers, much of the early policy and academic focus has been on financial remittances between individuals and households (Faist and Fauser 2011, 1-2) and on their economic impacts, particularly on household and meso-levels. The assumed confluence between remittances and development has led to a neglect of attention on other types of transfers, such as transnational diaspora philanthropy. India is a top remittance-recipient, with US$ 79 billion in 2018 (World Bank 2019). Data for the period 1997-2009 indicates that 5% of migrants’ flows were remitted as personal gifts and donations through official channels (Reserve Bank of India, 2010, as cited in Guha 2013, 1). Further, Guha (2) found that 30% of migrants to the UK from central Gujarat, India made monetary transfers, of which two-thirds were economic remittances, and one third of the flows consisted of philanthropic donations. These donations were of much higher volume than remittances and more likely to be made by permanently settled migrants (ibid). Thus, diaspora philanthropy is significant in terms of volume, but the motivations and meanings behind such transfers remain little understood (Ramachandran 2016; Johnson 2007). 1 Policymakers couch remittances within an economistic discourse, privileging rational imperatives in such transfers (Bakker 2015; Page and Mercer 2010). This focus on migrants’ remittances as financial flows ignores the sociological and anthropological motivations underpinning remittances and philanthropy to organisations in the ancestral homeland.

I focus on Jain diasporic transnational philanthropy to Veerayatan, a Jain faith-based organisation established by Jain nuns in India to deliver health and education services. I am interested in understanding a) what motivates transnational diaspora philanthropy from Jains in the UK, USA and Singapore to Veerayatan, in some case for more than twenty years; and b) what does this tell us about the broader cultural meanings of such engagement for this socio-economically successful diasporic group. I adopt Johnson’s (2007, 6) definition of philanthropy as “the private, voluntary transfer of resources for the benefit of the public”. While the term ‘diaspora philanthropy’ has many variants (Johnson 2007, 5), I use the term transnational diaspora philanthropy to convey the transnational social fields (Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc 1992: ix) in which Jains in this study operate. They give to Veerayatan’s projects in the ancestral homeland, sometimes to its projects in other countries, and almost always support the organisation’s work in their country of settlement. This suggests that they are simultaneously embedded in social ties, networks and institutions in multiple sites. I contend that diasporic Jains in this study display a hybrid logic of philanthropy; humanitarian ideals intersect with shared religious convictions to motivate giving. Support for Veerayatan is sustained through embeddedness in network-based social capital involving lateral ties with co-religionists in the country of settlement and transnationally, as well as with the nuns in the homeland. This transnational engagement is facilitated by their successful integration and belonging in host societies, but also allows diasporic Jains to express a ‘homing desire’ (Brah 1996) and re-affirm their cultural and religious attachments.

**Conceptualizing transnational religious philanthropy**

Scholarship linking philanthropy to religion provides one useful lens to understand Jain diaspora philanthropy to Veerayatan. Johnson (2007, 6) observes that philanthropy is deeply embedded in religious and spiritual traditions. A range of studies have found a positive link between religion and philanthropic giving (Grönlund and Pessi 2015). Such prosocial behaviour is connected to religious affiliation and belief, and especially to religious activity and membership in religious community (Wiepking and Bekkers 2012). Bekkers and Wiepking (2011, 944) note that research on the relationship between religion and philanthropy points to two explanations. The first refers to “conviction” or “norms”; the religious beliefs, values and attitudes that encourage altruism and may provide psychological benefits. Individuals drawing on religious norms that promote caring and giving may see their philanthropy as acting in accordance with their religion and acting religiously. As in other South Asian religions (Viswanath and Dadrawala 2004), the roots of Jain philanthropy, or *dān*a can be linked to duties and custom related to alms giving to renunciates (Laidlaw 2000). Jain ascetics are expected to renounce all worldly possessions and focus their life mission to work toward their own internal purification and liberation from the transmigratory cycle of birth-death-rebirth. They cannot prepare and cook food or possess money to purchase food and so alms giving to ascetics, in the form of food, by lay Jains is essential. Jain texts identify a gift to ascetics seeking liberation as the highest form of gift that contributes to earning merit as ascetics are perceived as the only really worthy recipients (Laidlaw 2000: 625).2

However, the Jain nun who established Veerayatan in India, hereafter referred to by her religious title *Ācāryaji,* has contested the focus on internal purification and liberation as the only ascetic path. She believes *seva* or selfless service to relieve physical and mental suffering amongst the poor and needy represents “true religious practice” for Jain renunciates (see Author Forthcoming). In other words, proactively doing ‘good’ rather than withdrawing from society, or compassion in action, can also be a spiritual path for Jain ascetics. Like other Hindu renouncers who have pursued the path of *seva* (Warrier 2003), *Ācāryaji* has established an institutional organisation to fulfil her worldly mission, and allowed for the possibility of private philanthropy as alms giving to Veerayatan the organisation.

