Paying Guests: Between Kinship and Capital

An ethnography of boarding house residents in urban South India

Gillian V L Bowan

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Department of Anthropology

Macquarie University

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Abstract

Single women are migrating to Indian cities in increasing numbers, seeking employment and higher education. This thesis investigates the lives of these migrants through an ethnographic study of Bangalore's paying guest hostels.

The boarding house, or PG, is a key site from which to interpret the shifting positions that women occupy as they move between natal families, workplaces, public transport and spaces for recreation and consumption. It also afforded the ethnographer uniquely close access to a group of young women from different regions of India, diverse language groups and religious identities, all living away from the care and custodianship.

The thesis foregrounds an analytic focus on class, but it is not a political economy of work. Drawing on the Sanskrit concept of *seva* or selfless service, the thesis explores the spatial-temporal orientations of migrant working-women's existence, whose labour in Bangalore is rewarded with an enhanced status in their natal homes and in familial support to secure advantageous, if delayed, marriages. A unique feature of this thesis is the connection it establishes between upward social mobility, and longer collective caste histories of social reform involving missionaries, caste associations and the state.

In order to highlight the nature of the temporal orientations which form the implicit background to the labour of working daughters, the thesis also highlights examples of what happens when these projects collapse or are suspended. The thesis concludes with an account of the aestheticising practices of city elites who treat the

urban environment as a space to be preserved from the environmental impact of large-scale migration.

Statement of Candidate

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled ‘Paying Guests: Between Kinship and Capital: an ethnography of boarding house residents in Urban South India’ has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that this thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance I have received in my research work and the preparation of this thesis have been appropriately acknowledged.

In addition, I certify the Macquarie University Human Ethics Committee approved this research project [reference number 5201100749 on 17/10/2011].

Signed

Gillian V L Bowan

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***

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Finally, I thank the women who shared their lives and stories with me when we lived together as paying guests. As one of them, who I am unable to name, told me one day as she helped another resident with a college assignment, ‘whatever we know, we should share’ and I cannot think of a more elegant summation of the kindness and friendship I was fortunate to find in the field.

This thesis is dedicated to them all.

A Note on Terminology

In Indian English, *paying guest* refers both to a resident and to the place where they reside. The full form of the style of residence is a ‘paying guest accommodation or accommodations’ and the most common abbreviated form is ‘PG’. I provide examples of advertisements of these places in Chapter Four so that the reader may glean a sense of the diversity of usage. Residents referred to one another as ‘hostel-mates’, ‘roommates’ and, if they were in college together, as ‘batch-mates’.

Somewhat confusingly, places that are called paying guests are only loosely distinguished from other places called working women’s hostels or just hostels. Many women in the study referred to the place where we lived as both a PG and a hostel and sometimes even as a paying guest hostel. Although residents tended to use the terminology ‘PG’ and ‘hostel’ interchangeably, most of the advertisements tended to be for ‘paying guests’ even in circumstances where the level of accommodation offered was closer to that of a hostel. This suggests that ‘paying guest’ was a much more appealing and perhaps a more prestigious label.

When asked if there was a difference between a PG and a hostel, most women and property owners would reply that a paying guest (here understood as the person) lived with a resident family, renting a room in their home. In contrast, hostels were managed by a warden, often with the assistance of domestic staff. The accommodation offered by a hostel was perceived to be less homely, more rule-bound but also more affordable. With PGs, by contrast, perceived as offering a more comfortable room and likely more space and privacy, but at greater expense.

The distinction seemed to hold with most people but was not exact or uniformly adhered to, either in terminology or practice. For example, the PG were I lived so as to conduct this research did not have a resident family *or* a warden, but was managed instead by two domestic workers, who happened to be sisters. Following the etiquette set by other residents, I have called these two women the *Akkas* or elder sisters in Kannada and Tamil. Within the thesis, I have treated a place as a PG if it was called a PG by residents or advertised as one by the property owners even if the accommodation was more like a hostel. I have distinguished hostels from PGs by looking at their proximity and relationship to other institutions. Most designated hostels were attached to schools, colleges or religious institutions. Co-operatives or larger associational bodies often ran these places whereas PGs were more likely to be residential housing and privately owned.

In most instances I have used the acronym PG to denote the place and the term ‘paying guest’ to refer to the person who lives there. At times, I have also used the term ‘boarding house’ so as to distinguish the place from the people who resided there.

Figure 1 Advertisements for Paying Guest Accommodations also known as PGs

Introduction

The door opened and Jaanvi[1] smiled. We had been neighbours for several months, living in adjacent PGs. But only after an introduction from Deepa, the owner of her PG and an unofficial broker for mine, had she agreed to an interview. Her combination of *churidars* and hospital uniform had stirred my curiosity. In turn, my presence, the first foreigner to move into a PG in the small lane had piqued hers. She led me up the stairs of her small PG and together we entered the bedroom she shared with three other young women. Sitting on her small cot, her desk strewn with anatomy textbooks, plastic containers and utensils, she laughed shyly when I asked for the full form of her name. 'I am Doctor Jaanvi Sali' she replied. She was still coming to terms with introducing herself as a doctor. She was in the final stages of her training as a medical intern at the nearby oncology hospital where she had been working for the last eleven months. Jaanvi was completing specialist training in pathology. After gaining entry to a private medical college in Mumbai she had studied there for five years. She elected to complete her internship in Bangalore because it was closer to her home, in Maharashtra, rather than the northern city of Chandigarh. She had also considered working in Chennai, but lacking the ability to converse in Tamil she anticipated a struggle communicating with patients and superiors. She also perceived a social barrier between herself as a Maharashtrian in relation to Tamils. Bangalore, she felt, was a more cosmopolitan city, where students and professionals from all over India would be made to feel welcome. Perhaps her most important consideration was that the Bangalore internship was in an oncology hospital and this was her first preference in medical specialisation.

[1] All names in this thesis are pseudonyms with the exception of those used in Chapter Five. As Chapter Five describes a public project and the research was conducted with the permission of relevant organisations and individuals, I have used real names in that chapter.

As we talked, she described her home life, growing up in a joint family until the death of her paternal grandfather and the marriage of a paternal uncle. At that point, the families split up, unable to cope with the prospect of yet another family moving into their crowded one-bedroom apartment. Jaanvi emphasised the fact that it was a housing problem that caused their separation, and not discord between her father and his two younger brothers.

Her father was a businessman who ran a shop and her mother was a housewife. Becoming a doctor, she told me, had always been a personal ambition as well as representing her mother's aspirations for her only daughter. Her experiences of moving to Bangalore on her own were positive. 'God', she told me, 'has always given me a very good life.' She was happy with her roommates and had found supportive mentors at the hospital. She was less than pleased, though, with the accommodation offered to her as a medical intern – the employee hostel provided by the hospital was cramped and unclean.

Rejecting her father's suggestion that if she was unhappy with her accommodation she should come home to Mumbai, Jaanvi moved into a PG. Although concerned about the large initial deposit and the prospect of living with women of unknown family backgrounds, she persevered. I complimented her on the self-possession that had brought her to Bangalore alone. Jaanvi's response was revealing. Mingled with the desire for professional training was a desire to build a new a relationship with her home and her parents. She replied:

> Before, I was very emotionally dependent on my parents. So somewhere, I wanted to find myself. I wanted to see if I could manage alone. Coming here, has been a very good experience for me. To find some new posture in myself: to stand in situations which I feel are difficult but I'm able to handle them. Parents will be there always but I have to be strong enough to face things first. I wanted to study post-graduate at any cost and my parents were so good. They are not of that sort 'Ok *bas*, enough studies, now get married'. Why are we studying so much? Not to sit at home.

> My parents trusted me to do this. The trust they have in me is more than I could trust myself, so I feel I should not be hurting them in any way. I should be doing this job.

***

Allovi was also Jaanvi's neighbour but the two did not know each other. Allovi lived on the first floor of my PG. She migrated to Bangalore from Delhi, but her family lived in Itanagar, the capital city of the state of Arunachal Pradesh, located in the North-East of India where her father was a prominent party leader for the Congress. Her family belonged to a powerful clan within the Nyishi community. Allovi's father had two wives. His marriage to her mother had been in violation of proscriptions on clan endogamy so in order to regain respectability, he had conducted a subsequent marriage to another woman. Allovi was the eldest child of both branches of the family and had many siblings. The family's wealth and prestige was reflected in Allovi's expensive, Western style clothing, personal computer and her attendance at a private law college located close to our boarding house. Before moving to Bangalore she had attended an elite co-educational boarding school in Delhi.

As an interstate student she was required to pay a much larger admission fee than students who had been admitted to this college from Karnataka. Although a member of a scheduled tribe, Allovi had not sought to access reservations or reduced college fees. Her father sent a regular allowance that she used to pay board and for shopping, and to travel around with friends. She was interested in fashion and wanted to study fashion design in the UK, but the family had insisted that she complete a qualification in law. She described this as 'her father's dream'.

The paying guest accommodation was a far cry from the comforts of home but like many young men and women from well-off, English speaking families, Allovi had been sent to Bangalore for her education and was expected to adjust to this new challenge. As

she explained, the North-Eastern states lack the same infrastructure as metropolitan India and colleges and schools are of lesser quality. She could have studied in Delhi but her parents felt that safety was a concern. Although Bangalore is further away, they felt she would be safer there.

Allovi's slender figure, long straight hair and almond eyes identified her as a North-Eastern migrant. Like other women from the North East, she was frequently targeted and harassed by groups of young men. Taunts of '*Chinki!*' and '*China!*' were a constant reminder of the marginal position of the North-Eastern states in relation to the rest of India and her vulnerability as a migrant living away from her family.

When Allovi first moved to Bangalore her parents arranged a small apartment for her but a group of young men memorised her college timetable and often waited for her to leave the house each day before following her to college. With her parents too far away to intervene on her behalf, and with no relatives nearby, they insisted that she move to paying guest accommodation with a security guard.

Despite these daunting early problems, Allovi enjoyed living in Bangalore. She was close to many of the other college students in our PG and others who were resident in the other accommodations in the lane. She enjoyed the social opportunities and the chance to spend time with her boyfriend who was also from Arunachal Pradesh and studying management in Bangalore. Both families knew about their relationship and Allovi's mother had played a part in encouraging if not explicitly arranging the match. While initially uninterested in law, she had come to the conclusion that a law degree would help her later in life. However, like many student migrants she faced resentment from the local population and felt that she was discriminated against in college. 'Everywhere you go, Indian people are friends with each other but not with North East people […] Even the teachers will say, "They only come for enjoyment, not for studies." '

***

For our PG-mate Tamana, Bangalore was an escape. She migrated to Bangalore from her family home in Salem, Tamil Nadu. Her mother was a housewife who suffered from a serious illness, while her father worked as a real estate broker but struggled to maintain regular employment. At home Tamana resented her lack of freedom. She described having to beg her father and elder brother for days to be allowed to go to the cinema with her friends – and often to no avail.

In the 1970s, one branch of Tamana's maternal relatives migrated to Bangalore. An enterprising aunt, widowed and left without financial support, resettled in the city with her children. She supported the family by setting up an *idli* stall for migrant labourers and sought assistance from the US charity, Christian Children's Fund to keep her children fed and in school. Her daughters Priya and Aarti had put down roots in the city and in 2012, both were employed as domestic workers in our PG. Although they were not officially designated as wardens, both exercised some warden responsibilities, as well as cooking, cleaning and supervising the young female residents. Tamana was their mother's sister's daughter. Her parents allowed her to move to Bangalore to look for work as she was able to live under the supervision of her elder family members. Tamana wore her relationship to them with a degree of discomfort and resignation. She emphasised her differences from them through her appearance, which was self-consciously 'Western' and included jeans, sleeveless *kurtis* and t-shirts, her ability to speak English and her status as a college graduate employed in a multinational firm.

Although she struggled with English, a fact she disguised with an aloof and occasionally intimidating manner, Tamana had completed a Bachelors of Computer Applications at a private college in Salem. As one of the few women, in this research project who had not attended an English medium primary or high school, initially, she

struggled to speak and to be understood. However by the completion of her degree, at a private, English medium college she was confident enough to move to Bangalore and look for a job.

She found a position working night-shifts in one of the large business process outsourcing firms (or BPOs) for which Bangalore has become a national and global symbol of India's economic progress. At work, her primary duty was data entry and taking in-bound calls. Over the past three years she had worked for insurance companies, a major supplier of hardware and printers and in her current role, provided data entry and administrative services for several US-based banks. She told me one afternoon as we sat together in the converted garage that now served as a TV area within the boarding house:

> In the beginning I joined as an associate in a call centre. Later on I moved to some other company. And again, my mother got sick, and because my sisters are married there was no-one to take care of her so I went back to Salem. I was there for a year, and worked at a local bank, then my brother got married and my sister-in-law came to our house, so again I came back here and now I'm working for another BPO.

When she first arrived in Bangalore, she boarded in yet another relative's home. But the family expected her to behave like other women in the household, performing strenuous domestic chores. This soon became unbearable as she was also working night shifts. Yet when she was called back to Salem to nurse her mother, she returned as soon as possible, preferring life in the city. This was despite the repetitive office job and shift work. She told me, 'I like this life. Nobody will ask me, nobody will restrict me. If I'm at home they'll say something and interfere so much. Here it's not like that; when I want, I can do it and if I want to go out I can.'

***

What do these three women have in common? All tell us something about the possibilities, challenges and benefits of female migration to cities in India. Yet even

though they lived in the same building or were neighbours, their experiences are diverse, reflecting the diversity of their backgrounds and migration histories.

One thing their stories share is a growing emphasis on post-secondary education in scientific and professional fields for women. Many of the women I met during my fieldwork were the first in their families to complete tertiary education and to find employment in the so called 'knowledge economy' (Nisbett 2009, Dahlman and Utz 2005). Others were following similar professional trajectories to their educated parents. The growing interest in disciplines such as computer science and engineering, alongside more established professions like medicine and law has emerged with an increasing number of jobs in the multiple fields of business process outsourcing (BPO). In addition to it being a prime location to secure such work, Bangalore is also a centre of education in India where students from all over the country compete for places in highly ranked colleges. The three women described thus far migrated to Bangalore, India's premier IT metropolis where they live as paying guests in houses owned or rented by long-term city residents. The lives they craft as a single women living in a booming Indian metropolis under conditions of increased freedoms and new challenges make up the core of this thesis.

In this thesis I will argue that migrant women, like those I have described, are positioned between competing frameworks of value. The labour they perform, whether it is studying for degrees or working predominantly in the services industry or as junior professionals, aligns them with the values, practices, constraints and opportunities offered by neoliberal capitalism in an Indian metropolis. By becoming workers, these women contribute to India's economic transformation and become beneficiaries of the country's economic growth and prosperity. They also contribute to the perception that India's economic transformation has enabled new forms of autonomy and opportunity for women.

In an article about the work and family lives of female software programmers in Bangalore and the US, Radhakrishnan (2008, 11) has argued that:

> as growing numbers of women have entered the IT industry … media representations of India's booming IT industry have often carried a woman's face, suggesting that the tech revolution in India has signalled a gender revolution as well.

Even as these women come to represent economic progress and even the gendered modernity of the nation, the reality is of course much more complicated than such descriptions allow for.

The women with whom I lived as a paying guest were a diverse group. For some, their shared address was all that they held in common. But what emerged over the months we lived together most strongly was that the lives of this admittedly small number of working women and college students were poised between a series of temporal orientations defined by what they presume will be their life-course. Falling between the ages of eighteen and thirty, all were old enough to legally marry, but as unmarried women they remained members of their natal families. Yet as migrants, they resided with their families only when there was a break in their work or college schedules. Some women whose families lived close to Bangalore were able to return home each weekend; others whose parents and siblings lived in North India or the North-Eastern states were able to return just a few times per year.

All of the women looked back fondly to their families left behind, but they also looked forward to their anticipated marriages. Some were working to contribute towards the costs of their wedding and dowry, while others were studying in preparation for their lives as educated mothers. A very small number of women hoped to combine paid work with raising a family but most were unsure of whether they would continue to work after marriage. Their lives as paying guests were therefore experienced as a lived time oriented

towards a future horizon in which the social relationships they built and the spaces they inhabited were thought of as temporary. The women in this study, representative as they are of thousands of other young women, were positioned between the demands and rewards of kinship and the structures and opportunities of work, education, evolving forms of cultural capital, urban living and socio-economic change. I knew these women best through our shared experiences of life as paying guests, but one of the main arguments I wish to make in this thesis is that their residence as paying guests was a relatively minor aspect of their lives and concerns. These were more often were directed towards futural projects, like further study or marriage or the needs of the families located elsewhere. The PG as a place where migrant women could find safe and cost effective accommodation on their own *enabled* these other more materially significant and affectively driven projects. And indeed, enabled my own research.

In addition to documenting the experiences of a select number of migrant women who lived as paying guests, their lives are placed in relationship to older and longer-term residents with whom I interacted as part of an urban renewal project. The work of heritage conservation, public art and social activism that I will document was pursued by longer-term residents of the city of Bangalore who, unlike the paying guests, possessed a more interventionist perspective towards the city. Their attempts to inscribe the past on the face of a changing metropolis, so that its history can be read and understood by new migrants was also an attempt to claw back an historic neighbourhood from the juggernaut of change.

I commence with a review of the key themes of this thesis, as they stand in relation to the wider arguments, debates and literature. These debates have illuminated my own analysis of the urban processes transforming Bangalore and the lives of its inhabitants.

The Indian Middle Class

Throughout this thesis, I will describe residents of the paying guest as ‘middle class’. I use the same label to describe boarding house owners and in the final chapter, I describe the civic activist project as a form of middle-class assertion and a dialogue between members of the middle class and the state. But the ethnographic evidence I will present indicates that although these diverse groups may be defined as middle class and will describe themselves as such if asked, they are not middle class in the same ways, or with the same degree of confidence or assertion. In analysing the lives of young women I draw upon the work of scholars who, following Bourdieu (2008, 1984), traced the direct correlation between embodied states of confidence and assertion the historical absorption of a class habitus (Jeffrey 2010, Harriss 2009, Fernandes 2006, Bourgois 2002, Jeffrey, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2008, Brosius 2010). The young women whose lives I document in Chapters One, Two and Four are for the most part, members of families who are relative newcomers to the Indian middle class. While those I will describe in Chapters Three and Five are members of families with a more established claim to middle-class status.

As such this research situates itself as part of a wider literature on was been described in the South Asian context as the ‘lower middle class’, the ‘newly middle class’ or the ‘regional middle class’ (Nisbett 2009, Donner 2011, Jeffrey 2010, Uberoi 2006a, Lukose 2009, Mankekar 1993). These groups do not form a single category. Rather, that they are distinct from the older, more established and wealthier fractions of the urban Indian middle class. Members of these ‘other’ or ‘emerging’ middle classes are defined by a struggle to belong, both materially and socially, to the class which is presumed to benefit most from the liberalisation of India’s economy (see Lukose 2009, Fernandes 2006, Dickey 2012).

There is some overlap between the women in this study and the group Fernandes has called the ‘new’ middle class. For Fernandes, membership to the new middle class is

defined by employment in industries that have been established by economic liberalisation (Fernandes 2006, xviii). Some of the women described in this thesis worked in industries that are associated with economic liberalisation, like BPO, while others were working to establish themselves as medical doctors, solicitors and accountants. However, as service sector workers and students they were excluded from the spheres of luxury consumerism, lifestyle movements and new spirituality that both Fernandes and Brosius (2010) argued distinguish the new middle class from those who may work in middle-class occupations but lack social and economic capital. Although they are middle class, they are denied entry to what Harriss has called the 'elite fraction' (Harriss 2009, 110).

Instead, the women's lives that I will describe share many features with the communities studied by Lukose (2009) and Jeffrey (2010) within India and by Liechty in Nepal (2003). For them, the experience of being, becoming or of trying to be middle class often results in a existential predicament marked by marginality, exclusion and peripheralisation. These narratives of exclusion should neither be wholly taken at face value, nor dismissed. Rather, I suggest that we interpret these paying guests' explanations and perceptions of being peripheral or excluded as themselves indicative of an at least partially successful performance of middle-class status. This emerges with particular salience when the experiences of these migrant women are compared with those of the urban working class or of the poor who live in their hometowns and villages. It was precisely against these others that the women in this study worked to distinguish themselves through acquiring education and working (Dickey 2012, 572, 577, 587, Vijayakumar 2013, 784).

For the relatively privileged women in this study, gaining entry to the middle class entails a narrative of overcoming barriers. So when Judith, one of the key informants in this study, told me that 'the middle class struggle a lot', or when other women complained

that the boarding house was dirty and unpleasant, their remarks are best interpreted as evidence both of this struggle and of this narrative.

Much ethnographic research on the lower middle class in parts of South Asia has foregrounded the experiences of young men (Nisbett 2009, Osella and Osella 2002, Jeffrey 2010) while ethnographic research on women has looked at either highly skilled professionals (Radhakrishnan 2008, Maira 2002, Raghuram 2006) or, even more regularly, at the poorest of the poor (Agrawal 2006a, Adhikari 2006, Arya and Roy 2006, see also discussion on page 24). As Nisbett's work reveals, a gendered existential dimension of class-based marginality is borne by young men who struggle to find employment, make repayments on their multiple consumer loans and impress eligible young women (Nisbett 2009). Similarly, Jeffrey's work describes the emergent political potential and conviviality that develops between young men when they are unable to secure work and thus to marry (Jeffrey 2010). My research adds an additional (rather than an alternative) perspective to this literature through a sustained focus on the experiences of predominately middle-class and lower middle-class, English speaking, young women.

***

Do kinship and capital complement or contradict each other in the lives of three women with whom I opened this chapter? In this thesis I argue that the attitude of 'adjustment' that women are encouraged to adopt from a young age in preparation for their roles as wives and mothers is an unintended but nevertheless advantageous preparation for their lives as migrants and workers. Like Vijayakumar (2013), I discovered that women developed a disposition towards adjustment as they mediated between the demands of their kin and of participation in the workforce that was itself viewed as form of service or *seva* to their families. In this mediation, a South Indian metropolis becomes the stage on which lower middle class women, and their wealthier and more privileged roommates act out

collective, familial and individual dreams for social mobility. Like Allovi, some of the women were following trajectories laid out by their parents who had invested in their education from a young age, sending them to elite boarding schools and contributing towards expensive college degrees. Others were more like Tamana, their families lacked cultural capital and struggled financially. Some women had to push harder against parental expectations and family commitments to migrate at all, others were openly encouraged to do so.

Middle-Class Castes[2]

The women in this study were not only classed subjects but also members of castes. Two lines of argument emerge from the ongoing debates about what might be described as a 'caste base' for the Indian middle class that are relevant to this research. The first, which has been put forward by Deshpande (2013) and Fernandes (2006), suggests that although it may be unacknowledged, membership of the urban Indian middle class remains disproportionately restricted to Indians who belong to the forward and relatively higher-ranked castes. Fernandes has argued that, 'Caste has continued to provide segments of the middle class with an important source of capital, which has shaped the upper-class character of the … new liberalising middle class' (Fernandes 2006, xxxiii). Though I am hesitant to generalise, in the main, those women who revealed their caste status were mostly of lower or backward castes. None of the women with whom I worked were members of scheduled castes and only one was a member of a Brahmin caste.

Although neither Deshpande nor Fernandes implies a causal relation between forward caste status and middle class identity, both suggest that the high correlation between socio-economic membership of the middle class and membership of forward or higher ranked castes has remained relatively stable over time despite reservation policies. Deshpande

[2] I take the phrase 'middle class castes' from Narasimhan and Fuller (2014).

argued that the reason for the enduring upper-caste status of the Indian middle class is precisely the fact that members of this group have been afforded the privilege of treating caste as voluntary, unlike lower and scheduled caste Indians who have never enjoyed the privilege of disassociating themselves from caste as a category, the stigma of which endures even after religious conversion. Deshpande argued that the invisibility of caste for the 'general category' underwrites these privileges and should be investigated:

> If one meaning of the annihilation [of caste as suggested by Ambedkar] must be to render caste irrelevant as a determinant of life chances, then it is necessary to understand not only how a particular caste habitus might block or limit these chances, *but also how another such habitus might enlarge or amplify* life chances [emphasis added] (Deshpande 2013, 39).

Both Deshpande and Fernandes suggest that members of scheduled castes continue to face obstacles to joining the respectable middle class, whether this be the result of ongoing yet silent caste-based discrimination or of sedimented histories of socio-economic and educational privilege (Fernandes 2006, xxxi, xxxiii)[3].

Fuller and Narasimham suggest an alternative view, which is also relevant to the arguments presented in this thesis. These authors agree that there exists a strong correlation between forward caste status and membership of the middle class, going as far as to argue that for their informants – Tamil-speaking Brahmins – caste and middle-class status have become indistinguishable. They argued,

[3] Quality investigative journalism continues to provide evidence of ongoing caste-based discrimination that takes particularly aggressive forms where members of scheduled castes seek social mobility through education. In 2012, there was a particularly distressing incident in which children admitted to a private English medium school under RTE (Right to Education) had their hair cut by teachers to identify them as low caste and admitted under the quota system (Bangalore Bureau 2012). Jeffrey et al. (2008, 59-60) provide evidence of similar instances where *dalit* children have been openly discriminated against in schools. They may be forced to eat in a separate area or singled out unfairly by teachers or other students. The ongoing conflict over the suicides of low caste medical students at AIIMS is a further illustration of the challenges these students face and a degree of indifference or indeed open hostility to supporting them (Jeelani 2012).

> Tamil Brahmins have become a middle-class caste. Critical in this development is their systematic tendency to equate traditional Brahman and modern middle class values, as if they were one and the same … *middle class values are regarded by Brahmins as paradigmatically their own*, so that the Tamil Brahmin middle class – especially the upper-middle class – is so to speak, a natural dyadic unit [emphasis added] (Fuller and Narasimhan 2014, 17).

However, the authors treat this tendency amongst their informants as a gloss over a much more complex reality that is only appropriate to the upper crust. In much the same way that most Tamil speaking Brahmins have never functioned in their caste occupation as priests, (Fuller and Narasimhan 2014, 6), Fuller and Narasimhan suggested that the perception that Brahmins dominate both the Indian middle class and the field of information technology is more a myth or 'factoid' than a social fact that can be confirmed using data[4]. Nisbett has also drawn attention to the perception amongst his informants that Brahmins dominate the middle class and the IT industry in Bangalore as well as elsewhere in India. However he has also suggested that differences in income and access to IT jobs were more a source of competition, anxiety and resentment than discrimination or exclusion arising from caste status within the all-male friendship group he studied (Nisbett 2009, 44-5, 86-87)[5].

For this thesis, what is most significant about the arguments that these authors put forward is what such a perception may mean for women such as those with whom I lived. They were neither urbanites, nor members of the forward castes. If we agree that there at least exists a strong perception that Brahmin, or more broadly, forward caste membership 'naturally' connotes middle-class status, can we then assume that exclusion from one

[4] Like Dirks (2001), they noted that the self-reporting of caste has been excluded from the Indian census since the 1930s, so it is notoriously difficult to quantify or evaluate the exact correlation between caste status and social class, which in any case is also self-reported and determined relationally rather than according to objective and universally agreed upon criteria.

[5] For a critique that suggests the ongoing significance of caste within peer groups, in contrast to Nisbett's position see Fernandes (2013).

category, necessitates exclusion from the other? I assert that the women I knew contested this vision of a natural fit between middle-class values and membership of the forward castes by emphasising their own achievements in the field of education, thrift and moral personhood. These women used their education as a means to 'prove' that they too possessed the skills, knowledge and capacities to function in professional roles even though their parents never had the opportunity to do the same. As I will argue in Chapters One and Two, these women did not view caste as an insurmountable barrier, but rather as a form of advantage that they lacked. Histories of social reform and resistance to caste-based discrimination have provided discourses and ideologies that equip subjects to resist exclusion and promote collective social mobility for members of these castes. However, I soon found that the same ideologies were not extended to *dalits* or the urban poor who Dickey has argued, carry the burden of representing all that the middle class must work, struggle and sacrifice to resist becoming (Dickey 2012, 591)[6].

While the necessity of a natural fit between being forward caste and becoming middle class is certainly contested both by informants in this study and by scholars of class, (Nisbett 2009, Agarwala and Herring 2009), the primacy of urban environments as the natural location of the middle class is uncontested. Cities provide subjects belonging to the aspiring middle class with white collar and professional employment and cities provide unparalleled opportunities for consumption. This research is centrally concerned with Bangalore, a city vying for the recognition accorded to a global or world city.

The 'Global City'

Early research on the Indian middle class focused on large cities. This reflected the employment patterns and lifestyles that came to be associated with the middle class.

[6] Davidoff and Hall (1988) have also made this argument with regard to the establishment British middle-class culture in the early stages of the industrial revolution.

Fernandes suggested that the historical antecedents of the contemporary Indian middle class began as a colonial bourgeoisie that developed after Independence into a series of occupational groups who found white collar employment in cities (Fernandes 2006, 4, Jaffrelot and van der Veer 2008, 15-6). The post-independence middle class played important roles in India's modernisation, and cities were central to the newly modern India they laboured to build along with factories and dams (Srivastava 2014, 102-3). The offices of multinational corporations that provide employment to diverse fractions of the contemporary middle class are more likely to be located either in cities or on their growing peripheries (such as the Electronic City in Bangalore). For these reasons, ethnographic research on the middle class, particularly those authors who have engaged with its elite fractions have also engaged with the paradigms of world and global cities and the role of the middle class within these models (Rao 2011, Brosius 2010, Fernandes 2006).

Drawing on Sassen's (2001) original formulation of the global city (based on a comparative study of London, New York and Tokyo) several relevant points emerge concerning the role of the middle class and urban locations. According to Sassen's model, cities must meet two criteria to be designated global; firstly, they must be centres of financial trade and host to large banks and non-bank financial institutions. Secondly, cities must draw firms that provide services to financial institutions. A secondary effect of the first two criteria is the growth of low-waged employment that provides services to the highly paid employees in the above sectors. A further effect is the gentrification of inner-city neighbourhoods. Although to my knowledge no explicit comparison between the two cities has yet been attempted, there are clear parallels between the arguments made by

Fernandes based on her research in Mumbai, and those posed by Sassen for New York, London and Tokyo[7].

Both authors draw attention to the growing economic power of private sector employees in the producer services or FIRE[8] sectors, suggesting that these young professionals, with their comparatively large salaries, are reshaping the public face of cities as they take up residence in previously poor, inner city neighbourhoods, consume luxury goods and work hours that encourage many to take on household staff. Fernandes and Sassen both noted that comparatively large salaries *and* a marked precariousness with regard to ongoing employment are distinctive features of this emerging global elite. Unlike their predecessors, members of the new middle class increasingly look to the market and the private sector. In the Indian context, it is precisely these factors that come to distinguish the 'new' middle class from its state-led predecessor (Fernandes 2006, 3, Gupta 2012, 22-3, 29-30). Fernandes draws attention to a decisive shift from a middle class who supported state-led economic development, particularly focused on rural areas and the construction of large infrastructure projects, to a middle class marked by urban locations who look to private sector enterprise and the global market for services and commodities to generate economic growth as create jobs (Fernandes 2006, xv).

The majority of migrant women whose stories are explored in this thesis migrated to Bangalore from cities classified as Tier II or Y or Z by the Government of India[9]. The migration pattern described in this thesis is thus one from large town, cum small-city to a

[7] Although her argument is not explicitly about class or employment, Desai (2004, 208-9) has pointed to the depiction of Mumbai a global city in a series of low budget and independently produced South Asian films designed to appeal to the newly cosmopolitan classes in India and the South Asian diaspora.

[8] FIRE is a common acronym that stands for finance, insurance and real estate (see Sassen 2001, 90-126).

[9] Tier II cities are those with a population between 50,000 and 99,000.

teeming metropolis. The women in this study all had prior experience of urban ways of life before they migrated to Bangalore, but on a smaller scale than the city they currently resided in. Indeed, ethnographic material I will present suggests the practices of distinction that women drew on to differentiate themselves from those they described as 'villagers' in 'backward places' (see chapter Four ;Vijayakumar 2013, 784).

By emphasising the links between women residing in Bangalore and exploring the journeys they make back to their families, the research adds to the growing body of literature on what Upadhya and Rutten have called 'provincial globalisation' (2012)[10]. Although Upadhya et al. (2012) and contributors to Subaltern Urbanisation Project provide evidence that smaller cities in India are undergoing transformation of their economies, the migrant women in this study sought employment that was not readily available in their hometowns. The growth of producer services firms that service IT companies are particularly significant if one is to understand why so many young people migrate to Bangalore.

The 'Bangalore Challenge'

Although the idea of Bangalore as a global city is frequently voiced by business leaders and ordinary middle-class people when they describe the city's growth, Bangalore can only be included in Sassen's model with a caveat. The city has never been a centre of financial trade and has no stock exchange. But the city conforms to Sassen's model in that it is a global centre of 'producer services' providing back-office support to business and

[10] The Provincial Globalisation Project [ProGlo] currently underway, investigates migrant remittances and philanthropy, the experiences of youth including interstate and international students and relationships established between regional diasporas and three sending communities in India (see www.proglo.org). The Subaltern Urbanisation Project is a further example of the growing interest in processes that drive urbanisation of small towns. In contrast to ProGlo, this project looks specifically at the problematic of urbanisation that is not dependent on processes traditionally associated with rural to urban migration (see http://suburbin.hypotheses.org/888).

governments all over the world (Sassen 2001). Further, salaries available in the IT sector are substantially higher than in other sectors in the city and this promotes the kinds of growth in elite restaurants, a thriving local art scene and opportunities for luxury consumption that Sassen identified as indicators of global city status. In a revised edition to *The Global City* (2001) she argued that so called 'tech cities' present a challenge to her model based solely on the financial services sector: 'High-tech centres such as Silicon Valley and cultural centres like Berlin, may well be akin to global cities in their own specialized domains even though they do not have financial sectors' (Sassen 2001, 361).

Technology and services are synonymous with the domestic and global image of Bangalore now known as an IT City and as India's Silicon Valley. Bangalore is also associated with the transfer of service-based employment from Western countries to workers in Asia. Business process outsourcing or just 'outsourcing' are now so firmly attached to Bangalore that US President Barak Obama, during a speech to college students in 2010, implored US businesses to 'Say yes to Buffalo and no to Bangalore' and for North American college students to work harder to 'meet the Bangalore challenge' (PTI 2010).

Outsourcing as a labour practice is so entrenched among Bangalore's young people, that any labour practice in which a foreigner delegates tasks to an Indian subordinate can fall under this label. I discovered this while transcribing an interview conducted on my behalf by my research assistant who informed the prospective interviewee that I had 'outsourced' conducting the task to her. Although they were most certainly not the high-flying and highly paid workers described Sassen (2001, 264), some of the women with whom I worked were employed in so called 'outsourced' jobs. One managed medical insurance claims for an US based private hospital, another worked at the software and services firm Infosys (Bangalore's quintessential IT success story), Tamana, whom I described earlier, worked for a major provider of BPO services to banks holding US

mortgages. Another was a civil engineer, employed by a construction firm that, like other city firms was building residences and commercial premises for the new elite.

As with Obama's 'say no to Bangalore' message, much early research on outsourcing approached this labour regime from a North American or Eurocentric position that encodes a narrative of loss – loss of economic security and the growing precariousness of employment, loss of middle-class jobs to Asian competitors and even loss of sovereignty[11]. The 'rise of the "cyber-coolies" ' (Bidwai 2003) as they became known after an influential article published in the *New Statesman* became yet another example of declining opportunity for minimally skilled US workers, and of the end of the nationally bounded labour regime known as Fordism in which employees are also consumers in protected national markets (Harvey 1989, Sassen 2001). The shift to production for a global market rather than for a designated population of national consumers is the structural transformation that has made outsourcing more profitable than keeping service and back-office jobs 'in-house'.

Since this thesis deals centrally with the experiences and views of women who are employed in the BPO sector, it also necessarily locates itself within debates on outsourcing and broader economic change from the position of BPO employees. My research focus on housing is just one example of the challenges that young women face when they move to cities looking for employment and somewhere safe to live. This research engages with the stigma and moral policing to which young, working women are exposed (Patel 2010, Fernandes 2006, Phadke, Khan, and Ranade 2011). But the project is not a political economy of work and my engagement with ethnographic research on outsourcing in

[11] Much anti-outsourcing rhetoric in the US emerges in circumstances where a government department or some other state body retrenches local workers and their jobs are sent overseas (Sharma and Gupta 2006, 4-5). See also Fernandes (2006, 117).

general and call centres in particular makes reference to selective arguments emerging from these debates.

Firstly, given that BPO work grew out of auxiliary office services performed by secretarial staff, the tasks performed tend to be coded 'women's work'[12]. Patel suggested that as the work is associated with women and often requires the performance of emotional labour, BPO work tends to be lower paid, more precarious and of lower status than other categories of formal employment (Patel 2010, 30-1).

Secondly, following the work of Freeman (1993), I am interested in the significance of BPO employment from a gendered perspective. Freeman's research on Barbadian women employed in data processing argued that although these employees made marginal economic gains from their work and would have earned only slightly lower salaries to perform manual labour or to work in garment factories, the value of remuneration was bolstered by the prestige value of working in a 'high tech' profession, albeit at the lowest level. Although hierarchies exist between the labour intensive sectors of Bangalore's IT industry which includes BPO work, employment in call centres and low-grade software programming, and the capital intensive sectors that include research and development, start-ups and boutique firms, entry into the tech and BPO sectors affords access to relatively attractive salaries and to the prestige of joining an industry with enormous symbolic capital. As both a globalised and highly technical industry, India's success in IT has come to represent the national aspiration to global prestige and economic might. As subsequent chapters will suggest, the desirability of an IT or BPO job was not limited to the salaries that women were paid and was bolstered by the symbolic power of the IT

[12] I note an important caveat. When I suggest that BPO work is viewed as women's work, this does not mean that men do not complete auxiliary office tasks, and research from Patel (2010, 37-40) suggests that when she was completing research on the sector, recruitment favoured men.

industry as both a quintessentially Indian-cum-global symbol of success and a representation the aspirations and achievements of the Indian middle classes[13].

Working Women and Migration

Given its emphasis on the experiences of single female migrants, this thesis draws on the growing body of research on women, work and migration, and particularly the work that has a regional focus on South and South East Asia. A review of this diverse body of literature reveals several relevant themes. I commence with an account of the main sectors that employ migrant women. These sectors are sex work and domestic work. I then provide a brief review of other sectors that employ large numbers of migrant women – the global garment industry, and some skilled and highly skilled professions.

The over-representation of young migrant women in domestic service and sex work illustrates firstly, the relatively privileged occupational position of the women in this study and secondly the effects of gender on the occupational trajectories of all female migrants in their region. Agrawal argued that although women make up a significant proportion of international labour migrants, the occupations open to female migrants correlate to or represent an extension of domestic roles with much greater frequency than for men (Agrawal 2006a). With the exception of highly skilled professional women, of whom I will have more to say later, female migrants in and across Asia are over-represented in the occupations of domestic service and sex work – clear evidence that presumptions about appropriate productive roles are overdetermined by reproductive roles.

[13] The positive image of IT in India is the result of an interesting confluence of factors. The perception of large salaries, the status of the industry as both 'technical and scientific' and its status as an enabler of successful diasporic migration (see Radhakrishnan 2008; Khadria 2003; Nisbett 2009) combine to make IT a desirable profession for men and women. This contrasts with the status of IT in Australia where the sector is broadly considered to have 'an image problem'. As a result, in Australia, over 10% of IT employees are recruited using the skilled migration programme (Eastley 2014).

Sex Work and Domestic Service

Although sex work and domestic service may appear to be distinct socio-economic domains, ethnographic evidence provided by several authors suggests otherwise. These two forms of reproductive and household labour often shade into one another in contexts of extreme economic, racial and social inequality. As such, narratives provided by sex workers and domestic servants emphasise their capacities to provide shelter, sustenance and education for children and potentially other family members. However, enduring forms of stigma cast doubt on the methods through which women provide for themselves and others. Stories abound of migrant women who apply for work as servants and are then trafficked or otherwise coerced into sex work[14]. Even domestic servants who are not explicitly coerced into sex work are at considerable risk of sexual exploitation by their employers (Ray and Qayum 2009, 133, Arya and Roy 2006, 23, 27). Adhikari reported that the stigma attached to working as a domestic servant in the Gulf States is so extreme that many former migrant workers from Nepal are unable to return to their hometowns and instead, use their earnings to settle in new localities where their history as migrants may be plausibly denied (Adhikari 2006, 103). A further illustration of the stigma of domestic service is provided by Ray and Qayum (2009, 135) who mentioned that a particularly benevolent employer assisted her domestic servant to retrain as a beautician and then encouraged her to employ a servant of her own to proclaim that she had escaped the degraded the stigma of being a servant herself. Perhaps the most significant point has been made by Rozario who argued that even those women whose work outside the home does not involve selling sex become morally suspect simply because of their mobility (Rozario 2007, 163). That such women often face what Naifei Ding has called the ‘stigma of sex

[14] This narrative has proven particularly successful in recruiting charitable interventions by international donors (see Kristof and WuDunn 2009).

and work' (Ding 2006) is the result of their occupying an ignominious symbolic and material position at the bottom of gendered and occupational hierarchies.

Women in the Global Garment Industry

The role of women in the global garment industry has empirical and theoretical significance for arguments made in this thesis. Ong has argued that the international garment industry initially planned to recruit young men as ideal industrial workers, but with the establishment of free-trade and special economic zones across South East Asia, South Asia and South America, young women became the core workers in this industrial workforce (Ong 1991, 281). In the context of South Asia, the garment industry is particularly salient for Bangladesh (Azim 2005, 196, Rozario 2007, 154), for Bangalore (Pani and Singh 2012) and for parts of Tamil Nadu (Chari 2004).

At the empirical level, the two domestic workers who figure in this thesis as managers of the boarding house I lived in, were both employed in Bangalore's garment industry for many years before moving into their current occupation of managing the paying guests (Chapter Four). At the level of theory and analysis the ambiguous class position of call centre workers emerges more clearly when the work they perform is compared to manufacturing roles that overwhelmingly recruit women. Freeman has argued that although BPO involves mostly clerical tasks, the work environment bears closer resemblance to an industrial production line than a corporate office:

> Information-based enterprises closely model their traditional manufacturing counterparts, and what looks like clerical work (generally considered white-collar 'head' work) begins more closely to resemble low-skilled, highly rationalised assembly-line work in corporate garb (Freeman 1993, 170).

She went on to suggest that processes of de-skilling, Internet enabled communication and subcontracting are common factors that have contributed to the profitability of outsourcing as a global business practice. Although the BPO employees in her study go to

great lengths to conform to a 'professional' or white collar aesthetic, the work they perform is best interpreted as industrialised service work.

The tensions that Freeman identifies between clerical or office work as a middle class occupation and BPO as an industrialised labour regime are lived out in the ambiguous class positions of call centre employees. Although BPO workers work in offices rather than factories and use computers and telephones rather than heavy machinery, the work they perform is de-skilled and repetitive. Workers are kept under close surveillance. Unlike their white-collar counterparts, they also work in shifts, a form of time-based discipline more common to manufacturing than regularised office hours. Garment manufacturing can therefore be interpreted as a bridge between industrial labour and BPO.[15]

Nursing, the 'Care' Professions and Christian Influence

In order to conduct this research, I lived as a paying guest accommodation that was owned by a Christian family and located in a Christian residential compound. Although this was not a requirement that applicants needed to fill in order to be offered a place, several informants and two of the key informants in this study were members of Indian Christian communities. I therefore draw the readers' attention to the relationship between Christian conversion and work outside the home for some of the women included in the study. The sample size of my research is too small to extrapolate trend data, but I noted a correlation between young women whose mothers had completed some form of paid work, and Christian affiliation. Working women and many students in this study who were

[15] Fluency in English was not an important distinction for Freeman as all of the working women (in manufacturing and BPO) were fluent in English. By contrast, in Bangalore there existed a much greater gulf between the salaries available to BPO workers and those employed in garment manufacturing. Singh and Pani recorded wages between 1200–4000 INR per month for garment workers of various designations in the mid 2000s (Singh and Pani 2013, 100-4) while the BPO employees in this study earned between 12,000 to approximately 30,000 INR per month depending on their qualifications and the skills required for the job.

members of other faiths were less likely to have mothers who had worked outside the home before or after marriage but this had not impeded their efforts to study and seek employment[16].

In the South Asian context, the emigration of nurses from the state of Kerala to both the Gulf States (Percot 2006, Brody 2006) and North America (George 2005) exemplifies the predicament of women employed in a somewhat stigmatised occupation that nonetheless enables a prestigious form of international migration. Yet their social and physical mobility is enabled because of an occupational shortage in the receiving country, due in part to the declining status of the occupation there too.

Authors have noted a strong tendency for migrant nurses from South Asia to be religious minorities. Evidence collected by George (2005), Rozario (2007, 164) and Blunt (2003, 283) suggests that historically, Indian Christians and Anglo-Indians were more likely to take up employment as nurses[17], teachers and clerks than Hindu or Muslim Indian women. Two factors facilitated the entry of some Christian Indian women into paid work. The first was the more relaxed approach to the seclusion of women by their male kin

[16] One of the paying guests, Yasmin, came from an orthodox Sunni Muslim family and had nonetheless convinced her parents to allow her complete airhostess training at a private hospitality institute at considerable cost. Although some family members had objected to her chosen career path, on the basis that it was inappropriate for a Muslim woman, eventually, her parents agreed. After completing the one-year course, she was told that she was too short to become an airhostess, but when we met she was putting her hospitality training to good use working as a guest relations manager at the nearby private oncology hospital. Despite having gained familial support for a career viewed with some ambivalence by her parents, this woman was the only woman I interviewed who explicitly stated that she had no intention of working following her marriage. When I asked her why, she replied that following marriage she wanted to dedicate herself to providing comfort and care to her husband and children.

[17] Like BPO and factory workers, nurses of necessity, work in shifts. George's (2005) ethnography is suggestive of the role of shift-work in remodelling domestic relations between husbands and wives and in contributing to the ambiguous class position of nurses.

amongst Indian Christians[18]. The tendency for converts to belong to lower rather than higher ranked castes also meant that residential seclusion of young women was, in any case, less likely to be practiced by these groups prior to conversion (Ram 2009, 149).

Highly Skilled Professionals

At a further remove from the skilled and petit bourgeois employees described above are female migrants who are employed in highly skilled professional occupations. Much less research has been conducted with these migrant groups than with industrial, domestic or sex workers reflecting the much smaller global scale of this form of female labour migration and a social justice orientation to much migration research. Two themes within this portion of the literature are relevant to issues raised in this thesis. Firstly, authors have noted a continuity between the elevated social class and professional status of South Asian professional migrants and the career aspirations and successes of their children (Dhingra 2008, Maira 2002).

Research on professional migration from South Asia to North America suggests that success in education and eventual employment in fields such as management, medicine, law, engineering and other highly skilled professions is transmitted from professional and highly qualified parents to their American-born children. Through these practices, class is reproduced within the diaspora.

The South Indian professional diaspora to North America has particular significance for the city culture of Bangalore. Many Indian trained software engineers-cum-entrepreneurs and IT professionals migrate to the US for short stints and then return to India to set up lucrative ventures in the Indian market where labour and operating costs are cheaper (Radhakrishnan 2008). The tremendous global success of the e-commerce

[18] By contrast, Rozario (2007) and Seeley et al. (2006) detailed the difficulties that Muslim Bangladeshi women face when they try to seek work outside the home.

company *Flipkart*, whose corporate headquarters are located in Bangalore, was often recounted to me as an example of the repatriation of human and financial capital via circuits of return migration to the benefit of India in general and Bangalore in particular. The company was founded in 2007 by two former employees of Amazon.com. Both were Indian nationals and graduates of the Indian Institutes of Technology.

