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CHARITY AND PHILANTHROPY IN SOUTH ASIA: AN INTRODUCTION¹

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There are no reliable figures to help us measure the volume of charitable donations in South Asia, but according to the 2014 World Giving Index,² Sri Lanka is ranked 9th in the world for the charitable efforts of its citizens, while other South Asian countries figure in the top 75 out of 135 countries surveyed. According to the same Index, India comes first in the world for the overall number of people donating money to charities and volunteering for social causes; Pakistan is ranked 6th for the number of charitable donations; India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are within the top ten countries for the number of people who have ‘helped a stranger’ in the 12 months prior to the survey.³ According to a 2001-survey by the Sampradaan Centre for Indian Philanthropy, among members of the A-C socioeconomic classes, 96% of respondents donated annually an average of Rs 1420.⁴ The total amount donated was Rs 16.16 billion. Two recent surveys conducted in West Bengal and Sri Lanka⁵ suggest that South Asians across the social spectrum contribute readily to charity.⁶

Charitable and philanthropic activity, then, appears to permeate all levels of society in South Asia, from individual donations to major philanthropic trusts and foundations across the region. In recent years, South Asian publics have been mobilized—often by religious-political organizations—to give for humanitarian relief and reconstruction in the wake of natural disasters,⁷ or in the aftermath of communal violence,⁸ while the Indian government has introduced legislation to make corporate

¹ I would like to thank Jon Mitchell, Jock Stirrat, Ritu Birla, Saeyoung Park, Valentina Napolitano, Magnus Marsden, Atreyee Sen and Syed Mohammed Faisal for their comments on early drafts of this Introduction. My sincere appreciation also to two anonymous reviewers whose comments and suggestions have helped me to sharpen my arguments and clarify my assumptions. My biggest thank you goes to Sumathi Ramaswamy without whose insights, criticisms, encouragements and editorial inputs this Introduction would have been much poorer. However, I am solely responsible for the arguments and ideas discussed in this essay.

² Started in 2009 by the UK-based Charities Aid Foundation, the Index measures the number of people giving money, volunteering time and helping strangers in 135 countries.

³ CAF 2014 at https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-publications/caf_wgi2014_report_1555awebfinal.pdf

⁴ SICP, *Investing in Ourselves: Giving and Fund Raising in India*. Sampradaan Indian Centre for Philanthropy, New Delhi, 2001.

⁵ See eg S.S. Srivastava, R. Tandon, S. K. Gupta, and S. K. Dwivedi, *Dimensions of Giving and Volunteering in West Bengal*, Society for Participatory Research in Asia, 2003. Available at http://ccss.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/09/India_PRIA_WP_7_2003.pdf; F. Osella, R. Stirrat and T. Widger ‘Charity, Philanthropy and Development in Colombo, Sri Lanka’, in *New Philanthropy and Social Justice*, B. Morvaridi (ed), Policy Press, Bristol, 2015, pp. 137-174.

⁶ Srivastava et al. *Dimensions of Giving*.

⁷ See eg., E. Simpson, *The Political Biography of an Earthquake: Aftermath and Amnesia in Gujarat, India*, Hurst, London, 2013.

⁸ R. Jasani, ‘Violence, Reconstruction and Islamic Reform: Stories from the Muslim “Ghetto”’, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 42, no. 2-3, 2008, pp. 431-456.

philanthropy mandatory.⁹ Economic liberalization and consequent redefinition of the scope and range of state welfare across the region has lent a new impetus and significance to organised forms of charitable and philanthropic giving as a means to deliver social welfare, humanitarian aid and, more generally, to foster socio-economic development.¹⁰ Recounting how he ‘became convinced that markets, public systems and philanthropic initiatives all had a significant role to play if the country was to have inclusive development’, IT entrepreneur Azim Premji, the first—and only—Indian billionaire-signatory to the global philanthropic movement called ‘The Giving Pledge,’ has mobilised close to US\$ 5 billion to charitable purposes as of the beginning of 2015.¹¹ In the meantime, Indian industrialists such as Ratan Tata, Anand Mahindra, and N.R. Narayana Murthy have made multi-million dollar donations to American universities, projecting the reach and influence of South Asian philanthropy beyond the shores of the subcontinent. Even in the face of such an apparent proliferation of giving, however, relatively little has been written about the politics of charitable acts and philanthropic individuals outside the Western world, South Asia included, with much existing research focused on Europe and the United States. This might not come as a surprise in that considerable literature links philanthropy to the rise of modernity and capitalism in the West, and therefore contrasts modern philanthropy with more traditional forms of gift giving. Existing research on the politics of giving in South Asia has tended to reinforce this perspective, implicitly juxtaposing the embeddedness of South Asian giving in religious morality with the apparent universalist humanitarianism of modern philanthropy.

The aim of this volume goes beyond filling a gap in the historiography and ethnography of South Asia. Through examining the interconnections and influences of different modalities of giving, contributors to this special issue seek to unsettle a dyadic focus on tradition and modernity which ultimately consigns South Asian charity and philanthropy to the realms of either naked instrumentalism or religious piety. Arguing that altruism and self-interest might not be necessarily at odds with each other as we have been led to believe,¹² several of the essays in this volume explore the everyday working of economies of morality in which profit and piety might coalesce or appear antithetical with equal ease. Although the rise of secular philanthropy is generally associated with a shift in sensibility whereby ‘love of humanity’ replaces ‘love of god’, in practice it is often impossible to disentangle

⁹ A. Singh and P. Verma, ‘From Philanthropy to Mandatory CSR: A Journey towards Mandatory Corporate Social Responsibility in India’, *European Journal of Business and Management*, vol. 6, no. 14, 2014, pp.146-152.

¹⁰ R. Arnove and N. Pinede, ‘Revisiting the “Big Three” foundations’, *Critical Sociology*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2007, pp. 389-425; M. Edwards, ‘Gates, Google, and the Ending of Global Poverty: Philanthrocapitalism and International Development’, *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2008, pp 35-XX; A. Vogel, ‘Who's making Global Civil society: Philanthropy and US Empire in World Society’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 57, no. 4, 2006, pp. 635-655.

¹¹ <http://givingpledge.org>, accessed on February 28, 2016.

¹² I draw inspiration here from Marcel Mauss’ analysis of exchange in which he argues that pre-modern modalities of gift giving are always driven by and entangled with passions and interests (M. Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, Routledge, London, 1990 [1925]). See also Bourdieu’s analysis of ‘symbolic capital’ in which he puts to rest the notion that gift exchange might be motivated solely by disinterest or altruism (P. Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998). For a more recent and heterodox formulation of a theory of gift exchange driven by the dynamic logic of interest, see Frédéric Lordon, *L’intérêt Souverain: Essai d’Anthropologie Économique Spinoziste*, Editions La Découverte, Paris, 2006.

religious and secular motivations for giving or receiving, as several of us also suggest.

Moreover, several essays in this collection underscore the importance of understanding the specific historical and political contexts in which charitable practices unfold. The goal of this Special Issue is to explore historical transformations of practices embedded in different traditions of giving, and show how these not only draw on each other, but also relate to translocal politics of development, community formation, and nation building. Focusing on both formal and informal religious, humanitarian, familial and corporate giving practices in the region and its diaspora, the volume examines relationships between indigenous and global concepts of charity and volunteerism, as they are understood and enacted by donors, mediators, and beneficiaries. It also explores debates underpinning current practices of giving, locating in the cultural/religious orientations and aesthetics of specific social groups. In so doing, it seeks to consider the intersections between different traditions of giving and receiving and ways of understanding and imagining economic and social transactions, which make up ostensibly discrete and often everyday and unremarked charity in modern South Asia.

South Asia and the Moral Economy of Charity

Modalities, ideologies and aesthetics of giving undergird or are constitutive of a wide range of socio-cultural practices in South Asia, from those concerning the reproduction of caste status, kinship relations and political patronage, to those objectifying specific soteriologies or religious rituals.¹³ Indeed, there is a rich vocabulary to define and differentiate the scope and direction of non-reciprocal modalities of giving—*dana* as ritual gift, *dakshina* as ritual payment and *bhiksha* as alms, for instance—as well as their obligatory or voluntary nature—for example, the annual obligation to give *zakat* as opposed to the voluntary nature of *sadaqa*. Whilst the boundaries between different forms of giving might be blurred—typically, between *dana* and *dakshina*, or between *zakat* and *sadaqa*—such a vocabulary underscores the different religious genealogies of practices such as those evoked by the notions of *dana* and *zakat*. At the same time, the multivocality of *dana* affords a shared language to differentiate non-reciprocal forms of giving from other prestations, as well as a means to encompass novel practices such as blood or organ donations that have become visible in more recent decades.¹⁴ Whilst contributors to this collection

¹³ Amongst the most inspiring and seminal studies of the politics of giving in South Asia, see M. Marriott, M. 'Caste ranking and food transactions: a matrix analysis', in *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, M. Singer and B. S. Cohn (eds.), Aldine, Chicago, 1968, pp. 133-171; A. Appadurai, 'Gastro- politics in Hindu South Asia,' *American ethnologist* vol. 8, no. 3, 1981, pp. 494-511; J. Parry, 'The Gift, the Indian Gift and the "Indian gift"', *Man* (n.s.) vol. 21, no. 3, 1986, pp. 453-473; J. Parry, 'On the Moral Perils of Exchange', in *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, J. Parry and M. Bloch (eds), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 64-93; G.G. Raheja, *The Poison in the Gift: Ritual, Prestation, and the Dominant Caste in a North Indian Village*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988; N.B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnology of an Indian Kingdom*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987; M. Mines, *Public Faces, Private Lives: Community and Individuality in South India*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1994. For a more recent critical appraisal of the debate on genealogies of religious/ritual giving, see M. Heim, *Theories of the Gift in South Asia: Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain Reflections on Dana*, Routledge, New York, 2004.