The second explanation within the religion and philanthropy literature addresses social factors such as “community” or “networks”; identification with religious community, social pressure, and solicitations for contributions can encourage philanthropy. This explanation draws on Putnam’s (2000, 117) argument that social capital, defined as embeddedness in social networks, “provide the channel through which we recruit one another for good deeds, and social networks foster norms of reciprocity that encourage attention to others’ welfare.” Brown and Ferris’ (2007) research confirms the importance of social capital, and in particular the role of network based social capital in encouraging giving to both religious and secular causes. Philanthropic donations can also confer status and reputation from co-religionists, and psychological benefits related to feeling a part of a community (Bekkers and Wiepking 2011, 944), suggesting an element of self-interest motivating such practices.

These two explanations for the link between religion and philanthropy are useful but offer only a partial understanding of diasporic Jain philanthropy to Veerayatan, especially the targeting and sustained nature of such philanthropy within a transnational context. Scholars studying migrants’ philanthropic activities and other collective economic transfers through hometown associations or diaspora organisations have noted targeting for the public good, such as building of schools, hospitals or community centres (Johnson 2007, 7; Merz, Chen and Geithner 2008). Directing philanthropy for public good is also evident in India, with health, education or religious activities identified as greater beneficiaries of philanthropy (Guha 2013, 2-3; Basu 2013; Dekkers and Rutten 2011; Dusenbery and Tatla 2009). Such financial flows are often explained in terms of ties of moral co-responsibility across boundaries (Werbner 2002, 121) or helping ‘one’s own’ (Sinatti and Horst 2015). Dusenbery and Tatla (2009, 5-6) suggest that diaspora philanthropy also embodies what Levitt (1998) calls ‘social remittances’ (ideas, behaviours, identities and social capital) and is targeted towards what is perceived as necessary or valuable; diaspora visions of how to advance human welfare. While useful, in pointing to social factors motivating transnational economic and social transfers, religion is rarely considered as a motivating factor in this scholarship (Erdal and Borchgrevink 2017)3.

Research suggests that religious organisations in less developed countries receive significant levels of philanthropic funding from diasporic religious groups and this is especially so in India (Kapur, Mehta and Dutt 2004; Guha 2013). Guha’s research (2013, 18) found that the overwhelming majority of donations (48.5%) sent to Gujarat, India, go to religious organisations, many of which may also be involved in delivering education and health projects. Yet, little is known about why faith-based diasporic communities engage in transnational philanthropy (Johnson 2007; Bekkers and Wiepking 2011; Brinkerhoff 2014). Research on religion and transnationalism highlights the transnational circulation of religious ideas, practices and beliefs between home and host societies (Shah 2017; Levitt 2007), or how membership of a transnational religious community can facilitate transnational belonging as well as local attachments (Ehrkamp 2005). This scholarship points to the importance of examining religion in motivating sustained transnational diaspora philanthropy. Additionally, the diaspora studies literature is helpful for understanding the wider cultural meanings of engagement in sustained transnational diaspora philanthropy to faith-based organisations in the ancestral homeland.

There has been much inter-disciplinary debate within diaspora studies (Cohen 2008), and application of the term ‘diaspora’ has been extended to groups hitherto identified as immigrants, refugees, ethnic minorities, guest workers and so on (Tölölyan 1991). I find useful Clifford (1994, 308), who draws from Gilroy (1987) to argue that diaspora consciousness exemplifies ‘identifications outside the national time/space in order to live inside, with a difference’. Clifford acknowledges that diaspora consciousness may be constituted negatively by experiences of exclusion and discrimination, and positively through identification with historical cultural/political forces such as “Africa” or “China” but these identifications are not as much about being African or Chinese, as about being American or British, or wherever migrants settle, differently (ibid, 311-312). Similarly, Brah (1996) argues that not all diasporas express a homing desire through a desire to return to a place of ‘origin’; for some cultural identifications with the ancestral homeland may be most important, in other words, living with difference. Framing diaspora consciousness as historically contingent and socially constructed is useful for examining diaspora consciousness among settled Jain immigrant communities with different migration trajectories, as described below, but successfully integrated into all three host societies.

