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Middling Migration

Contradictory Mobility Experiences of Indian Youth in London

Mario Rutten and Sanderien Verstappen

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we examine the contradictory migration experiences of Indian youngsters who recently moved to Britain on a student or temporary work visa. All of them lived in London at the time of the interview, and are from middle class families in Gujarat. Like many of their peers in developing countries, they dreamed of going to the West to earn money, to study and to get experience in a foreign country to improve their prospects at home. Once in London, however, they ended up in low-status, semi-skilled jobs to cover their expenses, and lived in small guesthouses crammed with newly arrived migrants.

Why did these youngsters leave India and go to London, and what do they get by moving abroad? Based on long-term research in London and Gujarat, our findings show that the decision to migrate is shaped by a combination of individual and social motivations of both the young migrants and their families in India. Several youngsters moved to London not only to earn money and gain new experiences, but also to escape family pressures and obligations by living away from their parents. Their parents encourage them, and even support them, though they are aware of the difficulties their children face in London. They regard the migration as a temporary, but requisite precautionary strategy to maintain their status as middle class families in present-day India, thereby safeguarding the next generation's future prospects.

Keywords: Migration, Social Mobility, Youth, Middle Class, Britain, India

Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR), Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Amsterdam. The authors would like to thank Barak Kalir and Carol Upadhyia for their valuable comments and feedback on the initial drafts, and Revathi Sampath Kumaran for editing the manuscript with great care.

INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2009, reports in the British and Indian media spoke of the sufferings of Indian youngsters in London. A BBC radio documentary turned the spotlight on the many cash-strapped Indian students who were forced to take free lunches offered by *gurudwaras* in Southall (Donald MacIntyre show, 29 November 2009). This item was picked up by the Indian media and also reported widely in the newspapers of the Indian diaspora.¹ Many of the Indian students were in difficulty because of the economic crisis and a crackdown by the UK government on the so-called 'bogus colleges'. They had recently arrived as part of the rising numbers of Indian youngsters entering Britain on various types of temporary visa, most of which were issued to persons younger than thirty (Salt 2009).

Over the past decade, the total number of Indians entering Britain on a student visa, working-holiday visa, high skilled migration permit or work permit has increased by more than four hundred per cent, from 18,397 in 2001 to 76,450 in 2008 (*Entry Clearance Statistics UK (2005-2009)*).² The influx of immigrants on temporary visa has been a topic of recent political discussion in Britain. In his address to the Conservative Party members on the government's immigration policy in April 2011, Prime Minister David Cameron emphasised that too many people who enter Britain on a temporary work or student visa stay on and aim for permanent settlement. 'Our country has benefited immeasurably from immigration. Go into any hospital and you'll find people from Uganda, India and Pakistan who are caring for our sick and vulnerable. ... (B)ut it cannot be right that people coming to fill short-term skills gaps can stay long-term'. According to Cameron, '... the figures clearly suggest that many gain temporary entry into the

UK with no plans to leave' (*The Guardian*, 14 April 2011).

Over the past few decades, a large number of studies have been conducted on the settled migrant Indian communities abroad, especially in Western societies such as the UK and the USA. These have often focused on issues related to the integration and assimilation of the migrants into the host society, and the construction of ethnic communities (see e.g. Jayaram 2004; Parekh et al 2003; Vertovec 2000). More recently, there has been a growing interest in the various types of transnational linkages that Indian migrants maintain with their home regions. These studies explore how the economic, social and cultural ties between the migrants and the members of the home community in India are characterised by both closeness and tension (Kapur 2010; Taylor, Singh and Booth 2007; Velayutham and Wise 2005).

Temporary forms of mobility, however, seem to have received less attention in academic literature. Besides, most of these studies deal with either the lower or upper end of the migration process. Studies on the movement of unskilled or semi-skilled labour from developing countries emphasise the problems of illegality and exploitation, and discuss the transnational social and political practices of workers such as agricultural and construction labourers and female domestic workers (Smith and Guarnizo 1998). Studies that deal with the upper end of the migration process focus on the movement of elites between different parts of the developed world, the migration of highly-skilled knowledge workers from developing countries to the West, and the complexity of the work arrangements and the differences in work cultures between India and the West (Xiang 2007; Roos 2010; Upadhy 2008). Many of these studies

¹ Articles appeared in national newspapers like *The Hindu* (30-11-2009), *Indian Express* (30-11-2009), *Hindustan Times* (1-12-2009), and *The Economic Times* (1-12-2009). The London-based Gujarati newspaper, *Gujarat Samachar*, made an appeal to the established Gujarati community in UK to donate food and clothes for distribution to the newly arrived youngsters from Gujarat.

² Immigration law in Britain has been tightened recently, and it has become more difficult to acquire a work permit or student visa. A section of the Indian youngsters who entered Britain as 'students' over the past decade, had opted for cheap (low fee) or 'bogus' colleges, as their intention was to work full time in Britain. This option will not be available from April 2012 (UK Border Agency, 24th May 2011).

also emphasise the global outlook and international orientation of these ‘cosmopolitans’ or ‘new Argonauts’ (Hannerz 1996; Saxenian 2006).

Compared to our knowledge of the migration experiences of the global elites and the working classes, we know very little about the ‘in-between’ category of migrants. They belong to the middle class in their home societies, and they are increasingly seeking entry into western countries such as Britain on the basis of temporary visas (often student visas). There are indications that international migration is no longer ‘...confined to the experiences and practices of migrant...elites on the one hand and labour migrants or refugees on the other’ (Friesen, Murphy and Kearns 2005: 386).

Most of the literature on middle class forms of international migration emphasise that movements by temporary migrants of middle class origin are to be seen as periods of exploration, travel and new experiences (Conradson and Latham 2005b). These studies are often based on research among youngsters from developed countries who take ‘gap years’ or career sabbaticals overseas, or who study abroad while working at the same time. But, what about middle class youngsters from developing countries who move to the West on temporary work or student visas? A study of young, middle-class Indian men employed on a temporary basis in the hospitality sector in London shows their contradictory migration experiences. Although their move to the West enabled them to be financially independent and gain new work experiences, they ‘...were performing labour not congruent with their social class in India’ (Batnitzky, McDowell and Dyer 2008: 65). A study on young, skilled migrants from Punjab who recently moved to the West Midlands in Britain reiterates this view: ‘Whilst the research participants hoped to be able to advance their careers by migrating to Britain, either by acquiring higher

education or by gaining “exposure” to the British labour market, this ambition turned out to be unattainable for many. ... This gave them a marked ambivalence towards the project of migration...’ (Harriss and Varghese forthc.: 3-4).

Both studies indicate that the middle-class background of Indian youth gave them the resources to move abroad by providing them with the requisite educational qualifications and the experience to obtain a work visa or gain access to overseas educational institutions, as well as the financial support to meet the high course fees and visa costs. Paradoxically, the very educational qualifications and work experience that were required for their entry into Britain were devalued after they had entered the country, and they often had to start from scratch once again (Batnitzky, McDowell and Dyer 2008: 65; Harriss and Varghese forthc.: 9 and 11). They became, so to speak, highly educated young persons from a low income country who ended up doing low status work in a high income country. The contradictions in their migration trajectories can only be understood by engaging with the experiences of the youngsters in both terrains: the country of origin and the destination country.