¹⁴ See M. Kasturi, "'All Gifting is Sacred': The Sanatana Dharma Sabha Movement, the Reform of Dana and Civil Society in Late Colonial India', *Indian Economic & Social History Review*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2010; pp.107-139; J. Copeman, *Veins of Devotion: Blood Donation and Religious Experience in Northern India*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 2009; B. Simpson, 'Blood Rhetorics:

are cognisant that positing hard and fast conceptual boundaries between different forms of giving in South Asia might run the risk of drawing accusations of unwarranted essentialism or facile reductionism, the essays in this volume build upon a time-honoured South Asianist scholarship to concentrate on modalities of giving ostensibly directed towards the public good—in whatever forms the latter might be conceptualized in different historical and social contexts—to reflect on the interests, connections, and imaginary they entail and evoke.

Alms to mendicants, contributions—whether of money, time or in kind—to support the *upliftment* of individuals and communities, gifts to religious or secular organizations providing services or social protection, blood and organ donations, and such are acts which might be glossed as expressive of charitable or philanthropic dispositions, and indeed be analysed as such. The complex histories of South Asian modalities of giving should warn us however of the perils of such a move. The issue, is not simply one of translation: canonical modalities of giving in South Asia—*dana* or *zakat*, for instance—cannot be glossed too easily by European or North American notions of charity. Charity and philanthropy are culturally and ideologically loaded terms, relating to modalities of giving embedded in a specific (theological, economic and political) genealogy of Christian-secular understandings of relations between self and other, altruism and self-interest, immanence and transcendence.¹⁵ In Europe this history is oft—and unhelpfully—represented as a linear shift, from medieval and early modern Christian charity—a means to ensure personal salvation through acts of mercy and generosity—to nineteenth and twentieth-century humanitarian philanthropy: the responsibility to alleviate the actual conditions of suffering of an undifferentiated humanity that is associated with the emergence of a liberal bourgeois self at the interstices of modern capitalism and protestant reformation.¹⁶ Importantly, this universalizing teleology is undergirded by normative assumptions concerning the nature of charitable giving—namely, its disinterested and non-reciprocal

Donor Campaigns and their Publics in Contemporary Sri Lanka', *Ethnos*, vol. 76, no. 2, 2011, pp. 254-275.

¹⁵ For a discussion of the problems in translating culturally specific modalities of almsgiving as charity, see G. Peterson, 'Overseas Chinese and Merchant Philanthropy in China: From Culturalism to Nationalism,' *Journal of Chinese Overseas* vol. 1, no. 1, 2005, pp. 87-109; J.F.H. Smith, 'Social Hierarchy and Merchant philanthropy as Perceived in Several Late-Ming and Early-Qing Texts,' *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 41, no. 3, 1998, pp. 417-451; C. Décobert, *Le Mendiant et le Combattant: l'Institution de l'Islam*, Seuil, Paris, 1991; M. Bonner, 'Poverty and Economics in the Qur'an,' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2005, pp. 391-406.

¹⁶ See, typically, M. Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1978, page 581ff, or more recently re-rehearsed in S. Kahl, 'The Religious Roots of Modern Poverty Policy: Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed Protestant Traditions Compared,' *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2005, pp. 91-126; and M. Hénaff, 'Religious Ethics, Gift Exchange and Capitalism,' *European Journal of Sociology* vol. 44, no. 3, 2003, pp. 293-324. See also T. Haskell 'Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility', *American Historical Review*, vol. 90, no. 2, pp. 339-61 (part 1) and vol. 90, no. 3, pp. 547-66 (part 2); and D.A. McCloskey, 'Bourgeois Virtue and the History of P and S', *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 58, no. 2, 1998, pp. 297-317. For a critique, see T. Safley, 'Introduction', in *The Reformation of Charity: The Secular and the Religious in Early Modern Poor Relief*, T. Safley (ed), Brill, 2003, pp. 1-14; A. Muehlebach, *The Moral Neoliberal: welfare and citizenship in Italy*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2012, pp. 3-30; and D. Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2012, pp. 1-20.

character¹⁷—against which historically or culturally specific practices of giving are benchmarked, and inevitably found wanting. Pitting altruism and self-interest against each other leads predictably—and unproductively, I might add—to questioning motivations and legitimacy whenever actual practice diverges, as it unavoidably does, from formal definitions of what constitute charity or pertains to economic practice.¹⁸

The history of European charity, however, reveals degrees of complexity which ill fits modernist teleologies or ideal types, thus allowing us to dislodge South Asian modalities of giving from the iron cage of cultural exceptionalism. In late medieval Christian monastic institutions, for instance, the establishment of lay orders which protected and advanced monastic interests allowed for the acceptance and management of substantial charitable donations without impinging on theologies of apostolic poverty and a soteriology of salvation.¹⁹ And whilst in medieval Europe charitable donations to monasteries and to the poor entailed various degrees of self-interested calculation for the sake of salvation²⁰ as well as expectations of reciprocity via the prayers and blessings extended by recipients,²¹ in post-reformation England charity to the poor was seldom anonymous and hidden. Donors to Protestant almshouses expected to gain spiritual reward, ‘not only through the gift itself but through the ongoing prayers of the beneficiaries.’²² At the same time, in sixteenth-century Europe, Catholic and Protestant charities established to provide respite from rapacious moneylenders, themselves lent money at an interest, and used the latter to support the poor. And in Calvinist Germany, ‘deacons encouraged recipients of alms, especially

¹⁷ In his reading of Mauss’ seminal theorization of gift-giving, Parry argues that, ‘while Mauss is generally represented as telling us how in fact the gift is never free, what I think he is really telling us is how we have acquired a theory that it should be’ (Parry ‘The Gift’, p. 458). For critical studies stressing the inevitably ‘interested’ nature of contemporary philanthropy, see I. Silber, ‘Modern Philanthropy: Reassessing the Viability of a Maussian perspective,’ in *Marcel Mauss: A Centenary Tribute*, W. James & N. Allen (eds), Berghahn, Oxford, 1998, pp. 134-150; and A. Herman, *The “Better Angels” of Capitalism: Rhetoric, Narrative, and Moral Identity among Men of the American Upper Class*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1999.

¹⁸ Economists in particular have struggled to incorporate altruism into models or theories of self-interested maximization, eventually resorting to notions of interdependent utility functions whereby one’s happiness is realised not only by forwarding individual self-interest, but also by promoting the welfare of others (See eg. R. Sugden, ‘On the Economics of Philanthropy’, *The Economic Journal*, vol. 92, no. 366, 1982, pp. 341-350; and P.K. Bag and S. Roy, ‘Repeated Charitable Contributions under Incomplete Information’, *The Economic Journal*, vol. 118, no. 525, 2008, pp. 60-91).

¹⁹ I.F. Silber, ‘Monasticism and the “Protestant Ethic”: Asceticism, Rationality and Wealth in the Medieval West’, *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 44, no. 1, 1993, pp. 103–123, p. 116

²⁰ Charitable donations to the Battuti Fraternity of Treviso, for instance, were rewarded with indulgences which would shorten the donor’s time in purgatory (D.M. D’Andrea, *Civic Christianity in Renaissance Italy: The Hospital of Treviso, 1400-1530*, University Rochester Press, Rochester NY, 2007). See also J.T. Rosenthal, *The Purchase of Paradise: Gift Giving and the Aristocracy 1307-1485*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1972; J. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1987; D. Psotles, ‘Small Gifts, but Big Rewards: The Symbolism of Some Gifts to the Religious’, *Journal of Medieval History*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2001, pp. 23-42; and T. Nichols, ‘Secular Charity, Sacred Poverty: Picturing the Poor in Renaissance Venice’, *Art History*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2007, pp. 139-169.

²¹ Silber, ‘Monasticism’; D’Andrea, *Civic Christianity*.

²² M. K. McIntosh, ‘Poverty, Charity, and Coercion in Elizabethan England’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2005, p. 467.

those capable of working, to regard them as loans rather than gifts.²³ In an opposite move, in sixteenth-century Catholic Spain, economic loans were represented as a generous act of (charitable) gift giving which elicited a counter-gift (*antidora*) from the recipient, rather than a repayment with accrued interests. Here the vertical and horizontal integrative force of Christian charity—connecting the donor to God and to a community of brethren, respectively—was rhetorically privileged over the ostensibly immoral world of barefaced commerce and usury.²⁴ That is, *pace* to differences between Catholic and Protestant theologies, there appear to be as much continuity as breaks in the history of Christian charity in Europe which undermine linear teleologies. Moreover, we find that both charity and commerce entail quantification, calculation and careful accounting, suggesting that the economy of the market and the economy of piety can easily come together to sustain modalities of accumulation in which material wealth and spiritual merits might appear simultaneously as incommensurable *and* working through each other.