The professional successes of migrants and the material security thought to follow was, until liberalisation, viewed as the sole prerogative of those wealthy and successful enough to reach Western countries in this privileged migration stream. As I will suggest in Chapters Three and Four, liberalisation has encouraged more and more young people to aspire to professional careers in private sector undertakings now that globally benchmarked salaries for professionals are available in India (Fernandes 2006, 106-7, 124). The majority of the student migrants interviewed for this research were completing degrees in management, accounting or law with ambitions to enter such occupations in India and then possibly go abroad (see also Rutten and Verstappen 2012).

The role of women in this privileged migration stream has been discussed by Raghuram (2006) in relation to the medical professional and Radhakrishnan (2008) who wrote about highly skilled software professionals. Evidence presented by both authors suggests that the preferences and concerns of the broader kin group play an important role in how professional women conceive of themselves as workers. Although professional migration is undertaken with social mobility as a goal and increased quality of life as an objective, professional migrants are less likely to have migrated in order to provide remittances to family members left behind.

Kinship and Capital Flows

Thus far I have referred to a range of migrant experiences of considerable diversity. I progress now to migrants' connections to the family unit.

Women work to support their kin. From the construction workers-cum sex workers described by Shah (2006, 241) who defend their stigmatised labour as being 'for the stomach' – in other words, to feed their children – to the domestic servants who enter domestic service after being deserted by husbands and rejected by their brothers (Ray and Qayum 2009, 126), the survival of the family may depend on the female migrant worker. Yet even those women who are fortunate enough to be spared daily toil to meet their subsistence needs state that support for the family is the most common reason given for work outside the home (Agrawal 2006b, Lyttleton 2014, George 2005). The highly skilled IT professionals interviewed by Radhakrishnan (2008) similarly indicated that they worked to provide materially for their children but clearly, they did so under markedly different conditions. For Radhakrishnan's informants, the collective needs of children and family place a check on the personal ambitions of successful managers – because excessive focus on one's individual career places one's 'status as an Indian mother … in jeopardy' (Radhakrishnan 2008, 15).

The working women I came to know laboured in Bangalore not because their parents desperately needed them to do so, but rather because their salaries could be redirected to diverse family projects such as building a house, or contributing to the educational expenses of a sibling, providing capital for a family business or purchasing consumer items. They also saved in order to share the burden of their wedding expenses and dowries.

Although it is clear that working for the family is a common thread that runs though migrant narratives, both for women fighting for survival and globally mobile professionals,

the global diversity of family forms, post marriage residence rules and stages of the life course complicate this picture. In societies where patri-virilocal residence is the norm, women face particular challenges should they wish to support their natal families after marriage[19]. Further, the natal family may find it difficult to support a daughter should she be left without support by her affines. George (2005), and Lamb (2009) provide ethnographic examples of the challenges that married women face when competing demands are placed on their earnings or family property by natal and affinal kin. These conflicts create tension between husbands and their wives. George describes a feeling of powerlessness and loss of authority experienced by the husbands of migrant nurses who might be helping members of their natal families to migrate. She has suggested that this leaves the husband without the traditional support of this own family (George 2005, 40)[20]. Continuing this theme, Lamb has explored the gendered dimensions of care for the aged and notes that Bengali families expect support from sons, but accept that after marriage, their daughters may only provide support to them in addition to responsibilities to her affinal kin. Bengali families take a philosophical approach to these competing demands stating: 'How much can daughters do in this society after they are married?' (Lamb 2009, 99). Lamb argues that family prestige is entangled with gendered expectations and daughters who choose to support aging parents often face opposition from husbands or made clandestine payments so as not to shame their brothers (Lamb 2009).

A homogenous view of support for 'the family' is also complicated by how this unit of solidarity is imagined and lived. Poor migrant women often worked to support children

[19] This theme will be explored substantially in Chapter One so I will provide only a brief discussion here.

[20] Charsley's research on patterns of migration practiced by young men from Pakistan, who migrate to Britain in order to marry their parallel cousins provides a similar picture of the difficulties faced by husbands when they must reside with or assist their wife's family following migration as this contravenes to normative position whereby the woman joins the man's patrilineage after marriage (Charsley, 2008).

when they had been abandoned or turned out by their natal and conjugal kin (Rao 2006). Rozario indicated that unmarried women who were spared the need to mediate between natal and affinal kin faced competing and occasionally irreconcilable demands from different branches of their extended kin groups. She documented the competing demands placed on a migrant woman who remitted large sums of money to members of her extended family in Bangladesh over a period of many years, suggesting that once family members became accustomed to receiving payments, the woman was obliged to assist with the education expenses of all nieces and nephews as well as contributing towards a house for her mother and sponsoring the migration of a nephew and his wife. Failure to assist all members of the family could be interpreted as favouritism and this was to be avoided at any cost (Rozario 2007, 157-8).

A Growing Emphasis on Education

As the working women and students in this study were not yet married, those who remitted salaries did so to their natal families only. Further, the focus was on the nuclear unit rather than an extended family. Some women assisted with the cost of their dowries and wedding expenses while others simply felt a responsibility to remit money they earned in recognition of the substantial costs that their parents had incurred by educating them. One woman, who I will explore in greater detail in Chapter Three was working and earning so as to *avoid* drawing on parental support as her relatively wealthy parents were struggling to repay loans taken out to send her brother overseas to complete his medical training. These explanations are suggestive of the ambiguous position of working daughters and to the fact that for most women dowry was something they were entitled to by virtue of gender but that the costs of studies needed to be repaid. George described the incomplete transformation of daughters from ‘burdens to assets’ when they take up paid work (George 2005, 42).

Ethnographic material from South East Asia completes this picture. Ong noted that young factory workers in South East Asian export processing zones entered employment both to repay their families for raising them and to contribute to the costs of their dowries. Daughters, she suggested, thought of themselves as 'useless' and as such felt a need to support parents before their marriage. Ong argued

> Women working in FTZs[21] fulfilled and expanded "traditional roles/expectations of daughters" … It was a question of repaying parents the cost of bringing up a "useless" daughter – a child lost to the natal family after marriage … Mothers praised [daughters] for being more "filial" than sons, whose education was often paid for with their sisters' earnings (Ong 1991, 287).

Despite the diversity of experience to which I have referred, single employed women occupied an ambiguous position. On the one hand, as daughters, they were perceived as dependent and perhaps even financially burdensome; yet on the other, the efforts of daughters to earn on behalf of their families were rewarded with increased respect from parents and siblings (George 2005, Pagaduan 2006, Adhikari 2006, Patel 2010). In this thesis, I take up the effects of the changing position of working daughters in their natal families and explore the relationship between financial support provided by migrant daughters and delayed marriage (Chapters One and Three).

I will suggest that a shift is occurring whereby families aspiring either to join the middle classes or to cement their claim to membership are investing heavily in education for young women at considerable parental expense. All of the women in this study told me that it had been a family as well as a personal goal for them to attain education in a particular profession. With their education complete, the move to Bangalore was premised on the large number of jobs and opportunities for further training available there. Another common reason was that working in Bangalore would command far better pay for the same work than in other cities. With parents spending more on their daughter's education

[21] Free Trade Zones.

and living expenses, the need to repay any loans taken out to cover college fees encouraged women to work in cities where their pay would be higher (for an overview of the increasing cost of tertiary education see Tilak 2014).

Many of these women were working in BPO jobs because these utilised some aspect of their professional training but paid more than employment in their professional field. One woman, whose migration history I will explore in Chapter One was able to find work in medical coding because of her post-graduate training in health sciences. Another who was Jaanvi's roommate had completed her Bachelor of Laws but rather than working as a junior solicitor, she had found a job in legal process outsourcing, checking writs for US clients. Although she was not really interested in the work, it paid nearly three times what she could expect were she to work as a junior solicitor. When we met she was arranging to send half of her first pay cheque back to her parents in Calcutta.

Another young woman, who was just nineteen, had come to Bangalore to work as a secretary in an automotive repairs business. She was already engaged. Her family came from Punjab but she had grown up in Ooty where her father managed a strawberry farm. As she knew that her marriage was immanent, she hoped to work and remit money to her parents for one year before moving to Punjab to join her husband's family:

> I wanted to work for my family to earn and help them out. I see my dad spending so much, he's working so hard for us. He allowed me to study, I'm educated because of his hard work, so I wanted to earn something for them before my marriage.

Increased investment in education for young women is not solely a middle-class pursuit. Research conducted with women employed in domestic service and garment manufacture found that these groups were also investing in education for their children even in circumstances of extreme financial hardship (Pani and Singh 2012, 56-7, Ray and Qayum 2009, 134). For both groups, this investment represented the best chance that their children would avoid entering the same lowly paid or stigmatised jobs.

For the women in this study parental investment in education was an essential aspect of broader family strategies to produce and perform class-based distinction, to ensure that daughters absorbed the habitus of the middle-class woman and could thus perform it for members of their families and future families following marriage. As one of the PG managers I interviewed put it, 'only well settled families send girls out of the home for studies'. The profound sense of gratitude that women felt to their parents was shaped by the growing significance of education for women looking to better their own prospects.

The Growth of English Medium Schooling

That I conducted almost all of the interviews and ethnography for this project in English, is also illustrative of the broadening of English medium education as a critical marker of middle-class distinction that may be acquired, as it was in many cases I document, through schooling rather than in the home.

Several authors have commented on the relationship between upwardly mobile communities and either a growing market for English medium schools (Scrase and Ganguly-Scrase 2011, 122) or a deepening sense of marginalisation of students studying in Hindi, Tamil or other Indian language schools (Lukose 2009, Chapter Five, Rogers 2008, 83-4). Many women viewed their English as awkward or inadequate – from their perspective, they had acquired basic competence but not the confidence or flair that they imagined was only possible for people who unlike them, had English speaking parents, or came from English speaking Western countries, but nevertheless, they had made it through English medium schools and acquired degrees in the language. They were able to find employment in jobs that listed competence in English as essential requirements. As Mohan has argued, 'English serves the purpose of a gatekeeper' ensuring that only those who have been educated in the language can have any hope of succeeding when they apply for coveted jobs (Mohan 2014, 22). Arguments I present in this thesis will illustrate the

growing significance of English language education as a form of middle-class distinction making.

Research Design and Methodology

This research draws on twelve months of ethnographic fieldwork and interviews conducted in two localities in Bangalore during 2012. The core ethnographic data was collected in two boarding houses that were temporary homes for single employed women and college students. The women were aged between eighteen and thirty years old and those I came to know best were Christians. The large number of Christian women in the study was largely the result of the fact that the paying guest hostel where I lived was located in a Christian locality that had been built as a compound in the 1960s to house functionaries working at the Hudson Memorial Church.

According to a local PG owner, Deepa, who helped me establish myself as a paying guest, PGs began to emerge in the compound after 1998 when a Christian high school, in the same locality re-opened as a private law college catering to women. The Christian Law College had a student hostel but it was located in another C.S.I[22] owned compound approximately 5.5 kilometres from the college. Following the lead of a single, entrepreneurial resident who took a boarder into a spare room in her home, over the next ten years several families who lived in the adjacent compound lanes began to convert parts of their homes into accommodation for paying guests. Located between a law college and a private oncology hospital the paying guest hostel was ideally positioned between two forms of professional accomplishment, law and medicine that enticed middle-class women

[22] CSI refers to the Church of South India, a union of Anglican, Methodist, Congregational and Reformed denominations and the successor to the Church of England in South India. Membership of the CSI currently stands at four million. See http://www.csisynod.com/

looking to improve their circumstances and those of their families. Most residents were studying at the Christian Law College and two residents worked at the hospital.

Several other prestigious educational institutions were located within walking distance, making this an ideal area to commence such ventures. With Jain University, St Josephs College of Arts and Sciences and a government college of pharmacy all located within a short walk, the lanes were soon filled with PGs and a micro economy sprang up of ice-cream, sweets and *chaat* vendors that sought their custom.

This research could not have been conducted had I not lived on-site for many months. It would have been impossible to complete this project as a 'visitor' to the space – living in the PG was a necessity. Other urban ethnographers working in Indian cities have noted the relative decline of co-residential field research as a practical strategy as informants have less time to dedicate to research projects and finding housing with informants presents several practical and methodological issues (Brosius 2010, 35). Nisbett, whose research on Internet cafés in Bangalore I have already mentioned, noted that he was unable to live with his informants because as members of the lower middle class, they simply did not have space in their homes to accommodate him. He therefore treated a single Internet café as a base and commuted to and from the site each day like his informants (Nisbett 2009, 25). However, this project makes a strong case for the continuing relevance of this method. And others have taken similar approaches employing co-resident fieldwork that is methodologically similar to this project. Lukose lived and worked within a hostel attached to a post-secondary college and completed fieldwork at both sites (Lukose 2009, 16). Sivakumar (2011) lived within the hostel of a ladies college in Mysore and experienced many of the frustrations that also marked my work. Like me, she discovered that residents are a highly mobile group, moving in and out of the PG at unpredictable times. She also noted that by establishing close friendships with some women she was unable to approach

others because of peer dynamics, class difference or differences in age (Sivakumar 2011, 221). Patel (2010) and Pothukuchi (2001) also conducted research with women who lived as paying guests but recruited these informants either through their workplaces (Patel 2010, 18), or by standing on the street outside their hostels (Pothukuchi 2001, 367)[23]. Most property owners who host paying guests and many working women's hostels place restrictions on residents hosting friends and classmates on the premises. One of the college students whom I interviewed told me that these restrictions were the most cumbersome aspect of life as a paying guest. She and a fellow journalism student from college had been encouraged to start a student magazine as an extra curricula activity. But on afternoons or evenings when the other student, a young man, came to her PG to drop off articles or photos, she had to stand on the street to speak with him and was not allowed to invite him into the house. She felt this rule was both inhospitable to her friend and made her a source of gossip amongst other families in the street. These restrictions on paying guests hosting friends on-site made it almost impossible for me to conduct comparative field research with young men who stay in similar accommodation although I did conduct six interviews with male college students who lived in a nearby hostel by visiting them at college. I hope that another ethnographer will take up the task of exploring male experiences of student and temporary migration.

By becoming co-resident with other paying guests I began to regard the minute practices that shaped their everyday routines as indicative of broader attachments and projects, both to their families left behind, and to a future in which they would be married women residing with their husbands. The PG therefore had a makeshift quality that resonated with the liminal life stage that residents inhabited. From the cups, plates and linen they brought from their family homes, to the bibles and deities that connected them

[23] Fernandes conducted research with women who lived as paying guests in Mumbai but does not mention how they were recruited to her project (Fernandes 2001, 163-8).

to larger communities of kin, faith and attachment, what could not be carried was left behind in homes they did not entirely leave. What would become of the lives they built after marriage was unclear. Their college uniforms and mobile phones confirmed their place in a nascent urban modernity, but even as they engaged with the opportunities of the city, their families remained close at hand.

Co-residence allowed on-going, daily interaction with informants and the domestic workers. I engaged in this research through continuous unstructured conversations that were mostly participant directed, followed by two or three interviews that I recorded using a digital voice recorder. During recorded sessions I asked interviewees questions to which they had already given answers during informal one-on-one or group discussion. Using these methods, I established basic demographic information and recorded migration histories. I made extensive field notes. All but three interviews were conducted by myself in English. Interviews with the boarding house domestic workers – the Akkas, were conducted by myself with the help of my multilingual research assistant who translated my questions into Kannada and their responses into English.

My research assistant also acted as an interpreter during interviews and meetings with representatives from the Bangalore City Corporation (Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike). Since 2010, property owners and operators have been able to opt to register their PGs as commercial enterprises. With the implementation of new regulations, owners and operators should also register for commercial gas cylinders and are required to declare the income they receive from tenants for tax purposes.

Representatives from the BBMP, in both the Office of the Chief Health Inspector, and the Citizen Information Service told my assistant and I that no more than 30% of PGs operating in Bangalore had undertaken voluntary registration by the end of 2012. Anecdotally, it seemed that PGs catering to the top end of this market; those who managed

the most expensive places geared to wealthy visiting professionals and the guest houses and serviced apartments targeted at foreign visitors were more likely to have completed registration than families who housed paying guests in their homes. But reliable information about the regulation of PGs and about how many are operating in different localities in Bangalore was very difficult to measure. We approached the health inspectors' office many times and were told that the information on registered PGs would be forthcoming. Eventually we were given 4-5 hand-written sheets with some addresses and no further information.

We found that BMMP staff were more likely to talk to us if we did not record them or write down anything that they said. On one of our later visits, my assistant and I were followed to the elevator by an administrator. He asked if we planned to visit any of the registered properties having learned of their location. When we replied that we only needed the addresses, he took steps to source the information for us. In another informal chat with a BBMP official in Madiwala, we were told that the BBMP did not require mandatory registration because PGs were mostly operating in buildings not designed for commercial purposes and were located on roads that did not meet the requirements for commercial zoning. He went on to explain that if mandatory registration was instituted, BBMP officials would need to give approval before a property owner could take in paying guests. As this is a long process and many families have already moved out of their homes to cheaper areas where they can rent houses at a lower price to make room for paying guests, a retrospective attempt to re-zone these dwellings would be not be in the interest of either the residents or the property owner.

However representatives from the BBMP also told us that it is adjusting its agnostic stance towards PGs and moving towards a more interventionist model. One owner explained that in the last two years, efforts have been made to force some PGs to register

as commercial enterprises and this had increased her water and electricity bills by a factor of three. As reliable statistics about PGs were impossible to obtain, I adopted a qualitative and case study approach to learning about paying guests and the environments where they live.

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When I conceived of the research project, I wanted to study youth culture. I was interested in the new cultural styles of metropolitan Indian young people and hoped to study members of this group using a similar framework to that of Hall and Jefferson (1993). Hoping to learn about migrant youth, I conducted participant observation and interviews at one of Bangalore's elite, English medium colleges. The college was located at a ten-minute walk from the PG. With the assistance of my research assistant, I conducted twenty interviews with male and female college students enrolled at this institution. Some of this material is included in Chapter Four as many of the students were migrants and lived either in their college's dedicated hostel or with local families. But I soon discovered that Western style or even Western inspired youth cultures touched only a tiny minority of young people living in the city. The experiences of migration that are central present an alternative picture of Indian youth that does not accord with these Western derived models.

Prior to my move to the boarding house, I also conducted six weeks of ethnographic research with a prominent local non-government organisation. This NGO provided space and infrastructure for local artists, industrial and web designers/developers, and civil society activists. Approximately one third of the employees of the organisation were North Americans or non-resident Indians who had grown up in the US.

While I was living on the NGO premises the organisation had just moved to a new site and was in the process of reconstruction. A small café was constructed to provide a cash source for the NGO that would help cover the rent. By the time I left Bangalore twelve months later, the café was a buzzing meeting place where I conducted several interviews with members and held meetings with my research assistant. During the six weeks spent with the NGO I worked on a project that aimed to encourage cycling as well as to improve non-motorised transport for residents of one of the city's oldest and most prestigious localities, Malleswaram. This involved community awareness campaigns, door knocking with surveys, visiting schools and colleges.

Argument and Structure of the Thesis

Although no single theoretical approach unifies the thesis, I draw on diverse strands of anthropological, sociological and critical theory in each of the chapters. All chapters foreground the significance of spatial and temporal orientations and explore the existential predicaments that arise in the lives of young migrants.

Drawing on the Sanskrit concept of *seva* or selfless service and approaches from the anthropology of kinship and of ethics, the opening chapter (Chapter One) explores the spatial and temporal orientations of migrant working women, whose labour in Bangalore is rewarded with an enhanced status[24] in their natal homes and in familial support to secure advantageous, if delayed, marriages. This chapter explores the affective dimensions of the migration process which emerges as central to how women understood their role as daughters and as future wives as well as workers.

[24] The increased status of a working daughter is reflected in the allocation of household work, increased mobility in their home town and greater respect from parents and siblings. This will be explored ethnographically in Chapter One.

In the following chapter I look more closely at the goal of collective social mobility that motivates many women to work prior to marriage. Adopting an historical approach, I suggest that this project has a much longer and more complex set of origins than is often assumed. I discuss the ongoing influence of histories of caste mobilisation and subtle changes in the gendering of education and labour that link upward social mobility, *seva* towards the family and longer collective caste histories of social reform involving missionaries, caste associations and the state.

Against the familial projects of increased material security and social mobility, secured in part through the labour of working daughters, I also provide examples of what happens when these projects collapse or are suspended. For women, waiting involved the suspension of expectations of a very different sort to those of the young men explored in Craig Jeffrey's *Timepass* (2010). Expectations involving marriage and the search for the right man, rather than the prospect of employment which the women already enjoyed.

This account of waiting is used to make better sense of collective life in the boarding house, in which living in the present becomes a matter of adjustment to conditions of surveillance and constraint, but also of assuming a certain attitude of temporariness. The lack of aestheticising practices in the space of the PG is treated in the thesis as evidence of the attenuated forms of belonging that are typical of life in such spaces for single migrants, whose existential concerns are always directed to an 'elsewhere' as well as to another time.

The lack of care and concern for the environment evident in the PG emerges more clearly when compared to the aestheticising projects of those who live in the city of Bangalore in a very different way. The thesis closes with an account of the new civic sensibility of organisations and campaigns to protect the city's heritage and spaces from the ravages of over development. I will argue that the growing citizen mobilisation around infrastructure, development, and political corruption has created a new civic sensibility that

has emerged as a counterpoint to waves of migration. Bangalore is imagined both as a prestigious technology hub but also as series of neighbourhoods that have been lost. The growing interest in heritage and environmental conservation emerges in this thesis as both a reaction to the waves of migration into the city, as well as evidence of the subtler privileges of class. Those who wish to care for ‘their’ city also assume their claim to a long-term stable attachment to Bangalore as ‘their’ place.

Chapter One

Working for the Family

It is Saturday morning. Judith and I have woken up on the small cot we fell asleep on last night in her parent's house. Since my arrival in the boarding house some months ago, the two of us have become fast friends. I have travelled to Dharmapuri at Judith's invitation, aiming to compare her life at home with her family to her life as a paying guest in Bangalore. Her mother Janani is already awake and offering us coffee. Her brother's wife, Sarah, is tending to her two-year-old daughter who is stirring in her cradle – a white cloth hung from the roof. Judith checks that I am comfortable and then goes back to sleep. She rests for a little longer before bathing, while her mother busily prepares our breakfast.

Judith needed the rest – it was a tiring journey that brought us to Dharmapuri, on top of her full working week. Judith embarked on the journey every Friday night but this time I sought to experience it with her, the transition from work to family and the journey that marked it. The bus took us from our boarding house in the city centre, through the weekend gridlock, past Electronic City where the larger IT companies have their campuses and offices. It began to rain as the bus lurched, jerked and halted in chaotic traffic. I felt anxious about our safety on the wet road, but Judith was pleased – government buses are not air-conditioned and she had been concerned that I would be too hot on the journey, the rain cooled the atmosphere nicely.

We sat behind the conductor. Judith knew that under his watchful eye no one would interfere with us. In prayer meetings at home, when her family members expressed gratitude to God for particular acts of benevolence or grace, Judith gave thanks to Him for protecting her on her lone travels.

The bus was full by the time it left the city and bleary-eyed workers were falling asleep on their feet in the aisle. They were exhausted, blinked, nodded: I wondered if they would stand the whole way to their destinations. It was the Friday before the May Day holiday, and the bus was bursting. As people squeezed into the available space, another young woman joined us. Although she was travelling home with her brother for the holiday, she preferred to sit in our makeshift ladies section. Like the special drama actresses studied by Seizer (2005), we too had succeeded in creating what she has described as a 'structure of enclosure … even in the most public of spaces' (Seizer 2005, 322). Our safe space was enabled by proximity to protective male kin such as our companion's brother, as well as to public officials such as the conductor and the bus driver.

As the bus pulled out of Hosur, – a satellite town for many of Bangalore's workers located just beyond the state border with Tamil Nadu – the lights were switched off, and Tamil film songs began to play. People slouched, leaned forward or backward and slept. Four hours later, we disembarked at Dharmapuri's major bus stand, where Judith's brother Caleb collected our heavy bags on his motorbike. Together, Judith and I walked down the darkened and muddied streets, past tethered animals and small brightly painted houses towards her home. Even though it was late, nearly eleven, when we reached her house her family were still awake and ready to welcome their newest foreign guest.

Judith's family are Christian Nadars. Back in the boarding house she proudly displayed her membership of the global Christian faith and the Pentecostal movement. Unlike Hindu residents who built shrines to honour deities they had brought from home, Judith kept her leather bound Tamil Bible on her pillow. Her metal cupboard was adorned with the phrase, 'It is your greatest success to know God and to become the person he has designed you to be.' Judith's assumption that I was a fellow Christian contributed to her openness and offer of friendship.

At the threshold of her home, as Judith and I removed our sandals, her mother asked her to confirm that I was Christian. She answered in Tamil but repeated in English that indeed I was. Amid nods of approval from the family members (who do not speak English) I was warmly invited into their home and fed chicken gravy with *puris* – a welcome change from hostel food. I was not the first foreigner Judith's family had accommodated in their home. Occasionally, her parents hosted teams of American missionaries. Judith's eldest brother, David and his wife, Shaila were both employed in full-time missionary work by the US-based organisation, Youth With A Mission. They lived in Chennai. Her next elder brother, Caleb, lived at home with his parents, his wife, Sarah and their two daughters. After dinner, I was ushered into a side room to sleep. Judith told me that she never slept alone in her house, but next to her mother. In Bangalore, we slept in adjacent bunks. That night, we fell asleep on the same metal cot. Judith's parents slept nearby on mats on the floor. Caleb and Sarah had a separate room, with their two infant daughters who were sleeping soundly in homemade cradles suspended from the ceiling.

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This bus journey and homecoming were part of Judith's weekly routine. The full contrast with her life in Bangalore will only emerge when I describe the makeshift nature of the way the PG was lived in by its working women (see Chapter 4). But one feature was palpably obvious from the moment we set foot in her home.

Here, she was a highly valued earning member of the family visiting her parents. As such, she was encouraged to rest, eat her favourite home-cooked dishes and spend her time socialising, relaxing and enjoying herself. On subsequent occasions when I again travelled home with her, we spent our time visiting the local bazaar and shopping centres, purchased night dresses and sheets for our hostel bunks, rode around the town on her scooter and

watched sermons that were being broadcasted from her brother's Church located in Chennai.

Judith's return visits are suggestive of the liminal position she occupied with regard to kinship roles. During return visits she was treated as a daughter of the family awaiting marriage under the care and supervision of her kin and also something like a married daughter who has left the natal family to join the family of her husband but who enjoys higher status on her visits home where she does no work and is indulged by her mother and by the wives of her brothers. But in this case, it is migration to the city and entry into paid employment that has produced this blurring of kinship roles. As a not-yet-married woman, Judith was expected to stay at home with her family if she was not at college or working. But, like a married daughter of the family, Judith was not entirely co-resident any longer and therefore held something like the status of a guest in her own family (see Minturn and Kapoor 1993, 54). Judith thought of her work in the office as a sacrifice that she made for her family. She had to come home, but once she was there she could relax and enjoy herself.

Trips home were also opportunities for family outings such as visiting the travelling exhibition or county fair that I attended with Judith and her family when it arrived in Dharmapuri some weeks later. The exhibition hosted stalls selling vessels and cooking items, fashion accessories, Aquaguards and solar panels. Together, we took Judith's nieces on the amusement rides, and to the miniature zoo, ate *papads* and then went home for dinner. These were precisely the kind of 'idle' amusements and moments of consumption that Judith never allowed herself in Bangalore, a place thought of as a temporary home prior to her anticipated marriage.

Visits home also necessitated attendance at church. Together, we attended the only English medium Pentecostal service in Dharmapuri. The pastor was also the town's

ophthalmologist and the service was held in an office space above his clinic. Normally, Judith attended a Tamil-medium service at a much larger Church with her parents and the rest of her family, but this weekend it was the smaller English medium service for my benefit. She lent me her prized leather bound English Bible. After the service, we returned to her house and ate fish fry prepared by her mother, before boarding an evening bus and travelling back to Bangalore.

Judith's leisurely time at home stood in stark contrast to her busy and responsible weekday routine working in the city and living as a paying guest. During the week, she held a deputy manager position in the small coding team of a US based insurance company. Initially her parents had hoped that she would enter the medical field, if not as an MD then in an auxiliary medical role. Although she was trained as a physiotherapist and had experience working in government and private hospitals, Judith had not been able to earn a satisfactory salary from this type of work and when we met she was putting her medical knowledge to more lucrative use as an employee of a business process outsourcing company.[25] She was born in Dharmapuri in 1986 and attended the only English medium school in the town. At the age of 18, she moved to Erode to attend college. Her family spent nearly five lakhs (approximately 10,000 AUD) on her education and were keen to see a financial return on this investment. When her work as a physiotherapist failed to generate a satisfying income, her parents consulted widely within their kinship and social networks to find alternative employment. Eventually, their church pastor's wife recommended that Judith move into the administrative profession of medical classification. The pastor's wife was already employed by one of the larger business process outsourcing

[25] Judith demonstrated her skills as a physiotherapist on me when I developed tendonitis in one of my ankles.

firms in Mysore that provided medical coding services to multinational companies.[26] Assisted by her mentor with the entrance test and memorable for her confident English, Judith found herself offered training and employment as a medical coder in Mysore. After working in Mysore for two years, she found employment in Bangalore which is closer to her home town and where the working conditions are more attractive.

Judith genuinely enjoyed her job. Her family were not mistaken in treating her as resting from a busy and responsible existence. The structure of the insurance company that she worked for promoted ongoing relationships between members of the Bangalore team and their US counterparts. The company managed the patient records of a private hospital located in Texas. Judith's team provided back office support for the private hospital's in-house coding team. Communications between the in-house coders and Judith's division were conducted via daily emails and a weekly Skype session attended by all managers in both teams. After receiving her much desired designation as a permanent staff member, Judith was commended for excellent work during one of these Skype calls. She arrived back at the boarding house later than usual after this evening call, visibly elated. Those commending her were important people in the company and she had progressed to a permanent staff member even though she lacked official certification as a coder. To attain certification, she needed to qualify through the American Medical Association and she could not afford to pay the fees.[27]

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[26] Medical coders are skilled administrative workers who must have medical training. Their primary role is the application of universal numeric codes to patient records for billing and the tracking of the global prevalence of particular conditions.

[27] Judith's position at work stood in stark contrast to Tamana's (see Introduction) who worked for a multinational financial services company on the mortgages team. Customers frequently shouted at her if they believed she was Indian. She had limited autonomy and her primary responsibility was monotonous data entry. She also worked night-shifts in contrast to Judith's regular 8am to 5pm hours and weekends off. For this, she earned less than half of Judith's salary.

This existence was punctuated by the weekends. After finishing work on Friday evening she would return briefly to the boarding house, pack her clothes, and then board the government bus to travel home, tracing out in reverse the same route on Sunday evening before commencing work on Monday. This cycle of resting in Dharmapuri and working in Bangalore was essential to the family's economic welfare. Like other migrant workers, Judith remitted almost all of her salary to her parents leaving only enough to pay her own rent and board and to meet the contributions towards a modest life insurance policy.

Her salary played an important role in several family projects. Her income was used to repay a high interest loan her parents had taken to cover medical expenses after her father had a heart attack. It provided a cash source for their family business, a small condiment factory. Finally, it was to contribute towards her own dowry and wedding expenses. Unlike women who are forced into employment due to dire financial necessity, Judith's work for the family is better interpreted as part of a household project of social mobility and respectability. Her status as a college graduate educated in English and employed in a multi-national company was central to this family plan. Judith often, and pointedly, declared to me and to others that it was her *education*, and not financial need that made her a potential worker. With the support and encouragement of her parents as well as from members of her church congregation she was working for the family.

For Judith, working for the family entailed obligations to, and sacrifices for, her kin but she also received many benefits from such an exercise of responsibility. I turn to these now as they reveal important dimensions of the constitution of *personhood*, not only for Judith, but for many others like her. Her acts of sacrifices and the benefits she received were enacted against a background of collective social mobility through social reform and advancement. Unlike both of her elder brothers, Judith was a post-graduate, and was

equipped to work in a white-collar job. She came from a caste, the Nadars, whose historical occupation of producing palm wine and jaggery did not require formal education and was stigmatised both as manual labour and for its association with alcohol.[28] This history fed constantly into the family's experience of Judith's educated status. Not only did it enhance Judith's sense of self-worth, it equipped her family with enhanced respectability. I elaborate on this theme later in the chapter.

Personhood and Labour

Let me open this discussion with Dumont to indicate how knowledge about personhood and labour is organised in different theoretical paradigms. The separation Dumont posed between status and power, and his argument that economic relations are subsumed within power, has lead to a curious partitioning of the literature in which caste, personhood and labour have rarely been addressed together.[29] In the case of Dumont, this was no accident. His argument about value and interdependence was aimed directly at materialist interpretations of peasant labour under the *jajmani* system (Dumont 1972, 145). He also turned a critical eye towards what he viewed as attempts by anthropologists to treat caste as primarily a material or economic phenomenon similar to social class or social stratification. In keeping with his emphasis on the separation of power and status, labour relations too, were treated as 'encompassed' within status difference and ultimately

[28] Hardgrave has argued that, 'Among the communities of South India, the Nadars have perhaps most clearly evidenced the effects of change in the past 150 years. Considered by the high caste Hindus in the early nineteenth century to be among the most defiling and degraded of all castes, the Nadars, as toddy-tappers, climbers of the palmyra palm, suffered severe social disabilities and were one of the most economically depressed communities in the Tamil country.' (1969, xix). Although few Nadars continue in their historical occupation and are more closely associated today with business and trade, palmyra cultivation continues to be associated with lower caste status. Daniel suggested that Sinhalese and Tamil speaking Sri Lankan elites in Britain marked the boundaries of their community against the perceived incursions of poor Tamil speaking asylum seekers by naming them 'riffraff' and 'tree-climbers' (1997, 325, 355).

[29] This tendency has been identified and criticised by De Neve (2007), whose approach I draw on in this section.

organised by the fundamental opposition between the pure and the impure (Dumont 1972, 81)[30] Dumont's suggestion that the anthropologist should attend to the cultural system or structure (the whole) rather than to the person or to individuals (the parts) has had far reaching implications for anthropological approaches to personhood.

Following Dumont's separation of the 'person' defined as the 'empirical agent' (Dumont 1972, 42) found in every society and the Western 'individual', found only in modernity and animated by concerns specific to that intellectual history and division of labour (Dumont 1972, 43), ethnographers have worked to define the constitution of the person in diverse Indian communities. In addition to Dumont's structuralist approach, approaches to personhood in India can be broadly divided into the transactional models pioneered by Marriott (1976) and symbolic analysis developed by Schneider (1980), later taken up by Inden and Nicholas (2005) and Ostor et al. (1992). For the authors of *Concepts of Person* (Ostor, Fruzzetti, and Barnett 1992), persons, kin groups and castes are constituted through the exchange of substances such as blood, semen and breast milk.[31] These relations link men and women and kinship groups to wider groups like castes. The authors go on to describe gendered aspects of blood purity that combine to produce relations of descent. The interpretation of cultural symbols, which the authors describe as 'native categories' (Ostor, Fruzzetti, and Barnett 1992, xxvii) is meant to avoid imposing the categories of Western social science on societies where these may be not be appropriate.

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[30] From Dumont, 'The opposition of the pure and the impure … underlies hierarchy, which is the superiority of the pure to the impure, underlies separation because pure and impure must be kept separate, and underlies the division of labour because pure and impure occupations must likewise be kept separate.' (1972, 81).

[31] A much broader vision for the exchange of substances is proposed by Daniel (1984) in *Fluid Signs*. In this ethnography he explored the exchange and comingling of bodily substances during sexual intercourse, the substantive relationship thought to prevail between persons and their houses and that between persons and the soil in their villages.

Tensions have long existed between Dumont and the Chicago School led by Marriott. To some extent, this was due to Dumont's theoretical approach. Dumont's structuralism broke with the structural-functionalist interest in organic unity and focused on the production of difference.[32] In this approach, persons and categories of persons emerge through their difference from other persons and categories of persons in a hierarchical model of encompassment. Dumont rejected the notion that ideology which he glossed as 'ideas, belief and values' (Dumont 1972, 37) is secondary to material factors in society. He was therefore critical of materialist approaches that paid insufficient attention to the role of shared values.

For Marriot, the fluidity and substantive dimensions of the purity : pollution distinction were poorly served by Dumont's model. The dynamism of social life emerged as 'dividuals' continually exchange and transform coded substances both with others and within their own bodies through daily practices (Marriott 1976). While both authors attended to the role of values in sustaining caste distinction, Marriott placed greater emphasis on practices of exchange. Despite these differences, though, there are also broad bases of agreement between these approaches that are relevant for my examination of the meanings that working women in the PG gave to their work. The first is an acknowledgement of the hierarchical encompassment of the person within their kin and caste group, as argued by Dumont and others who have taken up his approach (Ostor, Fruzzetti, and Barnett 1992). The second is an interest in how a sense of self and of personhood is realised relationally, as stressed by the approach of Marriot (1976) and Daniel (1984).[33] For the purposes of this chapter, attention to relational personhood and to

[32] For Dumont's defence of his exclusive adherence to approaches derived from structural linguistics see (Dumont 1972, 77-78, 321-22).

[33] Studies by Wilce (1998) and Trawick (1990) that focus on language and intersubjectivity can be interpreted as successful attempts to engage the structuralist approach without losing sight of the specificity and intersubjective world of the person within kinship and caste.

the hierarchical encompassment of the woman within the kin group is of central significance. My perspective, which focuses on working women's lives, seeks to locate the meanings they give to their work within the interlinked domains of personhood, kinship and caste.

My approach has been aided by the work of ethnographers who have looked at caste and labour in capitalist industries outside the system of village interdependence.[34] Studies by De Neve (2007, 2011) Mines (1984) and Chari (2004) describe the increasing imbrication of labour and caste solidarity in industries dominated by specific castes. These monographs pay special attention to the significance of the labour histories of particular castes, analysing the relationship between collective memory of either agricultural labour or of trade networks that bear on what might be called the character, morality or collective self-representation of the caste as it currently stands.

Of these studies, one that is particularly significant for women such as Judith, is De Neve's research on Vanniyar owned cottage industries. He explores kinship morality as it is discursively produced and put to work as a form of labour discipline (De Neve 2007, 2011). De Neve suggests that in Vanniyar owned yarn-dyeing factories, managers refer to their workers as *sondarkarar*. This term, glossed as 'one who is related', is applied both to persons who are actually related to one another and also more broadly to caste peers. It is even extended to persons belonging to other castes if they have acquired the trust of the owners. De Neve argued that managers deploy real and fictive kinship to produce loyalty and obligation among their highly mobile workforce, albeit with limited success (De Neve

[34] Further, these capitalist industries have developed outside large metropolitan cities in formerly rural areas where the relevant castes were dominant.

2007, 234).[35] He proposed that the morality of kinship differs from that of other social relationships in that relationships are presumed to be ongoing and as such, people are prepared to tolerate delays in reciprocation (De Neve 2007, 213). De Neve's findings concern us here because his argument that working for kin entails a longer temporal framework for reciprocal action than working for others with whom one shares no further bonds of solidarity can help us better understand the many months and years that Judith worked to remit her income to her family – like De Neve's informants, she too was working within a familial system of delayed reciprocity.[36]

Strathern (1980) provides a further example of the ways that women's labour is readily encompassed within the collective demands of their families and kin groups. She found a shared orientation amongst Hagen women towards investment in collective goals, which has its parallel in De Neve's argument about the extended temporal framework for reciprocal kin morality. Women are seen to help their husbands through cash cropping and marketing while limiting domestic consumption. Strathern suggests that when a woman contributes to larger family projects, she is not subject to coercion or acted upon as a 'dupe', but has recognised that her own self-interest is one with her kin group and the goal becomes a personal endeavour for her (Strathern 1981, 173). To better understand the significance of working for the family, labour must be brought into the discussion on kinship, caste and personhood.

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[35] The managers emphasised the egalitarian dimension of kin based relationships between men both to reflect existing relationships and to soften the perception of exploitation of workers. De Neve argued that other caste-dominated industries in India tend to foreground the hierarchical aspects of kin morality so as to discipline labour. Kin morality emerges as a powerful discourse precisely because it can be deployed to reflect either tendency (De Neve 2007, 244).

[36] De Neve's argument that real and fictive kinship is utilised as a technique of labour discipline is not applicable to our case study of Judith because although her income was redirected to her family, she did not literally work for them in the sense of her being employed within the family business like De Neve's informants.

In Chapter Four I will argue that the boarding house was an instrumental space that residents used in order to pursue education and paid employment. But their ends did not coincide entirely with these projects. There was a framework which preceded their present endeavours even as it provided a future horizon, both of which gave richer meanings to their lives. Attaining professional degrees and employment in Bangalore's service industries was tied to broader familial strategies of improvement. Their lives as paying guests were understood as a means to improve the socio-economic status of their families

Seva: an Ethic of Devotion

In this section I explore some of these projects as a means to facilitate employment and to send remittances, through case studies of two women who lived as paying guests. The first woman is Judith to whom we have already been introduced. Judith's salary was used as capital for a family business, to pay off medical debts and as savings, both in the sense of resource collection, and also as a reserve of goodwill that will mean her family will fulfil their obligations to her when the time comes to arrange for her dowry and wedding expenses. Manaswi's salary was used for a house-building project on her family's land. As I will illustrate in this section, the Sanskrit concept of *seva* or selfless service may be employed as an interpretive device to better understand how women understood their labour for the family even though they did not explicitly use the term.[37]

Although neither Judith nor Manaswi explicitly described their actions as *seva*, I suggest that it is an appropriate explanation for how they viewed the sending of remittances and their weekend journeys home. In Judith's case, she would not have used and indeed may not have known the Sanskrit term *seva*, and, as a Christian, would be

[37] Caste, like kinship was also a core aspect of personhood for Judith, who worked not only for her family, but also with a strong sense of mobility and betterment for her caste. I will return to the role of caste in Chapter Two.

unlikely to use a Sanskrit term to describe her actions. However, what she told me about trust, both in her parents and in God is suggestive of the kinds of reciprocity that is elsewhere described as *seva*. Although Manaswi did not describe her actions as *seva* she was explicit about the reciprocal nature of remittances and her sense of duty and obligation to her parents. As she put it, 'Whatever we will do [in life], the same thing we will get. If we are sending somebody's parents out of the home, one fine day our children will send us also. Finally God will punish us.'

Seva is a cultural and religious ideal and a set of social practices which allows us to make sense of the performance of intergenerational reciprocity. Lamb argues that some aspects of *seva* are folded into ritual practice, but she also suggests that everyday activities like visiting kin, listening to stories, sharing and preparing food are interpreted as acts of *seva* performed by juniors for their senior kin. She argues that,

> The providing of care for seniors in the family is often termed (in many Indian languages) *seva*, service to and respect for the aged. *Seva* can be offered to deities as well as elders. When provided to elders, *seva* entails acts such as serving food and tea, massaging tired limbs, combing hair, bringing warm bath water, and offering loving respect—in short, striving to fulfil all of the elder's bodily and emotional needs (Lamb 2009, 32-33).

The performance of *seva* entails sacrifices made on behalf of senior kin by their juniors. This does not mean that the performance of *seva* is necessarily a burden. Cohen argues that interpreting care of the aged as burdensome reveals a Western preoccupation with autonomy, defined as a lack of relatedness to others, which is irrelevant to how Indians think of their families (Cohen 1999, 94). Indeed the women I describe in this chapter took great pride and satisfaction in assisting their parents. Nevertheless, as Lamb suggested, the expectations of care for elders may produce friction between members of the joint family, particularly concerning financial responsibilities and time taken away

from paid employment to provide home-care for the infirm[38]. However, within the purview of a powerful cultural ideal these sacrifices are perceived as legitimate when compared with ongoing acts of love, care and protection already provided by one's own parents or one's husband's parents:

> It is precisely what parents once gave their children—such as a body in birth, food, material goods, money, a home, forms of love, the cleaning of urine and bowel movements—that children are expected to provide in return for their parents, years later in old age and by reconstructing and venerating them as ancestors after death (Lamb 2009, 32).

Seva is therefore a practice of reciprocity in which the expectations of return are deferred until the next generation matures. Much anxiety in contemporary urban India about the behaviour and values of young people centres on parents' fears about whether their children will take care of them as they age (Cohen 1999). The trope of the 'bad family', where juniors usurp control from seniors and where women, in particular daughters-in-law, mistreat or neglect their mothers-in-law is treated as no less than the loss of an 'imagined Indian self' (Cohen 1999, 104). But parents and elders do not need to be infirm to expect that their children will care for and respect them. Rather, the ideal of *seva* comes to the fore as elders age but it is also present throughout the life course. As such it is appropriate to think of *seva* as a form of ethics – both as an ideal negotiated in everyday relational life and as a set of ethical practices.

Demarcating an appropriate object has proved a contentious issue within the anthropology of ethics. These debates concern us here, as they are key to determining whether *seva* is an appropriate interpretive approach. A significant thread in the anthropology of ethics debates whether all social action and social relatedness can potentially be brought within the purview of field. Lambek (2010) and Laidlaw (2002)

[38] Lamb worked with upper-class Bengali families many of whom lived in the United States. In the majority of these families, both the men and women were in paid employment.

support this view while Robbins (2007) and Zigon (2014, 2007) provide an alternative argument, suggesting that ethics can only be said to emerge in moments of intense socio-cultural change or in Heideggerian limit situations. For Zigon in particular, the emergence of ethics requires some form of intensification or rupture, to produce reflection on the part of the subject – normal relations outside these moments are described as constituting 'morality' rather than ethics (Zigon 2014, 133).

While sympathetic to Zigon's position that locates the moment of ethical reflection in the failure of the 'ready-to-hand' (Dreyfus 1991, 70-3, Zigon 2007, 134-5), I suggest that *seva* as ethical practice occupies a salient position between Zigon and Lambeck's formulations. Interestingly, both authors draw on different aspects of Heideggerian phenomenology, to make their claims.

Lambek locates ethics in the meaningful background of everyday activity. For him, 'the "ordinary" implies an ethics that is relatively tacit, grounded in agreement rather than rule, in practice rather than knowledge or belief and happening without calling attention to itself' (Lambek 2010, 2). The ways that women described their work has exactly the taken-for-granted character of the that background Lambeck describes as "a modality of social action or of being in the world [rather than] as a modular component of society or mind' (Lambek 2010, 10). Further, Lambek's approach is applicable to the full gamut of social activities and practices, including the ongoing hardship and austerity, that characterised young women's lives as paying guests in the boarding house. It also bestows a particular ethical dimension to the way their families cared for them during the home visits I describe. The mundane activities of living and working in the city drew moral force from a background in which the performance of *seva* was a highly valued cultural ideal. Obligations to kin came to the fore in discussion with informants about finding employment, sending money home and travelling back to their families on the weekend.

The relationship between ethics and prior debt, highlighted by Derrida, is in this sense wholly appropriate to the concept of *seva*. I quote Lambek's succinct summary of Derrida's argument:

> Ethics must be grounded in prior acts, and specifically, ethics must address the rupture, wound or fall of a *debt already incurred*, [Quoting Derrida] "an originary guilt or incrimination, a guilt or responsibility … the theme of a debt, an indebtedness, a being-indebted, all originary, prior to any contract, prior to contracting anything" [my emphasis] (Derrida 2008, 319-20 quoted in Lambek 2010, 18).

