Misfortune, misfits and what the city gave and took: the stories of South-Indian child labour migrants 1935-2005.

by
Vegard Iversen[+]
and
Yashodhan Ghorpade[*]

Abstract: Using a primary data set comprising the worklife histories of 90 child labour migrants from Coastal and Central Karnataka who migrated to Mumbai, Bangalore and other destinations sometimes between 1935 and 2005, we study persistence, change and spatial variation in the incidence and causes of child labour migration, in the nature of intrahousehold agreement and dissent that preceded these migration events and in the workplace experiences and other migration outcomes awaiting these very young migrants. While migration prior to 1975 mostly was from the Coastal belt, often was prompted by financial distress and usually involved migration to small South-Indian eating places in Bombay, more recent migration frequently involves educational misfits. In spite their young age when leaving home, our informants typically regard migration as a transformative and attitude changing experience that opened new avenues for acquiring work-related and other skills, languages included. This transformative scope varies across time, destinations and occupations and is intimately linked to leisure becoming a reality. Particular limitations are identified for those who migrated early, for agricultural labourers whose social lives often were confined to caste fellows from the same or nearby villages and for girls working as domestic servants. We illustrate how early migrants to Bombay were uniquely placed in that migration for work improved their educational opportunities. Their accounts of the Kannada Night Schools they attended are a useful corrective to official documents and evaluations.

[+] Institute for Development Policy and Management (IDPM), University of Manchester. E-mail: Vegard.Iversen@manchester.ac.uk
[*] The World Bank, New Delhi.

1. Introduction

While migration by children for work is common in West-Africa (e.g. Bledsoe 1994; Serra 1996; Kielland and Sanogo 2003) and was a foundation for employment in child labour intensive industries in the carpet belt of Uttar Pradesh (Kanbargi 1988), sociological, anthropological and economic studies of child labour migration remain relatively few (e.g. Iversen 2002; Punch, 2002; Hashim 2003; Kielland and Sanogo 2003; Young 2004; Whitehead and Hashim 2005). At the same time, most historical accounts have addressed the philanthropic movement of orphans and others to new settlements in colonized territories in America and Australia (Sherington and Jeffery 1998; Coldrey 1999). In this paper, we take advantage of a data set comprising the worklife histories[1] of 90 individuals who left rural Coastal and Central Karnataka sometimes between 1935 and 2005.[2] These 90 migrants, whose guardians or parents stayed back in the native place, were all below the age of 15 at the time of leaving home and moved to take up or find employment in Bombay (Mumbai), Bangalore and other cities and small towns. As far as we know, the data-set is the first of its kind and the extensive time period covered presents a unique opportunity to study persistence, change and spatial variation in the incidence, causes and motives behind child labour migration, in the intrahousehold agreement and dissent that preceded these migration events and in the workplace experiences and other migration outcomes awaiting these unusually young migrants.[3] The data set also offers an important opportunity to shed light on migration's transformative potential and it's variation across time, workplaces and destinations. Rather than opting for a narrow thematic focus, say, on youth transitions (e.g.

---

[1] Retrospective data collection involves methodological hazards: In an empirical assessment of recall quality, Smith and Thomas (forthcoming) found that respondents typically remember salient moves and tend to forget the details of local or short-term migration. The migration episodes reported in this paper were usually life-changing events.

[2] Interviewees were selected using a two stage design. In the first stage, we purposively selected eight study villages – four in Karnataka's Coastal belt (now Udupi district) and four in South-Central Karnataka (Mandya district) . In the second stage, we identified individuals with a history of child labour migration from randomly selected households within each study village. For more on methodology, see section 3 below.

[3] Throughout, respondent names have been anonymised.

Punch 2002), child labour causes and outcomes (e.g. Basu 1999), migration and intergenerational contracts (e.g. Kabeer 2000; Whitehead, Hashim and Iversen 2007) or within economics and related to the latter, migration as a cooperative household venture (Stark 1991), doing justice to the material at our disposal does, we feel, require us to engage with a broad thematic canvas. Much of what follows will add considerable nuance and lend empirical support to the idea of the child as an agent (e.g. Nieuwenhuys 1994; Iversen 2002; Ota 2002; Hashim 2004). Among the questions we will raise is whether the causes and motivations behind recent migration episodes are similar to or different from half a century ago. Further, what novel insights into parent-child relationships and their changing dynamics might these unusually detailed migration accounts unveil? We also document the preludes to and aftermaths of runaway migration, which we interpret as young assertiveness finding new and dramatic expressions: such episodes are spatially clustered, mostly recent, and usually traumatic for those left behind. Turning to migration outcomes, the 90 narratives uncover both the hardship and joys associated with work and careers in small South-Indian eating places,[4] as domestic servants, among helpers and soon to be mechanics in car repair garages and workshops, in agricultural plantations and fields and in other working class occupations and jobs. Evidence of ill-treatment, of health hazards and on whether promotions were based on merit or nepotism is interspersed with candid reminders about the pride and confidence associated with learning and with acquiring new skills. One perhaps surprising finding is the linguistic proficiency of many of our informants.[5] Less surprising, the destination environment appears crucial for migration's transformative scope; the contrasts between agricultural labourers from Coastal Karnataka whose social interactions in nearby Shimoga district have been confined to caste-fellows from their native areas and migrants to most other destinations are startling. There is also, we suggest, an important gender dimension to this transformative potential; girls working as domestic servants are frequently restricted to the domestic realm and to interactions with other members of the employer household. Adding to this transformative potential, but with distinct variation across sectors of work and destinations, workhour and workday reductions made leisure a reality. This is most apparent for early and later arrivals to Bombay where hotel work, partly as a result of intense union activism during the early 1960s, at present proximates formal sector employment in some important respects.[6] Further and soon after the Government of India introduced a blanket ban on child labour, we register that many child migrants who were working in small South-Indian eating places in Bombay were able to attend Kannada Night Schools.[7] Apparently motivated by the prospects for uplifting disadvantaged children from Tulu-speaking areas of the Coastal belt, philanthropic hoteliers made it possible for child workers to switch work for education a couple of hours every evening. This observation of child labour migration improving educational opportunities and prospects is particular to Bombay and to a specific era: the demand for Kannada Night Schools education is presently

---

[4] "Udupi hotel" or just "hotel" is local terminology for eating places serving *tiffin* (snacks) and/or South-Indian *thalis* (meals). See Toft Madsen (1991) for an account of their origins and Iversen and Raghavendra (2006) on the link between caste and employability in this industry.

[5] A feasible empirical project would thus be to test for linguistic proficiency and proxies for attitudinal transformations, the null hypothesis being that other things equal, the linguistic absorptive capacity of children exceeds that of other migrants while impressionability could, at least in principle, generate more rapid attitudinal transformations. Similar tests could be implemented for other categories of workers, across sectors, workplace compositions and educational levels. Children may, of course, suffer serious disadvantages, as well – systematic comparisons of a wide range of

---

career and well-being outcomes (vulnerability to drug and substance abuse) with other migrants would be desirable, but much beyond the scope of the present study.

[6] For more on Bombay's history of union activism, see van Wersch (1992), Chandavarkar (1994) and Pages and Roy (2008), among others.

[7] The city's first Kannada Night School, run by the Mogaveera community, opened it's doors in 1918. As far as we know, the Mogaveeras were also the first Coastal community to open their own society in Bombay in 1902. Such societies and associations, organized along caste or religious lines, would often extend important assistance to migrants (including some of our 90 interviewees) arriving in the city, including lodging. Caste associations were not unique to Bombay and Bangalore had many including the Mysore Lingayat Educational Fund Associations (estd 1905) and the Vokkaligara Sangha (1906) (Nair (2005); 397). See Thimmiah (1993) for a list of caste associations in Bangalore in the early twentieth century.

in decline and in contrast to many of their predecessors, more recent child labour migrants often leave home because of their lack of interest in schooling.

The rest of the paper is laid out as follows: we begin by placing the extensive period covered in a brief historical perspective. Section 3 presents our methodological approach and brief summaries of source area backgrounds. Combining primary and secondary data, the section also documents trends and changes in the scale, gender composition, destinations and sectors of work of child labour migration from the eight study villages in Udupi and Mandya, the two study districts. Section 4 identifies spatial and periodic variation in causes and in the intergenerational bargaining and negotiations preceding these migration events. Section 5 focuses on runaway migration and presents in-depth accounts of the preludes to and aftermaths of these episodes. In section 6, we consider the impacts of dynamic changes in working conditions on the welfare of young workers and highlight various aspects of employer-employee relationships before documenting some transformative effects of child labour migration. Apart from concluding remarks, Section 7 contains a summary of the main theoretical implications of our findings.

2. History and background

To provide a brief historical backdrop to the extensive time period covered, it is useful put down a few introductory markers. During their working careers, the seniormost among our informants (in their early eighties in 2004-05), had lived through the final days of the Raj and the turmoil and trauma of partition. Prime Ministers from Nehru to Vajpayee came and went and the first arrivals to Bombay moved to a city that in 1935 had a population of 1.6

million.[8] By the turn of the century, this figure had increased tenfold. Against the background of often intense union activism, they also witnessed the decline of the textile industry and the city's transformation from an industrial to a financial hub. Many of our interviewees interpret the periods of industrial unrest in the early 1960s, often spearheaded by a young Mangalorean named George Fernandes[9], as decisive for subsequent improvements in the working conditions of the city's numerous hotel workers (see Salian 2004). Their memories of backlashes against migrants (mostly South-Indians, Gujaratis and natives of UP-Bihar) who were not sons of Maharashtra's soil are inevitably less fond.[10] In 1935, the two source areas were not part of the same administrative unit. South Canara (Dakshin Kannada) district belonged to Madras Presidency until 1956 (Lobo 2004), and Udupi district came into being after a split from Dakshin Kannada in 1997 or about the time that the Konkan Railway, long perceived as an engineering impossibility, transported the first passengers from Mangalore to Bombay. In contrast, Mandya district belonged to Mysore state which was renamed Karnataka in 1973. Our informants' testimonies bring to light the practical implications of the slowly evolving transport revolution that culminated with the completion of the Konkan Railway. In the mid-1930s, a migrant's journey from Udupi to Bombay would be by Coastal steamer or overland; the latter would be arduous, involve numerous river crossings and take around three days to complete.

Less visibly and often with considerable contributions from local Mutts, Dakshin Kannada district developed the most robust educational institutions and records in Karnataka outside the city of Bangalore. Although standards of living steadily improved, the high out-migration that had been a prominent feature of everyday Coastal life persisted but found new expressions and forms.[11] A broad sense of these Coastal belt migration trajectories and of underlying change may be gauged from Figure 1 which depicts female-male ratios in Udupi and Kundapura taluks between 1931 and 2001, a period that roughly coincides with our study. While the female-male ratios stay unusually high throughout, migration appears to have peaked in Udupi as early as 1961 and then gradually declined. In Kundapura, in contrast, the sex ratio has been cyclical – while as high as 1.15 in 1931, there are two peaks, the first in 1961, the second for 1991-2001. Hence, judging by these high female/male ratios, out-migration from both Udupi and Kundapura taluks appears to have been persistent and high at least from 1931 onwards.[12]

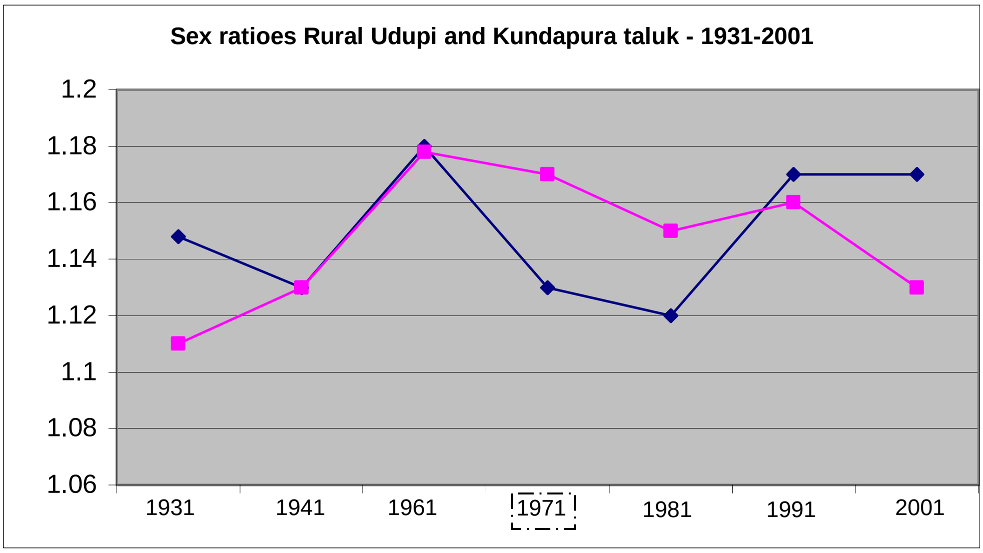
---

[8] Between 1901 and 1931, the percentage of migrants from the then Madras Presidency in Bombay's migrant population increased from 1.01 to 2.45. By 1961, Mysore state accounted for 6.17 % of the city's male migrants – the largest migrant groups were natives of UP-Bihar (16.1%) and Gujarat (14.96%) (Zachariah 1968).

