

IT WILL BECOME: MODERN INDIA AND THE LABOR OF ASPIRATION

by

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## **Abstract**

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This study combines political economy and twenty-two months of fieldwork to understand the limits of social mobility for poor and working class people in modern India. Despite more than two decades of economic liberalization, access to quality education, well paying jobs, and high standards of living, remain largely tied to class and caste advantages. Main informants include lower class golf caddies and middle and upper middle class members at golf clubs in Bangalore, India's "Silicon Valley." The study shows that members, many of them entrepreneurs, white-collar professionals, and civil servants, simultaneously educate the caddies in the rhetoric of bootstrap capitalism, on the one hand, and also foreclose opportunities to assert their independence, on the other: first, by refusing the caddies control over their labor process; and, second, paying them insufficient wages (\$1-2 a round) that keep them dependent on additional handouts to cover health care, children's school fees, and other household expenses. The result is a form of social, economic, and cultural exchange that encourages servility and reinforces existing inequalities. The study underscores the limits of trickle-down-economics as a means to development—absent effective industrial policy and jobs programs, as well as adequate investments in health care, education, and basic social services, these caddies, and others of similarly impoverished backgrounds, have little choice but to seek out relationships of this sort, and even then, chances at social mobility are slim.

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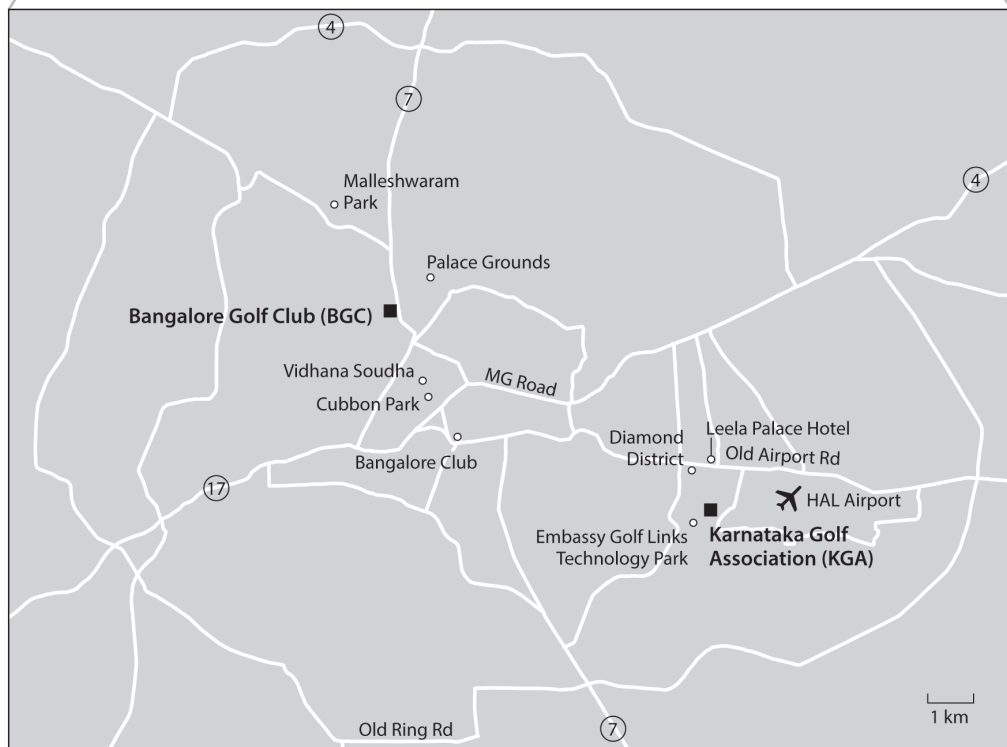
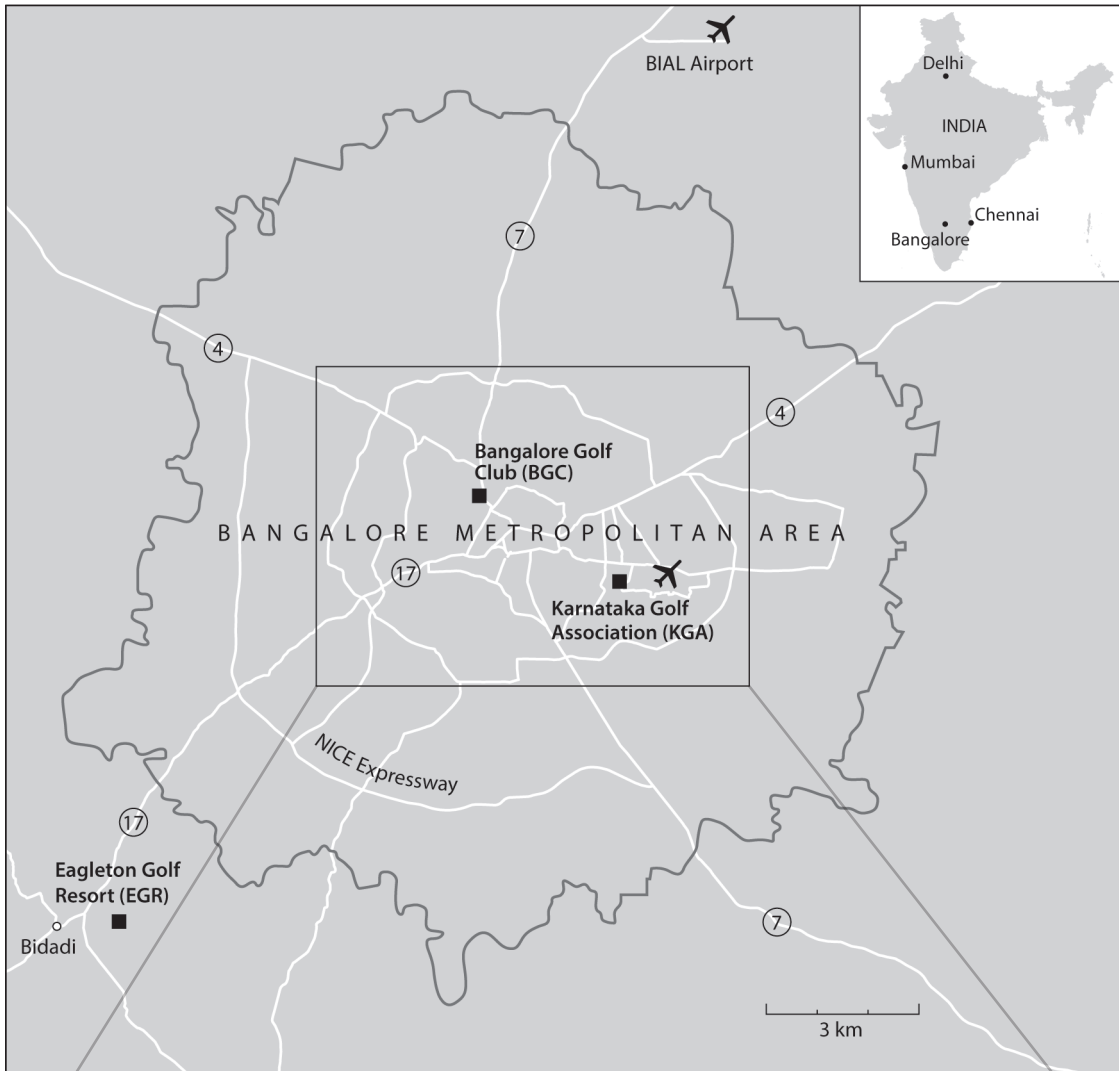
Stanley Aronowitz was the primary reason I came to the Graduate Center, and he remains one of the reasons I will miss it the most. As chair of the dissertation committee, he has shaped this project more than anyone—all for the better. To him I offer my sincere thanks and gratitude.

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## Introduction

Ravi Krishna grew up poor, the son of an itinerant wage laborer, in the mixed income community of Palace Gutahalli, west of Mahatma Gandhi Road (M.G. Road) in Bangalore. When he was thirteen, in the late 1980s, he dropped out of the government school he had been attending to assist his family with daily expenses; whatever his father made was spent mostly on alcohol. He took up work as a caddy carrying the golf sets of wealthy members at the venerable Bangalore Golf Club (BGC), founded by the British in 1876, and located up the road from where he lived. At the time, he was paid ten rupees, less than an American quarter, plus tips, per eighteen-hole-round, which typically lasted five to six hours. If he started before dawn, when the members first showed up at the club, he could fit in two rounds in a day.

Like caddies before him, Ravi picked up the game watching the members and then practicing with his friends. They used tree branches and discarded iron rods for clubs, balls lost and found on the course, and holes dug out of the earth. They played before and after rounds, in behind the caddy station, and during rounds, as well, off to the side of tee boxes, when members were stuck waiting behind another group. Some improved quite a lot, earning playing privileges on Wednesdays, when the course was otherwise closed for maintenance. The best among them, including Ravi, qualified to play in what was then the country's first professional golf tour, organized by the Professional Golf Association of India.

Ravi, now thirty-three, five-foot-eight, with a round, dark face and thin mustache, only played in a handful of tournaments, never making all that much money. He had

started too late, he said. There was also never enough time to practice. Eventually, in 2002, he quit, preferring, as did his family, the meager, but steady, stream of wages and tips he earned from members at the club. By then, he had already started supplementing his income as a caddy with money he picked up as a coach at a driving range inside the Palace Grounds, a 400-acre area of land owned by the former Maharaja of Mysore and his family, located north of the club. It was there, in January 2007, where I first encountered him.

I had come to Bangalore to study the vaunted new elite and the social and economic transformations they were bringing about in the city, a hotbed of research and profit making in information technology (IT) and software design, and across the nation, more generally. The BGC, I figured, along with its younger cousin in the east of the city, a club known as the KGA, short for Karnataka Golf Association, would be ideal settings for this research. But, first, I had to gain access, and to do this, I had to meet members, which is why the driving range was so appealing. Above all, it was public. I could visit whenever I wanted, and speak to whomever I wished.

The range itself was little more than an open dirt field that doubled as a site for trade shows and festivals, usually held in the evenings and on weekends. Visitors paid fifty rupees, or approximately one American dollar, for fifty golf balls delivered by men, current and former caddies, in battered yellow hard hats who ventured into the field to collect them in plastic buckets. Aside from this expense, I paid Ravi 150 rupees for a forty-five-minute lesson, repeated three to four times a week, beginning at seven in the morning. My only other golf experience had been a few lessons one summer as a teenager, and some duffing in year-end faculty tournaments during my time as a high

school teacher in Vancouver, Canada, where I lived and was educated.

Golf was beside the point. I was there to meet members, young and old, and in time, I did, some of whom eased my entry into the clubs, inviting me out for drinks with them and their friends, for example, or out on rounds of golf. We also met in their homes and offices. Such conversations were almost always conducted at a distance from the noise, filth, and grime of city life. The extreme poor who huddled on street corners and sidewalks were largely out of sight, and mostly out of mind.

The working classes were more proximate, however. There were the golf caddies, for one, people like Ravi who had worked all their lives at the side of the rich, and others besides, including their many cooks, drivers, and domestic servants. Spending my time at the driving range and at the clubs, I came to think that whatever story I wanted to tell about the Indian elite, new and old alike, and their impact on the society was inextricably wrapped up in their relationship to these service workers. It was impossible, witnessing Ravi's interactions with other members and reflecting on his interactions with me, to separate out the experiences of India's rich from that of its poor, as most scholarly and popular analyses tend to do. The great, and growing, inequality between rich and poor in the society, exacerbated by economic liberalization, necessarily, if ironically, brought the two together. The labor of the poor came at a bargain, obviously, while the rich offered the poor what the government could not, or would not, namely, a job, and, if they were lucky, extra help in covering health care costs, private education for their children, and other expenses.

Ravi wanted out of this compact with the rich. He hated being a caddy, not so much for the work but because of what it paid, and what it made him do. Caddy work was

never just caddy work. He relied on tips, mostly, and had to act in ways servile and deferential in order to secure them. That is why he turned to coaching. It paid him more than he made as a caddy, and therefore provided a measure of independence from members. They became his clients, rather than his benefactors.

Still, it was never enough. With the recent birth of his daughter—she was just three months old when I met him—he felt a special urgency about the future. He tried other things, tapping into the entrepreneurial spirit championed by the members and celebrated in the mainstream press. With a friend, another caddy at the BGC and coach at the Palace Grounds, he started a business selling wholesale clothes offloaded from a member who ran a textiles factory. They borrowed money and opened a storefront, but sales languished, and after two months they closed up shop. Ravi returned to coaching. He wanted to start his own golf academy. He sent out fliers. Nobody signed up. He then put money down on a coaching certificate program, which, thankfully, raised the interest of a professional coach in the area, a member of the BGC and KGA with middle class means, who hired him to work in his own golf academy. Ravi's salary, though, never exceeded much more than he made as a caddy.

For Ravi, the members were like role models. He saw up close the way they lived, the clothes they wore, the cars they drove, and the smart phones they used; he overheard what they said to one another, the tales they told, of work and family, of the places near and far where they vacationed and traveled, of the schools to which they sent their children. All of this more than intrigued him. He wanted these things, too, but was at a loss as to how to go about getting any of them. Ravi was certainly no dupe. He was keenly aware of the social and economic privileges members had inherited at birth, just

as he was aware of his own lack in this regard. Pointing this out, however, did not amount to much.

Ravi embraced a mantra, which he dictated in his lessons whenever I mistimed my stroke, a not infrequent occurrence, unfortunately. “It will become,” he would say, by which he meant, keep at it, work hard, and good things will happen. For him, though, and for others similarly stuck spinning their wheels, the very act of “becoming”—that is, improving life chances—required he adopt the pose of willing supplicant. In the “new” India, despite all manner of new money and new technologies, servitude was still the most reliable path to upward mobility. In order to scrape by, much less get ahead, the poor, invariably, had to bow down. How, and why, this is so, even after twenty plus years of economic liberalization and the rise—and rise—of a new elite, is the subject of this study.

## THE WORLD IS NOT FLAT

The idea for this project emerged a year prior to meeting Ravi, in the backseat of a taxi, in another city, Mumbai, on the way to the airport. I was heading back to Bangalore, where I had been giving a talk on digital publishing the week before, and from there I would fly out to New York.<sup>1</sup> Stalled in rush hour traffic on an elevated highway stretched out over Dharavi, Asia’s biggest and most notorious slum, an Indian boy in a stained white shirt and torn cotton pants approached a half-opened window opposite where I was sitting. In his arms, he was holding a stash of pirated bestsellers,

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<sup>1</sup> The talk, titled “Open Journal Systems and the Challenge to Improve Research Capacity in India,” was given on behalf of a research team of which I was a part at the University of British Columbia, where I obtained a master’s degree in 2003.

among them Thomas L. Friedman's *The World Is Flat*,<sup>2</sup> on the promise of IT and software in India and other developing countries, which had only just been published. I slipped the boy a hundred-rupee note, thinking it would make an interesting souvenir, given the manner in which it was obtained, and he passed the shrink-wrapped book back through the crack in the window.

This was my second copy of the book. I had purchased the first in a New York bookstore a month earlier. I had brought it with me on the trip to India, and had read most of it by the time the boy happened upon me. It was a minor paradox the sight of him carrying in his arms a book that reflected so little of the India that immediately surrounded the highway, as if in a scene right out of the pages of *National Geographic*—stretching out as far as the eye could see hundreds, maybe thousands, of one-story houses cobbled together from discarded corrugated steel and blue tarpaulin sheets.

The book itself opens in a remarkably different setting, at the first tee at the eighteen-hole course at the KGA in Bangalore. Friedman and his playing partner, Infosys CEO Nandian Nilekani, trade advice on how best to play the 300-yard fairway ahead of them. "Aim at either Microsoft or IBM," Nilekani says to Friedman, as the pair look off in the distance at two glass-and-steel buildings behind the first green. Friedman notices other familiar sights, as well: HP and Texas Instruments buildings on the back nine, Epson's logo on tee markers, and a 3M hat atop his caddy's head. "No," Friedman writes, "this definitely wasn't Kansas. It didn't even seem like India. Was this the New World, the Old World, or the Next World?" At home, in suburban Maryland, outside of Washington, D.C., he pulls his wife aside, and offers his own conclusion. "Honey," he

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Picador, 2005).

tells her, “I think the world is flat.”<sup>3</sup>

Early in my research, before I met Ravi, I walked the perimeter of the KGA, making my own discoveries. The club, I learned, is located at the dead end of Golf Avenue, a narrow lane that runs perpendicular to Airport Road, approximately ten miles east of downtown Bangalore. Next to the KGA, on the right, is the Royal Orchid, a five-star hotel, and opposite both, Diamond District, a gated community. On the backside of the course, just south, is the Embassy Golf Links Business Park, which houses the IBM and Microsoft buildings Friedman takes in on his round; to the east, an international airport; and farther north, half a mile away, out along Airport Road, another five-star hotel, the Leela Palace, a private hospital, and shops and restaurants that cater to the middle and upper middle class residents of Indira Nagar.

There was such an incredible contrast between the open fairways and finely manicured greens inside the barbed wire fence that encircled the club and the public space just a few feet beyond it. An open sewer, I noticed, thirty to forty feet wide in some places, strewn with trash and smelling of human and animal excrement, winds around the north side of the course. Barefoot men, women, and children regularly passed me by, traveling on dirt paths and broken sidewalks.

None of this, to be sure, features in Friedman’s book. Friedman's preferred tour guides in his flat world that are middle and upper middle class Indians, who either manage or work for IT and software companies, live in gated communities, and, to believe him, mainly eat, drink, and think as Westerners do. It is primarily their vision of India that is taken into account. The poor, by contrast, though tagged as the key beneficiaries of trickle down economics, are invisible. In fact, no poor person appears in

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 5.

the book, no landless laborer, no slum dweller, and certainly no boy like the one I saw in Mumbai. Neither is there mention of open sewers, or any blight whatsoever.

Indeed, as David Harvey writes, “Friedman’s is a brilliant but hyped up caricature of the neoliberal world view that currently reigns supreme.”<sup>4</sup> True enough, aside from the usual scholarly jargon, tables, and graphs, there is little to distinguish Friedman from mainstream economists on the question of economic development. Few economists, for example, would disagree with his policy prescriptions for developing countries, which entail devaluing a nation’s currency, bringing down tariffs on imported goods and services, exposing domestic industry to outside competition, and diminishing the influence of labor, all the while limiting government activity to managing the money supply and sustaining the rule of law. If there is disagreement, it is among economists and other social scientists and business writers who think Friedman—in this book and in his earlier bestseller, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*<sup>5</sup>—was too optimistic about where India and the rest of the developing world currently stands in regards to these policy changes, as opposed to any particular problem with them.<sup>6</sup> In fact, to this day, it remains the consensus view in these circles that more, not less, globalization, in the form of free

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<sup>4</sup> David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 52. For a fuller treatment of neoliberalism as concept and economic policy, see David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). For additional criticism of Friedman’s “flat world” thesis, see: Nancy Birdsall, “The World Is Not Flat: Inequality and Injustice in Our Global Economy” (lecture, United Nations University-World Institute for Development Economics Research, Helsinki, Finland, October 26, 2005); John Gray, “The World Is Round,” *New York Review of Books*, August 11, 2005; Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Picador, 2007); Edward E. Leamer, “A Flat World, a Level Playing Field, a Small World After All, or None of the Above? A Review of Thomas L. Friedman’s *The World Is Flat*,” *Journal of Economic Literature* XLV(March 2007); Andrew Ross, *Fast Boat to China: Corporate Flight and the Consequences of Free Trade; Lessons from Shanghai* (New York: Pantheon, 2006); Neil Smith, “Afterword to the Third Edition,” in *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Richard Florida, “The World Is Spiky,” *Atlantic Monthly*, October 2005; Pankaj Ghemawat, *World 3.0: Global Prosperity and How to Achieve It* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2011).

markets, free trade, and strong private property rights, is the only answer to underdevelopment.<sup>7</sup>

Above all else, Friedman gives popular legitimacy to the idea developed by Manuel Castells and others that IT and IT-related services are an effective, if also necessary, strategy for economic development.<sup>8</sup> Friedman's primary test case is Bangalore, which he calls, after a fashion, India's "Silicon Valley," on account of the thousands of IT and software companies based there. In this, he follows legions of others, including Sunil Khilnani, who describes the city as a "software utopia," and, after Mumbai, traditionally India's seat of business and finance, the "strongest alternative incarnation of Indian modernity."<sup>9</sup> A similar faith in IT pervades Harvard economist Edward Glaeser's book, *Triumph of the City*, in which he refers to Infosys as a "flat-world phenomenon," in one of several unacknowledged references to Friedman, and to Bangalore as a "boom town."<sup>10</sup> In a conclusion titled, "Flat World, Tall City," Glaeser implores cities worldwide to follow Bangalore's lead in cultivating business-friendly environments with offers of cheap but skilled labor and low (or no) corporate tax rates to entice would-be IT outsourcers like IBM and Microsoft.

Granted, IT contributes five percent to India's GDP, and much of this is generated in Bangalore, where India's software industry is based. But the industry, overall, employs

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<sup>7</sup> Jagdish Bhagwati, *In Defense of Globalization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Jagdish Bhagwati and Arvind Panagariya, *Why Growth Matters: How Economic Growth in India Reduced Poverty and the Lessons for Other Developing Countries* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2013); Philippe Legrain, *Open World: The Truth about Globalisation* (London: Abacus, 2003); Arvind Panagariya, *India: Emerging Giant* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Michael Spence, *The Next Convergence: The Future of Economic Growth in a Multispeed World* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2011); Martin Wolf, *Making Globalization Work* (New Haven: Yale Nota Bene, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society, Vol. 1*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996; Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (London: Penguin, 2003), 11, 148.

<sup>10</sup> Edward Glaeser, *The Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier, and Happier* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 24-27.

a mere three million people, drawn mostly from the middle and upper middle classes, making projections about the impact of IT appear fanciful,<sup>11</sup> at best, and disingenuous, at worst. More critical observers of Bangalore's development scoff at the insinuation that IT has benefited any but the most privileged. In the literature, Bangalore is variously described as a "divided city," a "fragmented city," and a "world-city nightmare," where the rich live and work in a "parallel universe," separated from the poor by an "involuntary apartheid."<sup>12</sup> This divide is made literally concrete, as I had plenty of occasion to see on subsequent trips, in the walls that cordon off densely packed slums—what Mike Davis calls "off worlds"<sup>13</sup>—from the more pristine areas of work and leisure for the rich.

The evidence that free markets have improved life for India's poor and working people appears mixed. Though the percentage of Indians living on \$1.25 or less a day has declined from 51.3 percent, in 1990, to 41.6 percent, in 2005, the number of people living in extreme poverty has increased, from 435.5 million to 455.8 million over the same period, many of them concentrated in the northeast of the country.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, as many people live in extreme poverty in eight northeast states as inhabit twenty-six African nations.<sup>15</sup> Malnutrition among children across the entire country is particularly acute:

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<sup>11</sup> Carol Upadhyaya and A.R. Vasavi, *Work, Culture, and Sociality in the Indian IT Industry* (Bangalore: National Institute of Advanced Studies, 2006)

<sup>12</sup> Solomon Benjamin, "Governance, Economic Settings and Poverty in Bangalore," *Environment and Urbanization* 12, no. 1 (2000); Christoph Dittrich, "Bangalore: Globalisation and Fragmentation in India's Hightech-Capital," *ASIEN* (April 2007).; Michael Goldman, "Speculative Urbanism and the Making of the Next World City," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35, no. 3 (2011).; Brad Wetzler, "Boomgalore: India's Tech Superpower is Acting more like Silicon Valley Every Day," *Wired*, March 2000; Jeremy Seabrook, "That Side of the Street: An Involuntary Apartheid, It's in the Fabric of the 'Successful City,'" *Outlook*, July 16, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (New York: Verso, 2006), 114-120.

<sup>14</sup> Shaohua Chen and Martin Ravillion, "The Developing World is Poorer than we Thought, but no less Successful in the Fight Against Poverty," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 125, no. 4 (2010).

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2010: The Real Wealth of Nations; Pathways to Human Development* (New York: UNDP, 2010).

more malnourished children under the age of five, 60.8 million, live in India than anywhere else in the world.<sup>16</sup>

Not for nothing, then, do critics like Harvey take umbrage at Friedman's apparent blindness to the fact that the majority of Indians "[live] under conditions either 'unflat' (full of pain and despair) or 'half flat' (full of anxiety, hoping and struggling to find a place)." <sup>17</sup> Given such conditions, though, what accounts for the fact that there is relatively so little struggle between the classes, especially in the cities where inequality is most acute and readily visible? Why is it, moreover, that Friedman's brand of free market capitalism, or neoliberalism, as Harvey calls it, "reigns supreme," and not only as religious edict in economics and business departments the world over, but also as a guiding principle of everyday life, as much among the poor as among the elites?

It would be far too cynical to impute false consciousness onto poor and working Indians. The answer to these questions, more likely, lies in the set of structural constraints that limit available options for work. Consider, for instance, comments *New York Times* correspondent Jim Yardley collects from passersby outside Reliance chairman and CEO Mukesh Ambani's newly constructed twenty-seven-story personal residence in Mumbai. A "Blade Runner-meets-Babylon edifice," as Yardley describes it, Ambani's "home" features nine elevators, a spa, a fifty-seat theater, and a grand ballroom, built at an estimated cost of one billion dollars. Middle class residents react with disgust at how Ambani, worth approximately \$21 billion, can think to build a home so ostentatious, so extravagant, in a city of twenty million inhabitants, two-thirds of whom live in slums. Others much less fortunate, however, find inspiration, and then some. A twenty-six-year-

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<sup>16</sup> *Economist*, "Putting the smallest first: Why India makes a poor fist of feeding the young, and how it could do better," September 10, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 61.

old decorator's assistant muses: "Whether it is a beggar or an Ambani, the desire to be rich is in everyone's heart." So it is. Sushala Pawar, a cook, who makes 4,000 rupees, almost \$100, a month, is more practical still, announcing: "Maybe I could get a job there."<sup>18</sup>

Where pro-globalizers come across such statements as these, they lodge it as evidence in support of what great and wonderful things are happening in India. Journalist Anand Giridharadas, for one, in a new memoir titled, tellingly, *India Calling: An Intimate Portrait of a Nation's Remaking*, remarks that India is awash in "brazen, unapologetic dreams," all of which, together, reflect an interest on the part of the poor as much as the rich to make a break with the past.<sup>19</sup> "The Indian revolution was within," he goes on to say. "It was a revolution in private life, in the tenor of emotions and the nature of human relationships. The very fabric of Indianness—the meaning of being a husband or a wife, a factory owner or a factory worker, a mother-in-law or daughter-in-law, a student or teacher—was slowly, gently unraveling by the force of these dreams, and allowing itself to be woven in new ways."<sup>20</sup>

Whether or not these dreams, however woven, translate into better life chances for poor and working people, like Sushala Pawar, for example, or the boy in Mumbai or even Ravi, goes without mention. For Giridharadas, Friedman, and others who write in a similar vein, it would seem to be enough to point out that something *is* happening in India today, what with the mix of people, technology, and money gravitating to the cities from all around. It matters little if that something is only vaguely defined, and couched in the

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<sup>18</sup> Jim Yardley, "Soaring Above India's Poverty, a 27-Story Home," *New York Times*, October 28, 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Anand Giridharadas, *India Calling: An Intimate Portrait of a Nation's Remaking* (New York: New York Times Books, 2011), 25.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

language of dreams, with the underlying implication being that ordinary Indians never had any such dreams before economic liberalization.

I reject any notion of a scheming cabal of elites behind closed doors planning the ruin of society and the end of poor people, in particular; and, likewise, any notion of poor and working classes convinced of their prospects of upward mobility even when all available evidence suggests a bleaker future than the one they have in their heads. What I have in mind, rather, is a moral and economic exchange between rich and poor premised on interests and needs set within the larger structural framework of a developing society beholden to the exigencies of global capitalism. In the pages and chapters that follow, I map the structure and flow of this exchange, as represented in the interactions between the middle and upper middle class members at the KGA, BGC, and a third club, the Eagleton Golf Resort, and the lower class golf caddies they hire.

#### THE LABOR OF ASPIRATION

In September 2007, I paid \$1,500 for one of the short-term memberships at the KGA. This allowed me to extend my field of observation to the golf course, an area previously off limits. Up until then, from January to May, I had only been practicing, rather than playing, golf with my lessons at the Palace Grounds. The membership at the KGA, for a period of six months onward, also provided me with access to the BGC, by way of a standard inter-club agreement. Playing golf at the KGA and BGC two to three times a week, on average, for many of these six months, I observed unscripted interactions between the members, which added a layer of analysis to go along with the more predictable routine of asking questions of members in private. I was also able to

observe members' interactions with the caddies, who, unlike the waiters and busboys I was used to in the clubhouses I frequented, were almost always with them, looking in on their conversations and thinking over their behaviors. In no time, we started sharing notes.

In India, caddies are generally not employees of the clubs. In reality, though, caddies are treated as if they are, except they have no claim to job protection, guaranteed wages, or benefits. Labeled "contract" laborers, ostensibly free to work whenever they like, with whomever they want, they are nevertheless obligated to wear uniforms associated with their rank and experience; follow strict procedures, such as replacing divots and sweeping sand traps, while out on the course; report to caddy masters, essentially managers paid by the clubs; and attend unpaid training sessions led by members who sit on the honorary committees that oversee the clubs' affairs. In addition, clubs set their rates, typically in the range of 100 to 200 rupees. Labor unions are barred. Even talk of organizing, if the clubs get wind of it, is met with temporary or permanent suspension. All of this is true at the BGC and KGA, and it is also true at most other golf clubs in the country.<sup>21</sup>

Given these circumstances, caddies work in a liminal space between service and servitude. What they make, in wages and tips paid by members at the end of a round, is hardly enough for them, individually, let alone the families they support. Ultimately, they come to rely on a few good members who supplement their incomes with additional cash payments that help feed their families, send their children to private English-medium schools, cover health care costs, and manage other urgent household expenses. They do

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<sup>21</sup> I visited eighteen golf clubs across India, in Mumbai, New Delhi, Kolkata, Chandigarh, and Coimbatore. There was just one club, Jaypee Greens, outside of New Delhi, that paid the caddies a salary, and only then, a select few of them.

whatever they must in order to secure such commitments from members, including begging, if need be. Behavior of this sort is strategic, of course, and generally ceases when the flow of money dries up, but even so, the effort expended is taxing on their pride and self-esteem.

Regardless, members see this as an “opportunity,” as in the opportunity to serve them, and with that, a chance at a better life. Most caddies seem to get the idea. The few who do not, typically leave.<sup>22</sup> But even disgruntled caddies, who resent the members for setting up and maintaining this dynamic, see this line of work as more palatable, and certainly more lucrative, than whatever else they can find in the city. Many try their hands at other jobs, such as driving auto-rickshaws for hire, digging and filling holes at construction sites, overnight security stints, and the like. In the end, few have the background or education to compete for much else. The members, however, are very rich, by comparison, many of them highly esteemed entrepreneurs and professionals in their chosen fields and industries. They have money, obviously, though they are also good for something else. Working with them, following them around is, in itself, an education.

The first time I played golf at the KGA, in September 2007, I hired a caddy named Narayan Kumar, five-foot-nine, with an unshaven, pug face. Crisscrossing fairways, chasing after errant tee shots, he and I got to talking. He said he was from a village in the neighboring state of Tamil Nadu, and that he had moved to Bangalore with his family when he was ten years old. His father, a landless agricultural laborer, uneducated and illiterate, had trouble finding work in the village because of droughts that had ravaged the

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<sup>22</sup> Peter Bearman makes a similar point about doormen and other service professions. Those who find serving others in the sometimes obsequious ways service work entails an affront to their sense of self are usually not long for the job. See Peter Bearman, *Doormen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

state. Bangalore was no better, though. Hopes dashed, and drinking heavily, his father returned to the village, leaving Narayan and his mother and grandmother behind. They lived in a shack, as he described it, a few miles east of the club. When he started out as a caddy, in the early nineties, he made just seven rupees a round; but it was good money, more than he had ever seen before. He dropped out of school, and by fifteen, he was a full-time caddy.

His English was pretty good, I noticed, as we were walking up the seventh fairway. At one point, he was on my left, a golf set I had borrowed from a member slung across his back, and the IBM and Microsoft buildings Friedman mentions in his book on our right. I asked Narayan how he had picked up the language. He answered, matter-of-factly, “My school is the KGA.”

Narayan could only have been talking about the informal English lessons he received from the members, but I had the occasion to find out what else he had learned, too. He was a hustler, like all caddies. He had to be, of course. Together, he and his peers at the KGA divided up the members into “good” and “bad” men. “You pay [i.e. tip] the caddy,” he once told me, walking another fairway, on another day. “If you don’t pay the caddy, you’re a bad man. That is how you give respect.”

Naturally, Narayan saved his best work, and best self, for “good” members. “If you do your work properly,” he said, “the members won’t say anything.” He elaborated: “The first thing you have to do when you take a member’s bag is you have to count the clubs. Next thing, count the balls. If anything is missing, they’ll be upset. But do the work properly and next time the member will call, ‘Hey, I want Narayan! Where is Narayan?’ he tells the caddy master. Or he’ll say, ‘Take my number, man. I’m playing Saturday.

Please call me Friday.’ He’ll tell like that. If my job is not good, next time he’ll tell it to the caddy master, ‘I don’t want this caddy. Send me another caddy.’ First, do your work properly.”

It was a message Narayan passed along to new caddies. I once observed him pull one aside, a fifteen-year-old boy, on his first day of work. The caddy was carrying the members’ bag all wrong, apparently, letting it hang off one shoulder. He adjusted the bag so that it would rest across the caddy’s back. Then he grabbed the caddy’s left hand and instructed him to curl it around the bottom of the bag that jutted out from behind him on the left. He moved the caddy’s right hand and placed it across the clubs sticking out at the other end. After this, Narayan asked him to put the bag down, at which point he rifled through the bag and pulled out the three-, four-, and five-irons and put them together in one compartment, and then did the same for the six-, seven-, and eight-irons, which he grouped in another section, and again with the nine-iron, pitching wedge, and putter, and finally the drivers. The bag rearranged, Narayan removed one of the irons and showed the caddy how to clean the club face with a towel attached to a clip near the strap. This is what had to be done after every shot.

Narayan cultivated what Erving Goffman called a “presentation of self,” maximizing his wages and tips while also maintaining a modicum of independence from, and moral authority over, members.<sup>23</sup> In the process, he had accumulated four “bosses,” or “gods,” as he sometimes referred to them. One he had known for twelve years, another for seven, and the others for three. “They are good, rich people,” he said of them. “They know my problems. I can ask them for help, and they will give support to me. Any problem is there, school fees, book fees for my sons. If anything is there, they will help.

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<sup>23</sup> Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor, 1959).

I'll say, 'Sir, I don't have money to buy what I need.'"

But Narayan also had a way of punishing members he did not like, "bad" men who were cheap and did not give him respect. If asked to go on a round with one of them, he would defer, making up a story about being busy or waiting on another member. At other times, however, especially if he needed the money, he would go along with the member, and then sometimes only to steal expensive golf balls and other items.

"If you wear sandals," he explained, "there's a top loop. If you turn over your foot, there's a gap. So what you do is use your other foot to slide the ball into the gap, into the arch of the foot, and then when no one is looking you move the ball from the foot to your hand and then into your pocket. The member will say, 'Where's the ball?' I'll say, 'Probably it hit the tree and after that I lost sight of the ball.'" Days later he would sell the balls back to unsuspecting members at "special" rates.

"A good member," he said, "would be someone who gives me more money. If I want a cold drink he'll buy me a cold drink. If I want a lunch he'll buy me a lunch. With those people I don't have to steal. I want to make a good impression on these members. But the member who isn't going to pay me well, who is not going to treat me well, then I'll probably steal a ball and then hope he doesn't call me again."

All of this might appear like so much resistance, and it is—to a point. The forerunner to resistance studies, of course, and from which many studies in this area have since taken a cue, is James Scott's landmark research of peasants working for overbearing landowners. The peasants, Scott argues, draw on two distinct "transcripts," one "public" and another "hidden": when the landowners are present, peasants apply the former transcript, handing out praise and showing great deference; when the landowners

are not around, they apply the latter transcript, putting them down and mocking them.

These transcripts, along with various activities in the fields that undermine landowners' power, constitute, for Scott, "weapons of the weak," out of which he sees the potential for social revolution.<sup>24</sup>

Vinay Gidwani, writing about a rural setting in northern India, would seem to share Scott's optimism. He describes a young day laborer, Ajibhai, a lower caste Thakur, married with three children. The rich farmers in the village see him as lazy, a man who prefers drinking to work. In response, Ajibhai tells Gidwani, "I am not anybody's servant. I work when I want to and rest when I want to." Gidwani, in turn, remarks that Ajibhai "arranges to use his labor and his activities of consumption in time and space at *his* pleasure." For Gidwani, Ajibhai's actions, or non-actions, as it were, represent a "counterforce" or form of "resistance," not only to the farmers who would put him to work in more productive ways than he would have it, but also to capitalism itself.<sup>25</sup>

Yet the caddies, if they practiced similar acts of resistance, on the whole, seemed more inclined to consensus, if out of necessity. Activities that undermined members' authority, often enacted without them knowing it, yielded limited results. A laugh or critical remark here, a stolen ball there, and that was perhaps it. Rather, the way up and out of their present circumstances, many of them concluded, required the help of members, who, beyond the money they dole out, also served as their "reference group."<sup>26</sup> They saw a social and economic purpose in drawing closer to members, being like them, in a way, even when they were not around, adopting as best they could with limited

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<sup>24</sup> James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>25</sup> Vinay Gidwani, *Capital, Interrupted: Agrarian Development and the Politics of Work in India* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 208-209, emphasis in original.

<sup>26</sup> Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: Free Press, 1968).

means their dress, manner, speech, even their ideological dispositions, on the assumption that doing so will make a difference for them and their families. Indeed, for some, it does. Dressing well, or well enough, keeping clean, staying sober—all this signaled a commitment to upward mobility. Members, typically, took notice and invested accordingly, which had a way of imposing discipline upon the caddies, though especially from within their ranks.

The “good boys” among the caddies, as some members referred to them, played an integral part in affirming the bootstrap narrative members outwardly projected. All any member had to do was point to one of them and he had proof positive that his view of the world held true. A conceit among these few caddies, likewise, was that they had achieved success on their own: the better living conditions they found themselves in, the health care to cover their families, the private schools for their children. Others could have these things, too, they said, mimicking the members, if only they had a similar drive. These few caddies and the members who supported them rarely ever admitted to the more obvious implication of their relationship to one another, that all caddies, and really anyone of limited means, required a good deal of support just to survive.

At times, as I have suggested, relationships between caddies and members would appear to embody forms of traditional patronage reminiscent of a bygone colonial or pre-capitalist era. Caddies often presented themselves as overly eager to please, for example, bowing incessantly, cowering when scolded, all to ingratiate themselves with a member. Members, too, for their own part, could seem only too happy to don the demeanor and stance of entitled masters, basking in unwarranted praise, bellowing orders, blaming caddies for their mistakes, and so on.

To understand the relationships between caddies and members as purely traditional, however, would be a gross oversimplification. Not all caddies acted as servants, and not all members acted as masters, but among the ones who did the reasons why spoke more to the ways in which India's economic development has proceeded than the stubborn persistence of traditional or cultural values. If servitude, rather than simply service of the sort I outline here prevails in India, it is because other paths out of poverty are forestalled. Two decades of free markets, free trade, and mostly jobless growth, combined with underfunding in areas of education, health care, and other social services, have left the poor with few other options but to seek out the rich and plead their case for assistance. They do so following not the dictates of religion, community, or caste, but, rather, the dictates of modern capitalism.

#### WHITHER THE NEHRUVIAN DREAM?

At independence, in 1947, many expected that India would follow a similar social and economic path as had the United States, Great Britain and other industrialized societies. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, envisioned a large urban industrial workforce collectively contributing to, as much as benefiting from, the gains of industrial development.<sup>27</sup> Modernization theorists, among them liberals and Marxists alike, expected that whatever informal employment remained in India would only be temporary, affecting mainly rural settings. Eventually, the argument went, all or most Indians would be absorbed into the formal sector, either in factories, government offices, or one of any number of professional environments, such as schools and hospitals. In

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<sup>27</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *"Hind Swaraj" and Other Essays*, ed. Anthony J. Parel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

these jobs, they would earn for themselves and their families a living wage, job security, health care, and a pension.

The promise and prediction of formal employment for the majority of Indians has not come to pass, and may not, in fact, for a very long time, judging by the numbers of people who find employment outside the formal sector of the economy, coupled with the lack of political or industrial will it would take to make the transition. Indeed, according to India's National Sample Survey data, as much as ninety-five percent of the working population labors in the informal sector, most under highly contingent and precarious conditions without oversight or regulation by the state.<sup>28</sup> Much of this informal sector labor, moreover, remains tied to agriculture. As of 2001, there were 233 million agricultural workers, or 58.5 percent of all workers, contributing one-fourth of the country's total economic growth. Manufacturing, by comparison, has remained stagnant for nearly all of the reform period, hovering at or below seventeen percent of growth for the past two decades. India's industrial proletariat is small relative to the population as a whole, as well as to the needs of the society. It accounts for just eleven percent of all workers.<sup>29</sup>

It is difficult to see how India can truly develop into the industrial powerhouse its most enthusiastic supporters imagine while conditions of work leave so many with so little, and with so few protections.<sup>30</sup> This certainly is not the path to development followed by early developers. The United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the United

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<sup>28</sup> Rina Agarwala, "An Economic Sociology of Informal Work: The Case of India," *Research in the Sociology of Work*, 18 (2009); Jan Breman, *Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Barbara Harriss-White, *India Working: Essays on Society and Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>29</sup> Panagariya, *India*, 13, 283-284.

<sup>30</sup> Dipankar Gupta, *The Caged Phoenix: Can India Fly?* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2009).

States all pursued industrialization in a deliberate manner, with the intention to shift away from agriculture toward manufacturing. None of these countries simply left it up to individual firms to seek out their own interests, either, on the hope or promise that together, in the aggregate, these interests would produce positive effects for the nation-state and its people. Early on, these countries were protectionist to the core, offering firms incentives to produce for a domestic market, while imposing tariffs and taxes on imported goods and services. This had the effect of growing industry from within, which, in turn, promoted job creation, and with it higher productivity, higher wages, and higher rates of consumption. Only after a time, with these benchmarks met, did these countries lower the price on imported items and encourage domestic firms to compete on the open market.<sup>31</sup> India, quite clearly, has it the other way around—lured, ironically, by politicians and economists from these same early developers, into thinking that unregulated free markets and free trade are the means to development, when history proves otherwise.

Nehru, of course, knew this history well, as did economic advisers and other officials in his administration. Contrary to current popular thinking on matters of development and free trade, India's failure at development under Nehru's rule was not because he and his planners had too much authority in implementing their vision for the country; it was that they had too little. From the beginning, as sociologist Vivek Chibber makes clear in his review of planning in the early years after independence, Indian

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<sup>31</sup> For a more involved discussion of European and American development, see Paul Bairoch, *Economics and World History: Myths and Paradoxes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Francois Crouzet, *Britain Ascendant: Studies in British and Franco-British Economic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Nicholas Kaldor, *Strategic Factors in Economic Development* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).

industrialists had no intention of ceding control over their businesses, and never did.<sup>32</sup> Under India's plan of import substitution industrialization (ISI), there was virtually no incentive for industrialists to comply with regulations that would limit their decision making. Absent the British, Indian industrialists were granted unencumbered control over the domestic market. They welcomed state subsidization of their businesses, which limited foreign competition, but refused any meddling from the state that would have determined where and how to spend their profits. The state, meanwhile, which had submitted to the recommendations of industrialists in setting up purely advisory councils, was essentially helpless to discipline these same industrialists in the event they pursued their own interests ahead of the broader interests of the country.

Indian industrialists, as Chibber notes, responded to the incentive structure of ISI by taking subsidies guaranteed to protect them outside competition, while at the same time refusing state intervention in their business decisions. A different industrialization pattern, under the banner of export-led-industrialization (ELI), prevailed in Korea, mainly due to the opportunities opened up by the country's evolving relationship with former colonial power Japan. If Korean industrialists wanted to benefit from these opportunities, which would make it possible for them to earn greater profits beyond the Korean market, then they had to follow the directions set out by the state. Many did, and in doing so, maintained a focus on innovating their production lines, rather than venturing into new sectors, as did their counterparts in India.

Even as Korea has enjoyed considerable success through the 1980s and early 1990s, along with other East Asian "Tigers" similarly committed to state-led

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<sup>32</sup> Vivek Chibber, *Locked in Place: State Building and Late-Industrialization in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

development,<sup>33</sup> India remains mired in underdevelopment. The Indian state, to this day, does not have the institutional autonomy to compel industry to invest in ways that would benefit the larger society.<sup>34</sup> One of the more popular strategies of late, power sharing agreements between government and industry, or public-private partnerships, are typically skewed to the interests of the capitalist class, while lining the pockets of the politicians and other bureaucrats who assist them.<sup>35</sup> And yet the dominant narrative in the business community and among economists, in general, remains that the government is the problem, and by only removing government interference in economic affairs can the country can reach its development potential. Central to this narrative is the idea that industry is hindered by government oversight of labor relations. Government makes it difficult, if not impossible, to hire and fire workers, and this has a direct bearing on investment decisions. Research, however, does not support this assertion. In reality, while there are, indeed, many regulations in place regarding labor relations, very rarely are they ever enforced, meaning that Indian business is basically free to decide who to hire and fire, and when.

As Rina Agarwala details, the government had already given up the dream of formal employment for the mass of the population and holding business accountable to existing labor laws as early as the mid- to late-1980s, bowing to pressure from business leaders at home and abroad who called for a more flexible, and therefore less regulated, workforce considered necessary for global competition.<sup>36</sup> From this point forward, laws

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<sup>33</sup> Robert Wade, "East Asia's Economic Success: Conflicting Perspectives, Partial Insights, Shaky Evidence," *World Politics* 44, no. 2 (1992).

<sup>34</sup> Chibber, *Locked in Place*.

<sup>35</sup> Asha Ghosh, "Public-Private or a Private Public? Promised Partnership of the Bangalore Agenda Task Force," *Economic and Political Weekly* 40, no. 47 (2005).

<sup>36</sup> Jan Breman, "An Informalised Labour System: End of Labour Market Dualism," *Economic and Political Weekly* 36, no. 52 (2001).

were rewritten to permit factories and other large employers in the public and private sector to retrench formal employees and to hire contract workers as and when the need arose, while refusing them benefits, job security, or minimum wages. Informal workers, likewise, were stripped of whatever minimal rights they had, leaving them no legal standing by which to issue grievances or complaints regarding the conditions of their labor.

