

“In the Joy of Others Lies our Own”

Altruism and Social Service of the Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) in the United Kingdom

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Abstract

This article is based on a study of 348 randomly chosen followers of a branch of the Swaminarayan sect in the United Kingdom called the *Bochasanwasi Shree Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha* (BAPS). BAPS is a Hindu organisation with origins in Gujarat, India. It has a strong presence among the Gujarati-speaking diaspora in the UK. Social service is an important aspect of BAPS whose followers (also known as *satsangis*) believe that faith is strengthened by an altruistic approach to serving society. Bivariate and logistic regression analyses showed that the followers view that altruism and social service strengthen community bonds while their philanthropy achieves a larger public good. Logistic regression models reveal that gender, age, marital status and the duration of volunteer service are critical predictors of how the followers view the altruistic work that they do under the aegis of BAPS. The study stresses the need for a continuing discourse on the nature and quality of humanitarian work by BAPS in UK and accommodating this within the discourse on faith-based social services.

KEYWORDS: BAPS, UK, Altruism, faith-based social service

Introduction

Faith is re-emerging in the public realm as a significant driver of welfare and social services (Dinham and Shaw, 2011). Faith-based organisations (FBOs) can be broadly defined as any kind of faith-related voluntary association. The focus in this paper is on those FBOs that offer a broad range of social welfare services and use their influence in social policy making. Several studies in the past decade examined the capabilities and effectiveness of FBOs in areas such as social work and social welfare (Fridolfsson et al., 2009; Jurgen et al, 2009; Montagne-Villette et al., 2011). In particular, faith-based organisations work through factors such as shared cultural forms (Bunn and Wood, 2012) and volunteers are key stakeholders therein. Several studies were also carried out on volunteerism in faith-based organisations (Allahyari, 2000). They focused on faith-based social capital (Wuthnow, 2000) and compared the volunteer behaviour this genre vis-à-vis the more reflexive type (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003).

Contemporary interest in the rise of FBOs in the United Kingdom (UK) can be attributed to the neoliberal trends in European welfare states (Gocmen, 2013). Historically, in the UK, religious organizations worked in partnership with the state to provide for those in need. The peaceful coexistence, which was the hallmark of state-religion relations during the period of nation-state formation, as well as the state's relatively tolerant approach toward different faiths, resulted in the establishment of an enduring balance between religious and secular agencies in the early 20th century (McLeod, 1996).

Since 1997, successive governments led by the Labour Party have emphasized the importance of the contribution of faith groups to a 'communities' agenda. The presence of culturally diverse migrant groups also triggered a surge of new FBOs in the United Kingdom. Hence, in the UK, increasing policy interest in FBOs is mainly an outcome of the transformations in social welfare in the post-1980s period. This has resulted in shifts in the roles of the state and voluntary associations in social welfare provisioning and also broadened the window of opportunity for the FBOs for a wider engagement in social welfare initiatives.

I have focused on the Swaminarayan sect in the UK and its social service arm known as the BAPS (*Bochasanwasi Shree Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha*) Charities. The Swaminarayan faith was founded by a charismatic faith teacher, Bhagwan Swaminarayan, in the nineteenth century in the state of Gujarat, India. The movement has now become a dominant form of British Hinduism — as practised by the Gujarati-speaking population (Dwyer, 2004). Currently dominated by an order of male celibates called the *Swamis*, it is headed by a *Pramukh* (chief) *Swami*.

Followers believe that the building of temples is an inward-looking act of devotion and part of a broader approach based on selfless service or *seva* (Srivastava, 2009). Although the Swaminarayan movement has its roots in the Indian state of Gujarat, owing to the presence of a large number of Gujaratis in the Indian Diaspora, it has a significant presence in many countries and has attracted scholarly attention worldwide.

The BAPS has, over time, deployed temple space to engage with the public in diverse ways (Kim, 2007). Hinduism in the UK acquired greater visibility in the 1970s with the construction of temples (Knott, 2000). The BAPS movement, in particular, gained greater public notice with its expansion — initially in East Africa and, later, to the UK and North America. To the movement, the temple is an important space through which BAPS negotiates, accommodates and debates its relationship with the various publics (Kim, 2009).

BAPS temples in Western countries compel a close examination of the discursive and sociological dynamics of 'religion' and their intersection with the Swaminarayan idea of *bhakti* (devotionalism). My focus was on the Neasden temple in London, which functions like a multivalent structure responding to both public expectations and the individual's desire to show devotion. This is the core around which the BAPS Charities, UK, operates and is supported by its followers.

BAPS followers (or *satsangis*) stress the pre-eminent role of devotion in transforming lives (Kurien, 2007: 109). From a sociological perspective, the emphasis on redirecting devotion from the guru (teacher) towards social causes has resulted in the ability of BAPS to discern changing social and political contexts and respond to them. BAPS's sensitivity to the lives and concerns of its devotees and people in need is possible due to the intimate and uninterrupted channels of communication between *satsangis* and the living *Guru* (Teacher) *Pramukh Swami* (Kim, 2009).

