

## 022. 6<sup>th</sup> Evaluation - Gudibanda & Mitterari - Ravishankar (Aug 2003)

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am an academician, working at a University, teaching Sociology, and it was purely by chance that I came across Bagepalli, more than a decade ago. On an advisory stint with DANIDA's water supply and sanitation programme, I had occasion to test my classroom theories across the vast and vexed heartland of Karnataka. Over my many visits to Bagepalli, I came to realise that the Bagepalli Coolie Sangha was a unique experiment, one based on an ideology and guided by a mission – which not many NGOs can boast of.

I could hardly refuse the invitation to return to Bagepalli for the second of my evaluations of this unique experiment. Personally, I saw this as an opportunity for me to be with a community I have respected for many years. It was also an opportunity to help ADATS to take stock and chart the way ahead. Yet, despite these credentials of experience and kinship, I had my doubts as to whether I could do justice to the new area that the study called me to venture into. That I was able to resolve my doubts, and that the report is finally ready, owes much to Ram Esteves.

I thank Ram for the trust that he has reposed in me, and for the time he spent with me, clarifying concepts, discussing the strategies, hopes and fears of the Coolie Sangha. I must also thank him for the free hand he has given me in doing this study, which I know comes from a genuine desire to bring about the best for the people for whom he lives, works, and cares. An ideologue with his head looking over the next mountain, Ram Esteves essentially remains a visionary with his heart in the right place and his feet solidly on the ground.

To Mario Esteves, I must say thank you for his affectionate concern for me. His concern for the way the study was turning out was equally affectionate! The itinerary I suggested was followed to a 'T' and there was none of the usual attempt to camouflage and hide. It was a pleasure working with him for this evaluation.

To Mamatha Esteves, Extension Worker of the Project, I am deeply indebted. Mamatha accompanied me and took care of the logistics and needs during my stay. Her cheerful presence was a great source of strength. She helped me clarify the workings of the children's project, and to access data on the computer. Her sacrifice of personal time to be with me has made a difference to the quality of this study.

A study of this kind does not happen without the help of a large number of people. Anil, Gangappa, C. Babu, Sathyanarayana Reddy, Raghu (*the* computer wizard), Ramalaxmi, Sharadamma, Gangulamma, Venkatanarasappa, Ramachandrappa, Ramachandra Reddy, Ayaz, Laxminarasimhappa and others, the VHWs, Women's Committee members, Mahila Trainers and Balakendra Teachers all spent their precious time for discussion and dialogue, happily accompanying me to the field during the rigorous schedule of visits I had chalked out for my study. I must acknowledge the assistance of Mr Robert Clive, who helped me with the field-work and collected data that was relevant to the study. I thank them sincerely.

I must specially mention the children of various Balakendras. Such sprightly selves, they cheerfully answered all my questions, regardless of the lateness of the hour. The Balakendras have provided to them secure platforms on which a new tomorrow could be dreamt of, and built, even as they play and enjoy their childhood.

I would like to extend my thanks to John Bowis and Debbie Petlueng of SCNZ for initiating this timely study. I must appreciate, too, their commitment to causes so far away from home and yet so close to their hearts.

I cannot conclude this acknowledgment of debt without mentioning that dear soul at Bagepalli, Mrs. Mabel Esteves. How can I forget her profound concern for my welfare, her complete dedication to my comfort, and her genuine desire to make me feel at home? Even at her age, her grit and determination are manifest and unconquerable. I can see why, over the years, she has nurtured many a dream and, in her own quiet way, inspired her sons to quest for the stars.

Tashina brought to me a sparkle of childhood – something central to the BCS – even when I was away from my daughter; and Rocky made my stay warmer and nights brighter with those steaming cups of tea that he made so cheerfully.

Every time I come away from Bagepalli, I do so with a mixture of happiness and regret. Happiness, that here is a project that has struck a chord among the Coolies and their children, becoming a part of their lives in a way that cosmetic programmes cannot. Regret, that evaluations tend to be critical of achievements in a way that might seem to call their worth into question. I have no doubt that, criticisms notwithstanding, the BCS is a bold experiment, a genuine one, the full fruits of which would flower only in the distant future, provided the experiment is sustained and carried through. I can only hope that my study will help the Coolies of Bagepalli, and their children, to carry forward the gains they have made in improving their lives.

**Dr. Anita Ravishankar**

Mangalore, August, 2003

## ABBREVIATIONS USED

ADATS	Agricultural Development & Training Society
B.Com.	Bachelor of Commerce
BCS	Bagepalli Coolie Sangha
CSUs	Coolie Sangha Units
GCS	Gudibanda Coolie Sangha
GP	Gram Panchayat
NFE	Non Formal Education
PRI	Panchayat Raj Institutions
PUC	Pre University Course
SDMC	School Development Management Committee
SSLC	Secondary School Leaving Certificate (tenth standard)
ToR	Terms of Reference
TP	Taluk Panchayat
VHW	Village Health Worker
VSD	<i>Vokkaku Sanchi Duddu</i> (petty credit fund for Coolie women)

## GLOSSARY

**Jhola/Jowar** : A corn grown in the Bagepalli region, having cash value. It also forms the staple diet for the people of this region.

**Kabbadi** : A sport of Indian origin, played by teams of seven on a circular sand court. Players attempt to tag or capture opponents and must hold their breath while running, repeating the word ‘*kabbadi*’ to show that they are doing so.

**Kho-kho** : One of the most popular traditional sports in India, which in its simplest form involves chasing and touching an opponent. Each team consists of twelve players, but only nine take the field for a game. Like all Indian games, it is simple, inexpensive, and enjoyable.

**Prathinidhi** : Elected Representative of CSUs and Mahila Meetings

**Ragi** : Finger millet grown in the arid regions and used as a staple food.

**Santhe** : Village fair/market

**Tamarind** : A large tropical caesalpiniaceous tree. Its pod, filled with an acidulous, sweet, reddish black pulp, is used extensively in Indian cooking. Botanical name *Tamarindus Indica*.

**Tennicoit** : A game mostly played by girls and women, forming teams of two or four, where a soft, rubber ring is thrown across courts.

**Tur Dhal** : A type of lentil grown in this region, used as a cooking base.

## 1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

### 1.1. Purpose of Evaluation

1. To assess the progress of the programme towards achieving its objectives.
2. To assess whether the rationale underlying the programme, and its objectives, are still relevant.
3. To suggest modifications and future directions.

### 1.2. Objectives

1. To assess progress towards achieving the original goals and objectives of the programme as set out in the original proposal.
2. To assess whether the rationale for the programme is still valid and whether the original goals, objectives and activities are still relevant from the viewpoint of the beneficiaries, community, ADATS and SCNZ. *Special emphasis will be given to the situation of Coolie children and youth.*
3. To recommend appropriate changes to the design of the programme, *especially the Children's Programme*, to improve its effectiveness and responsiveness, reduce any negative developmental impacts, and promote sustainability.

### 1.3. Key Tasks

The Evaluator will assess progress towards achieving the original goals and objectives of the programme as set out in the original proposal.

1. Undertake preliminary assessment of available data to ensure it is adequate for the evaluation, identify any gaps, and request ADATS to provide additional material required within a reasonable and agreed timeframe.
2. Analyse narrative and financial reports from the ADATS website.
3. Analyse project monitoring processes and data.
4. Hold briefing meetings with ADATS Staff.
5. Consult with intended beneficiaries of the programme (e.g. Coolie children and families, Balakendra Teachers, ADATS Staff), and those affected by the programme (e.g. local school teachers, community leaders) using participatory methodologies.
6. Collect and analyse gender disaggregated data to identify the current roles and involvement of women in the project (at community and organisational level), their control of and access to project resources, and the distribution of project benefits between women and men, girls and boys.
7. Identify the extent to which the programme is relevant to the needs and priorities of the target communities.
8. Identify and assess positive and negative impacts arising from the programme and the changes it has brought to Member Coolie families, village CSUs, and the community at large.
9. Identify the extent to which the programme's goals and objectives have been met; how they were met; and the behaviours which facilitated achievements.
10. Identify the most crucial drawbacks or weaknesses of the programme, why they were critical and what effect they had on the programme.

The Evaluator will assess whether the rationale for the programme is still valid and whether the original goals, objectives and activities are still relevant from the viewpoint of the beneficiaries, ADATS and the Coolie Sangha.

1. Assess what mutual advantage has been obtained by ADATS and the Coolie Sangha.
2. Identify the effects on the programme of external events/changes and analyse the impact of these external factors on the rationale for the programme, *especially the Children's Programme*.
3. Assess whether the current processes and the outcomes are sustainable, and what factors will affect this sustainability.

The Evaluator will recommend appropriate changes to the design of the programme to improve its effectiveness and responsiveness, reduce any negative developmental impacts, and promote sustainability. These might include:

1. Recommending modifications to the programme's current design and implementation to improve its effectiveness, development impact, and sustainability.
2. Suggesting changes to the programme's objectives or activities which should be considered.
3. Suggesting improvements in the implementation and administration procedures or the organisational and management structures .
4. Suggesting changes to existing monitoring systems and improved/additional indicators to measure achievement of objectives.
5. Suggesting ways in which the programme could be made more cost effective, and any recommendations for change in the financial budgets.
6. Recommending whether the programme in its current form should be continued or modified.

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the last six years the Balakendras functioning in Gudibanda and Mittermari areas have put the smile back of children's faces and hope in the lives of Coolie parents. Children come to the Balakendras every evening to play and learn. The Balakendra Teachers, who are at the centre of it all, seem happy with the role they are performing. Older teachers, particularly, seem aware of their responsibility towards children. However, there is need to redefine their role so that they become Facilitators more than Teachers. As a result of the Children's Programme we notice that school enrolment rates have gone up and the gender gap is reducing. The school retention rate, particularly for girls, is very high.

There is a steady increase in the achievement levels of students every year. Apart from coaching given to 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Standard students every weekend, the availability of school textbooks and good quality notebooks is an added factor for their good performance. This needs to be seen against the government schools that Coolie children go to, which are ill-staffed and where teachers are indifferent to the learning needs of students.

As parents, Coolie Sangha members have got themselves elected into School Development Management Committees and they have made a difference in the day to day functioning of the schools. However, the Coolie Sangha could act as a pressure group on the local government schools and education office to see that schools are adequately staffed, infrastructure is in place, and committed teachers appointed.

There has been a conscious effort by ADATS, BCS and GCS to build political and resource commitments aimed at closing the gender gap at both, a policy level and at the level of activities. The positive discrimination for girls and the exposure they have got in continuing their

education has resulted in increasing the confidence level of girls and their parents. Investing in educating girls is one of the most crucial investments that the GCS and BCS have made, the effects of which will be known perhaps a decade from now.

Health of Coolie children has also been an important variable taken care of. Everyday ailments of children are treated through the VHW. However, a concept of health needs to be looked at holistically, and VHWs trained accordingly.

However, a majority of the adolescents at the Balakendra are not sure of their future and are not sufficiently prepared to deal with the demands of modern society. There is a need to provide them with a direction and equip them with skills in critical thinking, problem solving and decision making.

Although there are demonstrable effects of the SCNZ Children's Programme on children and their parents – improved school results, some children attaining excellence in sports – there is an intrinsic need to broad base education. This is because the Coolies need to think on investing in the next generation, their children, for the future of the Coolie Sangha.

The Coolie Sangha is seen as a community based grassroots movement having a caste/class base. They represent a new breed of actors, determined to create a free space from where a democratic social order can emerge. At the village level, the Coolies are members of CSUs and Mahila Meetings. These constitute the primary unit of participation and decision making at the village level. The percentage of population covered is 34% in the 128 functioning villages. 55% belong to the lower castes, 29% to the dominant castes, and 16% to the middle castes. Membership in CSUs and Mahila Meetings have sustained the Coolies with economic support, social support and political support.

Most of the Coolies wanted to belong to a group and thus joined the Coolie Sangha. The motivation was more in Gudibanda, where the Coolies had already heard of the BCS and many were thus eager to join the organization. Issues taken up in the CSUs and Mahila Meetings include struggles at the individual level, community level, and at the level of society, thus expanding the societal scope of the movement.

Although the CSUs and Mahila Meetings are now aware of the importance of the need to educate their children, a Child Focus in terms of respecting the individuality of children is yet to come about.

ADATS has an evolving policy on gender and has tried to institutionalize a mainstream gender concern within the organization. At the village level the Mahila Meetings have given Coolie women an opportunity to be themselves, to build their confidence level, and to develop skills. Women have the veto power in sanctioning CCF loans, child and health budgets and Women's Fund benefits. There has been a lessening of domestic violence and a total annihilation of child and early marriages.