Two hundred years later, the instrumental and self-interested nature of eighteenth-century English charity is revealed in Bernard Mandeville and Adam Smith's respective critiques of those who 'stressed the identity of charitable virtue and mercantile interests.'²⁵ Mandeville dismissed merchants' charity as driven by 'lust and vanity' rather than Christian virtue; for Adam Smith charity reproduced relations of patronage and dependency through which the poor were reduced to a condition of degrading quasi-slavery. For both, charity neither improved the lives of the poor nor did it enhance the economic prosperity of the nation, fostering instead dependency, sloth and profligacy.²⁶ The eventual waning of the moral economy of mercantilism paved the way to the formulation of novel techniques and pedagogies for reforming the poor via moral *and* vocational education extended by a plethora of charitable institutions. This is a major theme in nineteenth-century British philanthropy with its stress on 'the deserving poor,' which was accompanied by an awareness of the potentially transforming impact of giving but also the realisation this might not lead to changes in life outcomes for recipients.²⁷ Projects of socio-moral reform articulated through charitable interventions thus came to serve as prosthetics to the working of free-market commerce and enterprise.

Historically, then, the worlds of charity, economic practice, and political calculation have seldom been apart, a connection that has led some researchers to represent

²³ B. Pullan, 'Catholics, Protestants, and the Poor in Early Modern Europe', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2005, p. 455. See also T.G. Fehler, 'Refashioning Poor Relief in Early Modern Emden', in *The Reformation of Charity: The Secular and the Religious in Early Modern Poor Relief*, T. Safley (ed), Brill, 2003, pp 92-106; and McIntosh, 'Poverty, Charity, and Coercion'.

²⁴ B. Clavero and J.-F. Schaub, *La grâce du Don: Anthropologie Catholique de l'Économie Modern*, Albin Michel, Paris, 2014.

²⁵ D. Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1989, p. 33.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 30ff and 143ff.; see also T.D. Birch, 'An Analysis of Adam Smith's Theory of Charity and the Problems of the Poor', *Eastern Economic Journal*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1998, pp. 25-41.

²⁷ G. Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion: The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians*, Knopf, New York, 1991; and R. Ashcraft, 'Lockean Ideas, Poverty, and the Development of Liberal Political Theory', in *Early Modern Conceptions of Property*, J. Brewer and S. Staves (eds.), 1996, Routledge, London, pp. 43-61. See also Kahl, 'The Religious Roots;' and Hénaff, 'Religious Ethics.'

modern charity, perhaps too narrowly, as capitalism's handmaiden.²⁸ In fact religiosity continued to play an important role in various forms of modern charitable giving, so that nineteenth-century German *nouveau riche* gave liberally to cleanse themselves of the stink of new money.²⁹ Here the transformative nature of charitable and voluntary actions is quite clear: making saints out of sinners; absolving the giver of the taint of evil; mobilizing self-interest for the common good; or, more generally, creating pious subjects for a New Jerusalem.³⁰ But this transformative effect is not limited to the world of the religious giver. The literature on more ostensibly secular philanthropists, for example, biographies of Rockefeller and Carnegie—not to mention the hagiographical literature on the so-called 'new philanthropists'—are also replete with references to the transformative power of giving.³¹ Thus we find that amongst contemporary philanthropists—especially those participating in the tradition of North American individual and corporate giving animating powerful philanthropic foundations and charitable trusts³²—a rhetoric attributing accumulation of wealth solely to entrepreneurial skills, hard work, and virtuosity turns economic success into a moral responsibility to foster the common good. Here the moral discourse of philanthropic benevolence not only engenders interventions which complement or replace altogether state welfare—thus producing influential clusters or networks of governance—but legitimises and naturalizes class inequalities, and the privileges of elites whose philanthropic endeavors ostensibly trigger the trickle down of wealth on society as a whole.³³ And yet, the opportunities afforded by charity and philanthropy of making economic success equivalent to moral worth have not been exploited solely by contemporary philanthrocapitalists in North America and beyond. From Renaissance Italy³⁴ and Ottoman Turkey³⁵, to late Ming China³⁶ and, as I will discuss below, South Asia, emerging elites mobilised charitable giving not only to establish networks and build social connections, or to secure political alliances and elicit allegiances, but also to claim participation in, and eventually transform, existing hierarchies of status from the tainted position of the upstart *nouveau riche*.

²⁸ See eg K.D. McCarthy, *American Creed: Philanthropy and the Rise of Civil Society, 1700-1865*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2003; Haskell 'Capitalism'. See also D. Rajak, *In Good Company: An Anatomy of Corporate Social Responsibility*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2001.

²⁹ S. Lässig, 'Bürgerlichkeit, Patronage and Communal Liberalism on Germany, 1871-1914', in *Philanthropy, Patronage and Civil Society*, T. Adam (ed.), Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2004, pp. 198-218. See also A.O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before its Triumph*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1997.

³⁰ J. Offer, 'Idealism versus Non-idealism: New Light on Social Policy and Voluntary Action in Britain since 1880', *Voluntas*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2003, pp. 227-240; and S.T. Ziliak, 'Self-reliance Before the Welfare State: Evidence from the Charity Organization Movement in the United States', *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 64, no. 2, 2004, pp. 433-461.

³¹ C. Handy, *The New Philanthropists: the New Generosity*, Heinemann, London, 2007.

³² For a comprehensive review of the extensive literature on North American philanthropy, see P.D. Hall, 'A Historical Overview of Philanthropy, Voluntary Associations, and Nonprofit Organizations in the United States, 1600–2000,' in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook* (2nd edition), W. W. Powell and R. Steinberg (eds.), Yale University Press, New Haven, 2006, pp. 32-65.

³³ Herman, *The "Better Angels"*.

³⁴ Henderson, *Piety and Charity*.

³⁵ A. Singer, *Charity in Islamic societies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008

³⁶ J.H. Smith, *The Art of Doing Good: Charity in Late Ming China*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2009.

We have seen that in the history of Christian charity in Europe immanence and transcendence went hand in hand regardless of theologies asserting the contrary, whilst European and North American philanthropy allow for the simultaneous objectification of projects of individual self-aggrandisement and moral virtuosity. Moreover, the ingenuity of actual practice is such that it can ensure the smoothing out of tensions between worldly passions and otherworldly yearnings. This is exemplified by the establishment of Christian lay orders entrusted to administer pious endowments without impinging on monastic asceticism, or by the translation of economic action into the language of Christian fellowship and charity.³⁷ That is, the complex and contradictory history of ‘Western’ traditions of charitable or philanthropic giving destabilizes attempts to plot South Asian charity on a traditional/modern grid, and in so doing allows us to consider instead specific instances through which social actors might bring together or keep apart the apparently contradictory qualities and expansive potentials of giving. When the contributors to this special issue employ notions such as ‘charity’ and ‘philanthropy,’ then, they are mindful of the shortcomings of teleologies of giving which confine some practices to the realm of tradition and others to modernity, but also of the debates and technologies through which in colonial and post-colonial South Asia various modalities of giving come to be imagined and practised in the idioms of charity and philanthropy.

Historical Ethnography of Giving in South Asia

Reverend Samuel Mateer, a zealous London Missionary Society minister who spent more than 30 years (from 1859 to 1891) in the erstwhile princely state of Travancore on the southwest coast of India, described the place as,

one of the great strongholds of Hinduism and caste in the South of India, and is distinguished as ‘The Land of Piety and Charity’ for its liberal support of Brahmanical religion and priesthood. No less than one-fifth of the whole annual revenue of the state is expended on the support of the Brahman temples and priests.³⁸

This is not an expression of charity Mateer condones. ‘[T]he influential classes,’ he continues, ‘are united in the support and defence of this formidable system of imposture and superstition.’³⁹ After recounting the grandeur of royal festivals conducted at the Padmanabhaswamy temple, he lists the substantial expenses incurred for the various celebration to conclude, ‘much evil arises from the gluttony, disorder, and vice incidental upon the attendance of these crowds of sensual idolaters.’⁴⁰

Mateer’s lurid rhetoric is somewhat predictable. After all, his writing is directed to stir the repugnance of a god-fearing English audience whose Christian charity must be elicited to sustain the proselytizing efforts of the London Missionary Society in South

³⁷ Indeed, such discursive moves chime with the politics of mutual disavowal informing gift relations between Jain laity and renouncers in South Asia. See J. Laidlaw, ‘A Free Gift Makes no Friends’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2000, pp. 617-634.

³⁸ S. Mateer, *The Land of Charity: A Descriptive Account of Travancore and Its People, with Especial Reference to Missionary Labour*, J. Snow and Company, London, 1871, p. 159.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 168.

India. Indeed, much of Mateer's book is devoted to reporting the spread of the Gospel in Travancore amongst 'untouchable and slave castes.' Confidently he reassures his readers that the charitable efforts of mission schools and hospitals were leading to the moral enlightenment of the 'heathens,' as well as to the spread of novel dispositions towards industry and progress. He is also keen to distance Protestant missions from their Catholic counterparts who face far less opposition from upper caste Hindus in that, Mateer notes, 'in common with Hindus they practice image worship, processions and pompous ceremonies [and] they observe caste to some extent.'⁴¹

Reverend Mateer encouraged his readers to compare the wastefulness of native, as well as Catholic charity to the enlightened charitable work of Protestant missions and the civilizing endeavour of empire.⁴² The targets of his narrative are modalities of giving constitutive of pre-colonial Hindu kingship in South India, whereby donations to temple deities and Brahmins not only lent moral and political legitimacy to rulers, but allowed for the integration of an otherwise fragmented polity,⁴³ as well as the accommodation of landowning or trading communities.⁴⁴ As upholder of *dharma*, the ruler—either caretaker of the royal deity or by virtue of partaking in the divine substance of a deity⁴⁵—participated in the hierarchical re-distributions of ritual honours and resources flowing from temples. Although by the time of British colonial expansion the contours of such a galactic polity⁴⁶—constituted by exchanges between rulers, local elites, and deities—were more marked in South India, elsewhere in the subcontinent comparable politics of giving undergirded statecraft. Unlike previous Muslim ruling dynasties who established religious endowments (*awqaf*) to support mosques and madrassas, Mughal rulers made substantial personal grants to *pirs* and religious scholars as acts of piety and devotion, and to ensure, 'the loyalty, or at least

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 277.