One important component of devotion is *seva* (or social service). The Neasden temple is not just a site for devotional practice; it is also the arena in which sociality is imbricated with faith. Since its inauguration, English-speaking *sadhus* have taken up full-time residence in the temple's adjoining facilities and contributed substantially to

the teaching of Swaminarayan texts and behavioural ideals for *satsangis* of all age groups. The spread of the ideals of the Swaminarayan sect to the UK —into a secular Christian environment — involved engaging and negotiating with the larger public and discourses (Rajagopal 2000; Kurien 2007).

Thus, the Neasden temple has moved beyond its devotional foundations to fitting into and engagement with the socio-political contexts of the UK. This begins with discourses on virtues, ethics and morality, the ideals of which *satsangis* are encouraged to imbibe and practise.

Practice of these ideals can take the form of volunteering for social service, which includes community work, health care initiatives, environmental issues and care of the aged. Such an approach leads to a doubt whether this *seva* (social service) is directed towards strengthening their devotion in a non-Hindu context. The critical view is also that such enterprises are a vehicle site to promote *Hindutva* (the belief in the superiority of Hindu ideals and thought) as a hegemonic form of ethno-nationalism that subverts subaltern voices (Bhatt, 2000).

However, the fact remains that the Neasden temple serves as the locus for other BAPS temples and charities in the UK for their engagement in a range of social service initiatives. In this paper, I have presented my study of the BAPS as a form of faith-based social work from the perspectives of the volunteer-followers (*satsangis*). BAPS is represented in a dominantly evangelical context through the language of faith, spirituality and sociality, which simultaneously strengthens devotion and gains the individual greater visibility in the Diaspora community.

Methodology

This paper studied the aspects of altruism in BAPS's approach to social service as viewed through the perspectives of the *satsangis*. Three initial propositions, drawn from literature, guided this study:

- **Proposition 1:** BAPS engages in its social service mandate through follower-volunteers (*satsangis*) in the diaspora.
- **Proposition 2:** The follower-volunteers belong to socially privileged groups for whom engagement with BAPS is at once for philanthropic goals as well as for forging close bonds among the BAPS members.
- **Proposition 3:** Service is viewed by the follower-volunteers as a part of moral duty, to evoke divine grace, and as a contribution to social development in keeping with the Swaminarayan philosophy.

Volunteer lists, which were obtained from the Neasden temple authorities and the BAPS Charities UK (April-June 2012), formed the basis of the data. The devotees at the temple also formed the cadre that was actively involved in social services of the charities wing. Through simple random sampling, 348 BAPS followers (or *satsangis*) were identified as respondents from a universe of 1743 volunteers from various parts of the UK. The response rate was 78%. In keeping with research ethics, verbal consent for the study was sought from all the respondents prior to the interviews.

An interview schedule was drawn. Appointments for the interviews were fixed in advance. The followers were interviewed at BAPS's offices or locations. The interview schedule was designed to obtain information on the socio-demographic profiles of the followers, their engagement chronicle including initiation, duration of volunteer service and the service type, their views of service and motivation.

The followers were also questioned on their perception of the implications of volunteering for BAPS, both for themselves and the social milieu of the Diaspora. These questions were open ended and the responses were grouped into analytical codes using Nvivo 10 software package.

The schedule also included five scales – Self-reported Altruism Scale, Centrality of Religiosity Scale, Philanthropy Scale, a Volunteerism questionnaire and a Moral Foundations questionnaire. The scales were cross-checked for validity and reliability. The Self-Reported Altruism Scale, developed by Rushton et al. (1981), is a Likert-type scale containing a list of twenty items each rated in five categories from never to very often. The lowest possible score is 20 and the highest, 100. Cronbach's α for the scale is 0.89.

The Centrality of Religiosity Scale (version 15, which is the basic and interreligious version), developed by Huber and Huber (2012), measures the salience or the importance of religious meanings in personality. This Likert-type scale comprises 15 questions rated by respondents on a scale of one to five score. The lowest possible score is 15 and the highest achievable is 75. Cronbach's α for the scale is 0.92.

The Philanthropy Scale (Schuyt, Smit & Bekkers, 2004) is an eight-item measure of attitudes about philanthropy; and specifically examine respondents' beliefs about their own responsibility towards the public good. The items blend together attitudes about intergenerational solidarity, the decline of solidarity in society, and personal responsibility for the others' well-being. Altogether, the authors contend that these components form the foundations of social responsibility. Respondents answer each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (disagree completely) to 5 (agree completely). Four of the eight items are reverse coded. Cronbach's α for the scale is 0.87.