Coolie women who have entered public domains enjoy a new respect from their family members. Through the Coolie Sangha, women's practical gender needs and strategic gender needs are being met. However, there is a need to disaggregate data according to gender. The newly recruited Mahila Trainers need to be equipped with skills required to operationalise and promote gender concerns.

The development impact of the Coolie Sangha building process have been many. The process of building the Coolie Sangha has demonstrated the possibility of incorporating social justice and participation into a process of mild economic growth that have benefited the vulnerable Coolies in all-round development.

The Coolie Sangha has created an organized mass of critical and organized people who have become a countervailing power that has helped reduce exploitation, check corruption, and take over and perhaps manage more efficiently institutions such as the Taluk Panchayat.

An astonishing feature of the Coolie Sangha is that at the village level the CSUs and Mahila Meetings take on the characteristics of both, Primary and Secondary Groups. This is rare because groups are either primary or secondary. But these units, while interacting at a personal, intimate and emotional way, are also business-like in their transactions.

The BCS, during the last 25 years, has confined itself to local situations, fighting local power equations which has been so necessary for the survival of the Coolies. However, the macro reality and political economy are changing and will continue to change. Changes going under the rhetoric of globalization are bringing in rapid transformations, the implications of which have to be understood by the BCS and GCS. The BCS and newer GCS are indispensable to combat globalization as they are better placed than governments to deal specifically, act quickly, mobilize at the grassroots level, and understand the new social needs of the Coolies. ADATS should help the GCS and BCS, as it has done until now, to crystallize a new political ideology having an economic perspective, through discussion and exchange of ideas. For the Coolies, development should continue to be visible. Thus a careful blend of ideological commitment and discipline, macro perspectives and micro level involvement, would go a long way in making the BCS and the GCS a stable alternative in the process of social transformation in the region.

The future of the Coolie Sangha lies in the development of their children. Developing the individuality of the Coolie Child becomes central to the new agenda that Coolies have to set for themselves. The educational intervention through the Balakendras and the economic, social and health inputs through the Coolie Sangha have added to the positive dominant cultural capital that Coolie children will need for the future. The synergistic role of the family's socioeconomic environment, coupled with appropriate Child Rearing practices, will go a long way in affecting the direction of the Coolie Child's growth.

The emphasis that both ADATS and the Coolie Sangha has placed on educating children would go a long way in bringing equality and reducing poverty. The structural features and programmes of the BCS in particular is indicative of modernisation processes having set in within the organisation. The Coolie Sangha is beginning to accumulate dominant cultural capital through improved economic activity, breakdown of ascriptive criteria and an emphasis on formal education. This is a legacy that the Coolie children will need to inherit as it would effect their performance in modern society.

Finally, I have made 4 recommendations at the policy level, and 8 at the programme level. At a policy level ADATS needs to evolve a holistic children's policy. The Coolie Sangha too needs to develop a Child Focus which respects the development of individuality in children. At the programme level, Balakendra Teachers should be seen as facilitators and the training already given to them should be further strengthened. School final students and their parents must be given base information, career guidance and adolescence counselling to make informed choices.

### 3. INTRODUCTION

#### 3.1. Perspective for this Study

I am not the typical consultant one comes across, whose business it is to evaluate Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and their projects. I am an academician, a student of sociology, who believes that development has to have a strong political vision. My first reaction when I was offered this assignment was that I was not the person to do it. It was only later on, after my acceptance, that I realised that I was what Gudibanda needed at this stage. The Coolie Sangha was built 25 years ago, with an astute understanding of the political economy of the time. In the meantime, the political economy has changed and it is vital to know what the



present reality is. Earlier, the oppositions were fixed; the exploiter was one particular caste/class. Today, the oppositions are shifting, and the mantle of the exploiter cannot be placed exclusively on middle peasant *Ryots*.

In this scenario of shifting oppositions, the poor and the marginalised – the Coolies – would get disenfranchised. This could result in the strengthening of parochial processes among the poor, undermining the very base of the Coolie Sangha. What the Coolies have achieved in terms of uniting the poor in the last 25 years, in strengthening the caste/class base of the region, cannot be taken for granted any more. It can easily split and break away with parochial identities surfacing, and this could lead to the disintegration of the unity of the Coolies. We do have macro-examples of countries like Yugoslavia, which have buckled under the pressure of new realities; a similar scenario could threaten the Coolie Sangha. There is a need for the older Bagepalli Coolie Sangha (BCS), and the newer Gudibanda Coolie Sangha (GCS), to take stock of macro-processes while chalking out micro-strategies.

I have evaluated the SCNZ Children's Programme at Gudibanda and Mittermari against this framework. The GCS has no doubt used the larger and the older BCS as its reference point. Therefore, it is within the scope of this Report to reflect on the reference point itself. The evaluation here has been attempted at three levels: the first deals with the issues that the Terms of Reference (ToR) has thrown up. The second concentrates on child socialisation practices that need to get emphasised if Coolie children are to develop an individuality. The third is an exploration of the directions that the Coolie Sangha movement could take in the future.

### 3.2. Methodology

I have tried to use a participatory approach by involving all levels of stakeholders while deciding on the methodology. I believe that when stakeholders are involved in the process that leads to the findings, the likelihood increases that they would accept ownership of the processes and findings. This process, it is hoped, will contribute to the building of local capacity for decision-making.

The partnership approach was where the concerned ADATS, BCS, and GCS Staff and functionaries became actively involved in the agreement of checklists/indicators, and where all of them were involved in sharing ideas and considering options. I have tried to facilitate shared decision-making through the process of this evaluation, including identifying the purpose, selecting methods of data collection and analysis, field-implementation and disseminating/acting upon the findings. Such a type of evaluation calls for simple methods throughout the evaluation cycle.

### 3.3. Key Tools & Techniques

Secondary data was collected from the six monthly progress reports and from the databank available with ADATS.

A checklist and simple assessment techniques were prepared along with Project Staff and Coolie Sangha members. These were used during interviews, group discussions, and for observation.

Conversational interviews provided the bulk of the findings. These interviews were conducted with the help of checklists and indicators.

Focus group discussions complemented the information culled out from the interviews. These discussions comprised of groups of ADATS, GCS and BCS Staff/functionaries – Mahila Trainers, Balakendra Teachers, Educationists, Doctors, members of Mahila Meetings and



Coolie Sangha Units (CSUs), Cluster Secretaries, CSU Representatives at the Gram Panchayat, School Development Management Committees, and the children.

Appropriate tools to study the changes and impacts were also used. The attempt was to facilitate discussion, ensuring that everyone present had an opportunity to participate. Findings were put forth before the secondary stakeholders for formulating recommendations and follow-up action.

## 4. THE COOLIE CHILD

### 4.1. Bhavya says it all...

*“I would like to be a Child when I grow up,” was the response of fourteen-year-old Bhavya in one of the Balakendras in Gudibanda that I visited. She was responding to the question as to what she would like to be when she grew up. I was talking to her about her life, her hopes, her fears, and her dreams.*

*On asking her where she lived, she gave me her address: “I live next to Malla Reddy’s house.” “And where is that?” I ask. “Near that big tamarind tree.” Asked to recall the happiest day in her life, she answered clearly, “The day I received the school uniforms from Mamthakka.” These were the parameters she talked of.*

*Hunger was an everyday experience for her, till her parents decided to join the Sangha, and then again for some time when, for some reason, they left the Sangha.*

*She helps her mother in the housework, before and after school. Asked whether her brothers did work at home, she quickly replied, “Yes, plenty. If something fell on the floor, they pick it up!”*

*She likes to play, but the only toy she had was a doll her parents brought back from the village santhe years ago. At the Balakendra, she enjoys playing kho-kho, tennicoit (“ring”), skipping, volleyball, and she sometimes longs to draw and colour like the younger children of her centre. “They never allow us to handle these at school, it’s always meant for the boys,” she explains.*

*She realises she has to study because she “do[es] not want to be like [her] parents,” but does not like going to school because there are no teachers for most subjects. At the Balakendra, she clears her doubts through either her ‘teacher’ or her senior friends.*

*She, like many in her age group, knew nothing about menstruation or about her own body. “What is there to know?” she asks me innocently. “Every woman bleeds.” “The Future? . . . Marriage?” I ask. She giggles. “I just want to be in this centre every day, forever. I want to play. I want to sing. I want to be a child.”*

My first reaction when I heard these words, spoken so earnestly, was that, in a world of increasing cruelty to children, here is hope for the Child. The little girl’s words point to an important achievement of the Coolie Sangha: it has given to little children their childhood, away from the drudgery of fetching water and cooking and sibling care. It has given them a place away from home; a place to play; a place to be children. By any standard, this is a quantum leap for childhood.

### 4.2. Balakendras

For the last six years, the Balakendras functioning in Gudibanda and Mittermari have put the smile back on children’s faces, bringing hope into the lives of their Coolie parents. For the Coolie children, the 118 Balakendras – 58 in Gudibanda and 60 in Mittermari area – have been places where they could go to after school between 5.30 and 8.30 p.m. every evening.

Every CSU has a Balakendra where the children of Coolie families come to play and learn every evening. Every Child that is enrolled at the Balakendra gets textbooks, notebooks, and two pairs of uniforms. The Coolie Sangha pays the fees of children studying in private and government schools. Frequent health check-up camps – general, dental, and eye camps – are conducted for them. Iron and multivitamin tablets are distributed if children are found deficient in nutrients. In case of serious defects, they are referred to hospitals.

In most Balakendras that I visited, I was greeted by enthusiastic children who told us how happy they were to be part of the Balakendras. The children of Hanumantharayanapalli Balakendra (Mittermari) proudly displayed talents and skills that they had picked up at the centre – acting, singing, and dancing – besides very small children being able to do maths rapidly. Behind the enthusiasm of these students was a second year PUC educated Balakendra Teacher who was able to relate to the children very easily.

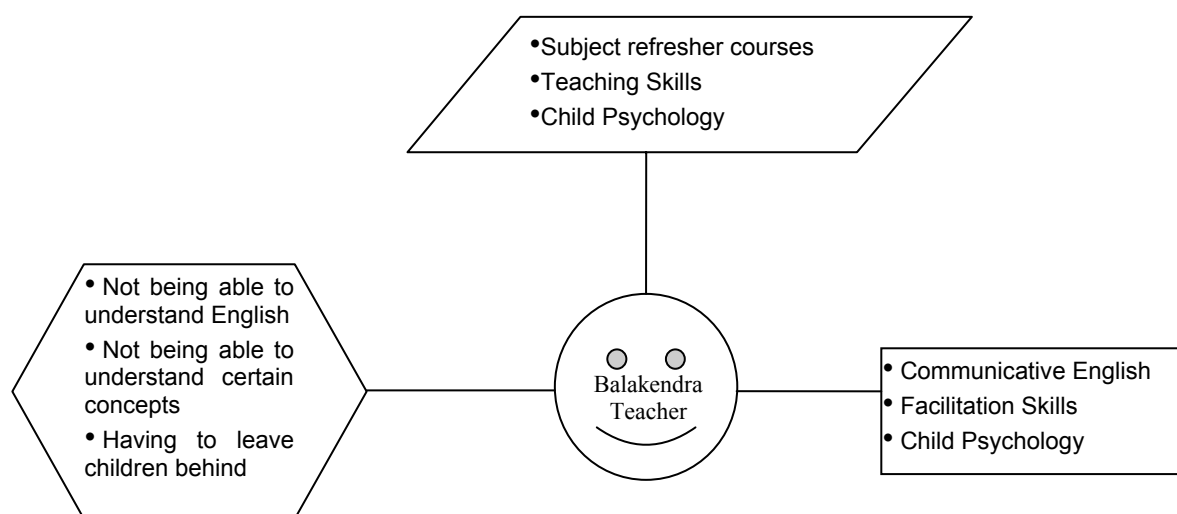
Everyday at the Balakendra, children play various games: kho-kho, kabaddi, volleyball, cricket, tennicoit, and skipping. While playing these games, boys and girls seem to mix freely. Most children told us that this was the first time they were handling such equipment. While older children played, the younger ones were seen drawing and colouring on bright chart papers. Every week, children are coached by special coaches in various games like cricket, volleyball, and netball. A notable achievement is three Balakendra children representing Karnataka State in the National Netball Championships at Chandigarh, Punjab, where they played till the semi-finals.