[9] Fernandes's standing among Bombay's workers and others is perhaps best illustrated by his 1967 shock election defeat of the overwhelming favourite, S. K. Patil.

[10] Such backclashes are not unique to Bombay; in Bangalore's case such disturbances have often been prompted by Kannada-Tamil political conflicts over Kavery water (Nair 2005).

Figure 1: Female / Male ratios rural Udupi and Kundapura[13]



---

[11] Between 1901 and 1931, the percentage of migrants from Madras Presidency in Bombay's male migrant population increased from 1.01 to 2.45. By 1961, the by then merged Mysore state accounted for 6.17 % of the city's male migrants – the largest migrant groups were natives of UP-Bihar (16.1 %) and Gujarat (14.96 %) (Zachariah 1968). Madras Presidency administrators were acute observers of female-male ratios which were seen as reliable indicators of out-migration (see the Census Report, Chapter 5, Madras Presidency 1932). The 1931 female surplus figure for South Canara (Dakshin Kannada) District as a whole, about 1,075, was much below the figures for Udupi and Kundapura taluks.

[12] In comparison, the sex ratios in the dryland taluks in Northern Mandya district, Krishnarajpet and Nagamangala, were 1.015 and 1.032 in 2001.

[13] Note that the 1951 observations are missing.

Located about 120 kms to the east of Nagamangala, the dryland taluk of Northern Mandya District studied by Iversen (2002), Bangalore lacks Bombay's industrial past and distinct history of union activism. While Bangalore's recent growth has outpaced Mumbai's, the main destination sector for child labour migrants from Mandya, Bangalore's hotel industry remained distinctly informalised in 1998. While an easy entry point for newly arrived migrants, hotel work in Bangalore, in contrast to Bombay and partly mirroring this formal/informal dichotomy, has not attained the status of being an end in itself. One hotel owner, with ownership experience from both cities, described employment in Bangalore's hotel sector as "floating", in contrast to the workforce stability in Mumbai hotels. The earliest episodes of child labour migration we document are from Udupi taluk and to South-Indian hotels and domestic service in Bombay. [14] Somshekar (2005) notes that while Bangalore's first vegetarian hotel with Coastal belt owners opened in 1904, conflicting accounts surround the precise timing of the opening of Bombay's first South-Indian food joint (Salian 2004). The early prominence of Shivalli (or Udupi) Brahmins in the Bombay branch of the industry has been attributed to refined cooking skills acquired by combining a traditional upbringing with regular preparations of mass meals in local temples and the Coastal belt's locational disadvantage, whereby inhabitants "*stood little chance of competing with the Tamil Brahmins who almost held a service monopoly in the Presidency (Madras) as a whole* (Toft Madsen 1991; 10)" While many of Bangalore's present day eateries are owned by Kota Brahmins from Kundapur taluk just to the north of Udupi town, the Bunt community, the non-vegetarian peasant and landowner caste of the Coastal belt has gradually established a firm grip on ownership of Bombay's vegetarian South-Indian hotels, often after takeovers of Irani hotels.[15] While Bangalore's first such eating places catered exclusively for Brahmins, the modern manifestations of caste within the industry are distinctly intriguing. While some present day signboards contain explicit references to Brahmin ownership in Udupi town, the fishing port of Malpe, a few kms west, has a Brahmin run hotel with a Muslim name but remains true to some traditional purity and pollution ideals – only Brahmin cooks are considered employable.[16] One important question is whether and if so precisely how the caste identity of child employees matters within the industry.

---

[14] The sectoral destinations of unskilled South-Indian migrants to Bombay vary systematically with place of origin and by age as documented by Zachariah's (1968) comprehensive study of migrants in Bombay based on 1961 NSS-data. While male migrants from Andhra Pradesh cluster in spinning, weaving and construction work, those from Mysore state have clustered in services and clerical work. For the under 15 male working population, the occupational concentration is even more pronounced – the bulk of these workers were household domestics and eating place employees in 1961 (ibid. 273). A similar observation would appear to hold for Bangalore in the late 1990s (e.g. Iversen 2002).

The strong spatial concentration of hotel ownership and the ensuing density of backward links from urban Udupi hotels in Bangalore or Bombay to Coastal belt villages might have facilitated the large scale movement also of children. The combination of recent development progress, rising parental educational aspirations and a relative erosion of the social status of hotel work within Udupi (and Dakshin Kannada more generally) district would, however, militate against a *recent* surge in child labour migration. Further, Udupi had less poverty and higher female (74.02 % vs 51.62 %) and male (86.59 % vs 70.71 %) literacy than Mandya in 2001 and both districts underwent demographic transition between the 1991 and 2001 Census rounds (Guilmoto and Rajan 2002). A recent decline in child labour migration from both areas might therefore be expected. A distinct possibility would be that child labour migration, especially from the Coastal belt, may have peaked sometime back. The village data, to which we now turn, reveals a more complex reality.

---

[15] We are not aware of any systematic data on ownership of Udupi hotels by social groups in Bangalore. There are around 12,000 small eating places in Greater Bombay among which perhaps as many as 6,000-7,000 may be South-Indian hotels (Toft Madsen 1991). The Bunt-community may control as much as 70% of the latter eating places (Iversen and Raghavendra 2006).

[16] For a detailed account of caste and employability in these eating places, see Iversen and Raghavendra (2006).

3. Methods for data collection, migration flows and composition

Two villages in Kundapura and two in Udupi taluk were purposively selected to capture the geographical and socio-economic diversity of the Coastal belt. Compared to Northern Mandya district, Coastal villages are more populous and have more dispersed settlements with residential houses located next to a household's paddy fields. In the more developed Udupi taluk, Innanje, an interior village in the south with good educational institutions, a population dominated by *Bunts* and *Billavas*[17] and a considerable minority of Roman Catholics, was chosen to represent a rural setting in transition. In Innanje, it is now customary for young women and men to have BA-degrees. The second village, Pandeshwara is located on the Coast and has local factories producing coir, desiccated coconut and cashew which provide off-farm employment opportunities mainly for women. Billavas are again the numerically dominant caste, followed by Brahmins and *Mogaveeras* (the fisherman caste of the Coastal belt). In both Innanje and Pandeshwara, sub-contracted beedi rolling is a popular income-generating activity among women. In Kundapura, where literacy and educational levels are lower, and development lagging compared to its southern neighbour, Yeljith, an interior, socially heterogeneous and mainly agricultural village to the North and Ulthoor, a village a few kilometres inland from the Coast were selected. Ulthoor is predominantly agricultural, but with increasingly important off–farm links. Using 2001 census data, table 1 illustrates the inter-village variation in main occupations for women and men in these four Coastal belt villages.

---

[17] Traditional toddy-tappers.

Table 1: Occupational composition in four study villages, Udupi and Kundapura taluk

	Main cultivators Male	Main cultivators Female	Main Agricultural Labour Male	Main Agricultural Labour Female	Main HH Male	Main HH Female	Main Other Male	Main Other Female
Innanje	215	309	46	57	35	109	371	84
Pandeshwara	142	69	75	132	7	36	557	93
Ulthoor	92	99	92	202	33	35	194	39
Yeljith	299	361	105	79	21	6	86	21

Source: Census of India 2001; Primary Census Abstract, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Lakshadweep.

Keeping the Census categories and focusing on main activities, table 1 covers four broad occupational groups (cultivators, agricultural labour, HH-based income (e.g. sub-contracting, artisans etc), and a residual "other" category) disaggregated by gender. Innanje remains mainly agricultural but with a significant number of men working outside farming. In Pandeshwara, agricultural labour is as important as cultivation, while most men are engaged in other activities. Yeljith is the only Coastal belt study village where agriculture is still the main employer; Ulthoor falls somewhere in between since agriculture and agricultural labour dominate female employment while accounting for roughly the same number of male jobs as the "other" category. This declining role of agriculture is in notable contrast to the four study villages in northern Mandya district, all of which featured in Iversen's 1998 study and were revisited for the present research. The occupational structure in Nagamangala is more homogenous, with a large majority relying on farming-based livelihoods.

Table 2: Occupational composition in four study villages, Nagamangala taluk

	Main cultivators Male	Main cultivators Female	Main Agricultural Labour Male	Main Agricultural Labour Female	Main HH Male	Main HH Female	Main Other Male	Main Other Female
Alisandra	272	219	10	11	4	4	48	13
Konanor	184	89	8	23	1	1	26	14
Satenahalli	267	21	5	8	1	0	12	5
Devaramadihalli	143	46	1	0	10	8	8	4

Source: Census of India 2001; Primary Census Abstract, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Lakshadweep.

Even so, this greater occupational homogeneity conceals notable intra-village contrasts. In Alisandra, a well-developed village one kilometre off the Bangalore-Mangalore highway, many farmers have invested in private borewells with coconut and paddy being the main irrigated crops. Cultivation in and around Satenahalli, in Western Nagamangala, is dominated by coconut and sugarcane, while vegetable cultivation is exclusive to Konanor. The principal dryland crop, red millet or ragi, is the main local staple and the principal ingredient in ragi roti and the popular and omnipresent ragi-ball ('mudde'). The dominant social group in the Mandya study villages, the Vokkaligas, are the peasant caste of Southern Karnataka (Srinivas 1976). The Mandya villages are also populated by Lingayats and a spectrum of artisanal castes - washermen, barbers, potters, fishermen, blacksmiths etc. Devaramadihalli is distinct for its comparatively numerous Scheduled Caste population. There is notable inter-village variation also in the access to quality education. While Alisandra and Satenahalli have good quality village schools and Konanor is favourably located for attending the local private school run by the Adi Chunchanagiri Mutt, the 1-4th standard primary school in Devaramadihalli is experienced as very poor (see below).

Within each of these eight villages a simple, random sampling procedure was adopted for selecting households. For the larger villages, 1 out of 3 households were randomly selected, while 50 % of the households in the smaller villages were covered. A simple survey instrument was used for conducting brief household interviews and to identify cases of child labour migration.[18] In the Coastal belt, the identification of recent and more sensitive cases of child labour migration[19] were carefully triangulated through extensive discussions with ward-wise key informants with whom and over time excellent rapport was established.[20] In Mandya, contacts from the 1998 research were re-established and relied upon for similar triangulation. In their study of the Izhava (also occasionally referred to as traditional "toddy-tappers") community in Kerala, Osella and Osella (2000;76) found a number of migrant respondents to give vague or wrong answers to survey questions to conceal the low status of their true occupation and workplace. During our data collection, few problems of this kind were encountered and in the couple of cases where achievements were inflated, this was easy to detect. Many interviews were conducted only after informants had been visited in their workplace or in their often modest urban residence and combined with familiarity with the terms of employment and the working conditions in the relevant pockets of the labour market, this made comparisons and triangulation of migration outcomes across individual worklife histories relatively straightforward.