The Volunteerism Questionnaire (Clary & Snyder, 2002) is a 30-item measure of the reasons for volunteering and volunteering outcomes. This is also a Likert-type scale. Scoring is done with ratings from 1 to 7 (1 = not at all important/accurate; 7 = extremely important/accurate). Cronbach's α for the scale is 0.86.

The moral domain is not just a subset of the values assessed by value inventories; it is broader than concerns of empathy and justice. To fill the need for reliable and theoretically grounded measurement of the full range of moral concerns, Graham et al (2011) developed the Moral Foundations Questionnaire using a theoretical model of 5 universally available (but variably developed) sets of moral intuitions: Harm/Care, Fairness/Reciprocity, Ingroup/Loyalty, Authority/Respect, and Purity/Sanctity.

The Moral Foundations Questionnaire contains two parts: moral relevance and moral judgements. Each part consists of 15 items. In the first part, rating is done on a 6 point scale continuum (1=not at all relevant and 6=very relevant). In the second

part, the rating ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Average Cronbach's α for the scale is 0.79.

The quantitative data was analysed with STATA 12 software. Univariate and bivariate analyses were carried out. Pearson's chi-square test was applied to understand the association between socio-demographic profiles of the respondents and aspects of initiation into service, duration, motivation, perceived self- and societal implications and scale scores. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to determine the socio-demographic and engagement chronicle variables as predictors of the altruism scale scores.

Logistic regression analysis was used to understand the predictors of perceived implications for self (proximity to the *guru* or teacher proximity, or self-actualisation) and society (spreading the Swaminarayan culture and values or contributing to community service). Further, Box Cox regression model was used to understand socio-demographic and engagement chronicle covariates of the volunteers' perceived implications for the self. Nominal/categorical level variables were suitably recoded into binary or dummy variables for the purpose of regression analysis.

Respondent Profiles

53.73% of the followers were in the age group of 20-49 years (young to middle-aged). 19.83% were in the age group 50-59 years and 26.43% were senior citizens (60 years and above). The majority (69.54%) of the followers were men. This is explained by the fact that the Swaminarayan sect is male-dominated and has a strong patriarchal structure. Gender divisions are rigid. The majority (50.29%) of the followers were currently married, 20.69% never married, 15.23% widowed and 13.79% were divorced/separated from their spouses.

18.39% of the followers had completed their A levels, 22.70% had a graduate (bachelor's) degree, 28.16% had completed their post-graduation (masters') and 30.75% had professional qualifications. Most (73.85%) ran small businesses. The rest were employed. The volunteers resided in London (22.13%), Manchester (12.93%), Birmingham (12.64%), Leeds (13.79%), Liverpool (14.66%), Sheffield (12.64%) and Edinburgh (11.21%). 43.97% reported a monthly per capita expenditure in the range of 500-799 pounds. Thus, it can be said that BAPS volunteers are mostly young to middle-aged males, married, with average educational qualifications and belonging to the business community and, therefore, belonged to a privileged economic class.

Findings

Initiation: Initiation means being introduced to the sect and influencing the decision to become followers. 63.79% of the followers were initiated into BAPS by their families, and 36.21% by the *sadhus*. Age of the followers was significantly associated with the manner of initiation on the Pearson's chi-square test ($\chi^2(6) = 17.6108, p=0.0076$). A higher proportion of the members in the younger age groups were initiated into the sect by their families. 50.72% of the followers in the age group 50-59 and 47.22% of the followers in the age group 70-79 were initiated by other members of the order or by the BAPS *sadhus*.

Education: Education level of the followers also had significant association with the form of initiation ($\chi^2(3) = 16.9277$, $p=0.0008$). Followers with higher qualifications were more drawn to BAPS by the charisma and propaganda of the members of the order.

Duration of Volunteer Service: 23.85% of the members had served between five and years. 52.59% had served for more than eight years. The age of the members was significantly associated with the duration of their volunteer service ($\chi^2(12) = 23.4581$, $p=0.0249$). About two-thirds of the followers in the age group 20-29 and in the age group of 50-79 years had longer duration of service (eight years and above). Availability of time could have influenced the extent of the members' involvement at both ends of the age range.

Residence: The followers' place of residence was also significantly associated with the duration of service ($\chi^2(12) = 21.1553$, $p=0.0494$). A higher proportion of followers residing in London (62.34%) had served for more than eight years. This was followed by those residing in Manchester (51.11%), Birmingham (52.27%), Leeds (56.25%) and Liverpool (54.90%). A possible explanation for these differences could lie in the duration of the presence of the Gujaratis and the age of the temples in these places. These are likely contributory factors to BAPS *communitas* (anthropologist Victor Turner's concept denoting community feeling) culture in these places; and hence, the tendency to participate in social service activities for a longer duration.