Besides, a summer camp for girls and boys studying between classes seven and ten was also arranged. During this camp, besides sports, children were involved in creative work – developing models and charts. These models have been put up at the annual Science Exhibition held on Children's Day (November 14) at the Taluk headquarters. Children told us that these camps helped them to develop a competitive spirit.

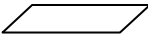
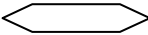

### 4.3. The Balakendra Teachers

The Balakendra Teachers represent a whole new, younger cadre who have tremendous potential to take on leadership in the Coolie Sangha building process. Most of them are young. Their educational qualifications range from a failed SSLC to studying for a graduate degree. Most Balakendra Teachers whom we met are aware of the rights of children and of the need of children to have a childhood. Many are children themselves and having a 'commitment' to the rights of children is too much to ask of them. But the older ones are aware of the responsible role they are playing in their village. All of them have been given training on child psychology, education, developing child aptitudes, active learning, although they did state that these were inadequate. Besides, they also attend a monthly refresher course. The diagrammatic representation given below will perhaps make the understanding of their training needs clearer.

#### 4.4. Training Details of Balakendra Teachers



**Key:**

-  = Trainings Undergone
-  = Problems in Training
-  = Trainings Needed

Almost all the Balakendra Teachers in Gudibanda and Mittermari that we interacted with stated that their biggest obstacle in performing their role as Balakendra Teachers was illiteracy regarding the English language, particularly communicative English. Future training sessions should include training in English, besides training in child psychology and facilitation. An attempt has been made by most Balakendra Teachers to translate much of their learning into everyday classroom sessions – helping children make charts, building blocks, and involving them in word play for improving vocabulary. Expanding the role of the Balakendra Teachers and a different monitoring method could help them discharge their roles as Facilitators rather than as Teachers. But it is heartening to note that all Balakendra Teachers are happy with the role they are performing. Children’s right to education cannot be realised unless those who teach accept a responsibility towards children. At the same time, teachers in these centres have to be made more accountable.

#### 4.5. Challenges in Balakendra Functioning

In some centres, I found that storybooks, picture dictionaries, and puzzles given to them were not made use of. The Balakendras were just places where children came to do their homework after playing for an hour. This could be attributed to a lack of motivation on the part of the Balakendra Teachers, as they themselves are very young and can very easily slide into typical ‘teacher’ role model that they see in government schools. The body language that children displayed when answering questions, hands clasped meekly across their chests, denotes that the atmosphere in these centres is not entirely violence-free. Children still display gestures of subordination. There has to be a conscious attempt at letting go of such behaviour. Without this, the confidence and self-esteem of children cannot be built. There is also a need to redefine the role of the Balakendra Teacher so that she becomes much more than just a

teacher. For this, they need to be given regular and consistent training to develop facilitation skills.

#### 4.6. Number Speak

The latest database of ADATS reveals that there are about 4,010 Coolie children in school. This is about 86% of school-going children in the age group of 6-15 years. Many of the remaining 14% of children who are out of school are children who were already out of school when the Children's Programme was started. Talking to a few parents, I found that although the need for children's education had not played a role in initially motivating people to join the CSUs, today they all seem to realise the importance of schooling for their children. Almost all of them are convinced that their children should go to school at least so that they may not be "like their parents." It is heartening to note that the gender gap in school enrolment has reduced drastically since the BCS started working in the area.

Level	Gender Enrolment Rates	
	Boys	Girls
Primary School	52%	48%
Middle School	53%	47%
High School	55%	45%
Pre University Course	67%	33%
Degree	69%	31%
Non Formal Education classes	47%	53%

Although boys do outnumber girls, the difference is negligible. Moreover, we should remember that the sex ratio for Karnataka state, and for Kolar district in particular, is unfavourably tilted against girls. The 2001 Census data show that there are 964 females for every 1000 males in Kolar district ([www.kar.nic.in/census](http://www.kar.nic.in/census)). This is higher than the all-India sex ratio, which stands at 933 females for every 1000 males.

#### 4.7. School Performance of Children

In terms of school performance, the achievement level of the Coolie children is very high. When we compare the performance of the Coolie children with children in the rest of the Taluk, the results of the former are indeed commendable (see Table below):

School Results				
Year	SCNZ children Standard 7	Taluk overall Standard 7	SCNZ children Standard 10	Taluk overall Standard 10
1998-1999	87%	82%	58%	40%
1999-2000	92%	85%	62%	36%
2000-2001	98%	90%	91%	60%
2001-2002	98%	--	85%	--
2002-2003	96%	--	70%	--

Analysing the trend, we find that there has been a steady increase in the achievement levels, with students bettering their performance every year, except for the current year when there is a fall. This enhanced performance is because of the special coaching given to students in Standards 7 and 10 every weekend on the core subjects taught at school. In this context, the coaching given to the students has relevance to the future of the children. Better student performance may also be attributed to the fact that the Balakendras provide to the Coolie children a haven which keeps them motivated to go to school. The availability of school text-

books and good quality notebooks supplied through the SCNZ programme has been an added factor in children's enthusiasm to get themselves educated. The strong base that the BCS and the GCS has been able to create through its Balakendras has also led to a steady increase in the number of Coolie students enrolling themselves for the pre-university course. It needs to be noted that there is a reduction in the number of girls going in for higher education when we compare it with the high school rates. The reasons for this need to be looked into.

This is a very commendable effort when we realise that many of the government schools that children go to are ill-staffed and teachers are often apathetic to the learning needs of students. During my visit to one of the government primary schools in Gudibanda, I found that most of the *non-CSU* children in the fifth standard could not even read properly. The teachers are aware of this, but blame it on parents and the larger cultural environment. What fuels dropout rates in schools is the harsh treatment of children by teachers, and their negative attitudes towards students and their families. Most of the government primary schools that I visited were single-teacher schools. Almost all schools lacked even basic infrastructure like toilets and safe, clean drinking water. In these schools, the teacher and children seemed to have lost the sense of joy in being involved in an educational process, which is mainly seen as a process for preparing students for their annual examinations. What is to be appreciated here is that despite these odds, children still seem motivated to go to school.

Commendable achievements of the Coolie Sangha in the field of education need to be balanced through attention to related aspects of the subject. For example, while there has been an increase in enrolment into college, it does not correspond with the percentage of students who pass their high school. Out of 244 students who passed their SSLC examination in 2003, only 81 entered their PUC.

There are many reasons for this. The first (not necessarily in order of intensity) is the reluctance of parents to send children for further studies, and this is more so for girls. Parents, too, are not aware precisely what their children should do if "they should not be like [them]." Many who are aware that the next step is to get a PUC, see the village to college distance factor as a hindrance to enrolment. This is understandable when public transport in villages is erratic and unreliable.

#### 4.8. Involvement of Parents

There are signs of change. Coolie parents are involved in the children's lives and in the Balakendras in a responsible way. They are aware of the need to educate their children so that "our children should not become like us." This is a common refrain heard from almost every Coolie parent who sees education as a ladder to climb up the socio-economic hierarchy. Parents voice concern over the need to educate children, particularly the Girl Child. Progress reports on the Child, as to how she/he fares in the *Balakendra*, are sent home every month to be signed by parents. Balakendra Teachers also inform parents if their Child has a health problem and gets it corrected. This way, a serious attempt has been made to involve parents and focus them on the activities of the Balakendras.

An indicator of the fact that Coolie parents are interested in the school education of their children is their participation in the School Development Management Committees (SDMC) of government schools. In the Ullodu high school (Gudibanda), out of nine SDMC members three are from the CSUs, while in the middle school all members including the President are CSU members. These members have made a difference to the way that day-to-day school activities are conducted. Students have been made to wear ties, belts and shoes to school, and this has increased their self-esteem, particularly that of Dalit children. Monthly tests and regular health check-ups are conducted, and the mid-day meal scheme is supervised. They have also made the administration comply with their wishes to keep administrative files and

papers in an orderly way. If one understands the way in which government schools are run, these above achievement of the Coolie Sangha are of no mean order.

#### 4.9. Coolie Sangha Influence on Govt School Performance

Nonetheless, the Coolie Sangha needs to broaden its initiatives in education to bring government schools within its purview. The centrality of the government schools in the lives of Coolie children and their parents is undeniable. An overwhelming majority, almost ninety percent of Coolie children, go to government schools. Therefore, the overall functioning of government schools in terms of basic infrastructure, faculty strength, affectionate and kind teachers, and the quality of teaching, become critical issues. Pushing children into dysfunctional or poorly functioning schools is making a mockery of the right to education. This is where the Coolie Sangha could act as a pressure group on the local government schools and on the local education officials to see that schools are adequately staffed, infrastructure is in place, and committed teachers appointed for teaching.

#### 4.10. Effects of Schooling on the Girl Child

One of the positive policies of ADATS, and therefore of the BCS and GCS, has been a concerted effort to build political and resource commitments aimed at closing the gender gap, both at a policy level and at the level of activities. There has been a conscious effort at eliminating ingrained gender bias that limits the demand for girls' education in a crisis like the onset of puberty. This has resulted in greater enrolment and retention in schools. In all the CSUs and Mahila Meetings that I attended, members did discuss the need for children to get educated, particularly girls. There seems to be a greater awareness amongst parents at closing the gender gap in education. This has definitely seen a larger number of girls completing school, which has meant that the average age that a Coolie Child gets married has risen from 13 or 14 just ten years ago, to the legal age of 18.

The positive discrimination for girls and the exposure they have got in continuing their education, some up to PUC and two up to B.Com., has resulted in increasing the confidence level of girls and their parents. Today, girls are allowed to travel away from their villages to take up jobs in garment factories and participate in mixed sports events. The fact that one Coolie girl was selected to play for the State Netball team at the National Games is a good indicator that the Coolie Girl Child has come of age. It is also an accepted practice today for girls, as much as boys, to stay away from home for a month while participating in computer training programmes and during the tenth standard coaching classes.

Encouraging the Girl Child to go to school in a culture that is hostile towards girls and women is one of the most crucial investments that the BCS and GCS have made for social amelioration and for their own future. Education empowers the Girl Child by building up her confidence and enabling her to make informed decisions about her life. For every girl, this is about something more fundamental. It is about not being forced into a marriage while still in your teens because you have no other choice; about managing pregnancies so that they do not threaten your health, life and livelihood; about seeking and obtaining medical care for your children and yourself when you need it; about child care and nutrition; about ensuring that your children attend school. It is about being able to earn an income when women before you earned none or very little; about knowing how to handle the various crises that can suddenly descend on you like desertion, divorce, or death of a husband; about knowing and enjoying rights which women before you never knew they had; about educating children to do the same, and their children after them; it is, in short, about ensuring a decent life for an entire generation and succeeding generations thereafter. These are the spin-offs that come from investing in girls' education, the effects of which will be known perhaps a decade from now.



The little girl's dialogue quoted at the beginning of this section is ample testimony to the fact that this future will be brighter than current circumstances allow us to imagine. The point here is that the BCS has provided children with a space to experience childhood. Here is demonstrable proof that in an increasingly cruel world, human development affords us the exciting opportunity of making the world a more humane place. In a world where man is considered a victim of situations or fate, the BCS has made a difference in carving out the space for expression of concern for fellow human beings. Here is human development at work in all its intensity.

#### 4.11. Children's Health

Health is a very important variable in the growth and development of children, and in ensuring for them a future. Children from poorer households in India normally suffer from anaemia and malnutrition. In Gudibanda and Mittermari, this used to be the case ten years ago. But after the formation of the Coolie Sangha, this has changed as the income of Coolies has increased. Everyday ailments of children, like cough, cold, diarrhoea, and fever, are treated by the VHW, who is literally a walking pharmacy!

Apart from the recent drive for immunisation against polio that most SCNZ children have undergone, parents do not seem to have adequate knowledge about the various types of immunisation. In the interest of the health of the child, a Health Card could be given to each Child who joins the Balakendra on which her/his health status is maintained. Similar is the case with water. Most villages do have access to water, but the safety is questionable because of a very high percentage of fluoride in the region. The treatment for fluoride is a campaign that the Coolie Sangha needs to take up because the availability of clean, safe water is one of the most contributing factors to the improvement in child survival and health. Similarly, ensuring that every Balakendra has access to clean drinking water, apart from contributing to child health, would also teach children good clean habits.

#### 4.12. Problems of Youth

While talking to tenth standard children in the Balakendras, it was found that a majority of them do not have an idea as to what to do next. They had not discussed this with either their teachers or parents. There is a need, therefore, for adolescent counselling, career guidance, and information to be given to both, children and parents. Role models also need to be highlighted, such as the boy who has been part of the Balakendra in Ullodu (Gudibanda) for six years: he has scored 82% marks and is a topper at the Taluk level in the final PUC examination conducted by the State Board in April 2003. He is planning to continue his education by enrolling for a Teacher Training Course.