However, Cohen and Lamb provide many examples of situations within families where the normative reciprocity of *seva* has broken down and elders have taken up residence away from their adult children. These examples conform to the models of breakdown that Zigon identifies as appropriate to an anthropology of ethics, and suggest that as a thematic and public set of discourses and practices, *seva* appears to transcend the background of everyday, unthematic comportments during moments of crisis. Although *seva* is deeply grounded in affect and personal experience – love, comfort and care – it is also enabled by public and normative behaviours, comportments and practices that emerge from a shared understanding of appropriate, right thinking behaviour for all (Dreyfus 1991, 145) even though all of these aspects are not discussed explicitly by informants. Trawick's *Notes on Love in a Tamil Family* (1990) captures the imbrication of everyday practices of socialisation, conflict, affection, ambivalence, feeding and intimacy within a single family that culminate in love and solidarity. I propose a similar approach here. *Seva* was a significant self-interpretation (Dreyfus 1991, 95) that women like Judith and Manaswi took on, but they did so as part of wider understandings of being a good daughter or a loyal employee.

When Migrant Daughters Provide *Seva*

Post-marriage residence conventions play a decisive role in who is present and therefore available to take care of their parents. One's kin must be present and by implication, co-resident so as to provide care for elders, otherwise *seva* cannot be performed. In the ethnographies of Lamb (2009) and Cohen (1999, 116-7) many people residing in aged care homes in India were elderly women who either had no sons or who were not receiving support from their sons and daughters-in-law. Lamb's research suggests non-kin can perform acts of care and nurture but these acts are only understood as *seva* by the recipient when they are performed without expectation of financial compensation. In the aged care homes where Lamb conducted research, elders or their kin paid fees for meals and upkeep but proprietors were careful to stress that the fees covered food and basic amenities and not emotional labour – the care and respect showed to elder residents was offered freely and not in exchange for money.

When asked about it, the responses of Judith and Manaswi concerning their remittances followed a similar logic. Taken on their own, remittances were not *seva*. Like acts of bodily care, giving money to parents was only thought of as *seva* when it was done with the same caring orientation. Not only did Judith and Manaswi remit salaries, they also regularly travelled home to be with their parents and kin. Co-presence of an embodied nature was given key importance but its continuity was determined by the time-frames of the working week. This lent a particular importance to being present and interacting with the family, and sharing their concerns when possible. The very fact of being continually 'on hand' so to speak, to participate in family projects is central to the emotional experience for both sides in a relationship of giving and receiving *seva*.

On weekends at home, however, Judith was not obliged to perform any specific tasks of *seva*. Indeed, as we have seen already, she was given the luxury of being attended to,

not only by her mother but by her sister-in-law as well. It was her sheer presence in the home that was expected and seen as quite a necessity. She could help with cooking when she wished, but she was not required to assist. In Dharmapuri she was also permitted greater mobility than in Bangalore and felt safe travelling around, shopping in the market and running errands for her mother. Her only explicit responsibility was to attend church on Sunday.

The contrast with her sister-in-law, Sarah, brings out more clearly Judith's many privileges on these weekend trips. Given that her parents had delayed her marriage so that she could complete her education, at twenty-seven her parents were looking for an appropriate marriage alliance. Sarah, by contrast, had by the age of twenty-five already given birth to two children. Sarah had not completed high school and did not understand English. The disparity between them also applied to housework, cooking and childcare. On one of our trips, Sarah went to a church function leaving her two-year-old daughter Carol at home with Judith and myself. While she was out, Carol, who was not toilet trained, needed to be changed. I watched as Judith washed her in the bathing stall and then searched around for a nappy. This was unusual. Generally her sister-in-law or her mother changed the babies while the more pleasant and educational forms of play were left to Judith. As the family owned a personal computer and had a home Internet connection Judith would seat Carol on her knee and together they would watch song clips of nursery rhymes. Judith would entice Carol with toys but was not normally required to feed or bathe her.

Spared unpleasant chores Beulah was also allowed certain privileges of dress and style – she liked to dress in fashionable *churidah* sets while Pricilla favoured ankle length

house dresses. These patterned, cotton dresses were also worn by women in the PG but only inside.[39]

'Living Away from Home': Narratives that Re-negotiate Stigma

The correct performance of *seva* has far more significance for a woman living and working in Bangalore than for a man. It carries within itself nothing less than the potential of restoring the respectability and meaning of the female body of the worker in the city. Phadke, Khan and Ranade (2011) argued that,

> … [f]or women, respectability is fundamentally defined by the division of public and private spaces. Being respectable, for women, means demonstrating linkages to private space even when they are in public … Women also have to demonstrate that their presence in public space is necessitated by a respectable and worthy purpose (Phadke, Khan, and Ranade 2011, 24-5).

Moving to and through the urban environment with the full knowledge of kin and with family approval is exactly the purposeful action and micro-strategising that constitutes the respectable woman in public space. Women in public space without a legitimising purpose are effectively 'matter out of place' (see Douglas 1966) and are therefore beyond the protection of kin.

Such strictures create particular problems given fresh developments in the gendered nature of work in India. Patel (2010) has detailed the effects of global outsourcing on Indian women who find employment in the Internet enabled service industries. She argued that a feminisation of labour is taking place whereby women became the favoured employees in BPO industries (Patel 2010, 28). For Patel, this shift has produced new freedoms for women, but at a price – they often face a social backlash and must go to greater lengths to prove that they have not been 'spoilt' by employment (Patel 2010, 87).

[39] Judith did not engage a tailor in Bangalore as this was too expensive. She had all of the clothes made in Dharmapuri where it was cheaper and where the entire family used to same tailor.

Working women who spoke with me gave reflective accounts of why they were living away from home. These accounts suggested a need to justify the distance between themselves and kin. Living away from parents was not itself a stigmatised position but it did create room for conjecture and gossip on the part of hostel-mates and more importantly, kin and neighbours in their sending communities. The very fact of naming a boarding house a 'paying guest accommodation' can be interpreted as an attempt on the part of families and PG owners to associate themselves with an elite image and to deflect stigma in the host community arising from the perception that young, unmarried women are living without the protection and beyond the disciplinary gaze of the family in the city.[40]

Migration for employment occludes the familial gaze but simultaneously exposes women to heightened moral censure and acts of custodianship (Phadke, Khan, and Ranade 2011, Patel 2010, Nisbett 2009, 129-131). The performance of *seva* proves to potentially hostile others that women are working for the benefit of their families and communities. This sense of collective endeavour and shared advancement helps to renegotiate stigma because it emphasises the continuing embeddedness of the woman within the kin group.

In addition to carefully managing their conduct in Bangalore, women such as Judith and Manaswi maintained the respectability of their families through interactions with friends, neighbours and 'caste-peers' (De Neve 2014 passim) in their sending communities. Even the most dedicated working daughter needed to cautiously manage work, residence and interaction with members of the family to avoid losing face.

[40] An upper-class friend's father told me that when he was growing up in Chennai, paying guest accommodations were referred to as 'mansions' because of the homely comforts they offered. Hostels on the other hand, tended to have more austere or working class connotations (see Singh and Pani 2012, 56-77).

The way that Manaswi carefully balanced her relationship to her employer and the expectations of her parents illustrates some of these dilemmas. Manaswi had been living as a paying guest for four years when she was granted permission to work from home in her village provided that she provided her own laptop and Internet connection. She had been missing her family and sought to spend more time at home without giving up her job. Her manager agreed to this arrangement but her mother encouraged her to stay in Bangalore at least until arrangements for her marriage had been finalised. The family were concerned that if she were to return without a reason the community may come to believe that she had come back due to some sexual impropriety rather than as an indicator of flexibility or her increased seniority at work:

> Suppose I'm working here, then they [neighbours] will think she's working there, all is well, no problem for her. But if I go back to my place, then they will think that something has happened to her, she has done [or] someone else has done some wrong to her in Bangalore, and that is why she came back to her home town. My mother advised me, if you come home then all of them will talk like that and I'm not able to listen [to] all those things. So it's better you stay there. (Manaswi interview 16.05.12)

Steering Between Opportunity and Respectability: the Dilemmas of Respectable Upwardly Mobile Communities

Van Wessel's work with young middle-class informants in Baroda suggests that for middle-class young people and their parents, modernity can be interpreted 'as an ontological paradigm – an ideological resource that offers ideological resources for understanding the nature of being' (Van Wessel 2011, 104). According to this argument, young people linguistically and ideologically mark the positions they take on complex family expectations like marriage arrangements and respect and caring for parents in old age in a temporal framework through their use of terms like 'modern, forward, freemind[ed] and broadmind[ed]' which are then opposed to 'orthodox, backwards,

narrowminded or rigid' (Van Wessel 2011, 104). Young people perform identity work that allows them to produce coherent narratives of the self in contexts where the evaluations of peers and parents come into conflict.

At one level Judith and her family fit some elements of Van Wessel's argument. They set themselves apart from others by having a working daughter who was employed at a foreign firm located in a 'global city'. As the opening to this chapter suggests, Judith and her family had achieved a level of comfort and security in Dharmapuri through the success of their business, the education and employment of their sons and their daughter and the successful and fertile marriages of their two eldest children.[41] By giving Judith permission firstly to complete college outside Dharmapuri and subsequently by allowing her to live and work in Bangalore, her family were able to claim a place in India's neo-liberal modernity like other families with aspirations to cement their position as members of the middle-class.

Yet there are many elements in Van Wessel's argument that do not fit women like Judith or her family. Judith also utilised the term 'orthodox' to describe herself and her family – but in her usage this was not to be equated with 'backwardness'. Instead, it implied positive virtues of stability and moral personhood. Judith attributed what she called the 'orthodoxy' of her family in matters of marriage to her caste identity as well as to Christianity. On topics like romance, and even on trips to the cinema that were common fare in the PG, she would look at me sternly and say, 'My parents are orthodox people, they will never accept this.' Unlike boarding house residents, Judith refused to watch

[41] In early 2011, Judith's elder brother and his wife announced that after six years of trying for a baby, they were at last expecting their first child. This was an enormous relief for the family who had tried biomedical infertility treatments and group prayer sessions for many years. In 2010, a visiting Nigerian Pentecostal preacher prophesied that they would eventually have a child. When their daughter was born in early 2012, this preacher returned to India to dedicate the baby to the church.

Western and some Hindi films. When I first asked about this she told me that as a Pentecostal Christian watching such genres was not encouraged. Seeing that I was unconvinced by her answer she conceded that in fact the real problem was that she was not allowed to go to movie theatres – the theatre spaces were viewed as inappropriate. Wearing make-up and jewellery was also discouraged, by the Pentecostal faith. The only ornamentation that she chose to wear was a gold wristwatch. What this suggests is that the challenge for Judith's family was to grasp with both hands the opportunities associated with modernity, while keeping the less desirable aspects of what others would call 'freemindedness' resolutely at bay.

This uneasy relationship to the imagined significations of being modern was mirrored in Judith's way of negotiating a relationship to the very different spaces she occupied. On trips back home, where Judith found herself embedded in practices of care, sustenance and sociality, her sense of self was certain and she was markedly more confident. But in Bangalore, where she was just another migrant struggling along, working long hours and trying to save money, her sense of self was challenged by the dreary environment and cramped conditions in the hostel where she lived with strangers, non-Christians and women who did not speak Tamil. Indeed, she was challenged by the city itself.

Her grasp of the city was strikingly tenuous. If she wanted to go shopping she usually asked a colleague from work to accompany her because she felt that didn't know where the good places were to find bargains. She did not use the city as a recreational space (at least, not until much later in my fieldwork when she became engaged to a young man from a Pentecostal Nadar family who had settled in Bangalore during the 1970s[42]). Other than the

[42] I was fortunate enough to attend Judith's wedding in November 2012. It took place one month before I left India.

occasional trip to a nearby *darshini*,[43] to MacDonald's and to the budget department store called Big Bazaar, Judith did not travel around other areas of Bangalore as she did at home. The palpable wealth of other people in the city made her feel uncomfortable. On mornings when I walked with her to her office she would point to expensive cars on the road, the cost of provisions and auto rickshaws indicating that these were all far too expensive in the city.

For those kin in Dharmapuri, Judith brought back a taste of urban sophistication associated with Bangalore, as well as remittances that were used to increase their prestige in the town. But her dedication to serving the family and her weekly returns also suggested to outsiders in Dharmapuri that despite her status as a migrant, she remained embedded within the concerns of her family and within the sphere of their care and direction.

Examples of women taking on paid work as a means to escape poverty and to provide for dependents are well attested in ethnographies of South Asia and South East Asia (see literature review p 39). In circumstances where a male breadwinner cannot or does not perform this role, women face many challenges and often endure social stigma in order to provide for their families (Rozario 2007, Ray and Qayum 2009, Adams and Dickey 2000). But Judith avoided two kinds of stigmatised stereotypes attached to female workers. Her remitting money and weekly return to kin demonstrated that she had not become too individualistic or disinterested in the needs of her family – a trait that has come to be associated with female employees of mobile call centres (Patel 2010, 12). Equally, the family's large reinforced concrete house, prosperous business and ownership of consumer items like washing machines, televisions and motor scooters refuted any suspicion that her

[43] *Darshinis* are small restaurants that serve mostly South Indian dishes on a set menu along with tea and filter coffee. At least once a week, Judith and I would have dinner in these affordable restaurants to give ourselves a break from the food provided in the hostel and to enjoy some time to chat out of earshot of the other residents.

employment bespoke a failure on the part of her family, in particular of her male kin, to provide for her wellbeing (Ray and Qayum 2009, 126).

Neither newly mobile and ‘forward, freemind[ed] and broadmind[ed]’ (Van Wessel 2011, 104) nor working class and failed by her father and brothers, Judith presented herself as a working woman from a comfortable and respectable family that was well off compared to other families in their relatively small town.

Yet, in quiet moments when we were alone together, Judith told me that before she had started earning, the family had faced serious financial difficulties. These were compounded by a protracted dispute between her father and his elder brother. The family also experienced cash flow shortages due to competition to their business. Judith’s brother Caleb helped their father with the business and earned a small additional income as a music teacher for local children but it was clear that the regularity of Judith’s salary played a stabilising role in the family finances. She even went so far as to describe herself as the ‘bank’ for her family.

Judith’s remittances were also central to establishing the prospect of her own favourable marriage, in turn a strategy that was germane to her family’s upward mobility. Judith’s marriage had been delayed both by the demands of her postgraduate course and by a tumultuous period in which her parents nearly lost their business due to the emergence of a local competitor and her father’s poor health. With these difficulties behind them, – thanks in no small part to Judith’s salary, Judith’s family were directing a great deal of effort towards settling her marriage in 2012. Judith’s family were flexible and ready to capitalise on opportunities where these arose. They had no misgivings about settling her in Bangalore, Mumbai or Chennai and entered into marriage negotiations with families in all three cities. Their main concern was that the marriage settlement needed to be affordable and the family trustworthy and likely to treat their daughter well.

During marriage negotiations, families would view each other's homes, and check information on salaries and living conditions. The initial agreements over dowry and compulsory gifts would need to be settled at this time. In many cases, negotiations would collapse over disputes, misunderstandings, and broken promises. After initial enquiries were made Judith would be sent with a relative, usually her mother, to meet her prospective in-laws. Of the three families who approached her family, the first refused an engagement on the grounds that her skin was too dark. The second agreed, only to have the alliance terminated by Judith's family when they discovered that the young man had not completed college and earned a minimal salary and would not let them visit his house. The third family proved acceptable, and the marriage went ahead with great fanfare and excitement. This family owned a house and a church in the Cantonment area of Bangalore. Their ownership of property, residence in Bangalore and a shared commitment to the Church were likely factors in the successful negotiation of the engagement.

It is well established that status competition and competitive display are core elements of South Asian weddings. Marriages are occasions for parents to fulfil important obligations to their children, to demonstrate their wealth and to forge new kinship networks. But for the woman's family, marriages are notoriously expensive. Although Judith disapproved of dowry, her family were still intending to supply her future groom with a large cash payment and many expensive gifts. Her primary objection was that it was 'un-Christian' to make dowry demands (see Caplan 1984). A further objection was that her parents had not requested dowry from the families of her brothers' wives. Judith's elder brother had made an unusual marriage – his wife was neither Tamil nor Nadar and came from Kerala. Their marriage had been arranged with the help of their church pastor in Chennai and according to Judith had proceeded without a dowry. Her younger brother had married a Nadar woman from Tirunelveli and had also not received dowry from her family. As such, a familial configuration that would otherwise have favoured her – two

sons and only one daughter – had not done so. The as yet undetermined cost of Judith's dowry and wedding was a source of anxiety. Although some money had been saved and arrangements made to borrow from family friends the total cost would be high and further demands could always be made by the groom's family. Finding a good quality match meant that her parents would need to be in a strong position to provide their daughter's new affines with whatever was deemed necessary to secure the arrangement. The careful management of Judith's salary over the several years she had been working played a significant role in the success of the engagement and betrothal function held in Dharmapuri and the two marriage ceremonies, one in Dharmapuri and the other in Bangalore. Shortly after the marriage, Judith's father-in-law requested that her parents provide his son with a car, a demand that would have been difficult to answer without the prior support of Judith's income.

In his account of the emergence of new consumer cultures in early nineties Nepal, Liechty suggested that anxiety is a core dimension of the experience of being middle class. He argued that 'Middle-class status is as precarious and fleeting as middle-class fashions, and it is the chronic fickleness of the "fashion system" (Barthes 1983) that best analogizes the anxious cultural experience of the middle-classes.' (19). He suggested that membership of the middle class must be performed in daily interactions and practices and that in this repeated need to reconstitute class status, middle-class Nepalis experience, 'instability, ambiguity [and] vulnerability' (Liechty 2003, 19). This argument has also been taken up by Dickey (2012) who suggests that although the middle class is becoming an increasing desirable self-interpretation, it is also, "a markedly uneasy and unstable place." (Dickey 2012, 560)

In line with Liechty's argument and that of Dickey (2012) and that of Donner and De Neve (2011), I interpret Judith's marriage negotiations less as a static representation of

middle-class identity or values and more as a moment 'when … being middle-class becomes an option, a possibility, desirable or a problem' (Donner and De Neve 2011, 8).

The remittances that Judith earned opened up a number of opportunities for her family to present themselves as middle class to others. The marriage negotiations, their position in the community as employers and her education and career history were moments of possibility. The ethical project pursued by family members entailed taking up opportunities as they arose and melding the wealth and prestige associated with urban modernity to orthodox practices and family solidarity. This strategy was not restricted to Judith's family. Other boarding house residents were also working to send money to their families. We turn now to the story of Manaswi.

Manaswi: Constructing a Stable Future

Before moving to Bangalore, Manaswi had rarely spoken to an unrelated man, even on the telephone. Five years had passed since her arrival in the metropolis and she now held a senior management position in a private engineering and project management firm close to the boarding house. After my initial meeting with her, she did not speak to me directly for three months. In contrast to Judith's open and direct manner, Manaswi seemed dour, unfriendly and uninterested in interacting with other residents in the boarding house. Later I discovered that she was actually just very shy. Like Judith, she dressed in the traditional style of *churidar* sets, with her *kameez* cut well below her knees. Many of the college students and some working women experimented with sleeveless tunics worn over jeans but Manaswi was uninterested in participating in these fashions. She did not own Western clothes and preferred to converse in Kannada rather than English. She rarely complained about the facilities in the boarding house and was on very good terms with the PG staff. With me, she was more reserved until one morning we clashed over access to the bathroom. Ironically, this dispute was enough to break the ice and eventually we became

quite friendly. Having learned about my background from other women her initial suspicions about my residence in the PG were eventually dispelled.

Unlike most other residents of the PG who migrated to Bangalore from small cities in other Indian states, Manaswi grew up in a village in the wealthy agricultural district of Mandya in the south-west of Karnataka. Her family were *Vokkaliga Gowdas* – an agricultural caste who vie with Lingayats for political power in Karnataka.[44] Her parents managed a small farm where they cultivated sugar cane, legumes and other crops. Neither of Manaswi's parents nor her elder brothers had completed high school. Her mother and father came from the same village, her mother and her mother's sister had married two brothers and lived in a joint family. Manaswi described her mother as illiterate. Her father had completed school up to sixth standard before moving into manual labour. Manaswi's brothers assisted their parents on the farm and worked intermittently transporting goods between their village and Mandya town. In addition to farm labouring, her father worked as an overseer and labour subcontractor on various coconut plantations to supplement their income. Her mother had never been employed outside the family.

Manaswi showed great promise at school and was supported by her parents to study hard and achieve excellent results in science and mathematics. She won a subsidised place and a scholarship to attend a private engineering college in Mandya where she also learned English. Until her first year of university, her education was exclusively in Kannada. At the completion of her bachelor of civil engineering degree, she was encouraged to migrate,

[44] Manor argued that Vokkaligas were acknowledged as the dominant caste in Mysore state prior to Independence and the re-organisation of state boundaries along linguistic lines in 1956. At this time several northern regions were added to the newly created state of Karnataka. With the addition of these northern areas, Lingayats began to compete with Vokkaligas for dominant status and political control. During 2012, the defection of Lingayat leader BS Yeddyappara was the cause of significant political unrest and has been credited with the eventual loss of the BJP to the Congress in the 2013 election (see Manor 2013; Niranjana 2000, 4148; Sivanna 2014, 45-7).

as her father felt that she would be better equipped to find a good job in Bangalore. When asked if she had always been interested in engineering, she replied that there was no prior planning but that she had been mentored throughout her high school years by a friend of her father:

> Once I finished my 10th, my father's friends told me to take science, so I took that course in PU.[45] My parents told me to study in a good way, so I did. But I didn't have any guide from my family background. Only my father's friend is there. He told me to do that, this, all those things. As per his instruction, I have come up and I got this job.

During her years working in the city she had earned enough money to assist her parents to rebuild the family home on their land. In addition to remitting her salary, keeping back only a small amount for board and emergencies, Manaswi had also designed the new family home utilising the principles of *vaastu shastra*.[46] In consultation with her parents she had drawn up all of the plans, budget and timelines for the project. These tasks were similar to the duties she performed at work where she provided total project management for civil projects. At the time we lived together she was in charge of the construction and fitting of a new auditorium in a private college in Banshankari. This project required that she liaise with contractors, discuss quotations and make regular visits to the worksite.

I could not help admiring Manaswi's dedication to assisting her family but to her this was simply one of her many obligations to her kin. Assisting her parents with the new house was an obligation she had found great pleasure in fulfilling. As we sat together on her cramped bunk bed in the boarding house one evening, she showed me photos she had

[45] PU stands for pre-university.

[46] According to Patra (2006, 201), 'Vaastu Shastra has laid down several principles for constructing building[s] by taking advantages of "five basic elements" known as "Panchbhutas" (earth, water, fire, air and space), the earth's magnetic field and the rotational influence of the sun, moon and other planets surrounding the earth with a view to bringing balance and harmony between man, nature and his building, thereby ensuring peace, prosperity and happiness.'

taken of the newly constructed house with her phone camera. After a pause, she asked, ‘Is it true that you foreigners live away from your parents? After you become mature you go work, I saw on the news, children will leave their parents and they will start earning?’ I gave a brief explanation about moving out of home having completed my bachelors degree. ‘Everyone does this?’ she asked, shocked. ‘Yes most people’, I replied. She looked thoughtful and then very serious. ‘Well’, she said, ‘if everyone is doing that, then you don’t feel like us.’

This and other exchanges made it clear that Manaswi did not perceive any value in earning only for herself. Money was certainly important but only if it could be redirected to kin. Her comment is similar to those of Liechty’s informants who were rural students living in Kathmandu attending college. Liechty asked a mixed group of rural and urban youths how they would spend their winnings if they won the national lottery (2003, 90-97). The rural students differed in that any economic windfall they received would be redirected either to their kin or used to further their education. Urban youth on the other hand could name several individual consumer items they would buy if they won the money. Rather than view rural youth as altruistic and urban youth as self-centred, Liechty suggested that the different responses reflect different levels of absorption into the consumer cultures emerging in the city. From Manaswi’s point of view, there was simply no imperative to work unless her earnings were redirected to kin and used for family projects like housebuilding or anything else that would make their land more valuable or productive.

Like Judith, Manaswi's weekends were spent at home with her family. On Fridays she travelled by train on the three-hour journey to Mandya and then on to her village.[47] The love, support and blessings she received from her parents give her the strength to return to Bangalore each week and continue to work. She also found strength in the fact that the new house was a powerful manifestation of her family's collective efforts – a tangible example of their improved fortunes for all the community to witness. Having contributed to the building of the house, she and her family had won respect in their community. This was an adequate reward for the difficulties she and her parents had faced while building their new home.

Education is a Must for the Girls!

Like Judith, Manaswi came from a socially orthodox family, yet in both cases their parents had gone to great lengths to encourage tertiary education. Judith indicated that despite their orthodoxy in relation to marriage, her family's attitude to education made her parents superior to other people in Dharmapuri even though they were not educated themselves. I have suggested earlier that working women such as Judith and Manaswi are not to be confused with women workers who come from poorer families or who are working because of inadequacies in male support. Nor are they to be confused with the cosmopolitan strata who have given Bangalore its particular reputation.

My visit to Judith's home town revealed new dimensions of the social distinctions that her family used to set themselves apart – this time, from 'village people'. Female education played a key role in this form of distinction- making.

[47] Unfortunately, I was not able to stay with Manaswi's family. As she lived at home with two elder brothers and neither of her parents was able to understand English and I could not speak Kannada, securing consent for a home visit proved too difficult. As a result, I have had to rely solely on interview material and our friendship over many months.

On our first trip to Dharmapuri, Judith told me that the district has one of the lowest literacy rates in Tamil Nadu. As she put it, 'People in the villages don't know anything; they simply take care of their farms – that is their lifestyle.' But she suggested that this was changing and now, even the illiterate labourers who worked in her family's condiment factory were sending their children to schools and colleges.

Judith's views on the difference between herself and the less fortunate members of the town community were similar to those views expressed by the regional BPO workers interviewed by Vijayakumar (2013) in towns outside Bangalore. She argued that 'the majority of workers had higher education levels than their parents, and saw themselves as distinct from an older generation they often dismissed as "village" people, not "educated" like themselves' (Vijayakumar 2013, 784).[48] But Judith stressed that her uneducated parents were different to others in the town because even though *they* were uneducated they had absorbed the value of education for their children.

Despite being largely illiterate themselves, her mother and father placed her and her brothers in English medium schools when these were scarce and relatively expensive. The school was run by Seventh Day Adventists and here Judith learned to read and write in English and Tamil. Here was one source of the profound respect and gratitude Judith felt for her parents. Her parents had set her apart from other girls. She proudly informed me that she was the first girl in her street to be sent outside Dharmapuri to attend college: 'After me only they started sending [girls]. Otherwise they'll stop at 8th standard or 9th

[48] Although Vijayakumar did not make the point explicitly, my data suggests that there are two sides to these attributions. Regional BPO workers like Judith are comfortable critiquing the supposed ignorance of manual labourers and those who have not received equivalent education, but at the same time, other residents of their towns and sending communities may misinterpret the position of the mobile, working daughter as promiscuous leading to gossip and loss of face for parents. On this point Manaswi said, 'Common people might put some comments. In front of me they're all OK, [but] back of me, I don't know what they are saying.'

standard – they'll not send the girls outside. But now they know, education is important – It's a must for the girls!'

Like the development workers described by Gupta (2012), Judith saw a natural correlation between education and competence. The reverse was equally true – 'incompetence was usually explained by a lack of education' (Gupta 2012, 209). Given the enormous significance she attached to her own education and her equation of education with competence, Judith was a vocal critic of other paying guests who in her opinion were wasting their opportunity to get an education by focusing on consumption, recreation and forbidden relationships with young men.

High Fashion Sets and Drama People

We have seen that Judith often expressed ambivalence about her social position relative to others. She reflected on her middling position between the wealthy but amoral elite and the poverty stricken uneducated labourers. Her dress, speech and demeanour separated her in obvious ways from the poor whom she pitied. This was brought home to me as we walked to her office during a city-wide *bandh*. We came across a group of men, barefoot, wearing turbans and carrying painting supplies. We were walking because the city buses were cancelled due to the *bandh*. When I asked about the men, she replied 'They are coolies who have to work for their food, there is no bus, so they have to walk.'

But in this section I wish to reflect in more detail about the distinctions that she used to set herself apart from people of higher castes as well as from those she perceived to be wealthier than she was regardless of caste. She was critical of women who engaged in activities she disapproved of on moral or spiritual grounds. The most notorious among

these, from her perspective, were women who have boyfriends[49]. Judith was not alone in condemning other women for entering into relationships with men whom they had met in the city. Most paying guests told me that engaging in any secret relationship with a man not sanctioned by the family was a betrayal of parental trust and an act most likely to damage a woman's chances of having a successful marriage. In her time as a college student living in university hostels, Judith told me that had seen all kinds of girls: 'drinking girls, smoking girls and girls who have affairs'.

Sometimes she referred to these others as *hifi* or high fashion people. In Judith's descriptions and attributions, *hifi* people were upper class, urbane and fond of consumer display, expensive gadgets and cars. Their identity as *hifi* was mediated through access to foreign produced consumer items. They were defined not only by their ownership of expensive commodities but through their carelessness with money and ostentatious conceit. On reflection, to be 'high fashion' implies an almost aristocratic attitude to consumption against Judith's more sombre, middle-class sensibilities and income. Liechty argued that the concept of fashion in Nepal promotes nothing less than a revaluation of the meaning of the social world and the correct way to engage with it (Liechty 2003, 107). As he put it,

> The practice of fashion opens up new ways of imagining oneself and one's community in commodity terms. In short doing fashion is less about having than doing. Fashion … is not a thing but a performance and the thing performed is class (Liechty 2003, 110).[50]

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[49] In contrast to Western, colloquial use of this term, the word 'boyfriend' need not imply a sexual relationship. Most of the women I knew who were prepared to privately admit to having boyfriends were not in sexual relationships from what I could gather.

[50] Commenting on the relationship between 'fashion' and women's mental health, Pinto (2014) argued that fashion 'offered the ability to link provincial lives to the space-time of cosmopolitanism [and] to the future.' (Pinto 2014, 240). But excessive interest in 'fashion' casts the wearer as an over-reacher, one who has risked too much and who will ultimately become destitute.

To this we must add that gender is also central to the performance of fashion as marker of class. Judith was reacting to gendered as well as class-based codes when she compared herself to the *hifi* people. Van Wessel, conducting fieldwork with young people in Baroda, intuited that the term *hifi* has moral as well as socio-economic connotations:

> Stylish clothing items are often sought out that are associated with success, glamour and fashion. Apart from fashion, there are other markers that single out specific youths as modern, for example 'English medium' education or hairstyles. *This applies especially to what middle-class youths refer to as hifi youths, those young men and women from affluent families who can afford 'anything' and (supposedly) have no fear of social control being imposed to keep moral norms intact* [emphasis added] (Van Wessel 2011, 103-4).

Although clearly different from the *hifi* set, Judith viewed herself as modern but appropriately so. She differed from those perceived as *hifi* in that her modern behaviour was appropriate to the gendered and social norms in her family and community. She worked for the family, did not waste money on consumer display and avoided inappropriate influences and places. Against the wasteful consumption that she attributed to others, she emphasised the moral imperatives of working and saving. She went to great lengths to save money and chided me for allowing vendors and auto-drivers to overcharge me. Further, given that goods and services were substantially cheaper in Dharmapuri than in the city, there was little incentive to make purchases in Bangalore. Occasionally she would buy shoes and dresses for her nieces and diabetic biscuits for her mother as these were unavailable at home but these were gifts for other people rather than herself. Even on days when the PG had not had running water for two or more hours, she refused to use packaged drinking water to wash her hands or face, as this was 'wasteful'. Although Judith drew attention to her own austerity, she displayed a heightened awareness of the challenges of living in an expensive city. She understood that it was only the urban elite who were able to live without compromise and discomfort. Despite living in close

proximity they were separated from women like her by vast social difference. Good, moral and hardworking people like her were the ones to had to 'adjust'[51].

In contrast to their home towns, life in Bangalore entailed living with 'drama people' and a *hifi* set. For Judith and Manaswi, such '*hifi'* tendencies were to be observed within the boarding house itself. They found such tendencies among the college students who were generally of a more privileged socio-economic class than the working women.[52] In contrast to the work that Judith and Manaswi performed for their families, the college students seemed only to be in Bangalore to enjoy themselves. One evening as we sat together eating our dinner I asked Manaswi what she thought of the student migrants who lived on the first floor of the house.[53] 'They get so much freedom – they can do anything. They have no responsibilities.' Judith was on the phone to her manager discussing a problem at the office that she deemed too sensitive to mention at work, but having hung up the call she added, 'Those upstairs girls have all the facilities. No need to work.' Manaswi laughingly agreed, 'No need to earn also.' 'No need to earn for themselves', Judith said. 'because they get money from their parents – no need to worry about anything, just enjoy.' Ghassem-Fachandi argued that in Indian English, and more specifically in the variant spoken in Gujarat, the word 'enjoy' can be used to refer to 'all sorts of transgressive behaviours involving wasteful expenditure' (Ghassem-Fachandi 2009, 91). In his gloss, 'enjoy' draws on other verbs that have specific connotations in Gujarati. However the word has very similar connotations where Judith and Manaswi used it in the above

[51] See Chapter Four for further elaboration of 'adjustment' as a cultural thematic that residents used to describe their experiences as migrants.

[52] Despite Judith's persistent criticisms of the college students, it is important to note that all of the working women in the study had once been college students themselves. However unlike the students they now lived with, they had attended colleges in smaller cities and towns and done so on government seats, meaning on scholarships rather than fee-places.

[53] Most of the college students lived on the first floor of the boarding house. This was a deliberate strategy on the part of the owner as it separated college students from working women.

exchange. In much the same vein, Manaswi told me that the college students have no responsibilities [to budget carefully or remit money] yet enjoy all the facilities that working women like she and Judith had to work for. Unlike the working women, who remitted their salaries, the students were the recipients of allowances from their wealthy parents. The work performed by Judith for her salary could have been seen as having an equivalent in the study performed by the college students. Yet from the perspective of both Judith and Manaswi, even this potential for moral application was squandered by the students. In their eyes, very few of the students seemed to study.[54] From their perspective, education itself was something the college students thoughtlessly consumed without real commitment. After the exchanged described above, I replied that as the college students were rarely in the PG during the day, they must be attending college. I was corrected:

> Gillian: But they're here for college.
>
> Manaswi: Still.
>
> Judith: Most of the girls are not going to college. You have seen Sriparna no?

The Sriparna that Judith referred to was our newest roommate. She was a troubled student migrant from West Bengal who was not adapting well to living away from her parents. She was moved to our room by the PG owner after a dispute with another student. Although she put on her college uniform each morning and left the PG, I occasionally found her in the TV room during the middle of the day watching serials or lying on her bunk. I replied, a little uncertainly, that Sriparna did, after all, go to college. Judith's eyes narrowed: 'Sometimes she goes … she paid some eight or nine thousand fine because of her attendance. Same with [she went on to list the names of several other students].'

[54] Some of course did. Renuka who migrated to Bangalore to complete a one year university course in interior design was one of the most diligent students. As Manaswi had a lot of experience drawing up plans and using AutoCAD she often helped Renuka with assignments. The two women were roommates.

Manaswi in turn registered her shock that so much money could be wasted because a woman refused to attend her classes.

Strategising a Return to 'Native Place'

Manaswi did not use the term *hifi*. Instead, she referred to many people in Bangalore and in the boarding house as 'drama people'. In contrast to her humility and earnest desire to assist her parents, urban people were, according to Manaswi, inherently dishonest and arrogant. As a result of this evaluation, she longed to return to her native place. Like all South Indians, Manaswi distinguished between her 'native place' and the place where she currently resided.[55] For Manaswi, her native place was her village in Mandya region, while she simply resided in the PG. Judith told me that her native place was Tirunelveli. For some time I mistakenly assumed that this was where her family lived while she resided in the PG. I was to discover later that Judith's family lived in another district in Tamil Nadu but referred to Tirunelveli as their native because it was the region with the largest historical concentration of members of their caste, the Nadars. For Manaswi, her home village and her family's land was where she made the greatest affective and financial investment. Manaswi's investment in her native place makes sense when read against Daniel's argument that there is a compatibility between the soil in a person's native place and the endeavours of one's caste (Daniel 1984, 67, 86). This applied particularly to dominant agricultural castes of which the Vokkaligas are one.

But in Bangalore, cut off from her community, Manaswi had no choice but to endure those she described as 'drama people'. 'Drama people' were those boarding house residents who interfered with her desire for peace after a long day at the office. They were

[55] From Daniel (1984) 'Tamils also distinguish between the ur that is merely one's current residence or home and the ur that is one's real home (conta ur), that is, the place whose soil is most compatible with oneself and with one's ancestors' (p. 67). Of course, Manaswi was not a Tamil speaker but the concept of native place was clearly fundamental to her identity.

noisy, nosey and dishonest. Manaswi did not have time for what she perceived as false niceties. If she had a complaint with another resident, she addressed that person directly, as I discovered myself when we argued over the bathroom. She could not accept that some people in the PG complained about their roommates rather than addressing them in person. These people could be tolerated, but neither could they be loved nor trusted. Early in the research I thought of the boarding house residents as constituting a kind of community and I speculated with the idea of it being an emergent community neither of caste nor religion. However, when I put this formulation to Manaswi, her reply was negative. The only community she identified with was that of her family and to a lesser extent, other people from her village. Of the other paying guests, she said, 'We can keep for *timepass* but we can never keep them in our hearts.' Travelling home to her family each weekend was a reprieve from the constant 'drama' she found in Bangalore.

Manaswi was secure in her belief that living in Bangalore was simply a means to an end. Exposure to a global city that fuelled desire in others only left her looking back to the better and happier life she had left in her home district to which she would return. If she had been able to find employment closer to home, she would not have moved to Bangalore at all. After finishing her bachelor's degree she had hoped to work in Mysore where Kannada, her mother tongue, is the most commonly used language. Mysore is also close enough to her village that she would have been able to live with her mother, father and elder brothers rather than as a paying guest and this was very appealing. She applied for several jobs in Mysore but did not receive any offers. She enjoyed her work but insisted that her parents find a husband for her in Mandya, and not let other villagers persuade them to settle her in Bangalore, although it is a more prestigious locality. Like most working women, she was not clear as to whether she would continue to work after marriage. Manaswi's attitude to living in Bangalore is similar to the attitude of 'extended temporariness', described by Singh and Pani (2012, 3), that they found amongst many

rural-to-urban migrants working in Bangalore's garment export industries. According to Manaswi many people from her village migrated to Bangalore where they would work, but eventually return to start a business or some other income generating activity. What emerges most clearly from Manaswi's attitude is that although she was not in the same economic circumstances as these other migrants from her village and was in fact in an ideal position to settle in the city, she seemed to share their views that return to the native place was the ultimate goal of rural to urban migration.

When I asked her why she felt that even good people became selfish in the city, her reply was that when people begin to receive independent incomes, many did not redirect their earnings to kin. Thus family sentiment was eroded and money was wasted on consumer items. By remitting salaries to kin, families ensured that it would be saved and redistributed according to the needs of the entire group. In this way, *seva* or service to the family could engender collective social mobility. As she put it,

> People forget their culture because they get money. In their home town they won't get any kind of money – they will only get things from their parents and only necessities. Once they come to Bangalore they can buy everything; they have everything in their hands. So if someone is buying a branded thing, we will want to buy the same thing – we'll also enjoy. But it's not good. If we're coming from a poor family, then first we should help our family to come up. After that, you can think of individual requirements.

Manaswi's ethical commentary on the effects of urban life indicates a long-standing ambivalence towards Bangalore that is particularly strong for speakers of Kannada hailing from Mysore and the surrounding districts. When Manaswi told me that living in Bangalore made people selfish, dramatic and tiresome or that the city attracted people who already had these dispositions, she was providing a meta-commentary on the distinction between the village and the city that has taken on new meanings in postcolonial societies. Commenting on this theme, Ferguson suggested that, ' "the village" in postcolonial society tends to be invoked not as alternative to the city, but as a moral image that should inspire

or discipline urban behaviour.' (Ferguson 2009, 84). In effect, the village becomes a nostalgic moral horizon that stands as a counterpoint to urban environments that are associated firstly with the alien culture of the coloniser and secondly with the hegemony of postcolonial elites (Ferguson 2009, 82).

As stated earlier, Manaswi's home region of Mandya is particularly associated with the wealthy Vokkaliga farming communities of which she is a member. Niranjana has suggested that although Vokkaligas have achieved strong political representation in Karnataka, the community continues to be associated with the limited cultural capital of the rural peasant – she argued that the Mandya accent is often used to signify the figure of the foolish peasant in Kannada comedy (Niranjana 2000, 4148).[56]

In Karnataka and for Kannadigas, Bangalore has long been an internal other – a South Indian metropolis where Kannada speakers find themselves relegated to the status of a minority[57] (Nair 2005, ch 7, Niranjana 2000, Raghavendra 2011). Located in close proximity to the state boundaries but peripheral to the other parts of the former Mysore kingdom and long associated with the British, who occupied large areas of the city as a segregated military cantonment until Independence, Bangalore today is the locus of globalised modernity, home to migrants from all over India and host to American chain stores, inflation and other indexes of 'Westernisation'. Manaswi felt a loyalty to Mysore that did not extend to Bangalore even though both cities are part of the same state.

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[56] On the limited cultural capital of the peasant see Bourdieu (2008, 198-99).

[57] Nair has documented the history of Bangalore's tense relations with neighbouring Tamil Nadu from the Cauvery dispute and anti-Tamil riots of the early 90s, to the Bangalore's ambivalent current position as an internal other within Karnataka.

In this chapter I have argued that the working women whose lives I have described were guided in their labour by the cultural and religious ideal of *seva.* I have suggested the labour performed by working women is encompassed within familial affects and projects. The hardship that women faced as paying guests makes sense when placed in this broader context of family strategies for social mobility. Respectable standing in their home communities is secured through migrant remittances and challenged by the perceived modernity and otherness of Bangalore. Educational attainment and frequent trips home to the family emerge as a means to renegotiate the potential stigma attached to living alone as a woman in the city and working for the family.

Drawing on responses from informants, I have suggested that *seva* is best approached as a form of ethical service to the family. Following the approach outlined by Lambek (2010), I argue that although *seva* forms the background of dispositions and practices and need not emerge only at moments of rupture, it is nevertheless, an ethic that also needs to be reflected upon and chosen in its living out. The enormous value attached to one who performs exemplary *seva* functions as a means for women like Judith and Manaswi to distinguish themselves from other paying guests who outrank them in their acquisition of other socially valued qualities and commodities. By focusing not on how much one earns but on how much one redirects one's acquisitions to one's kin, Judith distinguished herself from those she deemed *hifi*, ostentatious and wasteful. For Manaswi, the reinvestment of her earnings in a home for her parents on their land and her eventual return to her village motivated her to continue working in the city.

In the next chapter I broaden the discussion of *seva* to engage more directly with the role of caste in the projects of social mobility that Judith and Manaswi were engaged in on behalf of their families. I will suggest that histories of social reform, religious conversion

and caste dominance play a central role in how such women experience their entry into the Indian middle class.

Chapter Two

Working in the Broader Context of Region and Reform

The desire to lovingly serve one's parents was a powerful motivator and lent moral force to the privations that women faced in their lives as paying guests. But working women, like those I have just described, also demonstrated a strong commitment to caste-based solidarity and uplift beyond their own families. In this chapter, I argue that the working lives of women like Judith and Manaswi have been shaped by histories of caste mobilisation and subtle changes in the gendering of education and labour. It is within the overlapping contexts presented by capitalist transformation, histories of social reform and widening opportunities for education that the city of Bangalore becomes a beacon for women like Judith and Manaswi.

In the previous chapter, I reviewed two paradigmatic approaches to caste, personhood and work, to illustrate the hierarchical encompassment of the woman and her labour within a model of ethical service to the broader kinship group. In this chapter I will explore the centrality of another dimension of caste that emerged as being significant the course of my relationship with Judith and Manaswi – that of a strong community, with shared moral codes and mutual assistance. I will suggest that this ideal of caste as a shared community played an important role in the ways that Judith and Manaswi understood their service to the family. I will explore the emergence of community feeling around caste as it has developed during the twentieth century before illustrating the significance of an ideal community for both women. An approach that pays special attention to history will aid this exploration.

Caste as Community

The work performed by both women was informed by a broader frame of reference to caste as a wider community. The perception of castes as communal units working competitively to further their interests, seeking political power and economic advancement is one that Dumont saw as superseding the older model. With the advent of Independence and of a democratic political system, he noted that the caste system was in the process of having encompassing spheres of value fragmented into castes as competing vote blocks that behaved like competitive individuals (Dumont 1972, 269). Yet he argued that neither the growth of competitive caste associations, nor the development of caste-neutral professions were sufficient to suggest that caste as a system was breaking down (Dumont 1972, 265, 271, 276). During the early debates that followed the publication of *Homo Hierarchicus* (1972) Bhatt suggested that Dumont had paid insufficient attention to the implications of these changes, in particular the longer-term consequences of legislative and institutional transformations of caste. By contrast, Bhatt was concerned with the 'political consequences of social mobility' (Bhatt 1971, 99). He outlined several general changes predominantly affecting the Other Backwards Classes.[58] His most significant finding for the purposes of my argument is his suggestion that the post Independence establishment of democratic institutions and universal franchise 'undermined the importance of ascriptive

[58] Vokkaligas and Nadars [including Christian Nadars] are classified as OBCs by the National Commission for Backwards Classes.
For Nadars see: http://www.ncbc.nic.in/User_Panel/GazetteResolution.aspx?Value=mPICjsL1aLv%2b2hza1cVSjGj2lbN6VTmqldqIuVcOEkgHeh8PGW22Whuvc80mubPb
For Vokkaligas see: http://www.ncbc.nic.in/User_Panel/GazetteResolution.aspx?Value=mPICjsL1aLsThxqt53NPf0ggPwu7BzPqgy3u3lupJmQLsT8%2fMjBlhiG%2fb0Het9uX
Much debate about broadening the number of castes that are classified as OBC centres on the fact that members of caste may be able to make a case for economic or social backwardness even though the same group or cluster of groups may be politically dominant or own the majority or agricultural land (see Srinivas 1959, 1). Since the conflict that arose with the Mandel Report, these debates have taken on new dimensions that are beyond the scope of this chapter but see (Jaffrelot 2003; Dirks 2001, 268-288; Lukose 2009,162-199).

ritual status as a criterion of [social] mobility by emphasizing "achievable" aspects of status such as education and occupation' (Bhatt 1971, 103). In the previous chapter I indicated the significance of success in education and entry to the professions for women aspiring to social mobility. Now, though, I turn to the implications of these changes for what informants often refer to as 'the community' – a common, idiomatic proxy for caste.

I have already mentioned that Manaswi disapproved of individual consumption. She told me many times that buying branded consumer items in Bangalore was a waste of money, which ideally should be directed to parents. When for example, she told me that, 'If the family comes up, then the whole community will respect our family – neighbours, relatives, everyone will give us respect.' Or that up until she left Mandya and became a paying guest in the city, she had very little experience or exposure to what she called the 'non-community' her use of community is in fact a way of expressing ideas about caste solidarity and also her own efforts to improve the position of her own family within the community understood as caste.