This paper discusses the migration experiences of twenty-six Indian youngsters in London who have recently moved to Britain, from Gujarat, on student or temporary work visas. It is the outcome of an intensive interaction with the migrants and some of their family members over a period of three years (May 2008 – September 2011), both in London and in Gujarat. All the selected youngsters had resided in the same paying guest accommodation in East London for some duration of this three year period. Over the years, we periodically stayed with them in London, and paid several visits to their home region in Gujarat to meet their family members and to keep in touch with those youngsters who had returned to India.³

³ Several of the youngsters appear in a film documentary we produced, together with Isabelle Makay, entitled ‘Living Like a Common Man’ (2011). See for further information on the documentary: <http://sites.google.com/site/livinglikeacommonman>. One of the authors has conducted long-term research in central Gujarat, including on Gujarati migrants in London and their linkages with the home region (Rutten and Patel 2003 and 2007), the other author is currently doing her Ph.D. research on migration and development in central Gujarat.

Table 1 provides a summary description of the twenty-six youngsters.⁴

All of them belong to middle class families in Gujarat. Most of them are in their twenties and had entered Britain on a temporary work, or student, visa less than four years ago. They have completed their higher education in India, and most have at least a bachelor's degree. They dreamed of going to Britain to earn money, to study, and to get some work experience abroad so as to improve their prospects and status at home. Once in London, however, they ended up in low-status jobs to cover their expenses, and lived in a small guesthouse, crammed with newly arrived migrants. Most of them hold a semi-skilled job in a supermarket, factory, sandwich bar or coffee shop, or work as a helper or carer in the health sector. In terms of social mobility, the experience of the young Indian migrants has been contradictory, at odds with their dreams. Why did these youngsters leave India and move to London? And, under the circumstances, what do they get out of their decision to live abroad?

Taking as its point of departure both the social environment of the youngsters' place of origin as well as of the locality to which they have migrated, we argue that the decision to migrate is determined by a combination of individual and social motivations of the migrant youngsters and their family members in India. Several of the youngsters indeed moved to London to earn money and to gain new experiences, but also to escape social pressure from the family by living independently. Their migration experiences, however, are characterised by ambivalence and ambiguity; there is both downward and upward social mobility. They live in rather primitive circumstances in London and work in low-status jobs, but their move abroad has increased their social status among family-members and friends back home. As for the youngsters' parents in India, though they realise the difficulties their children face abroad, they

encourage, and even support them in their endeavour to move to London. The families regard migration as a temporary but requisite precautionary strategy to maintain their middle class status in present-day India, in order to safeguard their children's future prospects. We employ the term 'middling' migration (Conradson and Latham 2005a) to capture these contradictory class experiences and seemingly simultaneous upward and downward mobility, as well as the ambivalence of the middle class Gujarati youngsters as they negotiate their life-worlds in, and between, London and Gujarat.

GOING AWAY

Ninety per cent of the youngsters want to go abroad, to make money.

I prefer foreign countries to India ... because here the things are not so developed compared to foreign countries....

These were statements that emerged during a discussion with a group of young men standing on the streets of a mid-sized town in central Gujarat. They exemplify the aspirations of the younger generation in this region. As one travels through central Gujarat, it is impossible to escape the overwhelming presence of the physical manifestation of these aspirations: Along the main roads in the towns billboards promote the attractiveness of studying in the UK, USA or Australia; through advertisements plastered on the façades of business and shopping complexes, consultants offer to help students get admission to foreign colleges and provide private tuition to prepare them for English tests; banners above the entrance of banks in urban neighbourhoods and villages heartily welcome NRIs (Non-Resident Indians),⁵ while special educational loans are offered inside the branch offices to cover the course fees of youngsters who want to study abroad.

⁴ To protect the anonymity of our respondents, the names of the youngsters (and of their parents) have been changed.

⁵ The NRI (Non-Resident Indian) category was created by the Indian government in the 1980s and carries certain financial and taxation benefits. To qualify as an NRI, a person must live outside India for more than 183 days a year.

Indeed, the desire to go abroad can be so strong among the younger generation in central Gujarat that some parents complain that their adolescent children drive them crazy with their daydreams of moving to London or America. Twenty-three year old Arun's father, whom we met in Gujarat, told us:

I have only one son ... when I tell him to stay in India and I refuse to let him to go to London ... he gets very angry and also very disappointed... But my son wants to go to London or America anyhow!

Six months later, Arun had managed to get a student visa to London.

The aspirations of the younger generation in central Gujarat are not unique or new. A strong desire to migrate to the West has been very much in evidence among the youth in other regions of India and in other parts of the developing world. With regard to the situation in Punjab, for example, Harriss and Varghese emphasise that youngsters express a strong desire to study overseas 'as a result of peer culture' (forthc.: 8). A study on youth in rural Egypt, quotes one youngster: 'If they could, everybody here would leave, everybody. Nobody would stay' (Schielke 2008: 256).

Regions that exhibit such intense migration aspirations are often described as having a 'culture of migration'. In such places, earlier experiences of migration tend to get reproduced, reinforcing the celebration of migration and migrants, thereby fostering further migration (Ali 2007; Kandel and Massey 2002). Although adopting a 'culture of migration' perspective carries with it the danger of essentialising the concept of culture, it cannot be denied that the long history of migration from Gujarat has partly contributed to the strong migration aspirations of the youth of this region.

Gujarat, one of the more prosperous states of India, has a tradition of international migration, particularly from its central region. In the late

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, people from central Gujarat migrated to East Africa, benefiting from the job opportunities provided by British colonial rule. From the mid-1960s, Britain became the main destination of migration (Michaelson 1978/79: 351; Tambs-Lyche 1980: 41); since the early 1970s, the migration stream partially shifted to the USA and Canada.

As a consequence of decades of international migration, Gujaratis comprise one of the largest Indian communities abroad (Jain 1993: 36), and the Patidar or Patel community constitutes a significant part of this regional diaspora. The Patel community is an upwardly mobile, middle-ranking, landowning agricultural caste, which has a presence in several regions of Gujarat but is mainly concentrated in the Charotar tract of Kheda and Anand districts in central Gujarat (Pocock 1972; Rutten 1995). Based on a conservative estimate of the membership of Patel associations in Britain, there were already about thirty thousand Patels from central Gujarat living in Britain in the early 1990s, of which 90 per cent resided in London (Lyon and West 1995: 407).