---

[18] Worklife histories, based on in-depth interviews with each identified migrant should ideally have been collected for each identified case. Due to resource limitations, we settled for a sub-sample of 55 cases or 71.4 % of the total Coastal belt sample with a slight bias towards migrants residing in Mumbai, Bangalore, Udupi or Shimoga (destination area for agricultural labour migration) district at the expense of a small number of migrants in Hyderabad and individual migrants in Gujarat, Pune, Nasik, Karwar and a few other destinations. In Mandya, 35 of the 43, i.e. 81 % of the identified individuals with a history of child labour migration were traced and interviewed in depth.

Turning to the data, the Coastal belt villages display remarkable contrasts in the timing and incidence of child labour migration. For instance, while the average age of the 18 individuals with a history of child labour migration in the Innanje sample was 42.1 years, the corresponding figures for Ulthoor and Yeljith were 29.7 years and 22.1 years, respectively. Hence, whereas the scaling up of child labour migration in Yeljith is of recent origin, the average person with a history of child labour migration from Innanje was a mature (middleaged) adult in 2004-05. Even within a relatively limited geographical area, the dynamics of child labour migration would thus seem to display remarkable contrasts.

---

[19] In technical terms, this is a cross section where household members are individuals residing in the household or offspring of the household head. In the event of extended families where, say, three brothers and their wives coreside with the parents of the brothers, the offspring of these smaller units are also considered household members. The latter is fully consistent with established migration research practice (e.g. Winters et al. (2001)). While the ideal would be a longitudinal study resembling Breman (1996, 2007), where a sample or panel of individuals or villages are followed over time, this is not, for obvious reasons, a feasible option for studying the history and relevant dimensions of child labour migration from our source areas. Our retrospective cross-section is the best alternative but has some limitations, as explicated below. Note that even Breman's longitudinal work suffers from selectivity bias.

[20] One of these local informants, a returnee with more than 20 years migration experience from Bombay, accompanied us during several visits to the city and introduced us to migrants from his village we had scheduled to interview.

Table 3: Estimates of child labour migration from four study villages, Udupi district

	Sample [village number of HHs in 2001 Census]	Pre-1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-2000	2001-2005	Sample size adjusted estimates of the incidence of child labour migration[21]
Innanje	192 [610]	5	6	2	4	1	**0.093**
Pandeshwara	111 [622][22]	3	2	4	3	1	**0.108**
Ulthoor	107 [321]	0	3	2	5	1	**0.102**
Yeljith	131 [392]	1	3	4	13 (1)	14 (3)	**0.260**
Total		9	14	12	25	17	

Source: Village sample surveys

Table 3 suggests that child labour migration from Innanje, Ulthoor and Pandeshwara, over the years, has been a reasonably stable phenomenon. We can be confident about the validity of this conclusion at least from the 1970s onwards.[23] In Yeljith, in contrast, and alongside a surge in adult migration over the last 15 years or so, there has been a dramatic hike in child labour migration. The overall increase in child labour migration from the Coastal belt is thus attributable to Yeljith alone. What accounts for this dramatic change? In Yeljith, the early child labour migration episodes typically involved the Gowda-community's seasonal and other agricultural labour migration to plantations in Sirsi and Ghatta in nearby Shimoga-district; since 1990, these flows have been complemented with and outnumbered by other social groups migrating mainly for hotel work to Bangalore, Hyderabad, Mumbai and other destinations. The four observations of girls migrating from the Coastal belt are all recent, from Yeljith and with one exception for work as domestic servants within Udupi district itself. Despite Bangalore's closer proximity, the early episodes of child labour (and other) migration from Innanje (and Pandeshwara) were to Bombay, reflecting the city's pre-eminence and development during the first half of the twentieth century (e.g. Zachariah 1964; Chandavarkar 1994; Salian 2004).

---

[21] The estimate is of the fraction of sampled households with a child labour migration episode – hence 9.3 % of the randomly sampled households in Innanje and 26 % of those in Yeljith reported such episodes.

[22] Only one of every six households in Pandeshwara were sampled.

[23] The extensive time period covered means that households that now aging child labour migrants left behind would have been dissolved a long time ago. That old individuals with a history of child labour migration were observed only in the Coastal belt suggests that child labour migration has a longer history there but could also reflect differences in return migration – hence, if there were such early migrants also in Mandya and these did not return to spend their old age in their native villages, a similar pattern to that we observed would emerge.

Table 4: First destinations (and sector of work) for child labour migrants from Innanje, Udupi

	Pre 1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-2000	2001-2005	Total
Total	**5**	**6**	**2**	**4**	**1**	**18**
Mumbai	4	2	2	1	0	9
Other Destinations	1	4	0	3	1	9
For "hotel" work	**4**	**5**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**12**

While conclusions need to be qualified by the small number of observations, table 4 suggests that with the passage of time, child labour migration from Innanje spread out across sectors and to more destinations. The picture in Yeljith is remarkably dissimilar:

Table 5: First destinations (and sector of work) for child labour migrants from Yeljith, Udupi

	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-2000	2001-2005
Total	**3**	**4**	**13**	**14**
Bangalore	0	0	6 [1][24]	6
Shimoga district	2	1	2	1
Hyderabad	0	0	1	1
Other destinations	1	3	4	6 [3]
Sector of work				
"Hotels"	0	3	8	7
Agricultural labour	2	1	2	1
Domestic servant	0	0	1 [1]	3 [3]
Other	1	0	2	3

Although Yeljith is north of Udupi, and closer to Mumbai, Bangalore is the main child labour migration destination after 1990. Further, the few recorded episodes in the 70s involved one carpenter and two cases of agricultural labour migration to Shimoga district. The dramatic rise in child labour migration from Yeljith comes alongside a greater sectoral spread and more destinations. We return to the causes behind this rise in section 3. For comparison, information from the four study villages in Mandya are reported in table 6:

Table 6: Estimates of child labour migration from four study villages, Mandya district

	Sample [village total number of HHs in 2001 Census]	1961-1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-2000	2001-2005	Sample size adjusted estimates of the incidence of child labour migration
Satenahalli	106 [216]	0	0	6	5	3	**0.132**
Konanur	73 [146]	0	2	1	7 [2]	2	**0.164**
Alisandra	126 [252]	0	0	0	4	3	**0.055**
Devaramadihalli	69 [138]	0	0	2	8 [3]	0	**0.145**
Total		0	2	9	24	8	

The average age of child labour migrants was 25.6 years in Satenahalli, 24.7 years in Devaramadihalli, 24.9 years in Konanoor and 18.1 years in Alisandra thus supporting a general hypothesis and the figures in table 4 in suggesting that compared to the Coastal belt, child labour migration from Mandya appears to be a more recent phenomenon. Table 3 and 6 suggest that while Yeljith has the highest incidence of child labour migration among the eight study villages, the Mandya villages, Alisandra being the exception, have a higher overall incidence of child labour migration than the remaining Coastal belt villages.

---

[24] Numbers in [ ] refer to girl migrants.

Table 7: First destinations for child labour migrants from Devaramadihalli and Satenahalli

	1981-1990	**1991-2000**	**2001-2005**
Total	**8**	**13**	**3**
Bangalore	5	9 [2]	2
Bombay	3	4 [1]	1
Sector of work			
"Hotels"	6	9	3
Domestic servant	0	3 [3]	0
Other	2	1	0

Satenahalli, unusual among the Mandya-villages, has significant migration to Bombay, but otherwise Bangalore is by far the most common destination. Further and with the exception of girls working as domestic servants, there is also a strong concentration of hotel work among boy child migrants from Nagamangala.

4. "Between the devil and the deep sea:" migration causes, motives and the changing interface with education

The Coastal belt villages display notable contrasts in migration motives and in the interface between migration and education. In Yeljith, recent migration episodes often involve male educational misfits, where the migration initiative usually was the migrant's, and often met with parental resistance. In Yeljith's earlier migration episodes which are fewer in number, this sharp interface with education was missing. Instead and as table 8 suggests, a combination of economic hardship, parents' low educational aspirations and taking up caste occupations in agricultural labour and carpentry featured. A radical and recent change in parental educational aspirations, also among poorer households, has resulted in more pressure on children to perform in school and is a recurring theme in recent Coastal belt narratives. Sreenivas, now aged 45 and a native of Ulthoor, had parents who struggled to feed the family and received no support for schooling. He never attended school and spent his younger days playing at home. Now, he observes "*even families who struggle are keen to educate their children*." While chronic poverty has remained more important than illness or other shocks as a child labour migration trigger, school failure or lacking a basic interest in education is the most prevalent recent migration cause. In notable contrast to Iversen's (2002) findings from Mandya, where domestic discord regularly prompted boys of the relevant age to leave home on their own terms, there is only one runaway case in the Coastal belt.

Table 8: Causes of child labour migration, Yeljith village[25]

Causes	Pre 1970	1971-80	1981-90	1991-2005	Total
Chronic poverty	0	1(1)	2(1)	2(1)	5(3)
Drought, Illness shock or death of family breadwinner	0	0	0	1	1
Elder sister's marriage	0	0	0	2(1)	2(1)
Educational misfit (drop-out)	0	1	1	9(2)	11(2)
Low parental educational aspirations	0	0	0	0	0
Higher schooling unaffordable	0	0	1(1)	1(1)	2(1)
To take up caste occupation	0	2(1)	2(2)	0	4(3)
The allure of hotel work and / or city life	1	0	0	2(1)	3(1)
Domestic discord	0	0	0	0	0
Pressure from parents	0	0	0	1	1
Other	0	0	0	1	1

Chronic poverty has been a persistent migration cause in Yeljith over the years, but is in aggregate much less important than being an educational misfit. As table 9 shows, there are notable contrasts and some similarities in migration causes in the other three Coastal belt villages. First, the sharp intersection with schooling is distinct to Yeljith, as explicated below. Another contrast to Yeljith is that deprivation is the principal cause of child labour migration with chronic poverty and illness shocks being roughly equal in importance. Notice also that indebtedness due to dowry payments to marry off elder sisters appears to be an increasingly important cause of financial distress and child labour migration in the other villages. One account also brings to light how persistent teasing by other students instilled a determination to leave school in a high-caste boy suffering from a hearing impairment. A similar stubbornness was evident in the, at the time of our interview, 80 year old Vasu whose uncle's controlling behaviour was intolerable and decisive for his choice to leave for Bombay back in 1935. Note also that the allure of hotel work and city life has remained a source of inspiration for young boys in these other Coastal belt villages.

---

[25] Here, as in the following tables, some migration episodes have multiple causes with the two most important being reported. Numbers in parenthesis denote observations that are part of a multiple-cause explanation. For instance, while taking up caste occupation never is a single cause explanation, being an educational misfit usually is. And so forth.