Compare Manaswi's statement which describes winning respect and approval from the community to this statement from the Backward Classes Commission cited by Guha (2007, 608), 'When a backward caste candidate becomes a Collector or Superintendent of Police … the psychological spinoff of this phenomenon is tremendous, the entire community of the backward caste candidate feels elevated.' Both quotes suggest that when a person from a subaltern caste achieves advancement either through acquiring a coveted job or an investment in property, this in turn increases the prestige of the wider caste group. As Manaswi was a member of a powerful landed caste, her efforts were directed towards improving her family's property and land. As Judith's family were merchants and members of an increasingly powerful business caste, her efforts supported the family business.

Vokkaligas: 'They are the Big Ones Out Here!'

Vokkaligas are known in Bangalore for their widespread land ownership and political dominance. As one of the interstate college students I interviewed put it, 'They are big ones out here because they own so much land'. According to Epstein (1998), the Vokkaligas of Mandya were the major drivers of the move into high input, industrial agriculture as well as the main beneficiaries of this economic development. Epstein's fieldwork, which began in the 1950s and continued intermittently until the 1990s, charted the transformation of Vokkaliga castes in Mandya.[59] As with Manaswi's family, the Vokkaligas owned land near irrigation channels, and engaged in the intensive production of sugar cane that in turn stimulated commercial and industrial development within Mandya. The resulting wealth of some Vokkaliga families contributed to the growth of education – firstly for boys and from the 1970s onwards for young women as well (Epstein, Suryanarayana, and Thimmegowda 1998, 155, 160-171)).

Like other land owning groups, the Vokkaligas have a stable regional identity, a strong sense of what South Indians refer to as 'native place', which includes attachment to regional language. This stands in contrast to merchant and trading castes that embrace mobility as a means of economic advancement. This distinction builds on the differences posited by ethnographers of South India, between the right-hand and left-hand castes. The former are associated with land ownership and agriculture while the later are more mobile, in their capacities as merchants and traders. Not bound to agriculture and possessing an alternative means of survival, Mines argued that the left-hand castes 'have been more mobile, less tied to a specific locality, and through their trade networks they have helped to

[59] Epstein referred to Vokkaligas as Peasants [with a capital p] in her published works in order to differentiate them from scheduled caste farmers who work on Vokkaliga land but do not own it. I have substituted the term Vokkaliga for 'Peasant' in quotations from Epstein to avoid confusion. See Epstein 1967 and Epstein (1998, 17) for further details.

link the settlements of agriculturalists.' (Mines 1984, 4). By contrast, the right-hand castes are those who own land as well as the service castes who have historically been 'bonded' to them. Mines suggested that Dumont's model of caste as a religious-economic system built on interdependence is in fact a model that describes only the social organisation of the right-hand castes (Mines 1984, 4, 8).

Thus far, I have used the cases of Judith and Manaswi to make implicit and explicit contrasts that reflect the left-hand, right-hand distinction. But it needs to be pointed out that although Judith's family can be seen to reflect the mobility and occupations associated with the left-hand castes, Nadars, are in fact a right-hand caste (Hardgrave 1969:23). As providers of services to the dominant, landed castes, Nadars are part of the right-hand group, and this included the stigma and poverty of landlessness for many amongst them. Hardgrave suggested that their entry into trade and commerce was stimulated by the desire to escape the humiliating service relations to which they were bonded, as the trees they depended on for subsistence as toddy-tappers were owned by the land-owning, dominant castes. The move of large numbers of Nadars into business and trade affirms the argument put forward by Mines, that trading castes in Tamil Nadu have enjoyed a degree of economic autonomy and built regional networks beyond those of the dominant landed castes.

When we turn now to land-holding groups like the Vokkaligas, we find that they have also begun to diversify beyond agriculture. But they have continued to maintain strong political networks of patronage in the areas where they dominate land and the local caste order, a process that Jeffrey, writing on Jat dominance in Uttar Pradesh, described as 'intensifying local political investments' (Jeffrey 2010, 53). In a field study that compared two villages, one that was serviced by irrigation channels and one without irrigation, Epstein argued that where the Vokkaligas controlled access to water as well as land, the

inequalities that shaped interaction between Vokkaliga land owners and their scheduled caste labourers had in fact intensified (Epstein, Suryanarayana, and Thimmegowda 1998, 19). By contrast, in the other village, where farmers had to rely on rain for harvesting, many diversified out of agriculture, migrated to cities or worked in cane processing units and Epstein found that caste discrimination was less intense (Epstein, Suryanarayana, and Thimmegowda 1998, 121-123).

This caste-based process of intensifying local prestige and power is tied to distinct values and orientations for Manaswi. Investing her salary in a house-building project reflects a preference for local accumulation and prestige. A comfortable material position in her locality, prestige amongst caste peers and neighbours and the warmth of her extended family were viewed as much more valuable than the monetary compensation she received from her employer.

Her choice of firm in Bangalore was also influenced by her attachment to language and native place. The project management firm where she worked was headed by a Kannadiga man and serviced domestic and commercial infrastructure and construction projects in Bangalore. Although she would have earned more working for a multinational company and was equipped able to do so with her level of experience and command of English, Manaswi felt an enduring loyalty to her ‘Sir’ whom she respected. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, she hoped one day to work on government infrastructure projects, where many of her friends from college were already employed. A sense of patriotic duty emerged as the motivating factor. She told me that she wanted to ‘give some benefit to the nation’. The loyalty she felt towards her ‘Sir’ indicates that it was self evident to Manaswi that one was lucky to find good people in Bangalore. From her point of view, even the best people could turn bad under the city’s corrupting influence. Therefore, the character of the business and the people she worked with was more important than an increased salary.

> I have learned so many things from this office, so I'm not able to leave. Also, my boss is a good person – that too in Bangalore! If I'm only interested in money – then I don't know what type of people I will have to face. I thought, let me learn something good from this office, then see. God is there for my work, he will only decide what to give.

Despite the enormous pull of overseas migration for the rural middle class in India[60] Manaswi did not have any desire to live in any other part of India – let alone overseas. As a woman living close to her home and certain of an advantageous marriage she enjoyed much more security than Judith. Further, if her parents followed her wishes and found a family for her in Mandya, she would be able to stay close to them even following her marriage.

From Shanar to Nadar

Judith was open about her membership of the Nadar caste. She told me that Nadars were part of the Other Backward Classes and ranked beneath Brahmins. Large numbers of Nadars were Christian but the church and her caste identity were separate:

> We [Tamils] have so many castes, like Nadar, Vanniyar, then what … Mudaliar? But my parents want me to get married within our own caste people who are Nadars. You can see other caste people in the Pentecostal Church: *we* are Nadars.

As a Nadar, Judith belonged to a caste that has experienced an almost complete transformation since the late nineteenth century through processes of social reform. I turn to this now as it has a direct bearing on her work for the family. What follows will link the social mobility of Judith's family to the wider mobilisation of the Nadars. The history of reform *and* a lingering sense of being 'backward' or open to negative judgement shaped her experiences in equal measure.

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[60] Several documentary films have captured the aspirations of young Indian migrants and also the structural disadvantages they face in the host countries see *Living Like A Common Man* (Verstappen, Rutten and Makay 2011) and *Sunshine and Shade* (Tiwary 2012). The opening statement from an informant captured by Verstappen et al. in a small town in Gujarat makes this clear, '90% of youngsters want to go abroad, to make money'.

Reforming Dispositions

Scholarly attention to the outcomes of social reform movements has produced an influential body of literature on South India. In recent years, ethnographers have paid sustained attention to the creation of new imaginaries and ethical horizons among castes traditionally designated as 'low' and 'backward' (Jaffrelot 2003, 166-180, Pandian 2009, Ram 2009). The prominent position of the Nadars in this literature is both an outcome and an example of the processes ethnographers have described. Hardgrave's early account of social change within the Nadar community described the development of associational life and the genesis of a politicised Nadar identity (Hardgrave Jr 1969). For many years this centred on K. Kamaraj, a powerful figure in the Indian National Congress and a Nadar who served as the chief minister of Tamil Nadu between 1954 and 1963 (Hardgrave Jr 1969, 153-154). Judith's family, like many other Nadars, were therefore long-term supporters of the Congress.

Hardgrave described the Nadars as 'the Horatio Algers of South India' (Hardgrave Jr 1969, 148). This comparison to American fiction writer Horatio Alger who wrote hundreds of 'rags-to-riches' tales in the late nineteenth century in which the hero achieves success through faith and hard work expresses the moral and ethical significance of work and employment to the Nadars. Such values are often implicitly contrasted with those who inherit wealth, a position thought to lack this moral dimension.[61]

[61] Hardgrave's analysis suggests that Christian conversion among the Nadars is to some extent responsible for group attitudes towards hard work, thrift and delayed gratification. While I agree and will argue that Protestantism and Evangelical Christianity certainly influenced the Nadars including those who did not convert to Christianity, Manaswi, whose family are Hindu and have had no contact with missionary efforts made very similar claims to Judith about working, saving, avoiding debt and giving her salary to her parents. While remaining attentive to the diffuse influence of Christianity, I note striking similarities between both women.

Using data collected by Hardgrave, and following a similar framework to that proposed by Bhatt (1972), Jaffrelot argued that the Nadars exemplify a process of 'ethnicisation', whereby castes are transformed from small transactional units to larger scale regional voting and associational blocs (Jaffrelot 2003, 150, 166). He argued that this process of ethnicisation developed through the articulation of an indigenous identity shared by all Non-Brahmin castes in Tamil Nadu. This pan-Dravidian identity offered a powerful alternative imaginary to that of Sanskritisation and provided the ideological and political foundations for the Non-Brahmin, or Self-Respect Movement. Quoting from M.S.A. Rao, Jaffrelot argued for the significance of alternative social imaginaries in the reconstitution of disadvantaged but upwardly mobile groups:

> Such a process [that of social reform] also implies a collective history – at least a golden Age – and a separate, cultural identity. The subjective representation of the collective self is most important in this process. Caste is partly a mindset; it is based on beliefs in hierarchies relying on purity … *Alternative social imaginaries might be conducive to the emancipation of the lower castes*. As M.S.A. Rao argues: "The problem of identity is crucial in the formation of protest groups and for collective mobilisation" [emphasis added] (Jaffrelot 2003, 150-151).

Within the community, Nadar mobility is viewed as a triumph against the indignities of caste and of poverty. Pandian has argued that social mobility and prosperity only begin to signify 'reform' with all its specific moral connotations where this is achieved through forms of labour also produce a transformation of the subject towards ethical selfhood (Pandian 2009). He contrasted the mobility and increasing respectability of the Nadars with that of the Kallars, a non-agrarian community who were designated a 'criminal caste', and forcibly made sedentary by agents of the colonial state in order to effect 'moral improvement' (Pandian 2009, 179-180).[62] He argued that like the Nadars, the Kallars have

[62] Like other forms of colonial governmentality, projects of reform and enlightenment were realised through coercive practices. The processes described by Pandian were efforts at reform *and* control. Indeed, evangelical sentiment viewed these modalities as mutually constitutive (see Ignatieff 1978; Cooper and Stoler 1997).

achieved increasing prosperity in recent years despite belonging to a formerly subaltern and stigmatised community.

Having overcome many barriers to social mobility through improvements in literacy, education and entry into profitable businesses, it is not unknown for Nadars to discriminate against scheduled castes who have not achieved the same social mobility (Ram 1998, 132, Rogers 2008, 93).[63] Nadars themselves continue to face a degree of discrimination from forward caste groups. Hardgrave argued that Nadars have not been immune to such evaluations: 'They will call us Nadar to our face, but when our backs are turned, they will say, "He's just a Shanan[64]" '(Hardgrave Jr 1969, 252).

The processes of reform, diversification out of service relations to dominant castes, and conversion to Christianity had been underway for several decades before Judith was born in 1986. She identified strongly with the social imaginary of uplift and mobility that is central to Nadar identity today. The success of her family's business, which is all the more impressive given their humble beginnings, attests to the role of caste in her self-concept. This came to the fore when she told me about her family history.

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[63] The specificity of Nadars' mobility can be attributed in part to their liminal position in the caste order. As producers of alcohol and worshipers of Gods that fall outside the Brahmanical order, Nadars were designated as unclean. However unlike *dalit* castes, Nadars do not consume the alcohol they produce nor do they eat beef. Indeed inclusion of Nadars within the classification of the backward classes was the result of political mobilisation by Nadar organisations that sought to express their superiority in relation to *dalit* castes *and* to lobby the state for government support in the form of welfare measures (Hardgrave 1969, 144). The 'middling' position of the Nadars also has an occupational dimension: extraction of juice and other products from the Palmyra palm is not limited to the production of toddy. As producers of jaggery and sweet toddy, Nadars had greater opportunities to diversify into trade than other castes. Following the influential missionary, Caldwell, Hardgrave described the Nadars as existing in 'social limbo somewhere between the Sudras and the outcaste untouchables' (Hardgrave 1969, 21).

[64] Shanan was the derogatory caste name given to all members of the caste until they renamed themselves Nadars by group consensus (see Hardgrave Jr 1969, 106-107).

Interpreting Narratives of Family History

The material advancement of Judith's family from poverty to a comfortable, if slightly unstable position of middle-class prosperity was attributed to her family's identity as Nadars. When I visited her family home, Judith proudly walked me through the onsite factory where female labourers were slowly spooning fresh pickle varieties into plastic bags. She was enthusiastically re-telling the history of her father's company – how he and his elder brother had built it up with minimal capital through reverse engineering. 'Nadars', she exclaimed, 'are the best in business!' She attributed her father's business acumen and success to this unique talent of Nadars. But Christianity too, played a part in Judith's account of her father's rise from poverty. This was despite his being denied an education. Unable to complete secondary school after the death of his parents in an epidemic, he was forced to rely on what she described as 'God's knowledge'. Enabled in their endeavours by God, assisted practically and spiritually by the church, educated in Christian institutions and equipped by the flair of Nadars for trade, Judith's family were secure in their position as Nadars who had 'come up' in the world.

Judith was born a Christian but her paternal ancestors are not the early convert Christian Nadars described by Hardgrave. Her father Mahesh was born into a very poor family of Hindu Nadars who lived in a village in Ramnad District. His parents died in an epidemic leaving their four children to fend for themselves. She repeated several times that the orphans were very poor. A mark of poverty she chose to share was that they were too poor to buy rice: only 'royal' or 'rich' people could afford this luxury staple. Her father and his sisters lived on *ragi*[65] and the small earnings of their eldest brother who had found employment in a provision shop. Judith's father left school at thirteen and joined his brother in the provision shop. After arranging the marriages of both sisters, Judith's father

[65] *Ragi* is also known as finger millet and is a cereal crop that forms an important staple in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

and her paternal uncle moved to Chennai where they started a small business. She was not clear on what the concern of the business had been.

It was during this period, where he lived in unhygienic conditions, that Mahesh developed symptoms of tuberculosis. This illness was the catalyst for his conversion to Christianity and will be discussed in the next section. Some time later, he married Judith's mother Janani, who was also a member of the Nadar caste but who was born a member of the Church of South India.[66] At the same time, Mahesh and his elder brother began to manufacture condiments. Their operation was successful and eventually it was divided into two separate cottage industries, the first located in Salem and managed by Mahesh's elder brother, the second in Dharmapuri where Judith's family settled. Now known in the town as 'Pickle *Anna*'[67] [Pickle Elder Brother] he commands the respect accorded to a successful businessman and employer. When we travelled together to Dharmapuri, Judith took me to the local market where she proudly pointed out the varieties of their condiments for sale in the stores. I noticed that many people greeted her warmly, stopped to chat about her life and career in Bangalore and passed on greetings to her parents.

The respect accorded to Judith's family in Dharmapuri town was also evident in brief moments where she came across a friend or acquaintance from Dharmapuri while in Bangalore. One Friday evening as we rushed to the bus stand near the boarding house, we reached a major intersection where a Dharmapuri bus was waiting at the signal. Judith began to frantically hail the driver, who upon noticing her, cheerfully opened the doors and allowed us to board just as the signal changed. Stepping around the moving vehicles that were pulling out behind the bus I was terrified, but Judith was relaxed. The driver came

[66] Despite constant questioning Judith was evasive when asked about her mother's family.

[67] *Anna* [elder brother] in Tamil conveys Judith's father's exalted position as an employer. The use of this kinship term implies that his capacity to provide sustenance and protection associated with an elder brother has been extended to a whole town.

from Dharmapuri and was one of her brother's friends and a member of their church. 'Of course' he was happy to stop in the middle of the road to pick us up. 'He is one of our believer's sister's husband'[68] she told me, as if this settled the matter.

In keeping with the significance of the Nadar narrative of reform and improvement, Judith tended to speak in sharp contrasts about a prior history of disadvantage and a comfortable but not entirely stable position of middle-class prosperity. These strict dichotomies also emerged in her evaluation of the *hifi* people. Stark contrasts charted her father's rise from extreme disadvantage and chronic illness to his current position of a successful businessman. She contrasted lack of food, earlier and their current surplus as producers of food. She contrasted her father's unfortunate upbringing without parents to the warmth and closeness of their joint family. The poverty that prevented his getting an education fuelled his desire to provide an education for her. As she put it,

> My father's thing is, he didn't study well so his kids, *they* should study well. Back then there was only one English medium school - we [she and her two elder brothers] were there. We studied in English medium so now we are in a good life in this place (Judith).

Her exalted status as a postgraduate working in a BPO in Bangalore while fluent in English was a testimony to her father's efforts.

Ownership of property was also illustrative of the family's progress. She distinguished between rented houses and their current status as property owners.[69] She described the small house once owned by her father's family in their village in Ramnad where food was scarce, and the rental houses in Chennai where her father had suffered tubercular coughing

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[68] Judith used the term 'believer' to refer to other members of the Assemblies of God Church she attended and more broadly to other Pentecostal Christians.

[69] My research assistant also frequently made the distinction between residents in Bangalore who owned property and those, like her family, who rented their apartments. The owners of property were described as advantaged over others regardless of their ethnicity or regional identity.

fits before being saved by the Pentecostal congregation who prayed for his recovery. This narrative ended with her explaining that due to the grace and favour of God her parents now owned both the multi-room, two storey concrete house they lived in, their factory compound and another small dwelling which they rented out to an impoverished Brahmin family.

Supporting the Family Business

Hardgrave argued that both wealthy and impoverished Nadars share an awareness that the community has 'come up'. For Judith's family, their entry into trade and subsequent success in business was the result not only of frugal management but also of the combined efforts of all family members. This too relates to a feature of the community noted as far back as the late 1960s. Hardgrave argued that the success of the Nadars in business can be attributed to belief in the improvement of the caste as a group and the combined and continuous efforts of family members to work for and support Nadar businesses. He stated, 'In their determination to rise, each pice and all the energy of the family are turned back into the business, no matter how small or how large.' (Hardgrave Jr 1969, 148).

Narratives like the one that Judith told me about her family's rise from poverty, illiteracy and disadvantage to comfort and security are common among Nadar traders. Judith's act of remitting almost all of her salary to her parents each month thus emerges as more than an instance of familial *seva*. It is also a part of the ethics of a caste-based collective endeavour. She was expected to return each weekend not only to receive sustenance and participate in the regular transactions of food, substances and care but also to assist her parents with whatever tasks happened to be required by the family business.

Judith generally longed for her weekends at home but during May and June, the middle of summer, when Bangalore was hot but bearable, the temperature in Dharmapuri

continued to rise. Her parents did not own a power inverter and the long power cuts under load sharing meant hours without ceiling fans. Wood smoke and fires from the pickle factory intensified the heat. Her nieces, one a baby, the other a toddler, were troubled by the extreme temperatures and often screamed. Prior to one of our trips she begged Mahesh to let her stay in Bangalore where it was cooler. At this moment, her normally congenial father reprimanded her, reminding her that as they were not 'silver spoons' she should adjust in all things and was expected at home. Like Jeffrey's Jat informants in *Timepass* (2010) who also used the term 'silver spoons', Judith's family ethic was also a caste ethic by which they differentiated themselves from the urban middle classes whom they perceived as effete and 'soft' (Jeffrey 2010, 174).

For Judith and Manaswi, family histories of poverty and manual labour continued to shape their values and actions as members of the regional middle classes even though their families were no longer in poverty or performing such work. De Neve argued that his Tamil Gounder[70] informants made similar claims, deriving their success as textile producers from the attitude to hard work that had been learned while they laboured in the fields:

> The imagery of 'poverty' and 'simple beginnings' … shape these entrepreneurs' narratives about the early stages of their working lives in the city […] For all men narratives about simple beginnings go hand in hand with a discourse of *uzhaippu* (toil, hard work), routinely used as an explanation for their success (De Neve 2011, 76).

[70] Although Ne Deve and Epstein both worked with castes called 'Gowdas', 'Gounders' etc. Pandian notes that although both castes are referred to as Gounders/Gowdas, 'The Kongu Gounders [referred in De Neve] represent an agrarian history … and social background different from that of the [V]Okkaliga Gounders [referred to in Epstein].' (Pandian 2009: 274). The evidence I have presented in this chapter indicates that some similarities exist across both groups but although they have a similar name, their members are not of the same caste.

Missionary Influence and Social Mobility

Judith was born in 1986 and as an infant was dedicated to the church, rather than baptised.[71] She grew up attending regular Sunday services, participating in church functions and was educated at a Seventh Day Adventist School. She was fervently committed to the Christian way of life and relied on church publications and the Bible as a spiritual guide. I was struck early in my acquaintance with Judith by her active engagement with social work and service to the church. Although not in full time ministry like her eldest brother, Judith has worked for many years as a Sunday school teacher – in fact she had managed to continue to play the role even while living and working in Bangalore. It was another reason that she returned to Dharmapuri each weekend. She also performed in a regular community television program to promote Christian faith in children and in videos of devotional music written and performed by one of her maternal uncles. In addition, while living in the PG she was studying for a Bachelor of Social Work by correspondence and hoped to move into that field at a later stage.

In the previous chapter, I indicated the enormous importance that Judith and her parents placed on education. These attitudes can be traced back to the work of Protestant missionaries who proved an asset to the cause of Nadar advancement. The mass conversions of Shanars in Tirunelveli at the hands of Protestant missionaries provided this group with access to education, patronage and employment as church functionaries and as proselytisers. These early roles in the church provided opportunities for further education and were a means to launch some converts into professional careers. Even though many Nadars, including Judith's paternal ancestors remained Hindu, Christianity produced new social imaginaries, which have shaped notions of social class and of gender among Nadars today. In addition to an escape from the humiliations of low caste status, missionary

[71] Judith's church practices the 'dedication' of babies rather than baptism. Members of the church can only request baptism after they have experienced the Holy Spirit.

evangelism provided a conduit to church institutions, forms of patronage, literacy and education. Hardgrave has argued that Tirunelveli conversions provided the catalyst for the subsequent elevation of the Nadars and the growth of a shared identity (Hardgrave Jr 1969, 45-55). Unlike their Jesuit rivals, who aimed in the main to convert the forward castes, Protestant missionaries worked against the caste system (Mosse 2012, 51-2). Drawing on evangelical beliefs in 'improvement' and 'duty', which readily became dispositions of reform, missionaries sought to impose British aesthetics, practices and dispositions on their convert populations rather than indigenise Christianity (Mosse 2012, 50-1). But this also brought in its train a refusal to practice 'accommodation' to Brahmanical norms. The attitude would have long lasting effects. Among converts, Christianity was viewed primarily as a means of social advancement and the importance of caste was never depleted and possibly strengthened by conversion (Hardgrave Jr 1969, 90).

The process of conversion and the missionary goal of producing a completely Christian habitus required a new imagining of gender roles and of femininity.[72] Nadars recognised early that conversion presented an opportunity for social mobility through education. Haggis (1998) has argued although missionaries extolled the Victorian codes of female domesticity, in practice, they openly encouraged Indian convert women to enter missionary service, to work for the missions producing lace, or become nurses or teachers in the mission schools. She argued that it was as teachers, nurses and midwives and rather than as sequestered [Hindu] wives that converts would be most useful to church

[72] Following conversion, Nadar women posed an explicit challenge to the dominant caste Nairs, when they began to cover their breasts. Covering was forbidden for all non-Nair and non-Brahmin castes. Faced with ire from those they were attempting to emulate, Nadars were ordered by royal decree to use a different garment to that of the Nairs. They refused. Missionaries argued that covering was in accord with Christian modesty, thus illustrating their refusal to accommodate caste norms in the domain of adornment or practice. Hardgrave and others have detailed the struggle that ensured between missionaries, Nadar spokespeople and members of the dominant castes (Hardgrave Jr 1969 55).

organisations (Haggis 1998, 82, 90, 92). For their part, these early converts used their mission education and new mobility to engage in practices otherwise forbidden to women of low caste origins (Haggis 1998, 94-95).

Judith's account of her family's conversion and their dedication to the church illuminates the complex intersection of social mobility, faith and collective identity. She told me that her maternal relatives had always been members of CSI congregations. Her father, born into a Hindu Nadar family, converted to Christianity while suffering from tuberculosis and believing that conventional treatments had failed to cure the disease. He was persuaded to attend an Assemblies of God Church where the congregation prayed for him. According to Judith, this act of prayer affected a miracle. Believing himself cured, Mahesh destroyed the deities to which he and his brother had made daily prayers, was baptised and joined the church. After his conversion, his elder brother and his elder brother's wife and their children all joined congregations of Assemblies of God. Shortly after, he married Judith's mother. Hindu and Christian Nadars have a distinctive history of marrying across religious lines but only with fellow Nadars. Judith herself mentioned this. She could marry into the family of a man who was a Hindu Nadar but he would have to convert to Christianity. Belatedly she said that she could also worship Hindu deities if she married into a Hindu Nadar family but her preference was for a Pentecostal Christian family.

Working to Avoid Debt

The church provided Judith's family with patronage and support at critical moments. In addition to providing spiritual guidance, the church provided employment for her brother, small loans and access to valuable professional networks. It was through the efforts of the pastor's wife that Judith secured her first job as a medical coder without prior experience or professional certification. In the PG when we found time to talk undisturbed

by others, Judith confided that the church and the mercy of God had saved her family from bankruptcy. I was shocked. Just weeks earlier she had proudly informed me that her parents were the first family in their street to own a television or to have a home Internet connection. Their current financial position had, in fact, been secured by Judith's salary. But before she was able to contribute financially, the situation had been dire. Judith's parents were forced to seek loans from members of their extended family. In addition to being humiliated, their position of indebtedness compromised Judith's education. Relatives argued that the education of a daughter was something her parents could ill afford if they needed money so badly and tried to convince her mother and father to withdraw her from college. She described having to borrow 7000 rupees from friends to pay for her end of year exams. During this time, her father developed low blood pressure and needed heart surgery. Relatives, including her father's elder brother turned them away and would not provide further loans for his medical treatment. Her parents approached a local moneylender but could not afford the interest that would have been charged on the principle. In anguish and desperation, the family turned to prayer.

Members of the nuclear family gathered daily and prayed that God would help them find the money. Friends and members of her congregation came forward and helped her parents with small loans before finding permanent employment in the ministry for her elder brother. The church also arranged her elder brother's marriage to an orphaned Christian woman from Kerala.[73] Her father's surgery was successful and he recovered. Over time the business also recovered and her parents were able to clear their debts. The

[73] Initially I was surprised to discover that Judith's parents had allowed an intercaste marriage in their family. When I asked Judith about how such an unorthodox wedding had been allowed, she indicated that residence rules were the reason. In the case of a woman from another caste marrying one of her brothers, the woman would be coming into *their* family and Judith's parents could be satisfied that she would be treated well. They would never give their daughter to a family from a different caste because as she would be obliged to live in the other family's home her own family could not guarantee her welfare.

relationship that had been established between Judith's family and the Assemblies Of God mirrors that of the Tirunelveli converts and Protestant missionaries in the nineteenth century. The church provided patronage, global links, educational and professional opportunities as well as spiritual guidance. She told me many times that the period had irrevocably damaged relations between her nuclear family and that of her father's elder brother. The strain between these two branches of the family was evident at some of the family functions I attended and in Judith's refusal to attend a paternal cousin's wedding because this cousin was younger than her and she felt that the family should have waited until her wedding had been fixed before going ahead. Her parents attended the function, but Judith remained in the boarding house in protest. These acts of perceived acts of betrayal were neither forgiven nor forgotten. In the face of such disappointments, she would only place her trust in God and her parents.

What this suggests is that although Judith's attitudes were clearly shaped by positive histories of social reform and widening opportunities for advancement, the progress that her family had attained was precarious and could be destroyed by misfortune, debt and lack of reciprocity between kin. Solidarity and mutual assistance stood out for her as important virtues precisely because her family's shared strategy to improve their circumstances was so badly compromised by the lack of support from extended kin. It was therefore all the more important that she adopt a steadfast position by working to provide remittances and maintaining faith and trust in her parents.

Family histories of debt also shaped Manaswi's upbringing. Her grandfather died after receiving a loan and as a result, responsibility for settling the debt fell to her father who worked for many years as a coolie to clear it. This experience of poverty and indebtedness had lasting consequences for the family. Determined that they should never be at the mercy

of moneylenders again, Manaswi's father, Jayendra, decided that the family would make many sacrifices in order to live within their means. As she put it:

> What we have in our hand, that much only we will spend. Even if we don't have food, we will not take money from others. We prefer a simple life; we like to live happily with no worries. Suppose something happens to me or even if something happens to all of us – then no problem, no worries. [But] if we borrow something then we are always thinking, we have taken that amount, we have to return it to them.

This history of indebtedness has fed into the family's support for Manaswi to complete college, migrate alone and take up paid work to assist the family. Utilising her salary and expertise, they were able to raise the capital of forty lakhs needed to rebuild the house without taking loans. I learned from other families that house building and college education were two areas where families often took high interest loans.[74] But by using remittances and keeping costs low in Bangalore, the family avoided going into debt. I estimate that Manaswi worked for at least five years full time to raise this money. As her education was heavily subsidised this was attainable without the family having to borrow.

Frugal management of family resources was paramount. Given that Mandya is a drought affected area in Karnataka, many other families were adopting income-generating strategies like silk farming and sinking new wells. Manaswi assessed these on how risky they seemed. She knew that relatively prosperous families in the village had borrowed

[74] 2012 was a particularly bad year in the ongoing drought affecting Karnataka. Manaswi spoke at length about the distress caused by water shortages across villages in Mandya, including her own. Her account of the lengths to which her family had gone to avoid entering into debt showed many similarities with accounts of farmers driven to suicide by mounting debt in Karnataka, Maharashtra and elsewhere (see Bhatia 2009). During 2012, lack of rain intensified conflict between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu with regard to the sharing of Cauvery waters and resulted in protests, vandalism and strikes ('Cauvery Protests Continue in City' *The Hindu* 8/10/12, 'Cauvery Protests Hold City to Ransom' *The Hindu* 5/10/12 and Meenakshisundaram, Raghavan and Singh 2010).

money from moneylenders to sink bore wells.[75] Her family had considered putting in a bore well but decided against this as they could not be certain that there was water available and could not take such a risk so soon after the completion of the construction of the house. Any further expenses would drive them into debt.

Both Judith and Manaswi's middle-class identities were thus far from assured. Rather they had emerged more recently from histories of familial struggle. These histories of disadvantage were overcome through the introduction of high input agriculture in the case of Manaswi's community and the establishment of successful businesses in the case of Judith's community. These histories of disadvantage not only made the position of a working daughter more salient but they also bequeathed a determination to guard against the possibility of sliding back into poverty. This was lived as part of everyday common sense – whether regarding consumption or labour.

Unlike Judith who spoke mostly about her father and paternal relatives, Manaswi described the difficulties faced by her mother. In her family, two sisters had married two brothers. Her paternal grandmother (now deceased) favoured her elder aunty and burdened Manaswi's mother and her elder brothers with farm labour, preventing them from regularly attending school.

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[75] Other families affected by the drought also began silk farming as this activity could generate an income and was not affected by lack of water. Manaswi mentioned that some members of her extended family had left their land and were now working as daily labourers in order to survive and feed their families. This accords with predictions that Epstein made in the 1990s. She suggested then that although Vokkaligas continued to be a dominant community in Mandya district, even with land ownership their dominant position was threatened by lack of water. She argued, 'External interventions to increase rural incomes have recently concentrated on improving agricultural productivity. […] Irrigation schemes have relieved farmers from dependence on uncertain and scare rainfall. Irrigation together with high yielding varieties of seeds and artificial fertiliser brought about the "green revolution", which increased the agricultural productivity of irrigated lands manifold. […] However, irrigated farming practices use up excessive amounts of water, so much that *water rather than land has now become the scarce resource*.' [emphasis added] (Epstein, Suryanarayana and Thimmegowda 1998: 213-214).

> My paternal grandmother used to send my mother to farm, to work. She faced a lot of problems. My elder aunty would take care of me, but my brothers are there and no one took care of them. My grandmother used to send my brothers to farm along with my mother. They were in school that time but before going to school they had to bring crops to feed the animals. Even as young children they used to work. So my mother feels so bad because my elder aunty's daughters and sons are all going to school; they don't have any work before school but my mother has got this kind of work. She feels "why are they doing this to my children?" She faced so many problems in her life.

The challenges that Manaswi's mother faced as a young woman before the death of her mother-in-law and the separation of her family into a nuclear unit were part of the reason that Manaswi wanted to help her parents build their house. She continued,

> My mother suffered a lot. [But] now, the happiest woman in my family is my mother! We have nearly built our house. It's a big house compared to others. Now everyone will say, "that family has built a house and we have not done [achieved] anything. Now they have that idea!"

Seva and Social Mobility: Coming Up in the World

Seva is meant to be reciprocal, but reciprocation is delayed to the next generation. By raising their children to adulthood, parents have already fulfilled their obligations and responsibility falls to their children to care for them. Both families were at a kind of midpoint in the cycle of reciprocity where grown children no longer needed constant care from their parents, and parents were not yet retired and reliant on their children. In a sense, all members of the family were serving each other in the pursuit of collective goals like marrying off a daughter or sister or building the elders a comfortable new home. In monetary terms, Judith's parents had supported her, fed, cared for and educated her throughout her life and given her well beyond what they had received from their parents. It was therefore fitting that she contributes as much as possible to assist them to continue to assist her. That she did so with an understanding that much of what she earned would eventually be returned to her as her dowry should not imply individual self-interest. As I

have suggested, *seva* or service to the family engenders redistribution by parents and therefore appropriate social mobility for the entire family.

As Lamb (2009) and Cohen (1999) have argued, *seva* is a long standing cultural ideal in India. Where the practices I have described differ from this ideal are firstly in the newly-ordered gendering of these responsibilities (see Chapter One), and secondly, in the fact that the kinds of *seva* I have described can be meaningfully linked both to histories of caste mobilisation and to micro histories of the social mobility of families. It is here that discourses of 'coming up in the world' intersect with discourses of *seva*. Remitting money to kin and building houses are also viewed as a way of protecting family wealth against future loss or misfortune. Consider a second time, the quote from Manaswi to which I referred in the opening of this chapter:

> If we're coming from a poor family, then first we should help our family to come up. After that, you can think of individual needs. If the family comes up, then the whole community will respect our family – neighbours, relatives, everyone will give us respect – so that development will not vanish. If I spend money on myself, and only raise my own position, then if one day I don't get any money – I'll go back to bottom.

For both women, the sense of collective endeavour was shaped by family histories of manual labour and disadvantage as much as by broader histories of caste mobilisation and social reform. The fabled rise to prominence of the Nadar castes provided a stable narrative bulwark against the unpredictable fortunes of Judith's family business. The newly constructed house that Manaswi paid for and designed for her family proclaimed their collective achievement of social mobility and provided security against future misfortunes, including the vagaries of drought. The frustrations and alienation that Manaswi endured in the city were redeemed by her family's progress in their village, in the reconstruction of their home and the rejuvenation of their farm and land. Both women laboured in Bangalore

as a means to demonstrate love, support and closeness to their families although they could only be at home just two days a week.

In the next chapter I will describe another resident, who like Judith and Manaswi, lived as a paying guest in order to work and assist her family, but did so in ways that established greater autonomy for herself than other women in the boarding house.

Chapter Three

Women and the Temporality of Waiting

At thirty, Ruth was the oldest resident of the paying guest.[76] She had been living there for between six and eight years. We were roommates. When I first arrived, she was absent, attending a training camp of BPO workers in Mysore having just secured a job with Infosys,[77] one of India's largest providers of business process outsourcing. Infosys employs close to 160,000 people worldwide. Its corporate headquarters are located in Electronic City, a special economic zone to the south and west of central Bangalore. Many Infosys employees work in internal communications and administrative roles. Ruth worked in one of these internal divisions. She worked a standard six-day week and alternated between day and late shifts. Her regular hours were 11am to 9pm. If her shift commenced during the day, she caught a bus; if it was a night shift she was collected from our boarding house by a driver and driven home afterwards. The boarding house was located nearly an hour from Electronic City – an hour, that is, if the traffic was to keep flowing smoothly. Employees at Infosys receive small incentive payments if they find accommodation close to the office. This supposedly reduces transport costs and prevents lateness, but Ruth

[76] Ruth was less forthcoming with personal information than some of the other participants in this study. The timeline I have given is based on information she provided and commentaries from friends and sometime adversaries in the PG.

[77] Infosys boasts a large private estate with sleek modern offices overlooking an auditorium and carefully manicured gardens and lawns. There is also a large swimming pool although I did not see it. The complex, which is known in Bangalore as the Infosys campus is a carefully managed, self-consciously eco-friendly environment in which employees cycle between hubs and there are no cars, only buggies. In the early section of my field research I was invited to attend an Infosys staff party. At this event which reminded me more of a sports carnival than a work function, a critically acclaimed and very popular actor and playback singer provided the entertainment as various 'teams' received prizes for outstanding customer service. The male and female employees, most of whom looked to be 30 years old or younger danced beneath billboards that read 'INFOSYS, COOL, FUN WORKPLACE'!

preferred to stay in the PG where she had been living while unemployed, the rent being manageable within her current salary.

The distance from her office, coupled with Bangalore's chaotic traffic, increased her travel time substantially and meant that she often had to eat cold, stale dinners late in the night. She was usually still asleep when other residents were waking, eating breakfast and leaving for college or their offices and by the time she returned, the other women were usually in bed. Her working hours or 'timings' as she and other women referred to them suited my purposes, however. They facilitated my getting to know her. By mid-morning, the PG was usually empty except for Ruth, the *Akkas* and myself. As a result, we regularly spent time together while she prepared for her shift. During these relatively quiet moments, other residents were not present to overhear our conversations. When our sleeping area was 'full', Ruth withdrew from the group by watching movies, drafting emails or listening to music on her laptop with headphones. She frequently stayed awake late into the night to speak on Skype with her younger brother, Rajesh, who had just enrolled in a medical residency at a hospital in Chicago. She kept a small black leather bound Bible on her pillow. In contrast to some of the other women who read from Tamil, Kannada or Malayalam Bibles, Ruth's Bible was a King James edition in English.

Ruth's family were middle class, and 'rich' in symbolic capital in the form of English medium education and postgraduate qualifications, as well as being professional members of a highly educated urban intelligentsia. Her mother was a lecturer in economics at a college in Hyderabad, and her father a retired school principal. Her parents had the values of an older liberal elite. They had encouraged their son to work for a year as a medical officer in a village hospital, both to widen his experience, and as a form of service to the less fortunate. But following this stint Rajesh wanted to complete further specialist training in the US. He had saved some money for himself but in order to realise this ambitious

dream, the family borrowed heavily. Ruth's mother liquidated her savings and borrowed a large amount of money from commercial lenders and relatives to facilitate the move. Once in the United States, Rajesh received financial support from 'seniors' who like him, had completed their earlier medical training in Hyderabad. These seniors helped Rajesh secure a position in a hospital placement and provided him with short-term loans and accommodation during emergencies. However, the family now had to repay these senior colleagues as well. If successful in his bid to gain a place as a medical resident, Rajesh would be in an ideal position to seek a permanent position in a US hospital and thus to repay the initial costs of his placement with ease and settle in the US if he chose.[78] He assured his parents he would repay whatever had been spent to get him to the US. The debt was considered a short-term period of indebtedness that was necessary to reach a longer-term goal. After all, as a qualified medical practitioner working in the United States, Rajesh could look forward to a financially comfortable and high-status career. Eventually, Rajesh was accepted into a residency program at a hospital in Chicago and was able to earn again.

Although Ruth viewed her younger brother as the more intellectually gifted sibling, her own training and education were impressive in turn. However, a number of circumstances conspired to make Ruth' life one in which her choices were far more constrained than that of her brother's, as well as tying her ever more closely to providing emotional and at times, financial support to her parents. Ruth completed a Bachelor of Science degree followed by a Masters in microbiology and biochemistry. In the early

[78] In order to compete for a place, Rajesh needed to clear many examinations. The family had to pay substantial fees for each of these exam sittings. These and other ongoing costs were producing significant financial strain for the family and it was not clear that Rajesh would be competitive enough to be offered a place. As I mentioned in Chapter One, the prohibitive cost of gaining US based certifications was one of the reasons Judith was unable to establish herself formally as a medical coder.

2000s, microbiology was hailed as an up and coming field in India's expanding knowledge industries (for an overview of the 'knowledge industries' concept see Dahlman and Utz 2005). Pharmaceutical companies promoted microbiology as a booming field where many new and well-paid positions would soon become available for talented Indian graduates (Kumar et al. 2004). Under the direction of C.M. Krishna, the state government of Karnataka offered concessions and tax breaks in an attempt to attract biotech companies to Bangalore (Nair 2005, 334). At the same time, universities integrated microbiology into their curriculum to meet demand from families who hoped that their children might join this new labour force. Ruth completed her Masters in the first 'batch' in a new course in microbiology at a private girls college in Hyderabad. But much to her disappointment, by the time she graduated, this booming industry where she had hoped to work and progress was not taking on as many Indian workers as had been predicted.[79] Only highly skilled research scientists with doctorates were able to find employment in the foreign and Indian owned firms she approached for jobs.

Unable to find employment in a science related field and lacking financial support to begin a PhD, Ruth had endured between five and six years of unemployment before finding a job at Infosys. Ruth was ambivalent about her job. But during this interim period there was a sense in which she needed to remain 'independent' – that is, not be an economic burden on her parents. She was satisfied with the salary but found her daily tasks dull and stifling. She planned to work for a few more years, and then possibly commence a PhD in microbiology.

[79] The short article 'Biotech Boom … but where are the jobs?' published on Reddiff suggested that Ruth was not alone in her struggle to find entry-level work without a PhD or a qualification in pharmacy. Like her, many students quoted in the article moved to IT companies when they were unable to find work in biotech (see Bansal 2007).

Independence as Service to the Family

Educational and professional opportunities motivated many young women to migrate to Bangalore. The other working women in this study migrated in order to find employment opportunities that were unavailable in their home towns. There were no BPO jobs for Judith in Dharmapuri; Renuka (whose migration history I will document in Chapter Four) would have found it tough to find work as an interior designer in the small northern city of Davangere in Karnataka. While jobs were available for civil engineers in Mandya, Manaswi was able to earn a great deal more in Bangalore than would have been possible at home. Women from the North East of India were even more emphatic about the lack of professional opportunities in their home states which they often described as 'backward places' when compared with Bangalore where many college places and entry level jobs were available. But Ruth's presence in Bangalore presents an anomaly within this explanatory framework. Ruth migrated to Bangalore from Hyderabad, a city that vies with Bangalore for investment in the BPO and ITES industries. Yet she was employed in a low-level call centre job. I often wondered why she was living away from home rather than with her parents.

In part, she migrated to escape from family conflict. Ruth's father had struggled for many years with alcoholism. Although she described herself as extremely attached to her father, who always treated her as precious and special, she fought with him constantly about his drinking, and this became unbearable. Ruth did not reveal this to me until after her father's death in December 2012[80] although in earlier interviews she had mentioned tensions in the family. Although she viewed herself as being over-qualified to work in a call-centre, employment in the ITES and BPO industry provided a welcome alternative to her struggles at home. As she put it in an early conversation:

[80] I returned to Bangalore for a short research trip in May–June 2013.

> I came here looking for a job.[81] I did some computer courses. After that, I was planning to do my PhD but it would take a lot of time and money. My dad retired by then, so it was kind of getting difficult at home. My brother had finished his education and he wanted to go abroad for studies, so I thought, I'll take up a job, support myself and not be dependent on my family. So that's what I'm doing now.

This striving to 'not be dependent' shapes her description of the entire early period of her life as a working woman in a new city. In the beginning, like many other women in this study, Ruth boarded with friends of her parents who acted as her guardians. Eventually though, she decided to move to a boarding house as she had begun to feel like a burden to this family.

> When I arrived, I stayed with my dad's friend[s]. It was somewhere here close by. And then, I mean, it's not that they were not accommodating or anything but I didn't like it there. I felt it was very good for me to move into a PG. I searched for a place and then I got it here and I moved. I mean I don't want to disturb anybody. I know they could accommodate me but still they would have a problem. Why give them additional problems? I went for interviews I came back *late* and all, that's a problem right?

As with Tamana, whom I mentioned in the Introduction, boarding with relatives or family friends placed Ruth and by implication, her parents, in a position she felt that she could not appropriately reciprocate. She was also concerned that her movement though the city – searching for jobs, spending time in Internet cafés, travelling long distances to attend interviews – made her guardians anxious. This accords with Patel's argument that travel between home and the office often provokes greater anxiety for women's kin than their taking on paid work and is one of the reasons that BPOs are obliged to provide transport

[81] At no time during recorded interviews or informal conversation did Ruth refer to the period when she had been unemployed. I did not want to press her on this and therefore do not have any information explicitly from her about this period of her life or how she supported herself. I have been led to believe by other informants that her mother paid her board and covered her living expenses while she lived in the PG.

options for their employees (Patel 2010, 70).[82] Negotiating public transport, catching buses, communicating with auto rickshaw drivers and navigating the city were challenges she faced. Initially her parents refused to allow her to move to a PG. When I asked what their concerns were at the time, she said:

> I was alone here. There was nobody to help, and I didn't even know the language. They felt it was not safe. But now they feel more confident, because I know a lot of places, I [can] go on my own, do everything on my own.

As she did not already have a job and had few networks or connections to help her find employment, she told me that like others, she had struggled to find work:

> It was very difficult because I had to find out [about job opportunities]. I didn't have a laptop or an Internet connection, I had to go to an Internet Café to browse and find out things. I had the usual difficulties of settling down. It took time for me to adjust, but I felt comfortable after six months. After that, I slowly started doing things on my own. Going out for interviews on my own and all of that. It was very difficult, but we have to struggle to get a job; it's not easy. I did struggle, but it's OK, I'm happy. It was worth it.

Ruth's desire to be independent was shaped also by a desire to be of service to her family. In contrast to understandings of autonomy that tie this concept to self-interest Ruth viewed her independence as the most appropriate way to serve her family (see Mahmood 2005, 11). Even though she described conflict with her father, they had been especially close – he often joked to his son that he better 'study well' because he intended to leave all of his property to Ruth, rather than share it equally between both of his children: 'Whatever I have will go to this girl', he would say. Although her father was joking in these exchanges, his humour gained its force by running counter to the prevailing ideal and practice that a daughter, once married, has no further claim on parental property which passes to her male kin (Lamb 2009, 34). There was a tragic undertone to this humorous

[82] From Patel (2010, 70) 'The pick-up and drop-off service is considered the highest level of transport available. Women whose families were difficult to convince about their taking a call-centre job looked specifically for companies that provided this type of transport.'

exchange which was re-told first during his illness and later, after his death. Our final interview took place five months after he passed, and Ruth was struggling with the grief of losing a parent.