⁴² For a discussion of colonial representations of 'native charity' as wasteful and excessively 'personalized and ritualistic', see S. Sharma, *Famine, Philanthropy and the Colonial State: North India in the Early Nineteenth Century*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001, p135ff. See also A. Watt, 'Philanthropy and Civilizing Missions in India, c. 1820-1960', in *Civilizing Missions in Colonial and Postcolonial South Asia: From Improvement to Development*, Carey Watt and Michael Mann (eds.), Anthem, London, 2011, pp. 271-317.

⁴³ Historians have explored extensively pre-colonial Hindu kingship, as well as its transformation resulting from the expansion of Muslim polities, and colonial penetration. Amongst the most inspiring work, see especially B. Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1980; A. Appadurai, *Worship and Conflict under Colonial rule: a South Indian Case*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981; P.G. Price, *Kingship and Political Practice in Colonial India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996; Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*; S. Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700-1900*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004.

⁴⁴ See C. Talbot, 'Temples, Donors, and Gifts: Patterns of Patronage in Thirteenth-Century South India', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 50, no. 2, 1991, pp. 308-340; and D.W. Rudner, 'Religious Gifting and Inland commerce in Seventeenth-Century South India', *The Journal of Asian Studies* vol. 46, no. 02, 1987, pp. 361-379. For northern India, see C.A. Bayly, 'Patrons and Politics in Northern India', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1973, pp. 349-388; and J.P. Parry, *Death in Banaras*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, pp. 33ff.

⁴⁵ C.J. Fuller, *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1992, p. 106ff.

⁴⁶ S.J. Tambiah, 'The Galactic Polity: The Structure of Traditional Kingdoms in Southeast Asia', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* vol. 293, no. 1, 1977, pp. 69-97.

acquiescence, of the prominent...religious lineages of Hindustan.⁴⁷ Likewise, in Ceylon, kingship was objectified and legitimated through the flow of gifts from rulers to the Buddhist sangha and laity.⁴⁸ Beyond the realm of pre-colonial kingship, donations to temples, Brahmins and religious institutions were part and parcel of landowning or merchant elites' pursuit of piety, status and reputation.⁴⁹ Arguably, public performances of expansive munificence towards actual and would be clients continue to this day to sustain and objectify South Asian big-men and women's political ambitions at local and national level.⁵⁰

What Reverend Mateer calls 'native charity' was more than a tool for the art of governing, but constituted—ontologically and practically—actual polities as well as economies. Across South Asia land granted to temples, mosques, madrassas, and monasteries was rented out to various constituencies.⁵¹ South Indian temples used the revenues from endowments to lend money to traders and farmers, securing interest on repayments.⁵² Merchants could utilise endowments to family temples and deities as a reserve of capital to finance debts or credit;⁵³ donations to temples allowed merchants to access novel markets and expand trade networks in South Asia and beyond.⁵⁴ That is, pious dispositions and economic or political interests did not stand at opposite poles of the moral spectrum, but mutually constituted each other through various

⁴⁷ G.C. Kozłowski, 'Imperial Authority, Benefactions and Endowments (Awqāf) in Mughal India', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 38, no. 3, 1995, p. 366. See also G.C. Kozłowski, *Muslim Endowments and Society in British India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985.

⁴⁸ R.F. Gombrich, *Buddhist Precept and Practice: Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971; and H.L. Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1999. See also S.J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976.

⁴⁹ D.E. Haynes, 'From Tribute to Philanthropy: The Politics of Gift Giving in a Western Indian city', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 46, no. 2, 1987, pp. 339-360; Rudner 'Religious Gifting'; Bayly 'Patrons and Politics'. See also Birla, *Stages of Capital: Law, Culture, and Market Governance in Late colonial India*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2009, p. 33ff.

⁵⁰ See Mines, *Public Faces*; Raheja, *The Poison in the Gift*; S. Dickey, 'The Politics of Adulation: Cinema and the Production of Politicians in South India', *The Journal of Asian Studies* vol. 52, no. 2, 1993, pp. 340-372; Price, *Kingship and Political Practice*. For a thorough and insightful recent review of debates on political patronage, see A. Piliavsky, 'Introduction,' in *Patronage as Politics in South Asia*, A. Piliavsky (ed.) Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 2014, pp. 1-38.

⁵¹ See eg., the classic case of pre-colonial Tamil Nadu in B. Stein, 'The Economic Function of a Medieval South Indian Temple', *The Journal of Asian Studies* vol.19, no. 2, 1960, pp.163-176; A. Appadurai and C. Breckenridge, 'The South Indian Temple: Authority, Honour and Redistribution', *Contributions to Indian Sociology* vol.10, no. 2, 1976, pp.187-211.; and D. Mosse, and M. Sivan, *The Rule of Water: Statecraft, Ecology and Collective Action in South India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2003.

⁵² Rudner 'Religious Gifting', p. 362.

⁵³ Birla *Stages of Capital*, p. 88. See also C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988.

⁵⁴ Bayly 'Patrons and Politics'; Rudner 'Religious Gifting'; Parry, *Death in Banaras*, p. 33ff; and S. Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.), 2009, pp. 110-111.

modalities of giving.⁵⁵ In the rush to denounce the moral depravity of the ‘heathens’, Reverend Mateer had no inclination to interrogate the political and economic consequences of Christian charity extended by Protestant missions to South Indians. By the end of the nineteenth century, extensive conversions of members of ‘untouchable’ communities became a demographic threat to the caste-based politics of the Hindu princely state of Travancore, leading eventually to the abolition of rules restricting access to government employment, education and temples to *avarna* Hindus.⁵⁶ Protestant missionaries encouraged and facilitated the recruitment of converted ex-untouchable agricultural labourers as indentured coolie labour for the colonial plantation economy.⁵⁷ These, I argue, are not unfortunate spillages of self-interested instrumentalism onto an idealised virtuous altruism of charity. In the practice of giving in South Asia, as much as in Europe or North America, interest and disinterest materialise as different sides of the same coin.⁵⁸ Here I am not seeking to gloss over the complex soteriological underpinnings and theological interpretations which differentiate practices of religious giving in South Asia, or to deny their heterogeneity and historicity. Rather than imagining an implausible South Asian ‘culture of giving’, I simply underscore the productive power of giving which can be at best controlled or contained, but not entirely erased even when its returns might be utterly other-worldly and immaterial, as in promises of eventual salvation and release from cycles of re-birth,⁵⁹ or in the ‘warm glow’ ensuing from secular practices of humanitarian giving.⁶⁰ I also note that the sacrificial nature of giving⁶¹ entails both purification of the self and a notion of increase. What is given is returned multiplied, either as merits for the afterlife, and/or wealth, fortune and auspiciousness in this life. The merit economy of giving, that is, might—and does—produce material returns and underpin actual economies.

Colonialism, Modernity, and the Making of Charity and Philanthropy in South Asia

Reverend Mateer’s *avant-lettre* Weberian narrative of inevitable rationalization, moral enlightenment and socio-economic progress engendered by conversion to Protestant Christianity points us to wider debates taking place in nineteenth-century

⁵⁵ F. Osella and C. Osella, ‘Muslim Entrepreneurs in Public Life between India and the Gulf: Making Good and Doing Good’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* vol. 15, no. s1, 2009, pp 202-221; and Parry, ‘On the Moral Perils of Exchange’, p. 77ff.

⁵⁶ R.L. Hardgrave, *The Nadars of Tamilnad: The Political Culture of a Community in Change*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1969; F. Osella and C. Osella, *Social Mobility in Kerala: Modernity and Identity in Conflict*, Pluto Press, London, 2000.

⁵⁷ D. Kooiman, *Conversion and Social Equality in India: The London Missionary Society in South Travancore in the 19th Century*, Manohar, Delhi, 1989; see also D. Mosse, *The Saint in the Banyan Tree: Christianity and Caste Society in India*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2012.

⁵⁸ Parry, ‘The Gift,’.

⁵⁹ Parry ‘The Gift’; Laidlaw ‘A Free Gift’; Singer, *Charity in Islamic societies*.

⁶⁰ P. Singer, *The Most Good You Can Do: How Effective Altruism is Changing Ideas about Living Ethically*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2015.

⁶¹ What is given stands either explicitly—in the tradition of *dāna* and Christian charity—or implicitly—for Islamic *zakat* and *sadaqa*—as a substitute for the donor. See H. Hubert and M. Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function* (trans. W.D. Halls), Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1964; J.C. Heesterman, *The Broken World of Sacrifice: An Essay in Ancient Indian Ritual*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1993; and Fuller, *The Camphor Flame*, p.83ff.