In this same period, unions steadily shifted their goals from winning the rights of all workers to defending the interests of those already protected by collective bargaining agreements.<sup>37</sup> Ever since, unions have proven ineffective, much less interested, in stanching the increasing number of workers in the informal sector. Indeed, the power of labor has waned just as the power and influence of private industry has grown. Political parties once beholden to unions and their workers now feel little, if any, need to court workers. Unions, in turn, have lost the ideological and political underpinnings that defined their mission immediately following independence.<sup>38</sup>

Today, only a slim minority of workers, by some estimates between seven and eight percent of the working population, enjoy benefits, protections, and minimum wages or better within India's current industrial relations system; less than half of these workers are unionized, a shocking figure given that there are as many as 66,000 unions in the country.<sup>39</sup> All this being said, the legal mechanisms that have ensured retention among a

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<sup>37</sup> Debashish Bhattacharjee, "The Evolution of Indian Industrial Relations: A Comparative Perspective," *Industrial Relations Journal* 32, no. 3 (2001).

<sup>38</sup> Supriya RoyChowdhury, "Class in Industrial Disputes: Case Studies from Bangalore," *Economic and Political Weekly* 43, no. 22 (2008).

<sup>39</sup> Barbara Harriss-White and Nandini Gooptu, "Mapping India's World of Unorganized Labour," *Socialist Register* (2001); Elizabeth Hill, "The Indian Industrial Relations System: Struggling to Address the Dynamics of a Globalizing Economy," *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 51, no. 3(2009); Jamie McCallum, "Organizing the 'Unorganized' Varieties of Transnational Trade Union Collaboration and Social Dialogue in Two Indian Cities," *Journal of Workplace Rights* 15, no. 3 (2012).

privileged few workers have become compromised under globalization. Gains made on their behalf in generations past are now under threat, resulting in a shift to informal employment along with downward mobility for many once considered labor aristocracy.<sup>40</sup> Capital within India, moreover, is on the move, leaving recalcitrant workers behind, if need be; and when capital stays put, it finds ingenious ways to avoid adhering to laws designed to protect employees, for instance, laying off workers prior to their achieving permanent status, hiring workers on fixed rather than long term contracts, or outright fudging the books to indicate fewer employees than might actually be the case.<sup>41</sup>

The number of informal workers overall has swelled in recent years to include poor and working Indians of all ages, male and female, young and old. Multiple incomes from multiple bodies keep families afloat, and so, what once was considered a “dual economy,” according to Jan Breman, with the hope that the formal sector would grow as the informal sector diminished, is now no more. Today, there is only one sector, it would seem, and it is informal.<sup>42</sup>

To its credit, the government has attempted to address this imbalance with various programs intended to attenuate consequences expected and unexpected, seen and unseen, that flow from opening up the economy. Such programs include: the National Social Assistance Programme, instituted in 1995; the Janashree Bima Yojana, a social insurance scheme, functioning since 2000; the National Social Security Scheme for Unorganized Sector Workers, in 2004; and the Universal Health Insurance Scheme, also in 2004.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Breman, “An Informalised Labour System.”

<sup>41</sup> RoyChowdhury, “Class in Industrial Disputes.”

<sup>42</sup> Jan Breman, “An Informalised Labour System.”

<sup>43</sup> John Harriss, “Globalization(s) and Labour in China and India: Introductory Reflections,” *Global Labour Journal* 1, no. 1 (2010). Also see Mahendra Dev, *Inclusive Growth in India: Agriculture, Poverty and Human Development* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008) and Rohini Hensman, “Labour and Globalization: Union Responses in India,” *Global Labour* 1, no. 1 (2009), from which Harriss’s discussion

While certainly representing progress, these initiatives are in practice merely half-measures. They provide barely enough, and often a good deal less, to people who have been promised much more in a “flat” world.<sup>44</sup>

In the absence of state-level support in the form of training and jobs programs, guaranteed wages and other worker protections, and quality public education for their children, the caddies, understandably, turn to the members, who appear to them as governments-in-miniature. For many of these caddies, the members are all they have, and the members know it, too. Even the more enlightened members, who think it wrong the way the caddies are treated at the clubs and in society generally, lack the courage of their convictions. They resign themselves to helping the few caddies they can, while leaving the status quo virtually untouched, and, more often than not, unquestioned.

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This study draws on twenty-two months of fieldwork over four years, between 2007 and 2010. Though this research was conducted mainly in Bangalore, I also visited several other golf clubs throughout the country, in New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chandigarh, and Coimbatore, eighteen in all. My main method of data collection was participant observation, playing golf and hanging out in and around the clubs, activities that yielded in excess of 1,000 pages of typed field notes and transcriptions, as well as thousands of photographs. I conducted 275 semi-structured interviews with 206 individuals, including seventy-eight members and seventy-five caddies. Most informants were selected by means of snowball sampling—one person would introduce me to a

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is derived.

<sup>44</sup> Friedman, *The World Is Flat*; Legraine, *Open World*.

friend or acquaintance of theirs whom I interviewed, he or she would introduce me to someone else, and so forth. At other times, however, I made my own introductions, showing up at the clubs to play a round without previously arranging a playing partner or a caddy, just so that I would have the occasion to meet new people.

Interviews were recorded and lasted between forty-five minutes and two hours, typically covering informants' personal histories and educational backgrounds, as well as their views on such varied topics as religion, caste, class, urban development, and political economy. Interviews with members were carried out in English, as they were fluent in the language, while interviews with caddies were facilitated by paid interpreters. Throughout the dissertation, I have placed quotation marks around speech that either represents an accurate reproduction from transcripts or that I have reproduced in my notes from conversations in the moment or shortly after they were finished. The usual pauses and repetitions have been eliminated.<sup>45</sup> To be clear, though: the same standard for quoting applies for interviews in which I was aided by an interpreter as to those without. Not all my conversations with caddies were assisted, and among the ones that were, it was not uncommon for caddies to insist on speaking to me in English, at least part of the time. I have taken special care to confirm that what caddies related to me through an interpreter closely approximates their intended meaning, going as far as to double- and triple-check with my interpreters and informants during the interview itself to be sure what exactly was said.

I have included two appendixes at the end of the study. Appendix A presents results of a survey I administered in the spring of 2008 one-on-one with 264 caddies at the BGC,

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<sup>45</sup> For a more detailed discussion of quotation practices and quandaries, see Mitchell Duneier, *Sidewalk* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2001).

KGA, and Eagleton. Questions focused on demographic information, such as birthplace, religion, place of residence, education history, and father's and mother's occupations, among other areas of interest. At the same time as I was undertaking this survey with caddies, I was granted access to the historical archives of notes, minutes, and application records at the BGC and KGA. Appendix B presents results of a survey of application records at the BGC and KGA. At the BGC, I randomly pulled 161 applications submitted between the years 1991 and 2006, taking down biographical information, such as birthplace, marital status, education, and occupation; at the KGA I copied information from 183 applications submitted between 1986 and 2006.

Members, caddies, and others who participated in this study offered their consent, either in writing or orally, and sometimes both. Most of my informants agreed to let me reference their real names and identifying characteristics, which I take as a considerable show of trust. I do not make a point to reveal which of my informants' names are real and which are pseudonyms.<sup>46</sup> Names for the clubs I mention in this study are, however, real, as are their surrounding landmarks. My findings would not have the same analytical power if I kept the clubs and relevant facts about them hidden. Regardless, this is not a study about these clubs, or any one club in particular, which I repeatedly relayed to management at each in writing as well as in person. It is, rather, a study about elites and their interactions with the poor who surround them, and how these interactions, in turn, shine a light on development in the Indian context.

In chapter one, I lay out the separate and shared histories of the BGC and KGA. Mainly members considered old money or old middle class populate the BGC, a colonial-

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<sup>46</sup> In making these decisions regarding naming (or not naming) informants, I follow the lead of Mary Patillo, who applies a similar standard in her book *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

era club. Members at the BGC founded the KGA, in 1973, opening an eighteen-hole golf course in 1989. Over the years, as some of these founding members would have it, the KGA has diverged from the “old world” values upon which it was built, and which still define the club culture at the BGC. There is a palpable tension, I suggest, between old and new money within and across these clubs, which I take as representative of a deeper struggle, more generally, within the Indian elite. Though it risks caricature to say, the old elite seems to care more about preserving an outmoded club culture limited to individuals and groups with original ties to old money, while the new elite tend to think money and merit alone are sufficient markers of status and prestige. While there is much to recommend the latter position, as I argue in this chapter, there is still the enduring problem of serious inequality across the wider society.

Chapter two develops this point further, providing a content analysis of members’ commitments to fairness, justice, and equality, especially among the new elite, and then comparing such rhetoric to ways in which they talk about the caddies and, more importantly, how they treat them. Members reduce caste to class, which, as I show, follows in line with more recent scholarly contributions on the subject, and yet they seem only vaguely aware that class, as both concept and practice, similarly forecloses possibilities for the least advantaged.

Chapter three draws on fieldwork at a third club, the Eagleton Golf Resort, thirty miles outside the city, in order to highlight labor conditions at the other two clubs. At the BGC and KGA, caddies appear to have been given a choice, premised on members’ assumptions about merit and discipline: they can work with whomever they like, and work as many rounds in a day or a week as they like. Choice at these clubs, however,

devolves into a choice over which member to serve in an overly servile and deferential manner. Not so at Eagleton. Caddies in this part of the city, in what is still a rural setting, oftentimes live with their families on land their fathers own. They also earn more money, per round, than caddies at the KGA and BGC, because members who play there are entirely new rich, seemingly with money to burn. As such, Eagleton caddies are independent of members in ways BGC and KGA caddies are not. Even so, on-the-ground developments in the area, engineered by private and public industry, appear to be threatening this independence, cutting into the family land once promised to these caddies. All of which, over time, I predict, will make these caddies more dependent on members in similar ways to their counterparts at the BGC and KGA. Indeed, this is already happening.

Chapter four tracks those caddies who have edged out of poverty by virtue of “choosing” the right members to serve in exchange for their support. Success here hinges on a caddy’s ability to model the language, dress, and movement of members, distinguishing himself from other caddies and standing out as worthy of investment. But even so-called successful caddies, as I argue in chapter five, struggle to overcome the structural limits of upward mobility within society, and which have yet to be adequately addressed by India’s political and economic elites. I focus specifically in this chapter on access to quality education for the caddies’ children. As I show, nominally private English medium schools suggested and paid for by members lack resources and experienced staff, offering children almost no chance to supersede their fathers’ social and economic status, while still making the members appear generous. This chapter follows the struggles and educational attainment of children from select families, in

particular, and incorporates data from multiple home and school visits.

In the conclusion, I pull back from the setting of the golf clubs to consider the long-term effects of liberalization in the Indian context, which not only benefits the rich more than the poor, but also supplies the rich with a language and practice to give the opposite impression. Unfortunately, the sort of development that would provide individuals of limited means with the civic and institutional support necessary to craft meaningful lives is presently wanting in a society beholden to neoliberal dogma. I briefly compare India's path not only to the history of development in the west, but also to how development is being pursued in other societies today, most prominently, in China. Ultimately, I make the case for a more balanced development that figures the needs of India's least advantaged into economic growth.

## Chapter 1: Out with the Old

In 1962, S. Shanmugam, who goes by Shan, returned to Bangalore after earning a mechanical engineering degree in London. He immediately took up a management position at India Lamp Components, a family business specializing in the manufacture of light bulbs, wiring, and fixtures. Shan helped his father guide the company from minority equity status under British-owned Thorn Electrical Industry prior to independence, in 1947, to total ownership by the late 1980s, following Thorn's merger with music giant EMI. Through the mid-1990s, business was good, and promised to be better after the factory's relocation to a site outside the city. Eventually, though, workers protested the move, on the grounds that it added to their travel time. Facing a strike, Shan sold the company in 1998 and invested in commercial real estate, a shrewd business decision given the technology and software boom that was by then beginning to gather speed.

Today, in his early seventies, Shan conducts business from a fourteenth-floor office inside one of four towers that make up MilleniaTech, a business and IT park his company built between 1999 and 2003. The first of its kind in Bangalore's central business district, less than a mile north of M.G. Road, the entire complex holds 650,000 square feet of office space leased to local and global businesses, with multinational electronics company Philips as its feature tenant.

By the time I sat down with Shan at his home, in September 2007, I had known him for several months, previously meeting with him at the Bangalore Club, his office, and at the KGA. Pouring drinks from a bottle of single malt Scotch I brought him, Shan spoke about the physical and social changes to the city, as well as at the Karnataka Golf

Association (KGA), a club he had helped to found. He lived right on M.G. Road, in a colonial era mansion where he had grown up. The house and a black S Series Mercedes Benz he kept parked in the driveway were blocked from view by a row of trees and a front gate bearing his late father's name. Not a hundred feet away men without hats or shoes were breaking up the pavement in the middle of the road, preparing to install fifty-foot pillars that would hold an elevated metro line, the city's first.

The construction outside his door was a regular nuisance, and would continue for many more months, maybe years. He seemed resigned to it. In any case, while he maintained that government still meddled where it did not belong, and shirked responsibilities where it did, overall things were improving in the city and state. Nothing could be worse than the "hell" he had lived through prior to the reforms begun in 1991, when, he said, virtually every business decision had first to be vetted by the government, under a regime known pejoratively as the "Permit Raj."

Like most of India's rich, new and old alike, Shan had an idea of Indian history before liberalization as one in which government bureaucrats ground the economy to a halt. In this version, industrialists like himself were at the mercy of government, incapable of growing their businesses and breaking out into new sectors, and thus improving the economy and society. Then, in 1991, when India bowed to outside pressure to modernize the economy in exchange for refinancing its debt obligations, Indian businesses were finally free to fulfill their intended mission. Hitherto policies and procedures that slowed businesses were retrenched, domestic firms were opened to international competition, and foreign direct investment was permitted to circulate within the country. Thereafter, business boomed, bringing a greater degree of wealth and

prosperity to many more Indians than was ever before thought possible. While there remained a lot more to do on this count, as Shan said many other times over, there were notable improvements, and things were getting better all the time.<sup>1</sup>

“The government,” Shan now happily maintained, “accepts the reality that the growth of a country depends, to a large extent, on the private sector, whereas in the earlier period of time, in the sixties and seventies, government had the view that only a government company can thrive. That is not the case today. The whole thing has changed, but a lot more can be done.”

Take a look, he said, as an example, at the fiasco swirling around the construction of the new international airport north of the city. According to him, Siemens and other European technology and design firms had kept up their part of the bargain and were close to finishing the airport, well ahead of a deadline set for spring the following year. But the local government had yet to arrange for rail or ground transportation to and from the city, and seemed unlikely to do so, he surmised, unless and until petty and corrupt politicians and bureaucrats were paid their ransom.

The same problem of corruption, in Shan’s view, plagued the delivery of quality education. “Just the other day,” he pointed out, “I was reading that eight or nine percent of government spending is supposed to go to education. But is it, really? We don’t know. Tax collection by the central government, it runs into billions of dollars, so there’s money available, no question. Still, there are schools without any teachers. The kids come and have their lunch and go back home. How sad that is.”

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<sup>1</sup> This is a popular view, as well, among mainstream economists. See, for instance: Jagdish Bhagwati, *In Defense of Globalization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Arvind Panagariya, *India: Emerging Giant* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Michael Spence, *The Next Convergence: The Future of Economic Growth in a Multispeed World* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2011).

It was not just the schools that worried him, though, or the airport or even the expected delays that would come with the transit line outside his door. The relationship between business and government would sort itself out. Bangalore would have its elevated trains, its new airport; schools would be built, and, one day, hopefully, populated by properly trained teachers. The bigger issue, for him, was one of ethics, or lack of them, in the present era.

To Shan, India's new middle and upper classes—or *nouveau riche*, as he sometimes referred to them—represented a threat to “old Bangalore,” and this was no more apparent than in their slow but steady penetration of historically venerable and guarded institutions like the Bangalore Club and Bangalore Golf Club (BGC), built by the British in 1864 and 1876, respectively, and maintained by Bangalore's indigenous elite since their departure. Even more susceptible, Shan argued, was the KGA, the newer golf club that opened its full eighteen-hole course in 1989. He and other founding members originally intended the KGA to mirror the British norms that still prevailed at the other two clubs, but that objective had been compromised in the modern era by the entry of people Shan described as “undesirable,” as “hang-about.”

These were people, he said, “who do not know how to conduct themselves in public. They think that money is all that matters in life.” Some were locals, he guessed, but many more were from Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata, most of them entrepreneurs or salaried white collar professionals in software and IT and related services. Bypassing the social networks typically necessary for admission, they had simply bought their way into the KGA, and in the process had altered the club's mission, turning it into a place to host lavish parties and entertain others similarly lacking in decorum and demeanor. From the

appearance of open-toe sandals in the dining room, collarless T-shirts on the golf course, and laptops and smartphones in the clubhouse, their presence signaled to Shan not only a precipitous decline in the culture of the club, but also more generally in the culture of society.

Several weeks later, in November, I attended at reception at the KGA celebrating the reopening of the back nine, which had been closed for several months for the installation of a modern drainage system. A similar renovation was planned for the front nine, set to begin early in the New Year. On this night, a gourmet buffet was served, along with free alcohol, compliments of the club. There were a series of short speeches from committee members past and present, including Shan, who was clearly in his element, wearing a sharp Italian suit, modern glasses, his silver hair brushed back, perfectly coiffed.

Most of the members were dressed like Shan, but there was one member, a portly man in his fifties, who inexplicably wore a collarless red T-shirt and a sleeveless navy blue fleece vest, with matching baggy sweatpants for bottoms, and cross trainers. At one point, close to midnight, with the crowd much diminished and Shan long gone, John Denver's "Country Road" played out over the speakers, rousing the member to his feet. He ambled over to the lectern that had been set up for the speeches given earlier, took the microphone off its stand, and sang along, belting out the lyrics to an unsuspecting audience.

With the song over, his turn at the mic finished, those of us still present showered him with mock-applause. He returned to the table where a few others and I had been sitting with him, but only to say goodbye. He invited us to his place one evening the

following week for a regular poker game he hosted at his apartment. Then, he stood up, stumbled from side-to-side, clearly well past his alcohol consumption limit, and ambled down the clubhouse stairs and out toward the parking lot. He had driven to the club, and intended to drive home, even though he lived no more than a hundred paces from its front gate, in Diamond District, a fifteen-acre gated residential community.

Here, it seemed, was precisely the type of member Shan had warned about, a member who might be perceived as “unclubbable,” to judge by his actions—and yet still a member. “I’m concerned,” Shan confided in me, on another occasion, referring to the increasing presence of members such as this, with none of the pedigree or good sense to conduct themselves in ways befitting the British club culture he cherished so dearly. From the start, he and other friends and acquaintances of similar stature who had founded the club had hoped to carry this legacy forward. Now, however, they all agreed, it was under threat. “I don’t want to see the institution fail,” he said, before finishing, “It’s like a baby to me.”

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When opinion makers and scholars write enthusiastically about the “new” India in one of India’s many newspapers or in scholarly journals and publications emanating from some of the leading business schools and economics departments domestically and abroad,<sup>2</sup> they invariably point to the social and economic success of the country’s new rich. After decades of economic failure presided over by a litany of corrupt politicians, bureaucrats, and old rich stalwarts inimical to change, the new rich offer Indians

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<sup>2</sup> Ken Auletta, “Citizen Jains: Why India’s Newspaper Industry is Thriving,” *New Yorker*, October 8, 2012; Bhagwati, *In Defense of Globalization*; Panagariya, *India*; Spence, *The Next Convergence*.

everywhere a glimpse at the good life. Models of aspiration all of them, they are, at one end of the spectrum, entrepreneurs and investors in software, IT, and telecommunications, as well as those breaking into more traditional areas like real estate and infrastructure; at the other, they are the highly educated and well paid white-collar salaried professionals who work for them as managers, sales staff, lawyers, doctors and accountants. Small in number relative to size of the larger population, at 1.1 billion, the new rich nevertheless comprise a sizable, and growing, contingent of India's 158,000 millionaires and approximately 153 million middle class families.<sup>3</sup> If the reports and headlines are to be believed, they are the future of India, and maybe its present, too.

There are also concerns, however, quite aside from the ones Shan raised. Indeed, one way or another, attention to what the new rich do, what (and how) they consume, and for whom they vote, if it all, underscores almost all critical engagements with India's liberalization era. Indeed, next to the issues raised by critical scholars and journalists troubled by deepening inequality and divided urban landscapes, Shan's complaints about "hang-about" buying their way into what remains a private club appear trivial. Yet even as critics draw on very different politics than Shan—who in no way can be labeled anti-liberalization—they share with him a sense that the new rich have irrevocably changed the society for the worse. It is precisely this perception I want to rethink in this opening chapter, though not, I should say, in the guise of a booster.

Let me say this up front: there is no way to gloss over the less democratic tendencies of this emerging class, as many do, or the way in which local and national

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<sup>3</sup> Devesh Kapur, "The Middle Class in India: A Social Formation or Political Factor?" *Political Power and Social Theory* 21 (2010); Martin Ravallion, "The Developing World's Bulging (but Vulnerable) Middle Class," *World Development* 38, no. 4 (2010); Rajesh Shukla, *How India Earns, Spends and Saves: Unmasking the Real India* (New Delhi: Sage, 2010); "India to See 242,000 Millionaires by 2017," *Times of India*, October 14, 2012.

governments pander to them out of all proportion to their representation. Take, as one of many possible examples, business writer Gurcharan Das, who objects to the “vulgarity” of the “new bourgeoisie” and its “new-rich mentality,” and yet maintains that “whether India can deliver the goods depends a great deal on it”.<sup>4</sup> Or another, from journalist Anand Giridharadas, who just as confidently asserts the primacy of the new rich, singling out the richest of them all, the already mentioned billionaire Mukesh Ambani, whom he calls, without irony or embarrassment, the “most powerful private citizen of India since Gandhi,” and, absurdly, a symbol of “a new India that rewarded the gritty and the impatient.”<sup>5</sup>

Such unabashed champions of India’s new rich refuse to take seriously the more structural critiques of liberalization and its consequences, including, among others, as Pankaj Mishra contends in his latest book, “the privatization and truncation of public services, de-unionization, the fragmentation and lumpenization of urban working classes, and the ruthless suppression of the rural poor.”<sup>6</sup> To emphasize, then, as do almost all boosters of the new economy and its new rich, that aspirations are rising among masses of poor people seems more like an evasion, much less an objective observation of fact. To state the painfully obvious, not all of India is shining: aspiration alone does not help the poor put roofs over their heads, feed their families, pay their medical bills, or put their children into decent schools, certainly not in the cities.

Indeed, as Jeremy Seabrook observes, Indian cities have been overwhelmed by an

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<sup>4</sup> Gurcharan Das, *India Unbound: The Social and Economic Revolution from Independence to the Global Information Age* (New York: Anchor, 2002), p. 280.

<sup>5</sup> Anand Giridharadas, *India Calling: An Intimate Portrait* (New York: New York Times Books, 2011), 105, 116.

<sup>6</sup> Pankaj Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire: The Intellectuals who Remade Asia* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2012), 308.

“alien urbanism,”<sup>7</sup> whereby urban governance turns on the financial and aesthetic interests of corporations and “citizen”-consumers over and above the majority poor and working classes. As several studies have shown, local economies that give character and purpose to poor neighborhoods are routinely swept aside to make room for offices, malls, and other development projects linked to the global economy and circuits of consumption that cater to the new rich.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, in municipal affairs, more generally, these individuals of the new rich persuasion rarely fulfill their civic duty to vote and pay taxes,<sup>9</sup> all but ensuring that anything public languishes, while what is private flourishes—even if this does not stop them from monopolizing basic services otherwise intended for the least advantaged.<sup>10</sup>

Anticipating such criticisms, proponents of India’s liberalization highlight the achievements of a few staunch strivers in reaching the lowest rungs of middle class respectability. Today, in modern India, as Patrick French writes, echoing Das and Giridharadas, “the middle class had a chance to shape its own destiny in a way that had never been possible before.” He concedes, of course, as he must, that “a wide gap remained” between the new rich and everyone else, and that growth would likely “not eradicate poverty.” At the same time, he says, ridding poverty cannot happen without growth, and, by extension, not without the new rich. Wealth, eventually, will trickle

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<sup>7</sup> Jeremy Seabrook, “That Side of the Street,” *Outlook*, July 16, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Solomon Benjamin, “Governance, economic settings, and poverty in Bangalore,” *Environment and Urbanization* 12, no. 1 (2000); Christoph Dittrich, “Bangalore: Globalisation and Fragmentation in India’s Hightech-Capital,” *ASIEN* (April 2007); Vinay Gidwani and Rajyashree N. Reddy, “The Afterlives of ‘Waste’: Notes from India for a Minor History of Capitalist Surplus,” *Antipode* 43, no. 5 (2011); Michael Goldman, “Speculative Urbanism and the Making of the Next World City,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35, no. 3 (2011).

<sup>9</sup> Leela Fernandes and Patrick Heller, “Hegemonic Aspirations: New Middle Class Politics and India’s Democracy in Comparative Perspective,” in *Whatever Happened to Class?: Reflections from South Asia*, ed. Rina Agarwala and Ronald J. Herring (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> Susan Chaplin, “Cities, Sewers, and Poverty: India’s Politics of Sanitation,” *Environment and Urbanization* 11, no. 1 (1999).

down. Already, he affirms, India's economic success since adopting free market reforms had "ensured that some escaped their fate." Like, for example, the man in Bangalore French meets, a "barefoot landless laborer's son,"<sup>11</sup> who now works as a computer scientist in the city. It took this man, French observes, ringing a note of optimism, barely one generation to elevate himself beyond his father's lowly status.

Mishra's response, published in the pages of *Outlook*, India's most popular weekly magazine, is, if petty in places, also entirely appropriate. Labeling French a "Lord Curzon without an empire," an obvious outsider "detached, pedagogical" in his approach to India, Mishra eventually lands on French's real failing. This is a book, Mishra clarifies, written for "western businessmen, who, given the size of India's middle class and aspirational market, can afford to remain indifferent to the benighted 800 million in rural areas." As for French's anecdote of the former rural peasant risen to software work, Mishra answers, wryly: "Well, yes. But, surely, not all young men from destitute rural families can join the software industry, which currently employs all of 2.3 million people." The only Indians rising, Mishra reminds his readers, many of whom likely fit the description he presents, are "the aspiring as well as already privileged classes with their inordinate craving for wealth and fame, and their very fragile self-esteem."<sup>12</sup>

But the charges leveled by Mishra, along with French's counter charges, in which he remarks, "I have grave doubts whether Marxism, Maoism or Mishraism offer a solution,"<sup>13</sup> also serve to highlight the narrow terms in which the debate on India's new rich is currently set. Writers like Das, Giridharadas, and French, as I mention, herald the rise of the new rich, while sidestepping any serious consideration of the structural

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<sup>11</sup> Patrick French, *India: A Portrait* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), 208, 223, 224, 254.

<sup>12</sup> Pankaj Mishra, "A Curzon without an Empire," *Outlook*, January 31, 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Patrick French, "Cameron's Cuz is more the Curzon," *Outlook*, February 14, 2011.

inequalities that make it difficult for others to reach even a fraction of the material success this class enjoys. This is a real problem that limits the scope of their analysis. All the same, if champions such as these overestimate the material and social impact of the new rich on the rest of society, then surely critics underestimate it. Journalists such as Mishra and Seabrook and countless others in the academy only observe the new rich living apart from society, holed up in their exclusive offices, social clubs, and places of residence. They miss out on the ways in which the new rich actually challenge tradition with their talk of merit, hard work, and discipline, all of it backed by money. The ripple effect of this stance against old money and even older cultural barriers is not insignificant in the least. It serves as both a model and an inspiration to others seeking their own path to upward mobility.

In the second half of this chapter, I draw on interviews and observations with younger, new rich members at the KGA and other clubs where I conducted my research in order to highlight just the sort of cultural shift in aspirations and expectations I am pointing to. In particular, I want to highlight explicit statements that can be taken as support for universal and cosmopolitan values of fairness, justice, and equality among the members I spoke to. Doing so, I will admit, I repeat some of the same claims made by Das, Giridharadas, French, and others. Indeed, I did find that such members offered a more open and democratic vision of society, reflected not only in their words, but also, importantly, in their actions toward much poorer service workers, including the waiters in the clubhouses and the caddies out on the courses. They relished the fact that money could win them a seat in these clubs, and they hoped that other similarly worthy (and wealthy) individuals, no matter their background, could do the same.

Such lofty ambitions for others, while not easy to dismiss, also belied social and economic circumstances, a point I emphasize in the conclusion and will further elaborate upon in the chapters that follow. The same software and IT economy the new rich members celebrate, and which produced so many of them, has done little or nothing for everyone else. New rich types at these clubs were not, on the whole, job creators, and if they were, it was not many jobs they produced. They built start-ups, managed investments, and sat in office spaces far removed from ordinary people. On the weekends, they played golf, or spent their free time in some other leisure pursuit. Some participated on boards of charities. Almost all saw to the short- and long-term care of select laborers at the clubs, and in later chapters, I have focused specifically on their relationships with the poor and lower caste golf caddies. If they could be faulted at all, it was in their willful ignorance that a handout here, a handout there, delivered in times of need, fell far short in helping the objects of their support to transform their existing conditions. It was a lie that discipline and hard work alone could improve these lives, but a lie they promoted in their interactions with the caddies, as well as in their private conversations with me.

First, however, I want to start out with a history of the KGA that relates the passing influence of the old rich and the rise of the new in present-day Bangalore. Ironically enough, it was people like Shan, driven to build a club that would replicate “old world” British values, who, inevitably, paved the way for the new rich to assert their influence, for the simple reason that the club needed their money, if not they themselves, to bring this dream about. The concerns registered by Shan and others of his generation and pedigree regarding the existing, and supposedly deplorable, state of the KGA and club

culture in Bangalore, generally, reflect highly subjective judgments of taste. But they also help bring into sharp relief what kinds of biases and prejudices permeated club culture at an earlier point in time, and which the new rich today wish to put aside, even, perhaps, as they unwittingly have a hand in cementing new barriers of exclusion.

## FOUNDING THE KGA

The history of the KGA, as told by Shan and other founding members, only further confounds their strongly held notion that industry leaders were ever held at a distance by “Permit Raj” bureaucrats and hamstrung in their efforts to pursue their own social and economic interests. Not only were founding members at the KGA close friends and acquaintances with important government officials, but also from the very beginning these friends in high places seemed remarkably amenable to persuasion. In just this one case, founding members, all of them business leaders in some industry or area of agriculture, were able to leverage personal ties within the halls of political power that resulted in the procurement of public land for what would eventually become a private golf course and club for the rich and well-to-do. This suggests not just an ability to win an audience with high-ranking officials, but also an ability to influence them.

The founding members of the KGA, twenty of them in total, were all members of the BGC and Bangalore Club. Their motivation, in 1972, when the idea was first sprung, was to build an international championship course, which would require at a minimum 120 acres of land. The course at the BGC was small, by comparison, at sixty-four acres, and located in the heart of the city without any opportunity for expansion. Founding members held semi-regular meetings, either at the BGC or nearby Bangalore Club.

Records were kept at Shan's home, which was used as the club's offices in the early days. Through contacts at a government agency called the City Improvement Trust Board, in charge of allocating land for development in expanding areas of the city, founding members came to know of a public reservoir (referred to as a "water tank" in India) east of the city, in between present day middle class neighborhoods of Indira Nagar and Koramangala. Nevertheless, from 1973, when the KGA was founded, until 1980, very little movement was made in gaining assurances on this land.

Things changed, however, in 1980, with the election of R. Gundu Rao, head of the state's Congress Party, as chief minister of Karnataka. Rao had been a longtime friend of many of these founding members, but he was particularly close to Kumar Siddanna, who was an early advocate and later club president, from 1990 to 1997. The two knew each other from their time in Kodagu, or Coorg, as it was known under the British, a region in the southwest corner of the state. Prior to his rise to the office of chief minister, Rao had been town municipal president of Kushalagara, near where Siddanna's father owned a coffee plantation and horse breeding operation.

In a smoke-filled bar at the Bangalore Club, in spring 2007, Siddanna reminisced about his early conversations with Rao about land for the KGA. A short, plump man, with a thick mustache, on this evening he was wearing a short-sleeved shirt, untucked, as was typical for him. "We want some land for a golf course," Siddanna said he told Rao. "No problem," Rao responded, apparently, adding, "Why not? We'll locate the land and give it to you."

Sure enough, as chief minister, Rao made it a priority to secure the land in and around the previously discussed "water tank," which at the time was managed by the

Public Works Department. With the chief minister's approval, rights to the tank were transferred to the Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC). The choice of the KSTDC was convenient, as Siddanna recalled this one evening at the Bangalore Club, but effective. "They had to justify why they were giving us this land, so they picked tourism." In time, though, the KSTDC handed over to the KGA on lease for a purely symbolic amount, somewhere between fifty and 100 rupees per acre.<sup>14</sup> The task of turning the water tank into a golf course fell to Thomson, Wolveridge and Associates, a golf course architecture firm headed by Peter Thomson, five-time British Open winner, hired and paid \$25,000 by the KGA to design and oversee its construction.

By 1983, Rao lost his seat as chief minister to Ramkrishna Hegde, a member of the Janata Party in the state, who held the position for a period of five years. Like Rao before him, Hegde was also close to many of the founding members of the KGA, including Dr. V. M. Ghatge, its president from 1975 to 1990, and at the time the chief executive at Hindustan Aeronautics, a government-owned aerospace and defense company, one of the largest in Asia. Early in his tenure, Hegde called Ghatge, Shan, captain V. T. Krishnamurthy, heir to an oil company and owner of multiple car dealerships, and treasurer Alan Chaves, who worked as a manager in the oil business, to his office. In December 1984, Hegde informed them, Bangalore was set to host the second annual meeting of the business-friendly South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and he thought it a good idea that the golf course be ready by this time, so that conference attendees could play a round.

In order to speed up construction and achieve this deadline, Hegde offered up

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<sup>14</sup> None of the founding members I spoke to could actually remember the exact figure of the original lease agreement. Some estimated 100 rupees, others fifty, which is what I indicate here.

twenty-lakhs, approximately \$50,000 in today's currency; one founding member I spoke to called this a "princely sum." Hegde also allocated additional funds for the KGA, "forcing," in the words of another founder, fifteen government companies to take up corporate memberships at a price of one lakh per company. These memberships, lasting fifteen years, granted each company the right to name four individual nominees of their choice as members of the club. The chief minister also ensured the KGA would have the use of Army equipment and labor to build the course. The forestry department, too, was commissioned to give and plant thousands of saplings of various types free of charge. In exchange, Hegde asked the KGA to give up five of eleven positions on its board of directors, a move that went to cement further the partnership between the KGA and the government, while ceding a slim majority to the club and its members. Board positions were originally granted to the commissioner of police, the chairman of the Bangalore Development Corporation, the chairman of the KSTDC, the state secretary of tourism, and the state finance minister.

Though only nine holes were ready by the time of the SAARC conference, the KGA by then had taken on approximately 200 more members, each of whom had paid 5,000 rupees, for a total of ten lakhs. Immediately following the conference, corporate memberships for private or government-owned businesses doubled, to two lakhs. In 1989, the back nine opened, thereby bringing to reality an eighteen-hole championship course in Bangalore. By then, membership had reached nearly 500.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Although the specifics of these various arrangements up until the present were related to me in private conversations with founding members, the general story, is publicly available at the KGA website, where the history of the KGA reads as follows (emphasis mine): "It was in 1973, [sic] that a group of avid golfers from Karnataka, [sic] embarked on a mission of identifying Bangalore as the golfing capital of South India. The search for a suitable site for an international standard golf course started in right [sic] earnest and *in May 1980, the then Chief Minister of Karnataka, Shri. R Gundu Rao personally took the initiative to hand over 125 acres of land in Challaghatta to the Karnataka Golf Association.* The next five years were spent

The KGA would get a new clubhouse, too, though not until later, in 1997. The first clubhouse, which has since been turned into a maintenance shed and water treatment facility, was set along Wind Tunnel Road, opposite the backside of the airport. Just as with the golf course, the government would again prove instrumental in its construction. The contract to build the clubhouse was granted to Wills Classic, a subsidiary of the publicly traded India Tobacco Company (ITC), once called the Imperial Tobacco Company, owned by the British and based in Calcutta. Wills fronted much of the cost of construction, in return for naming rights and, most importantly, land elsewhere in the city promised by the government.

#### BARBARIANS AT THE GATES

The KGA was the first eighteen-hole golf course built in post-independence India. Even so, many of its founding members did not expect the culture of the club to break significantly with the past. What they had in mind, rather, was a bigger, fancier BGC, with similar rules and by-laws, upheld by the same type of people who had presided over the BGC for so long, year after year, namely, industrialists, coffee and tea planters, company men, and high-ranking civil servants. It did not turn out that way. In the time it took these society men to finish the KGA, Bangalore had already changed dramatically, and in ways they had yet to grasp.

As Shan and others were laying the groundwork for the KGA in the mid-1980s, the

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in fund raising and working with the renowned golf course architects M/s Thomson Wolveridge and Associates of Australia headed by British Open Winner Peter Thomsom [sic]. The proposed SAARC heads of states meeting at Bangalore in 1986 proved to be the catalyst for the central government infusing funds for the golf course project. *The then chief minister of Karnataka, Shri Ramakrishna Hegde, himself an avid golfer, made available Rs.25 lakhs* and in December 1986, 9 holes were completed and opened well before the conference. Three years later, in May 1989, all eighteen holes were completed and the Karnataka Golf Association championship course was offered to the playing members.” “KGA History,” Karnataka Golf Association, accessed March 18, 2013. <http://kga.in/about-kga/history-2/>, emphasis added.

city itself was undergoing a renaissance. At least since the 1960s, India had based its science and technology research facilities in Bangalore, but now, with the software and computer bubble set to take off in the west, it was suddenly the place to be.<sup>16</sup> Precisely the kinds of people who flocked to Bangalore in this period were the same kinds of people who rushed to the gates of the KGA as soon as they opened. What made things worse for the founding members was that they needed just these sorts of people—individuals who had money to burn and reputations to build. It is not overstating the case to say that there would not have been a KGA without them. But that did not mean that any of the founding members and their old world friends from the BGC and Bangalore Club had to like it. Most certainly did not.

“To get money,” Siddanna admitted, reflecting on the founding of the KGA, “we opened up our membership and became a little more liberal than we should’ve.” The problem has only worsened, according to him. “The young today,” he said, “don’t know anything about club culture. Most of these guys, they’re not members of any other clubs.” Asked why this was important, he added, “You’ve got to have very clear principles. You need to know what it means to act like a gentleman. You’ve got to have a little touch of that British training of the olden days. Unless you’re a member of other clubs, you wouldn’t know any of this.”

The new rich, Siddanna went on, taking a sip of his Johnny Walker at the Bangalore Club, where we were sharing a meal, “they’re printing their own money. It’s obvious.” He recalled visiting one of his favorite restaurants a few days before we met, only to find that the parking lot was full of brand new cars, presumably driven by the

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<sup>16</sup> James Heitzman, *Network City: Planning the Information Society in Bangalore* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004); Janaki Nair, *The Promise of the Metropolis: Bangalore’s Twentieth Century* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

very people he disdained. “Some people think, ‘Oh, Bangalore is booming, this, that, and the other thing.’ Everything has been ruined now!”

Halfway through the conversation, Siddanna’s cousin, Belli, twenty years his junior, walked in and joined us. Belli was soon launching into his own diatribe against the new rich. “What is *nouveau riche*?” he asked, and before anyone at the table could give an answer, he offered his own. “You get rich over night,” he said, “that’s all.” Then he nodded in the direction of Siddanna, who by then was leaning forward in his chair. “These guys, they have culture. It’s come down from generations. It can’t just seep into someone who has become rich.”

For others, though, it was more a matter of where you were brought up. “The ethnic identity got diluted,” announced Kirin Reddy to me one day, referring to the influx of individuals and families from the north. They had begun to come to Bangalore in the 1980s. It was just before eight o’clock in the morning, as we were sitting down for breakfast at the Bangalore Club, where he had recently ended his tenure as president. He was a regular at the club, showing up very early every morning for a swim, followed by a fitness routine recommended by his doctor. He was also a member at the BGC going on fifty years, as well as a member at the KGA since the beginning. Like so many older members of these clubs, Bangalore was home. Though he had left Bangalore in the 1950s to pursue a mechanical engineering degree in Leeds, he returned to the city after graduation, taking up a position at a local plant manufacturing tools for use on heavy machinery. He had been retired for ten years.

“Bangalore is not a Kannada city any longer,” he lamented. “People came here determined only to profit,” he added, narrating the story of Bangalore’s demise. “They

built their condos and corrupted people, did all kinds of funny things. There is resentment against them, particularly north Indians. They're crass, they don't mingle, they don't make an effort to learn the language. They organize themselves into their own groups, which is very evident in the KGA. There's a Punjabi enclave, you have a Marathi enclave. They identify themselves not so much as KGA members as Marathi members of the KGA, as Punjabi members of the KGA, and so on. This is where the KGA kind of slipped up."

As secretary of the club during these early years, Shan could attest that many new applicants were, indeed, from the north, but this did not bother him as it did other members such as Reddy. He cared little, in fact, where anyone came from, he said, as long as they were "clubbable," meaning that they had been cultivated in traditional club values as originally determined by the British. Like Siddanna, he deeply regretted that this standard had not kept pace in the intervening years since he had stepped away from managing the club's affairs. "It's very sad," he said.

B. K. Gajraj, in his seventies and also a founding member, shared his specific concerns about the new members and their predilection to flaunt their wealth. I was having coffee with him one afternoon, just before he stepped out onto the course to tee off for his weekly round of golf with Shan and Siddanna. The three had been friends for long time, at least since the 1950s. "A lot of these new guys," he said, "they're not aware of what is behavior. Let's say you go to a small roadside bar, play, get drunk and shout and yell and order your weight around. Sure, go ahead, just not here." He particularly disliked the habit of tipping that had permeated the KGA. The new rich, he observed, tipped at will, for almost anything. "In a club," he clarified, "you never treat a bearer

[waiter] like just any bearer. Now what has happened, is if I'm nice to a bearer he doesn't understand it because he's not used to that and all the time he's holding out his hand for a tip, whereas in a club we never tipped. There was always Christmas time. Each of us would put money [out] and that was shared. Why this man tips, the newcomer, is that he thinks he'll get attention."

V. K. Surendra made a similar point. He had been a founding member of the KGA along with his father, V. T. Krishnamurthy, the oil baron. He came from money, he noted, and this meant that he valued it in ways that seemed foreign to the newer members. "Well, traditionally," he said, sitting across from me at his office at one of several auto dealerships in the city he and his family owned, "the wealthy man does not exhibit decadence, his wealth or his assets. He doesn't mention it, whereas the newer chap talks about it."

He offered an example: "You'll find a newer member coming in and to get popular he says to himself, 'There are six people around me, eight people around me, let me give them all one drink. Okay, fine, but then stop. I'd like to return the favor. Instead, it goes on, and he orders the second turn, so he's got to be told, 'That's not done in this place.' It's not about pride. Everybody's equal. I don't want to take six drinks off you and not return the six drinks."

It was not just in the dining areas of the club where these tensions surfaced. It was also out on the course. "Cutting, you know, when you're supposed to follow a sequence, that happens," said Amit Shukla, a tall, angular, athletic looking member at the KGA and BGC. An avid golfer since his late twenties when he took a management position working for Shell, he had participated as a board member on multiple amateur

associations throughout India. He knew the sport, and played by its rules.

“You start on the first and finish on the eighteenth,” he said, noting the obvious. “But you have chaps who want to go off to office so they just start off on the first and then shoot off to the eighth or the ninth and finish up and brush off. I mean, I don’t blame them but that’s not done on a golf course. You’ve got to ask the person, ‘Do you mind? Am I holding you up?’ That’s the kind of brashness you find at the KGA.”

Gajraj, like others I met, seemed resigned to the way things were at the KGA. Change was inevitable, he said, and maybe it was not such a bad thing. “We always said we couldn’t just take any and everyone, but things have changed. You keep fighting those things, when all you can say is, ‘Okay, my time is over.’” Hearing complaints from the likes of Shan and Siddanna, two of his closest friends, he could only laugh. “If you see Shanmugam,” he said, a smile streaking across his face, “tell him, ‘Mr. Gajraj said you’re a pucca sahib.’ Your days are over!”

## REMEMBERING WHEN

At least for a little while longer it appeared that the BGC would hold onto its past. For one thing, the members seemed older than at the KGA. Most appeared to be in their sixties and seventies, while at the KGA, members were, on average, twenty or thirty years younger. The age differences were reflected in each club’s social atmosphere. The KGA hosted Bollywood theme nights, for example, while the BGC featured local artists singing and dancing to classic Kannidiga music. There was, moreover, a bar-like feel to the KGA, especially during the weekends, when the clubhouse patio would be full of members and their guests drinking late into the evening. At the BGC, by contrast, most

members typically cleared out as the sun was setting.

The older members with whom I spoke liked it this way. The BGC, even if they were members at the KGA, too, was still their favorite club, and, really, their favorite place to be in the city. It was their home away from home. As Reddy told me, though at the time we were sitting at the Bangalore Club, “The Bangalore Golf Club even today remains a much more palatable place, more acceptable to a Bangalorean, than the KGA. I like this club the best of all the clubs because the club has a very, very healthy attitude. More or less it doesn’t change. They don’t talk of politics. They don’t discuss committee meetings. Golf is the focus.”

It was a common criticism of the KGA, in fact. Siddanna had described it as a “two-way club,” in the sense that it served two purposes, entertainment and golf, with golf being a secondary concern. At the BGC, he and others argued, these priorities were reversed, and rightly so.

“There’s a British history that’s still here,” another member, Satish Prabakar, said, one particularly muggy and humid Sunday afternoon as I was sitting with him and his playing partners drinking a beer following their game. “At the KGA, it just seems more westernized,” he said, where there was a spirit of “one-upmanship.” He was slim, dressed in gray slacks and a white button-down shirt, with beads of sweat gathering at the tip of his bald head. Born in the mid-1940s, just before the British left India, he could not have remembered much, if anything, of their reign over the country. He held the British in high regard, nonetheless. “You can talk about whatever is lacking today,” he said, “but then, at least there is something to talk about.” He mentioned the railways and bureaucracy, specifically, as legacies of the British, and fine ones, at that.

According to Prabakar, though, the British colonial legacy had been more than just railways and bureaucracy; they also had bestowed upon the Indian people their very own culture. “Being fair, the value of love, this kind of thing, in a formalized sense, this has come from the British,” he said. Golf, too, was a gift, as it instilled in the Indians who played it a sense of character, discipline, and etiquette. “Golf, in the first place,” he said, “shows the real self, both good and bad. If a person is prone to telling lies, it is seen immediately, and he feels humble. It shows you the strengths of a person, as well as his weaknesses. You can’t hide on the golf course.”

In between drinks this one afternoon, I was introduced to Anand Sirur, a short balding man with thick glasses. A few weeks later, I was at his home in Malleswaram, west of the club, snacking on biscuits and drinking tea prepared by his wife, a painter. He never became a member at the KGA, he explained, even when his friends prodded him back in the 1980s. Now in his seventies, he had no regrets, given what he heard about the club. Retired from a sales marketing position working for CalTex, the American oil producer, he still played golf two or three times a week, spending the rest of his time reading and writing his own history of Bangalore, a pet project.