Diaspora consciousness may refer to a symbolic or an aesthetic imaginary, or what Quayson and Daswani (2013, 8) call ‘affective economies of dispersal’. Objects such as memorabilia and photographs, and practices embodying music, cuisine and religion demonstrate a double consciousness of living in one place and retaining strong emotional attachments to the homeland (ibid). Werbner (2002) also recognises a diasporic consciousness constituted by material flows such as philanthropy, as well as culture and politics for settled and integrated communities. These emotional/symbolic attachments and material relations may reflect feelings of desire, nostalgia and loss, but also indicate collective memory, are objects of communication and conversation, and reflect multiple belonging (Boym 2001, 327-336). Here my interest is not in defining those who identify as Jain and live in places other than India as *the* Jain diaspora. Rather I am interested in exploring whether engagement in sustained transnational philanthropy to a Jain faith-based organisation can be understood in terms of *a* Jain diaspora consciousness. I make this distinction because support for *Ācāryaji’s* reinterpretation of the Jain ascetic path and for Veerayatan is by no means universal amongst all Jains in India or beyond. Further, there is a class dimension to transnational Jain diasporic philanthropy to Veerayatan, as I indicate below and discuss elsewhere (see Author Forthcoming).

**Jain in UK, USA and Singapore**

As in India, 4 Jains are a minority ethno-religious community in the diaspora. The 2011 UK census recorded a figure of 20,000 Jains,5 in the US there are an estimated 100,000 Jains (Lee and Nadeau), and approximately 1500 Jains resided in Singapore in 2010 (Singapore Jain Religious Society). In Britain the majority of Jains are Gujarati immigrants who had arrived from East Africa during the late 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s. Despite ‘forced’ migration during a period of ‘Africanization’ in the post-independence period, many East African Asians brought substantial human capital and some arrived with significant financial capital. These capitals were translated into higher levels of educational and occupational achievements during the 1990s among East African Asians than those arriving from the Indian sub-continent (Vertovec 1995).

In the USA the majority of Jain immigrants arrived after the passage of the 1965 Hart-Cellar immigration reform law, which lifted racial quotas on immigration. Smaller numbers of Jain families arrived in the 1990s as part of the family re-unification programme of the Immigration Act of 1990. The linguistic and regional heritage of Jains in the USA varies, unlike in Britain, and includes Jains from the Indian states of Gujarat, Rajasthan and even Punjab. Though there are no official figures, like other Indian Americans (Kurien 2006), Jains in my study are among the wealthiest and most educated immigrant group.

The first Jains arrived in Singapore in the early 1900s to conduct business. Since the Second World War, there has been a steady increase of Jains moving to Singapore to conduct business or as professionals, with the community also growing through natural increase with the birth of the second-generation in Singapore (Singapore Jain Religious Society). Jains in Singapore hail from the states of Gujarat and Rajasthan, and while there is no data on socio-economic position of Jains in Singapore, informal conversations with Jains not included in my study, as well as community donations for the purchase of a building to establish a Jain religious and community centre in 1978, and for two subsequent renovations (see Singapore Jain Religious Society), suggests that the Singapore Jain community is also a wealthy community.

This brief description of Jain migration trajectories draw attention to the potential differing impact of time and space in influencing a diasporic consciousness and relations across borders.

**Methodology**

This article primarily draws on in-depth interviews conducted as part of a project on transnational Jain diaspora engagements in India. Between October 2014 and February 2016 I interviewed 24 Jains who have engaged in philanthropic giving to Veerayatan at substantial levels and for an extended period of time (eleven in UK, eight in USA, and 5 in Singapore) to support a range of projects in India, the UK or USA, or more recently in Nepal. Another distinguishing feature of this sample is that they were all highly successful entrepreneurs or professionals at the time of the interview. Three interviews were with couples, the rest were with individuals. While the sample consists of 8 women and 15 men, philanthropic activity and support for Veerayatan among respondents who were married was a joint endeavour between spouses. Given the small purposive sample, my findings are exploratory and not representative of the philanthropic practices of all adult Jains in the diaspora.

I made a methodological decision to recruit participants from UK and USA because diasporic Jains in these countries were among the first to support Veerayatan, beginning in the early 1990s. All my British Jain respondents, except one young woman, were born in East Africa, and were the children of Gujarati Jain parents who had migrated from India to East Africa in the early 1900s. These respondents had then migrated to Britain from the late 1960s onwards and so, as ‘twice migrants’ (Bachu 1986), they had no family ties in India, though some had business ties and all maintained social and religious ties. The young woman was born in the UK but maintained social and religious ties with India. All, except one, of my respondents in the USA had migrated directly from India and had been living there for more than 30 years. All were of Gujarati heritage, except one who had Rajasthani heritage, and they all continued to maintain family ties in India. The one respondent who was born in East Africa, and had migrated to the USA via the UK, had been also been living there for more than 30 years. Her ties to India were similar to those maintained by most of the British respondents. In the UK and USA most of my respondents were linked to Veerayatan UK or Veerayatan USA, both independent charitable organisations established in these countries to primarily support Veerayatan India but which also supported local charities in each respective country.