The youngsters in our sample are from families that are considered middle class in their home villages and towns in central Gujarat. All the families had sufficient means to cover a major part of the initial migration expenses of their wards. According to the visa agents we interviewed in Anand, middle class youngsters from the Patel community constitute about 80 per cent of their customers. This predominance of the Patel community among the migrants is reflected in our sample, which includes nineteen Patel youngsters, while the remaining belong to brahmin and 'other backward communities' (OBC). Several visa consultants emphasised that in recent years it has become possible even for young members of poorer communities, such as those belonging to lower Hindu castes, or having a Christian or Muslim background, to move abroad. This is partly because nationalised banks have started providing educational loans to cover the fees for study

programmes abroad.⁶ In our sample, there were several from impoverished brahmin and upwardly mobile artisan families, who had taken such loans to cover a part of their expenses.⁷

Although constant exposure to migration of peers and distant relatives in the region was often what triggered a youngster's decision to go abroad, all our respondents migrated independently of the existing social networks of earlier migrants. That is, they were not part of a migrant network or 'chain migration' system that is usually associated with low-skilled migrants (Massey et al. 1993: 449-451). Rather, they were often the first in their families to move abroad, and they sought the help of a visa consultancy agent for the purpose. These agents, who assist in applying for a temporary work or student visa, perform an important function in the thriving migration economy of central Gujarat.⁸ In Anand district alone there are thirty-three visa consultancies, most of them located in one of the many shopping areas or *bajars* of Anand town.⁹ Applying for a student visa is currently the best option for youngsters who want to go abroad. Since the early 1990s, a process of 'commodification of higher education' has resulted in attempts by universities from countries like Britain, USA and Australia to vigorously market their educational programmes to attract more students from countries like India, turning education into an export product (Baas 2010: 90-102). As a result, in many parts of India, education has come to be viewed as the easiest and fastest route to go abroad, and the rising number of visa consultancies in the home regions facilitates the acquisition of such visas.

All the visa agents we interviewed in Anand were specialising in processing student visas, and some of them even had 'exclusive deals' with certain

foreign colleges. Most of them advise their customers to apply for a student visa to the UK as it is often cheaper to study in England than in the USA or Canada. Besides, Britain also provides them with better work opportunities and, until very recently, it enabled them to stay on after graduation. On an average, our respondents had spent about 4000 to 5000 pounds, which included the agent's fee, visa costs, airfare to Britain, and (in the case of a student visa) the course fee for the first year. As several youngsters were unable to find a job immediately on arrival, they also needed money to pay for their living expenses during the first few weeks or months in London. All these costs were covered by the savings of the family, sometimes supplemented by loans the parents took from banks or private money lenders, using their houses or landed property as collateral. Most visa agents emphasised that a majority of those who came to them for a student visa were not really planning to pursue their studies abroad; they were mainly interested in finding a job to earn money. The youngsters in our sample corroborated this. Their main concern was to earn enough during their stay to cover their living expenses, pay off the cost of their travel to England, and accumulate some savings before returning to India.

GOING DOWN

Here in India I live like a prince. I don't need to do anything, everything is ready for me. I don't need to use public transport, because I got a car, I got a motorbike. It's the life of a prince. But in London I am living like a common man. [Suresh, 24 years]

When [our sons] call us, and we hear how they live there, we feel a bit sad. Here they lived in a house with ten to twelve rooms. We have

⁶ For example, the Bank of Baroda offers loans of up to two million rupees (24,000 pounds) to students of Indian nationality who have secured admission to a foreign educational institution; no other criteria of eligibility are defined.

⁷ For similar trends in other regions of India, see Harriss and Ossella (2010: 156).

⁸ See Rajan, Varghese and Jayakumar (2011) for a detailed description of the overseas recruitment system in India.

⁹ See <http://www.anandct.com>.

four bathrooms. But there, they live with three in a room as big as our bathroom. So we feel a bit sad. [Jigneshbhai, father of Suresh and Pravin]

When Suresh made the statement comparing his life in India with that in London, he was in India, for his marriage. His sentiment is a clear expression of the downward mobility that the youngster experienced after reaching London. The subsequent remark, by his father, shows that parents are not unaware of the slide in the social position of their children who had moved abroad. The father is a wealthy farmer who owns large tracts of irrigated farmland in a village in central Gujarat and a small floor tiles factory as well, whereas his son, Suresh, works as a waiter in a sandwich shop in London.

Twenty-two of the twenty-six youngsters already had a diploma, or a bachelor's or master's degree when they reached London (Table 1). Twelve of them entered the UK on student visas, but almost all of them gave up studies soon after their arrival. They quickly discovered that they hardly had time to study in London because of the long hours they had to work in order to earn enough to cover their living expenses and reimburse their families in India for the amount they had spent on their course fee, visa and travel costs. Officially, however, they remained students, registered in their colleges, to ensure their legal immigrant status.

Until recently, many educational institutions in Britain were more than happy to allow this type of arrangement to continue, as long as the students paid their course fees on time. Although the British government was aware that such irregular practices had been prevalent for years, they failed to take measures to stop them. It was only after the publication in July 2009 of 'Bogus Colleges', the Home Affairs Committee's Eleventh Report on the '...illegitimate educational establishment set

up...to enable non-European Economic Area (EEA) nationals to come to the UK on fraudulent student visas' (p. 2), that action was taken.¹⁰ At the end of that year, 2000 colleges in the country were put on the list of 'suspected bogus colleges'. They were accused of using their status as educational institutions to facilitate the illegal entry into the country of youngsters from developing nations.

Among those affected by the new measures of the British government were three of our respondents, who were registered in one of the 2000 colleges listed as bogus. In one case, the student's institution was granted permission to continue operations after investigation, but the other two had to look for another college as their institution was closed down. Though they were able to secure admission in another college, they had to pay extra course fees and several hundred pounds to their broker. All this added to their financial burden as both the youngsters had already incurred debt in order to move to London.

Four of the youngsters, all of them males, had worked in India for a few years before they moved to London. Two had held office jobs and entered Britain on a 'High Skilled Migration Permit', hoping to gain work experience in London that would help them in their future career in India. Both of them, however, found out that their educational qualifications and work experience in India were not recognised in Britain. They had difficulties in finding work and in the end had to settle for lower level jobs.

Before coming to London, Pravin (26 years) had a job as a project manager in a local branch office of a large insurance company. 'I wanted to get more management experience by working in a modern company abroad', he told us. With high hopes he had reached England in 2007 on the basis of a 'High Skilled Migration Permit', but soon realised that he

¹⁰ See <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhaff/595/595.pdf>. Accessed January 8, 2012.

would not be able to get the kind of job he had hoped for. In fact, during the first few months of his stay in London he was unable to find any work and was at home for the most part, helping out in the catering company of an acquaintance from Gujarat during the weekends in order to earn some money. Finally, he landed an office job in the purchase department of a car parts company. During each of our visits to London over the last few years, whenever we got together, Pravin indicated that his high expectations of England have not been met and that he is somewhat disappointed with his work. 'I'm happy that I got this job, but it's much lower work than what I used to do in India'.

On whatever type of visa they entered Britain, all the youngsters discovered soon after their arrival that it would be difficult to get the kind of jobs they had aspired for. In Gujarat, their families are of the middle classes, and in most cases they also belong to the dominant caste in their village or urban neighbourhood. Their fathers are middle-large farmers, middle-level bureaucrats, traders, small-scale industrialists, or hold administrative jobs in private companies. Their mothers are housewives, and most of them employ part-time servants to do household chores. None of the youngsters had ever engaged in manual or low-skilled service work before they came to Britain. Consequently, they found it difficult to come to terms with the fact that they had to do menial jobs if they wanted to survive in London. Being a waiter, a shop attendant, a supermarket helper, a home carer or a geriatric helper (Table 1) was associated with the lower classes and the lower castes by people of their background in India. As a result, the youngsters considered it below their dignity to do the kind of work they now had to. Some of them began to have serious doubts about the judiciousness of their decision to migrate to London.

