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GIVING BACK

**Diaspora Philanthropy and the
Transnationalisation of Caste in Guntur (India)**

Sanam Roohi

GIVING BACK

Diaspora Philanthropy and the
Transnationalisation of Caste in Guntur (India)

Sanam Roohi

This Ph.D. thesis is part of the research programme 'Provincial Globalisation' ('ProGlo'), a collaborative research programme of the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR), University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bangalore, India, funded by the WOTRO Science for Global Development programme of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), the Netherlands (2010-15).

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GIVING BACK

Diaspora Philanthropy and the Transnationalisation of Caste in Guntur (India)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AC College	Andhra Christian College
ATA	American Telugu Association
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
EAMCET	Engineering, Agriculture and Medical Common Entrance Test
ECFMG	Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates
GGH	Guntur General Hospital
GMC	Guntur Medical College
GMCANA	Guntur Medical College Alumni Association of North America
GMCOSA	Guntur Medical College Old Students Association
GRE	Graduate Record Examinations
ICU	Intensive Care Unit
IDF	India Development Foundation
IIT	Indian Institute of Technology
INR	Indian rupees
IT	Information Technology
JKC College	Jagarlamudi Kuppaswamy Chowdary College
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institutions
MBBS	Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery
NATA	North American Telugu Association
NATS	North American Telugu Society
NIT	National Institute of Technology
NJ	New Jersey
NRI	Non-Resident Indian
NTR	N. T. Rama Rao
NY	New York
OCI	Overseas Citizen of India
OTP	Optional Practical Training
PIO	Person of Indian Origin
PPP	Public-private partnership
SC	Scheduled Caste
ST	Scheduled Tribe
BC/OBC	Backward Caste/Other Backward Classes
TANA	Telugu Association of North America
TDP	Telugu Desam Party
TLCA	Telugu Literary and Cultural Association

US/USA	United States/United States of America
USMLE	United States Medical Licensing Examination
VGTM	Vijayawada-Guntur-Tenali-Mangalagiri (Urban Agglomeration)
Y2K	Year 2000
YSR	Y.S. Rajashekhar Reddy
ZP	Zilla Parishad

INTRODUCTION

On 18 January 2014, a new Trauma Centre¹ was opened at the Guntur Government Hospital amidst huge media coverage by the local and national press. E.S.L. Narasimhan, then Governor of the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh,² inaugurated the Centre, flanked by important politicians and members of Guntur Medical College Association of North America, or GMCANA (Figure 1).



Figure 1: E.S.L. Narasimhan inaugurating the Trauma Centre.

Source: www.gmcana.org

What is remarkable about this new centre built at a government hospital is that it had received 200 million Indian rupees (INR³) in donations from medical professionals residing in the United States of America (USA), all graduates of the hospital's affiliated teaching college, Guntur Medical College (GMC). These alumni, several of whom visited India to attend the inauguration, had donated money through the GMCANA, an association for GMC alumni living and practicing in the USA and Canada. At the time, it was the largest philanthropic project of its kind in Guntur funded by Non-Resident Indians, or 'NRIs'.⁴ From an estimated cost of 100 million INR at its inception, of which half the cost was to be borne by the government, the Centre finally cost INR

1 The Trauma Centre has the latest facilities, such as an emergency unit, an imaging centre, laboratory services, operation theatres, and 'super-speciality' units such as cardiology, nephrology, neurology, plastic surgery, and gastroenterology.

2 In this thesis, I use 'Andhra Pradesh' to refer to the undivided state of Andhra Pradesh, before it was bifurcated in June 2014 into the new state of Telangana and the residual state of Andhra Pradesh.

3 One INR is approximately 0.01 USD and 0.014 EUR.

4 'Non-Resident Indian' is an official term denoting Indian citizens who live outside the country for more than 180 days a year, mainly for taxation purposes. But the acronym 'NRI' is widely used in India, in English as well as in other Indian languages, to refer to any Indian residing outside India, regardless of citizenship status.

300 million, of which the GMCANA members donated double the amount of the government contribution. This was a ‘public-private’ (PPP) social development project, in which money was drawn from private philanthropists while the government provided matching grants.⁵ However, the Trauma Centre was not the only PPP development project in Guntur to utilise money raised or donated by NRIs. In this thesis, I present many other examples of social development projects funded by ‘diaspora philanthropy’.⁶

When I started my fieldwork in early September 2011 in Guntur (a regional town in coastal Andhra Pradesh, India) and began asking people about NRI support for development projects, I became excited when many of my interlocutors suggested that I interview ‘NRI doctors’. In Guntur, the NRI tag is a locally valued status symbol, signifying educated, upper middle class, cosmopolitan, and internationally mobile people. Within this category, there is an internal hierarchy in which doctors occupy the highest position, followed by engineers. NRI doctors are held in very high esteem because of their qualifications and ‘merit’, their American incomes that, in some cases, hit the ‘million dollar per year’ mark, and their coveted ‘NRI’ status. Local people would mention this specific group whenever I told them I wanted to study diaspora philanthropy.⁷ I was often told that ‘doctors are doing good work for the community’ and that ‘they have done well for themselves and now want to do something for the motherland’. In these narratives, NRI ‘engineers’⁸ (most of whom were software engineers or IT professionals) were placed just below doctors, although they worked hard to close the gap between themselves and medical doctors in terms of social esteem. Together, these two professional diasporic groups were considered to be at the forefront of charitable or philanthropic engagements in the region.

I first learned about the Trauma Centre during a conversation with one of my key interlocutors, ‘Mr. Kantharaju’,⁹ when he handed me the Guntur edition of *Andhrajyothi* (the second-largest circulating Telugu newspaper in Coastal Andhra) that carried a news item about Dr. Akaluri Prasad – the largest donor for the Trauma Centre – and his philanthropic activities in Guntur district. At that time, *Andhrajyothi* was running a

5 The proposal to build the Trauma Centre was made by GMCANA members in the mid-2000s, and the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh promised to match the funds that they raised with a grant of equal amount.

6 I use the phrase ‘diaspora philanthropy’ in keeping with current academic usage to refer to philanthropy of diasporic groups/migrant communities to their place of origin.

7 Informants referred me particularly to NRI doctors who were alumni of Guntur Medical College. GMC was the only medical school in the district for many years, and it was from this college that most medical students from the region graduated and later migrated to the USA and other countries.

8 Computer engineering is a coveted profession among youth in Andhra Pradesh (Xiang 2007). In Coastal Andhra, after doctors began migrating out in the late 1960s and 1970s, engineers and IT professionals followed a similar migration trajectory in the 1980s and early 1990s.

9 To protect the privacy and confidentiality of informants, their names are anonymised in the thesis. Names of all villages and most organisations are also anonymised and the rationale behind the selection of some real names of organisations is explained in Chapter 2.

weekly column called *Mana NRI* (or 'our NRI') in its Guntur edition, focusing on the philanthropic work of NRIs from Guntur.

Who is Dr. Prasad, and how did he become such a successful migrant that he was able to make a donation of 100 million rupees to an institution in his home town? This basic question motivated me to seek an interview with him. Finally, two years after I had first heard about him, he agreed to a telephonic interview in February 2014, when he had just arrived back in New Mexico, USA after the inauguration of the Trauma Centre. During that conversation, he related his life story. Dr. Prasad's *swanthaooru* (native village) is Velcheru in Guntur district, but he grew up in the capital city of Hyderabad and went to school there because his father was 'into movies' (i.e. working in the Telugu film industry). Later, his father moved back to his native village where he ran a movie theatre, and Dr. Prasad attended JKC College in Guntur for his Intermediate (pre-university course, or 11th and 12th standards), after which he entered Guntur Medical College. After graduating from GMC in the '1981 batch',¹⁰ he got an opportunity to work in the USA and left India in 1989. He told me that as many as twenty of his 'batchmates' were also practicing medicine in the US.

Dr. Prasad's story is not unusual. Altogether, some 1,800 alumni of GMC¹¹ migrated to the USA, most of them between the 1960s and 1980s. Many other educated professionals, especially scientists and engineers, also went to the USA from Coastal Andhra during this period, to pursue higher studies or for employment. This pattern of migration was reinforced and expanded during the 1990s due to the 'Y2K boom',¹² when many engineering graduates from the region got jobs in the USA and other countries in response to the global demand for software engineers. Several of these highly skilled professionals have settled down abroad where they live comfortable upper-middle-class lives, and are now eager to 'give back' to their places of origin – their home villages or alma maters or to support various social development projects in the region – thereby becoming key 'stakeholders' in the development of their home state of Andhra Pradesh.

'Giving Back'

Examples of diaspora philanthropy were not very hard to find in Guntur. Most of my interlocutors narrated stories of NRI munificence – about a brother, a sister, a neighbour,

10 At GMC, the class of alumni or 'batch' is identified by the year in which they joined the college, rather than the year of graduation.

11 There are no clear data on this exodus: 1,800 is an approximate number that was suggested by several reliable sources, but estimates of the number of GMC graduates who have migrated abroad were as high as 2,500.

12 The 'Y2K crisis' refers to the widespread fear that computer systems would become disrupted at the turn of the millennium, on 31 December 1999. To correct anticipated problems, many software engineers were hired, including from India. The 'Y2K' scare turned into a 'Y2K boom' for Indian IT professionals.

a son or daughter, or a relative living abroad (mostly in the USA) – who was inclined to ‘serve the *matrubhoomi*’ (motherland) or to ‘give back’ to the ‘Telugu community back home’. Earlier, I related the most prominent example of NRI philanthropy in Guntur – the GMC Trauma Centre – but most cases of NRI largesse that I documented were smaller individual or collective efforts. These acts of ‘giving’ were described in various ways by informants: ‘*donation*’, the English word usually used in Telugu conversation to refer to collective giving for social or political projects often for ‘development’ of the region; ‘*sahayam*’ or help that is directed to a needy person; ‘philanthropy’, used to refer to large contributions from donors who identified themselves as philanthropists; ‘gifts’, directed to family members or friends; and ‘*daanam*’, religious donations to the poor or a temple.

This thesis is about the various forms in which Coastal Andhra NRIs are engaged in ‘giving back’ to their home region, especially through ‘donations’, *sahayam* and ‘philanthropy’, often for the stated purpose of *seva* (service) or ‘development’ – categories that I explain and unravel in the subsequent pages. Drawing on extensive fieldwork carried out in Guntur district, the USA and other sites, I explore the different ways in which transnational migrants engage with their hometowns, villages or community, through various forms of ‘giving’. My focus is primarily on ‘secular’ forms of giving (rather than religious donations) that are directed at ‘developing’ the home region. This choice reflects the overarching narrative of ‘development’ that frames these transnational transfers of money and aid. In this thesis, I ask – what are these acts of giving, which in the development literature are framed as ‘diaspora philanthropy’, all about? And, more importantly, what are the effects of these flows of migrant resources in the region to which they are directed?

In the literature on migration and development, ‘diaspora philanthropy’ has emerged as a major modality through which migrants engage with their countries of origin. The category of diaspora philanthropy is distinguished from household-level remittances, which are usually intended to support families ‘left behind’ (Gulati 1996; Zachariah and Rajan 2007). In contrast to migrant remittances, diaspora philanthropy refers to financial resources sent by migrant or diasporic groups to their countries of origin with the aim of enhancing the welfare of people outside their own kinship groups or families, or contributing in some way to the development of the ‘homeland’ (Johnson 2007). But this categorisation and definition does not do justice to the rich tapestry of connections and exchanges that constitutes the fabric of transnational giving in Guntur.

In the following chapters, I present transnational flows of NRI money into diverse development projects and social welfare or community ‘upliftment’ initiatives in Guntur

district in all their complexity, and attempt to explain these migrant interventions by developing a more nuanced theoretical framework than what is offered in most studies of diaspora philanthropy. I examine the ways in which the educated or ‘high-skilled’ Andhra regional diaspora ‘give back’ to their home region, for what purposes, and what motivates these philanthropic acts. I also turn an anthropological gaze to the recipients of this largesse, focusing on the consequences of these flows in the home to which such ‘giving’ is directed.

Beginning with intensive and extended fieldwork in the key regional town of Guntur, I followed the trails on which NRI philanthropic projects led me – the places and projects that received NRI donations, the organisations that tapped NRI resources or were founded by NRIs, and the networks that connected donors and recipients across national borders. This strategy of tracking transnational social networks through flows of philanthropic money allowed me to not only collect narratives about ‘giving’ from both sides (donors and recipients), but also to examine the layered practices and politics of diasporic giving. This, in turn, led me to explore in depth why NRIs from Coastal Andhra (in particular, Guntur district) are so involved in ‘giving back’ to the home region, and to try to understand why their philanthropic engagements in the region have become particularised in certain ways.

In Guntur, ‘NRI culture’ is unambiguously equated with a particular caste group, the Kammas – the major landowning, agrarian community of Coastal Andhra which has successfully transitioned into the urban middle classes by pursuing higher education and entering professional and white-collar occupations. Kammas are an affluent caste group that is engaged in lucrative business enterprises, agricultural production and salaried professions, and who continue to own large amounts of land in the Coastal Andhra region. Although many urban middle-class Kammas live outside the region, having migrated across India and abroad, members of this caste continue to hold important positions of power in the state and the region. By mapping flows of migrant resources into the region, I have tried to explore how this ‘dominant caste’¹³ has become transnationalised, and in this case untangling the complex connections between caste and transnationalism.

In Guntur, I frequently encountered certain assumptions about both migration and diaspora philanthropy: first, that it is Kammas who produce the most transnational migrants because of their ‘qualifications’ and ‘merit’; and second, that it is Kamma NRIs

13 M.N. Srinivas (1959) coined the term ‘dominant caste’ to refer to a pattern found in most regions of India, wherein a single caste is usually numerically preponderant, has control over most of the agricultural land, and as a result, holds a politically and economically dominant position in the region or village. The dominant caste status of Kammas in Coastal Andhra is discussed in Chapter 3.

who are most engaged in philanthropy because ‘giving’ is considered to be an intrinsic attribute of their ‘community’. These popular narratives suggest that both international migration and diaspora philanthropy are seen as something *specific* to this community, and also that the philanthropic activities of Kamma NRIs represent a continuation of earlier caste-specific practices. Consequently, Kammas became the central focus of my research, which in turn, led me to map the diasporic networks and transnational flows of money that have become central to the reproduction of this community (cf. Weiner 1980).

When a rural elite community is in the process of transitioning into an urban and transnational elite and invokes the rhetoric of ‘public welfare’ to explain their philanthropic engagements, it becomes imperative for the researcher to take into account both their discursive practices of self-fashioning as well as the processes and mechanisms through which their philanthropic transactions takes place. In this thesis, I examine both the narrative and the processual aspects of transnational philanthropy to offer insights into the emergence of a transnational community that remains culturally and materially rooted in a particular region of India. The members of this transnational caste fashion themselves as ‘flexible’ or transnational citizens (Ong 1999; Xavier 2011) who are responsible for ‘giving back’ some of the wealth they have acquired through migration, in order to help ‘develop’ their community and region from which they come. In the following chapters, I describe the caste- and place-inflected NRI philanthropic circuit that connects Guntur with the USA. This case study of the transnational engagements of a particular community within a single region of India demonstrates that the terrain of philanthropy is not as straightforward as it is often presented in the literature on diaspora philanthropy or migration and development. Although Kammas have a long history of ‘giving’ for the welfare of their own community, with the development of a strong pattern of out-migration from Coastal Andhra, their philanthropic practices have changed – especially by becoming institutionalised within transnational associational structures and the local state. I argue that such strategic forms of giving reinscribe caste, region, local politics, and statecraft across a transnational plane.

In brief, the thesis draws on multi-sited research to answer the following research question:

How have outward migration and transnational philanthropic practices reconstituted or altered the dominant position of a particular caste in one region of India?

Further, the thesis addresses these sub-questions:

How have the specificities of caste, region and local politics shaped diaspora philanthropy in Coastal Andhra?

Does diaspora philanthropy build on older practices of the community or region, or is there something new and distinctive about transnational practices of giving?

Why has NRI 'giving' been institutionalised in particular ways and at a particular point in time?

What have been the social and political implications of these interventions for the region?

I seek to address these questions by mapping the *continuities* in the organisation of a dominant social group in transition, and the *changes* brought about by migration within the community, by delineating the transnational domain of giving and receiving. In this ethnography of global connections, the terrain of giving is fraught with friction (Tsing 2005), yet it is also imbued with a particular logic of caste or community. By describing a transnational social field that has been created by out-migration of a dominant group that then 'gives back' to their community at home, I propose to show how philanthropy not only emanates from the performance and reproduction of caste-based collective affiliations, but becomes an expression of a strategic caste-inflected *habitus* (Bourdieu 1992) which aids members of the community in (unevenly) accumulating greater social, symbolic and political capital. Moreover, this transnational *habitus* of 'giving back' legitimises the involvement of already powerful and mobile 'global' or transnational citizens in local politics and statecraft.

Outline of the Thesis

The example of the Trauma Centre built with the support of NRI doctors in partnership with the state government (described above) provides an entry point into the main focus of this thesis – the transnational migration of educated professionals from the Guntur region of India and the 'reverse flows'¹⁴ of their resources back into the region. When members of a regional elite community spread across the globe transmit resources to their home region, tracking the modalities, forms, and destinations of these flows can provide insights into the community's constitution and organisation, as well as into the implications of such philanthropic endeavours for the places and people to which they are directed. My attempt is to understand the mechanisms and motivations behind diaspora philanthropy in Coastal Andhra, and to explicate its role in the formation of a transnational community that replicates and reproduces local social relations within a transnational social field. In addition, I show how diaspora philanthropy became institutionalised within the local state in Guntur district and thereby implicated in local

¹⁴ The Provincial Globalisation Programme statement used the term 'reverse flows' to refer to all kinds of resources that are sent back by the migrants to their places of origin. The term has a different meaning in economics. See: www.provglo.org

politics, by exploring how the state has harnessed NRI wealth for local development projects and how diasporic and other powerful actors appropriate state agencies in the pursuit of their own agendas.

Drawing on diverse bodies of work, including the literature on ‘migration and development’, transnationalism, and historical and anthropological studies of caste, exchange and reciprocity, Chapter 1 builds a theoretical perspective for understanding diaspora philanthropy in Guntur. The chapter critiques the development-oriented literature on migration and development for its often over-simplified view of the positive impacts of migrant remittances. I also discuss other critiques of this literature that point to the neoliberal agenda behind the optimistic view of migrant contributions to development, but suggest that this argument often neglects the political contexts of such resource flows and their complex motivations and outcomes in the recipient sites. Going beyond this debate, I turn to the literature on transnationalism, drawing on the concepts of transnational *habitus* and transnational social field to build an alternative perspective that helps to explicate how a ‘community’ comes to define itself within this field. However, because a transnational lens may miss the complex local or regional processes that shape the moral universe of givers and receivers, I also draw on the anthropological literature on ‘giving’ in India to enrich the understanding of the practices, ideologies and outcomes of philanthropy and its role in creating community solidarity and boundaries.

Chapter 2 maps the fieldwork trajectory and the research methods employed, and explains the rationale that guided data gathering. Tracing the ways in which the research objectives shifted in the field, the chapter foregrounds how the identity of the researcher shapes the research process.

Chapter 3 describes the region and the community that I studied, detailing how this particular caste (Kammas) gained pre-eminence in Coastal Andhra. The chapter sketches a brief history of the region from the colonial period to the present, and delineates the various processes that made the Kammas a major land owning group in the region, and allowed them to work towards greater caste consolidation and upward mobility. It also outlines the history of Kamma out-migration, the role of education and caste networks in creating a strong pattern of outward mobility, and the formation of transnational ties within the Kamma community through a description of ‘NRI parents’ in Guntur, their children in the USA, and the caste-based interactions that create and sustain this transnational community. I argue that migration to ‘America’ has become a rite of passage for many families in the region, creating a transnational social field in which villages of Guntur district, Guntur town, Hyderabad and various sites in the USA are

closely interconnected, separated by space but united by shared experiences, values and social practices steeped in a caste- and place- inflected *habitus*.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are the core empirical chapters of the thesis. Drawing on fieldwork data, Chapter 4 shows that the capacity of Kammas youth to access higher education was a crucial factor in helping them migrate out of the region as international knowledge workers, starting in the 1960s. Although they usually frame their success in the language of individualised ‘hard work’ and ‘merit’, I show that higher education was often supported by the ‘community’ as a collective mobility strategy. Ideas and practices of education and migration were shaped by caste *habitus*, especially community-specific practices of ‘giving’ and ‘sharing’. This history explains why many NRIs feel obliged to ‘give back’ to their ‘own people’, particularly in the field of education. The chapter then traces the channelling of NRI philanthropic activities through caste associations, such that the community became a key resource for its members – strengthening and reproducing caste affiliation and solidarity despite extensive migration and social mobility.

Chapter 5 describes the formalisation of transnational giving by NRIs through diasporic organisations in the USA, such as TANA (Telugu Association of North America) Foundation and GMCANA, which were at the forefront in creating a culture of transnational philanthropy among NRIs. The formation of diasporic Telugu associations helped migrants to forge a sense of community away from their ‘homeland’, and subsequently, these organisations became vehicles for the formalisation of transnational connections and institutions through which development aid flows back to the region. The institutionalisation of diaspora philanthropy has been built around the concepts of ‘transparency’, ‘meritorious’ beneficiaries, and ‘efficient’ donors, suggesting that NRI donations replicate philanthropic practices of modern western countries that these diasporic actors have learned while living abroad. On the surface, the concept of ‘community’ appears to expand and become elastic as philanthropy ties donors in the ‘developed world’ to recipients in ‘developing countries’. However, closer examination reveals that professionalised forms of philanthropic engagements forge relations hinging on the principles of trust and reciprocity. Migrants from the region foster ties within a transnational social field where diasporic giving and business activities are often interconnected. When migrants invoke notions of trust, merit and efficiency in building these transnational relations, the definition of who constitutes the community is narrowed, and philanthropy appears to mimic older practices of giving that were defined by the logic of building caste cohesion.

Chapter 6 complicates the picture of NRI giving developed in previous chapters by showing how transnational philanthropy works not only through caste-based diasporic

associations and transnational organisations, but also by actively connecting with local state institutions. The Indian government as well as the state government of Andhra Pradesh view the Indian diaspora as a repository of surplus financial capital and ‘global’ knowledge, and have made efforts to involve ‘Overseas Indians’ in state-led development programmes. Yet, the national policy framework does not explain the highly particularistic ways in which different regional diasporas engage with their home regions. Unravelling the involvement of US-based affluent NRIs in local statecraft and politics in Guntur district, I show that their engagement in local development is uneven, fluctuating in response to district- and state-level political dynamics. The chapter argues that diaspora philanthropy is not neutral, nor does it simply reflect a ‘neoliberal’ agenda of fostering public-private partnerships for development. Rather, NRI ‘philanthropic’ projects are highly political as they become entangled with, and attempt to influence, local and state-level caste-based politics. I conclude that the institutionalisation of diaspora philanthropy through the bureaucratic machinery works to strengthen the dominance of an already powerful group via its influence on the local state.

In summary, the thesis traces how institutionalised transnational giving has evolved over several decades in Guntur, and has been closely enmeshed with caste connections, regional affiliation, and local politics and statecraft as it reinscribes these elements on a transnational plane. These philanthropic practices are strategically expressed in the idiom of a transnational moral collective, in which giving is framed as: (a) the obligation to ‘give back’ to one’s community; (b) giving as a reciprocal act of recognition and sustaining social relations; and (c) giving as an act of exchange – of global expertise and capital for symbolic and political capital.

The thesis thus employs philanthropy as a conceptual lens through which to understand the architecture of a particular caste group that has become transnationalised. Philanthropy has not only become *constitutive* of this transnationalising caste, it has also become a means of social reproduction and domination within the home region. I argue that philanthropy is a form of capital accumulation (in Bourdieu’s sense) and circulation, in this case mediated through caste networks and the local state. But the elaborate and intricate networks that are woven through transnational philanthropy have shifted over time in response to the socio-political dynamics of the Guntur region and the state of Andhra Pradesh. In the process, a highly stratified social field of power has been created that operates at several scales – local, regional and transnational.

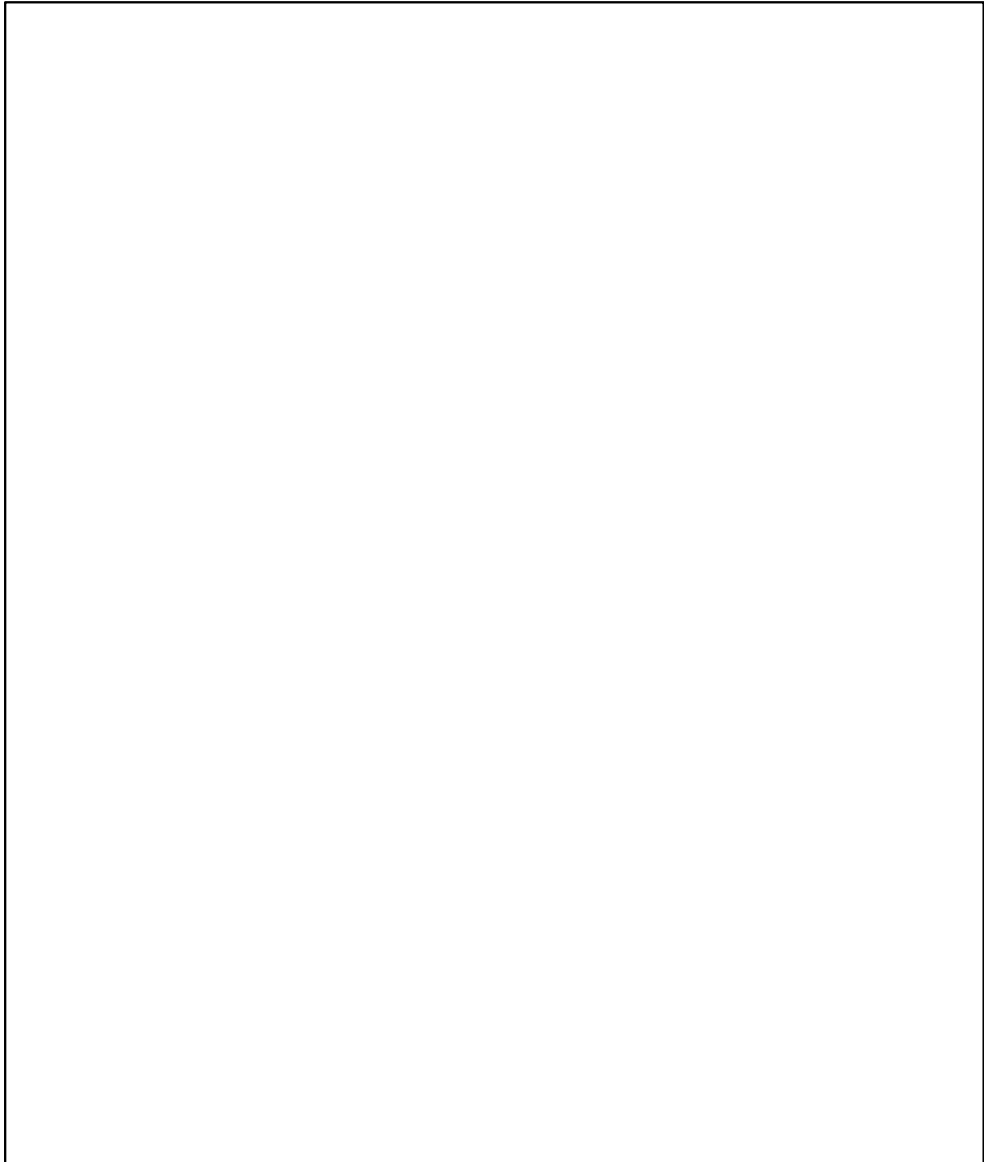


Figure 2: Map of India highlighting the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh

Source: Sanam Roohi with Nalini S

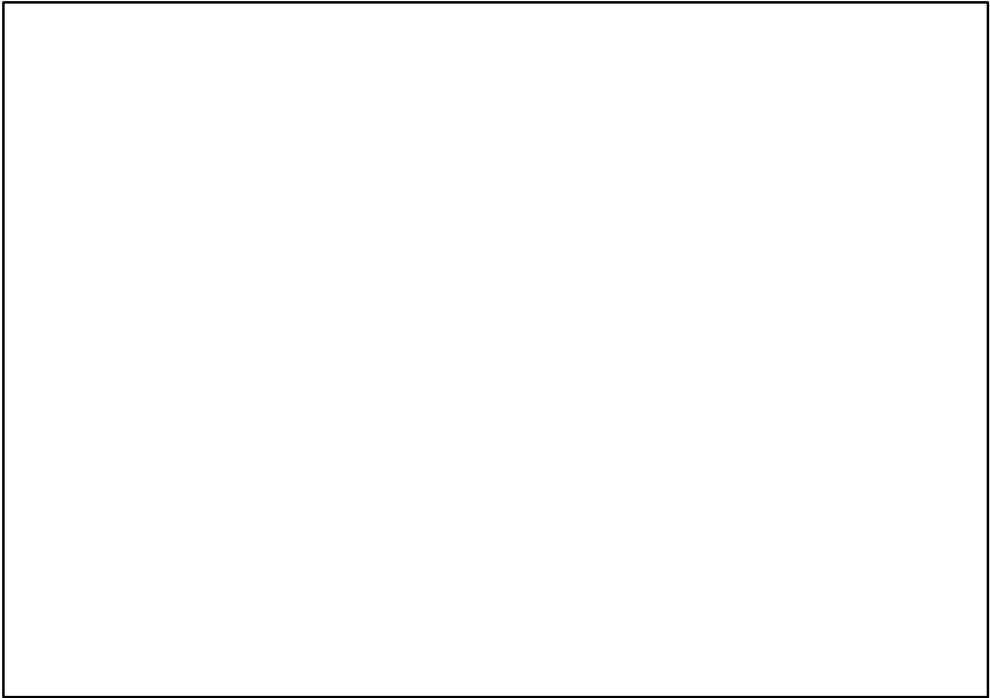


Figure 3: Map of Andhra Pradesh showing Guntur and Krishna districts

Source: Sanam Roohi with Nalini S



Figure 4: Map of Greater Guntur highlighting the main fieldwork site

Source: Sanam Roohi with Nalini S

Chapter 1

UNDERSTANDING TRANSNATIONAL GIVING

Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) from Coastal Andhra living in the USA send substantial money for charitable purposes to their home region, especially in the domains of education, health and rural development. These transnational philanthropic engagements have become part of the collective memory in Guntur town, whose residents view NRIs as ‘bringing development’ to the rural landscapes of Coastal Andhra. In this chapter, I develop a theoretical framework through which to understand this transnational pattern of ‘giving’. I draw on several bodies of literature that contribute to my analysis of diasporic philanthropy in Coastal Andhra, especially how this pattern of ‘giving back’ (re)constitutes the *social* by creating a locally rooted transnational community while also strategically generating individual and collective cultural, symbolic and ‘political’ capital. The literature that I discuss, which address monetary transfers by migrants and philanthropy more broadly, are organised under the following four broad themes.

First, I review the development-oriented literature on transnational resource flows, which generally views migrant remittances as contributing to the development of migrant-sending countries and as an important form of development resources for the global South. I point out several gaps and shortcomings in this literature by contrasting it with more nuanced work on migration and transnational flows.

Second, I focus on the Indian diaspora and point to the highly variegated forms of giving in which they engage. Transnational capital flows, religious regeneration, neoliberal ideology and new governance practices are all implicated in these forms of diasporic giving. The larger background is the Indian state’s view of the affluent Indian diaspora as a potential economic and political partner, thereby territorially expanding the notion of citizenship. However, the existing literature often overlooks the particularities of transnational transactions and the cultural or historical specificities that shape diasporic engagements with the home country.

Third, I discuss the literature on transnationalism and suggest that the concept of transnational social field may help us to grasp some of these particularities of migrant transfers informed by their bifocal outlook. But I also point out that this literature often does not delve into the relational structures that underpin transnational giving.

Finally, I turn to anthropological literature on gift and reciprocity to examine the ‘social’ aspects of diaspora philanthropy, its meanings and its consequences for the communities involved. I also argue, based on existing studies of the construction of communities in India historically and in the contemporary moment, that transnational giving may work to sustain or reproduce caste, class, regional and religious identities. In the concluding section, I draw together the insights gleaned from these diverse literature and their

relevance to the analysis of diaspora philanthropy in Guntur in subsequent chapters.

Migrating Out and Sending Back

Movement or mobility is commonly characterised as one of the quintessential features of the contemporary era of globalisation (Urry 2007). Market forces, territorial conflicts, environmental changes and other such factors have uprooted and mobilised an increasingly large number of people, while the growth of mass communication, international travel and a global market for commodities, texts, fashion and ideologies place individuals and communities within an ever more interconnected world. We live in an 'age of migration' (Castles et al. 2013): migration is now seen as a complex process involving multiple streams, such as flows of refugees, family reunification policies, import of skilled workers, use of temporary or 'guest workers', and 'illegal' immigration (Abraham and van Schendel 2005; Kalir et al. 2012). In this context, scholars have called for a renewed focus on transnational migration and its outcomes (Vertovec 1999), such as the collapse of the distinction between 'centre' and 'periphery' or the 'local' and the 'global', leading to the reordering of communities and identities or to enhanced upward social or economic mobility for mobile groups (Appadurai 1996; Gardner 2008; Inda and Rosaldo 2008). Coastal Andhra in southern India (the region on which this dissertation focuses) became increasingly entangled in these global interfaces from the 1960s with the emergence of a sustained pattern of migration to the 'advanced' industrialised countries of the West, especially the USA. With the crystallisation of this mobility pattern, the region has been the recipient of intense inward flows of remittances and other financial resources emanating from migrants, and hence has become a key site in India for processes of 'provincial globalisation'.¹⁵

The term 'remittance' has varied meanings in different academic literature. It may refer to any kind of financial transfer from migrants to their places of origin, or more narrowly, to the transfer of wages earned abroad that are sent by migrants to their families at home (Ratha et al. 2010). Using the term in its broadest sense, and interchangeably with other terms such as 'transfers' and 'resource flows', in this section I review the dominant stream of work that tends to view migrant resources, including household-level remittances and diaspora philanthropy, as contributing positively to development in migrants' places of origin. I argue that this view is not only deficient in its understanding of migrant remittances, but also neglects the social and political contexts of such cross-border monetary transactions.

15 'Provincial globalisation' refers to the imbrication of non-metropolitan or 'provincial' regions in transnational or global connections, leading to processes of 'globalisation' that are shaped by local social conditions (see: www.provglo.org).

Diasporas as 'agents of development'

Since the 1990s, the idea that migrant remittances are a key source of development aid has gained considerable academic and policy attention (Adelman 2009; Orozco and Wilson 2005). The developmental impact of remittances has been studied primarily by economists, who see these financial transfers as a clear and well-defined object of study in relation to economic growth (de Haas 2010, 2014). Within development economics and development studies, migrant remittances are often described as a key 'source of external development finance' and as playing 'an effective role in reducing poverty' (Ratha 2007: 1). Since remittances are usually directed to migrants' families in the home country, they are considered to be 'well targeted to the needs of the recipients'.¹⁶ Development experts argue that in order to enhance their contribution to social development and welfare, inward remittances should not be taxed or directed to specific uses; instead, remittance services should be made more convenient (Mazzucato 2010; Ratha 2003). Thus, the resources of diasporic or migrant groups¹⁷ are seen as an important substitute for, or supplement to, international development aid. That remittances contribute significantly to the social and economic development of migrants' home countries is the currently dominant view (de Haas 2005: 1269). However, policymakers have not always seen the migration-development nexus in such a favourable light: the resurgence of the 'optimistic' view of migration and development began only in the 2000s (de Haas 2010: 230).

Since at least 2003, the World Bank has been tracking migrant remittances, which it claims amount to three times the total volume of development aid flowing to 'developing countries'. In policy circles, remittances are seen as a more resilient source of development finance for developing countries than overseas development assistance or foreign direct investment (World Bank 2016) – sources that fell dramatically with the financial crisis of 2008 (Anyanwu and Erhijakpor 2010). This positive view of the impact of remittances in developing countries has congealed into a dominant discourse within development policy circles that views migrants as 'agents of development' (Faist 2008; Kapur et al. 2004; Ratha et al. 2010). Accordingly, many national governments regard their diasporas as potential partners who can be tapped for development resources, sometimes literally in the case of public-private alliances.¹⁸

In mainstream development discourse, migrant networks and organisations are often represented as conduits for the flow of development aid that interact with state institutions and play an 'increasingly prominent role over the past few decades, without necessarily displacing the "state" and certainly not the "market"' (Faist 2008: 23). However, Faist

16 Ibid.

17 While most scholars make a distinction between diasporas and transnational migrants, in this thesis, I use the terms interchangeably, particularly because I draw upon and contribute to the literature on 'diaspora philanthropy' and transnationalism simultaneously.

18 An example can be found at: <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41880.pdf> (last accessed on 28 October 2015).

warns that we should not over-estimate the development potential of migrants, because mobile people who do not reside in their communities of origin may hold very different notions of development compared to those who remain at home (2008: 37).

A report on migration, globalisation and poverty explains that although diasporic groups are often interested in contributing to the development of their countries of origin, their forms of engagement are highly varied, ranging from small-scale community initiatives to major investments and transfers of knowledge (Development Research Centre 2009). That India receives the highest amount of remittances in the world is well documented,¹⁹ but such data does not tell us much about the specific cultural or structural frameworks through which money flows, nor about the diverse social and economic impacts of such flows at the local or regional level.

Going beyond the dominant trend of research in this domain, which focuses on economic impact, researchers have also studied other aspects of remittances, asking for instance, ‘why do migrants give?’ and ‘how do migrants give?’ Thus, a number of studies have documented the channels, destinations and consequences of transnational flows. For instance, in addition to the remittances that migrants send home through formal channels such as banks and money transfer organisations, a significant amount of money is transmitted through informal networks and so is difficult to map or measure (Pieke et al. 2007). Moreover, alternate channels for garnering migrant resources, such as the Chinese *Shetuan* or voluntary organisations, are often encouraged by official policies in the countries of origin, leading to the revitalisation of older social networks (Liu 1998: 598). In the case of Coastal Andhra too, as discussed in the following chapters, language- and region-based voluntary organisations have become key conduits for transferring resources to India. Given the variability in forms and channels of migrant resource flows, their economic and political effects are understandably diverse. In view of these complexities, a quantitative approach to remittances provides a limited understanding of what remittances do on the ground.

Several scholars have tried to move away from the dominant economic and quantitative approach to the study of migrant remittances by adding a qualitative, subjective or institutional dimension (Kabki et al. 2004). For example, several studies suggest that economic resources routed through transnational associations might be co-opted by the state, or conversely, that such associations build alliances with government machinery to promote a certain notion of ‘development’ that may be linked to local political interests (Caglar 2006; Mohan 2006). Caglar (2006:16), for instance, shows that the rise of

19 For recent figures on the inflow of remittances country-wise, see: <http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTDECPROSPECTS/0,,contentMDK:22759429-pagePK:64165401-piPK:64165026-theSitePK:476883,00.html> (last accessed on 31 August 2015).

'hometown associations' amongst Turkish immigrants in Germany is closely linked to state institutions, and that the Government of Turkey uses these associations to fulfil its interventionist neoliberal agenda.

Migrants send back not just economic remittances but also 'social remittances' such as development ideologies or agendas (Levitt 2001). Levitt (1998) coined the term 'social remittances' to highlight the intangible resources that are transmitted by migrants along with economic remittances (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011). Economic and social remittances not only follow similar paths, but also work along similar trajectories and reinforce one another. For instance, economic and social remittances are both ways of garnering social capital for migrants and their families. Thus, it may not be very useful to view material and non-material transnational flows as separate entities.

The significance of the entanglement of social remittances with flows of development resources is seen especially in the case of transfers that have been labelled 'diaspora philanthropy' in the development literature. In contrast to remittances, which are considered to be directed at household consumption or savings, diaspora philanthropy is assumed to be guided by the desire for 'social change and equity'. Such interventions are usually directed by individuals or organisations that maintain some form of connection with their places of origin and channel their resources for 'public benefit' (Johnson 2007: 4–5). Celebrated as a non-elitist form of developmental action (Newland et al. 2010: 3), diaspora philanthropy (like remittances) holds out the promise of development, but of a particular kind.

Philanthropy as part of the 'third sector'

Although diaspora philanthropy is a nascent field of academic study, several policy-oriented studies on the relation between diaspora philanthropy and development have appeared (Geithner et al. 2004; Merz 2005; Najam 2006). Scholars have examined the role of diaspora philanthropy in bringing about global equity through the movement of financial resources from the global North to the South. Much of this work shows that these flows are framed by specific notions of progress and improve the development prospects of the receiving countries. Portes, Escobar and Radford (2007), in their study of Colombian, Mexican and Dominican migrant associations in the USA and their transnational philanthropic engagements, found:

While by no means universal, transnational civic, philanthropic, cultural, and political activities are common among immigrants in the United States and, on the aggregate, they possess sufficient weight to affect the development prospects of localities and regions and to attract the attention

of sending governments (2007: 276).

As an example of the 'weight' that diasporic groups carry in their home society, Lessinger (2003) discusses the activities of alumni of the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) who have settled down in the USA. These highly skilled migrants, considered 'strategic assets' for India (Kapur 2003a), responded to a call given by the Government of India to raise funds for their alma mater in the early 2000s. However, in return for their donations, they wanted to set the agenda for restructuring the IITs, especially to promote entrepreneurship (Lessinger 2003: 165). Thus, such philanthropic activities may perform functions other than fostering 'development' in a straightforward way. Although there is growing interest in tracking the diversity of migrant resource flows, philanthropic transfers are usually not captured in national accounts of remittances (Guha 2011). The literature on diaspora philanthropy often views such flows as a means through which migrants remain connected to their 'homeland' and contribute to its development (Geithner et al. 2004). However, most studies have not explored the rich tapestry that constitutes philanthropic activities, such as those I found in Guntur. Instead, scholars working on remittances tend to club these transfers with other forms of migrant intervention and homogenise the economic consequences of these resource flows.

But why has this intense focus on migrant remittances emerged over the last two decades? Bakker (2015: 22) argues that it was due to the 'intellectual efforts and political practices of a group of researchers and policy entrepreneurs' interested in turning remittances into a neoliberal tool for development. Other scholars similarly suggest that the current optimism about the development potential of migration has a strong ideological dimension that draws on the currency of neoliberalism in development practices since the 1980s. Instead of Western donors or multilateral agencies being the main source of development aid for developing countries, migrants are now seen as fulfilling this role (de Haas 2010: 228).

Reflecting this shift in development thinking, philanthropy (including diaspora philanthropy) is usually viewed as part of the 'third sector', a space of social action between the state and the market (Johnson 2007: 42). In this context, philanthropy is understood in relation to the ideology of neoliberalism, in which private enterprise or the 'third sector' is encouraged to take over the state's responsibilities. Philanthropy thus gained currency as a commitment to individualism, reflecting mistrust of the government (Wuthnow 1991). Scholars have also pointed to a shift in the way philanthropy has operated over time, away from charity for the poor (often religiously motivated) to more targeted, rationalised and professionalised forms of giving (Gross 2003; Payton 1989).