Jains in Singapore are relatively recent supporters of Veerayatan, beginning in the early 2000s and thus was selected as a location to recruit respondents to investigate if motivations for philanthropy were similar or different to those long-term supporters in UK and USA. While one respondent had lived in Singapore for more than 50 years, two had lived there for more than 30 years, and two were born in Singapore. All were of Gujarati heritage and linked to the local Jain community organisation to a greater or lesser extent. The three who were first generation Jains in Singapore maintained family links in India.

Interviews lasted between 30 minutes to two hours, and were conducted mainly in English. I transcribed into English any Gujarati words and phrases used by the respondents. All interviews were analysed and interpreted through systematic thematic coding, in a fashion which used data to interrogate pre-existing conceptual assumptions as well as through inductive coding which remained open to patterns emerging from data.

**Values framing Jain diaspora philanthropy**

Veerayatan began operating in rural Bihar in the early 1970s, running eye-camps, providing food to the needy, and spreading the message of non-violence to local communities. Since the early1990s, when diasporic Jains first became aware of Veerayatan either when carrying out pilgrimages Samet Shikhar, a significant Jain pilgrimage site then in Bihar state, or when *Ācāryaji* and her disciples visited Britain and USA, it has grown into a large charitable institution which runs an eye hospital, schools and technical colleges in four locations in India (see Author a forthcoming for a discussion of its activities in Gujarat). Veerayatan India has become part of a transnational network of Veerayatan organisations in the UK and USA and support networks in Singapore, Malaysia, Kenya and Oman that act as vehicles to raise funds for Veerayatan India projects. In the UK and Kenya, Jains have also collectively organised and supported regular Jain religious classes under Veerayatan’s auspices. A Board of Trustees, made up of wealthy lay Jain men and women, oversee governance of funds and compliance with regulations within Veerayatan India. However, overall visionary and spiritual leadership is still provided by the head nun, and other senior nuns are responsible for implementing projects, including operational decisions related to personnel and marketing, collaboration with state agencies, maintaining relations with donors, and liaising with local politicians. Lay Jains and non-Jains paid employees, and occasional groups of volunteers, are responsible for the delivery of services. The nuns are all supported in their daily living through Veerayatan India, the organisation, but they do not receive salaries and their ascetic vows prevent them from accumulating property of their own.

Diasporic Jain philanthropy has involved financial donations, either collectively with other groups of Jains or as individual families, to support eye-camps, hospitals, schools, pharmacy, engineering and business/management technical colleges, and administrative buildings. Many respondents have also made social remittances (Levitt 1998) in the form of mobilizing social networks to raise funds or provide expert knowledge, marketing and institutional development skills, organising fund raising events, and providing medical care to the nuns.

Displaying a humanitarian ethic

When asked why they have engaged in philanthropy to Veerayatan, all respondents spoke of compassion for the needy and wanting ‘to support someone doing good for humanity’ as Naren in Singapore mentioned.6 Reflecting on why Veerayatan UK was established to support Veerayatan India, Bimal recalled that Mansukh, a key instigator in forming Veerayatan UK and now deceased, was struck by the poverty in Bihar while accompanying his wife on a pilgrimage in 1990: ‘he [Mansukh] wanted to do something for the needy people’. Bimal asserted that Jains in the diaspora did not understand rituals and restrictions in Jain practice but could relate to the idea of humanitarian service:

Even a little boy of ten years old understands… he [a little boy in rural India] doesn’t have any food, give him some food. He doesn’t have an education, give him education so he’ll understand life.

Nayna and her husband in the USA ‘really valued’ the focus of Veerayatan India on ‘how to better the community’ but also the fact that ‘they [Veerayatan] do not discriminate against caste, creed, education, social or economic standards, nothing’. Similarly, Kamala and her husband were drawn to support Veerayatan India because of the nuns’ compassion for those struck by poverty, and because ‘they’re even empowering women’.

These narratives indicate that my respondents, all living in highly developed countries, express their support for Veerayatan through a humanitarian ethic that draws on Christian notions of improving the lives of poor and Western secular discourses promoting equity, particularly for women. Only one couple linked their long-term support for Veerayatan to *seva* and interpreted it through religious idioms, “as part of the concept of *dāna*” (Anju and Mitesh, UK).