Type of Volunteer Service: 44.83% of the followers participated in regular *seva* and 38.51% undertook programme based volunteering. 16.67% said that they preferred to make monetary donations. Age of the followers was significantly associated with type of service ($\chi^2(12) = 25.9035$, $p=0.0115$). Monetary donations were preferred mostly by followers in the age group 50-59 (30.43%). The inclination to perform regular *seva* was highest (57.33%) in the age group of 30-39 years and programme based volunteering was more preferred by those in the age group 40-49 (51.43%).

Gender: Gender also had significant association with the service type ($\chi^2(2) = 9.5250$, $p=0.0089$). More women (56.6%) preferred regular *seva* than men (39.67%). However more men participated in programme-based volunteering (40.91%) and donated money (19.42%) than women (10.83%) who preferred donations.

To some extent, the place of residence also had significant association with the nature of service ($\chi^2(12) = 21.2246$, $p=0.0484$). A higher proportion of those residing in Manchester (28.89%) and Edinburgh (23.08%) than in the other cities said that they preferred to make monetary donations. 63.64% of the followers residing in Birmingham (where a larger proportion of the Gujarati Hindu population resides) preferred regular *seva*. 44.44% and 40.26% of the followers from Manchester and London respectively preferred programme based volunteering.

26.15% viewed *seva* was viewed as a moral duty, 50.86% considered it necessary to invoke the grace of Lord Swaminarayan. From a more practical viewpoint, *seva* also helped in strengthening the individual's bond with the community, which is of particular importance in an alien cultural milieu. This was the view held by 22.99% of the followers.

The followers' view of *seva* was significantly associated with age ($\chi^2(12) = 31.5664$, $p=0.0017$). To 39.47% of the followers in the age group 60-69 years, service was a moral duty. For 68.57% of the followers in the age group 40-49 years, service was performed to evoke the grace of Lord Swaminarayan. 39.13% of the followers in the age group 50-59 viewed service as the means to gain inclusion and acceptance within their community.

There were two important factors that motivated members to volunteer: gain proximity to BAPS *sadhus* (56.90%), and the prospects of admission into the inner circle of Swaminarayan sect and become a part of the culture (43.10%). The latter means that motivation came from the prospects of having a deeper involvement with spirituality. Proximity to *sadhus* is a political motivation and prospects of admission to the inner circle is a spiritual motivation. Marital status of the followers had a significant association with motivating factors ($\chi^2(3) = 8.7633$, $p=0.0335$). For the never married (65.28%) and divorced/separated (70.83%) followers, motivation was derived from the prospect of proximity to the members of the order.

Currently married (48.57%) and the widowed (49.06%) followers were more motivated by the prospect of deeper spiritual engagement with the movement. Thus, singlehood was associated with the motivation to associate intensely with the ascetic/celibate order and chart out the course of one's life accordingly.

The place of residence also had significant association with the motivational factors ($\chi^2(6) = 14.6394$, $p=0.0240$). Followers residing in London (61.04%), Birmingham (68.18%), Liverpool (66.67%) and Edinburgh (64.10%) were chiefly motivated by the prospect of proximity to BAPS *sadhus*. This could be due to the existence of temples in these places which influenced the followers to volunteer. Further the proximity to *sadhus* and thus having a greater influence in community matters was also a factor that motivated followers to volunteer.

The *implications for the self*, as perceived by the followers were: closeness to the *guru* and the Swaminarayan culture (34.20%), the feeling of goodness and well-being (35.06%), self-actualisation and realisation of altruistic potential (30.75%). The motivating factor was significantly associated with implications for self ($\chi^2(2) = 6.1350$, $p=0.0476$). Proximity to the *guru* was viewed as a positive implication for the self.

The perceived implications for society were: propagating (or spreading) the Swaminarayan culture (60.06%) and contributing to community service in keeping with the Swaminarayan philosophy (39.94%). Marital status of the followers had a significant association with their perception of the implications of BAPS social service engagements ($\chi^2(3) = 14.3128$, $p=0.0027$). Currently married (68%) and widowed (64.15%) followers were more inclined view the implications as spreading of the Swaminarayan culture. Never married followers (55.56%) had a greater belief in contribution to welfare and development consistent with the Swaminarayan philosophy. Divorced/separated followers were equally divided (spreading the culture and contributing to welfare/development) in their perceptions.

The education levels of the followers had significant association with their perception of the implications for society ($\chi^2(3) = 11.0845$, $p=0.0117$). Followers who had studied up to their A levels (67.19%) and those who held a masters' degree

(69.39%) perceived the societal implications as spreading of the Swaminarayan culture. Those with a bachelor's degree (53.16%) or a professional qualification (42.99%) tended to perceive contribution to community service as the basis of Swaminarayan culture.