Underlying modern philanthropy is the idea that non-state or civil society actors should share some of the responsibility for social welfare in the name of 'socially responsible capitalism' (Sweetbaum 2008), and that individuals or groups can juxtapose enlightened self-interest with the welfare of the community to 'deepen democracy' (Appadurai 2001). Although the state has long encouraged non-state actors to provide welfare and social services, especially for the poor, the triumph of neoliberalism has expanded the scope of such civil society interventions in the name of progress and democracy (Corbridge et al. 2005).

Today, the goals of formalised philanthropy are not very different from those articulated by the international development establishment – the difference being that development aid, instead of flowing from rich nations to poorer ones via governmental or inter-governmental channels, comes from the private sector or entrepreneurial individuals. The emphasis on garnering resources from the 'third sector' has also led to the 'professionalisation' of philanthropy, especially in the West. Indeed, the professionalisation of philanthropy and its increased targeting of developmental goals are overlapping developments. The question, then, is whether the institutionalisation of philanthropy offers greater scope for controlling the outcomes of development projects, or whether it influences local structures of power or domination in certain ways – for example, by enabling particular groups to monopolise control over resources or by augmenting their political power. These are among the questions that are addressed in this thesis.

National governments not only encourage citizens living within their territories to take responsibility for welfare work, but also actively seek support from their diaspora (Ratha 2007). Yet, different countries have specific cultural or economic logics of engagement with diasporic groups; conversely, the ways in which these groups engage with their countries of origin also vary. In some cases, diaspora interventions appear to be driven by the neoliberal economic agenda or philosophy that underpins contemporary philanthropy in the West, but in others, they are motivated by cultural orientations or political projects that are linked more to the country of origin.

As a corrective to the 'philanthropy for development' lens, Brinkerhoff (2014) highlights the faith-based motivations behind the philanthropic engagements of the Egyptian Coptic Christian diaspora. She also argues that diaspora philanthropy has complex outcomes due to the different experiences of migrants in their countries of origin and settlement (2014: 989). In another example, Edwards suggests that US-based Africans who do business in Africa desire to promote transnational pan-Africanism through their philanthropy, based on an ideology of 'self-reliance' within the community (2008b:

26). Similarly, Portes et al. (2007) found that transnational immigrant organisations are involved in manifold philanthropic activities – civic, political, and religious – that run counter to the ‘multinational logic of capital’. Thus, not all developing countries have similar experiences with diaspora philanthropy.

Nonetheless, neoliberal regimes promote the adoption of welfare activities by the ‘third sector’ (Johnson 2007), and migrant-sending countries often view migrant resources as one component of this sector (Zapanta Mariano 2011; Mazzucato and Kabki 2009). Such transnational philanthropic activities have met with diverse official responses from governments (Portes et al. 2007: 253; Qureshi et al. 2012), which sometimes wish to capitalise on the development potential of these activities. In high-migration countries such as the Philippines, diaspora philanthropy plays a vital role in the national economy; with the withdrawal of the state from social services, private money (including philanthropy) has become responsible for key social welfare activities (Zapanta Mariano 2011). In India, the impact of diaspora philanthropy seems to be uneven, and has had visible effects only in some regions – although there is a paucity of literature on this subject. In the next section, I turn to studies of diaspora philanthropy in India to understand how the state (at different scales) and diasporic groups have leveraged philanthropy and for what purposes.

Diaspora Philanthropy in India

Scholars studying the Indian diaspora have observed that Indians living abroad are increasingly inclined to give back to India (Kumar 2003). Development-oriented NRI activities in India tend to focus particularly on the health and education sectors, although religious donations form a substantial part of such contributions (Kapur 2003b). A survey of Indian Americans revealed that the majority of respondents had made some sort of donation in the previous year (Kumar 2003: 54–8). Another study carried out among Indians in Silicon Valley showed that affluent immigrants considered ‘giving back’ to India an important obligation that does not necessarily arise from prevalent forms of charity in India (Silicon Valley Community Foundation 2012).

Organised philanthropy is not new in India: its history goes back at least to the national movement when big industrialists supported Gandhi’s freedom struggle (Birla 2009: 11–12; Sundar 2013: 36). But the liberalisation policies of the 1990s changed the profile of these benefactors, from ‘a highly homogeneous group of self-made industrialists’ to the ‘new philanthropists’. This new breed came from more diverse backgrounds ‘in how they made their wealth, often working in new industries such as information technology and the service and financial industries, which have a more limited direct imprint on

the communities in which they operate' (Varadarajan and Chanana 2013: 69–70). Significantly, many of these new philanthropists are NRIs or returned migrants (Sidel 2000). However, as my thesis will show, such broad statements about the limited impact of this new kind of philanthropy may not hold up under scrutiny.

Kapur alerts us to the fact that most discussions of diaspora philanthropy focus on the more visible contributions – for example, direct flows of cash or supplies goods such as clothes, books and medical supplies. However, there are other, less well-documented ways in which diasporic groups contribute to their home countries or places of origin, which may have socio-political, cultural or economic agendas at their core (Kapur 2003b: 2). Migrant resources, including remittances, skills transfer, or social capital, can amplify their 'voices' in their place of origin (Kapur 2008: 2), allowing them to influence policies and practices – for example, by promoting the public-private partnership model in development projects.

Indian diaspora philanthropy often flows through institutional channels such as professional and religious organisations or regional, caste or language-based organisations. Indian-American diasporic organisations offer members insights into American ways of organising, including fundraising, and pave the way (particularly for men) to become the 'power elite' of their community (Brettell 2005: 877–8) – a point that resonates with the case presented in this thesis. Immigrant and other voluntary associations may become bases for such 'power elites' to garner social (and political) capital that can be utilised both in their place of origin or settlement (Carruthers 2002).

Thus, much of the development-oriented literature on migrant resource transfers does not adequately address these broader implications of migrant transfers, where a few elites often control the collection of donations and decide what is to be done with these resources. Preoccupied with macro-level data, this literature misses the sociological aspects of migrant engagements as well as the social context of the recipient region or groups. Diaspora philanthropy in India shows similar complexities, one of which is its shifting response to suit the Indian state's changing policies towards its NRIs.

The Indian state and the 'diaspora option'

Since independence, the national government of India has used 'development' as a discourse to suture its fragments together (Deshpande 2003), especially after liberalisation (Corbridge et al. 2005: 2–7). This period also coincides with the increasing recognition of the value of India's 'diaspora option' for development (Pellerin and Mullings 2013). The Indian state's changing stance on its relationship with the diaspora has been reflected in these deterritorialised citizens being increasingly encompassed within the imagined

national body (Biswas 2005). Over the last few decades, India has actively nurtured a 'positive' relationship with 'Overseas Indians', especially by seeking to involve them in the country's 'development' (Edwards 2008; Kapur 2004).

The Government of India created the official category of the Non-Resident Indian (NRI) as early as the 1970s, a 'status intermediate between that of Indian citizen insiders and foreign investor outsiders' (Lessinger 2003: 176). This strategy not only allowed Indians working outside India to repatriate their earnings without being subjected to double taxation, it also created an avenue for them to 'invest their savings – accumulated overseas from professional salaries, business enterprises and profitable domestic investments – in Indian industrial ventures and Indian banks' (Lessinger 1992: 54). Since then, the government has made more concerted efforts to recognise and include the diaspora in the life of the nation-state (Walton-Roberts 2004). Policy shifts to engage Overseas Indians more closely can be traced to particular political-legal moments in the history of post-independent India – for instance, the creation of the category of 'Person of Indian Origin' (PIO) (Roy 2010).

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the major political proponent of right-wing '*hindutva*' ideology, or Hindu nationalism, when it was in power for the first time (1999 to 2004), took concrete steps to woo the Indian diaspora, especially those settled in 'developed' countries such as the USA, Canada and the UK, by invoking a sense of (Hindu) religiously defined patriotism. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee wanted to convince 'Overseas Indians' to invest in India by granting them a special quasi-citizenship status and promising them a favourable economic environment. A major policy shift was signalled by the appointment of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora in 2000. The release of the Committee's report in 2002 marked the formal recognition and cultivation of the role of the Indian diaspora in India's development. In response, India saw increased flows of remittances and other investments from NRIs and PIOs (Walton Roberts 2004: 56). This political recognition of the Overseas Indian was strengthened when the category of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) was created by the Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2003 (Roy 2010). However, these schemes were biased towards people of Indian origin who had become citizens of North American, European and Australasian countries, and those with Hindu ancestry.²⁰ The unskilled and semi-skilled NRIs who send the largest amount of remittances to India from the Middle East²¹ were not accorded the same status by this entrepreneurial state (Mazzucato 2013), which distinguishes between NRIs on the basis of their countries of residence and educational

20 See Introduction and Chapter 3 of Roy's book *Mapping Citizenship* (2010) for a discussion of the exclusivist nature of these amendments to the Citizenship Act of 1955.

21 For details of remittances India received from the Middle East as of 2014, see: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/allyssaayres/2014/02/26/indias-stakes-in-the-middle-east/#7d9681f763b9> (last accessed on 16 February 2016).

capital. The promulgation of this category thus introduced the concept of ‘pre-eminent transnational citizens’ (Roohi forthcoming) because of the mutations in citizenship brought about by neoliberalism (cf. Ong 2006; Vora 2013).

Seeing the connection that the diaspora felt with their country and their willingness to contribute to development and social welfare projects in India, the Government of India also set up the India Development Foundation (IDF) in 2008 (Qureshi et al. 2012). In this context, Xavier suggests that states are:

... often sympathetic to the idea of using the extension of citizenship as a tradeoff to guarantee access to their diasporas’ economic and political value: Extending the nation to formally incorporate those who once belonged to it (or their descendants) seems to be a fair price to pay for their capital, investments, know-how, and political influence (Xavier 2011: 37).

The nexus between the Indian diaspora and the state created ‘a tacit economy’ as the government ‘traded cultural and symbolic capital for diasporic financial and material capital’ (Xavier 2011: 48). For Amrute, the promulgation of the category of the NRI created a new notion of ‘Indian subjecthood, one that links Indian identity to transnational spaces’ (Amrute 2013: 130). The rules governing NRI taxation and investment regarded the NRI as a ‘private person doing the work of accumulating capital on behalf of the nation, a job that was previously assigned to territorially bound citizens and their government is a part of this process of individualisation, privatisation and market ideology’ (2013: 147).

Thus, the Indian citizen residing in the developed world has the capacity to exploit her NRI status in India through a special legal-symbolic status, while simultaneously aiding the state by transferring capital. When such transnational citizens turn their gaze towards their motherland to help ‘develop’ it through their philanthropy, we need to parse not only the discourse of development that frames such acts, but also the practices of diaspora philanthropy themselves.

In India, it is not only the central government but also state and district governments that have actively sought the involvement of migrants in their development programmes. A survey of Telugu NRI websites suggests that villages and towns in the Guntur region are actively soliciting funds from NRIs for development;²² this is another scale of ‘diaspora philanthropy’ that I explore in this thesis. The discourse on development is no longer being constructed within a national framework, as decentralisation and devolution make

22 A Google search on Telugu philanthropy will yield many such results.

state and local governments focal agencies for developmental activities. Conversely, diasporic actors often engage with the state at sub-national scales rather than only with the national government and its programmes (Sidel 2007).

Thus, while the Indian state views the diaspora as a part of a 'global India', a kind of transnational citizenry with whom it is eager to build cultural and economic relationships, it is at the level of the region or provincial state that successful state-diaspora engagement more often takes place. Although several ethnographic studies point to intense migrant engagements with their home villages and towns through remittances, kinship connections, and flows of ideas (Chu 2010; Gardner 2008; Levitt 2001; Osella and Osella 2009; Taylor and Singh 2013), we have few studies on diasporic engagements at the regional or local scale in India. Yet, we know that Indian diasporic actors forge a sense of morally bound community through the transmission of resources, which in turn, are deeply informed by the migrants' regional, language, caste, class or religious affiliations. As Kapur notes:

It is rarely the case that philanthropic contributions are made on abstract notions of the nation state. Individuals are much more easily persuaded to contribute on the basis of narrow specific identities, for example regional and sub-regional identities or particular interests such as alumni associations. The motivations might be 'pure' altruism to potential network payoffs to an implicit contractual arrangement with local society (Kapur 2003b: 10).

This observation is highly relevant to the present study which also found that the impulse to give is not usually tied to allegiance to the nation-state; instead, philanthropic endeavours are focused on the local or regional level. To understand the significance and consequences of diasporic giving, we need to locate these practices within their social frameworks such as of region and caste, and pay attention not only to the political and economic interests of donors but also to the moral discourses that frame these activities.

Variegated forms of Indian diasporic giving

Sidel (2004) points out that diaspora philanthropy may enhance pre-existing fractures in society, particularly in the case of funds channelled to religious or political organisations: 'The importance of religious giving shows us just how political the issues of diaspora giving are, and how closely such philanthropy is tied to the key fissure points of contemporary India' (2004: 224). Biswas (2005) argues similarly that 'while diasporas help disrupt, theoretically and conceptually, the forceful hold of the nation-state on the global political imagination, there is nothing inherently politically progressive, subversive

or liberatory about diasporic mobilizations' (2005: 66). Yet, the dominant development discourse presumes that diaspora contributions are 'good for development'.

Biswas further suggests that social fractures within India are often muted within the diaspora in the interest of forging a unified 'Indian' identity (2005: 50). However, this study suggests that a national identity is only selectively deployed by the diaspora, who tend to cohere along lines of religion, region, language and caste, mirroring divisions within India (Rayaprol 1997: 100). When diasporic groups 'give back' to their home country, such activities may have serious political or cultural consequences, for instance, through the dissemination of fundamentalist religious ideologies or right-wing political agendas. Several scholars have argued that there is growing religious anxiety within the Indian diaspora, sections of which have promoted the ideology of hindutva both abroad and at home (Bhatt and Mukta 2000; Katju 2005; Mathew and Prashad 2000). Indian Hindus in the USA seek to inhabit a deterritorialised Indian national space, producing a religio-nationally defined Hindu-Indian moral community (Rajagopal 2000). These studies, while critiquing the way Indian diasporic groups homogenise the diasporic cultural spaces as 'Hindu', tend to elide the complexities of caste, language and region that underpin most diasporic engagements with India. To move beyond assumptions of a single religious ideology uniting the Indian Hindu diaspora, we need to pay attention to intersectionalities of caste, region and market forces that create not a single Indian diaspora, but multiple diasporas.

Malayalis, Gujaratis and Punjabis have been among the most studied migrant groups from India, whose remittances and philanthropic engagements in their home regions have gained some academic attention. Most of these studies point to the regionally specific cultural, social or religious framing of their remittances or philanthropic practices.²³ For example, Tatla (2009) contextualises Punjabi Sikh diaspora philanthropy through a close reading of Sikh religious texts. Problematizing the category of 'Sikh' in this context, he identifies friction between the religious ideas of *daan* and *seva* and the Punjabi Jat cultural notions of *izzat* and *sardari*. They also highlight the various ideological and religious justifications used by diasporic Sikh philanthropists that inform the changing moral universe of the Punjabi Sikh Jat diaspora. Other studies of the Punjabi diaspora argue that flows of transnational resources into Punjab have exacerbated inequalities between the landholding Jats and poor Dalit²⁴ farm workers (Taylor et al. 2007; Taylor and Singh 2013). Research on Gujarati migrants points to the

23 See for example Dusenbery and Tatla (2009), Osella and Osella (2000, 2006), Taylor and Singh (2013) and Zachariah and Rajan (2011).

24 Dalits are the erstwhile 'Untouchables' in India, who were considered to be outside of the fourfold Varnaashrama and who are today recognised by the Constitution as Scheduled Castes. The term (which means 'broken' in Sanskrit) is a self-chosen name that aims to unite members of different 'untouchable' jatis and is used primarily for political assertion.

complex motivations of NRI philanthropists, especially their preference for supporting projects in their own villages, interventions that may not be viewed as ‘useful’ by the local community (Dekkers and Rutten 2011). Thus, Indian diasporic groups act within a transnational social field of power relations that is shaped by the regional cultural and political framework.

Although diaspora philanthropy is often framed by sectarian interests, caste loyalties, or religious beliefs, these transnational flows are also inflected by ‘modern’ aspirations for development or social mobility. Osella and Osella (2009) trace the changing nature of charity among Malayali Muslim Gulf migrants and returned migrants, linking Islamic consciousness, entrepreneurship, charity and notions of modernity and showing how these values get reshaped in a transnational context. Drawing on examples of three successful entrepreneurs from Kerala, the authors suggest that their experiences in the Gulf create aspirations for progress among Kerala Muslims. Elsewhere, Osella and Osella (2000) have shown how ‘low-caste’ Izhavas achieved some measure of socio-economic upward mobility because of the money and social prestige they earned through Gulf migration. Such resource flows can also work to remove the tag of ‘backwardness’ among communities with many migrant members, who invest their money in ‘community upliftment’ projects, such as for education (Osella and Osella 2009).

These anthropological studies suggest that resource flows of migrant resources such as remittances or philanthropy have diverse effects and meanings as they move through particular channels. The money that is sent ‘home’ by migrants holds varying and specific meanings. These transfers may be viewed as a device for transmitting ‘care’ (Lamb 2009; Singh et al 2010) within a ‘cultural framework’ where money is often gifted or flows back and forth between parents and children, and sometimes, to extended kin. Such a ‘currency of care’ (Singh 2006) arises from a sense of obligation to one’s family, kin group or home community. As Mohan notes, because migrant households invest money in the migration process, migrants are often:

... strongly obliged to send money back – and there is great pressure on them to ‘succeed’. The logic is partly one of rational reciprocity, as the obligation is a way of ‘repaying’ the family (Mohan 2006: 871).

However, Mohan cautions that such a view can be utilitarian, and the role of socialisation, gender and kinship needs to be taken into account (*ibid*). This sense of obligation may be shaped by traditional norms such as the obligation to care or do *seva* (service) for the elderly, reflecting an ethic of intergenerational reciprocity in which parents take care of the children, who in turn look after their parents in their old age. This *seva* falls in

the realm of the 'personal' rather than the 'impersonal', where everything is regarded as transactional and defined by market forces (Lamb 2009: 197). However, as I show in this thesis, the distinction between personal and impersonal is blurred when their own community is made central to migrants' transnational philanthropic engagements.

Another dimension of diaspora philanthropy that is highlighted in several studies is how it may be used to garner intangible gains, in terms of social or symbolic capital or political influence (Carruthers 2002). Philanthropy may become a channel to create or affirm social networks that will become useful when making future economic and political investments in the place of origin. For example, the Vellalars from Soorapallam village in Tamil Nadu replicate their caste and kinship networks in Singapore based on a closed translocal 'moral economy', which promotes giving and taking across places (Velayutham and Wise 2005).

The social and economic flows that connect migrants with their places of origin embody and create transnational forms of sociality. As this study will show, diaspora philanthropy forges connections that link migrants with their families, communities or sites of donation in specific ways, which are determined by their migration trajectories and the nature of translocal or transnational conditions (Scrase et al. 2015; Verstappen and Rutten 2015). In the following section, I draw on the transnational studies literature to help theorise diaspora philanthropy. Our understanding of social processes and institutions such as philanthropy may be deepened by using a 'transnational lens' (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Extending and deepening the literature on migrant resource flows like remittances and diaspora philanthropy, the idea of a 'transnational social field' helps us understand the relational aspect of diasporic giving that binds the giver and the receiver within different relationships, the particularities of which are shaped by this field of interaction.

Mapping Transnational Social Fields of Power

The term 'transnationalism' became the focus of academic attention in the early 1990s, although migration scholars were already engaged in studying movements across borders and their effects on social change in both 'sending' and 'receiving' countries (Castles 1998; Massey et al. 1993; Zolberg 1989). Glick Schiller et al. (1992) defined 'transnationalism' as the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and country of settlement. However, in a large country such as India, such processes may occur at a regional scale, connecting migrants

with their towns or regions of origin.²⁵ Immigrants who build such social fields were designated as ‘transmigrants’, who ‘take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously’ (Glick Schiller et al. 1992: 1-2).

By the late 1990s, many scholars working on migration began using the term transnationalism, but modified it to make it more analytically stringent. For instance, Portes and his collaborators wrote about the creation of transnational communities linking immigrant groups in ‘advanced’ countries with their nations of origin or hometowns (Portes et al. 1999). They argued that back and forth movements by migrants have always existed, but that they had not acquired until recently the ‘critical mass and complexity necessary to speak of an emergent social field’ (1999: 217). Similarly, Vertovec (2001; 2004) argued that although transnationalism is not a new phenomenon, certain transnational practices have brought about structural transformations in many spheres, which in turn, have induced sociocultural transformations in which a *bifocality* ‘of outlooks underpinning migrant lives of being here and there’ emerges (Vertovec 2004: 977). This bifocal outlook precipitates as a result of ‘transnational practices of exchange, communication and frequent travel’ that shape the outlooks and experiences of migrants (*ibid*). Within this field, he regards remittances as the single most important factor that has the potential to bring about structural changes. As I explain in the following chapters, ‘bifocality’ is an important vantage point from which to understand how Telugu migrants lead their lives within a transnational social field.

Building on this body of work, Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) proposed a ‘social field approach’ to the study of transnational migration, arguing that assimilating within the countries of settlement while maintaining enduring transnational ties are neither incompatible processes nor binary opposites. They distinguished between ‘ways of being and ways of belonging’ in that field – the former dependent on everyday practices, the latter on identities (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004: 2). They define a transnational social field as:

... an unbounded terrain of interlocking egocentric networks that extends across the borders of two or more nation-states and that incorporates the participants in the day to day activities of social reproduction in these various locations (Fouron and Glick Schiller 2001: 544).

25 In a large country such as India, a regional perspective on cultural identities and politics helps to destabilise the conventional rural-urban dichotomy, and provides a more expansive view of social relations that often emanate from a region rather than from a locality or the larger national scale (Koskimaki and Upadhyaya 2013; Misra and Niranjana 2005).

In this thesis, I employ the idea of transnational social field to understand how transnational migrants and their networks interact, reshape and reproduce ideas and relationships. Certain social processes and institutions – in this case, ‘diaspora philanthropy’ flowing from the USA to Guntur – and the transnational channels through which such philanthropy is made possible, can be best conceptualised through this category. Power relations within and between their countries of settlement and countries of origin affect these transnational practices, which in turn, shape how transnational social fields are created and structured.

Another useful concept is that of ‘transnational communities’, which Portes describes as constituted by ‘dense networks across political borders created by immigrants in their quest for economic advancement and social recognition’ (1997: 812). Through these networks, a growing number of people are able to lead dual lives and ‘[p]articipants are often bilingual, move easily between different cultures, frequently maintain homes in two countries, and pursue economic, political and cultural interests that require their presence in both’ (*ibid*). Whereas diasporic communities include only those who have migrated, the concept of transnational community has the advantage of encompassing those who have not migrated but are linked to migrant groups. The families of the migrant, the networks of people and institutions with which the migrant interacts in the home and host countries, and perhaps also others who are not directly part of migrant networks but are ‘beneficiaries’ of interventionist projects in the home region, are all part of this transnational social field.

In addition, I adopt the idea of ‘transnational *habitus*’ (Guarnizo 1997: 311), which incorporates the social position of the migrant and the context in which his/her migration occurs. Borrowing from Bourdieu, we can explain *habitus* as dispositions that one acquires in an intimate family setting and from one’s larger sociocultural milieu, which may include one’s class (and caste) position. A distinctive set of cultural competencies, demeanours and tastes are embodied as ‘dispositions’ that form the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1986, 1992). The concept of *habitus* helps us understand why certain groups are more amenable to imagining and becoming a part of a transnational social field. This approach also enables us to trace the transnational and material practices (including philanthropy) in which migrants are engaged, both in their country of origin and in the host country.

As discussed above, many studies view remittances as an important source of development finance, but merely marshalling quantitative data on these flows misses the micro-politics of giving, which is highly particularised and often enmeshed in larger political processes of the place or region. Instead, we can better understand the impact of resource flows by exploring how transnational communities build an uneven transnational social field

through resource transfers. Such practices might create certain power relations or sustain existing ones because of the social position of the migrant. As I show in this thesis, one mechanism that may exacerbate or diminish relations of power is the sending of resources by migrants for ‘development’ – resources that operate within a transnational social field marked by shifting or uneven power relations.

Apart from the studies cited above, there has been little systematic work on how transnational flows to India inflect structures of power or inequality in migrants’ places of origin, such as inter-caste or intra-caste relations or structures of class domination. In the case presented in this thesis, the pivots that connect the making of a transnational community with a local community are caste and regional affiliation. To explicate the nuances of caste, kinship, linguistic or regional specificities of giving, and the cultural framing of different forms of philanthropy in India, we may turn to an older anthropological and historical literature. In the following section, I briefly discuss some of this work as well as literature on the transformation of caste during the colonial and early postcolonial periods, in order to understand the role of giving historically in India in the formation of communities and social dominance.

Caste, Community and Traditions of Giving in India

Migration disembeds and re-embeds social relations in different ways, often crystallising certain identities, discourses and practices while altering others – processes that, in turn, are reflected in transnational resource flows and patterns of giving and receiving. Since most of the literature on diaspora philanthropy does not capture the social contexts of such transactions, in this section, I draw on the anthropological literature on the ‘gift’ to develop a theoretical framework for understanding the cultural and symbolic significance of giving, reciprocity and exchange. Scholars of South Asia have theorised giving primarily through the category of *daan-dharma*, which frames the moral universe of Hindu donors (often overlooking other contexts that inflect and shape giving in India). Below, I discuss these key concepts as well as other literature that helps us to grasp the meanings that givers and receivers associate with the act of giving outside the scope of religion. One such axis along which giving and receiving takes place is caste. Therefore, I also explore why and how caste becomes a key expression of collectively shared identity around which givers and receivers cohere. This discussion provides vital insights into the construction of the multiple moral universes within which (transnational) giving unfolds.

Daan, dakshina, seva: An ‘Indian’ moral universe of giving

Since Mauss published *The Gift* (1925), anthropologists have been interested in

questions of giving, reciprocity and exchange. Giving signifies building of relations and has a strong sociological function (Berking 1999). Indianists and Sanskritists have long explored the Hindu or Brahminical texts that inform *daan/dakshina* or sacrifice, or the 'Indian gift' (Heesterman 1985; Malamoud and White 1996).²⁶ The concept of *daan* is significant for this thesis because the kind of transnational giving in which my informants were engaged were often expressly articulated as the opposite of *daan*. According to Trautmann, *daan* as a religious act is a foil to the Maussian gift, which is reciprocal and serves a sociological function (1981: 279). For Mauss, giving is a form of social contract that entails the obligation of reciprocity, but *daan* presents a challenge to this theory because it appears to not create any counter-obligation (Heim 2004: 34). Parry (1980; 1986) draws a finer distinction by arguing that *daan* is not a 'gift' in Mauss' sense, but rather entails absolute alienation. According to Heim, the 'Indian gift' is a moral and religious duty, similar to practices found in Theravada Buddhist and Jain traditions. *Daan* thus stands in for a broader system of morality within these religious cultures. Yet, there is much more to South Asia than the brahminical cosmos, in which *daan* and *dakshina* create a moral universe (cf. Osella 2009, 2014).

Moreover, the concept of *daan* itself has changed in the contemporary moment and is invoked in diverse contexts in India. Copeman (2009, 2011) reviews the various meanings of *daan*, especially its uses in common parlance and everyday practices in an increasingly globalised India. He argues that *daan* is not just a textual relic but is a 'vital contemporary category of exchange' that gets variously associated with 'kinship, sacrifice, sinfulness, asceticism, merit and caste identity' (2011: 3). He suggests that *daan* in contemporary India relies heavily on invoking the worthiness of the receiver (2011: 20), which builds accountability into the modernist philanthropic forms of *daan*. *Seva* or service is related to *daan*, and together, these two concepts can be considered to constitute a Hindu moral universe. The term *seva* was resurrected during the colonial period and became an idiom through which the upper castes became *sevaks* or 'servants' of lower-caste beneficiaries through their largesse (Skaria 2002; Watt 2005). Skaria highlights the inherent hierarchy in this notion of *seva*, especially its utilisation by Gandhi during the nationalist struggle, who invoked it to bring the 'Harijans' into the 'Hindu fold' (Patel 2007). A reverse trend has also been noted, where 'lower caste' women political workers of the BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party, a dalit political party) used the idiom of *seva* to refer to political action within the community (Ciotti 2012). *Seva*, in this instance, becomes a non-alienable and communally defined practice. Exploring the various contexts in which categories such as *seva* or *daan* are used can help us to unpack the meanings and practices underpinning particular forms of giving.

26 To maintain consistency, *daan*, *dana*, *daana* and *daanam* – different forms of the same term used in the literature – are all referred to here as 'daan'.

Giving, reciprocity and exchange are culturally defined practices – this is as true of the category of money as it is for the gift (Block and Parry 1989). Following Mauss, we need to ask whether and how the ‘gift’ or philanthropy is different from market exchange, in binding the giver and receiver in an obligatory long-term, but often unpredictable, relationship.

Building solidarity: From inter-caste giving to intra-caste philanthropy

Both *daan* and *seva* are implicated in the caste system, a deep-rooted structure of Indian society in which asymmetrical flows of resources and symbolic values mark out the moral or social universe. The literature on the ‘*jajmani* system’ that structured the ‘traditional’ village economy summarises the exchanges that were mandated as certain castes provided services to the dominant landowning groups in exchange for grain or cash (Cohn 1987; Dirks 1976; Fuller 1989), creating a village community based on inter-caste dependence. Several scholars have argued, however, that such exchanges (especially with Brahmins) may not only signal interdependence but also perform other functions, such as transmitting the sins of the giver to the receiver (Parry 1986), or removing inauspiciousness (Raheja 1988; Saavala 2003). All such inter-caste transactions, whether between dominant landowning castes and service castes, or *dakshina* given to Brahmins, assume a vertical social positioning of giver and receiver. However, as this thesis will show, giving can also be horizontal in nature.

Patron-client relations based on giving and receiving, which may be interwoven with religious forms of giving or *daan*, has an old history in the sub-continent. Haynes, who studied wealthy Hindu and Jain merchants’ involvement in a wide range of gifting activities in sixteenth-century Surat, argued that by ‘channelling a portion of their economic capital into symbolic investments’, donors established ‘a series of relatively stable, multi dimensional relationships’ with important people, such as the Muslim rulers. But they also concentrated their efforts within their own communities: ‘They built up their social reputations and economic credit largely through religious gifting’ (Haynes 1987: 357). For the Kammas, as I show in the succeeding chapters, secular philanthropy within the community plays a similar political and economic role.

The embedding of ritual and economic exchanges within the caste system, according to several scholars, has weakened since the colonial period, being replaced by relations of exploitation and the pauperisation of the labouring castes (Breman 1974). Nonetheless, patron-client relationships between different castes still exist today in reconstituted forms (Cross 2014; Piliavsky 2014). For example, Gidwani (2008: 35) observes that the landowning Patels of Matar *taluka* of Gujarat construct themselves as people who are obliged to ‘give’ to the ‘lower castes’ such as the Bhangis and Nayaks, as saying ‘no’ would

suggest the Patels are miserly and bring shame to them. But relations of patronage do not only mark hierarchical inter-caste relations. Many communities prioritise 'giving' to their own kinsmen, usually to poorer members. In the case of the Karavas of Sri Lanka (a 'low caste' that rose to become an elite class), intra-community philanthropy played an important role in cementing the solidarity of the group (Roberts 1982). Roberts notes that 'within each locality, Karava notables maintained their linkages with the Karava poor through patron-client transactions and political leadership' (1982: 130). Similarly, accounts of the Izhavas of Kerala (Osella and Osella 1999), the Marwaris (Birla 2009), and the Chettiers (Rudner 1994) point to the importance of patronage by elites who became benefactors for poor or under-privileged members of their communities. Similar practices are also seen among the Parsis, who are still known as major philanthropists in India (White 1991). In their case, philanthropy helped to strengthen the boundaries of the community while simultaneously building the reputation and honour of Parsis in the eyes of the British East India Company (1991: 317).

These examples point to the role of philanthropy in the reproduction and regeneration of intra-caste solidarity as well as inter-caste differences or hierarchy, processes that gained momentum under colonialism. In many cases, building a solidary caste identity was a first step to organised efforts to claim upward social or ritual mobility – a point I return to in Chapter 3.

The institutionalisation of philanthropy amongst Kammas in Guntur and abroad, discussed in the following chapters, is a development of earlier forms of giving in which caste became a principle axis of community formation, social mobility, assertion, capital accumulation and patronage – a key modality of solidification, sustaining the power of local or regional elites. In most documented cases of caste consolidation or mobility during the colonial and early postcolonial periods, caste associations – sustained with money donated by community leaders or caste 'notables' – played a major role (Roberts 1982), giving rise to 'corporate identities' for castes (Conlon 1974). (The 'substantialisation of caste' thesis and the role of caste associations are discussed further in Chapter 3.)

How do we know that caste-based relations of patronage or exchange are relevant to the study of philanthropy among the Indian diaspora? Turning to this question, we should first note that scholars have long debated whether caste continues to exist when Indians settle overseas, or has weakened or disappeared altogether (Mayer 1967). The evidence is mixed. Among migrants who were sent to other colonies such as Fiji and Mauritius to work as plantation labourers in the 1800s, it has been argued that caste identities were transformed into group identities based on language and religion (Kumar 2012: 224).

Hollup (1994) found that caste ideology based on the principles of hierarchy, purity/pollution and birth-ascribed status has disintegrated to a large extent among Mauritian Hindus. At the same time, he noted a spurt in caste associations in Mauritius, which work as ‘corporate’ bodies to bargain with the government, thereby working more as ‘political interest groups’. Jayawardena (1971), who studied the Indian community in Fiji, similarly concluded that the caste system – at least as it works in India – is not found in rural Fiji. The case of the Gujarati Mochis settled in South Africa is similar. The Mochis, a low caste in India, achieved upward mobility as a community in Africa by regulating their trade and projecting it as an occupational specialisation rather than as a caste identity, and their caste associations survived until much later (Dhupelia-Mesthrie 2012). A similar change in ritual status was seen amongst Gujarati Patels: through migration and remigration the lower-caste Kanbis were able to claim a higher ritual status as Patidars (Chandra 1997). Since the functioning of caste associations was sustained by resources provided by community notables within and outside India, such support not only cemented intra-caste relations, sometimes transnationally, but often enhanced the status of migrants and helped their communities to achieve upward social mobility.

In these examples, Indian diasporic communities that were formed by migration prior to India’s Independence have overcome the rigidity associated with the caste system, perhaps by virtue of their long stay outside the country and lack of continuing connections with their home regions. However, more recent migrants seem to carry with them the rules and identities of caste or sect, such as in the case of the Sikhs cited earlier (Taylor and Singh 2013). Rutten and Patel (2003) found that Gujarati Patidars in London continue to maintain caste-based ties and exchanges with their caste brethren in central Gujarat, despite having migrated several generations earlier. My research similarly reveals the reproduction of caste ties amongst transnational Kammas. Like the older migrant groups, the Kammas of Coastal Andhra settled in the USA are now engaged in a distributive, reciprocal, obligatory giving across a transnational or transregional²⁷ space. I end this section with Bourdieu, who argues that a gift that is not returned can ‘become a debt, a lasting obligation; and the only recognised power – recognition, personal loyalty or prestige – is the one that is obtained by giving’ (1992: 126). Contrasting pre-capitalist and capitalist societies, he argues:

Social formations in which relations of domination are made, unmade and remade in and through personal interactions contrast with those in which such relations are mediated by objective, institutionalized mechanisms such as the ‘self-regulating market’, the educational system or the legal apparatus, where they have the permanence and

27 ‘Trans-regional’ refers to more particularised connections between different regions of the world, in contrast to ‘transnational’ that refers to crossing national borders.

opacity of things and lie beyond the reach of individual consciousness and power (Bourdieu 1992: 130).

Diaspora philanthropy flowing from the West to rural areas of a ‘developing’ country follows a transnational journey that can simultaneously make some things transparent while rendering others opaque. In this thesis, I hope to uncover both the transparent and opaque layerings of these transactions. When the community involved in these projects is a transnational elite, which remains embedded in local social structures and power relations while benefitting from their position within the global economy, the effects of such giving on local social formations needs to be examined in depth. The goal is to interrogate both recent and historical community-specific and regionally particularised practices, in order to glean sharper insights into what is new and what remains unchanged with different forms of transnational giving.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed several bodies of literature from which I draw key concepts that inform the central argument of this thesis, at the same time pointing out various gaps and weaknesses. I established the intricate links between transnational remittances and philanthropy, neoliberal ideology and governance practices, such that philanthropy (including diaspora philanthropy) is now expected to perform the welfarist role of the state. I have suggested that the literature on remittances and diaspora philanthropy, though generally framed around questions of development, should be extended to explain how resource transfers occur within a *transnational social field* of action. Such a perspective helps us to gauge the social and relational aspects of transnational transactions.

Just as these specificities shape the social field that is constructed by a migrant community, they also shape their transactions across it. Therefore, in the thesis, I interrogate both recent and historical community-specific and regionally particular practices to unravel what is new and what has remained unchanged in this form of transnational giving. While recent literature on philanthropy points to how an interconnected global economy promotes certain ideas of development and philanthropy in a neoliberal milieu, the earlier anthropological literature on giving helps me to understand newer practices of community formation in a globalised milieu by showing how such projects are historically and culturally rooted.

In this chapter, I have outlined the concepts, theoretical approaches and questions that frame the arguments developed in the core chapters to follow, where I trace the shaping

of a transnational *habitus* in which migrating out and giving back have become markers of a particular community in Guntur.

Chapter 2

**STUDYING DIASPORA PHILANTHROPY –
METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES**

My first exposure to diaspora philanthropy in Guntur was through a presentation made by Dr. Teegala Bhaskar²⁸ at a conference in Bangalore in June 2010. He was just back from a four-day trip to Guntur and had collected some interesting information on three cases of NRI philanthropy in Guntur – the district NRI Cell, Sankara Eye Hospital and GMCANA. His presentation not only aroused my curiosity, but also opened up many questions in my mind: Why were Telugu NRIs interested in doing philanthropy in their native towns? Was this exceptional? Was there something more than prestige attached to such practices? Having made up my mind to work in Andhra Pradesh, this conference sowed the seeds in my mind of a possible research topic – to study how and why diaspora philanthropy gained traction in a provincial town like Guntur.

In early January 2011, five months into my PhD programme, I made a ten-day ‘recce’ trip to Guntur and was able to identify four possible areas for research – migration and communities in flux, socio-spatial changes in the town due to migration, the real estate boom and its relation to migration, and finally, diaspora philanthropy. I realised philanthropy was something most people were comfortable talking about. Though a few were critical about the intentions of donors and regarded them as ‘show-offs’, most people I met spoke with pride about someone directly related to them who had done his or her ‘bit’ for their ‘motherland’. For this reason, diaspora philanthropy appeared to be an apt focal point for a study of migration and transnationalism at the regional level, one that would also allow access to affluent or middle-class people in Guntur and abroad who prided themselves on their philanthropic endeavours.

Within the first few weeks after starting my year of fieldwork in Guntur district, in September 2011, the ‘messiness’ of the field overwhelmed me – the different ways in which people were involved in philanthropy, the different kinds of collaborations between NRIs and local people, and the many philanthropic projects for which NRIs were sending money to the region. The literature I had read on diaspora philanthropy before embarking on fieldwork had inadequately prepared me to handle the complexities that I encountered in the field. But I was also convinced that there must be some order to this apparent messiness, and I started to dig further in search of the roots of NRI giving, tracing the networks through which donations move and the history of transnational philanthropy in the region.

In my research proposal, I made a deliberate decision to study philanthropic projects funded by Telugus living overseas that were ‘secular’ in nature and oriented to social development, such as donations to schools, hospitals, village infrastructure development,

28 Bhaskar’s work in collaboration with Bhat (2007) is one of the few studies on the Telugu diaspora. Their study traces the historical migration trajectory of Telugus from Andhra Pradesh to different parts of the globe since the early nineteenth century.

and the like. Although I had learned that substantial diaspora money was also flowing into Hindu temples and religious trusts, I decided not to pursue religious philanthropy in order to keep the scope of the fieldwork manageable. The decision was also based on my desire to avoid a topic of discussion that could potentially upset my interlocutors or create an air of mistrust, given my own religious identity as a Muslim. Also, I found out later that my respondents differentiated between ‘*daan*’ (or religious donations) and philanthropy, and that the latter was understood to be development-oriented, intended to support ‘social’ causes, and was therefore seen as more noble.

My intention was not to assess whether NRI philanthropy is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ for the development of the region. Instead, my effort was to understand the pathways and processes through which such giving occurs, how transnational philanthropy has become institutionalised in particular ways, and how the embeddedness of transnational migrants in local social structures and relations of power has shaped these modes of giving. As noted in the previous chapter, there are few anthropological studies of diaspora philanthropy that analyse systematically all these elements of transnational relations and transactions. My project attempted to fill this gap in the literature through a case study of a particular region in India and a particular caste group, as an example of a transnational community that is intensely engaged in developmental and political activities in the home region. In this chapter, I describe the research process through which I pursued these objectives, the kinds of data I collected, and the analytical approach that I developed.

Research Strategies and Methods

In this section, I briefly present the various field methods that I used to gather data and the rationale behind them, and outline the kinds of information and insights that these methods yielded. When one’s object of study appears to be very large and complex, finding patterns in the endless detailed data that one collects is a daunting task. In order to keep the fieldwork process manageable I narrowed my focus and followed these steps: First, I started by gathering information on diaspora philanthropy in Guntur. Next, realising that most of my interlocutors belonged to a particular caste (the Kammas), I decided to limit myself to study the philanthropic engagements of Kammas living abroad (most of whom were professionals) who still have families in Guntur. This choice was also dictated by the ‘snowballing’ method I used to contact informants and my location in a town that is spatially divided along caste and class lines. Next, I further narrowed the scope of the research by focusing on secular, development-oriented philanthropy, and then (based on my initial observations) I traced the ways in which this has become institutionalised in Guntur. Finally, in order to situate my research within the larger context of Kamma migration to the USA, I investigated how and why a particular

pattern of migration developed in this region and why Kammass became major actors in this development.

When thinking about possible field sites, I chose Guntur town rather than other major towns such as Vijayawada or Visakhapatnam, or one of the smaller provincial towns that dot the region, partly because I already had indications that something ‘interesting’ and distinctive was going on in Guntur, since an ‘NRI Cell’ had been set up by the district administration. After making Guntur town my base, I carried out fieldwork in the area between September 2011 and August 2012, with an additional field trip of two weeks in December 2012 when I travelled with groups of NRIs across Andhra Pradesh. Subsequently, I made four short visits to Guntur, the last in August 2015.