In India, Pranav (24 years) had been a small share broker. For the first few weeks after

arriving in London, he had to live off his savings from India as he could not find any job. Then he worked on several temporary jobs before settling down as a helper in a nursing home. 'On my first day at work, I was told to clean the garden and plant flower bulbs. Only people of other castes undertake these tasks in my village; I'd never had to do this kind of work before. I felt extremely dejected and went to the bathroom to cry. A few days later I was told to paint the walls of a room. In India we hire six people when we want to paint our house. I began to have serious self-doubts and started asking myself: Is this why I came all the way to England? What am I doing here?'

Realising that they were unlikely to get the type of jobs they had dreamt of, the youngsters sought employment with the settled Gujarati community in London. Almost all our respondents were working for someone of Indian, or even Gujarati, origin. Initially, the youngsters had imagined that being their 'countrymen', their employers would support them. But this turned out to be a pipe dream. Several of them felt that they had actually been exploited and taken advantage of because of their vulnerable position as temporary migrants.

In various other ways too these youngsters felt that they had ended up in London at the lower end of British society, a strange experience for them after belonging to the middle classes back in India. In Gujarat, they had often been part of groups of (dominant caste) Hindu youngsters who would lord it over the public spaces in the village or urban neighbourhood in the evenings. In London they lived on the margins of society. They hardly went out and sometimes experienced discrimination at their workplace or when travelling home on the bus or in the subway. Their distaste for the locality in which they were staying was obvious: it was low-class and there were many Muslims. On our way home from shopping on Green Street one day, Magan grimaced as he described his neighbourhood:

East London is like an Asian area...mostly Indians, Pakistanis and from Bangladesh... I don't like these people here. ...no one will say that Green Street is a part of London.... It's so dirty, ...this street is so dirty, even worse than some of the streets in India... London is a good city, but if you see this street, no one would say it is London I am living in. [Magan, 24 years]

Moreover, their congested living quarters in East London was a far cry from their spacious homes in Gujarat. The small paying guest accommodation in which they were living with eleven others had five small bedrooms, a small kitchen and only one bathroom. Some of them shared a small room with two others and so had to live in a jam-packed space, with three beds squeezed in. Others slept in bunker beds with suitcases piled up on the side. (The landlord charged them fifty-five pounds per person, per week, for accommodation and food, and with twenty-two such houses, he ran a very profitable business indeed.) There were many other problems the youngsters had to put up with: During winters, the heating system would be on for only a few hours a day; each person was allowed to use the washing machine only once a week; although a cleaning service for the bathroom and kitchen was included in the rent, these common spaces stayed dirty and had tiles falling off the walls; and bed bugs could be found running around, occasionally.

The house we are living in at the moment is bullshit, it's full of shit... The facilities in the house that the owner provides are useless... I mean it's totally shit. I don't find our room...clean, ...it's very untidy... It's also too small for three persons... There are too many people in the house.... and there is only one bathroom...which is not cleaned. [Surendra, 23 years]

Besides living in a much smaller house than they were accustomed to, the youngsters also had to perform household chores that would be done for them by their mothers or servants at home. Some

of them were dismayed when confronted with this and considered it part of the process of downward mobility they had been experiencing after moving to London.

I never made beds in India, and now you can see, I'm doing it. This is London. I have to do all the things on my own. I have to wash my own plates and do my own laundry. ... According to me, and from the culture I come, I think that I become smaller by doing all these things. [Pranav, 24 years]

On the whole, most youngsters were disappointed with their experience in London, especially with their living conditions and their lacklustre career. They had left India with high expectations, optimistic about enhancing their future prospects by gaining work experience, earning good money and maybe even pursuing higher studies. After living in London for several years, however, they felt caught in a rut, frustrated by the lack of opportunities to grow. One of the youngsters was so dissatisfied with his life in London that he decided to return to India before his visa expired. When we met him again in Gujarat, he remarked: 'London has been a bad experience for me. I decided it wasn't worth it and made up my mind to come back'. Others did not take such a drastic step, though they were as disillusioned and regarded their position as worse than that of their friends who had stayed back in India.

After completing her bachelor's degree in Microbiology in India, Indira (25 years) applied for a student visa to England: 'I would have very much liked to do a master's in Microbiology in London, but I needed money for rent and other expenses. Since this meant I had to work, there was no time left for my studies. In the beginning, I tried to get a job in a laboratory or to become a nurse-in-training in a hospital, but that wasn't possible because I'm on a temporary student visa.'

Indira worked for the first two years in a McDonald's outlet, after which she got a job

in a Starbucks coffee shop. More than once Indira told us that she had enjoyed studying Microbiology in India. With great enthusiasm she showed us a picture of herself and her co-students in India during a practical class in the laboratory. Some of her co-students had gone on to do a master's degree, while others had found jobs in the laboratory of a pharmaceutical company. 'Whenever I call them, they tell me how lucky I am to be in London. But I tell them that they are the lucky ones, because they've got to work in a laboratory. For me, getting such a job is just a dream as of now.'

The findings discussed so far indicate that after migrating to Britain, Indian youngsters of middle class origin experienced downward mobility in terms of work, living conditions and social position. But the youngsters and their family members back home in Gujarat simultaneously experienced a social ascent as well, as we will see in the following section.

GOING UP

(Our son) Pravin has gone to London and we like that. We are proud of him. He will prosper in his life there... He earns good money and he gets good knowledge and experience. He will come back to India after ten years or so... and ... do good business. [Jigneshbhai, father of Pravin and Suresh]

During our visits to Gujarat, we observed that the relatives and friends of the youngsters in London follow the latter's achievements with pride. Like the father of two of the youngsters quoted above, the parents are eager to talk about their children's lives in London. To have a son or daughter living in a western country is often considered prestigious, and the feeling of pride in their enhanced social status helps parents combat their sadness over the absence of their children and their apprehensions about the difficulties they face abroad. For instance, Jigneshbhai, the father who talks appreciatively of

his son's progress in the statement above, told us earlier how sad he felt about the living conditions of his children in London (see section 'Going Down').

The youngsters in London encourage such feelings of pride among their relatives and friends back home by maintaining close contact with them. They call them regularly on telephone, and during these interactions, the youngsters do their utmost to present themselves as successful migrants by emphasising their positive experiences in London. They also use social media such as Facebook and Orkut to show how happy they are, by posting their photographs taken in front of tourist attractions such as Tower Bridge, London Eye, Trafalgar Square, or during outings to Wales or to the beach in Brighton. There are no photos of their paying guest accommodation on Facebook, nor of their workplaces. Most of them hide from their parents the fact that they have been unable to continue with their studies because of financial constraints. We met one girl's parents in Gujarat, and in the course of our interactions, it became obvious that her father had no idea that she had been constrained to discontinue her studies, for financial reasons, very soon after her arrival in London two years ago.