Table 9: Child labour migration causes: Innanje, Ulthoor and Pandeshwara

Causes	Pre 1970	1971-80	1981-90	1991-2005	Total
Chronic poverty	1	3(2)	2	1	7(2)
Drought, Illness shock or death of family breadwinner	1	0	2	3(1)	6(1)
Elder sister's marriage	0	1	0	4(1)	5(1)
Educational misfit (drop-out)	0	2	0	1(1)	3(1)
Low parental educational aspirations	1(1)	2(2)	0	0	3(3)
Higher schooling unaffordable	1	0	0	0	1
To take up caste occupation	0	0	0	0	0
The allure of hotel work and/or city life	1	1(1)	1	2(1)	5(2)
Domestic discord	0	0	0	0	0
Pressure from parents	2(1)	2(1)	1	0	5(2)
Other	1	0	1	0	2

While rich in details about child agency and its multiple manifestations, the runaway episodes Iversen (2002) reported from Mandya are rare indeed in the Coastal belt. In the 1998 Mandya-evidence, domestic conflicts and quarrels prompted young boys to leave home either to take up a prearranged job or embark on a search for work in one of Bangalore's many South Indian eating places. Temporary deteriorations in father-son relationships were often at the heart of such conflicts. The evidence from Yeljith, in contrast, suggests that while young boys stop short of leaving home on their own terms, they do not hesitate to enter into tough bargaining with their parents. There is also a notable time dimension to the content of such parental-child conflicts and disagreements which are increasingly common in recent migration episodes in the Coastal belt; we use Manju's case to illustrate the singular determination of an educational "misfit." After failing his 4th standard, Manju openly expressed a disinterest in further studies. His cousin-brother (mother's elder sister's son), a 22 year old kitchen assistant in a vegetarian restaurant in Peddapalli,[26] was visiting the village during his leave and approached Manju at the behest of his employer. Manju decided to accept the job offer and informed his mother who initially opposed the idea, insisting that he should instead continue his education. His father backed the mother and Manju bluntly told his parents that if they would not endorse his plan, he would stay back in the village, refuse to attend school and stroll around and work as a labourer. His parents next sought the assistance of their neighbour, the local postman (well-educated and 26-27 years of age) who did his best to persuade Manju to stay on in school, arguing that this would be in the boy's own best interest. However, Manju refused to yield and eventually left his parents with no other option but to give in. In another case, Ramesh left school at the age of 12 after being at the receiving end of repeated beatings both from parents and teachers. Like Manju, he lacked a basic interest in education: schooling was simply not his cup of tea. His teachers would beat him for not completing homework[27] and to avoid further punishments, he would shirk classes for days and play and roam with similarly-minded friends and classmates. His mother and elder maternal uncle would punish his regular absenteeism and Ramesh was forced to choose between "*the devil and the deep sea*." His father was eager that Ramesh, who was a first generation learner as well as the eldest son, should pursue further education and on hearing his wife's complaints, would advise Ramesh to attend school or beat him more. During the summer break and before the start of the new academic year, Ramesh approached his father's younger brother, the owner of a pan-beeda stall in Chamrajpet, Bangalore who was visiting the village on vacation. Ramesh asked whether his uncle would find him a job in Bangalore. The uncle agreed to assist but only if Ramesh's father endorsed the plan. The responsibility for obtaining paternal consent was then left to Ramesh. His father initially disapproved and attempted to persuade Ramesh to continue his studies. However, Ramesh persistently refused to consider further education an option, which eventually forced his father to give in. This example brings to light how beatings, at school and home, may not only fuel a desire to leave the village, but also a stubborn determination that parents eventually may find it hard to resist. In Ramesh's case, more sensitivity both at home and in school could have produced a different outcome. Emerging and often very strong parental educational aspirations, a recent phenomenon that would appear to transcend social layers, were at the heart of emerging intergenerational tensions in these two Coastal belt examples. Notice though that once negotiations are brought to a close and a "settlement" has been agreed, parents return to being constructive so as to secure a final outcome that is both protective of the child and attuned to the interests of the sending household. High priority is therefore attached to securing a proper job in a suitable work environment.

---

[26] The taluk headquarter of Karimnagar district, Andra Pradesh, about five hours by bus from Hyderabad.

[27] He had problems in mathematics, with mathematical tables, English copywriting and was also beaten for not being able to answer questions in class.

Another example of such negotiations where the father and mother initially disagreed involved Raghu, now a 45 year old Brahmin, who left home for Udupi town aged 13. A partial hearing impairment augmented Raghu's learning difficulties and made the tasks of learning maths, science and English arduous. He completed 5th standard with considerable difficulty and classmates would often tease him about his handicap. Raghu shared these experiences and told his father of his determination to leave school. After first disapproving, his father gave in when Raghu's mother backed her son; his father then took on a constructive role suggesting that rather than sitting idle at home, Raghu could work in a hotel; this would present an alternative avenue for learning. Raghu agreed and his father brought him to his nephew, a *dosa* cook in Dwareka hotel in Udupi town. The nephew spoke to his employer, a Brahmin from Udupi, who agreed to hire Raghu as an assistant to the cook.

The next few examples illustrate how educational dreams and other aspirations may be cut short and shattered by misfortune such as the illness or death of a breadwinner, confronting young boys with sudden and often towering new responsibilities. Sreenath was regularly attending school with parents insisting that he should pursue further education, a government job being the ultimate goal. His father, the family's sole breadwinner, was keen that Sreenath should become a first generation graduate and break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy. When Sreenath was a 7th standard student, his father lost his right leg after meeting with an accident. Sreenath had to look after his father in the hospital and was unable to attend school and was left with no choice but to permanently dropout after his father was discharged. While mother and sisters were able to look after his father during the recovery period, the earning responsibilities now fell on Sreenath's young shoulders. Ready to accept this challenge, Sreenath told his father that he would not be able to earn enough as a local agricultural labourer and would instead find a job elsewhere. While supportive, his parents insisted that Mumbai was too far away. Besides, his father had a good friend in a Billava co-villager running a small Coffee Day-outlet on Bangalore's MG Road. When contacted over the phone, this friend asked Sreenath to call back three days later and promised to find Sreenath a job, a promise that he kept. In Pandeswhara and Ulthoor, Sreenath's circumstances are not uncommon and typically leave the oldest son with little real choice – these young boys are well acquainted with where the breadwinner responsibility next falls. Taking on this responsibility with dignity and determination, is suggestive of early maturity and adversity appears to evoke a sense of filial responsibility and pride associated with being able to assist the family in a time of urgent need which may or may not be coupled with some disappointment and resentment at the hard diktats of fate.

As hinted at, financial distress may have other triggers. In particular, the younger siblings of daughters who have reached or are approaching marital age may be asked, leaned upon or feel compelled to make substantive sacrifices. During his 5th standard, the elder sister of Mahesh Gowda, a boy with a keen interest in schooling, got married and Mahesh's father borrowed Rs. 40,000 to cover the extra expenses incurred. Mahesh realized his responsibilities and quit school to help repaying the loan. Similarly, Anurag Poojari was confronted by the burden of outstanding debt used for financing his sisters' weddings. Aware of his elder brother's (who was already working hard in Mumbai) struggle to repay this loan, Anurag was eager to assist and asked his brother's advice about how to best help the family. His brother suggested that Anuraag could join him in a paan beeda stall in Mumbai, which Anurag agreed to after persuading initially reluctant parents.

How do these Coastal belt accounts compare with Northern Mandya district? We begin with Alisandra and Satenahalli, the two more well developed among the four study villages in Northern Mandya.

Table 10: Child labour migration causes: Alisandra and Satenahalli

Causes	Pre 1970	1971-80	1981-90	1991-2005	Total
Chronic poverty	0	0	0	0	0
Drought, Illness shock or death of family breadwinner	0	0	0	3(1)	3(1)
Elder sister's marriage	0	0	0	1	1
Educational misfit (drop-out)	0	0	2	3(3)	5(3)
Low parental educational aspirations	0	0	0	0	0
Higher schooling unaffordable	0	0	0	0	0
To take up caste occupation	0	0	0	0	0
The allure of hotel work and/or city life	0	0	0	5(1)	5(1)
Domestic discord	0	0	0	3(1)	3(1)
Parental pressure	0	0	0	1	1
Other	0	0	0	0	0

We first consider poverty-induced child labour migration, the interface with schooling and parallels and contrasts to Udupi. Rather than chronic poverty, illness and other shocks matter in these two better off villages. Further, like Yeljith, child labour migration has peaked in recent years. There are other similarities to Yeljith, since being an educational misfit or a school failure is an important migration cause. However, in contrast to the Coastal belt and consistent with Iversen's (2002) observations, the intrahousehold tensions that poor educational performance give rise to are not amicably or constructively resolved within Mandya households. Instead this causes domestic distress and discord that may culminate in young boys taking matters into their own hands and leaving home without notifying anyone in the family about their plans or intentions. The seven Alisandra cases are all recent and include two runaways and two pairs of brothers. The first runaway, Harish, felt that his sister received preferential treatment in the allocation of household chores and was beaten up by his father for refusing to put up with this perceived injustice. The second runaway case resonates with the Yeljith-narratives up to the point where after being beaten by his father for refusing to resit his failed 8th standard exam, Venkatesh decided to depart.

The first pair of brothers started work in the same Bar and Restaurant and although there were financial problems at home, these were not of a serious nature. The account given by the second pair of brothers, sent to Ooty by their parents is very similar – they were dispatched for work after completing their 4th and 5th standard without there being a known financial imperative. The final case, where household financial distress did come into play was anchored in the need to marry off the migrant's three elder sisters. However, Krishna did not perceive this to be a sacrifice on his part since he in any case preferred work to more education.

In Satenahalli, where eight child labour migrants were interviewed, the picture is more mixed, complex and also involved three Dalits. Financial distress was an important migration trigger in two cases. There are also two runaway migrants and a couple of educational misfits. During Ganesh's 6th standard studies in 1994, his father fell ill with malaria and was bed-ridden for three months. Because of a chronic intestinal disorder, his mother had already stopped working and the burden of provision now fell on Ganesh. Similarly and following poor rains that decimated the ragi crop, reduced local wage labour opportunities and made payment for more education harder, Shankar a 13-year old who had just completed his 7th standard, was told by his father that the time had come for his son to shift to Bangalore and work in a hotel. This was in 2002 and Shankar was not unhappy with this decision since he had already developed a passion for hotel work.

Satenahalli's educational misfits include Shankare Gowda who ran away to Bangalore in 1984 – after passing his 7th standard exam, he informed his mother that he would move to Bangalore to become a driver – however, his father, at the time a migrant based in Badravati, and his mother were both keen that their son should study more – Shankare hatched a conspiracy with his classmate Raghavendra and ran away after stealing money from his father who was visiting the village during a leave.

Swami, who lacked an interest in schooling from the start, but had continued out of fear of his father's beatings, failed his 6th standard exam and refused to resit citing "shame" and embarrassment as reasons. His father told Swami that if he continued to refuse to resit he would be thrown out of the house; Swami retaliated by saying that he would then run away before his father hit him in the face. Having stolen money from his father's pocket, Swami ran away the next morning. After first heading towards Mumbai, a conversation with a fellow passenger revealed that Swami lacked the means to complete the journey to Mumbai. He changed his mind and went to Bangalore instead.

Mutthaya, a 10 year old Dalit, firmly believed that schooling was not in his faith and after overhearing his parents discuss their difficulties with raising money to marry off their daughters hinted that since his schooling was not progressing too well, a hotel job would be an attractive alternative – he had visited his uncle's workplace, Kamat hotel near Majestic in Bangalore, and would be happy to work there. Manju Gowda had failed his 7th standard (in 2004) because of poor skills in science, maths and English and refused to resit even though his parents insisted. His father had taken up a loan to treat his mother for her chronic stomachaches after the Caesarean section birth of their second son and did not object to Manju's plan.

Anand, a Dalit, left for Bangalore aged 14 in 1984. There were no educational aspirations in his family and he never attended school – he recalls being envious of upper-caste children wearing nice uniforms and attending the village school – his brother instilled in him that this was not their destiny. Unlike others with similar addictions, his father, while a drunkard, was not a nuisance. There was no pressure on Anand to migrate but his brother agreed that migration would be a good idea and sought an obtained the necessary assistance from their paternal uncle.