At the inception of fieldwork in Guntur, I started to identify NRIs, their local family members and relatives, and the various philanthropic projects in which they were involved, and to follow the channels and destinations of these projects – interviewing the beneficiaries and donors (and their family members). Following the trail of philanthropy, I also travelled to other towns and villages of the region. My research strategy was structured by three main questions: how are NRIs ‘giving back’ to their home town or village, for what purposes are they giving, and why are they giving? In order to investigate these questions, I also had to understand the pattern of migration to the USA from this region and the nature of transnational networks that connect Andhra to other places. While exploring these questions, I simultaneously attempted to build a conceptual framework to understand how and in what ways caste connections and regional specificities shape diaspora philanthropy, and how such philanthropy, in turn, has shaped the structure of a caste group that has become transnational.

Like other qualitative researchers, I relied on several methods simultaneously to gather information: participant and non-participant observation; maintaining a reflexive journal; conducting structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews; and content analysis of documents and other written, visual and digital material. My objective was to interrogate how and why transnational philanthropy was being used for social development work in Coastal Andhra, and to develop an ‘emic’ perspective to understand why these diasporic actors ‘give back’ to their home regions and how such donations are perceived by the recipients. Accordingly, I employed mainly qualitative and ethnographic methods rather than more ‘objective’ methods, although I also collected some amount of quantitative data. Ethnographic methods produce narratives and ‘thick descriptions’ of cultural orientations, frameworks and experiences (Geertz 1973), and allow the researcher to explore the texture and complexity of social relations in a manner not available in standard survey methods. I paired this method with a survey of 100

households to get a sense of how widespread diaspora philanthropy is in the region. Since my intention was to conduct a study of transnational ties and transactions, I employed a multi-sited approach (Hannerz 2003; Marcus 1995, 1998), which allowed me to make connections between various actors, discourses and practices across local, global and transregional planes, while exploring the field from a ‘situated “point of view”’ (Tsing 2005: 170). Moving between different places – across towns, villages and cities of Andhra Pradesh and several sites in the USA – while anchoring myself in the town of Guntur for the major part of the research, allowed me to reflexively build a layered perspective on migration and flows of philanthropy back into the region. In total, I interviewed or interacted with more than 200 people during my extended fieldwork across these various field sites, not including the 101 households surveyed in Guntur town. My interlocutors were overwhelmingly Kammas, followed by Reddys and members of other castes including Vellamas, Kapus, Malas, Madigas, Yadavas, Muslims and Christians of various denominations. Table 1 shows the caste-and religion-wise breakup of all those who were interviewed, and Table 2 gives the caste-and religion-wise breakup of the household survey respondents.²⁹

Table 1: Caste and religious affiliation of interviewees

Source: Survey conducted by Sanam Roohi

Caste/religion of interviewees	Number of interviewees
Kamma	138
Reddy	25
Brahmin	9
Kapu	8
Vaisya	5
Naik	1
Raju	1
Dalit	5
Muslim	6
Christian	3
Total	201

²⁹ The survey was conducted a few months into the fieldwork to understand the extent of transnational philanthropy in Guntur Town. A questionnaire was prepared to capture the social profile of respondents, details about transnational migration of family members, and any charitable activities and their purposes. The survey was conducted in public places like parks, recreational spaces and temples. The places where I carried out the survey were concentrated in and around Lakshmiapuram neighbourhood where I was simultaneously conducting my qualitative fieldwork, as the area is known to have many NRI families. Out of the 101 individuals surveyed, only two were also respondents who were interviewed as part of the ethnographic research.

Table 2: Community identity of respondents (caste or religion)

Source: Survey conducted by Sanam Roohi

Caste/religion of survey respondents	Number of respondents
Kamma	72
Brahmin	14
Vaisya	6
Kapu	3
Reddy	2
Kshatriya/Raju	1
Padmashali	1
Baliya	1
Muslim	1
Total	101

The ‘Kamma bias’ in the cohort of respondents and interviewees is explained by my choice to focus on this community, as noted earlier. Since the survey was carried out in public places such as temples and parks in affluent neighbourhoods of Guntur where most inhabitants are also Kammas (see Chapter 3 for details), not surprisingly, most of the respondents were Kammas, followed by Brahmins. As Table 3 below indicates, out of the 101 respondents surveyed, 61 had family members abroad (mostly children and siblings), pointing to the high incidence of migration from groups living in this part of the town. Out of these 61 households with migrant members, 41 were Kammas (Table 4). The USA was the most favoured destination, with 51 respondents having family members (parents, children and siblings) in the country (Table 5).

Table 3: Households with migrant members

Source: Survey conducted by Sanam Roohi

Respondent with /without NRI family members	Number of households
With NRI family members	61
Without NRI family members	40
Total	101

Table 4: Caste-wise breakup of surveyed households with NRI members*Source:* Survey conducted by Sanam Roohi

Caste identity of NRI households with NRI members	Number of households
Kamma	41
Brahmin	11
Other	9
Total	61

Table 5: Country of settlement of NRI family members*Source:* Survey conducted by Sanam Roohi

Country of residence of NRI family members	Number of households
USA	52
Canada	2
UK	2
Australia	3
Germany	1
Other	1
Total	61

Among the 41 Kamma families with migrant members, more than half (29 households) said that their NRI family members had made donations for various kinds of philanthropic or charitable activities in the last few years (Table 6). These donations included those made for religious purposes (a significant proportion), but support for secular activities was also significant (Table 7).

Table 6: NRI households engaging in philanthropy*Source:* Survey conducted by Sanam Roohi

Whether Kamma NRI family engages in philanthropy	Number of households
Engages in philanthropy	29
Does not engage in philanthropy	7
No answer	5
Total	41

Table 7: Purpose of NRI philanthropy

Source: Survey conducted by Sanam Roohi

Purpose of donation in Kamma migrant households	Number of households
Village 'development'	3
Temple	11
Education	6
Others	9
Total	29

Since the survey was largely conducted among those who were not part of my ethnographic study, these tables indicate that the choice I made to focus on secular philanthropy was reasonable, given its strong presence in Guntur and the fact that my interlocutors differentiated *daan* from social development oriented philanthropy.

Building networks

One of my main research strategies was to identify and cultivate strong relationships with a few key interlocutors. Recording oral narratives on migration from a few key people gave me an 'emic' perspective on mobility, the development in the region, and the self-identity and history of the 'Kamma community'. To retain the terms of their discourse, in this thesis I mostly use the word 'community' to refer to Kammas, while acknowledging the problematic status of the term in the social sciences. While the English term 'Kamma caste' (or 'Kamma community') was used even in Telugu conversations in Guntur, in the USA, Kamma interlocutors did not refer to themselves in terms of their caste, except in a few rare instances, instead speaking about themselves as part of the 'Telugu community' or as Andhraites from Coastal Andhra (as opposed to Telugus from the Telangana or Rayalaseema regions – the three regions that made up Andhra Pradesh prior to 2014).

In addition, I spoke with several local scholars, activists, journalists, and others who have closely followed NRI activities in the region. Interacting with public representatives and officials, including in the NRI Cell and a few villages where NRI funded government projects were carried out, gave me the 'official' perspective on diasporic interventions in the region. Interviews and non-participant observation in places where the parents of NRIs gather, such as the 'Kamma temple' in Guntur and the Indian Temple in Queens, New York, allowed me to explore their specific practices and strategies of giving. Daily interaction with NRI families and return migrants was an important method for understanding the lifeworlds of my subjects.

In addition to interviews, I also had many unguided and free-flowing interactions with the family members of NRIs and return migrants, and various other people in Guntur and Krishna districts, including those who have been touched by diaspora philanthropy and those who have not. This category included beneficiaries of NRI-led development projects as well as people in villages where planned philanthropic projects did not take off. In Hyderabad, I spoke with families or friends of NRIs who have strong Guntur or Vijayawada connections. Interviews with members and officials of NGOs, philanthropic foundations, family trusts, and various charity and other associations in Coastal Andhra, Hyderabad and the USA yielded insights into the ways in which NRIs donate money, for what causes, and their motivations.

Many of the early Kamma migrants³⁰ to the USA were doctors and other highly qualified professionals, most of whom became permanent immigrants and American citizens, forming the basis for a large and affluent Telugu community in that country. It is this group that appeared, from my initial research, to be most extensively engaged in philanthropy in their home region. Indeed, the most important channels of philanthropy were US-based diaspora organisations – especially TANA and GMCANA – which had been founded mainly by Telugu doctors. The younger generation of migrants, who are mainly engineering graduates and IT professionals, who went to the USA in the early 1990s, were also emerging as key donors.

As the field threw up new and interesting leads, the course of my study took a somewhat different turn than I had intended. Below, I discuss how Guntur became the site that anchored my study and how I reevaluated my research questions after spending some time there.

Anchoring the study in Guntur

Guntur was my major research site, and I spent most of the fieldwork period in the town in order to immerse myself in the lifeworlds of my interlocutors. From this base, I followed the trail of diaspora philanthropy, including ideas, actors, resources, beneficiaries, institutions, and places, and traversed the widest expanse to which these trails led me – from neighbouring villages to donors in the USA. This strategy enabled me to not only collect narratives from my interlocutors, but also to understand the processes involved in transmitting philanthropic resources from the USA to Guntur.

I spent the first few weeks of my time in Guntur settling down and familiarising myself with the place. As the next step, I started identifying and building a small group of

30 I use the term ‘migrants’ as shorthand for international migrants, unless otherwise specified. The pattern of rural–urban migration and urban-to-urban migration within the region, including migration to Hyderabad, is also linked to transnational mobility, as explained below.

key interlocutors. As noted above, I knew already that most migrants belonged to the dominant landholding castes, particularly the Kammas, and it was people from this community who formed the majority of my contacts. Soon, I realised that the strongest link between the NRIs and the region were a group known locally as ‘NRI parents’, or parents of NRIs, living in Guntur town – who also turned out to be important channels of NRI donations. Meeting NRI parents in their houses or in public places such as temples or during social occasions helped me to understand how global resource flows are anchored in local social relations of kinship and caste. The Sri Venkateswaraswami temple – which was built with donations from Kammas (including NRIs) and is locally known as the ‘Kamma temple’ – and three key interlocutors (all of them NRI parents) were my main routes to meeting other people in the town. The temple was an important site for me to gain credibility and entry into the affluent Kamma community, many members of which had settled down in the upper-middle-class Lakshmipuram neighbourhood over the previous two or three decades. I found myself a place to stay in this neighbourhood and lived in close proximity to the temple and to a number of NRI parents.

As I built my social network within the community, I also began to identify organisations and associations that received diaspora philanthropy. Initially, I had planned to focus my work on the NRI Cell, a local government institution which partnered with NRIs in building village infrastructure in Guntur district. But I soon realised that this strategy would limit my research to just one aspect of diaspora philanthropy – rural development. Therefore, I began mapping the whole gamut of diaspora philanthropic engagements, especially NRI involvement in the education and health sectors, while also trying to immerse myself in the local Kamma community and the life of the town. In addition, I visited nearby villages and towns where philanthropic projects for ‘developmental’ purposes were undertaken by NRIs. From this initial research, I began to get a sense of the importance of NRIs in the social fabric of the Guntur region and how the category of the NRI inflects local imaginaries of upward mobility and success.

Reworking the research questions

Interacting with the parents of NRIs gave me a good understanding of how the migration process began amongst Kammas and about the role of caste, education and place in diaspora philanthropy (Chapter 4). The names of particular NRI philanthropists and organisations came up repeatedly in conversations, and most of these organisations were based in Guntur. These discussions gave me a sense of the boundaries of my research area and helped me to define Guntur as a key research site for the first phase of my fieldwork. By the third month, I had compiled a list of more than twenty organisations involved in diaspora philanthropy and began collecting information from them. In my remaining

months in Guntur, I followed as many leads as I could gather to get a fuller picture of the different dimensions of NRI philanthropy and development activities. I soon found out that in some cases, ‘philanthropy’ is closely linked to business interests, while in others, it has a strong caste dimension, and I explored these various lines of enquiry as well.

At the start of fieldwork, I had hypothesised that diasporic philanthropy was directed mainly to the ‘needy and poor’ of the region and therefore to the ‘Other Backward Classes’ (OBCs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs)³¹ in particular, and that through such initiatives, the ‘dominant castes’ were perhaps trying to reinforce or re-establish their social dominance (through patronage). However, after I had gained a fairly good idea about the different areas of NRI involvement in Guntur, I felt that my initial idea that their philanthropy was reproducing an older pattern of patron-client relationships could only be partly substantiated.

Though I started the fieldwork with particular research questions and methods already planned, the discoveries I made along the way required me to invent new strategies and rethink my questions. For instance, I realised that it is important to trace the channels through which NRIs send money home as donations because they throw light on the caste-specific dimensions of philanthropy. I had assumed that the dominant castes, although many of its members have left their villages or migrated abroad, were still enmeshed in local social relations of inter-caste dependence in which patronage of lower or less powerful castes was a central element. Instead, I discovered that NRI involvement in the home region was primarily directed at their own caste groups, to their home villages, or to villages where their own caste is predominant. This finding prompted me to rethink my research questions to reflect the themes emerging from fieldwork.

The new questions that then directed my fieldwork were: What insights can transnational giving throw on the changing nature of a rapidly transnationalising ‘dominant caste’ community such as the Kammars? Given that these philanthropic resources were mostly channelled through local or transnational associations and government bodies, what could the institutionalisation of philanthropy tell us about a transnational caste and its relation with local power relations and the post-liberalisation state? These reworked questions led me to one of the major themes of this thesis: the shift from ‘traditional’ channels of charity to more institutionalised forms of philanthropy, that I argue is linked to a liberalised economy and transnationalised state. In the thesis, I also explore

31 The Constitution of India designates certain categories of people as eligible for ‘reservations’ in selection for government jobs and places in educational institutions, a positive discrimination policy intended to remedy past caste discrimination. These ‘reserved’ categories include the ‘Scheduled Castes’ (SCs), ‘Scheduled Tribes’ (STs) and the ‘Other Backward Classes’ (OBCs).

how this change is reconstituting or reproducing caste identities and forms of power distinct from the forms of domination and authority that are highlighted in theories of patronage. From this perspective, the questions of ‘who gives’ and ‘why do they give’ took on new meanings. By trying to answer simple questions about the who, why and what of diaspora philanthropy, I was preparing to address larger questions about the nature of transnational caste consolidation among the Kammās. Since I found that most philanthropy was channelled through caste-based networks, a major theme of my research became the caste-specific modalities through which money was mobilised and directed at caste-specific targets, and the local consequences of these flows. Tracing these transnational caste networks through the lens of philanthropy then became a major focus of my fieldwork in Guntur, Hyderabad and the USA.

Fieldwork in the USA: Tracking philanthropic pathways

I wound up my fieldwork in Guntur in April 2012, and in May, I travelled to the USA for two months of fieldwork in sites where many Telugu migrants live. This field trip had a more narrow focus of gathering insights into the lives of American Telugus in the USA, and the roles played by Telugu diaspora associations and key individuals in the USA engaged in philanthropy in Coastal Andhra. Another objective was to understand how notions of ‘community’ are defined, negotiated or worked through in a transnational setting (especially among Kamma migrants) and what bearing this has on their philanthropic activities ‘back home’.

I stayed in New York for the first three weeks and the last three weeks of my field trip. Living in Kissena Boulevard in Queens, I got an opportunity to interact with Telugu families who had moved to the USA in the previous decade – most were recent migrants working in the IT industry. However, migrants from across Andhra Pradesh and from different castes had made this locality their home even earlier. In addition to IT professionals and their families, I interviewed several important philanthropists from Guntur who live in the same city. I also spent time at the Ganesha temple in Queens which is frequented by Telugus, where I was able to arrange some interviews. The temple (and a nearby Sai Baba temple) is one of the main reasons that many Telugu people have moved to this neighbourhood. Many of the well-established doctors and business people from Andhra live in Long Island, to which I also made a couple of visits.

Between my stays in New York, I spent two weeks in the Bay Area in California, where I met many more IT professionals and their families. Silicon Valley has a large presence of IT professionals from Andhra Pradesh, and here, I also met several professionals who were important donors for various philanthropic causes in Andhra.

During the US field trip, I was able to take part in a large national-level convention of a Telugu Association called NATA (North American Telugu Association) in Houston. Annual Telugu conventions are gala events where prominent Telugus from across the USA get together to meet friends, enjoy cultural performances, and engage in social, business and political networking. This event gave me a glimpse into the lifeworlds of important leaders and affluent members of the Telugu community in the USA, helped me to situate Coastal Andhra migrants within the context of the larger Telugu diaspora, and provided insights into intra- and inter-community politics and its connections with the politics of giving.

After returning to India, I conducted a final round of fieldwork in Hyderabad in August 2012, to trace the Hyderabad connections of some of the donors I had met in the US. Here, I gathered information about return migrants who were entrepreneurs as well as donors and who had made Hyderabad their home in the 1990s. Because I had met many important members of TANA in the US, in December 2012, I got the opportunity to travel with TANA representatives across Andhra Pradesh. This allowed me to compare the activities and goals of the two important American Telugu groups – the Reddy-dominated NATA (North American Telugu Association, the group with which I had travelled in December 2011) and Kammas-dominated TANA. As mentioned in the Introduction, TANA has a strong presence of members who hail from Coastal Andhra, who are mostly Kammas and doctors and engineers by profession, as well as some businessmen.

In 2014, Andhra Pradesh was bifurcated into the two states of Telangana and (residual) Andhra Pradesh following a long political struggle for a separate Telangana state. In 2011–12, when the Telangana agitation was at its peak, many of my interlocutors expressed their opposition to the idea of bifurcation while others looked forward to it. More than the state's bifurcation, it was the decision of the (truncated) Andhra Pradesh government to construct a new state capital near Guntur that prompted me to return to my first field site for follow-up research. The fortunes of many NRIs from the region were materially and emotionally invested in the town or its neighbouring areas – even more so after state bifurcation and the planning of a new state capital near Guntur – because many had purchased land in the area in anticipation of these developments. Accordingly, I made three quick visits to Guntur during 2014–15 to explore what bearing these developments had on NRIs, and particularly on their philanthropic engagements with the region.

The data that my fieldwork yielded can be summarised under two broad themes: (a) the processes of migration – who migrated and why, why some groups were left out of this movement, what enabled the 'ecosystem' of migration to evolve in the Coastal

Andhra region, and how Guntur town became central to the migration process; and (b) what comes back, or the discourse and practices of philanthropy – who are the donors, why do they donate, why did giving start in a particular timeframe, the politics of diasporic giving, why some forms of transnational giving have changed over time while others remained the same, and why Guntur emerged as an important node of these transnational philanthropic networks that connects India and Coastal Andhra with the USA.

In the next section, I reflect further on how I embedded myself in my field sites and how my identity influenced my work as well as the construction and analysis of my data.

Situating the Self in the Field

Reflexivity has become an important dimension of anthropological fieldwork. Reflexivity denotes the constant mutuality that is maintained between fieldworker and informant, underscoring the fact that the fieldworker's positioning in the field influences the data that she acquires (Clifford 1990; Narayan 1993). The idea of reflexivity also derives from anthropology's recognition that one's writings must take into account the political and epistemological forces that condition them (Burawoy 2003). This concept refers both to the researcher's awareness of his or her relationship to the field and her interlocutors, and to the ways that cultural practices involve their own consciousness and commentary on themselves. After finishing my year of fieldwork, I have visited my field site four times within a period of twenty four months, revisiting the sites and reflexively going over my earlier data. Since my work straddles the discursive realm (Escobar 1984), including the mechanisms and processes of power, control and exclusion (Tilly 2004) that were often hidden in these discourses, I needed to adopt a dynamic and long-term relation to the field in order to 'make the hidden obvious'. By conducting long-term research across a transnational plane, I could generate insights into the matrix of domination (Cho et al. 2013) that emerges from the intersection of caste, politics, cultural capital, social and spatial mobility and diaspora philanthropy.

In such an approach, it becomes vital not only to make sense of the practices and discourses of actors in the field, but also to be reflexive about one's own social location. Ethnographic accounts reflect the interplay between the field and the fieldworker. One of the first things a researcher does in the field is to identify potential 'key informants' or 'gatekeepers' to the community. When both the researcher and the researched are Indian, there is a trust-building exercise where the researcher and the researched need to know, assess and place each other through markers of caste, class, language, religious or regional belonging. Although as a Muslim woman, I did not share any of these

affiliations with my interlocutors, I still managed to find a comfortable acceptance in the community I was studying, as I explain below. Yet it was not an easy task. One gentleman, a big businessman and a very important donor of the Sri Venkateswarswami temple who later became a crucial contact for me, had earlier helped foreign students who were in Guntur for their field studies. However, with me he was more guarded. Before agreeing to help me, he took down my Calcutta address, my Bangalore address, my husband's work address and my work address (as a staunch Hindu, he was especially wary of my Muslim identity). Once I won his 'trust', however, he turned out to be a true 'gatekeeper' who opened many doors for me, especially at the temple.

In addition, I had been given the name of the father of a friend's friend in Guntur, who could potentially help me build my own circle of interlocutors. This individual became my second key informant. One of the difficulties of working with affluent or middle-class groups is gaining access to their private spaces, which leads researchers to focus on accessible public spaces (offices, shops, parks, etc), but through this elderly man living in my neighbourhood, I managed to access the private spaces of several families in Guntur. While I was trying to forge relationships with my interlocutors, they were simultaneously constructing my own identity. Marking me as a Muslim, a Bengali and as the wife of a Reddy, was their way of incorporating me into their social universe by locating me within familiar categories. Being married to a Reddy made me a '*teluguinTi aaDapaDuchhu*' (a Telugu daughter-in-law), and therefore, an insider to Andhra. The Reddy tag gave me a point of connection that I perhaps could not have enjoyed with my Muslim identity. But at the same time, I was not a complete insider as I was married into a community considered to be political opponents of the Kammas. For this reason, I was never regarded as one of them, in sharp contrast to my experiences interacting with Reddys in Hyderabad and the USA. One reason why I was allowed to join the group of Reddys from NATA that came to India for a 'Seva Yatra' in December 2011 was because I was married to a Reddy. They declared, 'you are one among us'. Thus, I easily became part of Reddy social circles and shared in their 'gossip' – an insider status that largely evaded me while researching Kammas.

Yet the Reddy identity was not enough to give me access to this 'rural/transnational' elite community – perhaps because of the long-standing social and political antagonism between Kammas and Reddys in Andhra Pradesh. Only a few of my interlocutors were aware that I am a Muslim, and they would strategically *not* inform anyone about my religious identity. Sometimes, they would introduce me by telling others that my husband is from Ongole and is a Reddy. Both these identities opened an ambiguous but helpful space for me to win the confidence of Kammas in Guntur. What was surprising was that my Bengali connection (I was born and raised in Calcutta) helped me to gain

wider acceptance and credibility among my interlocutors. They would introduce me to other respondents as a '*bengaali ammai*' (Bengali girl). While living in Calcutta, I was always seen as a 'non-Bengali' because I did not speak the Bengali language at home, but for my Guntur interlocutors, I was Bengali by virtue of my birth, although many knew that Urdu was my mother tongue.

My gender also inflected my field experiences. Philanthropy for community welfare is commonly imagined as a male domain in which women play only a marginal role, particularly in Guntur. The presence of women in welfare activities is more visible in the USA, but it still falls far behind the involvement of men. Women mostly engage in smaller charitable acts compared to men, with a few striking exceptions. Thus, my gender became another attribute of my identity that I had to negotiate in order to study this domain. My 'insider' *teluguinTi aaDapaDuchu* identity required that I dress in a certain 'respectable and acceptable way' for a woman of that status, while my 'outsider' identity as a 'Bengali' woman pursuing a PhD helped me to access public 'male' (gendered) spaces, although with some of the usual restrictions. For instance, I could not enter the LVR Club in Guntur because it is considered a 'boisterous' male space; nor could I 'hang out unnecessarily' with men in their offices once interviews were over as this is deemed inappropriate behaviour for a respectable woman.

When I went to the USA armed with a few contacts, I could build a network due to my familiarity with names and places back in Guntur. However, it was my English-medium education in India and my urban middle-class identity that helped me to closely connect with Telugu migrants there, who could identify with my 'cosmopolitanness' while still bracketing me as a Muslim married to a Reddy. Caste turned out to be a sensitive research topic. In Guntur, when I realised that my circle of interlocutors was largely limited to Kammas, I could be open with them and say that I was focusing on Kammas in my research. However, in the USA, it was not easy to talk openly about caste (see Chapter 4). Instead, I had to carefully employ the term 'NRI' to explain my research topic, knowing that in the collective imagination of the Kammas, an NRI hailing from Guntur is inevitably a Kamma. Instead of asking about caste, I tried to identify people's caste based on their surnames (assumptions that I later confirmed with my key interlocutors).

My unusual Muslim religious identity and my conjugally bestowed Reddy caste membership forced me to manoeuvre these identities as best I could without jeopardising my work, because neither Reddys nor Muslims are considered very trustworthy by

Kammas.³² Such tactical strategising foregrounds the role of caste and religious identities that social scientists in South Asia are forced to reckon with while pursuing their research projects. For instance, a Dalit researcher may find it very difficult to study a community of a higher caste rank, while a Muslim or Hindu researcher may not be able to break into the ‘ghetto’ of the ‘other’ community easily. But insider–outsider categories, as Kirin Narayan (1993) suggests, are not fixed. They shift in relation to what or who the anthropologist hopes to represent.

Ethical considerations

As a matter of standard practice, when requesting respondents for interviews I assured them that their names and names of their organisations would be anonymised in my writings to maintain their privacy and confidentiality. Similarly, names of most of the places mentioned in this thesis (mostly small towns and villages) are also anonymised. However, names of public personalities such as chief ministers are not anonymised. Moreover, I have used the real names of major cities and towns such as Vijayawada, Guntur and Hyderabad. Not using a pseudonym for Guntur was a deliberate decision, as my work is as much about Guntur as it is about Kammas, and using a pseudonym would take away much of the significance of this study. With regard to institutions and organisations, only the names of a few large and easily identifiable ones are not anonymised, provided that the respondents had no objection to using the real names. I have used only real names for Telugu associations in the USA, Guntur Medical College and its alumni associations, other publicly funded colleges, Sankara Eye Hospital, and Telugu newspapers circulating in Andhra Pradesh. These names are provided as a reflexive strategy, to prevent undue self-censorship while being aware that these institutions and organisations are easily identifiable.

Fieldwork entails other ethical considerations, apart from protecting the privacy and confidentiality of informants. In a work such as this, which pays attention to local specificities and global developments, the field cannot be a fixed or bounded zone although it might be delineated spatio-temporally by the research strategy. As mentioned above however, I made several short trips to Andhra Pradesh after the main fieldwork period. The field leaks into ‘real life’, as fieldwork may never end: as Gupta and Ferguson point out that ‘in an interconnected world, we are never really “out of the field”’ (1997: 35). This is especially the case when one stays in contact with people through the Internet. I have used social media to make connections and keep in touch with some of my key interlocutors, especially those in the USA. In some cases, these contacts have led to the development of long-term social relationships. Moreover, many NRIs have become

32 The hostilities between Kammas and Reddys are well known, but early in my fieldwork, I also learned that with growing Hindu religiosity in a town that was once a bastion of the Communist Party, there were increasing misgivings about Muslims too.

'Facebook friends' with me over the years. I have also been following several political and socio-cultural groups online to keep abreast with developments in the Telugu NRI community in the USA. In this context, not only is spatio-temporal boundary-setting difficult, but following seemingly unrelated networks may suddenly lead you to a deeper understanding of your own research area, while at the same time implicating you in online political debates. In this context, this blurring of public and private presents difficult intellectual and ethical challenges, making the researcher accountable to her interlocutors much beyond the actual fieldwork period – a problem with which we will have to increasingly grapple in the future. For instance, we need to be aware that our writings and other outputs may circulate in the public domain and may be received critically by our interlocutors, even though every precaution has been taken not to cause offense or harm to the individuals or communities who are at the heart of the study.

Conclusion

As my fieldwork progressed, I realised that the study of diaspora philanthropy was an appropriate choice for studying larger issues around transnational migration and connections in the Andhra region. This focus soon led me to explore the different ways in which migrants were involved in the reconstitution of local social relations. Much of what I found revolved around caste as a principle axis of social affiliation, which either defined the transnational networks that were created for transmitting these resources or overtly, or often covertly, informed or shaped the purposes and destinations of these flows. Thus, I used philanthropy as an analytical tool to prise open and comprehend larger transnational and caste-based connections and changes in the region in which they were implicated. Diaspora philanthropy in Coastal Andhra became a lens through which I was able to capture the 'architecture' of a transnationalised community, the Kammas, and understand how this caste group has organised itself across space. Following the trail of philanthropy – the flows of money and its pathways and destinations – helped me to capture the often circuitous journeys and the diverse meanings and implications of NRI donations, and thereby to generate key insights into how a caste community imagines and reconstitutes itself in a transnational context.

Chapter 3

**REGIONALISING THE STORY OF TRANSNATIONAL
MIGRATION FROM COASTAL ANDHRA**

While travelling across Guntur, one is struck by the myriad ways in which a transnational – and particularly, an American – aspirational imagination is conveyed through the visual field. It could be through a billboard promising you a studentship in the USA, which many education and visa consultancies guarantee if you pay their fee, or a training institute that guarantees to outfit aspirants for the job market abroad, or a language school that teaches the language of the global markets and capitalism – English. One does not need to look hard in Guntur to find such visual markers of this imagination linked to migration and America (Figures 5 and 6).

This imagination is not only aspirational, it also articulates the successful culmination of the aspirations of those who have ‘dared to dream’ – people who have migrated to the USA and are now making a difference back home. ‘NRI Cell’, ‘NRI Academy’, ‘NRI Hospital’ – hoardings (billboards) with the term ‘NRI’ – are commonplace in Guntur. Some NRIs who have become successful and realised their ‘American Dream’ are back (often sporadically, sometimes permanently) and making a name for themselves, boldly articulating their achievements through the names and activities of such institutions. The ‘NRI phenomenon’ is not limited to this town but can be seen across large and small towns, and even in some villages, of the region (Guntur and Krishna districts in particular). These names and signs are signifiers of the ubiquity of the aspiration to migrate out in this region.



Figure 5: One of the oldest English coaching centres in Guntur

Source: Sanam Roohi



Figure 6: Indian and American flags on the compound wall of an ashram

Source: Sanam Roohi

Coastal Andhra has been witnessing significant transnational migration for several decades, most visibly from the late 1960s, continuing up to the present. Literature that accounts for this movement is however limited.³³ In this chapter, I describe this pattern of migration against the background of the region's history, discuss the formation of an affluent regional diaspora, and analyse the emergence and significance of the 'NRI' category. Who are the NRIs? How and why did so many people from Coastal Andhra emigrate to America? Why did Guntur become an important node in a specific transnational circuit of mobility and remittances? What are the silent stories behind the most commonly articulated narratives about migration? In what ways does the aspiration to migrate, and the migration process itself, affect everyday life in Guntur? In the Introduction I noted that the category 'NRI' is loaded with symbolic value. It is not a 'floating signifier' (Levi-Strauss 1987 [1953]: 63), emptied out of meaning, but has a caste- and place-specific signification attached to it in Guntur. In the following sections, I also explain how the town of Guntur became the pivot of a reflexively created transnational social field.

The story of a dominant caste and how it becomes transnationalised cannot be understood without delving into the history of the region. Sociologists alert us to the need for studying regional variations to prevent the glossing over of processes termed as Indian (Jodhka 2014; Vasavi 2011). Similarly, when studying how a regional diaspora in the USA consisting of Telugu professionals from Coastal Andhra emerged, we need to be attentive to the history and sociological variations of the particular migrant-sending region.

The region of Coastal Andhra has traditionally been the stronghold of the Kammas – the major landowning or 'dominant caste' of Coastal Andhra. Their strategies of domination or assertion point to the important but complex interlinkages between region, caste, state and transnational civil society groups (discussed in Chapters 5 and 6). To better contextualise these connections, this chapter examines how and why Coastal Andhra – a semi-rural and agriculturally productive region – came to be a major source of 'high-skilled' international migrants. The creation and articulation of the widespread aspiration to migrate out, particularly to the USA, is mirrored in the desire on the part of migrants to 'give back' to their home region. Migration and giving back are also seen as inextricably linked within the popular story about how Coastal Andhra became the most 'developed' region in the state of Andhra Pradesh – a theme that I explore in the following section.

33 Apart from the work of Bhaskar and Bhat referred to in the previous chapter, the Provincial Globalisation research programme produced several research reports that capture various aspects of migration and transnational 'reverse flows' of resources (Heerink 2012; van Kampen 2012).

Situating the Study in Coastal Andhra

Coastal Andhra (also referred to locally as ‘Kosta’) was one of the three main geographical and socio-political regions of the (undivided) state of Andhra Pradesh.³⁴ Until 1953, it was part of the erstwhile Madras State, and was incorporated into the newly formed linguistic state of Andhra Pradesh in 1956. The region includes the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh that lie between the Eastern Ghats and the Bay of Bengal. Coastal Andhra broadly refers to nine of the 23 districts of the undivided state of Andhra Pradesh (now truncated to 13 districts after state bifurcation on 2 June 2014). Four districts – Krishna, Guntur, East and West Godavari – are considered to be the ‘heartland’ of the Coastal Andhra region. They are also ranked among the top ten districts of Andhra Pradesh in terms of development indicators,³⁵ mainly due to their high levels of agricultural, educational, and (to some extent) industrial development. In the following section, I trace how the region acquired its ‘developed’ status historically, compared to other parts of Andhra Pradesh.

Agriculture and economic development in Coastal Andhra

In this section, I briefly sketch the history of the region and examine how its political economy differentiated it from the other two regions of undivided Andhra Pradesh, Rayalaseema and Telangana.

Coastal Andhra was part of the Madras Presidency under British colonial rule and followed the *ryotwari* system of land revenue collection.³⁶ Due to the construction of dams across the Krishna and Godavari rivers, which were completed in 1852 and 1854 respectively, and the development of canal irrigation systems by the colonial authorities in the late nineteenth century, the region saw a sharp increase in agricultural productivity and the commercialisation of farming during the early twentieth century (Baker and Washbrook 1975; Satyanarayana 1990; Washbrook 1976). Rice became the main agricultural product and monocropping became the norm in this region,

34 ‘Region’ in India is often equated with the officially designated states or districts, but it is also a socio-spatial category referring to an area with a distinctive geography, culture, and history. The state of Andhra Pradesh, formed in 1956 on the basis of a common language, was conventionally divided into three agro-economic and socio-political regions based on their distinct histories – Coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana. These regions are not marked by political boundaries but are widely recognised as culturally distinct. The movement for a separate Telangana state, which started in the late 1960s and re-erupted in 2009, was partly based on the claim that its resources had been exploited by Coastal Andhra people, leading to the underdevelopment of Telangana. Telangana was declared a separate state in June 2014 after several years of (at times, violent) agitation.

35 The following report places all the four Coastal Andhra districts at the top among other districts in terms of Human Development indices: <http://cerpaindia.org/DistrictDevelopmentIndices.pdf> (last accessed on 18 June 2016).

36 ‘*Ryotwari*’ refers to a land revenue collection system instituted by the British, in which agricultural taxes were directly collected from individual cultivators, in contrast to the *zamindari* system where local landlords were responsible for revenue collection.

leading to the emergence of commodity markets for agricultural produce. One of the prominent outcomes of these colonial interventions in agriculture was the monetisation and commercialisation of the regional economy (Upadhyaya 1988). Up to the 1930s, the area under cultivation expanded, leading to tremendous pressure on land, as even grazing land was converted into agricultural land to grow paddy (rice). The *ryotwari* system also instituted a system of private ownership of land by cultivators, creating land markets in the process.

These developments led to the emergence of a large and prosperous peasant community which participated in the growing cash economy (Kumar 1975). The rise of a prosperous class of large landowning cultivators consolidated the power of the dominant agrarian castes, especially the Kammas, Kapus, Reddys and Rajus. Harrison estimates that in the Krishna delta region, Kamma farmers owned 80 per cent of the fertile delta land (1956: 381).

After Independence, the Green Revolution of the late 1960s and early 1970s further stimulated the growth of commercial agriculture and, according to some scholars, led to the emergence of 'capitalist relations' in agricultural production. Agricultural development programmes promoted by the state government facilitated access to market, credit and irrigation facilities (Parthasarathy 1975). Later, this 'capitalist farmer' class began to diversify into business activities and non-agricultural occupations, such as trade and moneylending, and started to migrate to regional towns to establish businesses and pursue education for their children (Upadhyaya 1988). The construction of the Nagarajuna Sagar Dam, completed in 1961, brought the hitherto dry areas of Guntur district under irrigation (Reddy 1985), further expanding commercialised agricultural production. A process of financialisation of land and the two-way movement of capital between the countryside and urban centres shaped the development of a vibrant regional economy, helping Coastal Andhra to gain its 'developed' status *vis-à-vis* other parts of Andhra Pradesh, particularly after Independence (Ananth 2007: 120-2). However, agrarian expansion and development went hand in hand with the deteriorating condition of agricultural labourers (Rao 1977). The rise in the economic stature of landholders saw a concomitant decline in the social status of agricultural labours (mainly Dalits or SCs). Such strong hierarchical positioning of the dominant castes *vis-à-vis* the service castes have not altered until today.

From the early twentieth century, landowning agrarian groups began a quest for upward economic mobility by acquiring education and accumulating wealth through business investments (Ranga 1926; Slater 1918). The Kammas, in particular, emerged as an affluent, rural-based community that also has a strong presence in business and

professional occupations in urban areas of the region (Damodaran 2008: 95).

While these developments secured the dominant position of rural elites, the agrarian castes strove to improve their social status to match their improving economic status. The dominant landowning castes such as the Kammas began organising themselves politically and socially to advance their social standing in the region.

The Non-Brahmin movement, education and upward mobility

Upward economic and social mobility through efforts at caste consolidation and political participation has marked the history of the dominant caste groups – the Kammas, in particular – of the Krishna and Godavari river basins over the last century. Although commanding local social power, the landowning agrarian castes – Kammas, Reddys, Rajus and Velamas – lacked the high ritual status of Brahmins and other upper castes. They had also been largely excluded from modern western education that Brahmins were able to access under colonial rule. The Non-Brahmin movement, which emerged in response to perceived Brahmin supremacy in Madras Presidency (Pandian 2007), also engulfed the Andhra region during the 1920s. The formation of the movement in the Telugu-speaking districts reflected the frustration of the landowning groups with the monopolisation of western education and government jobs by Brahmins, who constituted a small minority of the population (Ramaswamy 1978). Initiated by the dominant agrarian castes, the movement attempted to convert their economic wealth based on large landholdings into political power and social status.

Another element of the movement for upward social mobility and political influence was the attempt by dominant castes to claim Kshatriya status (Keiko 2008), rejecting their traditional *varna* classification as *Sudras* – despite the fact that the *varna* system was not very salient in most of south India (Ramaswamy 1978).³⁷ Alternatively, some landowning communities claimed a higher ‘*Sat Sudra*’ status to distinguish themselves from other *sudra* castes (Bayly 1999: 301). One modality through which claims to a higher caste status were made was through caste associations – a development that was seen across India during late colonial period – a point to which I turn in the next section. But the pursuit of higher ritual status was not the only major way in which Kammas tried to improve their social standing. They also followed the Brahmins in pursuing higher education and moving from villages to towns, while remaining strongly rooted in the agricultural economy. Through these strategies, the Kammas and other landed caste groups over time succeeded in displacing Brahmins as the dominant groups

37 *Varnashrama* refers to the four-fold *varna* system in which the Brahmins (priests) occupy the highest position, followed by the Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaisyas (traders) and Sudras (labourers). Outside of the four *varnas* are the former Untouchables. The actual unit of social life, however, is the *jati* or endogamous sub-caste. Many *jatis* cannot be fit neatly into the *varna* schema, especially in southern India.

in the region (Ramaswamy 1978: 191-2).

Thus, Kammas and other non-Brahmin landed groups developed a strong interest in education during this period. The 1931 Census shows that the literacy rate in the delta districts 'grew faster than anywhere else in the Presidency' (Damodaran 2008: 97). Surplus capital generated from intensive cash crop farming was invested in the education of children, which was seen as a prime means of social and economic upward mobility (Omvedt 1981; Upadhyaya 1988). Higher education had become available in the region because of the establishment of several institutions, especially by Christian missionaries (Frykenberg 2008). Lutheran missionaries in particular had built schools, colleges and hospitals in Guntur district and elsewhere as part of their evangelical mission. As a sixth-generation Christian convert and principal of Andhra Christian College explained to me:

Father Hayer from the Lutheran Church of America had come to India in the 1840s to start the Lutheran church and founded the AELC (Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church) ... The church ran charitable hospitals and colleges in Andhra, and through these institutes it carried the mission of spreading the Gospel.

Non-Christian elites took advantage of these facilities. According to Frykenberg, the expansion of

... advanced learning in English for elites did not occur without corrosive changes in the very character of the most prestigious missionary institutions. Elite missionary colleges soon tended to cater more heavily to non-Christian upper-caste mahajans, with sometimes up to 80 per cent of students enrolled not being Christians (Frykenberg 2008: 337).

According to Dr. Sheshaiah (a community notable in Guntur and president of Guntur Educational Society, a private educational conglomerate), these missionary activities inspired local Guntur intellectuals and wealthy individuals to start charitable educational institutions in the pre-Independence period.

Thus, Coastal Andhra was marked by the strong social value placed on higher education, especially within the dominant castes – an emphasis that was central to their efforts at social mobility. Guntur district became a hub of higher education during the early part of the twentieth century. Hindu College and Andhra Christian (AC) College were established in Guntur town prior to Independence, offering undergraduate courses in

sciences and arts. AC College nurtured future leaders such as ‘NTR.’ (Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao, the matinee idol who later became Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh). In Guntur and Krishna districts, in particular, Kammas with meagre landholdings who could acquire education began to occupy lower level government jobs such as teachers in government schools or clerks in government offices in the early decades after Independence. A common saying in both Guntur and the US is that ‘children of teachers are now in the US’, pointing to how the basis for transnational migration was laid through the education of Kammas in earlier decades.

Coastal Andhra also saw the establishment of two medical colleges – Andhra Medical College at Vishakhapatnam in 1923 and Guntur Medical College in 1948. The benefits of the availability of higher education in the region were reaped by those who were first able to access these institutions, several of whom later constituted the ‘first wave’ of medical professionals who migrated to the USA (discussed below).

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Thus, Coastal Andhra was marked by the strong social value placed on higher education, especially within the dominant castes – an emphasis that was central to their efforts at social mobility. Guntur district became a hub of higher education during the early part of the twentieth century. Hindu College and Andhra Christian (AC) College were established in Guntur town prior to independence, offering undergraduate courses in sciences and arts. AC College nurtured future leaders such as ‘NTR’ (Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao, the matinee idol who later became Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh). In Guntur and Krishna districts in particular, Kammas with meagre landholdings who could acquire education began to occupy lower level government jobs such as teachers in government schools or clerks in government offices in the early decades after India’s independence. A common saying in both Guntur and the US is that ‘children of teachers are now in the US’, pointing to how the basis for transnational migration was laid through the education of Kammas in earlier decades.

Coastal Andhra also saw the establishment of two medical colleges – Andhra Medical College at Vishakhapatnam in 1923 and Guntur Medical College in 1948. The benefits of the availability of higher education in the region were reaped by those who were first able to access these institutions, several of whom later constituted the ‘first wave’ of medical professionals who migrated to the USA (discussed later).