“The friendship and camaraderie that we have at the BGC is absolutely outstanding,” he said, describing the club. “There are times when a youngster or a new member comes to the club, and if he’s sitting by himself, that’s not on. Somebody would go up and say, ‘Come, join us.’ You will never be without a round of golf at the BGC. You go there, and if you want a round of golf, you’ll always find people. That won’t happen at the KGA.”

We began to talk about old money and new money, and I asked him where he

thought he fit on that spectrum. “Well,” he said, “I wouldn’t use that category of rich at all. As I said earlier, I’m absolutely a middle-class person.” His father, too, was middle-class, he explained, and had worked most of his adult life as a manager for a textiles factory owned by Raja Mills, one of the earliest mills opened in Bangalore, in 1894. He commuted regularly between Chitradurga, about 125 miles from Bangalore, where the cotton was purchased, ginned, and pressed, before it was shipped.

In the early 1960s, Sirur became a member at the BGC, following the lead of his father, who had pressured him to join, saying it would be good for developing social and business contacts, Indeed, it was. Back then, he said, you could mix easily with industrialists and landowners, even if you were not one yourself. Everyone, it seemed, knew his place, mind you. Money, though, was not the chief matter of distinction.

“It’s just that there were older members,” he said, “It so happened that they were also well-to-do people, but it wasn’t a financial thing. They were senior members, and there were very few of us youngsters playing golf, you know. So they were older, but it was also about the position they held as people in the society.”

He paused to light a cigarette, asking me in advance if I would mind. I said no, and then asked him to elaborate on what made these senior members respectable.

“They were not particularly loud. Very soft spoken. I’ll give you an example.” He mentioned the three Krishnamurthy brothers, one of whom, V. T. Krishnamurthy, had served as the captain of the BGC in 1961 and later as co-founder and future president of the KGA. “They used to come to the golf club every evening at eight o’clock. Every single evening, well dressed, you know, in suits. They’d come, have their drinks. They’d talk to people, but they had their own group, too. I think I was one of the first ones who

broke into that. I used to sit with them. I was in the oil business, at CalTex, and they were also in the oil business. They were Shell dealers, very well known in Bangalore and Chennai.”

All three brothers were gentlemen, Sirur said, and to highlight the point he told a story about one of them, V. T. Padnanabhan, going back forty years. By coincidence, the two had arrived at Puddy’s Bar, inside the clubhouse, at the same time one afternoon. “I wished him [said hello], and he wished me back and said, ‘Here,’ and let me go first. He ended up talking to someone else, so I went and sat at the bar, ordered for a drink, but the barman was tied up and didn’t serve me. Then he saw Mr. Padnanabhan and immediately he went and served him his drink.”

Padnanabhan then pulled up a chair and sat down beside Sirur. “He was about to take a drink,” as Sirur recalled, “and said, ‘Sirur, where’s your drink?’ I said, ‘No, sir, I’ve ordered.’ So he called over the barman, a chap called Sandy. He said, ‘Sandy, Mr. Sirur had come earlier. You had not served him, and you served me.’ When I got my drink, he said, ‘Cheers,’ and then insisted on signing for my drink. Now, that is the old world charm, the grace with which they behaved in those days.”

Padnanabhan had died by the time I started my research, but in the weeks following my meeting with Sirur, I was able to secure an invitation to see his brother, V. T. Krishnamurthy, at his home near the BGC. At ninety-two, but still lucid and relatively healthy, Krishnamurthy was one of the oldest members still alive. He had actually lived under the British. Though he was always wealthy, heir to one of the most profitable oil companies in India, as indicated, and therefore did all right by them from a business standpoint, he cared less for them in the realm of politics.

After a light lunch, we sat in the sprawling garden drinking tea. Like many other Indians of his class, he said, he was educated at Bishop Cotton, an elite school named after George Cotton, one-time bishop of Calcutta. “Personally, we had our differences,” he said, remembering his British teachers and classmates. “We got on all right, but they were the rulers. We never felt comfortable with them. I was against the British.”

Krishnamurthy’s animosity towards colonial rule only deepened into his late teens and early twenties. In 1936, he moved to London, where he attended the London School of Economics, sitting in on lectures delivered by British economist Harold Lasky, among other noted scholars. The Second World War broke out, however, and he never finished his degree, returning to Bangalore to work alongside his father and two brothers running the family business. The time in London further exposed him to the views of Nehru and other anti-imperialist agitators, including Krishna Menon and Subhas Chandra Bose, who were all also in the city in those years. Back in Bangalore he would sit in on Gandhi’s prayer meetings whenever the Mahatma visited the state guesthouse not far from his home.

However much he disagreed with the British, Krishnamurthy remained enamored of their philosophical and political traditions. Like Gandhi, Nehru, and others committed to the struggle for independence, he embraced the British vision of a free society, in which individuals could speak their minds and live their lives openly, with the invitation to air their disagreements publicly through careful deliberation and debate. It was these traditions and affiliations that colored his opinion of Indian society to this day, and, in particular, of the shifting culture at the golf clubs.

Not unlike Sirur, Shanmugam, Siddanna, and others, Krishnamurthy reflected back

on former days at the BGC with deep nostalgia. As he, and they, described it, the BGC was a cosmopolitan mélange of people and classes. Though not everyone may have been equal in business or politics outside the club, they enjoyed a measure of courtesy and respect within it, or at least this is how they presented things. It was this standard by which they measured the current affairs at the KGA and BGC.

“When you meet people who are the same,” Krishnamurthy said, “you stop talking. You don’t want to be contradictory. When you’re young you can contradict others and get away with it. You can have different views. We can agree to disagree. It’s a healthy thing. But nowadays, [club membership] is confined only to the members and the members’ children. In my opinion, this is sad. There must be an element of new people coming in. At least let in a third of the people, new people whose fathers are not members, so there’s a little more change and broader outlook. There has to be a new element, a little bit, at least on equal terms. Right now, a new member comes in, he’s an outsider, [if] his father isn’t a member. If he applies at thirty he doesn’t become a member until he’s sixty, seventy, I think.”

Unless, of course, a prospective member has money, and lots of it, in which case he can jump the queue and receive membership right away under one of several “associate” categories. Associates apply independently or as part of a corporation, paying between one and a half lakhs, or approximately \$2,500, in the former case, and thirty lakhs, or close to \$55,000, in the latter, at the KGA.<sup>17</sup> Regular permanent memberships at the KGA tallied just 30,000 rupees, less than \$1,000, but such memberships, for the time being, were no longer available; comparable figures and limitations held at the BGC, as well. The only downside to associate membership at either the KGA or BGC is that such

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<sup>17</sup> See the KGA website for these and other membership categories and figures (<http://www.kga.in>).

members are barred from voting in general club elections. Otherwise, they have full use of all club facilities.

It is through these associate memberships that the KGA was able to fund its early development and recently finished course renovations. Indeed, from the mid-1980s through the mid-2000s, nearly a fifth of all applications were of this type. The BGC, while also handing out associate memberships, nevertheless saw itself as impervious to the sway of new money—only four percent of members who applied between 1991 and 2006 were admitted in the associate category.<sup>18</sup> This has started to change, however, in more recent times. When the BGC wanted to install a new water treatment plant, for example, in the early 2000s, the honorary committee had to go searching for new members in associate categories, and invariably members who were among the new rich, to pay for it. The same happened when it wanted to renovate the original clubhouse, standing since before the club was founded, in 1876, adding amenities like a gym, spa, and underground parking, all of which were under construction at the time of this writing.

Money, it would appear, had become the great equalizer, and contrary to what Krishnamurthy or anyone else said, these clubs were all the more diverse for it. The numbers and shifting trend in demographics do not lie. Through the 1940s and 1950s, the BGC only had approximately 100 members, many of them culled from industry and agriculture, as were Krishnamurthy, Shan, and Siddanna, or managers and civil servants, like Sirur. In the ensuing two decades, membership jumped to 500, and by the early 1980s, membership at the BGC had topped 1,000. A decade later it was up to 1,580, and, as of 2006, membership was 2,391, just shy of total membership at the KGA, which was

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<sup>18</sup> See Appendix B.

at 2,677 in the same year.<sup>19</sup> At the both clubs, salaried professionals, including those in software, IT, and engineering, account for approximately fifty percent of all members, while members with backgrounds in industry and agriculture represent between a fifth and a quarter of total membership.<sup>20</sup> Krishnamurthy's "new element," then, had arrived, without him noticing, it seemed.

#### NEW INDIA SPEAKING

In May 2007, I was at the Chancery Pavilion Hotel in Bangalore for a fundraising event sponsored by a few members from the KGA. The party was held on an outdoor patio on a Saturday evening. Speaking with four or five members who had gathered at the open bar, each of us with a drink in his hand, I was asked to give an impromptu summary of my research to date. As I started, one of the men stepped forward, drawing his face close to mine, and exclaimed that I had committed a "serious offense" by not contacting him before even commencing my research. By then, of course, I had spoken to a few dozen members, some at the KGA and others at the Bangalore Golf Club. I had not, however, spoken to this man, nor had I thought to, though he was, in fact, a committee member in high standing.

"How can you say you're studying the KGA," he said, eyes flared, "without contacting the office bearers? You haven't done your homework!"

One of the other members in attendance pulled him back. The others said the problem was not with me, exactly, but what this member perceived as a slight perpetrated by the club's office bearers. He was a proud man, and wealthy, too. While not a founding

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<sup>19</sup> These figures are drawn from annual reports at the two clubs.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix B.

member at the club, he was one of the first members to sign up in the years when the first nine holes were completed. He had held several senior positions on honorary committees over the years, and did at the time of this run-in. It was just that no one thought to include him in discussions pertaining to my research.

The following Monday I handed the member a personal letter expressing my regrets about the evening. He never responded. I had obviously been caught up in the middle of club politics, but the incident did make me think more deeply about the attachments different members established in their connection to the KGA and its history. Shan, Siddanna, and this man, and many others steeped in old money and old Bangalore besides, cared that much more about the club than did newer, the new rich members. To the former, the KGA was more than a club—it was an institution, with a long tradition going all the way back to the colonial era. But to the latter, the club was just that, a club, a place to play golf, relax, and enjoy the company of family and friends. Their identities were not wrapped up in it.

Venkatesh Chandra, in his early fifties and a member at the KGA, was a good example of this. Born and raised in Hyderabad, capital of Andhra Pradesh, he graduated with a masters degree in electrical engineering at a university in Bangalore. He moved to Delhi to work for a software company in the mid-1980s, and a few years later was transferred to Bangkok to head up a growing marketing division across Southeast Asia. At the end of his tenure with the firm, he founded his own company, specializing in software solutions for private insurance companies. In 1996, he left Bangkok for Bangalore to set up the head office.

I ran into Venkatesh regularly at the Palace Grounds driving range. One day,

following a lesson, he offered me a lift to the BGC, where I was planning to meet with another member. He often asked about my progress, and this day was no different. I mentioned that I had been introduced to a pair of members with dual memberships at the KGA and BGC who were prominent in these clubs and in Bangalore high society, more generally. Getting to know them the previous few weeks, I shared with Venkatesh their thoughts on the new rich, individuals like himself, mainly in software, who they said were ruining the clubs with their indiscriminate consumption and crass manners. He had heard all of this before. His response was to say that these were men of a certain age and class who were losing their grip on the city, if not reality itself. They were, as he put it, like “frogs in a well.”

In an email during the summer in 2007, when I was back in New York, he wondered why I would expend any effort studying what he referred to as “a bunch of self-obsessed, one dimensional, and phoney (west aping) characters.” He implicated himself, too, in this group. Members at these clubs, whether they themselves or others considered them as old rich or new rich, he implied here, and in my interactions with him before and after the summer when I returned to Bangalore, were just not that interesting. They were rich and played golf and that was about it.

Though never poor as a child, Chandra did not come from a lot of money, either. His father managed accounts for a public utility in Hyderabad. He was not a “club man,” as Chandra put it. In fact, Chandra became the first club man in his family, in 1999, when he took up a membership at the KGA, later adding a membership at the Bangalore Cricket Club (BCC), in 2003, where he invited me to meet him late one Sunday afternoon.

Early in the conversation, I told him about a man I had met earlier in the week who boasted he was a member at eight different clubs, including the KGA, BGC, BCC, and Bangalore Club, and that his father, supposedly, was a member at fourteen. For Chandra, though, such men as this who collected memberships like trophies were “uncomfortable with their Indianness,” and that is why they gravitated to the clubs. As he pointed out, “The club culture is essentially a British culture. All these guys want to dilute their Indian identity. ‘Oh,’ they say, ‘I am now different. I go to the club. I meet people.’ But this isn’t any great thing. It’s not contributing anything significantly to the society or to themselves.”

I asked him why, then, if he did not think much of the clubs or people who joined them, he was a member. “For me,” he said, “the club is a place where I come for recreation. I have traveled the world and I have come back to India and I have settled here. I don’t have to express myself through the club. I really don’t believe that joining a club makes you special. I come here so I can play tennis. I can have a drink. I can have a good laugh. I run my own company. I’ve got several other identities, and this identity [as a member] has no significance at all.”

We then discussed the old rich, whom he did not much like, apparently. He thought their complaints about people like him, new to club culture being loud and obnoxious, throwing around their money, were petty and self-serving. “That’s all bullshit,” he said. “Egoistic types have existed since time immemorial.” He did, however, concede that the old rich had reason to feel threatened. The new rich, he said, “look at these old buggers who made their money a thousand years back. These guys used to make all the decisions. It was a closed network. So, today, yeah, others are saying, ‘You don’t tell me what to

do. It's not your father's property.' All of that is happening.”

Salil Poonoose, another member, and one of the few I met who accepted the title of “new rich,” was more ambivalent about what he called the “old guard” at the clubs. “With growth comes change,” he said, meeting with me at the KGA after a round, “and with change comes a degree of resistance from people who have to accommodate change. The person who's been part of the club over the last twenty years will have mixed feelings towards the club's success. Nostalgia for the old, intimate atmosphere will be there.”

A graduate of management studies at the University of Bombay in the mid-1970s, Poonoose worked as a sales director at Unilever India, makers of Dove Soap and Lipton Tea, for which he earned what was then forty dollars a month. In the mid-1990s, he took his talents to Best Foods, an American-owned company that produces Hellman's Mayonnaise and Skippy Peanut Butter, among other food items. By 2002, with his stock options reaching maturity, he stepped down and effectively retired. He had just turned fifty. Today, he played golf three or four times a week, sat on the board of a charity for orphaned children, and, when called upon, advised American companies on investment opportunities in India.

“I'm very newly rich,” he admitted. “My father worked as a government official for the IAS [Indian Administrative Service]. I inherited no wealth. When I retired, I had made enough money, in dollar terms, to send both my kids to the US to study. I've built a couple of homes. I have a fancy car, a Merc [Mercedes Benz], and another car. I have two drivers. We have full-time help, too, all the trappings of great wealth.”

Approached in the late 1980s to join as a member at the KGA, he rejected the offer.

“They were begging you to join,” he said. “I was posted at Unilever in Bangalore, in 1988, and the club wrote me a letter saying, ‘Please join us. Our lifetime membership is a hundred dollars.’ I said, ‘I hate golf. I’m not going to do that ever.’ I ate my words later.”

Following retirement, in 2003, he figured he would give it another try, but by then, the club told him he would have to wait ten or fifteen years to get a membership, something he was not willing to do. They asked if he could claim status as a non-resident Indian, which would put him in league for a special category of membership. He assured them he could, given that he spent upwards of 180 days outside of India a year. If he was willing to write a check for \$12,000, then they would make him a member as soon as the next day, he recalled, and so he did.

More than anything, he appreciated the mix of people at the club. As he described it, “The new profile is many more foreigners, many more women, and many more younger people, and many more ethnic groups apart from the locals, north Indians, Punjabis, Sikhs, Bombayites.” It was a “huge difference in demographics,” he said, compared to what he noticed at the BGC, a club he hardly ever visited, and where he did not have a membership. The atmosphere at the KGA, he explained, was “younger, more lively, corporate, more fun, more youthful, more wide open. This is much more cosmopolitan. I think this club is more egalitarian, with less social divisions than the other club.” Members at the BGC, as he said, “tend to be more regional, more south Indian, more Bangaloreans.”

On another occasion, again at the KGA, and also after a round of golf, he explained why he did not pursue a membership at the BGC. “I’m pretty sure I wouldn’t be comfortable. I would always see myself as an outsider and they would see me as an

outsider.”

Benedict Thomas, a friend of Poonoose’s, said just as much. Originally from Mumbai, he studied accounting at a university in Delhi. He joined the KGA in 1998, only a few months after he had moved to the city with his wife and three children, two sons and a daughter. The family had lived abroad previously, in Bangkok, where he managed an export business on behalf of Indian clients. Though he would not admit that he was new rich, or rich at all, at fifty-one, he was three years into retirement. “I’m comfortable,” he said, “let’s put it that way. I’m enjoying the fruits of my labor.” We were sitting at a round glass table under an umbrella on the patio at the back of the KGA clubhouse. The waiter walked by, and Thomas stopped him to order a Coke with extra ice.

“I don’t speak Kannadiga,” he continued, mistaking the name given to people of this region with the language itself, which is Kannada. To some people, he added, “You’re an outsider. So, obviously, you tend to gravitate to people who you’re more familiar with, more comfortable.” I pointed out that there were a few locals in his regular playing group, a contingent of twelve to fifteen members. “Yeah,” he said, “we have one or two who are locals. They tend to be the more sort of enlightened, outward looking types.”

These so-called “enlightened, outward looking types,” Thomas confirmed, had gradually wrested control of the club away from the founding members and their progeny. He referred to the founding members of the KGA as a “clique,” and their impact on the club was still noticeable. “They want to retain their hold over the club. They want to be able to make all the decisions.” Only recently, he said, did it appear that their grip on the club was subsiding. He referred to an earlier tradition, apparently, when close

friends and family members succeeded them in assuming important positions on the honorary committee. “It was almost dynastic,” he said, “like the Gandhi family, father, son, and so forth, keeping it within them. They all knew each other. The fathers went back many years. They tried to maintain control by becoming managing committee members. They controlled the finances. They controlled how funds were to be expended.”

The same group had originally implemented “silly rules and regulations,” he said, which made “no sense.” One such rule forbade children under the age of twelve in the clubhouse dining area after nine o’clock in the evening. His wife and he would lie about their children’s ages, as did many other members, and eventually, over time, the club stopped asking. “It used to be that you couldn’t do this, couldn’t do that. You had to have shirts with collars. You couldn’t come in with a round collared T-shirt. Lots of silly, silly rules.” Today, he said, approvingly, “Nobody bothers,” an observation that would surely rankle Shan.

#### COSMOPOLITAN ELITES

Thomas, like Poonoose, Chandra, and many other independently wealthy members I came across at the KGA, had benefited greatly under liberalization, a fact he did not hide. But he seemed no less aware of how little was changing for others less fortunate than them. This point warrants special mention, because much of the critical literature presents the new rich in a markedly different light, as individuals not only cut off from the rest of the society, but grateful for it. My time with Thomas and others, however, suggested a recognition of and, I would go so far as to say, concern for India’s unequal

development that journalists and scholars have either missed or, more likely, dismissed.

There was a point in the conversation with Benedict, for example, where he stopped to single out a group of professional caddies finishing the eighteenth hole just in front of us, at the edge of the clubhouse patio. “Look at these guys playing right now,” he said, calling my attention to one, in particular. “He’s a pro, but he’s not a member at the club. He gets playing facilities, but he won’t come here and have a drink. He’s not allowed. That’s the way it is in this club, whether you like it or not.”

He assumed it would be different in the United States, though I suggested it might not be. “Okay,” he said, “you may not see a janitor being a member of a golf club, but no one ever looks down on him. He’s doing a job. He’s doing an honest day’s work and he’s being paid for it. But over here, there’s a social hierarchy, and it’s very, very deeply entrenched. It’s almost in our blood. We don’t consider waiters here your social equal, for example, but overseas you could go to a bar with them. Outside of work hours, you could have a drink with them. That will never happen with this country. You don’t have these kinds of social divisions in America.”

He had conveniently neglected America’s early and more recent history of slavery and racial discrimination, and the continuing prejudices that informed everyday life and politics on the other side of the world, but his intuition about Indian society, at least, seemed accurate enough. “I mean, take Narayan Murthy, okay, owner of Infosys, ex-officio chairman, whatever. He’ll be fair to people, judge them on their merits, but still that social divide exists. He may hire a very smart guy, maybe a caddy’s son, or maybe a laborer’s son, but when it comes to social activities that wall is always there. It’s very difficult to get it out of your system. I mean, I’ll admit it. I think that way also. It’s

because we grew up that way.”

For him, caste was to blame. “It’s almost unbreachable, irrespective of education. Even people who are highly educated, and maybe liberal in their outlook, that ingrained, you know, class division, it’s almost like people know their place. You look down to the lower classes.”

Perhaps, I suggested, drawing on a common theme in the media, things were different in the cities. Thomas was not so sure. “You, as a foreigner,” he said, “won’t see it, but I can see it. It’s all latent. It’s not obvious. Let’s say I go into a shop, to take an example. I can see the way they will deal with me if I come in to look at something, as opposed to someone who they perceive to be socially below them. It’s a completely different attitude. There’s a subtle change in the way the interaction takes place. It’s there.”

There was one member, Rajesh Patel, who railed in particular against Western writers who promoted the “India shining” narrative, which assumed what was good for the rich was good for everyone else. Any discussion of class or caste were necessarily wished away. Son of an army general and now a real estate developer, Patel admitted that while software and IT had contributed “a lot of advancement in India,” the wider benefits were less easy to discern.

“There is a large divide between the haves and the have-nots,” he said. He looked upon India’s high growth rates through the 2000s as only one measure of success. “It all depends,” he said, “upon how you judge a country. Do you judge a country by how it looks after its poor, how it looks after its blind, how it looks after its handicapped, or do you judge a country by the per capita income? You can’t have farmers dying, you can’t

have minorities being prosecuted [sic] and you say my country isn't poor. You have to look at it in totality.”

He turned a critical eye towards himself and his wealthy friends and acquaintances, other members at the club, who happened to be sitting on the same patio as us, not more than twenty feet away in any direction. “Who’s playing golf here? It’s the software engineers. But how many software engineers are there, really?” He did not wait for a response, answering: “It’s a small percentage, you see. The have-nots are a very large percentage. They’re finding it difficult.”

Chandra, too, emphasized this divide in my conversation with him at the BCC. Whatever struggles there were between old rich and new rich in the clubs, he said, paled in comparison to the larger troubles in the society. He noted the growing appeal toward ordinary T-shirts, as opposed to collared T-shirts and dress shirts. “It’s not a serious thing,” he said, and really not a marker of change at all. “Now, if they’ve”—and here he was talking about the new rich, specifically—“become more tolerant of others, other segments of society, then I would say it’s a significant change. If they extended their fellowships to different categories of people, then I would say it’s a significant change. If they were becoming more socially responsible, if they were becoming true believers in the processes of power, that is, democratization, accountability, things like that, if their ideas were broadening, in the sense of how the world should be, what is happening in India, if their intellectual horizons were changing, if any of these things were happening, if anything of the sort, then I’d say there’s change. But that’s not what’s happening.”

Another member at the KGA, a software consultant who had just moved back from the United States, similarly pressed me to widen the scope of my study beyond the space

of the club. He was one of the haves, he admitted, while on a lunch break at the KGA, near where he worked. He warned that what I was seeing inside the golf clubs was not the “real” Bangalore.

“What you’ve seen here,” he said, “is such a minuscule part of Bangalore’s population. We’re point-zero-five percent of Bangalore’s population, probably less so. This is the privileged crowd. You’ve got to see people outside, people whom we work closely with, for example, our caddies. You can explore that group. Our drivers, our maids, the sweeper, the gardener, all those guys. They see people like us getting richer every day. They see people like us, you know, buying things, dumping things, wearing clothes for two days and throwing them away, eating at expensive places, all kinds of stuff, you know, the disposable culture which is picking up, and so they see that but they get nothing from it.”

He talked about his driver, in particular. “He’s been with me for four years now. My salary has gone up two times in four years. His salary has probably gone up thirty percent, so he was anyway at a much lower place and I was here. Now I’ve gone from there to double. So that gap is widening and that results in a strong resentment against the rich.”

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“The concept of the wealth trickling down to the poor and the poor getting richer is just wrong,” said Kirin Reddy, when I sat with him in the Bangalore Club. “The gap between rich and poor widens,” he continued. “As a citizen of Bangalore, it worries me very much, because I have seen no improvement among the poor. What does it mean to

say you're a world-class power if the bulk of your people are not provided with the basic necessities of life? Under these conditions, how can anyone say India's going to be a world-class power? It's Rubbish."

He was particularly dismayed at the coverage Thomas L. Friedman's *The World Is Flat*,<sup>21</sup> had received. As an industrialist himself, he knew that the idea of the growth of Indian IT and software as a panacea for all Indians was fundamentally flawed. "I set up factories all around," he said, thinking back to his work as a mechanical engineer. "I was able to provide jobs for 6,000 people at that point in time." Like newly rich Rajesh Patel, above, he asked about the software industry and how many jobs it had created. He answered his own question, as did Patel. "Not many," he said, and went on to add, "All this talk about a flat world, this thing, it's nonsense, sheer nonsense."

It can be argued that the old rich contributed more in the way of income and jobs for poor and working class Indians than do the new rich. Undoubtedly, Shan's biggest contribution to Indian society was maintaining the factory that produced light bulbs. The new rich, by contrast, have not by and large built factories. They have worked in IT and other areas of the economy that have not typically generated wider employment, managing or working alongside similarly privileged and highly educated Indians like themselves. What Shan and others who founded the KGA did was provide these newcomers with a place to congregate and network, and that is exactly what the new rich have done. Their entry into the club—at a high cost, for some—had somewhat democratized the space, providing at least some evidence to the claim that money and merit could, in the right circumstances, elevate one's position in the society, no matter his

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Picador, 2007).

background.

But this was not real democracy, let it be clear. It was symbolic. The old rich members, to their credit, understood this; in words, at least, they protested the state of Indian society, even to the point of implicating themselves in the criticism. It was all a mess, and they were partly to blame, they admitted. This was not a small thing, of course, and yet it was not something to be applauded, either. The poor, and how they lived, were everywhere on display. It was hardly radical to acknowledge their existence in polite conversation within the confines of a clubhouse patio, glass-and-steel office tower, or air-conditioned home, as old and new rich members repeatedly did. What really mattered is what one did, or did not do, when it came to the poor and working Indians directly within one's reach, and not just in one's sights. Only focused action within a general policy framework that actively promoted civil society and engaged the disadvantaged for the greatest good for the greatest number would make a difference over the long term. Rhetoric and wishing that things could be different was not enough, no matter one's claims to old or new rich status.

## Chapter 2: Caste *Illa*

On the surface, at least, it would seem that those who play golf at the BGC and KGA and those who caddy for them aligns almost perfectly with the Hindu caste system. In private conversation, a majority of caddies at these clubs admitted they were either Dalit, formerly Untouchables, generally considered outside the caste system, or Shudra, part of a larger agricultural laboring caste.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, nearly all of the Indian members at the clubs were upper-caste, comprised of Brahmans, associated with intellectual and spiritual leadership; Kshatriya, descendants of warriors and kings; and Vaishyas, known for commerce and enterprise.<sup>2</sup> Members' work, if not necessarily aligned with their specific caste, nevertheless did seem to reflect their position within the system. A collection of doctors, lawyers, engineers, entrepreneurs, and business people, all members were college-educated and well paid, relative to the majority in Indian society.<sup>3</sup> They tasked their brains for a living, not their hands, as did the caddies and others from so-called lower castes.

None of this mattered, though, to hear the members tell it, and the caddies, too. The caddies, notably, would frequently respond, “Caste *illa*,” whenever pressed on the extent to which caste influenced their relationship with the members, or even with one another.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A. As part of my surveys with caddies, I asked them to identify their caste and sub-caste, or jati. Most, however, claimed they did not know their caste for certain. In some cases, I suspect, they were simply hiding the truth, but in others, perhaps a majority, I had the sense that they really were unaware of their caste origins—or if they knew their caste origins, did not know their jati, or vice versa. This is not at all uncommon, actually. Many social scientists agree that caste is a notoriously difficult thing to pin down. (See Sonalde Desai and Amaresh Dubey, “Caste in 21st Century India: Competing Narratives,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 46, no. 11 [2011]). Regardless, over time, I became less and less convinced that the exact details mattered. Social class, as I argue here, is really the key in understanding their relationship to members, not caste.

<sup>2</sup> I avoided asking members directly about their caste origins. Even a quick perusal of annual yearbooks at either the BGC or KGA, however, reveals that a majority of last names bear the hallmark of upper-caste lineages.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix B for details on education and occupation backgrounds of BGC and KGA members.

By this, they meant, translating from the original Kannada, “Caste is not there.” It seemed so. Among each other, for instance, there was little evidence that caste played a role in their selection of friends. Every single caddy I asked to fill out a survey eliciting demographic details—approximately 100 caddies at each club—listed at least one caddy from another caste or religion in their top five list of friends at the club, and many listed three or four. I regularly observed their interactions, as well, and there was no hint of caste bias or discrimination, at least within the space of the clubs.

For the caddies, caste denial was also a practical matter, perhaps. For any caddy to draw on his caste background to talk about where he sits in the social hierarchy would have been to commit social suicide, not to mention kill his chances of making a living working inside the club. To reference caste, even to utter the word, would have been to automatically signal to others that he was beholden to ideals of a bygone age that presumed fate determined your social position in the society, an assumption accepted without question. These days, things were different, and the caddies believed it, too. Every day on the golf course they could see and hear for themselves the supposed wonder and magic of the global economy: members driving up in Toyota vans or Mercedes Benzes, all of them sporting the latest mobile phone, going on about their sons and daughters in colleges and universities in Europe, and the like. In an environment such as this, it made little sense to challenge the legitimacy of members’ material resources, educational access, and other privileges on the basis of caste, even if there seemed to be a strong correlation.

Members largely agreed. They scoffed at the suggestion that whatever success they had experienced in life could be put down to their caste. That they had social and

economic advantages, in some cases going right back to their births, they did not deny. Caste, though, mattered not a wit in their professional lives and less so in their decisions over which caddy to hire or whom to sit with in the clubs. Again, as with the caddies, their interactions with others added weight to this assertion. Indeed, members seemed to care scarcely at all as to what caste their caddy belonged, so long as he could do the job effectively. During the round, as caddies placed, marked, and sought out the ball from hole-to-hole, fairway-to-fairway, neither they nor the caddies ever worried about rubbing shoulders with one another or walking across each other's shadow, a major breach of Hindu law, as bad as physical touch.<sup>4</sup> If this had been the case, they would never have finished a round.

I raised the issue directly one afternoon in late June 2008, when I sat down with Allabash Kadir, a thirty-seven-year-old member at the KGA and BGC. We had met a little more than a year before at a designer clothing store he owned in the east of the city, out along Airport Road. I bought a shirt and a pair of jeans, not thinking I would see him again, and then I did, at the Palace Grounds driving range, closer to where he lived. We became regular acquaintances, seeing each other at the range now and again, practicing next to each other and talking over two-rupee tea poured out in tiny plastic cups by one of the ball boys who worked at the range. Once we even played a round together at the BGC.

In the back office of his store, we settled into a conversation about the caddies and his relationship with them. He had not played in a week due to the rains. He looked fit and well rested all the same, wearing a beige dress shirt and black slacks. "There's

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<sup>4</sup> Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

nothing missing from my bag,” he said, when I asked him why he hired Sampath Acharya, a senior caddy at the KGA who had been his caddy for five years. He had a similar arrangement with a caddy at the BGC, whom he used whenever he played there. He paid as much as 500 or 600 rupees a round, double and sometimes triple the suggested board rate for caddies of their rank and experience, depending on how he played and the mood he was in. They were worth it, he said.

“There’s never any balls gone, no tees gone, nothing. These aren’t the guys that when I’m hitting a shot, they’re messing around with my golf clubs, either. They don’t do anything.”

“Have you had to instruct them to be that way? What do you tell them?” I asked.

“I’ve told them, ‘Hey, maintain some decorum. I’ll take care of you guys, but I need you to be honest with me.’ I respect these guys, you know. I mean, it’s an honorable job. I use their first names. I talk to them, and others, too. When I’m playing, I make sure I stop, even if a caddy’s not in my group, just to say a few words to them. A caddy’s a human being, right?”

I had been spending considerable time with Sampath and his family at their home in Challaghatta, a small village once far removed from the din of the city, but which now rests on the southeastern border of the KGA golf course, adjacent to the software and technology park that houses Microsoft and IBM.

“What do you know about Sampath?” I asked him.

“I know he’s got two kids. His wife’s working in some multinational company. She’s got a good job. The children go to school.”

I had seen Allabash snub a caddy a few weeks prior to this conversation. Though he

had promised a round to Sampath, the other caddy did not know this and had tried to convince Allabash to hire him before Sampath arrived. He met Allabash at his car in the parking lot to the KGA, only to be turned back. I had come up to Allabash, too, to say hello, having seen him pull up.

“Do you know this guy?” Allabash asked me, just as I appeared, cutting off Balaji’s attempts to enter into the conversation. “This is ‘dollar’ Balaji.”

“No, sir,” Balaji replied, with a mischievous grin. I was familiar with him, certainly. He was amiable and cheerful, with a full, round belly and a mustache.

“Why do you call him dollar Balaji?” I asked Allabash.

“Because he only caddies for money,” Allabash answered at the time. Though Balaji smiled, I could not tell if it was an admission of guilt—and, really, no one caddies but for money—or if he was simply trying to save face. In any event, the matter was over in less than a minute. Allabash and Sampath headed toward the starters area and Balaji and I walked back to the caddy station. Balaji shrugged the incident off, laughing. He assured me that Allabash was only joking.

In his office a few weeks later, I asked Allabash again about Balaji. “He’s just not my kind of guy,” he said. “I don’t know how you say it. Nothing personal against him. Look at Sampath. He’s a more dignified, quieter, more mature, levelheaded sort of person than Balaji. That’s what it is.”

Though a Muslim, and presumably less in thrall to caste than a Hindu, Allabash’s comments about Sampath closely mirrored comments other members made about their caddies. Their decisions were based exclusively on whether or not they had a good ‘feeling’ about a caddy, if they could trust him with their things, if he worked hard.

Sampath, unbeknownst to Allabash, was a Dalit. He, too, like almost all the caddies, thought that caste did not matter. It was not there, in a general sense, but also in the particular. He had grown up with caste discrimination, knew what it looked like, how it felt, and whatever transpired between caddies and members at the club was clearly nothing like it. Here, there were choices, and money, to be made. Members like Allabash paid attention to merit, honesty, and discipline, above all else, and these were the things he focused on, too, in his evaluation of them. But this was not exactly freedom, either. Class, as a system also, Sampath learned, was not necessarily any more open or democratic than caste. He was still, after all, at thirty-six, a caddy, and had been one for more than twenty years. That was not going to change anytime soon, and likely never; in his position, there was nothing else to do, nowhere else to go. He certainly had no chance at becoming a member. Neither did his two sons.

Before elaborating on Sampath's story any further, and clarifying the limited choices upon which his life and work proceeds, I want first want to review the debate on caste. It will become clear, if it has not already, that I much prefer class as a framework for understanding inequality in Indian society. In this, I follow recent scholarly efforts "to bring class back in," as it were. I outline these contributions here, but also seek to make some points of my own. At the end of the chapter I juxtapose members' commitments to freedom, equality, and justice for an abstract poor they keep in their heads, while comparing the way they speak about and treat the poor in their midst, namely, the caddies.

## RETHINKING CASTE

At least since the time of Karl Marx, European social scientists have assumed the caste system to have been an obstacle to economic development. Marx, for one, contemplated what massive social and economic changes the European bourgeoisie of his time would bring to Indian society. Although no defender of British imperialism, or of capitalism, in particular, he nevertheless saw the spread of bourgeois political economy on the subcontinent as inevitable, even necessary. Like most other European thinkers of his generation, Marx considered “Hindustan” a land with no history, nothing more, really, than a loose collection of far-flung villages, each defined by a separate and distinct system of production and exchange. He had no doubts as to the enervating effects of this way of living on human progress and development, nor what it would take to set history, and particularly proletarian history, in motion.

“We must not forget,” Marx elaborated in the *New York Daily Tribune*, in 1853, regarding village life in India, “that these idyllic village communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, that they retrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies.”<sup>5</sup> He went on to say, “these communities were contaminated by distinctions of caste and by slavery, that they subjugated man to external circumstances, that they transformed a self-developing social state into never changing natural destiny, and thus brought about a brutalizing workshop of nature, exhibiting its degradation as the fact in the fact that man, the sovereign of nature, fell down on his knees in adoration of

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<sup>5</sup> Karl Marx, “The British Rule in India,” in *Dispatches for the New York Tribune: Selected Journalism of Karl Marx*, ed. James Ledbetter (New York: Penguin, 2007), 218.

Hanuman, the monkey, and Sabbala, the cow.”<sup>6</sup> The British, he predicted, would change all this. In another letter published in the same pages, Marx wrote, confidently: “Modern industry, resulting from the railway system, will dissolve the hereditary divisions of labor, upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress and Indian power.”<sup>7</sup>

Max Weber, too, shared Marx’s assumptions about caste, if not his hope and zeal for communism. The caste system, he observed, like Marx, was a hindrance to India’s social and economic development, as it limited exchange to familiar and familial relations. Individuals’ aspirations were thus forestalled in their physical mobility, as well their general well-being. Telling, for Weber, was the lack of any rational accounting procedures. If it were not for the British, he averred, again echoing Marx, Indians, left to their own strategies and beliefs, would have “never” arrived at modern capitalism. The railways, fortunately, as well as the electronic telegraph, had “shaken caste relations,” putting in motion a “slow and irresistible process” of modernization..<sup>8</sup> Weber, in the end, was more skeptical than Marx that modernization would ever be fully achieved in India, as it had been in Europe. The Indian way of life, guided by such strict caste divisions, was, in his final analysis, simply too set against change.

Weber was obviously wrong, and Marx, too, according to business writer Gurcharan Das. “On the face of it,” Das concedes, “caste ought to kill enterprise. It segments human experience for generations and fragments society. Its inherent

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Karl Marx, “The Future Results of British Rule in India,” in *Dispatches for the New York Tribune: Selected Journalism of Karl Marx*, ed. James Ledbetter (New York: Penguin, 2007), 223.

<sup>8</sup> Max Weber, *The Religion of India: Hinduism and Buddhism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2000), 113, 30.

conservatism ought to destroy creativity and experimentation.”<sup>9</sup> But, he writes, contra Marx and Weber, “I have come to believe that being endowed with commercial castes is a source of advantage in the global economy.”<sup>10</sup> Brahmans and Kshatriyas, he observes, who traditionally held posts in the civil service, on account of their supposedly natural affinity for mathematics and commerce, are now turning these skills over to the private sector. Non-commercial castes, too, he notes, are helping to elevate the country, again eschewing the civil service for work in software, technology, and other knowledge industries. Nevertheless, he asserts, economic expansion will only continue to “weaken the old caste-occupation link,”<sup>11</sup> so that more and more individuals will take up work of their choosing, rather than work traditionally affiliated with their caste.

But this view is to accept the idea that caste at all limited progress to begin with. Others, notably sociologist Dipankar Gupta, reject the very premise of this argument, as well as the order in which various castes are traditionally placed. Such a “‘book view’ of the caste system,”<sup>12</sup> he argues, which gives authority to Brahmanical records of events, has no real basis in fact, but instead follows from the treatment of caste in mainly, though not exclusively, Western social science; he reserves special criticism for Marx and Weber, as well as more recent scholars Louis Dumont and Murray Milner.<sup>13</sup> Gupta disputes the notion that non-Brahmans accept their lowly status beneath Brahmans or any other caste. Even a scheduled caste imagines itself as the most pure, most superior of all,

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<sup>9</sup> Gurcharan Das, *India Unbound: The Social and Economic Revolution from Independence to the Global Information Age* (New York: Anchor, 2002), 147.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Dipankar Gupta, *Interrogating Caste: Understanding Hierarchy and Difference in Indian Society* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2000), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006); Marx, “British Rule”; Murray Milner, *Status and Sacredness: A General Theory of Status Relations and an Analysis of Indian Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Weber, *Religion of India*.

as “being way on top,” no matter what its present position in the society.<sup>14</sup> “The Brahmanical lifestyle and symbols,” Gupta clarifies, “do not excite universal favour among many jatis.”<sup>15</sup> Kshatriyas, for example, do not want to be like Brahmans, by way of adopting their traditions and rituals and discarding their own, any more than Brahmans want to be Kshatriyas. Likewise, Shudras do not wish to be like Kshatriyas.

Obviously, certain castes exert more power and influence than others. The point is not which caste exerts its authority, but under what material conditions, which elevates the question of political power to one also of economic power. As Gupta remarks, “caste domination is wrought by material resources and not by spiritual, ideological and ritual compliance.”<sup>16</sup> Regarding ritual compliance, Gupta clarifies, “the rule of caste is only obeyed when it is accompanied by the rule of power.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, any caste that can monopolize water, land, and other important resources, including access to quality jobs and education, will necessarily influence the beliefs and traditions that pervade a given area or region. In this instance, all other castes adhere to behavioral norms the dominant caste sets down on pain of physical or symbolic violence.

Despite the best of intentions, at least part of the blame is owed to early efforts to get rid of caste altogether. In banning caste, the authors of the Indian Constitution put in place a reservation system, much like affirmative action in the United States, intended to redress past ills, but which had the unintended consequence of reinforcing caste.<sup>18</sup> Appealing to one’s caste background—or making it up—became a way to acquire goods and services, including food, jobs, education, and health care. To wit, the rich got richer,

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<sup>14</sup> Gupta, *Interrogating Caste*, 5.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>18</sup> Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India*.

while the poor got poorer. In the modern era, caste resonates in politics perhaps the most, where appeals to one caste or another can spell success or ruin in national and local elections.<sup>19</sup> New research also suggests that the influence of caste endures within the modern workplace, at multinational corporations who espouse supposed meritocratic ideals no less, where caste determines, in part, hiring and salary decisions.<sup>20</sup>

But without question, as Gupta argues, the caste system, as it is known in the literature, has largely been “destroyed,”<sup>21</sup> that is, if it ever really existed in the ways Westerners imagined. This is especially true within the cities, Satish Deshpande confirms, owing to demographics and density that make it difficult, if not impossible, to avoid contact with any one person or group for fear of contamination.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, if caste operates as it once did, as anthropologist Susan Bayly writes, whether in cities or not, it survives only “within the sensitive zones of ‘hearth and home,’”<sup>23</sup> as in decisions over marriage, or perhaps what to eat for a family festival.

## BRINGING CLASS BACK IN

The trouble with cultural explanations of inequality and the treatment of the poor in India, specifically, is that they hold up only so long as India remains the exclusive focus of discussion. In reality, what is true is that poor and working classes are universally marginalized, even despised, the world over. If they appear to be any worse off in India, treated more poorly, this likely has more to do with economics, not culture, and because

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<sup>19</sup> Gupta, *Interrogating Caste*.

<sup>20</sup> Sukhadeo Thorat and Katherine S. Newman, eds., *Blocked by Caste: Economic Discrimination in Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> Dipankar Gupta, *Mistaken Modernity: India Between Worlds* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2000), 124.

<sup>22</sup> Satish Deshpande, *Contemporary India: A Sociological View* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India*, 339.

the social and economic distance between rich and poor in India is that much greater than almost anywhere else in the world.

More accurate, and more analytically useful, is an approach that treats class as the main driver of injustice. In this view, the rich treat the poor as they do as a means to protect their hold on scarce resources, not out of some mystical belief about the poor and their perceived impurity, as sometimes implied in the caste literature. Indeed, religion is largely beside the point. Economic power—wealth, ownership of resources, “political” decision making over local, regional or national economies is what really matters. Accordingly, therefore, scholars of class in the subcontinent discard essentialist critiques, in the end claiming that rich and powerful Indians act like rich and powerful people anywhere, and Indian society operates in the same way as any other society the world over, at least in regards to the motivation and performance of its ruling classes. If anything, new studies that track the recent entrepreneurial success of individuals of lower-caste origins only confirm the obvious—when such individuals come into money, they act as individuals with money do. As necessary, and when convenient, they cast aside their caste allegiances, instead favoring political, social, and economic acts of class solidarity with others of similar means.<sup>24</sup>

Though there is comparably less scholarly attention devoted to the experience of class in India, a compendium of studies edited by Rina Agarwala and Ronald J. Herring

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<sup>24</sup> On the phenomenon of upwardly mobile lower castes, see Lydia Polgreen, “Scaling Caste Walls with Capitalism’s Ladders in India,” *New York Times*, December 21, 2011. The article cites notable scholarly studies, including: Viktoria Hnatkovska, Amartya Lahiri, and Sourabh Paul, “Castes and Labor Mobility,” *American Economic Journal* 4, no. 2 (2012); Devesh Kapur et al., “Rethinking Inequality: Dalits in Uttar Pradesh in the Market Reform Era,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 45, no. 35 (2010); Chandra Bhan Prasad, “Markets and Manu: Economic Reforms and Its Impact on Caste in India” (working paper, Center for the Advanced Study of India, Philadelphia, January 2008).

is an important contribution in this direction.<sup>25</sup> The authors, among them John Harriss, Leela Fernandes, and Vivek Chibber, have all published work independently on the topic.<sup>26</sup> But here their writing fits within a very specific project that reads like a manifesto, with the aim to recover class as a method and means for understanding social change in India and the wider subcontinent. As Agarwala and Herring argue in the introduction, “Class analytics depends on disaggregation, of moving beneath aggregate presentations of economic well-being to the level where people live, where life chances are still, perhaps more than before, unequally distributed.”<sup>27</sup> The goal, and the promise of the book, then, is to “explain how class structure influences political behavior and thus social change.”<sup>28</sup>

The subsequent seven chapters do well in highlighting where particular individuals and groups fit within the larger social order, something that new and learned scholars of Indian society will appreciate. Two of the chapters draw directly on original ethnographic data. One of these chapters, written by Agarwala, reveals the tactics and strategies *bidi*, or cigarette, makers and construction workers employ to win some semblance of job security and other protections from the state. The other, from John Harriss, contrasts the power and efficacy of civil society groups that organize around middle class interests with the relative weakness of local associations and political parties effectively shut out

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<sup>25</sup> Rina Agarwala and Ronald Herring, eds., *Whatever Happened to Class? Reflections from South Asia* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2009).

<sup>26</sup> Vivek Chibber, *Locked in Place: State-Building and Late Industrialization in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003); Leela Fernandes, *India's New Middle Class: Democratic Politics in an Era of Economic Reform* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Patrick Heller, *The Labor of Development: Workers and the Transformation of Capitalism in Kerala, India* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

<sup>27</sup> Rina Agarwala and Ronald Herring, “Introduction: Restoring Agency to Class: Puzzles from South Asia,” in *Whatever Happened to Class? Reflections from South Asia*, ed. Rina Agarwala and Ronald Herring (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2009), 19.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

of formal decision-making processes, but nonetheless supportive of working class concerns. The rest of the chapters can properly be called historical or theoretical, including a piece by Chibber that points to the adoption of poststructuralism and postcolonial theory as the reason why class has been “lost” within the academy.