The child labour migration causes in the two remaining and poorer villages in Northern Mandya are summarized in table 11:

Table 11: Child labour migration causes: Konanur and Devaramadihalli

Causes	Pre 1970	1971-80	1981-90	1991-2005	Total
Chronic poverty	0	1(1)	0	6	7(1)
Drought, Illness shock or death of family breadwinner	0	0	0	1	1
Elder sister's marriage	0	2(2)	0	1(1)	3(3)
Drop-out	0	0	0	4(2)	4(2)
Low parental educational aspirations	0	0	0	0	0
Higher schooling unaffordable	0	1(1)	0	1	2(1)
To take up caste occupation	0	0	0	0	0
The allure of hotel work and/or city life	0	0		1(1)	1(1)
Domestic discord	0	0	1	2	3
Parental pressure	0	0	1	0	1
Other	0	0	0	3	3

As in the other Mandya villages, child labour migration has become more common of late but here, causes are more attuned to expectations (e.g. Basu and Van 1998) with chronic poverty being the most prevalent cause. Notice that "educational misfits" has been replaced with "school dropouts" and that costs of higher schooling and three observations in the "other" category pick up school discontinuation prompted by financial constraints and in the case of Devaramadihalli and distinct from other study villages, the low quality of the local primary school. From 1st to 4th standard, Prasanna studied in Devaramadihalli, but didn't learn much. He picked up reading and writing only when attending the Upper Primary School in the neighbouring village – primary school teachers in Devaramadihalli had little to divulge and students not attending to home work would face a variety of punishments including beatings, ear squeezing, sit ups, standing on a bench etc.

In summary, then, migration causes and the contents of intergenerational negotiations display considerable variation. Further, opposition to recent migration ventures is often parental, although there are also, as noted, instances where parents disagree. Occasionally, others are drawn into these negotiations – as strategic allies by children (as in Ota 2002) or by increasingly desperate parents eager to sway a recalcitrant migrant. Elder brothers, themselves often migrants, often side with their younger siblings on such occasions. Table 12 presents a synthesis of the intrahousehold dynamics preceding the migration of boys in our sample before and after 1975, a somewhat arbitrary cutoff point. The focus on boys is easy to defend: girls' resistance to parental decisions or desire to migrate did not surface as an issue during our interviews. Kavita's account is typical in this respect: She was simply told that she would now work in Bangalore. Her approval was not sought and according to Kavita, parents have every right to decide what children should do; what parents decide is right.[28]

---

[28] This absence of girls' agency in our accounts contrasts with Nieuwenhuys (1995) observations of the migration of young girls from fishing communities in Kerala to prawn curing factories in distant Gujarat.

Table 12: The process of intrahousehold migration decision-making – boys

	Number of obser-vations (n) (1)	Migrant's own initiative (2)	Migrant's own initiative after adjusting for house-hold distress (3)	Migrant dictate (run aways) (4)	Parent (s) dictate (5)	Negotia-tions as % of all episodes (n) (6)
Pre 1975	14	28.6 %	21.4%	0.0 %	43.0%	21.4 %
Post 1975	69	63.8 %	45.0 %	8.7 %	24.6%	37.7 %

Columns (2)-(4) report cases where migrants either initiate the migration process (2) or run away from home (4). Column (3) represents (2) after adjusting for observations such as Sreenath's decision to step forward and take responsibility in response to an illness shock in his household. Column (2) thus includes observations where a young migrant in practice may have little real choice but to take on new breadwinner responsibilities. In contrast, Column (3) represent cases where choice is genuine and there are real alternatives. Column (5) reports cases where a parent, usually the father, unilaterally decides and then informs the migrant that he will now have to leave home. Column (6) gives the percentage of cases proceeding to a negotiation stage. While caution is a must when interpreting these figures (n prior to 1975 is only 14), there are interesting indications about the type of insights carefully collated worklife histories may provide. Firstly, the figures are suggestive of a growing assertiveness and say among young potential migrants and of a decrease in the extent to which child labour migration decisions are unilaterally imposed by either or both parents. There are also, after 1975, strong indications of a growing prevalence of intrahousehold negotiations preceding child labour migration.

There are no runaway cases prior to 1975, and five of the six runaways are observed in Mandya district indicating a spatial as well as a time dimension to this behavioural change.[29] A further disaggregation of the figures in table 10 post 1975 is feasible and shows that among the cases reported in column (2) and where mothers were consulted, about 45% instantly approved of their sons initiative. The corresponding figure for fathers was 54%. As the above accounts have shown, the recent child labour migration of boys is subject to initial intergenerational conflicts and to paternal and maternal resistance, with mothers thus being more frequently opposed to their sons plans than fathers. We also register that children ally with third parties as a bargaining strategy more often than parents do – these allies are usually their elder brothers, themselves often migrants and keen to secure sibling company in their workplace.

Finally, a brief reminder that young age and affective ties make these migration events particularly emotive: Manju's very close relationship to his mother made the decision to migrate hard, but he agreed to shift to Belgaum. Before leaving, his mother offered moral guidance and advice: (a) take a good name (behave properly) (b) provide no scope for your employer to complain about your behaviour (c) be loyal to your employer (d) don't quarrel with your colleagues (e) be careful while moving in the kitchen – especially avoid boiling oil and slippery floors (f) report everything to your employer (g) if a customer forgets or leaves something behind, make sure he gets it back. Mother and son both wept on the day of departure.

---

[29] It is important to avoid pushing the suggestion of new behavioural patterns too far: In it's 7. November 2008 editorial honouring the 86 year old classical singer Bhimsen Joshi, the latest recipient of the Bharat Ratna, The Herald (Panjim) observed: "*Born into a Brahmin family at Gadag – in what is now Karnataka – … he was obsessed with music even as a child, to the utter dismay of his father, a schoolteacher, who wanted young Bhimsen to become a doctor or an engineer. But the boy, deeply moved by a recording of Abdul Kharim Khan, the great founder of the Kirana Gharana, rebelled and ran away from home. He headed for [distant] Gwalior which he had heard was one of the best places to learn classical music. He was only 11 then.*"

5. Running away: preludes, reactions and aftermaths

In the 1998 data from Nothern Mandya, conflicts between fathers and their increasingly assertive sons were often catalysts for runaway migration: For instance, Kumara ran away to Bangalore along with his friend to escape hard agricultural work and cattle grazing, often accompanied by beatings from his parents. A persistent, unacceptable situation prompted his move. Decisions to run away could also be less premeditated. Pramod ran away as a 13-year old after his father scolded him for failing the 8th standard exam. Similarly, Manjunath, who lived with his grandparents, ran away to Bangalore after being beaten up by his grandfather who accused him of stealing Rs 200. Later it was discovered that the money had been misplaced. Although the present data-set contains fewer runaway cases, the incidence is much higher in Mandya district. Out of the altogether 30 child labour migration episodes involving boys (5 were girls) in Mandya district, 5 or roughly 16.7 % were runaway cases where the migrant left home without informing parents or guardians of intentions or plans. One set of issues that these worklife histories allow us to uniquely explicate are the accounts of these runaway episodes, parental reactions and the migration experiences and outcomes.

While his sister would enjoy her leisure, fetching groceries and water were among Harish's domestic responsibilities (he interprets this as a parental strategy to keep their mature daughter at home). Arguments with sister and mother over trivial issues were common and so were Harish's runaway threats. These threats were normally snubbed by his parents whose retaliatory response would be that if he was ever to implement his threat, he would not be welcome back. One day and after refusing to fetch groceries, Harish was scolded by his mother and beaten up by his father. His sister intervened and attempted to stop the fight but in vain. Wanting to end to this humiliation, Harish decided to run away.

His relative and father's cousin sister' son, Narayan was a supplier in a bar and restaurant in J. C. Nagar in Bangalore and Harish had, on a few occasions, visited this bar and restaurant together with his father. He knew the area well. He stole money from his mother's "bank" – a vessel with mustard seeds (a common place for women to keep their cash) and boarded a bus to Bangalore where he linked up with Narayan the same evening. Narayan was debriefed, consoled Harish and spoke to his employer, Rame Gowda also a native of Mandya. Harish was offered a cleaner's job for a monthly salary of Rs 900. Since Harish's threats had made explicit mention of joining Narayan in Bangalore, Harish's father came looking for his son the next day. Despite persistent requests and occasional threats, Harish refused to return to the village and his father was forced to return empty-handed after Narayan persuaded him to let Harish continue his new-found work issuing the assurance that he, Narayan, would act as Harish's local guardian.

In another case parents mobilized close relatives to participate in search parties after their son Raju absconded. While one such party, led by Raju's father, headed for the taluk headquarter, Nagamangala, a second party traveled to Mandya (the district headquarter) and from there to Mysore. Raju's brother in law, an operator in a garment factory in Bangalore, was asked to search for the boy in the city. Carrying a photograph of Raju, he made enquiries in numerous hotels in Peenya and upto the Majestic area and also in and around Bangalore Railway station. The search ended happily when the brother in law visited Raghavendra Krupa where the employer summoned Raju and offered to let him go. However, Raju refused to return to the village citing a fear of beatings and humiliation. This was two months after he disappeared.

A third case, Chandra, was keen to continue schooling but financial constraints made it difficult to support his further education. He was a regular student and was occasionally punished for not doing homework, which included learning mathematical tables, solving sums, copywriting and taking dictations. He completed his 4th standard in the village school and 8th standard in a local school run by the Adi Chunchanagiri Mutt. Chandra was good at sports, especially running, longjump, highjump and shortput throw and had even won certificates at District level athletic games for students. During the summer break following his 8th standard exams, he was caught stealing raw mangoes from a mango grove - this was a favourite pastime pursuit and the guard abused him verbally and gave him moral instructions. His father was also summoned and issued a strict warning. His father brought home and abused his son verbally but stopped short of beating. A week or so after this incident Chandra went swimming in the local stream without permission – hearing of this from a co-villager cum friend, his elder brother Swami rushed to the spot carrying a small wooden piece and beat Chandra on the head causing bleeding and injury. Swami brought Chandra home and informed their parents. Their mother scolded both sons and gave Chandra money, instructing him to see a doctor in Nagamangala. Chandra, who had other plans, traveled by lorry to Mysore where he put up in a park next to the Mysore Palace for a few days. He was concerned about his future course of action since his cash quickly dried up and was reluctant to approach hotels since his brothers might come searching and thus easily locate him. He made enquiries with a couple of lorry owners eating breakfast in a nearby hotel, but they refused to hire him, advising him instead to return home. Chandra prevailed and eventually managed to secure a cleaner's job with Abdul, a Muslim lorry driver from Mysore. While the job was unpaid, food, clothing and shelter were taken care of by Abdul. The lorry operated on the Mysore-Madras route, via Bangalore. After about eight months, Chandra received his first lessons in the art of lorry driving. One day he ran into Venkatesha, a Besta from his native village who was working as a supplier in Hotel Rajbhavan in Mysore.