Beyond the larger history of agrarian development, the Non-Brahmin movement, and the historical role of the missionaries in Guntur, which led the Kamma community to invest in education, they also sought to collectively promote education within the community. Landowning groups acquired an ‘educational edge’ not only through the individual efforts of landowning families who sent their sons and daughters to medical and (later) engineering colleges, but also through concerted, organised community initiatives. such as the construction of caste hostels for students, scholarship programmes (often run by caste associations), and later, the establishment of private medical and engineering colleges by wealthy businessmen and politicians. Consequently, being ‘well qualified’ in terms of education and degrees is now seen as a Kamma trait, a component of their community ‘*habitus*’³⁹ – so much so that in Guntur, a less educated Kamma is practically viewed as an outcast and may be ashamed of his or her relative lack of ‘qualifications’.

Guntur not only became a centre of formal public education, it has also been a pioneer

39 Bourdieu (1992) coined the term *habitus* to describe human action that is neither the result of an individual’s free will nor is wholly determined by social structures. Rather, it is created by a kind of unconscious interplay between the two.

in private educational ventures. It is not a coincidence that Coastal Andhra was one of the first regions in India where private engineering and medical colleges were set up in the 1970s, institutions that were most often funded by wealthy members of dominant castes. It was during this period that the Guntur Educational Society (GES) (run by a Kamma trust) and Krishna Educational Society (KES)⁴⁰ were established and founded private engineering colleges in Guntur and Krishna districts, respectively. Students who could not gain admission to government engineering institutions such as the IITs (Indian Institutes of Technology – the most preferred destinations for engineering education in the country) or other state colleges such as the Regional Engineering College in Warangal now had the option of these private colleges. Colleges such as GES and KES provided preferential admission to students from their own community, many of whom received scholarships as well.

The private ‘coaching’ industry also had its inception in this region. ‘Coaching centres’ train aspiring students for competitive entrance tests for institutions of higher education, such as the EAMCET (Engineering, Agriculture and Medical Common Entrance Test) and the ECFMG (Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates, for doctors applying for post-graduate courses in the USA). One of the spectacular stories in the rise of private education in the region began with such coaching centres – the ‘Bodhi’ group. ‘Bodhi University’, which now has a sprawling and picturesque campus a half-hour drive from Guntur city, had humble beginnings in the late 1970s when its founder started coaching classes.

Due to these developments, Guntur and Vijayawada towns have emerged over the past few decades as major centres of private higher education in the region, providing degrees in engineering, medicine and other professions to students who earlier would have gone to Hyderabad, Chennai or Bangalore for higher studies. Today, Guntur district alone has more than 50 engineering colleges,⁴¹ and Andhra Pradesh in 2013 had more than 700 engineering colleges (Upadhyaya 2014). The great importance that was given to the education of sons, and later also to daughters, is one of the factors leading to the pattern of out-migration from dominant caste groups such as the Kammas.

Caste associations and caste consolidation

While some sections of the dominant landowning castes of the Coastal Andhra region were becoming urbanised and educated in their attempt to achieve social parity with the Brahmins, they also made efforts to consolidate localised sub-castes within larger caste categories such as ‘Reddy’ and ‘Kamma’, especially through the formation of caste

40 Names anonymised to maintain confidentiality.

41 <http://www.apengineeringcolleges.in/Guntur-District-Engineering-Colleges.html> (last accessed on 10 November 2015).

associations. Caste associations sprang up across the length and breadth of colonial India in the early twentieth century, demanding equal representation in education and employment, and ‘as part of a strategy geared towards ritual status upgradation in the local and regional caste hierarchies’ (Bairy 2009: 90). Such associations were a product of India’s tryst with colonial modernity, when the ‘dominant discourses’ in the late colonial period ‘sought to de-legitimise caste as a resource for self-making and interest articulation’ (Bairy 2009: 90). These movements required that castes communities consolidate themselves to press for higher status in the *varnashrama* system as well as to achieve economic and social mobility – efforts that paved the way for greater caste cohesion. Caste associations not only organised to improve their ritual status, they also worked to subsume the various sub-castes within a unified caste identity in order to have greater bargaining power with the colonial state (Conlon 1974; Michelutti 2007; Osella and Osella 2000: 193-5). For example, in tracing the sub-caste unification project of the Gauda Sarasvata Brahmins in the Bombay Presidency, Conlon highlights the role of caste associations in forging ‘corporate consciousness among a particular caste’ (1974: 353).

Later, as a result of these developments, the ‘*jajmani*’ system of patron-client relations in rural India, marked by a ‘hierarchical interdependence’ between castes (Fuller 1996: 14), gave way to a situation in which castes became autonomous units that competed with each other (Dumont 1998). Dumont refers to this shift as the ‘substantialisation’ of caste, a term used by scholars to explain how caste groups began to resemble ethnic or political groups or classes (Barnett 1977; Dirks 2001; Srinivas 1991). However, although caste associations promoted solidary and ‘discrete’ caste identities (Gupta 2005), hierarchy remained the principle around which many of these associations articulated their interests (for instance, in their efforts to achieve a higher caste rank). Building such discrete identities led to the ‘reinvention’ of caste (Guha 2015) during the phase of colonial modernity as well as in post-colonial India, as caste became a principal axis for bargaining and accumulating resources within the democratic nation-state.

In Andhra, both caste leaders and Non-Brahmin leaders attempted to enhance the status of their communities through caste associations, such as the Kamma Mahajana Sangam founded in 1914 under the patronage of the Raja of Chellapalli and other prominent Kammās. Similarly, the Reddy Mahajana Sangam was started in 1920, while the Velamas too founded an association around the same time (Ramaswamy 1978: 294). The history of caste-based charitable giving in the region can be traced back to this period of increased caste awareness and political activity, when caste associations and caste leaders started collective endeavours to advance the social standing of their communities, especially through building caste hostels and educational institutions and providing scholarships for poor students.

A prominent example of such community mobilisation was the *varaalu* system, in which a poor student would be given a meal by a different patron at his home each day of the week. The system, which was prevalent amongst Brahmin communities in different provinces of India (Bairy 2013), was later replicated by upwardly mobile non-Brahmin castes. According to the popular local history, the Kammas adopted the Brahmin *varaalu* system to achieve educational and – by extension – social parity with the Brahmins, who were believed to have prevented other castes from accessing education. Under this system, wealthy caste members would provide food or shelter to underprivileged Kamma students, often from rural areas, and help them with their education. In addition, some patrons also taught students as part of their commitment to *varaalu*. Although the modalities of community aid differed, the goal of these various efforts was to promote the education of ‘Kamma boys’. Elliott (1995) historicises this pattern of giving:

Eventually both Reddis and Kammas formalised these patronage relationships into caste associations... One of the early activities of these associations was the foundation of hostels near educational institutions to accommodate village youths during their education in the towns (Elliott 1995 [1970]: 136).

The *varaalu* system slowly disintegrated by the 1970s (according to some informants), but most of the hostels, schools and colleges that were built by wealthy Kammas for the benefit of the community still function.

These patronage activities played an important role in building cohesive caste communities. These forms of (occasional) giving were not used to camouflage or defray hostility to institutionalised privilege, as in the case of *jajmani* (Vasavi 1998), since the donor and the beneficiaries belonged to the same caste. This period also marked the consolidation of the various Kamma sub-castes into a larger caste group, which challenged the dominance of Brahmins and demanded parity from the British colonial state (Keiko 2008; Ramaswamy 1978).

Caste associations not only fostered the patronage by community notables of less well-off community members, but also furthered more broadly defined ‘interests’ of the community, such as the writing of caste histories. The best example is K. Bhavaiah Chowdary’s *A Brief History of the Kammas*, written in the 1950s, which can be found (in Telugu or English) in most Kamma households. These history-writing projects worked to condense, codify and disseminate a distinctive caste identity tied to region and place. The objectives and mode of functioning of caste associations changed over time. Writing

in the 1960s, Elliott observed:

By comparison with caste associations elsewhere, those in Andhra have been less self conscious in their conception. Their histories show an increasing embarrassment over identification with caste. The establishment of one Kamma hostel in Krishna brought much controversy over the use of Kamma in the hostel name, for the leaders were anxious to demonstrate that all castes could use the facility. They eventually used the name in order to appeal to traditional landlords for funds, but did not restrict the membership (Elliott 1970: 137).

However, my fieldwork data suggests that more recently there has been a revival of caste associations and of efforts at caste consolidation for political ends. A host of Kamma caste associations appeared in the late 1970s in different parts of Andhra Pradesh, a phenomenon that coincided with the rise of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and its coming to power in 1982. (The role that these associations might have played in the ascendancy of the TDP is a question that I do not explore in detail in this thesis.)

Emergence of caste-based politics

The Telugu Desam Party is widely seen in Andhra Pradesh as a party that caters to the interests of Kamma farmers and businessmen. Yet, much before its formation, Selig Harrison, in his article written after the 1955 legislative assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh, gave a detailed account of how the Communist Party had accommodated the Kamma 'kulaks' in Andhra and Telangana states (Harrison 1956). He attributes this to the fact that Kamma–Reddy rivalry within the Congress Party was becoming more overt. The Reddys were the most powerful and populous landowning caste in the undivided state, but had a smaller population in the Coastal Andhra region. Reddys had long held political power in Andhra Pradesh through their close connection with the Congress Party, and hence were the main political rivals of the Kammas (Harrison 1956; Pingle 2011). Due to this inter-caste rivalry that was reflected in party politics, the Kammas of the coastal districts aligned with the Communist Party of India, which never managed to capture power in the state. Consequently, powerful Kammas would often depend on the Reddys as political arbiters. As one of my key interlocutors, Kanthraju, put it: 'We had money, but still had to go begging to these Reddy politicians for our business purpose'.

In response to the resentment of Kammas about their lack of political power, the Telugu

Desam Party was founded by the Kamma cinema superstar, N.T. Rama Rao in 1982.⁴² The TDP quickly became a serious challenger to the ‘Congress Raj’ in Andhra Pradesh, as Kammas began to consolidate their political power in the state by entering into formal party politics and contesting elections. With the formation of the TDP, the Kammas emerged as a strong political force in opposition to the Reddys, who continued to dominate legislative state politics in undivided Andhra Pradesh. It also became difficult to separate the interests of the caste from those of the party (Reddy 2002: 875).⁴³

While Kamma-Reddy rivalry is an old phenomenon in the state, the early 1990s witnessed a localised but more acute and violent rivalry between Kammas and Kapus in the region. Kapus are the other major landowning caste in Coastal Andhra and have a considerable influence in Vijayawada (major regional town). The ascendance of TDP is considered to have triggered this struggle over territorial control between Kammas and Kapus, but also with other castes such as the Komatis and Rajus (Parthasarathy 1997). Given the caste politics of the region, Coastal Andhra can be viewed as a political space that is shaped by the beliefs and practices of the dominant communities struggling among themselves to exercise greater control by promoting their own ‘culture’. Although the Kapus are also a dominant agrarian caste of the region, Coastal Andhra is usually equated with the Kammas and their distinct ‘culture’ – not only by Kammas but even by the people of Telangana and Rayalaseema. The collapsing of a caste and its ‘culture’ with a region has a bearing not only on migration patterns but also on the philanthropic resources that flow into the region, as I show in the following chapters.

Having gained control over resources such as land and education, as well as political power through the TDP, the Kamma community later began to become transnationalised through out-migration. Other landowning groups of the region, who have also had the resources to send their children for specialised higher education, have also become transnational – but to a less extent.

Because of these historical developments, a dominant caste group (Kammas) could benefit from a prosperous agrarian economy, ownership of land, economic diversification and investment in higher education – developments that positioned them to participate

42 According to a popular story, when NTR was not given a ‘ticket’ by the Congress Party to contest elections, he challenged the Congress leadership, saying that he would put an end to their political ‘*raj*’. Subsequently he formed his own party, the TDP, which defeated the Congress government in Andhra Pradesh in 1983. The Congress Party has traditionally been regarded as a Reddy caste bastion, and NTR’s political success was seen as a challenge by the Kammas to Reddy political domination. Since then, Kammas regard the TDP as ‘their’ party and other castes too refer to it as a ‘Kamma party’.

43 With the bifurcation of the state in June 2014, the caste dynamics in the truncated state of Andhra Pradesh have altered: this development is widely seen as a triumph for the Kammas with the shrinking of Reddy dominated areas within the residual state of Andhra Pradesh. At present, the only serious challenge to Kamma domination in the Coastal Andhra region is the Kapu community. Yet, they do not have their ‘own party’ with which to start a political battle for control over the region.

in high-skilled migration to the West, especially the USA.

Migration as Caste Habitus

Kammas are warrior caste, migration is in their blood. Warriors move from one place to another waging war. They are also an agricultural community. They move to fertile lands. An agricultural community, they also move from one place to another. Even in agriculture they have great entrepreneurship. Though they are warriors, second in *varna*, they want to be second to none. Agriculturists are facing problems for a long time now. Children are not content with earnings of their parents [agriculturalists]. They know their past glory and their present misery. This makes them migrate [to the US].

- *Manjunath Rao*, retired Registrar, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur

Such narratives of migration have become part of the self-identity of the Kamma community, a narration of their history that is interwoven with other representations of the Kammas as a distinctive caste and a risk-taking, entrepreneurial community. They have constructed a reputation as a community that is 'invincible' and 'able to survive anywhere'. Kammas trace their ancestry to the Guntur-Krishna basin, from where they dispersed, first to different parts of South India and later across the world.⁴⁴ This history of outward migration, and Kammas' self-narration as a community that 'migrates', provides the background to the more recent trend of transnational migration, which began in the 1960s and 1970s. There are now nearly 1.9 million Indian Americans living in the USA,⁴⁵ of which Telugus are the fourth largest linguistic group.⁴⁶

Transnational migrants from Coastal Andhra, however, are not a homogenous group: the region has seen extensive migration of 'unskilled' or 'low-skilled' workers to the Gulf and other places, in addition to the migration of 'high-skilled' professionals to the West. While most highly educated migrants come from the dominant castes, labour migrants are more often from Muslim and lower caste groups. Strong caste-based networks have facilitated these patterns of migration, as migrants retain social, cultural and economic links with their towns and villages of origin.

44 Benbabaali (2013) explores the relation between the dominant caste status of Kammas and territory in South India, emphasising their internal migration patterns and social transformation from landed farmers to businessmen, industrialists and professionals. In fact, Kammas, reputed as 'enterprising farmers', often migrated to newly-irrigated areas of the state where they bought cheaper areas of land and began cultivating them, for instance in Khammam district after it received canal irrigation from the Nagarjunasagar Dam.

45 <http://migrationpolicy.org/article/indian-immigrants-united-states> (last accessed on 31 August 2015).

46 Ibid.

The history of the Kammās recounted above points to the role of caste affiliation and identity in facilitating this pattern of international migration. In Guntur district, Kamma families were able to send their sons and (later) daughters for higher education, many of whom became professionals such as doctors, engineers, pharmacists and scientists, who were then able to take advantage of new opportunities that opened up in the USA and other countries in the 1960s and 1970s. This wave of out-migration, in turn, created a ‘culture of migration’ (Ali 2007; Connell 2008) that continues to influence the aspirations of young people in the region.

Stories of the successes of Telugus in the USA circulate widely in Coastal Andhra, and one often hears about the ‘craze to go to the US’. This indicates that it is not just money that pushes people to migrate out, but a dominant social imaginary that views migration as a positive, highly desirable, and even, inevitable process. This pattern of migration has created aspirational pathways for many dominant caste youths in Coastal Andhra, who see mobility not as a rupture but as a desired extension of their lifeworlds and who seek to become part of the affluent Indian community living the ‘American Dream’.

Three waves of migration

Migration from this region can be roughly divided into three phases or ‘waves’, creating different generations of migrants: (1) the post-Green Revolution period of the late 1960s and 1970s, (2) the post-IT revolution phase, and (3) the most recent phase starting from the early 2000s.

The first wave of migration can be traced to the US Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which is seen as a watershed that allowed many skilled professionals to migrate to the USA (Subramanian 2000). With this law, the background of Indians migrating to the United States changed ‘fundamentally’ (Bhatia 2007: 14). In Coastal Andhra, the first wave of US migration consisted mainly of doctors, who also took their families with them through the visa sponsorship scheme. Migrants who left India in the 1960s and 1970s were invariably from big landowning families, for whom migration can be seen as a risk mitigation strategy. In some cases, one or two sons of the family stayed back in the village to look after farming while the most academically successful son (or, in very few cases, daughter) was given the opportunity to study or work in the USA. As Sharath Babu, one of my informants, put it:

The propertied class could afford to go. The reason was not to earn money ... their social and economic position had declined. With abolition of the *zamindari* act and the Land Ceiling Act⁴⁷ their social standing came down,

47 The Land Reforms Act of 1955 was intended to remove the rights of superior tenure holders (landlords and zamindars) and give land to the ‘tillers’.

even though they were rich. Every farmer prefers to get his child educated and not do agriculture. Only those who are not good in studies settle into agriculture.

The route to the USA was often circuitous, with many Andhra doctors first going to Iraq, Iran, Malaysia, or North Africa, and then, from there to the USA after passing the entrance exam for medical residency (EFMCG).⁴⁸ This pattern of mobility was facilitated by information sharing within the community about where residencies or vacancies were available, how to complete the necessary paperwork, and about life in USA in general.

The second wave of migration began from the 1990s, when many more professionals from the region started going to the USA to work in IT related jobs, often as contract workers on H-1B visas.⁴⁹ Although computer engineers from India had started moving to the USA from the late 1980s, by the turn of the century, this movement intensified due to the boom in the software industry. But since the 'Y2K boom' was rapidly followed by the dotcom bust in the early 2000s, aspiring migrants began to go to other destinations such as Australia and Europe, as stop-over points in their quest to reach the USA (Xiang 2007).

In the third wave that started in the early 2000s and continues until today, many young people from Coastal Andhra have become 'education migrants'. Most are students who have graduated from local engineering colleges and enrol in masters of science or engineering courses in American universities (often in computer science). This education route may lead to permanent settlement, because students may be allowed to do a period of 'Optional Practical Training' (OPT) for up to twelve months after completion of their course. Students with strong social networks end up finding a job or placement within this period. Often, several potential migrants form a group, apply to the same universities and migrate out together. These boys and girls belong to either the same colleges or the same villages or towns, and often to the same caste.

Though Telugus can be found in all the states of the USA, three regions stand out as areas of dense population: the East Coast, the Mid-West (especially Illinois, Ohio and Michigan, which host a large number of Andhra doctors), and the West Coast from Seattle to Los Angeles (where many IT workers are concentrated). Unsurprisingly, the first Telugu organisation in the USA was formed in New York – the 'Telugu Literary and

48 More recently, Caribbean countries have become an important migration route for aspiring doctors, whose aim remains the same – to reach 'America'.

49 H-1B visa holders are allowed to bring their immediate family members (spouse and children under 21) to the USA under the H4 visa category.

Cultural Association’, or TLCA. The oldest migrants are found in the East Coast and Mid-West, whereas the IT workforce and student migrants can be found throughout the country.

Some of my interlocutors highlighted the differences between these three waves of migrants. Compared to the first generation, many of the second- and third-wave migrants are from less affluent backgrounds. Still, in quite a few instances I documented, their families invested large amounts of money in the migration process, by funding their children’s education or paying consultants to get false papers or to ‘manage’ the visa. The older generation also consider themselves to be more ‘multicultural’ and as having a broader worldview compared to the more recent wave who, they claim, live in a Telugu ‘bubble’. They claim that younger migrants, being less cosmopolitan, stick to their own culture and kind – they eat Telugu food, watch Telugu cinema, live amongst other Telugus and hardly interact with local Americans. The first wave of doctors and scientists also say that they studied for more years, faced more hardships and started earning later in life, and so got very well ‘exposed’ to American life. In contrast, the ‘engineers’ who came to the USA at a young age and started earning well early in life, are more ‘inward looking’ and are only interested in ‘making money’ and leading a lavish lifestyle.

In spite of the perceived social differences between these different generations of migrants, the channels and modalities of migration from Coastal Andhra are broadly similar. Caste networks have been central to facilitating migration in most cases, a point I elaborate in the following section. Yet, in their migration narratives, NRIs and their family members stress the hard work that went into this journey. Below, I examine stories of Kamma ‘toil’ (Chari 2004b) through which they frame their successful transnational movement, placing them alongside the more instrumental yet muted stories of caste and kinship networks that played a key role in producing the Kamma subject as a ‘well-qualified’ professional and transnational migrant.

Migration narratives

Whoever has gone there has flourished, so nobody regrets it.

- Dr. Sarita K, gynaecologist, Guntur

Dr. Sarita is a doctor in her early seventies. She is a well-known figure in Guntur because her father was a celebrated journalist and she was one of the few women to graduate from GMC in the 1960s. Married to another doctor with whom she had two children, she went on to become the mayor of Guntur. Since all her siblings and some of her fellow

students and colleagues from GMC had migrated out of the country over the years, she too strongly aspired to migrate to the USA, a place one of her friends described to her in 1972 as ‘heaven’. But her husband was disinclined to leave his ‘roots’. She told me one day:

I too wanted to go like all my siblings and friends... I too gave the exams in 1960s, my sisters could also sponsor me, but my husband was never willing to leave, he didn't want to leave his roots. But I have fulfilled my dreams now. I sent all my children to the US! We have a bigger family reunion there than we have here.

Failing to migrate herself, she fulfilled her dream by ‘working hard’ on her children’s education and sending them to the USA. Dr. Sarita may have been unable to leave because of personal reasons, but with all her siblings and children settled there, she was a frequent visitor to the USA until a knee operation in 2010 halted her mobility temporarily. By visiting the USA often and through her family connections there, she is as much a part of the transnational Kamma community as those who have migrated. Like many other informants, she told me that ‘every family in Guntur’ [i.e., Kamma family] has a member in ‘America’. She said that many people from her community have made the USA their home and were leading ‘structured, organised lives’ there. They feel that the polity and society there is much better, and that it is a ‘land of opportunities’. According to her, there is a ‘mad scramble’ to migrate by ‘hook or crook’ because the USA promises something to everyone. In Dr. Sarita’s family, like many others, those who migrated in the first wave helped the later migrants.

Mr. Doddapaneni’s story is different from Dr. Sarita’s. With just a bachelor’s degree and not much ancestral land to fall back upon, he did what many in Guntur do or aspire to do – moved to the USA on a sponsorship visa provided by his sister. Living in Queens, New York, he helped his sister, a doctor, to run her real estate business. He stayed in the USA for three decades before he decided to return to India in early 2008. Mr. Doddapaneni told me that doctors became successful migrants due to their ‘grit and determination’. In those days, people did not have money to ‘buy’ seats,⁵⁰ unlike people today, he said. It was ‘merit’ that got them wherever they have reached in their lives, becoming ‘successful people in America’.

Similarly, Bhaktavatsala Rao, who claimed to be among the first NRIs to return to India,

50 Private colleges have a certain number of seats reserved under the ‘management quota’, which they can allot to anyone for a higher fee, while the ‘government’ quota is controlled by an entrance examination and has fees fixed by the government. Often such colleges ‘sell’ the ‘management’ seats by charging hefty ‘capitation fees’ or donations from students who could not get regular seats through the entrance exam.

also told stories of hard work and merit to explain the migration of his five children to the USA during the 1970s and through the 1980s. With all his children settled abroad, in the USA, he and his wife also moved out of Guntur and lived in the USA for almost three decades before returning in 2000, retiring to a quiet life in an apartment in Guntur town. In a subsequent meeting, Bhaktavatsala Rao told me the story of how all his children managed to migrate to the USA:

My first son Dr. Bhaktavatsala Prasad went to US in 1974. He went to GMC for MBBS on merit, not donation (I am against donation). He went for internship and completed it in two years, then did a year of fellowship in radiology and settled in Chicago. He went to US because of good opportunity and then called my third son Vineet there. My second son is Surendra Bhaktavatsala, a software engineer. He worked as a bank manager for 10 to 15 years in Guntur, then went to US after Vineet called him. My daughter Sridevi is married to Komineni, a doctor from Tenali, and went [to the US] in 1984. She did medicine here, went as a dependent, then did her residency there. My fourth son, Narayan Bhaktavatsala went after his elder brother sponsored him after he became a citizen. All are US citizens now.

He explained that all his children were well-qualified because they were ‘hard working’ and got entrance to colleges ‘on merit’. Although several of his children entered the USA by being sponsored by their relatives, he attributed their ultimate success to their educational achievements based on ‘merit’.

Such stories of Kamma families being ‘hard working’ and thrifty – ‘saving money to give children a proper education’, and about the ‘merit’ of their children enabling them to migrate – abound in Guntur. People assert that without these investments in education, the community would not have been at the forefront of migration to the USA. Even on limited salaries, through personal toil, it was possible to educate their children and so enable them to land ‘cushy’ corporate jobs abroad. This strategy saved their children from ‘hankering for government jobs’, a career path that some of these parents had faced. These stories of personal hardship weave into other narratives about upward class mobility, which together create the image of the Kammas as a hardworking transnational community in the making. In their narratives, a particular caste- and place-based *habitus* is foregrounded as outfitting them to become transnational migrants because of their education, qualifications, ambitions and risk-taking abilities, making them more upwardly mobile than other communities in Guntur.

However, challenging this notion of Kamma merit linked to migration, a young Kapu doctor, who was preparing to take the USMLE exam in order to apply for a residency in the US, said that the Kammass are ‘visionaries’ and had an advantage over other caste groups by emphasising education at an early stage in their history. So their success is not due to the inherent ‘merit’ of Kammass but to their deliberate investment strategies. He pointed out:

Thirty-forty years ago, when no one could think of selling lands for education, the Kammass did. They got their children into colleges (first medical and later engineering) by *purchasing* seats. Only now have others started to emulate Kammass in Guntur.

On closer examination, these stories of migration and transnational mobility, which are framed in the language of merit, turn out to be anchored in channels formed by kinship and caste ties and trajectories that are pursued through both tangible and intangible means. Although transnational migration appears to be sustained and recreated mainly through kinship ties, caste and kinship are not separate. Kinship relations, either through blood or marriage, are most often circumscribed by caste – a point I elaborate in the following section.

Caste and kinship networks as channels of mobility

For Kammass, stories of success in migrating to the West are attributed to their hard work, their risk-taking abilities and their educational qualification. Yet, what most of these stories do not mention is the availability of many resources that most migrants had at their disposal. For instance, the local Kamma caste association in Guntur has provided aid to ‘meritorious’ students for over one hundred years, and caste-based colleges give preference to Kamma students and sometimes even free education to their ‘brightest’ – a point I discuss in detail in Chapter 4.

Another resource available to Kamma medical students was coaching by GMC professors, who sometimes volunteered their time to make these aspiring doctors’ dreams become a reality. Dr. Prasanna, a Kamma, now more than 80 years old, was a professor of Guntur Medical College who would help students of his own community to pass the ECFMG or EAMCET exams, without charging fees. During a GMC alumni meeting in February 2012, I met several doctors who praised Dr. Prasanna for the ‘selfless’ help he gave to medical students over the years. Dr. Prasanna told me that there were other professors who did the same, since they felt ‘duty bound’ to help ‘meritorious youth’ in Guntur who needed guidance. Terms such as ‘meritorious youth’ and ‘community’ are

frequently used as shorthand to refer to one's own caste members.⁵¹

There are other ways in which kinship and caste ties aid in the migration process. For instance, in coastal towns, education consultancies or IT training and recruitment agencies are owned mainly by Kammas or other dominant caste members.⁵² In Guntur, aspiring jobseekers and students are likely to approach a consultancy run by a member of their own caste, or from their village, for help in training for entrance exams such as the GRE (Graduate Records Examination) or in admission applications for universities abroad. Similarly, many Kamma-owned 'bodyshopping' consultancies are situated in the Ameerpet locality of Hyderabad (a Kamma-dominated neighbourhood), where a complex network of training and placement agencies work together along the lines of caste and kinship to facilitate the outward migration of software engineers (Xiang 2007).

Apart from these, the most significant modality of migration in the first phase was through kinship and family networks. Under the visa sponsorship programme, migrants could sponsor family members to immigrate to the US. Marriage (which is still largely endogamous and arranged by families within one's caste) was another important route through which many Kamma women from Guntur migrated to the USA on dependent visas. This kinship route of transnational migration continued even after the tightening of immigration rules, when the second wave of migrants were only allowed to bring their spouses with them, especially since many of them were on H-1B or education visas. Even so, many of the second and third wave migrants already have relatives in the US who had migrated earlier. These relatives may not be able to help in getting them visas but they do provide information, advice and often also material help to new migrants until they 'settle down'. Thus, for many Kamma families of Guntur, chain migration to the USA has been fostered through caste and kinship networks.

The history of agrarian change and development in the region outlined above are key to understanding how the social structure of dominant groups such as the Kammas have defined patterns of out-migration. With frequent mobility of people between villages in Guntur district, Guntur town, Hyderabad and various places in the USA, these sites have become closely interconnected. US migration has become a norm or a rite of passage for hundreds of families in Guntur, creating a transnational social field in which Guntur, Hyderabad and New Jersey, for example, become three interconnected planes separated by space but united by experiences of caste-structured transnationality.

51 This is similar to what Mayer found in a Rajasthani village in the 1990s, where the word *jat* (caste), commonly used in the 1950s and 1960s, was being replaced by '*samaj*' (community) (Mayer 1996: 59).

52 Castes that are not covered by reservations (a positive discrimination system in which a proportion of places in educational institutions and government jobs are reserved for candidates from SC, ST and OBC communities) are considered 'forward caste' and officially referred to as 'general category'.

The literature on transnationalism suggests that systemic or structural shifts are occurring in ‘migrant-sending places due to intense exchanges across borders and the deepening of transnational ties’ (Gardner 1995; Levitt 2001). The aspiration to migrate as a route to upward mobility and progress has spread beyond the affluent class of Kmmas to ordinary middle class and small farmer Kamma families – creating a regional culture of migration in which mobility is also equated with development. Migration is seen to transform the fortunes of the family, the community and the region. Consequently, the social lives of Kmmas are infused with a transnational imagination or *habitus*, such that every parent desires to send their child to the USA to achieve social, economic and spatial mobility. This transnational aspiration does not exist in a deterritorialised imaginary space, however, but is spatially anchored in particular places such as Guntur town, which has become a key pivot for this mobility pattern, anchoring and emplacing social relations on a transnational plane. The town is also viewed as a central site that enabled Kmmas to transform themselves from a regionally dominant caste into a well-educated, mobile and now transnational community.

Caste, Mobility and the Town

Guntur town is socio-spatially demarcated along caste lines. A railway line cuts across it, almost dividing the city into two. Like many cities in Andhra, Guntur has a ‘One Town’ and a ‘Two Town’, the former being the old city and the latter, the new town. Diverse groups of people have made Guntur their home, each with its own neighbourhood. Muslims, Kapus and Vaishyas dominate One Town, while Dalits (SC communities) live on its fringes. One Town also includes Kothapet, a unique locality that hosts a dozen or more hospitals, scores of ‘nursing homes’ and many ancillary medical establishments such as diagnostic clinics and laboratories – pointing to Guntur’s significance as a centre of medical expertise. Kothapet’s growth is partly connected with its proximity to Guntur Medical College. Two Town begins on the other side of the railway track, marked by Brodipet and Arundalpet neighbourhoods. Brahmins dominated these areas at one time, but most have moved to other cities such as Hyderabad or to the USA, and their houses have become retail establishments. Besides Telugus, Marwaris (from north India) and Muslims predominate in these areas, which have become commercial areas.

After Brodipet and Arundalpet, Lakshmipuram Main Road begins. This long stretch of road, also called Main Road, was the focal point of my fieldwork in Guntur, because as Kantharaju explained, ‘NRI parents live here’. There are scores of ‘layouts’ (housing developments) on either side of Main Road, which is considered the most affluent part of the city and is home to many Kamma families. Vidyanagar, adjacent to Lakshmipuram, is an extension of the Kamma locality. Shyamalanagar is another residential layout where

mostly Reddys and Brahmins live, many of whom also have NRI family members. Guntur town has expanded rapidly in the last few years and newer migrants tend to live in these peripheral neighbourhoods, but flats near Lakshmipuram are still highly coveted by Kamma NRI parents, not only due to the prestige attached to the area but also because of the civic amenities that are available there.

'NRI parents live here'

During my fieldwork in 2011-12, Andhra Pradesh was experiencing major power cuts, but neighbourhoods in and around Lakshmipuram Main Road received two hours of power more than other parts of Guntur. A Muslim neighbour in Rajendranagar (a layout near the Main Road) confessed:

Everyone with money prefers to live in areas where Kammas live, as the civic facilities are best here. Here, the power cut is for two or three hours, but in other places it's four hours. In One Town, it goes up to six hours a day.

Residential developments around Lakshmipuram Main Road began to appear and expand when NRI parents started buying plots of land or apartments in the area and moving in. In the past few years, many plots have been built up into four- or five-storied apartment blocks. This 'apartment culture' – a novelty for a provincial town like Guntur – replicates urban housing styles seen in larger cities of India, but the social lives of apartment residents still revolve around kinship and caste relations.

Many rural Kamma families with NRI members gave up farming and retired to a neighbouring town after their children had made sufficient money by working abroad. Guntur is the most favoured destination for such a move from village to town. Apart from buying land in the village with their children's earnings, purchasing a plot or a flat in Lakshmipuram is a common practice of NRI parents, one that carries a strong symbolic meaning. Owning property in that particular place gives one the respectability of living in a 'good neighbourhood' and the security of having friends and relatives nearby.

Lakshmipuram's reputation as a prime location is linked with this pattern of inward and outward migration. Up to the 1960s and 1970s, this area was mainly agricultural land. Land values in the 1960s in the Brodipet area were as low as 16 rupees per square yard, and in the 'interiors' (a kilometre or two away, in areas such as Rajendranagar or Nalandanagar), land cost 13 rupees per square yard. In 2012, the same land was valued at as much as 30,000 to 60,000 rupees per square yard. This sharp rise in land prices has

been due partly to NRI investments, spurred by the Telangana agitation (which made Hyderabad less attractive as a site of investment). During that period, many NRIs from Coastal Andhra began investing money in real estate in the Guntur-Vijayawada region, sometimes building houses which their parents occupied or buying land which their parents could look after for them.⁵³ As Kantharaju said:

People believe that NRIs can pay more, that they have more purchasing power in dollars, so land prices have increased in anticipation. In the US, they have no idea about investing. They invest here [in Guntur] because they don't want to invest in property there ... Real estate activities have increased here in Guntur since past 10–15 years due to NRIs.

However, the connection that Kammas have with land is not just utilitarian. Land and real estate are viewed as providing security against hard times, but land ownership is also related to 'prestige', 'honour' and the collective might of the Kammas, whose honour as a dominant caste is linked with landholding. The famous adage, '*Kammavaariki bhoomi bhaya paru Duthundi*' (the earth fears Kammas) encapsulates the relationship that Kammas share with their land – 'the land yields and submits to them'. Selling agricultural land to raise money for the education of children does not always mean a loss of prestige for Kammas. It is considered to be a temporary phase, and the loss is expected to be recovered and their wealth multiplied when that investment starts to bear returns: NRI children's earnings are often used to purchase land or real estate in rural or urban areas of the region. Thus, loss of land at one phase of the family's life cycle is made good at another phase, when the children have 'settled' into well-paying jobs in the USA, Hyderabad or Bangalore, and their parents are then able to move into spacious apartments in a provincial town like Guntur. Transnational funds compensate for the earlier 'loss' of land, as families use this money to buy property at a later stage. While Andhra NRIs invested heavily in real estate in Hyderabad during the 1990s, when the Telangana agitation reignited in 2009, they began to look for other locations for their property investments, especially in the Vijayawada-Guntur-Tenali-Mangalagiri (VGTM) region (Ananth 2015).⁵⁴ Such investments not only have economic value but also carry important symbolic value for this landowning community, strengthening the links that NRIs have with Coastal Andhra as well as Kamma dominance in the region (Upadhy 2016). NRI parents usually 'manage' such properties for their children.

53 Their calculations paid off when, after the state bifurcation in 2014, Chandrababu Naidu came back to power and announced that the new capital city would be located in Guntur district. At that point, land prices in and around Guntur town shot up further. Now, even affluent families are unable to afford plots in Lakshmipuram and are instead buying land at high prices on the outskirts of Guntur.

54 Their calculations paid off when Naidu, who became the Chief Minister again after state bifurcation, announced the location of the new capital region in Guntur district in late 2015. Land prices shot up multifold in Guntur town.

The outward migration of Kamma youth has triggered a parallel movement of their parents from village to town. While young people are pushed out of the towns and villages of Coastal Andhra in search of a better life elsewhere – in larger cities of India or abroad – their families move from villages or provincial towns to regional cities such as Guntur to enjoy a more comfortable lifestyle. Just as staying back in Guntur is seen as a sign of stagnation for the youth and is construed as a failure to ‘grow’ in life, the older generation see their own movement to Guntur town as a mark of progress. NRI parents, in their quest of upward mobility and a ‘better life’, leave their villages in Guntur, Prakasham, Khammam or other districts to ‘settle down’ in Guntur. These concurrent outward and inward movements have changed the contours of Guntur town.

As they have made Guntur their home, a sense of community has developed among Kamma ‘NRI parents’. Those who are well-off but do not have children living abroad are sometimes contemptuous of these upwardly mobile parents of mobile software engineers. As one such person told me, ‘These NRI parents have false prestige. We still consider America to be rich but it is not anymore [referring to the 2008 economic crisis]. It’s false prestige that brings them [NRI parents] together’. Another interlocutor, an 85-year-old doctor with considerable local standing in the town, confided in me, ‘Those who are not well-off, send their children to US ... My son is here. He doesn’t need to go to US. He runs his own hospital here’.

With this stream of outward migration from rural areas to towns and abroad, there is widespread fear that ‘Kamma villages’ will soon be devoid of Kammas – an anxiety that was expressed by informants from Guntur to the USA. ‘We hardly have a hundred people in our village ... most are in the US, Hyderabad or Guntur’, rued Dr. Shivanand, a returned migrant settled in Guntur. This anxiety is linked to the perception that their dominant caste status is threatened locally, and it is this anxiety that, in part, prompts NRIs to create a presence in their native villages through philanthropy (discussed in Chapter 6). Despite this expressed perception that Kammas are losing ground in their ‘own’ villages, I found extended family members of NRIs still living in most of the villages I visited. NRI parents too, although they may have moved to town, frequently visit their villages. Thus, the ties of migrant Kammas to their ‘native place’ remain strong.

The temple as epicentre of Kamma life

Having left their villages, many NRI parents spend their evenings in the Sri Venkateswarswami temple located in the heart of the Kamma neighbourhood in Guntur, rebuilding a sense of community in their new place of residence. This temple, situated in Brundavan Gardens in Lakshmipuram, is also known as the ‘Kamma temple’. A governing board consisting of many community notables of Guntur manages the

temple, which was built with money donated by local and NRI Kammas. The temple has become a meeting ground for NRI parents in Guntur, who assemble there regularly to share their laments, gloat over the achievements of their children, and while away the evenings watching cultural or religious programmes. While people of other castes also visit the ‘Kamma temple’ – especially those who stay in and around Lakshmipuram Main Road – they also have their own ‘Brahmin temple’ or ‘Naidu (Kapu) temple’ in Guntur.

The temple is the epicentre of community life for many Guntur Kammas, especially NRI parents. This temple is also the spatial centre of the Kammas: surrounding it are several affluent and middle-class Kamma localities. The temple’s daily patrons are mainly NRI parents. A retired professor of political science, Venkatesiah, who is actively involved in temple affairs, told me that ‘nearly seventy to eighty per cent of people who assemble here are called NRI parents. They are alone, and because of the temple, they are happy or they would have become mental patients’. While these recent migrants from rural areas to Guntur talk about the disintegration of village ties, they seem to recreate the village square in the heart of Guntur – in the temple courtyard. Many temple regulars have their own small coterie of people with whom they interact when they visit, groupings that are mostly based on village and kinship connections or on ties of friendship.

One way to become prominent among the older and more established Guntur Kammas is to actively participate in temple activities. Returned NRIs or NRI parents who wish to be noticed in the community make substantial contributions to the temple. One such person is Mr. Doddapaneni, who came back to Guntur in 2008 with savings of some 20,000,000 rupees (or around 310,000 US dollars). He bought a flat near Lakshmipuram, depositing the rest of the money in the bank. His only daughter is ‘well-settled’ in the USA and ‘he does not need to worry about her future’. With his family’s future secured, one of his first acts was to donate money to the temple and sponsor a *burra katha* programme (an oral storytelling performance accompanied by music) one evening. As a returnee and an NRI parent, he believes that he has a double role to perform. Having migrated to the USA from Veparru, a small town near Guntur, he made Guntur his home upon his return, but had very little social capital in the town. Giving to the temple was a way of gaining respect within his community and building up his social capital.

The temple is not an equal playing ground for all community members, however; there is a clear demarcation between the powerful decision-makers of the community and their followers. Nor are all Guntur Kammas regular visitors at the temple. Differences of opinion, a taste for the ‘good life’, ego clashes and personal enmity are some of the

reasons said to keep some Kammas away from temple life. They instead spend their time at other key sites of sociality such as the LVR Club, Guntur Club or other gathering places.

Such intra-community differences notwithstanding, I argue that Kammas do not just have a strong sense of affiliation to their community because they belong to a particular caste, but that they actively produce caste belonging by performing their 'Kammaness' as part of a strategically cultivated caste *habitus*. Such a *habitus* results from 'the internalization of specific embodied characteristics, which constitute hierarchical boundaries and, consequently, structure relationships with other castes' (Gorringe and Rafanell 2007: 98). *Habitus*, once internalised, both produces and is reflexively produced by the social world (Wacquant 2006). In this case, caste *habitus* is fashioned over time by garnering social and cultural capital (Savage and Bennett 2005), a process that is aided by belonging to a particular caste that is advantageously positioned within a social field of inter-caste relations. This field is stratified by a power hierarchy (as opposed to a caste hierarchy based on the principles of purity and pollution; Dumont 1998), which also positions one dominant caste as the adversary of the other. Such a positioning has strong socio-spatial repercussions in Guntur, which helps Kammas to consolidate their influence and standing in the town. Embodied dispositions or *habitus*, aided by strong caste-based social networks, further produce a community discourse in which specific attributes are essentialised as constitutive of 'Kamma personhood' (see Chapter 4), and which over time amplify the life chances of those who are already powerful.

Performing 'Kammaness' in Guntur

The narratives quoted above illustrate the popular understanding that an average Kamma family has gained from their calculated investments in education, and that they are reaping the benefits of their hard work, having successfully sent a family member to the US. Most of my interlocutors in Guntur – NRI parents whose children are mainly software engineers in the US shared similar stories of sacrifice, hard work and the benefits of such hard work with me. These benefits include the ability to buy land in their native villages, houses or apartments in Guntur. To differentiate themselves from other affluent castes of similar social status, they also build on the social and cultural capital that they can access by virtue of their caste affiliation, and embody and perform it as a distinct marker of 'Kammaness' in different ways. Following Goffman's (1958) 'dramaturgical' approach, I argue that the social selves of Kammas are constructed iteratively through the performance of various roles or personae that have become associated with the community.