How the followers were initiated as a follower into the movement also had a significant association with their perception of the implications ($\chi^2(1)=4.5122$, $p=0.0346$). Those who were initiated by BAPS *sadhus* (67.46%) considered the propagation of Swaminarayan culture to be paramount. Those who were initiated by their families (44.14%) were inclined to consider contribution to community service as more important. Hence, the perceived need to spread the culture appears to have a parochial undertone. On the other hand, initiation by the family conferred a more universal worldview and the ability to place BAPS's social engagements in the broader framework of social development.

Duration of Volunteer Service: Here, too, there was significant association with implications ($\chi^2(2)=9.5424$, $p=0.0089$). 72.29% of the followers who had served for five to eight years perceived the spreading of Swaminarayan culture as the core implication. 51.22% of those who had served from two to five years and 40.44% of those who had served for more than eight years saw contribution to community service as the major implication. Thus, a higher proportion of entry level members and those with a sustained association were able to place BAPS's social engagements in a macro-perspective. Others, who had more experience with BAPS but which were not sustained enough, were more preoccupied with the faith aspects of the Swaminarayan culture.

The core motivational factor was also significantly associated with their perception of the implications for society ($\chi^2(1) =15.6746$, $p=0.0001$). 72% of the followers who were motivated by the prospect of deeper involvement in the Swaminarayan movement considered that spreading the message was paramount. 48.99% of those who derived their motivation from proximity to the *sadhus* were able to place their social service engagements in the macro- landscape of societal welfare and development.

On the scale of volunteer motivation, 46.55% had scores in the range 91-150 (moderate) and 43.68% scored in the range 151-210 (good). The followers' occupation had a significant association with the scores on the volunteer motivations scale ($\chi^2(2) =12.7623$, $p=0.0018$). 52.14% of the followers who had businesses had moderate scores vis-à-vis those who were in service. A higher proportion of those in employment (58.24%) had good scores on the scale vis-à-vis those who had businesses. It could be inferred that the motivation and inclination to volunteer was greater among the followers who were employed. Those in businesses were more likely to make monetary contributions as a demonstration of altruism and philanthropy.

On the philanthropy scale, 40.52% of the followers had scored in the range 13-16, which indicates a high level of social responsibility, 38.51% had scores in the range 9-12 (indicative of moderate levels of social responsibility) and 18.10% had scores in the range 17-20 (the highest in the scale of social responsibility orientation). Education levels of the followers was associated with scores on the philanthropy scale on the Pearson's test ($\chi^2(9) =17.8966$, $p=0.0374$). 45.31% of those who had

completed their A levels and 45.57% of those who had a bachelor's degree achieved good scores vis-à-vis 34.69% of the followers who had a masters degree and 39.25% of those with a professional qualification.

On the Centrality of Religiosity Scale, 42.82% had moderate scores (31-45 range) and 42.53% had good scores (46-60). Gender had a significant association with the religiosity scale scores ($\chi^2(3) = 17.3197$, $p = 0.0007$). A higher proportion of women (52.83% & 14.15% respectively) had good and very good scores vis-à-vis men (38.02% good and 6.61% very good scores).

Significant association of the marital status of the followers with the religiosity scale ($\chi^2(9) = 19.9636$, $p = 0.0182$) was also observed. 52.83% of the widowed followers had moderate scores, 51.39% of the never married followers had good scores and 16.67% of the divorced followers had very good scores. In general, single status was associated with a greater inclination to religiosity.

Further, monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE) of the followers had significant association with the religiosity scale scores on the Pearson's test ($\chi^2(9) = 29.4621$, $p = 0.0006$). Frugality appears to be the hallmark of religiosity. 50.91% of the followers with MPCE of less than 200 pounds had good scores and 16.36% of them scored very high. However, at the other end, 51.79% followers in the higher expenditure bracket (of 800 pounds and above) had moderate scores and 37.5% had good scores. Thus, it may be inferred that the propensity to be religious was higher at either end of the expenditure bracket.

The manner of initiation also had significant association with religiosity scores ($\chi^2(3) = 21.0299$, $p = 0.0001$). Of those initiated through their filial connections, 48.2% had moderate scores. Of those initiated by BAPS *sadhus*, 53.17% had good scores and 12.7% had very good scores. In comparison, 36.49% of those initiated by their families had good scores and 6.78% of them scored very well. Hence, it could be said that filial ties ensured moderate religiosity (as depicted by scale scores); but the intensity was greater when initiation was performed by the *sadhus*.

On the Self-Reported Altruism Scale, the majority had fair (41.95%) or good (41.67%) scores. Marital status of the followers had a significant association with the altruism scale scores ($\chi^2(9) = 20.4043$, $p = 0.0156$). 58.49% of the widowed followers had fair scores, 45.83% of the never married followers had good scores and 14.58% of the divorced/separated followers had very good scores. A general observation is that single status is associated with higher altruism scale scores.