South Asia concerning the purpose and scope of ‘native charity.’ In the closing years of the eighteenth and early decades of the nineteenth century colonial administrators, missionaries and British commercial concerns haphazardly supported schools, hospitals and famine relief.⁶² Colonial charity—firstly extended to provide assistance to indigent Europeans left stranded in the sub-continent⁶³—was informed by contemporary notions of charity and philanthropy shaped as much as by Protestant theologies as by the theories and practices of British utilitarianism and liberalism. Bringing together the hidden hand of providence and that of the market,⁶⁴ British (and north-European) charity had morphed from an act of unconditional mercy to a means to foster the common good and, along the way, to discipline the poor, the vagrants, the sick, the elderly, and the disabled.⁶⁵ In this volume, the complex, and counter-intuitive history of emerging ‘native’ philanthropy in a colonial environment is brought to light in Sumathi Ramaswamy’s account of the posthumous making of Pachaiyappa Mudaliar—a notoriously sharp Tamil *dubash*—into the archetypical example of a modern benefactor who lived for the public good. Ironically, it was not Pachaiyappa Mudaliar’s intention to bequeath his fortunes to modern learning, but the outcome of a protracted litigation over his inheritance for about half a century led the colonial state to appropriate the accumulated surplus for the foundation of the first native educational trust in the Madras Presidency. As a result, Pachaiyappa Mudaliar’s life—purged of the unsavoury means through which he had accumulated his wealth—was memorialised as the embodiment of an ethical model of public service to be emulated by generations to come.

By the 1830s, South Asian merchants and entrepreneurial elites—whose trading interests had become dependent on a close interaction with the practices and cultures of the colonial economy—were encouraged to turn the largesse of their alms giving and religious endowments to the same purpose. From Allahabad⁶⁶ and Surat,⁶⁷ to Bombay,⁶⁸ Madras⁶⁹ and Colombo,⁷⁰ participation in charitable initiatives prompted

⁶² C.A. Watt, *Serving the Nation: Cultures of Service, Association and Citizenship in Colonial India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2005; Sharma, *Famine*; and G. Brewis, “‘Fill Full the Mouth of Famine’”: Voluntary Action in Famine Relief in India 1896–1901’, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 44, no. 4, 2010, pp. 887-918. See also S. Sharma, ‘Corporate Social Responsibility in India’, *The Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 46, no. 4, pp. 637-649;

⁶³ D. Arnold, ‘European Orphans and Vagrants in India in the Nineteenth Century’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1979, pp. 104-127; and L. Caplan, ‘Gifting and Receiving: Anglo-Indian Charity and its Beneficiaries in Madras’, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1998, pp. 409-431.

⁶⁴ G. Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2011, p. 261ff.

⁶⁵ Andrew *Philanthropy and Police*. See also Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion*, and Ashcraft, ‘Lockean Ideas.’

⁶⁶ Bayly ‘Patrons and Politics’.

⁶⁷ Haynes ‘From Tribute to Philanthropy’.

⁶⁸ D.L. White, ‘From Crisis to Community Definition: The Dynamics of Eighteenth-Century Parsi Philanthropy’, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1991, pp.303-320; J.S. Palsetia, ‘Merchant Charity and Public Identity Formation in Colonial India: The Case of Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy’, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2005, pp. 197-217.

⁶⁹ K. Mukund, ‘New Social Elites and the Early Colonial State: Construction of Identity and Patronage in Madras’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 38, no. 27, 2003, pp. 2857-2864.

by colonial administration and British businesses, as well as the patronage of local institutions, arts and culture—endeavours often rewarded with colonial titles and honours—afforded the emerging indigenous elites novel means to establish individual status and trustworthiness, to build political careers, to gain the goodwill of the colonial administration, and to participate in emerging politics of community building and assertion.⁷¹ Wealthy anglophile Gujarati and Parsee businessmen and entrepreneurs such as Jamsetji Jejeebhoy, Jamsetji Tata, Sir Dinshaw Petit and Premchand Roychand—who, in some cases, had made substantial fortunes in the early nineteenth century through the trade of opium to China⁷²—are exemplary figures of such a shift.⁷³ Brian Hatcher’s essay in this special issue takes inspiration from the writings of the Brahma thinker Rajnarain Bose to delineate the contours of the intellectual environment of early colonial Calcutta which fostered the proliferation of expansive forms of modern associationism and philanthropy. Taking issue with both nationalist and postcolonial historiography, he recuperates the notion of ‘imitation’ to characterise a period of intense cultural elaboration which saw the reappraisal of existing modalities of public life, and the appropriation of colonial notions and practices of civic engagement. Short-lived as it might have been, such a process of creative imitation allowed for the articulation of novel political and social sensibilities underpinning the emergence of a modern civil society. However, Ritu Birla’s article in this collection reminds us that colonial cajoling of merchant and intellectual elites went hand in hand with the introduction of regulations seeking to define clear boundaries between hitherto overlapping practices of private—that is, directed to the benefit of the extended family or lineage—and public charity. Starting with the 1860 Societies Act, successive colonial legislation limited the scope of a time-honoured tradition of religious-cum-charitable endowments,⁷⁴ establishing along the way a novel rhetoric of public duty. Colonial juridical interventions which introduced the instrument of the trust, Birla argues, inserted a wedge between the realm of self-interested profit making and charity—redefining the latter in terms of ‘general public utility.’ By doing so, it simultaneously disembedded the market from the responsibilities entailed in existing modalities of social co-dependency, and, via the introduction of fiscal regulations and tax exemptions, turned charity ‘as a problem of the distribution of profit,’⁷⁵ making it a matter of market governance through which the social whole could be brought within the reach of economic calculation.

⁷⁰ K. Jayawardena, *Nobodies to Somebodies: The Rise of the Colonial Bourgeoisie in Sri Lanka*, Zed Books, London, 2000.

⁷¹ Haynes *ibid.*; Bayly *ibid.*; Watt, *Serving the Nation*; Sharma, *Famine*; Rudner ‘Religious Gifting’; Birla, *Stages of Capital*; Osella and Osella ‘Muslim Entrepreneurs in Public life’; Watt, ‘Philanthropy and Civilizing Missions’; M. Pernau, ‘Love and Compassion for the Community: Emotions and Practices among North Indian Muslims, c. 1870–1930,’ *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* vol. 54, no. 1, 2017, pp. 21-42. See also E. Sinn, *Power and Charity: A History of the Tung Wah Hospital*, Oxford University Press, Hong Kong, 1989..

⁷² Gyan Prakash, *Mumbai Fables*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2010, p. 37ff.

⁷³ H. Damodaran, *India’s New Capitalists*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2008, pp. 8-47.

⁷⁴ See Birla *Stages of Capital*. For colonial regulations of Islamic charity in South Asia, see Kozłowski, *Muslim Endowments*; E.L. Beverley, ‘Property, Authority and Personal Law: Waqf in Colonial South Asia’, *South Asia Research*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2011, pp. 155-182.

⁷⁵ Birla, this volume, p. XX

Colonial recasting of ‘native charity’ in the idiom of common good and public utility began to chime with the politics of religious and community reforms animating late nineteenth-century South Asia.⁷⁶ As Hatcher and Kasturi show in this volume, emerging religious, civic and caste associations joined colonial critiques of traditional modalities of religious giving to call on the economic resources and time of a newly constituted modern public to support cultural enlightenment, religious reform and social progress.⁷⁷ The call of socio-religious reformism was answered in earnest by established commercial or banking elites, but also by the emerging urban middle class, constitutive of a novel aesthetic of self-making, individual and collective agency, and public visibility.⁷⁸ Sayyid Ahmad Khan, for instance, could draw on donations and support from wealthy Muslims to establish the Muslim Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh (later Aligarh Muslim University), an institution which became the template for modern Muslim education across the sub-continent, from Peshawar to Colombo.⁷⁹ Charity, then, took up the explicit pedagogical scope of transforming the spiritual and material wellbeing, as well as the cultural and social dispositions, of donors and recipients, as Ramaswamy also suggests in her essay for this volume. Such an impetus toward eliciting individual and collective social responsibility brought together nineteenth-century colonial discourses about the idleness of the non-working poor, the moral value of education and work, and the profligacy of idolatrous superstitions with various strands of Hindu,⁸⁰ Buddhist⁸¹ and Islamic⁸² reformism and revivalism. The articulation of novel imaginations of charitable giving and the introduction of legal frameworks for the regulation of charitable institutions, however, were often contested and, as Malavika Kasturi discusses in her essay in this collection, fraught with tension and contradictions. We find that north Indian sectarian monastic orders which colonial legislation had classified as private rather than charitable institutions faced the challenge of Hindu reformist organizations—the Hindu Mahasabha, for instance—over the administration and (mis)use of wealth donated by devotees. Whilst in the first half of the twentieth century monastic orders

⁷⁶ Watt, *Serving the Nation*; Sharma, *Famine*.

⁷⁷ K. W. Jones, *Socio-religious Reform Movements in British India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989; Brewis “‘Fill Full the Mouth of Famine’”.

⁷⁸ S. Joshi, *Fractured Modernity: Making of a Middle Class in Colonial North India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2001; P. Kidambi, ‘From “Social Reform” to “Social Service”: Indian Civic Activism and the Civilizing mission in colonial Bombay c. 1900–20’, in *Civilizing Missions in Colonial and Postcolonial South Asia*, pp. 217-40; J.D. Fuller, ‘Modern Hinduism and the Middle Class Revival in the Historiography of Colonial India’, *The Journal of Hindu Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2009, pp. 160-178; Osella and Osella ‘Muslim Entrepreneurs in Public life’.

⁷⁹ D. Lelyveld, *Aligarh’s First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1978.

⁸⁰ See eg. W. Radice (ed) *Swami Vivekananda and the Modernisation of Hinduism*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1999; G. Beckerlegge, *The Ramakrishna Mission: The making of a modern Hindu movement*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2000; A. Copley (ed.) *Gurus and Their Followers: New Religious Reform Movements in Colonial India*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2000.