Land ownership and residence in a particular locality are not the only important attributes of Kamma identity; they also create other symbolic markers to distinguish themselves from others in Guntur. During the first month of my fieldwork, women neighbours told me that the jewellery and sarees worn by Kamma women are different from those of women from other castes. Their marriage ceremonies and celebrations are also distinctive. Some of these cultural markers, which are indeed distinctive of Kammas – in terms of attire, food habits and so on – are not very old. For example, in earlier times, many interlocutors said, marriages and festivals were more ‘simple’ and ‘simple’ food was served, whereas now celebrations have now become as ‘lavish as those in Hyderabad’. Fashion too has changed. Local people attribute these changes, especially the expensive consumption habits seen in the town, to the inflow of ‘NRI dollars’.⁵⁵ New ‘function halls’ have been built in Guntur in the last decade, which charge rents as high as one lakh rupees for a few hours, in which marriages or other social events are organised. These halls are owned by Kammas and are often rented by Kammas. Often such halls are hired by NRIs during their annual visits to their hometown, where they perform life cycle rituals for their children such as ‘half-sari’ ceremonies (coming of age ritual for girls). As Bourdieu (1984) has argued, the creation of ‘distinction’ between different social classes or categories is a cultural process through which groups cultivate and exhibit a particular sense of taste, lifestyle, or set of values. In the case of Coastal Andhra, the creation of distinction is caste-specific, and is produced and reproduced through the performance of ‘Kammaness’. The performance of ‘Kammaness’ is now infused with a transnational disposition.

It is these repeated performances of being a Kamma (as opposed to other dominant castes in the region), and cultivating certain cultural attributes that Kammas consider as particular to them that creates a collective disposition or *‘habitus’*. For example, Kamma men and women are reputed in Andhra and elsewhere to be very hardworking and financially conservative. While men traditionally worked hard in the fields (or elsewhere), it is said, women saved every *paisa* (penny). Women would also take up work outside the household – sewing, embroidery, running ‘curry points’ or sweetshops, or helping their husbands to run their small family businesses – to augment the family income. But the best way they could contribute to the upward mobility of the family was by helping their children to accumulate ‘knowledge capital’ (engineering or medical degrees or computer training) and utilising it to migrate to the USA to cater to the service-based ‘new economy’ (Nigel Thrift 2005).

This caste *habitus* is not acquired or reproduced only through the reiteration of embodied cultural differences. Kamma caste identity, which is tied up with their ‘dominant caste’

55 I heard stories of NRIs bringing as much cash as legally allowed when they come to visit India, thereby avoiding taxes on such transfers.

status as a landowning community, emanates from the social and political history of the region, discussed earlier. This history placed the community in a position of power, and created an uneven social field in which Kammas hold an advantageous bargaining position from which they are able to monopolise resources. Caste dominance and the accumulation of resources plays out in multiple ways in the lives of Kammas in Guntur and abroad.

Another much-discussed attribute of Kammas, which they believe distinguishes them from other castes, is their social cohesion as a community (discussed in Chapter 4). This cohesiveness is seen in the modes of sociality I observed in Guntur, where social interaction is largely restricted to their own community and where community spaces such as the temple become the place where a ‘Kamma public’ (Udupa 2012) is shaped in Guntur town.

The cohesiveness of the community is evident not only in Guntur but also in the USA. Such strong caste-based sociality, coupled with everyday practices steeped in caste *habitus*, also shapes how Kamma migrants form social ties abroad. In New York, one of the oldest destinations of Telugu migrants, I met a family from Vemuru (a village in Guntur district), who had migrated in the 1980s. They told me that when they invite friends for get-togethers during the weekends, it is usually people from their own caste. (This example stood out because I found during my fieldwork that caste is not usually discussed openly in the USA.)

In Guntur, Lakshmiapuram can be seen as a microcosm of how ‘Kammaness’ is performed across time and space. Kamma caste affiliation has augmented the life chances of the community members who have individually and collectively worked to improve their social, political and economic status in the region, through landholding, the pursuit of education, and transnational migration. Through intricate practices of being and belonging in Coastal Andhra and in the US, and by performing ‘Kammaness’ ‘here’ and ‘there’, Kammas have augmented their caste identity and solidarity. In the process, the community has reconstituted their regional dominance through new modalities, one of which is transnational philanthropy as I show in the following chapters.

Conclusion

The dominant caste status gained by the Kammas in Coastal Andhra over the last century is reflected in their caste *habitus* as well as their control over economic resources, especially land. A calibrated flexible *habitus* has added new layers over time, redefining Kamma identity. Caste consolidation, land ownership, accumulation of

cultural capital in the form of education and professional qualifications, and more recently, transnationalisation are all part of a shared Kamma *habitus*. Everyday life in Guntur, where Kammas (especially NRI parents) interact and socialise within a local and transnational social field, promotes these intricate caste practices, which in turn constitute the Telugu community in the USA. In the process, Guntur and its caste-stratified life emerge as a major node in the transnational social field that encompasses Coastal Andhra and the USA.

The Kammas have successfully transformed themselves from a dominant caste into a transnational caste group that continues to be socially, politically and economically dominant in the region. The sinews of this caste community draw strength from their political and economic strategies that weave together access to the market and the local state machinery such as to further the class mobility of this caste group. Operating within a caste-stratified local and transnational social field where a power struggle with other dominant castes (Reddys in particular) plays out, the Kammas have judiciously activated a circuit of migration and remittances, thereby strengthening their caste power. Coastal towns such as Guntur and Vijayawada have become key nodes in these multiple mobilities, anchoring and emplacing social relations across a transnational plane that grounds their caste belonging and enhances their class position. These strategies play out not only in the political and economic realm, but also become embodied in the creation of a Kamma self that is not only politically and economically dominant but also carries layered symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1986, 1992) that can be converted to other forms of capital both in Guntur and in the USA. Such convertible capital is often utilised when Coastal Andhra migrants engage in diaspora philanthropy in the region – a point I discuss in the following chapter.

Chapter 4

TRANSNATIONAL GIVING AS COMMUNITY OBLIGATION

Coastal Andhra NRIs are engaged in highly varied forms of philanthropic projects in the region, which broadly fall into three domains: education, health and rural development. However, these interventions are particularly striking in the field of education. There are myriad ways in which NRIs are engaged in the support of education in Guntur. This could be a single donation, when someone in the USA sends money for a child who is 'brilliant' but lacks economic resources, after hearing about the student from family members, relatives co-villagers, or through an email group. Some initiatives are more organised or collective, such as when NRIs adopt a school and improve its infrastructure, or start a trust in Guntur to support a scholarship scheme.

Not only is education a major site of NRI philanthropy, education is also pivotal for the migrants themselves, who explain their support for educational causes by reference to their own backgrounds. They say that they were able to migrate to the USA because of the education they had received, which allowed them not only to migrate but also to 'settle down' in well-paying jobs. Since they are in the high-income bracket, they have the potential to remit money for philanthropic projects to their home region.

This thesis maps the various philanthropic projects of Coastal Andhra NRIs. In this chapter, I focus on their engagements in the domain of education and explore why education became a major target of their philanthropy. I also try to understand what this focus tells us about the nature of the migration itself and its entanglement with support for educational causes. To contextualise the ways in which migration and NRI giving are interconnected, in the following section, I first present a few examples of migrant engagements in this field.

NRI Involvement in Education

Many American Telugu NRI donors are deeply engaged in the field of education, which they view as providing them with multiple possibilities to 'help' that are suited to their financial status and willingness to commit time or effort. It is possible to make even small donations to support education projects, hence for many NRIs, this is an easy way to 'do good' within their means. NRIs send money to Coastal Andhra to finance the education of a needy student or group of students from a particular school or village. They may make donations to support one or two 'brilliant' but poor students, in response to a call for support from their alma mater, or as individual or collective contributions to build a school in their village of origin. While most such donations are sporadic and individualised, recently many NRIs have also scaled up their philanthropic engagements and made them more organised as collective endeavours. Below I present three examples of NRI support for education in Coastal Andhra, to illustrate the diverse ways in which

NRIs are engaging in this field.

Manju migrated to the USA in the 1980s, a few years after her marriage. She is an engineer by profession, as is her husband. She called her generation of migrants the 'sandwich' group, who are neither from the earlier wave of doctors who migrated in the 1960s and 1970s, nor the generation of software engineers who migrated in large numbers from the 1990s onwards. While she feels 'at home' in Dallas because many Indians live in the area, she said that something was 'missing' from her life, so she decided to keep herself busy by getting engaged in community work through TANA. Her son was finishing his education, and with fewer family and financial responsibilities, she started 'helping' people 'back home' by providing scholarships to a few students in her native village. She described these students as 'deserving' but financially not well-off. Although she visits India regularly, her mother – who lives in Guntur town – oversees the disbursement of these scholarships. Manju said that she does this 'small' (philanthropic) work because she is a 'middle-class woman' and she can only afford such minor donations.

Shailaja was in her early forties when I interviewed her in November 2011. The daughter of an affluent family in Guntur, she is an engineering graduate who migrated to the USA after marriage and went on to build a career as a software engineer. Although she has teenage children, she finds time to get involved in 'community activities' in the USA and in India – first through TANA and later through NATS, a break-away group (see Chapter 5). Her mother told me that Shailaja was a student of one of the first English-medium schools⁵⁶ in Guntur. The school, she said, inculcates very strong values in its students, and the students in return always stand by it when it requires help. Shailaja would readily contribute to her old school when the principal needed funds to construct a new building or to provide scholarships for underprivileged children.

My third example, Dr. Padmavati, belongs to the first wave of migrants. She moved to the USA in 1972 along with her husband for her medical residency. She is one of the most respected community leaders in the USA and has been closely involved in TANA, working with the association since its inception in 1977. Dr. Padmavati hails from a village in Guntur, which did not have a high school but only a primary school. Her story of migration and her success in creating a medical career in the USA is legendary in the village. Local people recounted that she would walk a few kilometres every day to a neighbouring village to attend middle and high school. In spite of these hardships, she emerged as one of the most illustrious daughters of her village, having completed her MBBS from Guntur Medical College and her residency in the USA, after which she started her own private practice in New York. So, the story goes, it was 'natural'

⁵⁶ 'English-medium' schools are those where the language of instruction is English.

for her to help start a high school in her village. The school is managed by a local trust, and she donated money to build the structure. The school was founded in 2003 with the intention of providing free education to the children of the village. Gradually, the 'model' changed and a 'nominal' fee is now charged to students who are from the 'weaker' and poorer sections of society – those belonging to marginalised communities 'of all religions – Hindus, Christians, and Muslims', explained one of the school trustees. The fee was introduced to discourage dropouts and build a sense of responsibility among parents, who would be more inclined to send their children to school regularly if they had to pay for it, he said. Nonetheless, the trustees consider the school to be 'charitable', given that students are provided 'good' quality education at a nominal fee. The school is popular in the region, with more than 1000 students.

These three examples illustrate the diversity in the ways in which NRIs contribute to the development of education in their home region. Though marked by variety, these charitable activities fall along a continuum and show certain similarities. All the donors I documented were highly educated professional migrants and active members of diasporic associations in the USA. All started engaging in philanthropy 'back home' around the same time – in the early or mid-2000s – although their migration histories were quite different. In Chapter 6, I explain why NRI philanthropy began at this particular point in time, but in this chapter, I focus on the ways in which Telugu NRIs organised educational philanthropy through two case studies. Further, I disentangle the linkages between education, migration and the region to explain why Andhra migrants have engaged especially in educational philanthropy 'back home'.

Modalities of donor engagement

NRIs are not the only people engaging in philanthropy in Guntur. The town has many local charitable programmes and organisations, and NRI activities only add to its already vibrant culture of charity, especially in the field of education. NRI donors, however, tend to see themselves as different. They point to two interlinked points of divergence between local charitable activities and their own engagements. The first is their own educational status – they point out that they are well-qualified professionals, which they feel makes their engagements qualitatively different than those of local, less 'well-qualified' people. They also note that they are socially and spatially mobile, which not only gives them higher disposable incomes compared to similar professionals in India, but also make them more attuned to the qualities of a 'good life' and sensitive to its relative absence in Guntur and India in general. Their migrant status, they say, makes them more aware of the social realities back home and the need for development. But more important, their American 'exposure' has introduced them to the idea of bringing about change through charity, because 'everyone does charity in America'. In America,

they say, they learned to engage in ‘community service’.

But the notion of ‘community’ that is constantly invoked in the narratives of NRI donors is very different from its meaning in the American idea of ‘community service’. Here, as explained earlier, the term ‘community’ often stands in for caste. Although caste affiliation was seldom openly expressed in my presence, Kammas would differentiate themselves from other castes in subtle ways, both in the USA and in Coastal Andhra. Moreover, people belonging to other castes were quick to point out that Kammas had segregated themselves from the rest of the Telugu community in the USA. Thus, in their narratives, ‘community service’ in many cases literally referred to doing service for their own community, a point that I elaborate in Chapter 5.

Below, I provide two case studies to illustrate the kinds of philanthropic projects that are funded by NRIs, and the ways in which narratives about education, migration, community and charity are closely intertwined and shape the ways NRIs engaged with the region.

Kakatiya Society

Dr. Jasti Koteswar Rao was in his early nineties when I interviewed him in February 2012. He is an NRI doctor who returned to live in Guntur after working in the USA for many years, and who then founded the Kakatiya Society to help poor but ‘deserving’ students of his community. Dr. Rao had migrated in the 1960s, practiced medicine in the Midwest (like many Telugu doctors of his generation) for more than three decades, and finally returned to India in 2000 to ‘dedicate his life and expertise to the people of Guntur’. Dr. Rao recounted how from being just a ‘poor village boy’, he was able to become a ‘successful doctor in Michigan’ only with the help of his community, and so he in turn wanted to help ‘poor children’ of his community through the Kakatiya Society. Behind his professional ‘success’ was not only his own ‘hard-working’ nature, but a story of gracious community members who provided financial help and took over the responsibility for his education when he was young. Had it not been for the ‘community’, he would not be where he is, he averred. As a student he was helped in particular by a rich Kamma man who took care of his educational needs under the ‘*varaalu* system’ (see Chapter 3), which ultimately helped him gain admission to the ‘prestigious’ Guntur Medical College after he finished his secondary education. Here too, he received another form of community help – he was able to live in the Kamma Boys Hostel in Guntur while studying to be a doctor. The accommodation enabled him to avoid spending time and money commuting between his village and Guntur to attend college. The hostel provided him with free lodging and food, without which he could not have studied well and succeeded in life, he said. For Dr. Rao, starting

the Kakatiya Society was not only a gesture of reciprocity, but a commitment and an obligation to 'give back' to the community that had supported him when he needed it. He felt obliged to help other students from his community in the same way, now that he had the time, money and expertise to do so.

Dr. Rao formed the Kakatiya Society in 2004, registering it in Guntur, with the aim of providing scholarships to needy students in the home region, especially those from poor Kamma families. 'Brilliant' students, defined as those who were rank holders in their class, who had difficulty in paying school fees, were given financial aid. I paraphrase below an official account of the Society's origins:⁵⁷

The Kakatiya Society was established in the year 2004 by philanthropically oriented people settled in Canada, America and India. The main aim of the Society is to help financially the poor, deserving students with academic merit who are pursuing post-graduation, technical education, medical education or other professional courses. The Society invites applications from all over Andhra Pradesh in the month of November and those selected will receive financial aid by way of cheques before the end of February every year.

For the 2012 round of scholarships, *Eenadu*⁵⁸ carried the Kakatiya Society's scholarship advertisement asking for applications. When I was staying in Guntur, I had the opportunity to attend the scholarship distribution function which was held in January that year. December and January are relatively cool months in Coastal Andhra and is a favorite time for NRIs to pay a visit to their *swanthaooru*.⁵⁹ Since most donors for the scholarship programme live in the USA or other countries such as Canada and Mexico, often one or more of the big donors plan their visits to India to coincide with the scholarship distribution programme. In January 2012, two prominent NRI donors and two returned NRI donors attended the programme. Others who were present during the ceremony included local donors who had also made endowments to the Society. Most of these local donors are also 'NRI parents'. At this event, around 100 scholarships were distributed to school students of different classes. Every award was funded by endowments given by particular donors, and when the awards were distributed, the names of the recipients as well as the donors were called out, to rounds of applause. That year, the programme was held on the premises of a school run by the Guntur Educational Society (GES). GES is a local Kamma-managed trust that runs educational

⁵⁷ I paraphrase the entry, without providing the link to the website to maintain the anonymity of the society.

⁵⁸ *Eenadu* is one of the largest circulating Telugu newspapers, owned by Ramoji Rao, a prominent Kamma and major supporter of the Telugu Desam Party. Many people attribute the rise of the TDP and N.T. Rama Rao to Ramoji Rao's political strategising and media management.

⁵⁹ *Swanthaooru* means native village or place of origin in Telugu.

institutions in the district; it is sustained by funds donated by community members as well as by the surplus it generates from tuition fees. GES's motto is to provide quality education 'on a non profit basis'. The school where the function was held is located on J.K.C. Road, named after Jagarlamudi Kuppuswamy Chowdary, a prominent Kamma caste notable and a local philanthropist from Guntur who promoted education in the early twentieth century. He is known as a leader who dedicated his life to the development of his community and is remembered with much respect in Guntur. After his death, his family members and others from the community made endowments to start a college of their 'own'. This is how JKC College, locally known as 'Kamma College', was started in Guntur in his honour. This college, and the school where the awards were distributed, are both part of the GES group.

The GES group is also linked to the Kakatiya Society in several ways. In fact, GES and the Kakatiya Society have an umbilical relationship, with the school's address and the address in which the Society is locally registered being the same. Many GES governing board members are also on the board of Kakatiya Society. In 2012, most students who received scholarships from the Kakatiya Society were students of the GES school, further highlighting the close relationship between these two societies – one, a local Kamma-run educational society, and the other promoted by Kamma NRIs.

The Kakatiya Society was started with the idea of drawing donations from affluent community members living in the USA. In its initial days, it raised money from NRIs and channelled its awareness and fund collection drives through TANA. The idea of the Kakatiya Society as a 'community' organisation disbursing scholarships fructified in 2004, when they were able to raise INR 700,000 and USD 28,000. The first round of scholarships for 'meritorious and needy' Kamma students, amounting to INR 500,000, was distributed the same year, and the rest of the money was kept as a corpus and managed by the Trust that ran the Society. That year, 200 students applied for the scholarship, of which 73 were selected. Over the nine years since its inception, the Kakatiya Society claims that it has distributed scholarships worth a total of 25 million rupees and has a corpus of 20 million rupees, the interest of which supports the scholarship fund.

KAKATIYA SOCIETY - GUNTUR PATRONS		
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Figure 7: List of donors for the Kakatiya Society (names blocked to maintain anonymity)

Source: Sanam Roohi

According to the organisation's 2011-12 yearbook, donors are divided into categories of 'chief patron' (those who donated USD 10,000 or more), 'patron' (who donated less than USD 10,000), 'donors' and 'life members' – who donated USD 1000 and 500 respectively. Altogether there are 66 donors listed, of which 47 are residents of the US and 17 are local Gunturians. The board shown in Figure 7 provides the names of donors, the amount each donor has given, and the place where they reside. Many of these names indicate that the donors are Kammias.

As mentioned earlier, in its first few years TANA worked from the American side to mobilise resources for Kakatiya Society, seeking donations from Kamma NRIs, while locally the GES exhorted rich Kammias in Guntur to give money for the 'needy children of the community'. Since personal connections were used to raise funds, donors felt obliged and were often happy to give. However, later the Kakatiya Society was registered as a charitable society in the USA and started to receive donations from NRIs directly, bypassing the TANA Foundation. This was because, as one of my interlocutors

explained, TANA deducted 10 per cent or more as processing fees. Today, the Society is managed in the USA by a Kamma nuclear scientist, Dr. Kakarala, who is also a member and donor. In Guntur, Dr. Sessaiah, the president of GES, manages the trust.

The Kakatiya Society, which is registered both in Guntur and Michigan, explicitly promotes education within the ‘community’ by providing financial aid to ‘deserving but poor’ Kamma students. But not all NRI supported organisations work for educational development; others have diversified their philanthropic commitments to include various other causes. *Alluri and Friends Foundation* is one example. In the next section, I examine this case in detail and contrast it with the example of Kakatiya Society.

Alluri and Friends Foundation

Mahesh Alluri recounted in detail the ‘extraordinary journey’ of his life. His early life was marked by relative deprivation, but today, at less than 50 years of age, he is a powerful and respected man within the Telugu community in the USA. Coming from a village near Repalle town in Guntur district, his family sold off their small but expensive and productive parcel of agricultural land and migrated to nearby Khammam district (an ‘underdeveloped’ region of Telangana), a move that enabled them to substantially increase their landholding. This shift, however, did not make life easier for Mahesh. He went to a local government school in Kothagudem town in Khammam, and after school, he would help his father in the small restaurant where he had started to augment their family income.

As he grew up, Mahesh did well in his studies – he said that he was ‘not brilliant but a good student’. With ‘hard work’, he managed to clear the entrance exam for Krishna Engineering College in Vijayawada. This college is run by another Kamma educational conglomerate – the ‘Krishna Educational Society’ or KES. While GES caters to Guntur district’s educational needs, KES operates in Krishna district. Since it is a private college, the fee for the engineering course in the mid-1980s was very high – 5,000 rupees per year – which at that time was a ‘fortune’. Mahesh said that his parents did not have that kind of money nor were they willing to send their son away to study because they wanted his help in running their restaurant. It was at this crucial moment that a distant relative ‘adopted’ him and paid most of the tuition fees. Once he graduated from college as a software engineer, he put all his efforts into migrating abroad. Many graduates from Krishna Engineering College were at the forefront of migration from Guntur to the USA after the IT boom (see Chapter 3). Mahesh went to the USA in 1992, and after working for a few years in the software industry, he started his own company. Since then, he said, he has ‘grown from strength to strength’ in his career and has managed to climb to the ‘top rungs’ of the American corporate ladder. He later started his own

software company, registered in Boston, which is a multi-million dollar enterprise. His entrepreneurial success has been widely recognised, leading to several business awards.

These achievements notwithstanding, Mahesh likes to remain 'rooted', and he tells the story of his humble beginnings with modesty and pride in equal measure. One way of staying rooted is 'doing something back home'. When I met him, he was involved with multiple charitable projects in Andhra Pradesh through Alluri and Friends Foundation, which has been operating since 2000. The name 'Alluri and Friends' indicates that his friends also actively contribute to many of his philanthropic activities. Though he did a 'little bit of everything', helping the poor to access education was a cause close to his heart, and he had taken on the responsibility for the education of 48 students in Khammam through his foundation. The website of the Foundation lists some other key areas of his philanthropic engagements, which I paraphrase below:

a. Health

The foundation has donated nearly Rs 500,000 to Indo American Cancer Hospital in Hyderabad. It has also donated money to the Lions Club of Nandigama to help build an eye hospital. The foundation has conducted several health camps to provide healthcare to the poor. It has donated 1200 pairs of eyeglasses to poor elderly people.

b. Poverty Relief and Farm Aid

Alluri and Friends Foundation provided financial help directly to the needy, who were desperate for such help. Due to their ability to respond to these needs in a timely manner, the foundation has been able to save lives, which is one of their highest achievements. They have helped farmers by providing the funds they needed to build their lift irrigation systems. They have helped several children to get critical healthcare and saved lives. They have also helped environmental agencies and non-profit organisations.

c. Children

By donating plates, cups and utensils, the foundation was able to render assistance to afternoon lunch programs at primary schools. It donated 100,000 rupees to build a primary school in an urban colony of Bhadrachalam. The foundation also donated Rs 125,000 to a child rescue shelter built by TANA foundation in Vijayawada. This rescue shelter identifies hundreds of street children and provides them with temporary shelter, food, healthcare and counselling until they are sent back to the bridge schools or to their parents.

d. Other Humanitarian Assistance

[Mahesh] built and donated an ultra modern guest house worth INR 20,00,000 to Sri Sita Rama Swamy Temple, Bhadrachalam. Though the purpose is not expressly religion-oriented, the foundation has donated money to several temples and churches across the state. Alluris donated INR 125,000 to the Gujarat earthquake relief fund and INR 200,000 to the Tsunami Relief Fund, and INR 50,000 to the Kargil war relief fund. They have consistently responded when needed and are always willing to extend a helping hand to needy people in both India and USA.

Apart from these activities, Mahesh and a close friend – both alumni of Krishna Engineering College – had put together a scholarship endowment fund worth INR 20 million for their alma mater. As of early 2012, the foundation had supported 70 scholarships, covering the tuition fees for engineering students of that college: ‘We are the first to start this great scholarship scheme in a *private* engineering college’, he exclaimed, visibly proud of the idea.

Behind the excitement and triumph in his narrative is also a strong sense of gratitude. He attributes his success to the relative who ‘adopted’ him and became his ‘godparent’. In December 2012, when Mahesh had come to Andhra Pradesh with a few TANA executive members and I was touring the state with the group, he was keen to introduce me to his ‘second father’ (as he called his relative) in Kothagudem, where we had made a temporary halt. Mahesh told me that this godparent was his inspiration to ‘give back to his society’. Mahesh spoke about the ideas behind his diverse endowments and charities in these words:

I have no vision, except that we make a difference in the lives of the less fortunate when we ourselves are so fortunate. In India, there are scores of rich people who can bring some change in the lives of the ordinary people. It bothers me when I see crores being spent on religious places and not enough being done for development. I am not criticising religious people, but if we can spend the same kind of money on schools, hospitals and our neighbourhood, it will go a long way. The government and the people together should think of how to provide education and employment. This can be a big problem for India if we don’t get involved in our own vicinities. Ultimately, the less privileged will want as much as the privileged and if the haves do not improve their lives, there will be social problems. What I am trying to say is that with involvement from the community, if even a

single family can be uplifted, it will be an achievement.⁶⁰

Notions of upliftment, generating employment, and especially providing education for the needy, frame the goals of his philanthropy. He feels that ‘rich Indians’ are not committed to these ideals. His narrative stressed that his philanthropy is not religiously motivated but is avowedly *secular*. He told me that he believes in God but is not a religious man and seldom gives to temples, although this is still a popular charitable engagement for many Telugus.

The examples of Mahesh and Dr. Rao explain how their philanthropic engagements can be seen as acts of reciprocity – of ‘giving back’ to the community that had supported them earlier by helping them become educated professionals and, eventually, successful NRIs. However, giving back does not only operate on the principle of reciprocity but is also an act of obligation, based on a moral connection with the community, in which the unspoken agreement is to ‘give back’ to ‘deserving’ and underprivileged members – a point I explain in detail below.

Giving as Obligation

Most of the people who are giving for village development or education belong to the lower middle class. They were brought up in villages and experienced hardships. Nobody is self-made. Everyone plays a role... [and] is involved in making the other. A collective effort goes into making someone what he is today. There is also a feeling of oneness. They realise that my parents alone are not involved in my success, but the entire village is. This attitude makes them responsible to their village and town and its people.

- *Dr. Venkatesaiah, retired political science professor*

Older groups also help the younger groups – they refer people for job vacancies in same companies or help people when they are in financial trouble (in the US). Some give scholarships to poor students. Relatives and friends help when asked. It’s not help actually, it is an obligation.

- *Mastan Rao, retired Chartered Accountant*

In this way, Dr. Venkatesaiah and Mastan Rao, both Gunturians – the former a childless

⁶⁰ This excerpt is part of an interview available online, which has been paraphrased to maintain the anonymity of ‘Mahesh’.

retiree and the latter an NRI parent – put into perspective why Kammas feel a sense of moral obligation to ‘give back’ to one’s village or community. The underlying premise of this sense of obligation is that members of the community (village, caste or kin group) share a deep bond with one another and are hence obligated to help each other whenever the need arises.

To explain how this tradition started among the Kammas of the Guntur-Krishna region, they trace its history to caste notables such as J. K. Chowdary of Guntur district or Tripuraneni Ramaswami Chaudari of Krishna district, who in the last century had led the community in its efforts for upward social mobility, by claiming Kshatriya status (Keiko 2008) and by encouraging higher education. They also mention an earlier caste leader, Vasireddy Venkatadri Naidu, who was a rich *zamindar* and a ‘*pedda* (big, belonging to a higher ranked sub caste) Kamma’ who started the practice of *danadharma*. Also referred to as ‘Raja’ (or a local ruler; Narayan Rao 2008), Vasireddy built and protected many places of worship and was seen as the protector of the community. Vasireddy is the earliest ‘philanthropist’ mentioned by many of my interlocutors when talking about philanthropy, tracing the history of charity within the community back 200 years. Though according to local legend, Vasireddy Naidu was from the upper Krishna delta, he made Amaravati (in Guntur district) his ‘capital’, and so has been associated with Guntur.

One evening, while chatting over tea, Kantaraju explained to me that the story of Vasireddy’s benevolence has a gory twist: attempting to rid the district of the Chenchus (a tribal group), who were reputed to be expert robbers and were creating havoc in the region, Vasireddy invited hundreds of them for a feast and then had their heads chopped off. But he became very guilty about this act, and so devoted his life to building temples and offering *daanam*. Such myths of origin, which create a popular history for the community, underscore the foundational principle of mutual aid and provide examples that members of the community feel obliged to emulate.

While philanthropic activities were earlier individualised private transactions, initiated by a handful of community notables, later efforts to aid and ‘develop’ the community have been more collective and public in nature. Local and NRI Gunturians come together to show their responsibility toward their villages and communities in a more organised way – particularly in the field of education. Though Jasti Koteswar Rao and Mahesh Alluri belong to two different ‘waves’ of migrants and have different educational qualifications (one is a doctor and the other an engineer), as well as differing modes of engaging in philanthropy, both display a strong commitment to providing educational support for ‘needy’ and ‘poor’ students of their home region. For them, one reason

that education is a central value is because it has the potential to generate a pool of employable people. Donating for education is considered more worthy than donating for religious purposes because, as Mahesh pointed out, it helps the beneficiaries to ‘stand on their own feet.’ Such engagements are considered more useful and practical than giving donations to temples, as Dr. Shivanand explained to me: ‘Rich non-NRIs also give, but they give to temples. The things NRIs are giving importance to, non-NRIs don’t think are important ... they are giving for rural development, for education, and so on ... more useful stuff’.

Nevertheless, beyond the obvious utilitarianism of these narratives about ‘useful’ forms of philanthropy is a morally infused discourse and older practice of ‘giving back to the community.’ Both Dr. Rao and Mahesh Alluri felt duty-bound to give back to their community and to support education in particular because they owed their success to the help that they had received from the community or a distant relative when they were young. If it was not for this community support, they would not have migrated to the USA and made successful careers there.

When speaking about their involvement in such causes, most of my interlocutors similarly point to the moral dimension of giving. They speak about their philanthropic projects in the language of ‘donation’ rather than ‘charity’ or *daanam*. I explore this point further in Chapter 5, but here wish to highlight that *daan* is marked by asymmetry (Parry 1986). When I asked whether donations could be called *daan*, a respondent looked visibly uncomfortable and emphasised that NRIs give ‘donations’, not ‘*daan*’: ‘*daan* is for the poor or the temple’, he proclaimed. Intra-community giving is thus framed by a community morality where, in spite of the class differences, members are considered to be part of the same community by virtue of their caste affiliation. As discussed in Chapter 3, Kammias have developed a strong sense of a caste identity – a characteristic that is pointed out not only by Kammias but also by members of other castes, who would often contrast it with a lack of similar cohesiveness in their own communities. Therefore, relations of obligation and reciprocity among Kammias emanate from what some scholars have termed ‘caste ideology’ (Barnett 1977), in which ‘horizontal’ caste affiliation eclipses class differences within the community. Kammia practices of giving are thus dissimilar to the patronage transactions that express and create relations of caste hierarchy (Raheja 1988) or inequality and domination (Price 2014).⁶¹

As discussed in Chapter 3, philanthropy has traditionally played an important role in building community solidarity among the Kammias, as for many other castes and

61 This is not to suggest that Kammias do not ‘give’ to other groups who are below them in caste hierarchy. But I found such instances to be less frequent, and were often undertaken by NRIs who were simultaneously engaged in multiple philanthropic projects.

communities in India. Thus, philanthropy has long been entangled with caste identity and caste interests. The kind of diaspora philanthropy described here can be understood as a continuation of such older community practices. The close linkage between building caste cohesion and achieving greater upward mobility for Kammas has been strategically facilitated by rallying community support for the education of its youth in Coastal Andhra. Kammas are considered to be a 'well-qualified community' because of the emphasis they have given to education as a site for community action since the early years of the twentieth century. While in the earlier decades they employed strategies such as the *varaalu* system or constructing caste hostels, more recently, Kammas have started private educational institutions through caste-based trusts, providing the community an additional advantage in acquiring higher education (as detailed in the previous chapter). With the trend of outward migration, the 'community' has been extended spatially to include NRIs, who are asked to contribute for the welfare of their community 'back home'. This means that the project of forging a strong and morally bound community has not been disrupted with rural to urban migration or international mobility; rather, these practices have become transnational and indeed can be viewed as *constitutive* of a transnationalising Kamma caste.

Thus, in this case, 'diaspora philanthropy' performs many of the same functions as charitable giving under late colonialism – building a sense of corporate identity and mutual obligation within the caste. However, while earlier forms of giving were seen as the domain of wealthy Kamma notables, with widespread higher education and migration to the USA, the number of those engaging in secular philanthropy (especially in education) has increased manifold.

Community charity is not limited only to Coastal Andhra Kammas. Wealthy Kammas and Telugus living in other parts of Andhra Pradesh, such as Rayalaseema,⁶² also contribute to welfare initiatives for less affluent community members. But unlike Kammas who have migrated to other regions of the state or beyond, among whom it is mainly the rich who make such donations, in Coastal Andhra and among NRIs, community welfare activities are more broadly based and are pursued also by middle-class actors. Thus, transnational giving has been incorporated into the Kamma caste *habitus*, which is also shaped by the *place* from which migrants come. With the expanding scope of giving, Coastal Andhra NRIs and their families have recursively cultivated the image of Kammas as a 'community that gives'. Donation then becomes a practice through which wealthier caste members dispense patronage to less privileged people within their own caste. The performance of philanthropy of charity enhances their own and their families' social standing within the community. Thus, diaspora philanthropy appears

62 In the popular imagination, Rayalaseema is a 'backward' and violence-prone region of Andhra Pradesh. The Reddys are dominant in the region in terms of landholding (Kumar 2011).

to be not an import from the West, based on NRIs' experiences of living abroad, but a continuation of an older caste practice. I take up this point in the next chapter. But notions of 'community service' or 'volunteering' take on new meanings when they are transposed from the USA to Guntur, in particular, adopting a caste-specific shape.

In these transnational practices of philanthropy, caste becomes most visible not only in the identity of the beneficiaries but also in its sources and channels of transmission: as the discussion above shows, the conduits and nodes that connect NRI giving back to the region are occupied by Kammas. In the examples given in this chapter, the donors, the modalities through which money was sent, and often the beneficiaries as well, are all Kammas. Mahesh Alluri and Dr. Jasti Koteswar Rao are raising and sending money for the educational advancement of Kamma students. While one does this overtly through the Kakatiya Society (an openly Kamma organisation), the other promotes education for the poor in general, yet the scholarships often benefit Kamma students in particular. Mahesh's endowment for his alma mater, KES, is another case in point. In both examples, personal, place-based and caste bonds have been utilised to raise funds and carry out philanthropy, thereby solidifying caste networks in a transnational setting. The caste dimension of these practices is also reflected in the ways that Kammas in the USA come together to engage in philanthropy – activities that grow out of overlapping networks of friendship, profession, caste and regional affiliation. I expand on this point in Chapters 5 and 6.

In sum, donors from Coastal Andhra living in the USA are strongly informed by notions of collective action that permeate the self-identity of their caste, and from which they have often personally benefitted. Donation or giving has become part of their caste *habitus* – just as being 'well qualified' is seen as a 'natural' Kamma trait, giving back is also considered to be a Kamma 'attribute', one that has now acquired a transnational dimension. But giving is also a performance; one that has become routinised in particular ways, as I show in the following section.

Giving as Performance

There is a craze to let society know you are big and you give! NRIs feel what they do should be striking and conspicuous.

- P Kantharaju, 69-year-old Kamma in Guntur

Kantharaju has two children who are 'Green Card holders'.⁶³ Like him, many NRI

63 Migrants who have lived in the USA for a certain number of years can apply for a permanent residence permit, or 'Green Card', the first step to acquiring citizenship.

parents (as well as others) feel that NRIs often seek self-promotion in whatever they do back in the home region, including philanthropy. In Guntur, NRI donations are generally publicised, with the name of the donor etched on a marble plaque with 'USA' in parenthesis. Diaspora philanthropy works in several ways to generate symbolic capital for the donors. One is the projection of social status by publicising their donations through print advertisements or the organisation of ceremonies to mark the various stages of progress of their philanthropic engagements. These ceremonies are often ostentatious, accompanied by feasting in large function halls where community members are also invited. In all the events I witnessed, such functions involved 'felicitation'⁶⁴ of the donors by community notables or beneficiaries, where the donor is garlanded with flowers, praised with generous words, and presented with an award.

In such cases, giving appears to be aimed primarily at enhancing the migrant's and his or her family's social standing *within* the community, pointing to the importance placed on the recognition of their success by fellow caste members. The modalities through which social status is asserted or claimed can be understood only by contextualising these practices within the larger cultural and historical context of Guntur and Coastal Andhra. In the region, it produces the expectation that when members of this community move out and start to earn well, they have a moral obligation to give back to the community that has nurtured them. While people explain their philanthropy, interrogating the mechanisms underpinning the channels and routes these NRIs donations take uncovers how a community imagines itself, as the stories of Jasti Koteswar Rao and Mahesh Alluri illustrate. In Chapter 3, I showed how the Kammas acquired the economic status and educational capital that allowed them to enter the professional educated class and also to emigrate, which eventually brought many into the fold of American middle and affluent classes. But while their improved social standing may have a symbolic significance for the Telugu community in the USA, for donors such as Manju, Shailaja, Dr. Padmavati, Dr. Jasti Koteswar Rao and Mahesh Alluri, its real importance lies in Coastal Andhra where the larger community lives. It is here where the NRI needs to assert his or her new-found status by building houses, buying land, and bringing *gauravam* and *maryada* or honour and respect to themselves and their families that live in Guntur through such investments, as well as by 'giving back'. Not giving back to the community when one becomes prosperous is seen as almost sacrilegious.⁶⁵

Thus, for Kammas, the pursuit of education, the aspiration for migration, and philanthropy have become interlinked practices that promote upward (social and

64 In Guntur, felicitation programmes were organised by relatives or community members to show respect to someone for his/her achievement(s) and to celebrate them.

65 In Guntur, I could hardly find any examples of 'well-off' Kamma families, settled for a few decades in the town, who were not engaged in some form of charitable activity.

economic) mobility for the community as a whole as well as for individuals and families within it. In the following section, through a description of an event I attended in Vinukonda, a town in the dry (non-irrigated) region of Guntur district, I elaborate on the performative aspects of the generation of symbolic capital through giving. Such performance engenders not only the obligation to give but also incorporates the public accountability of Kmmas to their community.

Vanabhojanam in Vinukonda

On 6 November 2011, I set out for Vinukonda, a small town in Guntur district and a three-hour journey from Guntur town. Kantharaju was keen that I attend a *vanabhojanam* function⁶⁶ to get an idea of 'Coastal Andhra culture'. Vinukonda is situated in a less wealthy part of the district, and so international migration from this area is relatively minimal; consequently this region has received fewer donations from NRIs (see Chapter 6). Attending this *vanabhojanam* provided me with a snapshot of how the practice of donation takes place within the community, apart from the NRI-driven functions that I had mostly witnessed until then. The way this ceremony is organised, I was told, is characteristic of Kamma functions, where rich patrons invite less wealthy caste members who receive support from them. The organiser of this meeting was one Venkatadri Chowdary from Guntur town, who often coordinates such events where donations are sought from affluent Kmmas to raise money for student hostels, old age homes, cremation grounds, schools and health facilities for disadvantaged Kmmas.

At the *vanabhojanam* in Vinukonda, a *puja* or prayer was first performed, after which community notables were 'felicitated'. *Pratibha puraskaram* or awards were given to six individuals who had contributed to the progress and pride of the Kamma community. Among the awardees was a famous Congress politician who, at the time, was a Lok Sabha⁶⁷ member from Guntur. Another awardee was a Mandal Development Officer,⁶⁸ while a third was a young IT entrepreneur. All six recipients of the awards were from Guntur district and were seen as role models in their efforts to support the community. The awardees sat on a makeshift stage decorated with flowers. Below the stage, the audience, comprising family members of the organisers and the award recipients, sat amidst other local Kmmas and a large group of girls from the local Kamma Girls Hostel in Vinukonda. Also present were dozens of local media persons -- photographers, reporters and 'stringers'. The gathering was estimated to be more than 1,000 people.

66 *Vanabhojanam* is a traditional meal shared collectively outdoors in an open space, which takes place during the *Karthika Masam* (around November) to celebrate the arrival of autumn. The meal is usually organised along caste lines, although it sometimes includes members of different castes when it is arranged by firms or institutions.

67 Lower house of the Indian Parliament.

68 Mandals are administrative divisions below the district level and above the village level, within the three-tier Panchayati Raj system of governance in India. The activities of the mandal are mainly development-related. A Mandal Development Officer is the head government official of the mandal.

After the awards were presented, an inspirational speech was given by Venkatadri asking Kammas to stand together in the current crisis (referring to political hostilities and the impasse in then undivided Andhra Pradesh, where the death of the Chief Minister Y. S. Rajashekhar Reddy threatened to destabilise the state politically).⁶⁹

After the awards and speeches, Venkatadri Chowdary explained to the audience why he had organised this gathering. Guntur notables had already been doing a lot for Guntur city and for the better-off mandals of the state, he said, and it was now time for them to turn their attention to dry and 'backward' places such as Vinukonda which also should be developed through community efforts. He said that the land on which the event was taking place had already been donated for the 'cause' by a farmer, Kommineni Veeraiah (who was among those felicitated), to build a community school and an old age home. The land was estimated to be worth 2.5 million rupees in late 2011. The remaining cost for building these institutions was sought from the notables present at the ceremony. Venkatadri first turned to the individuals seated on the stage and requested them to donate for this cause. Within an hour, the six awardees and a couple of members of the audience had pledged a total of 2 million rupees. Three of the donors happened to have NRI family members (such people are considered to be 'well-off' and are often targeted by community members for such donations). When the pledge to give money takes place on a public platform, people usually do not default on their promise to donate for such 'noble' purposes.