MPCE was also significantly associated with altruism scale scores ($\chi^2(9) = 23.8690$, $p = 0.0045$). Interestingly, at one level, lower MPCE was associated with better altruism scale scores. 46.43% of those with MPCE between 200-400 pounds had fair scores and 43.14% in the next bracket of 500-799 pounds had good scores. 54.55% of the followers whose MPCE was less than 200 pounds had good scores. At another level, 16.07% of the followers in the highest MPCE bracket had very good scores. It can be thus proposed that altruism dominated at both the ends of the expenditure spectrum, separately establishing a relationship with both frugality (by negating desires) and abundance (by sharing and giving). An analysis of income and MPCE distribution in tandem will provide greater insights into this.

The method of initiation also had a significant association with scores on the altruism scale ($\chi^2(3)=12.4806$, $p=0.0062$). About half of the followers initiated by BAPS *sadhus* had fair scores in comparison to 37.39% who were initiated through their filial connections. 47.45% of the followers initiated by their families had good scores and 9.09% of them had very good scores. Hence, it may be inferred that, in general, initiation by family results in higher altruistic sentiments vis-à-vis initiation by members of the order.

The perceived implications of BAPS's engagements with society (spreading of culture or contributing to development) was also associated with altruism scale scores ($\chi^2(3)=10.8818$, $p=0.0129$). 44.5% of those who proposed that spreading of the Swaminarayan culture is of primary importance had good scores on the altruism scale. 10.53% of had very good scores. 51.8% of those who viewed as primary contribution to social development had fair scores. Thus, the higher levels of altruism among Swaminarayan followers translated into worldviews that are dominated by the Swaminarayan cultural habitus. Fair scores on the scale were associated with a more balanced and inclusive worldview of BAPS's social role as contributing to community service.

On the moral foundations questionnaire, 30.17% of the followers had moderate, fair and good scores respectively. Around 8.05% had very good scores on the moral foundations scale. Hence the followers/volunteers had high morality ratings which could be due to their association with the sect, its teachings and the emphasis on morally appropriate behaviour for its associates.

In the regression model shown in Table 1, the adjusted R^2 is 41%. This means that about 41% of the variability of the altruism scale scores is explained by background characteristics and service engagement variables. The standard error of the estimate or the unexplained variability is 0.74532. Further, model significance is through F -test statistic = 21.06, $p=0.0136$, thereby referring to the fact that at least one predictor is significantly influencing the dependent variable. Coefficient-wise significance is depicted through the t -test values. The predictors that are significantly related to the altruism scale scores are marital status, the manner of initiation and perceived implications for society.

A logistic regression analysis was conducted using all background and other factors as predictors to predict whether the perceived implications for self were proximity to the *guru* or self-actualisation. The analysis results are shown in Table 2. A test of the full model against a constant only model was statistically significant indicating that the predictors, as a set, reliably distinguished between those who perceived the implications as proximity to the *guru* or self-actualisation. (LR $\chi^2(12) = 67.31$, Prob > $\chi^2 = 0.0208$).

Prediction success was 51.31% (pseudo $R^2=0.5131$). The z -test showed that the duration of volunteer service with BAPS and its social projects made a significant difference to the prediction of whether perceived implications for the self was *guru* proximity or self actualisation potential. To look at the effect size of the said predictors, the odds ratio of the predictors' sex, marital status, occupation, MPCE, service type, service duration and motivation was greater than one. Thus, for men who were currently married, having their own businesses, in the mid-range of the expenditure bracket, engaged in regular *seva* and/or programme based volunteering,

having served for a longer duration and whose main motivation was the prospect of proximity to members of the order, the perceived implication for self was proximity to the *guru*.

For the older adults, being better educated (a masters' degree and/or professional qualification), who were initiated into BAPS by their families and viewed service as evoking divine grace and for acceptance into the community, the perceived implication for self was self-actualisation, well-being and being able to realise one's goodness and fulfil the altruistic potential.

A Box Cox regression model for predictors of perceived self-implications was also deployed with four iterations. The full model was statistically significant (LR $\chi^2(12) = 91.17$ Prob $> \chi^2 = 0.000$) indicating that the predictors suitably distinguished between perceived self-implication as proximity to the *guru* or self-actualisation. The z-test ($z = 3.32$ $p < 0.000$) and the θ coefficient ($\theta = 0.4958$, std. err. = 0.1534) showed that the predictors' gender, marital status, occupation, MPCE, service duration and type were reasonably stable in predicting perceived self-implications.

Logistic regression analysis was also conducted (Table 3) to predict whether the perceived implications for society was spreading Swaminarayan culture *or* contributing to social welfare or development work consistent with the philosophy of the Swaminarayan movement. All background and other factors were used as predictors. A test of the full model against a constant only model was statistically significant indicating that the predictors, as a set, reliably distinguished between those who perceived the societal implications as spreading culture or contribution to social development (LR $\chi^2(13) = 68.97$, Prob $> \chi^2 = 0.0022$). Prediction success was 62.27% (pseudo $R^2 = 0.6227$). The z-test showed that marital status and motivation made a significant difference to the prediction of whether the perceived societal implication was spreading Swaminarayan culture or contributing to social development.