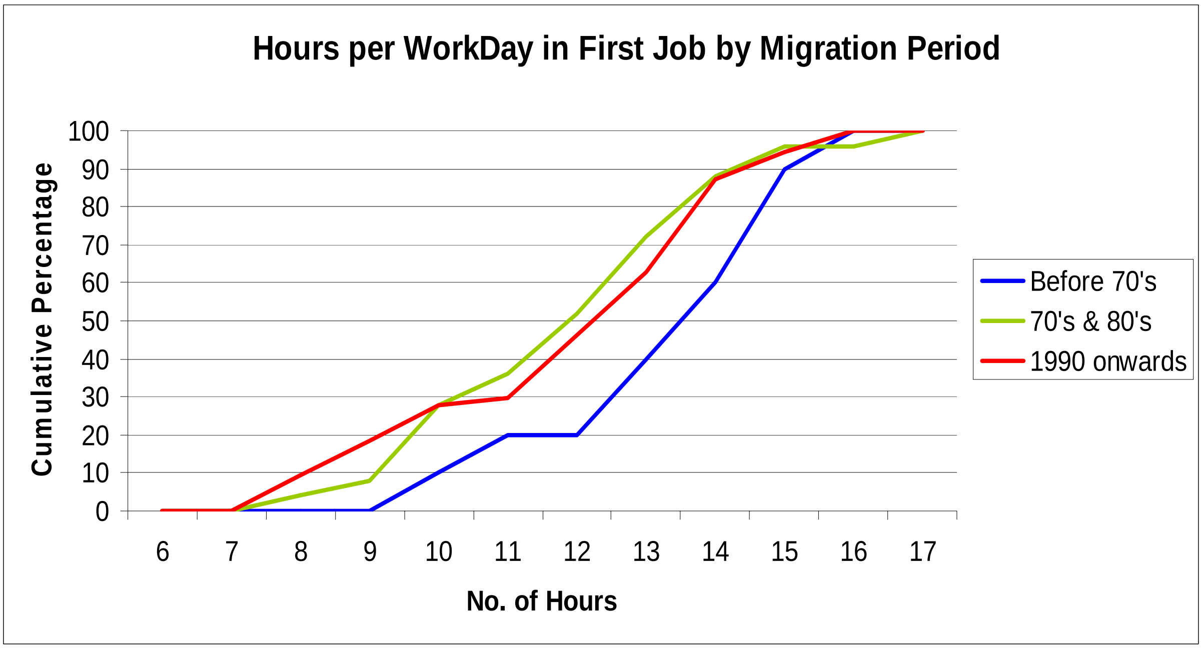
Soon after, Swami came searching for his sibling. This was one and a half year after he absconded. Swami promised that he was welcome to return if he so wished and reminded Chandra of his duty to keep in touch with his family. By this time, even Chandra was homesick and desperate to see his family. After taking Abdul's permission, he returned to Konanor on a month's vacation. Abdul paid him Rs 2,000. He returned to Mysore after one month and rejoined as a cleaner – he wanted to ask Abdul to fix a salary after a month or so, but fate had other plans. The lorry met with an accident in Satyamangalam forest area and Abdul died on the spot. Chandra jumped out of the lorry and escaped with only minor injuries.

6 Migration outcomes

6.1 Workhours, workplace conditions and welfare

Bombay's Labour Unions have exercised a strong influence on industrial relations and the city's workplace environments. The volatile industrial relations during the 1930s have been interpreted as decisive for the independent course that labour legislation in Bombay subsequently took (Pages and Roy 2006; 3). Following a famous agitation in May 1962, the Chief Minister agreed to appoint a Minimum Wage Committee with hotel employees, Union leaders and government representatives as members (Salian 2004). The Committee report paved way for minimum wages in the hotel industry. The proximate formalization of working conditions in Bombay hotels after these landmark events contrasts with the informal nature of hotel sector work in other locations and also with what early arrivals to Bombay endured. After arriving in Bombay in 1935, Vasu Shetty's first hotel job involved 14-16 hours of work a day (5 am to 11 pm) for seven days a week. He describes the work, which earned him a monthly salary of Rs 2 along with free shelter, free meals and healthcare, as highly intensive. In his second job, also in a hotel, work hours were down to 12-14 hours a day, but work intensity and weekly workdays were similar. He left this job after two years, upset by beatings from his employer (for failing to get up at the scheduled time and for not performing according to expectations). Such beatings in front of customers might prompt customers to slap, too. When Ganesh Poojari reached Mumbai as a 12-year old around 20 years later, the working conditions in his first workplace, Hotel Shanti Bhavan, were remarkably similar to those reported by Vasu Shetty; with official work hours from 5 am to 11 pm, seven days a week and a one hour mid-day break. His initial salary was Rs 2 per month and free shelter, free meals and free health care were the perks. In spite of long hours, many Mumbai hotel owners offered child workers the opportunity to attend local night schools. Those arriving in Bombay from the 1970s onwards had fewer workhours and often a weekly day off. While working conditions have been improving also in larger enterprises in Bangalore, the situation in other destinations and in other industries and types of work is mixed and continues to involve long workhours and often at most a Sunday afternoon break. As figure 2 illustrates, the workhours in the first job for the child labour migrants in our sample have declined after 1970.

Figure 2: Changes in daily workhours



What about other dimensions of work? Satish Shetty who first migrated to Hubli and later to Mumbai during the 1970s offered reflections on a number of workplace issues. The employer in Satish's first and second workplaces would kick on the hips, splash a bucket of water on the face and pour hot water on their hands to penalize workers reluctant to get up early. In his first job as a cleaner in a Hubli eating place he also recounts injuries and ailments; continuous contact with water would result in serious skin problems, specifically cracks on palms and feet. Medical facilities at the workplace were scant and there was limited space for sleep. Problems with organising a regular bath amplified health and hygiene concerns. As he was promoted to work in the kitchen, he became exposed to the intense heat from the oven. Cracked heels and palms followed by whitening due to extensive contact with water is a common hotel industry ailment with treatment usually based on home remedies like coconut oil. In some cases skin damage becomes more serious. Prakash Kamath, working in a Mandya hotel, suffered severe skin damage because of water and a lack of proper and timely medical care. Wounds did not heal naturally, were decaying, and eventually forced him to leave his job. Unwritten “contracts” within the hotel industry place the onus to cover medical expenses, at least for minor ailments and illnesses, on employers. Uday Battala recounts one instance when he fell sick and his employer accompanied him to the doctor for examination. Ramesh Gowda similarly remembers falling ill and his employer organising hospitalisation and covering all treatment-related expenses. In other instances, employers are more reluctant to cover treatment costs. Sudesh Shetty who migrated to Sircilla (AP) aged 11 and worked as a cleaner in a hotel was entitled to free healthcare for minor ailments. For more serious illnesses where treatment required hospitalisation, the employer would pay an advance that would subsequently be deducted from the salary. For others such as Anurag Marati, free healthcare was not forthcoming. Instead the employer would pay an advance to cover medical expenses in time of need and later deduct from the salary. While working in Belgaum, Shivaram had a small bicycle accident and his employer, a hotelier, paid for his medical care. Later on, after moving to Hyderabad, he developed a tumour which compelled him to quit his job and seek treatment without receiving any help from his employer. After taking up another job in Pune, the tumour re-emerged and he returned to his native village (Yeljith) for surgery. The more recent migrant accounts bring to light more intricate and contradictory facets of employer-employee relationships. Kavita, a domestic servant, had no fixed work hours – from 6.30 am to 8.30 am she would assist the employer’s wife by sweeping and wiping the kitchen floor, cutting vegetables, cleaning vessels and serving coffee and tea. 9.30 am she would wash and dry clothes and from 10.30 onwards she would assist with lunch preparation. In the evening she would water the garden plants, serve coffee and tea to everyone and help with dinner preparation. The main hall of the house, which also housed the TV, was her sleeping area. The employer had two children and Kavita developed close relationships with the Madam and her daughter, a high school student. Others also treated her well. The employer addressed her as Kavitamma (a mark of respect and affection). She had no idea about salary arrangements, but knew that her father was saving parts of her earnings with the employer. The employer donated Rs 30,000 for her wedding and also sponsored the marriage silk sari and a Mangalasutra (a gold pendant symbolising that one is married).

Gowramma's summary observations resonate with the above: "*Food, shelter, good emotional relationships. Learning domestic work and tailoring and patience. The goodwill of the employer. Earnings. Being able to support family. Good health. Medical treatment to mother when she fell sick with jaundice. City life. I have picked up some readings. Manners. Marriage arranged – negotiated by the employer. A feeling that I didn't burden my father for my marriage. Disadvantages: I missed my mother very badly initially, but the Madam's influence was such that I started missing her during visits to my village.*"

Suresh Gowda's workhours at SLV Garage were from 9 am to 7.30 pm with a 30 minutes lunch break. Apart from a monthly salary and a Dussehra bonus, he received a set of blue uniforms. The workplace offered shelter and cooking facilities. He would assist senior mechanics by supplying tools and learn tasks such as oiling, greasing, removing and tightening screws and become acquainted with a variety of tools and their purposes. His informal apprenticeship combined hands-on experience with learning through observation. Any mistake such as supplying the wrong tools and a failure to immediately respond to requests would be punished with beatings using tools, tools being hurled at him and verbal abuse. While initially disturbed, he gradually realized that this was the culture in this profession. He was threatened with losing his job if he opposed or overreacted since these punishments had the approval of the employer. Nevertheless, he benefited from his guardian and protector, Chellavaraju, who introduced him to the workplace and whose presence would protect him from abuse. Some senior mechanics responded to Chellevaraju's protective interventions: "*If he has no fears, how can he learn?*" – "*How long should he work as a helper? Should he not pick up the tricks of the trade?*" Some of his seniors claimed that they would face the employer's wrath if they did not provide proper training. Hands would become very hard, injuries were common and medical aid typically in short supply. Three of the six mechanics were Muslims and use of vulgar language was widespread. Four years after Suresh joined, Chelluvaraju fell out with the employer and left. Suresh also wanted to leave but stayed on for two more years on the advice of the latter. By that time, he mastered common repairs, understood vehicle mechanics, especially autos, and knew how to drive an auto.

6.2 "Earning and learning" and other skills

What other skills were developed in destination workplaces? As part of his Brahmin upbringing, Sreenath was accustomed to assisting his mother in the kitchen. Cooking is the only job he knows and throughout, the kitchen remained his only world. In his first workplace, Dwareka, he kept asking the Chief Cook about techniques for preparing new dishes to perfect his own culinary skills. These cooking skills gave him a new identity. His deafness also occasionally worked to his advantage, since other Brahmin boys of his age would start as water-boys, while he was appointed directly to the kitchen. In both workplaces, kitchen colleagues and owners were kind, patient and his hearing handicap was never an issue. Many of our informants stress the valuable learning hotel work would offer and a repeated mantra of "earning and learning" refers not only to cooking but also learning how to run a business. Starting one's own enterprise and gaining independence is an aspiration for many. For others, including carpenters, migration would enhance their skill repertoires. In Yeljith and surrounding areas, carpenters mostly do roofwork, doors, windows and make agricultural tools: in Shimoga, in contrast, the range of tasks and demands were broader; including making furniture such as tables and cupboards. In Goa, one informant picked up boat-making skills. Gaining an employer's trust is crucial and improves the odds for developing supervisory skills. As an agricultural labourer's son, Ganesh Gowda would do plantation work in Sirsi and Ghatta. He continued in this line of work, and with time, was given supervision responsibilities for more than 110 acres of the landlord's plantation where paddy, areca nut and coconut were cultivated. He also became a labour contractor responsible for organizing a workforce for the landlord ahead of the peak season.

The work-life history of Manjunath supports this observation. Manjunath started as a cleaner in Sridevi hotel in Mumbai where duties included cleaning premises, assisting at the counter and supplying water to customers. After a brief stint with a steel company, he became a counter assistant in Shanthi Sagar hotel in Mangalore. Apart from interacting with customers, Manjunath also learnt about the outside world by delivering food to nearby offices. He was soon promoted to assistant cook and picked up the art of cutting vegetables and gained familiarity with basic kitchen chores. He also helped out in a mobile omelette cart, adding new skills. In his next job as an assistant cook in a hospital, he learnt how to prepare dosas. When he eventually left this job he had enough confidence and knowledge to start his own business.

Shifting one's line of work may develop a broader range of skills. Srinivas Rao started his career supplying water in a cafe in Madras. Thereafter, he worked as a helper in a Cinema tent in Brahmavara before returning to the hotel industry in Madras. This time, he started preparing coffee and idlis; and after picking up basic Tamil, would also assist at the counter.

He then relocated to Calcutta and worked in a sweets shop, helping in preparing chakkuli, ubattu, janghir, Mysore Paak and laddoos. After marriage, he moved to Bannoor (near Mysore) and together with his wife started an eating place. She would prepare idlis, dosas, chutney and sambhar while he was responsible for other aspects of the business. After this venture failed to take off, Srinivas Rao worked as a Line Manageer in Swekar Hotel in Bangalore. Finally and only after clearing a proper interview, he was employed as a supplier at Woodland's restaurant in Bangalore from where he eventually retired with much satisfaction.

Having started off as a cleaner, Gundappa Gowda realised that hotel work was not of much interest to him, and involved too much hardship and damage to health. He shifted to the painting industry and was trained in painting and paint-mixing. Currently, as an in-charge, he supervises 5-6 painters and 2-3 helpers and is responsible for maintaining quality and for meeting deadlines. His responsibilities include spot visits, taking orders, finishing estimates and supervision.

