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7 Contested Family Relations and Government Policy

Links between Patel Migrants in Britain and India

Mario Rutten and Pravin J. Patel

This paper discusses the social links between Indian migrants in Britain and their family members in India. It is based on fieldwork among members of the Patidar community in rural central Gujarat and among their relatives in London. Members of this community have a long history of national and international migration. Many of them migrated to East Africa in the early part of the 20th century and from there to Britain (and the US) in the 1960s and 1970s.

The aim of this paper is to show the differences in perspective on the social links 'from below' between the Patidar migrants in London and their relatives in Gujarat.¹ Both the migrants in London and their relatives in Gujarat acknowledge the notion of an Indian diaspora as a significant category, but they frame and discuss this notion in very different and contradictory ways. The Patidar community in London is a transnational community that maintains frequent long-distance family links with their home region in India. There are, however, differences within the community that are related to their patterns of migration. The links between family members India and Britain are neither static nor without problems. Over time, the orientation towards India has become more ambivalent. Moreover, there are differences of opinion between the Indian migrants in London and their relatives in Gujarat on the nature of their relationship and on the type of help rendered. Furthermore, the migrants in London challenge the government perspective on the diaspora concept. This paper thus shows the complex process of appropriation of notions of 'the Indian diaspora' among those who describe themselves as members of that diaspora, and among their relatives at home.

Introduction

By the end of the twentieth century, about 2 million people of South Asian origin were residing in Europe, the US and Canada. The majority of them, about 1.26 million, live in Britain (Jain 1993: 34-35). Geographically, the Indian migrants in Britain are concentrated in the urban counties of England, from Kent in the south east to Lancashire in the north west. The largest number, about 36 per cent of the total Indian population, live in Greater London, while 22 per cent have settled in the Midlands area (Ram 1989: 101-02). With regard to their region of origin in India, the Gujarati and Punjabi communities are by far the largest Indian communities in Britain (Jain 1993: 36).

Gujarat is one of the prosperous states of India. Being a coastal state it has a long tradition of overseas trade. Gujarati business houses have existed in Africa since the thirteenth century and Gujarati businessmen, particularly the Ismaili Muslims, have been bankers and money-lenders of high reputation (Dobbin 1996:109-30). Among the Hindus of Gujarat, the members of the Patidar caste from central Gujarat have emigrated to East Africa in large numbers since the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The Patidar community is an upwardly mobile, middle-ranking peasant caste which can be found in several regions of Gujarat, but has its main concentration in the Charotar tract of Kheda and Anand districts in central Gujarat (Pocock 1972). With about fifteen to twenty per cent of the district population, the Patidars form a substantial minority that have been able to acquire economic, social, and political dominance since the early part of the twentieth century, both at the regional and state level (Hardiman 1981; Rutten 1995).

Participation of the Patidars from central Gujarat in the process of migration abroad has a long history. From the late nineteenth and early twentieth century onwards, family members of Patidar businessmen had already started migrating to Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and other states of India, to trade in the locally produced biddy tobacco. This form of migration was mainly confined to the upper stratum of the business community in central Gujarat. A more spectacular form of migration, which was one of the first streams of migration among the middle-class Patidars in central Gujarat, was the migration to foreign countries, especially to East African countries such as Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. This pattern of migration started during the period of economic deterioration around the turn of the century and accelerated during the 1920s and 1930s. Many Patidars who had never travelled any further than Ahmedabad or Baroda began to pick up the trade connection which had existed for two thousand

years between Gujarat and Africa (Pocock 1972: 63; Desai 1948: 18/141; Tambs-Lyche 1980: 35-40).

This early migration abroad from the Charotar tract was closely related to the job opportunities offered by British colonial rule in East Africa. During the first decades of the twentieth century especially, many Patidars from middle-class and lower middle-class peasant backgrounds migrated as passage or free migrants to countries like Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Colonial rule and the completion of the East African railways offered these educated middle-class Patidars white-collar clerical occupations, and initiated a new era of economic opportunities to be exploited by the members of this peasant caste who took up a variety of commercial and professional activities. Most of these Patidar migrants went to East Africa on the basis of a work permit provided by fellow villagers who had gone earlier, or on the basis of a marriage with a Patidar girl or boy living in an East African country. These marriages were known as *permitian lagn* (marriage arranged with a view to get a permit to go to Africa), because the main purpose for the Patidar family in the village was to provide one of their sons or daughters with an opportunity to migrate to East Africa. It was usually through the help and support of their new family-in-law, along with that of other relatives and fellow villagers, that these young migrants who had never travelled beyond their own regional towns, were able to settle down in their new environment.

The colonial period in the 1950s saw only a very small trickle of Patidars to Britain. From the mid-1960s onwards, however, the pattern of migration of the Patidar households changed very quickly from East Africa to Britain. As a result of radical Africanisation programmes in these countries and the fear that immigration restrictions would soon be implemented by the British government, many of these East African Indians left for Britain in a relatively short time span. Between September 1967 and March 1968 alone, 12,000 South Asians from Kenya entered Britain, while 29,000 Asians arrived in 1972 after being expelled from Uganda (Michaelson 1978/79: 351). Although a relatively prosperous minority of these so-called 'twice migrants' (Bhachu 1985) had already begun to invest in Britain in the 1950s and early 1960s – mainly through the purchase of houses where young relatives could stay whilst studying (Michaelson 1978/79: 350) – most of those who migrated from Africa to Britain at the end of the 1960s, early 1970s, arrived practically empty handed and were usually fully dependent on friends and relatives (Tambs-Lyche 1980: 41).

As a result of these patterns of migration, the Patels constitute one of the largest groups among the Gujarati Hindus in Britain. Not surprisingly 'Patel' is one of the most popular Indian surnames abroad along with the 'Singh' surname. According to a conservative estimate

of the membership of associations of all the marriage circles in Britain, there were about 30,000 Patels from central Gujarat living in Britain in the early 1990s, of which 90 per cent reside in London (Lyon and West 1995: 407).