Promoting the public good

This humanitarian ethic displays a duality between short-term alleviation of the symptoms of poverty or disaster relief as well as long-term development (Erdal and Borchgrevink 2017). One of the first projects supported by British and American Jains was an eye-camp offering free eye operations to rural communities in Bihar. Bimal recalled the easy success in raising more than £25,000 for cataract operations from both adults and children in the UK in 1995:

…we talked to the youngsters about how the people [in Bihar] have problems with their eyes and many can’t see. Even if you donate £6.00 of your own pocket money, you’ll be doing a very big favour for these needy people…lots of children said, ‘okay fine, we will donate one eye operation from our own pocket money’…Donations from younger children gave incentive to the elders…

A similar fundraising effort initiated in the USA in 1998 was also aimed at young children. Manish described the ‘Give the Gift of Sight’ programme, which encouraged children to donate $20.00 on their birthday to pay for one eye-operation for ‘somebody who is a really needy person’. Manish, who has administered this programme since it began, noted that it raises an average of $10,000 and supports 400 eye-operations a year at Veerayatan’s eye-hospital in Bihar, which was built with large-scale donations from diasporic Jains.

Support for projects that alleviate symptoms of poverty display ties of co-responsibility (Werbner 2002) towards the underprivileged in India, and a desire to advance human welfare (Dusenbery and Tatla 2009; Erdal and Borchgrevink 2017). Since the early 2000s, respondents in all three countries were keen to prioritise support for long-term development projects that they considered valuable. Like other Asian diaspora groups (Geithner, Johnson and Chen 2004; Guha 2013; Kapur et al. 2004; Qureshi and Osella 2014), my respondents provided large-scale philanthropic support for Veerayatan’s primary, secondary and professional education projects in Bihar and Gujarat states.7 Motivations for prioritising philanthropy for education differed between respondents from the USA and those from UK and Singapore. Nayna observed that Jains in the USA are ‘very educated and they realise the value of education’. Kirit, made a direct link between the education he had received when young and his later professional and financial success in the USA. All USA-based respondents reflected on their own migration trajectories of pursuing higher education in the USA, and as Nayna suggested, Veerayatan’s provision of what she called ‘value based education’8 had touched the hearts of Jains in the USA because they perceived such education as ‘the way to bring peace and end the poverty in the world and give everyone equal opportunity’. They strongly believed that education would empower Indians, enabling them to gain upward social mobility, and perhaps even become globally mobile.

In contrast, British and Singaporean Jains perceived their support of Veerayatan’s education projects as a vehicle for addressing poverty and lack of development at the local level. As ‘twice migrants’ (Bachu 1986), respondents in Britain had experienced ‘forced’ migration from East Africa. However, they also believed that education ‘is the best investment you can make in people’ as Dipak put it. He proudly stated that of the £1 million Veerayatan UK raised through six Cycling for Charity fundraising trips in various countries, a large proportion had supported Veerayatan’s education projects in Bihar and Gujarat. Payal, a young British Jain, believed that ‘education [was] the only way out’ for the rural poor India. After spending time volunteering at a Veerayatan school set up to meet the needs of children orphaned in the aftermath of an earthquake in northern Gujarat, she and a group of friends established a Sponsor-a-Child programme to mobilise support for the school from the London Jain community. When asked about her commitment to running the programme for five years, at a time when she was also building her own career, she expressed the same humanitarian ethic discussed earlier: ‘[they] didn’t exclude the outcasts. So there was an all-inclusive policy and to educate women as well’.

The individual and family migration histories of the respondents from Singapore indicated that their migration trajectories were linked to entrepreneurial opportunities in Singapore rather than the pursuit of higher education and professional careers. The four respondents who had also decided to focus their philanthropic donations on education projects had the same motivations as respondents from the UK. Binoy and Asha believed ‘that education is empowerment’ and had made financial and social philanthropic donations to Veerayatan for at least 10 years at the time of the interview. Rajula liked what she described as the ‘*seva* spirit’ at Veerayatan and she and her husband, Sailesh, ‘had wanted to help poor children in India’. They had sponsored operational costs for one of the Veerayatan primary schools in Gujarat for three years, and Rajula had spent two months teaching there.