Adolescents whom we met at the Balakendras are not sufficiently prepared to deal with the demands of modern society in terms of acquisition of skills. This seems understandable given the poor quality of schools and teaching in government schools. In the absence of educational programmes that address their employment and self-development needs, both adolescent boys and girls, especially those out of school, have little opportunity to grow into confident, aware, and healthy persons. There is presently nowhere that their real life education needs are met – i.e. understanding and critically reflecting on their lives, exploring opportunities for employment, skill training, and confidence building.

In the case of girls, although it is important to see them in schools, it is also essential to give them what is known as Life-Skills Education – skills that should help women to deal with the demands and challenges of everyday life. More specifically, these include problem-solving and decision-making skills that would enable girls to make informed choices in all areas of their lives. Critical thinking and creative thinking skills would also help them to arrive at de-



cisions. Self-awareness, empathy, communication, inter-personal relationship, and skills for coping with stress will go a long way to improve their productivity, efficiency, self-esteem, and self-confidence. These could be given over a period through the Balakendras. But for this, the Balakendra Teachers themselves should be trained.

#### 4.13. Education Impact

The ADATS/SCNZ Children's Programme could be seen as an investment in a country's future workforce. The programme being all the more relevant because of the failure of the existing educational system to respond to the diverse needs of the learning population. This has led to a situation where many learners are unable to attend school, though they are eager to learn; others often fail or drop out even after they enrol, owing to a lack of sensitivity to their educational needs.

There have been demonstrable effects of the SCNZ Children's Programme on children and their parents. These are as follows:

- Improved School Results for Boys and Girls
- Dropout Rates Considerably Reduced
- Reducing Gender Gap in School Enrolment and Retention
- Increase in Girls getting Educated
- Attaining Excellence in Sports
- Traces of Creativity in Children through Science Exhibitions
- Increase in Number of Children going for Skill Training – Computers and Garments
- Traces of Confidence in Parents and their Children.

#### 4.14. Broad Basing Education

Recognising the gains made we see that through this programme two basic rights of children have been met: the right to education and the right to play. However, at this juncture the BCS has reached a quarter century of its struggles and, with the GCS using them as a reference group, there is a need to take stock of the larger macro-reality within which Coolies and their children exist. There is an intrinsic need for the Coolies to look beyond the immediate environment of their struggle and take into account macro-changes taking place in society. The BCS and the GCS need to link their micro-level struggles with broad macro-level processes like globalisation. The world that is unfolding is one with a strong market, but weak democracy. A world with serious deficit – security deficit, social deficit, environmental deficit, and democratic deficit. In such a world, education would be more crucial for development of the Coolies, particularly in the light of the expected decline of prices for agricultural products and worsening drought conditions.

Right now, a lot of processes underway in BCS and GCS aim at getting people started in the rural economy, often under very harsh ecological conditions. This is where we need a paradigm shift, where the Coolies need to think of investing in the next generation, their children, and an intrinsic need to engage in other forms of business for encouraging economic growth. The link is definitely education.

For this, they will need not only capital but also skills. Although equipping Coolie children with skills looks like a possible strategy, we should be cautious about rushing into this. Mere vocationalisation of education alone might not solve the problems.. It is doubtful whether indiscriminate expansion of vocational education is advisable.

In a recent research (Singh, 2003) on skill education and employment, economists have pointed out that in a chronic unemployment situation as in India, with a formidable large un-

employment, providing skills to everyone may not be the answer to solving unemployment problems. They fear that any attempt to correct macro-policy distortions through micro-interventions by way of increasing the supply of skilled and educated workers would, in the skill hierarchy and job competition models, have the consequences of overcrowding and bumping down low-skilled workers and creating a large pool of surplus, skilled workers. This is not to undermine the importance of education of skilled workers, but merely enhancing the so-called employability without tackling demand-side bottlenecks would mean surplus skilled labour in placed of surplus unskilled labour.

Therefore we will need to take a broader understanding of education. The French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1964) emphasised the socio-cultural relativity of educational ideals – i.e. there is no single ideal or perfect type of education for society. Differences in socio-cultural milieus and needs play an important role in the type of educational programmes to be established in different cultures/sub-cultures. Education should be seen as an important agency of socialisation, where it has the potential to bring in and teach new values to children and adults. Value-oriented education should be given in the Balakendra centres. This is the only way that a new generation will get socialised to bring about a just society. This needed all the more because the schooling of the poor is predominantly controlled by the State, and the State is the handmaid of the dominant classes and groups. In such circumstances, only through the Children’s Programmes and Balakendra centres can education hope to become broad-based.

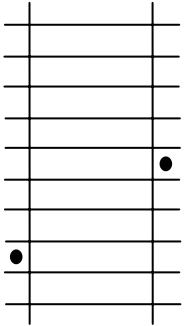
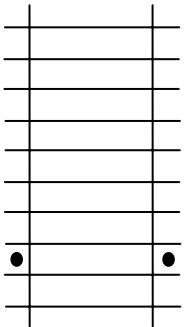
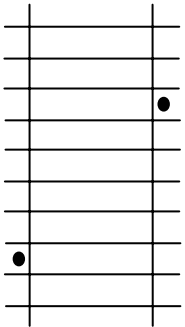
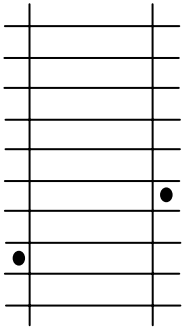
Education should certainly not be narrowly defined only as preparation for a livelihood, much less for a specific job. All-round development of human personality, the fuller realisation of a person’s potentiality and establishing a harmony with the immediate environment is essential for development. These might sound vague and utopian, but any search for alternatives in a situation which is in reality hopeless, may not yield anything better.

There is need to get into a praxis mode. Goals of education and strategies to achieve them need be spelt out. This has to be done through a series of sessions, identifying indicators with which progress can be measured. In order to develop a Child Focus, it is perhaps necessary for ADATS to help the BCS and the GCS develop a children’s policy which will provide an operational framework with a vision statement and objectives and realistic guidelines from which action programmes and services can be developed to facilitate the active involvement of children and the Coolie Sangha.

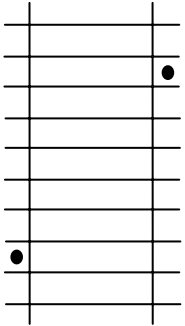
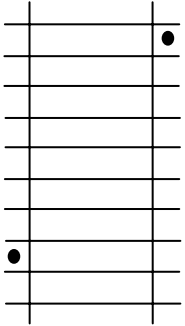
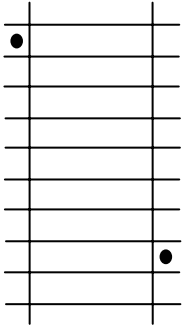
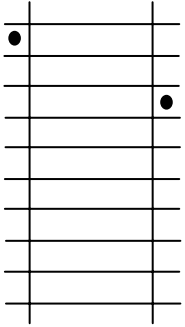
#### 4.15. Changes in Children’s Lives

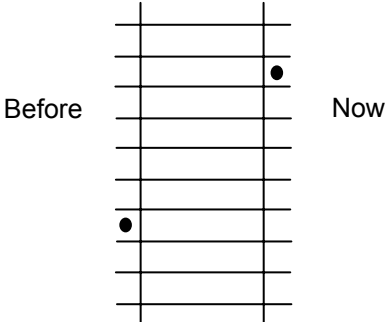
This exercise has been done with children from Dhumkuntlapalli, Eereddipalli, Korenapalli & Gundlapalli.

In the Area of	Indicator or Progress	Reasons
Health		“Improved our standard of living because of ADATS, CCF.”

In the Area of	Indicator or Progress	Reasons
Food		<p>“Because of ADATS poverty is not there. Now parents are spending on us because of ADATS.”</p>
Water		<p>“Earlier wells were there. Now no wells. Fluoride in water. No improvement.”</p>
Clothes		<p>“Now no poverty. Our parents take CCF loan and give us dresses. Through Balakendras also we have got uniforms.”</p>
House		<p>“Only few people have improved their houses. No voltage because of that not able to study.”</p>

In the Area of	Indicator or Progress	Reasons
Education	<p>Before</p> <p>Now</p>	<p>“Earlier we were not able to buy books because of poverty. Girls were asked to stay at home. Now our parents are aware of the need to educate children. They value education.”</p>
Knowledge Increase	<p>Before</p> <p>Now</p>	<p>“Because of encouragement from ADATS, Balakendra Teachers and parents we are able to increase our knowledge.”</p>
Freedom of thought	<p>Before</p> <p>Now</p>	<p>“We now feel important. We are encouraged to speak and talk by the teachers in the schools and in the Balakendra.”</p>
Freedom of Expression	<p>Before</p> <p>Now</p>	<p>“We are allowed to be creative in the Balakendra Centres by drawing, making charts, taking part in quiz and science exhibitions.”</p>

In the Area of	Indicator or Progress	Reasons
Recreation		<p>“More play things in the Balakendras. We get coaching for sports, then we also draw in the Balakendra.”</p>
Sports		<p>“We play all games at the Balakendra, specially coaching is given in the weekends. Encouragement is given by the Balakendra Teacher and by the ADATS.”</p>
Neglect by Family members		<p>“Parents are more aware of us because of the Sangha. They know they have to educate use, give us clothes and also food to eat. Because of CCF the family income has gone up.”</p>
Abuse from Teachers, Family members		<p>“Verbal abuse and beatings still there. If it is done in excess our parents question the teachers. Parental verbal abuse still there.”</p>

In the Area of	Indicator or Progress	Reasons
Respect		“Parents are aware of the value of children now. In turn we also have learnt to treat them with respect.”

## 5. COOLIE SANGHA BUILDING PROCESS

### 5.1. The Coolie Sangha Movement

The Gudibanda Coolie Sangha can be seen as a community based grassroots movement having a caste/class base. Coolies, because of their culture, could be seen as forming a cultural area. They share certain overt cultural traits like subsistence farming, low position in the caste hierarchy, low entrepreneurship, low wages, low purchasing power, and minimal access to and control over resources. It is these factors that have brought the Coolies together to form an “Effective Minority.”

A process of discipline has been brought in and internalised by most Coolie members. This exercise has been empowering the poor Coolies who hitherto had been excluded from mainstream development processes to participate in and effectively shape decisions related to development within their areas. In the process of the Coolies internalising the discipline of belonging, the GCS has been influenced by the much older BCS, which has been around now for the last 25 years. The GCS has now become the new actor, particularly in Gudibanda Taluk. They work through decentralised structures at the village, Cluster, and Taluk levels, and have been able to make perceptible changes in the lives of Coolies over the last six years. In the Coolie Sangha building exercise, the discipline that is so very important for the sustenance of the movement, has been brought about by a process of consciousness-raising where new learning and socio-political identities get redefined.

The GCS, like the BCS, is not fighting to assume State power, not because they do not know what to do with State power, but rather because they represent a new breed of actors determined to create a free space from where a democratic social order can emerge. Such movements can and should be a countervailing power to the State. It has been through raising mass consciousness, building countervailing power, and initiating equal access of resources to the poor, that the old dominant feudal structures are modifying and slowly beginning to change. Coolies of Bagepalli and Gudibanda do not tolerate polarisation and iniquity, but rather seek means of satisfying needs in a humane way. Both the BCS and the GCS are rooted in their own reality and demonstrate how the Coolies themselves have emerged as chief actors through a participatory process.

### 5.2. Coolie Sangha Units (CSUs) and Mahila Meetings

The organisation is structured to elicit the participation of the poorest and the marginalised. Men and women are organised into collectives called the Coolie Sangha Units (CSUs), and the women have their own forums called the Mahila Meetings. These constitute the primary

unit of participation and decision-making at the village level. The decision-making process that goes on is informal and there is an element of flexibility and informality in their working, which is conducive to the Coolies. This is also the space to which they bring their everyday experience, learn from each other, and strengthen their capacities as problem solvers.

Women are organised into collectives called the Mahila Meetings. These Mahila Meetings have tried to create a separate space for the Coolie women and have emancipated them to the extent of giving an opportunity to be with themselves, build up their confidence levels and develop skills, as a result of which they have already emerged as a solidarity group in Mittermari and an emerging one in Gudibanda. Mahila Meetings should be seen as gender parallel and gender integrated structures. Gender parallel, as they are separate autonomous groups having special functions like veto power over Coolie Credit Fund (CCF) loans and deciding on the children and health budget. They can also be seen as gender integrated structures, when we see them as auxiliaries of the larger movement, the Coolie Sangha.