The best, and appropriately last, chapter of the book is the one on the politics of India’s new middle class coauthored by Leela Fernandes and Patrick Heller. Despite its diminutive size—an estimated 28.4 million households, or 153 million people, one-fifth of the total population<sup>29</sup>—the middle class as a whole receives the lion’s share of attention in the mass media. The “new” in new middle class refers to a dominant fraction of this larger group that wants to “redefine middle class identity through the language of liberalization.”<sup>30</sup> The original insight Fernandes and Heller develop is to suggest that the political aspirations of this group are markedly different than the forms of hegemony depicted in the class literature on middle class power and privilege. Rather than a politics of liberalism, in which the middle class might aspire to win the consent of the masses, the new middle class of India practices the politics of illiberalism, the goal of which is to distance itself from the lower classes. If such a politics means that the new middle class retreat from *actual* politics, they nevertheless seek to expand a base of support in other ways, “through a more culturally grounded ideology that takes the general form of a nationalist-organicist ideology.”<sup>31</sup>

For all that these scholars get right, however, they can also appear strangely myopic

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<sup>29</sup> Rajesh Shukla, *How India Earns, Spends and Saves: Unmasking the Real India* (New Delhi, Sage, 2010).

<sup>30</sup> Leela Fernandes and Patrick Heller, “Hegemonic Aspirations: New Middle Class Politics and India’s Democracy in Comparative Perspective,” in *Whatever Happened to Class?: Reflections from South Asia*, ed. Rina Agarwala and Ronald Herring (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2009).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

in their interpretation of rich and poor interactions. These interactions are often read deterministically: if the rich treat the poor poorly it is because, well, they are rich and the poor are not, end of story. Just the same, Indian elites' appeals to fairness, justice, and equality in the media and in daily conversation are dismissed outright, on the assumption that, at best, such talk is rhetoric only, and at worst, is a calculated distraction from the more nefarious ways they wield power in the society. Such a view misses out on the more thoughtful—which is not to say kind or generous, not remotely—considerations the rich give to justify their illiberal treatment of the poor.

Indeed, there is reason to question the near pervasive imagery of “two Indias,” as there is, or was, reason to question the idea of hundreds, if not thousands, of Indias, as depicted by earlier caste scholars. Objectively, of course, rich and poor do interact, and in a myriad number of ways, in the streets, for example, in general service situations and in middle and upper middle class homes, perhaps most of all, where servants, cooks, and drivers abound. This is not, of course, out of some allegiance to a colonial past or the lingering effects of caste or any other such cultural artifact, but because of the near limitless supply of cheap labor in the country. The rich get help for a pittance, while the poor get a wage, if not a livelihood.

The dynamics that bring rich and poor together in India receive a fair amount of treatment in the literature, and yet much of it is limited to structural analysis. While analysis of this sort yields important findings on differences that separate a range of groups, in terms of wealth, occupation, and relative power in the society, the emphasis on mapping the divide between rich and poor in this way can overshadow other concerns. More to the point, the interior life of individuals within a given class location is treated

like an afterthought. What emerges, at times, is a simplistic understanding of what motivates individual actors, so that the rich are taken to see the poor as serving strictly utilitarian purposes, and the poor, likewise, as seeing the rich in a similar way. I investigate and discuss such notions in the following two sections: first with a discussion of Sampath's shift, physically and mentally, from practices of caste to class; and, secondly, with an outline of the golf club members' perspectives on the caddies, in general, in light of their feelings about others of poor backgrounds across the society.

#### UP FROM CASTE

Sampath, Allabash's caddy, still lives in the same one-story mud and brick house he grew up in as a child, at the back of Challaghatta. As a child, in the late 1980s, Sampath used to pass the KGA on his way to and from school, back when the entrance was located on Wind Tunnel Road. He remembered marveling at the people inside the course, not exactly sure what they were up to, as he had never seen golf before. One day, when he was ten years old, the caddy master, Balakrishna Gopalan, summoned him from where he was standing on the other side of the road. He asked Sampath if he wanted to carry a bag for one of the members. It was a government holiday, as Sampath recalled, and there were, apparently, too few caddies for all the members who wanted to play a round.

"So I went," he said, in a conversation at a coffee shop near the club. "I made five rupees and came back home." He kept one rupee, he added, with a look of pride, as a smile lit up his face. With it, he bought himself a chocolate. The rest he gave to his father. From that point forward, he visited the club on weekends and other government holidays,

which is typically when the members played.

He passed his twelfth grade exams at a government school where the language of instruction was Kannada. He graduated with neither the necessary grades nor the desire to pursue higher education. For a time, he supplemented his income at the club shoveling dirt and hoisting bags of cement at the open construction site of what would eventually become the Diamond District, the gated community opposite the gates to the KGA. He worked at a number of other menial jobs, at one point mopping floors and cleaning toilets at Manipal Hospital, also a new addition to the area back then. But by his twentieth birthday, he had settled on full-time work as a caddy. By the mid-1990s, the suggested minimum fees had improved to twenty-five rupees a round, plus the work of a caddy was easier, more attractive and interesting than filling of bags of cement or scrubbing toilets.

In recent times, the number of KGA members has swelled to more than 3,000, from less than a hundred in the early days. Approximately ten or fifteen percent play regularly, which means that any of the 150 or more caddies who wish to work a round can get one. Sampath talked about his work with the bravado and pride of an entrepreneur. “In one day, if I want,” he said, “I can take two or three rounds. It’s good work, not cheap work. For a caddy, I’m rich.”

“How much money do you make in a month, would you say?” I asked.

“In a bad month, maybe I make only 4,000 rupees,” a figure comparable to the minimum wage, not nearly enough to support a wife and two boys and mother and father who lived with them. “But suppose I take two rounds in a day and the members are good, I can make 600, 700 rupees. On a Saturday afternoon, maybe I take half a round. I can make another 100 or 150 rupees. I can go one more afternoon during the week and I can

make 150 or 250. I can make 10,000 rupees in a month.”

I asked Sampath about caste and whether it mattered in his relations with the members. Hardly, he intimated. “The only difference between me and members,” he said, “is education, money. More than caste, it’s the way that I’m looking that makes a difference. If I wear dirty clothes, they’ll say, ‘Don’t touch my water bottle,’ ‘Don’t touch my cell phone,’ but that’s not about my caste. If I’m clean and my appearance is neat, then it doesn’t matter. On the golf course, nobody is asking [about] my caste.”

He had known what caste discrimination was about, he assured me. Growing up in the village, wealthier upper-caste Reddys and Gowdas occupied larger, more durable homes in the center. The physical order of the village mirrored its social or moral order, as well. Conventions restricting direct or indirect contact between the castes reflected and reinforced upper-caste dominance. On occasion, Sampath remembered, as when a member of one of these upper-caste families died or when the village celebrated a festival honoring one of their gods, he and others of his age and background were summoned to visit Reddy and Gowda homes to pay their respects. They brought gifts and were instructed to leave them out front. Then they lined up, one after the other, holding out their hands, palms facing upwards, and waited for candy in return. The owners would drop pieces of candy and fruit into their hands, but from a vertical and, presumably, safe distance of a foot or more.

Most of the time, though, as Sampath walked through the center of the village, he was always sure to keep his head down, thereby avoiding any untoward advances or indignities. At the government school he attended, the primary language of instruction was Kannada, administered by poor, and poorly trained, teachers from a similarly

disadvantaged caste background. His classmates were also lower-caste, many of them his neighbors. After school, they returned to the back of the village to play in the cramped alleyways between their houses.

Things today were different, but not perfect, he said. He was still barred from entering the temple at the front of the village, and if he lingered too long in the area, people would stare at him. Referring to the Gowdas and Reddys, he said, “They say we can’t go here, only there. That’s what they’ll do.” He has friends from other castes, however, he said, who live near the front of the village; some of them caddies, and when he wants to, he visits them. He may not go inside their homes, but will hang out with them at nearby tea stalls, for instance, or by the side of the road. “If I know him,” he told me, “and he is my friend, if we went to the same school, then we talk.” But, he clarified, “I can’t talk to just anyone. I can’t talk to the elders.”

Much of this I confirmed one afternoon wandering through the passageways and streets of Challaghatta. Sampath was at the club, but knew I would be stopping by, and passed on the message to his wife and children in advance. I was with Meera, one of the two translators I hired in Bangalore to assist in my conversations with the caddies. When Meera and I arrived at his home, we asked Sampath’s mother, Aditya, if she would help show us around the village. She was sitting down outside, leaning against the front of the house, making paan. She refused to go with us, and said we should not go, either. She seemed scared, as much for us as for herself, which seemed reasonable given what Sampath had said about his childhood in the village. A boy, Babu, in his late teens, who walked with a slight limp, offered to take us instead, though even he would only go so far. He, too, seemed scared, turning back just as we came upon the upper-caste homes.

I told the Reddy and Gowda families we met I was doing some research on the people of Challaghatta. I did not divulge that I was already acquainted with Sampath and others who lived in behind their homes. Sitting on the front steps at one home, an elderly woman expressed resentment over the fact “AKs,” or Adikarnatakas, as Dalits are called in the state, had “come up the [social] ladder.” She was unhappy with pro-Dalit land reforms that had been instituted in the 1970s by then former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

“We don’t really talk to them,” she said. “We don’t let them inside the house.” I asked why not, and she said, “We are different, they are different. The elders have created this [division] and we don’t want to go against them.”

I asked the neighbor next door if he knew anyone who was a caddy. “No,” he said. “I don’t know anyone around here who does that kind of work.” He gestured up the road from where we had originally come. “They live over there.” He suggested we go in the mornings, because in the afternoons and evenings “all of them are drunk.”

Another man, standing nearby, feeding cows, recommended against it entirely. “They don’t know anything,” he said, barely hiding his contempt, and calling them “dirty.”

Finally, after three hours, Meera and I sat down for tea and biscuits with this man and his wife and daughter to talk about the village history. He appeared to be liberal in outlook, stressing that the AKs were “human,” and that “everyone” in the village is “equal.” Despite this, the family employed a little girl of perhaps nine or ten years of age to sweep floors and clean toilets. She was barefoot, I noticed, wearing a stained white dress that looked more like a used rag than suitable clothing. Her hair was matted, too,

and she looked as if she had not had a shower or bath in many days. She sat on the floor most of the time, while the five of us sipped tea from large sofa chairs. They insisted she was “part of the family.” She was AK, the man of the house confirmed, and lived at the back of the village.

Sampath had encountered caste discrimination even within his home, as well as around it. His wife, Danalakshmi, is of the same caste, though with origins in Karnataka; Sampath’s family has roots in the state of Tamil Nadu, making their union a point of contention. They grew up in Challaghatta, in homes facing one another across a narrow pathway, only a few feet apart. At first, they were just friends, but then, when Danalakshmi was in her late teens and Sampath in his early twenties, they eloped. Sampath’s parents grudgingly accepted the marriage, but Danalakshmi’s did not, forcing a split with them that has never been mended. Her father passed away a few years ago, without reconciliation. Her mother still would not talk to her. Only one sister out of three maintains any contact whatsoever, and even this is strained. Although the two families continue to live in the same homes, across a pathway they share, they still do not interact to this day.

Later, on another visit, I asked Sampath a pointed question about his sons, Santosh and Kiran, at the time seven and eleven years old, respectively. “Do you envision a day when they can go into one of these homes, speak to the elders, and not have any problem?”

“Caste is changing,” he said. “Maybe.” As for what future awaits his sons, in terms of a university education and quality jobs, he added, “It will depend on them, how they study. Of course, I want my sons to be well educated. In the future they can work for

these people, the members even. They might not be able to sit in his place, in the member's place, in his chair, but maybe they will be able to work in the office where the member works.”

Sampath's father, Subappa, was illiterate with no formal education. He worked for upper-caste families, carrying out menial tasks for them, running basic errands, tilling their land, and feeding, caring, and cleaning up after their animals. His mother, also illiterate, spent her mornings taking care of domestic duties, getting Sampath and his siblings to school, and then, in the afternoons, pulling weeds and sweeping sidewalks out along Airport Road, just to bring in some extra money for the family. Neither of them spoke any English. Both, in fact, were living and more or less following a similar routine and schedule as they did when Sampath was a child. They wore the same clothes as before—a cotton shirt and lungi for Subappa; a sari for Aditya. They did not leave the village all that often, nor did they really have any need to.

Prospects for Sampath and, especially, his sons were different, he argued on this visit, and it was hard not to agree, given his narrative. “From where my father was, what he wore, it was only one pair of shorts and one shirt, I've already improved. I wear an undershirt, a golf shirt or dress shirt, some pants,” he added. “My children might have a better life than me, and their kids will have a better life also. I'm confident about that.”

Confident, yes, but Sampath also knew that whether or not his sons achieved much in life hinged almost entirely on his ability to win support from the members. Sampath had to cultivate these relationships in ways a servant indulged his master, knowing when to speak, what to say, always ingratiating, and never overstepping his boundaries.

## THE RHETORIC OF CLASS

There were some members who held fast to the idea that India was growing in a manner that would lift all boats. One member at the BGC, a mechanical engineer by training, insisted, “Things are getting better and better.” Even poor farmers, he said, were improving their position. “Don’t think they are a dissatisfied lot,” he went on. “No, in India, they are very highly satisfied.” Government, it turned out, was the real problem. In time, the middle class would grow, and with it, better prospects for everyone else. Another member, this time at the KGA, suggested the same. He fell within the top two or three percent of income earners in the country, he admitted, owing to his executive experience at home and abroad. But his wealth would trickle down, he was sure of it. “It’s like an accordion,” he said, drawing an analogy. “As the poor become more affluent, the gap will narrow. The fifteen to one will become twelve to one, eight to one.”

Such optimism, however, was rare among many of the members with whom I spoke. Most, as I indicated in the last chapter, knew well enough, at least intellectually, the struggles poor people faced, and by and large did not trade in the usual “rhetoric of emergence,”<sup>32</sup> as critics call it, whereby everyone in India was now free to do and become whatever he or she liked, owing to liberalization. Like the caddies, these members also understood class to be a closed system, privileging money and education, above all else, and they did not think either were so easy to obtain without ready access of the kind and level with which they had been provided by birth and inheritance. Indeed, for many of them, India was not “shining” in the least, as long as more than half the country remained poor, going without essential basics, such as food, shelter, health care, and a well-paying job. In fact, many of the members with whom I spoke seemed just as

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<sup>32</sup> Rafia Zakaria, “Slums, Schools and Neocolonialism,” *Dawn.com*, January 4, 2013.

critical of India's path of liberalization as any critical scholar.

But if these and other members seemed genuinely troubled by the current state of Indian affairs, it also seemed their worries were only limited to abstract conversations about the countless, nameless, and faceless poor beyond the gated walls where I met them. There was sympathy for the poor they did not know, though much less, it seemed, for the poor they did know. The bootstrap narrative they put down as a fiction when talking about the general poor suddenly seemed to be a thing worth advocating in discussions about the caddies. It is not so much that familiarity bred contempt as expectation. The poor elsewhere were assumed to have no contact with rich people like them, and in their mind, these were the truly disadvantaged. But the poor in their midst—like the caddies, for example—were thought to be lucky, privileged in a way others were not. At least they had work, and a chance to make some money, however little that might actually turn out to be. The expectations were that they make good on this opportunity, and if they did not, it was their own fault.

“They don't have a boss,” said Sunil Biswant, a member at the KGA. We were sitting together one evening at the Bowring Institute, a colonial-era social club near MG Road, in the center of the city. There was a cold pitcher of beer in front of us. Light snacks were on the way. “The caddies work at their leisure and by their choice,” he said. “Some have come up in life. They see this as an opportunity and take advantage of it.” For others, the work was only “a form of what is called casual labor. ‘When the need arises I come and caddy, pick up a hundred or a couple hundred bucks, and go get drunk.’ There is just no discipline or duty for these guys. As much as one would like to help them, there are limits. Many of these boys, they have been encouraged. They have been

nurtured. We've given them money, because we know these are good boys, they have bright futures, but we can only help them so much."

So much effort by members, and yet so much of it wasted. "They have come into a lot of money," a member at the BGC confided, as we were sitting at the Kirosklar Hut, a resting stop for refreshments midway through the course. "One out of ten or fifteen," he guessed, "are really growing up the social ladder properly. The rest are throwing it all away on all kinds of vices, is what I feel. They should realize there's an opportunity they have got and they should make use of it. They should take advantage of it and change their lives for the better."

One time the member caught his caddy betting on his game. By the sixteenth hole, he recounted, the caddy was looking defeated. "He had some sort of bet, which I later came to know was for the caddy fees. I pulled him aside and told him, 'What the hell are you doing?' I said, 'You are not in the position [to bet]. The 100 or 125 rupees I'm giving you is your meal money.' I got really angry. 'Who gave you permission to bet?' He said, 'I'm sorry, sir, sorry, sir.' I told him, 'I'll hit you and I won't even pay you the caddy fee. You came here to do a job. You're not here to bet.' He was a young boy. Hopefully, he learned a lesson."

This same member had recently proposed a "caddy welfare fund" based on voluntary member contributions. The fund would do away with the tendency among caddies to ask members for money, something he found "troubling." "I don't want caddies to be overpaid," he clarified. "What you give to them is what you give to them." If they needed anything extra, they could get it from the fund. This fund would also be used to "attack social etiquette," he said, adding: "We want the caddies to wear their

uniform and their shoes, you know, bring a little discipline into them. We'll also have an etiquette clinic, which I'm going to stress more on, how they should conduct themselves. I mean, about golf, we're going to show them more videos and other things, so that they have more enthusiasm."

Members at the KGA were also troubled by the lack of discipline and work ethic in the caddies. Instead of a caddy welfare fund, however, an evaluation and rewards system had been discussed. One member who had been assigned a role on the caddies' subcommittee had contacted friends of his working in human resource management at IT companies in the city. These friends had advised him to install a "carrot and stick kind of approach" to "entice" them.

"You have to reward these guys," he said. "We're trying to put a system in place to get, let's say, unbiased, constructive feedback on them." This feedback would come from members and be used to identify "a caddy of the month." The award, he hoped, would give the caddies an "added incentive, so they have something to aspire for. We'll put this [plaque] up in their caddy station so that they know who the caddy of the month was." There would also be a caddy of the year award, he said, which would be combined with an offer of vocational training in automobile mechanics, computers, or pipe fitting, so that this one caddy might develop "an alternative skill set."

Carrots and sticks, training programs, and other innovations, however, were bound to fail. The clubs were limited in what they could do with the caddies by virtue of the fact they—as organizations—did not pay them. An additional problem, moreover, especially at the BGC and KGA, were the rotating voluntary committees. Rarely did the interests of one committee carry over to the next, leaving pet projects of individuals and

subcommittees unfinished. The primary concern was golf, not caddy welfare, which was always given secondary consideration next to the needs of members and guests. The member who had organized the education program at the club would conceivably pull it down eventually. There was no one really in charge of it, and no one around to see that it was not working.

Members had better luck impacting the life of caddies they hired than did the clubs. Whatever the members thought of the caddies as a whole, they were inclined to give their own caddy the benefit of the doubt. When referring to “my” caddy, as they often did, they could show remarkable compassion, albeit with a hint of infantilism.

Out on the course one afternoon, one member at the KGA freely admitted, “I love the caddies,” and even went so far as to say he considered them part of his family. “It’s not an easy job to carry a twenty k.g. bag,” he conceded. “They are human, aren’t they?” Hiring a caddy, he said, even when he did not need one, was his way of “indirectly helping the poor,” something he was proud of.

Another member at the BGC, a Muslim businessman originally from Mumbai, quipped, when I first met him at the driving range in November 2007: “In India, there is no dignity of labor.” I saw him again, in February 2008, for a drink on the clubhouse patio at the BGC.

“It’s not for the love of the game that they become caddies,” he speculated, leaning back in his chair, sipping whiskey. “No, it’s because they have to earn their livelihood. That’s why they’ve come here, working eight hours and only making 200 rupees [approximately three to four American dollars]. It doesn’t give you a good, nice feeling.”

“How would you describe your relationship to the caddies?” I asked.

“Normally I’ll try to have one caddy. When he’s busy I’ll try to get another caddy. I don’t have personal relationships, except with two of them. I help them whenever they need it.”

“When you say ‘personal relationship,’ do you mean friends?”

“No, they’re not friends,” he said, emphatically. “Because there is no dignity of labor, you look upon them as inferior. You don’t take them to be equal. Any servant, any employee, it’s the same. Any employee in this country is treated like he is an inferior man.”

“Is that how you treat the caddies?”

“No, that treatment is not there,” he said, then quickly added, “but they cannot come closer to you because you treat them as if they are inferior to you. It’s very hard, I would say, for anyone to become friendly with the caddies.”

Naveen Prakasam held a membership at both the BGC and KGA. In his late thirties, he worked as a manager for a family textiles business. Naveen was an imposing figure, at six feet tall, with broad shoulders and a barrel chest. Friendly and jovial, he was very popular with the members. A regular on multiple subcommittees, many tagged him as a future club captain at the BGC, his home club since he was a teenager.

Naveen spoke about a caddy his own age who had been his personal caddy for eight years. The caddy was an alcoholic when Naveen first met him, and still is, apparently.

“I’ve made him come down a little bit,” he said, meaning he had persuaded the caddy to drink less over time.

“What I’ve done is make his life a little better. I educate his children, take care of them. The money doesn’t go to him. It goes directly to the school. When they have

birthdays, I send them gifts. I pay him per round. For him, I'm a guru. I can say my thinking has rubbed off on him."

Naveen had organized and paid for the private English-medium education for this caddy's three children, a girl and two boys. He had also secured him work collecting range balls and assisting coaches in the club's after-school junior program, a move that provided stability to his life. Indeed, most caddies complained that the cash-in-hand they earned from members made it difficult to budget wisely. Though he continued to caddy occasionally, picking up a round and a bit of cash here and there, now at least he was guaranteed 4,500 rupees, or around \$100, a month, divided into two paychecks.

Nevertheless, Naveen was unable to imagine the implications of this approach were it to be applied more broadly. In no time, we were back to talking about the irredeemable qualities of *all* caddies who, in his estimation, were the "very low class, riffraff of society."

"Every habit is there among these guys," he said, "drinking, smoking, drugs, gambling, and womanizing. There are some guys who are out and out crooks. They'll rob you of any goddamn thing that you have. That's the kind of people they are."

Like the members I note above, Naveen was convinced caddy work was good work. "A male coolie only gets around 100 rupees. These buggers get more than that. If they take two rounds, they can make 200 bucks [rupees]. That's 6,000 a month, and some guys are going to get lucky and get even more rounds, so it becomes 7,000. That's fantastic, man, and it's fun, too! It's not drudgery."

Most caddies could help themselves. If not, they could at least ask for it. Poverty and hardship was no excuse, according to the member.

“Unless you stretch out your hand, I can’t shake it,” he said. “Most of these guys are arrogant buggers. They think they’ve sort of achieved something. Many think they’re like members. Dress that way and take this thing and walk around like a stud. It’s youth, so many things. Suddenly, one day you’re in your mid-forties and you’re nothing. That’s when they decide to stretch you’re hand out.”

“So you know, Patrick,” Naveen added, “I’m a firm believer that unless you want me to give you some advice, I’m not going to open my mouth and say anything. What does it matter?”

Still, there were other members who seemed to understand the struggles these caddies faced on a more human level, without the tough love Naveen advocated. One, a man in his early eighties and a former secretary at the BGC, told me he paid for a caddy’s stay in a rehab clinic attached to a local hospital. He had the caddy admitted to the program for “about a month” and arranged for some money from the club to pay for it, and also to help his family out because he could not work at the same time. The intervention did not work, though. “He lived for a couple of years,” the member said, “but went back to drinking. He was found [dead] one day on a footpath.”

This member was noticeably shaken at the thought. He did not even want to divulge that he had been the member who helped this particular caddy, preferring, initially, to talk as if he had overheard the story from another member. It was evident he cared deeply for this caddy and likely still sympathized with other caddies in similar predicaments.

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The proverbial elephant in the room in all of these conversations with members, of

course, was the structure of wages and the organization of work for the caddies. Members would reveal to me their thinking on such matters, often agreeing that something had to be done. Intuitively, they knew—and even some admitted as much, as I have indicated—that if the caddies made more in wages, they would be that much more stable than they were at present, and therefore less prone to the bad decisions some of them did, indeed, make, wasting what little they earned on alcohol and gambling, for example.

But it was not as if the members wanted to see the caddy fees raised, either. That would mean more money out of their pockets; it would also mean greater independence for the caddies. If the caddies were granted protections of formal employment, this would only strengthen their hand, perhaps making strikes and other worker disturbances more likely. It was a possibility no member wanted to countenance, no matter how sympathetic they were to any one caddy or another.

In the end, members were able to have their cake and eat it, too. They could say that they worried about what liberalization was doing to the nation's poor, and they could come across quite convincingly when they did. Members knew less about the poor out there, beyond the walls of the clubs, or at least they pretended to. It was possible to think that this abstract mass of poor people did not have the opportunities necessary to reach their full potential. But not the caddies. The caddies who labored under them they could denigrate as morally inferior, lacking in discipline, wasting time and money. Unlike the poor out there, beyond the walls of the clubs, these caddies at least had an opportunity, a privilege, many of the members thought, to carry their bags and pick up some cash. What the caddies did with this money, then, was what counted, and if they were going to waste

what they earned, so be it. That was not, and could not be, the members' concern. In such twisted logic of illiberalism, the caddies had only themselves to blame, or so it seemed.

### Chapter 3: Working the Divided City

Monday through Friday, the course at Eagleton Golf Resort (hereafter Eagleton) was mostly empty. As the thirty-kilometer drive in weekday traffic could take up to an hour and a half or more, members and guests tended to avoid the hassle and instead played their golf on the weekend. The caddies followed members' lead, and their money, showing up in droves on Saturday and Sunday. Both days, as early as dawn, a hundred or more of them descended on the caddy station, coming from the approximately fifteen local villages nearby, most on foot, others on bicycles, and a small number on scooters or motorcycles. Their wait for work was not usually long in coming, and they were soon pairing off with members, who arrived by considerably wealthier means. The first "four-ball"—a group of four playing partners—teed off at first light, followed by another group ten minutes later, and so on.

It was something of a shock, therefore, when on a Sunday morning in late February 2009 there were no caddies to be seen. Lawrence, the caddy master, called one of his assistants seated at the registration desk inside the club. A former caddy, the assistant had heard rumblings among his friends that they were not happy with the new system for pairing caddies with members. This new system, instituted only a week earlier, required each caddy to take a numbered piece of paper when he showed up at the club. The first caddy would be given the number one, which would entitle him to a round of golf with the first member who arrived, the second was given number two, and so on, until all the caddies and members were accounted for. The caddies, however, were not pleased.

Under the old system, as at the BGC and KGA, one of two things happened when a

member pulled up to the caddy station. If the member had a longstanding relationship with one of the caddies, then that caddy, and he alone, would appear at the parked car, ready to pull the golf bag out of the backseat or trunk. Other caddies would know that this member “belonged” to a certain caddy, because he would have told them beforehand. No one else would dare approach the car, for fear of threat or violence.

If there was no caddy aligned with a member upon arrival, however, or if it was unclear, then a kind of frenzy broke out. One moment quiet and calm, leaning up against the caddy station or sitting passively inside, caddies would spring to life and race one another to reach the approaching car. Whoever reached the car first would increase his chance of being selected by the member when he stepped out from behind the wheel. Lawrence and his assistants rarely intervened, and if so, only to ensure that the caddies did not offend members with their aggressive behavior. For the most part, the caddies would figure—or fight—it out for themselves.

The new system at Eagleton, based on blind pairings, was intended to make things fairer than before, giving every caddy an equal chance to work with the members who paid well. However, few caddies saw it that way. Caddies who had developed regular working relationships with a set of members were especially disinclined to accept the change. The money they made may not always have been great, but it was constant. They could count on “their” members one week to the next. So could their families. Even new or young caddies, who had yet to cultivate long-term working relationships with any members held out hope that one day they would be able to do so. They worried that this new system would forestall that promising possibility.

All of this and more the caddies conveyed to Lawrence on the morning in question.

Approximately seventy-five caddies met with him at the southeast gates of the club, in the shadow of a sixty-foot Aditya, in honor of the sun. It was nothing personal, they said. Their problem was with the club, not him. They wanted things to return to the way they were, or they would not work. He had only to pass the message onto club management.

The standoff did not last long. By mid-afternoon, at the urging of members worried at the prospect of carrying their own golf clubs, an agreement was reached. The caddies who had maintained close relationships with members could keep their commitments and schedules. New commitments and schedules would also be honored. Day-to-day, however, caddies without a previously arranged round would be obliged to take a number. With this, things essentially returned to normal; the status quo had prevailed.

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Unlike the BGC and KGA, both of which had received land and other subsidies from the government, Eagleton, inaugurated in 1997 with a full eighteen-hole course ready for play by 2000, is a strictly for-profit institution run by a private management firm. Golf is not even the primary draw, but rather one of several amenities in the complex, if also the biggest. The golf course sits in the center of a 550-acre gated community. At the time of my last visit to India, in the summer of 2010, only a few summer homes had been constructed, all of them lining the golf course. Eventually, houses and additional subdivisions would be built, along with a hospital, school, riding academy, and entertainment and leisure center, all features typical of gated living. The restrictions on membership at the other two clubs—where even obtaining an application form required intense vetting—were not a problem at Eagleton. There was no waiting

period to buy up any of the remaining empty plots of land, and no honorary committee to oversee the application process, either. There was just a cashier and presumably a credit agency to double-check the availability of funds.

Here, at Eagleton, money was really all that mattered. The majority of people who played at the club, whether as members or as guests, could best be described as “new rich,” many without the social or cultural capital to win membership at the other two clubs in the city, and who, in fact, did not care, either way. Some owned land within the flourishing development. In 2008, sales staff quoted property prices at 2,500 rupees a square foot, expecting this figure to reach 4,000 rupees (or \$100) a square foot, within a few years time; today, the largest built-up space available, as advertised on the Eagleton website, is 2,200-square-feet. Seemingly, eighty-five percent of properties are now sold.<sup>1</sup>

Many more people, though, do not own property at Eagleton. They have regular memberships instead: as of 2008, so-called life members would have paid six lakhs (\$2,000) for a membership; corporate members paid ten lakhs, with the option to nominate two additional individuals to avail themselves of member privileges; and temporary members, whose memberships expire after one year, paid 60,000 rupees. In addition, there were also the weekend golfers who played irregularly, paying the green fees when they showed up, as they would at any public course in Europe or North America, something that was impossible at the other clubs unless a prospective member was accompanied by an existing one.

Playing less often, mainly for reasons of distance, as mentioned, members and guests paid the caddies more in tips than members at the other clubs, who played more

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<sup>1</sup> “The County at Eagleton,” Eagleton Golf Resort, accessed April 8, 2013, <http://www.eagletonindia.com/county.htm>.

frequently. It was not atypical for a caddy to earn 400 or 500 rupees a round, three or more times the board rate. For most, this money was pocket change. Not only were prices for basic materials and foodstuffs cheaper outside the city, but also in ninety percent of cases, their families owned the land and houses in which they lived. By comparison, twenty-four and thirty-three percent of caddies at the BGC and KGA, respectively, owned the homes where they lived. In addition, almost all of the Eagleton caddies were young, in their mid- to late-teens or early twenties, without families of their own to support.<sup>2</sup>

But all was not perfect. Like caddies at the other clubs, and precarious workers across India,<sup>3</sup> the Eagleton caddies labored at the whim and mercy of people and events outside their control. During monsoon season, for example, the course was unfit for play, and thus for days on end unable to provide work. It was the same with personal illness, and the illness of loved ones, which left a caddy homebound, with no way to make up a day or more of lost wages. There was also just the threat of working on a golf course, where they risked personal injury, even death. “I had an incident some time back,” an Eagleton caddy told me, to highlight one example, “when I got hit by a ball in the chest. I had to pay 3,000 rupees for an operation. After I came back to work, I got hit by a ball in the head.” He pointed to his chest to indicate where he was hit the first time. Then he bent over in his chair to reveal a swollen area on the back of his head where he was struck the second time. For this last injury, he had tried to contact the member whose ball had hit him, albeit accidentally. Originally, the member said he would help cover the hospital

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<sup>2</sup> For these and other comparative figures, see Appendix A.

<sup>3</sup> Jan Breman, *Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Barbara Harriss-White and Nandini Gooptu, “Mapping India's World of Unorganized Labour,” *Socialist Register* 37 (2001).

expenses, but when contacted he declined, threatening to call the police if the caddy ever bothered him again about the matter. “I had to pay 500 rupees for stitches,” he said. “I couldn’t get a [PET] scan, because it would’ve cost me 2,000 rupees.”<sup>4</sup>

Not all members were this lacking in empathy, but even those who were not could be extremely fickle. Some members, for example, handed out 500 rupees at the end of one round, only to pay 200 rupees or less at the end of another a week later. From time to time, members would also cancel a round, on a moment’s notice, and without recourse, leaving a caddy scrambling to find work, and not always successfully. Still others decided, weeks or months into an unwritten agreement, that, in the end, they would like to try out another caddy, someone they thought would be better suited to their game and temperament.

In a better world, caddies at Eagleton, even accounting for the fact that members, on average, paid them quite well, still longed for full-time employment, receiving a regular paycheck every two weeks, and, ideally, a measure of security, in the form of health benefits, sick leave, and contributions towards a pension. Indeed, among a group of older caddies I came to know well, and who had the most influence over the group as a whole, this was a frequently expressed desire, at least at the level of private conversation. Lack of security was a constant irritant. As one of the group put it to me, “This is not a life.”

Village life, too, was becoming compromised. This part of the state, along a

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<sup>4</sup> Being hit by a wayward ball on a golf course is not at all uncommon. I had the experience once myself, at Eagleton, when I was performing caddy duties for a caddy during the annual caddy tournament in 2010. Aside from a ringing in my ears for a period of twenty-fours, a large welt behind my right ear, and what must have been a mild concussion, i was all right. A caddy at the BGC, in 1996, was not so lucky. Similarly struck on the head, he was subsequently pronounced dead at the hospital. The club paid out 3,000 rupees for funeral expenses, plus 2,800 rupees for hospital fees. (Bangalore Golf Club, Minutes of the Honorary Committee, Book 24, Meeting of September 24, 1996)

corridor connecting Bangalore and Mysore, the former capital, was suddenly bursting with development, hastening the pace at which family-owned land—sometimes two or more acres—was being divided among relatives or sold off to private industry, real estate companies, or the state. Land sales, in fact, accounted for much of the growth in this greater metropolitan area, officially renamed Ramanagar District in 2007 at a ceremony hosted by one-time resident and then chief minister H.D. Kumaraswamy. Even at this early stage, though, there were already several development projects in the works, apparently totaling more than a crore [10 million] of rupees, or approximately \$200,000.<sup>5</sup> In August 2008, a manager to whom I spoke with at Canara Bank in Bididi, a small town south of the club and beyond the villages where the caddies lived, reported that fixed deposits (similar to term deposits in the US) had more than doubled and that total deposits had tripled, in just the previous five years ending in March 2008, from nineteen to fifty crores and thirty to ninety-two crores, respectively.

Those with land to sell rarely realized market value; few peasants in India ever did, and this part of the state was no different.<sup>6</sup> No matter how individual caddies' families made out, what this meant, essentially, was that family land once promised to these caddies would not be available to them in the future. It would be one thing, of course, if newly set up plants belonging to Toyota, Coca-Cola, and other multinationals offered formal employment; at least this would have made the loss of land and lack of secure employment going forward manageable. However, this was rarely the case. Indeed, industrial plants in the area have practiced instead what Kalyan Sanyal and Rajesh

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<sup>5</sup> "Ramanagara District will be Made the Best: Kumaraswamy," *Hindu*, August 27, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Goldman, "Speculative Urbanism and the Making of the Next World City," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35, no. 3 (2011).

Bhattacharyya have called “dispossession without proletarianization.”<sup>7</sup> They have bought up land, in other words, often at below market rates, and then refused to hire local men on full-time contracts.

If the rapid development east of Bangalore, where the KGA is located, was any indication, the caddies at Eagleton were perhaps a decade out from being in the same, or worse, predicament than the caddies at the BGC and KGA. I say worse because at least the caddies at these other clubs are based in the city, where members played more regularly; there usually was always a round to be taken, and this would be the case for the foreseeable future. Also, given this was the city, the caddies could, conceivably, pick up bits of work elsewhere whenever they wanted. But if the benefits of land that the caddies at Eagleton depended on as a safety net dried up and the local industries refused to hire them on a more permanent basis, they would be more dependent on the members than they had ever been. It seemed only a matter of time.

None of this seemed to figure in their deliberations on whether or not to go on strike. Despite their longstanding autonomy from members and the club, and the solidarity they enjoyed amongst each other (all of them lived within a one mile radius of the club, and most, nearly ninety percent, were Vokiliga, part of a dominant caste<sup>8</sup> in the region) they had organized, basically, for a return to the status quo, rather than push forward on the issue of full employment. Their collective action, impressive as it was, and as understandable as it was, appeared, in hindsight, as a missed opportunity,

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<sup>7</sup> Kalyan Sanyal and Rajesh Bhattacharyya, “Beyond the Factory: Globalisation, Informalisation, and the New Locations of Labour,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 44, no. 22 (2009).

<sup>8</sup> The term dominant caste has specific scholarly meaning. A dominant caste is simply a caste—regardless of its position in the traditional caste system—that assumes a regional advantage on account of its monopoly or near monopoly purchase on land and other resources. See M. N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

especially given a look at their possible futures, presently being lived out by the caddies at the BGC and KGA.

What this means, exactly, I begin to outline in the next section, with an analysis of the labor process involving caddies at the BGC and KGA. Then, in the section that follows, I profile union efforts—or, more precisely, union talk—at the KGA, highlighting the actions and words of two caddies, in particular. I return to Eagleton in the second half of the chapter to emphasize the differences between caddies here and elsewhere, in terms of their pay, their living conditions, and, most of all, their interactions with members. In a penultimate section, I show how shifting political and economic conditions on the ground are slowly, but surely, eroding the advantages these caddies have over their counterparts at the BGC and KGA, and what this means for them and their families.

#### “THE CADDIE QUESTION” AND THE POLITICS OF LABOR

On a weekday morning in the second week of November 2007, there was a caddy shortage at the KGA. The problem, however, was not a strike. To be precise, it was Diwali, the annual festival of lights, akin to New Year’s celebrations in western popular culture. A fair number of caddies at the KGA had taken the opportunity to skip town for the weekend, to visit with relatives in far-flung villages, or simply to stay home and take a break, as did many of the members.

By seven-thirty there was a delay in sending members out for their rounds of golf—the reason being that they could not, or would not, play without caddies to carry their bags. My group, comprising a tax collector, a clothier, and a software technician, were set to tee off at ten past eight, but that now looked doubtful. Half of the approximately

twenty members milling around the starters area did not have a caddy, and they were irate.

“Why are there no caddies?” a member in my group barked at Deepak, one of two caddy masters working the morning shift, along with another, Ramaiah. “You need a proper procedure!” yelled the member. “What is the system here?”

“I’m sorry, sir,” Ramaiah said. “We will give you a caddy when one turns up.”

Moments later, a twelve- or thirteen-year-old boy appeared, as if out of nowhere, from behind the caddy station in the parking lot. A sub-junior caddy, he was wearing a brown bib around his neck and shoulders; he was ready to work. To my astonishment, though, Deepak stepped out in front of the gate, and with a few terse words spoken in Kannada and a wave of the hand, sent the boy away, though not before asking him to remove his uniform and hang it up on the gate.

“Why did you do that?” I asked, surprised at Deepak’s actions. There was an obvious need for caddies. Here was one, and he was being turned away.

“You need to discipline them,” he answered. “Otherwise, they come whenever they like, and that can’t happen. This boy, he walked all the way around outside and then came in. I saw him. I’ll put his name down in a book.” He made a motion with his hand as if he was writing. “But just wait, in five minutes he will come back and say that he is sorry and he will not do it again.”

By this time, members who had started their rounds before dawn were finishing. They settled up with their caddies, which meant that a new group was free to work a second round for one of the waiting members. I already had a caddy, Manju, who I had secured the previous evening by phone, and who had been chatting with some members

and caddies for the previous fifteen or twenty minutes. The man who had been yelling at Deepak and Ramaiah now had one, too, as did the others in our group. We headed to the tee box. When we were away, I looked over my shoulder, curious about the boy and the uniform he had left behind. Sure enough, the uniform he had left on the post was no longer there. The boy had come back for it, as Deepak had promised, and he was standing at the side of a member in a group behind ours.

The whole thing struck me as curious. The boy had committed no crime. He had showed up late for work at a club that does not pay him a salary, provided him no job security, no health care, no benefits at all, and yet here were the caddy masters, paid employees of the club, exerting influence over him, in contradiction to what club records at both clubs stipulated: the caddies were not employees, and could not, and should not, be treated as such.

The basic system of informal rather than employed labor was set as far back as July 11, 1896, at a club committee meeting at the BGC, when a question was apparently raised about what could be done to improve caddy attendance. Might the club employ them, thereby “compelling them by fines to be present always”? A “retaining” fee of three rupees per month, paid to a minimum of twenty caddies, for a total cost of sixty rupees a month, had been suggested. At the time, however, the club was only recovering forty rupees a month in fees for each of the previous six months. The proposal was shelved. “The loss thus incurred to the club,” a note in the minutes reads, “would not be justified by the advantage gained, even if the plan was a success.”<sup>9</sup> Today, more than a century on, the question of whether or not to employ the caddies, referred to as “the caddie question” in the minutes of a meeting held on October 19, 1908, has been answered in much the

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<sup>9</sup> Bangalore Golf Club, Minutes of the Honorary Committee, Book 1, Meeting of July 11, 1896.

same way, not only at the BGC, but also throughout the city and across the country—  
“No!” And yet this club, and almost all others, act like it were “Yes.”

The reasons for refusing the caddies employment are obvious, and not at all atypical of Indian employers, in a country where ninety-five percent of workers are categorized as informal.<sup>10</sup> First and foremost were the financial savings by leaving it to the members to pay the caddies a base wage plus tips directly. Any response to any accidents or injuries the caddies incurred out on the course, meanwhile, could also be taken on by individual members, if they so decided. In extreme circumstances, as when a caddy was hit by an errant ball, which could happen on occasion, as in the case cited above, or when a caddy fell seriously ill and could not come to work, a notice would be put up in the clubhouse requesting donations; members were not, however, obligated to contribute.

The clubs also avoided paying taxes on all these additional workers. In the late 1990s, for example, according to a former secretary at the BGC I spoke to, the local state government sent a taxman to collect back taxes on all unreported salaried employees. “The government said they were our employees,” the member recalled. After a brief investigation, however, the taxman was sent away, apparently content with the club’s answer: “The caddies are not our employees,” he repeated. The issue, he assured me, was never an issue again.

Refusing the caddies employee status has not been, however, only a matter of finances and taxes; it is also a political calculation. More than anything, the clubs have feared a protracted labor dispute, which would adversely affect golf operations. As club

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<sup>10</sup> Rina Agarwala, “From Work to Welfare: A New Class Movement in India,” in *Whatever Happened to Class? Reflections from South Asia*, edited by Rina Agarwala et al. (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2009).

officials understand it, only employees so named could strike with the intent to leverage employers for more wages, better working conditions, and the like. If the caddies were not officially declared employees, or so these officials claimed, then the possibility of a strike could be forestalled indefinitely.

The clubs have preferred to think of the caddies as “contract laborers,” to whom they have no responsibility or obligation. Indeed, as one club official put it to me just a few weeks prior to the incident observed around the time of Diwali, “[The caddies] are like railway porters in the railway stations, you know, the guys who come into the train when you arrive at the station. They ask if you need some help carrying your bags. It’s the same with the caddies. They do not fall under the Labor Act. We can’t control them. There’s no register. They come to the club and a member will hire them out for a round and pay them the suggested rate. If a member wants to pay more, then that’s okay, but they don’t have to.”

This member was referring, specifically, to the Indian Industrial Disputes Act, written into law at the time of independence, in 1947. The law was amended in 1976 to obligate employers of more than 300 employees to formally file for permission from the government before retrenching their workers; in 1982, this threshold was lowered to 100 employees.<sup>11</sup> Various companies, including golf clubs, it seemed, actively hired and fired workers with this figure in mind. That is partly why, on a technicality, the clubs did not want to recognize the caddies as employees. There were more than 100 of them, and if they were hired as employees, so the reasoning went, they could never be fired.

Then again, if the caddies were not designated as employees, they were certainly

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<sup>11</sup> For a history of industrial relations in India, including the named amendments, see Debashish Bhattacharjee, “The Evolution of Indian Industrial Relations,” *Industrial Relations Journal* 32, no. 3 (2001).

treated as if they were, starting with the register the club official claimed did not exist. Indeed, such a register did exist. It is what Deepak had referred to when he said he was going to “write up” the offending caddy. A similar register was used at the BGC. I had seen these registries with my own eyes, and on the very occasion just described: inch-thick rule-lined notebooks the caddies were asked to sign upon entering the club for work. The two clubs also kept binders holding biographical data for each caddy, including their name, along with such personal details as age, address, education, and a passport-sized photograph.

More telling than registers and binders, however, was the elaborate management system and corresponding rules and regulations that governed caddy behavior on and off the course. Rules were typically posted on message boards in the caddy stations and enforced by caddy masters and their assistants, all of whom were former caddies who now received a regular paycheck and other benefits of full employment. The caddies were also obligated to wear uniforms. Sub-junior caddies at the KGA, for instance, wore brown, sleeveless uniforms that hung over their shoulders; juniors wore blue; seniors wore red; and professionals, so called because they had, at some point, qualified as professionals on the Professional Golf Tour of India or its defunct precursor, the Professional Golf Association of India, wore green. At the BGC, sub-junior caddies wore red; juniors wore green; and seniors wore blue. Professional caddies at the BGC were exempt from wearing a uniform.

Each rank corresponded to a certain level of experience and skill and, likewise, to a suggested rate posted on a board beside the gate to the starters area. Caddies could improve their rank by honing their golf knowledge and caddy skills, winning

recommendations from members, and upholding standards of dress, etiquette, and punctuality—a fifth to two-fifths of caddies at all three clubs, in fact, fell in the category of junior caddies, while a majority were seniors.<sup>12</sup> There was always the potential for demotion or suspension, though, for failing to live up to these standards. In addition to their other responsibilities, BGC and KGA caddies were expected to attend unpaid meetings and training sessions, usually held once every other month. Which is to say they were a long way from being like railway porters.

“I tell them this is a job,” a member in charge of the caddies subcommittee at the KGA once said to me when I met him after one of the training sessions. “If they’re not interested, then don’t do it. Go somewhere else. You cannot decide to come one day and not another. See, there’s an attendance register, and if the guys don’t show up on a regular basis, and they haven’t informed the caddy masters that they’re not showing up, then action will be taken.”