The individual orientation and attitude of migrants may crucially affect skills acquisition. Nagesh Poojari attributes his rise and growth over his career, which started at age 12 to his ability to absorb and quickly adapt. The 12-year old migrant, who was disinterested in formal schooling back home, was an acute observer in his workplace. Once promoted to table-manager, greater exposure and chance to intently observe and interact with customers ensued and enabled him to pick up elementary English, Tamil and Telugu, in addition to Kannada and Tulu which he already knew.

Lakshman Poojari who had spent the last ten years assisting his employer at the latter's paan beeda stall was pleasantly surprised when his employer gave him the stall before winding up and returning to his native village. Lakshman sees this as a token of appreciation of his loyalty and of the extra initiative he took in helping the employer in his business over the years.

Language skills, as many of our informants note, are very important in helping a young migrant adapt and integrate into the new (destination) environment, make friendships and access information. Interview transcripts point to a range of other such "soft-skills" gained over the course of one's career. Nagaraj Poojari identifies language skills, opportunities to pick up culinary skills and exposure to different aspects of city life as major benefits. Vasantha Kullala and many with him identify the confidence gained from surviving in a new city, learning about social life and social interactions, exposure to city life and information about the outside world as important sources of personal and professional growth.

6.3 Philanthropist hoteliers and Bombay's Kannada Night Schools

One important finding is that work in small South Indian eating places in Bombay, from an early date, was commensurate with the pursuit of further education. Bombay's first Kannada Night School, Mother India, was established by the Mogaveera (the fishermen community of the Coastal belt) Society in 1918. By 1950, four more Kannada Night Schools were up and running in and around the area known as Fort Bombay. Before considering our informants' often positive accounts and experiences with Night School attendance, we cite and report passages from the Government of Bombay's (1956) Review of Education in Bombay State 1855-1955. Official experiments with Night Schools predate those targeting Kannada speakers and in 1872-73 a total of 3,000 students were enrolled in such schools in Bombay. These schools '*were meant for "adults and boys who are occupied during the day" and for "Hindus of the mixed castes, Mussalmans, cultivators and such like* (ibid, 351)". Inspite of attempted expansion, this experiment was officially described as a failure. Between 1881 and 1921-22, the number of students fluctuated, attaining a peak of 7,600 in 1891-92, declining to 2,380 in 1901-02 and then increasing to around 5,000 in 1921-22. In 1884-85 the Educational Inspector noted that "*It is, however, but quite natural that after a day's hard physical labour the mind should repel an attempt calculated to lay a heavy strain upon in at night. The schoolwork, therefore, is interesting only in the beginning* (ibid, 352)." In 1901-02, the Director reported that "*there is no chance that they [the Night Schools] will prosper…. In many cases the schools serve no purpose but to enable the master to draw his extra allowance* (ibid, 353)." Hence, the Kannada Night Schools that some of our informants attended had predecessors that were not particularly well regarded, at least in official circles. Our informants views and accounts, to which we now turn, are more positive. According to Ganesh, the Kannada Night Schools were started on an initiative of natives of the Coastal belt, including philanthropist hoteliers. Many hotel owners were keen to promote education among child workers from their native region and facilitated night school attendance by organizing shift arrangements and time off during evening work hours. From his night school classes, Ganesh recalls that workers from other parts of Karnataka also attended, but that a majority of the students were natives of the former Dakshina Kannada district. Ganesh himself attended Gaov Devi Kannada Night High School. His employer extended flexible work hours to all employees who attended and would schedule early morning work hours to compensate for the loss of evening work hours. Classes were for two hours (from 7 to 9) every evening. Homework would involve solving mathematical problems, copywriting and learning mathematical tables by heart. The teachers were liberal and would not overburden students with homework and punishments were not strict. There were only terminal examinations and no monthly tests. Ganesh's school covered 1st to 8th standard and each class had around 50 students aged between 10 and 30 years. In Ranga

Shetty's first workplace, Night School attendance was mandatory for all workers (Young Men's Night School– quite far away). Throughout his two years in this workplace, however, Ranga, much to his elder brother's (himself a serious student) irritation, remained an irregular Night School student. Apart from learning, the Night Schools were also sites for exchanging information about job opportunities where students resorted to school friends to arrange new jobs. Many employers would also use workers attending Night Schools to recruit new workers during periods of labour shortage. After returning from his village, Ranga used his Night School friendship networks to find a new job. Many of his classmates and Night School friends worked at the Mumbai Municipality canteen and through a fellow classmate, Ranga approached the owner of this canteen, a Bunt (from Udupi region) and was offered a supplier job. At the time of our fieldwork, Ranga was himself the manager of a Catering operation holding the franchise for public sector canteens and now extends similar educational opportunities to his workforce. In spite of a heterogeneous workforce, by caste and place of origin, this educational opportunity has primarily been taken up by Coastal belt natives. Among nine staff members who either are or have been availing of this opportunity, eight are natives of Udupi district.

6.4 Migration's transformative scope (and limitations): new attitudes, new friends

The scope for friendship formation beyond the workplace is affected by leisure time. Before the 1962 industrial action, Mumbai hotel workers often had no weekly days off. This would often restrict friendships to fellow workers and to regulars among customers. While common native language made communication easy, language could act as a powerful barrier. The first Coastal belt migrants arriving in Madras were surrounded by people speaking a “foreign” language (Toft Madsen 1991). The same applies to Kannadigas in Bombay where Hindi and Marathi are the main languages outside the workplace. A move to Bangalore, in contrast, offered a short term linguistic advantage.[30] Many of our informants picked up English, Hindi, Marathi or Gujarati during their Mumbai years. Migrants to Bangalore, in addition to English, often understand Telugu and Tamil. There is one exception to this pattern. While female migrants may enjoy more leisure during the day (time off from household chores) their recreational activities and mobility are restricted; girls and young women are rarely if at all allowed outside the house unaccompanied and end up watching TV and chit-chatting with the employers’ children and others. A simple comparison of the language skills of female and male migrants illustrate this contrast; With the exception of one additional language in a single case, the six other female child labour migrants, all starting as domestic servants, only speak and understand Kannada.

The following examples deliberate on the importance of language for social life, for social interactions and for being able to establish quality contacts. One difference between social life in Shimoga and Goa, according to a carpenter from Yeljith, was that interaction was more regular in Shimoga where Kannada facilitated more diverse friendships links and where his best friend was a Lingayat, selling milk. In Goa, in contrast, interactions were limited to people from the same region because of the dominance of Marathi language: his best friend there was another carpenter (a Vishwakarma) from Aloor, close to Yeljith.

As noted, agricultural labourers from Yeljith’s Gowda community have been moving to Sirsi and other destinations in neighbouring Shimoga district for an extensive period of time: Anand of Yeljith, a contractor for farm workers in Sirsi describes his social life at destination thus: *“Friendships are mainly confine to people from Yeljith and surrounding villages*

---

[30] Note, though, that according to the 1991 Census, only 35% of Bangalore’s residents declared Kannada their mother tongue; the corresponding figures for Tamil, Urdu and Telugu were 25%, 19% and 17%, respectively (Nair 2005; 246).

and mostly from the Gowda-community." At the time of our interview, Anand shared accommodation with five friends, all Gowdas from his native place.

The extent to which workplace obligations limit opportunities for social interaction varies historically and with destination. In Bombay and following the 1962 industrial action, shorter work hours and fewer working days allow workers to enjoy and diversify their leisure activities. In other destinations, workplace conditions and leisure prospects are more mixed. In Belgaum, Ganesh's outside work hours activities included watching Kannada and Hindi-movies on the staffroom TV in the company of colleagues, playing snake and ladders game and playing cricket with colleagues in the morning, evening and during vacations. In Bangalore, his major activities were cooking and watching Kannada movies in Uma theatre. Most of the customers in the club he worked for in Bangalore and the Bar in Belgaum were regulars. They treated him well and gave generous tips.

Another migrant to the same destination (but not workplace) had a different experience. In Shivaram's case, workplace responsibilities would compel workers to forge ties with colleagues at the same level. While cooks and suppliers would go out together after work, the cleaners would have additional responsibilities (cleaning vessels used by staff for the evening meal as well as cleaning the floor) to attend to and little time and energy for outings even after the shutters had come down. On Sundays, the cooks and suppliers would collect cash from the owner, go for a movie and eat a non-vegetarian meal. The employer was reluctant to give money to the cleaners, often compelling them to stay indoors or to borrow from senior colleagues.

Karunatha describes after work hours discussions as centering on domestic affairs, childhood experiences, *Yakshagana*, day-to-day workplace events, cinema and drama. There were occasions when Karunatha and his colleagues would hire bicycles after work and watch dramas in places 15-20 kms away. In contrast, Raghu from Ulthoor experienced work pressures as intense. Moreover, *"caste was never an important matter in workplace discussions which would instead evolve around day-to-day experiences of the workplace and life back home. Many a day, workers would also not find time to chat."* Even after the hotel had closed for the evening, Raghu and other cleaners would clean and wipe the floor, tables and the counter in preparation for the next day. He would then have a bath, eat the meal that had been freshly prepared and go to bed. Work pressures the following day would occupy most of his thoughts.

While many were open to friendships and had better friends at their workplaces than back home, some had personal reservations: Uday of Yeljith states that he is in the city as a migrant to earn his livelihood and not to make friends. He does not keep in regular touch with other migrants from his native place. *"You migrate in search of a good future and you should always keep that in mind: friendships may even be counterproductive at workplaces."*

Similarly, Satish Shetty's regular contacts in Mumbai are restricted mostly to migrants from his family; beyond this he has no close friends. Close relations are maintained only with his brothers and other kin. He keeps a distance to others in the workplace and believes that friends who become too close may engage in backstabbing.

Much also depends on the facilitator or door-opener, who may exercise considerable control over the migrant for whom a job was arranged. If the facilitator is a close relative cum colleague, he may occupy a significant part of the worker's private space. In Hyderabad, Shivanand's father completely occupied his son's space. However, whenever his father visited Yeljith, Shivanand would go to movies, mostly alone and only occasionally with friends from the same hotel and chat about movies, life back in the native place and share workplace experiences. For Krishna from Innanje, his elder brother took him along to Bombay and looked after him as a close friend and literally occupied his private space completely. Their relationship was so intense that Krishna finds it hard to realise that his brother is no more, six years after he succumbed to a massive heart attack. Kittu of Innanje contends that his uncle who was his facilitator cum employer remained his guardian and guide. Working in a bar and restaurant could involve temptations that the presence of an elder sibling might contribute to curtail: Udaya mentions that some of the suppliers would drink the leftover licquor – even though he too wanted to taste it, in the beginning, the presence of his elder brother acted as a deterrent and he never tasted alcohol even after his brother left. He considers this to be an achievement.

Exposure to city life has changed the outlook of many of our interviewees, towards life in general and caste in particular. Shivaram describes his close friendship to a local Dalit in Yeljith. They play chess and cricket together and local women tell Shivaram to avoid such company: Shivaram might have heeded their advice had he not seen more of the world. Shankar's best friends include G Devadiga (25 years of age) from Uppunda, working as a head cook in Sandesh hotel, G Karvi, a 19 year old Mogeveera who is a boatdriver cum fisherman and a daily customer at the present workplace. Shankar mentions that his best friend is Manjunath, a 23 year old Dalit from Kirimanjeshvara, a local construction worker, and a very regular customer in the canteen.