The main part of the findings presented in this paper are based on fieldwork conducted in 1998 among members of the Patidar community in rural central Gujarat and among their relatives in London in 1999, followed by subsequent visits since then. In order to study the links between the Patidars of India and Britain we collected information through a survey from 313 households in six villages in central Gujarat who have relatives in Britain, out of which 157 were selected for in-depth interviews. This was followed by a survey among 159 Patidar households in Greater London, of which 80 were selected for in-depth interviews. Members of the Patidar households in Greater London originated from these same six villages in central Gujarat.² The reason for selecting six different villages is related to the fact that the Patidars of central Gujarat are not a homogenous group but an internally differentiated one with several hierarchically organised subgroups having a unique preoccupation with the competitive display of social status. In their selection of marriage partners the Patidars confine themselves to their own subdivision within a specific group of villages, based on an extended hierarchical system of endogamous marriage circles (Pocock 1972; Hardiman 1981). These marriage circles (*ekada* or *gol*) have retained their social significance for the Patidars living in Britain, where they have established associations which organise social and cultural activities for its members (Lyon and West 1995: 407; Michaelson 1979-79: 355).

In order to have a fairly representative picture of the socio-economic-cultural links among the Patidars in central Gujarat and their relatives in Britain, we decided to select villages of both high ranking marriage circles and medium-ranking marriage circles. For this purpose, we divided the villages of central Gujarat into two major strata which are recognised as socially significant: *Mota Gam* (big villages) and *Nana Gam* (small villages). The six villages belonging to the marriage circle known as *Chha Gam* (six villages) are considered *Mota Gam*, while almost all the other villages are generally known as *Nana Gam*. From *Mota Gam* we selected two villages from the *Chha Gam* marriage circle. The big villages are actually rural towns compared to the smaller villages. However, this distinction does not only reflect the difference in size but also the social status. The Patidars of the big villages are considered to be of the highest social status among all the hypergamously organised marriage circles of villages in central Gujarat (Pocock 1972; and Hardiman 1981).

Except for the *Panch Gam* (five villages) marriage circle, whose status is ambiguous, all the other marriage circles belong to the *Nana Gam* category. From these marriage circles we selected four villages from two medium-status marriage circles: *Sattavis Gam* (27 villages) and *Bavis Gam* (22 villages).³

The selected stratified sample of villages within both *Mota Gam* and *Nana Gam* marriage circles allows for comparison between Patidars from high-status and medium-status villages. This difference between high-status and medium-status villages is an important aspect within the Patidar community with its strong sense of hierarchy and practice of hypergamy. An important reason for selecting these three specific marriage circles is that members of these circles make up the largest share of the Central Gujarat Patidar migrants in Britain. Based on information provided by Lyon and West on the number of Patidars in London, it turns out that seventy per cent of the 30,000 Patidars from central Gujarat in London belong to the *Chha Gam*, *Sattavis Gam*, and *Bavis Gam* marriage circles (1995: 406-07).

Within the Patel community in Britain, there are differences that are related to their patterns of migration. First of all, there are those who belong to so-called twice-migrant families. These Patels entered Britain from East Africa, especially from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. In our sample of 159 households in Greater London they make up three-fourths of the total number of household members who were not born in Britain. This figure includes those who came to Britain after a temporary stay in India following their departure from East Africa. The remaining one-fourth of the household members consists of those who migrated directly from India to Britain without having any previous migration history.

In his overview of differentiation among the British Gujarati, Steven Vertovec extensively discusses the difference between these 'East African' Gujaratis and the 'Indian' Gujarati. In general, he emphasises, 'East African' Gujarati are viewed as having a higher educational and occupational background and being more wealthy and of higher status compared to those who had directly migrated from India.

East Africans' are usually associated with higher educational and occupational backgrounds than Indians (Modood et al. 1997). This trait has been subsequently equated with greater status and wealth. The East African Asians' supposed longer and deeper acquaintance with the English language and with urban, middle-class 'European' (albeit colonial) lifestyles has connoted a better preparation for successful living in Britain. Though it would be difficult to prove the validity of all such traits, they remain com-

mon stereotypes that determine much by way of attitudes and social formations (Vertovec 2000: 90-91).

Our analysis of the migration history of the Patels from central Gujarat points to the fact that there are also social differences among East African Gujarati in Britain that belong to the same caste group. Most of the East African Patels settled in Britain came from Kenya and Uganda. There are slight social differences between those Patels who came to Britain from Kenya and those who came from Uganda. One of the reasons for this process of social differentiation within the Patidar community seems to be partly related to a difference in their patterns of migration.

It appears that due to an earlier process of urbanisation and education, and a subsequent greater exposure to the outside world, the Patels of the *Mota Gam* villages started emigrating to East Africa earlier than their counterparts from the *Nana Gam* villages. Perhaps the fear of losing status by their inability to marry their daughters and sisters in equal or higher status families within their own marriage circle, due to a combination of higher dowries and an increasing scarcity of land, may also have compelled them to look for better opportunities outside India. As a result, most of those Patels who emigrated to East Africa at an early stage originated from one of the *Mota Gam* villages that belong to the *Chha Gam* marriage circle. Since Mombassa was the port of arrival in those days, the large majority of the *Mota Gam* Patels settled down in Kenya.

After they had established themselves, these migrants started to encourage and help those relatives who were interested in migrating to East Africa. This applied especially to those who were in need of assistants and other junior staff members to help them run their businesses. Due to the prevailing system of hypergamy among the Patidars of central Gujarat, some of these relatives, particularly on the in-law side of their family, originated from *Nana Gam* villages that belonged to other marriage circles. As a result, an increasing number of *Nana Gam* Patels started to emigrate to East Africa. Being latecomers and relatively less educated compared to the *Mota Gam* Patels, many of them encountered difficulties in finding employment in Kenya. In search of new opportunities, these *Nana Gam* Patels started moving further inland and settled down in large numbers in British protectorate Uganda.

Thus, it seems that the majority of Patels who settled down in Kenya originated from the *Mota Gam* villages, while among those who settled down in Uganda the proportion of Patels from *Nana Gam* villages is higher. This difference in geographical pattern of migration reflects a relatively invisible but nevertheless significant difference of status with-

in the Patidar community of central Gujarat. In general, the Patels that belong to the *Mota Gam* villages are usually associated with higher status and greater wealth as compared to those who originate from the *Nana Gam* villages. Therefore, most of those who came from Kenya to Britain were relatively better-off and higher status Patels than many of those who came from Uganda. Moreover, the Patels of the *Mota Gam* villages who had migrated earlier to Kenya also had a stronger tradition of retaining links back home than those who came later and settled in Uganda due to various socio-historical reasons. This different tradition of maintaining links back home in India seems to be reflected in these two groups even in Britain.