[My daughter] wanted to study, that's why she specially went there... not for doing service ...[although] she also works there. Even now she is in London, and she is interested in studies only... London's education is the best you can get... those children who come back after completing their education there, they will never fail anywhere, ...because the colleges in London are the best of the best in the whole world. [Ghanshyambhai, father of Indira]

The youngsters further nurtured and cultivated feelings of pride among their relatives and friends back home by sending them gifts and by making financial contributions to family expenses. Despite their low salaries and the high living expenses in

London, most of the youngsters were able to save a few hundred pounds per month. While some of it went towards repayment of debts, a part of the savings was regularly transferred to their parents to enable them to share in various social expenses of the extended family, such as those related to marriages, festivals and religious rituals. Additionally, on their visits to their family homes back in Gujarat, the youngsters' suitcases were filled with gifts for relatives and friends. These presents and financial contributions were not intended to outweigh the contributions made by the parents and other relatives at the time of migration; it was not so much the amount of money that mattered as the fact that the youngsters had bought these presents with the money they had themselves earned in London, and that they were able to provide financial support to their parents. This knowledge gratified the youngsters and compensated for the loss of self-esteem they had experienced after moving to Britain. The gesture, therefore, is to be seen as part of their attempt to maintain their social links with Gujarat and to enhance their status among the relatives and friends back home. Popular presents were electronic devices and cosmetics, which were often also meant to signify their integration into the modern society of London, thereby reinforcing the image of a successful migrant. A few days before he returned to India, one of the youngsters showed us the gifts he had bought for his family:

This is the shaving machine I bought for my dad. And I have to show him how to use it, because he has never seen this before. And these make-up sets, hairspray, cosmetics are for my sister. She is really going to be happy because right now she is not using that.
[Pranav, 24]

Getting a visa extension, with the likelihood of applying for permanent residency, was seen as one of the major markers of a migrant's success, both by the youngsters themselves and by their relatives and friends. Eleven of the twenty-six youngsters had managed to get their visas extended. For eight

of them, this was an extension of their student visa only, and although it allowed them to stay on for some more time in Britain, it did not increase their chances of permanent settlement. Three youngsters were able to get an extension that also provided an opportunity to apply for permanent residency in the future. Though living in London had been a struggle, these three youngsters were thrilled about this milestone, which enhanced their status among their friends in London and among their friends and relatives back home. One of them used the occasion to introduce changes in lifestyle to signal his new position in London.

After completing his master's degree in Business Administration in London, Dipesh (25 years) secured a Post-Study Work visa on the basis of which he could stay on in England for one more year. Soon, he got a job in the warehouse of an auto parts company, where he had to keep track of the inventory by entering data into the computer. Although this work was not in line with his educational background, Dipesh decided to put in an application for a long-term High Skilled Migration Permit. But as his annual income was too low his request was turned down, and he lost 800 pounds on visa costs and agent's fees. A few months later, Dipesh re-submitted his application. This time it was approved because their agent had found a way to artificially hike Dipesh's annual income. This made it possible for him to stay on in London for a minimum of two more years, and if all went well, to apply for permanent residency after five years.

Shortly after this happy occurrence, Dipesh and his wife Indira left the paying guest accommodation they had lived in ever since their arrival in London and moved into a rented house with two other couples. This made them feel more like settled migrants, and they regarded the event as a milestone in their life abroad. Their self-assurance got a further boost when Dipesh was promoted from a job in the warehouse department to an

administrative position in the sales department at the head office. Though the promotion did not result in a real raise in salary, Dipesh sees it as one more step towards getting a better position in London.

Although for most of the youngsters the work experience, education and financial savings they were able to get fell short of their hopes, their stay in London did increase their social status among their relatives and friends back home. Whenever they visited Gujarat, they played the role of a visiting 'Non-Resident Indian' convincingly, wearing sunglasses, branded (short) pants and baseball caps, and driving around on their newly purchased motor cycle or in their father's car. Even though they did not fulfil their ambitions in London, they portrayed an image of success to those left behind and were more than happy to answer any questions their friends or relatives had about life in the West. In return, they were admired for the fact that they were living abroad. Although their friends and relatives did sometimes gently ridicule the youngsters for showing off, usually behind their backs, they were obviously envious of those who had managed to migrate to the West.

Based on these observations it can be surmised that by moving to foreign shores, the youngsters had experienced upward mobility, though paradoxically, downward social mobility as well. They live in a smaller house and in a lower-class neighbourhood than they did in Gujarat, and they also work in lower status jobs. At the same time, they are admired by their family and friends in Gujarat because they now live in London. While all respondents considered permanent residency in London a desirable option because of the legal security attached to it, they also dreamed of building a family house in their home village or town after returning to India. It is apparent, therefore, that most of them were still in two minds about where to settle down, ultimately. One day they declared that they wanted to leave the UK as soon as they had 'enough money' to start their own business back home. The next day, they fantasised

about getting a UK driver's license and opening a shop there. Whenever we met them in London, several of the youngsters routinely said, 'Despite all the problems I'm happy I came to London, but I don't want to stay here too long'. It seems to be a tacit admission of their unease with the simultaneity of their social decline and social ascent, and also a reflection of their ambivalent attitude towards their migrant status.

In the following section, we will reflect on what motivates the youngsters to stay on in London despite the difficulties they are facing. All of them did indeed migrate to London to earn money and to gain new experiences, but they also wanted to experience a different lifestyle and to escape social pressure from the family by living independently from their parents.

GROWING UP

I came here to do all things on my own and ... to live my life by myself. I don't want to depend on anyone else.... Like back home...I get money from my father...but here I earn my money on my own. I live my life by my own...I don't depend on anybody and I am learning things... so it's quite good being here.
[Surendra, 23 years]

Like the youngster quoted above, for most of our respondents the decision to migrate was often caused by a combination of individual and social motivations. Many of them moved to London not only to improve their position by earning money and gaining work (and study) experience, but also to imbibe a different lifestyle and to break away from family pressures by living independently. A majority appreciated the wealth of new experience they had gained by living in London. For instance, if they had remained in India, it would not have been possible to stay on their own at such a young age, and take their own decisions without seeking permission from their family members; and the youngsters enjoyed these novel experiences. Initially, they often ended up feeling frustrated

when dealing with living and working conditions they had never had to encounter in India. Gradually, they began to take pride in their ability to adjust to the new environment and to tackle problems on their own, and the feeling that they had become more mature, more independent since their move to London gave them greater self-assurance.

Well there are a lot things that I ...got and learned from here. ...this is a struggling time and ... it's like getting the experience to live on your own. ... I got a job on my own and now I can proudly say that slowly and steadily I am becoming independent. Everything I am doing on my own, making decisions on my own. [Jagdish, 22 years]

In the lives of the youngsters, London and Gujarat were closely connected, and somehow even interchangeable. As mentioned above, all of them communicated very regularly with their families in India using the telephone or the Internet, and occasionally sent presents to relatives and friends back home. From our meetings with some of the parents in Gujarat, we learnt that parcels were also being sent from India to London every few months, mostly containing spices, snacks and other home-made food. We could also gauge that they missed their children very much. One of the youngsters had returned to India, and his parents told us how delighted they were to have him back: 'We kept missing him at every meal. Our house was eating us. We felt his absence very much. Empty. It felt empty. That's how it was'.

Close ties with their families in Gujarat were of vital importance to the youngsters in London. The assured affection of their loved ones back home gave them the confidence to face the difficulties they encountered in their new environment. At the same time, there were indications that the family ties were sometimes fraught with complications. Most youngsters said that in India they had often felt constrained by the social restrictions imposed on them by their families. By moving to London

they hoped to escape the interference and close supervision of their parents and other relatives. Freedom from monitoring was one of the reasons for living abroad, and this fact was especially appreciated by the young women who often compared their liberated lifestyle in London with the social obligations that encumbered them in India. Spending time with their partner, being able to openly express their affection for each other, and going out on their own without having to seek permission were some of the freedoms the young women enjoyed in London.