It was only after her father's death that she revealed he had been in poor health for three years and had needed constant medical intervention and frequent hospitalisations. Ruth shouldered many responsibilities during his final illness. She recounted harrowing experiences of tending to him in intensive care – rushing between floors to purchase medicines from the counter, pay the bills and discuss her father's treatment with the medical staff.[83] Her mother had encouraged Rajesh to return to Hyderabad, but Ruth's father died before he could board the plane. As a result, he stayed on in the US and could not attend the funeral. In the aftermath, Ruth was seeking an internal job transfer to the Infosys office in Hyderabad where she hoped to be employed in the same division and for a comparable salary.

Before her father's death, when I asked her about her hopes for the future, she stated unequivocally that she wanted her parents to be secure and happy. They in turn would be satisfied when their children were secure in well-paid jobs and settled with their spouses. Her parents had directed their energy and finances towards these ends for many years.

> I want them to be happy because they have been through a lot of hardship for us, for the family's sake. They will be happy when we are happy. I would do anything for them. They've always struggled hard to get us into good colleges, everything. They've taken loans: when they wanted to save they could not save because we were in college. They've been through pretty much struggle all their lives. They never thought about owning a house or car or anything for themselves because they felt our education and getting a good job was more important. So they want us to be in a very good position, married, settled, everything. (Ruth)

[83] It is standard practice in Indian hospitals that the family of the patient must purchase all medicines used to treat their loved ones. This can add a great deal of stress and anxiety as the family member must queue at different stations and make repeated trips.

This statement suggests the complex entanglement of parental aspirations for children as well as the children's sense of the intimate tie between their own wellbeing and the sacrifices made by their parents in order to bring their own imagined futures to fruition. Indebtedness to parents for acts of care already received is central, as we have already seen, to the way *seva* is understood and actualised. For Ruth's family, as with Manaswi's, described in the previous chapter, the existential sense of indebtedness and responsibility includes also the economic indebtedness and responsibility that bears on the actual indebtedness of the family. The parents, who have taken capital loans to pursue these projects of upward mobility, face hardship and potential loss of face as they struggle to repay their creditors. Like the loans taken by her parents, the qualifying examinations undertaken by her brother and her own working week divided into shifts, Ruth's world consisted of cycles of time over which she had little control. In these trying circumstances, she drew on considerable reserves of endurance and turned to forms of purposeful waiting.

What Was She Waiting For?

Waiting to Shift from the PG

Like Judith, Ruth often told me that she was planning to 'shift'. Residents of the paying guest are a highly mobile group. As I have indicated in a previous chapter, women moved in and out of the PG making regular trips home to their families and often stayed with relatives living in the city. When we met, Ruth's closest friends, Hannah and Meena had both left the boarding house permanently. Hannah married, and Meena was forced to leave after several acrimonious disputes with the *Akkas* and other residents. Without these close friends, Ruth was feeling lonely in the boarding house and wanted to find accommodation closer to her office. But in early 2013 when I returned to Bangalore she was still living there. Her job did not pay much, but it was enough for her to pay rent and board while she waited and hoped that her brother would eventually help her leave for

good. Her immediate responsibility was to work off the debts incurred through her father's medical treatment and assist her mother who was living with an aunt. After that, she wanted to move into an apartment.

Waiting for Marriage

For most women, the boarding house was a temporary home that they occupied and made habitable for a finite period prior to marriage. For Ruth, this temporary home had become relatively permanent. Years of unemployment had stretched on and terminated in a job well below her expectations of a successful career. Although call centre employment is perceived by some as relatively prestigious on account of the regular and relatively high salaries available in the industry, the fast money available does not necessarily contribute towards social mobility or respect for call centre employees and their families. Patel noted a family preference for sons and daughters not to marry a call centre worker even if they work in a call centre themselves (Patel 2010, 130). In part, this reflects tensions within fractions of the middle class. Ruth's family placed a higher value on achievement in one of the professions than in service sector work regardless of the salary. Her job at Infosys and by implication, her residence as a paying guest were improvised substitutes that would be replaced by further study and eventually, marriage when the loans had been repaid, and when Rajesh was able to contribute.

In addition to her struggle to find a desirable job, she was pained by the failure of the relationship she hoped would culminate in marriage. During the time I knew her, I witnessed the slow deterioration of her relationship with a prospective husband until it finally collapsed over several months. They had met on Skype. Like her, the young man came from Hyderabad but was working in Jamaica before returning to Bangalore, to a

position in a local bank.[84] Ruth mentioned the relationship but did not speak freely about it. As I had witnessed in the case of Judith's family, the process of settling engagements between prospective spouses was a fraught and often tense time for the families.

Ruth's approach to her marriage followed the pattern that Uberoi has described as an 'arranged love marriage' (2006b, 180). Having decided to marry, the couple make initial agreements in anticipation of introducing the match to their parents in the hope of gaining their permission and support. Where the prospective spouses are of similar social class and parents agree, the choice made by both individuals is supported retrospectively by both families and the marriage proceeds as if it had been arranged (Dickey 2010, 180, Uberoi 2006b). Uberoi has treated this emergent marriage practice as an example of class solidarity, noting that it is favoured by upwardly mobile class groups in the diaspora and amongst the urban Indian middle classes. But support in such matters cannot be taken for granted. Uberoi has suggested that even middle-class urban Indians and economically mobile fractions of the diaspora may be explicitly 'anti-cosmopolitan' in their kinship practices and gendered norms (Uberoi 2006a, 22). In cases where parents react with shock, refusal and anxiety, additional stress is placed on the couple who in extreme cases may also face violence from families and the police who are known to endorse familial preferences over the wishes of the young people involved. This is contra to the law that in theory should offer them protection (Mody 2008, Chowdhry 2007). Although Ruth had no reason to fear violence from her parents, she was painfully aware that the relationship risked hurting them and she wanted to avoid giving them trouble, anxiety, and pain.

Although she rarely expressed emotion in front of others during the day and adopted a critical attitude towards those who did, her weeping often woke Judith and myself during

[84] Ruth implied that her fiancé's position as a service sector employee was one of the reasons that her parents objected to their relationship.

the night. Months later it emerged that her parents objected to the relationship. Her family had invested heavily in education and clearly valued it as a core dimension of achievement and identity. As a result, they would not give their consent to marry their only daughter to a man who was not a college graduate even if he was her preferred match. She too had begun to question the relationship and ultimately accepted that it could not continue. Her parents did not necessarily expect her husband's family to be of higher social status, as is the ideal in other Indian communities (see Uberoi 1993, for an overview), but the man's family must at least be equivalent in status to their's for the marriage to be successful and for their daughter to be safe and comfortable (see Caplan 1984, 188-119).[85] When I asked her what this meant in practical terms, she replied that the man should be of similar status and earning capacity to her brother. But given the lengths to which her parents had gone in order to get Rajesh to the US, it seems that a higher status husband was ideal. The family's resources were stretched to the limit in pursuit of this goal.

With marriage receding from the horizon, Ruth had begun to envision an alternative future in which Rajesh could sponsor her to emigrate to America once he had completed his medical residency. But her parents, in particular her father, wanted Rajesh to return to India once his training was complete and he had earned enough to cover the loans they had taken out to pay for his residency. Given her father's poor health during this entire period, it was all the more important that his son was with him in India. After her father's death, Rajesh did stay on in the US, but would not have the financial resources nor the legal privilege of sponsoring Ruth for some years.

[85] The idea of minimal status equivalence was articulated by other Indian Christian women in the boarding house, but they indicated that at the very least both bride and groom should be of the same *caste* rather than social class for the marriage to be successful.

Waiting as a Form of Agency

In the midst of disappointment and uncertainty, Ruth negotiated her circumstances by taking up the position of one who makes a virtue of successful waiting. Her ability to endure protracted waiting emerged as a moral practice that helped to constitute her sense of ethical selfhood. But she reflected on this indirectly by telling me stories about two other women who had left the PG. The first, Hannah, arranged her own marriage against parental wishes. The second, Meena, had her hopes for marriage dashed when her intended husband demanded a dowry that neither she nor her parents could afford. We will hear these stories in more detail but in order to understand the moral framework in which Ruth told these stories, we need to understand her particular way of synthesising her situation – where waiting was necessarily enjoined with a notion of purposeful moral practice. In her circumstances, where opportunities for action that would offer long-term solutions were curtailed, and the resolution of her predicament could not be effected alone since she required the collective efforts of her family members, she had taken recourse to a form of purposeful waiting. Although patience may not have ameliorated her distress, it certainly lent moral weight to her choices.

We may begin by considering the parallel here with Mahmood's informants who practiced a form of pietist Islam in Egypt (Mahmood 2005). They referred to the pious practice of *sabr* that Mahmood glossed as 'patience' but also as 'perseverance, endurance of hardship without complaint and steadfastness' (Mahmood 2005, 171) to describe an ethical practice that does not necessarily ameliorate one's difficult situation or allow one to realise goals, but it does enable a subject to live their suffering in a religiously appropriate manner (Mahmood 2005, 173). Outlining her approach as one that locates 'the meaning of agency … within the grammar of concepts within which it resides' (Mahmood 2005, 34), Mahmood located *sabr* within a broad framework of concepts, practices and dispositions

held not only by her informants but also by their husbands and families to a greater or lesser degree.

Hage has also argued that 'waiting […] emphasises a dimension of life where the problematic of our agency is foregrounded' (Hage 2009a, 2). He argued that although waiting may be presumed to be a state where one is unable to act as 'things are beyond our control, out of our hands, and we can "only wait" for what we wish to happen' (Hage 2009a, 2), the experience of waiting provokes reflection by the subject on their predicament and enjoins a shift from passivity to endurance. His work indicates that the problematic of waiting or patience as a form of agency is not limited to the challenges of living a religiously appropriate life. Hage's subjects were members of the middle class in contemporary Australia who may, he argued, experience a similar crisis as they witness the perceived greater social mobility of non-white immigrants (Hage 2009b). Unable to act effectively to improve their own prospects and peripheral to governmental decision-making about immigration, they too resorted to purposeful waiting for conditions to improve in much the same way as Ruth and the women described by Mahmood. Based on this empirical evidence, he argued 'It is not what you actively or creatively achieve that makes you a hero but your capacity to stick it out and 'get stuck well', so to speak […]. It is also to be able to wait for deliverance so as to come out as a survivor and start 'moving' again' (Hage 2009b, 100).

Utilising approaches developed by Hage (2009b) and Mahmood (2005) I argue that in addition to exposing the limitations of agency understood solely as based on action, an attitude or stance of purposeful waiting becomes meaningful not because of how subjects resolve their dilemmas but in the way that subjects come to inhabit them, to live within them, as an ethical practice. Ruth and other working women in the PG enjoy far less cultural capital than Hage's middle-class white subjects. A sense of what Hage described

as ‘existential immobility’ or ‘stuckedness’ describes the situation of Ruth even better (Hage 2009b, 97).

Ruth’s decision to remain in the paying guest and wait for a better alternative exemplifies a moral project of endurance, itself a kind of agency. But at the same time, waiting without action, runs the risk of simultaneously dissipating or shrinking the potential scope for future action (see also Hage 2009a, 2). The more she aged, the more difficult it would become for her to marry. Although Ruth never mentioned this, her resilient and matter-of-fact nature could not completely conceal a deep sadness.

Telling Stories of the Self by Narrating the Stories of Others

Ruth told stories about other women she had known in the PG. She told stories that reflected on a pursuit they all shared – the search for the right man, the search for loving partners. However, we have already seen that women such as Judith and Manaswi, as well as Ruth, are all deeply invested in the wider social frameworks of meaning provided by their families, and for Judith and Manaswi, their castes, which function for these purposes as dynamic communities rather than as hierarchy. It is hardly likely that for such women the search for the right partner would be conducted without reference to the wishes and support of those for whom, in some sense, they were working. The framing of marriage, and the framing of their working lives as forms of *seva* also constitute moral constraints within which women had to manoeuvre. Ruth said all this – but not in so many words. Instead she told stories that were not unlike the ones Jane Austin told over and over about the consequences of different choices taken by different women, often sisters. Their lives take very different turns, depending on their capacity to balance the passions of love and the wisdom of a marriage with the kind of income that will avoid the wretchedness of a married life overburdened by work and dismal surroundings – the fate of some women unable to call on kin whose support by then had been bartered away. The stories Ruth told

me spoke to the sadder and less sanguine elements of arranged marriages and the marriage market – more *Mansfield Park* than *Pride and Prejudice*. The lives of the female acquaintances she described were narrative foils whose failings were lessons, but unlike Austin's, Ruth's stories had no obvious heroines or happy endings. Implicitly perhaps, *she* was the heroine, but as she was 'stuck' the stories lacked narrative closure and ended ambivalently.

Ruth's stories were a critical but indirect reflection on her predicament, expressed through narratives of her relationships with past residents. They also described the constrained world of possible forms of action within which young women like herself must act and find repertoires of agency. Like her, these young women had experienced a situation of being 'stuck'. But unlike her, Ruth seemed to suggest, these women proved unable to endure. They acted impulsively, and in doing so, failed to take into account their own best interests when viewed over a longer time frame.

Ruth's Story of Hannah

Within the environment of the PG, Ruth described herself as reserved and told me that she did not like to socialise much. She appeared warm and friendly with close friends but avoided constant interaction with others. She also avoided shared spaces like the television room and kitchen, preferring to watch serials and movies on her laptop and eat sitting on her bunk. While usually friendly, she could quickly become guarded and occasionally, dismissive and cold. She liked to contrast her own behaviour and disposition with that of Hannah, a former resident, who despite being so unlike herself, had once been a close friend. Hannah's reputation among PG residents was almost the opposite of Ruth's reputation: she was known for being loud, energetic and fond of dancing. Hannah had migrated from Andhra Pradesh (like Ruth herself), but in order to complete her university

education. Also like Ruth, Hannah came from a middle-class, Christian family who lived in Hyderabad. Her father was a doctor and managed a hospital.

Meeting a roommate from the same sending community or language group was normally an opportunity to build relationships and establish ties but Ruth, with her tough attitude, had deflected Hannah's initial overtures based on shared regional background:

> [Hannah] asked me, "Where are you from?" I said, "I'm from Hyderabad." "Oh, I'm also from Andhra …" I turned to her and said, "So what?" [laughs] and she thought, I've got a lot of attitude and all of that. But gradually after some time we became friends.

But after a period when they were roommates in adjacent bunks, Hannah ran away from the PG and got married. Ruth was dismayed by the news. Her recounting of Hannah's experiences expressed concern laced with sharp criticism. She told me that Hannah had met a 'low' boy. When I asked if she was referring to his caste, she replied that caste was irrelevant to her assessment. Earlier she had told me her own family did not follow caste norms and that other than their membership of a CSI congregation, they had no caste affiliation.[86] No, the reason he was 'low' was because, unlike Hannah, his family were poor. He was poorly educated and earned a low income as an X-ray technician. He was therefore a lowly paid technical worker in a hospital, as compared with Hannah's father who was both a medical doctor and a manager. Her evaluation referred back to the moral framework of family and kinship, important also as ongoing forms of support for a woman:

[86] Ruth's claim that neither she nor her family follows caste norms can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, Caplan (1987) has argued that the many middle-class Indian Protestants were originally members of lower castes but have achieved social mobility through the patronage of the CSI and no longer identify their castes. Alternately, Ruth's claim that she has no caste can be interpreted using the model posed by Deshpande (2013). He suggested that many forward-caste Indians no longer claim direct membership of castes and rather, disguise their caste identities, posing as 'casteless'. Only members of backward classes and scheduled castes are identified by caste which is then presumed to be low.

> [Hannah] had complications at home. She ran away and got married and all of that. But I felt that was a wrong thing to do. I don't like it somehow. Maybe you call me cultural, or have a problem with the generation. I don't care; that's how I am. I don't like that.
>
> Whatever you have to do, do it, but don't hide. Be brave, tell your parents, take your time. Best thing is to take your time. You cannot decide for your life when you are very young. You need a lot of time and maturity to decide about things like that. I mean, she suffered a lot. I've seen her suffer. After getting married, they used to fight. The boy used to abuse her – she used to cry. And I felt why did she do it and why is she suffering now?

After her marriage, Hannah became pregnant, and there was a rapprochement between her parents and her new in-laws. She was allowed to return to the PG and finish university. Ruth had been surprised that Hannah's parents forgave her, especially when Hannah had gone to the extreme of filing a police complaint against them for attempting to prevent her marriage.

Hannah's was a story of downward social mobility. She was back in the PG but now married and pregnant to a man who was not her social equal and living with a family that could never approximate her own in wealth, comforts or financial security. In moments of crisis or change, many informants suggested during the course of my fieldwork that 'adjustment' was the best solution to the challenges they faced as migrants, daughters and future wives (see Chapter Four) (Vijayakumar 2013, Uberoi and Singh 2006). But Hannah could not 'adjust' to her new family. She struggled because she was accustomed to living with parents whose income provided everything for her. Joining a family in reduced circumstances had been painful.

Hannah's marriage to this young man also reversed the expectation of status equivalence between families that Caplan argued is a characteristic of marriage arrangements amongst middle-class Protestants in South India (Caplan 1987). As I mentioned earlier, a lack of status equivalence stood in the way of Ruth's hopes for

marriage and ultimately she came to view her brother rather than a husband as the one who would help her to leave. She would not elope like Hannah. Ruth interpreted Hannah's suffering as a lesson – a tale outlining the inevitable distress caused by failing to wait and the consequences of abandoning rationality to sentiment. From Ruth's point of view, Hannah's suffering would be as permanent as her unorthodox marriage, whereas her own situation had the potential to improve. Waiting was therefore the more practical as well as the more ethical choice. She completed the narrative by telling me:

> All she thought about was that she loved him, and she wanted to marry him; it was justified. I don't have a problem with that but they should have waited. If you love him, and if you want to marry him, then wait. Give it some time. They're OK now. But that's a lesson to me: be careful, always.

In Ruth's opinion, Hannah was married but not *settled*. In Indian English, the word settled connotes the ideal coming together of a person and the life stage appropriate to them in kinship, material and interpersonal terms. The word settled is often used as a synonym for married but as Hannah's situation indicates, one could be married without being settled. To be settled connotes a socially esteemed marriage, not simply the cessation of one stage through the progress of the life-course, but appropriately marked arrival at a new life stage. Movement for its own sake or without socially validated purpose holds connotations of being promiscuous, of roaming or being out of bounds (Ram 2009, 140, Niranjana 2001, 62, Phadke, Khan, and Ranade 2011). Seizer's (2005) work with special drama actresses brings together the meanings of stigmatised forms of mobility and being settled in the lives of women. Her informants continually transgressed the norms of respectable femininity, not only through their performances that invited the male gaze but also by their movement through towns and cities they travel to in order to perform:

> Seen as too public, as moving out into the world far beyond the bounds of proper, private, modest feminine behaviour, actresses must nevertheless somehow move on the ground to conduct their business. The form of this *inappropriate mobility* […] threatens to expose the fragility of the culturally naturalised division of gendered

> spaces. […] *The actress is most unsettling precisely in her unsettledness* [emphasis added] (Seizer 2005, 319).

The desire to be settled is not exclusive to young women. An upper-class male informant who was struggling to pay off a mortgage on property purchased for his family often spoke of the need to get his mother settled before moving forward with individual projects. We are back with the logic of *seva*. If parents must settle their children, when parents become dependent, they must in turn be settled and cared for by children. There is a strongly gendered dimension to these discourses because while senior men gain a greater say over matters like residence and financial arrangements in old age, women may be presumed to be dependent regardless of age (Lamb 2009, 102-103). In other words, a woman must forever be settled by others – and as the story of Hannah illustrates, even a husband may be judged insufficient to settle a woman, if her kin are not also involved.

Ruth's Story of Meena

The struggle to settle was also apparent in the story Ruth told about Meena. Meena was also a former resident with whom Ruth had been close. Like Ruth and Hannah, Meena migrated to Bangalore from Andhra Pradesh. She too, was a student migrant. But unlike Ruth and Hannah, Meena was Hindu and came from a family of struggling farmers who owned land but had little money. Ruth explained that large loans had been taken by her father and brothers to allow her to complete higher education. Meena fell in love with a man she met at college. After six years they decided to get engaged. There was no impediment to their marriage as the two came from the same region and caste but the relationship faltered over a dispute about dowry. As soon as the engagement had gone ahead the man demanded a large quantity of gold for his sister. Meena agreed to this arrangement as she wished to maintain a good relationship with the man's family but

insisted that she needed to work off the debts incurred by her education before she[87] could purchase gold and other gifts for his sister. Her boyfriend could not accept this arrangement and the relationship ended acrimoniously.

> Ruth: This boy was greedy. In their caste there is a lot of importance to dowry and gold and everything. If that boy did not love Meena and if he wanted to go for another alliance, he would get a lot of dowry.
>
> Gillian: So she had to compensate him in some way?
>
> Ruth: Exactly. That was the problem. [When it ended] I told her, you are crying now, you are suffering now; but it will be OK. Everything will be fine after 3–6 months. You will be glad you let that boy go – you'll feel a lot better that you let that boy go.

The dispute reveals emergent conflict resulting from the transition from kin arranged marriage with a dowry to love marriage which as it proceeds without parental consent, negates parental obligation to provide dowry (Uberoi 2006a, 24). Ruth's comment, that if the man did not love Meena he could have expected a large dowry from another woman's family, suggests a trend identified by Uberoi and Singh whereby a marriage that is partially chosen involves the transfer of material responsibilities from parents to the lovers (Uberoi and Singh 2006, 218). When I asked Ruth why she felt the relationship had ended, she replied that the problem was stubbornness on the side of the man and his family, but her reply also suggests the value she placed on her own independence:

> [Men] have some problems. Sometimes they're demanding. Sometimes they don't respect your independence. I am very … you know. My upbringing is completely different. I treat men equal to myself, I don't treat them more, I don't treat them less. They are equal.

Meena did not go ahead with the marriage and according to Ruth did not regret her decision. In Meena's case, the solution was again to wait for the right man – here a man

[87] Ruth was not explicit about whether Meena herself was supposed to provide her own dowry or whether this responsibility would be shared between Meena and her parents. In any case, her income would play a significant role as she earned more than any other member of her family.

who would make fewer financial demands on her and her parents but would also respect her independence. The solution offered by Ruth was, in this story too, to 'give it some time'.

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Ruth's stories about Hannah and Meena can be interpreted both as social commentary and a means for her to express her own ideals and hopes for the future. As they were no longer living in the PG and their reputations could not be damaged nor their feelings hurt by things she said, Ruth felt no anxiety about sharing their stories with me. In speaking to me about Hannah and Meena, Ruth implied that marriages should be arranged by parents or at least have their support and that a woman should marry a man of equivalent or higher status than herself. But she was critical of what she perceived to be over zealous demands for dowry and of the dependent position of the woman's family in relation to her in-laws. In this sense, she was also the product of attitudes shaped by a sustained period of activism and campaigns by the Indian Women's Movement since the late 1970s.[88] When I suggested this to her, she attributed the difference between herself and other women not to a nascent feminism but rather to her upbringing. Her parents had an unusually egalitarian marriage. She hoped to emulate this model in her own life but had found it impossible thus far. As she put it:

> Initially my mum was more qualified and she earned more than my dad. They were always equal. My dad respected her and my mum respected my dad. So this was like, mutual. [But] It's hard to find a match like that.

In interpreting the stories Ruth told me, I draw on Ingold's suggestion that storytellers transmit points of significance that can then be used by others to attune themselves to specific environments or landscapes:

[88] These include the movement to legally restrict demands for dowry and mandatory investigations into suspicious deaths of newly married women (see Kumar 1993; Forbes 1996; Gupta 2012, 249).

> We should resist the temptation to assume that since stories are stories they are, in some sense, unreal or untrue, for this is to suppose that the only real reality, or true truth, is one in which we, as living, experiencing beings, can have no part at all. Telling a story, … is not like unfurling a tapestry to cover up the world, it is rather a way of guiding the attention of listeners or readers into it. A person who can 'tell' is one who is perceptually attuned to picking up information in the environment that others, less skilled in the tasks of perception, might miss, and the teller, in rendering his knowledge explicit, conducts the attention of his audience along the same paths as his own (Ingold 2000, 190).

The stories Ruth told me alluded to the points of significance, the undulations in the moral or affective landscape inhabited by women like herself. In this landscape, the desires and expectations of oneself, one's parents, and potential husbands were navigated with difficulty and often collided. Re-telling the experiences of friends was a way for her to not only describe acceptable boundaries of behaviour for women, but also to reflect on her experiences and to comment on what she perceived as the relatively narrow range of good or sensible options to solve the problems that she, Meena and Hannah faced. For women of her class position, matching desire to socially approved courses of action rested on the ability to wait. By contrast, to impulsively act on one's desires could have problematic long-term consequences. The narratives Ruth presented express the ethical complexities of trying to bring together kin-based relationships with romantic ones. Ruth's formulations show ambivalence about the behaviour of others, 'It's difficult doing things that you're supposed to do … you may not be able to … [but] there are people who do it no matter how hard it is'. There were moments of doubt or uncertainty throughout our conversations, as for instance where she said of Hannah's behaviour, 'I don't like it somehow.' These were not overt condemnations. It was clear that Ruth empathised with the predicaments of other women. These were, after all, shared predicaments. But it was equally clear that she did not endorse their impulsive and individualist methods of solving their dilemmas.

The Experience of Temporality for Young Women

The passing of time was a recurrent theme during the interviews that I recorded with Ruth. In her descriptions, taking one's time and letting time pass are approaches to coping with difficult or painful circumstances. While enjoining others to take their time over complex life decisions, her accounts also suggest the healing power of the passing of time when relationships fail or women fall out with their parents or husbands. However the passing of time could also be a relentless reminder that her life projects were not progressing as she wished they would. Hage noted that waiting actively produces time:

> On one hand, waiting happens in time, in the sense that time and time frames pre-exist the subjects that are waiting within them. On the other hand, waiting creates time. That is, various modalities of waiting produce their own temporality that may or may not be in tune with other social and natural temporalities (Hage 2009a, 7).

Movement through one's life-course was arrested in Ruth's life. She was lonely, desired a husband but was alone, and was perhaps beyond the ideal age to settle. Milestones such as graduation from university, career success or marriage were either in the past or continually deferred to the future.

A growing body of research on South Asian youth suggests that Ruth is one among many men and women whose marriages have been delayed by the demands of extended education and the financial pressure this has placed on families. Uberoi argued that the tendency to delay marriages has produced a phase 'between sexual maturity and marriage for which, cognitively speaking, there [is] no provision under the traditional order.' (Uberoi 2006a, 25)

The shift to delayed marriage has implications for a conventional view of the female life-course in which early marriage was normative and viewed as a crucial societal response to female puberty and physical maturation. Niranjana described the earlier

normative view as upheld strongly in villages outside Bangalore where she conducted fieldwork in the late 1980s:

> There is a general consensus that early marriages are best […] in order to control and channelize the active/emergent female sexuality, and also to guard and foster female virtue. A common refrain is that a grown girl should not be kept in her parent's house. Not only is delay in her marriage seen as unnatural, in the sense of disregarding natural urges, it is also considered damaging to the family's reputation (Niranjana 2001, 63).

Early marriage is associated with lower income and non-urban communities in India[89] but even the middle-class Christian informants interviewed by Caplan in the late 1980s, told him that in families where the woman was not married by the age of twenty-five, questions would be raised about the health and suitability of the woman and the social esteem of the family (Caplan 1987, 120).

The shift to later marriage has implications beyond the lives of the younger women I have been discussing. Some of Lamb's elderly informants attributed the growth of institutionalised aged care in India in part to the increasing prevalence of delayed marriage. In the narratives Lamb presented, older and more assertive daughters-in-law and perhaps more established and independently minded sons, who may have chosen their own wives, figure prominently in the complaints of the elderly (Lamb 2009, 74-5, 94-102). With later marriage and the perception of a greater assertiveness of in-married women, cross-generational co-residence becomes more difficult and alternatives may be sought or imposed on the elders by their juniors (Lamb 2009, 117). As one of Lamb's informant's put it, 'Now, if adjustments are to be made, they will be made by the *older* generation.' [emphasis in original] (Lamb 2009, 75)

[89] In this vein, Nandy argued that the urban middle-class outrage about child marriage and other practices that disadvantage women bolsters the inordinate political power of urban citizens over their rural counterparts (Nandy 1995, 34).

While men and women are affected by this shift, the implications of protracted waiting and the practices that have emerged to cope with it are gendered. I refer here to Jeffrey's ethnography in which he has argued that waiting reorganises sociality for young unemployed men in North India (Jeffrey 2010). Delayed marriage and the shift from collective identities organised by agriculture to that of educated unemployment produce homosocial dispositions and practices described as *timepass,* an Indian–English colloquialism that according to Jeffrey, 'was what one had to do when other more meaningful and "serious" ways of engaging with the world were unavailable' (Jeffrey 2010, 80). Jeffrey indicated that some of the female college students also described their time in extended education as a form of 'timepass' but unlike the young men, these women were waiting for their marriages rather than the moment when they would secure formal employment (Jeffrey 2010, 77). For women such as Ruth, this form of women's timepass is in fact a form of watchful vigilance and self-imposed restraint. But his description matches more closely some of the less diligent student migrants who lived as paying guests and were clearly studying in order to increase their value in the marriage market rather than to move into employment. This was never admitted openly but was evident in somewhat lackadaisical attitudes and practices amongst them. Some college students skipped scheduled classes and were fined for poor attendance and for missing their exams. One particular student confided to me that having missed many of her mandatory exams, she had been coerced by the corrupt administration of the law college she attended into paying substantial bribes to re-sit them. Other college students described similar events though often as if these had happened to a 'friend' rather than to themselves. Narratives of other women 'not studying properly' and 'having boyfriends' came up as a kind of gossip that floated around or an insult that friends threw at each other during disputes (see Chapter Four).

Like Ruth, Jeffrey's informants described timepass as a form of waiting that must be endured, as being in limbo and feeling stuck. And like Ruth, Jeffrey's informants marshalled hope and proclaimed their capacity to endure difficult circumstances by continuing to wait (Jeffrey 2010, 75, 85). The social factors that have produced timepass as a cultural phenomenon – delayed marriage, protracted unemployment and an indefinite extension of the 'student' life stage – show many similarities with the experience of social suffering I have thus far described for Ruth. But unlike Jeffrey's informants or the young unmarried men described by Osella and Osella (2002) who found socially tolerated, if not entirely approved, outlets for their aimlessness and unfulfilled sexual desires, female PG residents did not have the same privilege of travelling out into the public spaces of the city just to hang out and enjoy themselves. With the exception of occasional shopping trips, visits to temples and church, residents were busy either with college or working in their offices. They looked to friends in the hostel, and to romance novels and romantic Hindi serials to engage imaginatively with their future lives as married women living with their husband's kin. More than a few Mills and Boon paperbacks were passed between residents in the paying guest. Uberoi has described these texts as a pleasurable form of timepass for women (Uberoi 2006a, 6). Most weeknights residents would sit around one of the two televisions provided by the PG to watch the popular serial *Is Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon?* The male lead, an outwardly 'angry young man' with a deep inner sensitivity and loyalty to his sister, was a favourite for many residents.[90]

Some women experimented with romantic relationships with men they had met at college or who had migrated from their home areas at the same time. Of the two relatively serious relationships I knew of, one ended in a marriage despite initial refusal on the part of the man's family. The couple successfully convinced their parents to allow the marriage

[90] Watching serials was an important social practice within the PG. It was also a source of disputes, some of which I will describe in a subsequent chapter.

to go ahead. The other ended when the woman's family discovered the relationship. The young man and the resident came from the same town in Karnataka but as the couple were not of the same religion, the woman's parents refused to allow them to continue seeing each other. Very soon after their relationship was discovered, the woman was removed from the PG by her family and taken home.

Residents also differed from the specific predicament that Jeffrey identified in *Timepass* (2010) in that they were either studying as interstate students in expensive colleges or employed and working in the kinds of clerical, administrative and even IT based jobs that many of Jeffrey's informants desired but could not obtain.[91] Although Ruth came from a relatively wealthy family, her age, and the number of years she had lived as a paying guest made her something of an outlier when compared to other women but even she was employed in the coveted BPO sector.

But perhaps the most significant difference, aside from gender, between the 'social and temporal suffering' Jeffrey described and Ruth's experiences of protracted waiting are the result of their different locations and the cultural politics of both spaces. The young men in Meerut studying at poorly resourced colleges felt themselves to be profoundly excluded from the economic development, excitement and opportunity that they associated with nearby urban centres like Delhi, NOIDA and Gurgaon. The modernity of these spaces that are also hubs of employment in the post-liberalisation industries stands in stark contrast to dilapidated college buildings and the sparse tea-shops where young men hangout (Jeffrey 2010, 79). This sense of being 'nowhere', trapped in places bereft of opportunity that are implicitly compared to metropolitan centres, has been captured to great effect by Liechty in his portrait of a young heroin addict in Kathmandu. He stated,

[91] Jeffrey indicated that employment in the civil service was the most desirable and this was the goal toward which many students he knew were studying. Some suggested that employment in IT or in clerical occupations in the state bureaucracy were equally appealing (Jeffrey 2010, 82, 89).

> Like many other adults I met in Kathmandu, when speaking in English Ramesh constantly referred to the place he had spent most of his life as 'out here.' 'Out here in Kathmandu' prefaced so many of his comments that in the course of time the words barely registered in my mind. *This persistent self-peripheralization is almost unimaginable outside the context of global media and a host of other marginalising transnational cultural forces* … [emphasis added] (Liechty 2003, 237)

Timepass, too, can be interpreted as a self-peripheralising (to borrow Liechty's phrase) discourse through which young unemployed men speak of their marginalisation in this regional environment. But unlike the young unemployed men of Meerut, Ruth and other residents of the paying guest lived amidst the self-conscious modernity that Bangalore represents to the rest of India and the West. Ruth herself described Bangalore as an 'ultra-modern' city.

The idea of Bangalore as an island of liberal exception and wealth in a sea of social conservatism and poverty is a broadly articulated sensibility across social groups – whether this is interpreted as an example of Western cultural imperialism (Niranjana 2000) or as an index of India's global success in Western-derived industries (Radhakrishnan 2008). Even before the gang rape in December 2012, people often told me that while I could 'roam around' alone in Bangalore, such behaviour would be far too dangerous in cities like Delhi. Similarly, while in Bangalore a person could manage, albeit with difficulty, using English and a rudimentary version of an Indian language like Kannada, Hindi or Tamil, to do so in other Indian cities would be much more difficult. In a recent study of Tamil Brahmins, Narasimhan and Fuller (2014) captured the view of Bangalore as hedonistic and Westernised in the eyes of their informants who live in Chennai. They argued:

> Quite a lot of Chennai residents actually prefer Bangalore, but others actively dislike it, condemning it as a superficial, glitzy, over-priced, 'artificial' city typified by its foreign food, bars and frivolous 'party culture' (Fuller and Narasimhan 2014, 164).

As the quote suggests, Bangalore's modernity and inherent difference from other cities was reckoned to make its citizens less rule-bound and more hedonistic. Ruth's parents, like other parents, experienced anxiety at the thought of her coming under the influence of such people. Her parents placed a great deal of trust in her ability to avoid these undesirable consequences of migration. As she put it, 'They'll [her parents] have their concerns because they know Bangalore is an ultra modern place. And if you have friends going to these pubs and all of that you will have that influence on yourself.' The very fact that she had for so long lived as paying guest reflected anxieties about the risks posed to single women in metropolitan cities.

Although Ruth's parents initially objected to her moving to a PG, this was seen as a preferable alternative to unsupervised accommodation where she may have been exposed to the bad influences of other young people working in Bangalore. In an early interview Ruth told me that her parents had advised her to move to what she described as a 'nice modest place' like the PG if she refused to live in the home of her local guardians. If she had wanted to live in an apartment, they would not have allowed it. Living as a paying guest was not only a cost effective form of accommodation but also a way to deflect the perception that women who live alone are hyper-sexualised and immoral. The difficulties that single women face when they try to rent apartments is an effect of this stigma. As Patel has argued, single female migration for educational purposes is usually interpreted by families and communities as legitimate (Patel 2010, 102) but a woman who choses to reside independently if her family live in the same city or town will be judged harshly. She argues,

> For women … who could afford to live on their own and had addressed the hurdle of it being considered inappropriate not to live with one's family, access to housing itself was a challenge, particularly for single women who work the night shift. *They are viewed with suspicion in that some landlords do not want to rent to single women, whom they suspect of being bar dancers or prostitutes.* [emphasis added] (Patel 2010, 101).

For women and their families, the city offers opportunities but as these opportunities have the potential to damage women's chances advantageous marriages, they must be carefully managed. The liberal values Ruth had learned at home made her more assertive in her deflection both of risk and of gossip. Unlike some of the other women who expressed anxiety about being gossiped over or questioned about their movements outside the boarding house, Ruth was defiant. She saw herself as more than equipped to decide upon appropriate conduct for herself without the intervention of anybody beyond her family. After mentioning that the *Akkas* often asked where I was during the day, she had this to say:

> They didn't say anything bad about you but they used to ask, "Where's this girl?" "Where did she go?" I'm like, what do I know? I leave in the morning, I come back at night. She's not here – I tell them the same thing. When I'm gone they will ask "Where did she go?" I don't have to tell them. I call my mum, I tell my mum this is what I'm doing and then I'm going. I'm not answerable to anybody. I don't care. Judith was telling me once that they were asking where you went and when Judith goes they will probably ask the same thing, "Where did she go?" "Why did she go?" Why do they want to know?

In the light of this spirited and somewhat unorthodox response and taking into account her relatively privileged position as an employed, educated woman living in a cosmopolitan centre and possessing greater freedom of movement than other women, how then should we compare Ruth's experiences to the existential struggles described by Jeffrey and the self-peripheralising discourse illustrated in Liechty? In addition to the more general predicaments of love and an ethics of *seva* (itself another form of love as well as duty), the stories told by Ruth about other women also speak to her position as an older and as yet unmarried daughter in the family unit and to her experiences as a migrant. While certainly not peripheral to her family's concerns and projects, Ruth was not a central figure. Her younger brother received greater financial support and her father required greater care. Neither her hopes for marriage nor her goals for a career had been realised either individually or as family projects. Her education had been generously provided for

but now that financial resources were scarce she was torn between autonomy from parental support, unavailable in any case, and ongoing compliance with broader family goals for further social mobility that would be more likely be achieved by her brother rather than by her own efforts. And although she was located in a metropolitan centre, the pleasures and dangers of the city were mostly closed off to her by her long working hours and her preference for avoiding potentially bad influences. The hostel itself was not a very dynamic environment with its gloomy rooms and her lack of close friendships. The relative lack of outside direction only gave her the autonomy to direct her own daily activities. When it came to larger family decisions such as marriage, further education or international migration, however, she continued to be dependent on her family.

Autonomy as *Seva*

In contrast to narratives of career success understood as a kind of form of devotion to the natal family that we examined in Chapter One, Ruth characterised her experiences as a migrant as a means to become independent. But even here, financial independence, at least with regard to her daily expenses like rent and board, meant that she need not draw on her family's already over-stretched resources. In other words, it re-joined her more general desire to avoid being burdensome to others. This was the most affectionate and practical way to assist them. She developed the skills required to serve her parents through her mastery of the challenging experiences as a single migrant. She frequently reiterated the importance of being independent and earning a living:

> I was very dependent on people when I first came here. But I understood that it's not possible for everyone to help me. At some point in time they had something else to do. So, I felt, I'm going to do it on my own. I should be able to do it. If you depend on someone, then they don't come, they don't turn up and then you're upset. If you do it on your own, you're happy, you feel that you're capable – so I started doing things on my own.

Initially, I interpreted her explanations as normative as they coincided with my views and with the dominant narrative in Anglo-Australian culture about parental responsibility and financial independence. However compared with other women in the study, the financial position she advocated was unusual. Ruth did not remit her salary nor did she accept an allowance from her parents: she told me that this was unnecessary. This could have been to save face.[92] However, if true, then it is striking that she wanted neither to give nor to receive. She was also permitted to remain in Bangalore on weekends and was not pressured by her family members to return home. She was therefore accorded greater autonomy than Judith, Manaswi and many of the other women in the boarding house.

The desire for greater autonomy, which distinguished Ruth from others, was pursued with regard to two different spheres – marriage and employment. Unlike other women, she expected to enter into a dialogue with her parents about the selection of her husband. She would not break their trust and contract a marriage without their knowledge, but neither would she simply accept their choice. The narrative she provided about Hannah illustrates the clearest path to autonomy from the natal family that is available to middle-class women – that of marriage. But Ruth viewed this as a kind of illusory autonomy, a choice grounded in bad faith because marriage necessarily bonds a woman to her husband's family and this further limits autonomous action. As she put it, 'When you hurry and you're in some kind of frustration, then you get married to someone who is not worth it, you will suffer all your life.' Secondly, she had been educated in order to enter formal employment. But one of the central difficulties and disappointments in her life had been her inability to find a job in her preferred field. So even in the other path to autonomy, searching for work in the formal economy, she had only achieved minimal success. And even in this domain, she was no less attached to her family than other women.

[92] Like other women I interviewed she was understandably embarrassed about discussing family finances and indebtedness.

Gender and Migration Strategies within the Middle Class

The material presented, thus far, suggests that although sons are viewed as the primary agents of family continuity and esteem, daughters are not entirely peripheral to this process. And although sons may be considered more important than daughters for the material security they provide for their parents and the ritual roles they undertake, daughters are not irrelevant to these projects.[93] To capture this, I quote from Kondos's sensitive rendering of the father-daughter relationship amongst high caste Hindus in Nepal.[94] She suggested that while many privileges and greater responsibilities are accorded to sons, daughters are not simply the binary opposites of their brothers. Rather, daughters are marked as 'different':

> If the father is doing the correct thing by the daughter, this would also mean that in everyday practices he is treating her as somewhat distinct, and constantly treating her in this way provides the occasion for sensing her as different … The effect is to locate her in her separated niche, *belonging to the natal family but disjoined from it, distanced from self and those like self* [emphasis added] (Kondos 1991, 126).[95]

Kondos's description captures Ruth's position of belonging to her natal family in affective and material terms, but with comparatively reduced capacity to call on family resources when compared with her brother. In certain important ways, Ruth and Rajesh were treated equally. But a subtle sense of difference shaped their divergent experiences of migration and career success. They had both studied up to Masters level at reputable universities in Hyderabad. Her parents had placed brother and sister in English medium schools since kindergarten. After they had both graduated from college, their parents

[93] There are many examples in ethnography that suggest the pre-eminence of sons in the family unit. Perhaps most telling is the fact that a woman may be considered 'childless' on the basis that she has no sons. Kondos has argued that, 'True maternity is not viewed as simply a matter of reproducing, but of reproducing the masculine sex.' (Kondos 1991 127).

[94] I selected this text because it provides one of the few ethnographic explorations of the relationship between fathers and their daughters.

[95] Kondos suggested that in order to meet social obligations to his daughter and to others, a father may have to behave to his daughter in a way that causes her personal hardship (1991, 132).

supported both children to migrate so as to improve their chances of career success. Like many Indian parents hoping to secure a bright future for their son on whom they would come to depend financially in old age, loans were taken so that he could study and possibly live in the US – a preferred site of professional migration since the 1960s (Khadria 1999, Maira 2002). A striking feature of this family trajectory is that while greater expense and risk were taken to improve the opportunities offered to Rajesh, Ruth's family wanted to improve her circumstances as well. In effect, Rajesh was encouraged and supported to emigrate to the US while Ruth was encouraged to migrate only as far as Bangalore, which her parents, like many other middle-class Indians, viewed as an enclave of modernity and economic opportunity within the territorial boundaries of India and the region of South India. Bangalore was close enough to their home for Ruth to return when necessary without incurring the enormous cost of international air travel, yet opportunities for employment were better in Bangalore and she would have more chance of utilising her skills.[96]

Ruth's parents clearly encouraged both of their children to develop skills that would equip them to work and support themselves. However, this produced a paradox that is shared by that broad section of the middle class that seeks to send its sons abroad. Encouraging their son to migrate would increase his capacity to support them financially. But once he began to practice in the US, other kinds of help and support could only be offered from afar.

Further, after marriage Ruth would not be expected to provide financial support and care to her parents, as this responsibility would fall to her brother and his wife. Ruth joked that when the subject of her marriage came up at home, even in her years as a college

[96] As many IT jobs are available in Hyderabad this may have been a somewhat strategic narrative for Ruth and her parents – her preference for living away from her father was taboo, and migration for work much more socially acceptable.

student, a time when many young women have their marriages arranged, her father would jokingly tell her more practical mother, 'She's just a small girl. Why do you want to get her married and send her away – far away from me?' As Lamb argued, financial support or care performed by a daughter for an aged parent is interpreted as exceptional *seva* as it is offered in addition to that which she must perform for her in-laws. Financial support, physical care and transactions in the family are expected between sons and their aged parents (Lamb 2009, 104). Ruth was unclear about whether Rajesh would return to India. She maintained that although he could stay away for many years if he wanted to, her parents ultimately expected him to return – the decision was in his hands, and that the family would accept whatever he chose as long as he was happy.

The autonomy and independence that Ruth expressed can be attributed in part to her parents' outlook. They hoped to be supported by their son who would return to India to live, but they accepted that he should do so of his own volition. They, therefore, have much in common with elders described by Lamb who expressed the opinion that parents should not necessarily co-reside with their adult children unless this arrangement were desired by all. This relatively open stance is a marked contrast to the familial practices and preferences I have described in the previous chapter. Lamb argued:

> [Parents] would explain how they had in fact raised their children to pursue independent, professional careers and lifestyles, sending them to elite English-medium schools, funding educational opportunities abroad, allowing them to choose their own marriage partners, and encouraging them to set up households of their own after marriage (Lamb 2009, 110).

That daughters and sons should receive equal support from their parents, good education and mobility through migration is enough to distinguish Ruth's parents from others, further demonstrating their liberal orientation. However, it is also the case that a lingering sense of difference marked Ruth's experiences as a migrant. She was afforded parental love and support but not in exactly the same way as her brother. Ruth was one of

the most educated women in the PG but it is clear that her parents prioritised the education and migration of her brother. She was not the only woman in this situation. Another Christian working woman had won a government seat in a medical college but her parents had encouraged her to complete a Bachelor of Computer Science degree instead as this course was less expensive and would free up money that could be spent on the education of their younger son. Provision of greater educational opportunities for sons as opposed to daughters was by no means universal as the case studies of Judith and Manaswi illustrate. In their families, parents prioritised the education of daughters so that their sons could remain at home and assist either with the family business or farm. There were also three college students in the PG whose parents had daughters but no sons. This had not impeded and may have increased their access to education, as they were not required to compete with brothers for parental resources and support – all three were studying for degrees in Bangalore at expensive private colleges.

In Ruth's case the kinship-based logic whereby the earning potential of a daughter would be terminated at her marriage while the income of a son could be counted on in perpetuity played some role in shaping her circumstances. She herself did not view the situation in quite these terms. She agreed that 'partiality' had been shown to her brother in terms of the opportunities offered to him by her parents but she attributed the difference not to gender or kinship but to what she perceived to be his greater intellectual giftedness and work ethic. She believed that his superior career, that of a junior doctor, was a sufficient reason for their unequal treatment.