This story illustrates the long-standing social practice among Kammas of soliciting and making donations for community causes. What is new about the contemporary context is that the scope for community action has expanded, as more Kammas have become affluent due to migration and other factors. Such donations have supported the construction of a number of buildings and the establishment of various institutions in and around Guntur. The Sri Venkateswarswami temple, Kamma Boys and Girls Hostels, various Kamma associations, the Sankara Eye Hospital at Chinnakakani, cremation grounds in villages, old age homes and many other such institutions have been built through donations from local Kammas as well as NRIs and their families. When donors come forward to support such projects, the term 'donation' gets defined in terms of the community and takes on an obligatory meaning. Today, when transnational members of the community collaborate to donate for various causes that often benefit their own community and the Coastal Andhra region, community obligation gets reinscribed on

69 After the death of the Chief Minister Y.S. Rajashekhar Reddy (YSR) in September 2009, his son Jagan Mohan Reddy was denied the chief ministership by the 'Congress High Command' in Delhi. Reddy responded by forming his own party together with 'rebels' from the Congress Party. The state fell into political chaos and at that time was seen as leaderless. Subsequently local body elections were suspended and the Telangana agitation resurfaced, with its demand for a separate state to be carved out of Andhra Pradesh. The speaker was referring to these political developments, which were perceived to be against the interests of Kammas.

a transnational plane, and these acts of giving and receiving help to solidify a sense of community boundary and identity.

Conclusion

The 'dominant caste' status of Kammas has been consolidated over the past few decades not only through control over land and the garnering of political power, but also through the collective control and management of institutions of higher education in the Coastal Andhra region. For Kammas, access to higher education and transnational migration are interrelated processes that have been enabled by the careful utilisation of cultural capital and caste networks, drawing on already existing social capital available to them by virtue of their dominant caste status (Bourdieu 1986; Portes 1998; Upadhyaya 1997). For the first wave of migrants, it was a government college – Guntur Medical College – that became a key centre for the production of cultural capital enabling migration, while for the second wave, the many private engineering colleges in the region played a major role by producing engineers and catering to the global demand for IT labour. The developments in education in Coastal Andhra (described in this and the previous chapter) gave the Kammas an edge over others in employment, both in India and abroad.

Therefore, like higher education and migration, 'giving back' too became a key element of the community's caste *habitus*, which in turn, required that affluent Kammas 'give' to deserving but less resourceful members of their community out of a sense of obligation (given their gratitude for receiving community help as students). Education, migration and philanthropy can thus be seen as interlinked processes that have reinforced one another, helping Kammas to become transnationalised through flows of people as well as resources and helping a community in transition to define itself. Giving is also performative, in that it may be used as a means to display one's success and create recognition for donors as important members of the community who are working for the cause of the community. The performance surrounding giving also engenders the obligation to give. Though this practice has an older history, as detailed in Chapter 3, with the trend of outward migration and the inward flow of philanthropic and other resources, Kamma NRIs are now performing a similar role to that of earlier caste notables and patrons, albeit on a transnational plane.

While community philanthropy is not just the domain of Kammas, what sets them apart from other communities in the region is that they have successfully strategised giving and tempered it to suit changing times, steadily recruiting new donors into the fold. Transnational giving, which has become part of a caste-and-place inflected *habitus*, has expanded as more NRI donors become a 'resource' for the community. Moreover,

when a large cohort of transnational and upwardly mobile members of the community became donors or philanthropists for the community, these practices started to take on a more formalised and institutionalised shape. After Coastal Andhra NRIs reached a 'critical mass' in the USA, and with the proliferation of various local or national Telugu Associations in the USA, the loss of a sense of community that troubled the earlier generation of migrants was replaced by a sense of sociality marked by collective action. NRIs began organising community services and philanthropic engagements in the home region on a larger scale, efforts that were better coordinated and more 'professional'. In the following chapter, I explore this theme.

Chapter 5

**FORMALISING GIVING, FORGING
TRANSNATIONAL SOLIDARITIES**

On 4 February 2012, the 1972 'batch' of graduates from Guntur Medical College celebrated its 'Ruby Jubilee', marking forty years of their journey since becoming doctors. About 160 alumni attended the reunion, 40 of whom had travelled across the world to be part of this event. Most of these doctors were practising in the USA, and a few in the UK. Like any other public event I attended in Guntur, this one too was marked by speeches, felicitations, and the distribution of mementos, but it had an added air of bonhomie that often marks reunions. However, unlike the other celebratory events I witnessed, where community notables were usually honoured or 'felicitated', the felicitations here were in honour of twenty GMC teachers who these well-established doctors – practising across India and abroad – acknowledged as being instrumental in their success and in making them 'what we are today'.

The event took place in the GMC Auditorium (Figure 8), a building that is often mentioned as an example of NRI munificence whenever the topic of NRI philanthropy is raised in Guntur. It was built entirely with donations from GMCANA members and is seen as one of their prominent 'gifts' to their alma mater. Members had raised 50 million rupees and spent more than half a decade planning, fundraising and monitoring the progress of the construction, which finally culminated in this beautiful auditorium, which had become functional in 2006. It is an 850-seat air-conditioned theatre with state-of-the-art audio-visual facilities, a Continuing Medical Education Centre, a study room, a seminar room, three furnished guest suites, and a multipurpose recreation centre.

Since 2006, the GMC Auditorium has been the site of many social events organised by alumni or other doctors. But the events that are given primacy are GMC alumni meetings, especially those marking important milestones such as twenty-five, forty, or fifty year anniversaries of a graduating class. A staff member who manages the auditorium told me that January and February are very busy months for them because it is during that period that alumni events are usually organised. The events are managed by the local 'Old Students Association' of GMC (GMCOSA). GMCOSA was founded in 1971 on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the college, and many doctors practicing in Guntur town and elsewhere actively participate in events that are organised by the association, sometimes in liaison with GMCANA.



Figure 8: GMCANA Auditorium, Guntur Medical College

Source: Sanam Roohi

The ‘Ruby’ celebrations of the 1972 batch of GMC alumni was a two-day affair, funded by generous donations from alumni and organised by GMCANA and GMCOSA members, who volunteered their time. The first day’s events were held in the Auditorium. The mood was sombre, beginning with felicitations of teachers and ending with a slide show of family pictures of every member of the batch. The second day was celebrated in a more relaxed manner at Hailaand Park,⁷⁰ an amusement park located on the outskirts of Guntur. The focus of this day was to brainstorm on how members of that class could be more ‘useful’ to their alma mater and do something ‘efficiently’ to help it. They discussed how to ascertain the needs of the college and to *collectively* contribute to their college. In these discussions, many doctors expressed their sense of gratitude to the GMC, highlighting the role of their teachers in training them very well in their various fields of specialisation. They also spoke about the benefits of studying in a government-subsidised college, where they were charged ‘peanuts’ or ‘next to nothing’ for such a ‘world-class’ professional education. They compared GMC favourably with the private medical colleges that have sprung up across India since the late 1970s, which charge huge ‘capitation fees’ (unaccounted and arbitrary fees beyond the regular tuition fees), but often offer low-quality education (in the estimation of my interlocutors). Alumni

⁷⁰ Hailaand Park is a theme park at the outskirts of Guntur at Chinnakakani. It also has a resort.

thus view 'giving back' to their alma mater as an act of reciprocity and an expression of gratitude. They argued that receiving government subsidised education facilitated their medical careers, and so now it was their turn to take care of their ailing alma mater, which is no longer the prestigious college and hospital it used to be.

Moreover, from the perspective of these NRI doctors, the GMC stands for a place that ran on the basis of 'merit'. It was only meritorious students who could get a 'seat' (place) in the GMC, I was often told. As Bhaktavatsala Rao would tell me with pride whenever he talked about the fact that three of his five children had graduated from the college, 'They went to Guntur Medical College on merit, I did not give any donation. We don't give donation'. The college, in turn, enhances the 'meritoriousness' of its graduates – a point that was repeatedly made by NRI doctors who presented their ability to migrate to the USA and establish a successful medical practice there as evidence of their inherent 'merit' (augmented by their GMC education). 'Giving back' is therefore a *reciprocal* act to reward the college for recognising and enhancing their inherent merit.

In the previous chapter, we saw how NRIs have supported educational development in Guntur out of a sense of obligation towards their community, which had helped them to acquire education and become highly skilled migrant professionals. In this chapter, my focus is on the institutionalisation and formalisation of such gestures of reciprocity through organisations such as GMCANA and TANA, as NRIs build alliances through relations of giving, receiving and sharing based on trust, where the actors involved recognise the inherent merit of one another. Indeed, many of the US-based doctors who attended the 'Ruby Jubilee' event were members of TANA as well as GMCANA. During my field research, I gradually discovered that the membership of GMCANA (an alumni body) and TANA (a national Telugu association in the USA) overlaps substantially. To account for this convergence and explain its significance, in the next section, I trace the history of these associations and how they became entangled through diasporic philanthropic activities.

Creating a Culture of Transnational Philanthropy

GMCANA was formed in 1981, during the third biennial TANA conference. TANA at that time was a fairly new organisation, having been established in 1977-78. TANA was the first national-level Telugu association in the USA, which was created with the aim of preserving and promoting Telugu language and culture among immigrants from Andhra. The association organises a national convention once every two years to bring together Telugus from across the country. The convention is hosted in cities with large concentrations of Telugus on a rotation basis. At the time it was established, there were

already a few local or state-level Telugu cultural associations in various American cities. What was new about TANA was that it was formed as an umbrella organisation to unite all Andhra people living in North America. A number of GMC alumni were instrumental in the founding of TANA, along with other well-qualified professionals such as scientists and engineers, many of whom were from Coastal Andhra and were among the ‘first wave’ of migrants. Consequently, TANA came to be known as an association of highly educated professionals from (mainly coastal) Andhra Pradesh – who were also mainly Kammas.

During the third TANA conference held in 1981, a number of participants who were also GMC graduates discussed the need to form a GMC alumni association. They envisioned that the association would create a platform for all GMC doctors in North America to keep in touch with colleagues, to reach out to those in need, and to foster professional networking. In addition, as their website states, they decided to ‘raise money and material to promote teaching and patient care needs at Guntur Medical College and its affiliated institutions’.⁷¹ This initiative was paralleled by the creation of TANA Foundation a year earlier (in 1980) to promote welfare activities such as giving scholarships to meritorious students. Thus, GMCANA was born as a spinoff from TANA, and both organisations have had a noticeable philanthropic component to their activities since their inception.

Since TANA and GMCANA had an umbilical relationship and several TANA governing body members were affiliated to GMCANA, GMCANA members started to meet during the biannual TANA conferences. It was only in 1989 that GMCANA held a separate meeting for the first time; this was due to the growing anxiety among some TANA members about the close connections between TANA and GMCANA. Different reasons were cited by my interlocutors for this concern – the most important one was that many non-doctor TANA members felt they should set a boundary so that the interests of TANA and GMCANA would not overlap. However, GMCANA’s link with TANA continues until today. For instance, a GMCANA member recently became the president of TANA. In addition, GMCANA still conducts their general body meeting every alternate year at the start of the TANA conference.

Crucially for this discussion, TANA and GMCANA were key actors in the history of diaspora philanthropy in Guntur. Members of these associations were among the first to initiate transnational philanthropic initiatives in the region, activities that focused especially on health issues and on developing the infrastructure of their alma mater. This formalisation of diaspora philanthropy in Guntur through a transnational

71 <http://gmcana.org/>

organisation was, at that time, a novel step. Since TANA and GMCANA were initially closely associated, it is difficult to delineate which organisation first started undertaking philanthropic projects in Guntur. However, the role of both organisations in fostering a ‘culture of philanthropy’ is widely acknowledged in Guntur.

In the 1980s, these engagements were very limited, and prior to this period, one can hardly find any instances of NRIs ‘giving back’ to their home region. It was only when the doctors of GMCANA held their first alumni meet in Guntur in 1991, and donated money for the GMC and its attached General Hospital, that the potential of NRIs as promoters of ‘development’ began to be recognised. However, sustained and substantial contributions by GMCANA members began only in the late 1990s, when they started collaborating with the government more closely – a point I return to in Chapter 6.

One of the important activities of GMCANA doctors is to fund health camps in rural areas, which often also receive support from TANA. These health camps usually screen patients for heart ailments, cataracts, stomach ulcers, low blood platelets, and (increasingly) cancers. ‘Eye camps’ are also very popular, and NRIs often sponsor such camps in their own villages in Guntur district, sometimes also taking part in the screening and surgeries themselves. Many of these eye camps are held in collaboration with Sankara Eye Hospital⁷² located in Peddakakani, a village close to Guntur town.

Such projects are usually initiated when individual members or a group of members identify an area that requires help and discuss a proposed project with the GMCANA board. If the latter agrees, they help to raise funds for the project through the association. While some members donate only money, others take an active interest in monitoring the development and implementation of the project. These health camps or projects usually target particular groups and focus on achieving specific outcomes and outputs – for instance, by quantifying the results of health interventions, or identifying a need in the government hospital and pooling resources to bridge it. Details of the funding and the progress of projects are made available to all GMCANA members, making all transactions transparent. Thus, the projects undertaken by GMCANA members are organised with transparency, and funded and monitored in an institutionalised and formal manner.

72 Sankara Eye Hospital in Guntur is part of a chain of eye hospitals in India that was built with substantial donations from hundreds of local and NRI Gunturians. It also received significant funds from TANA Foundation. Today, Sankara Eye Hospital is considered ‘one of the best eye care providers’ in the region. Donations are sent through Sankara Foundation (a religious trust which is very active in California and has a centre in Guntur), which collects the money given by all donors – Indians and non-Indians. I was told that when there was a discussion on where to establish the hospital, the outskirts of Guntur town was chosen over Vijayawada, in part, because many TANA members (who raised money for the hospital) come from the district. This story illustrates the influence of Guntur NRIs in decision-making within these transnational associations.

Through such activities, the GMCANA doctors have, over the years, created a more focussed and organised mode of doing philanthropy (compared to the more unorganised forms of one-to-one giving), one that they sought to make 'efficient' and effective by professionalising and streamlining their activities. In this formalised mode of diaspora philanthropy, TANA and GMCANA become key nodes in the transnational networks that channel resources from the USA to Guntur.

TANA and GMCANA as nodes in a transnational caste network

TANA is not just a 'diasporic' organisation based on linguistic, regional or caste identity; rather, it represents (like GMCANA) a transnational network of highly skilled professionals. The formation of Telugu associations such as TANA in the USA helped NRIs to forge a sense of community away from their 'motherland', and subsequently, these associations became key nodes or conduits in the transnational networks through which donations and development aid flow back to the region.

The institutionalisation of diaspora philanthropy that was pioneered by TANA and GMCANA had a cascading effect on NRIs from Coastal Andhra, many of whom replicated this model by setting up their own trusts and foundations (examples of which are given in the previous chapter). Many GMCANA and TANA members started forming their own family trusts through which they channelled their philanthropic money and activities. Today, NRI professionals from Guntur who are members of GMCANA and TANA pride themselves on pioneering this kind of philanthropy in the region, and on sustaining the spirit of giving in a 'professional way', which they contrast with the activities of Telugus from other regions. Guntur district is seen as not only a pioneer but also as a 'successful example of what more organised giving can do for the region,' a former president of TANA (a doctor from Guntur) explained to me. He pointed out that NRI donors from neighbouring districts, including Krishna, wished to emulate Guntur in this regard. Thus, TANA and GMCANA were key players in the institutionalisation of transnational giving and for whom the desire to do 'service' back home is an overriding concern.

The institutionalisation of diaspora philanthropy in this case was built around ideas of 'efficiency' and 'transparency'. According to some of my interlocutors, these forms of giving replicate modern, western philanthropic practices that NRIs have learned from living abroad. For instance, several NRI doctors told me that the practice of donating to their alma mater through an alumni association is an American practice. By living and working in the USA, this group of medical professionals have imbibed a particular 'culture' of giving, which revolves around efficiency and targeted philanthropy.

Behind the formalisation of philanthropy around the professed principles of transparency and professionalism, caste- and place-based ties are still at work. Caste ties create the trust that allows NRIs to come together to 'give back' collectively and to collaborate in business ventures. This is not to say that everyone who is a part of such transnational networks would trust everyone else within them, but collaborators or partners very often belong to the same network which is defined by caste and regional identity. This way of creating connections is akin to Chinese *guanxi* (social connections), in which social relations are built through giving and by coming together for business purposes, which in turn helps members of the network to accumulate greater social and cultural capital (Smart 1993).

Therefore, in addition to the formalisation of diaspora philanthropy through associations, NRI-run businesses in Guntur are also taking up philanthropic projects as part of their 'corporate social responsibility' commitments, thereby pursuing a more 'corporate' or business model of providing welfare services (Rajak 2011). But unlike the usual corporate model, the collaboration that one often sees in the overlapping of philanthropic and business engagements is made possible by caste-and-place based transitional ties and networks that invoke notions of trust (Harriss 2003: 762; Rudner 1989). In the following sections, I examine how the distinction between for-profit business and not-for-profit philanthropy collapses in the context of these transnational networks.

Mixing Business with Philanthropy

Among the active network of doctors based in the USA who are engaged in development and welfare activities, many also decided to start business activities in Guntur, because of a conducive atmosphere created by the Andhra Pradesh government encouraging NRIs to do something for the motherland – a point I elaborate in the next chapter. The perceived lack of 'infrastructure' in the region and general inefficiency and lack of local expertise, are cited as factors that prompted NRIs to do something useful 'back home' – not only through philanthropy but also business investments. They contrast these features of their home region negatively with the 'efficiency' and expertise of themselves (NRIs), who alone have the capacity to come together to organise and manage projects successfully. Their narratives draw a clear distinction between 'how things are done by the government' and 'how it is done by NRIs'. (However, not all governments are considered 'inefficient', as we will learn in the next chapter.)

Many Andhra NRIs have formed partnerships or companies to start business ventures in the region, some of which are supposed to be run on a non-profit basis in the service

of social causes such as the development of health services, education and agricultural research. In this section, I highlight two examples of NRIs from the same region and caste who have come together to develop projects on the model of ‘philanthro-capitalism’ (McGoey 2012). These businesses are promoted (so they claim) not as profit-making endeavours, but as a means of fulfilling their ‘social responsibility’ – although a close look reveals that these organisations do indeed generate profits. These case studies are: (1) NRI Trust for Education (NRITE) – an educational conglomerate that runs primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions and that also engages in philanthropy through its charitable initiative, Association for Rural Scholars (ARS); and (2) NRI Science and Medical Foundation (NRISMF), which runs the Indo-American Hospital in Mangalagiri in the outskirts of Guntur ‘for the welfare of rural and poor patients’.

Association for Rural Scholars

The NRI Trust for Education (NRITE) is a successful educational business venture that owns and manages several schools and colleges in Guntur, Vijayawada and Hyderabad, with a total of 50,000 students. While NRITE is a for-profit social venture that aims to bring ‘quality education’ to local children, the Association for Rural Scholars (ARS) is a philanthropic organisation started by NRITE that has been distributing scholarships to poor students since 2003. Dr. Alankar Srikanth, a doctor practicing in California, and his brother Alankar Srinath, a Guntur politician and former TDP minister, were the ‘brains’ behind the NRITE and the ARS. Dr. Srikanth raised the initial seed money to set up educational institutions in Andhra Pradesh by soliciting donations from his doctor friends in the USA (all of whom are also Kammas). A portion of those funds were also used for philanthropic purposes such as providing scholarships under the ARS.

The scholarships that are distributed by ARS to ‘deserving’ students usually enable them to study in NRITE-run schools and colleges, although the organisation has also supported a few top-ranking students to study in other institutions of higher education such as the IITs, NITs⁷³ or medical colleges. An interesting feature of this scholarship programme is that once a recipient of a scholarship finishes his or her education, he or she is required to donate part of their salaries to the ARS fund, in order to help continue the cycle of donations. ARS thus has a ‘chain model’ of charity. It also promotes the idea of ‘social investing’ and ‘compassionate capitalism’. The rule that scholarship recipients must contribute to the fund once they become financially independent is intended to build accountability and sustain the spirit of ‘giving back’, as the manager of NRITE explained to me. As of 2012, 120 students had given INR 5,000 each to the corpus fund. Indeed, donations from former scholarship recipients form a large portion of the corpus, only a small fraction of which was provided by NRITE.

73 National Institutes of Technology (NITs) and Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are premier government engineering institutes in India.

However, NRITE was eager to expand its donor base: in January 2012, I learned that they had plans to exhort rich Gunturians to support ARS. A list of 100 names was drawn up to be targeted for fund raising, and brochures were printed for distribution among wealthy Kamma families in Guntur. In a role reversal (NRIs are usually targeted for donations), NRIs appealed to local people for donations. The brochures mentioned that 1,650 students had already benefitted from the ARS scholarship scheme and some 65 million rupees worth of scholarships had been disbursed. However, a teacher in an NRITE school had told me that only 348 students had been given scholarships, of which 135 students had graduated and gotten jobs.

The ARS claims that it does a thorough ‘background check’ in order to select only ‘deserving’ students for scholarships. Caste or religion are not supposed to be considerations; instead, students are selected on the basis of three criteria: ‘they must be poor, they must be from rural areas, and they must be meritorious students’, according to Alankar Srinath. Under the aegis of the ARS, scholarship recipients are selected each year through a state-level exam; for each class (Standard 6 to 10) the five students who score the highest are selected. ARS takes care of the ‘lifelong education’ of these children, provided they maintain a certain academic standard. NRITE holds this ‘talent test’ each year in January.⁷⁴ Once selected, children are enrolled in Indian Rainbow, a school run by NRITE. If their marks fall more than 5 per cent below their marks in the previous exam, the scholarship is revoked.

In January 2012, I had an opportunity to witness the selection exam that was being held in the premises of an Indian Rainbow school in Guntur town. Some eight children in the age group of 10–14 were gathered there. There had been no official announcements about the exam (such ‘talent hunt’ exams had been banned by the Andhra Pradesh government), and I learned from the children that they had gotten information about the competition directly from Alankar Srinath. I also learned that most students were not really ‘poor’ – one of them was a son of a police inspector and the other was the daughter of a milk vendor who had his own shop. The fathers of these children knew Alankar personally and had political connections with him. Moreover, the students were more often than not from the same caste (Kamma) as the brothers who managed NRITE. Thus, the test that was supposed to identify ‘meritorious students’ (whose credentials as ‘rural’ and ‘poor’ were supposed to be checked) actually provided scholarships to those students who were already known to Alankar Srinath, a very popular TDP leader in Guntur. Parents may use their connections to get scholarships that enable their children

⁷⁴ Local people who were critical of NRITE told me that these talent hunts or selection exams actually attract more fee-paying students, and the provision of scholarships to poor students by ARS is a means of getting students. The government banned talent search contests because they were said to be misleading people and becoming a way of catching students for private schools like those run by NRITE. Yet NRITE continued to hold these exams in 2012, when I was in Guntur.

to study in an expensive private school. By providing scholarships in this way, the leader acts as a patron to the students and their parents, who in turn became beneficiaries or clients of the leader and his party.

This story points to several contradictions between how the NRITE represents the ARS scheme and what it actually does (perhaps not unusual for such organisations). However, NRITE has become one of the best-known education providers in Guntur and Krishna districts and has been very successful. Because of its 'NRI' tag, local residents believe that its quality is at par with (if not more than) some of the older and well-established educational institutions. NRISMF, the next case study presented here, has also successfully mixed business and philanthropy by trading on the NRI tag.

NRI Science and Medical Foundation

Like NRITE, the NRI Science and Medical Foundation, or NRISMF, is a business venture that runs on a 'not-for-profit' basis, with the stated aim of providing cheap or sometimes free health facilities to the rural populace. The organisation established a private medical college along with a large teaching hospital. The umbrella organisation, NRISMF, was started in 2001-2 by a group of 32 doctors living in the USA, most of them GMC alumni originally from Guntur and Krishna districts. According to an informant, all these doctors except one are Kammas. Speaking about their motivation for setting up this foundation, the dean claimed that there was a pressing need for a medical college and hospital in the area:

NRI doctors from the coastal districts decided to establish a modern speciality hospital here to serve the rural people of this region. The existing hospitals could not cater to the needs of two million people of the region who require medical assistance. In 2000, a group of NRIs purchased 50 acres of land and started NRISMF between Guntur and Vijayawada ... to serve these rural people.

NRISMF started the hospital mainly because a medical college must have a teaching hospital associated with it in order to train the students. Guntur district already had a government hospital and medical college, as well as an older private medical college. According to government policy at the time, a second medical college could not be established in the same district, but due to the proximity of the NRISMF group to local politicians, the group obtained the required clearances.

In addition to providing paid services, the NRISMF hospital runs several philanthropic projects such as a free maternity ward, a mobile cancer screening van, and a Rajiv

Arogyasri section – a scheme that enables the poor to obtain free healthcare in private hospitals.⁷⁵ The NRISMF also conducts many health camps throughout Guntur district, which provide free medical consultations and medicines. All of these projects are funded by the directors of NRISMF. Apart from these philanthropic projects, establishing a ‘corporate hospital’⁷⁶ in a rural setting was itself considered a philanthropic endeavour, as one of the directors of NRISMF explained:

We brought corporate healthcare to the rural population. NRISMF hospital is a lot cheaper than other corporate hospitals and has also brought good services to the region. We do free healthcare, free delivery, provide free maternal healthcare, free C-sections, and provide a free ICU. For cardiac operation, we take one lakh [rupees], all inclusive. It’s very cheap compared to other corporate hospitals. A couple of our directors are member of the Nargis Dutt Foundation in the US, and they have provided a mobile van which is equipped with ultrasound, lab, and X-ray machine, and we send it to rural areas for cancer screening. Moreover, our medical college provides the best medical education. Starting the hospital and college is an act of philanthropy itself!

Talking to patients from across the Coastal Andhra districts who had been treated at this hospital revealed that NRISMF has a reputation as a ‘very good hospital’ that charges a ‘reasonable amount’ for services that are ‘among the best in the region’.

Scholars who have studied the privatisation of healthcare in India and government schemes such as Arogyasri (Baru and Nundy 2008; Reddy 2012) point out that these developments reflect the influence of a neoliberal governance model, in that they represent the withdrawal of the state from the provision of basic services and the entry of private players in its place. Although some among the poor might benefit from schemes such as Arogyasri, these programmes are often criticised as essentially money-making schemes for private hospitals, which may carry out unnecessary tests and treatments in order to claim reimbursements from the state. But there is more to these developments than a simple ‘retreat of the state’ argument can capture. What is unfolding in the philanthropy-cum-business projects spearheaded by NRIs that I have documented is a complex entangling of local politics with aspirations for upward mobility and capital accumulation by a regionally dominant caste, all of which revolve around the deployment of ‘caste capital’.

75 This programme was initiated by the Congress government in 2008 to provide free quality healthcare to the poor in any tertiary care hospital in Andhra Pradesh. The costs of treatment are reimbursed to the hospitals by the state.

76 Private for-profit hospitals in India are known as ‘corporate hospitals’. Such hospitals charge high fees and promise state-of-the-art facilities, and so are preferred to government hospitals by the middle and affluent classes.

Philanthropy and Caste Capital

There is a close nexus between the two NRI-funded institutions described above, NRISMF and NRITE, which in turn are closely connected with TANA. The President of the NRISMF is also the chairman of an engineering college run by NRITE, and six out of the 32 directors of NRISMF are also directors of NRITE. Moreover, most of the promoters of NRITE are NRI doctors and also members of TANA or its recent breakaway association, NATS – another national Telugu association in the USA. Thus, TANA appears to be a central institution from where the model of combining business with charity emerged.

The cases of NRI business-cum-philanthropic projects presented above show both continuities and differences with the examples of NRI philanthropy described in the previous chapter. The common thread is that all these engagements are framed by notions of efficiency and transparency and are permeated by a strong sense of a community. However, while the examples given in Chapter 4 emphasise the idea of a community defined along caste and regional lines, in the cases discussed here, the idea of community was defined in terms of being medical professionals and having graduated from the same college. Yet, as already mentioned, most of these doctors also share the same caste location. Unlike the examples of NRI philanthropy presented in the previous chapter, in these cases caste and professional networks have been invoked to start business ventures that also engage in philanthropy. Thus, NRISMF and NRITE represent the formation of a transnational circuit of capital accumulation that is mediated through caste- and place-based as well as professional networks, in which Telugu diasporic associations have become key nodes and channels of circulation and organisation. The importance of these networks lies in the ways in which both material and immaterial resources move through them and accumulate, creating an interface between the regional and the global.

‘Caste-capital’ (Deshpande 2013) plays a vital role in nourishing and sustaining these networks. Caste-capital refers to the (largely invisible) symbolic, cultural, or social capital that an actor may possess by virtue of upper or dominant caste affiliation, capital that accords advantages not enjoyed by people from other castes. In the case of transnational Kmmas, caste capital allows for the strategic pairing of the global with the local (Kearney 1995) that facilitates the accumulation of symbolic capital (the NRI status and the respect that comes along with it) and social capital (strong social networks that invoke trust and facilitate deal-making). Such capital also provides economic benefits in migrants’ home region as well as their country of settlement. These caste-based transnational networks, which tie donors and beneficiaries of philanthropic projects together through a morally defined idea of a community, also enable the accumulation of economic capital through

business ventures combined with ideas of community or public welfare. Also, as I show below, they are inextricably intertwined with associational politics of differentiation and the setting of community boundaries through transnational politics.

Caste politics within American Telugu associations

Let's put it this way -- if I go to an ATA meeting I am less likely to meet people from the Circars, people who I know from my Guntur days.

- *Dr. Bhaktavatsala Prasad, an NRI doctor*

Dr. Bhaktavatsala Prasad is a Kamma doctor who went to the USA during the 'first wave' of migration from Guntur. Coming from a wealthy *zamindari*⁷⁷ family, he obtained his medical degree (MBBS) from the GMC and then left for the USA due to the 'lack of opportunities back home'. Later he helped his four siblings as well as his parents to migrate through the visa sponsorship scheme. Dr. Prasad is a member of all four national Telugu associations in the US – TANA and NATS (both known as 'Kamma associations'), and ATA and NATA (known as 'Reddy associations'), but he says that he 'stays away from politics' by which he means standing for elections for offices in these associations. Yet, he is an active member of TANA and has dutifully given money several times when TANA sought donations for its philanthropic activities 'back home'. Though he is not very 'active' politically, Dr. Prasad identifies himself with TANA rather than ATA.

As mentioned above, there are four registered national-level Telugu associations in the USA today.⁷⁸ All four associations share a common genealogy, having broken off from the oldest Telugu association, TANA, which was formed in 1977. The newest association is NATA (North American Telugu Association), created in 2010. Further, each state and city that has more than a few thousand Telugu people has its own local Telugu Association, and sometimes more than one. These are, in turn, often affiliated to one of the four national associations.

Although ATA and TANA are called 'Telugu' associations, pointing to their larger linguistic basis, and their memberships are open to all Telugus, informants told me

77 *Zamindari* was a system of land revenue administration that was imposed in some parts of India by the British colonial state, in which large tracts of land were allotted to superior tenure holders or *zamindars*, who would collect revenue on behalf of the state in return for which they could keep a portion for themselves.

78 In 2015, yet another organisation appeared, the Telangana NRI Association (TeNA), an association of US-based migrants from Telangana. Interestingly, unlike the other four national associations that call themselves Telugu associations (based on language identity), TeNA clearly represents only NRIs who are from the newly formed Telangana state.

several stories about how caste and political alignments are reflected in the workings of these associations. For instance, TANA's membership in its early days came mainly from Coastal Andhra Telugus and from the Brahmin, Kammas, Reddy and Raju caste groups. Soon, the association came to be dominated by Kammas, who monopolised executive committee positions. The disgruntled Reddys and Brahmins then left to form their own national Telugu association in 1991, called ATA (American Telugu Association). According to one story, Marri Channa Reddy, a Congress politician who became the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh in 1990, allegedly 'advised' the Reddys in the USA to reject the leadership of Kammas and form their own group, leading to the creation of ATA. In contrast, the Reddy side of the story points instead to caste politics within the organisation: informants suggested that during the TANA elections a Reddy was tipped to be president for the first time, but he lost due to the Kammas clique voting against him – leading to the breakup of TANA and the formation of ATA. They also said that ever since Chief Minister N. T. Rama Rao was invited to the TANA Convention in 1993, Telugu associations have never been apolitical; rather, it has become difficult to differentiate TANA's interest from those of the Telugu Desam Party.

By 2009, ATA and TANA had split further into two groups each. ATA was divided due to a power struggle between members (mostly Reddys) who were Telangana sympathisers and those who were in favour of a united Andhra Pradesh. The group that were against the formation of a separate Telangana state broke off to form NATA. The split in TANA apparently occurred because of differences over how and where to conduct their biennial Telugu convention. But conflicts and 'ego clashes' had been brewing for some time, according to informants, creating factions within the association. Remarkably, local Guntur politics played a key role in TANA's split. TANA is supported by one Guntur TDP leader while NATS is supported by another TDP politician from the same place. In our conversation, the President of NATS alleged that TANA was being taken over by businessmen, while NATS inherited the reputation of an organisation run by 'educated professionals'. This point was refuted by TANA members, who nonetheless agreed that some businessmen had become powerful in the association but averred that doctors and engineers continue to hold the most influence. A former president of TANA, a businessman, dismissed the allegation that the break-up created a rift within the community, suggesting that 'we are too many, it is natural that more than one organisation will be there for us'.

The way in which TANA broke up highlights the importance of Guntur in the associational lives of Kammas NRIs. Not only state-level politics, but even local politics in Guntur has had a direct impact on the ways in which Coastal Andhra Kammas organise or align themselves in the USA. This shows that the flow of ideas is not unidirectional:

rather, there has been a cross-fertilisation of interests and activities in both directions within this transnational social field. Although TANA and NATS have divided, both retain a strong presence of Coastal Andhra Kammas: their leadership is always drawn from this group, and most members of both associations are supporters of the Telugu Desam Party. In contrast, the top leadership of ATA and NATA are Reddys, and ATA is seen as catering to people from Telangana (specifically, Hyderabad) while NATA is viewed as representing ‘all Telugus’.⁷⁹

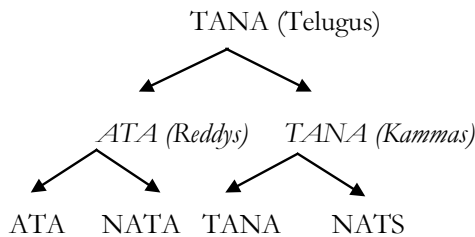


Figure 9: Genealogy of Telugu associations in the USA

Source: Sanam Roohi

Thus, these diaspora associations have been closely involved in the politics of their home state of Andhra Pradesh, which in turn are enmeshed in caste politics. Over the years, the constitution and practices of these associations have come to replicate the caste associations of the early twentieth century (described in Chapter 3). As in colonial times, they work to make caste relevant, but now in a globalising milieu. These diasporic associations perform many roles, one of which is to ‘help’ the Telugu community in the USA and in India. But tracing which association extends what kind of support to whom offers a fascinating insight into the ways the Telugu community is both united and divided, especially along caste and regional lines.

The example of the functioning and politics of Telugu associations in the USA demonstrates that transnational migration does not necessarily weaken caste or regional ties or identities; on the contrary, caste and caste-based political affiliations and regional belonging have been reinforced in the diaspora, as reflected in the formation of separate associations such as ATA and TANA. These organisations and their activities reproduce and participate in the divisive caste and regional politics prevalent in Andhra Pradesh, thereby fracturing the Telugu community in the USA. This is not to say that personal

⁷⁹ Not all ATA supporters were in favour of the formation of a separate Telangana state, and not all NATA members supported a united Andhra Pradesh. In some cases, members remained in ATA out of a sense of nostalgia despite their differing political views, while others joined NATA even though they supported a separate Telangana because of the influence of friends. With the bifurcation of the state these dynamics may have changed. Moreover, the more well-connected and affluent members of the Telugu community often become members of all four associations.

friendships or working relationships are not forged among NRIs belonging to different castes or regions. But in public arenas such as American Telugu associations, the hold of caste and region becomes quite apparent, a fact that my interlocutors explain through the language of ‘difference’.

Politics of ‘difference’

Like other migrants from India and elsewhere, Andhra migrants in the USA have come together to form community associations, especially in cities where there are large numbers of Telugu-speaking NRIs. While most Telugus feel a sense of affinity towards all other Telugus, they are also aware of regional and caste differences. Their narratives often point out that the cultures of the three regions of Andhra differ, with Coastal Andhra culture being represented as more ‘authentic’ and superior. For instance, the Telugu spoken by the Coastal Andhra people is considered by many to be the pure or ‘standard’ version (Mitchell 2009: 24), while the Telangana dialect is supposed to be a less pure version that has been contaminated by Urdu, and people from Rayalaseema are said to talk in a rough and disrespectful way. My interlocutors constantly pointed out these ‘differences’ to me. When I was travelling to Houston for the NATA convention in June 2012, in the same plane, there were more than a dozen New York Telugus on their way to the same convention. I asked some of the women if they were members of TANA. One woman whose husband was a state coordinator for NATA told me sarcastically, ‘We don’t understand their language and they make fun of ours’. She was from Hyderabad, and although she was earlier a member of ATA she later joined NATA. She kept her distance from TANA because she felt its culture was not the same as hers and she could not bear their attitude of superiority. She strongly identified herself as a Telanganite – an identity that was reinforced by the Telangana movement.

In 2012, the Telangana agitation (which began in 2009) was at its peak, and the strong demand for a separate Telangana state also affected migrants from Telangana in the USA. Jyothi, an NRI from the Vellama caste (a powerful landowning community in Telangana) who lived in a neighbourhood of Queens, New York, was taken aback when I told her that I was studying migrants from Coastal Andhra. She asserted that there were more Telangana people than ‘Costa’ (Coastal Andhra) people in the USA. Jyothi’s husband is a doctor and she works in an IT firm. She is very well-connected in the Telugu circuit in Queens because her husband is a member of all the national associations – ATA, TANA, NATS and NATA, and even a local one called the Telugu Cultural and Literary Association (or TLCA). But she was critical of these diaspora associations, particularly TLCA, telling me disapprovingly that it is ‘dominated by people from Coastal Andhra’. This ‘us versus them’ binary can be viewed as an affective response to the strong regionalist sentiments that prevailed at the time within the

Telugu-speaking community. For example, under Jyothi's leadership, the women in her neighbourhood decided to celebrate *Bathukamma* (a Telangana festival) without the support of any association. Since *Bathukamma* coincided with *Navratri* and *Dasara* – festivals celebrated with fanfare by local and national Telugu associations – this Telangana-specific festival had always been side-lined. Jyothi's initiative reflected her deep feeling of marginalisation: 'They [TLCA] celebrate every festival except ours; Telangana festivals are never celebrated by them, so we decided to do it on our own'. *Bathukamma* celebrations started gaining traction in the USA only from the 2000s, and only in some parts of the country.

The air of mistrust between NRIs from Coastal Andhra and those from Telangana was palpable during my fieldwork in the USA. My NRI interlocutors from Coastal Andhra were shocked about the 'violence' that was perpetrated on their people in Hyderabad during the agitation, and they accused Telangana people of being 'ungrateful' that it was 'their' Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and the 'hard working people' of Coastal Andhra who had transformed Hyderabad from a 'sleepy town with only rocks and boulders into an IT hub', as an IT professional in the Bay Area put it. Telangana migrants, on the other hand, talked about the 'loot' of the region by 'greedy' Andhra people who had 'robbed' Telangana's resources. A young Kamma woman entrepreneur in California (who has lived in the USA for almost two decades and is married to a German man), told me that due to the 'vitriolic hatred' that people of Telangana have for Coastal Andhra people, she was not inclined to do any 'service' to Hyderabad (such as setting up an offshore office there), but instead wanted to 'help' a smaller city such as Visakhapatnam (where she grew up) to 'develop'.

The discursive and political divide that I have described here is an amalgam of caste, region, culture and politics, in which Coastal Andhra is seen as a Kamma and TDP bastion, and Telangana and Rayalaseema as regions which oppose the perceived domination of Coastal Andhra Kammias in the (undivided) state. The Telangana movement, a major plank of whose ideology was that Kammias or 'Costa' people had taken over Hyderabad's resources, should be seen in this light. With the widespread hold of caste and regional identity on Telugu migrants, the ways in which they organise themselves through diaspora associations in the USA is also shaped by the state and regional politics of India. The caste basis of these associations, which as we have seen are dominated by either Kammias or Reddys, is not just an iteration or performance of caste identity or a result of the accumulation of capital and resources, but also emanates from this inter-regional politics which creates a social field of action for competing groups within the diaspora as well as India.

This transnational political field has produced a politics of differentiation between the two major caste groups in the USA, who have subsumed the politics of other castes (neither Kamma nor Reddy) within them, creating essentialised *uber*-categories of Reddy and Kamma which are popularly characterised by community-specific traits. Reddys are considered ‘power hungry’ and so do not easily trust anyone else, not even their own community members, and are regarded as individual players; whereas Kammas see themselves as hardworking and as having deep social bonds with one another, characterised by relations of reciprocity. Because of these traits, they are said to work together well and do things in a more organised and efficient way. While such stereotypes (negative and positive) do not create visible enmity between the two groups in the USA, they create a politics of cultural differentiation that often translates into a volatile struggle for political power in Andhra Pradesh. Whereas Reddys and Kammas often see each other as opponents or rivals, they also regard themselves as the only two legitimate caste groups who can represent Telugus both in America and in Andhra.⁸⁰ This echoes the succinct observation made by Elliott in 1970:

The culture of dominance is such that conflict among Reddis, or between Reddis and Kammas, is honourable and understandable within the system but conflict between Reddis and weavers, for example upsets the system and is to be feared (Elliott 1995[1970]: 133).

When these Telugu associations, each with their own set of caste and religious affiliations, become nodes in transnational circuits through which ideas and resources flow, group solidarities are further strengthened. For Coastal Andhra Kammas, this sense of solidarity works to recreate the community’s boundary within a transnational setting. The Kamma caste affiliation marks its members as ‘efficient’ and dependable, and endowed with the tangible resources and intangible qualities needed to build a reciprocal or mutually beneficial relationship, such that one does not have to look outside of one’s caste network for alliances or business connections. The idioms of merit and efficiency animate the community’s discourse about itself and become markers of differentiation between Kammas and the other major caste groups (particularly Reddys). However, cultural differentiation is not just a discursive strategy of caste politics but also works as a filtering strategy, as I explain in the next section.

‘Merit’ and ‘Efficiency’ as Community Traits

The preceding discussion indicates that TANA is not only an organisation of educated

80 With the creation of a separate Telangana, the domination of Reddys in the state has been challenged somewhat by the powerful Vellama caste, who are considered to dominate the current ruling party of Telangana, the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), which came to power after bifurcation.

Telugu professionals living in the US; it also unites Coastal Andhra Kammias on a common platform. TANA, the TANA Foundation and GMCANA became springboards for the development of transnational philanthropy, by providing an organised mechanism for people who want to 'give back' to their places of origin or alma mater. TANA was a prime channel for such donations up to the mid-2000s, after which many NRIs started sending money back home through their own family trusts and societies. These associations also streamlined and formalised transnational philanthropy in Guntur, reflecting the 'professional' character of their memberships.