After work, Suresh and Mina (both 24 years) are together all the time; when they are outside the house they regularly hold each other's hands, and in the kitchen they often sit on each other's lap. 'Back home that's not possible', they told us, at various times. 'You know how it is in India, we're never alone, there are always relatives or friends milling around, and in public it's not appropriate to hold hands'.

Despite all the problems they have been facing, Suresh and Mina enjoy being in London, particularly the freedom they have to do what they want. They love to go out, to shop, to go to movies, or to eat out at a restaurant. More than once Mina told us that she realises that returning to India will entail having to give up some of her freedom, and she wonders if she has already changed too much to be able to go back to a cloistered life. 'In Gujarat, I can't just go out on my own and buy something. I would always have to take someone with me. I'll have to spend most of my days in the kitchen with Suresh's mother, and I don't know if I'd be able to do that'.

In some instances, the family ties were not just complicated but also oppressive, and social control not just irksome but suffocating to the youngsters involved. One young woman had moved to London to escape the pressure of marriage and to live with her boyfriend, who had migrated to England a few months earlier.

'If I had stayed in India my parents would have forced me to marry someone else', Indira (25 years) told us once. 'So it was better to tell my family I wanted to study more and I wanted to go abroad for further study. Most marriages (in India) are arranged by the family and they take place within the same caste. Dipesh and I belong to different castes and that was the problem, especially because my father highly values traditions. I knew for sure that he wouldn't approve of our relationship.... Not long after Dipesh moved to London, I therefore decided to also apply for a student visa to England because I wanted to be with him.'

In 2008 Indira and Dipesh seriously considered getting married in London, but they decided against it because they knew it would make their parents terribly unhappy to learn that their offspring had married without their consent. They made up their minds, instead, to go to India and persuade their parents to permit them to marry. Before going to India, they made several long-distance calls to Indira's elder sister and Dipesh's elder brother, and sought their help. The siblings and their spouses met in a restaurant subsequently, and after much planning, broke the news to their respective parents through carefully selected mediators.

Indira's father firmly opposed the alliance initially. His wife and Indira's elder sister pressurised him to consent and persuaded him to meet Dipesh's family, after which he relented. Indira was thrilled on learning about her father's permission, particularly since she did not have to keep her relationship under wraps any more. During a brief visit to India, Indira and Dipesh had a civil marriage followed by a ceremony at Dipesh's house.

On the one hand, this case illustrates how migration is used as a strategy of avoidance, on the other it shows how migration can prove fortuitous for those involved. It was only because of their decision to migrate that the couple could

get married with both their parents' permission, an unlikely eventuality had they stayed back in India.

From the discussion so far it is evident that a combination of individual and social motivations influenced the youngsters' decision to move to London. They wanted to earn money and gain new experiences, but they were also eager to experience a different lifestyle and escape family pressures by living away from their parents. The findings also point out that the parents encouraged the youngsters to migrate and even helped them financially, though they were aware of the downsides of living abroad. Why did the parents in India support their children when they decided to move to London and, later, when they wished to stay on abroad, even after they realised that it had resulted in downward mobility in terms of living and working conditions for their wards? In order to answer this, we need to take a closer look at the process of social mobility among the middle classes of central Gujarat. This will show that the families involved regard migration as part of their strategy to maintain their middle class status in present-day India, thereby safeguarding their children's future prospects.

MIDDLE CLASS MOBILITY

Nowadays, in India, I dislike the way business is done...and our politics. I want (my daughter) to go to London, it will be very fine for...us. She...can make money and...her life will be very fine. [Ashokbhai, father of Amita]

This statement by the father of one the youngsters in London is a pointer to why Indian parents allow, and often support their children's migration from India, despite being aware of the exertions involved in living abroad. The parent in this case is a wealthy farmer and trader, who owns several houses in his home village and in the nearby town of Anand. Even though his family belongs to the upper stratum of rural society, the father states that he has no faith in

the economic and political developments of India and feels his daughter would do better to move abroad.

All our respondents are from middle class families in India, a majority of whom can be categorised as lower middle class, consisting of middle farmers, small industrialists, small businessmen and traders, low-ranking bureaucrats, and people doing supervisory and administrative jobs in private companies (Fernandes and Heller 2006). Due to the modernisation of agriculture and the subsequent expansion of the service and industrial sectors, as well as the acceleration of economic development in the region over the past few decades, there has been widespread increase in wealth among members of the middle classes in the small towns and villages of central Gujarat. Upward social mobility has resulted in the customary lifestyle changes, characterised by the tendency towards opulence and conspicuous consumption. There is, thus, an accumulation of luxury consumer goods in the homes, and the construction of large, well-appointed houses, often in separate housing societies on the periphery of the towns or villages. Such mobility has also resulted in more leisure time for the middle class families and a change in the nature of the work performed by both male and female members of these families. To distance oneself from physical labour is an important aspect of this new lifestyle. The men have opted for jobs as supervisors, managers, gentlemen landowners, or administrative work; the women have become full time housewives and employ part-time servants to help with the more strenuous household chores. The expedient of withdrawing from manual labour to raise one's social status is not a new phenomenon among the middle classes, but it is a practice that has recently become more widespread among the lower middle class families in central Gujarat, especially among those belonging to the Patel community (Rutten 1995: 247-299).

The recent changes in the economic condition and lifestyle among the middle classes of central Gujarat has also had an impact on the education of the members of this class. In recent decades, an increasing number of children from this section of society has benefited from the improved access to higher education in the region, especially in places like Vidyanagar, Baroda, Anand and Nadiad. Consequently, the middle class people in the region are largely well-educated, and the youngsters, irrespective of gender, generally hold a diploma or university degree. In her study of the middle class in the city of Baroda in central Gujarat, Margit van Wessel avers that education has become an important part of a strategy to realise the multiple aspirations of middle class life, especially in terms of social status:

...education forms part of a secure and confident middle-class identity. Education provides a person with social status, and in addition, education is held to induce highly legitimate mental progress. ... High educational achievement is not just a source of pride and a possible ticket to a career, but also an asset that can lead to a desirable spouse. (Van Wessel: 91 and 67)

However, their recent upward social mobility also generated a growing sense of frustration and insecurity among the lower middle class people. The reason being, despite the substantial improvements in their educational attainments over the past few decades, access to internationally acclaimed educational institutions such as the Institute of Rural Management in Anand (IRMA) and the Indian Institutes of Management (IIM) in Ahmedabad and other places remained beyond the reach of the younger generation. Most of the youngsters in this study were educated in government and private institutions that cater to the masses, as a result of which 'English, the language of the powerful, is not mastered by many in the middle class. Their sense of security and status in their social

world is attacked through their feeling of inadequacy' (Van Wessel 2001: 91).¹¹

Increasingly, the middle and upper castes among the middle classes in central Gujarat are openly voicing their grievances against the policies of the government. Interestingly, most of them manage to evade taxes, circumvent government regulations, and even benefit directly from government subsidies, yet they are vocal about the government policy frustrating their economic interests. This antipathetic attitude is also evident vis a vis the social policies of the government. Members of the Patidar community, especially, are very outspoken in their criticism of the positive discrimination measures of the state and national governments. The aim of this policy is to facilitate access to higher professional education and to employment in the public sector for lower castes through a mandatory reservation quota. The Patidar community claims that the increasing participation of children from the lower castes in educational institutions and in government positions has resulted in a decline in the level of education and public facilities, and the government is to be blamed for this (Rutten 2003: 75-86).