⁸¹ R.F. Gombrich and G. Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988; H.L. Seneviratne, *Rituals of the Kandyan state*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978.

⁸² B. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1982; D. Lelyveld, *Aligarh’s First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1978; F. Osella and C. Osella, ‘Introduction: Islamic Reformism in South Asia’, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 42, no. 2-3, 2008, pp. 247-257.

did not yield to reformist demands to turn themselves into charitable trusts devoted to supporting the constitution of an expansive Hindu national community, Kasturi goes on to show that in post-independence India they deployed reformist notions of charity as a means to shore up their own project of socio-religious transformation of a Hindu public.

South Asian anti-colonial nationalism stimulated further conceptual and practical transformations of indigenous charity into service (*seva*) for the moral, cultural and economic *upliftment* of the soon-to-become independent nations, such ideas also fuelled by the Gandhian emphasis on *sarvodaya* (welfare for all). Although none of the contributors to this collection focus on Gandhi, the Mahatma's intervention in twentieth-century understandings of philanthropy through his writings on the concept of trusteeship are important to flag. The doctrine of trusteeship was the compromise that enabled Gandhi to hold on to two key ethical principles: *aparigraha* (non-possession) and *ahimsa* (non-violence). The 'sin' of wealth accumulation in the hands of a few could be 'non-violently' mitigated by persuading the capitalist that he held his riches in trust on behalf of those who after all helped him accumulate his capital. In his own lifetime, Gandhi had a few spectacular successes in winning over some capitalist acolytes to his cause in men like G. D. Birla and Jamnalal Bajaj. The *bhoodan* (land-gift) and *gramdan* (village-gift) movements led by the Gandhian activist Vinoba Bhave also carried forward such ideas in the immediate aftermath of Indian independence. Although Gandhian trusteeship is frequently dismissed as a pipe dream, it is worth our scholarly attention especially if we see it as a serious attempt to provincialize Andrew Carnegie's pronouncements in this regard that emerges from the subcontinent.⁸³ In a parallel move, the political theology of Abu al-Ala Maududi—the founder of Jama'at Islam—sets almsgiving, *zakat* and *sadaqa*, as a means to provide social welfare in a future polity which would be inspired neither by capitalism nor communism, but by Islamic principles of mutuality and redistribution.⁸⁴

Post-colonial Politics of Giving in South Asia

In contemporary India, the rhetoric of *seva* and enlightened service continues to be mobilized by secular, religious or community based organizations to elicit donations from a (oft transnational) public of followers, devotees and well-wishers to sustain countless public initiatives, from building a simple roadside bus-shelter, to constructing and running super-speciality hospital and colleges, as in the case, amongst countless other, of the Kerala-based Mata Amritanandamayi Mission. Built in 1981 to fulfil the Mother's spiritual duty 'to alleviate humanity's suffering' the Mission nowadays 'runs a wide network of charitable and other institutions in India, ranging from orphanages, hospices and a high- cost 'multi super-speciality' hospital in Kerala, to modern schools, computer institutes, and engineering and management

⁸³ Watt, *Serving the Nation*. On *sarvodaya* and trusteeship, see especially T. Weber, 'Gandhi's Moral Economics: The Sins of Wealth without Work and Commerce without Morality' In *The Cambridge Companion to Gandhi*, edited by Judith Brown and Anthony Parel. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011, pp. 135-53. On *bhoodan* and *gramdan*, see also David Hardiman, *Gandhi in his Time and Ours: The Global Legacy of his Ideas*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003, pp. 198-207. For connection between Gandhi and Carnegie, see B. Chakrabarty, 'Universal Benefit: Gandhi's Doctrine of Trusteeship', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 49, no. 2, 2015, pp. 572-608.

⁸⁴ A. Maududi *Economic System of Islam*, Islamic Publications, Lahore, 1940.

colleges.’⁸⁵ Inspired by Christian missionary practices⁸⁶ and Hindu reformist traditions,⁸⁷ organizations such as the Mata Amritanandamayi Mission bring together market principles and charitable endeavour to deliver services, particularly in the fields of education and health.⁸⁸ There is little doubt that the aesthetics of associationism and voluntarism inspired by nineteenth and early twentieth-century religious reformism, nationalist politics and middle-class modernism to which Hatcher alludes continue to inspire the rhetoric and practices of contemporary charities. However, much charitable activity often takes place within the ambit of individual religious traditions or communities. This is most obvious where the results of charitable activity are the construction of religious buildings, mosques, temples and churches, but it is also clear that individual or collective acts of charity tend to link givers and receivers within the same community, or they are imagined to do so. More generally, there is a degree of tension between particularistic and universalistic approaches to charity and a continual questioning as to whether or not charity should be aimed at ‘our own’ or to a broader humanitarian constituency. As Kasturi demonstrates in her essay—and underscored in recurrent allegations about the possible instrumental use of charity to foster religious conversions⁸⁹—the social body of the post-colonial nation interpellated and mobilised through charity is indeed experienced in practice through the lenses of community, religion or region.

In post-colonial India, changes in corporate governance, the emergence of new large corporate players, and political demands for a more decisive contribution by private businesses to national developmental have also impelled the work of existing charitable foundations, and to the consolidation of corporate philanthropy,⁹⁰ the precursor of contemporary programmes of corporate social responsibility (CSR).⁹¹ Take the case of a transnational corporation such as Tata, whose founding partners were Parsee.⁹² One of India’s oldest, largest and most established companies, Tata

⁸⁵ M. Warriar, ‘Processes of Secularization in Contemporary India: Guru Faith in the Mata Amritanandamayi Mission’, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2003, p. 216-217. See also M. Warriar, *Hindu Selves in a Modern World: Guru Faith in the Mata Amritanandamayi Mission*, Routledge, London, 2004.

⁸⁶ See for instance the highly reputed Vellore Christian Medical College in Tamil Nadu founded as a dispensary in 1900 by American Missionaries.

⁸⁷ Beckerlegge, *The Ramakrishna Mission*.

⁸⁸ See also Osella and Osella ‘Muslim Entrepreneurs in Public Life’.

⁸⁹ See for instance, N. Mahadev, ‘Conversion and Anti-Conversion in Contemporary Sri Lanka: Pentecostal Christian Evangelism and Theravada Buddhist Views on the Ethics of Religious Attraction,’ in *Proselytizing and the Limits of Religious Pluralism in Contemporary Asia*, J. Finucane and R.M. Feener (eds), Springer, Singapore, 2014, pp. 211-235

⁹⁰ P. Sundar, *Beyond Business: From Merchant Charity to Corporate Citizenship: Indian Business Philanthropy through the Ages*, Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2000.

⁹¹ M. Sidel, ‘Recent Research on Philanthropy and the Nonprofit sector in India and South Asia’, *Voluntas*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2001, pp. 171–180; A. Sood and B. Arora. *The Political Economy of Corporate Responsibility in India*, UNRISD, 2006; E. Jansons, ‘The Business Leaders Behind the Foundations: Understanding India’s Emerging Philanthropists’, *Voluntas*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2015, pp. 984-1006.

⁹² S. Worden, ‘The Role of Religious and Nationalist Ethics in Strategic Leadership: The Case of J. N. Tata’, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 2005, vol. 47, no.2, pp. 147–164.

has been engaged in philanthropic activities since its establishment in 1868.⁹³ Instrumental not only in the development of Indian heavy industry, but in the funding of the independence movement, Tata enjoyed a close relationship with the Indian National Congress since its inception,⁹⁴ and in post-liberalization India, it has become a standard-bearer for CSR.⁹⁵ The new philanthrocapitalism—which encompasses CSR—promises an alternative to state-led development, in which the social and environmental costs of rapid industrialisation may well be ameliorated by business itself.⁹⁶ CSR is often presented as a radical break from colonial forms of industrial philanthropy and post-colonial paternalism, but like its predecessors, it continues to be a means to negotiate relations with state and market, and to objectify pious dispositions. In Sri Lanka, for instance, Muslim owners of family-run businesses discharge their obligation to give *zakat* and *sadaqa* by funnelling funds into their companies' CSR programmes. At the same time, the latter might be deployed to support government initiatives, as a means to avert Sinhala-Buddhist xenophobia, which has led recently to violent anti-Muslim campaigns.⁹⁷ That since 1980 in Pakistan *zakat* is collected and distributed by the state,⁹⁸ and a new company law introduced in India in 2013 (and amended in 2014) mandates large private and public corporations to devote 2% of their average profits over three years towards CSR initiatives⁹⁹ underscores the role of the state in regulating charity, as well as in the production of specific aesthetics and modalities of private and public giving.

Considering the genealogy of legislation regulating charitable organizations in post-independence India, Ritu Birla argues in her essay for this collection that the apparent continuities between pre-colonial charity and contemporary corporate philanthropy are built, firstly on a radical separation of charity from profit-making, and later on the imbrication of the former into the latter via the articulation of the notion of 'general public utility' at the core of the modern charitable trust. In contemporary modalities of CSR, then, philanthropy becomes a technology of (neoliberal) governance through which 'the rights of citizens are mediated by the responsibilities of corporations'¹⁰⁰

⁹³ L. Fraser, *Iron and Steel in India*, Times Press, Bombay, 1919; F.R. Harris, *Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata: A Chronicle of His Life*, Blackie & Son, Bombay, 1958; and S.N. Pandey, J.B.P. Sinha, J.S Sodhi and S. Mohanty, 'Tata Steel: Becoming World Class', *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2005, pp. 296-299.