To look at the effect size of these predictors, the odds ratio of the followers' age, marital status, education, duration of volunteer service and self implications was greater than one. Hence, for young and middle-aged adults, who were currently married, having higher educational qualifications, longer duration of, and who perceived self-actualisation feeling of well-being, realisation of one's own altruistic potential) as paramount, the perceived societal implication was spreading the Swaminarayan culture.

For women, in regular service/ employment, in extreme end expenditure brackets (frugal or generous), initiated into BAPS by their families, serving through giving (monetary donations), viewing service as a moral duty and deriving motivation from the Swaminarayan cultural habitus, the core implication — as perceived by them — for society was contribution to community service with the backing of Swaminarayan philosophy.

Discussion and Conclusion

Altruism and social service in the BAPS is thus a combination of club-like closed network for individual good and philanthropy for the public good. The socially privileged profile of the follower-volunteers reaffirms the initial propositions on profiles of volunteers in faith-based organisations. The class superiority and outlook that is unique to a given age-group among BAPS followers are characteristic of

followers of new age philosophy. The Swaminarayan sect is patriarchal in structure with more men followers than women. This is contrary to the general trend among faith-driven volunteers where there are more women than men, so much so that empirical evidence points to a link between femininity and religiosity (Fader, 2006; Flere, 2007)

Such a follower/*satsangi* trajectory is also a reflection on the Hindu-Gujarati 'travelling' culture (Clifford 1994) and not something attributable wholly to the British context. Stephen Vertovec (2000) identifies this trend as 'cosmopolitan Hinduism', where Hindus in the Diaspora demonstrate 'a capacity to live in multiplex environments' and an ability to accommodate 'co-existing multiple identities' (Vertovec, 2000: 164). What comes to the forefront is the peculiarity of faith- or sect-based altruism and social service in an alien cultural milieu. BAPS in the Diaspora (read UK) and its engagements in social work offer a sustainable model of practice of followers/*satsangis* being committed due their loyalty to the order or the *sadhus*.

This paper discussed the engagement chronicles of followers as influenced by several factors: the manner of initiation, duration of volunteer service, type of volunteerism, motivation, views and the followers' perception of the implications for self and society.

Initiation into BAPS as influenced by filial ties corroborated the findings of studies that showed a link between the faith patterns of parents and the manner by which faith is formed, maintained and transmitted to their children (Milevsky et al, 2008; Mahoney, 2010). Initiation by members of the order is a demonstration of the faith's social capital formation model through the aspects of trust. The followers' engagement with BAPS is long-term, even lifelong, and regular.

The close relationship between affiliation to a group and affirmation of identity further reinforces these lifelong efforts. Service or *seva* is viewed by the followers as a kind of dedicating their life to prayer. Motivation comes from factors such as gaining wisdom from the experience and the (subjective) feeling of psychological well-being. Applying the theory of social identity theory, it can be said that the manner in which the followers of BAPS define personal gains to sustain their motivation implies a sense of coherence and security in their attachment to the Swaminarayan sect.

The implications for the self as perceived by the *satsangis* combine prospects for personal growth community orientation with the privilege of belonging to a tightly knit group that is the Swaminarayan sect. Hence, the implications can also be considered as inward-outward as well as ascending, meaning veneration of the *guru* and prospects of attaining transcendence by the individual (Newton and McIntosh, 2009).

The impact for the Diaspora's social milieu is that BAPS is perceived to address existential uncertainties at one level; and cultural ennui, evil and temporality at another, which accompany contemporary individualising cultures (Harskamp 2008). The moral tone dominates, refracting a sense of a constituted habitus among the followers and ingressing those onto the wider social field (Dawson 2006). This patterning is akin to a metaphorical reflection of a faith-oriented cultural field, like that of the BAPS, on to a perceived depersonalised cosmos, wanting of change – a direction which BAPS is perceived as capable of scripting. Hence, through the voices

of the followers and the order, BAPS in UK can be said to project a faith-based model of social engagements (Dawson, 2006).

There is, thus, both acceptance and projection of an organisational culture informed by religious identity (Sager, 2010) but certainly capable of reaching out. Its heritage of faith is what makes BAPS distinct and its altruistic endeavours malleable – also at times complementing service delivery by state or other providers (Campbell, 2011). The stability and continuity is derived from the Swaminarayan cultural roots of ‘*bijana sukhma aapnu sukh*’ (meaning, “in the joy of others lies our own”, Dave, 2000). The services – in areas of education, health and older adult care provide a complementarity in the social welfare mandates in a situation of global recession and a simultaneous crunch on public resources.