Other members, though, were ambivalent about such efforts at bending the will of recalcitrant caddies, and instead resorted to berating them and sometimes hitting them, all for the slightest infraction, such as forgetting to rake a bunker, speaking when a member was about to take a swing, refusing to fetch a ball in a water hazard (although it was against club rules for them to do so, and even for members to ask), or showing up late.

I remember once, for instance, standing among a group of caddies leaning on the side of a car in the parking lot at the BGC when a member and what looked like a new caddy fourteen or fifteen years of age appeared at the front entrance to the club. The member was yelling at the caddy, for what, I did not know. One of the caddy masters approached the scene. Without so much as hearing either side, he lifted his hand and

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<sup>12</sup> See Appendix A.

brought it down on the side of the caddy's head. The caddy, half the size of the caddy master who struck him, faltered and backed away. When he regained his footing, the caddy master hit him again. The caddies standing around me simply laughed, taking in the proceedings, as if it were a form of entertainment.

“With them, might works,” a member who at one time was in charge of the caddies at the BGC boasted. He was a big man, six-foot-one or two, at least 225 pounds, maybe more, wide across the shoulders and neck and thick in the middle. Reminiscing about his time in the position some years back, he said, “I ran it out of love and affection, 120 [rupees] here, a bottle of beer there, put a hand on two or three guys, that's by and large how I did it. The only thing I was particular about, was no drinking and coming to work. If you drink, you drink, I'm not bothered, but there's no coming back. I suspended some guys, hit a couple of guys, just to bring some discipline, nothing much.”

Early in his tenure, he admitted, he “belted” a few caddies, making an example of them. “How you do it, is you just sit down quietly, then suddenly get up and bang them. The guy's totally taken aback. I did it when guys were hanging out and watching, so news would spread that I'm not going to take any junk. I will hit. I'm not going to even think about it.”

Even putting aside such instances of abuse, the near universal position expressed by past and current officials at the KGA and BGC was tenuous, at best. A few members, however, recognized the inconsistencies. One sympathetic KGA member with whom I raised the subject put himself in the shoes of these caddies for a moment and made a point I had long considered, saying, as if he were one of them, “De facto, we are employees of the club, because of the way you treat us, therefore we are entitled to the

benefits of an employee.' Yeah, I can see that. It's a likelihood, sure." But then he added, as if taking back his words, "as far as the club is concerned, we don't want them as our employees."

Aside from the impromptu strike organized by the caddies at Eagleton, there has been only one other instance of caddies in Bangalore walking out on the job. It occurred at the BGC, in 1988, when a group of caddies joined the kitchen staff in a strike that lasted two months. They were seeking an increase in caddy fees, along with benefits and other provisions. The caddies involved in the strike were dismissed and replaced by whoever approached the club looking for work. Some of the offending caddies were arrested and fined for their role. The labor unions in the city and state were useless to resist the club or the courts. After a time, most of the offending caddies were allowed to return, but not before they had agreed never to participate in such activities again.

Nowadays, caddies at the BGC, especially the older set, did not see any point in rekindling any labor troubles. "I don't pay any attention to that thinking," one said. "I just come, earn some money, and go back home." Most are more or less resigned to let members decide their fate. Of course, they would like the members to take better care of them, but few hold out any hope that this will happen. One caddy suggested that the members, in his words, should "take the initiative and look to the welfare of the caddies. We don't have any power to ask, but even if we ask, they don't pay any attention to us."

As these caddies well knew, and I had the occasion to find out, some of the most important people in politics, finance, labor, and law in the city and, indeed, throughout the entire country count themselves as members of these clubs. It would seem, from a legal or financial standpoint, that the caddies would not stand a chance in launching any

collective action, even if they were in the right. This would be true, no matter their category of employment. Despite myriad rules and regulations on the books, actual regulation of labor in India is virtually nonexistent.<sup>13</sup> Principally, this has to do with the number of informal workers in the country and the size of the informal sector, overall, which undoubtedly will continue to grow. Since the mid-to late-1980s, the Indian government has bowed to pressures from business leaders at home and abroad calling for a more flexible, and therefore less regulated, workforce supposedly necessary for global competition.<sup>14</sup> Quite contrary to Nehru's original dream of formal employment for all, nowadays official government policy is to sell entrepreneurship as a moral and economic virtue.<sup>15</sup>

Political parties once beholden to unions and their workers now feel little, if any, need to court worker interests, and those of informal workers least of all. Unions, likewise, have lost the ideological and political underpinnings that defined their mission immediately following independence.<sup>16</sup> By some estimates, there are as many as 66,000 unions in the country, but few, if any, take the interests of informal workers to heart.<sup>17</sup> Their interest largely remains in the small minority of workers already protected by collective bargaining agreements.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Barbara Harriss-White, *India Working: Essays on Society and Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Jan Breman, "An Informalised Labour System: End of Labour Market Dualism," *Economic and Political Weekly* 36, no. 52 (2001).

<sup>15</sup> Rina Agarwala, "An Economic Sociology of Informal Work: The Case of India," *Research in the Sociology of Work* 18 (2009).

<sup>16</sup> Supriya RoyChowdhury, "Class in Industrial Disputes: Case Studies from Bangalore," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43, no. 22 (2008).

<sup>17</sup> Barbara Harriss-White et al. "Mapping India's World of Unorganized Labour"; Elizabeth Hill, "The Indian Industrial Relations System: Struggling to Address the Dynamics of a Globalizing Economy," *Journal of Industrial Relations* 51, no. 3(2009); Jamie McCallum, "Organizing the 'Unorganized' Varieties of Transnational Trade Union Collaboration and Social Dialogue in Two Indian Cities," *Journal of Workplace Rights* 15, no. 3 (2012).

<sup>18</sup> Bhattacharjee, "Evolution of Indian Industrial Relations."

All this is to underline that fact that the workers are on their own, whether they are based in the formal or informal sector, and the employers know it. But this is especially true in the case of the golf caddies. There are so few of them in the city—no more than 500, by my estimate, across the clubs that are the focus of this study. They are invisible, in other words. It is likely that a good number of these caddies would immediately be banished from the clubs if they organized collectively, just as happened before at the BGC, except this time it is very doubtful that they would ever again be allowed back in to work. It was this distinct, even likely, possibility that served as a major check on their group ambitions, as it did with other informal workers elsewhere.<sup>19</sup>

#### UNION, YES? CLASS STRUGGLE AT THE KGA

Sanjay, a caddy at the KGA, was one of the few union advocates I could find in all of my conversations with the caddies, at this or any club. A high school dropout after finishing tenth grade at a government school, he was twenty-three years old when I met him. He was tall, wiry thin, and almost always quick with a joke and a laugh, except, that is, when the subject turned to the members.

“There’s not a lot of respect coming from members,” he told me, as we sat together in an outdoor section to a restaurant inside Diamond District, opposite the KGA. “They say, ‘Come here, do this.’ They talk in a very aggressive, rough way. They’ve got money and I don’t, so what to do? We’re all the same, right? Every human being, our blood is red. The behavior should be the same, but still I see the members are not acting that way.”

“If a member doesn’t treat you with any respect, what do you do?” I asked.

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<sup>19</sup> Breman, “An Informalised Labour System.”

“You suggest what we can do,” he answered. “They have money. I can’t do anything.”

“Is there anything you would change at the KGA?”

“I want to organize the caddies,” he said. The goal was to “pull in 100 rupees per month [per caddy] and make a fund for the caddies,” which would be available to them for whatever reason. “If you want to buy a golf set you could use the money for that, or if you’ve got some problems at your house you could use the money for that, anything, really.” This last, rather surprising remark, however, suggested to me that the real purposes of a “Caddy Fund”—one that would appeal and make sense to the caddies as a whole—had not really been thought out by Sanjay. Unions and associations don’t create funds to pay for golf sets or household goods or day-to-day expenses like a new roof, but rather to deal with emergencies or a clearly demonstrated need. A Fund as insurance was what was needed, but even that was proving to be a hard sell to men to whom 100 rupees was important monthly income, and to whom insurance they might never actually use was something for the future to worry about.

The idea of the Caddy Fund was not exactly Sanjay’s alone, but something he had borrowed from another caddy, Narayan, and a mutual friend of theirs named Vijay. When they first approached him about the idea, he himself actually declined their invitation to contribute, thinking he would not have any use for such a fund. But then he met with a bad fall and broke his foot. Hospital expenses and recovery cost him and his family 50,000 rupees, as much as he could hope to earn in a year. After that, he said, “I’m willing to give my 100 rupees.”

His peers were unconvinced, apparently, but he was optimistic nonetheless. He

compared the effort to constructing a building. First, he said, he needed to make a solid foundation, and only then would he be successful with it. “I feel that they will support me eventually,” he said. “‘If you support me, I can support you,’ I’ll tell them.”

Sanjay would never get to see built the foundation he envisioned. A few short months after our conversation, he was lifting weights unattended at a gym and choked to death under the pressure of a barbell that had trapped him. At the time of his death, the club invited donations for his family from the members, as it often did in the event of a caddy emergency or sudden death, but otherwise left arrangements to the family. This was about as much as could be expected, given that he had no formal appointment with the club, no health care and no life insurance. The fact that the club suggested its members help out was at least some indication that officials were aware of their moral, if not legal, obligation to him, even in death.

The KGA was one of the richest clubs in the country. The caddies failed to understand why some of this money could not be put to use in supporting them as full-time employees, especially when they saw how the club managed its finances. The club, to take but one example, had spent millions of rupees on floodlights posted outside the final five fairways. The lights were intended to make it possible to play beyond dusk. Though erected in 2005, they could not be turned on. Officials at the nearby Bangalore International Airport, fearing potential interference with planes landing at night, refused to grant the club the necessary special permission. It has only been since the airport was closed to commercial traffic in 2008, and a new airport opened in Yellahanka, north of the city, that the lights could be used. The whole fiasco, according to Narayan, Sanjay’s friend and confidant, was a waste of money.

“There’s so much money here,” Narayan exclaimed one afternoon as we were walking up the fifth fairway. He had just handed me a five-iron from my bag, in preparation for my next shot. He pointed to the ground at my feet, reminding me that the front nine had just been reopened after more than a year of renovations, in which the fairways had been elevated by ten feet to accommodate a state of the art water filtration system underneath. The cost, he could only guess, was in the millions of rupees. Then, looking up, he pointed to the lights, sticking up between the trees, and asked, rhetorically, “What happens to the caddy? Nothing. Why can’t they give us something? If you work for a corporation you have some security, but not here. Why?”

As a man, Narayan did not think there was any great difference between him and any of the members. His blood was red, as was theirs, he would say, echoing Sanjay. “I cannot think that I’m poor,” he said, sitting with me a few months later at an outdoor restaurant. “There are people like [Wipro chairman]<sup>20</sup> Azim Premji who comes here to play. He’s the richest person in Asia. My boss plays with him. When my boss plays with him he plays with him as an equal. He doesn’t play with him as if he’s playing with the richest man in Asia. When they behave like that, why can’t I behave like that?”

“How does it feel,” I wondered aloud, “to be this close to that much money and this much power?”

He deflected the question, answering instead, “The people who are rich today are people whose parents educated them and put them up in a job that matches their

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<sup>20</sup> Wipro is a \$7.4 billion dollar conglomerate, a global information technology, consulting and outsourcing company with 140,000 employees serving in seventy-two “global delivery centers” in fifty-three countries. For other details, see “Fact Sheet,” Wipro, accessed April 18, 2013, <http://www.wipro.com/about-wipro/fact-sheet.aspx#>. Premji’s net worth is estimated at \$11.5 billion, making him the third wealthiest person in India. Profile available at Forbes.com (accessed April 18, 2013, <http://www.forbes.com/profile/azim-premji/>).

education. That's why they earn that kind of money, that's all. A bank manager earns a lakh a month, but he would've spent the same time and money on educating himself. The only difference today is that we're not educated, we have no money, so, no, we can't become like them, but still we are the same." Which is why it bothered him so much when the members would act as if it were otherwise, as if they were his betters, when they were not. They were just more fortunate to grow up in the homes and neighborhoods where they did, to attend the right schools, to know the right people. He did not begrudge them their good fortune. He only wished they could see that poor and working people such as himself and other caddies required similar kinds of institutional support that might propel their own success.

Like Sanjay, Narayan resented the fact that amid so much conspicuous—and, to him, reckless—consumption he and his peers were forbidden to organize even a modest Caddy Fund that they and their families could access in the event of suspension, accident, or emergency. He floated the idea, similar to Sanjay's, whereby each of them would contribute 100 rupees a month to the fund. Ten of them would be elected to manage it, and make decisions on behalf of everyone. Steadily, with this fund in place, the caddies would become more independent of the members than they were presently.

The members, though, vehemently opposed the idea, on the assumption that such a thing smacked of union activity. That did not stop Narayan from asking a few select members with whom he had a particularly good rapport. But even they objected. He also raised the issue at a monthly caddy meeting, only to be rebuffed by members of the club's honorary committee who ran it. The mandatory meetings were ostensibly held to let caddies air concerns and complaints, but this was one concern the club was not

interested in hearing.

I wondered why Narayan even bothered to solicit feedback from the club and its members at all. It was almost as if he wanted their permission. Could he not tell that their interests and his were in no way aligned? Apparently not, and yet this misunderstanding of interests reflected a deeper confusion about the proper role of a union, and what sorts of conflict it would necessarily require to set one up.

Narayan disparaged the activities of labor unions in Kerala, a state south of Karnataka that up until recently has been ruled by the Communist Party of India, and which for many years had earned a distinction, after West Bengal, as one of most left-leaning states in the country. Bangalore, he said, drawing on unsupported knowledge passed down in conversations with the members, was more popular than Kochin, Kerala's capital city, because of its business friendly environment. "Kerala," he worried, "was never going to develop because of the Communists. The unions threaten to go on strike anytime." He referred to a small airline owned by a Mallayam from Kerala. "But he doesn't run it there. He runs it here, because he can't stand the union problems there."

He wanted to organize a union, but different from the ones in Kerala, a state south of Karnataka widely regarded as the most developed of all Indian states, if also one where union activity and success was also high. "Unions in Kerala are bad," he said. "There, if you get down from the railway station and you're carrying a bag which is more than ten k.g. you're supposed to hire a porter. If you don't take one and say that you'll carry it on your own they won't let you put the bag in an auto. It's like some form of militancy. People get mad because of that, and I understand why. I'm not talking about that kind of union. I'm talking about a union that will bring welfare to the people

involved.”

Though a caricature, to be sure, unions in India did have a reputation of promoting the interests of leadership over workers.<sup>21</sup> Kerala presented a unique case, though, and it was a curious thing to hear Narayan disparage it. Unlike the situation in the rest of the country, organizing peasants and lower classes had the effect of extending the benefits of economic development.<sup>22</sup> Narayan, by contrast, envisioned a union of caddies, a kind of association that would not in the least upset existing relations with the members. I suspect even he knew the limits to this approach.

Indeed, I witnessed a time where his frustrations appeared to boil over, in June 2010, at the club’s annual caddy day, a day in which the club supposedly honors the caddies. This one-day event is usually hosted on a Monday, when the course is otherwise closed. Caddies participate in a number of games and activities. Some are golf-related, like a pitch-and-putt competition; others are not, like a beanbag race, something that on the face of it appears—intended or not—as something entirely patronizing and infantile. At noon, caddies are given a free meal on the clubhouse patio, a space they are refused entry at any other time of the year. Committee members sit and eat separately on a dais.

On the caddy day in question, the caddies were presented with brand new uniforms: a golf shirt colored to match their rank and a pair of black track pants, which they would be mandated to wear beginning in July. The caddies applauded when the announcement on uniforms was made. But afterward, approximately fifteen of them, with Narayan out front, swarmed the table where the members had been sitting. They did not want new

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<sup>21</sup> Stephen Sherlock, “Labour and the Remaking of Bombay,” in *Organising Labour in Globalising Asia*, eds. Jane Hutchison and Andrew Brown (New York: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>22</sup> Patrick Heller, *The Labor of Development: Workers and Transformation of Capitalism in Kerala, India* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

uniforms, they shouted, as if forgetting themselves. I watched from a few feet away. A caddy beside me who was uninvolved in the escalating confrontation provided a rough translation. The caddies, he said, were arguing that their earnings were not enough to help their children go to decent schools, let alone pay the rising costs of food, utilities, and medicine. The members responded with a combination of respect and restraint. They promised to take these concerns to the next committee meeting, which would convene at the end of the month. That was the best they could offer. After about ten minutes, the last of them left the patio, retreating inside the comforts of the clubhouse, leaving the caddies to stew outdoors in the searing heat.

A few weeks later, I sat down for dinner with Narayan, his wife, and two sons at their home, north of Airport Road, accompanied by Umesh, one of two interpreters I worked with in the city. The family lived in a ten-by-ten-foot space made of mud-brick walls and a corrugated steel roof, at the end of a narrow fifty-foot corridor in a line of similarly constructed residences. They had only a few key possessions: a double bed frame with an inch-thick mattress rolled up in one corner; a television set in another; a small table-top kerosene stove, pots, pans, and other kitchenware behind a dividing wall opposite the front door; and a standing two-foot-wide army green steel storage cabinet bearing a sticker that read: I Golf.

Over a curry chicken dinner prepared by his wife, Narayan explained his plan to buy a three-wheel auto-rickshaw, the goal being to rent it out during the daytime when he was at the club, and then to drive it for a few hours at night for extra money. It was not a new idea. He had expressed interest in owning an auto-rickshaw the day I first met him three years back. What had stopped him then, and what continued to be an obstacle, was

that he owed as much as 30,000 rupees to a bank for a loan he had taken out to set up a small roadside shack to serve tea and food. That was in 1999. The project had failed and, as he was still paying down the debt, the dream to own an auto-rickshaw would have to wait.

His boys, three and five at the time of this visit, attended a private English-medium school six days a week. It was “private,” in the sense that he had to pay for it, which reflected a praiseworthy interest in education; in reality, though, the school was only a marginal improvement over the free government-funded school in the area. To supplement their daytime learning, he also sent the boys to ninety-minute after-school “tuition,” or tutoring classes with other neighborhood children hosted by a teacher who lived nearby. He wanted to see them through high school, but he could not think much beyond that. He would have to see about college or university. It would all come down to money.

“See,” he said, at the end of dinner, insisting on English, “I can think my son will be the prime minister of India, but is that possible? You tell me.”

He waited only a second and then answered, “No chance.” He continued, “I can only dream, that’s all. Because, why, no? I’m a caddy.”

“And what about the dreams for your sons. What do you want them to be?”

“Even to get them an office job in the government,” he said, “they would have to graduate at least second P.U.C. [pre-university course, or equivalent to twelfth grade].” He was referring to a commonly held, and commonly observed, view that in order to access even government colleges and universities, thereby gaining access to government

jobs, required more than simply the cost of tuition.<sup>23</sup> “For them to study to that level, I’ll have to pay at least a lakh of rupees [\$2,000] a year, each of them. Do you think I can do that?”

I asked him to think back on what had happened at the club a few weeks earlier. He was still angry about it. He said one of the committee members in attendance that day had, a year earlier, made promises to the caddies. The member said he would make sure the caddy station was renovated with a new floor put down and that he would also see to it that new toilets were made available to them. These items he had taken care to do, but had reneged on a few other key things.

Narayan ranted: “He promised there would be a monthly medical check-up where they’ll check our eyesight and blood, but that hasn’t been done. The last three years, actually, the club has been talking about paying school fees for our children, but nothing happened. They’ve also promised to help us with an insurance program that would cover our families. If I get hurt, my family doesn’t have any source of income. But still they haven’t provided that basic insurance. Then, at the end of June, two days before the committee elections, this guy called everyone to a meeting. So, I told him, ‘You’ve said you would do all this and you haven’t done it,’ and all he said was, ‘What can I do now? There’s two days left in my term.’ He hasn’t done anything for us. He’s like a politician. He says one thing and does another. He’s giving uniforms, but we don’t want uniforms.”

It was getting late. The boys were nodding off. They had to be up early the next morning for school. We lifted ourselves off a rainbow colored mat on the floor, where we had been seated for dinner, and Narayan offered to walk us to the bus stop. We put on our

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<sup>23</sup> Craig Jeffrey, “Class, Caste, and Clientalism: A Political Economy of Everyday Corruption in Rural North India,” *Economic Geography* 78, no. 1 (2002).

shoes, said our goodbyes to his sons and wife, and headed out the door, back down the same narrow corridor we had passed along two hours earlier.

Outside, at my urging, he continued to talk about his sons' future. They would not be doctors, he said, or software engineers, his own lack of money being the primary factor. A job in the government would not be a bad consolation, he suggested. Then again, maybe things could turn around for him, and thus, for them, too. Perhaps a member would help.

"I am almost middle class, but not yet," he said, as we turned on to a side street at the end of the corridor, taking a right to head to the main road. "I've almost crossed over to the middle-class. After a few months, I'm thinking I can do something with my life."

At the end of the side street, we paused the conversation to cross the main road, joined by a stray dog that flitted nervously between the three of us. It was eleven o'clock at night and still the streets were alive with people and traffic. Motorists filled unmarked lanes passing in either direction. Men and women were stationed by fruit and vegetable carts; many more were selling electronic goods, candy and other items from open-air kiosks.

Reaching the other side, I commended him for his determination. I said he was smart, and that he would figure things out, I was sure of it. Cutting through the low, dull roar of hawkers and horns, he said, in response, "To learn from big people, we have to be smart."

"You have to be smart?" I asked, not sure what he meant.

"Be smart only," he answered, adding, "When an elephant eats, food spills, and it's eaten by thousands of ants. It's the same here. The members are big. They give out small

things. We live on that.”

The bus arrived. We shook hands and parted ways, Umesh and I hopping on board, heading in one direction, towards the city, and Narayan in another, back home.

## THE EAGLETON DIFFERENCE

There were none of the tensions between members and caddies at Eagleton that characterized social relations at the BGC and KGA. They were wealthier than their counterparts in the city, given their ownership—or their fathers’ ownership—of land and the lower cost of living in the country. For these reasons, they did not depend on the members in the same way as other caddies, and it showed in their actions and words. Rarely, did they speak ill of the members; rarely did they need to. Eagleton members paid more in caddy fees than did BGC and KGA members, in the range of 400 to 500 rupees a round. When a round was done, that was it. There was no asking for anything extra, ever.

The caddies had a swagger and confidence that was altogether missing in most of the caddies at the other clubs, especially among the senior caddies who had been around for a few years. Sometimes this bordered on the overly familiar, as I encountered one Sunday afternoon at the club. When playing at Eagleton, members and guests could register a kitchen order with a club assistant, usually a former caddy, who rode around the course on an electric golf cart. On this particular afternoon, my playing partners, an American and an Australian, and I ordered a few beers, and then, by the twelfth hole, our bill arrived. Though we had each asked for three beers, we had been charged for an extra three beers, along with some other items—a bottle of water and a sandwich. When we started asking questions, it became clear that the additional beers and food were ordered

by the caddies, on the assumption that we would pay for them, which we did. The others in my group were upset with the caddies. They considered what they had done lacked honesty and respect. I was impressed by the caddies' nerve. At the other clubs, similar things happened, but always on the sly. This was done out in the open, with little fear of reprimand, and what is more, they did not even say sorry.

At some point on the back nine, after this incident with the bill, my caddy called me by my first name, another thing that stuck out as different at the club. I did not mind in the least, in fact, and actually appreciated the informality, but it got me thinking. I had spent much more time at the BGC and KGA than at Eagleton. The caddies at these other clubs, though, even after months of my hanging out with them, refused to call me Patrick. Some still insisted on referring to me as, "Sir." I admonished them every time, but there was no convincing them. The caddies at Eagleton, though, like this one, did not need convincing. They did not even have to be asked. They called me Patrick, as if it was natural.

Things were otherwise at the BGC and KGA, to be sure, where relations between members and caddies were predicated on dependence. Members at these clubs were clearly expected to help out after a round, mainly because the basic fee they paid was so small. The caddies at these clubs traded on extreme deference and servility. They called upon members in moments of crisis. Members, to their credit, usually responded in kind, giving a few rupees here and there to make up the difference between what the caddies earned for work and what they needed to live. The whole scene, at times, appeared cut from another age, even pre-colonial.

To underline this point, one only needs to recall again the caddy day tournament at

the KGA noted above. Grown men participating in beanbag races, with the members looking on, as if it were an elementary school sports day, and then, when serious matters pertaining to their labor rights came up, how the caddies and their grievances were abruptly dismissed. There was no such argument at the BGC caddy day, back in 2008, but the dynamic between caddies and members was similar.

At a post-tournament awards ceremony, the caddies were gathered behind a maintenance shed and sewage treatment tank on the backside of the course. The captain, secretary, head of the caddies subcommittee, and an administrative officer were seated at a table draped in a royal blue cloth. In front of them, sitting cross-legged on a frayed plastic blue tarpaulin sheet, were the caddies, obliged to listen to extemporaneous speeches from members on how they might improve their work ethic. When all the talk was done, grounds men appeared from behind the dais to hang garlands of flowers around members' necks.

A few weeks later I stopped in at the caddy day at Eagleton. It was a Monday, just after seven o'clock in the morning. The caddies were summoned from the practice green to the driving range where they were met by the club's professional coach, Vijay Divecha. The caddies—approximately fifty of them—formed a semi-circle around him. Divecha, in his early fifties and a member at all three clubs, had by this time been the coach at Eagleton for two years. He had built a reputation for spotting talent in young golfers and then developing them into strong players. "We go by pure merit here," he once told me, and it seemed true enough. It did not matter to him whether they were caddies or sons of members. He gave everyone a chance, and that was what this tournament was about.

Divecha wanted to start a tradition at the club in which caddies would play in a tournament once a month; at the end of the year, he “guaranteed,” the caddy with the most tournament wins would receive a new set of golf clubs. This meant they had to keep their scores. He sent the caddy master, Lawrence, back into the clubhouse to fetch a stack of scorecards. When Lawrence said there might not be enough for members playing that day, Divecha scoffed, and insisted he get them anyway. When Lawrence returned, he passed out the scorecards.

Because there were so many of them, Divecha divided the caddies into four-ball groups and sent them to different tees to start the tournament. As an indication of how serious he took this, he instructed them to tee off from the professional markers, approximately twenty feet back from the markers members used, and forty feet back from where ladies teed off.

I had sat down with Divecha some months before at his office inside the driving range at Eagleton. He looked every bit a coach, in his bright orange Ping golf shirt, pleated slacks, and cross trainers. Though I had only visited Eagleton a few times up until then, I could tell that there was something different about the place. I noticed it every time I walked down from the parking lot, along a concrete path that cuts between the clubhouse and a line of trees that hides a maintenance facility. At the foot of the path there was a large putting green, fifty to sixty feet long and as much as forty feet wide in some places. On weekdays, especially, when the caddies had little else to do, several of them practiced their pitching and putting. They did not look so out of place, either. Indeed, from afar, it would have been easy to mistake some of them for members, decked out as they were in name-brand attire.

Divecha plucked caddies out of obscurity and groomed them for professional careers. He had taken a keen interest in one of them, fourteen-year-old Seenappa Chikkarangappa, who went by the nickname Chikka and even then was making a mark in Indian amateur golf. “It was nightmare,” Divecha recalled, the first time he walked Chikka through a clubhouse at a tournament. “Our job now is to make sure that he wins everybody over.” This involved teaching him “simple things,” like taking his hat off inside, giving a firm handshake, and, most of all, not appearing overly unctuous in front of his social and economic “betters,” something familiar among lower class Indians.

“It is important to give opportunities to people without any,” Divecha said. “This is key, and it’s why I do this work.” His work was made easier by the fact that caddies like Chikka had a “fire in the belly” that was not always the case in others who came from more privileged backgrounds, like the sons of members whom he also coached. Golf, to those mentored by Divecha was not a hobby, but a matter of survival. If they made it big—and few did—they could lift their families clear out of poverty.

I wanted to know Divecha’s impressions of the caddies, more specifically. He leaned back in his chair, looking contemplative. “What have we done?” he asked. “The British were here for 300 years and we kicked them out. We got rid of the British and replaced them with ourselves.” He was not referring, exactly, to politics, but rather to relations between rich and poor, and between members and caddies, in particular. Unions, he suggested, would be a way to correct this imbalance, win some respect for the masses. He had the caddies in mind, in particular. “We don’t want to talk about unions,” he said, “but the issue is there.” Refusing the caddies their organizing rights, he suggested, only reinforced inequalities. Members, he said, at least at the other clubs in the city, did not

really care all that much about the welfare of the caddies. It was not in their interest to see the caddies improve. “The system is designed to make caddies available when members come. That is the underlying principle.”

Later that same day, I met with Chetan Mehta, Eagleton’s managing director, and a member of the investing family that had started the club. He was not, however, a member of either the BGC or KGA. His application at the other clubs had been turned down, apparently, owing to his decision to reject a reciprocal relationship with the KGA that would have granted his members and theirs playing rights at the other club. At the time, the KGA was undergoing major renovations, with the back nine closed for a period of a year. Mehta, his family, and other business partners did not see it as an equal trade off, and instead floated the idea of charging an extra fee to the KGA members, at least until the KGA had a full eighteen-hole course to play. The KGA was offended. Given the club’s history and status as one of the more prestigious clubs in the city and the country, some members there said that the managing group at Eagleton should have felt privileged enough to have such an arrangement offered them. All of this was silly, according to Mehta, and he was shocked that the KGA had taken this stance. In his opinion, he and his family had simply made a sound business decision.

We sat in his office on the ground floor of the clubhouse, a massive structure that included a conference hall and hotel rooms. He was in his mid- to late-thirties, balding, with wire rim glasses, and dressed in blue jeans and an untucked golf shirt. He regularly paused the conversation either to smoke a cigarette or to check messages on his Blackberry, which vibrated frequently. Behind him, I noticed, was an empty aquarium, as long as his desk and three feet deep.

Mehta seemed genuinely interested in helping out the caddies, more so, I would say, than the officials at the other clubs I visited, who tended to speak about the caddies as if they and their issues were merely ancillary to much larger club concerns. There were many more boys and men around each of these other clubs to draw on, should any individual caddy take leave, or even if dozens did. That was not the case at Eagleton, where the surrounding population was small by comparison.

In any event, Mehta thought that the caddies had a good deal in working at the club. He appeared genuinely confused that they would not commit more fully to their work. He had trouble, he said, keeping caddies, with all the growth in the area, and the competition for piece work elsewhere, especially on a more regular basis than simply on weekends. He asked me if there was anything I thought he could do to win them over—the only such person in a management position to show any interest in what I thought about the caddies and how they were treated. I suggested he hire them as employees. That would make it worth their while to be loyal and to work hard. He had, he said, already tried that.

“We used to employ them. We’d collect the green fees from members and pay them from it. We used to take care of their needs, you know, but later what happened was people started tipping. Then, people started thinking that, hey no, maybe the club is just collecting the money [as a middleman] and not paying the caddies. Some of the caddies used to say this to members. ‘Sir,’ they’d say to a member, ‘I’m not getting money.’ The credibility of the club was questioned, so it changed. My only rule now is, I tell the members, ‘You pay 125 rupees. That’s the minimum fee. Anything above that, feel free to pay.’”

The caddies themselves, though, if they remembered being paid by the club, were

adamant that they were never employees. Certainly, they saw money at the end of the day, paid out by an administrative assistant, but that was it. Assuming they received all the money owed them, and applying Mehta's math from above, it was still just ten percent of what members paid; the rest went to the club. Even this was obviously not a guaranteed salary, and there were no provisions provided, either. If they did not have a round on any given day, because playing members were fewer, they did not get paid at all. Mehta did not seem to understand why the caddies gave up on this "employment" system, but it seemed plain enough. To the caddies who remembered the way things used to be, it was less transparent than the direct member-pay arrangement that followed. In any case, he was resigned to their decision. At the very least, as he agreed, it was one less headache for him.

The strike at Eagleton occurred a year after this conversation. When I saw him again, in 2010, I asked him about it, sitting in the same office where we had met previously. "The token system is the most impartial system," he said. "That means who comes first takes a token, a number, and as per your token you go with a member. It gives everyone a chance. But they said, 'No, we won't approve it because we have been here for a while. We won't go on a token system.'"

In a matter of three or four days, he could not remember exactly how long, the club officially reverted to a mixed system. Caddies who had their "permanent" members, as he called them, could stick with them, but caddies without such an arrangement were obligated to take a token (actually a piece of paper) and to get in line.

By 2010, Mehta had also put in place an educational program expressly designed for the caddies, so that they could pick up some additional skills. "We are the first golf

course in India,” he said, “which has provided an opportunity for the caddies to learn English, to learn computers. We have a center already set up. We have tied up with a charity organization in the US and have provided them space. This is part of our corporate social responsibility. It’s a two, three month program. You can go and speak to the teacher. See for yourself.”

One afternoon, I did. When I arrived, a teacher and his female assistant were sitting by themselves in a classroom formerly used as a utility shed behind the parking lot. There was a row of four used computers in the middle of the floor with empty chairs set in front of them. The teacher, a man in his forties, had been working there for three months. He had only three caddies enrolled in the program, he admitted, though he could not remember the last time they had visited him.

What Mehta had described as a great opportunity to learn and speak English, in fact, turned out to be a program designed to teach stenography, or shorthand, hardly a necessary skill. Why such a program was being offered to the caddies the teacher could not answer. He was being paid by the Newrite Foundation of India, a nonprofit associated with the Steno Trust based in Seattle, Washington, and founded by Walter Kistler, a physicist, inventor, and philanthropist who had developed his system of stenography in the mid-1950s.<sup>24</sup> The teacher said only that his boss, presumably a representative of the system in India, “wants to propagate this system,” and when asked why, he said, “because the founder needs to propagate this system.”

In time, Mehta had given up on his promise to throw out any caddy who did not participate in the program. Even so, when I saw him again after my visit to see the teacher he could not understand why they showed no interest. “They have to have self-

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<sup>24</sup> The Newrite Foundation India, accessed December 10, 2012. <http://www.stenotrust.org>.

motivation,” he said, sounding like so many other members I had come across. “In life,” he went on, “everything is about self-motivation. Only the club can facilitate that drive by doing things like this, free of cost. Anyway, it’s their own life, right?”

Mehta seemed genuinely interested in helping the caddies improve their lot. What he did not appreciate, however, was that this educational program was not designed to do any such thing. It appeared more as a marketing tool than anything else, which is to say that the gesture was, sadly, not purely altruistic. Thus, it failed completely.

The caddies had understood this. More than their counterparts at the BGC and KGA, the Eagleton caddies had a life, and could thus make different sets of choices regarding how to spend their time. They were not beholden to the club or to its members, anymore than the club or members were beholden to them. If not quite an equal relationship, there was certainly some balance. That balance would likely stay in effect, at least in the short term. Long term, though, this relationship could become tenuous. Given the wider changes to the area, it was not a sure thing that the caddies would always enjoy such independence from members. Already, in some ways, and for some more than others, this independence was under threat.

## THE BOYS OF BANANDUR

At Eagleton, Lokesh was a “big man.” Management trusted him, and typically deferred to him on matters pertaining to the caddies. Members, too, treated him with respect, in some instances as an equal, as far as I could tell. In nearby Banandur, though, where land conveyed wealth and status, he was a small man. There he exuded little of the confidence—bordering on arrogance—he displayed at the club.

Lokesh's grandfather, in fact, before his death in the 1960s, was one of the big landowners in the village. According to Lokesh, he owned as much as 100 acres, passed down from his father. He had seven sons, and when he died the land was divided between them, as per custom in joint families. Though Lokesh's father inherited approximately fifteen acres, he lost most of it to drinking and gambling debts. The rest, Lokesh claimed, was stolen by the surviving brothers, one of whom lived in a prominent two-story house at the entrance to the village. The other was building a similarly styled house right next door. Lokesh's lot, by comparison, was much diminished. Today, all that remained of his inheritance was one and a half acres, split evenly between him and a half-brother, Raju.

None of this Lokesh told me up front. When I first visited Banandur, in late June 2008, he invited me to drink tea with him in a large one-story two-room home, encompassing perhaps 400-square-feet, and one of two such dwellings opening onto a courtyard inside a walled compound. His friend, Manju, whom I also knew, was there too, as was Umesh, my interpreter. Manju sat on the bed in the corner, while Umesh and I pulled up chairs. Lokesh alternated standing and crouching down on the backs of his calves, leaning against a peeling blue wall behind him. The two were well-dressed, Manju in a blue and red Adidas T-shirt and gray slacks and Lokesh in a pink Polo Classic golf shirt and beige pants. Lokesh's mother, tiny and frail, paced back and forth between the kitchen, on the other side of this wall, and the room in which we were sitting, bringing us snacks and refreshments.

"We're improving [our lives] only after two years," Lokesh said, in response to a question about how he and Manju were managing. "Since the [economic] growth has been happening around Banandur, and since we have work [as caddies], even that's a

saving for us. For eating, we are growing food for ourselves. Whatever money we get is savings for us.”

Manju was a Kumbur, from a lower-caste of potters, while Lokesh was a Vokilliga, a member of the dominant caste community in the area. The difference in caste did not bother either of them. “He looks like a Gowda,” Lokesh said, when asked if anyone in his family would have a problem with Manju sitting in or near their home. “Right now,” he elaborated, “the future is changing. Some years more, all this caste business will go.”

It would be another month before Lokesh revealed that where he had hosted us was not where he and his mother actually lived, but was the home of his elder cousin; another cousin lived in the house across the courtyard. Lokesh’s estranged aunt, whom I met by accident one day later in the summer, gave me the family history. I had come looking for Lokesh’s mother, who tended cows in a field opposite the house. When I could not locate her, I sat down with this woman instead. Dressed in a pink silk sari and wearing prescription glasses, she sat on a wooden bench to the right of the doorway, with her back propped up against the front of the house. Lokesh’s mother came by, eventually, but did not sit on the bench next to this woman, even though there was plenty of room. Instead, she sat on the first of three steps leading up to the door, suggesting a manner of deference out of line, at least, with what Lokesh had previously told me about their position in the family.

On a future visit, Lokesh led me on a walk through the field, where his mother cleaned clothes and looked after the cows, to a river that runs parallel to the main road and through the village. He sat on a rock, taking a drag from a cigarette, and responded to questions I had about possible discrepancies in his story. Here is where he told me the

truth about where he lived and the existing relationship between him and others on his father's side of the family. They were rich, he said, and his cousins, especially. They were educated and worked as professionals in well paying jobs. He had taken a different, unintended, path, on account of his father's alcoholism. In the last years of his life, it was Lokesh who cared for him at home, obliging him to quit school after tenth grade.

He planned to build a house next to the one where I met his aunt. He had already laid part of the foundation. I asked what his cousins made of his work, if they respected him for it or not, and if it will make a difference to them if he built this house.

"I take it as a challenge to build it," he said, looking weary, his eyes moist. "The rest of the family looks down on us. They think we're cheap. They treat us badly. But if I build a house, even if it is half the size, they will think I have come up."

How would he pay for it? I wondered.

"I feel like crying when I talk about this," he said, obviously shaken. "When my father was dying he told me that no matter what problems I had, never to go to his brothers for help. 'Even if you are going to die,' he said, 'don't go to them for help,' so I don't ask them for any help."

The total cost of the house, he said, would run eight lakhs (or 800,000 rupees; approximately \$16,000 USD). He had already paid down 60,000 rupees for the foundation, money he borrowed from friends, some caddies and others in the village. When he had paid off the 4,000 rupees in debt still owed in his father's name he would then approach the banks for additional help.

"My S.C. [Scheduled caste] friends are more like my relatives," he said. Manju, he confirmed, was one such friend. "They work hard. I have a good feeling about them.

They're close to me.”

The sun was beginning to set. Lokesh said he had to meet some of his friends, also caddies, and asked me to come along. We stopped at the house of another of his friends, Prakash, in the center of the village, and within minutes a small group formed, of caddies, mostly, just getting back from the club, as well as children, and a curious stray dog with half an ear missing.

When I saw Lokesh again two years later, in 2010, I was astonished at the progress he had made on the house. His dream was clearly becoming a reality. A twenty-by-twenty foot foundation had been set, and concrete walls and a roof had just been put in place. All that was left to do was finish the inside. Granted, the house was half the size of his uncles' houses, which lined up side-by-side in front of his, an obvious indication of where he sat in the family hierarchy. But no matter. He had done what he set out to do, staying true to his word, and “doing everything myself,” as he said.

Nevertheless, the house was expensive, far exceeding his income at the club. By the time I stopped in to see it, he had already spent nearly three lakhs, two of which he had obtained by mortgaging the land and the rest on loan from his caddy friends. He assured me that it was all worthwhile, but his mother was skeptical. She was proud of what he had accomplished, and honored that he would do this for her. But she was also worried about the debts, and rightfully so, and she cried about it at night, he said. This did not deter him, however. In fact, it seemed to strengthen his resolve. He would settle her here, come what may. It was all he could do, he said, to win the respect of his family and maintain his status among the caddies.

We got to talking about the strike, which had occurred during the time I had been

away. He rejected any insinuation that he was one of the main ringleaders, and I neglected to push him on the issue. But he did admit that it was warranted. Despite what he made on weekends with the members, he preferred something more stable. He wanted a salary, he said, and would be happy to give up his day-to-day routine if it were offered to him.

Indeed, there was a lot of hanging out, what the caddies called “timepass,”<sup>25</sup> during the week in Banandur and the surrounding villages. Some caddies, at least some of the time, stuck close to home, as did Lokesh. Most other times, though, they congregated at the local candy and tea shops. To hear them tell it, this is not what they wanted for themselves and their families. They wanted to fill their days with something else, something more substantial. But what, exactly, they did not know, leading some to despair over their present circumstances relative to some other families in the village who had made small fortunes from selling land or who boasted a relative who had landed one of the few, highly coveted full-time positions at an area plant.

Some of the caddies at Eagleton picked up a shift at a local area plant every now and again, and if lucky enough, they could find something that would last a month, sometimes longer. But this work was always piecemeal, under short-term contract, which left the club as their one dependable constant in their lives. They could find work there, if nowhere else, and to that extent, it was their safety net. But the club was also clearly a safety net for the area plants, a convenient dumping ground, as it were, for all the temporary workers who cycled through.

Back in 2008, I had met Renuka, at the time a twenty-one-year-old student at a

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<sup>25</sup> For a fascinating analysis of this common phenomenon in Indian villages, see Craig Jeffrey, *Timepass: Youth, Class, and the Politics of Waiting in India* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

local technical college and part-time caddy, who also lived in Banandur. The school had cost his family a fortune, 30,000 rupees, paid in part by whatever he earned at the club on weekends, as well as money his fathered picked up from selling bananas and growing rice on the one-and-a-half-acre family farm. When I first met him he was preparing for his finishing exams, with ambitions to land a job at one of the new industrial plants that had opened nearby, either Toyota or Coca-Cola.

Two years later, though, when I returned to Banandur to see Lokesh, Renuka was still looking for work. I ran into him by chance, in fact, while walking the area with Lokesh, who was a close friend of his. When we happened upon him he was standing at the edge of one of two plots of land his family kept, busy cutting down tall grass to feed their two cows.

“I thought you were going to finish your exams and get a job,” I said, after a few minutes of exchanging pleasantries.

“I finished two years ago,” he said, adding that he had graduated with “first rank” scores. Ever since, he went on, “I’ve worked in two companies on contract for three to six months each, but now I want to get somewhere permanently. I have lots of experience, but in India, it’s very difficult to find a job, even with an education.”

One of his jobs, he told me, had been working as a label machine operator at Coca-Cola. It was only short-term work, though, and he was pushed out after six months.<sup>26</sup> Before that, he had held another job working in an office for a company he could not remember, it had been so long ago. He made 3,500 rupees a month in both places,

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<sup>26</sup> This is a common practice in India’s manufacturing sector. Employers typically layoff workers at a certain point in time for fear that keeping them on any longer will obligate them to turn employees over to full-time contracts. See Jessica R. Sincavage, Carl Haub, and O. P. Sharma, “Labor Costs in India’s Organized Manufacturing Sector,” *Monthly Labor Review* 133, no. 5 (2010).

working six days a week, supplementing his income with caddy work at the club on Sundays.

Thankfully, however, it was near harvest time, so there would at least be some more money. Some 500 banana plants he and his father had planted nine months earlier were ready for picking. Each plant would yield ten to fifteen kilograms of bananas; at forty rupees a kilogram, sold in local markets and to families celebrating weddings and various seasonal festivals, the family would do all right, even after recuperating the initial planting costs and paying off day laborers. But still, he longed for something more stable than the family farm or club could provide. He planned to apply for a job at a new plant coming up in a few months, though he was short on specifics.

Renuka's older brother, Prakash, whom I had previously met and who had dropped out of school in seventh grade for lack of interest was also looking for work beyond the club when I saw him again. He figured that his chances would not be as great as Renuka's. "It's very difficult without education," he said, sitting on a bed in his family's one-room house. He had hung a faded red Taylor Made hat off one of the bed posts. Adjacent to the bed was a wall of bagged rice and millet.

"I'm looking, but jobs are very hard to come by." The last three months, in particular, had been bad for him, he said, what with the departure of three of his regular members, one to the US, one to Denmark, and another to Ooty, a hill station south of Bangalore. "I go to the club no matter what, though," he said, looking dejected. "Whatever money the members give, 200, 300, 400 rupees, I do my work and go."

Gangadar, one of their other friends, had somewhat better luck finding employment, even if it was temporary, but he was also older, at thirty-six, and had been

at it longer. He was busy plowing an acre of land that he would soon plant with ragi, a type of millet, when I first met him. It was a bad rain season, though, and he was worried about the year's crops. The dry spell would keep him from planting rice, which needed far more water than the ragi. Once the ragi was planted, he hoped he could at least yield a few hundred kilograms, which he and his family would pack into burlap sacks and keep in the home for use through the wintertime into next spring.

Lucky for him, and rare among the caddies, Gangadar had secured a temporary contract with Toyota, working on an assembly line fixing covers to seats. He had been working on and off for the company for four and a half years running, but had just earned a probational period that would hopefully bring him health benefits, if not full employment, so long as he kept his head down and stayed out of trouble, as he understood it. He was scheduled to work a shift the day I saw him, beginning at two in the afternoon and finishing at midnight. He worked six days a week like this, making 200 rupees per day, paid in the form of a check at the end of the month. To supplement his income and that of his family, he worked as a caddy at the club on Sundays, where he earned an additional 200 or 300 rupees.

Gangadar dropped out of school midway through twelfth grade. His father had died suddenly, he said, and the family had needed the extra income he could provide. He picked up his high school equivalency only later in life, getting his technical training along the way. He believed that he had made it as far as he did with Toyota out of sheer hard work and perseverance.

“Whatever you do,” he said, “you have to do it with interest. Doing hard work is all that matters.” Still, he preferred the hard work of tilling his land and reaping a well-

earned harvest. More than anything, he lamented the turn away from agriculture toward factories that would not hire him on a regular salary. Asked what people in the village would do once they had left agriculture behind, thinking the factories could sustain them, he said only, “People will have to eat mud.”