Another reason for the social differentiation between those Patels in Britain who came from Kenya and those who came from Uganda is in the manner in which they migrated to Britain. Those Patels who migrated from East Africa to Britain came to Britain in two waves. Those who came from Kenya arrived mainly in the mid- and late 1960s, while those who were settled in Uganda entered Britain in the early 1970s. Those Patels who came from Kenya could usually plan their migration in advance. Due to the continuing Africanisation programs in Kenya, they could anticipate their departure and were able to transfer part of their wealth to Britain relatively easily. This was much less so for those Patels who had settled in Uganda. Their departure from Uganda was the result of a sudden and unexpected expulsion by Idi Amin. Being forced to leave the country at very short notice, they arrived in Britain as political refugees with very little personal property left over.

Social Links

Regardless of whether they migrated from East Africa or India, and whether they belonged to the *Mota Gam* or *Nana Gam* villages, the characteristic feature of the Patel community that we studied in London is that they remained attached to Indian culture and to their Gujarati background in terms of their social relations. Most of the older generation have retained their Patidar identity by organising themselves on the basis of their village of origin and marriage-circle (*gol*). These village-based associations and organisations of village circles in Britain bring out directories giving details of all the Patidar family members concerned. These directories are mostly used to help to arrange marriages. For this purpose, the associations also organise marriage-melas, in which young boys and girls publicly introduce themselves and try to find out suitable life-partners. Besides, the village associations and marriage-circle associations of Patidars in Britain organise meetings to

celebrate *Nav Ratri*, Diwali and other important Indian festivals, and have functions like dinner-and-dance parties, where they eat, drink, and dance to Hindi songs till late into the night and early morning hours on weekends. Moreover, many Patels participate in religious activities, for which the Swaminarayan temple in North London is often a focal point (see also Williams 1984). Although most of the active members in these associations belong to the older generations of Patidar migrants, many organisations also have youth committees in which youngsters are involved and encouraged to organise and participate in various activities.

Along with organising social and religious events, members of the Patidar community in London have started making organised efforts to teach Gujarati to the younger generation. Children belonging to the second and third generation of migrants are mostly able to understand functional Gujarati, but they find it difficult to speak, and are often unable to read and write the Gujarati script. This problem, of course, is not confined to the Patel community in Britain. The Gujarati community as a whole has become more conscious about teaching Gujarati to their children. There are about 500 classes that teach Gujarati throughout the UK, often for two hours a week on Saturdays and Sundays. By the end of the 1990s, about one thousand to fifteen hundred students were taking Gujarati language examinations annually.

On the whole, village life in Gujarat still has a profound effect on the first generation of Patidar migrants. They grew up in the villages during their formative years, where they studied and spent their childhoods. Moreover, many of them grew up during the patriotic period of the national independence movement, which made them even prouder of their Indian culture and heritage. The social, religious and cultural bonds with their home village and with other Patidar migrants from the same region, when they first lived in East Africa and later on in Britain, further cemented those ties with their villages of origin. Therefore, the social identity of the first generation of Patidar migrants is deeply embedded in village life. Meanwhile, their ties with their places of origin and with their relatives and friends in Gujarat are still quite strong.

One of the indicators of social links between the Patidar migrants in Britain and their relatives in the villages in Gujarat are the various types of intense contacts that exist between the members of both groups. Writing letters is still the major form of communication used by households in Gujarat to contact relatives in Britain, although phone calls are also an important way of keeping in touch. Because the costs of long-distance telephone calls from India to Britain are high they are usually kept very short and are often only made in emergency situations or for very specific purposes. Patels in Britain make phone

calls more often to their families in the village; some even call on a weekly basis for a few minutes. These calls are used to exchange information about the well being of relatives on both sides.

Another important form of contact between the households in Gujarat and their family members in Britain are visits by relatives from Britain to their home villages. More than ninety per cent of the selected 313 households in the six villages have been visited by relatives in Britain in the period between 1993 and 1998. In total, 768 relatives visited India which means an average of 2.7 relatives per household of which a substantial number visited India more than once during this five-year period. Most of these visits were of relatively long duration. Almost fifty per cent of them stayed one to three months, while the visits of nine per cent of British relatives lasted four to six months. About forty per cent of the relatives who visited their home villages stayed in India for less than a month.

In recent years, when many of the older migrants retired from active employment, a movement from Britain back to India during winter has emerged. Among the older generation of Patidar migrants in Britain, there are quite a few who could be called 'international commuters'. These are Patidars from Britain who travel to India every winter for stays of one to five months. In most cases, they live in Gujarat in their own apartment or bungalow in one of the nearby towns or on the outskirts of their home village. Some of them have actually for all practical purposes re-emigrated to India as they spend more time in their country of origin than in Britain. Although most of these people did return to spend their retirement in India, some returned because they no longer wanted to live with their families in Britain. Having returned to their village of origin, some of them realised, however, that they are no longer at home there either, as is shown in the following case study.⁴

Shamalbhai is 72 years old and since 1994 he lives again in the village in which he was born in 1925. In 1953, at the age of 27, Shamalbhai left his native village when he was already married. He was invited to come to Tanzania by his father's eldest brother's son whose family had been living there since the 1930s. In 1956, Shamalbhai came back to his village to collect his wife and three children. The highly unstable political situation around 1963 made them decide to bring their children back to Charotar and to leave them with Shamalbhai's nearest relatives in his native village where they could attend the local schools. Although his wife stayed with their children for some months, she again joined her husband in Tanzania in 1964. Together, they lived and worked in Tanzania until 1973 with only one visit to their children in Charotar in 1969.

After their visit in 1973, his wife remained behind in the village, while Shamalbhai returned again to Tanzania in 1974. From there he applied and was allowed to enter the UK in 1979. Within one year after his arrival in London, Shamalbhai called his wife and their three children to join him in Britain. But Shamalbhai and his family were only able to get unskilled work during the early period in Britain. 'I could only get a job in a factory', Shamalbhai mentioned to us. 'In Tanzania I had a big shop with assistants and drove around in a Jaguar car, but I had to leave almost all my property behind when I migrated to the UK and had to start again from scratch'.

'I was not really happy in London. It was hard work that my wife and I had to perform in those factories for very low pay, but we did it for our children. By migrating to the UK, we wanted to give them a better future, because they would not have these opportunities in India, being relatively low educated and without much property in the village. After my retirement in 1990, however, my wife and I started to visit India very regularly. In fact, we used to often stay several months per year in India. In 1994, we even returned and took up permanent residence again in my native village, because after my father's brother's daughter had left for the US, there was no one left in the village to take care of my old father. We then built a new house on the outskirts of the village and since then we live here the whole year around, and only occasionally visit the UK.'