Several parents we met were frustrated with the economic and political situation in India and remarked that they see no future for their children in Gujarat, even though their families belong to the middle stratum of society. Jigneshbhai, a wealthy farmer and small industrialist whom we have already introduced, felt that his sons would do better by moving abroad.

I think my sons have little choice but to leave India and move abroad. There is no real future for them here. It will be very difficult for them to have a good life in India in the future. To do your own business has become very difficult, because the government is sabotaging us by imposing taxes and regulations. And then

there is all the corruption. It is hard for our children to get a job in a good company and to get a job with the government is impossible, because of the reservation policies.
[Jigneshbhai, father of Pravin and Suresh]

A similar churning is visible among the middle classes in other parts of India. In his study of youngsters belonging to the lower middle class in the regional town of Meerut in Uttar Pradesh (north India), Craig Jeffrey explicates how the early consolidation of a prosperous lower-middle class subsequently became characterised by feelings of threats associated with the liberalisation of the Indian economy and a fear of downward mobility as a result of the rise of lower castes in the region.

What tends to unite these disparate (lower-middle) classes is a shared anxiety about the possibility of downward mobility... Upper-middle classes were able to use their social connections and accumulated cultural capital, especially their mastery of English, to capture the most lucrative and secure positions that emerged in information technology (IT) and allied industries in the wake of liberalization. But economic reforms often jeopardized the position of ... India's lower-middle classes..., undermining their ability to acquire state services, such as education and health care. ... Lower-middle-class young people commonly possessed the financial backing to obtain education but lacked the high-level social contacts and upper-middle-class skills to succeed within fiercely competitive markets for government jobs and positions in the new economy (Jeffrey 2010: 466-467).

This context of a growing sense of frustration and insecurity among the lower middle classes in India influenced the families of the youngsters we interacted with, and made them decide to support their children when they desired to move abroad.

¹¹ See Ganguli-Scrase and Scrase (2009: 131-150) for a detailed account of the importance of English for the (Bengali) middle classes in a globalising India.

One of the youngsters stated, 'Frankly speaking...my father was more interested to send me to London (than I was). He told me: you go there, you get better knowledge' (Magan, 24 years). Although most parents backed their children's decision to go abroad, they were not always happy with the type of work they were doing in London. One of the mothers plainly stated that although she approved of her son living in London, she did not like him to do menial jobs and therefore wanted him to come back after some years.

...if he has to work there for the rest of his life, I don't like it. He should earn a bit and come back. I don't want my son to remain somebody's servant. There they work as servants. When they return they'll have servants working under them. He will be a boss himself, and under him there will be servants. Right now, he is working as a servant. We don't like that. Therefore we want him to come back here (in the end)... [Hemaben, mother of Suresh]

With their recently acquired wealth and educational qualifications, the middle classes have the resources and qualifications to make use of the new migration routes via the system of international student visa and skilled work permits. The arrival of these youngsters from Gujarat in London is part of a wider tendency of middle class global mobility in which people from a lower-middle class background in developing countries are able, and often eager, to move to Western countries on the basis of a temporary visa (Batnizky, McDowell, and Dyer 2008).

CONCLUSION

What we *can* clearly say...is this: the hallmark of migration is its *ambiguity* (Gardner and Osella 2003: xxiii).

This paper has discussed the contradictory migration experiences of Indian youngsters who moved to Britain for work and study. Based on

research among Gujarati youngsters in London and their family members in Gujarat, we described their motivations and the ways in which they coped with their experiences abroad. Though belonging to middle class families in India, these youngsters work in low-status, semi-skilled jobs and live in a labour class neighbourhood in London. At the same time, their move abroad has improved their social status among family-members and friends back home. The migration experiences of these youngsters are therefore characterised by ambivalence and ambiguity, by both upward and downward social mobility.

Our findings are in line with the few other studies that deal with Indian youngsters who entered Britain on temporary visas. These studies also emphasise the contradictory experiences of the youngsters involved, and the unmistakable ambivalence towards their decision to migrate. Indian youngsters who recently arrived in the West Midlands from Punjab on temporary work or student visas are said to '...have mixed feelings whether to go back or to stay in UK' (Harriss and Varghese *forthc.*: 13-15). In a study of young Indian men in the hospitality sector in West London, the authors discuss extensively the various convolutions in the migration trajectories of these youngsters. They show how their experiences in the West are often incongruent with middle class identities in their country of origin, resulting in ambivalence towards their decision to migrate.

Although the individuals in our sample originate from a low-income country (India) and work in the hospitality sector, that they are highly educated, middle class and plan to return to India exemplifies some of the many complexities and contradictions of the migration trajectories of London's migrants. (Batnizky, McDowell and Dyer 2008: 56)

It is the social background of these young middle class migrants which results in their contradictory mobility, '...which is the dislocation resulting from the simultaneous experience of an increase in

financial status from overseas work, and decline in social status...’ (Kofman 2004: 651). In various ways, they occupy a position in-between, having neither really arrived in the West, nor really left their home country.

(This)...disjuncture in living standards between developed and developing societies means that...even though a migrant may realize that a foreign job is of low status abroad, he does not view himself as being part of the receiving society. Rather he sees himself as a member of his home community, with which foreign labour and hard-currency remittances carry considerable honor and prestige (Massey, Arango, Hugo et.al. 1993: 442).

Following Conradson and Latham, we therefore opt for the term ‘middling’ migration to characterise the contradictory migration experiences of Indian youngsters described in this paper. They are ‘...often, but not always, well educated. They may come from wealthy families, but more often than not they appear to be simply middle class’ (2005a: 229). Their move to the West has resulted in a simultaneous upward and downward social mobility. Seen that way, they are an illustration of the complexities and contradictory tendencies of the recent phase of globalisation that is characterised by increasing and differing forms of middle class mobility.

This ambiguous nature of the migration experiences of the Indian youngsters in London can only be understood if we take into account both their individual characteristics, and their as well as their families’ aspirations for social mobility. Our interactions with this group of youngsters indicate that the decision to migrate arose partly out of the individual motive of the youngsters to escape family pressure by living independently from their parents. Although they faced many difficulties, the youngsters emphasised that they enjoyed their lifestyle in London and the new experiences they gained. Their migration experiences are partly in line with the ‘self-

development’ type of motivation mentioned by Tartakovsky and Schwarz, in which migration is ‘...a move that provides opportunities for personal growth in knowledge and skills, and freedom to choose new, different, and challenging ways of living’ (2001: 91). Being financially independent and able to take their own decisions, is something these youngsters value. Their move abroad is ‘...a sort of “rite of passage” that proves to themselves and other members of their economic class that they can survive on their own’ (Batnitzky, McDowell and Dyer 2008: 63).