Therefore, there is the need for a continuing discourse on the nature, relative quality, capacity and constitutionality of implementing social service through the BAPS enterprise in the UK. The cord of tension may be proselytation or propagation of faith, but a macro-social audit and cost-benefit analysis may help find the right balance between the sacred and the secular. Hence, some aspects that social work literature may focus on are: effectiveness of non-evangelical faith-based social service engagements (particularly programme effectiveness in social sectors); identifiable indicators of programme effectiveness (particularly in a non-native setting); and the impact of such social services on other aspects of the organisation (such as staff’s spiritual enhancement and well-being) and its surrounding milieu.

In particular, it is important to carry forward the findings of previous studies (Johnson, 2000; Kim, 2001) that faith-based services can facilitate a general positive transformation for doers and increase civic participation within the community. Further, for social work practice and research, the need is also to specifically dwell on why BAPS’s social services are effective in the Diaspora: the Swaminarayan faith as a programmematic factor (philosophy, texts and their ritual reading) versus contextual factors (followers’ faith and service sentiment).

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Tables

Table 1- Multiple Linear Regression Analysis: Predictors of Altruism Scale Scores

Altruism Scale	Coefficient	Std. Error	T	P> t	95% confidence interval
Constant	3.21	0.38	8.35	0.00	2.4600 3.9755
Age	0.03	0.02	1.65	0.10	0.0859 0.7579
Sex	0.02	0.08	0.32	0.74	0.2058 0.4761
Marital Status	0.11	0.03	2.98	0.00	0.0382 0.8722
Education	0.02	0.03	0.65	0.51	0.0495 0.9860
Occupation	0.04	0.09	0.45	0.65	0.1393 0.6233
Residence	0.07	0.01	0.14	0.89	0.0418 0.6353
MPCE	0.04	0.04	1.02	0.30	0.1303 0.41358
Initiation	0.29	0.08	3.49	0.00	0.4653 0.3011
Service Duration	0.01	0.04	0.38	0.70	0.1168 0.7936
Service Type	0.04	0.05	0.86	0.39	0.1593 0.6232
Service View	0.01	0.05	0.22	0.83	0.1269 0.9019
Motivation	0.08	0.04	0.99	0.32	0.2488 0.8210
Implications for Self	0.07	0.05	0.08	0.93	0.1749 0.7962
Societal Implications	0.22	0.05	2.65	0.00	0.3944 0.5838

Table 2- Logistic Regression Analysis: Predictors of Perceived Implications for Self (1=proximity to guru proximity, 0=self-actualisation)

Self-implications	Odds Ratio	Std. Error	Z	P> z	95% confidence interval
Constant	2.23	0.38	0.75	0.45	0.2764 18.0841
Age	0.95	0.06	0.73	0.46	0.8336 1.0870
Sex	1.08	0.27	0.33	0.04	0.6573 1.8002
Marital status	1.08	0.11	0.75	0.04	0.8762 1.3427
Education	0.99	0.10	0.03	0.75	0.8070 1.2305
Occupation	1.29	0.33	1.00	0.02	0.7782 2.1582

Residence	0.97	0.05	0.39	0.69	0.8751	1.0931
MPCE	1.05	0.13	0.42	0.05	0.8253	1.3451
Initiation	0.85	0.20	0.64	0.52	0.5330	1.3743
Service Duration	1.21	0.10	2.31	0.02	0.5341	0.9503
Service Type	1.20	0.19	1.13	0.02	0.8733	1.6563
Service View	0.92	0.15	0.50	0.61	0.6644	1.2754
Motivation	1.08	0.25	0.33	0.03	0.6801	1.7229

Table 3- Logistic Regression Analysis: Predictors of Perceived Implications for Society (1=spreading Swaminarayan culture, 0=contributing to community service)

Implications For Society	Odds Ratio	Std. Error	Z	P> z 	95% confidence interval	
Constant	6.01	6.67	1.62	0.10	0.6826	53.1057
Age	1.02	0.06	0.31	0.05	0.8948	1.1654
Sex	0.79	0.20	0.87	0.38	0.4776	1.3303
Marital Status	1.25	0.13	2.10	0.03	1.0151	1.5484
Education	1.07	0.11	0.70	0.04	0.8713	1.3351
Occupation	0.86	0.22	0.57	0.57	0.5134	1.4447
Residence	0.11	0.06	1.86	0.06	0.9946	1.2413
MPCE	0.87	0.10	1.10	0.27	0.6816	1.1143
Initiation	0.65	0.16	1.70	0.09	0.4051	1.0672
Duration of Volunteer Service	1.17	0.12	0.91	0.03	0.6656	1.1609
Type of Volunteerism	0.91	0.14	0.55	0.58	0.6667	1.2568
Service View	0.82	0.13	1.16	0.24	0.5958	1.1427
Motivation	0.43	0.10	3.47	0.57	0.2703	0.6948
Implications for self	1.08	0.15	0.56	0.01	0.8163	1.4385