Although at first, Shamalbhai returned to the village only because of his father, he visibly enjoys being part of the village life. Every day he makes his rounds of the village and on various evenings one can meet him in the village square, talking to old friends. On the other hand, however, he occupies a marginal position in his home village. 'Although I was born and brought up here, even after four years of my permanent return, I still do not feel that I am really part of village society. We participate in various activities, but somehow we have difficulties really mixing with our relatives in the village and force ourselves to attend their gatherings. But to be honest, we used to have the same feeling when we were living in the UK, because I arrived there at the age of 55 and only worked there for about ten years'. After Shamalbhai left the room for a short while, his wife also started to express her views. 'Yes, we were also not at home in London, but at least we had our children and grandchildren nearby. I don't like it here at all and hardly leave our house. My whole life I have been able to live and adjust in different countries. I have lived in Charotar, in Tanzania and in London, but now that we

are old, I sometimes feel that we no longer feel at home anywhere and therefore it is better keep to ourselves inside our own house'.

As is to be expected, there are less visits by Indian relatives to Britain compared to the number of visits from Patidar migrants to India. However, members of more than twenty per cent of the selected households visited Britain between 1993 and 1998. In total, 128 members visited Britain in this five-years period, which comes to an average of 1.6 relatives per household. This clearly indicates that there are substantial numbers of household members from the villages who have visited Britain. These visits are often of a longer duration. Only eight per cent of the household members who visited Britain stayed there for less than a month. About 45 per cent of them stayed between one to three months, while the visits of 33 per cent lasted four to six months, with the remaining 14 per cent remaining in Britain for a period of more than half a year.

The 313 households in the six selected villages with relatives in Britain have a total of 3,624 relatives in Britain, which is an average of 11.6 relatives per household. Although the selection of households in the six villages was done on the basis of the existence of relatives in Britain, it turns out that 133 of the 157 selected families for in-depth interviews do not only have relatives in Britain, but also outside Britain. In total, this comes to an extra 1,469 relatives with an average of 9.4 per household. With the rigorous immigration restrictions imposed, emigration to Britain decreased rapidly from the late 1970s, early 1980s onwards. Since then, the US and Canada have become the most popular destinations for Patidar migrants (Jain 1993; Helweg 1987/1990). This is confirmed by the findings of our study. Almost 75 per cent of the 1,469 relatives of the selected families in central Gujarat live in the US, while almost 16 per cent live in East Africa.

One of the consequences of this widespread migration pattern of the Patidar community is the emergence of a category of people that we would describe as 'world citizens'. They are usually older people who, although they have a residence in one country, often travel between the UK, India, the US, and East Africa throughout the year, staying in each destination for a few months at a time. These people sometimes meet each other in different countries where they exchange information about relatives. There are even some cases of transnational holidays in which Patidar relatives from different parts of the world come together to spend their vacation by travelling to several countries.

Mirror Image of a Family Relationship

The above brief account indicates that members of the Patidar community in London frequently maintain long-distance family links with their home region in India. Regular visits and frequent contacts keep many of the Patidar migrants in London well-linked to the villages in Gujarat and vice versa. However, these visits and contacts are not without their problems. The following examples will show in more detail that there are sometimes differences of opinion between the Indian migrants in London and their relatives in Gujarat on the nature of their relationships and on the types of help rendered.

In many instances, the visits of the Patidar migrants to India and of their Indian relatives to Britain are related to the marriages of one of their family members in Britain or India, mostly with a marriage partner from the other country. During the visits of the Patidar migrants to India, activities related to religion are also very common. Because of the substantial donations they make to local temples, they are often given special treatment in terms of comfortable and prominent positions. This emphasis on religion by the relatives from Britain, and the special 'VIP' treatment they receive in the temples in central Gujarat is viewed by some local Patels with jealousy and ridiculed in private conversations.

In 1988, Mohanbhai retired from his clerical job in London, while his wife Vimlaben retired in 1991. Since then, the two of them have been visiting Gujarat every year during the winter season for a period of two to three months. In 1994, they bought their own apartment in the nearby city of Baroda.

During their stay in Gujarat, Mohanbhai and Vimlaben spend most of their time in Baroda and from there they also make trips to Charotar to visit friends and relatives in their native village. Alongside these social visits, they take the opportunity during their stay to visit temples in Gujarat and usually also make a tour of a few days to other religious places in India. Mohanbhai emphasises his religious nature, and indicates that he regularly makes donations to local temples. 'Also, when I am in London', he told us, 'I very often make visits to the temple. In London, I am a member of the temple of Akshar Pursottam. Whenever we stay in Gujarat, we make it a point of going to the big temple of Akshar Pursottam in Gandhinagar'.

During one of their trips to their native village, Mohanbhai and Vimlaben showed some relatives the photographs of the Yagna ritual in which they had participated in the village temple a few weeks earlier. While showing the photographs, Vimlaben

pointed out several of her relatives and friends from the UK and US. They were in fact easily recognisable, because Vimlaben and the other women from the UK and US were in the first row in the group photo, sitting in chairs with their plates on a table in front of them, while the women from the village sat on the floor behind them. Mohanbhai explained that Vimlaben and the other women from the UK and US had been the honoured guests at the Yagna ritual in the village temple. While explaining this, he took a letter from his wallet that he showed to us and his local relatives with some pride. It was a letter of recommendation from the Swaminarayan Mandir in London in which Mohanbhai is mentioned as a member of the Mandir in London and was allowed to stay in any of their temples in Gujarat for two days with a maximum group of 8 persons. 'In this letter, the temples in Gujarat are requested to provide me with boarding and lodging, and to enable me to pray and to have conversations with the priests', Mohanbhai told us. 'About two years ago, the Swaminarayan Mandir in London started to issue these letters in order to ensure that only genuine and honest people can make use of the facilities of the temples in Gujarat. And because of this letter, I will get special treatment during my stay in the temple', Mohanbhai added. 'We will be given a clean private room furnished with a table and a chair, and air conditioning if available. They will prepare food that is not too spicy and give us mineral water. This "VIP treatment" is usually given to every NRI (Non-Resident Indian) who visits a temple in Gujarat', Mohanbhai told us before he and Vimlaben left the house to visit some of Mohanbhai's old school friends in the village. Shortly after Mohanbhai and Vimlaben left, local relatives started to make some critical remarks about the earlier discussions. One of Mohanbhai's cousin's brothers remarked: 'This VIP treatment is given to the NRIs only because they donate in pounds or dollars instead of Indian rupees. Many of them were never very religious when they were in Africa or went to Britain. But now that they are retired, they suddenly have a need for Indian culture and to rediscover religion. However, many of them have already become too westernised. They are not even able to sit cross-legged on the floor for a long time and their stomachs can no longer stand our drinking water'. The other relatives agreed with him in their mild attempt to ridicule the NRIs emphasis on religion, but could at the same time also not hide their jealousy regarding the special treatment the NRIs receive in the local temples.