Through these channels and networks, particular models of development and philanthropy and ideas of progress have also circulated. In particular, NRI involvement in the education sector in Guntur, through scholarship schemes and the construction of school infrastructure, has revolved around key ideas of 'merit' and 'efficiency'. Similarly, scholarship schemes and endowment funds established by NRI doctors and the TANA Foundation target needy and 'meritorious' students who wish to pursue higher education. According to an official TANA statement:

Meritorious students are selected from low-income families that make less than Rs 65,000 per year and do not belong to any reservation category and as such do not receive any financial support from the Government. According to the current policy in Andhra Pradesh the Government reimburses tuition fee for professional studies for these students. However there are many left behind without any support.⁸¹

'Merit' was ostensibly the basis for selecting students in all the NRI-supported scholarship schemes I documented. GMCANA and TANA similarly encourage their members to donate to their colleges as an act of reciprocity towards institutions that recognised their 'merit', which was also a key theme of NRI narratives about their successful migration and careers (discussed in Chapter 4). NRI doctors, in turn, strive to recognise merit in others by giving scholarships to 'deserving candidates', in particular those who are not from the reserved categories – reflecting their generalised resentment against state policies aimed at providing compensatory support for marginalised groups.⁸² As a 'general category' but dominant caste group (Deshpande 2013), Kammias continually invoke the principle of 'merit', which works as code to devalue those who gain admission to educational institutions or government jobs through the reservation or positive discrimination system (cf. Subramanian 2015; Upadhyya 2007). In scholarship schemes and other such programmes, 'merit' is constantly claimed as the sole factor determining

81 <http://www.tana.org/foundation/scholarships/scholarships-in-india> (last accessed on 23 August 2016).

82 In the mid-2000s, the Government of Andhra Pradesh started a fee reimbursement scheme for economically weaker sections to pay for their higher education in private institutions.

who gets the award, while ‘need’ gets redefined through the notion of merit. Merit, defined as personal effort and talent through which one succeeds in education and life in general, is a key theme of the narratives of these migrant professionals from Guntur, because they also strongly identify themselves as meritorious and therefore successful. In turn, they promote merit among others through their philanthropic engagements. By channelling their aid through formal channels and organisations which they control, they believe that they are best able to reach ‘deserving’ beneficiaries, who are defined especially as those who do not belong to the ‘reserved categories’. A student who approaches a hostel for accommodation, a philanthropic organisation for a scholarship, or a college for a ‘seat’, has to first be marked as ‘meritorious’ through a test or based on his or her academic record.

However, the very particularistic and locally embedded aspect of these acts of giving becomes clear when we find that in many cases, the ‘deserving’ and ‘meritorious’ beneficiaries of these schemes come from the donor’s own caste or village. In many instances, more than exams being used to assess merit, students were pre-marked as inherently or potentially meritorious based on their caste affiliations. This observation points to the exclusivist moral universe in which the highly educated regional diaspora operates, which obliges them to ‘give back’ to their own community (see Chapter 3). Thus, supporting meritorious students becomes an act of recognition, of the inherent potential of a student who is marked by virtue of being from the non-reserved category and so is by definition meritorious (in contrast to ‘reserved category’ students who receive government support purely on the basis of their caste or economic status). The idea of merit and efficiency as community traits runs through many stories told by my interlocutors in Andhra and the US. Furthermore, to build reciprocal alliances, NRI doctors fall back on their own caste- and region-based transnational networks which invoke a sense of ‘trust’, both when they collaborate on philanthropic projects and when starting business ventures in the region (activities that are often interlinked, as noted above).

Kammas usually decry the reservation system because it is based on caste and not ‘merit’, yet their own activities and narratives, in tying merit inextricably to caste, reproduce caste privilege. Thus, notions of merit, and the rules governing the distribution of NRI largesse, could be seen as filtering tactics that exclude members of other castes from competing for such support. Yet, this aspect is submerged as the discourse of merit becomes self-reinforcing. The term also acquires new meanings, for instance when I was told that ‘deserving’ Kamma boys migrate to the USA because the reservation system limits their potential back home. The discourse of merit thus provides a moral grounding to the community’s self-representation, and the practice of targeting

meritorious students in their philanthropic engagements provides material resources to help disadvantaged community members to become upwardly mobile, within an already upwardly mobile community, filtering others in the process from benefitting from their largesse. Therefore, their ‘impulse’ to give (Bornstein 2009) is more than an affective response but emerges from the intersection of multiple local and historical processes.

Conclusion

Outward migration from Coastal Andhra, and the subsequent inflow of diasporic resources, have rapidly transformed Guntur’s image from that of an agricultural region to one that produces skilled professionals for the global market. The social landscape has also changed, as a predominately agrarian caste has transformed itself into a transnational class of educated professionals and businessmen, who reach out to their home region through the transmission of money and ideas. Although settled in the West, Andhra NRIs remain firmly grounded in village ties and caste-based practices and embroiled in (trans)regional politics. These highly skilled professionals consider themselves to be ‘meritorious’, having acquired medical or engineering degrees in India which enabled them to migrate to the USA and successfully pursue their careers there – both accomplishments that are understood as measures of their merit. Many of these NRIs are now inclined to ‘give back’, in some cases out of a sense of obligation and others in order to build reciprocal social and business relationships.

My Kamma interlocutors prided themselves on managing their philanthropic activities in a professional and transparent manner. ‘Professionalism’ is also a key trope around which many Kamma-owned enterprises in the region also construct themselves. Professional medical training (highly valued in Guntur as a marker of inherent talent and superiority) and transnational experiences enhance this assumed characteristic. Caste inflected ideas of efficiency, professionalism and merit, coupled with a disdain for socialist ideology and government-sponsored social justice policies, are elements of the collective self-identity of a transnationalised caste. In this dominant discourse, professionalism and ‘merit’ are closely intertwined – yet the sub-text is one of caste. Coastal Andhra Kamma professionals view themselves as carriers of these values, and caste as a collectivity lays claim to these values, which are reflected in the ways in which these NRIs engage in philanthropy.

As discussed in Chapter 3, collective giving for the cause of education was an important means by which the Kamma caste tried to achieve parity with the Brahmins in the late colonial period. This community-building project did not end with Indian

independence, which brought many social changes including the later pattern of out-migration, but has only expanded and become transnational. While caste is not openly discussed in the Kamma diaspora, and people even in Guntur are sometimes wary of spelling out their caste identity in public, caste affiliation becomes evident in the politics of associations such as TANA and ATA. It is also seen in the politics of giving, which has a strong caste angle – either in terms of the channels through which money is remitted or the identification of causes and beneficiaries – as shown in the previous chapter. These practices of giving have congealed within the idea of the community itself, which promotes giving within and for the caste and also represents itself as a ‘community that gives’. This pattern of caste-based philanthropy played an important role in forging caste solidarity historically, and now, the Kamma diaspora is similarly engaged in initiatives to contribute to the welfare of their ‘own’ people back home, thereby reproducing caste ties and boundaries.

Diaspora philanthropy is just one type of flow circulating within this transnational social field that is shaped and stratified by caste and regional identities. As the community has rapidly transnationalised, Kamma munificence has become constitutive of the diaspora’s continuing bonds with Coastal Andhra. Within this stratified transnational social field, intricate caste-based networks have been fashioned in which affluent diasporic Kammas recognise the potential or ‘merit’ of less affluent community members (the ‘beneficiaries’ of their donations) while asserting their own merit. However, as I show in the next chapter, the elaborate networks that have been forged by this transnational philanthropy are not always stable, and may change their contours, becoming dense or thinning out, in response to the socio-political dynamics of Guntur in particular, and Andhra Pradesh state in general. The continued embedding of NRIs in local caste and party politics has made the circulation of philanthropy uneven and closely dependent on the political landscape of the home region.

Chapter 6

DIASPORA PHILANTHROPY AND THE LOCAL STATE

It was late in the morning on 4 January 2011 when I had the opportunity to meet the Guntur Collector⁸³ for the first time. Dammalapati *garu*, who took me to the Collector's office, is an important person in Guntur political circles and a prominent person at the Sri Venkateswarswami temple in Guntur. He was visiting the Collector at his 'camp office' with two of his friends, to seek permission to organise a celebration at the temple. After an hour's wait, the Collector's arrival was announced by a *bantroth* (personal attendant to a government official), and after another half hour, it was our turn to meet him. The group met the Collector, handed him a document, spoke in rapid Telugu, and within a few minutes got ready to leave. Then, as if suddenly realising that I was also there, a quick line was spoken about my research on NRIs and their 'local contributions'. The Collector signed my letter and directed me to the Chief Executive Officer or CEO of the Guntur Zilla Parishad (henceforth, ZP)⁸⁴ to get 'all' the information about 'NRI contributions' from the NRI Cell.

The visit to the Collector's office was a novel experience for me for several reasons – two of which stand out. It was for the first time that I was officially introduced to the NRI Cell, and I made a mental note that I should find out more about the Cell as part of my research. Second, it was my first meeting with a District Collector, and I was quite impressed with the aura of the office that led influential town people to assume a stance of affected deference to the Collector, including the ZP CEO (another important bureaucratic office at the district level). When I came to Guntur again later that year to start my extended fieldwork, a different person was holding the Collector's office, but the deferential treatment of him by prominent citizens remained the same. Moreover, the Collector or the ZP CEO were always one of the 'chief guests' in the many events that I witnessed during my fieldwork, pointing to a symbiotic relationship between powerful caste groups in the town, and government functionaries and state representatives. This reciprocal relationship is not confined to the local topography, but has acquired a transnational character, as I argue below.

As discussed in Chapter 1, national and state governments in India view the Indian diaspora as a repository of surplus financial capital and global knowledge, and have made efforts to involve NRIs in state-led development programmes. Yet, the national policy framework does not account for the highly particular ways in which NRIs engage with their home regions. In this chapter, I unravel the involvement of the regional diaspora in a particular domain of public policy – rural development – and show that their 'contributions' are uneven, fluctuating in response to local and provincial state-level

83 The Collector is the top administrative official at the district level in India. The term is a hang-over from the colonial administrative system of land revenue collection, in which the top district administrator was the 'collector' of taxes.

84 The Zilla Parishad is a district-level elected body.

political dynamics. The discussion elaborates the argument that diaspora philanthropy is not neutral, nor does it simply reflect a 'neoliberal' agenda of fostering public-private collaborations.⁸⁵ Rather, NRI 'philanthropic' projects are revealed to be highly political, as they become entangled with, and attempt to influence, local and state-level (and often caste-based) politics. The institutionalisation of diaspora philanthropy within local state bodies therefore becomes a means by which the dominant castes or powerful groups are able to co-opt the local state⁸⁶ to serve their own interests (cf. Jeffrey and Lerche 2000). I conclude that the institutionalisation of diaspora philanthropy within the bureaucratic machinery works to further embed an already powerful group within the local state.

As noted in Chapter 3, Coastal Andhra has been sending migrants to the USA and other western countries in significant numbers since the 1960s, but their philanthropic engagements became noticeable only in the 1990s, intensifying in the 2000s. While N.T. Rama Rao was the first Chief Minister to invite NRIs to return to Andhra Pradesh to help the state's development,⁸⁷ it was under Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's government (who was in power from 1995 to 2004) that the involvement of NRIs in state developmental activities became significant. A pioneering initiative was Naidu's flagship Janmabhoomi programme, widely considered to be a 'neoliberal' project (Reddy 2002), which created a direct partnership between state government agencies and citizens to build rural infrastructure in Andhra Pradesh. Neoliberalism 'represents a shift in the rationality of government and in the shape and nature of states', whereby the state becomes 'government at a distance' and incorporates social institutions to carry out its traditional responsibilities (Gupta and Sharma 2006: 277).

In Andhra Pradesh, programmes such as Janmabhoomi, as well as new government institutions such as the NRI Cell, represent such a shift in ushering an era of neoliberal governmentality (Ferguson and Gupta 2002). However, neoliberal modes of governance are also shaped by local 'cultural frameworks' (Steger and Roy 2010: 76). This chapter explores the specific 'cultural framework' that enabled such policy initiatives to take root in Andhra. Further, it examines the politics and practices of the NRIs who started liaising with the state, making it a successful model of public-private collaboration for rural development.

85 Public-private partnership (PPP) is a business model in which government bodies and private entities enter into an arrangement to jointly finance or execute a 'public' project by sharing costs and profits. In the case of philanthropic projects, private entities or individuals provide resources which are matched by government grants.

86 Elsewhere, I further disaggregate the notion of the state, explaining how it is shaped by local or regional cultural and political registers in this case (Roohi, forthcoming).

87 For instance, Dr. Kakarla Subbarao, a radiologist practising in the USA, returned to India in 1986 after N.T. Rama Rao requested Telugus settled in the USA to come back and work for the 'development' of the state. Dr. Subbarao became the director of the Nizam Institute of Medical Sciences, Hyderabad. Other professionals – particularly doctors – also returned around the same time. Another example is Dr. Gullapalli N. Rao, founder of L V Prasad Eye Institute in Hyderabad.

In Chapter 3, I argued that ‘giving’ has become part of the caste *habitus* of Coastal Andhra Kammās, and in Chapter 4, contextualised the caste-inflected nature of diasporic giving within the colonial past, when caste associations in Coastal Andhra performed a role similar to that of diasporic organisations and associations today. In Chapter 5, I explored how philanthropy is constitutive of the transnational Kamma caste, reflecting the intra- and inter-community dynamics that play out transnationally but also creating a collective identity around notions of efficiency, transparency and merit – in the process reaffirming existing social hierarchies in the region. In this chapter, I shift the focus to how these transnational practices are closely implicated in local governance as diasporic actors have entered into partnership with the local (district level) and provincial (state level) government bodies.

In the following sections, I explain the transnationalisation of the local and provincial state through the examples of two government initiatives – first, the Janmabhoomi (motherland) programme started by then Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu in the mid-1990s, and second, the NRI Cell that was started by the Guntur ZP in 2002, through which NRIs were invited to become ‘partners in local development’ by channelling donations to rural development in their home district. I argue that in these cases, philanthropy represents an act of reciprocity in which NRIs deploy their ‘global expertise’ and resources to accumulate greater symbolic and political capital. Further, I argue that the rate of conversion of this ‘capital’ (cf. Bourdieu 1984) is dependent on the political dynamics of the region. Finally, I suggest that the powerful position of Kammās in Coastal Andhra is augmented by this mutually beneficial exchange, placing the community in an advantageous bargaining position *vis-a-vis* the local and provincial state.

Janmabhoomi: A Public-Private Programme for Rural Development

Janmabhoomi is the people’s movement for the reconstruction and revitalisation of the society.

- E. D. Setty, in *‘A Model for Securing People’s Participation in Janmabhoomi - Rural Development’* (2000: 11).

Janmabhoomi is a movement imbued with principles of democracy, self-reliance and concerted coordinated community action for all round development in rural and urban areas. The programme carries with it emotional and patriotic tone. It aims and stands for comprehensive community development, a massive people’s planned movement with the

stimulus provided by the government.

- N. Chandrababu Naidu, *Foreword in E. D. Setty's 'A Model for Securing People's Participation in Janmabhoomi - Rural Development' (2000).*

The Janmabhoomi initiative in Andhra Pradesh was launched in January 1997 as a mass mobilisation effort to involve local people in rural development planning, decision-making and finance through 'Panchayati Raj'⁸⁸ Institutions (PRI). Janmabhoomi has been described as a 'patriotic vision' that evoked love for the 'motherland' in order to foster people's participation in governance in the collective pursuit of progress. It is important to note that *abhimanam* or patriotism for one's region and language has a long history in Coastal Andhra (Mitchell 2009: 12). N.T. Rama Rao used similar rhetoric by collapsing *Telugu desa*, or motherland of Telugus into *atmagauravam*, or self-respect of the Telugu people, when he founded the Telugu Desam Party in 1982 (Srinivas 2012).

The Janmabhoomi programme encouraged citizens – both locals and NRIs – to take charge of rural infrastructure development by identifying areas or sectors that needed to be 'developed' and contributing 30 per cent of the cost of the projects (with the remaining cost borne by the government). The motivations for participation were multiple, but the programme was based on the assumption of an enlightened citizenry for whom 'participation could be self interest, concern for others, concern for environment and a sense of common cause and public good' (Setty 2000: 9). According to a website dedicated to the achievements of Chandrababu Naidu,⁸⁹ Janmabhoomi took governance to the level of 'philosophy' through which 'public representatives and the government come together to initiate development programmes at a micro level and create an inverted pyramid model for progress.'

According to several of my interlocutors, Janmabhoomi was inspired by South Korea's *Saemaul Undong* programme, while others said that it was former US President Bill Clinton who requested Naidu to initiate this programme. However, opponents of the programme suggested that it was promoted by the World Bank. Indeed, multilateral organisations point to Janmabhoomi as a success story in the public-private model of development (Mooij 2007). For instance, *A Handbook for Trainers on Participatory Local Development* refers to the programme as a 'PRI model for greater empowerment of the rural population and being in the spirit of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment that called for greater decentralisation [*sic*]' (Jain and Polman 2003).

88 'Panchayati raj' refers to a three-tier (village, mandal and district) governance system in India to foster greater decentralisation of political power and government decision-making.

89 http://chandrababunaidu.com/?post_type=dt_portfolio&p=392 (last accessed on 23 August 2016).

However, even at its peak the programme had limited appeal, and with the change of the state government in 2004⁹⁰ it died a silent death. But in the late 1990s, a few NRIs along with their families in Guntur district, came forward to participate in Janmabhoomi initiatives by identifying local projects that needed support, providing 30 per cent matching grants, and supervising the projects to completion. Guntur was perhaps the only district where NRIs showed some interest in partnering with the Andhra Pradesh government under this programme.

Guntur – Janmabhoomi’s success story

In Guntur district, the efficacy of this programme was mentioned by my interlocutors in two contexts – first, the involvement of village residents who gave financial support for infrastructure projects, and second, the support of NRIs and/or their families for such projects. As I show through specific examples below, it was the particular contexts in which these public-private development projects were undertaken that made Guntur district perhaps the only place where this programme was successful, and where local residents and NRIs collaborated with the government to build rural infrastructure.

Chintaparru is a large village in the delta region of Guntur district, from which several people had migrated to the USA in the first wave. It is also the first village to develop a Janmabhoomi rural development project. For this project, most of the money was contributed by one family, the Arikondalas. Dr. Raghavaiah Arikondala is the most prominent contributor from this family and is remembered with much reverence in the village. He had migrated to the USA in 1967 to pursue a Ph.D. in organic chemistry at Columbia University. His wife was a paediatrician who went with him and completed her residency in the USA. Dr. Raghavaiah, now retired, lives in New Jersey and is one of the most respected Kamma community leaders in the USA. He has an impeccable reputation there in Guntur as well, as a man with ‘no political interests’⁹¹ and a leader who works selflessly ‘for the community’. He is a founding member of TANA and a TDP supporter. NRI Kammass in the USA – particularly those who are active members of TANA and involved in community work – often turn to him for advice.

When I interviewed Dr. Raghavaiah in July 2012 at his home in Edison, New Jersey, he told me the following story. With no children of his own, he was keen to use his money to set up charitable projects and endowments in India under the auspices of TANA. He considers TANA to be ‘his baby’: he was one of the founding members and has been

90 In 2004, the Telugu Desam Party lost power to the Congress Party led by Y. S. Rajashekhar Reddy. With Naidu coming back to power in June 2014, Janmabhoomi has again been revived, but in a very different shape. When I visited Guntur in December 2014, ZP officials told me that the programme is now limited to a rural grievance redressal programme. For details, see <http://jbm.ap.gov.in> (last accessed on 10 November 2015).

91 Interestingly, this phrase means having no political ambitions or desire for personal gain from being active in associational politics, considered to be a positive attribute.

closely associated with the organisation from the beginning. In 1996, even before the Janmabhoomi programme started, Dr. Raghavaiah's father – a 'freedom fighter' and a community notable in Guntur district who still lived in Chintaparru – decided to 'do something' for their village. He was keen to utilise his 'surplus money' (much of which came from his NRI children) to improve basic infrastructure. The family was advised by the MLA of their constituency, Alankar Srinath (mentioned briefly in Chapter 4), who is a Kamma TDP leader, to seek government help for their endeavour. Dr. Raghavaiah sent a letter to Chandrababu Naidu with his request, and a few days later, during the annual convention of the party, Naidu announced that NRIs would become partners in local development through a programme he called 'Janmabhoomi'. Dr. Raghavaiah claimed that this event laid the basis for the programme. With Naidu's assent, Dr. Raghavaiah went about raising funds for his village from other migrants from Chintaparru living in the USA, including his younger brother (a doctor), and he routed the money to India through TANA to help develop Chintaparru with government support.

Janmabhoomi soon expanded into a state-wide programme and widened its scope by requesting (local and NRI) citizens to get involved in the development of the 'motherland'. Progressing in phases, Janmabhoomi encouraged decentralisation, participatory development and minimal interference from bureaucratic agencies and political interests in developmental activities. Financial details about the Janmabhoomi programme are difficult to find, but information gathered during fieldwork suggests that the involvement of NRIs was very sporadic and hinged on their personal relations with political leaders. Given Janmabhoomi's strong association with the TDP and the Kamma community – for instance, the construction work under the programme was usually taken up by civil contractors who were also party functionaries of the TDP – non-Kamma local citizens were not enthusiastic about the programme. The programme also faced strong opposition from other political parties, due to which the scheme only succeeded in a few pockets of Guntur district – particularly in Kamma-dominated villages. This outcome suggests that, rather than implementing the 'collective vision' of inclusive development promoted by Janmabhoomi, the scheme was appropriated by a network of caste-based powerful groups including NRIs. Indeed, I was not able to find examples of private participation in infrastructure development through Janmabhoomi outside of Guntur district. Within the district, I could identify only a handful of cases apart from Chintaparru, such as the town of Anepalle and a couple of nearby villages. The noteworthy difference between Chintaparru and Anepalle is that in the latter case, local citizens also became partners in the infrastructure development projects.

Significantly, both Chintaparru and Anepalle are Kamma-dominated places, and the donors for the Janmabhoomi projects were also local or NRI Kammass. Much like the

other diaspora charities or GMCANA-organised philanthropic projects described in previous chapters, the state-led Janmabhoomi programme also had an intimate link with TANA (a Kamma association) – and of course also with the TDP (a Kamma dominated party). Unsurprisingly, with Naidu's exit from the government in 2004, the Janmabhoomi programme collapsed, and it is only recently, after the return of the TDP to power in 2014, that the programme has been revived.

Thus, Janmabhoomi's appeal could not be sustained, and even the meagre NRI participation fizzled out by the late 1990s. But the idea behind the programme (soliciting donations from private citizens for infrastructure and rural development) was revived in a different shape when the TDP Chairman of the Zilla Parishid, elected in 2001, decided to implement the programme at the district level by starting an NRI Cell. Whereas Janmabhoomi, a state-wide programme, sought collaboration from both local and NRI citizens, the NRI Cell targeted only NRIs, and even more narrowly NRIs from Guntur district, constricting the concept of public-private collaboration both spatially and socially. This important shift in the government's vision of the partners who may be deemed appropriate for rural development points to the increasing political significance of the upper caste, middle-class NRIs who come from a particular region. The example of the NRI Cell illustrates this point, discussed below.

The Guntur NRI Cell

'A unique feature of this district is the NRI Cell.'

- CEO of the Guntur ZP, March 2012

This statement by the CEO is partly true: while the concept of an 'NRI Cell' was pioneered in Guntur district during 2002–03, it was not a novel idea since it was a replication of the Janmabhoomi model. Moreover, the Cell format was later copied by other coastal districts, and so it did not remain a 'unique feature' of Guntur district. However, the NRI Cells in other districts were largely ineffective in attracting NRI funds, and Guntur stands as the only successful example of a local district government entering into partnership with NRIs to promote rural development. As I argue below, Guntur's success can be attributed to many reasons, including the history of caste specific giving and consolidation in the region, the enmeshing of caste and politics in Coastal Andhra, and the quest for power and control by dominant groups – all of which have now become transnationalised through philanthropic networks.

The official story about the founding of the Cell holds that the local government

decided to tap the resources of Guntur NRIs, who had already shown their willingness to contribute under the Janmabhoomi programme. After receiving clearance to receive foreign funds under the Foreign Contributions Regulations Act (FCRA)⁹² in 2003, the Guntur ZP reached out to Guntur NRIs, asking those who were interested in supporting village infrastructure projects to approach the Cell. Many 'altruistic' NRIs responded by contacting the Cell. The procedure was that the donor and the NRI Cell would agree on a project, after which a cost estimate was drawn up, of which 30 per cent would be provided by the NRI and the remainder by the Cell. The overseas money was sent in installments to the NRI Cell's account in the State Bank of India, Guntur. Since the NRI donor had the right to decide which projects to support, in almost all cases, they were located in their own villages. As of 2012, NRI funds contributed to projects implemented through the NRI Cell amounted to two million US dollars.

During my fieldwork, I collected three different lists from the NRI Cell (updated in 2011, 2012 and 2013, respectively) detailing the projects undertaken by them. As of May 2013, the Cell had completed 233 projects in different villages of Guntur district. Table 8 reproduces a list that illustrates the nature of work carried out by the Cell.

Table 8: Guntur NRI Cell projects as of May 2013

Source: Guntur NRI Cell

Description of work	Number of projects
Cement roads	66
School buildings	55
Compound walls and community halls	41
P.W.S Schemes/Pipeline etc.	10
G.P. office buildings	5
Construction of bridges	7
Construction of library buildings	5
Construction of indoor stadium	1
Construction of veterinary hospitals	8
Construction of burial grounds	12
Improvements to PHC sub-centre	3
Others (drains, metal & gravel roads, school toilets etc.)	20
Total	233

The lists collected from the Cell reveal the contours and features of transnational flows of philanthropy in Guntur. First, the donor base is overwhelmingly located in the USA: out of 151 donors, two were from Singapore, four from the UK and the rest from

92 FCRA regulates the flow of charitable or developmental resources to India from outside the country.

North America, particularly the USA. Second, the lists show a spatial bias in these NRI projects. Third, they show that the flow of funds to the Cell has been uneven, peaking in the mid-2000s and then plummeting. I elaborate on the latter two points below.

Therefore, behind the apparently simple mechanism of the functioning lies a more complex reality, which suggests how and why the NRI Cell in Guntur district could be a successful experiment in institutionalising transnational giving through a local government body. Behind the ‘official’ workings of the Cell, there is an intimate history of transnational trust and friendship, which also tells an interesting story about the caste politics of the region. While resource mobilisation through Janmabhoomi and the NRI Cell was informed by neoliberal ideas of development promoted by transnational development agencies, civil society groups as well as the state government, it is important to trace the negotiations that took place at the local level and the rhetoric that was used to justify this kind of public-private collaboration. This, in turn, can yield a critical understanding of how transnational civil society groups belonging to dominant castes and classes have become embedded in the local state. The links between diaspora philanthropic networks and access to government machinery are unravelled further below.

Guntur politics and diaspora philanthropy

The ZP called a press meet on 1 October 2011, which I had the opportunity to attend. While the stated reason for this meeting was to announce the distribution of *puraskarams* or scholarships,⁹³ ZP officials took the opportunity to highlight the achievements of the NRI Cell in general.

It was already two months since the term of the last ZP Chairperson had ended, in August 2011. Fresh elections for the position (and other local body positions) had been delayed due to a political impasse in Andhra Pradesh, and the seat was still vacant.⁹⁴ The position had fallen under the ‘reserved category’ for the 2006–2011 term, prior to which it had been occupied by Narasimhaiah (between 2001 and 2006) – the ‘founder’ of the NRI Cell. Although he had been out of office for the past five years, Narasimhaiah presided over the press meet, giving an overview of the achievements of the NRI Cell to the press. In many ways, the story of the NRI Cell is also the story of Narasimhaiah, and the fate of Narasimhaiah and the NRI Cell were inextricably tied up together, as I now explain.

93 The press meet was held to announce the *Puraskaram* or scholarship distribution scheme that Daggubati Foundation (a USA-based Foundation) and the NRI Cell jointly organise every year.

94 Elections for the local government bodies were conducted in early 2014 after a gap of more than two years, and a new Chairperson of Guntur Zilla Parishad was elected from the Backward Caste (BC) category, as the Guntur seat was reserved for BCs that term. Due to this, Narasimhaiah could not stand for elections in this term as well.

At the press conference, Narasimhaiah took centre stage and extolled the work that had been carried out by the ZP through the NRI Cell. As its 'founder', the Cell and its achievements were as much his own achievement as of the ZP. Journalists present at the meeting assumed that he would again be elected Chairman whenever elections were held, and everyone, from the ZP staff to the journalists gathered in the room, treated him as if he already occupied the office.

In an interview later that day, when I asked about the history of the NRI Cell, Narasimhaiah related his story: On a visit to 'America', he built a 'strong case' amongst the Guntur NRIs to come forward and 'help' to develop the infrastructure of their villages. The Guntur Zilla Parishad had registered itself under the FCRA and so could receive donations from Overseas Indians directly, making the flow of donations easy. Sometimes rupee transfers also came from NRI accounts⁹⁵ in local banks to the Cell's account. Taking credit for creating this model, he explained that the Cell was a pioneering institution in which 'private parties' (NRIs) were recruited to support rural development projects to assist the government in doing its 'job'. Narasimhaiah further explained:

As of October last year (2010), the NRI Cell had undertaken more than 200 projects in different villages. The Cell is my brainchild ... it has till now received 20 lakh (2 million) dollars from the NRIs, most of it when I was the Chairman.

Narasimhaiah conceived the idea of the Cell when he saw that alumni of the Guntur Medical College settled in the USA frequently attended alumni meetings in Guntur and were donating money for the hospital. Observing these efforts, he realised the potential of NRIs, who he believed had the money and the 'will' to contribute to development. Moreover, he said that the ZP was facing financial crunch and did not have enough funds to carry out development projects in rural areas. Narasimhaiah then put his plans into action:

In my time there was not enough money to sustain the ZPs administrative functions for three years, leave alone five years. This made me think about the NRIs and when I visited major cities of America in 2001, I asked people I met to donate for the ZP through the NRI Cell. My idea was to develop the [infra]structure – school buildings, roads, community halls. See, NRIs were interested in having their names on the structures and

95 NRI accounts are special accounts for NRIs in banks authorised by the Reserve Bank of India to provide such services. The account is primarily used to deposit funds that are repatriated from the country in which the NRI resides, which may be in Indian rupees or foreign currency. These accounts carry higher interest rates and other benefits to attract foreign exchange deposits from Indians living overseas.

happy to only pay 30 per cent of the total amount – the rest to be covered by the ZP.

Vasudev, assistant to the next ZP Chairperson Rajamma, partly corroborated Narasimhaiah's account. He mentioned that under the Panchayati Raj system, money for development work comes from the ZP general funds. However, these funds are never sufficient. Therefore, an 'innovative' scheme was started by the former Chairman because of his connections with NRIs in the USA. But he also pointed to the biases within these projects:

Narasimhaiah had good relations with many of the NRIs from Guntur in the US. Many NRIs also voluntarily wanted to help develop Guntur district. Initially, NRIs had to only pay 30 per cent of the cost and the Cell covered the rest. But there were serious objections raised by some people as NRIs were paying only a small amount and were only interested in developing their own villages, while the NRI Cell was obliged to give matching grant. Most of the people who were donating were from certain villages around Tenali only. There are other villages which were lagging behind in development as they did not have many NRI connections.

To make sense of these narratives and understand why NRI funds were not necessarily a welcome addition to ZP funds, we need to examine the role of caste- and place-based politics in these donations. Narasimhaiah had made a personal trip to the USA to visit friends and family and explore possible avenues for starting business ventures with them. The idea of the Cell emerged when he met with his NRI 'friends', with whom he had place-based, caste-based and political ties. Moreover, Narasimhaiah is a member of the TDP, and he readily admitted that he is a party worker and promotes the party's interests in India as well as the US. As noted in the previous chapter, many TANA members also actively promote the TDP in the USA. One such person is Surendranath, a Kamma from Pedavarru village in Tenali district, and a friend of Narasimhaiah who migrated in the 1980s and started a business in New Jersey. He was also TANA Executive Committee member from 2001 to 2003, at the time when Narasimhaiah was seeking donations from NRIs.

Not surprisingly, Pedavarru was one of the first villages to receive funds from the Cell, from a donation made by Surendranath. These funds were used to lay cement roads, upgrade the ZP school, and build a community hall for 'harijans'. All of these projects were built between 2002 and 2005, when Narasimhaiah was ZP Chairman. While Surendranath paid a sum of 1.2 million rupees for these projects, his village received

total funds of around 5 million rupees because of the matching grant provided by the government. When I visited Pedavarru in December 2011, a resident who introduced himself as Surendranath's friend told me that Surendranath had spent '1 crore (10 million rupees)' for his village. It is not unusual to hear similar stories in other villages, where NRIs had paid only 30 per cent of project costs by donating through the Cell, but the villagers attributed the complete cost of projects to them.

Other NRIs who came forward to donate money to the Cell for the development of their villages were also friends of Narasimhaiah or Surendranath, or both. In the initial years, as we have seen in examples given above, money was routed through the TANA Foundation, which officially partnered with the NRI Cell when Surendranath was its executive committee member. A couple of years later, however, most donors chose to bypass TANA Foundation and began to send money directly to the Cell, often in the name of their parents or through family trusts.

Not coincidentally, the NRI Cell was started when the TDP was in power both in Andhra Pradesh and Guntur district. With a Kamma Chief Minister in office, funds poured into the ZP coffers and were diverted to the Cell. Although there was a change of government in the state in 2004, the ZP was still under the chairmanship of a Kamma TDP leader, until 2006. But after that, the resources of the Cell slowly declined, especially after Rajamma became Chair in 2006. Rajamma is a Dalit Christian woman belonging to the Congress Party. She won the seat because the constituency was reserved for Scheduled Castes during that term. One of the first changes she introduced was to increase the share of the matching grant to be given by NRIs from 30 to 50 per cent – a move that was not well received by NRIs or their families in Guntur. Subsequently, NRI donations to the Cell dropped substantially.

An *Eenadu* journalist put this in perspective by telling me that 'the NRIs want to see *their* people in the [ZP chairperson's] position'. By 'NRIs' he meant Kamma NRIs, reflecting the popular belief that NRIs from Guntur are primarily Kammass. He was also pointing to the fact that Kamma NRIs were not willing to give money to the Cell while the Chairperson was not from their own caste. This statement also shows that Narasimhaiah's caste identity (Kamma) was what made it possible for him to attract funds from the USA, and implied that only if he returns to power would the Cell start functioning 'normally' again. On the other hand, Rajamma's Dalit caste identity, coupled with her political affiliation, hindered the smooth flow of transnational resources to the Cell during her tenure. Thus, depending on the people and party in power, caste connections could fetter or promote NRI engagements in local development projects. When I interviewed the ZP CEO Narayanswamy in January 2011 and asked about the

slump in NRI donations to the Cell, he acknowledged that activities had slowed down in the last two to three years. When I enquired about the reason, he responded, 'Now the Chairman is a woman, earlier the Chairman was very active.' His remark likely reflects not just a gender bias but also a caste bias. He lauded the efforts of Narasimhaiah, whose 'pioneering' approach to mobilise resources from NRIs for the development of the district he found commendable. As if to absolve himself of this decline in the inflow of NRI funds, he mentioned that he had come to occupy this position only 18 months earlier, in mid-2009. Almost a year later, in January 2012, the NRI Cell remained largely inactive because the position of ZP Chairman was still vacant. Around a year later, I was told that TANA members had met the CEO at their biannual convention in Hyderabad and were eager to revive the Cell, hoping that the new ZP chairperson would be Narasimhaiah.

During my fieldwork, I had a chance to interview the two successive ZP Chairpersons (Narasimhaiah and Rajamma), and the contrast in the ways they perceived the fortunes of the Cell came out clearly from those conversations. For Narasimhaiah, the Cell was a success story, but Rajamma gave a critical appraisal of this migration-intense region and the functioning of the Cell:

Since the funds allocated to Panchayats are not enough to develop the villages, and at the grassroots level there are no roads, safe drinking water, PHCs (primary health centres), *anganwadi*⁹⁶ centres, libraries, veterinary hospitals or community halls, NRIs have come into the picture to provide 50 per cent matching funds for the development of their villages, while the ZP gives the rest. These NRIs were also living in villages 20 to 30 years back and they understand the need to develop their villages. They are interested in developing their villages on a US model. Sometimes, black money [unaccounted money] is utilised ... these charitable trusts and old age homes are built through this [black] money.

Further elaborating on the narrow focus of NRI aid in Guntur district, she said:

In Guntur, 75 to 80 per cent of the people are agricultural labourers. There are no big industries here, no jobs. There is upland and lowland – upland is dry and lowland gets flooded twice a year. These NRIs are not interested in any of this; they are busy helping their families and community only. The open categories [non-reserved categories] – Reddys, Kammas, Naidus etc. are 60 per cent [of the population] in Guntur, while the rest of the people

96 *Anganwadi* centres are located in villages to provide nutrition and basic education to children aged 0-6 years.

are 40 per cent. Migration from SC/ST population is restricted. The SC colonies are not developed at all and it is villages of these open category people which are developing [because of NRI Cell].

As noted above, Rajamma was instrumental in increasing the proportion of the grant to be given by the donor to 50 per cent from the earlier 30 per cent. Narasimhaiah's and Rajamma's differing points of view (one celebratory and the other critical) point to the simmering tensions, conflicts and fluctuations in the functioning of the NRI Cell, depending on who occupies the post of ZP Chairperson. Thus, caste affiliation largely determines the level of engagement between NRIs and the local government, though other dynamics (such as the location of target villages) also play a role. These interviews clearly showed that personal connections and caste interests are crucial determinants of the extent of NRI involvement in local development.

Spatial distribution of NRI Cell projects

While politicians expressed differing views on diaspora engagements in the region, for the donors the discourse around the NRI Cell was couched in the moral language of patriotism or *abhimanam* ('helping the motherland'), social responsibility ('developing the rural landscape'), or humble attachment to the homeland ('being rooted'). When Telugus from this region migrate to the west, their *abhimanam* for the language and place does not dwindle, instead it is reterritorialised on a transnational plane by sending resources that affectively connect them with their places of origin, with the local state acting as a mediator. What ensues is a collapse of caste identity, region and politics, as each becomes transnationalised through such cross-border transactions.

This politics also plays out when we see how the projects undertaken by the Cell were spatially distributed. Kamma-dominated villages produced more NRIs, and so had a greater chance of attracting NRI funds, compared to villages dominated by other communities. Until 2013, Guntur district was divided into mandals falling under three revenue divisions (later a fourth was created) – Tenali, Guntur and Narsaraopet (see Figures 10 and 11). Narsaraopet is in the 'uplands', a dry region that is less productive compared to the deltas and also with less Kamma presence. It is not surprising then that Narsaraopet is the most neglected zone when it comes to NRI Cell projects. Records gathered from the Cell show that its projects were concentrated in certain villages in the mandals of Ponnur, Kolluru, Duggirala, Tenali, Amartaluru, Guntur, Pedanandipadu and Mangalgiri (see Table 9), all of which lie in the fertile and irrigated delta region, which is also largely Kamma-dominated. This is also the area that sent the most migrants to the USA. The figures given in Table 9 illustrate this spatial bias in the utilisation of NRI Cell funds.

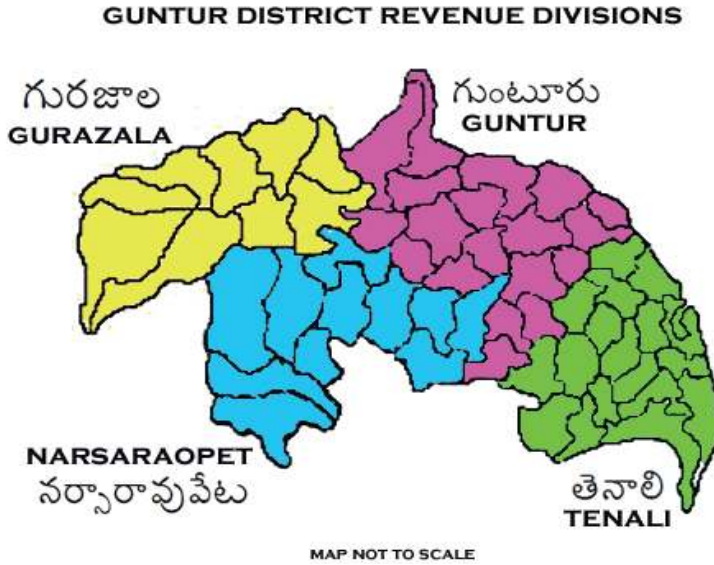


Figure 10: Guntur district revenue division map

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_revenue_divisions_in_Andhra_Pradesh#cite_note-8



Figure 11: Mandal map of Guntur

Source: www.zpguntur.org

Table 9: Number of projects per mandal*Source:* Guntur NRI Cell

Mandal	Number of Projects
Amaravathi	2
Amarthaluru	14
Atchempat	1
Bapatla	3
Bhattiprolu	14
Chebrolu	5
Cherukupalli	9
Chilakaluripet	6
Duggirala	12
Durgi	1
Guntur	4
Kakumanu	10
Karlapalem	4
Kollipara	1
Kollur	14
Krosuru	2
Machavaram	5
Mangalagiri	3
Medikonduru	3
Muppalla	1
Nadendla	8
Nagaram	1
Narasaraopet	4
Nekarikallu	5
P.V.Palem	1
Pedakakani	9

These data clearly point to a spatial inequality in the flow of diasporic money. My interlocutors explained that the Krishna basin is more socio-economically developed, and so has produced the most highly educated professionals who then became migrants – a point which my research also corroborated. They justify the concentration of ZP funds in those villages by saying that ‘whoever pays gets the funds’, ignoring the fact that ZP funds that are meant for overall development of the region are disproportionately going to villages that are already ‘well developed’. Through interviews, I learnt that villages receiving the most funds through NRI Cell were also those that already had facilities such as high schools, an outcome of the history of Kamma dominance, caste-based philanthropy, and access to state power discussed in Chapter 3.

Interestingly, these mandals also have a diminishing Kamma population due to out-migration, and there is a growing anxiety that soon villages in these areas will be devoid of Kammas. This anxiety reflects a wider perception locally that their dominant caste status is at threat with the considerable outward migration of community members. It is this fear that in part prompts NRIs to create a presence in their native villages through philanthropy. Predictably, NRIs and their families (who may still live in the village or may have moved to Guntur or other towns) would have complete control of these projects. In all the projects I gathered information on, NRI donors would instruct the Cell on where to spend the money, assert their right to follow up on the work, and demand complete ‘transparency’ in the use of their money. Often, they would also suggest who should get the contracts to execute ‘civil works’ such as road building, which in many cases would be their own family members or relatives (who thereby benefited from the flow of state funds). As in the Janmabhoomi programme, construction works for the project were often also awarded to civil contractors belonging to the Kamma caste and affiliated to the TDP, and those who were close to the ZP chair or to the donor. Thus, when Kammas ‘give back’ to their villages, acts that are framed through the ideals of ‘public welfare’, doing good for ‘society’, and so on, these terms often simply refer to their own fellow caste or village members. These actions also presuppose that the state representatives with which they must deal are ‘trustworthy’ – meaning that they share the same caste affiliation. The Zilla Parishad headed by Narasimhaiah was not only a friendly government but was one which the NRIs could ‘trust’ enough to enter into an alliance with. But when Rajamma took over and changed the ratio of matching grants, the state became untrustworthy in the eyes of the NRIs, who feared that their donations would not be utilised properly.