### 5.3. Coverage & Membership

There are 128 functioning CSUs in the SCNZ programme – Gudibanda has 56 and Mittermari has 72. Similarly, there are 58 Mahila Meetings in Gudibanda, and 72 in Mittermari. Within the CSUs, male membership is 66% while that of the women is 34%.

Both men and women are eligible to become members of the Coolie Sangha and represent their respective families. Membership of CSUs and Mahila Meetings has sustained the Coolies with much-needed support at various levels: Economic support (CCF loans, DLDP, Health & Children's Budget, Children's Programme, Aid Distress); Social support (solving domestic conflicts, support during marriages, illness and death); and Political support (solving conflicts with other communities, bargaining with government structures, contesting local level elections).

The BCS and the GCS have laid down rules and regulations relating to membership, method of electing Representatives, as well as cancellation of membership. The financial sustenance of the Coolie Sangha is through the Coolies' voluntary contributions during the formation phase, along with a 10 per cent contributions of the CCF, DLDP, and other benefits. More mature CSUs declare their annual incomes and pay a fixed percentage as Sangha Tax.

Through these processes, they become stake holders. The Sangha Fund is seen as a safety net by the Coolies for their future, so that individual village CSUs will be able to manage their development activities by themselves. The concern here is not with mere redistributive justice, but whether a self reliant and sustainable process has been set in motion, emphasising on human development, where the benefits can be largely enjoyed by the poor and the vulnerable.

### 5.4. Social Composition

The percentage of population covered is 34% in 128 functioning villages and 31% overall (i.e. including villages where CSUs were never formed or got cancelled). Caste identities have local interpretations based on the appropriation of property, socio-political status and, most importantly, self-perceptions that could be a result of years of *Sanskritisation*. At a regional level, they do not necessarily overlap with the traditional four-fold *varna* system of Hinduism.

- The majority of Coolie families (55%) belong to castes that are politically termed as the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST). Locally, they include Dalits, Lambadis, Vadde Bovi (stone cutters) and Gorika.



- 29% of the Coolie families belong to the politically and economically dominant castes which include castes from *Shudra*, *Vyshya* as well as *Brahmin varnas*. They are the Reddys (Kapu/Vokkaliga), Balijigas, and Komtis. Ironically, Brahmins are not leaders in this region.
- 16% of Coolie families belong to the middle castes who are a scattering from all four *varnas*. They include Bhajantri (barbers), Sakula (washer folk), Kumbara (potters), Kurubas (shepherds), Nege (weavers), Eediga (toddy tappers), etc.

### 5.5. Why do they Join?

Most Coolies want to belong to a group. This was the reason cited by them as motivation for joining the Coolie Sangha. Many in Gudibanda had already heard of Coolie Sangha activities in neighbouring Bagepalli and were therefore quite eager to join the organisation. There were also quite a few others who had joined the Coolie Sangha to receive economic benefits.

It is quite natural for participants to join a movement in order to get material benefits. But from the point of view of the sustainability of the movement, it becomes necessary to put in extra efforts to make these members internalise the discipline and norms of the GCS. In both Mittermari and Gudibanda, it has been at the time of paying the Sangha Tax that individual members have dropped out. Counter-pressure exerted by middle peasant *Ryots* has also been formidable when compared to the pressure to conform to a discipline within the Coolie Sangha. This could affect the cohesiveness of the group. Efforts need to be put into socialising members to Coolie Sangha norms.

Of course, there are many CSUs in both the areas who have returned after dropping out. Such CSUs are bound to be strong because they have come back after being convinced of the benefits of belonging to a group. The continuous efforts of Field Workers to re-induct these members and bring back entire village CSUs is to be appreciated.

### 5.6. Functioning of the CSUs

Attendance in CSUs and Mahila Meetings that I visited was good. Although, when scrutinising the registers, I did discover a drop during the agricultural season. Where oppression factors are high, participation of Coolies in the Coolie Sangha activities is high. Every Coolie Sangha has devised its own mechanisms to suspend a member who is continuously absent for five to six weeks.

Issues taken up by the CSU and Mahila Meeting include struggles at the individual level, community level, and at the level of society. At the individual level, issues taken up pertain to individual loans to members through the CCF, securing old age pension, housing and electrification benefits from the government, readmitting school dropouts, helping in the remarriage of girls and women, sanctioning aid-distress to families suffering from acute poverty, etc.

At the level of the Coolie Sangha, the CSUs and Mahila Meetings have been successful in electing their members to the Gram Panchayat and Taluk Panchayat bodies, reducing domestic violence among the Coolie Sangha members, introducing a certain financial discipline into the Coolie Sangha, increasing the productivity of lands through DLDP works (particularly in Mittermari), and drastically reducing dropout rate among children.

Issues that have been tackled at the society level is when the Coolie Sangha put pressure on the government to take action when cholera broke out at Beechaganapalli, forcing the CEO to appoint regular teachers in the place of teachers on deputation, the Doddanancherla CSU Members, particularly the Mahila Meeting, shifting the arrack shop away from the village, lending political support to favourable non-CSU Members while contesting local elections.

At an ideological level, the Coolie Sangha has protested when upper caste children refused to eat mid-day meals cooked by cooks belonging to a lower caste.

Judged from the perspective of issues that have been tackled, the BCS is not merely an inward-looking movement; it is concerned with what is happening outside too. Although the spatial scope of the movement is restricted to Bagepalli, Gudibanda and 3 other taluks, the societal scope is varied and spread over at the individual, political, cultural, social, and economic levels.

### 5.7. Thinking on Children

All the CSUs and Mahila Meetings are now aware of the importance of the need to educate their children. Benefits got through the Children's Programmes has been one of the incentives for members to stay on in the Coolie Sangha. Members make serious efforts to prevent drop-outs, and children's health issues are given importance.

However, a Child Focus in the Coolie Sangha has yet to come about in terms of respecting the individuality of children. For this, child-rearing and child-socialisation practices need to change.

## 6. GENDER CONCERNS

### 6.1. Gender Policy

ADATS has an evolving policy on gender. The organisation is committed to promoting gender equity. ADATS has tried to institutionalise and mainstream gender concerns within the organisation. This has been a political process which has required a shift in the existing organisational culture. The organisation has placed gender concerns and inequalities as major issues to be faced squarely with development issues. The BCS and GCS, as organisations, believe in and are committed to gender equity (Ravishankar, 1999).

At the organisational level, there are very few women at the administrative level. This could be due to genuine reasons of not getting qualified Staff to work under unconventional circumstances. At the lower rungs, there is a greater proportion of women. The Balakendra Teachers, for instance, are all women. But this has been a positive discrimination policy favouring girls as the Project Director is in favour of building a younger cadre of dedicated workers. However, it could also mean gender stereotyping, where women tend to get concentrated in lower posts, projecting caring and nurturing roles. Men and women are given equal pay in their respective positions. ADATS, BCS and GCS have been supportive of women Staff/functionaries by being responsive to their needs.

### 6.2. Mahila Meetings

All the villages have Mahila Meetings. Mahila Meetings at the village level have created a separate space for women that has empowered them to the extent of giving them an opportunity to be themselves, to build their confidence level and develop skills. As a result of this, they have emerged as a solidarity group. Coolie women have learnt to come out from the confines of their homes to discuss the wretchedness of their lives. This coming together itself has been the first step in empowerment. Only the Mahila Meeting has a veto power to block the sanctioning of CCF loans, Children's & Health Budgets, and Women's Fund benefits. The *Vokkaku Sanchi Duddu* (VSD) has been an effective instrument in freeing women from dependency on their husbands and landlords. The reasons for women taking this money has mainly been for domestic and health needs. All the women members are aware of their exclusive position within the Coolie Sangha.

Within this exclusive meeting space, women discuss economic issues, health issues, and domestic problems. Mahila Trainers are trained in the areas of conducting the Mahila Meeting, organising VSDs, identifying beneficiaries and motivating women to engage themselves in more economically productive activities. VHWs discuss aspects pertaining to women's reproductive health. Severe cases are referred to hospitals in Puttaparthi, Chickballapur and Bangalore. Women have benefited through VHWs as they were able to have safe deliveries and healthy babies. VHWs are trained to help in normal delivery, recognise and refer complications. They have been given hands-on training at the Chickballapur Government Hospital. Except for the VHWs, ordinary Coolie women do not seem to have any idea of common illness like diarrhoea, anaemia, and malnutrition, their prevention and treatment. There is a need to make Coolies conscious of improving nutrition standards even under pressures of abject poverty.

Mahila Meeting is an effective umbrella for Coolie women to come together at the village level. The Coolie Sangha addresses a wide range of issues relating to livelihood, education and health of women as well as accessing resources. At the village level, they have carved a niche for themselves by taking an active interest in village affairs. Mahila Meetings have taken a lead in enrolling children in village schools. Owing to pressure from Mahila Meetings, school dropout has drastically come down. Child and early marriages are not allowed. Lessening of domestic violence and putting pressure on husbands to give up drinking has created a better home atmosphere for children. They also monitor the functioning of schools. Many Coolie women have understood the need to curtail their family and have willingly gone in for laparoscopy even when they have had only a single girl-child.

### 6.3. Women as Individuals

At an individual level, women, in particular those who have assumed leadership – become *Prathinidhis* (Representatives of CSUs and Mahila Meetings), VHWs, Balakendra Teachers, Women's Committee members, and Taluk Secretaries – have become confident, articulate, and gutsy. From their traditional role as agricultural labourers, the Coolie women of Gudibanda and Mittermari have come a long way. They made their first breakthrough when they stepped out of their homes to attend the Mahila Meetings. Since then, women have steadily learnt to take on new roles. It is the Coolie Sangha that has nurtured women's new roles – as members, *Prathinidhis*, Women's Fund managers and VHWs, and so on. Interventions in health, education, disbursement of loans, etc. offered them these new roles. This has enabled them to interface with the village community and mainstream institutions. A few Coolie women have also assumed political roles when they entered the Gram Panchayats. These roles have enhanced their competency. The many roles that Coolie women are assuming have brought in their wake a gradual shift in their identity – at an individual level, within the family, and in village society.

The very fact that women have entered public domains through the CSUs, Mahila Meetings, and have a veto power in the sanctioning of various benefits, have brought about shifts in perceptions within their families. Coolie women feel they are better respected today by their spouses. "Men's perceptions have changed, basically because they see that we have brought benefits to the family. Each one of us has struggled with distrusting spouses and neighbourhoods. Each one of us has also withstood character assassinations in one form or another. But today, we have been able to overcome every one of those hurdles because of the Coolie Sangha."

While leadership roles of women have changed perceptions within the family, women's earnings brought about a different kind of shift. Even though their earnings are small, women who have, through the CCF, started a sari business or sold colourful bangles, tiny empower-

ing processes have occurred within women, changing their status within the family. Women say their husbands are more aware of them. “Earlier he would never take me out. Today, he wants to go out with me and insists that I be properly dressed.”

The self-esteem of the Coolie women has definitely gone up. Most women have also stated that budgeting of family expenses are done jointly. There is a fresh wind of change blowing across the lives of Coolie women in Gudibanda and Mittermari.

#### 6.4. Practical Gender Needs & Strategic Gender Needs

Being members of both CSUs and Mahila Meetings has enabled Coolie women to fulfil both strategic gender needs and practical gender needs. From the perspective of women, these two do not come across as water-tight compartments. Through the Coolie Sangha, women have been benefited by an improvement in their economic status, health needs have been met – pressing needs of women’s reproductive health, antenatal care, postnatal care, and reduction of maternal mortality. Besides, they have also been beneficiaries of various government schemes like old-age pension, housing, toilets, and so on. Although these are of great necessity, as far as the Coolie women are concerned, none of these have really challenged the Coolie women’s position in their culture. However, within the Coolie Sangha there is a conscious attempt to give land rights to women. Entitling poor Coolie women with land is a necessary component for improving the health and economic status of women. Coolie women have also got themselves elected to the local bodies like the Panchayat Raj institutions, milk cooperative societies, where they are active participants.

Prevention of child marriage and lessening of domestic violence have assisted Coolie women to achieve greater equality and change existing roles. These have challenged the subordinate position of Coolie women.