Another characteristic feature of the behaviour of the Patel migrants in London is the absence of productive investments in India. This lack of enthusiasm regarding the maintaining of financial links and investments in Gujarat by the Patel migrants in London are part of lively discussions both in India and Britain. Among the Patel migrants in London there are those who emphasise that they consider the lukewarm response accorded them by the Indian government in the early 1970s a more shocking experience than their sudden and unexpected expulsion from Uganda by Idi Amin. In those days, the Indian government did not realise the importance of the Non-Resident Indians. Therefore, many of those who settled in the UK, after being expelled from Uganda, ironically translate 'NRI', the much trumpeted term by the Indian government, as "Non-Required Indians", and their bitterness is also reflected in their lack of enthusiasm in maintaining links back home in the form of investments in India.

It is partly due to these feelings that there are no strong developmental links between the villages in Charotar and the Patel community in Britain, despite the size and frequency of monetary help and financial transfers of the Patel relatives from Britain. Many Patels in the villages express their negative views about the fact that migrants from Britain do not contribute as much to the development of their home village as they used to in the past. Although they seem to understand the economic problems faced by the Patels in Britain today, they strongly believe that they avoid their responsibilities by not contributing to the welfare of their home villages.

Sureshbhai's family belongs to one of the economically most well-to-do families in the village. They own about 20 acres of land and have a large cold storage building and a tile factory and several other undertakings. Sureshbhai's younger brother Mahendrabhai is a regional politician who is also quite active at the local level. Among other things, he is the chairman of the educational board and secretary of the village co-operative bank.

On various occasions, Sureshbhai and Mahendrabhai criticised the large-scale migrations of the Patel community to the UK and US of members. 'Not one of our direct relatives has migrated abroad', Sureshbhai used to say with some pride. 'We are happy to live here and are not like all those Patels who do will anything to be able to go abroad'. Mahendrabhai adds: "And when they leave, they forget all about their native place. In the past few years, there has hardly been any financial support of our village from the Patels who live in the UK. Until the 1960s, Patels who migrated to East Africa from our village used to make regular donations to the educational board and village *pan-*

chayat. It was because of these donations that our village was among the first in the area to have a high school. Since they migrated from East Africa to the UK, however, we have hardly received any donations from our fellow villagers abroad. Even though they established a *samaj* from our village in London, this has not resulted in substantial support for the development of our village. “We realise that it is expensive to live in London, but compared to Gujarat, the Patels in Britain have hardly any social obligations and therefore less expenses in this regard. I personally feel that Patels in the UK are only after money and obsessed with saving as much money as they can. They hardly care about their relatives back home, and seem to have become misers who do not want to spend money on their social obligations.

When they are in the UK, they don’t think about the welfare or development of their native village, but when they visit their village, they start to emphasise that we are all part of the same village and *samaj*. They even expect us to treat them with the highest respect because they have come from abroad. But to be honest, I don’t think the Patels in Britain from our village are part of our community anymore, they have become strangers to us, strangers who are no longer really concerned about the welfare of their native village.

Family property issues in the village are also not without their problems. In several cases, relations between relatives in Britain and family members in the Gujarat village have become severely strained due to property conflicts. Members of the households in the village often believe that they are entitled to the total amount of ancestral property, because they looked after the family’s property and often after their parents and other elder relatives in the village as well. The relatives in Britain, however, are sometimes of the opinion that they have a right to an equal share of the family’s property, which they then will try to sell off.

Thus, at the beginning of the twenty-first century the Patel community in India and Britain seem to be on the crossroads in every aspect of life. On the one hand, the relationships are becoming more transnational and extending their links into different countries from India to Britain and to the US. On the other hand, it is struggling to maintain its traditional culture in Britain by reclaiming the younger generation and by redefining its links with the relatives in the home region of central Gujarat. This continuing process of both closeness and antagonism between the two sides of the transnational family, and the way in which they interact and influence each other, is not a new phenomenon for most of the Patel migrants in London. This has been part of

their daily existence as migrants who maintain intense and frequent links with relatives in their home villages, especially for those who migrated to the UK from East Africa.

A man from overseas was not able to convert his success into prestige in Gujarat without the local knowledge and cooperation of people who had stayed behind. ...

The villages in Gujarat were sounding boards for gossip and anecdotes about emigrants in all parts of the world, and in East Africa the strongest sanctions compelling a Patidar to regulate his life according to the standards and values prevalent in his home district were the opinions of other Patidars in India. Every aeroplane flying to and from Bombay was loaded with gossip and comment (Morris 1968: 96 and 99).

Government Policy

Ever since the beginning of the large-scale migrations of indentured labourers from the Indian subcontinent there has been governmental ambivalence towards the Indians abroad. During the first period of indentured migration, there was little government control. As the number of Indians increased in the various colonies, problems arose with regard to their rights and duties as inhabitants and citizens of the colonies in question. As a result, the Indian government gradually began to pay more attention to what at that time was called 'the Indian problem abroad' (Davis 1968: 103). With this large-scale settlement abroad the issue was no longer simply one of regulating migration but of protecting an affiliated ethnic group. This matter has always been a very delicate one in terms of international relations. It was even more complicated because of the ambivalent position of the Indian government within the British Empire. 'The Indians, in contrast to the Negroes had a nation that could plead their case. Yet their own government was European in ultimate control, and hence had divided sympathies as between the migrants and their European masters' (Davis 1968: 103).

Although they were ambivalent, early government policy towards the Indian populations abroad had a profound affect on future emigration policy. After 1900, the indenture system became increasingly unpopular in India. Especially in view of the rising political awareness and growing strength of the independence movement, the treatment of the Indian indentured labourers abroad was considered an insult to the newly emerging Indian nation. During those years, public opinion in India therefore contributed to increasing the government's sensitivity to the adverse treatment of Indians abroad. This sometimes resulted in

specific regulations of the flow of migration with respect to particular areas, while in the end it speeded up the tendency towards the abolition of the indenture system. Of course, 'it is a matter of speculation as to whether this step came after the demand for indentured labour had already subsided anyway, but the government's action was strongly supported by Indian opinion' (Davis 1968: 106).