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As if the problem of finding permanent work in Banandur and the surrounding area was not bad enough, the golf club was introducing electric carts for member use—just like the one the assistant was riding to take food and drink orders on the course. When last I visited Eagleton, there were only a few in operation, but they were increasing in popularity among the members, and increasing the worry among the caddies. A four-ball group could hire out a cart, for example, which would cut down on the need for caddies. Now, instead of four caddies, one per member in such a group, there would, perhaps, only be need for two. Indeed, there was no reason to believe that the members would not be able to make do with one caddy splitting duties between the four of them. In time, perhaps members would do away with caddies altogether, drive their own carts, carry their own bags, and advise one another on shot selection.

The caddies at the BGC and KGA, by contrast, were safe from automation, or at least that is what it seemed. At these clubs, the caddies refused even manual carts members would prop up their golf sets on and have them pull. If a member thought his caddy could easily use such a thing, then it would not be long before he thought he could do it himself, and then the caddy would be out of a job. Better to carry the bag across his back, he would think to himself, and actively demonstrate the service he offered, one that

no cart, manual or otherwise, could replace.

What made caddies in India worthwhile was not the service they afforded—few members, in fact, reported that a caddy improved their game much at all. The bottom line was that they were cheap. There was little that the BGC or KGA were going to do to change that. The minimum suggested fees that were posted increased only infrequently. Even when they did, it was still a pittance, barely enough to live on, and so, inevitably, the caddies implored the members to help when times were particularly bad. This required a degree of deference and servility. They needed the members just to survive. Denied the stability of a regular wage and any benefits, rarely did they miss an opportunity to let them know it.

Indeed, whatever they thought of each other, members and caddies at these clubs had developed strong, albeit unequal, relationships to one another, in some cases lasting years, even decades. These ties were not easily broken, or given up for the convenience of an electric cart, as might be possible at Eagleton. There, the ties between members and caddies were weaker, by comparison. Members, mostly, were ambivalent about the caddies. They paid a lot in caddy fees, which brought them a measure of separation. As a result, they felt little to no obligation to the caddies.

For the caddies at the BGC and KGA, obedience in the absence of anything approaching employment stability and safety net benefits was their job saver, and that is what set them apart, ultimately, from the Eagleton caddies. Obedience and instability, though, was also their life maker. A little extra given by a member at the end of a month made all the difference in the world, in terms of whether or not there would be food on the table, for example, or whether or not a child would stay in school. For the caddy who

could commit himself to members, who could willingly fall at their feet, if need be, all seemed possible, at least in the short term. With what chance for longer-term success, however, and at what cost, personally and socially, I explore in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4: The Burden of Distinction

A few weeks into my fieldwork, in February 2007, I was admitted to hospital in Bangalore for what I expected to be routine surgery, only to be released three weeks later, following complications and a second operation. Ravi, my coach at the Palace Grounds and a key informant throughout the research, came to see me in the hospital, bringing flowers and a card. It would be another month, however, before I saw him again at the driving range and, when we did finally reconnect, I was surprised that he had not been doing much coaching in my absence. He had passed his time, instead, hanging out at the BGC, caddying the odd round with a member, or sticking close to home and watching TV. I was not, however, completely surprised by this. Although I had known him for less than two months, and believed him to be a good coach, I felt that he was just not a very ambitious one. I certainly did not think he could make a career of it, or a career out of anything, really. He did not seem to have that much drive.

Early on, I was a frequent visitor at the Palace Grounds driving range. I arrived by seven o'clock in the morning and though my lesson finished forty-minutes to an hour later, I usually hung around, talking with the caddies, ball boys, coaches, and members. Suleman, a former caddy and current coach with training, barely ever had a break, he was so busy. He also, I am sure, brought in the most money. He charged ten dollars for thirty-to forty-five-minute lessons, double what Ravi cost, though still a third or a quarter what professional coaches at the clubs made.<sup>1</sup>

After a lesson one morning, I asked Ravi why he could not be as seemingly

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<sup>1</sup> Members with coaching certificates were permitted to work at the clubs. Non-members, though, were not, hence why they coached at the Palace Grounds.

successful as Suleman. Because he was content, he replied. If he could coach one or two people, maybe caddy here and there, that was enough for him. Suleman, though he was successful, Ravi said, always appeared on edge. He was always thinking about money. Ravi said he was not like that, and could not imagine he would ever be so.

Several months later, though, and Ravi was thinking differently. Newly married when I met him, he was now a father, too. He was suddenly anxious about the future, and worried about his capacity to support his family. Up until that point, I had been a regular stream of revenue for him, but as my research advanced, I practiced and played less, and instead spent my days in the homes and villages of select caddies and also seeing members in their own homes and offices, if not at the clubs, whenever I had the chance. In all this time, Ravi had yet to find any new players to coach.

In the fall of 2007, he partnered with another caddy and longtime friend named Suresh to market knockoff clothes, mostly T-shirts and pants, unloaded by a member at the BGC. They did well for a time, actually, selling as many as fifty items in a good week. By the end of November, he and Suresh had opened a store on the ground floor of an office complex in Malleswaram, a middle-class neighborhood west of the Palace Grounds. They called it “T-World.” The original lease was owned by a member at Eagleton, who practiced at the driving range. If the business took off, he told them, then he would collect rent, but not before. The space was empty most of the time, anyway. Sadly, even after Ravi and Suresh had set up shop, it mostly stayed that way. They closed up within three months.

The reasons for the store’s failure were many and varied. The help they received from the member was a blessing—it saved them start up fees and rental costs—but there

was little to no planning on their part. They were not businessmen, after all. They were caddies. The store was never in the best of locations, as it was situated on a side of the complex with almost no foot or motor vehicle traffic. The competition from nearby stores also made things particularly difficult, though. Stores like theirs were common all over Bangalore.

Later, in June the following year, Ravi had another idea. He wanted to open a golf academy. First, it would start out small, just him and a few other caddies like Suresh offering group lessons at the Palace Grounds. Then, over time, as they developed a following, they would negotiate a deal with the BGC to hold the academy there. If that did not work out, they would buy or lease land outside the city, where they could build their own driving range and pitching and putting area.

I invited Ravi to breakfast one Saturday morning at Koshy's, a popular restaurant on St. Mark's Road, in the center of the city. He brought with him a piece of loose-leaf paper, on which he had mapped out a registration form and fee schedule. I was skeptical, though, and let him know it. I was impressed with his drive, I assured him, but it seemed unlikely that he would be able to muster the necessary number of clients to make a go of things. Sitting across from him, my back against a faux-leather bench and looking out on the restaurant, filled to capacity with middle-class patrons, I suggested he go back to work as a caddy and make that his focus. At least at the BGC he would be sure to earn something.

"I want to work," he said. "I want to make money, but I must do this first. If this happens, then I can do anything. All I need is my first success. I need just one success and then I can do anything. My first idea failed, I know, but I'm not sorry about it. I have

to keep going. If the golf academy fails also, I still have to keep going. If it doesn't work, I can't give up."

The following week, I helped make brochures advertising Ravi's golf academy and a friend of mine created a website. I also tapped a member at the KGA to print up 500 business cards for Ravi and Suresh, who was joining him in this venture, too. The two of them settled on Saturday, August 8, 2008, thinking it was a "most auspicious day." It turned out not to be. No one signed up. Neither of them even came to the Palace Grounds that morning.

In the ensuing weeks, at my urging, Ravi put aside all talk of a golf academy. He registered for a clinic in Chennai, a city in neighboring Tamil Nadu, offered by Vijay Divecha, the professional coach at Eagleton. On the last day of the clinic, a Sunday, he called me from the railway station. It was late, and he was on the move, so the conversation was short. He had a renewed sense of vigor. It would take some time, he said, but he was finally on a path to certification, something he desperately needed, in fact, if he ever wanted to follow through on his dream of starting a golf academy.

"Nothing can stop me," he said. "I must think about my daughter's future."

I was happy for him. But I remained somewhat skeptical. He had been just as enthusiastic about the store, I remembered, and it was the same with the golf academy. Neither of these ideas of his worked out, and I wondered if he was again setting himself up for crushing disappointment. With his new techniques, and whatever else he would learn at future clinics, he still did not have any members to coach. His list of clients was zero. For that to change would require not just new techniques but a new mindset. In the eyes of members, and maybe even to himself, he was still a caddy.

Indeed, it seemed that Ravi was in a kind of no-man's land, stuck between the life he knew as a caddy and the life he wanted to have as a coach. Such are the "hidden injuries of class," as Richard Sennett has called it.<sup>2</sup> Ravi could never quite remove the stigma of being a caddy. In his interactions with the members, he had adopted an entrepreneurial spirit, for sure, but had little in the way of connections that would give his business ideas any traction. In this regard, members were mostly useless. I knew some who helped land caddies jobs as office boys, cooks, and drivers. But these were mostly lateral moves. Rare was the member who did anything to advance the career prospects for any of these men, or even give real, practical advice. Ravi, for example, received none when he started the store. Elites typically guard their business contacts and networks,<sup>3</sup> and these members were no different. It was one more example of how their rhetoric of rewarding hard work and merit, no matter someone's background, was little more than a sham. The evidence suggested they preferred the caddies to stay just where they were.

All of this is to say that Ravi had his work cut out for him. That is why when we met at Koshy's I suggested he continue as a caddy. It was going to be easier on him and his family, I figured. To him, though, this sounded like giving up. He wanted more out of life than what being a caddy could give him. He had done it for almost twenty years, anyway, though principally this was not why he wanted to try something else. He wanted respect. He could not live with himself any longer begging and pleading for every little tip, all so he could barely make ends meet.

In the conversation at Koshy's, I had mentioned a friend and former classmate of

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972).

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Richard Nice trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); Lamont, Michèle, *Money, Morals, and Manners: The Culture of the French and the American Upper-Middle Class* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

his, Anand Kumar, who was among the more successful caddies I had come to know. Few, in fact, were as good as Anand at extracting money from members. When his son was born prematurely and had to stay in hospital for an extra twelve days, at a cost of 3,000 rupees a night, members he routinely caddied for contributed 20,000 towards the total bill. When his two girls received admission into a private English-medium school, the same members, likewise paid the 18,000 rupees in tuition and fees.

Once, at the Chalruyka Hotel, a brief walk from the club, I asked Anand how he did it, and he responded, “I know their moods. When a member’s in a good mood, I’ll tell him my problems. I’ll say, ‘Please, sir, think it over. See if you can help me.’ I don’t ask every member. I ask only a few I am close to. Only those members I approach.”

“Have you ever been turned down,” I inquired, “like, you ask a member for help and he says no, that he can’t help you?”

“When I approach the members, sure, some refuse,” he said. “When they say no, it hurts. I don’t even want to go for a round with them again. But some help me. I show my poverty on my face. I take them a school receipt or a medical bill. They have to believe me. I say to them, ‘Don’t give me the money. Give it to the school only.’”

To Ravi, though, all of this constituted begging, and when I put it to him in Koshy’s that he could, and maybe should, be like Anand, that is precisely what he said: “I don’t want to beg.”

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Anand, actually, did not consider what he did as begging at all. To him, this was not free money. He had earned it out on the course all these years—similar to Ravi, he had

committed nearly twenty years of his life to this work. On a daily basis, he helped members shave strokes off their scorecards. He knew what clubs to suggest for a given shot, whether it was out in the middle of the fairway or behind a tree in the rough. He had been at the BGC long enough to know each and every green by heart, no matter where the pin was placed. If the members were going to pay him so little for this expertise, then he was going to make up the rest some other way, and so he did. Like other service workers, he mixed emotional with physical labor, looking to the members for clues about when it was the right time to speak, and then, saying something he thought would help a member with his game; and, if a member was having an off day on the course, he said little or nothing.<sup>4</sup>

Above all, Anand was a master at “impression management.”<sup>5</sup> We were introduced by Ravi, my caddy on a weekday afternoon round, inside the caddy section of the Kirloskar Hut at the BGC. Named after an industrialist and former club captain, the Kirloskar Hut was where members stopped for a break after the ninth hole, and usually a snack served up by waiters and delivered to them on a small patio out front. In the back, out of view from the members, caddies congregated on concrete benches, drinking water from a communal jug, and eating dosa doused in oil passed to them by kitchen staff through a three-by-three-foot hole in a dividing wall. On this day, Anand was dressed in a maroon golf shirt that was tucked into newly pressed cotton pants. He had excellent posture, too, and a firm handshake. Unlike the other caddies there, who seemed genuinely

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<sup>4</sup> The classic study of emotional labor is Arlie Russell Hochschild’s *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, updated ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012). Also see Peter Bearman, *Doormen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Milian Kang, *The Managed Hand: Race, Gender, and the Body in Beauty Service Work* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Rachel Sherman, *Class Acts: Service and Inequality in Luxury Hotels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor, 1959).

bewildered that a playing (and paying) guest would sit down with them in this space, he seemed at ease, asking me how my round was going.

In the New Year, Anand and I had breakfast together at the Chalrukya Hotel, a brief walk from the club entrance on Sankey Road. He called me five minutes before eight o'clock, our scheduled meeting time, to say he was going to be a few minutes late. He was, but only by ten or so minutes, hardly reason to call ahead. I appreciated the courtesy, regardless, all the more because it was so rare, among members and caddies alike. When Anand arrived, he took a seat opposite me in a padded leather booth on the second floor. Right away he removed a blue Titleist hat from his head, rested it on his lap, and shook my hand. He had been up since half past four in the morning, he said, and at the club since five o'clock carrying the bag of a member who liked to get in nine holes before work.

According to Anand, showing up on time well dressed and clean shaven was only part of what made him successful with the members. To him, the most important thing was that he was sober when he did it. This is what truly set him apart, he said, and what made him a good investment. He could assure members that whatever money they gave him would be put to good use, rather than being wasted on alcohol, as both he and the members assumed most caddies did with the money they earned.

“They just come and go,” he said of the caddies. “They make their 200 rupees, maybe give forty or fifty of it in the home. The rest they take for drinking. Next morning, they show up fully drunk. They don't feel any responsibility to their families.”

This negative perception colored all his interactions with the other caddies. Once, for example, I was standing next to a caddy I had just met, making small talk with him by

the caddy station at the BGC, when Anand approached. The caddy was slight, compared to Anand. He was five-foot-five, perhaps 120 pounds, and dark skinned. He had on a light grey shirt two or three sizes too big and a pair of equally ill-fitting cotton pants. His eyes were bloodshot and there was alcohol on his breath, which Anand had immediately picked up.

I asked the caddy how much he had made that day, trying to make small talk,<sup>6</sup> and when he responded, “One-fifty, sir,” as in 150 rupees, Anand interrupted.

“One hundred for drinking, fifty for the home,” he said. Then he turned to me. “This guy is always drinking. Don’t listen to him.”

The caddy’s diminutive stature, the fact he did not speak English as well as Anand, and his dark skin, all singled him out for opprobrium, aside from the possibility he was still semi-intoxicated. Anand would not have pulled this stunt on another caddy of his own rank or status. But he would have thought to say the same thing, I am sure. Most caddies, he believed, as many as eighty or ninety percent of them, were heavy drinkers, and for that reason, he usually kept to himself to himself. If not at the club, he was usually at home. When he showed up at the club, it was because he had a scheduled round with a member. Once finished he would not hang out for very long to talk idle chitchat, as the others did.

If anything, it was the members who were heavy drinkers, not the caddies. Members typically drank after a round in the clubhouse, calling it—as in Western golf culture—the “nineteenth hole.” My interactions with them, whether at the clubs or elsewhere, either one-to-one or in groups, were almost always mediated by alcohol, often

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<sup>6</sup> Among the caddies, this was not considered an offensive question. It was routine for them to ask one another how much they made in a round, almost as familiar as asking how they were doing, generally.

hard alcohol, in fact, such as whisky. And while they often raised the prospect that the caddies were all “drunkards”—their word, not mine—it seemed largely motivated by convenience. What better way to avoid any real discussion of the social and economic differences between themselves and the caddies, then to point to instances of alcohol abuse. It was easier for them to think that these caddies were poor of their own volition than to think deeply about their own privileges. The caddies were the drunks, gamblers, and lowlifes, while they were hardworking, worthy of all the good things that had come their way.

Though Anand was not as rich as these members, it made sense that he appeared and spoke as if he was reading off the same script as them. Indeed, sitting with Anand over breakfast at the Chalrukya Hotel earlier, and in the many more months hanging out with him and his family that followed, even seeing him berate the unsuspecting caddy at the BGC, I was never really convinced that he cared all that much about caddies’ drinking habits. In truth, only a minority of caddies drank to excess, as far as I could tell, to the point that they would show up to work drunk or miss a round with a member because of drinking the night before. Even he drank on occasion—he did with me, in fact, a month after the incident with the caddy, though at a restaurant away from the club, and at my invitation.

The more I got to know him, the more I started to think that his complaints about drinking masked his own deep felt anxiety about being lumped in with them, not an uncommon sentiment of working class people, generally.<sup>7</sup> He was worried that the

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<sup>7</sup> Stanley Aronowitz, *False Promises: The Shaping of American Working Class Consciousness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992); Michele Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration* (New York: Sage, 2000); Loic Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2008).

members could not tell him apart from the others. This is why he made such a big deal of drinking among the caddies—it was the most readily available marker of distinction, and what informed members' own decisions over whom to support—or not.

But there was another—more personal—motivation, as well. His own father had been an alcoholic, in fact, whose demise set a number of things in motion that Anand regrets to this day. When his father lost his job in the police force in Kolar, a small hill station north of Bangalore, he moved the family into the city. He picked up work as an auto-rickshaw driver, but spent most of his days and nights passed out in the vehicle. Whatever pension he had earned from his time with the police was used up on medical fees trying to keep him alive. When he died, in 1998, of liver failure, Anand, his mother, and younger brother, Sundar, were left essentially empty handed.

At fifteen, Anand quit school to find work, which landed him at the club, working six days a week. His mother had been working at a food processing facility, but had to take up a second job at a textiles factory. And Sundar, who had dropped out of school even earlier than Anand, moved to Bihar, in the northeast of the country, on a construction assignment. When, not six months into his work, Sundar was hit by a speeding truck and pronounced dead on the scene, Anand became the primary breadwinner.

Naturally, he wanted better for his children. He had big dreams for his girls, especially. He imagined his youngest, Suri, who was six when I met Anand, as a doctor; Padmini, aged nine, he thought would make an excellent social worker. He could not know what Raja, all of three months old at this stage, would be, and certainly not what he would want to be. Under no circumstances, though, would he be a caddy, like his father.

“My goal is to educate them,” Anand said, adding, “I’ll do whatever it takes.” Distinguishing himself from other caddies, as serious and sober, was just the thing required to advance this ambition.

Anand was an upper-caste Rajput, making him a descendant of warriors and kings who, as tradition has it, ruled southeast Asia and the subcontinent for centuries. He did not know the history of his caste, exactly, only what his mother, Aishwarya, had told him. She insisted everyone at home speak Hindi, the language of her ancestors, even while Kannada, Telugu, and Tamil were all the more dominant in Bangalore. She also made sure the family trekked once every two or three months to Paiyur, in Tamil Nadu, where she was from. These trips served as reminders of their heritage, and for Anand, in particular, they had a way of replenishing his spirit and confidence. In the summer, months after I had first met him and the family, I joined them in the village for a festival.

The morning of the festival, Anand, a cousin of his, Mahesh, and I went for a walk. We came upon three children sitting on a bench. I said hello, but they did not respond, perhaps because they did not hear me. Anand thought otherwise. As we passed them, he said, “Suri and Padmini act good. They know how to say hi, bye, how to sit, stand, and all that.” They had learned these courtesies from him, he said, and he had learned them from the members.

In the village, Anand stood out. He wore a polo shirt and khaki pants, while most of the men in Paiyur wore langhis, essentially white sheets wrapped around their waists. He spoke English, not fluently, but better than anyone else we came across—English being a common language among India’s upwardly mobile and cosmopolitan elite, and therefore

a mark of prestige in its own right.<sup>8</sup> And he had, in his estimation, “the biggest man in Paiyur”—in other words, me—by his side, which he seemed to think elevated his status in the eyes of anyone else. I was the first foreigner, he said, and I am sure by this he meant Caucasian foreigner, to come to the village.<sup>9</sup>

“If you give respect to the members,” he said, at one point in our walk, “they give you back respect.” He put his arm around me, making a demonstration of it. “Some members walk like this with me. Some caddies don’t get this much respect. They come dirty, drinking. Even when they have good clothes at home they don’t wear them. The members think they are poor and give them more money.”

We left for the festival around noon, joining a procession of hundreds marching to a temple three miles away. It was in honor of a goddess named Chelliamma, revered by lower-caste Tamilians of the region. As legend had it, she had married out of caste, for which she was excommunicated from the village. Those around us had their arms outstretched above their heads, carrying baskets filled with assorted fruits, vegetables, and flowers; no one in our group had anything of the sort, nor was it expected that we would. These were men and women from lower-caste backgrounds, Anand said, cobblers, barbers, and drummers, bearing gifts for Chelliamma. Anand and the girls bounced along, chanting, in unison, “God is close to us!”

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<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of English usage and language politics in Bangalore, see Sugata Srinivasaraju, *Keeping Faith with the Mother Tongue: The Anxieties of a Local Culture* (Bangalore: Navakarnataka, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> I had no way of verifying this claim. The point is that Anand thought it be true, and, moreover, that it mattered. Interactions like these—and there were many of them with the caddies—reinforced my own sense of privilege relative to him, in terms of race and class. It also suggested his own understanding of this distance, as well as the strategies he employed leveraging this knowledge to his benefit, if at all possible. On race and class difference between researcher and informant in ethnographic fieldwork, see Mitchell Duneier, *Sidewalk* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2001); Jill A. McCorkel and Kristen Myers, “What Difference Does It Make? Position and Privilege in the Field,” *Qualitative Sociology* 26, no. 2 (2003); Edward Telles, *Race in an Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

The temple itself was small—a ten-by-ten-foot one-story structure colored in pink, with a pair of sitting cows on either side of the cross-legged statue of Shiva. Anand cut through the mass of people, bringing us to the front of the temple and an opening with a view to a priest standing at the side of a gold statue of Chelliamma, patiently receiving flowers and gifts and then placing them at her feet. A man was walking through the crowd carrying a plate of burning incense powder. People reached for the flames and then quickly pulled back, touching their hands to their foreheads and chests and foreheads again. Anand then led us away from the temple to a nearby rock formation, where we took a seat and observed the swarm of people below.

Sitting next to me on these rocks, overlooking the sea of people below, Anand received a call from a member. He said he was sick and unable to caddy. When he hung up, he turned to me, and said that he expected to make better than average money from them the following week when he returned. The members, he hoped, would feel sorry for him and offer to make up the lost wages.

When I did check in with him the following week, the members had done as Anand had expected. It reminded me that other caddies were less successful at pulling off this sort of ruse. Anand could, because of the conscious work he had put into his presentation of self.

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In the third week of July 2008, on a wet and rainy Tuesday afternoon, Ravi and I visited four business hotels in the vicinity of the BGC to pass out information and registration forms in preparation for the opening of his ill-fated golf academy—his, and

my, hope being that the managers at these hotels would pass the forms onto their guests. He had just had his haircut and his face shaved earlier in the day, and now he was wearing salmon-colored pants, a faded blue-and-white-striped golf shirt, and a blue BGC hat. After stopping in at the Ashoka Hotel, opposite the backside of the BGC, where he left the manager with fifteen forms and ten business cards, he remarked, “That’s the first time I’ve been inside a five-star hotel.”

Leaving the second hotel, the Taj West End, we were caught in a torrential downpour, common for Bangalore at that time of year. So we went back inside to sit in the hotel’s coffee house, Mynt, replete with polished hardwood floors, espresso colored chairs, and marble tabletops. Sitting at a table, we struck up a conversation about money, inspired by our surroundings. There was thunder and lightning in the not-too-far-off-distance and rain was pounding the granite patio just twenty feet away.

“Everything now is too expensive,” he said, taking in the grandeur of the hotel lobby in view from where we were seated. “Gas for home has come up in price. Petrol is six rupees a k.g. now. Costs go up, but they are keeping the same caddy fees on the board.”

I reminded him of the time at the Palace Grounds a year before, and how then he had seemed happy, content. I asked him what had changed.

“I didn’t think this was possible,” he said. “I never thought I could do this, that I could come into these places. I have the confidence now.”

The bill came: four-hundred-and-ninety-five rupees for two cappuccinos, far more than even I expected. A couple of coffees at Koshy’s, by comparison, was forty rupees, and the coffee or tea Ravi bought from the chaiwallah at a roadside stall near his home

was five rupees. He offered to help, taking in the grimace I must have had on my face, but I declined the offer.

“See, this is one day’s salary for me, not even,” he said. “For you, it’s coffee.”

At about five o’clock, we arrived back at Ravi’s home in Palace Guttahalli, a neighborhood north of the BGC and west of the Palace Grounds, to drop off materials and say hello to his wife, Lalitha. We stayed only for a minute, before heading out again, this time to a fabric shop so that I could buy a sari for the wife of a caddy I was visiting later that evening. Lalitha, who only spoke Kannada, stood in the doorway of the home, with Meghana, their daughter, now one and a half years old, in her arms, and asked Ravi if he could buy her a sari, too.

At the sari shop, Ravi looked disappointed. He said he did not have the money to buy one for his wife. Looking at a table full of saris displayed at the shop, near his home, I asked him if he would like for me to buy the sari for her. He did not. Earlier in the day I had bought books and games for Meghana at a local bookstore, something that I did now and again. He appreciated these gestures, he said, but for today that was enough.

In all my visits to see Ravi at his home, there were no outward signs of tension between him and his wife, and he never reported any to me. But Ravi’s inability to pay for small gifts for Lalitha, among other things, and his unwillingness to accept more than a few gifts, from me or from anyone else he met at the club, was a source of consternation for her. He knew that much.

They lived in a modest, but decent sized apartment, with three rooms aligned side-by-side, kitchen to the left, bedroom to the right, and welcome area in the middle. In the center room pictures and statues to gods lined a bookcase built into the wall. To the left

of the bookcase, against the adjacent wall, was a framed portrait of his mother and next to it a picture of his grandfather. On the opposite wall, to the right of the bookcase, there was a picture of Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of wealth, a popular goddess across India, but especially in Ravi's caste community. On the other side of this wall, in the bedroom, was a framed picture of Ravi smiling, holding a golf club and trophy, after winning the caddy tournament at the BGC five years previously.

When he was thirteen, Ravi dropped out of school, mostly out of boredom, and soon after, on the recommendation of a friend, he came to the club to start out as a caddy. Also at this time he started to leave home regularly, once a week, for days on end, staying with friends, sometimes sleeping in a nearby temple, on the road, or checking into a hospital. Ravi, understandably, did not like talking about the past, and certainly not about that time in his life, as it brought back painful memories of a lost childhood and of a mostly absent father. His mother died of tuberculosis when he was six; his father, an alcoholic, married another woman shortly thereafter.

I had known Ravi for more than a year, and visited him in his home a dozen times. But only late in my fieldwork, in August 2008, with his stepmother and his brother's family eating dinner in the bedroom, with us in the center room, did we speak at any length about his history. On other occasions, in restaurants, walking to and from lessons at the Palace Grounds, up and down the fairways at the BGC, he was reticent to say anything. That summer, his father had just been released from an intensive three-month inpatient detoxification program outside the city that Ravi persuaded him to attend. It was early days of recovery, but things were better between them.

“What was with your father, when you were growing up?” I asked him.

“Now he’s feeling better,” Ravi responded.

“Yes, but when you were growing up as a kid, when you were a boy....” I sensed, again, that he was avoiding the topic. If it were not for the fact that we had known each other as long as we did, and for the mutual trust I thought we had developed over that time, I would have dropped the subject entirely. Instead, I pressed.

“No, no. I didn’t like my father at all. Not even for one minute did I like my father,” he said, now opening up. “Also, he’s not spending time with me....” He paused.

“Spending time with me, with love, not even one minute.”

“He didn’t spend one minute with you,” I repeated after him.

“No, not at all.”

“But with Meghana, you’re very different,” I said.

“Yes, it’s the opposite,” he said, with pride.

Lalitha, of course, acknowledged as much, but admitted that she was frustrated at having to live hand-to-mouth on what little Ravi made at the club and the Palace Grounds. On a Saturday morning when Ravi was at the club, and with his permission, I, along with Meera, my interpreter, met with Lalitha. We arrived at ten o’clock in the morning, just after Lalitha had finished feeding Meghana. At the outset, Meera and I sat in plastic patio chairs opposite the entrance, while Lalitha, wearing a red sari with flower prints in white and teal, sat on two stools, blue and pink, stacked one on top of the other. Meghana, in a sweater and sweatpants, rocked back and forth on her lap. Lalitha’s arms were wrapped around her and hands clasped above her left knee.

She said that she had not known that Ravi was a caddy when they first met through a marriage broker, and only once they were married did she learn this fact. To this day,

she said, Ravi's work as a caddy was a secret to her father; he already had reservations about his daughter living with a man who only made a few thousand rupees a month. When they took up this residence with little more than a one lakh deposit—all of which they would get back when they moved, by the way—it was her father that paid for the television, furniture, and other household items.

To make ends meet, as best they could, Ravi invested in a chit fund, something like a local savings account among friends who met once a week to dole out money for those in immediate need. A while back he had pawned a necklace worth 25,000 rupees given to Lalitha by her father. And there was the 25,000 rupees her father paid Ravi as a wedding dowry. None of this Ravi had revealed to me. To Lalitha, these debts did not matter. She professed deep and profound love for him, regardless.

“Even though we're poor,” she said, “he's a good man. He's not into drinking or anything.”

Lalitha stood up and carried Meghana into the adjacent bedroom to put her down for a nap. She explained that Meghana would not fall asleep without her there, so we continued the conversation through an open doorway.

“I've asked Ravi to ask one of those wealthy members to get a job from them, a better job, but he refuses. He says, ‘No, I'm not going to ask them anything.’ I tell him, ‘If not for you, ask for one for me, because I want to go and work.’ Tomorrow, for her education,” she added, pointing down to Meghana, who was still awake and restless, “we need to pay a donation [to her eventual school] and things.”

Ravi, she admitted, did not like the idea of her working. With her education, to twelfth standard but only in a government Kannada school, she would only be able to

work in a garments shop, something he did not consider respectable.

“Why don’t you think Ravi asks the members for help?” I asked.

“Ravi feels that he’ll become cheapened in their eyes. ‘Oh, this guy’s come to us for money,’ he tells me. ‘What if they say something? What if they treat me badly?’ He doesn’t have a [twelfth standard] certificate. He can only work as a guard or an office boy. He doesn’t want to do that. This [the caddy job] is better than that,” she admitted. But she seemed, in fact, less than confident that this was so.

“He’s lost interest in everything else. ‘I’ve got to do something,’ he says to me. Especially in front of his brothers and sisters he wants to show them that he’s made it, too. He wants to say, ‘I also have the money now. People will give me a lot more respect when I have money.’”

“But don’t you worry about respect, as well?” I asked.

“Yes, I feel the same way. I feel bad if I have to go my father’s house [for money],” she sighed. “My brothers are doing very well, I think. I wish we had enough money, like them. I’m tired of counting rupees every month.”

A disappointed Lalitha, for Ravi, was a lesser burden than sacrificing his pride and self-respect going to members with his hand out. Compared to the other caddies, and to Anand, in particular, he had a peculiar relationship to money. He would accept gifts in kind, for example, but not cash for nothing, or what he considered nothing. Though he did not let me buy Lalitha a sari, for example, he did not mind if I bought children’s books for him and Lalitha to read to Meghana. When a friend of mine left behind a DVD player on her departure from Bangalore, I passed it over to him, and he did not seem to mind that, either.

It was different with money. He would not take it, if he did not think he earned it. At one point, I started paying Ravi for lessons in advance. I would give him 1,600 rupees up front, say, for four lessons—I originally paid him 150 rupees per lesson, which, over time, following successful efforts of his at negotiating an increase, became 200 rupees per lesson, then 300 rupees, and, finally, 400 rupees. Other members thought of this approach as a way of getting over on them. Sometimes, a caddy would ask for an advance and then, when he received it, would find a way to be busy, therefore never working to pay back the advance. Or it would happen that a member would give an advance, but in his mind (and, likely, in the mind of the caddy, too) consider it a give away, never really expecting to get it back. Ravi, though, always cleared the ledger. If I paid him 1,600 rupees for four lessons, I got four lessons.

Anand, too, it should be remembered, thought that he earned whatever any member gave him, no matter when he actually provided the service. With Anand any additional fees for service were not always apparent up front. He would expect to see his caddy fees at the end of a round, of course, but then later he would approach members for more money, and usually for things completely unrelated to his work, such as paying down a medical bill. He expected help in this way, primarily as the members' recognition of his personal, overall working relationship with them. It was a long-term, two-way commitment. With Ravi, however, all his fees for service were clear up front. There was no invisible or undeclared schedule of fees.

I always knew how much I was going to pay Ravi when I hired him to caddy or to give me a lesson, and what I was going to get in return. He was not comfortable with any other arrangement. At first, I did not really believe it. Once, before an overseas trip at

Christmas, in 2007, I sat him down at a cafe and handed over a letter of thanks for his contribution to my research to that point. Tucked inside the letter was a pair of 1,000 rupee notes, or the equivalent of close to fifty dollars. It was a bonus of sorts, a way of saying thanks, not only for the coaching and caddying he did, but also for facilitating my access to other caddies. He rejected the offer, though, saying he could not think to accept it.

In this sense, especially, Ravi was something of an anomaly among the caddies (and some former caddies-turned-coaches) that I had met and worked with. In Lalitha's eyes, at least, this also made him something of a dupe. He disagreed. To him, his refusal to accept a handout bought him his independence, and that, he could trade on. From this independence, he developed a sense of moral superiority over other caddies. Like Anand choosing not to drink at or near the club, and putting down those that did, this was Ravi's way of separating himself from other caddies. It did not, however, draw him closer to the members.

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Tannery Road, in the northern part of the city, starts at a junction with Saint John's Church Road and extends about two miles, across a set of train tracks that wind through this part of the city, and then turns into Arabic College Main Road. It is a poor, mainly working class area of the city inhabited mostly by Muslims and Dalits. The image of B.R. Ambedkar, author of the Indian Constitution and champion of Dalit rights, adorns the sides of buildings and schools on nearly every side street. The four minarets attached to the Shah Wallulah Mosque, west of Tannery Road, distinguish an otherwise dense, low-

lying landscape. A series of one- and two-story houses made of clay and concrete line the narrow streets and passageways that only people on foot, bicycle, motorbike, or auto-rickshaw could pass through.

Residents there live in an array of multi-level homes, apartment complexes, and shanties immediately to the east and west of Tannery Road, and, indeed, on Tannery Road itself. Both big and small industries abound, but perhaps none more prominently than the number of tanneries that give the road and area its name—and its smell. The pungent odor of newly processed leather hangs in the air and untreated chemicals seep into open sewers and down cracks in the pavement.

After a lesson at the Palace Grounds on a Monday morning in the summer of 2008, Ravi and I visited the area of Tannery Road. We were there to see Khalid, who lived here, as did many of the Muslim caddies at the BGC. At sixty-three, Khalid was the oldest living caddy at the club, and he still worked three or four days a week, sometimes taking two rounds in a day. This day he had off, though, it being a Monday when the course was closed for regular maintenance.

A few weeks previously I had hired him as my caddy. It did not go well, a fact that I could not blame entirely on him, of course—I did not exactly excel at golf. But even so, he was unable to see the ball up the fairway, and on the greens he had no sound advice to give at all. He did not speak any English, and I did not speak any Hindi or Urdu, so there was not much said between us the whole time. In the end, I played two holes, then cut through the course to take a long break at the Kirloskar Hut, returning to play the final nine before calling it a day.

Back at the clubhouse, I paid Khalid 300 rupees, more than double the board rate

and, likely, a lot more than he was used to seeing. Following the exchange, the caddy master on hand, Srinivas, who was standing nearby, shook his head from side-to-side. “Full drinking,” he said, an indication that all he thought Khalid would do now was drink for the rest of the day. Later, I asked Balraj, the other caddy master, about whether or not this was true, and he agreed with Srinivas. “Yes, sir,” he said, “today is like a festival for him with that money.”

Khalid had two daughters, both in their early twenties. The youngest was married to a tailor, he told me, one morning over breakfast at the Chalrukya Hotel, and the eldest to another caddy, Rafiq. Khalid said he never went to school, and neither did his wife, of thirty years. His daughters and their husbands, too, were uneducated.

At breakfast, Khalid admitted he was famished. He looked it. He was all skin and bones. I ordered him a dosa, some idly, and a coffee.

“The work is difficult,” he said, “but it’s the only job I know.”

There were two members, he said, who regularly hired him. But unlike Anand and others who worked for select members, he did not seem to know them too well, and said that they only paid him at most 150 or 200 rupees per round. One worked in real estate and the other worked out of an office, or so he guessed. Anand, I thought, making a quick comparison, could list not only names of members whose bags he carried, but also where they worked, what they did, as well as the names of their children and where they went to school. He made it his business to know such details, on the assumption that it made him a better caddy, more in tune with the members, if also more likely to earn more from them than he would do otherwise. It was not so with Khalid.

I sensed in him a total lack of confidence, which may have said less about his age

than the age in which he was reared in this work. When he started, he recounted, in the mid- to late sixties, there were considerably fewer members than there were now, meaning there were also fewer caddies. Members he may have worked for in the past would have died a long time ago, and the same with any caddies he might have considered close friends.

“Normally,” he remarked, talking about the members, “I keep the relationship to golf, what they’re supposed to do when they play, how to hold the club, that sort of thing. They pay me more, they pay me less, it doesn’t matter, but my behavior will be the same. Whatever is my work, let me do that. Even if a member scolds me, yells at me, uses bad words, whatever, I will tolerate it.”

“Why do you have to tolerate it?” I asked.

“Because of hunger,” he answered, plainly.

Though he never came out and said that he had a problem with alcohol, Khalid did admit to spending 100 rupees a day on drinking. If that was true, and if, in fact, he made 800 to 1,000 rupees a week, as he claimed, this would not have left him with much for anything else, and far less than the money he needed to support a family the his size. He never asked members for help, though, professing, “I don’t want to lie and take money from members.” All the same, given his age, appearance, and predilection to drink, he had to know the chances would be slim that he would receive anything approaching the extra money Anand managed to get.

“By the mercy of Allah I am born,” he said. “I ask Allah to take care of me and to give me food for the day. But in the evening, after I drink, I don’t like to pray. It’s not right to say the name of Allah after taking liquor.”

Khalid appeared to have many regrets about the decisions taken in his life that had led to his current situation. He did not blame anyone but himself. Even so, he harbored some resentment about a society that had left him behind. “Today’s generation,” he said, on a second visit to the Chalrukya Hotel, “think that only people with an education have value, and if you’re uneducated, you don’t have any value at all.”

In his own way, clearly, Khalid was also struggling for respect, just as Ravi and Anand were, and yet they, along with most other caddies at the BGC, perceived Khalid as more or less a cautionary tale. They felt sorry for him, if nothing else. He felt a little sorry for himself, too, it seemed. Like the “wineheads” in Elijah Anderson’s *A Place on the Corner*,<sup>10</sup> he occupied a position on the lowest rung of whatever hierarchy the caddies had established. Unlike Anderson’s wineheads, though, he had little in the way of disdain for strivers. Indeed, he hoped his grandchildren would be like the best of them.

“They have to improve,” he said. “They can’t be like me.”

“What kind of jobs do you think they’ll have in the future?” I asked.

He could not say for sure. “After they’re educated,” he answered, “they’ll find a job, maybe a high-paying job, maybe a low-paying job. It’ll depend on their fate.”

“But won’t it be up to them?” I insisted.

“It’s in our hands to try,” he replied, “but in the end, it’s Allah who gives.”

Khalid did not have a cellphone—rare among the caddies. There was not the money for one, he said. So when when Ravi and I planned to visit him on Tannery Road, we had reached out to Rafiq to help organize the meeting. The evening before he confirmed with Ravi, who was close with him. Khalid, he said, was looking forward to seeing us.

We were looking forward to seeing him, too, and I, especially. The things I saw,

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<sup>10</sup> Elijah Anderson, *A Place on the Corner* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

how Khalid lived, and where, were striking to me, even heartbreaking. The visit, tough, was just as important for what it revealed about Ravi and his shifting attitude to himself and others within the caddy ranks. By this point in the summer, Ravi had taken on a much more optimistic outlook about his own fortunes. There was the meeting at Koshy's, where he had adopted a rhetoric and pose oddly consistent with that of the members, more precisely a can-do spirit of entrepreneurial fervor. He was also dressing better, and it was not just a matter of what clothes he was wearing, either. It was a matter of taste. He was tucking in his shirt, for example, and taking off his hat indoors—performing some of the basic habits of bourgeois etiquette.<sup>11</sup> This, and more, was on display on Tannery Road.

Waiting on a final call from Rafiq this Monday morning, Ravi and I struck up a conversation on a curb along a side street. The night before at the Lido Mall on Old Madras Road on the other side of town, I had seen *The Dark Knight*, at the time Christopher Nolan's latest *Batman* movie. The Indian national anthem preceded the film, which struck me as peculiar. I had never experienced this in any theater in India or anywhere else. I commented on the seeming disconnect between the images of greatness conjured by the song and those that signaled deepening inequality that was evident wherever one cared to look, including right in front of us—children roaming about every which way, some of them urinating or defecating in the open, many with little to no clothes on their backs; beggars with crooked backs passing by asking for money; and, perhaps worst of all, as it indicated a form of environmental injustice and wider neglect,<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*.

<sup>12</sup> The now standard ethnographic work linking environmental injustice, corporate malfeasance, and government neglect to poverty of the kind I am describing is Javier Ayuero and Debora Alejandra Swistun's *Flammable: Environmental Injustice in an Argentine Shantytown* (New York: Oxford University

the stench from the tanneries, mixed in with the foul smell emanating from a government-built but no longer maintained washroom across the street.

“I don’t know who said it,” Ravi said, “but once I heard someone saying, ‘don’t think what your country has done for about you. Just think what are you doing for your country.’”

“It’s from a speech by John F. Kennedy, an American president, back in the 1960s,” I explained. I was unsure where Ravi was going with this.

“The problem,” he continued, and here he was talking about the problem of Indian society, in general, “is there is always one man who takes all the money.” He was referring to local politicians. “The people here,” he went on, looking out onto the scene before us, “they are not well educated.” He took a sip from a bottle of water he had been carrying.

“I have one more thing,” he said. “You write down this one.” He pointed at my pen and notebook, which were already in my hands. “See,” he said, “there is corruption in education, elections, and the army. If you find corruption in these, in any country, nothing will ever improve.”

Soon, we were joined by Rafiq, twenty-eight, Khalid’s son-in-law, who summoned us to hop onto the back of his motorbike. We set out to see Ahmed, eighteen, also a caddy. As we pulled up, Ahmed was standing outside his home talking to fifteen-year-old Ayaz. All together, we decided on some coffee at a small tea stand off the side of one of the roads we were venturing down, on the way to Khalid’s.

It was just after nine o’clock and the streets were lively. Women carrying multi-colored buckets were lining up at borewells to fetch water, with infants at their side.

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Press, 2009) in mind.

Older, school-aged children were on their way to school. Men and women were pushing fruit and vegetable carts up and down the lanes. Others headed to jobs at nearby factories. Around a bend, walking the streets as a pack, we happened upon Khalid, who was just sitting down for breakfast outside his home.

The space Khalid inhabited was tiny. It was not more than four-by-eight-feet. I said hello and peered my head inside, also greeting his wife, who was sitting at the foot of a single-sized metal bed that took up most of the room. She was playing with their grandson, a one-year-old toddler, who looked up for a moment, curious at this stranger before him, and then returned his attention to the candy wrapper in his hands. The boy's sister, five years old, was at school, Khalid said. There was a pile of clothes on top of a rolled-up mattress against the back wall. A green plastic bucket filled with sheets sat on a shelf in the left hand corner opposite the doorway, and in the right corner a kerosene-fueled stove.

The question that came to my mind was where they all slept. Khalid gestured towards the bed and said that his grandchildren, wife, and daughter rested there—his daughter's husband, the tailor, stayed elsewhere at a family friend's house. And so what about him? I asked, at which point he looked down to the three feet of space between the foot of the bed and the doorway and said, "Here."

Outside, Ravi and Ahmed had pulled up plastic lawn chairs. They saved one for me and another for Khalid. Rafiq rested on the back of his now stationary bike. Ayaz alternated between sitting on the six-inch concrete ledge in the doorway and standing. Settling into his seat, Khalid called his daughter away from the pots and pans she was cleaning outside, near a communal toilet, and asked that she come to clean up a pile of

feces left by a stray dog that morning, which she did, using a short broom and cracked dustbin, and without saying a word. His wife brought us tea on a plastic tray.

“I used to live in Palace Guttahalli,” Khalid said. Ravi offered a translation of the conversation. “After my father and mother died,” Khalid went on, “I stayed with my father’s family, but when I was married, I left my father’s house and came here. That must have been thirty years ago.”

The family got their water free from a government-owned borewell. He paid 100 to 150 rupees a month on electricity, which represented his share of a 300- to 400-rupee bill split three ways with the other families in the row of houses to which his was attached. There were nightly power cuts, he said, lasting two or three hours each time. He purchased fuel for the stove on ration at a local government provisions store, where it cost him eighty rupees for seven liters, as against thirty rupees per liter at the market price. He splurged on rice, though. The government variety was “bad,” according to him, most of it split and broken. He opted, instead, to spend twenty-five rupees per kilogram at a provisions store, paying nearly twenty-five times as much as customers usually paid at a government store.

Khalid’s grandchildren went to government schools, saving their parents and him money. He traveled by bus only, a monthly pass setting him back just thirty rupees. Rent, finally, cost him 450 rupees. All of which put his total monthly expenses, including milk, fruit, and vegetables, at no more than 1,000 rupees, by his estimation. His biggest expense, clearly, based on his earlier admission at the Chalrukya Hotel, was alcohol, which had left him penniless. I wondered which of the caddies sitting with us outside his house that morning would be in a similar position looking out thirty years.

Even at such a young age, Ahmed had a penchant for gambling and drinking. It appeared as if he had little in the way of family support. He was the youngest of seven siblings, five brothers and two sisters, and the only one who still lived at home. He had never been to school, he confirmed, neither did he see much reason to attend. No one in the family had been to school, either. His father was a railway porter, out the door at four in the morning, back home midday, and drunk thereafter, sometimes turning violent.

I asked Ahmed about the future, and he responded, in English, “What, man, I’m not an MLA [Member of Legislative Assembly, i.e., a politician]. You need to be a big man to be in business.”

He tore open a package of chewing tobacco and passed some to Ayaz, still seated in the doorway, and then to Rafiq. The rest of us declined. He boasted that he could finish off as many as twenty-five or thirty of these packs a day.

At this, Ravi sat up. He pulled out his cellphone, switched open the calculator function, and punched the keys. “In ten years,” Ravi said, addressing Ahmed, “you’ll spend one lakh, nine thousand, five hundred rupees on this habit. You can have a house for that. Come on, man. You have to try!”