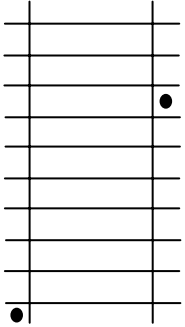
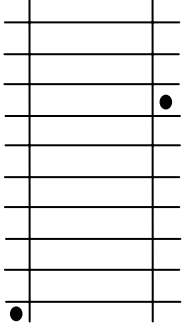
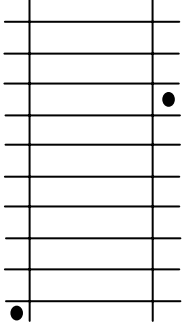
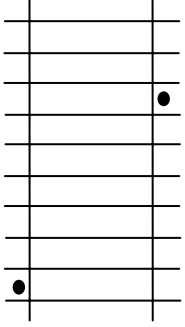
#### 6.5. Challenges

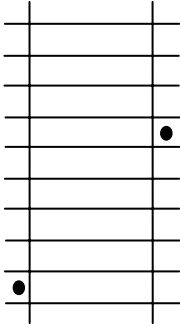
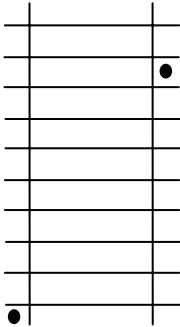
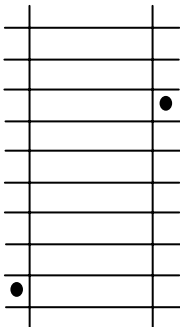
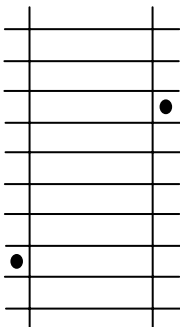
Although gender sensitisation training programmes have been given to ADATS Staff, there is a feeling that many of the Field Workers and the newly recruited Mahila Trainers do need to go through a series of gender sensitising training programmes. Merely sensitising them is not enough; the effort should be at equipping these functionaries with skills required to operationalise and promote gender concerns while planning activities and programmes with the Coolies.

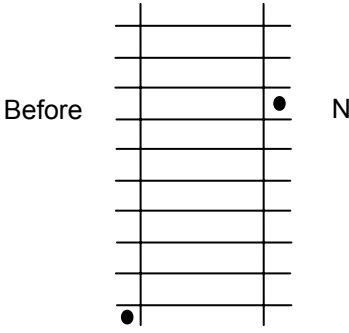
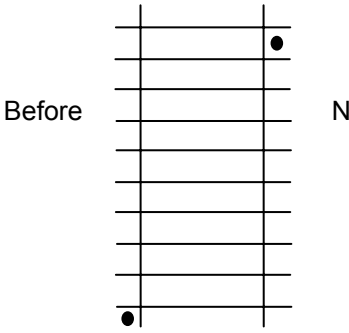
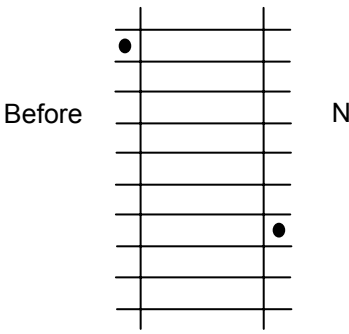
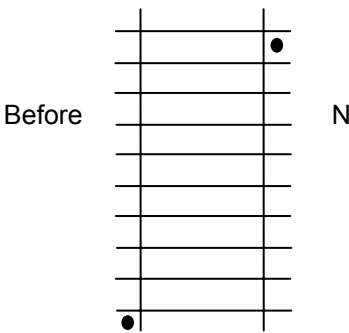
Health programmes should concentrate on changing attitudes of people in order to initiate change in habits. Adolescent girls could also be socialised and educated about reproductive health. The payoffs can be tremendous. Discussions need to take place as to how the health status of women is connected with the overall transformation of society. For all this, VHWs need to be given training accordingly.

Gender disaggregated data is available only in certain areas – concerning CSU membership, and regarding school enrolment and dropout rates. The data suggests that the gender gap is reducing and in some areas it is almost equal. However, gender disaggregated data regarding access and control of various resources needs to be done. This would help in doing a gender analysis.

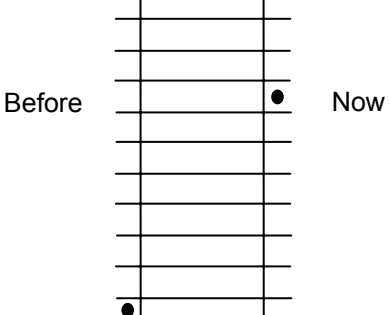
## 6.6. Self-perception of Changes in Women's Lives

In the Area of	Indicator or Progress	Reasons
Awareness	 <p>Before <span style="margin-left: 100px;">Now</span></p>	<p><i>“Attending Mahila Meetings, Taluk meetings, going to Gram Panchayat &amp; Taluk Panchayat offices. The VHWs and children have made us more aware. We have more contact with the outside world.”</i></p>
Income	 <p>Before <span style="margin-left: 100px;">Now</span></p>	<p><i>“Now, because of CCF, there is an income increase. Women also have small business like sari and cultivating Jola (Corn)”</i></p>
Savings	 <p>Before <span style="margin-left: 100px;">Now</span></p>	<p><i>“Earlier we had no money. Now we have money in our hands. We save in the post office savings account.”</i></p>
Health	 <p>Before <span style="margin-left: 100px;">Now</span></p>	<p><i>“Because of ADATS we get many tablets. Health Camps, laparoscopy done. Problems of white discharge not there. VHWs are there to solve our health problems.”</i></p>

In the Area of	Indicator or Progress	Reasons
Accessibility to Food		<p><i>“We have money now. Therefore we eat three times a day. If any of us go hungry we are given food by the Sangha.”</i></p>
Dressing		<p><i>“We want to look good now. We have money now which we can use. We see in TV and movies how women dress. We also want to be like them. In the market we also find more clothes.”</i></p>
Use of Jewellery		<p><i>“We want to look good. Earlier the men controlled its use, but today it is entirely in our hands.”</i></p>
Caring for Children		<p><i>“We are more aware now. Our children have to go to school so we have to take care of their needs. VHWs help us when children fall sick.”</i></p>

In the Area of	Indicator or Progress	Reasons
Decision Making in the Family		<p><i>“Most of the important decisions are taken by us. We are also more aware and knowledgeable now. Therefore we are in a position to take decisions. As women we are considered important. Men are also taught not to take us for granted.”</i></p>
Confidence		<p><i>“We feel protected through the Sangha. We are more aware now. We have travelled more. Some of us were in the Gram Panchayat. This has given us confidence.”</i></p>
Domestic Violence		<p><i>“This is because of Sangha. If our husbands or any family members abuses us we report it. Because of Sangha we have protection. Men are scared. Some have changed their attitude. Others are scared of the Sangha. That’s why it’s less.”</i></p>
Sense of Independence		<p><i>“Earlier we were known as daughters or wives of somebody. Because of Sangha we are somebody. We go to all public places on our own. We have money now. Our family listens to us.”</i></p>



In the Area of	Indicator or Progress	Reasons
Institutional Access		<p><i>“We go to all government and public offices. We know how they function. We know how to talk with concerned officers. We are not afraid. We have an identity now.”</i></p>

## 7. DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

### 7.1. Strengths Of the Coolie Sangha Building Process

- The strength of the Coolie Sangha building exercise is in the democratic decision-making and transparency that exists in the CSUs and Mahila Meetings. At the village level, this has meant trusting people and being committed to a more egalitarian society that would ensure equal access to resources – land, education, food, and health. Everyone in the Sangha has an opportunity to be heard. Decisions within the Coolie Sangha are taken after discussing the pros and cons. Leaders are also elected democratically. In most of the CSUs and Mahila Meetings that I visited, particularly in Mittermari, I did see many mature decisions taken by the Coolies, favouring the destitute and the very poor for taking a loan or even extending time for repayment. However, it should be remembered that CSUs per se or even the larger units could get affected by affiliations of certain members to their caste/class. Therefore, care should be taken to see that individuals or even Field Workers do not influence such decisions.
- There is also a transparency in the way CCF accounts are managed and a discipline with which members declare income and pay tax. Absence of theft and corruption is another indicator at the level of identification that Coolie Sangha members have with their organisation. This type of a discipline can come about only through a sustained effort on the part of ADATS Staff and Coolie Sangha functionaries, and will be a strong base for the movement in future.
- Staff meetings held very frequently to share the week’s happenings, solve problems, and plan in a business like manner is one of the strengths of ADATS, BCS and GCS.
- Without the help of or intervention of ADATS Staff, CSUs and Mahila Meetings are able to perfect fund rotation mechanisms, prioritisation of loans, fixing of repayment schedules, and monitor the recoveries.
- Because of a newfound awareness among Coolie parents about their children, they are able to send children to school, give equal importance to the Girl Child, and prevent early marriages.
- Within every CSU, members have got accustomed to listing out their problems and rank them through the Baseline making/implementing exercise. This speaks of a certain amount of maturity which has come into the Coolie Sangha.
- For any development to be sustainable, it should have spin-off effects – i.e. the empowerment and development already felt by the Coolies should be a catalyst for further de-

velopment. This is seen in members garnering state welfare measures which has resulted in furthering their social and economic development. In most of the schools in Gudibanda and Mittermari, Coolie Sangha members are members of the SDMC. In such cases, there have been considerable differences in the functioning and discipline of government schools, and children have benefited from these changes.

## 7.2. Impacts & Benefits

The developmental impact on the Coolies as a result of the Coolie Sangha is listed below:

- There has been an increase in the income of the Coolies. By how much has really not been computed. But when women say that prior to the Coolie Sangha they used to eat only once a day and had only one sari to wear, we know that their purchasing power has increased. However, there is a need to find out the actual increase, particularly with respect to gender and caste. Wage increase for men and women in agricultural labour has also taken place. Equal wages for men and women is still to be realised. During the agricultural season, men get Rs 50 and women get Rs 40, while during off-season, men get Rs 35 while women get Rs 25.
- Coolies are now completely free from the clutches of middle peasant *Ryots*. Although they work for them, they are not indebted and therefore have a sense of protection from that caste/class. They are free to send their children to school. Pressure on Coolies to borrow is also less, particularly as expenses related to children are met through the Children's Programme.
- Through the CCF loans, Coolies have been able to find alternate employment, particularly during times of drought. Both in Mittermari and in Gudibanda, men migrate to Hyderabad to buy and sell salt. They also buy and sell sheep at a profit. Women have taken up small businesses like selling saris and colourful glass bangles.
- In Gudibanda, five male children were released from bonded labour. They had been pledged for Rs 3000-4000.
- With better information, there is a shift in the cropping pattern. Coolies have begun to grow *Jhola* (Jowar) and *Tur dal* as a dry crop which fetches an income in the market.
- Access to political institutions like the Gram Panchayat, with Coolies being able to access government benefits like housing, electrification, bathrooms, toilets, old age pensions, and ration cards.
- New emerging identities of the Coolie women because of veto powers that women enjoy within the Coolie Sangha.
- Lessening of domestic violence.
- A preference towards monogamous marital unions.
- School education of the Coolie Sangha children ensured.
- Reproductive health needs of the women have been met as a result of early detection of symptoms.
- Better standards of living in terms of better houses, more number of clothes, and more steel utensils.
- Reduced the caste barrier. Balakendra children belonging to different castes, sit and eat together. CSU members, too, belonging to different castes are able to sit together to discuss issues. Even orthodox Muslim women attend CSU meetings and actively participate in them. For Coolie Sangha related activities, all caste members come together. But at an individual level, some of the caste barriers still do exist. At a personal level,

Sangha members are not yet prepared to dine in the homes of members belonging to other castes.