After Independence, the Indian government continued its ambivalence towards the people of Indian origin abroad. During those years, the bureaucracy dealing with foreign policy inside and outside of India was strongly influenced by Nehru's belief that Indians abroad should not look to India to solve their problems but should fully integrate into the societies in their adopted countries. Therefore, for a long time 'Indian diplomats did not concern themselves with the diaspora's woes. Things, however, changed with the second and third generation Indians who were educated and had acquired greater economic muscle, especially after the arrival in Britain of the people of Indian origin from East and West Africa' (Malik 1997: 136).

By the end of the 1970s, the Indian government increasingly felt the need to develop a policy framework for forging closer ties with the Indian diaspora. This attention by the government for the Indian diaspora in part had to do with India's need for more external funding to deal with its economic problems. It also had to do with fact that the Indian diaspora had become wealthier over the years. In the 1980s, in particular, soft loans and development aid to India by multilateral institutions declined considerably, forcing the government to turn to commercial borrowing at market interest rates with less favourable conditions. At the same time, there was a strong need for the renewal of Indian industry in order to increase the competitiveness of their exports in a globalised world. These changes in industry and the restructuring of the Indian economy required large inputs of capital, new technology and machinery, something which increased the need for foreign investment and aid.

This period of financial problems coincided with a growing visibility in economic terms of the Indian diaspora in the UK, US, Canada, and the Gulf states. The Indian government increasingly began to notice the achievements of their fellow countrymen in foreign countries, be it in business, industry, science, technology or education. As a result, it began to see the Non-Resident Indians as a potential resource for India. The aim was to turn the wealth of the Indian diaspora into future financial and industrial investments. The Indian government was therefore eager to quickly point out that the recent changes in the Indian economy also offered enormous opportunities for the Indian diaspora. It subsequently increased its efforts to attract expatriate scientists, technocrats, industrialists and businessmen of Indian origin who

were working in western countries such as UK, US, Canada, or Australia. 'Whereas previously it tried to persuade Indians to return to India for good, now the government wanted them to act as catalysts while continuing to work abroad' (Malik 1997: 122).

Over the past two decades, the Indian government has made efforts to evolve a policy that would benefit the Indian diaspora as well as Indian society.⁵ For this, it developed a large number of special schemes and fiscal incentives for NRIs. In 1979, the Malhotra Committee, appointed by Department of Economic Affairs, had already made various recommendations to increase the level of NRI investment, several of which were partially implemented after 1982. In the years thereafter, a large number of new schemes were introduced that provided incentives and concessions to those NRIs interested in making investments in their home country.

A special cell for NRI investment was constituted in 1983 and a Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Economic Affairs was designated as the Commissioner for NRI investments. In the 1980s, several special schemes were launched to attract NRI funds including: (a) various deposit schemes like the Non-Resident (External) Rupee Accounts – NR(E)A – scheme, the Foreign Currency (Non-Resident) Accounts – FCNRA – scheme, the Non-Resident (Non-Repatriable) Rupee Deposit – NR(NR)RD – scheme and Foreign Currency (Ordinary Non-Repatriable) – FCON Deposit scheme; (b) direct equity participation under various schemes; and (c) portfolio investment. Many of these schemes carried interests which were much higher than those available in the countries where affluent NRSs lived.... (Malik 1997: 123-126).

Ambivalent Responses

Notwithstanding the large number of incentives and concessions, there was not a corresponding increase in direct foreign investments by NRIs in India. Most of them preferred to invest their money in savings accounts or in commercial projects such as housing schemes. This was also the case among our sample of Patel families, as is shown by the following statement by one of them.

Most of the investments in India by the Patels from London that I know of come in only two forms. One, as NRI bank accounts and two, as real estate. This is because when we go to India we can use some of this money during our visits there, while we are getting higher interest rates at the same time. Quite a few of us have bought property in the form of flats or houses, mostly in cities like Anand, Vidyanagar, Baroda, and Ahmedabad. These

flats and houses are useful during our stay during the winter season. I also have a flat in Baroda which gives me the opportunity to stay in Gujarat without being at the mercy of my relatives. The rising prices of real estate over the past few years have also made it an attractive investment because the value of our property has appreciated very fast over a relatively short period of time. I have never invested in any form of business or industry and I only know of two people who have done so in the past. Both stopped after a few years, one because of problems with his local partners, the other because he got fed up with the Indian bureaucracy. Almost all Patels are only interested in making investments in the UK. Investments in London are more remunerative and more important for the future of our children and grandchildren.

This lack of productive investment by NRIs is confirmed in K.N. Malik's study. He states that:

In the case of Gujaratis, the annual inflow was estimated at £49.3 million in the late 1970s. Most of the remittances went into savings, maintenance, land, jewellery, consumer goods and better lifestyle. Little investment was made in trade and business.... Most NRIs have preferred to put their money in Foreign Currency Non-Resident (FCNR) deposits rather than invest in new projects (Malik 1997: 129).

It is often argued that this low level of total investment, especially of direct investment, has mainly been caused by the India's restrictive foreign investment policies until 1992. Although the impact of government policies on NRI investment did indeed improve after the Indian government embarked upon its economic reform programme in the 1990s, the reluctance or even unwillingness by Indians abroad to invest in their home region is also closely related to their view that other changes are necessary in order to improve these conditions.

Despite various concessions and incentives given to NRIs like tax exemptions in specific cases, easier norms for investment, changes in the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) in favour of NRIs, permission to retain their property and accounts abroad, NRIs are still awaiting further facilities and more openness of the economy, including full convertibility of the rupee. An unfavourable response to their demands for dual citizenship, and some other benefits and the existence of red tape and an unsympathetic bureaucracy, have made them think that conge-

nial conditions for NRI involvement in India do not exist as yet (Malik 1997: 132).

During our conversations with first-generation Patels in London, they regularly expressed negative views about Indian society. On many occasions, these migrants referred to bad experiences they had with the Indian government in the past, especially during their time in East Africa. One issue that came up several times in these discussions was the money they lost in the Indian government defence bonds scheme in 1964.

During a discussion in the Barham Veterans Club on the lack of interest in investments in India, Mohan Patel referred to the 'Defence bonds scheme' of 1964. According to him, the problems caused by this scheme are an example of the fact that for a long time, Indian government policies have been contrary to the best interests of the NRIs.