Sustained and large-scale support for Veerayatan’s education projects in India reflect ties of co-responsibility (Werbner 2002) and demonstrate my respondents’ visions for addressing poverty, development and equity.9

Expressing a homing desire through a hybrid logic of philanthropy

The narratives above suggest that my respondents’ vision of the ideal world (Bekkers and Wiepking 2011, 941) is shaped by a humanitarian ethic and Western secular discourses promoting equal rights. The majority do not express their reasons for supporting Veerayatan in Jain religious idioms of gift-giving, nor appear concerned about gaining merit through alms giving. However, for my respondents the logic of their philanthropy is compatible with *Ācāryaji’s* reinterpretation of the Jain ascetic path as compassion in action and Veerayatan’s mission. They perceived Veerayatan as applying shared Jain religious norms appropriate for contemporary times, that of *seva* and compassion for the poor and needy. Nirmal described Veerayatan as ‘Jainism in action’ and felt that this was ‘real Jainism with helping the people’ rather than the rituals. Bimal’s comment earlier also conveyed his belief that humanitarian service is ‘real Jainism’, a sentiment echoed by several respondents in the USA. Anand recalled that his parents had taught him ‘religion is humanity’. Thus transnational philanthropy to Veerayatan allowed my respondents to be British, or American or Singaporean differently (Clifford 1994) and to transmit this diasporic consciousness to the second and coming generations:

In my mind, the impact that it has on the kid who have never been to India, who’s seen the picture of a young child, or a person in India who needs surgery, who is able to see because of his or her $21 donation, that kind of feeling or character that is instilled in a young child at that age…I think it is very powerful (Nitin, USA).

Additionally, philanthropy to Veerayatan enabled my respondents to express a desire for emotional attachments to the geographical homeland. Binoy and Asha had specifically directed their philanthropy to Veerayatan projects in Gujarat because this was a way to give back to a region with which they had ancestral links. However, other respondents supported Veerayatan projects and activities in a range of locations in India, and more recently in Nepal. Sailesh emphasised that, while he and his wife donated to causes in Singapore, their donations to projects in India were much more substantial because ‘the suffering is much more severe [in India]’ and ‘being Indian you’re more affiliated to India rather than any other place’. Anand noted that a greater proportion of the annual funds raised by Veerayatan USA were earmarked for Bihar, a state with which none of the American respondents had family links. Unlike other studies on Indian diaspora philanthropy (Dekkers and Rutten 2011; Walton-Roberts 2009), philanthropy amongst my respondents was generally not motivated by a desire to maintain ties to a particular region or social status within the home community. For my respondents, all of whom described themselves as spiritual, and only one followed a Jain practice of rituals and austerities prescribed for lay Jains, philanthropic giving was generated by cultural and religious attachments to the homeland. They believed that philanthropy to Veerayatan allowed them to enact Jain spirituality in the diaspora. As an organisation run by Jain nuns, Veerayatan had become a worthy recipient, and gift-giving to “good recipients defines what in fact a good… Jain is” (Heim 2004, 67). Philanthropy to Veerayatan enabled my respondents to not only give out of compassion but also out of devotion.

**Role of social capital in sustaining transnational philanthropy**

Shared religious norms motivate philanthropy to Veerayatan, but what sustains long-term support, in many cases for over two decades? Almost all of my respondents had a history of civic engagement with caste, ethno-religious and/or civic, charitable and government bodies. These histories of civic engagement indicate a sense of belonging in countries of settlement as well as community ties with fellow Jains in these countries. In this section I argue that this social capital serves to sustain philanthropy to Veerayatan.

Ties to Veerayatan; ties to the homeland

Embeddedness in networks of Jain communities in the UK, USA, and Singapore led to exposure to Veerayatan and first contact with the nuns for my respondents. Regular visits by the nuns to the UK and USA since the 1990s, and to Singapore since 2001, at which time they were hosted by some of the key supporters, cemented these initial connections into strong commitment to Veerayatan for several respondents. In particular, two British respondents expressed their ties with Veerayatan in familial terms. Punit recollected *Ācāryaji’s* week-long stay with him and his wife in London in the 1990s as having ‘a wonderful time with her’. Over time, Punit came to perceive Veerayatan and the nuns as part of his family, in contrast to other charitable organisations in India to which he simply sent money but had no other attachments:

But this [Veerayatan] is the one, we are there. It’s our families doing it so we know exactly what’s happening. … Every other week I’m in touch with them. Especially what is happening in Bihar… I feel very proud.

Punit took great pride in Veerayatan’s achievements in Bihar, one of the poorest states in India, with a long history of violence, inter-caste conflict and Naxalite activities. Rahul recounted how within three months of meeting the nuns, he and his wife ‘were embraced like a family member’. This almost instant embrace within the Veerayatan family had influenced his commitment and support for Veerayatan: ‘so when you become part of the family then your attachment becomes unconditional. Your obligations become unconditional, your responsibilities become unconditional’. For Rahul, these strong affective ties with Veerayatan meant that he had a duty to become a ‘critical friend’ of Veerayatan: ‘…you must help to overcome their weaknesses and you have to build on their strengths’. This ‘duty’ translated into financial and social philanthropy, as well as carving out time to have lengthy conversations with the senior nun responsible for projects in Gujarat on Veerayatan’s direction and activities.