⁹⁴ M. Gupta and M.J.K. Thavaraj, 'Industrial Policy and Concentration of Economic Power in India', *Social Scientist*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1974, pp. 56-64.

⁹⁵ Sundar, *Beyond Business*.

⁹⁶ M. Bishop and M. Green, *Philanthrocapitalism: How the Rich Can Save the World*, Bloomsbury Press, New York, 2008; C.K. Prahalad, *Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid: Eradicating Poverty Through Profits*, Wharton School Publishing and Pearson Education, Philadelphia, 2006; M. Hopkins, *Corporate Social Responsibility & International Development. Is Business the Solution?*, Earthscan, London, 2007; and S. Zadek, *The Civil Corporation: The New Economy of Corporate Citizenship*, Earthscan, London, 2001.

⁹⁷ T. Widger, 'Philanthronationalism: Junctures at the Business–Charity Nexus in Post-war Sri Lanka', *Development and Change*, vol. 47, no.1, 2015, pp. 29-50.

⁹⁸ N. Kirmani and S. Zaidi, *The Role of Faith in the Charity and Development Sector in Karachi and Sindh, Pakistan*, Working Paper 50, Religions and Development Research Programme, University of Birmingham, 2010, p. 18.

⁹⁹ Singh and Verma, 'From Philanthropy to Mandatory CSR'.

¹⁰⁰ Birla, this volume, p. XX

portrayed as trustees of the nation's wealth. By folding philanthropy into the working of corporations and business, in recent legislation the objects of CSR interventions are no longer imagined either through the intimacy of kinship and the hierarchical mutuality of caste, or the political boundaries of the nation, but as members of 'communities that are understood as the environment of business.'¹⁰¹

Tensions between 'traditional' forms of giving and CSR programmes are also underscored in Katy Gardner's study of the flow of philanthropy to rural Bangladesh, an area characterized by substantial migration to Britain and, more recently, by the arrival of an international energy corporation extracting natural gas from extensive local underground reserves. Gardner explores the moral incommensurability of philanthropy extended by the Bangladeshi diaspora to their homeland and from the CSR programmes of the global energy corporation. Both modalities of philanthropic giving are clearly the outcome of the working of contemporary global capitalism. However, the former is embedded in hierarchical feelings of compassion for the suffering of known people, and in expectations of long-term support from those who have made it good through migration, which are objectified through Islamic modalities of giving. CSR interventions, on the contrary, not only seek to elide hierarchical relations between givers and receivers, but are also driven by (Christian-secular) humanitarian concerns about the fate of unknown strangers.

Gardner's essay also alerts us to the fact that whilst practices of giving have historically contributed to projects of self and community making, they have often done so on a translocal and transnational stage. South Asian trading communities have been prominent in the port cities of the Indian Ocean for centuries, constituting networks which facilitated flows of credit and commercial information,¹⁰² but also for the circulation of moral reasoning concerning the ways individual wealth could and should contribute to the collective good.¹⁰³ South Asian religious endowments and charity might be extended as far as the Hijaz to objectify and assert participation to the theologies, cultures and politics of a transregional *ummah*,¹⁰⁴ or could be mobilized to support political or humanitarian causes beyond the confines of the subcontinent.¹⁰⁵ Whilst the influences of South Asian modalities of giving on the development of modern European or North American philanthropy remain largely unexplored, there is ample evidence of the increasing importance of diaspora charity on South Asian economies and politics. Diaspora communities are encouraged to make donations to formal and informal organizations supporting the development

¹⁰¹ Birla, this volume, p. XX

¹⁰² C. Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750–1947: Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000; D.W. Rudner, *Caste and Capitalism in Colonial India: the Nattukottai Chettiars*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1994; M. Marsden, *Trading Worlds: Afghan Merchants Across Modern Frontiers*, Hurst, London, 2016.

¹⁰³ See eg. J.B. Blank, *Mullahs on the Mainframe: Islam and Modernity among the Daudi Bohras*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998; N. Vora, *Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian diaspora*. Duke University Press, 2013; and S.S. Amrith, *Crossing the Bay of Bengal*, Harvard University Press, 2013.

¹⁰⁴ Bose, *A Hundred Horizons*; M.F. Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma Below the Winds*, Routledge, London, 2003; U. Freitag, *Indian Ocean Migrants and State Formation in Hadhramaut: Reforming the Homeland*, Brill, Leiden, 2003.

¹⁰⁵ G. Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1982; Bose, *A Hundred Horizons*.

process in the native or ancestral homeland, whereby the flow of migrant remittances goes alongside the transnational circulation of charity.¹⁰⁶ The economic and intellectual resources of the diaspora are also mobilised with increased regularity to sustain political life in South Asia—the ethno-nationalist movements for Khalistan or Tamil Eelam, for instance—thus engendering transnational reconfigurations of South Asian politics.¹⁰⁷ It is not just mosques and gurudwaras, but Hindu temples as well that have become the sites for the proliferation of diaspora philanthropy, as illustrated by Siddharthan Maunaguru and Jonathan Spencer in their essay for this collection. On the one hand, they document how even in a ‘faraway’ place like the South London suburb of Tooting, the Hindu temple or *kovil* continues to play out its historic role as a ‘sovereign’ vehicle for receiving and reciprocity, and as a status engine that powers new ‘big men’ (*periyar*). On the other hand and ironically, its very involvement in charitable work brings it to the (unwanted) attention of the Charity Commission of England and Wales, reminding us that the regulatory apparatus of the modern state is the principal means through which the ‘good work’ of philanthropy is brought to heel, so to speak.

Indeed, a ‘professional’ approach to charity built around notions of bureaucratic efficiency and economic efficacy, as well as the discourse of charity-as-development, have become currency in charitable organizations across the South Asia partly as an effect of the circulation of practices and discourses brought to the region by international charities, and mediated by their local partners. Sanam Roohi discusses in detail the professionalization and institutionalization of transnational philanthropy. As in Gardner’s case, we find that skilled and professional Telugu migrants who have settled in North America maintain strong connections with and presence in their homeland via philanthropic donations that individuals and migrant organizations send regularly from the USA to coastal Andhra Pradesh. Here, however, Roohi identifies apparent transformations in the ethics and practices of philanthropic giving. In recent years, the form of responsive giving based on hierarchies of class and status that we also encountered in Gardner’s Bangladesh ethnography has been replaced by a novel project-focused meritocratic system directed towards ‘deserving recipients’. And yet, in emerging horizontal practices of transnational giving which draw on the tradition of North American philanthropy, meritocracy hides rather than extinguish existing politics of caste reproduction.

Pre-colonial modalities of giving are clearly different from organized forms of charity and corporate philanthropy that emerged in South Asia since the middle of the nineteenth-century, and have continued to undergo transformations in the post-independence and economic liberalization periods. Leilah Vevaina’s article on Parsi philanthropy in Bombay/Mumbai resonates with Birla, Roohi and Hatcher’s attention to continuities and breaks between what Hatcher calls the ‘then and now’. During the

¹⁰⁶ See eg. N. Van Hear F. Pieke and S. Vertovec, *The Contribution of UK-based Diasporas to Development and Poverty Reduction*, COMPAS, University of Oxford, Oxford, 2004; M. Rytter, ‘Events and Effects: Intensive Transnationalism among Pakistanis in Denmark’, *Social Analysis*, vol. 54, no. 3, 2010, pp. 90-106; and C. Upadhyaya and M. Rutten, ‘Migration, Transnational Flows and Development in India: A Regional Perspective’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 47, no. 19, 2012, pp. 54-62.

¹⁰⁷ B.K. Axel, *The Nation’s Tortured Body: Violence, Representation, and the Formation of a Sikh ‘Diaspora’*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2001; and Ø. Fuglerud, *Life on the Outside: The Tamil Diaspora and Long-distance nationalism*, Pluto, London, 1999.

colonial period, Parsi public charitable trusts replaced customary inheritance as a means to circulate resources across generations, shifting emphasis from kinship to community reproduction. Vevaina argues that in recent times the apparent demographic and social weakening of the Parsi community has engendered a shift in the direction and scope of philanthropic interventions. Time-honoured support for education, medical care and the poor which built the unique reputation of Parsi philanthropy during colonial time has given way to programs directed to shore up the demographic decline of the community, providing access to housing to newlywed Parsi couples for instance. If Vevaina's essay shows the bureaucratisation of giving at an institutional level, anthropologist Chris Taylor's ethnographic work in Lucknow among Muslim alms-givers of the old city reveals that even the individual's charitable disposition cannot escape the modern demand for accounting and accountability. The receipt (interestingly, referred to as *rasit*) given in exchange for the voluntary charitable donation (*chanda*) is only one among many other print documents—fundraising flyers, forms documenting details of acts of giving, financial statements laying out moneys received and dispensed, etc.—that come to proliferate in the world of everyday charity. Alongside materialising acts of pious giving, such documents, Taylor shows, are Islamic philanthropy's answer to print capitalism even as they offer evidence of the transformation it has undergone in order to cater to the modern state's intervention in the business of building trust(s).