'In 1964, the Indian government announced an investment scheme called the Defence bonds scheme'. Indians abroad could buy these bonds with British pounds while the value of the bonds was set in Indian rupees. The idea was that through these bonds the Indian government would be able to raise funds for their war efforts. These bonds could be sold as a kind of shares to importers who would then be able to receive foreign exchange, enabling them to make quite some money within the context of the so-called closed economy. In the first two weeks after the scheme was announced, the value of the bonds doubled and you could make quite some profits. You could not convert them back into pounds, but if you kept them they also provided you with interest.'

'Quite some Patels in Kenya invested in them. I also bought some bonds, while my father-in-law invested all his pension money in them. However, almost immediately after the closure date, the Indian government devaluated the rupee by 50 per cent and every one lost an enormous amount of money in terms of British pounds. This is how my father-in-law lost most of his pension as there was no opportunity to sell the bonds on the market for profit. This example shows that we Indians abroad have always been badly treated by the Indian government and that we therefore no longer trust the Indian government. Because of that, we are not interested in investing in India, despite the many schemes offered'.

Although political instability and corruption are part of the reasons why the Patels do not invest in India, such past experiences

are also very important in understanding the present attitude and behaviour of the older generation of Patels in London.

Another incident that the Patels in London often referred to was the supposed indifference shown by the Indian authorities during the period of political problems in East Africa.

During one of our visits to Rameshbhai Patel's home, he told us about his experiences in Kenya in the 1950s. In those days, he personally witnessed the arrival of Belgians who had to flee the Congo without any of their possessions. 'Our children's school was closed for a week because it housed these Belgian refugees. This experience of the Belgians made the Indian community in East Africa realise that there is a potential danger for us as well if we stay in these newly independent countries. We therefore decided to approach the Indian government.

'But when we approached the Indian government about what it would do if things got out of hand in Kenya, their representatives in Nairobi did not take our questions seriously. They had only come to Kenya to tell us clichéd stories and to emphasise that we had to stay in East Africa and contribute to the development of India by sending remittances and making investments back home. They did not take the problems of us Indians in East Africa seriously. They did not help us, but only came to teach us and to tell us to stay in East Africa, but in fact they let us down when we needed help from the Indian government at the time when things went completely wrong in Kenya and later in Uganda.

'To be honest, nothing has really changed since then. Now the representatives of the Indian government come to the UK and tell us the same kinds of stories. They emphasise that Indians in the UK should be proud of their Indian heritage and Indian culture, but when it comes to really understanding our problems and giving support to us, the Indian government does almost nothing'.

One of these more recent examples in which the NRIs felt to have been let down by the Indian government is the issue of the 'dual nationality'. This issue brought emotional sentiments to the fore as dual nationality was seen as the solution to many problems. Articles in newspapers and on websites discussed the advantages of dual citizenship. While migrants without Indian citizenship are restricted in the amount and type of property they can buy in India, the expectation was that dual citizenship would enable businessmen to buy land and property rights

and thereby expand their businesses in India. On the whole, once citizenship was offered to Indian migrants abroad, they were supposed to be on a par with Indian citizens in terms of property and other legal rights. Moreover, Indian migrants with a dual nationality would not have to obtain a visa to enter India. Despite these advantages, doubts were being expressed among the Indian migrants about the implications of this new system of dual nationality (Verma 2001). This was also clearly shown during a seminar on 'Dual Nationality' in London in June 1999, in which various Patels participated, as is shown in the following account from our fieldwork notes:

One of the issues raised during the seminar was the introduction of the PIO (People of Indian Origin) Card by the Indian government in 1998. The Deputy High Commissioner present at the seminar said that the PIO card is the closest approximation of dual nationality possible. The only difference is that PIO cardholders are not allowed to vote in elections, are not allowed to hold public office in India and cannot buy agricultural property. Other than that, PIO cardholders can enjoy the same benefits as other Indians (like access to education).

One of the main complaints from the NRI audience, many of whom were Patels from Gujarat, was the cost of the PIO card, which is \$1,000 for 20 years per person. The Deputy High Commissioner emphasised that the NRI should not think in terms of costs, but should think in terms of its value.

Many of the elder Patels present indicated that they considered it to be very important that they are both British citizens and Indians and that they should be recognised as such by the Indian government. One of them stated: 'When we have a PIO card we are not considered foreigners in India (by customs officials and the stamps in our passports), but as Indians. Because of the (emotional) value attached to a PIO card, we are therefore so disappointed that the Indian government charges \$1,000 per person for these cards. We feel that the Indian government should be proud and happy that we NRIs are also Indians and they should therefore give the cards to us almost for free. We have the feeling that the Indian government is trying to make money off of these PIO cards and this adds to our negative opinions of the Indian government, which is only after the NRIs' money and nothing else.'

Although most of the stories narrated by the Patels in London concern their negative experiences with the Indian government, there are also several instances in which they emphasised the support the Indian

community received from the Indian government. One of these incidents relates to their problems in Uganda during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

After one of our meetings in the Barham Veterans Club, in which several Patels had expressed their negative views about the Indian government, Sureshbhai Patel presented us with a different view when we accompanied him. Sureshbhai emphasised that the Indian government had, in fact, helped the Ugandan Indians in the early 1970s: 'Indira Gandhi negotiated with the British government and forced them to issue a stamp in the passports of those who first went to India. This stamp would give them the right to go to the UK whenever they wanted and the British government promised that they would always accept them. In that way, quite a few Indians were able to leave the problems in Uganda more quickly and return to India without the danger of losing their right to emigrate to the UK. As they had lost their jobs in Uganda, it was very difficult for them to live there. Their savings were running out quickly, while they had to wait for a long time to be allowed into the UK. Take my example. I only got permission after one-and-a-half years. To be able to go back to India has helped many Patels, because life in India was much cheaper than in Uganda'.

According to this Patel's view in London, the Indian government did indirectly help Overseas Indians in Africa by forcing the British government to state that they would always be allowed into the UK. At the same time, they could remain in India where life was much cheaper and less dangerous than in East Africa. He also indicated that several of his fellow Patels in London, who are in the forefront of expressing negative views on India, were among the strongest supporters of India at the time of their departure from East Africa.

'You must have noticed that Harishbhai Patel was expressing very negative views about the Indian government during our meeting. You can hardly believe that now, but he had been a staunch supporter of India in the 1960s in East Africa. When the situation worsened in Kenya at the end of the 1960s and many started to move to the UK, he told everyone that we should not go the UK but return to India, because there were many opportunities in India. He subsequently went to India, set up a business, but went to the UK after a few years. In fact, there were several others like him, who used to praise India, but quickly followed the majority to the UK and are now among the

ones who are the most vehemently negative about Indian society and the Indian government’.