In the USA, two respondents talked of strong affective ties with the nuns, though did not express these ties in familial terms. Kamala recalled that when the nuns first came to stay with them during their visits to the USA, she and her husband ‘connected very well’ with them: ‘the first time they [the nuns] ever stayed at our home it was a great experience, religiously’. Similarly, Nayna had hosted the visiting nuns on many occasions and spoke fondly of her relation with one particular nun. She was particularly proud of the impact these visits had had on her daughter who had produced five vocal albums for Veerayatan: ‘it’s wonderful to have children involved. So in that way they understand Jainism, the principles and it gives them strong roots’. In other words, these affective ties enabled both the first and the second-generation to live with difference in America and strengthen commitment to Veerayatan. Nayna continued to devote time to fundraising activities for Veerayatan USA as well as host the nuns in her home. Kamala and her husband mobilised support for Veerayatan India projects through their social networks, particularly through their involvement in another South Asian philanthropic foundation in the USA. They also drew on these experiences of civic engagement to contribute a range of social remittances to aid the launch of a new educational initiative at a Veerayatan conference in USA in 2014:

We were quite instrumental in putting the programme together, the schedule together, including the speeches, the presentations by different nuns, or the evening programmes and all that. Besides we worked on the book… the whole conception started at our home. In September 2013 we organised a meeting at our home when this idea was presented by *Ācāryaji* to the key supporters who travelled from different cities…

Other respondents did not describe Veerayatan as a family nor express their social ties with Veerayatan in affective terms. However, their identification with the religious norms espoused by *Ācāryaji* led many to display a strong commitment to and engagement with Veerayatan. Mitesh noted that the senior nun responsible for Veerayatan’s activities in Gujarat had asked him to move to Gujarat to help run the primary and secondary schools and the vocational skills programme, all of which he supported through annual donations. While he was unable to comply with this request, he made annual week-long visits during which time he also transmitted social remittances. During one such visit Mitesh was particularly keen to change what he perceived as an attitude of compromise amongst some students in the vocational skills class: ‘So I told these people, take this word “*chalse*” [compromise] out from your vocabulary. You have welded this but it is not right, and it won’t do’. In emphasizing the value of perfection to the students, he said he cited Germans as an example of ‘the best engineers because they don’t compromise’.10

Neemu, whose husband Mansukh was the key instigator in establishing Veerayatan UK, recalled that for ten years she had done something related to Veerayatan every single day, whether it was logging donations, attending fundraising events organised by Veerayatan UK, teaching at a Veerayatan sponsored Jain school in London, or hosting the nuns in her home when they visited London. Respondents in the USA and in Singapore also demonstrated a strong commitment to the organisation and the nuns. Kalpesh and Kirit, as well as several of their extended family members, volunteered time as officers in Veerayatan USA and/or at Veerayatan projects in India, made financial donations to Veerayatan projects, and had provided free medical care for the nuns since the early 1990s. Naren in Singapore mentioned that while he supported three or four other Jain organisations in India, Veerayatan was ‘special to [him]’ because it was nuns running it, they were ‘dedicated people’ and he had complete trust in the organisation.11 His commitment to Veerayatan was reflected in the way he readily solicited support from Jains in Singapore but also through his ties with wealthy Jains in Mumbai. Naren recounted that at one fundraising event he organised in Mumbai Jains committed four crore Indian rupees [approximately £463,000] for a school in Bihar. Asha and her husband continued to make financial donations to Veerayatan projects in Gujarat because it provided a channel that made them ‘feel good’. Additionally, Asha regularly produced promotional materials for Veerayatan projects, and had recently provided contacts in the museum sector in Singapore to aid with planning for a Veerayatan museum on Jain history and philosophy.

These narratives suggest that philanthropic support for Veerayatan confers psychic benefits. Particularly when donations are acknowledged at public events or through plaques on Veerayatan buildings (Shah forthcoming), they confer status and reputation from the nuns and from co-religionists who approve of the reinterpretation of the Jain ascetic path as compassion in action. Additionally, for some respondents, opportunities to express devotion when the nuns ask for philanthropic support in the form of specific social remittances may also generate psychic benefits.

Generating diasporic consciousness through transnational lateral ties with lay Jains

Philanthropic support for Veerayatan enabled a few respondents to develop lateral ties with co-religionists in other countries. British respondents had long-term lateral ties with Jains in East Africa through their family networks, but engagement with Veerayatan enabled some to expand these ties. For Rahul, the Veerayatan family extended beyond the nuns to include some of Veerayatan’s key supporters in the USA and India overtime. He noted that he and his wife attended life events such as weddings and deaths within this extended family. Nirmal, another British respondent, commented on ‘the wonderful friends’ his whole family had made with other long-term supporters across the globe.