“After ten years I might be dead,” Ahmed shot back.

“Whatever you earn, you need to save ten percent,” Ravi countered, with advice he later admitted he picked up from the members. “You do that, it will be big one day. After ten or fifteen years, you can reach your destiny.”

Ravi turned to me, perhaps hoping to find a more sympathetic ear. Ahmed, who was now laughing, was clearly uninterested in this unsolicited advice. “Every day,” he said, “Ahmed’s getting 300, 400, and he’s not saving anything. He’s gambling and

drinking and doing bad habits.”

He sounded like Anand, I thought. He looked in Khalid’s direction, but he may as well have been speaking to the group of them. “You missed your ten percent each day. That’s why you’re living here.”

“Yeah,” Khalid said, sounding genuine. “If I had saved that much money, I’d be better than this.”

Ravi reached for something reassuring to say. “Whatever you’ve done is done,” he told Khalid. “Just tell your grandchildren to do this, save ten percent each day, so they can be better than you.”

The conversation turned to lighter, less sensitive, topics, and before long it was time to leave. Ahmed and Ayaz went one direction, saying goodbye, and Ravi, Rafiq, and I set forth in another, toward Rafiq’s house, about a quarter of a mile away. We again piled onto the back of Rafiq’s bike, with Ravi behind Rafiq and me behind Ravi.

Rafiq turned the key in the ignition. Ravi leaned back and said, in what sounded like remorse, if not quite regret, “I’m not saying these words to my seniors. But I see Khalid’s house and I feel that I have to say something. He should do better than this.”

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By the time Anand’s father died, he had already become a pariah within the family and wider community. Following his death, it appeared as if his two surviving brothers had decided to sever ties with Anand, as well. The brothers provided Anand and his family with a ten-by-ten-foot room with a kitchen accessible through a private entrance at the side of their jointly owned two-story house in Palace Guttahalli, a mixed-income

neighborhood near to the BGC. Otherwise, they wanted nothing to do with them. One uncle lived on the other side of a thick wall, in the front of the house, and the second lived on the floor above them. In a dozen or so trips to see Anand, at no time did I witness him interact with them or anyone from their families, not even grudgingly for the sake of keeping up appearances.

Nevertheless, Anand's immediate family was remarkably self-sufficient. They survived on Anand's work at the club, combined with targeted help from certain members. Aishwarya's contributions were especially important. Evidently, it was she, not Anand, who was the head of the family, a role she had long ago adopted in the wake of her husband's precipitous decline.

Aishwarya had married Anand's father when she was eighteen. A year into the marriage, with his drinking problem already apparent and getting worse, and her carrying Anand, she moved back to Paiyur to stay with her parents. After Anand was born, she found employment at a food processing plant. She worked during the day, while her parents tended to the baby at home. Eventually, her father-in-law asked that she consider a reunion with her husband. She moved back to Bangalore in order to stay with him and his extended family. Things hardly improved in Bangalore, however.

"He wasn't very reliable," she said, when I asked Aishwarya about her late husband. I was visiting with her and Anand's wife, Sushama, at home one afternoon, while the girls were at school and Anand was at the club caddying a round. Barefoot, dressed in a purple sari, she was sitting cross-legged with her back against the wall opposite to where I was sitting on the edge of the bed. Sushama, in a yellow sari draped in a sweater, was making lunch in the kitchen.

“He used to go out in the morning and come back in the night,” she said, thinking back to how tough things were in the early years of their marriage. “When he got an auto he wasn’t running it regularly. Whatever money he made he used to get drunk.”

And whatever money she made—mostly from work stitching clothes at a small factory—she had to give to her father-in-law, a state of affairs that continued unabated until her husband died, in 1998. By then, Anand was a teenager and working regularly at the club. He met Sushama, a first cousin, at a family function, and within a year they were married. They took up residence at the back of the house in Palace Guttahalli, where they started a family.

“The boys grew up seeing what I went through,” she said, wiping away tears, careful not to let them fall from her cheeks. “They realized that to have respect in society you have to be respectable, not like their father.”

Indeed, Anand seemed nothing like his father, and the home life that he, Aishwarya, and Sushama were creating for the children seemed nothing like the experience he described growing up. “I don’t want the kids to suffer like I did,” he would say. And there was no evidence that they did, none at all. One of the first times I visited Anand, on a weekday morning in July 2008, I was able to observe the calm but deliberate order to things in his home, along with the deep care and affection everyone demonstrated in their interactions with the children.

By the time Meera and I arrived, a little after seven-thirty in the morning, the girls were already dressed in their school uniforms: patterned green and orange dress shirts, forest green neckties, and matching skirts. Sushama, wearing a thick brown sweater pulled over a morning gown, was standing in the center of the room, affixing orange and

white bindi dots on each girl's forehead. Aishwarya was busy shuttling back and forth from the kitchen bringing with her idly and biselabath, traditional south Indian fare, which she deposited on metal plates the girls were holding in their hands. Sushama tried to keep them still, even while encouraging them to eat up. Raja was quietly rolling from side-to-side in a short hammock suspended from the ceiling above the bed in the corner.

Anand had just returned from a nine-hole round at the club. He was kneeling down by the side of the bed, waiting to receive the girls in a line. He helped them pull up their socks and put on their shoes. When they were set, he reached beneath the bed to pull out a rag and a bottle of black shoe polish. "This is how they learn to be clean and dress well," he said. "Polishing the shoes is really important, because others at school can learn from them, too."

The girls then put on their backpacks and Anand led them out the door, down the side of the house, and onto the street. He walked a pace or two ahead, with Padmini on his right side, carrying a potted plant she had been growing for a school project, and Suri on his left, holding their hands. When a small Hindu temple came into view, he let go of them and put his hands together. First, he touched his hands to his forehead, then to his chest, and to his forehead again. "Do good, just do good," is all he prayed for, he said, when I asked about it later.

The day we visited, Aishwarya had been up since three in the morning collecting water from a local delivery boy and then setting to work washing clothes and cleaning pots and pans from the previous evening's meal. She insisted on a clean and orderly house, above all else. Lakshmi, she said, referring to the Hindu goddess of wealth, "doesn't enter a dirty home." Every morning, including this one, she sketched orange and

white patterns in chalk on the pavement outside. The “ranguly,” as it is called, hastened Lakshmi’s arrival, she said. “We are fine only because of her. If she doesn’t come one day, then she’ll come the next.”

Anand was a proud man, and most of all a proud father, but he was not particularly proud of the work he did. He made an effort to shield his daughters from whatever stigma attached to him as a caddy. He did not want others to think any less of them, or for them to think less of themselves. Every once and a while, for example, he went grocery shopping at Spencer’s or Food World, two chain stores that catered to mostly middle- and upper-middle-class customers, just to show them they were like everyone else.

The girls, in fact, did not know that he was a caddy, and it was unclear whether his wife and mother knew, either. He told them he was a coach. It was a little white lie, with hardly any consequence, but it was an interesting choice on his part, nonetheless. He said the term coach would be easier for them to understand than caddy, which was probably right. But then, he also must have known that calling himself a coach made him look more accomplished than he might have otherwise appeared. After all, there is a world of difference between a coach and a caddy, not only in terms of what each does, but also how much each stands to earn. The professional coaches I met in Bangalore, for instance, and this was especially if they were also club members, never so much as bent down to place a ball on a mat for a student at a driving range, much less carry the student’s golf bag all day. They coached, that was all, making as much as 2,000 rupees for a thirty-minute lesson, or more, depending on their level of certification, and word-of-mouth referrals.

On Mondays, Anand’s day off, when the course was closed for routine

maintenance, he would occasionally pick up the girls from school and bring them to the club, walk them out onto the course, and tell them this is where he worked. It was perfect timing, of course, as they were guaranteed not to run into anyone who would jeopardize the impression of himself and his work that he was carefully constructing for the girls. Few, if any, members were around then, but most importantly, there were no caddies in sight.

He also had a Sunday afternoon tradition. After taking a round at the club, he would bring his girls to a park in Malleswaram, a mainly middle- and upper-middle-class enclave about a mile away from where they lived. The park cost a rupee to enter, a nominal fee, but a fee apparently high enough to dissuade poor and most working-class people from coming in. Indeed, no such people were anywhere to be seen in or around the park, which added to its appeal, no doubt.

“It’s a good park,” Anand said, one Sunday afternoon when I decided to join him and the girls. “It’s very nice for middle-class people like us.”

We were there for only an hour and a half. And yet, it was just enough time for me to see how a place like this figured in his strategy to recast himself and his family in line with more middle- and upper-middle-class people in the city. There were perhaps a hundred others in the park when we pulled up on his scooter, fully half of them children. The girls, with their newly styled hair and patterned jeans and bright T-shirts, fitted right in. They were obviously familiar with the park, as they had a plan of activities for us the minute we stepped inside.

Our first stop was a carousel. Padmini hopped up on a green-painted horse and Suri on a red one, and Anand and I spun them round. And then it was onto the teeter-totters, in

the middle of a giant sandpit in the center of the park. Up next, a pair of jungle gyms adjacent in the same area, where they climbed chains and tires, swung from ropes, and raced across short walkways suspended in the air, and when they were bored with all that, they headed to the slides, with Anand and I following close behind.

It started to rain just as we were lining up for foot races on an open field at one end of the park. Anand whisked them away to an elevated concrete platform protected by a canopy, joining other children and their families in trying to keep dry. The three of them were singing: “Rain, rain, go away, come again another day, Padmini and Pavi wants to play. Rain, rain, go away...”

“This is a beautiful park, Anand,” I said, standing next to him, waiting for the rain to stop. “You’re lucky to have it here. I’m surprised more caddies don’t bring their kids.”

Not all the caddies lived in the area, of course, but enough lived in Palace Guttahalli and its neighboring areas. It was not a matter of distance, according to Anand, but rather conflicting interests, a sentiment expressed by him that I should have anticipated.

“A caddy has to make money, and in the evening he wants to drink, that’s all,” he said, in response, echoing a perspective I had heard from him countless times. “Ninety percent drinking, seventy percent, guaranteed. Sunday is too much drinking, because Monday is a holiday, no.”

“Does it make you proud when you see a member here?”

“Very proud.”

“It makes you proud, because you’re like them?”

“Like them, yes. Middle class, high class, everything, we have to play in one place.

Not them separate, we separate.”

“And how about the poor?”

“Poor class people are not coming. Only they will say, ‘Today we have to do work, take money, and eat.’ They live for today only, not tomorrow.”

The rain started to let up after about fifteen minutes, but by then Padmini and Suri were already exhausted, and it was time to go. Making our way across the park, covering a distance of approximately twenty-five yards, Anand pointed out a man in his mid-forties who was standing with his family by the exit. It was a second or third cousin of his, he said, though he was not too specific. I asked him if we should stop and say hello before we left, a prospect that appeared to make him immediately nervous. He said he would only speak to the man if he was acknowledged.

“He’s high class, no,” Anand said. He worked in construction, as far as Anand knew, and made a lot of money. “He’s not talking very close to me. Just, ‘hi, hi.’”

The girls darted out in front, holding hands, and we returned to our previous conversation about the caddies and their apparent disinterest in bringing their families to a park like this.

“Ask any caddy,” Anand said. “Nobody will come here. They’ll only go to Cubbon Park, drink and sleep.”

“But not with their kids?”

“No, alone.”

I asked him if he ever went to Cubbon Park, the largest in the city near the legislature, built in the late nineteenth century and named after Lord Cubbon, the commissioner of what was then the princely state of Mysore. He had not been there in

eight years, he said.

“Why don’t you go there more often?”

“It’s not a good place. Only couples and drinkers and pickpockets go there.”

Approaching the exit, we came upon the “high class” man Anand had noticed a few minutes before. He was standing at the side of the path, with his wife a few feet away attending to a little boy of Suri’s age and size. Anand, despite his intentions, said hello first, shaking the man’s outstretched hand. I introduced myself, saying a little bit about my project, how I was spending time with Anand and learning more about his life and work. He said he had been to Boston “several times.” I did not get his name.

“I teach music,” he said, speaking fluent English.

“I want to send them there, dance class,” Anand offered, in English, though clearly not as polished as the version this man was speaking.

The man barely acknowledged what Anand had said. He brought the conversation back around to his own work. He said he owned “five institutions.” I told him I was not very musically inclined. I loved music, but did not play any instruments.

“So, you guys are related?” I asked.

“Yeah, we are related,” he responded.

“Very close,” Anand added.

“Very close,” the man said, leading to an awkward pause.

“I’m here for another two months,” I said. Anand would be in a future book, I explained, to which he said, “Oh, great.” And at that, Anand and I said our goodbyes. We collected the girls, who were waiting patiently at our sides, and walked toward the exit.

“His wife and his son, family,” Anand said, as we neared the gates to the park.

“He’s family,” I said, “but if he didn’t see you, you wouldn’t have said hi?”

“No.”

“Why, if you’re family?”

“He’s high class, that’s why I don’t want to say hi. You saw just now. He has a big family. We talked two seconds.”

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Thinking back to the visit I made with Ravi to Khalid’s home, I understand that it would be disingenuous to think that my own presence that morning on Tannery Road had little or no impact on what Ravi said to the men in the group meeting there. Knowing Ravi as well as I did, or as well as I thought I did, I could see that his behavior and his speech was, at least in part, for my benefit. It was the same with the interaction between Anand and the drunk-seeming caddy at the caddy station at the BGC. I was not just anyone to either of them, or any other caddy, for that matter. I had privileges they did not—the ability to pay and play with members being the most prominent. I was white, middle-class, fluent in English, and educated. I stood out. If the members were models of aspiration, then so was I, and that made me someone to impress, whether I liked it or not.

Ravi and Anand are individuals, too, of course, responsible for their words and actions. That being said, words and actions do not spring forth in a vacuum. If our choices are our own, they are made within limited constraints, according to the social and economic resources at our disposal.<sup>13</sup> It was the same with Ravi and Anand and all the other caddies. This was not their own status game they were playing. They did not decide

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<sup>13</sup> There is an excellent discussion on the limits to individual agency under capitalism in Vivek Chibber’s latest book, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (New York: Verso, 2013), 152-177.

the rules governing who mattered and who did not. They did not decide who advanced, moreover, and who did not, and how far. That was up to the members. All Ravi and Anand had to do was follow along, as best they could, speaking and acting in ways that marked them off from the others. In that sense, they were only being strategic, smart, and highly rational actors, doing what I believe anyone in their shoes would do.

If it was a game Ravi and Anand were playing, however, it was not clear that they could ever be winners. They could, and did, stand out among the caddies, partly of their own volition and partly in accord with circumstances not entirely of their making. They did not, however, stand out next to the members, and, indeed, it was not for certain that the members saw either of them as being all that different from the rest in the group, at least in one respect—they were still caddies.

## Chapter 5: Sons and Daughters

One afternoon, late in my fieldwork, I dropped in on an elementary school classroom at a private English-medium school in Challaghatta. The school was obviously of compelling interest to me on account not only of its location, but also of the students who attended. The school takes up the second floor of a two-story building at the back of the village; the ground floor stores construction equipment and dry cement owned by local businesses. Sampath, his brother-in-law Arjun, and a few other caddies at the KGA had opted out of the free government schools and instead enrolled their children here, in the hope that it would make a difference to their futures. Other parents in the area had the same idea. In all, approximately forty-five students attended the school, and each came from poor and lower-caste homes in the immediate vicinity.

The principal, a retired nurse, and her husband, a salesman, had started the school in 2005. They, along with the teachers they employed, were certainly well meaning with only the best of intentions, but they lacked the resources and also the creativity and imagination necessary to propel these children forward. There was no library, for one thing, only textbooks, and even these were outdated. There were no computers, either, just pictures of computers thrown up on a wall in a main hallway off the second-floor entrance. Instruction, like much instruction in India, was only designed to encourage rote learning, with little or no attempt to stimulate any student imagination.

The fifteen students in the classroom I visited ranged in ages from five to twelve. They were dressed in matching brown and beige shirts and striped ties—the boys wore pleated shorts or pants and the girls skirts. All were sitting side-by-side on wooden

benches when I arrived, their faces thrust downward into a general social studies textbook written in English.

I pulled up a seat next to Anjali, Arjun's six-year-old daughter, who was sitting next to Muniraj, Sampath's five-year-old son. Their assignment, apparently, was to copy out a specific page from the textbook, one with definitions for words such as teacher, doctor, and scientist. I asked Anjali to read out one of the sentences she had copied down in a ruled notebook, one of which read: "The undigested part of the food will be excreted in the form of excretory products." She smiled, but looked confused, as if she was not sure what I had asked of her. It appeared that she was unaware of the significance of anything she was writing down. Muniraj, too. It was not their fault, obviously. Even if they had known English, sentences like these would have been difficult to comprehend for any first-grader. That they did not understand English, though, and were still being asked to copy the phrases down, said more about the school than it did of them.

On a bench in front of Anjali and Muniraj was a pair of twelve-year-old boys performing a similar exercise. I sat down with them next. They were copying down a page from a social studies textbook outlining various forms of communication. At my request, one of the boys read aloud. When he had finished, I asked about the content of what he had recited. It was a short passage, perhaps two or three sentences, describing why people sent letters via mail (answer: as a way to communicate across great distances), but he was at a loss. It was not the concept itself he struggled with, I assumed, but with its presentation in an unimaginative textbook written in a foreign language.

I queried the teacher, a young woman in her early twenties sitting in the corner of the classroom, as to the purpose of these exercises. She demurred, saying she only spoke

English “fifty-fifty.” Her job this day, as she explained it, was to check that students copied down the sentences correctly, and when they did, to inscribe check marks and draw happy faces at the top of their sheets.

At the end of the period, I thanked the teacher and principal for their time. Later in the evening, after several hours touring the area speaking with residents, I dropped in on Arjun. I was with Meera, one of my interpreters. Arjun, in his late twenties, had been a caddy at the KGA since he was fifteen, but now he was a professional golfer. He was fairly successful, too, making as much as three lakhs, or \$6,000, some years on the Professional Golf Tour of India. When he was not playing or practicing, he was coaching at the KGA, picking up an additional 500 rupees, or \$10 per lesson, a few times a week.

If Arjun earned more in wages than other caddies, he was no more advantaged than they in securing access to the closed networks guarded by the members. He still lived at the back of Challaghatta, for example, along with other lower-caste families, and a few doors down from Sampath, whose sister he had married. And like Sampath, he was relegated to inadequate, if still private, English-medium schools in the area. He was not exactly blind to this, frankly; in fact, it bothered him deeply. He just was not sure what to do about it.

Arjun was particularly concerned when I informed him of what I had observed at Anjali’s school earlier in the day. I recounted how Anjali had been instructed to copy down pages from a textbook, but that it was not at all clear if she had any understanding of what she was writing. He wondered if he should seek out a “better tuition” program, referring to after-school homework help. Ostensibly, these “tuition” classes, as they were called, were a means to supplement instruction in the schools. Private and unregulated,

and typically run out of a current or former teacher's home, they lasted one-and-a-half to two hours, at a minimum, and were repeated six, sometimes seven days a week. As many as fifteen or more students, each paying 250 to 500 rupees a month, signed up.

I had attended six such programs in the city, including two in Challaghatta. All good intentions aside, students more or less repeated whatever activities and exercises had been completed during the school day. In tuition, as at school, there was little in the way of teaching and learning. So, no, I told Arjun, better, or more, tuition would not be the solution. He needed to change schools.

“Even if Anjali brings home a report card, and she gets ninety-five percent,” I said, “and she receives teacher comments like ‘very good, very good,’ that likely does not mean anything.”

“I know,” he said.

“It's like...,” I started in, before he cut me off.

“What can I do?” he asked.

“That's the question,” I said.

Indeed, that was the question. I had no simple answer. The conversation soon turned to the topic of his other daughter, Radhika, who was celebrating her ninth birthday the following day. Arjun and the family were planning a party. Sampath would be there with his family, too, as would a number of other children from the area. In advance of the occasion, Arjun had bought a pink dress for Radhika and an orange one for Anjali. The pair cost him “800 bucks,” he said, approximately twenty dollars. The girls did not like them, though, he said, laughing. They asked him to take them along the next time he wanted to buy dresses for them. He promised to do better that next time.

Arjun's wife offered us tea and a snack, but we declined. It had been a long day already, and, really, I had just wanted to drop in and say hello. I had also planned to say a quick hello to Sampath, who lived nearby. I asked Arjun if he wanted to join me, and he said yes. His wife was busy in the kitchen, and the girls, just home from their tuition, were in the other room changing out of their uniforms into more comfortable clothes, before returning to their homework. He assured them he would be back shortly.

We stepped out of his house into a narrow lane and walked right, around a sharp corner, and then onto another narrow lane. A few moments later we were at Sampath's house on the edge of Challaghatta. He was happy to see us, inviting us in for dinner. His wife, Poonam, was especially eager to take us in, and I was tempted, because she was such a good cook. We passed up the offer, however, suggesting another time to get together the following week. Sampath was tired, anyway. He had caddied two rounds earlier in the day, and now appeared exhausted. His mother was sitting cross-legged on the floor in the front of the house peeling onions and handing them to Poonam, who was standing over a steaming pan preparing chicken curry.

Sampath returned to the back room to watch TV with his father. The boys, like Arjun's daughters, had just changed out of their school uniforms into pajamas. They were sitting on a bare metal bed frame in a corner of the room, about to start their homework. Arjun and I said our goodbyes and retreated into the alleyway to wait for Meera, who was quizzing Poonam on a recipe.

"What's your suggestion?" Arjun asked, getting right back to the earlier conversation. "What can I do about my daughters?"

"Well, how much do you spend on Anjali's school?" I asked. "Five thousand

[rupees], six?”

“Admission fees are five thousand,” he said. “Monthly fees, I pay three hundred.” Radhika’s education at the government school she attended was free, he said, but she and Anjali shared the same tuition class after school, at a cost of 150 rupees each.

I told him I thought he should speak to Ganesh, another caddy at the KGA, who lived on the other side of the golf course, close to the entrance off Airport Road. Ganesh was sending his ten-year-old son to a middle-tier co-educational private English-medium school on Airport Road and his twelve-year-old daughter Asha to a similar tiered all-girls private English-medium school. I had visited Asha’s school a few times, actually, and while the education did not appear anywhere close to the level received by the members’ children, it did strike me as better than what Anjali was currently encountering. I suggested to Arjun that he make some inquiries.

He liked the idea, but he was worried about the distance involved. The school I had in mind was north of Airport Road. In that case, I said, he could drop Anjali off at Ganesh’s home in the mornings and she and Asha could travel together.

The school year had only just started, he reminded me. He was reluctant to move Anjali. Next year, sure, he would definitely make the move. In the meantime, he wanted to know if I had any suggestions on a new after-school program where he might enroll Anjali and her sister.

Again, I offered that he speak with Ganesh. Maybe he would have some ideas. There was also the daughter of an upper-caste family I had met on another visit through the area. She was in her teens, spoke fluent English, and seemed relatively cosmopolitan in outlook and demeanor. At the time, she was preparing for her tenth grade exams and

talking about traveling to Europe the following summer. Maybe she could help Arjun and his daughters.

“But she goes to a better school,” he said, stating the obvious, hinting also that caste might be an obstacle in appealing to this girl for any help.

I skipped over these objections, saying only, “Anjali needs people to talk to her in English all the time. She needs to read English. She needs to...” I paused, struggling for the right words. “She needs to be challenged,” I finished.

“So, one more thing,” he said.

Just then, Meera stepped out of Sampath’s house, interrupting the conversation. I was glad she did. I did not know what more to say, and wondered if I had already said too much. I changed the subject, asking him about the coming weeks and the tournaments he would be playing in. Nearby, a small pack of stray dogs were barking at nothing in particular. It was time to leave. In closing, I asked him what I should get Anjali and Radhika for the birthday party the next night.

“Patrick,” he said, “whatever you like, you can get it. They’ll be happy.”

## THE EDUCATION TRAP

Arjun once told me a story about working at the airport when he was nineteen. His primary job was to remove the used food trays and leftovers discarded by disembarking passengers on arriving planes. He would then restock departing planes with new food trays for new passengers. He could not stand it, and lasted all of one day.

“I saw the passengers through the windows when the planes landed,” he said. “I felt that with this job I would never be able to board a plane. So I came back to the KGA.”

The intuition to return to the KGA turned out to be fortuitous. Arjun started out as a caddy, then picked up the game watching members and practicing in his spare time, and now he played professionally. Had he stayed on at the airport, without any chance to interact with the wealthy passengers coming and going, it is unlikely that he ever would have boarded a plane. Now, on occasion, he actually traveled by air to play at tournaments. He certainly would not have learned English, either, or any of the other things members imparted, knowingly or not, and he may not have been able to educate his daughters. It was a remarkable turnaround, to say the least, for a son of two uneducated day laborers with roots in rural Tamil Nadu.

Though not professional golfers, Sampath and Ganesh were also successful in their own right. Like Arjun, they were upwardly mobile, despite equally humble beginnings. Born to parents without formal education or English, they had also lifted themselves and their families by sheer will and determination, leveraging longstanding relationships with members, as and when necessary, no matter the cost to their own personal pride and self-esteem.

But now all three men struggled to put their children on a different life path than the one they had traveled. “My life is over,” they would say, on more than one occasion.

“Everything is for my children,” and to judge by their actions, these were not idle words.

None of them, in fact, subscribed to the view that their children should be permitted to do what they please, learn what they like, whenever it suited them, a style of parenting sociologist Annette Lareau has found typical in poor and working class homes.<sup>1</sup> Their parenting strategies instead reflected the ethic of “concerted cultivation” Lareau finds

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<sup>1</sup> Annette Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

typical among the middle and upper middle classes. All of them took an active role in the development of their children's lives and experiences. Each deliberately set aside enough money for private English-medium schools and after-school tuition programs, for example. In the home, they enforced limits on television viewing and other activities, so that school assignments were finished on time. They also regularly sought out and questioned administrators and teachers, in the event that their children had received less than standard grades.

Such dedication should have been rewarded, and it was—to a point. Homework was completed, assignments came back with high marks and smiley faces, report cards reflected mostly all As. All this, and more, made Arjun, Sampath, and Ganesh proud fathers, and yet they were still anxious. Like most caddies, their own education history was not stellar—only ten percent of caddies at the KGA, in fact, completed the tenth grade, while at the BGC twelve percent did.<sup>2</sup> Arjun and Ganesh each dropped out in the third grade, while Sampath lasted until the tenth. They never experienced an English-medium education, and never attended private schools, either. So they were happy, on one level, with the progress their children were already making, but they still suspected it was not enough.

They could plainly make out that members were better educated than them, even if they did not know precisely their education history. They also knew that members sent their own children to vastly different schools than they themselves could afford. They had a sense, too, that there was no way—no matter what kind of connections they had developed with a member over the years—that any one of them would facilitate access

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A for additional data on educational attainment among the caddies. Eagleton caddies, on average, had higher levels of educational attainment. Almost half had completed tenth grade. By twelfth grade, though, most had dropped out.

for their children to such schools, and so they never asked.

Aside from social and cultural capital, caddies obviously lacked sufficient money, as do poor and working people all over India. As it happens, nominally inexpensive tuition, textbook, and uniform fees at “free” government schools adds up to more than a day laborer’s wage, and thus more than what most poor families can comfortably manage.<sup>3</sup> Even then, high teacher absenteeism and the prevalence of rote learning instruction of the sort I observed in Anjali’s classroom induce what economists Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen have called a “discouragement effect.”<sup>4</sup> In no time at all, poor families come to suspect that all the work and money they have invested may not amount to enough in the larger context, and may only lead their children to pick up exactly the same or similar kind of labor they set out to save them from in the first place.<sup>5</sup> Worries are further exacerbated when they come across real life instances of “failed social mobility,”<sup>6</sup> where adolescents and young adults from similarly poor backgrounds pass out of twelfth grade or sometimes graduate from college, only to find that their degrees cannot provide, let alone guarantee, quality job opportunities.

Whether or not students land decent jobs, though, is but one measure of a good education. I cannot say for sure if the students in the classes I observed will obtain formal employment in professions desirable to them and their families. A bigger worry, I should

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<sup>3</sup> Jandhyala Tilak, “How Free is ‘Free’ Primary Education?” *Economic and Political Weekly* 31, no. 6 (1996).

<sup>4</sup> Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *India: Development and Participation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 158.

<sup>5</sup> Geeta G. Kingdon, “Private Schooling in India: Size, Nature, and Equity-Effects,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 31, no. 51 (1996); Jos Mooij and Manabi Majumdar, “Primary Education in India: Empowerment of the Marginalized or the Reproduction of Social Inequalities” (paper presentation, Conference of the Human Development and Capability Association, The Hague, The Netherlands, September 2011); Myron Weiner, “Putting Compulsory Primary Education on the Political Agenda,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 31, no. 45/46 (1996).

<sup>6</sup> Craig Jeffrey, Roger Jeffrey, and Patricia Jeffrey, “Degrees without Freedom: The Impact of Formal Education on Dalit Young Men in North India,” *Development and Change* 35, no.5 (2004), 976.

say, beyond the prospect of finding work, is if they will ever learn to think for themselves. I was not so optimistic on this count, based on what I witnessed. Rote learning is good for some things, obviously: students need to learn grammar in their language classes, multiplication tables in their math classes, and various laws of nature in their science classes. Such knowledge almost certainly must be memorized. But application matters, too, and there was virtually nothing in these classes to suggest that students had the faintest idea when, how, or why to use the concepts they were copying down and asked to memorize. Not once were students invited to give an opinion, form an argument, or think critically, in general—all essential tasks for effective and engaged participation in a democracy. Vast stores of curiosity, creativity, and imagination in students went basically untapped. Teachers, too, seemed largely resigned, as if they were going through the motion, waiting for the school day to end.

Rising tuition costs, absent or disengaged teachers, mind numbing instruction—these are not simply “personal troubles” the poor face, to borrow the language of C. Wright Mills;<sup>7</sup> these experiences, rather, reflect underlying “social issues” endemic to the society. Education, after all, is not entirely a matter for individuals. It is also, importantly, a matter for a nation’s overall health and well-being, in both economic and political terms. For whatever reasons, and all manner of excuses, India—as a state—refuses to take on the responsibility to educate its citizens adequately, just as it refuses to take on the difficult task of development, generally. The two, in fact, are not mutually exclusive, as economists and humanitarians alike well know.<sup>8</sup> Certainly, if a developing country

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<sup>7</sup> C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).

<sup>8</sup> Dreze and Sen, *India*; Dipankar Gupta, *The Caged Phoenix: Can India Fly?* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Atul Kohli, *Poverty Amid Plenty in the New India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

cannot, or will not, see to it that children—all children, and not just those of the rich—can read and write, add and subtract, at a most basic level, then it matters little where growth rates, foreign direct investment, and other economic indicators stand. If such conditions prevail, then there will never be enough skilled workers required, quite literally, to build the country. But there also will not be any citizens to govern it—citizens prepared, and willing, to deliberate openly and constructively in organizing their communities, challenging injustice wherever it lurks, or bringing elected officials to task. Yet this is the predicament in which India finds herself today, though not for any lack of money or resources. There is plenty of money. What India lacks is political will.

It was not always thus. Early on after independence, in fact, as I explain in the immediate next section, government officials were attuned to the necessity of education as a strategy of development, promising a significant portion of national income to this project. Such commitments never materialized, however, and still remain largely unfulfilled to this day. As it is, government primary and secondary schools are “grotesquely under-resourced,”<sup>9</sup> and mostly left to the poorest of the poor who cannot afford anything else. Others, among them Arjun, Sampath, and Ganesh, seek out alternatives in a rapidly growing private system. But even here there is tremendous variation in the quality and content of instruction, and also the opportunity to progress. In India, as elsewhere, there are private schools, and then there are private schools. I have indicated as much already, and will do so again below, in the second half of the chapter, where I emphasize the social and economic obstacles these three men, in particular, come up against in their attempts to elevate their children into the lower rungs of India’s middle class.

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<sup>9</sup> Kingdon, “Private Schooling,” 3311.

This last substantive chapter, in many ways, gets right to the heart of the matter. Throughout this study, I have described and interpreted the interactions between members and caddies as a way to shine a light on the consequences and problems with India's wider development strategy. Caddies fortunate enough to pair with members who see in them a reason to invest their time and money find their lives dramatically improved—for some, this change is only temporary, but for others, it can be more stable, if ultimately still tenuous. But the real test is whether or not a caddy can ensure that his children will succeed him in income and status, and for that, education is key. The stakes are high, then, and they know it. What they do not like are the odds, which seem decidedly stacked against them, despite their own best efforts.

#### FROM PUBLIC COMMITMENTS TO PRIVATE INTERESTS

In 1966, India's Education Committee, chaired by D. S. Kothari, set down a series of recommendations.<sup>10</sup> One such recommendation was to allocate six percent of the gross national product (GNP) to education, with 1986 as the deadline by which this goal would be met. An optimistic government of India concurred, including this provision in the New Policy on Education (NPE), published in 1968. UNESCO and UNDP (United Nations Development Program, founded in 1965), among other institutions and agencies, have since adopted the figure of six percent as a minimum level of investment for all developing countries. Twenty years on, though, India failed to meet its own trailblazing

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<sup>10</sup> In laying out this history of expenditure on education, I draw heavily on the work of Jandhyala B. G. Tilak. See, especially, Jandhyala B. G. Tilak, "The Kothari Commission and Financing of Education," *Economic and Political Weekly* 42, no. 10 (2007); Jandhyala B. G. Tilak, "Inclusive Growth and Education: On the Approach to the Eleventh Plan," *Economic and Political Weekly* 42, no. 38 (2007); Jandhyala B. G. Tilak, "Education in 2008-2009 Union Budget," *Economic and Political Weekly* 43, no. 20 (2008).

objective. The government again reiterated the goal in its eighth five-year plan, which was released in 1986. And it did so, as well, in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh five-year plans. It will do so again, presumably, in the twelfth five-year plan, due out in 2013.

Any analysis of the country's attempts to follow the letter and spirit of the Kothari Commission's expectations reveals a pattern of underinvestment. At the time the NPE was published, in 1968, investment in education stood at 1.7 percent of national income, up from 0.6 percent in 1952. By 1986, investment was at 3.5 percent, where it has more or less remained. In fact, the early 1990s was the only period in which investment as a percent of national income reached the still low mark of four percent. By 2005, investment was stuck at 3.8 percent.<sup>11</sup> The picture looks bleaker still when spending on education is taken as a percent of all government expenditure.<sup>12</sup> In 2000-2001, India spent 11.3 percent of its total expenditure on education. Eight years later, and it was spending just 10.2 percent, suggesting a marked decline in investment. For purposes of comparison, consider that the United States spends 15.2 percent of its total expenditure on education, and as much as four-fifths of this amount is contributed by the government—and even still, the system of education in the United States is no shining light, especially in regards to its inner city public schools, some of which function just as well, or worse, than schools in developing countries. In India, though, where there is less room for error than there is in the United States with its advanced economy, only forty-eight percent of all spending on education is funded by government.<sup>13</sup>

Evidently, India gets what it pays for. While India accounts for twenty-two percent of the world's population, economist Geetha Kingdon observes, it is also home to forty-

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<sup>11</sup> Tilak, "The Kothari Commission."

<sup>12</sup> Tilak, "Union Budget."

<sup>13</sup> Gupta, *Caged Phoenix*.

six percent of the world's illiterates.<sup>14</sup> The problem is not necessarily enrollment, either. In recent years, enrollment is up, in fact, particularly at primary schools. Indeed, the latest statistics show that fully ninety-three percent of Indian children aged six to fourteen attend school, not a small feat in a country as large as India. Most of these same children, however, dropout before they reach high school, where enrollment is just forty-seven percent. But even when students attend school, it is not always clear that they are learning anything, and hence the disappointing literacy rates.

Kingdon draws on a 2006 all-India survey of more than 300,000 households conducted by Pratham, a non-governmental organization.<sup>15</sup> Forty-seven percent of grade five students covered in the survey could not read a paragraph written at a second grade level. Among this same cohort of students, fifty-five percent could not solve a simple division problem—dividing a three-digit number by a one-digit number, for example. Better, if still shocking, only twenty-five percent of eighth graders in the survey could perform these same problems. Children in poor states fared worse. Sixty-two to seventy-five percent of students in West Bengal, Haryana, Bihar, Uttaranchal, and Chhattisgarh were unable to complete the mathematical exercises. The results from a 2002 standardized test issued by the government of India to 90,000 grade five students aged ten to eleven only confirm these figures. In the science portion of the test, students scored an average of 50.3 percent; in math, an average of 46.5 percent; and in language, an

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<sup>14</sup> Geeta Gandhi Kingdon, "The Progress of School Education in India," *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 23, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>15</sup> Pratham is the largest NGO in India. Created in 1994, with the backing of UNICEF, to address the almost completely non-existent educational opportunities in the slums of Mumbai, Pratham now sponsors nation-wide programs to meet pre-school needs and to complement and improve education within schools. Its motto is: "Every child in school and learning well." "About us," Pratham India, accessed May 13, 2013. <http://www.pratham.org/M-11-2-About-Pratham.aspx>.

average of 58.6 percent.<sup>16</sup>

The abysmal state of education in India overall has spurred a mass exodus from government schools, with rich and poor parents alike thinking that their children will fare better in the private system. In between the years 1978 and 1986, an average of 2.8 percent of children in rural settings attended primary schools in the private sector. Between the years 1986 and 1993, however, this figure multiplied by more than a factor of six, to 18.5 percent, and between the years 1993 and 2002, it increased again, to 24.4 percent. The percentage of children living in urban areas receiving primary education in private schools also increased across these three time periods. On average, 56.8 percent of children went to private primary schools between the years 1978 and 1986; between the years 1986 and 1993, the figure rose to 60.5 percent; and between 1993 and 2002, the number increased yet again, this time by half, to 95.7 percent.<sup>17</sup>

Data on adolescents attending private secondary schools is no less dramatic. Urban secondary private schools captured 17.7 percent of eligible children between 1978 and 1986, a figure that remained static through the mid-eighties and into the early nineties. But in the years 1993 to 2002, the number of children going to private secondary schools in Indian cities increased to 46.7 percent. In rural areas, in comparison, 5.8 percent of children attended private secondary schools between 1978 and 1986; 15.8 percent attended between the years 1986 and 1993; and between the years 1993 and 2002 the level was 30.9 percent.<sup>18</sup>

The push toward privatization in India, as in other developing countries, dates back

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 179-181.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

to 1990 at a meeting of wealthy and poor nations at Jomtien, in Thailand.<sup>19</sup> Jomtien marked the launch of “Education for All” (EFA), a United Nations-led initiative committing nations worldwide to providing universal primary education to all of their citizens. The impetus was the economic crisis of the 1980s, in which investment in primary education around the world, but particularly in developing countries like India, had drastically plummeted, bringing enrollment down with it. The agreement reached at Jomtien was intended to reverse these trends. In itself, of course, this was not a bad thing, except that the delivery of EFA was hitched to the broader agenda of structural adjustment programs in the developing world. No longer simply a plan to educate the world’s children, an otherwise laudable goal, EFA provided an opportunity to impose upon poor nations policy prescriptions and pedagogical strategies friendly to business and private interests.

Krishna Kumar, Munisha Priyam, and Sadhna Saxena single out the World Bank-funded District Primary Education Program (DPEP) as one of the first attempts to delegitimize the state’s role in education. As its title suggests, DPEP set out to install primary schools in underserved district communities, mainly in rural areas. Launched in 1993, at its peak DPEP operated out of 271 of 575 districts across eighteen states, according to the last available World Bank statistics.<sup>20</sup> “Behind the smokescreen,” Kumar et al. write, referring to the language in which DPEP was originally couched, “is a vivid story of the roll-back of the state, of contracting commitments for formal education, of

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<sup>19</sup> Krishna Kumar, Munisha Priyam, and Sadhna Saxena, “Looking Beyond the Smokescreen: DPEP and Primary Education in India,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 36, no. 7 (2001).

<sup>20</sup> “Delivering Universal Primary Education in India,” last modified September 2002, accessed May 5, 2013, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:20068107~pagePK:116743~piPK:36693~theSitePK:4607,00.html>.

the dismantling of the existing structures of formal education, proliferation of ‘teach anyhow’ strategies, a thrust on publicity management, and a neo-conservative reliance on the community.”<sup>21</sup> Most damning of all, for Kumar and his colleagues, DPEP did not employ full-time, credentialed teachers, but instead relied on “para teachers,” in other words, adults without specific training, hired on short-term contracts for low wages, and without the benefits or backing of a union to advocate for the resources necessary for progress.

DPEP was eventually replaced, in 2001, by a new primary education policy, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). Also funded by the World Bank, among other donor agencies, and larger in scope, SSA appears to retain the same policy framework as DPEP, most notably in its continuing use of short-term contract personnel in place of credentialed teachers.<sup>22</sup>

By now, the government of India has not only acceded to efforts at privatization; it has actively encouraged them in the era of liberalization, promoting in earnest so-called “public-private partnerships,” or PPPs. The reference to “public” in such “partnerships” is mostly a misnomer, writes Pauline Rose, amounting to “empty rhetoric.”<sup>23</sup> What drives PPPs, instead, is a “managerial logic,”<sup>24</sup> whereby statistics rule, and anything that cannot be put down to a number is discounted. Indeed, as Prachi Srivastava finds, in her review of India’s tenth and eleventh five-year plans, government documents often belie any commitment to a wider public outside private interests. The Planning Commission’s own

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<sup>21</sup> Kumar et al., “Beyond the Smokescreen,” 561.

<sup>22</sup> Christopher Colclough and Anuradha De, “The Impact of Aid on Education Policy in India,” *International Journal of Educational Development* 30, no. 5 (2010).

<sup>23</sup> Pauline Rose, “Achieving Education for All through Public-Private Partnerships?” *Development in Practice* 20, nos. 4-5 (2010): 474.

<sup>24</sup> Rahul Mukhopadhyay and Arathi Sriprakash, “Target-Driven Reforms: Education for All and the Translations of Equity and Inclusion in India,” *Journal of Education Policy* 28, no. 3 (2013).

language, she notes, is “shrouded in classic neo-liberal terminology of greater cost-effectiveness, higher productivity, accelerated delivery, and recovery of user charges.”<sup>25</sup> Citizens, for example, are labeled “customers,” Srivastava observes, quoting directly from a Planning Commission report, and the government, which admits to “the changed circumstances facing the economy,” is described as just one of several possible social service providers, but one whose role is, nevertheless, expected to “decline substantially” in the coming years.<sup>26</sup>

The handover of education to private interests—though still partly funded by the government—has resulted in a proliferation of private schools, but it has done little to encourage equity. Indeed, as a number of studies suggest, there is every indication that the increasing number of private schools in India has exacerbated rather than alleviated already existing inequalities.<sup>27</sup> Extremely poor children, for starters, are still mostly left behind, making do with government schools or none at all. Other poor families, who can somehow afford to send their children to private schools at the primary and secondary level certainly attempt to do so. The kind of private schools these families can afford, however, are often private in name only, as I witnessed firsthand in my classroom visits and observations. A majority, like the low-fee private and unrecognized school where Arjun and Sampath send Anjali and Muniraj, reflect modest improvements in the quality of instruction and achievement standards. The private but recognized (i.e. government recognized) middle school Sampath’s older son, Ramanna, attends, along with Ganesh’s

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<sup>25</sup> Prachi Srivastava, “Public-Private Partnerships or Privatisation? Questioning the State’s Role in Education in India,” *Development in Practice* 20, nos. 4-5 (2010): 542.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 544-545.

<sup>27</sup> Kingdon, “Private Schooling”; Krishna Kumar, “Reproduction or Change? Education and Elites in India,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 20, no. 30 (1985); Mooij et al., “Primary Education”; Geetha B. Nambissan, “Equity in Education? Schooling Dalit Children in India,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 31, no. 16/17 (1996).

son, Kumar, and the middle school where Ganesh's daughter Asha attends are better still.

But there is simply no comparison between the low-fee recognized or unrecognized private schools where caddies and others among the poor place their children and the private schools to which club members and others within India's middle and upper middle classes send theirs. Recognized, but unaided, and thus operating mostly outside the purview of any government influence whatsoever, these schools collect exorbitant fees, allowing them to invest in small class sizes and large campuses with state-of-the-art facilities, renovated on a regular schedule. I had the opportunity during my research to visit St. Joseph's Boys' High School, in Bangalore, for example, where the sons of some of the members at the golf clubs went to school. There was a massive open field and other sports facilities in the center of campus, a fully-stocked library, and a newly inaugurated computer and science wing bearing the name of KGA member Sabeer Bhatia, a one-time student at the school and millionaire founder of Hotmail. Graduates seemingly automatically go on to elite universities and colleges throughout India; many go abroad to study in the United States, Canada, and Europe.

Securing a place in a school like St. Joseph's or any other such school, including one of several international schools in the city or country, is much like getting into a private golf club.<sup>28</sup> There is an intensive screening process, for example, beginning with an entrance exam. If successful, parents of prospective children then submit proof of education, occupation, and income, often followed by an interview with the school staff and administration. The competition can be especially fierce among "outside" candidates for admission, as preference is typically given to children of former students and siblings

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<sup>28</sup> Geetha B. Nambissan, "The Indian Middle Classes and Educational Advantage: Family Strategies and Practices," in *The Routledge International Handbook of the Sociology of Education*, eds. Michael W. Apple, Stephen J. Ball, and Luis Armando Gandin (London: Routledge, 2010).

already attending.

The Indian elite, long ago, as Krishna Kumar writes, “eschewed the path they had themselves charted in the Constitution—that of mobilizing the resources and talents of all sections of society,”<sup>29</sup> and the failure at establishing quality public education only underlines this fact. The steady but consistent effort at undermining government efforts at improving quality public education, and the government’s own complicity in this, will likely handicap India in both the short- and long-term. For one thing, it is unclear if private schools can adequately support broader commitments like EFA, which intend to universalize, not limit, educational opportunity. By definition, the incentive structure of private schools would seem to run counter to such aims, and their increasing dominance in the education system at large makes these objectives all the more unlikely.<sup>30</sup>

But leave aside issues of enrollment. At present, anyway, enrollment appears to be less of a problem than the near total absence of a unifying vision on education and its role alongside economic development. In this regard, in particular, an emphasis on private schools appears misplaced. Private schools, though they may contribute in some small way to development, are nevertheless not bound up in it. Some schools, barred from turning a profit, invariably do, but, again, that is only one problem, and not even the biggest. Rather, it is this: any private school, no matter what its commitment to inclusiveness or its orientation to teaching and learning, is still, in the end, private. It does not have the larger interests of the nation at heart, because it cannot, simply by virtue of its size and scope.

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<sup>29</sup> Krishna Kumar, “Reproduction,” 1283.

<sup>30</sup> Martin Woodhead, Melanie Frost, and Zoe James, “Does Growth in Private Schooling Contribute to Education for All? Evidence from a Longitudinal, Two Cohort Study in Andhra Pradesh, India,” *International Journal of Educational Development* 33, no. 1 (2013).