Compared with Rajesh's success, Ruth's much lower status career, that of working in a call centre after several years of unemployment was also coupled with greater familial responsibility. Ruth's experiences were not quite those of an honorary son. Rajesh was performing the role of successful, academically gifted son well enough and could be

expected to continue to do so but she was obliged to provide financial support to her parents during her father's final illness and to travel home regularly to assist her mother with practical tasks like paying bills, visiting banks and managing the household. She also described providing intimate care to her father, bathing him when he was bed-ridden, carefully feeding him when he was unable to swallow and supporting her mother while he was in intensive care. Having performed these tasks without complaint, she said 'I miss him a lot because I have done a lot of things for him.' These acts of embodied care exemplify the conduct of a dutiful and loving daughter performing *seva* to her father. Although Ruth never mentioned this directly, the family's financial difficulties were the likely reason that no steps were being taken to arrange her marriage. Although Christians are known to demand and to give less dowry than other Indian communities (Caplan 1984), the payments even for a modest wedding may have been impossible in their difficult position. Perhaps, in addition, the desire to keep a loving daughter nearby to offer support and care during a troubled period played a role in the seeming lack of urgency with which her marriage was regarded, despite her advancing age.

In this chapter I have explored the complex relationship between employment and belonging to the kin group that characterises the lives of many working women. I have presented an extended case study of a young woman who provided a slightly different interpretation of the relationship between *seva* and work, suggesting that the independence, often painfully learned as a migrant on her own, could become a dimension of assistance to kin.

In the next chapter I turn to the boarding house as a social space to analyse the ways in which these existential predicaments shaped women's relationship to the PG and to the city as a form of place-making.

Chapter Four

Becoming Paying Guests

In Shantinagar, pasted onto the blackened brick wall opposite the entry to St Josephs College of Arts and Science, I found the following advertisement,-

Accomadation for Girls. Available with Food (veg and non-veg)

The greying sheet shared the wall with advertisements for telly callers, the shredded relics of old election posters with their passport style headshots of party members and a protest image that read 'Which is more important? Justice for Tibet or Money for China Bribe?' St. Josephs hosted a large number of interstate students from the North East and was known for producing activists. Below this call to arms was the advertisement for another paying guest with the homely name 'Comfort Inn', which offered:

PG Accommodation for Working Women and College Girls. At the heart of the City. Walking distance to Gaurda Mall, Brigade Rd, MG Road New Fully Furnished with all Amenities Please Call

Across the road on another wall was a further advertisement, this one printed in colour with an appealing clip-art image. The image was a clip-art illustration of a young Indian woman dressed in a blue t-shirt and jeans. She stood smiling beside a three-piece set of pink suitcases below a banner that read:

Modern PG.
Fully Furnished in the Heart of the City
24 hours hot water. Semi-equipped kitchen. Aquaguard. Spacious Wardrobes
North and South Indian Food. Veg and non-veg
Good residential layout in Priyanagar.
Please Call

These advertisements were designed to address a slightly different subject to those addressed by another advertisement that was glued over a control box on a telegraph pole in the nearby locality of Vasanthnagar. The colour image was the peaceful face of Sri Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of domesticity, praised also as the archetypal devoted wife. The house that Sri Lakshmi recommended was located just 'Walking distance to Mount Carmel College', an expensive and well-regarded women's convent school in Bangalore. Wealthy interstate students would make the ideal paying guests in a home where Lakshmi had been welcomed with appropriate rituals. 'Female only residents' at Sri Lakshmi PG could expect accommodation with attached bathrooms, food, television and hot water should they desire a room.

Figure 2 Advertisements for paying guests

Towards the south and east of the city as one gets closer to Electronic City, the special economic zone, advertisements made less homely claims. Double signed in Kannada and

English, the hostels that are advertised there have mostly Hindu names, like Santinikaten, or Gowri Shankar. These residences that make their appeals to an explicitly Hindu public offer hostel-style living with '1 2 3 and 4 sharing', implying that these are more cramped and likely cheaper than the more comfortable options open to interstate students in the more affluent localities of the city. In these hostels, guests are packed into rooms within vertical developments rather then in converted family homes. In BTM Layout, an area of South Bangalore, the PG ads that addressed 'boys' as often as 'girls', Figure 3, were nestled between advertisements for training courses in Java, SQL and AutoCAD that offered options for young people looking to break in to the lower end of occupations in software development and engineering but lacking the degrees and training certificates required to do so. These were pasted over with ads that read 'ENGLISH? SPEAK EASY', showing an Indian man in muted embarrassment with an X over his mouth.

Figure 3: Advertisements for paying guests in Madivala

The women residents filled the space in the PG with activities studying for degrees and working towards the beginnings of professional careers. Some were escaping troubled families, bypassing recourse to marriage as the only way out. Others, as we have seen, worked to support their parents and contribute towards their dowries and wedding

expenses (see Chapters One and Two). The paying guest was a role one assumed but also was a place. Yet as place, it failed to exert much affective pull over the residents that made it their abodes. The difficulty of forming a relationship to the PG as a place was exacerbated by the practices of the owners, who treated it as a place to be rationalised for maximum yield rather than a place to set down roots. This attitude manifested in the practices of residents for whom the PG with its partitioned rooms and cramped bunks was simply to provide a safe[97] place to stay for a finite period while they completed college or worked to support their families or themselves. Their lives as paying guests bore some similarities to their anticipated marriages. Both becoming a paying guest and marriage involved migration and settling in a new home. But future marriages entailed building life-long relationships with husbands and in-laws whereas in the paying guest most women described themselves as 'alone'. To ameliorate feelings of loneliness, women slowly built selective friendships with roommates to create a sense of belonging. But the early stages of life as a paying guest continued to be remembered with ambivalence. The following except from my field notes captures the ambivalence I felt, as I, myself became a paying guest:

> Having determined that I was an appropriately respectable candidate for admission to the paying guest she operated but that her PG was full, Deepa decided that I could perhaps be housed in the home of one of her neighbours. As her neighbour was unavailable that day, she had agreed to show me the available bed.
>
> I followed Deepa down a long corridor. We had entered the converted house from a back room that hid the kitchen and bathroom. Large aluminium vessels sat on a table covered with old newspapers. Small plastic containers were stacked beside the bigger vessels. As she hauled herself down the hallway – she was a large woman – young women ducked in and out of the rooms on either side. Unlike the rooms on either side of the corridor, my room did not have a door. When the PG had still

[97] Safety was a central concern for women and their families. The presence of a security guard on the premises, even if he was not viewed as particularly efficacious, added to the sense of security. In the evenings he would lock the entrance from the outside and then sleep on a plastic chair on the roof terrace. Early in the morning he would unlock the entrance and the small wooden casing that contained the switch for the water heater (geyser). After that the residents could proceed with their morning baths.

> been a family home, this room would have been the entrance to the house. But now though, there were metal bunk beds, plastic buckets, and empty bottles everywhere. The windows that looked out onto the lane were covered with curtains; the smaller windows were covered with yellowed newspaper. Between two of the bunks a tall young woman with curly hair was seated at a small wooden desk, reading over a notebook. She said hello to me awkwardly in English. Deepa turned to me; "This bed is free. You can adjust?" Her remark was between a statement and a question. I looked from the small metal bunk bed, to the serene image of Jesus posted onto the wall, to the darkened windows and nodded uncertainly. (Field notes 27/01/12).

My experience of walking into an unknown world, filled with young women who came from all over India to study or work in Bangalore prompted several questions that this chapter seeks to answer. Firstly, what was it like to live as a paying guest and what relationships did paying guest hostels establish with the neighbourhoods where they were located? Secondly, how did the residents – all of whom were women – create belonging in an alien environment shared with others whom they did not know before moving in? And finally what relationships, did residents develop with staff and with one another?

Broadly speaking, the paying guests housed at the property were I lived comprised two types of women. As we have already glimpsed in the often disparaging remarks made by one of these groups about the other, for example, by naming them *hifi* or 'drama people', there were working women and there were female college students. There were also some women who arrived in Bangalore to complete degrees and then stayed on in the city looking for employment, who were therefore neither college students nor (yet) working women. Working women tended to view the students as spoilt and immature but in this chapter, a will take a closer look at the students and why they were studying in an unfamiliar city.

In 2012 the average cost per resident, for accommodation in the PG was 3700 Indian rupees per month ($65), which increased to 4000 rupees ($82) per month in November. This covered a bunk as well as breakfast and dinner daily. For the college students who

received monthly allowances from their parents, their rent was usually about half of their monthly allowance. Working women's salaries ranged from 10, 000 per month for the lowest and as much as 80, 000 per month for the highest earners. Given that I stayed on the first floor of the house, the women I knew best were working women. I was also much closer in age to these women than the students. As a result, I did not come to know many of the student migrants very well and they were much more shy than the working women. In addition to the student migrants in my PG, I met and interviewed women who lived in two other PGs that Deepa operated, and several young women and some young men who were studying at a different college close to the boarding house. In this chapter I will refer to research completed across this group.

A Christian Locality for the Best Education: The Students

Bangalore is known throughout India for its prestigious educational institutions. As host to several elite government and private colleges, the city draws large numbers of student migrants from all over India. Most colleges have attached hostels. But students who are not granted a place in student accommodation or who choose not to live in designated hostels must seek accommodation either with relatives living in the city, or in the private rental market. Unwilling to rent property on their own, or actively encouraged by their parents to live in supervised accommodation, many interstate college students become paying guests and live in shared houses or hostels with other students and working women such as those I have described in Chapters One –Three.

Interviews conducted with PG owners suggest that hosting interstate students and working people has been a lucrative venture for many middle-class property owners. By opening parts of their homes to paying guests, these families have been able to share in the wealth generated by the IT boom without actually working in the IT sector. Some families host paying guests in their own homes. Others rent out their entire property to paying

guests and move to houses in other parts of the city. Some families take on just one or two boarders, treat them as family members and build ongoing relationships with them. Other families, as the advertisements cited earlier indicate, provide services to their paying guests, such as meals and cleaning, but have limited social interaction with them. And some, like the owners of the paying guests where I lived, employed domestic workers to manage the paying guests and therefore had minimal interaction with them.

Christian educational institutions are popular with interstate student migrants, some of whom come to Bangalore in their late teens to complete pre-university. The Christian institutions are especially prestigious because of their links to the colonial period and for the high standard of English medium education available. Interstate student migrants mentioned the quality of English used in their colleges as one of the factors that prompted them to migrate to Bangalore. Some also mentioned the lack of political disturbances and *bandhs*, and the methods of teaching. Many chose Bangalore over cities like Delhi, because it was viewed as safer for women and girls.

The owners of the boarding house where I lived were Christians. (See Figure 3). They had been allotted a plot in the Church-owned compound in the late 1960s. This family also owned another small house on the same block where one branch of the family continued to reside. The senior-most woman in the family was responsible for managing the boarding house. However, for most of the year that I resided in the PG she was busy setting up a school in Tamil Nadu. During this time, her neighbour Deepa, to whom I referred earlier assisted with the everyday management of the PG and came in to check on residents once a week or so.

In addition to receiving help from her neighbour, the property owner was assisted with the everyday management of the PG by three members of the same extended family who were Tamil migrants and members of the same church congregation. The sisters, Aarti

(aged 37) and Priya (aged 46) worked in the boarding house as managers, cooks and cleaners and Aarti's husband worked as a security guard. Aarti and Priya lived in adjacent localities with their husbands and children.

Figure 4: Christian imagery in the dining area

Figure 5 View from the PG onto the street

‘Mine is a Backward Place’

Most student migrants described their native places as backward. As women from relatively affluent families who lived in remote states, many had migrated to Bangalore with a strong sense that educational institutions and infrastructure were of better quality in the city than their homes. Kanti’s family lived in Kodagu (formerly Coorg) where her father managed a coffee plantation. In jest, she told me that although people from outside Kodagu praised the area for its waterfalls, jungle and greenery, living in Kodagu was boring! Only tourists and foreigners treated her home as a recreational or interesting place. Kanti’s roommate Myoko migrated to Bangalore from the Ziro valley in Arunachal Pradesh and was a member of the Apatani language group. Her paternal grandfather was a respected medicinal healer and her father a government-appointed physician specialising in the treatment of tuberculosis in remote locations. She enjoyed trips home, as she was able to spend time with her family and attend festivals but described living with the rest of her clan as troublesome. She preferred the facilities available in Bangalore and was studying to qualify as a chartered accountant.[98] Their other roommate Asha, told me that her home in Manipur was very beautiful but that despite the state being part of India for almost fifty years, the railway line did not reach her home.

The ways that student migrants described their native places provide subtle indicators of how this sense of backwardness was lived existentially. Their descriptions of home as the locus of backwardness and Bangalore as a site of metropolitan opportunity are comparable to the relation of colony to metropole during the colonial period (see Stoler

[98] Although she thought of her time as a paying guest as temporary, Myoko did not expect to return to Ziro permanently as there were more desirable job opportunities in Bangalore, Delhi and abroad. Like some of the other college students who came from economically privileged families, Myoko hoped to stay on in Bangalore after her graduation because she expected to earn more there than in other Indian cities. With parents spending more on their daughters’ education and living expenses, the need to repay any loans taken out to cover college fees encouraged women to work in cities where their pay would be higher.

and Cooper 1997) and of periphery to centre in discourses of underdevelopment (Ferguson 2009, Chakrabarty 2000). These descriptions indicate the relative affluence of their families who had sought to orient their daughters towards metropolitan centres and prepare them for life in the metropolis by placing them in private residential schools.

Myoko and Kanti were among many residents who had lived in residential schools before moving to Bangalore. These residential secondary schools were Christian institutions, and all were English medium. Indeed, Myoko, Kanti, Nila and other student migrants described in this chapter told me that their parents had selected residential schools as they were thought to impart the highest quality English medium education that the family could afford. Myoko's parents placed her in boarding school at the age of nine and she had lived in residential schools up until her matriculation to the university she attended in Bangalore. At home, she did not feel motivated to study, but she had learned good study habits during her many years in residential schools. Nila echoed this theme when she pointed out that students in her college in Bangalore were more confident and the teachers were of a higher standard than those in her school in Nepal. The competitive environment pushed her to study harder. In contrast to the working women like Judith, Manaswi and Ruth who lived in Bangalore although their existential concerns and projects lay elsewhere, many of the students described aspirations for urban sophistication and educational opportunities not available in their homes. Even before migration their interests were directed towards cities like Bangalore, as these were places where they could compete with urban peers.

Many college students saw themselves as fulfilling family as well as personal goals by studying to join a profession like medicine, accounting or law. Financial support and the approval of parents and other senior kin were essential for women who wanted to migrate to Bangalore for college (see Introduction). For Nila, who had migrated from Nepal on a

government scholarship at the age of eighteen, support from her father was as decisive as her winning the scholarship. When family elders objected to her being sent so far from home without kin nearby, he intervened on her behalf: 'When my father is supporting me, no one can speak against him,' she proudly told me.

Histories of living away from the family in residential schools suggest a longer temporality of adjustment to similar types of residences away from parents. When residents arrived in the PG they assimilated the new and unknown space to prior experiences of residence beyond the family home. These prior experiences were formative in shaping the ways that women evaluated their relative freedom as paying guests. Kanti described her life as a paying guest as much the same as at boarding school – she followed a similar routine of sharing a room, eating relatively unpleasant food and going to classes – but she also found that life as a paying guest allowed her greater freedom as the PG did not have the same strict institutional rules as her boarding school.

> Gillian: When you arrived in the PG what happened?
>
> Kanti: I was already used to it [the boarding house]. In high school I was in boarding and it's not much different. But I feel this is freedom, because in boarding, you know, it was so torturous. We have so many restrictions, "no mobile phones, no this, no that."

In addition to freedom from direct parental supervision, student migrants also enjoyed greater financial freedom than at home as they received allowances from their parents. Although money had to be carefully managed, these allowances were mentioned as exciting elements of life in Bangalore.

An Escape from Ragging

Many college students had initially lived in attached college hostels when they first arrived in Bangalore, but had left because of *ragging*. Ragging refers to the bullying of younger college 'freshers' by their elder 'seniors'. Examples of ragging that I recorded

included forced compliance with humiliating dress codes and painful or embarrassing initiation rituals. One student migrant, Malika who completed a degree in environmental science told me of the ragging that drove her from her college hostel to a paying guest. As a fresher she was instructed to wear house-slippers outside, tie her hair in pigtails and was not allowed to wear matching salwar-kameez for six months. These restrictions were not difficult to bear, but those who refused to comply, or tired of the rules and broke them were socially excluded or had their belongings hidden. Women like Malika moved to PGs even though the rent is much more expensive than that of a college hostel. Further, as Malika left her hostel before the end of the school year, she forfeited six months of included fees. The initiation rituals and imposed dress codes were supposedly a means for new freshers to meet their seniors, but in practice, Malika told me, 'It was very much a power play by a certain bunch of people over everyone else.'

Although the PG lacked the strictness and peer dynamics of designated hostels, there were still hierarchies in the house. These centred on differences between college and working women, to which I have referred in the previous chapter as well as status difference between the residents and domestic workers to which I now turn.

Labour and Class Based Hierarchies in the Boarding House

Although the staff worked as domestic servants, they were employed by the owner rather than the residents and therefore answerable to her alone. Residents addressed the sisters as *Akka*, or 'elder sister' in Tamil and Kannada.[99] Aarti's husband was called 'security uncle'. Interestingly, residents referred to the property owner using the English

[99] It was only after Deepa referred to Aarti and Priya as 'servants' during a private conversation with me that I began to think of them as subordinates. As employees of the owner who was often absent, both women had considerable freedom and exercised considerable control over residents in the boarding house.

kinship term 'Aunty' and this seemed to be the case in other PGs as well.[100] The *Akkas*, for their part, always used residents' first names and did not feel obliged to append an honorific kinship term that was a practice I noticed in many middle-class families who employed domestic servants (See also Dickey 2008, 478). Priya and Aarti had both been employed in other industries before taking up employment in the boarding house. Priya had been a garment worker in several of Bangalore's factories,[101] while Aarti, had worked in an Anganwadi, a pre-school and primary healthcare centre. When the NGO that provided funding to this child health program dissolved, she too had worked in several garment factories and light industries located in the Peenya Industrial estate in north-western Bangalore. Aarti's husband suffered poor health as a result of working for many years in garment factories. Priya's husband worked as an attender in an office. Both women had taken up employment in the boarding house when the IT migrations created these new opportunities.

The sisters worked in the boarding house in shifts. One would arrive around seven am to prepare breakfast and begin cleaning. She would be engaged in cooking, sweeping, washing clothes, making jasmine garlands and performing piece-work sewing. When these tasks were complete, she would clean the other property on the block. Then she would prepare a meal consisting of sambar, dahl, a vegetable preparation, curd and rice. The meal would be shared by the family and any boarders who were home from work or college. After that she would watch television or sleep until her sister relieved her. The two pm

[100] I interviewed several college students to who lived in different PGs located in Shantinagar and Langford Town. All of them referred to the owner and manager of their PG as Aunty.

[101] Although garment factories have been central to the economy of Bangalore since the 1970s and brought many migrants to the city, this industry has received much less attention than the IT industry. Singh and Pani (2012) argued that class, gender and the rural-urban divide have rendered this industry invisible to academic attention. Further, although a global industry, garment workers are perceived to be less attractive than IT employees to members of the Indian middle class: 'The middle-class-to-riches story of the IT workers has been much more seductive than the rags-to-export-rejects story of the garment workers.' (Singh and Pani 2012, 9)

shift would include chopping vegetables, making *rotis*, and cooking the evening meal (see Figure 5). The meal would be divided into portions and served into tiffin boxes and plastic containers. After that, she would clean the kitchen and prepare the batter for the following morning's breakfast of *idli* or *dosa*. Around seven pm, she would leave for home. The sisters worked six days a week. On Sunday they attended the PG early in the morning to prepare *dosa* for residents and took the rest of the day off. Each sister was paid 3100 INR ($54) per month.

On moving in each resident was responsible for purchasing or bringing from home a separate metal plate, a drinking cup and dinner box. After meals each woman was responsible for disposing of any uneaten food and personally washing each of these items. This self-service approach differs from the practices of domestic workers in middle-class homes recorded by Ray and Qayum (2009). They suggested that one of the most important tasks undertaken by servants is the washing of used, and therefore ritually polluted, cups and plates (2009, 59-61). In the event that a resident was careless and did not clean her plate or box, the domestic workers would refuse to refill it or to leave food for that woman. It was not clear whether this reflected a subtle form of refusal on the part of staff to perform work that was designated as polluting, but as they performed other polluting tasks such as cleaning the bathing stall and toilets, the refusal to clean dirty dinner boxes and plates more likely reflected the specific circumstances under which the staff had been hired. They were required to clean all common areas and cook for residents but not to provide personal services to any particular resident unless the resident paid extra money for these tasks.

Residents were also responsible for providing a plastic bucket and a jug for bathing. These buckets would also be used for washing and soaking laundry. Women who lived relatively close to their parents and travelled home on the weekends often took their

laundry with them and had their clothing washed by their mothers or sisters-in-law (see Chapter One). Residents could opt to pay the domestic workers to wash their bedding or darn or alter their clothing but by and large residents performed these tasks themselves.

The boarding house shared some characteristics of the public sphere as women interacted with people they did not necessarily know well who belonged to different castes and religious affiliations. But it was simultaneously a domestic space where people enacted the intimacies of sharing meals, bathing and sleeping. As such, the PG was a space one could avoid some contact with the bodily fluids and essences of other residents. I have argued in Chapter One that literature on South Asia identifies the transaction – or avoidance – of bodily substances as a core indicator of caste and kinship based solitarily (For example Marriott 1976). Residents were served from the same metal vessels and had access to the same water – but many purchased bottled water from the nearby provision stores. As we all ate the same meals, a simple, non-vegetarian diet – differences arising from diverse dietary regimes did not emerge. The women who were vegetarian bought food from nearby canteens on the two days of each week when chicken was served, or the *Akkas* provided a separate meal for women they particularly liked or cared for. But the meaning attached to the unavoidable transactions stands in marked contrast to the meaning of the same actions in family units: the transaction of substances in the PG was an unavoidable problem, not a desirable or intentional practice designed to create or to cement bonds between members. Steps were taken and rules put in place to limit moments when people would come into contact with other people's substances.

Almost all residents viewed the boarding house as dirty when compared to their family homes. In contrast to many family homes I visited, where people remove their shoes and leave them either outside the home or at the entrance, residents wore the same pair of rubber sandals inside the bathroom and toilet as the rest of the house including the

kitchen. On occasions where I forgot to wear my rubber sandals inside I was reminded by a resident or by the domestic workers to wear them all the time to avoid illness. Wearing footwear inside created a permanent barrier between the body and space of the PG. This logic also applied to other surfaces. The shared desks and the table from which food was served were covered in newspaper.

To the extent that this was practical, the owner separated working women from college students. The former slept downstairs near the kitchen, while the latter slept on the second floor. But because the PG was a makeshift environment in which people were constantly moving in, staying for some time and then moving out, there were exceptions to this rule. Deepa, who operated two other PGs in the same street, refused to accommodate working women. She reasoned that working women and college students made poor roommates because the younger women (who were mostly students) disturbed their elders and the two groups operated on different schedules. Age differences between women did occasionally create conflict and resentment as I have indicated in Chapter One, but it is just as likely that Deepa preferred to host students because of the greater financial reward. College students could be expected to pay higher rent, and would likely be more responsive to discipline because Deepa established a relationship with their parents before granting admission. Unlike the PG where I lived, Deepa only accepted paying guests after she had personally met their parents and deemed that they came from 'respectable families' – like her own. Our own PG owner was less attentive but still sought to separate college students from working women.

Difference of social class, region, religion and language also separated the so-called 'upstairs girls' from the working women. Working women were more likely to come from areas close to Bangalore, either in Karnataka or nearby districts in Tamil Nadu or Andhra Pradesh. Students were from much further afield – they came from capital cities like

Imphal and Itanagar in the North East, Durgapur in West Bengal and as far afield as Nepal. As Deepa put it, only women from very well settled families were sent out of the house to Bangalore for study. This level of privileged education was out of reach for struggling middle-class and poor families. The spatial separation of working women and college students meant that there was a tendency for South Indian women to live downstairs and North and North Eastern women, who were also drawn from a more privileged strata, to live upstairs, but in practice however, the staff and owners took a pragmatic approach to allocating bunks and the main objective seemed to be to fit as many people into each room as possible. To illustrate how the owner managed the space I will provide a brief overview of one of the hostel's many shared rooms and its occupants.

Figure 6 Dinner service

‘The Room is Too Small, but we Manage’

The most congested room in the house was on the bottom floor. This was a room where one of the residents had moved in after a dispute with a woman in another room. The tiny room was fitted out with two sets of metal bunk beds, three metal office cupboards, and a single wooden desk. The desk was covered with water bottles and plastic containers, suitcases were stacked haphazardly beside the cupboards, and plastic buckets protruded from underneath the beds. Four women shared this room, Renuka aged 21, Rayna aged 20, Tamana aged 24 and Manaswi aged 27.

Renuka migrated to Bangalore from the city of Davangere in Karnataka but considered Andhra Pradesh to be her native place. Her father was a retired *tehsildar* (revenue officer), and she moved around a lot as a child. Before she arrived in Bangalore she had completed a bachelors degree in mechanical engineering and migrated to the city to complete a postgraduate course in interior design at Jain University.[102] After that, like many other college students, Renuka stayed on to work in the city where many jobs were available and the salaries higher than in other Indian cities. Rayna’s[103] family lived in Mangalore. She migrated to Bangalore after finding employment in the State Income Tax Department. Tamana was 24 years old. She migrated to Bangalore from Salem and worked for one of the largest providers of business process outsourcing in Bangalore (see Introduction). I have already described Manaswi’s employment in detail in Chapters One and Two.

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[102] Both Renuka and Myoko were completing degrees at Jain University whose by-line reads ‘Bangalore’s Top Private University’. Renuka’s college fees were considerable at 57,000 rupees (approx. 1,177 AUS) for a one-year course. Tilak has argued that, ‘private education has become a dominant phenomenon in higher education in India’ (Tilak 2014, 33) and that on average, fees charged by private institutions are between 50% to 80% higher than those charged by public universities.

[103] Rayna was the only woman who lived on the bottom floor of the boarding house who did not agree to be interviewed for the project.

Other sleeping areas were arranged so that a resident slept on the bottom bunk and used the top bunk as a storage area. But in this room, residents slept two to a bunk. As there was no space in the room for Renuka's cupboard, this was left in the hall. When I asked if it was difficult sharing such a small space, Renuka replied, 'The room is too small, but we manage.'

On the right side of the corridor, there is a slightly larger room with an attached bathroom. This room was shared by Asha, Kanti and Myoko (see Figure 6). They are the only student migrants on the bottom floor of the house. All three women migrated to Bangalore to complete university courses. The 'spare' bunk is used to store their combined vessels, stationary and novels brought from their homes. The desk is stacked with textbooks on law, accounting, and management – popular professional specialisations for those looking for jobs in growing private sector.

Figure 7 Myoko [left] and Asha [right] in their room

Further down the hall, there is one more room that the owner has converted into a recreation area for the downstairs residents with a small colour television and six or seven plastic chairs. This area is also used to store gas cylinders. The room to the right is the largest sleeping area on this floor. During the course of the year, six women lived in this room but no more than five could stay at a time. When I first arrived, I shared this area with Prasanna, a computer science graduate who migrated to Bangalore from Mandya to complete a paid training program in the operating system, Linux, and Judith, and Chris, to whom I have referred to in previous chapters. Later in the year we were joined by Yasmin, who migrated from Mysore to Bangalore to work as a guest relations officer at the nearby oncology hospital. Midway through 2012, Prasanna was removed from the paying guest by her parents when they became suspicious about her friendship with a young man from her sending community. Following a dispute that I will describe in detail later, Sriparna, a troubled student migrant from West Bengal, was forced to move from the first floor by the owner. The room is relatively spacious – there are three sets of bunk beds and one freestanding bed underneath a wall recess. When the house was still a family home, this room would have been the entrance. Three metal cupboards block access to the front door. Unlike other family homes I visited, which are colourfully painted and decorated, all of the walls are painted a dull cream colour. Six months into my stay, the owner installed two MDF partitions as a makeshift door.

The students who lived upstairs accessed their rooms using a set of external concrete stairs. These stairs ascended to the roof terrace where all residents dried their laundry. On the roof, there was also an Indian toilet and a storage room for rations. The first floor housed approximately twenty women who lived in even smaller spaces than those beneath them. These women slept in small separate rooms and in large spaces that had been divided using MDF partitions mounted on the walls. There was a television area on this floor too and a balcony that could be accessed from one room shared by four women. One

of the bedrooms had an attached toilet with a tap for bathing, but no geyser to heat water. Only one of the downstairs bathrooms was fitted with a geyser and it was this one that most women used to bathe.

As with other households in Bangalore, there were frequent disruptions to the water supply. The property sourced water from a shared onsite bore but the PG staff also paid gratuities to the municipal water truck to provide the house with additional supplies when the well was too low or not functioning properly. Disruptions to the supply of electricity were also common. These were usually noted when the ceiling fans began to slow and eventually pause. I often returned to the house to find Renuka and other students completing their assignments by candlelight during the monsoon.

Perishable food was stored in a small refrigerator, but most of the food consumed by residents was purchased from vegetable vendors each morning by one of the sisters. Food was prepared from basic ingredients each day. Portions were strictly controlled. The meals that were provided were mostly vegetarian with chicken being served one evening per week. Most residents eat a non-vegetarian diet and consume chicken and eggs but abstain from beef. In an attempt to cater to all dietary preferences – and no doubt to reign in costs, the food provided by the PG was simple and monotonous. Coping with this food was a common challenge for residents. The women from Andhra Pradesh found the dishes too bland, while the women from North India complained about the addition of coconut to many preparations. In anticipation of days when the food was inedible or when they arrived home late from work or college and missed dinner, women kept provisions in their cupboards like sweet biscuits, jam, coffee and pickles. Alerted to the presence of several PGs, local vendors plied their wares in the early evening and occasionally women stepped out for ice-cream and snacks.

Although the house was advertised as accommodation for paying guests and described as a PG both by residents and the *Akkas*, the ongoing management of the property and boarders was conducted without one of the core residential practices of an ideal PG. Firstly, the owner and her family did not co-reside with the boarders. Secondly, this particular owner did not behave as a parental figure, nor did she perform emotional labour or develop strong attachments to any of the residents. She made brisk, infrequent visits to the PG to deliver rations and collect the rent, which was always paid by cash and receipted in an exercise book by the sisters. After taking payments, the owner would check the rooms and bathrooms calculate the monthly expenditures on food and bills and leave instructions for the staff. She maintained contact with residents using her mobile phone and occasionally contacted the parents of college students in the event of non-payment of fees or disputes. The house thus took on some characteristics of a working-women's hostel with no family in residence, but differed from many working-women's hostels because there was no official warden.[104] The *Akkas* felt that the house was more like a paying guest than a working-women's hostel because the house was more homely and because of the emotional investment they made in the residents. As the residents were all single female migrants and many were under the age of twenty-five, Aarti and Priya felt that they had a shared responsibility to take care of them. As Aarti put it, 'The girls leave their parents and come so far. So Priya and I have to take good care of them. They are girls, right? So if they don't have their parents to take care, they come to us and we take care.' These practices of care were of equal importance in their perception to the routine domestic tasks that staff performed.

[104] Priya and Aarti confirmed that when the house was converted into a PG, there had been a warden who was an elderly lady and eventually the owner asked her to leave and did not arrange a replacement.

Becoming Paying Guests

Residents found paying guests using interpersonal networks, kin or neighbourhood connections. Unlike other kinds of accommodation that require some interpersonal connection, potential residents can also find PGs using mass advertisements and by walking around in areas near colleges. The various methods of sourcing PGs either through colleges, employers, via kin connections or through mass advertisements indicate the enormous diversity of residential types and social practices covered by the label, paying guest accommodation.

Some students were referred to the paying guest by staff at their colleges. Others were directed to adjacent lanes of the compound and simply asked at houses with signboards or advertisements. Some had college seniors who were already living in PGs who directed them to the right houses. Employers also directed new staff to streets were they knew there were PGs operating. Arriving at the compound they looked at several PGs before selecting one based on price and proximity to their workplaces. Tamana moved to the PG because her elder cousins were working there.

Many residents described their early days in Bangalore as lonely. Even women whose early experiences both in the boarding house and in the city were very positive mentioned that they had expected to feel lonely as single migrants and expressed relief at the strong bonds they had formed with other residents and co-workers. While talking about her senior colleagues at the hospital where she worked, Jaanvi, whom I mentioned in the introduction, told me:

> My two seniors are like friends, or elder sisters. Every time they will say, “we are with you” and they will guide in each and every way. I did not expect such a good

> thing; I thought, I'm going to a different state, I have to live a life for three years as a lonely person, but I'm happy here[105].

Nila, who migrated to Bangalore from Nepal told me, '[Before arriving] I was so scared, I'm going to Bangalore! How will I adjust and how will I face the people? But when I came here local people were so helpful'. Nila's friend Asha from college, who migrated to Bangalore from Imphal, told me that in her early period of residence she cried for a month. Homesick, without any friends from her sending community and no relatives in Bangalore, she experienced painful struggle. She emphasised the strangeness of a multitude of people but no relatives nearby to help. Her slightly disjointed account to me of her early days in the city reflected her struggle to be understood as a speaker of Hindi, itself a secondary language for her, with limited English in South India. After this early struggle she made many friends in college as large numbers of the students are North Indian migrants. As I recorded her interview, she and Nila frequently broke off their conversation with me to argue or clarify their answers in Hindi. It became clear that as Asha found people to converse with and in some cases interpret for her, she began to feel more comfortable.

Renuka's experiences reflect those of a student migrant and a single employed woman. As I have mentioned, she moved to Bangalore to complete a course in interior design. After college, she stayed on in the boarding house and found employment in a small design firm. During her job interview, the interviewer looked over her design portfolio, and then asked if she had plans to marry. When she replied that she did not expect to marry for at least a few more years, she was offered a job. When she arrived in Bangalore, she found the PG with the assistance of an aunt, uncle, and cousin. On

[105] Jaanvi lived in one of the PGs that Deepa operated. Although Deepa did not usually offer accommodation to working women, she made an exception for Jaanvi because she was a student medical doctor and Deepa liked her parents.

weekends she stayed with these relatives.[106] Like Asha, she described missing her mother and father, becoming ill from eating street food, and lacking company and confidence to travel alone to visit the nearby temple. It was only after she befriended one of her roommates that she began to feel confident enough to travel around more freely. The two women often visited temples together. They travelled to the Bull Temple in Basavangudi and the ISKCON temple on the outskirts of Bangalore.

Adjustment

Residents described their experiences of moving to Bangalore as a challenge that was eventually overcome through the development of new relationships with co-workers, friends, and peers. Living in the paying guest was more or less confronting depending on prior experiences of living away from kin and the woman's age. But at least during the early period, life as a paying guest involved considerable hardship.

Residents described the disappearance of the familiar lifeworld and its replacement with a place where they did not know anyone and would have to build new relationships. Adjustment, emerged as a central theme around which a number of migrant experiences were organised. Repeated articulation lent to this concept a recursive quality. It was used to describe prior experiences of migration. Women often advised one another to adjust and in turn were frequently told to adjust by their parents when they complained of lapses in the provision of services in the PG or disputes with other residents. The concept of adjustment described familiarisation to new environments, the need to compromise either with difficult people or with unmet personal expectations, and tolerance of otherwise unacceptable behaviours.

[106] Like Ruth and Tamana, Renuka stayed with relatives or family friends when she first arrived in Bangalore but felt that staying with this family permanently was too much of an imposition. She compromised by visiting them at weekends and staying in the PG during the week.

In the following example from Renuka, the need to adjust implies the need to familiarise oneself with new environments, in this case both the city and the boarding house:

> When I first came to Bangalore me and my cousin-sister found this PG near my to college. When I came here, I felt very bad. I have to live far from my family. So I feel very bad, I'm missing my mum, dad and everyone. But we have to adjust for everything – food problem, everything. And we have to adjust for people. It was a too hard time for me when I came here. From the first week I suffered a lot – adjusting to people and having food and then everything. And then I had to start college and new people, [you] have to adjust for them. It's hard to adjust for everyone.

Like Renuka, Ruth used the term adjustment to describe a process of gradual familiarisation:

> I had the usual difficulties of settling down. Then I felt comfortable after six months. It took time for me to adjust. After that I slowly started doing things on my own. Going out for [job] interviews on my own and all of that, that's how I got adjusted.

Another resident moved to the PG as a six month trail to see if she could manage living away from her parents. In her account, the requirement that she adjust implied ongoing compromise. When I asked if she liked living in the PG, she replied, 'First I didn't like it. But I tried to adjust myself and now I'm OK.'

For working women, the comfort and security of their natal family depended in no small measure on their ability to endure life in the boarding house and this entailed adjusting to discomfort. For Judith, life as a paying guest enabled her employment. As she put it, 'without PGs we cannot stay here'. But PGs were also spaces of considerable hardship. As a migrant worker she needed to keep her own housing costs as low as possible. To do so she had to stay in an unhygienic and not especially comfortable environment. She seethed when the domestic workers did not arrive on time or prepared food she did not like. One of her main complaints was that the *Akkas* did not cook *roti* with

oil unless the resident bought the oil and provided it for her own bread[107] – everyone else had to eat stale tasting *rotis* prepared without oil. As *roti* was the staple and was served with each evening meal, this and other repeated minor annoyances could erupt into open conflict.[108] Following a week in which the Akkas arrived too late to prepare her breakfast twice in a row, Judith lost her temper and told me that she wanted to find another PG. We often discussed the possibility of moving to a better, cleaner and more comfortable boarding house but the desire to leave was constrained by financial pressure. Stating that one was 'planning to shift' was also one of the ways that people discursively marked the boarding house as a temporary space and it therefore could not be taken literally, but this time, Judith looked ready to walk out the door. What occurred next was an incident that highlights the compromises Judith had to make in order to continue to work for her family.

From my field notes:

After Aarti arrived too late to prepare Judith's breakfast for the third time that week, Judith was furious. 'It's her duty!' she exclaimed, exasperated. I told her that I would be happy to ask Deepa whether she had a vacancy in her PG across the lane. In the evening, when Judith returned from work, we walked over to Deepa's house. Deepa's son and daughter were sitting in their living room watching their prominent LCD television. Judith's manner instantly became demure and self-effacing. She told Deepa that she was looking for a new PG and wanted to cook for herself. After some chatting Deepa told Judith that the cost was 5500 rupees per month with food- slightly less without. Judith looked instantly nervous and a little embarrassed. Our boarding house charged 3700 per

[107] Ruth supplied oil to the staff so that they would cook her roti with it.

[108] I remember being scolded by Priya when after a long day I asked for an extra boiled egg for dinner. She refused on the grounds that she only cooked enough eggs for each resident to have one. Although annoyed, I walked out and bought dinner at a nearby canteen, but women like Judith could not afford to waste money like I did on consumables when food was included in their rent.

month; the difference of 1800 was a substantial increase. We followed Deepa up the stairs to the first floor where she housed her paying guests. There was a small stone kitchen with a stove but no refrigerator, a hall with one or two freestanding beds, and two separate rooms with freestanding beds and metal cupboards. Unlike our PG, the walls were brightly painted but there was no natural light. At the end of the hall, there was a small bathroom with a geyser and a western toilet. Two young women sat on the hall beds looking at us both with curiosity. Washing facilities were on the roof terrace. As Deepa led us up the stairs, Judith and I chatted in hushed voices about the price and how she might manage to pay it.

After that Deepa lead us across the street to view her other PG. The space is two rooms (one of which is a bathroom) – no kitchen. The sleeping area had three small free-standing beds and three tiny desks with chairs. The walls were painted a putrid green colour. The windows had been boarded shut and were covered with paper or cloth. Judith sat shyly on one of the beds. She and Deepa politely exchanged background information. Deepa did not ask anything specific about caste or region but Judith did mention that she had migrated to Bangalore from Tamil Nadu. Deepa mentioned that her people come from a place on the current border of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. After these pleasantries, Deepa asked Judith why she was unhappy with our PG, ‘Are the servants causing trouble?’ Judith replied that the *Akkas* do not come on time and as a result she is either late for work or does not have time to eat her included breakfast. She enquired about the price. Deepa told her that residents are required to stay for one-year minimum if they want to get their bond back. Judith asked if the advance could be reduced, Deepa replied that usually the advance is 10, 000 rupees, Judith looked aghast - 10, 000 was only a little less than half her monthly salary.

Back at the boarding house, Judith called her mother. They argued in Tamil for some time and eventually Judith hung up. In tears, she told me that her parents had advised her to stay in the PG and eat outside if the food was inedible or the *Akkas* were late. This was an empty suggestion. All the working women with the exception of Ruth refused to eat outside food unless there was no alternative as it was viewed as extravagant and food was provided as part of their rent. With the exception of a fried rice dish that Judith ate perhaps once a week, while in Bangalore she only allowed herself to eat PG food. After a few moments, Judith composed herself. Had she decided to move, the amount of money she would have been able to send home would have been seriously reduced. Later she told our roommates and myself that Deepa's PG was poorly ventilated and that was why she had chosen to stay.

The requirement that women adjust also applied to inter-religious and regional tolerance. In the multi-faith and cross-caste space of the PG, residents expected to encounter women of other faiths, speakers of diverse languages and people who followed different dietary regimes. While there was no pressure to adopt otherwise forbidden behaviours, there was an unspoken expectation of tolerance and non-interference with other residents food items, shrines and belongings.

> We have to adjust for everyone. Not like, you're from my place so I will accept you or you're not from my place so I will not accept you. It's not good; in the future we don't know what kind of people we will meet, so we have to adjust now itself! That will help our future. (Manaswi)

Although life as paying guests could be lonely and unpleasant, it offered exposure to difference that was a valuable lesson women would not have been able to learn had they stayed in their natal homes.[109] Renuka told me that living in a PG had a pedagogical function that would benefit her in two ways. Firstly, she believed that an early experience

[109] De Neve argued that his Gounder informants in Tirrupur told him that they viewed exposure to difference as one of the main benefits of international study (De Neve 2011, 81).

of living in a domestic environment with ‘strangers’ would help her adapt to the domestic ways of her in-laws when she eventually married. Secondly, she felt that living with people from different religions, castes and communities had made her and others more knowledgeable about difference and therefore more tolerant.

> Renuka: In the PG there are some good people, we come to know how they live, we understand their mentality and we come to know about the world. It’s a lesson for us to know everything about peoples lives, to see how they suffer and how we should interact with them.

Women found it easier and were more likely to develop close bonds with people from similar language groups and regions of India, but it is also clear that they valued tolerance and expected others to treat them with respect. Prior experiences of attending high school and college and working in mixed workplaces equipped residents to cooperate with those whom they perceived to be different to them. When I asked Ruth if she had experienced discrimination as a Christian she looked mildly insulted and replied, ‘People accept you the way you are. You come here, stay with a lot of different people. I’ve been with Hindus, Muslims, Christians – they’re all the same for me, just friends.’ Renuka was even more emphatic on this point, ‘We are Indians. We are not community this, community that. We are just Indians. I love India; we accept everyone’. But these types of responses were often followed with women saying that they were reserved, did not depend on their roommates and did want to disturb anybody. In the absence of a clear hierarchy, and given that residents and domestic workers interacted constantly but not in the ways explicitly prescribed by employee–employer roles, life in the PG depended on a continuous process of self-modification, restraint, compromise and enforced intimacy. In the rare instances that women left the PG as the result of disputes, it was assumed that they simply could not adjust to the environment and to other women.

The Bride and the Single Woman in the City

The narratives of homesickness and feelings of loneliness provided by residents echo the transition trauma experienced by many new brides as they leave their parents' house and move to their husband's home after marriage (Minturn and Kapoor 1993, 54). And like new brides, PG residents were encouraged to cultivate dispositions of tolerance, cooperation and self-sacrifice that mirror those of the ideal wife as she enters the joint family (see Minturn and Kapoor 1993, 172). Ethnographic and artistic accounts of early marriage identify adjustment as a modality of problem solving and the responsibility of the wife who has joined her husband's patrilineage (Charsley 2008, Uberoi and Singh 2006). A compromising attitude is viewed as a pragmatic approach to reducing conflict between husband and wife and between the woman and her affinal kin. The importance of adjustment and its application to the paying guest also indicates the relative lack of power the woman holds in her new home where she must manage as best she can.

However, although residents often discussed their lives in the PG as necessitating a process of adjustment, it would not be accurate to assume that their migration to Bangalore was an exact parallel to the migration implied by their future marriages. Life as a paying guest was clearly distinguished from marriage in that this was seen as temporary as against marriage, which was viewed as a permanent and irreversible transition in a woman's life that must be arranged by parents and sanctified through ritual processes. The college students and working women occupied a liminal status as they were physically mature but considered too 'socially' young to marry. Only in circumstances where the resident disobeyed her parents, would she get married before completing her studies (Ruth's story of Hannah was often referred to as a morality tale, indicating the likely fate of woman who married without parental permission).

Student migrants expected to get married between the ages of 25 and 27. Some had elder sisters whose marriages would take precedence, as female children are married according to birth order. They looked forward to their marriages because as married women they could expect higher status in their natal families, not to mention a much desired family function, new clothing and jewellery. But Nila, Kanti, Myoko and others confirmed that their parents would continue to politely deflect offers of marriage from interested families until their degrees were complete. Although some of the women believed that with the changes afoot in India, many families now prefer a 'working woman' in their search for wives for their sons, the decision about whether they would be able to work after marriage would be made by their husband and his family. Migration as paying guests was further distinguished from marriage because migration for marriage entailed joining a new family. Most residents expected to join joint families in which they would reside with their husband and his parents. The social relationships they expected to build in their roles as wives and daughters-in-law were different to the diffuse and individuated sociality in the boarding house.

Selective Friendships

The paying guest accommodation was a space of forced proximity that needed to be managed carefully in order to allow sufficient space for autonomy, while permitting people to strike up friendships and feel homely in a place far away from home (see Figure 7). In the initial stages of fieldwork, I assumed that the residents of the PG became a kind of surrogate family. I witnessed women build close friendships, address one another with kinship terms and share food, gossip and loan each other money on occasion. One evening, I left the PG after dark to buy drinking water. Sriparna asked me where I was going. Distracted, I hesitated to answer her, in the short silence that followed, her faced turned solemn and assuming reproach she said, 'You are elder to me, I should not question you.'

She also addressed me as *didi* (elder sister) and rarely used my first name. But following familial conventions was not universal.

Many women did not even know the names of other residents who lived in different sections of the house. In contrast to the hierarchical relationships of encompassment associated with family units, relationships between residents in the boarding house were fluid and depended on the characters and personality of particular women. The boarding house was one of the few domestic spaces where people could choose whether to form bonds with others or whether to remain aloof from all but the most utilitarian interactions. Relationships between residents could be very close but women could also ignore each other almost completely as was frequently the case. Residents distinguished between their trusted friends and others they merely interacted with. As Manaswi put it,

> Some people are good. We can only retain those people in our heart. Others – to one person she will do something, in front of me she will do something else. If we have a doubt about people we can never retain them in our heart. Just for *timepass* we will keep and then we will forget.

In Manaswi's usage the implication of 'timepass' is one of temporariness. She could be friendly to people in the PG but the boarding house was not a place to building long term friendships as eventually she would leave and forget the other residents. For Manaswi, the temporary bonds she developed with other women in the PG were implicitly contrasted to the more stable and lifelong bonds to her family and community for whom she laboured (see Chapter Two). Manaswi looked firstly to the family and then to the community for moral guidance and nurtured these bonds with care. With those she described as the 'non community', she was somewhat guarded.