Whilst colonial and post-colonial modernity transformed understandings and technologies of giving, these processes of change have taken place at different speeds and not always according to a predictable teleology. Morphing the devotional idiom of *seva* and the sacrificial nature of *dana* into modern notions of humanitarianism and active citizenship,¹⁰⁸ or mobilizing the religious obligation to give *zakat* for the sake of community or national development require substantial moral and epistemological shifts. The work of turning religious obligations into civic duty toward community and nation, or of refashioning religious giving as humanitarian care is inevitably unstable. Although the contemporary South Asian publics respond to the fundraising appeals of charitable organizations, individuals continue to distribute a substantial part of their donations in person and to one another.¹⁰⁹ And it is through these everyday acts that the 'impulse of giving' reveals itself in all its complexities. In South Asian affective economies of giving, compassion for a mendicant, fear of a *hijra*'s curse, securing the auspiciousness of a life-cycle ritual or success in a business deal, negative planetary configurations in one's horoscope or a sudden illness, feeling responsibility for the welfare of a poor kin or neighbour, and more are all motivations for giving which might intersect with, but cannot entirely be subsumed into ethics of religious piety, civic duty and national or community development.

While we might ask questions about the motivation behind charitable acts, we also have to recognise the complexities and ambiguities of the context in which giving takes place. By concentrating on the intentions, orientations and practices of givers—individuals and organizations—existing research has almost entirely erased the

¹⁰⁸ Typically in public appeals for blood and organs donation. See Copeman, *Veins of Devotion*; B. Simpson, 'Blood Rhetorics'; Cohen, 'The Other Kidney'.

¹⁰⁹ E. Bornstein, *Disquieting Gifts: Humanitarianism in New Delhi*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2012; Srivastava et al. *Dimensions of Giving*; Osella et al. 'Charity, Philanthropy and Development'.

presence of those who receive charity or are the object of charitable interventions. This is neither an anonymous nor heterogeneous body of recipients, and seldom are the latter passive beneficiaries of charity in whatever form it might come.¹¹⁰ Indeed, the experience of receiving is just as unruly as the practice of giving. Filippo Osella and Tom Widger's ethnography demonstrates that by receiving *and* giving *sadaqa* and *zakat*, poor and working class Muslim in a Colombo neighbourhood imagine inclusion and belonging to the wider Muslim community in Colombo. A participation which is not contingent upon the mediation and pedagogical interventions of charitable organizations and (middle-class) pious donors, but hinges on the mutuality of social proximity and the pleasure of fulfilling god's will. At the same time, recipients might prefer the lesser but more reliable help of their equals to the unpredictable flow of charity, and in any case the shame, status hierarchies or possible ritual dangers entailed in receiving non-reciprocal charitable donations can be mitigated or altogether undermined by re-signifying charity in the language of the rights and duties of kinship or patronage.¹¹¹ The subject position of recipients, then, lays bare both the power and dangers of South Asian politics of giving and receiving charity. The discourse of recipients is also frequently 'the scene of critique' of the very act of giving. As anthropologists Dwaipayan Banerjee and Jacob Copeman demonstrate in their essay for this collection on campaigns for blood donation in north India, every act of giving draws attention to the 'ungiven,' as well as to those who don't give. Indeed as demonstrated by the 'extreme' generosity displayed by some 'high net worth' individuals in recent years, the inadequacy of the state and governments that do not give is shown up in such acts, which is frequently read as the lack of care for the citizenry. Thus, as the authors insist, the study of philanthropic practice has to necessarily incorporate critique and self-critiques.

Albeit not addressed directly in any of the essays in this special issue, the gendered underpinnings of charitable giving, as well as its gendering effects require attention. By representing women as vulnerable and helpless—whose predicaments call for protection, support and, eventually, reform¹¹²—the (neo-patriarchal) developmental discourses of colonial and post-colonial modernity have turned (impoverished and destitute) South Asian women into the favoured object of charity. Indeed, it is often poor women and their children who appear nowadays in photographs published in newspapers or websites of charitable organizations seeking to entice donations from local and global publics.¹¹³ However, such a feminization of poverty and, as a result, of charity itself also chimes with women's practical role in charitable acts. More often than not the status and class hierarchies engendered and reproduced by receiving charity are assuaged by delegating to women the shameful task of approaching wealthy givers for help or, as Osella and Widger's essay shows, queuing publicly to

¹¹⁰ A. Appadurai, 'Topographies of the Self: Praise and Emotion in Hindu India', in *Language and the Politics of Emotion*, A.C. Lutz and L. Abu-Lughod (eds), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 92-112; J. Staples, 'Begging Questions: Leprosy and Alms Collection in Mumbai', in *Livelihoods at the Margins: Surviving the City*, J. Staples (ed.), Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek (CA), 2007, pp. 163-186.

¹¹¹ See also F. Osella and C. Osella, 'Articulation of Physical and Social Bodies in Kerala', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, vol. 30, no. 1, 1996, pp. 37-68.

¹¹² J. Devika, *En-gendering Individuals: the Language of Re-forming in Twentieth Century Keralam*, Orient Longman, Hyderabad, 2007.

¹¹³ See eg. M. Kottakkunnummal, "Making up Pious Women: Politics, Charity and Gender among Muslims of Kerala," *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* vol. 22, no. 3, 2015, pp. 358-386.

receive hand-outs from pious benefactors. And within circles of kin and neighbours, it is women who discretely extend assistance to needy relatives or acquaintances in an attempt to conceal, or make more palatable the uncomfortable status distance between giver and recipient which unreciprocated giving inevitably objectifies.

Given that South Asian women have been represented as passive recipients of charitable interventions, it comes as little surprise that the generous patron who mobilises various modalities of giving to ensure clients' allegiance and to build political alliances is invariably represented as male, the iconic South Asian big-man. Whilst some studies have explored the expansive masculinity engendered by such a politics of giving,¹¹⁴ little is known about South Asian women as givers and donors. Historical evidence suggests that in pre-colonial South Asia royal women,¹¹⁵ as well as women associated to temple worship—South Indian *devadasis*, for instance¹¹⁶—could and did support a variety of religious institutions through grants and donations. The ascendancy of colonial forms of charity saw South Asian women participating enthusiastically in philanthropic initiatives alongside their wealthy husbands or male relatives—albeit at times independently from them—to embody a gendered aesthetic of compassion and benevolence which satisfied the demands of modern class respectability and sophistication.¹¹⁷ The world of the upper caste and wealthy benefactress eventually blended with Gandhi's call for Indian women to join the independence struggle by doing *seva* (service) for the nation. Arguably, this practice of civic engagement not only opened up the public sphere of civil society to women, but “[lay] the foundation for social work to serve as a gateway to political careers for women.”¹¹⁸ Novel configurations of *seva*, that is, have become a means through which women can engage with and participate to political society, from dalit politics¹¹⁹ to hindutva activism.¹²⁰

We have seen that although charity and philanthropy cannot be reduced to epiphenomena of political or economic relations, neither can they be separated from the hierarchies and interests engendered by the latter. Whether driven by piety, humanitarianism or barefaced instrumentalism, charitable acts participate in the constitution or reproduction of economies, and elicit, implicitly or explicitly, specific dispositions and subjectivities which can be mobilized as tools for governing donors and recipients alike. Charity and philanthropy might allow for the objectification of ethics of compassion for the destitute, provide a degree of social protection for the

¹¹⁴ See eg. C. Osella and F. Osella, *Men and Masculinities in South India*, Anthem Press, London, 2006.

¹¹⁵ See I. Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends: Monks, Marriages, and Memories of Northeast India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2013.

¹¹⁶ See L. Orr, *Donors, Devotees and Daughters of God: Temple Women in Medieval South India*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2000.

¹¹⁷ P. Sundar, *Giving With A Thousand Hands: The Changing Face of Indian Philanthropy*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2017, p. 171ff.

¹¹⁸ M. Ciotti, "Resurrecting *Seva* (Social Service): Dalit and Low-caste Women Party Activists as Producers and Consumers of Political Culture and Practice in Urban North India," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 71, no. 01, 2012, p. 151. On the gendered genealogy of the notion of *seva*, see Watt *Serving the Nation*.

¹¹⁹ Ciotti *ibid*.

¹²⁰ S. Dyahadroy, "Exploring Gender, Hindutva and Seva," *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 44, no. 17, 2009, pp. 65-73.

poor, sustain the developmental ambitions of communities and nations, or, more generally, promote the common good. But the resources mobilised through charity and philanthropy might be extended selectively, or withdrawn at the whim of the giver, locking recipients into hierarchies of status, gender, class and power¹²¹ within communities and nation, and beyond.¹²² Indeed, this is a far cry from the ideals of rights-based citizenship underpinning post-colonial state welfare. And yet, as neoliberal reforms blur the boundaries between beneficence and state-led provision of social care and protection—by drawing charitable organizations and CSR programmes into the delivery of services or development programs, for instance—charity and philanthropy, and the politics of subjection and subjectification they entail, will become even more visible in the everyday lives of South Asians.

¹²¹ See Ambedkar's critique of the hierarchical ideology underpinning Gandhian *seva*, discussed in R. Srivatsan, "Concept of 'Seva' and the 'Sevak' in the Freedom Movement," *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 41, no. 5, 2006, pp. 427-438.

¹²² See, for example, Prashad's critical analysis of the global celebration—and eventual glorification—of Mother Teresa's charitable work amongst the Kolkata's poor (V. Prashad, "Mother Teresa: Mirror of Bourgeois Guilt," *Economic and Political Weekly* vol. 32, no. 44/45, 1997, pp. 2856-2858). See also, A. Sen, "Sex, Sleaze, Slaughter, and Salvation: Phoren Tourists and Slum Tours in Calcutta (India)," *Journeys*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2008, pp. 55-75.