- Coolies have a sense of identity, cohesion, and sense of belonging to the Coolie Sangha. Coolie Sangha members present themselves as members of a particular body when they go to the Gram Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat, banks, police stations, etc. Coolie Sangha children are also known and identified as such by their school teachers. During elections, they vote as a single block for their preferred candidate. They help each other in times of difficulty – when a family goes hungry, Sangha members are quick to give Ragi or sanction Aid Distress. They also step in as surrogate parents to orphaned children. Sangha members come to the aid of women, particularly those who have marital problems and help solve them.
- The Coolie Sangha has increased the confidence level of both its male and female members. Today they are bold enough to stage *dharnas* in front of various government offices when they come to know of any injustices. Coolie children proceeding from school to college seems to have increased their level of confidence. The new identity of the Coolies has made them accessible to loans from banks. There are many Coolie Sangha members who have become Gram Panchayat members and have helped other members access government benefits. Many a time, they have had to face the wrath of the upper castes. Not all Coolie Sangha members who are Gram Panchayat members take interest in matters equally. It was noticed that a Gram Panchayat member who belonged to the Scheduled caste in Gudibanda was more sincere than a Gram Panchayat member who belonged to an upper caste in Mittermari. The former seemed more committed to the values and the causes of the Coolie Sangha while the latter seemed to display a typical political approach to solving problems. This is where one is reminded that although the Coolie Sangha has got itself unified across caste/class lines, the heterogeneous nature of the group remains, reminding us that individuals are products of smaller sub-cultures of which they are a part.
- For identifying issues and helping the Coolies solve them, a ‘Baseline Making/Implementing’ methodology has been evolved by the Field Staff. This is a good way of identifying issues and helping to reach targets. In fact, the Field Staff goes about the achievement of the baselines with businesslike precision. There seems also a pressure on them to keep working at it. However, it needs to be kept in mind that while visible targets of progress and development are necessary for both the Staff and Coolie members, the conscientisation process that is part of Coolie Sangha building is equally important and should not be lost sight of.

## 8. INTERPRETING THE IMPACT

### 8.1. Non Material Considerations

This analysis has been primarily concerned with grassroots micro-processes. I have tried to see the issues of people’s participation, conscientisation, and the building of countervailing power as part of an ongoing social process: the long revolution towards social and structural change. The process of building the Coolie Sangha has demonstrated the possibilities of incorporating social justice and participation into a process of mild economic growth that have benefited the vulnerable Coolies in the all-round development. In the ultimate analysis, development is about people and expanding their range of choices, and enhancing their ability to negotiate a hostile world from a position of strength.

The type of development that has resulted up to now has emerged from releasing the creative energies of the Coolies. This form of development has gone beyond the material benefits they

have got – the CCF crop loan, benefits to children, health budget, and women’s fund. This type of participation has come about only because the Coolies have been able to counter the socio-economic reality around them and the forces that keep them in poverty through grass-roots organisations. Along with this, the processes such as reflection and collective action have also helped in ushering in change. This has constituted a learning process for the Coolies. It should continue as this could lead to further consciousness raising and self-transformation.

## 8.2. Critical Mass

The processes that have been set in motion within the CSUs and Mahila Meetings in Gudibanda and particularly in Mittermari have created a critical mass of organised, conscientised people who have become a countervailing power in opposition to the crude, dominant power. It is this countervailing power of the Coolies, through their organisations, that has helped to reduce exploitation, check corruption, and control the abuse of dominant power in government offices, and take over and manage more efficiently, and perhaps more equitably, institutions such as the Taluk Panchayat (this happened in Bagepalli four years ago, when Ramachandrappa was the President of Bagepalli Taluk Panchayat) and by the Coolies being Gram Panchayat Members.

## 8.3. Primary & Secondary Group

Every individual in society has membership in Primary and Secondary Groups which have specific functions and cater to totally different needs. While the former caters to emotional needs, self-fulfilment and being themselves, the latter serves a very narrow and specific function.

Characteristics found in Primary Groups are normally not found in Secondary Groups since the very reasons for their existence are so different. People join Secondary Groups to achieve specific needs. They become members for a limited purpose, to accomplish a personal goal. The organisation of the group is clear cut, activities of all members of the organisation are governed by a set of formally established rules and regulations. Secondary groups are organised under one fundamental principle – exclusivity. Only those who are considered “compatible” gain entrance (Ostrander, 1984). But Primary Groups are ends in themselves that people belong to. Functions that Primary Groups perform are usually not met by Secondary Groups, which have to be business like in order to meet limited ends (the Family is the best example of a Primary Group while, in this region, Milk Collection Societies and the so-called Self Help Groups engineered by the government can be considered as Secondary Groups).

But an astonishing characteristic of the Coolie Sangha, which I have repeatedly observed over the past 11 years, is that it takes upon itself both features. The CSUs and Mahila Meetings are predominantly both, Primary as well as Secondary Groups for the individual Coolie members! This is one of the rarest forms of social capital which they actualise to its fullest potential!!

The CSUs and Mahila Meetings have characteristics of both primary and secondary group. Primary because Coolies interact in a personal, intimate and emotional way within the group. Apart from sharing a common culture of deprivation that has brought them together, most members within the Coolie Sangha reach out to the other members emotionally. The CSUs can be equated with a peer group society, where as a primary group they revolve around intimate, face-to-face relationships. Each Coolie member has strong bonds with the others and can depend on the group for support. In return, each member has to adhere to the norms of the group (for more on primary groups, see Cooley, 1929; Gans, 1982).

At a Cluster meeting at Kondireddipalli, a VHW brought to the notice of the rest of the members, the plight of a Girl Child deserted by even her own mother. The VHW had been caring for the Child for days, and requested the Coolie Sangha for funds to buy some milk for the baby. As the Child could not sit up, the Cluster meeting also discussed the need for the Child to be shown to a doctor. Such examples are common in almost all Coolie Sangha. What is truly appreciable is the ability of these poor Coolies to feel for the other, to take over additional responsibilities amidst their own poverty. The same Coolie Sangha acts with business-like proficiency when it decides who should be given a loan and the amount to be sanctioned. When it becomes impersonal, unsentimental, and business-like, it has characteristics of a secondary group. Both the primary and secondary nature of the CSUs and Mahila Meetings would contribute to the sustainability of the movement.

The GCS has always held the BCS as its reference group. Therefore, the Coolies who became part of the GCS, had been undergoing ‘anticipatory socialisation’ in terms of developing a mindset for a caste/class unification and a certain amount of discipline in internalising norms of the Coolie Sangha to become members.

Thus, the changes that have occurred in the lives of the Coolies and their children in Gudibanda and Mittermari is because of a strong ideology coupled with a process of praxis, which has been one of the strengths of ADATS and by virtue of the BCS and GCS. This has gone beyond conventional redistributive justice.

## 9. CULTURAL CAPITAL AND THE COOLIE CHILD

### 9.1. The Need for a Child Focus

From the previous sections of this Report, we have seen that the Coolies, from being marginalised 25 years ago, have slowly started being integrated into the larger streams of Bagepalli. The GCS too has had successes in many areas of their activity – land, wage labour, children’s education, and so on. But the Coolie Sangha has to move on from fighting local power equations to taking into account larger macro-level processes that are under way. The Coolies need to make the positive forces of these macro-changes work in their favour.

In other words, the Coolie Sangha has to cast its sights ahead. This shift into the future can best be achieved through Coolie children. The future of the Coolie Sangha lies in the development of their children. Developing the *individuality* of the Coolie Child becomes central to the new agenda that Coolies have to set for themselves. This new agenda needs to have an economic focus, if the Coolies have to build on the gains already made. The Coolie Sangha needs to enable the Coolie Child to have a future.

It therefore becomes necessary to assess whether Coolie parents have the ability and the resources to care for their children. For this purpose, there is a need to take stock whether the Coolies are able to participate in social structures as capable adults for their children. There needs to be a continuing dialogue to see whether the ongoing programmes are enabling the Coolie Child to develop an individuality. This is the only way the future of the Coolie Sangha can be guaranteed. This section will try to analyse the extent to which CSUs and Mahila Meetings are helping the Coolie Child have a future. It will also attempt to analyse how these structures and child socialisation practices ought to be directed for the future of the Sangha.

### 9.2. Understanding Cultural Capital

Everyone has a “cultural history” accumulated through primary and secondary socialisation processes, which include anything that gives a person an advantage or disadvantage in certain situations. Making a distinction between material wealth and cultural assets, Bourdieu has reasoned that culture adds to the wealth of a particular class. Cultural capital can be consid-



ered to be anything in a person's personal or social background that hinders or helps progress. The term refers to material and non-material cultural goods that are socially valued, such as family background, status, information, income, educational qualifications, skills, etc. These determine the position that individuals will occupy ultimately in society (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1991).

### 9.3. Dominant & Non-dominant Cultural Capital

Dominant cultural capital corresponds to Bourdieu's conceptualisation of powerful, high-status, cultural attributes. Similarly, non-dominant cultural capital refers to codes and tastes used by lower-status individuals, which fixes their status and position within their respective communities. Although we are bifurcating them here, they are in reality interconnected. In an urban, heterogeneous space, people might want to employ dominant cultural capital so that they would gain social, economic, political, and educational mobility. In another space (and this could be a more homogeneous culture), persons might want to use their own non-dominant cultural capital to express their own in-group affiliation. Thus, dominant cultural capital has an instrumental purpose and non-dominant cultural capital has an expressive purpose. Sometimes, however, dominant cultural capital may be used for expressive purpose and non-dominant cultural capital for instrumental purpose (Carter, 2003: 136-55).

### 9.4. Applying the Cultural Capital Theory to the Coolie Sangha Model

Integrating analysis, it can be seen that Coolies share non-dominant capital like low position in the caste-hierarchy, low purchasing power, minimal access to and control over resources, low wages, and low literacy. By joining the CSUs and making the Coolie Sangha movement possible, much of the non-dominant cultural capital is in the process of being converted into cultural capital. Yet, the achievement made so far by the Coolies has not critically affected their economic or educational attainment. If the Coolies need to think of their children's future, non-dominant cultural capital has to be strategically negotiated. Child socialisation practices also have to change. Before we embark into an analysis of this sort, let us see how the existing programmes are having an impact upon the lives of children.

### 9.5. Impact of the CSUs and Mahila Meetings on Children

By becoming members of the Coolie Sangha, the Coolies have been able to have a substantial increase in their income, and improve their standard of living. Absolute poverty, which was an earlier cultural trait, has been reduced. The CCF, *Vokkaku Sanchi Duddu*, and benefits that Coolies have obtained through various government programmes, have benefited children and their lives. The vocational skill training (computers and garment making) has bettered the economic fortunes of Coolie youth. Children are healthier because they have food to eat, and clothes to wear. Their health problems and health needs are taken into account through the Children's Budget and efforts of the VHWs. The VHWs are doing a wonderful job in supplying iron and multivitamin supplements, and in educating the pregnant women about the need for nutritious food. This has paid off and there has been a reduction in maternal morbidity, maternal mortality, and infant mortality rates in both Gudibanda and Bagepalli. In Bagepalli, this has been so also because of the positive response of the government's Primary Health Centre to the health needs of people. The health camps (particularly family planning) that are conducted have had an impact on reducing the fertility rate. Most of the Coolie families that I talked to did have only a maximum of three children. This is no mean achievement as the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) for India for the census year 2001 stands at 3.4. Reduced number of children means healthier mothers and greater attention bestowed on children. At the same time, there is a visible change in the attitude to girl children amongst the Coolies, as evi-

denced in a few cases where I came across women going for a laparoscopy after giving birth to a single female child!

The Coolie Sangha has lessened the incidences of domestic violence on women and children within homes. Violence and abuse by men on their women is strongly condemned within the Coolie Sangha. Pressurising *arrack* shops to be set up away from the villages has brought down drunken behaviour of men. This has definitely helped in creating a home atmosphere for the Child that is conducive to study and growth. The Coolie community has stepped in to ensure care when the parents were unable to fulfil their role vis-à-vis children for reasons of desertion (as it happened in Kondireddipalli) or divorce. Such strong unwritten policies and commitments on the part of the Mahila Meetings and CSUs go a long way in making children grow up secure.

The Coolies have also been able to put some savings into Post Office Accounts. When asked the reason, most of them stated that it was meant for their children's future. Amongst them, there is more awareness regarding children. They realise that they do have a responsibility to feed, clothe, and educate their children. Membership of the Coolies in the School Development Management Committees, apart from having a direct bearing on the academic performance of their children, is an indicator of Coolies making the existing institutions work in favour of their children. Above all, the discipline that Coolie Sangha members have acquired, such as values of group cohesion, unity and identity, are strong, secure values that Coolie children can be socialised into.

#### 9.6. Child Focus in the Children's Programmes

The Children's Programme through the Balakendras is an educational intervention that has sought to improve the educational environment for the Coolie children. Because of the Children's Programme there has been a build-up of positive dominant cultural capital that will definitely contribute to the development of a new cultural outlook. The increased retention rate in schools, improved school results, reduction in the gender gap in schooling, more Coolie children pursuing higher collegiate education, are all indicators of the fact that there is an emphasis on progress and improvement. The coaching classes, the science exhibitions, the play and sports coaching, have definitely increased confidence levels in children.