While some openly challenge traditional notions of pollution and purity in commensality, both in their workplace and during visits back home, others resort to deception and prefer to conceal the caste identities of colleagues during joint visits to their native places: The close Mumbai-based friends of V Poojari from Pandeshwara included Nagesh, a Dalit from Beejadi near Kundapur, of the same age, and Gopala Poojari from Kundapur, 3 years elder to him. Both were waiters at Prasad hotel where V Poojari was also a waiter. Nagesh, Gopala and V Poojari were very close and would visit their native places together. They would spend two days at each other's place and then part ways to their respective houses and assemble in Kundapur before returning to Mumbai. V Poojari mentions that Nagesh's caste was never an issue in their friendship but that they would deliberately hide his caste from their families, always presenting him as a fellow Billava. Srinivas of Ulthoor says that he hails from an upper caste (Bunt) and there were no restrictions from the employers' side – he mingled with colleagues from different castes, but had some reservations about socially interacting with Dalit workers. The latter brings up the issue of untouchability in the workplace and whether age matters or not. In other words, would a Dalit child be treated in a similar way as a Dalit adult? As noted in Iversen and Raghavendra (2006), eating places are appropriate arenas for addressing this question because of the intimate link between the preparation and serving of food and purity and pollution ideals. The case of Raghu and other Dalit child migrants illustrate how young age fails to protect a child migrant from workplace caste biases:

"*The owner (a Bunt) agreed to take (the 10 year old) Raghu along and Raghu observes that the employer was extremely kind and looked after him well….. NP, a 29-year old Billava from Hebri was the manager cum coffee/tea cook and Raghu's best friend and guardian in the hotel. There were altogether seven workers: two cooks, two suppliers and three cleaners. Raghu was aware of the caste background of his colleagues and knew that he was the only Dalit in the workforce. However, apart from NP, his other colleagues had no clue about Raghu's caste. The owner concealed Raghu's caste identity and told Raghu to say that he was a Dev-Adiga if anyone asked* (Iversen and Raghavendra 2006; 338)."

7. Concluding remarks

Presenting narratives spanning more than half a century, we have sought to bring to life the experiences of struggles and joys, failures as well as sentiments of achievement interspersed with young migrants' active engagement with and interpretation of often challenging circumstances at home and destination. We view the events, occasions and descriptive accounts of the migrants' everyday lives not only through indicators of workplace conditions and welfare, but also from the standpoint of the often adult mind reflecting upon times past. We observed both persistence and shifts in the motivations and causes propelling child labour migration, the latter increasingly driven by the conflict between the shortcomings in young people's encounter with schooling and growing parental aspirations, with notable spatial contrasts. While our sample is limited in size, poverty and destitution and the allure of city life have continued to trigger child labour migration, while dowry and wedding expenses for elder sisters appears to increasingly and adversely impact on their younger siblings. We also presented evidence suggestive of fundamental shifts in the intrahousehold dynamics preceding child labour migration events and thus in relationships between parents and children. Our accounts of runaway migration document assertiveness and a readiness to opt for dramatic solutions to the problems young boys encounter at home and in school, again with remarkable spatial and periodic contrasts; the type of intrahousehold conflicts that fuel runaway behaviour in Mandya are resolved within the household in Coastal Karnataka. The narratives also contain grim descriptions of workplace conditions, where long hours, health hazards and challenging work environments will have affected young children's growth and development especially for those who left early. The change in working conditions, in particular shorter work hours facilitating the pursuit of leisure activities suggests improvements, especially in Mumbai. Inter-personal and social skills acquired and valued by our informants include the ability to master cosmopolitan environments, forge strong friendships and question (and often abandon) instilled practices that relate to caste and community discrimination/distinction thus unveiling migration's transformative scope. A perhaps surprising finding is that long before education was recognized as crucial to a child's development prospects and a useful corrective to the portrayal of child labour and employers in most international discourses, philanthropists among Mumbai's hoteliers offered many child labour migrants from the Coastal belt opportunities to improve their education through regular night school attendance.

Theoretically our findings speak to the literature on youth transitions and interdependencies (Punch, 2002) and to efforts at linking child labour migration to ideas about intergenerational contracts within the sociological and anthropological literature. There are, we propose, fundamental lessons also for the economic literature on child labour which almost uniformly places the responsibility for children entering the labour force on parents and/or misfortune. In addition, and also suggested by Iversen (2002), it is necessary to revisit portrayals of migration as a cooperative household venture. Starting with the sociological positions, Punch (2002) interprets adult-child relations in Bolivia as subject to constant negotiation and renegotiation where such negotiations are part of the process through which Bolivian youths become migrants. In main, this squares with the findings reported by Hashim (2004) in her study of a village in Ghana. Our evidence points towards a different conclusion. Firstly, we show that de facto negotiations were part of an intrahousehold process preceding migration in a minority of the 90 cases under scrutiny (cfr table 12). This is because initial disagreement is a prerequisite for negotiations to start. Our evidence, which is not robust in a statistical sense, is suggestive, though, of such negotiations gaining in importance with the passage of time which is suggestive of the migration of children being more strongly contested within the household; however, both in the early and more recent migration episodes, it is more common for a migration initiative to be unilateral and unopposed, in other words that the other party simply agrees to the initiative taken or the decision made. Hence, when initiated by the migrant child, parents may be consulted and their endorsement sought and received, rendering negotiations unnecessary. One important feature of the earlier episodes is that unilateral decisions often were parental, usually made by the father and left no room for discussion (cfr the "Parents dictate" column in table 12). For children in these early episodes negotiations were not part of the agenda.

Another insight worth stressing has bearings for the interpretation of migration as a cooperative household venture, which is popular among economists. As seen, the cases with negotiations often involve a period with "open" conflict that may stretch out and even pull others into the bargaining: there is, we have shown, a remarkable spatial and periodic contrast in how standoffs are resolved. In the Coastal belt, opposition to a son's expressed desire may result in high tension and in beatings but still be solved within the household and by the parties eventually reaching an agreement– we have seen how young boys stuck to their positions and strike tough bargains with either or both parents. This is consistent with the idea of migration eventually becoming a cooperative venture, since parents, once the dust has settled, often return to taking on a constructive role. But these "cooperative" ventures, like those classified under the "Parents dictate" column are one-sided – the latter against the child migrants, the former against one or both parents.

In Mandya district, in contrast, similar conflicts over schooling and other issues are often not amicably resolved and may prompt young boys to take off on their own and staying away for extensive periods before revealing their whereabouts. In these cases, cooperation is suspended, often for a considerable period of time.

Bibliography:

Basu, K and P. H. Van (1998):"The Economics of Child Labor," *American Economic Review*, 88 (3), pp. 412-27.

Basu, K. (1999): "Child Labor: Cause, Consequence and Cure, with Remarks on International Labor Standards," *Journal of Economic Literature*.

Bledsoe, C. (1994): "Children are like young bamboo trees": Potentiality and Reproduction in Sub-Saharan Africa, in Kiessling, K. L. and H. Landberg (eds.): Population, Economic Development and the Environment, *Oxford University Press*.

Breman, J (1996): Footlose Labour – Working in India's Informal Economy, *Cambridge University Press*.

Breman, J. (2007): The Poverty Regime in Village India, *Oxford University Press*, New Delhi.

Chandavarkar, R. (1994): The origins of industrial capitalism in India – Business strategies and the working classes in Bombay 1900-1940, *Cambridge University Press*.

Coldrey, B. M. (1999): "a place to which idle vagrants may be sent." – the first phase of child migration during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, *Children and Society*, 13, 32-47.

Government of Bombay (1958): A Review of Education in Bombay State, 1855-1955.

Guilmoto, C. Z. and S. I. Rajan (2002): "District Level Estimates of Fertility from India's 2001 Census," *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 16, 665-672.

Hashim, I. (2003): Child Migration: Pathological or Positive?, mimeo, Department of Geography, University of Sussex.

Hashim, I. (2004): Working with Working Children: Child Labour and the Barriers to Education in Rural Northeastern Ghana, Dphil thesis, University of Sussex.

Holmstrom, M. (1984): Industry and Inequality: The social anthropology of Indian labour, *Cambridge University Press*.

Iversen, V. (2002): "Autonomy in Child Labor Migrants," *World Development*, Vol. 30 (5), pp. 817-34.

Iversen, V. and P. S. Raghavendra (2006): "What the signboard hides: Food, caste and employability in small South-Indian eating places," *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 41(3), pp. 311-41.

Kabeer, N (1999): "Resources, agency, achievements: reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment," *Development and Change*, 30: 435-64.

Kabeer, N. (2000): "Intergenerational Contracts, Demographic Transitions and the "Quantity-Quality Tradeoff: Parents, Children and Investing in the Future," *Journal of International Development*, 12: 463-82.

Kanbargi, R. (1988): Child Labour in India: Carpet Weaving in Benares, in Bequele, A. and J. Boyden (eds.): Combating Child Labour, ILO, Geneva.

Kielland, A and I. Sanogo (2002): Burkina Faso: Child Labor Migration from Rural Areas, World Bank, Washington DC.

Lobo, N (2004): Migration and Migrants, *Mohit Publications*, New Delhi.

Nair, J. (2005): The Promise of the Metropolis – Bangalore's 20th Century, *Oxford University Press,* New Delhi.

Nieuwenhuys, O. (1994): Children's Lifeworlds: Gender, Welfare and Labour in the Developing World, *Routledge*, London.

Nieuwenhuys, O. (1995): "The domestic economy and the exploitation of children's work: the case of Kerala," The International Journal of Children's Rights, 3, 213-225.

Osella, F and C. Osella (2000): Social Mobility in Kerala – Modernity and Identity in Conflict, *Pluto Press.*

Pages, C. and T. Roy (2006): Regulation, Enforcement and Adjudication in Indian Labor Markets: Historical Perspective, Recent Change and a Way Forward, in "*India: Meeting the Employment Challenge: Conference on Labour and Employment Issues in India*", Conference Papers, Institute for Human Development, New Delhi.

Punch, S. (2002): "Youth transitions and interdependent adult-child relations in rural Bolivia," *Journal of Rural Studies*, 18, 123-133.

Serra, R (1996): An Economic Analysis of Child Fostering in West Africa, Phd dissertation, Faculty of Economics and Politics, University of Cambridge.

Sherington, G. and C. Jeffery (1998): Empire and Child Migration, *Woburn Press*, London.

Smith, J. P. and D. Thomas (forthcoming): Remembrances of Things Past: Test-Retest Reliability of Retrospective Migration Histories, *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series A.*.

Somshekar, Vemagal (2005): Hotel sector (Udayama), in L. S. Shesagiri Rao (ed): Bangaluru Darshana, vol 1, pp. 246-60. Bangalore: Udaya Bhanu Kalasangha.

Srinivas, M. N. (1976): The Remembered Village, *Oxford University Press*, New Delhi.

Stark, O. (1991): The Migration of Labor, *Basil Blackwell,* Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Thimmiah, G. (1993): Power, Politics and Social Justice: Backward Castes in Karnataka, *Sage Publications.*

Toft Madsen, S (1991): Udupi Hotels: A Case of Ethnicity Based Non-Virulent Development, Paper Presented at the First Nordic Conference on South-Asian Studies, Denmark.

van Wersch, H (1992): The Bombay Textile Strike 1982-83, *Oxford University Press.*

Whitehead, A. and I. Hashim (2005): Children and Migration, Background Report for Dfid Migration Team.

Whitehead, A., I. Hashim and V. Iversen (2007): Child Migration, Child Agency and Intergenerational Relations in Africa and South-Asia, Working Paper T 24, Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, University of Sussex.

Winters, de Janvry, A. and Sadoulet, E. (2001): "Family and Community Networks in Mexico-US Migration," *Journal of Human Resources,* 36(1).

Young, L. (2004): "Journeys to the Street: the complex migration geographies of Ugandan street children, *Geoforum*, 35, pp. 471-488.

Zachariah, K. C (1964): Historical Study of Internal Migration in the Indian Sub-Continent 1901-31, Asia Publishing House, Bombay.

Zachariah, K. C. (1968): Migrants in Greater Bombay, Asia Publishing House, Bombay.

Census publications:

Primary Census Abstracts (or their equivalents): 1931, 1941, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001.

For Dakshin Kannada District upto 1991 and Udupi District, post 1991.