The only institution with the capacity to ensure quality and equity in education, and in the service of broader development goals, is the state. Other developing societies, in other times, have understood this. China, today, understands it. India, in fact, once did, too, and yet with its glaring absence from a system that needs to be a national priority, presumably no longer. Indeed, for all the boom and bluster that surrounds India's education system, critics largely overlook the success the Indian government once had in bringing about institutes of science and technology in the 1950s and 1960s. These same institutes, in the case of Bangalore, specifically, became the bedrock foundation on which the IT and software boom of the mid-to late-eighties was based.<sup>31</sup> Such institutes, reflecting huge public investments in physical and human capital, would not have arisen except for the state. It is a mark of extreme bad faith that mainstream economists, journalists, and other social critics neglect this history in promoting free markets as the only solution to India's current education crisis.

## MOVING ON UP

"At the KGA, members tell us, 'You should educate your children,'" Ganesh once told me. He, for one, never doubted it. "If I had been better educated, I would have earned more money." Unfortunately, for him, as for most of the caddies, circumstances got in the way.

Ganesh's father, an agricultural day laborer, moved the family from their village

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<sup>31</sup> Ashish Arora and Suma Athreye, "The Software Industry and India's Economic Development," *Information Economics and Policy* 14 (2002); James Heitzman, *The Network City: Planning the Information Society in Bangalore* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004); Balaji Parthasarathy, "India's Silicon Valley or Silicon Valley's India? Social Embedding the Computer Software Industry in Bangalore," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 28, no. 3 (2004); AnnaLee Saxenian, "Bangalore: The Silicon Valley of Asia?" (working paper, Center for Research on Economic Development and Policy Reform, Stanford University, Stanford, February, 2001).

home in the Dharmapoori District of Tamil Nadu to Bangalore in the mid-eighties. He came looking for steady work, but all he could find was a string of odd jobs, at a hotel, working in construction and the like. After a time, he opened a small roadside canteen outside the main entrance to the golf club. The money from the canteen, though, was not nearly enough to support his wife and three children. Ganesh, then ten years old, and in the third grade, quit school, in order to lend a hand—his younger brother, Kanappa, was just five, and his sister, Sweta, barely a year old. He picked up work as a caddy, after his father, who had befriended the caddy master at the club, inquired about the job on his behalf. Twenty years on, it is the only steady work he has ever really known.

When they first arrived in Bangalore, Ganesh's family pitched a tent beside other migrant families at one end of the golf course, then still in the early stage of development. Then, as grass was being seeded and fences were put up, they moved to a construction site that eventually yielded the Embassy Golf Links Technology Park where IBM and Microsoft now sit. Forced out from there, they came to reside in what he consciously called a *cheri*, or slum, in his native Tamil, in Kodihalli, at first living on the north bank of an open sewer opposite the tenth fairway at the KGA. Clean water was sparse and the food they ate less than palatable—worms mixed with split rice and sometimes dirt. It was the face of real, grinding poverty.

The family bounced around, from one end of the slum to the other, until finally, in the early 2000s, it landed something more stable, a single-occupancy room above a store on the approach road to the KGA. Sanjana and Ganesh were newly married, and just about to start a family. Also, by then, Ganesh's father, mother, and sister had moved back to their village, where the family had suddenly inherited one acre of land following an

uncle's death. Kanappa stayed back, moving in with his brother and sister-in-law and sharing the cost of the room. But just as things were looking up, the storeowner decided he wanted to develop the building, adding a few floors to raise more rent, thus leaving them yet again without a home.

Soon, though, a member, Akash Murali, came forward, agreeing to co-sign a five-year lease on a second-floor apartment in the area and fronting most of the cost, one and a half lakhs, or approximately \$3,000, as part of a generous, interest-free loan. This was where Ganesh lived today, with his wife, Sanjana, and two children, Kumar, eight, and in the fourth grade, and Asha, twelve, in the eighth. The space was large by caddy standards, and obviously bigger than anything he had encountered before: the main room just inside the doorway was ten-feet-by-ten-feet, with an attached kitchen and bathroom and, in the back, off the main room, was a small bedroom, also ten-feet-by-ten feet.

Though the apartment was just steps away from the slum, there was almost no talk of it. This was deliberate, on Ganesh's part. Neither Kumar nor Asha had any inkling that this is where their father grew up. To them, it was mostly just an eyesore. They passed through it on the way to school in the morning and then again on the way back home, barely taking in the makeshift plywood, corrugated steel, and plastic houses or the people in and around them. Ganesh would have preferred them to take a different route, of course, except that this really was the fastest, most effective way to get to their respective schools.

"I haven't maintained contact with the people here," Ganesh told me, as we walked through the area one afternoon after he just finished at the club for the day. He was in sweatpants, sandals, and a "Beverly Hills 90210" T-shirt. He had a Livestrong bracelet

wrapped around his right wrist, along with a Titan watch, a gift from one of the members. Kumar, who joined us, was still in his school uniform, a short-sleeve dress shirt, forest green tie, khaki shorts, and dress shoes.

“What’s the relationship between Kumar and Asha and the children here?” I asked.

“They’re not allowed to come and play here,” he said, matter-of-factly. “It’s better for them over there.” He turned and pointed over his shoulder in the direction of their apartment building.

The area, he said, had grown considerably in the years since he and Sanjana had left it some fifteen years back, just before Asha was born, and prior to taking the room above the shop. It had also become dirtier. At first, there were maybe fifty families, he estimated, but now there were 400 it seemed, crushed into a space the size of two city blocks end-to-end. Mostly hidden by trees and new apartment complexes, this was still prime real estate. It had never been developed, though, on account of a dispute between two families, one of which owned the gated community Diamond District, opposite the front gates to the KGA. All these years, as the case wound its way through the courts, this same family had been renting out tiny plots, nowadays at 250 rupees a month.

We came to an opening in the center of the slum. A group of children three or four years old were playing with sticks, while a stray dog kept a watchful eye on strangers. Two middle-aged men sat idle on a fallen tree stump. I asked Ganesh why he thought some people lived this way, while somehow he was able to escape.

“Poor people are a cheated group,” he said, with the certainty of one who would know. “If you’re supposed to get a hundred rupees a day, you’ll end up getting fifty rupees, and on top of that you’ll have to give a commission to the guy who got you the

job. They're always cheated. The rich, they know how to account, keep clean. They are not deprived of anything. For me to move up, out of this place, you see, my thinking was there, the right kind of thinking. With hard work anyone can come up."

"So that's the solution, hard work?" I asked.

"Yes, that's it," he responded. "Poor people don't have their own way of thinking. They depend on someone else's advice. The person who always takes advice from someone else will always remain under that other person. He won't come up in life."

"But how important was the KGA to you?"

"After my mother and father, it's the KGA that comes first." He paused, waiting for a 747 to pass overhead, en route to what was then Bangalore's international airport. "It's been everything for me," he continued, "almost like a god. Other caddies, I notice, don't think they have to grow. They don't think about their future. They want to live day-to-day. They want to get some money, that's all. No future thinking is there."

We approached a hole in a wall made of corrugated steel that divided the slum into two sections. On the south side, where we were standing, lived local and migrant families from Tamil Nadu that had settled there a long time ago, while on the north side, close to the open sewer, lived new migrants from villages in northern Karnataka and other states, like Andhra Pradesh. These new migrants, often as whole families, worked on construction sites in the area. Curious, I asked Ganesh why the people here, at least the men, did not simply walk up to the club and work as caddies.

"They don't know anyone inside the KGA," he said. "They don't fit the culture of the club."

"What do you mean, they don't fit the culture of the club?"

“They just don’t have the style you need to be a caddy at the KGA. The caddy at least has reached some middle level, even if it’s not very high. Others don’t make it because of their ego, people like them, and because of that they stay here.”

“But how much of it, Ganesh, comes down to luck?” I asked, as we headed back through the hole in the steel wall. “Sure, hard work helps, but you were lucky to meet a member who helped you and gave you money and advice.” I mentioned Akash, specifically.

“It’s not only because of him,” he said. “It’s also from my side that changes have happened.”

Indeed, Ganesh had moved himself and his family up and out of poverty. Much of the credit, undoubtedly, rested with him. Like Anand at the BGC, he had consciously transformed himself into someone worthy of investment, in time and money. There was little available evidence left that Ganesh had ever lived in a slum, in fact. When it was put to him, as it was here, why he thought he was different, it made sense that he responded the way he did. He could easily call on personal characteristics, like hard work and discipline, and sound just like any member as he did it. If anything, he thought he deserved more than what members paid him, tips and all, and he was probably correct. Twenty years at the KGA, and he still made what was really a pittance. For a caddy, though, he had done better than all right. Compared to most, he was a resounding success.

But there were also not too many members like Akash, either, and this is what I meant to say when I referred to Ganesh’s good fortune in my conversation with him this day. I met Akash, in fact, when I first met Ganesh, in the fall of 2007, while on a round of

golf at the KGA. Akash, a former professional golfer and now full-time coach at the club, hired Ganesh as his regular caddy whenever he played, paying him 250 to 300 rupees, sometimes more, per round, double the board rate posted at the club. He recommended him to new golfers he coached, as well, who paid the same, or more. On this day, actually, Ganesh was carrying the bag of a lady member, while Akash walked beside her, offering instruction.

There was a friendly, but noticeable, distance between the two, despite the fact they had known each other since they were teenagers, when Akash hired Ganesh the first time as his caddy. Ganesh, for instance, refused to call him by his first name, preferring, “Sir,” or, more playfully, “Tiger,” after Tiger Woods. Ganesh, when I later asked him about this, said that this was just the way he liked it. He did not think it was appropriate to call Akash anything else. Neither did Akash, it seemed. Ganesh also did not think it appropriate to hang out with him in a familiar manner, say, at a restaurant or a bar. If Akash ever invited him out, he politely declined.

Ganesh and Akash were close in other ways, though. Akash had lost his father to cancer in his late teens, a year into his undergraduate studies at a university in Florida, prompting a return to India to finish his degree and look after his mother. Years later, in 2006, sadly, Ganesh’s brother Kanappa died in a motorcycle accident, along with another caddy who was riding with him at the time. The death was all the more tragic because Kanappa had become a successful professional golfer, who was just coming into his own, making more and more money, it seemed, with each passing tournament. Now he, and this money, were lost to Ganesh. Left behind, aside from the heartbreak, were also all Kanappa’s gambling and drinking debts, totaling nearly 500,000 rupees, approximately

\$9,000. Akash was helpful on both counts, offering emotional support, lending his ear, for one, but also financial support, taking on part of the burden of servicing this otherwise insurmountable debt, for another.

Akash, like most members, tended to drift into caricature when called upon to reflect on the plight of caddies. “Being a caddy is a good job,” he said once, when I sat with him for a beer at the KGA clubhouse after a round one Sunday. “If you’re hard working, you can make ten to twelve-thousand in a month, and that’s more than an office clerk would make. They’ve got it very good. Some of them just don’t appreciate what they really have out here. It’s human nature, I suppose. Most are into gambling and drinking, because that’s how it is for them. It’s how they’ve been for generations.”

But there was another side to Akash, too, one that did not always surface in my conversations with many other members. “I think it comes down to basic human compassion,” he said, “and I think it’s lacking, really lacking in some members. I don’t understand it. Anybody who is half decent, who has any compassion, would look at a caddy and say, ‘Hey, man, let me get you a pair of shoes.’”

He did that, and more, in fact. As mentioned, he put up the equivalent of \$3,000 to secure the lease on Ganesh’s apartment and helped with the overwhelming debt Kanappa had accumulated, which passed onto Ganesh with his death. But he also hired Sanjana as a domestic servant in his home, adding another 2,000 rupees, or fifty dollars, per month to the family income. And, not least, he covered the private English-medium school fees for both Kumar and Asha, at a cost of \$500 per year.

It was inconceivable to think that Ganesh would have been able to accomplish all that he did without Akash and a few other select members who contributed to his

family's well-being in some way. Akash, for one, freely admitted it. "He's going to be okay," he asserted, in my conversation with him. "He knows that I'm going to take care of him."

"What happens," I wondered out loud, "to the caddy who doesn't find this in a member?"

"You see the different colors of caddies, right?" he asked. I assured him I had. "As a caddy becomes better and better, a member will pick him up. I don't know anyone who hasn't [been picked up]. Everyone has their boss."

This was true, in principle. In reality, however, there were many caddies who did not have a boss like Akash, and even the ones who did, were never guaranteed that he (or she) would stick around. Things came up, preferences changed. Sometimes members simply moved away. The situation, for most caddies, most of the time, remained precarious.

Ganesh, admittedly, had it different, as things were more stable and secure for him than for other caddies. The question, however, was not what he could make of these advantages personally, but what his children could make of them. Sure enough, Ganesh no longer lived in a slum, and the chances were slim to none that his children would ever know that experience firsthand. They had already exceeded their father's education, attending private English-medium schools, no less. Yet the quality of these schools left the future of each very much in doubt. Through no fault of his own, there was still no guarantee that Ganesh's son would not end up as a caddy or engaged in some similar line of unskilled service work, and no guarantee, either, that his daughter would not end up as a domestic servant like her mother.

## FAR FROM THE TREE?

One afternoon I stopped in to see Ganesh, sitting on a single bed that doubled as a couch in the main room, just inside the doorway. Ganesh sat opposite me, in a white plastic chair, dressed in a red golf shirt and khaki pants, his yellow Livestrong bracelet still wrapped around his right wrist. His wife, Sanjana, in a green and yellow sari, was on the floor, cross-legged, her back propped up against the wall, with Kumar and Asha sitting similarly cross-legged a few feet in front of her. The children were just home from school, resting up before heading back out for their tuition classes. They had already changed out of their uniforms into more comfortable clothes. Kumar was in a striped T-shirt and jeans; Asha in a T-shirt and long skirt.

Kumar reached for his book bag, just behind him, and pulled out a social studies textbook. He hated social studies, he said, because it was “so hard.”

“What’s your favorite subject, then?” I asked.

“English,” he answered.

He brought out another book. His class was reading a short story, “Loving is Giving,” about a boy who wins a prize, only to give it to his grandmother, rather than keeping it for himself.

“Can you read a little for us?” I asked.

“Hamid was a little boy of eight years old,” he read aloud, with the book opened in his lap. “He lived with his grandmother in a little village in India.”

I was impressed. He was in the fourth grade, and this was his third language, after Tamil, his first, and Kannada. Ganesh, by contrast, was illiterate, by his own admission.

He could not read or write in English and struggled to do the same in any of the five Indian languages he spoke.

“How does it make you feel to hear Kumar read in English?” I asked.

“I feel very happy,” he replied, beaming. “I didn’t study much, no.”

There was a slight pause in the conversation, as Sanjana passed around tea and biscuits. “What do you want him to be when he grows up?” I asked.

“Any big job,” he said, “any job is there.”

I turned to Kumar, wondering if he could be more precise. “What do you want to be when you grow up?” I asked him.

“A software engineer,” he said, without hesitation.

Of course, Kumar could not have known what a software engineer was, or what one did. It was not clear if Ganesh or his wife knew, either. But they wanted their son to be a software engineer, nonetheless, because there was a sense that such professionals were well educated and made a lot of money. Ganesh, in fact, had been a regular caddy for a few software engineers, some of whom worked in the glass-and-steel buildings surrounding the course. He could tell them apart from other members by their fancy cars and smartphones. If he only educated his children, they told him, then maybe one day Kumar and Asha could be like them. It was a compelling idea, and one, evidently, he passed on in family conversations at home.

The family’s hopes rested on Kumar more than Asha, it seemed. Kumar was going to be a software engineer, Asha a social worker, and while men and women in India and elsewhere worked in either profession, there is no question these expectations followed long-established gender norms. There were also other subtle forms of gender bias in the

home, I noticed. Asha helped her mother with the cooking of meals most nights, for example, while Kumar had only to wait for meals to be served. Asha ran simple errands, as another example, like picking up milk from a shop on the way home from school; Kumar had no such responsibilities.

For Kumar, however, being a boy was only part of his advantages. Age and experience were also factors. Asha was only four years older than Kumar, but she had been born at a time when life for Ganesh and Sanjana was particularly tough financially. There was no money for private English-medium schools, so instead they made do with a local government Tamil-medium school. When things improved, Ganesh wanted to move her over to a private English-medium school, but she objected. Only when a member insisted such a school was vital to her development did he make the change. In fact, she was just beginning her first year at an all girls private school when I met her and the family.

Asha's school was located north of Airport Road. To get there, she left home at a quarter to eight in the morning, walking through the Kodihalli slum, crossing Airport Road, and hopping aboard a public bus, a journey that could take forty to forty-five minutes door-to-door. Classes started at nine o'clock, following a fifteen-minute assembly on the field in front of the school. The students, approximately 600 girls in grades seven through ten, all wearing matching navy blue cardigans, ties, and skirts, lined up in rows, twenty across and thirty deep. Four senior girls stood on an elevated concrete platform. Passing a microphone between them, they took roll call, with prefects below confirming that such and such a class was present and accounted for. They then led the assembly in morning prayers, followed by hymns.

The school espoused fairly progressive ideals. One morning when I visited the school, the students at assembly were singing a hymn, for example, which started:

India, O India  
Whatever Happened to you?  
India, O India  
Your story's sordidly true!  
The rich in the palace  
And the poor at the door.  
Are they too hungry to a call,  
Or does the guffaw in the palace  
Drown out their groaning?  
Is that a door or a wall.

There was also a painted board outside the principal's office that reaffirmed commitments to critical education. Along with key facts about the school, including when it was founded and how many staff and teachers worked there, there was an attached vision statement, which read, "To Create a New Society," and a list of four goals, among them "Academic Excellence," "Character Formation," "Social Responsiveness," and "Spiritual Growth."

This all read well, and it sounded positive and ambitious, but there was no indication whatsoever that the school actually had the fundamental ability to make good on these commitments. In content and pedagogy, it seemed remarkably beholden to the

status quo. I spent five days at the school over a period of six weeks, and while this was not a lot of time, it was enough to get a sense of how things worked.

In each of Asha's classes, on average, seventy to seventy-five students were packed shoulder-to-shoulder on wooden benches in classrooms twenty-feet-by-twenty-feet in size. It was no surprise, then, to see very little one-to-one interaction between students and teacher. As a matter of course, all instruction was dictated from the front of the room. Indeed, calling it instruction may be overstating the case. In a Hindi class I observed, for example, students were set to work copying out a poem, while the teacher barked at distracted students in English; when the class was finished, she exclaimed, "You have escaped punishment today. For homework, write out the poem five times." In a social studies class, covering the prehistoric period, the girls "learned" all about the role of men—and only men—in civilizing the world, copying down questions and answers from a textbook. In a "reading" class, students sat quietly listening to a teacher read out a story from a textbook, only speaking when asked yes or no questions on such things as a character's age, how many siblings he or she had, or the color of his or her jacket. When some of the students slouched, clearly bored, they were told to sit up straight, with their hands on the desks in front of them.

It was all quite frustrating, indeed sad, but in Asha's case, especially so. This was an English-medium school, but she did not yet know English. It was not exactly a secret. She could only copy out words as they appeared on the pages before her. She had almost no understanding, it seemed, of what the words meant. Her teachers did not appear interested to check for comprehension, even though they, too, noticed that she could not follow. I pulled one teacher aside and asked whether she thought Asha would achieve at

least a pass on the tenth grade government exams required of all students, no matter whether they attended government schools or not. These exams—still two years away—were crucial if she wanted to go onto eleventh and twelfth grade and from there perhaps to college. The teacher, however, was skeptical that she could reach this far. I then asked what steps might be taken in advance to ensure she would receive the necessary help, so that she might improve her chances of success. When I was told that student tutors might be of assistance, I politely changed the subject.

Asha was certainly not going to receive the necessary help and encouragement at her regular after-school tuition, held every evening except Sundays at a tenth grade teacher's house. I sat next to her once as she worked on her science homework. At the top of a rule-lined page in her notebook she had written the question, "What is a magnet?" Below, copying from the textbook, she had written: "A magnet is a substance which attracts iron fillings and comes to rest north-south direction when truly suspended." When finished with this, she was called upon by the tuition leader to parrot the answer without looking at her notebook, and when she could not, she was told to return to her seat on the floor in the corner to try and memorize it again. Whether or not she actually knew what purpose a magnet served seemed largely beside the point.

Kumar fared better, but only just. He had only ever known private English-medium schools, and yet his education looked much like Asha's, bearing similar results. He could read basic English texts, for example, as he had demonstrated in his home, but he struggled mightily with regular, even slowed down, conversation in English. Questions such as "How was your day?" or "What are you doing this weekend?" were met with blank stares. It was not clear that he was really learning the language, as much as he was

memorizing syntax and spelling, and even here there were issues, for reasons that became obvious in my visits to the school.

One morning I sat in the back of Kumar's English class. Kumar was in the front row, sharing a wooden bench with three other students, a boy and two girls. I counted twenty-nine students in all. The teacher was standing at the chalkboard at the front of the room. She was writing out answers to fill-in-the-blank questions taken from a workbook. In whole or in part, however, five of seventeen answers were incorrect. For example, in the sentence, "The tall \_\_\_\_\_ has gone to see her \_\_\_\_\_," where the correct answer, drawing from a list at the top of the page, should have been "woman" and "brother," the teacher had written "men" and "brother," respectively. In the sentence, "There are three \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ on the farm," she had written "goose" and "horse" as the correct answers, instead of the combination "geese" and "horses." In another, "The \_\_\_\_\_ laid his garland on the table," the teacher had written "bridegroom," instead of "bridegroom." The children, unawares, checked their answers against the teacher's, in some cases replacing correct answers with incorrect ones provided by the teacher.

Like Asha in her school, Kumar in his also suffered through similarly unimaginative and repetitive copying exercises in math and science classes. Also, as with her, he went without any access to computers, restricted to seeing pictures of them in textbooks or up on walls. Though it was still early in his education, an absence of computers even at this stage did not bode well for his and his parents' ambitions for him to become a software engineer.

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For the foreseeable future at least, India can count on little resistance from the likes of Sampath, Arjun, and Ganesh regarding the poor quality of education in the country. They see their children dressed in uniforms, out the front door in the mornings heading to school, back home in the afternoons bearing backpacks stuffed with books, and off again to tuition. To each of them, on a deeply personal level, this is progress. Rightly so. Even the fact that their children are in school is already an achievement, given their own childhoods. Largely uneducated themselves, but nevertheless careful students of history, they can project into the future and imagine their children's children in still better circumstances. Indeed, all across India, more and more poor and working people, in more and more states, are making precisely this same wager.

The children, too, seem happy enough. Rote education, without any real challenge, carries its own set of rewards, after all—memorize a list, copy out a page, or fill-in-the-blank and get a pat on the back, a sticker, maybe an A. If not quite learning, and meeting the inherent challenges of education, such practices are safe and predictable. This appears quite all right to students brought up in this way. Anything else can appear too difficult, and maybe even pointless. I remember once, in Asha's social studies class, for example, asking the girls if there were any instances they could think in which animals were superior to humans. At the time, they were copying down, word-for-word, a paragraph from a textbook that declared otherwise—humans were always superior to animals. So there was no reason to question it. "The book says so," I was told, and gave up trying.

Continued acquiescence among parents and children alike, however, is not a guarantee. Uninspired teaching and dull, unimaginative learning of the sort I witnessed in these schools, and which pervades all levels of education in India, simply does not pay,

except in the superficial ways noted above; if Sampath, Arjun, and Ganesh do not know that now, they will do so eventually. As it is, most high school and university diplomas earned at Indian institutions are almost worthless from a practical standpoint, leaving students without much choice in their work prospects. Successive generations of aspiring poor and working Indians sent to school on a promise of social mobility and then left to work low-pay, low-skill jobs as security guards, sweepers, domestic servants, office clerks, and caddies when they graduate is unsustainable in the long-term, both politically and economically.

Scholars and critics tend to emphasize the potential political fallout if the miseducation of millions of children persists, suggesting that India's neglect in this area may well sow the seeds for turmoil and unrest on a mass scale at some point in the future. Such predictions seem premature, at best, but regardless, it is difficult to say what, if anything, will bring about social revolution in India, or what it would even look like if it ever came to pass. Indeed, there is more certainty regarding the economic fallout of millions of unemployed—indeed, unemployable—men and women in the country. It makes sense that poor and working people stuck in dead-end jobs making little money also end up spending little. This is not good for them, obviously, as they cannot afford even basic necessities. But it certainly is also not good for the economy, either. Which again raises the question of development, thus bringing this study full-circle.

## Conclusion

Free market reforms were promoted in India, as elsewhere, on the premise that liberalization would enhance efforts at poverty alleviation—that what was good for the rich, in other words, was also good for the poor. Such is the rhetoric of trickle-down economics. Certainly, there are lower rates of poverty in India today than in past generations. But there are also more poor people, overall, with approximately two-thirds of the entire population of 1.2 billion living on less than two dollars a day.<sup>1</sup> Numbers aside, there is scant evidence that quality of life has improved, and a good deal of evidence to suggest that it has worsened, with the price for basic foodstuffs failing to keep pace with wages, for one<sup>2</sup>—for those who make any, that is. Income inequality is undoubtedly on the rise. There is no way around the fact that in India, the rich are getting richer and the poor, poorer.

Yet even more telling, for the purposes of this study, has been that opportunities for social mobility remain largely unchanged after two decades of economic reform.<sup>3</sup> Certainly, there is no shortage of aspirations in India today—and no shortage of scholars and journalists calling attention to them.<sup>4</sup> The aspirations of the poor have been elevated, partly, by the appearance of so many rich people, Indian and otherwise, in the streets, in

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<sup>1</sup> Shaohua Chen and Martin Ravillion, “The Developing World is Poorer than we Thought, but no less Successful in the Fight Against Poverty,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 125, no. 4 (2010).

<sup>2</sup> Utsa Pattnaik, “Imperialism, Contemporary Disorder in World Resources and Food Security, with Reference to the Indian Experience” (paper presentation, International Conference of Critical Geography, Mumbai, India, December 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Sanjay Kumar, Anthony Heath, and Oliver Heath, “Determinants of Social Mobility in India,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no. 29 (2002); Sanjay Kumar, Anthony Heath, and Oliver Heath, “Changing Patterns of Social Mobility: Some Trends over Time,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no. 40 (2002).

<sup>4</sup> Gurcharan Das, *India Unbound: The Social and Economic Revolution from Independence to the Global Information Age* (New York: Anchor, 2002); Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2005). Anand Giridharadas, *India Calling: An Intimate Portrait of a Nation’s Remaking* (New York: New York Times Books, 2011)

the newspapers, and on screens both small and large. That India's poor and working classes dream, and dream big, indeed, is now an accepted part of the Indian story, among pro- and anti-globalizers alike. Though overly romanticized and often misrepresented, even the awareness of desires and hopes among the poor is still a welcome change from earlier interpretations of lifestyles and habits drawing upon the controversial "culture of poverty" arguments first developed, in fact, in studies of Indian peasantry.<sup>5</sup> What has set the present study apart, however, has been its singular interest in how aspirations are turned into reality within India's existing political economic context, and what barriers stand in the way of such achievements.

Aspirations, of course, are not nearly enough. They do not produce jobs, for one, and jobs are what Indians need most of all. Not just any jobs, though, but good, decent paying jobs with benefits and protections and opportunities for career advancement. This would require a massive effort on the part of government and business to formalize much of India's ninety-five percent informal labor force.<sup>6</sup> It not only makes good moral sense; it also makes good economic sense. Workers with better wages and stronger rights and guarantees in the workplace are simply more productive than workers without any of these assurances, and for a developing country like India increased productivity is essential. It is the difference between a mostly rural-based agricultural economy and one that is urban-based and dedicated to industry, primarily manufacturing. Unfortunately, there is very little movement in the public policy arena that would suggest anything of the sort is likely to happen in the near future, and perhaps not even in the distant future, given the present state of India's economy and current trends, more generally, in the global

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<sup>5</sup> Oscar Lewis, "The Culture of Poverty," *American* 215, no. 4 (1966).

<sup>6</sup> Rina Agarwala, "An Economic Sociology of Informal Work: The Case of India," *Research in the Sociology of Work*, 18 (2009)

economy.

During the course of the fieldwork for this research, India recorded near double-digit rates of growth, leading many to think that the nation would, in time, turn a corner on development.<sup>7</sup> Now the emerging consensus—even among early boosters of Indian liberalization, most prominently the editorial staff at the *Economist*<sup>8</sup>—is that India’s window on harnessing this record-setting growth in the service of a wider development strategy is closing, and closing fast. Amid the present-day global economic crisis, annual projected rates of growth in India today stand at four to five percent. This is still strong by historical standards, of course, but it is a far cry from earlier targets, and way off what politicians and other optimists had promised.

India is losing its competitive edge to other developing countries in the wider region, including China, most notably, but also Bangladesh, Thailand, and Vietnam. Restrictive labor legislation is only part of the picture, and a small part at that. Industry commonly rails against India’s myriad labor laws, but in actual fact such laws are easily avoided. Most businesses in India take on contract workers for short periods, thereby sidestepping legal knots. In reality, China and other developing countries near and far provide not only cheap labor unencumbered by regulations and restrictions, but also more skilled workers than India, primarily due to better vocational training. Another area of competitive advantage these countries have over India is sound, reliable infrastructure, which makes them an attractive destination for multinational companies looking to set down roots. In India, by contrast, poor roads and railways within and between cities

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<sup>7</sup> Das, *India Unbound*; Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (London: Penguin, 2003); Arvind Panagariya, *India: Emerging Giant* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> “What a Waste: How India is Throwing Away the World’s Biggest Economic Opportunity,” *Economist*, May 11, 2013.

remain a perennial question mark, and an obvious drawback to foreign investment.

India also lags behind China on quality of life measures. In his summary of updated figures compiled by the United Nations, World Bank, and 2011 census, economist Amartya Sen notes that life expectancy at birth in China is 73.5 years, while in India it is 64.4 years. China's infant mortality rate and mortality rate for children under five is lower than India's, as well: fifty per thousand, compared to seventeen per thousand; and nineteen per thousand, compared to sixty-six per thousand, respectively. Maternal mortality rates are lower in China, too, as compared with India. In China, thirty-eight of 100,000 mothers die in childbirth, whereas in India the rate is 230 per 100,000 live births. Perhaps the starkest contrast comes in the area of education. On average, children in China attend 7.5 years of schooling, while in India 4.4 years is the norm. Literacy rates are also up in China, at ninety-four percent, compared to India, at seventy-four percent; literacy rates among Chinese women between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four are especially strong next to similarly aged women in India: ninety-nine percent compared with eighty percent.<sup>9</sup>

For work, poor and working Indians are left to ferret out their own path to subsistence and survival. One path I have emphasized in this research is a form of modern servility, as demonstrated in the actions and words of golf caddies at exclusive clubs in Bangalore. The caddies attach themselves to the rich, cultivating relationships that yield tips, plus wages, along with not insignificant contributions to health care, education, and other social provisions in short supply in the larger society. In exchange, they demonstrate loyalty and deference, yet only to a point: if, or when, money falls short of their needs and the needs of their families, the caddies move on, finding other

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<sup>9</sup> Amartya Sen, "Quality of Life: India vs. China," *New York Review of Books*, May 12, 2011.

members to fill this social and economic gap. Similar dynamics structure relationships between cooks, drivers, and domestic workers and the middle and upper middle class families who hire them. Indeed, such relationships as these are ubiquitous across India's massive informal sector. As the poor well know, whether at a golf club or within a gated community, servility pays. Even after all manner of economic reforms, it remains one of the most viable means to social mobility.

In other countries, in other times, direct and sustained interaction with the rich, while still helpful, was not the only thing poor and working people had to rely on. In mid-twentieth century America, for instance, it was enough for some to land a job at a factory that paid a living wage and provided additional protections and benefits backed by the weight of unions, in some cases just as powerful as the corporations they confronted. Many among the middle classes may have opted to work in the refined comforts of an office space as opposed to the shop room floor, but the effect was largely the same. In both cases, however, work was often salaried and secure, and this made social mobility possible, if not likely, for a great number of people whose parents and grandparents previously lived much more precarious existences. Advantages earned in these ways were then passed on to future generations, with the idea being that those who came after would be better off than those who came before. When people write or think about the American Dream, it is this real possibility of improvement by means of dedication and hard work generation after generation that they have in mind.

Of course, not everyone participated in the 1950s and 1960s post-war version of the American Dream as I describe it. For many stuck in grinding poverty—poor blacks and immigrants, especially—it turned out to be a nightmare, something that was more cruel

myth than reality.<sup>10</sup> Middle class women also faced hurdles in achieving their approximation of the American Dream. Wives of middle and upper middle class men, for example, were often relegated to secondary, though not unimportant, roles in support of husbands free to pursue their big city ambitions, while they tended to children in suburbs with no exits.<sup>11</sup>

Few people today in twenty-first century America are under any illusion about prospects for sustaining even middle class status, much less moving up the social ladder. Middle class whites, men and women both, are coming around to the stark realization that something is amiss in the popular formulation of America as a place of wealth and prosperity for all.<sup>12</sup> Once stable jobs are drying up, repackaged and shipped off to places like India or entrusted to computers and machines. Young graduates may have it worst of all, in fact, as they look out onto a “jobless future,” leaving school to work in unpaid internships and weighed down by unprecedented levels of student debt they will never easily be able to repay.<sup>13</sup> American banks and corporations, meanwhile, are doing just fine, back to posting record profits and handing out exorbitant bonuses on Wall Street less than five years after the bottom fell out of the economy, owing, in no small way, to faulty innovations and investment strategies developed by them and paid out on the backs of an unsuspecting public.

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<sup>10</sup> Loic Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Ann R. Markusen, “City Spatial Structure, Women’s Household Work, and National Urban Policy,” *Signs* 5, no. 3 (1980).

<sup>12</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich, *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1990); Katherine S. Newman, *Falling from Grace: Downward Mobility in the Age of Affluence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); George Packer, *The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Stanley Aronowitz and William DeFazio, *The Jobless Future: Sci-Tech and the Dogma of Work* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Anya Kamenetz, *Generation Debt: How Our Future was Sold Out for Student Loans, Bad Jobs, No Benefits, and Tax Cuts for Rich Geezers—And How to Fight Back* (New York: Riverhead, 2006); Ross Perlin, *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy* (New York: Verso, 2012).

The Indian Dream, if there is such a thing, reads like an updated version of the American original, though appropriately stripped of any and all pretense. The golf caddies I met and spent time with for this study were among the true believers. What they believed in, exactly, just to be clear, bears repeating. Members talked of opportunity, for example, but caddies, like many poor and working class Indians, knew just what this actually meant—an opportunity to serve them. Otherwise, real opportunity, as in the opportunity to control one's own labor, for example, or make social and economic decisions independent of superiors, was not in the cards. In these caddies, dedication, discipline, and merit mattered, moreover, yet only so long as these efforts were put to use ingratiating themselves in the company of members. This, after all, seemed to be the tried and true path to social mobility, as learned by these caddies over years and sometimes decades at the clubs, and then handed down to new caddies. Caddies skilled in the art of presentation and persuasion, shaping and shifting their words and bodies just so, moved ahead, ever so slightly, while others, less attuned to what was required, stayed back or quit altogether.

Moving ahead was always a relative thing, though, and never guaranteed to last. Caddies like Anand at the BGC and Sampath and Ganesh at the KGA, whose experiences I have highlighted throughout, knew that they were better off than their parents and grandparents, and they could prove it, too, in what they wore, how they talked, and where they lived. But their success hinged on their continuing devotion to members who had brought them this far. If the devotion of these select few members ceased, or if the members in whom they had placed their trust with their lives stopped calling or left town for long stretches at a time or forever, they could very well fall on hard times again.

When things were good, though, they were good, and life chances were dramatically improved as a result. As a way to strengthen this argument, I have pointed to Ravi, my caddy and coach at the BGC, who struggled mightily in the absence of these relationships. Forming new bonds with members as an equal, commanding courtesy and respect, did not come easily to him, or to any of the members who knew him strictly as a caddy. He worried, and probably rightfully so, as to if they would ever see him in any other light.

Lokesh and other caddies at Eagleton were more independent, it seemed, than any of the other caddies I came to know in the city. Lokesh, in particular, rarely, if ever, felt obligated to act in servile ways in his interactions with members as did caddies at the BGC and KGA; the whole concept appeared foreign to him, as it was to the other caddies this far from the inner city. They had their pick of members, most of whom paid them well, and they also had their inexpensive lives in nearby villages, buttressed and protected by family support. They were independent, then, but perhaps not for long, I surmised. Soon, I have argued, if developments on the ground kept pace, they might well lose family land to private or government industry at cut rate prices, and if that were to happen their lives would be upended. Short-term contracts at area plants would not suffice, either; these companies were no more committed to formal employment than the club. Without this level of stability, they risked the long-term prospect of becoming more indebted to members than they had ever been. Maybe then they would not look or act so differently than their counterparts in the city. Time will tell.

On the challenges the children of the caddies may face in the future there is perhaps some more certainty, and not in a positive direction. Caddies, too, believed that their

children would be better off than they were, even if they did not have any at the time. Their sons would likely not turn out to be caddies, if for no other reason than pride—any existing caddy I spoke to was dead set against that possibility. But this does not mean that their sons would be able to avoid informal service work of some kind. The same with their daughters, and perhaps even more so, given the already strong gender biases within the society. Children of the caddies might eventually find work as bellhops in hotels, domestic servants in homes, drivers within gated communities, or waitresses and servers at restaurants. They may even earn more in these positions. But if so these positions would reflect lateral, as opposed to vertical, movement. Such work would still leave them far short of the independence and quality of life enjoyed by the middle and upper middle class people they would serve. If current trends in education, employment, and industrial policy hold, however, chances are that just this level of work might be all that is available to caddies' sons and daughters alike, or at least to most of them. It is difficult to see a different future playing itself out.

It is also difficult to think that any amount of personal or corporate social responsibility can realistically attend to all the problems these caddies face. Sure, members kind enough, or smart enough, to think through their relationship with the caddies could well choose to make larger contributions than those they have already offered. They could ensure that children of regular caddies they hire go to the best schools possible, for example, as if adopting these children as their own. They could pass on information and contacts to the leading hospitals and doctors they and their families visit. They could help out with financial advice, putting their caddies in touch with bank managers and retirement planners, maybe even providing a start-up balance. In all these

ways and others, members at the three clubs could offer caddies greater security than is presently the case, and it would be felt, no doubt, not least by the caddies discussed in this study. It could certainly help to ameliorate the situation that continues to result from the clubs' adamant refusal to entertain the prospect of formal employment status for the caddies, and the economic and social benefits that would inevitably flow from such a move.

These caddies, however, need, and deserve, more than promises, and that is about all social responsibility at the level of individual members amounts to. Members in a position to give still have their own bottom line in mind. Nothing they do will ever touch existing inequalities between them and caddies. What they offer caddies in extra tips and added bonuses directed at health care and education costs, for example, is only spare change to them. Anything more is not feasible, from a personal or a class standpoint.

Social responsibility, or charity, as it was called once upon a time before advertising executives changed the label, is not the answer to development, anyway; it never has been, and never will be. The caddies, instead, require a committed government and senior managerial class invested in their potential as much as in the potential of multinational companies and the Indian middle and upper middle classes already captured by them. All of India's poor and working classes deserve this investment. So does the nation, in general. Yet it is also true that poor and working classes will have to demand a more open and inclusive development strategy through resistance and protest—a difficult thing, perhaps, not only logistically, but also economically and emotionally, as it will require severing the ties of servility many among them have worked so hard to cultivate. This is also to demand a different relationship between them and the state, and

thus a different kind of state entirely, perhaps. Certainly, India's political and economic elites are not just magically going to come to their senses on such matters. It is obviously not in their interests to do so. Like all other elites throughout history, they will have to be pressed from below if they are ever going to make good on their supposed and well-publicized commitments to fairness, justice, and equality that up until now appear as mere rhetoric.

## Appendix A: Results of Caddy Survey<sup>1</sup>

	BGC ( <i>n</i> = 114)	KGA ( <i>n</i> = 107)	EGR ( <i>n</i> = 65)	Total ( <i>N</i> = 286)
1. Biographical				
A. Age (in years)				
≤19	27	18	45	28
20-29	40	61	48	50
30-39	19	21	8	17
40-49	8	1	0	4
50-59	4	0	0	1
≥ 60	2	0	0	1
B. Birthplace				
Bangalore	73	53	2	49
Rest of Karnataka	20	17	98	37
Tamil Nadu	4	28	0	12
Andhra Pradesh	1	1	0	1
Kerala	0	0	0	0
Other states	2	1	0	1
C. Language at birth				
Kannada	34	46	100	54
Tamil	29	47	0	29
Telagu	9	6	0	5
Malayalam	1	0	0	< 1
Hindi	1	0	0	< 1
Urdu	24	2	0	10
Other (%)	3	0	0	< 1

<sup>1</sup> Survey conducted in spring 2008. All figures are percentages, unless otherwise specified.

	BGC ( <i>n</i> = 114)	KGA ( <i>n</i> = 107)	EGR ( <i>n</i> = 65)	Total ( <i>N</i> = 286)
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1. Biographical (cont.)

D. Religion

Hindu	61	95	100	83
Muslim	24	2	0	10
Christian	15	3	0	7

E. Education

None	14	9	2	9
Some primary	60	67	25	55
Tenth grade pass	12	10	46	19
Some high school	7	7	8	7
12th grade pass	4	6	14	7
Some college	3	0	5	2
College degree	0	0	2	< 1
In school	9	5	25	11

F. Family residence

Own	76	67	11	58
Rent	24	33	89	42

G. Marital status

Single	61	50	86	62
Married	39	50	14	37
Divorced	< 1	0	0	< 1

	BGC ( <i>n</i> = 114)	KGA ( <i>n</i> = 107)	EGR ( <i>n</i> = 65)	Total ( <i>N</i> = 286)
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1. Biographical (cont.)

H. Father's occupation

Caddy	8	4	0	1
Agriculture	17	37	89	40
Manufacturing	22	17	2	13
Textiles	5	0	2	2
Merchant	10	8	5	7
Service	19	15	3	14
Security	5	8	0	5
Coolie	6	6	2	5
Other	7	5	0	4

I. Mother's occupation

Housewife	78	76	60	73
Agriculture	6	17	37	17
Textiles	2	0	0	1
Merchant	2	1	0	1
Service	9	4	0	5
Other	4	2	4	2

	BGC ( <i>n</i> = 114)	KGA ( <i>n</i> = 107)	EGR ( <i>n</i> = 65)	Total ( <i>N</i> = 286)
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## 2. Work history

### A. Introduction to club

Self	10	26	37	22
Friend	4	4	5	4
Neighbor	54	27	43	41
Father	6	7	0	5
Uncle	4	8	0	5
Brother	12	15	8	12
Brother-in-law	4	4	0	3
Cousin	4	6	8	6
Mother	0	< 1	0	< 1
Aunt	0	0	< 1	< 1

### B. Years as a caddy

0-5	43	34	68	43
6-10	13	12	28	16
11-15	14	33	5	19
16-20	11	17	0	11
21-25	8	4	0	2
26-30	4	1	0	2
≥ 30	7	0	0	3

	BGC ( <i>n</i> = 114)	KGA ( <i>n</i> = 107)	EGR ( <i>n</i> = 65)	Total ( <i>N</i> = 286)
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2. Work history (cont.)

C. Caddy rank

Sub-junior	11	20	0	12
Junior	23	19	40	25
Senior	63	51	60	58
Pro	0	7	0	2
Administrative	4	4	< 1	3

D. Prior work

None	64	79	88	75
Agriculture	3	5	3	3
Manufacturing	11	6	4	7
Textiles	6	0	0	3
Merchant	9	3	0	3
Service	9	6	2	5
Other	0	3	5	3

E. Current part-time

None	85	89	88	87
Agriculture	0	0	2	< 1
Manufacturing	5	1	5	3
Textiles	0	1	0	< 1
Merchant	4	0	2	2
Service	5	7	5	5
Other	0	0	0	0

	BGC ( <i>n</i> = 114)	KGA ( <i>n</i> = 107)	EGR ( <i>n</i> = 65)	Total ( <i>N</i> = 286)
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2. Work history (cont.)

F. Interim work (on voluntary leave)

None	85	82	91	85
Agriculture	0	3	1	2
Manufacturing	6	0	2	2
Textiles	0	0	0	0
Merchant	6	2	2	4
Service	4	6	12	6
Other	0	1	2	1

## Appendix B: Results of Membership Survey at BGC and KGA<sup>1</sup>

	BGC ( <i>n</i> = 161)	KGA ( <i>n</i> = 183)	Total ( <i>N</i> = 344)
1. Biographical			
A. Age			
20-39	32	16	24
40-59	55	54	55
≥ 60	13	30	22
B. Gender			
Male	90	92	91
Female	10	8	9
C. Marital status			
Single	28	20	24
Married	72	78	75
Widow	< 1	3	1
D. Number of children			
0	41	36	38
1	18	13	15
2	36	41	39
≥ 3	4	8	6

<sup>1</sup> Survey of application records at the BGC and KGA was conducted in 2008. Information presented here reflects data provided at time of members' applications. Figures are in percentages, unless otherwise specified.

	BGC ( <i>n</i> = 161)	KGA ( <i>n</i> = 183)	Total ( <i>N</i> = 344)
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## 2. Application process

### A. Year of application

1986-1990	0	19	10
1991-1995	34	37	36
1996-2000	60	31	44
2001-2007	6	14	10

### B. Year granted membership

1987-1990	0	11	5
1991-1995	0	29	15
1996-2000	3	22	12
2001-2007	97	38	62

### C. Wait time for membership (in years)

≤ 1	4	8	6
2 to 5	13	76	47
6 to 10	73	16	42
11 to 15	10	0	5

### D. Category of membership awarded

Associate	4	16	10
Permanent	96	84	90

	BGC ( <i>n</i> = 161)	KGA ( <i>n</i> = 183)	Total ( <i>N</i> = 344)
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### 3. Education and work

#### A. Highest degree earned

Baccalaureate	50	49	49
Post-baccalaureate	34	38	36
Ph.D., M.D., J.D.	12	7	9
Undeclared	4	7	6

#### B. Highest degree type

Science, technology, and engineering	35	39	37
Business, commerce, and accounting	37	32	34
Other professional	17	10	13
Arts and humanities	8	12	10
Undeclared	4	7	5

#### C. Occupation

Agriculture	7	10	9
Industry	14	17	15
Science, technology, and engineering	8	13	10
Professional	40	39	39
Student	2	7	5
Other	6	4	5
Undeclared	24	10	17

	BGC ( <i>n</i> = 161)	KGA ( <i>n</i> = 183)	Total ( <i>N</i> = 344)
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#### 4. Club history

##### A. Additional club memberships

None	39	19	28
1	27	28	27
2	18	25	22
3	10	16	13
4	4	7	6
≥ 5	3	4	4

##### B. Quality of club affiliations

N/a	39	19	28
Member at own club, plus Bangalore Club	9	12	10
Member at both clubs	7	10	9
Member at both clubs, plus Bangalore Club	≤ 1	4	3
Member at own club, plus Bangalore Club, and one other British-era club	0	3	2
Non-British-era clubs only	20	24	22

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