Such ideas and practices have over time given rise to extended cycles of exclusion of underprivileged groups from development, by preventing them from accessing state resources in the same way – even funds that are earmarked for their benefit. For instance,

the ZP funds were often inadequate to complete planned development projects. When Narasimhaiah was Chairman, he found a creative mechanism to bridge the gap – he diverted funds from the central government scheme ‘*Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana*’, or ‘food for work’ programme that targeted the rural poor, to NRI Cell projects. This meant that ZP funds were used only for particular projects promoted by NRIs in their own villages where their own community held sway.

Being the dominant caste in the region, it is not surprising that the Kammas are in an advantageous position to mobilise state resources for the benefit of their own community or villages. Because of their political and economic power, Kammas in collaboration with the Cell have channelled public funds into their own villages, neglecting others in the process. In rare cases, funds meant for the poor may be utilised for the benefit of Scheduled Caste communities, such as by constructing houses, but this happens only in villages where SC labourers work on Kamma farms (the example of Kaanipudi village cited below is a case in point). The outcome of the public-private partnership model of development, as illustrated by the NRI Cell, suggests that private interests are served at the expense of others. The NRI Cell can thus be seen as a microcosm of how state resources may be selectively utilised for the benefit of a few powerful groups in a democratic set-up (Harriss-White 2003; Jeffrey and Lerche 2000).

Embedding a Neoliberal Agenda within Caste Politics

As we have seen, both Janmabhoomi and the NRI Cell were initiated at the instance of the Telugu Desam Party, and their activities waned with the TDP’s dwindling political fortunes. But their connections with the TDP run deeper. Chandrababu Naidu, when he was in power from 1995 to 2004, was a well-known advocate of neoliberal reforms in Andhra Pradesh (and was even hailed as the ‘CEO’ of Andhra Pradesh [Suri 2004]). He promoted two interlinked programmes – reducing ‘populist’ subsidies for the poor and greater public–private collaborations in the planning and development of the state. Janmabhoomi exemplifies the latter agenda.

Naidu’s political strategy was to create ‘hype’ (Mooij 2007) around economic and governance reforms as the route to ‘development’; in the process he was able to silence opposition because no one wanted to be seen as anti-development. A new market-oriented discourse developed in which a new upper middle class (consisting largely of engineers with backgrounds in electronics, software and computers) became ‘economically and politically important in the late 1980s and early 1990s’ (Mooij 2007: 42) and were able to influence state policies. Mooij argued that in Andhra, ‘economic development strategies may be designed to an increasing extent by powerful economic actors (who

may have an interest in liberalisation, etc.), rather than by public policy makers within the government' (2007: 42). Chandrababu Naidu's reformist agenda was facilitated by 'the changing economic needs and aspirations of the initially rural-based classes/groups on which the reforming regime was based' (2007: 34).

One of the important components of Naidu's governance reforms was the utilisation of public-private partnerships to foster quicker 'development' in the state. Janmabhoomi and the NRI Cell both represent permutations of this model, in which US-based migrant associations or NRIs could become partners in local development through philanthropy. Those initiatives were an integral part of the larger changes that Andhra Pradesh was undergoing during the 1990s and early 2000s, and were emblematic of resource mobilisation strategies informed by neoliberal policies. This particular form of public-private transnational collaboration illustrates the kind of state-society relation that was promoted in Andhra Pradesh under Chandrababu Naidu. But the micro-level negotiations that took place around these programmes, highlighted in the previous sections, point to how neoliberal policies that are presumably meant for the overall welfare of the state and for the benefit of unmarked categories of people become embedded (both locally and transnationally) in local structures of power.

Building legitimacy for NRI involvement in rural development

The NRI Cell and Janmabhoomi, although held up as examples of private participation in state projects for 'public welfare', were actually used to further particularistic community interests. However, this denouement, while widely known, was not seen as 'corruption' but as legitimate activities by the donors and the state apparatus. This legitimacy derived from the fact that the stated goal of these projects was the 'development' of rural areas, and they did not have any obvious profit motive; instead, donors were represented as performing acts of disinterested largesse. Such views were also expressed by people from other castes who perceived these charitable acts as '*seva*' (service) or *sahayam* (help). Even while knowing that these projects may have helped donors and their community castes, it was regarded as noble to work for the development of the region. However, my research suggests that the village development projects funded by state public-private programmes helped the Kammas at many levels. It was their villages that were being 'developed' with matching grants from the government (originally meant for marginalised groups). Also, the contracts to execute infrastructure projects were given to low-level party workers who were also civil contractors, thereby strengthening the party's base at the grassroots in the region (cf. Mooij 2007: 34).

Caste-based civil society groups work for the region's development drawing on their given expertise, often articulated as 'international exposure' and work experience and

their technical degrees. Yet, they selectively align themselves with the state based on their calculations of local political and social gains. Such alignments are often expressed through intimate terms such as ‘trust’ and ‘friendly government’. A concern expressed by most NRI donors is that their money may not be utilised ‘properly’ if it is not channelled in the right way. The trust that an NRI donor reposes in a government official of his own caste (who might also be a friend, relative, or from the same mandal or village) makes such giving easier – even for projects where the targeted beneficiaries belong to other (SC/ST/BC) caste groups. Therefore a friendly government helps them bypass the hurdles that corrupt bureaucracy puts up at times in getting things done (Gupta 2012). Kamma NRIs trusted the party and donated funds to the NRI Cell to foster the development of their own villages when the TDP was in power. When the Congress (seen as a bastion of the Reddys) came to power in the ZP and the state government, NRI donations dried up. However, diaspora philanthropy in the region found other channels, purposes and destinations and in fact increased over the years, as discussed in the preceding chapters.

On the surface, the interaction between a ‘friendly’ government and the NRIs can be seen as a rational form of exchange – of transnational wealth and expertise provided to the state in exchange for symbolic or political capital. But in this case, the exchange represents a reciprocal relationship between the party in power and the community, in which both view the other as an extension of itself. Chandrababu Naidu has always been seen as an ally by the Kammass and is lauded as a leader who brought ‘development’ to the state, but ‘development’ here is shorthand for the protection of Kamma interests. In the narratives of local Kammass and Kamma NRIs, Chandrababu Naidu embodies ‘efficiency’ and ‘merit’ and his government is regarded as trustworthy.

In the previous chapter, we have seen how ‘trust’ has been a key trope in the consolidation of the community, one that binds members to each other. The community shares the same relations of trust with the state when a ‘friendly’ government is in power. Their trust in the state changes depending on which party is in power. By the mid-2000s, with a ‘non-friendly’ party in power, Kammass in Guntur and the USA felt that they were at a disadvantage and that they were receiving ‘step-motherly’ treatment by the Congress government that had replaced the TDP in 2004 at the state level and in the Guntur ZP in 2006. ‘YSR’, the Congress Chief Minister was generally regarded by the Kammass as pro-Reddy (and by extension anti-Kamma), although he was acknowledged as a ‘good friend’ to his allies irrespective of caste. These feelings of being ‘unsafe’ under a non-TDP government were so strong that an NRI in New Jersey told me that if the TDP were to lose the elections in 2014, he would bring all his relatives to live in the USA as it was safer to be in a foreign land than to be ruled by YSR’s son ‘Jagan’ (as discussed

above).

It is important to note that with the change of guard, NRIs did not stop engaging in philanthropy or developmental work in their native villages, instead they decided to bypass the 'unfriendly' government. For instance, NRIs from Kaanipudi village wanted to send money to their native place, but did not trust the ZP chair who was not from their own caste. The former village president, Prasad Rao, a Kamma belonging to the Congress Party, explained that these NRIs preferred sending money directly to him for development work, rather than donating through the NRI Cell. This was because he was 'someone they could trust'. As a Kamma village president, he could reach out to the village's NRIs for help and the NRIs also trusted him and felt obliged to channel money through him, although he belonged to a non Kamma party.

This selective utilisation of the state machinery and resources by NRIs when their 'own people' are in power, and the turn away from the state when 'others' are in power, clearly reflects how these transnational caste groups see the state. The state becomes an axis around which community interests are aggregated when the interests of the state, the ruling party, and the dominant caste are aligned. The fortunes of these state programmes were thus closely tied to that of the TDP. This axis has further strengthened with the recent formation of a network of TDP 'NRI wings' in foreign countries where there are large numbers of Kammas.

The discussion in this and the previous chapters shows that the channels through which money is sent back to Coastal Andhra by the transnational Telugu community, and its purposes and destinations, are to a large extent structured by caste and regional networks (which have a significant overlap). These caste networks also find resonance in political networks. Through these caste-based transnational networks, Kamma diaspora philanthropy in effect has strengthened caste power in the home region by imbricating the community in the state through the transmission of transnational capital. Institutionalising diaspora philanthropy through official bodies such as the NRI Cell is one of the mechanisms through which this transnational caste has become embedded in the state.

Thus, the state is a key site for the pursuit of political and business interests by a socially and economically powerful caste group, but the effectiveness of this strategy depends on wider electoral and party politics. Through the strategies pursued by a powerful regional diaspora outlined here, the local state has been incorporated into the caste-inflected transnational moral economy, in which community-led charitable efforts to 'help' or 'uplift' its own caste members now becomes the duty of the state. Thus, transnational

philanthropy is deeply embedded in structures of power in the region and works to strengthen caste dominance through the state and its development agendas.

Conclusion

The examples of the Janmabhoomi programme and the NRI Cell discussed in this chapter illustrate how the regional diaspora utilise philanthropy to liaise with, and utilise, the local state machinery and government funding. In this case, caste connections and a caste-based political party have become the hinges for such engagements. These interventions support and protect the economic and political interests of the Kammas, either directly or indirectly. In this and previous chapters, I have shown that NRIs mostly give donations for collective welfare schemes that are framed by notions of the development of the 'motherland' or 'community upliftment'. But by delving into the meaning of 'community' in their narratives, and by following the trail of diaspora philanthropy, it becomes clear that the 'community' they seek to serve is strongly inflected by the caste location of donors and the places they come from. The history of the region, coupled with continued structures of caste dominance, has produced a caste *habitus* that foregrounds giving for the 'community', as we have seen above.

These examples also show that the institutionalisation of philanthropy within local government bodies enables dominant caste groups such as the Kammas to entrench themselves within state structures and thereby to accrue collective benefits for their community at the expense of other groups. Philanthropy is popularly viewed as selfless, altruistic and without expectation of return, and this view legitimises interventions by dominant groups in the region's development. The kinds of transnational giving discussed here clearly represent reciprocal exchange, in the process compromising the state's welfarist role *vis-à-vis* disadvantaged groups. Through philanthropy, affluent and transnational Kammas are also able to augment their social and cultural capital and thereby differentiate themselves from other dominant groups. What perhaps distinguishes this form of 'elite capture' from other instances documented in India is that it is couched in the moral language of *seva*, *sahayam*, *abhimanam*, *donation* and *development*, language that legitimises the exercise of power and control.

As the dominant caste group, Kammas are in an advantageous position to capture state resources for their own benefit, both locally and transnationally. Their 'NRI' status allows them to represent this manipulation of the state as 'bringing development' or as 'philanthropy for public welfare'. These claims do not go uncontested, but at the same time, these contestations do not hinder the enmeshing of caste interests with the 'disinterested' neoliberal programmes of the state, which in turn, strengthens the

dominant castes' presence and imprint in the region – a presence that is strengthened even with the physical 'absence' of migrants. While resource mobilisation may be informed by neoliberal policies promoted by diasporic civil society groups as well as the state, these policies are highly malleable and can be shaped by dominant groups to serve their own interests. In this chapter, I have tried to unravel the micro-level negotiations through which this transnational and locally powerful caste has attempted to direct and capture state policies and programmes through philanthropy, in order to critically understand the embedded nature of both (local and transnational) civil society groups and the state itself.

CONCLUSION:

INTERROGATING TRANSNATIONAL GIVING

Guntur district in southern India has been a site of substantial outward transnational mobility by educated professionals (especially doctors and engineers) from dominant caste groups, who started migrating to the USA and other countries in the 1960s. This pattern of high-skilled migration, which intensified in the 1990s, gave rise to a regional diaspora that remains culturally and materially rooted in the region of Coastal Andhra Pradesh. Materialising the dual experiences of belonging and uprooting, these transnational migrants started sending resources back home, in particular through ‘diaspora philanthropy’. Members of this regional diaspora started engaging in social development projects, especially from the 1990s, in the fields of education, health and rural development.

The thesis is an attempt to understand how regional specificities – especially caste connections – have shaped diaspora philanthropy in this case, and how diaspora philanthropy in turn has defined or reconstituted a caste group – the Kammas – that has become transnational. Extensive fieldwork carried out in Coastal Andhra and the USA revealed that these philanthropic engagements have been primarily channeled through particularised caste and kinship networks and are usually directed to aid members of the donors’ own ‘community’ – helping this group transform itself from a regionally dominant (agrarian and business) community into an emergent transnational caste.

While international migration and ‘reverse flows’ of transnational resources are found in many parts of India, in the thesis I interrogate why particular forms of transnational giving became prominent in a particular provincial town and region, at a particular point in time, and within a particular caste community. Everyday life in Guntur, where Kammas interact within a caste-stratified social field, has reflexively shaped the Telugu community in the USA. I argue that the modalities of caste organisation and ideology in Guntur have deeply inflected the transnational social field that connects the town and the region with the USA and other places, materialising in institutionalised practices of diaspora philanthropy.

To understand the ‘new’ forms of philanthropy that have emerged from the Kammas’ recent history of migration, I examine older community and regional practices of ‘giving’ and trace the continuities and discontinuities. This case study of diaspora philanthropy in Coastal Andhra shows that transnational giving is shaped by regionally specific intra- and inter-caste relations, especially by the dominant caste status of Kammas. The self-identity of the Kamma caste, forged through long-standing practices of ‘giving’ within and for the ‘community’, together with the popular history that posits Coastal Andhra as a ‘developed’ region that created educational and migration opportunities for upwardly mobile youth, frame the narratives of these migrant professionals about their desire to

‘give back’.

Further, the thesis shows that transnational resources are transmitted mainly through local or transnational organisations such as family trusts, diasporic associations, and professional and government bodies. The thesis also explores the role of diaspora philanthropy as it interfaces with the local state and regional politics in the transnationalisation of a dominant caste, within the context of processes of liberalisation and globalisation in India. The institutionalisation of diaspora philanthropy within the state’s neoliberal governance regime suggests that these transactions at once reproduce caste identity and forms of dominance and are also integral to wider processes of change in post-reform India, and in particular the state of Andhra Pradesh and the Coastal Andhra region. Based on multi-sited research carried out over 15 months, the thesis traces the history, discourses and processes that underpin diaspora philanthropy in Guntur district, in order to answer the main research question:

How have outward migration and transnational philanthropic practices reconstituted or altered the dominant position of a particular caste in one region of India?

Mapping both the *continuities* in the practices of a dominant social group in transition, and the *changes* brought about by transnational migration, I focus on the domain of giving and receiving, especially secular philanthropic endeavours. The study argues that, in this case, diaspora philanthropy for ‘development’ reinforces structures of power and social precedence through the generation, accumulation and uneven circulation of symbolic, economic and political capital. While an intense pattern of transnational migration can potentially disrupt the hold of the dominant castes in provincial areas, what we see in Coastal Andhra is a process of reterritorialisation by the landowning Kamma community, and a reproduction of rural social relations of hierarchy and dominance through outward migration and transnationalisation. Inserting themselves within particular segments of the global economy as highly skilled professionals, while remaining rooted in Andhra Pradesh through social, economic and emotional investments, Kammias have reconstituted their community identity and reinforced its boundaries in a global setting, while also re-embedding themselves in their home region through particular forms of philanthropy. For Kammias, the discourse and practice of institutionalised diaspora philanthropy have become important means through which a caste group in transition re-imagines itself and coheres as a distinctive, regionally rooted and powerful local community, one that is also transnational.

Towards an Anthropology of Transnational Giving

By exploring the case of a regional diaspora in India and its engagements in the home region, and by incorporating insights from the social anthropology and sociology of India, this research project contributes to the study of what has been termed ‘diaspora philanthropy’ in the development literature. While migrant remittances and diaspora philanthropy have been studied mainly by development economists and migration scholars – all providing important insights – an anthropological approach allows one to explore more deeply the multiple dimensions and meanings of trans-border giving and receiving through long-term, multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork. Moreover, this perspective leads the researcher to attend to the moral, discursive and social dimensions of giving as well as to the concrete practices and organisational modalities of philanthropy. This study gauges the effects of transnational development-oriented philanthropy in the home region of transnational migrants, in particular its role in preserving the local dominance of this mobile group. It contributes simultaneously to the literatures on transnationalism, migration and development, the anthropology of giving and philanthropy, and the sociology of India. Although extensive work has been carried out on transnational migration and remittances, including many studies in the South Asian context, there is relatively little research on how transnational ties impinge on the social fabric of migrants’ places of origin. Nor have scholars paid sufficient attention to transnational migrants from dominant agrarian castes and their engagements with their home villages or towns; the consequences of ‘high-skilled’ migration in provincial places; or to migration as a strategy of social mobility that may augment the power of already powerful groups (for some exceptions see Dekkers and Rutten 2011; Gardner 2008; Osella and Osella 2000, 2006; Taylor et al. 2007). With international visa regimes opening the doors to workers with particular skills and barring the ‘non-skilled’ from easy entry, we need to consider other kinds of repercussions of migration in the home country, such as its impact on social inequality in the migrants’ home regions. By exploring questions about the practices, ideology and effects of regional diaspora philanthropy, this project contributes to an important body of work on transnationalism that shows how villages, towns and regions become intertwined across borders through the transmission of economic and social remittances (Levitt 2001) – a process that has multi-stranded motivations and consequences.

As detailed in Chapter 1, there is a large literature on the developmental consequences of economic transfers from migrants to their home countries, much of which celebrates the positive impacts of the flow of remittances from the ‘developed’ world to ‘developing’ countries of the South. While we know that diasporic contributions to the development of their home countries are highly varied, ranging from small-

scale community initiatives to major investments and transfers of knowledge, many such studies lack an in-depth sociological and anthropological understanding of why and how migrant resource transfers occur. Studies of diaspora philanthropy tend to portray such initiatives as fostering global equity, although several scholars note that this discourse emanates from the neoliberal turn in development policies (Bakker 2015; de Haas 2010). Moreover, there has been little anthropological or sociological work on diaspora philanthropy in India, nor do we have good micro-level studies of particular aspects of diasporic interventions – their motivations, variations, historical precedents or effects on local social formations. This thesis is an attempt to bridge some of these empirical and conceptual gaps.

Contributing to, and moving beyond, the existing literature on ‘migration and development’, the thesis critically explores how and why transnational migrants from the Coastal Andhra region of India engage in philanthropy aimed at promoting particular kinds of development or social welfare. The question of ‘who migrates’ and what they send back is crucial for understanding the changes that are brought about by transnational flows and the meanings and practices of development that accompany these flows. There have been few studies that interrogate the development agendas and practices that are promoted by diasporic groups such as NRIs through their ‘philanthropic’ interventions, or on how the transnationalisation of particular regions has altered the discourse of development or impinged on local politics and the state. The findings of this thesis thus challenge the predominant optimistic view of the developmental potential of migrant remittances and engagements with the home country. By showing how diaspora philanthropy is integral to the reproduction of caste affiliations and structures of power through the transnational circulation of financial and symbolic capital, this thesis adds a new dimension to older sociological and anthropological questions about how social structures and relations of power are reproduced, dismantled or altered in an increasingly interconnected ‘global’ milieu.

A major conclusion of the thesis is that practices of philanthropy have become constitutive of a transnationalising caste. I argue that philanthropy is a form of capital accumulation that is mediated through caste networks and the local and provincial state. By entering into partnerships with a ‘friendly’ local government to promote rural development, this particularistic diaspora philanthropy legitimises the privileged access to state resources enjoyed by the dominant Kamma community (compared to other competing caste groups), thereby imbricating an already powerful and resource-rich community, now transnationalised, within the local state apparatus.

The main objective of the thesis is to develop a comprehensive analysis of diasporic

philanthropy in Coastal Andhra, in particular, to understand how this pattern of 'giving back' (re)constitutes modes of social domination by producing a locally rooted yet transnational community while also generating individual and collective cultural, symbolic and 'political' capital for an already dominant group. In the following sections, I summarise the key findings, draw out the emergent themes and highlight how these insights contribute to contemporary theoretical debates around diaspora, transnationalism and philanthropy and inequality in India.

Unevenness of transnational social fields

Conceptually and methodologically, the thesis draws on the literature on transnationalism, employing, in particular, the concepts of transnational social field (Levitt and Schiller 2004) and transnational community (Portes 1997). The study attempts to grasp the bifocality of the transnational social field that links Coastal Andhra to the USA, within which migrants straddle multiple lifeworlds. Intense transnational interactions – processes of 'moving out' and 'giving back' – have, over time, created spaces that connect not only migrants and their families but also other actors in Guntur to this social field and a new transnational imaginary.

The literature on transnationalism, while highlighting the intensity of cross-border exchanges and consequent social changes, often over-emphasises the transformative potential of mobility (Castle 2010). In contrast, this study shows that migration, rather than bringing about change, may preserve or even strengthen existing social structures and relations of domination. The outcomes of transnationalism can be highly uneven depending on the social profile of the migrants and the texture of the transnational field that they inhabit. For instance, the outward movement of educated professionals from Andhra, who come from dominant caste groups, rather than transforming social relations in the region appears to have reinforced existing forms of domination by an already powerful group. This pattern of mobility from the still largely agrarian Kamma caste has led to a strong pattern of transnational connection linking their home region with the USA and other places, especially through philanthropy.

There are few examples of mobile communities from India that are comparable to Kmmas in this regard. While Punjabi Jats (Taylor and Singh 2013) and Gujarati Patels (Guha and Rutten 2013) are also transnationally mobile communities, Kmmas are distinct in that they are educated professionals who are also relatively recent and often 'permanent' migrants to the West, unlike for example Kerala migrants working in the Gulf countries (Osella and Osella 2000). As mobile 'knowledge workers', Kmmas may be more comparable to the Tamil Brahmins (Fuller and Narasimhan 2014), but an important difference is that they are a dominant agrarian community that continues to

have a strong foothold in rural areas and the ownership of agricultural land – a social profile that inflects their transnational engagements with the home region.

Therefore, a transnational lens that takes into consideration migrants' transnational social field of action provides a vital addition to the literature of migrant remittances, which often neglects the social and political contexts of such cross-border transactions. It also contributes to the debate on transnationalism by showing that transnational social fields can be highly uneven, in that certain groups may have an advantage when they carry with them different (and unequal) forms of social and economic capital from the place of origin to the place of settlement – augmenting these forms of capital in both places. Yet, even the transnational lens perspective may not delve deeply enough into the relational structures that underpin transnational giving, a shortcoming I have tried to address in this thesis.

Diasporic giving, caste capital and caste habitus

While the migration-development debate has posited migrant resources as a development tool and pointed to the diverse engagements of nation-states with their diasporas, a transnational lens highlights the particularities of transactions in which migrants exchange their knowledge and resources to gain recognition or power. This study shows how philanthropy emanates from the performance and reproduction of caste-based collective affiliations within a transnational social field, and argues that it is an expression of a strategic caste-inflected *habitus* that aids members of the community to (unevenly) accumulate greater social, symbolic and political capital. These strategies of social and spatial mobility are embodied in the creation of a Kamma identity and the reproduction of a 'community' that is not only a politically and economically dominant force, but that also carries abundant and multi-layered symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1986, 1992).

This research deepens the study of diaspora philanthropy by drawing on the anthropological literature on reciprocity and the gift, to examine the social and symbolic aspects of diaspora philanthropy, its meanings and effects. I also argue that we need to pay attention to the historicity of such practices. Drawing on the studies of the construction or reconstitution of communities in India historically and in the contemporary globalised social milieu, I argue that transnational giving may work to sustain or reproduce caste, class, regional, religious or other social identities and affiliations. In this case, caste becomes a resource that facilitates social mobility at both the individual and community levels.

In India, giving was traditionally marked by patron-client relations of 'hierarchical

interdependence' between castes (Fuller 1996: 14), but over the past hundred years, for communities such as the Kammas, practices of giving have become more horizontal or intra-caste, a development that is linked to a politics of differentiation or political competition between caste groups. The self-fashioning of a community as 'different' from others is a strategically deployed form of caste assertion and solidification. The Kammas have built an exclusivist community morality and identity, from the the *jati* unification project that coincided with the non-Brahmin movement of the early twentieth century, later inter-community political conflicts with Kapus and Reddys, and most recently seen in the politics of diasporic associations in the USA – all practices that work to create, recreate and affirm a sense of community identity and solidarity.

Through intricate practices of being and belonging pursued in the home region as well as abroad, and by performing 'Kammaness' 'here' and 'there', the Kammas have created a transnational space that fosters community cohesion and a strong sense of identity (albeit one that is usually couched in the language of 'community' rather than caste). The sinews of this caste community draw strength from political and financial strategies that weave together their embedding in the market and the local state, strategies that work to further processes of social and economic mobility. As one of the crucial modalities through which intra-community relations are forged and social and symbolic capital are generated, philanthropy has become constitutive of this mobile community that draws upon its rural agrarian resources to provide stability while engaging in uncertain and uneven strategies of transnationalisation.

Consequently, caste has become a key resource for its members, amplifying the life chances of less privileged members of the community through donations by affluent and diasporic caste members for development or 'upliftment', activities that augment the social status of the givers. This caste *habitus*, now performed through a transnational social field, contributes to the power of an already regionally powerful group. As Deshpande (2013) notes, a paucity of studies focus on how 'caste-capital' of the 'general category' is invisibilised even as it contributes to the reproduction of social and economic (class) privilege – a gap that this thesis helps to bridge.

In this politically divided transnational social field, relations of trust, support and dependence are internally built and nurtured. The enmeshing of politics and economy creates a form of community sociality whereby the community becomes so important that *not* giving back when one becomes prosperous is seen as a moral transgression. It is significant that instead of invoking the religious category of *daan* (Copeman 2011; Parry 1986) to describe their philanthropic endeavours, Kammas use the term 'donation', which highlights the more horizontal or intra-community nature of these practices. The

solicitation of donations to foster the development of the community, a long-standing social practice within the Kamma caste, has now become transnational and has been institutionalised – often through transnational civil society groups that mimic the role of caste associations in earlier decades. These developments point to a shift in the way caste works – in this case, caste has become a key axis around which a transnational community (one that is also a regionally dominant elite) has been fashioned. The sharp articulation of this politics of difference remakes and repositions this powerful caste group in ways that consolidate its dominant (social, political, economic) position *vis-à-vis* other communities, both transnationally and locally.

I have shown that the motivations behind diaspora philanthropy in Coastal Andhra are complex and that its outcomes are multi-dimensional. NRI professionals most often use the idiom of ‘development’ when explaining their philanthropic engagements, which are articulated as informed by the American culture of ‘community service’. Yet, as my research shows, such practices are not new – rather, they are a continuation of older community specific practices linked to efforts at community consolidation and status production. The difference today lies in the inflow of transnational capital due to the wealth that has been generated by migration, leading to an increase in the number of donors and community benefactors and new channels and idioms of philanthropy. The institutional contexts of philanthropy have also changed, from family, village, caste or temple to new organizational forms such as local and international trusts, charitable societies, transnational civil society groups and diasporic associations.

The resurgence of caste as a key modality of social and political affiliation, evidenced in this example, points to how caste can be reinvented over time because of its multi-stranded or polyadic character (Guha 2015). The example of NRI philanthropy in Guntur detailed in this thesis is thus a microcosm for understanding the mechanisms that enable this ‘reinvention’ of caste (Dirks 1989) in the contemporary moment. I argue that globalisation and migration do not weaken this sense of caste belonging but rather reinforce it as caste ties become transnational. Diaspora philanthropy in Guntur mimics India’s variegated, caste-inflected economy, society and polity (Harriss-White 2003; Jodhka 2014), in that a strong caste bias becomes visible when one uncovers the channels, the destinations and the beneficiaries of NRI interventions in the region. For instance, I show that donations may become a means of creating or affirming social networks that may be useful in making economic and political investments in the home region. However, the elaborate and intricate networks that are created by transnational philanthropy have changed their contours over time, in response to the socio-political dynamics of the region. This is particularly the case because the state has played a significant role in forging transnational partnerships with the regional diaspora.

Embedding of a neoliberal development agenda

While we know that diasporic contributions are highly varied, most studies do not provide an in-depth understanding of how these transactions may tie up with a particular idiom of development, such as that informed by neoliberal policies. In Coastal Andhra, NRIs (perhaps not fortuitously) began to engage with the state during a particular neoliberal moment (the ascendance of Chandrababu Naidu). Their philanthropic activities started when the state government adopted policy recommendations of the World Bank to restructure its economy and governance practices. This thesis links the neoliberal turn in governance and development policies in India (Corbridge et al. 2005) to diaspora philanthropy, by arguing that such 'public-private' engagements have led scholars to refer to it as the 'privatisation of public interest' (Kamat 2004), legitimising the involvement of already powerful and mobile 'global' or transnational (non-) citizens in local politics and statecraft. As detailed in the preceding chapters, diaspora philanthropy has become a conduit through which new relations between the provincial state and some of its diasporic 'citizens' are forged in the name of development. The discourse of development has been amplified and altered locally through these transnational transactions, particularly as they became entangled with the 'neoliberal' Janmabhoomi programme of the 1990s, in which citizens were encouraged to become partners with the state in rural development projects.

For educated and affluent migrants, a form of pre-eminent citizenship has been created wherein privileged caste-marked diasporic citizens are viewed by the state as bearers of global capital and global ideas of prosperity, progress and development. These 'Overseas Citizens of India' or NRIs activate and participate in a transnational circuit of capital flow (of both economic and social investments) in their home region. The significance of the transnational circulation of financial, social and symbolic capital that I have described here is not only its imbrication in an ethnicised transnational caste network – it also points to how diasporic engagements for 'development' interface with the globalised capitalist economy. In this case, when knowledge workers from low and middle income countries enter the global economy as flexible labour, these flexibilities are cushioned by capital drawn from an older rural economy (Xiang 2007). These flexibilities are further sustained when these mobile subjects form caste-structured networks and organisations to help 'develop' their home region and community. Many of the community uplift projects of NRIs in Andhra entail private participation in the use of state resources for 'public welfare', thereby furthering particularistic community interests. However, this denouement, while widely known, is not seen as 'corruption' but as legitimate and selfless interventions by the donors in concert with the state apparatus for the purpose of 'development' in rural areas.

An examination of the interlinkages between these multiple processes shows how transnational philanthropy works to further embed a locally dominant community within the state apparatus. While the neoliberalisation of the Indian state has been documented by several scholars (Corbridge 2005; Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Gupta 1995), as has its transnational outreach (Amrute 2013; Xavier 2011), few studies have traced the entanglements of these near-simultaneous developments. Moreover, most scholarly work on the Indian state's engagement with its affluent Indian diaspora has focused on the national scale, eliding the particularities of more localised transactions and the regional specificities that shape such diasporic engagements. My research helps to fill this lacuna through a detailed case study of a regional diaspora and its interventions in Coastal Andhra.

Limitations of the Study and Directions for Future Research

The study has a few theoretical and empirical limitations due to the way the research was designed. First, by drawing on multiple streams of scholarship, the argument is not situated directly within any one body of literature. For instance, the thesis only partially addresses the rich literature on caste in India. A second drawback is that I was unable to collect comparative information on giving practices among other communities of the region. While interviews were conducted with key members of other castes to get a broad picture of transnational and local forms of philanthropy in Andhra, they were not followed up with the same depth or rigour as were Kamma activities and networks. In addition, the study does not capture NRIs who are not engaged in trying to 'help' their home region. Consequently, the uniqueness or ubiquity of Kamma diaspora philanthropy cannot be asserted with any certainty.

A third limitation concerns the question of inter-generational differences in philanthropy and more broadly in diasporic engagements with the home country. The quest by diasporic groups to sustain their sense of belonging to the region may be more typical of the first wave of migrants, and may weaken over time and within later generations. Given the recent political developments in the state of Andhra Pradesh and the continuing social dominance of Kammas in Coastal Andhra, Kammas living outside do retain a strong interest in the region and are keen to multiply their social, symbolic and political capital through transnational engagements. American Telugus may gradually reorient their philanthropy and community development goals to their adopted country. To capture such a shift would require a longer-term study of how transnational linkages are sustained or weakened as migrants settle down in the USA as citizens and their children become entrenched in the 'American way of life'. However, under present conditions, caste consolidation on a transnational scale remains a strong trend that may persist well

into the future – albeit in new forms.

A possible direction for future research would be the effects of state bifurcation (which took place after the completion of fieldwork) and the planned new capital city in Guntur district on diasporic engagements with the home region. The Guntur-Krishna region is widely viewed by Kammas as their ancestral homeland, and is culturally and politically the centre or ‘heartland’ of the community. Hence, it is not surprising that when the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) came back to power in 2014 in the truncated state of Andhra Pradesh, it decided to locate the new state capital in Guntur district. Although I made four short field visits after the bifurcation, my time there was not sufficient to understand the consequences of these developments for transnational politics, investments or philanthropy. It would be important to gauge the impact of lobbying by local and diasporic Kammas in the decision to locate the capital here – a move that promises to generate immense wealth for landowners and investors.

The continuing and intensified involvement of Andhra NRIs with the development of the new state of Andhra Pradesh is thus an important subject for future research. Already we have seen a revival of earlier modes of engagement with the regional diaspora along the lines of the Janmabhoomi programme, in the state government’s newly floated ‘Adopt a Village’ or ‘Smart Village’⁹⁷ schemes as well as Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu’s recent appeal to NRIs to ‘adopt’ government schools.⁹⁸ With the recapturing of power by the Kamma dominated TDP in the residual state, the current Chief Minister has avowed his commitment to a neoliberal model of economic development and governance that tends to collapse the state into the market. In all likelihood, the power and influence of this transnationalised dominant caste can be further strengthened by the legitimised use of their transnational philanthropic resources.

97 <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/smart-village-scheme-a-hit-in-andhra-pradesh/story-J8WNpDq10nSTBBdaGTWFxJ.html> (last accessed on 10 January 2016).

98 <http://www.thenewsminute.com/article/nri-moolah-andhras-strategy-get-funding-state-govt-schools-46518> (last accessed on 15 July 2016).

GLOSSARY OF INDIAN/TELUGU TERMS

<i>Abhimanam</i>	Pride, patriotism
<i>Ammai</i>	Girl
<i>Anganwadi</i>	Village nutrition centres for children up to six years old
<i>Ashram</i>	A place for religious retreat, or community life among Hindus
<i>Atmagauravam</i>	Self or community respect
<i>Baliya</i>	A trading and peasant caste of Andhra Pradesh
<i>Bantroth</i>	A personal attendant to a government official
<i>Batukamma</i>	A local festival of Telangana
<i>Bhangi</i>	A lower caste of sweepers in Gujarat
<i>Brahmin</i>	Priestly castes, occupying the first rank in the <i>varna</i> system
<i>Burra katha</i>	Oral storytelling performance accompanied by music
<i>Chettiars</i>	A trading caste of Tamil Nadu
<i>Daan, daanam</i>	Religious gift or donation in Hinduism and other Indic religions
<i>Danadharma</i>	Religious forms of giving based on Hindu cosmic order
<i>Dakshina</i>	Gift (religious) based on one's capability
<i>Dalit</i>	'Untouchables' who are considered to be outside of the fourfold varnashrama
<i>Dasara</i>	A South Indian Hindu festival
<i>Izhava</i>	An erstwhile caste of toddy tappers in Kerala
<i>-gaaru</i>	Honorific suffix added to terms of address or names in Telugu as mark of respect, used for those who are senior or superior in rank to the speaker
<i>Gauravam</i>	Pride
<i>Gounders</i>	A dominant peasant caste of Tamil Nadu
<i>Hindutva</i>	Political ideology of extreme Hindu nationalism
<i>Jajmani</i>	Patron-client relations ordering inter-caste dependence in rural India
<i>Janmabhoomi</i>	Birthplace
<i>Jat</i>	A dominant peasant caste in North India

<i>Jati</i>	Sub-caste into which one is born
<i>Kamma</i>	A dominant peasant caste of South India
<i>Kapu</i>	A dominant peasant caste of Andhra Pradesh
<i>Karava</i>	A low-ranked caste that rose to become an elite class in Sri Lanka
<i>Karthika Masam</i>	An auspicious Hindu month, generally falls around November
<i>Kshatriya</i>	Warrior castes, occupying the second rank in the <i>varna</i> system
<i>Madiga</i>	Former untouchable caste of Andhra Pradesh
<i>Mala</i>	Former untouchable caste of Andhra Pradesh
<i>Mana</i>	Our
<i>Mandal</i>	Administrative division below the district level
<i>Marwaris</i>	Prominent business community from Rajasthan
<i>Maryada</i>	Respect
<i>Matrubhoomi</i>	Motherland
<i>Mochi</i>	A low-ranked caste of cobblers in North India
<i>Naidu</i>	Title used by dominant peasant castes in Andhra Pradesh
<i>Navaratri</i>	An auspicious day before Dasara festival
<i>Nayak</i>	A lower caste in Gujarat
<i>Panchayati raj</i>	Three-tier governance system in India (including village, mandal and district)
<i>Patel</i>	Title used by dominant peasant caste in Gujarat
<i>Patidar</i>	A dominant peasant caste in Gujarat
<i>Pedda</i>	Big
<i>Pratibha Puraskaram</i>	Talent Award
<i>Puja</i>	Hindu worship ritual
<i>Raja</i>	Local ruler, land owner
<i>Reddy/Reddi</i>	A dominant peasant caste in South India
<i>Ryotwari</i>	Land revenue collection system instituted by the British, in which agricultural taxes were directly collected from individual cultivators
<i>Sahayam</i>	Help
<i>Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana</i>	A central government food for work scheme for rural India adopted in 2001
<i>Sardari</i>	Chiefship
<i>Sat Sudra</i>	Clean (peasant) caste
<i>Seva</i>	Service

<i>Sudra</i>	Servile castes, occupying the fourth rank in the <i>varna</i> system
<i>Swanthaooru</i>	Native village
<i>Taluka</i>	Administrative division below the district
<i>Telugu desa</i>	Land of Telugu speakers
<i>Teluguin Ti aaDapaDachu</i>	Telugu daughter-in-law
<i>Vaisya</i>	Third <i>varna</i> or trading/commercial caste
<i>Vanabhojanam</i>	Forest meals organised as a festivity in the month of November
<i>Varaalu</i>	Early-twentieth-century system of feeding needy students, usually of one's own caste
<i>Varna</i>	Fourfold hierarchical ordering of Indian society
<i>Velama</i>	A dominant peasant caste in Andhra Pradesh
<i>Zamindari</i>	A British land revenue collection system in which land was held by superior tenure holders or <i>zamindars</i> , who collected agrarian taxes on behalf of the state in return for a portion of the revenue
<i>Zilla</i>	District

Note: All terms are transliterated using standard English spellings or pronunciations.

THESIS SUMMARY

‘Giving Back’: Diaspora Philanthropy and the Transnationalisation of Caste in Guntur (India)

This thesis is an anthropological study of a group of highly educated professional migrants who are deeply engaged in philanthropic projects for social development (especially in education, health and rural development) in their home region in southern India. Based on 15 months of multi-sited research carried out in India and the USA, it examines the discursive and processual aspects of these philanthropic practices to offer insights into the shaping of a transnational community that remains culturally and materially rooted in its home region and in regional social formations of caste, class and kinship. Diasporic members of this transnationalised caste, which emerged out of the agrarian landowning elite of Coastal Andhra Pradesh, fashion themselves as responsible ‘global’ citizens of India who are obligated to ‘give back’ some of the wealth that they have acquired through international migration to help ‘develop’ the community and region from which they come.

Drawing on the literatures on ‘migration and development’, transnationalism, and historical and anthropological studies of caste, exchange and reciprocity, the thesis attempts to understand the mechanisms and motivations behind diaspora philanthropy in Coastal Andhra, and to explicate its role in the formation of a transnational community that replicates local social relations across a transnational social field. It contributes to each of these sets of literature by examining the particularised ways in which this regional diaspora engages in cross-border philanthropy, and its discursive framing through analysis of migrants’ narratives about ‘bringing development’ to the region, doing ‘community service’, and engaging in philanthropy in an efficient and transparent manner to reach the ‘deserving poor’.

Although diaspora philanthropy is a recent phenomenon in Coastal Andhra, the thesis traces it to an older history of caste-specific ‘giving’ that emerged within the landowning agrarian communities of the region during the late colonial period, such as support for the education of youth. These practices were integral to efforts to promote caste consolidation and upward mobility, particularly for the Kammas, who created a self-representation as ‘a community that gives’, framed by a strong moral discourse of reciprocity and ‘giving back’. The history of outward migration of educated professionals from the region can be traced to the emergence of Guntur town as a key site that enabled Kammas to transform themselves from a regionally dominant caste into a well-educated, mobile and now transnational community. Consequently, the social lives of Kammas

(both in India and abroad) are infused with a transnational imagination and *habitus* that identifies transnational migration with social and economic mobility. This transnational aspiration does not exist in a deterritorialised imaginary space, however, but is spatially anchored in particular places such as Guntur town, which became a key pivot for this mobility pattern, anchoring and emplacing social relations on a transnational plane. Linking older forms of community giving to recent flows of transnational philanthropic resources, the thesis interprets the philanthropic engagements of the affluent Kamma diaspora (known as 'NRIs' or Non-Resident Indians) living in the USA as investments by and for a 'community' that is now spread across time and space. Inserting themselves within the global economy while remaining socially, economically and emotionally rooted in the home region, mobile Kamma professionals have reconstituted a sense of community in a transnational setting. Diasporic associations perform a key role in reconstituting new forms of transnational sociality, often overlaid on older regional and caste affiliations. These associations have also emerged as key sites from which professionalised and formalised practices of philanthropy emanate. The institutionalisation of philanthropy further re-embeds diasporic actors within their home region.

The thesis further shows how diaspora philanthropy became institutionalised within the local state in Guntur district and thereby implicated in local caste-inflected politics. It explores how the state has harnessed the resources of affluent migrants for local development projects, and conversely how transnational actors appropriate state agencies in the pursuit of their own agendas. While some diasporic engagements in the region were anchored in neoliberal government programmes that sought partnership with diasporic citizens for rural development projects, these projects were inextricably intertwined with an associational politics of differentiation (based mainly on caste and regional identities) within the Telugu diaspora. Thus, caste-based practices of 'giving back' legitimise the involvement of already powerful and mobile 'global citizens' in local politics and statecraft. The sinews of this caste community draw strength from political and financial strategies that weave together their embedding in the market and the local state, strategies that sustain ongoing processes of social, economic and spatial mobility. However, the intricate and elaborate networks that are woven by transnational philanthropy have shifted over time in response to the socio-political dynamics of the Guntur region and the state of Andhra Pradesh.

In summary, the thesis understands diaspora philanthropy in Guntur as a form of transnational (economic and symbolic) capital accumulation and circulation, mediated through caste networks and the local state. Through the philanthropic activities of a powerful regional diaspora, a highly stratified social field of power has been created that operates at several scales – local, regional and transnational.

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