While the affective quality of social ties with the nuns and the boundaries of the social networks with co-religionists vary among respondents, these homeland and lateral social and emotional ties strengthen transnational network-based social capital. It is these feelings of belonging to a transnational Jain community that sustains long-term philanthropic support for Veerayatan India.

**Conclusion**

Since the 1990s academics and policy makers have regarded migrants with optimism and hailed them as conduits for development. This ‘development mantra’ (Kapur 2004) assumes that all permanently settled migrants and immigrant communities will transform into a diaspora (Ramachandran 2016), and adopts an economistic discourse to explain such transfers. A few studies have examined social factors motivating transnational transfers (Werbner 2002; Dusenbery and Tatla 2009; Sinatti and Horst 2015), but religion is rarely considered in this literature (Erdal and Borchgrevink 2017). In this article I focus on the role played by religion in diaspora engagements with development. I demonstrate that for diasporic Jains with varying migration trajectories to three different countries, and therefore time and spatial distance to India, sustained transnational philanthropy to Veerayatan, a Jain faith-based organisation, enables them to maintain material as well as cultural and spiritual relationships to the ancestral homeland.

Jains in this study exhibit a hybrid logic of transnational philanthropy. Their narratives convey a humanitarian ethic, feelings of co-responsibility across borders, and visions of how to advance human welfare. However, these discourses are compatible with reinterpretation of the Jain ascetic path as compassion in action and Veerayatan’s mission by *Ācāryaji*, a Jain nun. Philanthropy to Veerayatan, an organisation run by Jain nuns, makes Veerayatan a worthy recipient in terms of classical Jain understandings of gift-giving, and allows the donor to also express compassion. In this way, my respondents perceive Veerayatan as applying shared Jain religious norms appropriate for contemporary times, that of *seva* and compassion for the needy and poor. Shared convictions motivate diasporic Jain philanthropy to Veerayatan, but it is sustained over time through social and emotional ties rooted in and routed through network-based social capital involving co-religionists in the country of settlement and transnationally, as well as with the nuns. These networks and affective ties not only foster norms of reciprocity that encourage attention to others’ welfare but also provide channels through which my respondents recruit one another for good deeds.

Shared religious norms that promote caring and giving, and involvement and identification with a religious community encourage altruism and motivate transnational philanthropy amongst diasporic Jains. However, this study also suggests that sustained philanthropy to religious organisations displays a ‘homing desire’, and is a vehicle for the expression of identities, culture and religion for settled and socio-economically successful diasporic groups. Transnational philanthropy to Veerayatan allows diasporic Jains, whether long-established in first country of settlement, twice migrants or second-generation, to act religiously and be Jain. For class-privileged diasporic Jains transnational diaspora philanthropy is a marker of citizenship and multiple belongings, of being British, or American or Singaporean differently.

**Endnotes**

1. Scholars have noted the difficulties of distinguishing remittances from philanthropy. The lack of conceptual clarity leads to lack of accurate data and further undermines understanding of diaspora philanthropy (Johnson 2007).
2. See Laidlaw (2000) for a detailed explanation.
3. For exceptions, see Dusenbery and Tatla (2009), Singh, Simon and Tatla (2010) Najam (2006) and Erdal and Borchgrevink (2017.
4. <http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/religion.aspx> [Accessed 18 August 2012)
5. <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/rpt-religion.html> [Accessed 19 August 2013]
6. All respondents’ names are pseudonyms.
7. See Shah (forthcoming) for an analysis of the confluence of factors that has led to an expansion of Veerayatan’s education provision in Gujarat.
8. See Shah (forthcoming) for how Veerayatan defines value-based education.
9. My interest here is to understand what motivates diaspora engagement with development. However, see Basu (2013) and Dekkers and Rutten (2011) for a discussion of social differences and contestations between migrants/diasporas and homeland communities with regard to philanthropy.
10. Rahul’s and Mitesh’s comments display unequal power relations and neo-colonial sentiments but I do not evaluate them here as I am interesting in understanding their sustained commitment to Veerayatan, and what these commitments indicate about their attachments to the homeland. Elsewhere I discuss perceptions of Veerayatan and its activities among civil society actors in Gujarat (Shah forthcoming). Also see previous note.
11. Trust and worthiness are key criteria for the Indian diaspora who display significant mistrust in both official institutions and formal civil society organisations in India (Kapur et al. 2004; Najam 2006).

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