It took many weeks of repeated interaction before she began to acknowledge me. My attempts to get to know her were rebuffed many times, but after she had learned about me from Judith and others, she became warm, and was very generous with her time. After our

first interview I asked her if there was anything she wanted to know about me. She replied that she already knew everything having been told by other women about my family background, nationality and occupation. I was somewhat taken aback by this but it indicates that people did not have to become close friends to learn potentially sensitive information about one another – to some extent at least, people's initial reticence was based on very real concerns to regulate the flow of knowledge. Ruth, too indicated that she felt no obligation to establish bonds with roommates simply because they lived in close proximity. Mostly, she preferred to keep to herself – 'I don't talk a lot to a lot of people. I don't make friends instantly; that doesn't work with me. I may talk, I may say "hey hello, hi" but that's all.'

Yet, even when relationships were not especially intimate, women still drew comfort from the fact of having other people around them. Indeed the view that women are safer, happier and more secure living with other people was almost universally held by residents who neither desired nor felt comfortable sleeping in empty rooms.[110] When I asked Yasmin what she liked about living in the PG, she replied that she didn't particularly like anything about it. But after a long pause she added, 'Just you are here, and Judith. You are both very friendly with me, and Renuka and Rayna, they both are very friendly with me; on Sundays I will go out with them.' Similarly I asked Myoko, who seemed to spend more time inside the boarding house than others whether she ever felt lonely. 'No.' she replied, 'When she is not here', she gestured to Asha's bunk, 'she is here' she said gesturing to Kanti's bunk. 'And when they are not here, *they* are here.' – she pointed to the doorway of the room that Renuka shared with Tamana, Manaswi and Rayna.

[110] Daniel (1984) recorded similar attitudes among his Tamil informants. He suggested the village women in his study much preferred to sleep together and often invited kin, friends and neighbours to stay with them.

Figure 8 Resting after a movie

Being 'Alone': a Challenge and an Opportunity

Despite the congestion and lack of privacy, many women described themselves as 'alone' both in the boarding house and in Bangalore.[111] This was despite the fact that empirically, women were almost never alone in the boarding house. Even if other residents were absent, at least one and often two members of Aarti's family were present at all times; when the domestic workers left for home, the security guard who was Aarti's husband would arrive. In the mornings he would not leave until either his wife or his sister in law arrived to relieve him. It was unusual for a resident to come home to an empty room

[111] Brosius has argued that in class fractions outside a very small elite, Indians experience solitude as negative and undesirable. Those who desire solitude are viewed as anti-social. She suggested that real estate advertisements for elite gated communities draw on this semiotic precisely because it marks out the subject who desires solitude as a member of this elite (2010, 94-95).

or sleeping area. On the rare occasions when this happened the resident would have the option to seek out company by walking upstairs or calling a friend on their mobile.

The perception that one was alone was a motivator for weekend trips back to the natal family and visits to nearby relatives' homes. The sense of being alone can be interpreted as indicative of broader sentiments about family, regional identity and caste (see Chapter Two). Living away from the natal family seemed to render the woman 'alone' regardless of the other people she may reside with. Cut off from the practices of feeding, nurture and care in their families, they felt alone even though they were not. Building relationships with roommates was one way to stave off feelings of loneliness. While this was mostly unstated, feelings of loneliness in Bangalore played a role in women establishing relationships with men in the city, who were often from their sending communities. Yet if these relationships became common knowledge, they could further isolate the woman from others in the PG. Almost all of the women I interviewed mentioned that parents had trusted them to migrate alone and to live as paying guests. Entering into relationships with men broke parental trust in the most damaging way and could potentially compromise a woman's future. As Judith put it, 'In a hostel there are all types of girls – drinking girls, girls who have boyfriends – do all those things. There are good girls also. I have seen it, in this PG and in my old PG.' Renuka made similar comments. She had seen many women betray their parents' trust after being sent to the city. Like Judith, she sought to actively distance herself from these undesirable influences.

> Renuka: Sometimes I feel very bad about girls; they do unwanted things, I mean that parents have trusted them and sent them outside. It's too bad …
>
> Gillian: You mean their parents have trusted them and they're running off [with boys]?
>
> Renuka: Yes, it's too bad. I hate those girls … Frankly I hate them!

Trips back to the natal family were a common strategy to cope with loneliness. Renuka told me that when she travelled home to stay with her parents during college holidays her mother went to special efforts to prepare her favourite dishes as a reward for her endurance in the boarding house. Returning to the PG after these treasured weekend trips was distressing but after a week or so she again became accustomed to the routine. 'I don't have any mood to come back [to the PG]. I feel very bad to come back from home. [It's the] same atmosphere when I come here, some days I feel very alone.'

Separation from one's family and home community added to the perception of being alone. Women and their families used mobile phones to stay in almost constant contact to ameliorate the sense of loneliness. Calls between parents and their children, which in practice were most often between mothers and their daughters, provided sustenance and reassurance as well as contributing to monitoring. These calls could be about arrangements for upcoming trips home, commodities that the family wanted the daughter to purchase in Bangalore that were not available in the smaller towns or simply to discuss the working day, school and whether their daughter was managing in the city.

Mobile phones thus created a continuous link between the enclosed world of the boarding house and the outside world across varying distances that could stretch back to family as well as out into the network of peers, friends and for some, love interests located in the city. In circumstances were residents could not be reached by telephone, families relied on kin networks to locate and occasionally chastise their daughters. One of the rules that was specified when a college student joined the PG was that she must have a 'local guardian'[112]. This was a requirement enacted by the colleges for all interstate students. In cases where kin networks are unavailable, parents could contact the PG on the landline

[112] The requirement that each resident have a local guardian was relaxed for working women but deemed essential for all college students.

telephone or call the property owner. This ensured that in theory residents were always within the protection and control of kin or their proxies.

For residents, their mobile phones emerged both as the means of constant communication and as repositories of social memory, which could include images of absent kin, homes and pets and a means to establish and demonstrate ties of friendship and build networks in the city. While the rationale for mobile phone ownership was that of maintaining contact with kin, I often witnessed mobiles being used for communication not authorised by the family. The college students used their smart phones to make calls, to send chain text-messages between friends, to capture and view photos as well as using cellular data connections to access social networking sites like Facebook. The working-women used their phones (which were often the less expensive 'feature phones' rather than smart phones) to call and text as well as to stay in contact with workmates and supervisors and occasionally to discuss work matters that were deemed to sensitive for the office.

In previous chapters I have argued that working women in particular felt that the opinions of their extended family, caste peers and 'localites' in their sending communities were of far greater importance than the views of fellow paying guests. But friends provided an important support network for women living in the city and most residents had at least one close friend in the PG.

Residents were most likely to befriend women from similar sending communities, religious identities and so on, but interestingly, in the event that a friendship did not develop between women from the same language groups, residents seemed to be most anxious about the potential for criticism from these people. The most volatile conflicts were often explained to me as the result of these similarities. Many of the student migrants moved to the PG with a particularly close friend they had made in college or a friend from their sending community. These two women would then become PG roommates if adjacent

bunks were available. This was the case with Sriparna (whom I mentioned in Chapter One) and her best friend Shivani. Both women migrated to Bangalore from West Bengal. They left their designated college hostel in flight from inedible food and ragging. But after living together in the PG for six months the friendship soured. Sriparna accused Shivani of stealing her mother's watch. After a loud and chaotic dispute lasting more than two hours, the PG owner was called to the house. She moved Sriparna to another room and soon after Shivani failed an important exam and left the PG.

This dispute suggests that friendship beyond the family is ambivalent. Sharing a living area could strengthen bonds of friendship, but these could also break down causing one or both of the women to leave the PG. It also suggests that residents did not know how far to trust women with whom they lived in close proximity[113]. Even though people may strike up friendships, social relations are marked by a pervasive sense of doubt. Chakrabarty argued that a sense of ambiguity and doubt is characteristic of inter-communal spaces like the *bazaar* (2002, 73-74). In these spaces people partially domesticate their environments to protect themselves from the potentially malevolent agencies of others. The PG staff told me that the reason for Sriparna and Shivani's explosive argument was that they already knew one another before they moved into the paying guest. Later, Sriparna told me that during the dispute, Shivani had threatened to tell her mother that she had been having affairs with boys and 'changing boyfriends'. This was the ultimate act of betrayal by a friend as it would have damaged Sriparna's reputation and upset and possibly shamed her mother. She was thus relieved when Shivani moved to another PG but their dispute continued to effect her as they attended the same college and could not avoid one another.

[113] The dispute over the missing watch was also an example of the fact that valuables often went missing in the PG. The Akkas advised residents to keep all valuables and money inside their allocated metal cupboards. The staff were particularly strict about this rule and reprimanded women who did not comply with it.

Adjustment Versus 'Attitude'

Within the boarding house assertive behaviour, and behaviours that were uncooperative came together in two adjectives that women used to describe one another – 'having or showing attitude' and being 'bold'. In extreme cases these could take the adjective form, 'attitude person' – in which attitude becomes an aspect of personhood rather than just a particular behaviour. Those who were described as bold were also described as unable to adjust.

When I asked about what it meant to be bold, residents told me stories about two women, the first was a prior resident, Meena, to whom I have referred in the previous chapter and Tamana a current resident whom I mentioned in the Introduction. In the previous chapter I described Meena as special friend of Ruth who was badly treated by the staff and forced to leave the boarding house. This was Ruth's sympathetic point of view.

I asked Ruth how she befriended Meena when she was clearly disliked and feared by other residents. Ruth answered that Meena's disputes with the *Akkas* and other residents were the result of jealousy about her earnings and disapproval of her honest and direct manner:

> [The *Akkas*] had a problem with her because she spoke the truth and she did it to their face. They didn't like it, so they started to tell stories about her. If she had said OK to everything, she would have been treated like a princess in here: that's how it works. And you know, they treated her so badly, I don't know why. She used to come at 11 o'clock in the night. Half the time they forgot to keep food for her. And sometimes they used to keep only rice. She used to buy pickles and eat rice and pickle every night after working all day.

After completing college, Meena found a job as a chartered accountant and earned 80 thousand rupees a month. Her salary was nearly eight times what Tamana (see Introduction) earned as a data entry assistant and more even than the twenty-eight thousand Judith earned as a medical coder. According to Ruth, the *Akkas* were using dishonest

means to extract small amounts of money from Meena by suggesting that she owed them for additional food and services they provided. When she refused, they invented spurious reasons for not leaving her meals and gossiped about her to other women, stirring up ill feeling.

But according to other residents, Meena was an argumentative bully. She and Renuka had been roommates, but after several arguments over the shared bathroom, Renuka moved to another room. The move was not sufficient to resolve the conflict and Meena, who was viewed as the instigator, was forced to leave the PG. As I have mentioned, Renuka slept in the only room where all of the bunks were used for sleeping rather than storage. Sitting on Renuka's bunk, one afternoon when she had returned from college and was about to eat her dinner, I asked what happened between her and Meena,

> Renuka: She's gone. She left. She had to leave the PG because she had a problem with everyone. Even when we are going for a bath, we have to go for timings[114] and everything. But sometimes people show attitude. We have to adjust for everything; we have to prepare for that. It's difficult to adjust with everyone because sometimes people talk rubbish, but we have to see [them] everyday so we have to try to adjust otherwise … no solution.

When I asked Renuka about Meena, she pointed out while disputes were almost inevitable, it was important that residents reconciled or 'patched up' or they would not be able to continue living together. Given that women expected to see each other everyday, behaving in an argumentative or confrontational manner was taboo.

A similar perceived lack of self-regulation led many to describe a nightshift worker named Tamana (see Introduction) as an example of a woman who had attitude or was bold.

[114] Residents developed a system of 'timings' so that each woman would have roughly fifteen minutes to bathe before leaving for college or work each morning. All women disliked this system because if someone woke up late or the staff arrived later then usual other women would either miss their bath or risk being late for work or college. Nevertheless, timings were viewed as essential. The owner had encased the geyser switch in a locked wooden unit so women were only able to access hot water during specific periods.

Manaswi told me that all nightshift people had attitude – she had known other female call centre workers in her previous PG and disliked them as well. Patel and Nisbett have both suggested that one of the most intriguing paradoxes of outsourcing in India is that from the position of employers and multi-national companies, women are favoured employees because of their perceived docility but at the same time their working the night shift often leads to their being labelled, 'bold', 'easy' or otherwise unmarriageable (Patel 2010, 11, 80-1, Nisbett 2009, 130). Nisbett suggested that the stigmatised labels applied to call centre workers are the result of middle-class anxieties about women gaining autonomy. His young male informants told him that they tried to avoid 'dirty girls', 'vulgar girls', 'high class' or 'too Western' girls and 'call centre' girls in their search for ideal wives (Nisbett 2009, 129). But Tamana was not 'high class'. Her salary was the lowest salary out of all the working women in the study.[115]

When women told me that Tamana had attitude and that this was the result of her job, they mentioned her waking them at strange times when she returned from a shift, being noisy while they were trying to sleep and cooking in her bedroom. Our PG was one where residents were not permitted to cook for themselves, but because Tamana worked night shifts and often missed meals, she was allowed to keep a small stove in her room. Other women resented this preferential treatment. Tamana was also notable for her tendency to slam the partition doors, throw her clothing on other peoples' bunks and change the channel while other women were watching television. Excluded from shared activity by her roommates, one of whom told me, 'the three of us are close, but we never bother with her', Tamana told me that being alone was the best indirect outcome of staying in the PG. For her, it was an opportunity.

[115] Tamana earned 10, 000 IRD per month (approximately $230 per month).

In Tamana's case, the perception that she was alone was all the more unusual because three members of her extended family worked in the boarding house. With two of her cousin-sisters present, she was perhaps the least 'alone' of all of the residents. Her case is interesting because it demonstrates that her separation from other people was a kind of project – although she was relatively friendly to me, as I too was viewed as something of an outsider, she seemed to be intentionally without friends.

Permanent moves from the PG were moments to cement important relationships and provide the links to maintain those deemed to be most important. When, earlier in the year, a particularly close friend left the PG she handed around an autograph book and asked her roommates to write farewell messages. Residents also exchanged phone numbers, postal and email addresses at this time. In early September, I returned to the PG after completing a short field trip to find that Tamana had moved home to Salem without telling anyone including her roommates. She informed her sisters on the day that she left but said few goodbyes. There was much discussion of her departure in the PG. When I asked why she hadn't said goodbye to anyone, residents agreed that the reason was her attitude.

Although women disapproved of Tamana's conduct and occasionally gossiped about her, there was no sense that she should be confronted or advised by others to change her behaviour. A firm reprimand issued to Tamana may have been a greater example of intimacy and care than the fact that her provocative behaviour was stoically ignored or grudgingly tolerated by other residents. Trawick has suggested that the concept of harshness or cruelty between family members is an important dimension of the love and closeness that they share. She argued that 'to honestly convey one's disapproval of another's actions might be a sign of love for [and] closeness with that other' (Trawick 1990, 102).

That no one reprimanded Tamana is also illustrative of the fact that most women believed that only their real family had either the right or the obligation to reprimand them or to monitor their behaviour. Given that their parents had consented to their living in Bangalore, women like Ruth and Tamana felt that no further questions about their movements or conduct could be asked either by other residents or the property owner.[116]

Temporariness

Paying guests viewed the boarding house as a makeshift and temporary home. This section explores the ways that women fashion their lives in places they think of as transient. Having moved into boarding houses so as to be close to their colleges and offices, residents expected their time as paying guests to be short. Pothukuthi's (2001) research into working women's hostels in Bangalore indicates that one of the most common rules were time limits on the duration of residence (Pothukuchi 2001, 373). She argued that time limits are an effective means of ensuring that women have few options for permanent accommodation beyond the care and control of their families. Hostels, in her view emerge as complementary to familial protection and control, rather than offering an alternative (Pothukuchi 2001, 373)[117].

As a result, boarding houses and the relationships and enmities that women developed within them were thought of as temporary. Manaswi put it well when she told me, 'We

[116] In Tamana's case, the physical presence of her maternal cousins in the boarding house made her justifiably anxious about sharing potentially damaging information with other residents. However the presence of her kin in PG gave her considerable freedom to behave badly as other residents feared complaining about her to her relatives.

[117] While I agree that PGs are designed as temporary homes and that this does limit the options available to women who may not wish to reside with family members, it seemed from my perspective that the cost and availability of separate dwellings was far more limiting than the practices that govern PGs. Where this was an affordable option, it was not unusual for groups of young women to live together in a small apartment and I know that after one or two years as a paying guests, several past residents have moved into apartments together.

will stay here some few years; this is not a long lasting place.' For Manaswi residence in the PG was not a long-term option but her comment also suggests the internal fluidity in the boarding house where people were constantly arriving then returning to their families, staying during college term then going on extended holidays between semesters and 'shifting' as they finished college, prepared for their marriages or found employment in other parts of the city. To the question, 'How long will you stay in this PG?' most residents replied that they did not know – it would depend on their passing all of their exams, finding work or having their marriages fixed.

While residents did not necessarily know how long they would stay as paying guests, the fact that they returned to the same place over and over again generated a sense of permanency against a background of temporariness. I suggest that residents came to inhabit the boarding house as a home-like space through task oriented action. Ingold has argued for the mutuality between technical and social activity when he suggested that 'tasks are the constitutive acts of dwelling' (Ingold 2000, 195). When taken together, the continuous routine of everyday tasks like eating together, washing plates and cups, gathering to watch television, washing clothing in buckets and bathing at specific times were some of the processes through which the house, or more accurately some places within it, became a home. Acts of partial domestication were also opportunities for residents to exert some control over aspects of the environment. With this in mind, women built shrines in their sleeping areas and in some rooms and tacked keepsakes and personal effects onto the walls and desks. Covering surfaces and furniture could make these more homely and was viewed as a way to domesticate a space that was viewed as only partially and temporarily one's own.

In addition to the routine chores they performed, residents domesticated the space around their bunks and cupboards through religious observances. Many Hindu residents

built shrines in their sleeping areas. The deities in these shrines were often printed images. Fuller argued that the expansion of colour printing in India has meant that poorer Hindus who cannot afford idols made of brass, stone, silver or other expensive materials, consecrate and pray to these printed images (Fuller 1992, 59). The use of printed images in the PG reflects the temporariness of the environment and the relative portability of the images. Like their clothing, textbooks and other personal effects, images from home were easily brought to Bangalore – most women confirmed that their parents had given them the deities to take when they left home.

Figure 9 This wall space illustrates the religious heterogeneity of the PG. Hindu deities sit above a wooden Marian icon placed on top of the three symbols of Venkatashwara and a Christian calendar.

The performance of domestic rituals helped to maintain links between women and their kin. When she moved to the boarding house, Manaswi made a small shrine on top of her storage cupboard. The shrine included a colour image of Shiva with Parvati and the Shiva Lingam. She had also brought a small Ganesh made of tinted glass. She described her ritual practice as being directed towards a single and formless energy. Worship of this divine energy would encourage it to flow into her. Of the many forms taken by this energy,

her parents were the most important: ‘First, I will remember my parents. They are the first Gods for me.[118] I’m far away from [them] but still I will remember them. With them I will pray to God.’ More generally, Manaswi implied that acts of worship constituted an important form of protection during her weekly journeys between Bangalore and Mandya. Having taken *ashirvad* (blessings) from her mother and received these with an open heart, she would be protected from illness and misfortune during the week, until her return.[119] Christian women did not make shrines but many displayed Christian iconography near their bunks and on cupboards (see Figure 9). All Christian women kept Bibles on or near their beds.

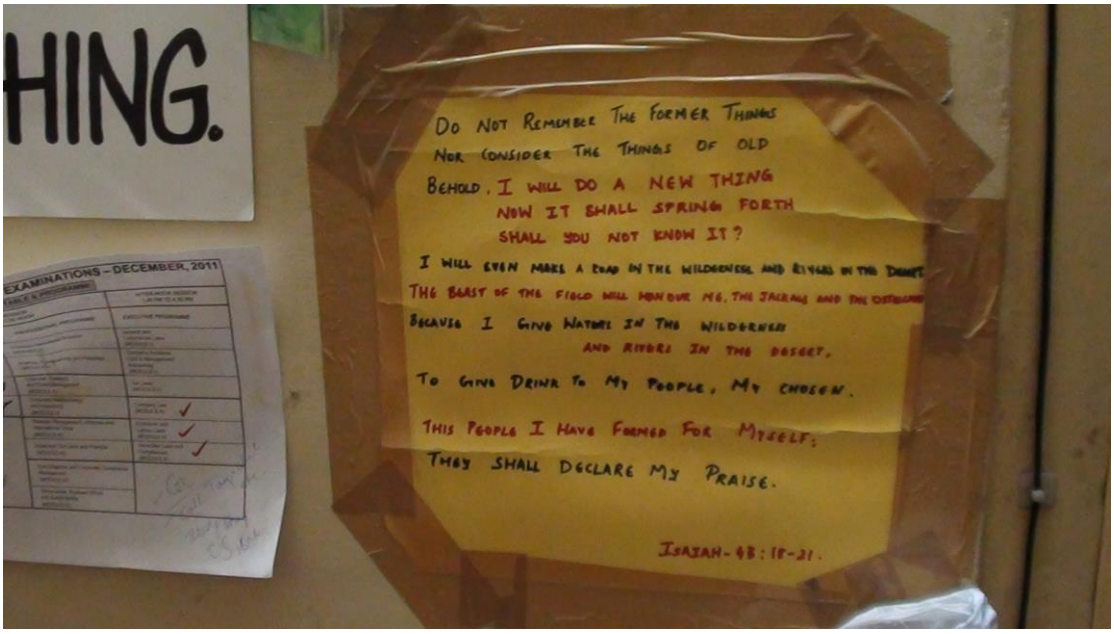

Figure 10 Hand written Bible passages

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[118] The belief that one’s parents are the first Gods to be worshiped is widespread in India (See Fuller 1993, 3; and Inden and Nicholas 2005, 27).

[119] Like Manaswi, Judith looked to the Lord’s blessing to protect her while she travelled between the boarding house and her parent’s home in Dharmapuri. During family prayer meetings, she gave thanks to God for protecting her during these solo journeys (see Chapter One).

In this chapter, I have argued that the boarding house was a space of enforced intimacy where women have to adjust to the demands of a new living arrangement and an unfamiliar city. I have suggested that they do this by calling on prior experiences of living in boarding schools, college hostels and other paying guest accommodations. Prior histories of living in these environments and the shared expectation that as women they will ultimately have to leave their natal families shaped their attitudes to and experiences of migration. Once in the boarding house, adjustment emerged as a way of making sense of the ongoing challenges of relating to others, managing new routines and coping with loneliness. Responses from residents often emphasised overcoming unfamiliarity as well as the difference between the appropriateness of adjustment and the disruptiveness of attitude.

Drawing on the themes of friendship and description of disputes, I have suggested that while women desire bonds of friendship that they hope will ameliorate loneliness, they also fear the potentially damaging outcomes of friendships gone awry. Life as a paying guest emerged as a complex negotiation of closeness and distancing.

Women partially domesticated some spaces in the PG through routine tasks and ritual observance. The previous analysis suggests that shrines vied with other belongings for space in congested rooms. Ritual observance also connected residents to their parents and families near and far.

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The next chapter presents a contrast to the material presented thus far in the thesis. In it, I examine an urban redevelopment project where I worked as a volunteer research assistant for six weeks in 2012. The project, its stakeholders and outcomes illustrate elite forms of belonging in Bangalore.

Chapter Five

Renewing the Metropolis: a Privileged Form of Belonging

The paying guests featured in this thesis forge tenuous links with the spaces of the boarding house and with one another. Although they carefully decorated the areas around their bunks by building shrines, tacking keepsakes onto the walls around their beds and keeping provisions nearby, these acts of partial domestication take place against an overall attitude of indifference. They experienced little control over how long they would stay in the same place and as such their time as paying guests was thought of as temporary. The women we have been encountering in the ethnography until now were unable to fully inhabit the spaces where they lived. The exception to this predicament has been Ruth. She inhabited the present rather than looking to a future time of marriage and familial projects because she had been forced by circumstances beyond her control to remain a paying guest much longer than she had initially anticipated. Without the cushioning effects of hopes and ambitions that might serve to limit the distressing nature of the present, she struggled to re-define her life as a form of purposeful waiting.

The thesis has sought to bring out the specificity of a present that is lived with one's concerns and projects directed to an 'elsewhere' as well as to a future time. In this chapter, a different ethnographic angle is used, one which will allow the specificity of the class dimensions of these young women's way of inhabiting the city to emerge more starkly. In order to do this, I introduce ethnographic material gathered from those who claimed a more privileged relationship to the city, both as longer-term residents, and as a group of migrants who enjoyed the class privileges of well-established professionals. The chapter explores their involvement in a project that views the city as a site of heritage to be preserved, as well as a natural environment to be renewed through civic mobilisation. The project

described takes us through the shifting orientations of residents of one of Bangalore's oldest neighbourhoods.

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My route to understanding this privileged form of belonging emerged through a volunteering stint I completed in the first six weeks of fieldwork. While still in Sydney, awaiting approval of my research visa, I learned of a Bangalorean NGO[120], Jaaga[121]. According to their website, this NGO provided space and infrastructure to other NGOs, citizen organisations, artists, educators and technologists. Jaaga's eclectic projects covered poetry readings, art exhibitions and dance performances. Jaaga also supported a start-up incubator and co-working space that seemed an ideal base for the commencement of my fieldwork. Jaaga was established in the late 2000s as a partnership between a Californian software developer and computer scientist, and an Indian artist and animator. When I arrived in Bangalore, Jaaga was preparing to undertake an urban renewal project in partnership with the Government of Karnataka. This project had been suggested to the government for several years by a social enterprise organisation that aimed to foster cycling and the protection of the Indian house sparrow. Having won a tender to run a pilot project, Jaaga was just a week away from the project launch when I arrived in the city. As a small team with a large project to complete in a tight time frame, they were happy to affiliate me to their organisation, in exchange for assistance with this project.

The Malleswaram Accessibility Project (cleverly typeset as M[A]P) aimed to improve infrastructure such as roads and footpaths, reduce traffic congestion and in particular, to discourage the use of motorbikes and scooters. It sought to build civic awareness and

[120] Jaaga was listed as a public charitable trust and can therefore be classified as an NGO. But Jaaga representatives applied this label selectively to their projects and often preferred the more neutral term 'organisation' or 'collective'.

[121] *Jaaga* in Kannada and Tamil can be translated as 'space'.

promoted the use of bicycles and public transport. It was hoped that a combination of improved infrastructure and greater awareness of culturally significant heritage sites in the locality would encourage grassroots conservation efforts and maintenance of the newly provided footpaths, cycle paths and street furniture. The project was a public–private partnership established between Jaaga and the Department of Urban Land Transport (DULT)[122].

DULT is a report-making unit set up as a special division of the state government of Karnataka. It was created in 2007 as part of the National Urban Transport Policy[123], embedded within the wider parameters of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission. This overarching project commenced in 2005 with the aim of achieving legal, administrative and fiscal reforms in the development and management of close to sixty major Indian cities including Bangalore[124]. In 2012, Karnataka was the only Indian state to have a special report-making directorate charged with improving public and non-motorised transport[125].

The project was divided into two components. There was a community engagement component designed to identify problems as well as to devise the routes of the proposed cycle paths and a period of survey collection to canvass public opinion about infrastructure

[122] I recall the six weeks that I worked with Jaaga on MAP as frantic. The small team was so busy trying to organise research assistants, plan and publicise events, shoot and then edit promotional films, upload web content, meet with the government representatives and facilitate all of the workshops that there was no time to conduct interviews while the project was going on. The data in this chapter is drawn from field notes I took during the project and three long interviews that I conducted via Skype with Jaaga's co-founder, project lead and heritage expert in January 2015. I approached the DULT representatives for interviews but unfortunately, I did not receive a response.

[123] The complete policy document is available at http://www.urbantransport.kar.gov.in/National%20Urban%20TransportPolicy.pdf

[124] See http://jnnurm.nic.in/

[125] http://www.urbantransport.kar.gov.in/

needs. Jaaga suggested the addition of a heritage component designed to document significant sites and social histories of the area. The heritage component was modelled on another heritage project Jaaga had implemented in the locality of Whitefield at the time that tenders were taking place for the MAP project. Jaaga had undertaken this project with the assistance of a small heritage conservation architecture firm and it approached the same firm to assist with MAP. Throughout the project, I worked closely with Jaaga's heritage consultant, Krupa. Although representatives from DULT were not particularly enthusiastic about the heritage component they eventually agreed to its inclusion in the hope that an emphasis on heritage would align the infrastructure project more closely with the sensibilities of the residents of Malleswaram.

Malleswaram, the Cultural Heart of Bangalore

The locality of Malleswaram developed as both a caste and class specific enclave. According to Nair, it was constructed from 1898 as a response to the plague epidemic (Nair 2005, 50). Unlike older areas of the city that were believed to have fostered the plague, Malleswaram was designed to a grid pattern with conservancy lanes[126] – a much desired design feature to maintain the health of residents. Selected for its proximity to the Kadu Malleswara temple, the area was envisaged as a comfortable locality for elite members of the Mysore State bureaucracy and professionals. Located to the north of the old Kannada city or *pete* and to the west of the British military cantonment, the Civil and Military Station, Malleswaram developed as a separate area whose population differed from both the Kannada speaking residents of the old city and the British.

[126] Conservancy lanes are spaces in-between the rows of houses. These were designed so that manual scavengers could remove waste. This practice has been rendered obsolete by the introduction of indoor toilets. Nair has argued that the inclusion of conservancy lanes in the plan and development of Malleswaram suggests the influence of colonial models of town planning and the elite character of the area (Nair 2005, 50-1).

Since its establishment, Malleswaram has been known as an enclave of powerful Tamil Brahmin families, many of whom have resided in Bangalore since the founding of the locality (Fuller and Narasimhan 2014, 165, Nair 2005, 51). However for the duration of the project, it was taboo to mention caste and first language was elided by the fact that project staff and respondents, especially to the residential surveys, worked solely in English. Community workshops and the project launch were also conducted in English[127].

This silencing of caste accords with Deshpande's argument that the privilege of forward caste status rests in the ease by which a person need not mention caste and can thus join the so called 'general category' (Deshpande 2013). Although Malleswaram was certainly a Tamil Brahmin neighbourhood, appeals to conserve its special history made no reference to either caste or language and instead described cultural and intellectual achievement in service of the nation. As against primordial forms of attachment to mother-tongue and to caste, which Nair suggested are associated with the political mobilisations of the urban proletariat (Nair 2005, 279-80, 96), attachment to Malleswaram was couched through appeals to history – understood as the long duration of continuous residence, either in the same house or the same locality. The historical achievements of prior residents, and the strong presence of performance genres and religious places were encompassed within the history of the locality. Emphasis on intangible cultural heritage, like dance forms and religious practices were all the more important because most old buildings in the locality were colonial.[128] Malleswaram was thus described as a culturally rich area where Hindu performance genres continued to be taught and practiced.

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[127] Surveys conducted by college students with maids, labourers and passers by were conducted in Kannada and notated in English. The collection of these surveys was delegated to a group of college students who volunteered to assist with the MAP project as part of the National Service Scheme (NSS). I assisted with the training and supervision of these student volunteers along with other Jaaga research assistants.

[128] This point emerged during my interview with Krupa, MAP's heritage expert.

Malleswaram was selected as the locality from which to launch the MAP pilot on the strength of a research proposal devised and costed by Jaaga's co-founder Archana Prasad. Archana is a direct descendent of Malleswaram's founder, Sri Venkatranga Iyengar, and thus a member of one of Malleswaram's most influential Tamil Brahmin families. Many branches of her extended family have lived in Malleswaram for generations. Senior men and women of the family were instrumental in developing charitable and educational institutions in the area with a particular focus on improving women's education. Institutions they founded, directed or funded in the locality included schools, an orphanage and a women's crafts centre[129]. Imbued with the values of an older elite, service to the underprivileged and educational attainment were well-established familial practices. Archana referred to this somewhat self-deprecatingly as a family history of 'social and cultural do-goodery'. But noted more seriously that her strong sense of obligation to carry on this family tradition derived from role models like her mother, grandmother and aunts. Although she was far too modest to say so herself, her own success as co-founder and operational manager of one of Bangalore's most successful and innovative NGOs continues the family tradition in its specific post-liberalisation socio-economic context. Archana's status in Bangalore's art scene and the NGO sector gave the MAP project added reach and clout. She planned and executed all of the major events, community workshops and meetings conducted as part of the project. With the assistance of a German diplomatic mission, the combined Max Mueller Bhavan/Goethe Institut, she also organised all of the public art activities.

[129] Although there is not scope in this chapter to explore the history of philanthropy and social work of Archana's family, their history does provide an interesting foil to the efforts of missionaries and Christian organisations to which I have referred in Chapter Two and should be interpreted as evidence that reforming initiatives and social work were in no way dependent on the efforts of the British or of missionaries and also came from within Hindu communities.

Utilising her connections in social enterprises operating in Bangalore, Archana recruited Praveen to work on MAP as both as program manager and lead community engagement officer on the strength of his prior experience as a community engagement manager in US and Indian NGOs. Praveen was born in the USA to Tamil speaking Indian migrants, grew up in San Francisco and moved to India in 2008 to work with an HIV/AIDS empowerment organisation in Chennai before moving to Bangalore to assist a social enterprise distributing information on primary health care via short video clips streamed from the Internet. When this project wrapped up, he eagerly joined MAP.

The most eminent representative from DULT was the Directorate's Commissioner, a stately, middle-aged, career bureaucrat who was addressed as Madam. The combination of the commissioner's presence, Praveen's dynamic delivery and Archana's personal connections to important performing artists, heads of institutions and political connections in the area meant that the partnership was viewed as effective because it exceeded expectations of how the government should engage with a community. Praveen put it like this:

> We made it clear that we were working for an organisation that was working *with* the government. I don't know how people interpreted it; did people wind up conflating it? As in, this is a government project and you're from the government? I hope not, because I didn't want to be seen as being from the government and neither did Archana. But it worked to our advantage because having the government's name behind you makes people interested to know what's going on. The government's name has power and pull so people would want to be part of a project related to the government; people would want to understand what the government is doing in their backyard. And the fact that the government had someone like Archana and all of our team members working on the project and *we were not typically looking or typically acting government people made it feel less 'government like'*. I would always explain [to participants] that Jaaga is an NGO and that the project was about the community and so because you're not putting on airs like a government person, you're taking on the role and performing as a civil society member – someone who cares about the community [emphasis added] (Praveen).

As neither Praveen, nor Archana worked for the government, it is understandable that they did not wish to be viewed as government employees. Archana told me that from her point of view the arrangement Jaaga had made with DULT was to work collaboratively – she was not working on their behalf in any direct sense and this was clear to both parties, but through the presence of a government partner her organisation gained relevant permissions to work in public spaces and the government partner achieved positive publicity. Although the commissioner clearly embodied the authority of the state, other employees from DULT also presented themselves to the public in ways that, to borrow Praveen's phrase, made them seem 'less government like' as well. Whether they were smiling in community engagement workshops, directing student volunteers in how to conduct vehicle counts on Malleswaram's busy streets, or conversing in confident English in front of the Jaaga documentarian's video camera, the government partner went to great lengths to cut through anti-government sentiment, by appearing to be present, accessible and to listening to the community.

The Malleswaram project shared many features with what ethnographers of Indian cities have described as civil society activism (Harriss 2009, Nair 2005), bourgeoisie environmentalism, (Baviskar 2011, Anantharaman 2013) and middle-class activism (Srivastava 2014, Chatterjee 2004, Fernandes 2006) The diverse projects that fall under these labels share many features and take place in several urban locations - from Bangalore, to Calcutta, Delhi and Mumbai. In all cases, the projects are directed either by informal residents' welfare associations or more rarely by specific citizens organisations that may or may not be classified as NGOs. Some of them foreground environmental goals such as the resident-led recycling drives operating in several large apartment complexes in Bangalore (Anantharaman 2013), or the provision of recreational programmes by a residents' welfare association in an upper-class housing society in South Delhi (Srivastava 2014). Others take a 'watch dog' approach, applying professional skill-sets developed in

public and private sector industries in order to oversee and place pressure on government agencies such as city corporations and other state service providers (Harriss 2009). Some groups seek an unmediated relation with the state with regard to governance and the provision of services[130].

As a public-private partnership, the MAP project combined the power and authority of the state with the caring orientation and reformist zeal of the civic activist collective. It offered an opportunity for select but also privileged groups to participate in the reimagining and reshaping of their area. University students, property owners and retired professionals were approached to participate in the development of plans for a scaled down 'community', that was oriented towards the needs of local residents and *not* for the needs of industry, large housing developments or core infrastructure. With its emphasis on healthy alternatives like walking and cycling and the reduction of pollution, the MAP project rested on a similar set of assumptions to other civic activist projects but with a critical difference with regard to the role of the state.

This was all the more important because it helped to address the sense of entrenched disillusionment, particularly among senior members of the community. As Praveen put it, 'There was a feeling of being disenfranchised by the government and ignored, like you're not cared about anymore.' The sentiment was palpable at the project launch where government representatives and Jaaga staff appealed to senior residents to assist with the project, to a mostly ambivalent and even hostile audience.

[130] During the course of my fieldwork I encountered citizens groups such as Jannagraha, who drawing on a desire for unmediated access to government decision makers, designed anonymous Internet based reporting platforms such as 'I Paid A Bribe.Com' and 'I Change My City.Com' which remove all personal contact between the private user and the government service provider. These platforms allow anonymous online reporting of requests for bribes and monitoring of complaints launched by citizens with the City Corporation [BBMP].

The Malleswaram project took place against a background of entrenched conflict between the BBMP (Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike)[131] and a residents' welfare association over the proposed widening of Sankey Road, a major thoroughfare that runs by the Sankey Tank[132]. The BBMP argued that widening the road was the only way to reduce traffic congestion. Residents countered that the loss of between seventeen and nineteen old-growth sandalwood trees that would be felled as part of the project was unacceptable and took the BBMP to court. The court decided in favour of the BBMP but added that the BBMP had just twelve months to complete the road upgrade. In mid 2011 the trees were felled but by late 2012, when the MAP project commenced, the BBMP has not widened the road or taken further measures to reduce the traffic.[133]

The Project Launch

The project launch was held on a Thursday evening in the meeting hall of the Malleswaram Entrepreneurial Women's Society, a charitable organisation founded with the assistance of Archana's paternal grandmother. Most of those attending were senior citizens who had lived in Malleswaram for many years.

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[131] The Greater Bangalore Municipal Corporation.

[132] Srinivas (2001) has documented the complex histories of Bangalore's tanks including efforts to protect these features of the urban environment from development (p51-2). The term tank is used in English to refer to both man-made and natural water reservoirs and ponds that predate the British annexation of Bangalore and were core features of the pre-colonial city connected by markets, tanks and temples (p.42). The Sankey Tank is one of Bangalore's man-made tanks named for its designer, the British engineer, Richard Sankey. Srinivas argued that since the 1990s, civic bodies have lobbied to protect tanks from falling into disrepair and thus being lost to urban development. She has stated, 'The threats faced by bodies of water and gardens in Bangalore are enormous: landfilling, sewage, encroachment, the collusion of property developers and corporation authorities, and population pressures' (Srinivas 2001, 53).

[133] See *Sankey Road widening from Thursday* published in *The Hindu* (2011) and 'RWAs to protest against Sankey Road widening today' published in *The Deccan Herald* (2010).

Praveen opened the meeting and then immediately handed over to Archana. They had decided that appeals from an influential local resident would be much more persuasive than the approach they devised for the college workshops, during which Praveen, the Indian-American took centre stage in front of an enthusiastic, youthful audience. In an attempt to pre-empt aggressive criticism of DULT, Archana graciously implored the audience to focus on solutions to the infrastructure problems rather than only complaints, telling them:

> This is an opportunity for us, as a community of people who have lived and grown up together, either in this neighbourhood or in this city to voice our opinions, and give solutions, not just complaints. Complaints are very good but also [we can], give ideas on how we can make that change, how we can help, and work with the government to make that change.

But murmurs of discontent mingled with the positive message put forward by the Jaaga team and the government representatives. When it was the commissioner's turn to address the group, she patiently listened to criticism and questioning from community elders for more than an hour, without expressing frustration or attempting to draw the already over-long meeting to a close. Some audience members said that the project was another example of wasteful government expenditure. Others mentioned that although they supported the plan in general, they did not trust the government to implement its own recommendations.

After the Q and A, the attendees were presented with an aerial map of Malleswaram that had been enlarged and printed onto a flex banner. As part of the heritage component, they were asked to mark and label places of cultural, historical or environmental significance using permanent markers. This exercise was replicated during several subsequent college workshops that I attended. Some residents, who were clearly still upset about the changes to Sankey Road marked it on the maps or drew trees. Others marked bungalows of famous former residents, places where they liked to shop or eat and temples

and shines. Although the project launch could not completely efface anger towards the government, the presence of the audience suggested that they were interested in government plans to improve the area and recognised the value of an occasion in which the government representatives had in effect 'come to them' to listen to their concerns and criticism. Archana's presence as a community organiser and government liaison furthered the sense that at last, perhaps, the government may actually listen to residents' concerns.

Class Inflected Visions of Development

By partnering with Jaaga, DULT was able to lessen, but not completely silence the normative anti-government stance and discourse of government failure that has been noted by Srivastava (2014) and Anantharaman (2013, 180) as central to middle-class civic activism. But if the government was not to blame for the congested traffic, air pollution and dilapidated infrastructure, then an alternative needed to be found. In practice, frustration about these problems was redirected towards the users of public space who were mostly poor vendors and commercial interests like property developers. The MAP report mentions the removal of hawkers where they are perceived to be 'blocking the traffic' and recommends that restrictions be placed on residents of the adjacent gated community using Malleswaram's residential streets as a traffic thoroughfare (see MAP project report 103)[134]. Motorbikes and motor scooters which Lukose (2009, 66-7) has argued are a distinctly subaltern and male mode of transport were also singled out as contributing to pollution. Nair argued that although environmentalist discourse tends to present itself as beneficial to all, it encodes a specific class politics that remains deeply antagonistic to working-class uses of public space and forms of political protest. Nair's research into the changing spatial politics of Bangalore's Cubbon Park suggests that beautification drives and calls to protect the environment have successfully limited access

[134] The MAP Project report is not paginated. I have given page numbers as if the title page was page one. The complete report is available at http://jaaga.in/portfolio/map/

to this public park, one of the city's last remaining large green spaces, to all but the middle class (Nair 2005, 213-217). In a similar manner, the environmental discourses developed in the MAP project, also won favour with residents by positioning the project, and by implication the state, as antagonistic to working-class and subaltern users of public space. As Praveen put it,

> For the older folks, there was this feeling that the neighbourhood used to be quieter, more "respectable" and things like that, when before residents could walk around and cycle, now they definitely cannot. I feel like some of the elders who are also of a certain economic status aren't thrilled about having the lower income stuff that's coming on the public face of the streets; like a lot of the dirt and the garbage that they associate with a lower class.

Anger about how the area was changing, or losing its special character was also displaced onto a narrative of hyper development that is observable in many other parts of Bangalore. I witnessed this process of displacement during the household surveys I observed. Research assistants conducted the surveys in an interview format, mostly, in private homes.

The surveys were designed to target five population groups: (1) households, (2) college students, (3) office workers, (4) maids and labourers, and (5) roadside passers-by[135]. But only the household, education and office surveys are treated in some detail in the project report. There is no detailed breakdown of findings from the surveys conducted with maids and labourers or passers-by and most of the project recommendations are clearly designed to suit the needs of residents/property owners as they address issues like parking, removal of hawkers and measures to reduce traffic[136].

When respondents were asked what they disliked about how Malleswaram had changed many replied that the presence of hawkers and slow moving traffic had spoilt the

[135] MAP project report 2013, 90.

[136] See MAP project report 2013, 102-3.

neighbourhood. Participants were even more vocal about the problems caused by commercial real estate developers. The development of the Mantri Mall, which markets itself as 'one of the largest in South Asia' and is more than one million square feet, and the Brigade Gateway, a commercial/residential development in nearby Rajajinagar which boasts 12,00 luxury apartments, a Sheraton Hotel and the Orion Mall[137] had greatly increased the traffic congestion. For the older elite of Malleswaram these overt markers of wealth and consumerism appeared as a gaudy imposition to be resisted rather than embraced. Embedded within the simple question and answer format of the survey was an intangible but powerful feeling that a certain peace or calm was simply not there anymore.

Not only its trees but also Malleswaram's distinctive culture was felt to be under siege. The residents of Malleswaram who participated in MAP related a history in which their special locality was losing its culture as a direct result of population influx and planned and unplanned development in adjacent localities. After the project had been completed, I asked Archana about the role of ongoing development in the neighbourhood. Her response reveals the significance of a gathering intensification in the rate of change. Development itself was not necessarily viewed as a problem, it was the pace and relentlessness of change that had unsettled longer-term residents. Archana's eloquent response to my question elaborated precisely on this theme:

> If the city grows in scale in terms of population, in terms of its infrastructure and landscape, so rapidly within a decade, then it loses its identity; its notion of self and it also loses its memories because they are erased so fast. A building holds public memory, a tree holds public memory, a bench in a park holds public memory. If, overnight these things are eradicated, changed; the park becomes a parking lot, the bench is gone, the tree has been cut down to make roads, the buildings have been demolished and overnight malls and new buildings come in, there is this problem of a certain identity that is lost.

[137] Brigade Gateway E-brochure available at http://www.brigadegroup.com/enclaves/gateway/brochure.pdf

She goes on:

> You have this influx of people – the majority of people are migrants who have come in, so they don't know this vision of Bangalore that very few of us now have which I believe is critical to shaping the future of the city. Because if you don't have that memory or association, or if you don't have that sense of history to your neighbourhood or to your city then you don't have an emotional connection to it. So the people who come in, if they came in at a normal pace, would have been welcomed by the locals and would have been told the stories, sat on those benches, shared the parks, visited the same buildings and learned these memories – these memories would have been transferred in a natural way. But in the case of cities like Bangalore that have this huge leap, the city has not been able to pass on these stories of people and spaces. The people themselves have been outnumbered, the spaces themselves have been eradicated.

Archana's narrative of how the city had changed emphasises the loss of a natural pace of transmission in which newcomers to the city would learn about places of significance from longer-term residents – the city's natural custodians and gatekeepers. Her reference to changes taking place 'overnight', to the eradication of facets of the built environment that have been flattened to make way for infrastructure built to serve the new migrant populations, has a decidedly dystopian tone that hovered beneath the surface of the positive message embodied in the project and helps to explain how it garnered support. Nair's research on Bangalore City suggests that Archana was articulating a widely held sentiment. A deep longing for the city as was it was before the IT migrations shapes attitudes to Bangalore for many long-term residents of Malleswaram and other localities. According to Nair:

> Nostalgia as a structure of feeling about the present harks back to an idyllic, imagined historical past. Fundamentally, it is associated with alienation from the present, a longing for the stability and order of a mythologised past to cope with the alienating effects of contemporary democracy (Nair 2005, 202).

Residents of Malleswaram were not alone in feeling that the city had changed for the worse. This was a common narrative that I heard in various versions from long-term

residents and property owners in the compound where my paying guest hostel was located to my elderly Kannada teacher.