These NRIs who are tempted to invest in productive activities in India are often scared off by the many stories of bureaucracy and corruption, which make up a substantial part of the conversations among the NRIs in the UK. Many have stories, which can be considered hearsay that then become reality and scare off those who are considering investing. Some of them have told of concrete instances of corruption and mismanagement involving their own bank accounts. Their instructions to the banks regarding their investment plans, they claim, are not properly processed and thus they feel frustrated. At certain meetings there is even a kind of peer group pressure where one is only allowed to speak negatively about India. Those who do otherwise are often strongly ridiculed or contradicted.

Conclusion

Over the past few decades, social scientists have increasingly paid attention to the processes of ‘globalisation’ and ‘transnationalism’ (see, for example, Bamyeh 1993 and Nederveen-Pieterse 1994). The rise of diaspora studies is one manifestation of this heightened debate. However, there is a lack of empirical studies that offer detailed insight into these processes. Empirical studies of international migrants – sometimes referred to as ‘the exemplary communities of the transnational moment’ (Tölölyan 1991: 5) – provide an opportunity to contribute to a deeper and concrete understanding of the various aspects and implications of the globalisation process.

Most of the earlier studies on international migration are characterised by a one-sided approach to the subject. They usually either focus on the effects of emigration for the home area or on the integration of the migrants in the host country. The research presented here has taken as its point of departure both the social environment of the locality of origin of the migrants and the social environment of the locality to which they have migrated. The focus has been on the changing social links between the migrants and their family members in the home area. It has also taken into account the changes over time in the government’s perspective on these links. By combining these different perspectives, this research hopes to contribute to a better understanding of the existence of long-distance family relations and other networks beyond the nation-state and thereby to a new conceptualisation of the transnational society in the making.

With world-wide improvements in communications, the ongoing inter-actional relationship between the migrant and the home community has grown more efficient and more evident. In contrast to the indentured populations, Patidar migrants nowadays have been able to maintain extensive ties with India. Marriage arrangements, kinship networks, property, remittances, and religious affiliations keep many migrants well-linked to their places of origin. Contacts between earlier migrants in East Africa and their home regions were often maintained with the notion of the migrant possibly returning, as a result of which the home community acted as the focal point within this relationship.

However, this does not mean that all of the parties involved form a static and homogenous diaspora community. It is true that migrants in London and their relatives in India do view themselves as part of one and the same community. But at the same time, this transnational community is subject to deconstruction as its members disagree on the kinds of obligations they have towards each other. Relations are burdened with expectations that are not met, resulting in many frictions. From the perspective of the Patidars in the Indian villages, first of all, the NRI's have acquired a self-centred view over time. In the past, the migrants in East Africa had greater stake in maintaining strong ties with their relatives in India. According to many Patidar relatives in Gujarat, the migrants then thought that at some time in future they might return to India to settle there permanently. However, the subsequent migration from East Africa to Britain changed this orientation towards India. The local relatives seemed to think that earlier on, migrants considered India as their motherland (*matru bhumi*) and a permanent shelter to which they always return. After going to Britain, they began acting as if India had become like their wife's village (*sasru*) where they demand to be pampered and treated with extraordinary respect, and without reciprocity, as traditionally the Patidars have been expecting from their wife's family side.⁶ According to some local relatives, the term NRI should therefore not only be read as 'Non-Resident Indians' but also as 'Non-Resident *Idiots*'. From the perspective of the Patidars in London, however, NRI's stands for 'Non-*Required* Indians'. The migrants are not required by their relatives, who have taken over the agricultural land in the villages, but laugh at them behind their backs. The migrants are also not required by the Indian nation-state, that appeals to them with faint promises but has never treated them as true Indians in the past. The first-generation Patidar migrants in Britain seems to have an ambivalent attitude towards their home region and their relatives in the native villages. They are very much attached to Indian culture and emotionally depend upon their social links with their relatives and friends in Gujarat. They want to be respected by their relatives, and at the same time, they criticise them on numerous

occasions and are not always willing to accept the social obligations that are part of these links, or only do so very hesitantly.

Apart from these two contradictory perspectives regarding the Indian diaspora among migrants and their relatives in India, we have highlighted the government's perspective, which has also changed over time. From a policy in the past of distance and ambivalence towards the Indians abroad, the Indian government has more recently made some efforts to develop a policy framework for forging closer ties with the Indian diaspora. The migrants who are hailed by the Indian government in this new manner have not yet, however, responded in the way that the government had hoped for. Instead, they look quite negatively on the Indian nation-state. They emphasise that the inclusion of 'NRI's' as true Indians is in fact hollow and hypocritical. Furthermore, many say that the government has never helped them in the past, which shows that it really doesn't care much about their fate and is actually not treating them as citizens of India at all.

To conclude, this article thus shows that notions of an 'Indian diaspora' are in line with the views expressed by both migrants and their relatives at home. Migrants in Britain and their relatives in Gujarat should therefore not be viewed as separate communities but should be considered in the same unit of analysis. At the same time, the findings of our study also indicate that they are also not considered as a *homogenous* transnational community (cf. Baumann 1996: 23). Social links keep many of the Patidar migrants in London well-linked to their Gujarat villages and have resulted in a two-way flow of people, capital, and ideas. These links are reinforced by frequent personal visits, continuous communication, and also by regular transfers of money and/or material goods. At the same time, however, these links between India and Britain are not without their problems. Several of the cases presented here show that there are substantial differences of opinion between the Indian migrants in London and their relatives in Gujarat on the nature of their relationships and on the types of help rendered. Moreover, the view of the government on the notion of diaspora has also been challenged. Therefore, this article shows the complex process of appropriation of 'Indian diaspora' notions among those who describe themselves as members of that diaspora and their relatives at home.

Notes

- 1 We would like to thank Sanderien Verstappen for her comments on an earlier draft of this paper.
- 2 This research was funded by the Indo-Dutch Programme on Alternatives in Development (IDPAD).
- 3 Viewing the differences in village size between the Mota Gam and Nana Gam villages, and in order to have a fairly evenly sized sample in both categories, we selected two Mota Gam villages and four Nana Gam villages.
- 4 All the names in the case studies presented in this paper are pseudonyms in an attempt to preserve some measure of anonymity.
- 5 For a recent overview of India's interface with its diaspora, see Sinha-Kerkhoff and Bal 2003.
- 6 This feeling that has been expressed by our local informants in general, was articulated by Prof. Bhikhu Parekh at a public lecture delivered at the meeting of the Viswa Gujarati Samaj held in Baroda on 2-4 January 1999.