In several of the cases presented, there is evidence that some of the youngsters also made the move to escape family pressure at home, especially related to the restrictive demands of living in an extended family. In those instances, migration is to be partly viewed as a strategy of avoidance in which youngsters move abroad as result of family quarrels between generations (Gardner and Osella 2003: xix). Additionally, women sometimes use migration as a way to avoid social pressure related to marriage (see also Habu 2000: 56-58). As shown in the paper, migration to Britain is also part of the life-cycle of the youngsters involved and thereby part of their process of growing up.

...(I)t is not so much that migration disrupts existing relations between generations, but more that it is tied to the life-cycle, so that movement marks the transition between adolescence and adulthood (and is also to be viewed as a) process of reaching maturity (Gardner and Osella 2003: xix).

The experiences of Indian youngsters in London seem to resemble those of youngsters from developed countries who take ‘gap years’ or career sabbaticals overseas, or who study abroad while working at the same time. Studies on these forms of transnational mobility conclude that temporary periods of movement by youngsters, often of middle class origin, are to be seen as periods of exploration, travel and new experiences. Their behaviour can be viewed as a ‘rite of passage’, in

which a period of overseas travel is viewed as 'both normal and to a remarkable degree taken-for-granted' (Conradson and Latham 2005b: 298). Compared to 'gap year' youngsters from developed countries, however, the Indian youngsters in our sample do feel a need to save money and, if they manage to do so, to also transfer part of their earnings to their families in Gujarat. Moreover, as youngsters from a developing country, they are not free to travel around the world in the same way as youngsters with a passport from a developed or Western country. Their choice to travel to other places, and whether to stay on or to return home is constrained by financial limitations and even more so by government policies on visa regulations in the host countries.

Although the parents in India realised the difficulties their children face abroad, they allowed and even supported them in their wish to (temporarily) move to London. They did so out of uncertainty about the family's future prospects in India, and with the hope that their children's move abroad would enable the family to maintain its middle class position in present-day India and increase the children's future prospects. These middle-class parents experienced economic and social upward mobility in their own life and work, and now realize that – given the changing circumstances in a globalising India – it will be very difficult, and perhaps impossible, for their own children to experience a similar type of mobility if they remain dependent on the family resources in

India. The parents therefore feel that it is necessary for them to push their children out to do something else – for their own long-term benefit – although they find it emotionally difficult to be separated from their children. Their strategy is to support their children to gain a passage to a life disconnected from the household in India as an economic base. For these families, migration is a precautionary strategy to consolidate their middle class status in present-day India, and thereby to safeguard their children's future prospects. The parents of these youngsters allowed and even supported their wish to migrate abroad '...because of uncertainty about future prospects. The aim was to maintain at least the pre-migration level in the face of the risks...' (Shah 2010: 174).

The findings presented in this paper focus on the 'starting phase' of the migration process as a result of which it brings out more clearly the ambiguous and ambivalent characteristics of the migration experiences of these youngsters. At this moment, four of our respondents have already returned to Gujarat while several others have managed to extend their visa and hope to be able to apply for permanent residency in the future. As visa regulations in the UK are further tightened, it is likely that many more Indian youngsters on temporary visa will have to return to their home region. It will be interesting to see how these youngsters and their families in India cope with this new situation.

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Table 1: A summary description of the respondents

Name	Caste	Gender	Age at migration	Year of migration	Type of visa	Education prior to migration	Education since migration	Type of job at interview	Location in September 2011
Suresh	Patel	Male	22	2007	Dependent	Bachelor	—	Waiter	Gujarat
Mina	Patel	Female	21	2006	Student	Bachelor	—	Home helper	Gujarat
Pravin	Patel	Male	25	2007	HSMP	Master	—	Office work	London
Amita	Patel	Female	26	2009	Dependent	Master	—	Home helper	London
Indira	OBC	Female	21	2006	Student	Bachelor	—	Waiter	London
Dipesh	OBC	Male	21	2006	Student-> HSMP	Bachelor	Master	Office work	London
Parul	Patel	Female	21	2004	Indefinite stay	Bachelor	—	Shop attendant	London
Rakesh	Patel	Male	24	2006	Dependent	Bachelor	—	Shop attendant	London
Pranav	Patel	Male	24	2007	Work-holiday	Diploma	—	Geriatric helper	Gujarat
Kirit	OBC	Male	22	2008	Student	Bachelor	—	Supermarket helper	Gujarat
Jagdish	Patel	Male	21	2007	Work permit	Diploma	Chartered Acc.	Office work	Gujarat
Surendra	Patel	Male	21	2006	Student	Bachelor	Master	Supermarket helper	USA
Dinesh	OBC	Male	29	2003	Visitor-> Overstay	High school	—	Shop attendant	London
Vipul	Patel	Male	21	2009	Student	Diploma	—	Shop attendant	London
Bharat	Patel	Male	32	2009	Student	Diploma	—	Office work	London
Arun	Patel	Male	24	2009	Student	Bachelor	—	Office work	Gujarat
Pritesh	Patel	Female	27	2010	Student	Bachelor	—	Beauty salon helper	London
Pankaj	Patel	Male	28	2010	Dependent	Bachelor	—	Unemployed	London
Kirti	Brahmin	Female	23	2007	Student-> HSMP	Master	—	Shop attendant	London
Harish	Brahmin	Male	25	2004	Dependent	Bachelor	—	Shop attendant	London
Mohan	Patel	Male	28	2008	Work-holiday	Bachelor	—	Supermarket helper	Australia
Magan	Brahmin	Male	21	2005	Student	Bachelor	—	Supermarket helper	Gujarat
Nandita	Patel	Female	22	2011	Dependent	High school	—	Babysitter	London
Mukesh	Patel	Male	29	2011	Student	Bachelor	—	Shop attendant	London
Nita	Patel	Female	32	2008	Visitor-> Overstay	High school	—	Babysitter	London
Deepak	Patel	Male	33	2008	Visitor-> Overstay	High school	—	Mechanic	London

OBC = Other Backward Castes

ABOUT THE PROVINCIAL GLOBALISATION PROGRAMME

The Provincial Globalisation research programme ('ProGlo') explores transnational connections between Overseas Indians and their home regions, especially the effects of 'reverse flows' of resources, including remittances, philanthropy, investments, and knowledge.

The programme consists of five independent but interlinked research projects (three PhD and two postdoctoral) located in three states of India – Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Gujarat. The research documents a broad range of resource transfers by migrants, including economic resources (such as household remittances, investments in land), social remittances (including flows of ideas, support for NGOs), and cultural flows (such as religious donations), and their influence at the regional level.

The PhD projects are intensive studies of three selected regions – Anand District in Gujarat, Guntur District in Andhra Pradesh, and Dakshina Kannada District in Karnataka – focusing on the effects of resource transfers by migrants in the key provincial towns and their rural hinterlands. The two post-doctoral projects provide macro- and meso-level mappings of transnational linkages and flows at the regional, state, and national levels. By tracing these transnational networks and the modalities and destinations of resource transfers comparatively across three regions, the research programme provides insights into the economic, social, political, and cultural consequences of Overseas Indians' engagements with India.

'ProGlo' is a five-year 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, initiated in 2010.

www.provglo.org

Programme directors:

Prof. Mario Rutten (AISSR)

Prof. Carol Upadhyia (NIAS)

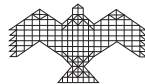
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The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO)
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