Earlier in the year I had been encouraged by my associate supervisor to begin learning Kannada. My affiliate institution helpfully suggested that an aunt of one of the other PhD students may be available to give me private lessons for a nominal fee. My Kannada teacher lived in the wealthy locality of Indiranagar – another well-maintained residential area that housed elite civil servants and their families. Her husband was a retired judge of the Karnataka High Court. Although as a Kannada speaking Brahmin, she had no family ties to Malleswaram, she travelled there often for music recitals as she was a gifted vocalist and musician – she gave music lessons as well as teaching Kannada to local pupils of all ages.

She often related stories of what Bangalore had been like twenty years ago, telling me that each bungalow in the locality was like a 'Little Lalbagh'. Along with Cubbon Park, Lalbagh is one of Bangalore largest public parks. Planted as a pleasure garden during the reign of Hyder Ali and taken over by the British in 1799, (see Srinivas 2001, 44), Lalbagh is a symbol of the 'garden city' that Bangalore used to be. But, she went on, when the children of these families went to America, seeking well paid jobs in IT and the professions, their parents could no longer maintain the large houses and gardens and these were sold. The blocks were subdivided and apartments were built in their place.

Lamb provides several examples of tales very similar to this one that she recorded from elderly informants in Calcutta. Although likely apocryphal, the stories recorded by Lamb imply that neglect of the environment parallels the neglect of aging parents who have been left behind after their sons have migrated to the US (Lamb 2009). My teacher mentioned this tale many times during the months that I visited her for lessons. As a foreigner, my interest in learning Kannada was enough for her to overlook my poor

acquisition of the language. She sometimes mentioned that for a time she had run free language classes for other women in the neighbourhood and been dismayed to discover that they wished to learn Kannada only in order to communicate more effectively with their servants.

Like other grassroots resident-led protests, the senior citizens who participated in MAP sought state intervention to provide respite from the effects of hyper development. In a similar manner to the slow growth movement in California documented in detail by Davis (1990) during the late 1980s and early 1990s, environmental civic activism in India adheres to an anti-development ideology centred on protecting the rights of property owners against property developers and preventing encroachment on valuable real estate. What Davis described as the politics of NIMBYism or 'not-in-my-backyardism' voiced reasonable concerns about infrastructure, population density, and traffic but was equally shaped by what he described as '[the] ugly racial and ethnic overtones of an Anglo genontocracy selfishly defending its privileges against the job and housing needs of young Latino and Asian population'. (Davis 1990, viii). This tendency towards the exclusion of minorities and the poor and practices of distinction towards new migrants is apparent in many accounts of civic activist practice in India (Nair 2005, Fernandes 2006, Bandyopadhyay 2011). It is significant that a series of autonomous grassroots social movements that emerged in response to the migration effects of global capitalism draws on an equally global discourse of environmental conservation and moral responsibility in order to generate an affective force in the public sphere. The 'global' scope of the MAP project invited residents to participate in this prestigious environmental program that appears to have won out over a vision of urban development that would encompass a wider variety of classes within Indian society as was once the case (Chatterjee 2004, 132).

Civic activist practice in Indian cities, including the MAP project, takes resistance to overdevelopment and the perceived effects of overdevelopment, which take forms such as consumer waste, traffic, pollution, as a core aim. As Archana suggested, the existence of overdevelopment was the central assumption on which the MAP project proceeded. A secondary assumption was that it was the responsibility of local residents, university students and local government authorities to ameliorate the environmental damage that overdevelopment had caused.

But for there to be an understanding of overdevelopment and poor governance as a shared predicament, and community action as an appropriate response, then development itself had to be assumed as a given. Put simply, for overdevelopment to exist as a neighbourhood predicament, development must have somehow been achieved. However, development in the Indian context can rarely be assumed as a given, even in cities like Bangalore that are taken as examples of successful urban development in India or even as global cities in the making. I will argue that the purported overdevelopment that found such resonance with participants in the MAP project has implications for the meaning of development writ large. When respondents to the MAP surveys identified noise and traffic as problems for the neighbourhood and as indicators of its declining position, their responses refer to intensified economic and population growth that has taken place in Bangalore since the early nineties. They make no mention of development as it was imagined during the pre-liberalisation period. Within this earlier framework, the concept was understood as a project of the new nation state that would accomplish social progress, industrial development under a command economy, political freedoms guaranteed by the Indian constitution and government support for the disadvantaged – in particular, the rural poor (Ram 2013, Srivastava 2007, Fernandes 2006). Although many members of the admittedly small circles of urban professionals I knew in present-day Bangalore expressed a strong commitment to pluralism and constitutional freedoms, little else remains of this

developmental vision. My discussions with urban, middle-class Indians suggest that they view that this type of economic development as dated, unviable and anachronistic.

Taking the claims of civic activists into consideration, it is clear that while the term development was once used to imply state-led economic and social development, it is applied in middle-class discourse exclusively to describe economic growth and urban transformation as these have been shaped in the post-liberalisation period. This departure in the way that development is understood is a class-specific vision. For India's poor and disadvantaged, the dilemmas of overdevelopment can appear as nothing less than a distant dream, more distant even than the dream of achieving development. Pandian wrote that, 'development is one of the most important objects of desire, imagination, and struggle in contemporary India' (Pandian 2009, 6). Further, research conducted by Sharma (2008), Gupta (2012) and Harriss (2009, 112-3) indicates that for the poor, this older vision of social justice and the provision of services by the state remains critical despite the efforts of government agencies and donors to shift responsibility for these matters to NGOs, the private sector and recipients themselves[138]. Sharma indicated that the very legitimacy of the state in the eyes of the poor depends on its redistributive functions and in the provision of infrastructure and services to rural populations. She argued that, 'Just because the state [has] failed in its duty of social provisioning [does] not mean that people's expectations for redistributive assistance and justice [has] evaporated.' (Sharma 2008, 127). The collision of seemingly irreconcilable developmental visions bears further exploration.

Brosius's research in Delhi suggests that for wealthy members of the middle and upper classes, and returning non-resident Indians, development is now signified solely by

[138] Somewhat ironically, it appears that the shift from government responsibility to NGOs, the private sector and recipients has found a more receptive audience amongst the upper middle class than the unorganised sector. This sensibility fuels the kind of activist sentiment that animated MAP (see Harriss 2009, 124).

examples of economic growth that are reshaping urban spaces (Brosius 2010). These new malls and multiplexes become a source of pride as they are taken as examples of successful 'development' She argued,

> Many members of the aspiring and arrived middle classes perceive the malls, business districts and multiplexes as signs of economic growth, confidence and potential membership to the 'world class'. Real estate development is imbued with the aura of India's transformation from a 'Third World' country into a *fully developed country* [emphasis added] (Brosius 2010, 59).

Brosius suggested that the desire to appear as a fully developed country to an imagined national and global audience and to shake off the stigma associated with the membership of the 'third world' and 'poverty' can help to explain middle-class enthusiasm for urban developments like malls, multiplexes and luxury stores. In an effort to appear 'world class', the poor are relocated and urban environments and middle-class selves are continually refashioned (Rao 2011).

But the middle class is no more monolithic in India than it is elsewhere and enthusiasm for further development is not shared by all. Appeals for further development understood as policies and infrastructure designed to encourage economic growth, may be met with clamouring to end overdevelopment. Residents of Malleswaram demanded that restorative measures be taken by the state to return key neighbourhoods and localities to their pre-growth sizes and character. Brosius suggested that with the rise of vertical gated communities, the spaces in-between these developments are adversely effected as they are viewed by residents of the enclaves as spaces that must be traversed, usually as fast as possible, between work and home (Brosius 2010, 92). The project report suggests that this was a major concern for Malleswaram residents as their locality had effectively become a corridor used by nearby residents of the Brigade Gateway gated community on route to central and south Bangalore (MAP Report 103-4). It was this that seemed a central concern in the loss of the neighbourhood's 'peace'.

But although the project worked against the restricted focus on economic growth, it too was part of a transformed developmental discourse. The project's heritage expert felt that the specific environmentalism that shaped the MAP project was also an attempt to stake a claim to the status of a 'fully developed country' or the 'world class city' by participating in 'sustainability' and the global environmental movement. From her perspective, this too could be interpreted as an attempt by the government representatives to suggest that their policies were informed by global discourses. Privately she described the project as an imposition that was basically unsuitable to the Indian context, as commercial and residential spaces are rarely separated in Indian cities, but the project was still carried out for its value as an example of globally informed, responsible policy making. She told me:

> The purpose of MAP was to show that *we* are a developed country. It's a way of saying we have arrived as well - so we also do cycle paths … We haven't gotten over our colonial mindset.

Nair captures the predicament of Bangalore residents who appear torn between two competing narratives of development. The first, a nostalgia driven narrative suggests that the city has undergone excessive development with which its infrastructure cannot cope. The second, a distinctly futural narrative argues that Bangalore has *not yet developed enough* to meet the needs of its increasing population who have migrated to take hold of new economic opportunities. Advocates of this futural position push for new highways and flyovers, expansion of the Metro and improved public transport. It is from this position that the desire for an 'information city', 'network society' and the dreams of joining the ranks of the 'global city' (see Sassen 2001) emerge. It is also from this position that Nair, echoing Bangalore's policy makers and entrepreneurs, asked whether 'Singapore is

Bangalore's destiny?' (Nair 2005, 333)[139]. Amid these competing approaches to Bangalore's future and ongoing contestation over the appropriate developmental approach, frustration with poor governance simmers and heritage takes on increasing importance as it is harnessed to the resistance against the homogenising tendencies of the global city. It is to this that I now turn.

Heritage Conservation and the Search for Roots

The executive summary of the MAP project report opens with the following claim:

> Urban non-motorised transport has become crucial in modern-day Bangalore. *Neighbourhoods, like Malleswaram in particular, will soon become unable to bear the congestion created by single-owner driven vehicles as the streets were not designed for rapid vehicular growth* … For layouts designed more than a 100 years ago for lower density and non-motorised transport modern traffic issues are a big cause for concern [emphasis added] (2011, 6).

It continues:

> In the face of *rapid urban development* that Bangalore is undergoing, the need to preserve the *last vestiges of our heritage as a city and a community becomes really important*. A sense of duty and civic pride is instilled from the knowledge that ones surroundings have a *long and superior history*. Knowing that *great thinkers, famous artists, poets and scientists* lived in the buildings that you see around you, makes one respect and maintain them [emphasis added] (2011, 8).

These passages exemplify the discursive construction of heritage within the project reports and community engagement sessions. Two themes recur. The first is Malleswaram's historical importance and its position as centre of high culture in the city.

[139] It is no coincidence that the Asian Tigers, rather than other Indian cities, provide the models of successful development that policy makers and entrepreneurs look to. The challenge then, becomes how to reconcile Indian democratic values with political models that prevail in these nations. Interestingly, at the same time that Indian planners and corporates look to Singapore as a prime example of enlightened urban governance, the city state of Singapore, and other Asian Tigers, are looking to Bangalore to obtain the human capital they need to grow IT industries. South Indians become the preferred migrants in a globally competitive bid to become not only global, but 'Intelligent Cities' (see Ong 2008).

The second theme is of a loss or erasure both of heritage and culture as the area is subjected to intensified urban development. In this section I look more closely at the role of the heritage component in MAP to argue that growing citizen mobilization around heritage conservation has emerged as a counterpoint to waves of migration and speaks to present realities as well as to a remembered or imagined past.

Chatterjee has drawn attention to the co-production of civic activism in Indian cities and demands for the protection of what he described as, 'the architectural and cultural heritage of the historic city, whether pre-colonial or colonial' (Chatterjee 2004, 131). In the context of the MAP project, calls to protect the environment also entailed a commitment to protect Malleswaram's proud heritage. As I have mentioned, Jaaga pushed to have a heritage component included in the project. DULT eventually agreed to Jaaga's suggestion to plan cycling routes along what they described as 'cultural hubs'. The responsibility for determining the location of these hubs fell to Krupa. After the project was complete, I asked her why she thought heritage was becoming more important in cities like Bangalore. She replied that long-term residents became engaged with heritage conservation for aesthetic reasons, but that such aesthetic tendencies were themselves a means of distinguishing older residents from newer migrants. However, in the case of Bangalore, heritage was gaining increasing momentum because newer migrants, mostly highly salaried IT and other private sector employees who had been posted to Bangalore, were searching for their roots. She told me,

> Funnily enough, the people who are in IT are more keen on heritage. As migrants, they feel a loss of identity more keenly because they're here today and they're posted somewhere else tomorrow, so the opportunity to put down roots at some location is that much harder for them.

She told me that recently arrived professionals living in vertical developments were interested in heritage and looked to professionals like herself to provide a meaningful cultural geography to guide them into the new cities where they had been posted. Clearly

then, there is a class dimension to the efflorescence of heritage as a concern. As Chatterjee has suggested, a growing concern for heritage is part of a broader orientation to public space that is becoming hegemonic amongst the newly middle class and more established middle-class fractions is itself a marker of distinction (Chatterjee 2004, Fernandes 2006). However, according to Krupa, the localised heritage of the MAP project differed from that of the ordinary Indian citizen, for whom heritage has a strongly mythic connotation that aligns with the pre-colonial past of palaces, princely kingdoms and temples. By way of example, she mentioned the exemplary Art Deco architecture in the city of Mysore and told me that for most residents, these buildings would not be considered heritage. Nair and Brosius have both suggested that aristocratic styles of architecture and interior decorating have found their way into high-end real-estate development, hotel chains and malls catering to Indian elites and foreign visitors (Nair 2005, Brosius 2010, 120-123). Clearly, a distinctly aristocratic idiom of heritage has also been commoditised and marketed to the middle and upper classes.

For Krupa, this limited general view of heritage placed some limitation on her professional practice which is more concerned with the ways that the users of public space interacted with their environments and focused on intangible heritage as much as aspects of the built environment.

The project report included a list of local buildings and institutions that were recognised as holding particular heritage value. These included the bungalows of former Malleswaram residents who had made particular contributions in the arts and sciences. They included the Nobel laureate, Sir C.V. Raman, the Carnatic musician Doreswamy Iyengar, the artist Venkatappa and others. Also listed were temples, a theological seminary, vegetable markets and institutions including a government girls school and the MEWS building which hosted the project launch. In addition to photographing and

researching these buildings and religious places, Krupa had conducted cultural mapping sessions and heritage walks with groups of college students and interested members of the public. The mapping sessions were a novel approach she devised to bridge the gap between the view of buildings as constituting heritage and person-centred approaches which could easily include examples of intangible or living heritage[140]. As she put it:

> A lot of what I do [as a heritage conservation architect] involves trying to make people aware that heritage is not just colonial bungalows or upper-middle class or middle-class government [buildings], its also vernacular neighbourhoods, market places and things. I don't know how much you remember about the sessions but I remember that there was one student who spoke about an avenue of lovely trees in spring so that stayed with me and I saw that workshop as a success; just to get someone to think of an avenue of flowering trees as culturally significant, that was a small step away from focusing on buildings or monuments … That's what *nakshay*[141] is about, it's about trying to engage with communities and to understand from them what is culturally significant to them.

I was invited to attend one of the *nakshay* or mapping sessions that Krupa organised for the project at one of Malleswaram's tertiary colleges. Prior to this event, I had attended other MAP information sessions at the same college that were designed by Archana and Praveen to encourage cycling and enlist students to distribute project surveys.

Krupa began the session with a question and answer discussion designed to discover places of particular cultural significance that participants passed through while travelling between their homes and college. She wrote the students' responses on the blackboard

[140] During our interview Krupa revealed her growing frustration with the elitist tendencies in the Indian heritage movement. For Krupa, this limited general view of heritage placed some limitation on her professional practice which is more concerned with the ways that the users of public space interacted with their environments and focused on intangible heritage as much as aspects of the built environment. Having completed a masters in the UK, she had been exposed to the efflorescence of heritage as a British, middle-class preoccupation during the 1980s and 1990s. The socially conservative foundations of this movement and its reactionary content are well documented (see Hall 1999, Mandler, 1999). Her person-centred approach to heritage drew on reactions to this mainstream approach developed by social historians as a response to what they viewed as an over-emphasis on aristocratic histories.

[141] *Nakshay* means 'map' in Kannada.

until it was full of clusters of spaces. She then ran each cluster through a process of elimination crossing out any place or space that could be found outside the locality – features such as malls, hotels and traffic were excluded and what was left, usually were natural features like lakes and trees and specific temples and shrines would then constitute the culturally significant spaces. The purpose, as the above quote suggests, was to encourage a more inclusive understanding of what counts as heritage by the participants.

The heritage walks that Krupa devised as part of MAP were designed to bring together participants with a general interest in heritage, understood as buildings and monuments and to include some of the places noted as significant during the *nakshay* sessions, like popular eateries, parks and markets. It was along these routes that the proposed cycle lanes were to be added and footpaths to be improved.

Leveraging Culture

In contrast to the generalised interest in heritage that Krupa attributed to newly arrived professionals, heritage for senior residents of Malleswaram meant something much more specific. It was not a loss of roots or identity that troubled the residents of Malleswaram but rather a feeling that they had lost a sense of control over their special neighbourhood as a result of encroachment and overdevelopment. As Krupa put it:

> I think it's more about losing control in a way. You're not able to control the environment around you, so you recede. You make your world smaller and smaller. [But the residents] feel that Malleswaram still has something whatever that something is to them, so they want to hold on to it … [The project] was about trying to leverage culture.

This class and caste specific definition of culture was also emphasised in a series of short films that Archana commissioned and produced in order to publicise the project. Drawing on personal and familial connections she engaged three professional performers who were also long-term Malleswaram residents, to be interviewed for short films

describing their relationship to the area. The films were screened on the project's YouTube channel and during the festival of urban neighbourhoods that I will describe subsequently.

Three of the performers were successful world-music or fusion musicians; another was the popular Bollywood actor, playback singer and musician, Vasundhara Das. I attended the filming of this promotional video along with Jaaga's media intern, Julia, a communications student from Vienna[142]. As we had agreed to film the interview at her home, Vasundhara, an established name in Hindi and regional Indian cinemas and an accomplished classical and popular musician, invited us into her home studio. Although only in her mid thirties, Vasundhara had performed in several big-budget Hindi cinema and parallel cinema roles. She was also an accomplished playback singer and composer who has written several iconic film songs and when we met, was taking a break from acting roles to focus on writing complete scores for films.

Over the course of the afternoon we discussed the Indian film industry, her work as a composer and current projects. She generously performed a few new tracks for Julia to film along with about twenty minutes of interview footage. When the interviews were cut together the narrative was as follows:

> What describes me best? The fact that I grew up in Malleswaram, the fact that I went to school there. I've always lived there, I still do. And I think a lot of who I am and who I've turned into over the years … has a lot to do with where I come from and that is Malleswaram.
>
> Because of the kind of environment that surrounded us, our families always encouraged us to not just be academic. The Malleswaram families have this one distinction about them, because there were so many music teachers from both the Carnatic and the Hindustani genres of classical music … and also dance teachers

[142] This media student proved invaluable to Jaaga during her internship because she was fluent in English and German. Jaaga worked closely with the combined Goethe Institut and Max Mueller Bhavan in Bangalore hosting German artists, and technologists so having an intern with native level fluency in both languages was hugely helpful.

> that all lived in this area, for a child growing up in a place like Malleswaram was fantastic.
>
> One thing that I've grown up with over the years is waking up to the sounds of Sanskrit which I don't think would have happened anywhere else… Basically, I'm a singer, I studied classical music for many years from my guru […] who taught in Malleswaram, who I met in Malleswaram […] life is all about choices and the choices you make come back to where you're from which brings me right back to Malleswaram[143].

As Vasundhara's narrative suggests, the Malleswaram families shared a distinctive culture, understood as comprising the great artistic and performance traditions of Sanskritic Hinduism. Children growing up in the area, as she had done during the 1980s were encouraged to take up at least one of the major classical performance genres which were fostered in Malleswaram by the large numbers of teachers who resided there. This sentiment was echoed in the project report that reads:

> In fact, even to this day, Malleswaram has remained a hub of creative and cultural activities. With several schools of classical Indian dance be it Bharatanatyam or Kathak, percussion schools, auditoriums and galleries promoting the arts, to more recent art groups like Bar 1 and Guruskool, Malleswaram seems to have its heart set – then and now – on Culture[144].

In their research on Tamil Brahmins in Chennai, Narasimhan and Fuller found that for their informants, 'culture' was interpreted as the 'high' culture of Sanskritic traditions and classical music and dance (Fuller and Narasimhan 2014, 163)[145]. In its knowing reference to the wealth of classical forms in Malleswaram and their skilled practitioners, the MAP project maintained this class and caste specific vision of culture.

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[143] The complete film can be viewed here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aG02sMETRBY&index=2&list=PLD3115D0717307AA2

[144] http://www.neighbourhooddiaries.in/

[145] For an elaboration of the particular burden of cultural transmission held by classical Indian dance in the diasporic context see Ram (2005). Ram argued that the complete embodied habitus is thought to be accessible through learning the dance form which is thought to transmit 'nothing less than "Indian Culture" ' (p.124)

The Festival of Urban Neighbourhoods

Jaaga's input in general, and Archana's vision in particular tied the artistic elements of the MAP project to this communal history of academic and artistic achievement but sought to add to it by drawing on a hybrid of contemporary artistic and performance genres. With characteristic flair, Archana sought to renew Malleswaram as a site of cultural influence through contemporary art traditions by organising a one-day street festival entitled 'Malleswaram Moves' at the culmination of the project.

The street festival had a decidedly contemporary feel. The greatest visual impact was achieved through the combined efforts of a group of German and Indian graffiti artists who were commissioned to spray-paint large scale designs onto public walls, buses and the Malleswaram railway station. The project, which was entitled 'Urban Avant Garde' was designed as a partnership between representatives from the MAP project and the Goethe Institut. The artworks followed a contemporary style and while some artists made reference to recognisably Indian aesthetics (see Figure 11) in their choice of subject and colour palate, others created walls that made no reference to their location in an Indian city and would not have appeared out of place in Berlin, New York or any other capital city in the West. The spray-painting project was complemented by contemporary dance and theatre performances which took place in public space with the painted walls and buses as a backdrop. Again, these performers, in particular the dancers had a decidedly contemporary feel but made reference to classical forms like Kathak and Bharatanatyam, that residents had suggested gave Malleswaram its special character as an artistic centre of high culture. I asked Archana why she had intentionally included contemporary art, and performances including graffiti art in a locality where this style was somewhat alien. She replied that the contemporary feel was an appropriate choice because although

neighbourhood residents may be conservative or orthodox[146] with regard to some spheres of life, the area also had a strongly reformist and what she described as 'progressive' character.

> [The residents] may look conservative but I know that they are progressive because I've grown up in this neighbourhood and I think the fact that the neighbourhood already had this history of culture and education leads to the possibility of a very progressive outlook. So there was already this duality and this contemporary undercurrent to the neighbourhood which I was privy to because I grew up there. See from the outside, I may not have known this if I was going in as a stranger.

Figure 11 *Swalpa Adjust Maadi* or 'Please adjust a little' – translated from Kannada, spray-painted onto a bus during the 'Festival of Urban Neighbourhoods'

The substantial presence of contemporary art forms during the festival is even more interesting when considered concurrently with the role of nostalgia and the interest in heritage to which I have already made reference. I interpret the fusion of contemporary art

[146] Although Archana did not make the point explicitly, when she referred to the tendency towards orthodoxy, she was most certainly referring indirectly to the caste homogeneity of the area and her own family's circle of relatives, friends, neighbours and acquaintances.

and heritage conservation as evidence of the elite character of the area and of the organisations involved in the MAP project. A very high degree of cultural and symbolic capital came together in the heritage and art initiatives that would not have been possible had Archana not been so well connected within the neighbourhood and in Bangalore's thriving contemporary art scene (see Munikempanna 2012). Her links to powerful global patrons including the Goethe Institute also added to the public profile of Project and also provided additional funding. The coincidence of the contemporary and the nostalgic are part of an attempt to merge a community history of considerable intellectual and artistic achievement to elite facets of the city's globally informed future. Through the work of its most talented young members, the Tamil Brahmin community of Malleswaram could confidently lay claim to both.

***

The MAP project was a restorative move to re-engage a select group of middle- and upper-class property owners who had lost an earlier sense that the state operates as an extension of their own agency (See Ram 2013, 33). As members of an older elite, both in age and as a group of early Indian recruits to the better off classes, the residents involved in MAP have moved through a period of privileged engagement with the state during the course of their working lives followed by a period of intense disillusionment as the middle class, the nation and the city have been transformed by liberalisation[147]. In contrast to the liberalisation discourse described by Fernandes and Brosius in which the new middle class view the state as its partner in further economic development, MAP encouraged an established community to view the state as partner in protecting their community from

[147] The project report mentions and gives thanks for the efforts of several senior citizens who offered to work pro bono on plans with either Art Tech or DULT. These senior citizens had formally been employed as engineers, architects and sanitation experts.

further development – but intensified development would no doubt continue, beyond the confines of this special neighbourhood.

The MAP project accords with Chatterjee's argument that heritage is both a strategy and a response to the homogenising effects of global capitalism on Indian cities (Chatterjee 2004, 131). The growing popularity of heritage is suggestive of the sense that labour migration produces specific existential predicaments, a feeling of rootlessness or loss. The attitudes of Malleswaram residents further indicate that as cities respond to intensified development, citizens will want to hold on to culture and heritage where they can. Yet, the emphasis within MAP on intangibles like performance traditions reflects the specific caste habitus of Brahmin castes whose migration trajectories of urban and later, transnational mobility lend these intangible forms greater significance as sources of communal history and value (Hancock 1999, 47) (see Chapter Two for a comparison with land owning, agricultural castes).

An attempt to read this material against Chatterjee's distinction between bourgeois civil society and populations of the governed is hampered by the minor involvement of disadvantaged members of the public either as concerned individuals or collectives. Although MAP purported to be a community project, the lines of community were demarcated not only by residence but also caste and class. As Harriss has suggested, this is a common if unintended feature in civic activist practice in India and bears out his argument that, 'Increasing opportunities for participation may actually increase political inequality' (Harriss 2009, 125). Feedback from informal sector workers was solicited. I observed student volunteers conducting surveys with members of this group, but feedback from maids and workers was not included in the final report. Further, MAP made little effort to engage community members outside the English speaking middle and upper classes or those residing in informal housing. However, as the project report's

recommendations were only minimally put into practice, hawkers were not removed, the cycling lanes were not implemented and the parking restrictions were neither implemented or enforced. As such, the informal sector was not adversely affected by the project at all[148]. But the lack of adverse effects can be attributed to the public-relations focus of the project and lack of implementation rather than to a position that considers those outside the middle class equal citizens rather than subjects.

Although the MAP project was intended to benefit the community, the chief beneficiaries appear to be the two organisations, DULT and Jaaga. Both raised their public profile through the art initiatives, community engagement sessions and online repositories. Archana conceded that Art Tech benefitted from the project even though just 75% of the recommendations were acted upon by the BBMP. Writing on development industry in Southern Africa, Ferguson has argued that 'failure appears to be the norm' (Ferguson 1990, 8). This assumption also seems to colour middle-class attitudes to the efficacy of the Indian state and federal governments . It can also help explain the blasé attitude of Jaaga contributors to the implementation of the project's recommendations[149] – they had performed their specific roles as community organisers, heritage experts and public artists with aplomb, the rest was the responsibility of the government and no-one was surprised that little action had been taken by 2015.

However this need not imply that any members of the MAP team intentionally excluded or neglected poor citizens or residents of Malleswaram from the community

[148] Benjamin indicated that this outcome is unusual in Bangalore's infrastructure debates. He documented the adverse effects of the KR Market flyover construction that all but destroyed a hawker market and forced hawkers to move on (Benjamin 2000).

[149] When asked about implementation and lasting effects, Archana described her position as agnostic but as a local resident, she was more interested in the lasting effects of MAP than Krupa or Praveen. She told me that after the project wrapped, she continued to work with DULT pro bono on the project's model street, devising an expert panel to review the design, but when the recommendations were passed on the BBMP, she had no further role.

sessions and town meetings but rather suggests the ways that the project interpolated specific subjects. With its focus on neighbourhood and community as a unit of analysis and Sanskritic performance traditions and educational or professional achievement as indicators of belonging, the project addressed itself to a forward caste and upper-class demographic of property owners and their descendants. Others who identify themselves as middle class, from the women I knew as paying guests, to the oft-discussed residents of the adjacent gated communities, were not excluded – but neither were they addressed as those whose opinions about city governance and services were thought to matter to those in power.

Unlike the participants in the MAP project, the paying guests did not treat the city as a recreational or homely space. For them, the habitus of the Jaaga set would likely seem quite alien. For the most part, they were either working in their offices, taking classes at college, travelling to or from work and otherwise confined to the hostel, especially after dark. When Manaswi described her experiences as a college student, she said, in no uncertain terms that she and other young women, went only between college and their houses. For Manaswi, other places were prohibited unless she was in the company of friends, or a family member in which case she could travel around as she wished. Although they visited nearby eateries, temples, churches and occasionally branded stores and provision shops, the kinds of activities that I have described as taking place in the MAP project – graffiti art, street theatre and contemporary dance performances were somewhat removed from the city imagined primarily as place to work and earn.

Despite this, it is inaccurate to assume that newer migrants to the city are unconcerned with environmental conservation and devoid of civic sense. They simply expressed their discomfort with the city's congestion and pollution in different registers to those of longer-term residents, reflecting their different experiences and senses of place. Their recursive

statements that the boarding house was congested, unclean and mostly unpleasant could easily be broadened to their views of the city. In Chapters One and Two I have suggested that women like Manaswi, longed to return to their small towns and villagers where the air was cleaner and people behaved better. Such women would quickly trade the noise and chaos of Bangalore city, and the relative depravations of the boarding house to be close to their parents and kin in the places where they had grown up. Denied the compensations of Bangalore's consumer modernity – too busy working and saving to wander around the malls and multiplexes, these women laboured in the city for the benefit of their kin. Certainly some of the wealthy college students eagerly took up the opportunities presented by the city to engage in consumption and recreation, but the women I knew best could not afford such luxuries. They did however seek out restorative niches by visiting nearby temples, or church, often with a friend from the PG or travelling home on weekends or during breaks from college to be with their families.

It is also not entirely fair to assume that lower middle-class migrants, like those I lived with in the boarding house were uninterested in heritage, although it clearly meant something rather different to these women compared with the long-term residents of Malleswaram. As Krupa has suggested, heritage has a strongly mythic and communal dimension for non-elite Indians, with the focus on medieval and early modern built structures like palaces, tombs, temples and forts. I recall a fieldtrip taken with one resident, Yasmin, to Mysore to meet her family. In anticipation of my visit, her father hired a car and together, the family took me to several significant historical sites from the ruins of Srirangapatna, to the Tomb of Tipu Sultan and several large temple complexes. The family's efforts to show me around these special places went somewhat against what I was hoping for from the trip – it was my intention to observe Yasmin's normal weekend activities and compare them to her life as a paying guest as I had done several times with Judith. But I appreciated the efforts made by her parents to accommodate me and take me

on these visits that clearly illustrate the importance of heritage for non-elite Indians. More research in order to launch a more systematic comparison, I simply make note of some surprising disjunctions between elite understandings of heritage and of new migrants and the far more complex reality of how non-elite groups relate to the Indian past through the built environment and intangible cultural heritage.

Conclusion

One of the salient empirical trends which emerges from the chapters of this thesis is that the life stage these women inhabit (which might be characterised as an awkward junction between daughter and wife, student and worker) is beginning to shift from an unmarked to a marked life stage – that of college-student-cum-working woman. As more and more middle-class families provide further education for their daughters and encourage them to seek an economic base beyond the family[150] marriages are delayed and the demands of this new life stage emerge.

As new roles in the economy and within the education system become available, new opportunities, identities and pressures present themselves to the women, their families and future in-laws. Instead of the kin groups that are supposed, in South Asian ideologies of gender, to be ever-present in a woman's life, new kinds of relationships with friends in their hostels, PG managers, college peers and colleagues become the immediate social network with whom the women interact.

Delayed Marriage

Three factors worked to delay the marriages of women in this study. Some were pursuing higher education that would take several years to complete. Most of the women studying law, accounting, engineering or other popular choices could expect to be in full time study for three to four years. Others were working in jobs, hoping to enjoy a year or two of relative freedom prior to marriages that were pre-arranged. Some women like Judith and Manaswi were working in order to remit salaries to their parents.

[150] See (Rutten & Verstapen 2012).

Could one argue that families were intentionally delaying the marriages of their daughters? With regard to the students, this is unlikely. Indeed, a top education was viewed as a means to increase the quality of future grooms. The students were being housed in Bangalore at considerable expense to their parents so that they could complete prestigious qualifications through private institutions. Although by providing education to their daughters, parents may be spared the provision of financial support later, should in-laws fail to provide.

Working women like Judith, Ruth and Manaswi were not married but this was not because of any intentional, self-interested or exploitative practices in their natal families. Financial troubles that could not have been anticipated and that needed to be overcome were the primary reason. Judith's family faced the same uncertainties as any other family who rely on a business for their security. Her family experienced cash flow problems, faced the challenges of local competitors and the burden of unanticipated medical expenses after her father developed a serious heart condition. It was from this precarious position that she proudly narrated their many achievements. But it was also from this position that she stated that she did not trust people and placed her faith only in God and her family.

Ruth's family were more established and wealthier than Judith's. However they too faced financial difficulties that pushed the expense of a daughter's wedding beyond the realms of what could be managed. With her father unwell and the family struggling to pay off the loans taken to support her brother, the kind of marriage Ruth desired was impossible at the time that I knew her. As she would not marry without parental involvement and consent, she resigned herself to waiting until her circumstances improved.

Given that Manaswi was the highest earner in her family, her income was critical in maintaining and supporting them. Her parents may have delayed her marriage if marrying her off would have interrupted her income or diverted it to her in-laws. However it is

equally likely that they simply could not afford to meet the ongoing expense of a daughter's marriage until their new house was complete. With the new house complete, her parents were actively searching for a husband for her. Holding her preferences in mind, they were looking for a groom in Mandya rather than Bangalore.

Seva

The concept of *seva* has been central to the arguments presented in this thesis. I have argued that the role of affect, care and commitment cannot be underestimated in shaping the course of women's engagement with the broader projects of their families. Using Lamb's definition (2009, 32-33) *seva* has been glossed as selfless service to elders that follows a reciprocal logic whereby parents and children care for one another throughout the life-course. In recognition of the highly specific forms of familial solidarity found in South Asia, I have applied Dumont's model of encompassment to this concept (Dumont 1972). Using Dumont, I have argued that *seva* is transmitted between women and their families, as kin, and as broader affective and political collectives such as castes. I have documented the ongoing influence of social reform movements and collective action in shaping the subjectivity of women like Judith as they contribute to their families' ongoing projects, even when these are a historical influence and the women themselves are not involved in any specific form of political action.

Drawing on approaches from the anthropology of ethics, I have suggested that *seva* is best approached as an ethic of devotion that orients women towards the broader, collective endeavours of their families. I have argued that *seva* occupies a liminal position as it is both a public and shared set of discourses as well as part of the meaningful background of everyday activity that need not be explicitly articulated to be felt and acted upon. Judith and Manaswi discussed *seva* most explicitly when they encountered other women who lacked, according to them, this ethical orientation. Student residents in the boarding house

were particularly noted by Judith and Manaswi as characterised by amoral consumerism and laxity. It was in these moments, when commentaries distinguished between those who did and did not attend to the ethical disciplines that were appropriate to daughters away from the immediate surveillance of their families, that it also became apparent to me that *seva* acted as a moral force that equipped women to endure many difficulties in Bangalore.

Seva, I have argued, is best interpreted as an ethical disposition. Although it involves reciprocal intergenerational exchange, the ethical disposition towards *seva* contains something more. Within the thesis, this emerged with force in cases where the family may have failed or ceased to provide for their daughter, as was the case for Ruth. For her, circumstances beyond her control and beyond the control of other family members conspired to trap her in a life stage that she had outgrown and in a place she yearned to leave. However, her commitment to the family, to uphold their wishes for her and work so as to become financially independent remained resolute and unshakable. I have explored her narrations of the predicament she and other young women faced in bringing together the needs and expectations of their families with their own hopes for the future.

I explored the implications of a family strategy that sent Ruth's brother Rajesh to the US for further training. The case of Ruth and her brother is of particular interest because it raises further questions about the role of sons in the provision of *seva* to aging parents. Lamb has argued that *seva* has traditionally been the special prerogative of the son, even if in most everyday contexts care for elders is provided by the daughter-in-law (Lamb 2009, 20). Families such as Ruth's face a paradox in that the pursuit of projects that are designed to ensure ongoing support from sons, such as further education or overseas migration, have in fact made parents increasingly dependent on their daughters. I hope that further research will take up the gendering of such responsibilities so as to provide a more complete picture of the ways that sons care for elders, and the inter-subjective features of these ongoing

relationships. An investigation of male migrants in similar circumstances would deepen our understanding of the role of *seva* in enabling or inhibiting migration, channelling remittances and building wider communities of solidarity.

Migration and the City

Through sustained attention to a small number of temporary migrants, accompanied by a briefer glance at a group of longer-term residents, this thesis has considered the changing face of the city of Bangalore. The city offers opportunities for elite education, through its many universities and colleges, as well as opportunities for employment in the BPO or Internet enabled services industry. The women I knew as paying guests migrated to Bangalore to avail themselves of these new and exciting opportunities. They were equipped to do so because their families had educated them in English medium schools and colleges. Parents also provided encouragement and financial support for their daughters to migrate alone.

Once in the city, women described the challenges of finding somewhere safe and affordable to live, coping with the conditions in the PG and building new relationships with other students and colleagues. Some also established relationships with young men even though this was a risky proposition should their parents or even friends come to know. Many college students had already lived in boarding schools, others had spent at least some time away from their parents while completing college. For some women though, their time as paying guests was their first experience of living away from their families. The transition was described as unsettling.

Yet, although the early period of residence in the PG was described in reference to similar traits and attitudes that are elsewhere related to marriage, the kinds of adjustment entailed by this specific form of migration diverged from marriage in several important

respects. Migrating as a student or working woman entailed living in close proximity to women of different castes, classes, faiths, and behaviours. Women who moved to the city to fulfil their ambitions and those of their families needed to carefully manage their own behaviour and accommodate the often perplexing behaviour of others in conditions of enforced intimacy.

Close proximity did necessarily foster closeness. Many women described themselves as alone in the PG although they lived with thirty other people, detailing the lengths they went to so as to avoid bad influences. These included hiding their valuables and maintaining limited interaction with roommates whose behaviour or attitudes they disapproved of. This presents a contrast to how the same group of women envisioned joining the husband's family at marriage. The goal of this type of migration is the full and harmonious incorporation of the woman into her husband's patrilineage . Links to the natal family remain but as married women, their lives are structured by the demands and needs of their husband and his kin rather than their own parents. Migration at marriage is also viewed as permanent, whereas residence as a paying guest was only ever viewed as temporary.

Coping with the demands of solo migration called forth an attitude of temporariness as the arrangement of being or becoming a paying guest would hold only as long as this was needed either by the demands of further education or employment prior to marriage. A shared sense of temporariness affected the relationships that women built with one another and their attitudes to the city. It also lent a makeshift quality to the space of the boarding house as women moved in, stayed for some time and then moved on.

Perhaps it is revealing in itself that I do not know what happened to most of the women I worked with to collect data for this thesis. After I left India we lost contact. Aside from the occasional Facebook message, it has not been possible for me to follow their lives

despite the closeness we shared as roommates. I imagine that they finished college. I know that many have since married. Others are likely to be working or waiting for marriage. Like me, they stayed as paying guests when their circumstances required this arrangement and then moved on with other projects and often to other places – to the home of the husband, back to family or on to new postings for work or further study.

Before leaving India, I was able to attend Judith's wedding and to establish rapport with her husband and his family. I know that she is happily married and living with her husband and daughter in Bangalore. Ruth returned to Hyderabad after her father died, from what I can gather she is not married and may have returned to university. I have had no contact with Manaswi since I left India in 2013.

The Middle Class

Throughout the project, I have attended to the role of predominantly lower caste and lower middle-class women in new roles, such as BPO workers or college graduates. A focus on these women strongly suggests that the middle class is not a fixed and unproblematic category, in the sense of an entity to which people simply belong.

Like other authors who write on this subject, I have indicated that the ownership of commodities and capital alone are insufficient for those seeking entry to this group. The mundane experiences of hardship in the PG that I have described are suggestive of the lengths women went to so as to assist their parents with broader projects of social mobility. Larger-scale lifecycle rites such as engagements and marriages were also moments where women like Judith, Manaswi and Ruth performed middle-class identities. Although the middle class is understood to be diverse, the ethnography I have presented suggests some recurring themes. These include the importance of higher education for women and the need to support the family and receive support from the family in turn. All three women

differed in the ways that they imagined middle-class futures. Manaswi paid off her family's new house and waited confidently for her marriage. Ruth wondered if she would go back to university or migrate to the US. Judith joined an appropriate family and enjoyed the pleasures of the early period of marriage, having children and settling in Bangalore.

I have also argued that for all three women, attempts to remain a member of the middle class provoked anxiety and caused hardship. Following the work of Dickey (2012) and Liechty (2003) I have identified the sources of these many anxieties – financial difficulties in the family, a sense that desirable commodities are out of reach, and the frustration of living in a boarding house; enduring the unclean conditions, the repetitive food and the behaviours and attitudes of other women, rather than living at home with the care and support of family members.

These anxieties also alert us to the many contradictions within the social space of the middle class. When Manaswi saw that investing in the new house for her parents was a way to guard against future loss or misfortune, or when Ruth's parents disapproved of her boyfriend because he had a service job rather than a profession, we need to recognise that these are not simply idiosyncratic factors within families. Rather, they reflect the specific character of *ways* of being middle class in India – prompting dialogue with the past, and ideas about desirable futures. I suggest that these different ways of presenting oneself or one's family as members of the middle class concern aspects of personhood, values and dispositions just as much as economic relations. Indeed, like other researchers who have studied the middle class in diverse contexts, I argue that a core aspect of 'being middle class' (Donner 2011) is located beyond the economic sphere. As Judith's moralising discourses on the *hifi* college students suggest, those who can claim membership to the moral middle classes are those who are defined by more than simply a lack of capital – the trait most often singled out in terms of definitions of class and working-class status. The

same is true for those who appear to be so wealthy that that potentially moral applications of resources are lost to excessive consumption – a trait women like Judith associated with the elite.

Consumer Citizenship

In contrast to much of the literature on the Indian middle class and the new middle class that foregrounds consumption as an increasingly salient aspect of personhood and even citizenship, this thesis has put forward evidence that consumerism remains a highly contested social practice which people regard with both desire and ambivalence. Prior to commencing fieldwork, I read Rajagopal (2001), Fernandes (2006) and Roy (2009) who argued for a growing shift towards a model of citizenship predicated on the capacity to consume. I was therefore surprised to discover that one of the few things that women such as Judith and Manaswi and the Tamil Brahmin elders of Malleswaram shared was a sense that the consumption of Western style commodities was uneconomical and led to the loss of culture and familial solidarity. Indeed, my research suggests that the older values of saving, thriftiness and simplicity have much greater bearing on people's lives than this literature allows for. A tendency amongst scholars to focus on the wealthiest fractions of the Indian middle class, for whom consumption of luxury goods is an important sociological fact, has tended to obscure the more sober and restrained attitudes to consumption amongst the majority of those who identify themselves as belonging to the middle class.

As opportunities for consumption have expanded, the moral or ethical dimensions of this practice may have taken on greater significance. It is not only what people buy but how they feel about the purchases they make and what such goods potentially communicate to others that seems to be most important. Given that each woman who lived in the PG had either a regular salary or an allowance, they were able to buy most products

but chose not to. As Liechty has argued (2003) the question seemed to be how one consumes appropriately to one's status and the status and aspirations of one's family. My exploration of emic categories like *hifi people*, and *drama people* are attempts to better understand the role of consumerism in practices of self-making which aim to bring older frameworks of values derived from caste, regional and family practices into a meaningful dialogue with new dispositions and opportunities. Evidence I have presented suggests that fear of debt and implicitly, getting by in an expensive city on a limited incomes was a far more prominent indicator of what might be called middle-class morality, than was consumption.

Undertaking Urban Anthropology

Bangalore has been transformed by the IT migrations. No less by a form of migration, that of highly skilled professionals and much poorer disadvantaged people who have migrated to provide services to them and the firms they work for and also to construct the new layouts and infrastructure for wealthy residents.

My research indicates that longer-term residents struggle to make sense of these changes. Through my involvement in the MAP project and through the myriad seminars, lectures, projects and goings on in the city during my stay, I witnessed the complex process of self-questioning taking place in the city about what kind of place residents wanted it to be. Clean-up drives, traffic reduction campaigns, and moves to register paying guest hostels were part of a wider struggle between longer-term residents and new migrants but also between the wealthy and the disadvantaged.

In the public sphere, this struggle was staged between different groups: NGOs, government representatives and citizen organisations clashed. Calls went forth to 'change the city', 'save the city', 'expand the city', and 'rebuild the city'. A furore was created by

an article published in *Outlook* by the noted scientist C.N.R Rao, in which he described Bangalore's city culture as 'intellectual garbage'. He even went so far as to suggest that 'If IT is going to take away our basic values, then you can burn Bangalore and burn IT' (Rao 2014). Rao's critique vocalised the palpable sense amongst many long-term residents of Bangalore, that the benefits of the IT boom have largely accrued to others. The success of IT in Bangalore draws on ideas and images that until liberalisation were located most markedly within circuits of the Indian–North American diaspora. However, to borrow Patricia Uberoi's phrase, 'the diaspora has come home' (Uberoi 2006b). Urban residents of cities like Bangalore are facing the prospect of globalised Western influence on home soil and the growth of consumerism and the enormous stress that migration has placed on the city's infrastructure has angered residents.

As a researcher I was swept up for a time in the process of self-questioning I have described. The strength of these discursive constructions and the power of those advocating them made these central questions in my research. I was therefore very fortunate to have established empirically concrete grounding and ongoing relationships with the paying guests whose concerns, beliefs and ethical orientations addressed different questions. I came to understand although these women studied or worked in Bangalore, they had no sense of ownership towards the city, and many did not even particularly like living there. I was surprised to discover that they were unimpressed by the 'global city' and yearned to return to their families. That the 'urban' for them consisted of a very small set of spaces; the PG, the bus stands and railway stations that they used to travel home and to areas surrounding their colleges and offices.

While in Bangalore I came across an online article entitled 'Clutter in the Suburbs' published in the *Deccan Herald* (Balaraman 2013). In the article, long-term residents

singled out newly arrived paying guests, among others as the reason for the horrendous traffic and overdevelopment in the locality of Whitefield:

‘The chief problem, I think, are the PGs,’ says Anukriti, [a resident] who works in ITPL[151] and lives a couple of kilometres from her office. ‘There’s very little regulation on them. So, some PG owners are constructing additional storeys to their premises – sometimes as many as five or six. There’s no dearth of people looking for such accommodation, so this kind of expansion only translates to increased income for them.’

The arguments and ethnography presented in this thesis provide a more nuanced picture of the lives of Bangalore’s temporary migrants and the roles they play in the city’s economy. Leaving aside discursive constructions of the ‘urban’ or of city culture, in which women such as those I have described are either omitted or constructed as a problem, this thesis has explored their desires, projects and sacrifices in great detail in order to present an ethnography not of the city but of a small number of young migrant women who labour to make it their temporary home.

[151] ITPL refers to the International Tech Park. A large industrial business park located in Whitefield, Bangalore.

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