Building confidence and self-esteem in children is so very necessary if they have to be equipped for the future. Besides, play in the Balakendras allows for healthy emotional outlet for her/his aggressiveness and frustrations. A very important offshoot of an increase in the number of girl children going to school is that child marriages are prevented and the age of marriage for girls has gone up. This in turn has relevance to the fertility rate.

There is a need for Balakendra teachers to equip themselves with skills and also develop monitoring mechanisms if non-dominant cultural capital of the Coolie child and the Balakendra teachers has to be transformed into dominant cultural capital. A supportive environment, although very important, is not sufficient for developing individuality in the child. It is imperative that the cultural capital that the Coolie Child inherits has to serve as a springboard for her/his mobility. This requires the Coolie Sangha to make community-specific investments in acquiring new skills, habits, and styles, which are needed to facilitate and reinforce the bargaining capacity of the Coolies. Enrichment of children's lives cannot take place if all that is already being done through the Coolie Sangha is ignored or left out. For the type of social structure that is emerging, with its emphasis on technology, we will need a working population that is trained not only in reading and writing but also in acquiring skills. Along with vocational education, certain kinds of attitudes and aptitudes have to be acquired by the children. There is also a need to usher in new values that focus on developing the individuality of children. This can be brought about only through a conscious effort aimed at changing



the socialisation process by concentrating on the three agents of socialisation for the children, namely, the Family, Education, and the Coolie Sangha.

### 9.7. Understanding Socialisation

Socialisation is that aspect of human development which involves an individual learning her/his ascribed roles in society, developing the accepted social values, interaction patterns, and above all, personality traits that are specific and approved by the society. It is a process of learning the rules of behaviour for a given social group as well as acquiring the motivation to perform properly within it. The transmission of culture and social heritage from one generation to another is also socialisation. From the point of view of the individual, socialisation enables her/him to learn the values, beliefs, and behaviour patterns of the society to which he/she belongs. The process begins in early infancy and continues throughout life.

### 9.8. The Child in the Family

The family is a primary group to which the responsibility of the care of children is assigned. The entire family, particularly the mother, plays a crucial role in transmitting to the Child the elementary rules of behaviour, social skills, restrictions, and taboos. This is part of the cultural capital that the Child inherits which facilitates the acceptance of the Child by the in-group to which it belongs. Learning the culture is important, but at the same time, it ought to be borne in mind that culture is not static and rigid; it is evolving and dynamic.

If the Coolies have to adapt to the changing environment, then there is a need to identify the cultural capital – beliefs, skills, attitudes, information, and education – that give the Coolie Child advantage or disadvantage to compete and go ahead in a changing society. Efforts have to be made to strengthen family ties for realising the full potentiality for the growth of children. The capacity of widowed and deserted women should be enhanced to look after children in the family atmosphere. The Women's Fund in Mittermari and CCF in Gudibanda have helped such women to look after their families. These efforts need to be replicated. The Coolie Sangha should collectively reflect on these matters. As long as the Coolies have a set of features that stands in the way of development, these would be termed as non-dominant cultural capital. Of course, certain aspects of the culture in which the Coolies are socialised need to be retained. Recognising the value of non-dominant cultural capital does not devalue dominant cultural capital (Aschaffenburg and Maas, 1997).

When traditional societies, like the cultures to which the Coolies belong, undergo a change because of urbanisation and globalisation, members of the younger generation find themselves poorly socialised for their new roles. Much of the cultural capital they have inherited might be irrelevant. The significant other (the most important person) for the Child in the formative years will be the parents, and they will have to help the Child in the formation of attitudes, beliefs, and a mindset that will help the Child do well in the changed circumstances (Mead 1967).

The Coolies should take care to see that their offspring are not socialised into gender-specific roles. A certain degree of gender stereotyping is inevitable. Although the Coolie Sangha has placed an invaluable emphasis on the Girl Child and her education, there is a need to find out the actual factors that affect enrolment, access, and dropout at different stages of school. There is also a need to probe into variables that determine the chances of continuing in school and later on into higher education, the choice of subjects, and whether schooling reinforces the social division of labour. A comprehensive study of the existing Child Rearing practices amongst the various castes within the Coolie Sangha needs to be carried out so as to arrive at a holistic understanding of socialisation patterns.

Enrolment of girls in schools, the type and length of education they receive, the kind of work that they take up later on, are all determined to a great extent by the perception of family members as to what a woman should be like. For the Coolie Child who is going to school, the academic environment of the family is vital. Academic environment is a broad concept comprising of material and non-material resources – the financial position of the family and the kindling of aspirations. These factors affect the achievements of Coolie children in school. In short, there is a need to find out whether the dominant cultural value (and capital) of the Coolies – valuing girl-children – is internalised by every Coolie through a process of re-socialisation.

Most children in the Balakendras reported that they work before as well as after school. The burden of work is severe, particularly for the first-born. Although Coolies are aware of the need for educating their children, they are burdened with work before and after school and during holidays. This obviously impacts on the learning abilities of children. Therefore, most children do their class home work and reading in the Balakendra itself.

The little girl's dialogue in the beginning of this Report is a reminder that everywhere in India, and much more so in rural areas, girls are taught to care, nurture, bear and rear. Girls are trained early to accept exclusive responsibility for reproductive labour, in addition to contributing to productive labour. This attitude is the cause for various other discriminations that are so subtle that they are almost taken for granted. The socialisation is so perfect that there is a naturalness with which gender-based division of work is valued and practiced. This would mean that women are often over-worked, shouldering responsibility for reproductive labour, eating last and least, and being undervalued and viewed as a labourer in her home. She would even be under pressure to give birth to a male child, to "continue the family line." In fact, I came across Coolie parents, particularly in the younger CSUs of Gudibanda, having a lot of ambition and hopes for their sons as against their daughters. They were only worried about how comfortably they could settle their daughters in good marriages. Such gendered ambitions could play a large role in conditioning children and in conferring an unwanted priority on the education of boys.

Parents should see that intra-household iniquities are not practiced. A new "parental technology" of being responsive to children's needs is to be emphasised. The child-rearing behaviour of parents is very important because poor quality childcare puts children's development at risk. There is even a need for parents to give training to children in hygiene and cleanliness concerned with toilet training, washing hands before eating, and teaching children not to immerse dirty hands into potable water. Only the synergistic role of families, coupled with Child Rearing practices that include good nutrition and health, and the socio-economic environment that can alter the direction of the Coolie child's growth.

### 9.9. Education of the Coolie Child

Next to the family, education in both its formal and non-formal aspects plays a very important role with regard to individual and society. The school is a social system that is responsible for socialization and for bringing about value change in children. The Coolie Sangha needs to understand the strong link between education and socialisation insofar as it involves the internalisation of values and identity. The schools and Balakendra centres that the Coolie children go to can have a neutralising effect on traditional stereotypes.

Socialisation in the school and in the Balakendra centres continues for a period of over ten years. This period is quite significant from the point of view of the Child. The emphasis that both ADATS and the Coolie Sangha have placed on educating children would go a long way in bringing about equality and extricating them out of poverty. This is the best investment that can be made for the children and their families.

Giving mere literacy alone is not enough. The content of education has to change and gender biases from textbooks removed. Schools and the Balakendra centres should equip the children for the future. Education must result in increased knowledge, skill development, and character building. In our education system, given through the government schools, the last two are missing. These have to be supplemented through the Balakendras. Within the Balakendra centres, Coolie children will have a peer group effect on each other, and hence it becomes all the more necessary that value education, keeping in mind the macro changes, need to be given to these children. Sociologists researching on socialisation emphasise the importance of the playgroup as a context of learning to care for others, and to follow rules of fair play (Mead, 1967).

There is a close link between education and economy, particularly in modernised, urban societies. Economic systems of modern societies require people to be trained differently. Modern occupations call for trained talent in the application of vision, knowledge, and concepts. Thus, human resource development of Coolie children should be concentrated on. It means the development of all such capabilities as can be of some use to the society and the individual.

The theory of cultural capital posits that social and economic inequality could yield disparate outcomes for students of subordinate classes, because such inequalities undermine beliefs and expectations about their chances for academic success. Bourdieu (1977a) maintained that schools help reproduce a stratified class system by bolstering the dominant social group's cultural capital. Research done among Afro-American children in America has shown that non-dominant cultural capital can influence teachers' opinions of children (Moss and Tilly, 1996). I came across teachers in government schools with an apathetic attitude towards those children who came from poor social and economic backgrounds. They evaluate these children as less mature, and less capable. This could be because of the teachers' backgrounds. There is an urgent need for Coolie families to work along with the school by becoming members of School Development Management Committees. The Coolie Sangha needs to make a conscious effort to change the educational culture in schools. Investing in education is much more an investment in HRD than something that merely increases the philosophical, spiritual and moral capabilities of the people, though values implicit in the latter may also be crucial for economic growth and welfare. Education should be seen as a crucial instrument for economic upliftment and value change among the Coolies.

### 9.10. The Coolie Sangha and the Coolie Child

The structural features and the programmes of the BCS particularly is indicative of a modernisation process having set in within the organisation – improved economic activity, the breakdown of ascriptive criteria, emphasis on occupational mobility, particularly through widespread formal education, and the weakening of the control of traditional political elite. These changes are central to the modernisation process. Compared to the culture that the Coolies had twenty-five years ago, there is a shift to valuing dominant cultural capital – a legacy that the Coolie Child needs to inherit. The extent to which these children accumulate this cultural capital will determine how they perform in the future.

However, I see a paradox. As a group, I see every Coolie Sangha member, both men and women, convinced and believing in the ethos and what the Sangha stands for. As individuals within their own families, there is a tendency to conform to narrow caste proscriptions. This can be seen with regard to their attitude toward higher education of girl children, fixing a marriage for their daughters, or even in the allocation of food and work within the household. There is, particularly in Gudibanda, a cultural lag between the dominant cultural capital of the Coolie Sangha and the non-dominant cultural capital of the individual Coolie members within

the household. The latter does not seem to catch up with the former. It needs to, if the individuality of the Coolie child has to develop.

It becomes the responsibility of the Coolie Sangha to strengthen the supportive environment for the Child. The emphasis should be placed on changing the attitude of parents and recognising the value of children for themselves and the society. Developing a clear and enlightened policy on limiting family size, related measures to decrease infant mortality and morbidity, condemning gender differentiation, increasing the age at marriage for both boys and girls, reducing intra-household iniquities, having an economic agenda for children, and ensuring health for children and mothers would go a long way as a pre-requisite for developing the individuality and well-being of children. Simultaneously, economic agendas to increase the income and purchasing power of the Coolies should be persistently perceived.

In an era of unprecedented global wealth, Coolie children could face a health crisis, along with millions of poor children around the globe. The Coolie Sangha should ensure that through the government Primary Health Centre public health concerns are guaranteed to every poor child. Health should be regarded as an essential input for the development of human resources. Improved health is a part of the total socio-economic development and is regarded as an index of social development. The VHWs, whom I see as an important link in the socialisation process, need to convince the people that only sensible living is needed to lead a healthy life. The aim should be to build a model that endorses medicine as a social subject to equip people with basic medical knowledge.

As a social movement, BCS and GCS has to develop two important functions – (a) Mediative function, that is the development of mechanisms for the involvement of Coolie children within the Sangha and help them develop capabilities and skills needed to survive; and (b) clarification of the new collective consciousness, that is, interpreting social processes and relationships and making the old and the new members aware of common interests.

For the socialisation of the child into the Coolie Sangha, the BCS and the GCS have to become the “significant other” (where the Child sees herself/himself through the eyes of people whose opinions are important to her/him). The Coolie Sangha has to provide children with a sense of participation – opportunities to role take and share responsibility and power in the groups and institutions to which they belong, such as the family and the school. The Coolie Sangha will have to see that these groups and institutions are “just” institutions. The best way to promote a sense of justice is to see that, in the social world in which the child lives, injustice is not the rule but the exception.

## 10. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

### 10.1. Taking Stock of a Quarter Century

The BCS, during the last twenty-five years, has confined itself to local situations – fighting local power equations – which has been so necessary for the survival of the Coolies. This de-linking of the local from the regional and national has been necessary for self-assertion, efficacy, and success of the Coolies in many areas of their struggle – land rights, wage-labour, gender rights, education of their children, and against exploitation. To this extent, the BCS has tended to be more pragmatic and down to earth in its approach – by believing and combating concrete problems with concrete solutions instead of diffusing them by stretching the prognosis of reality to the level of ideological abstraction. This action-oriented approach has contributed to broader processes of social transformation. The space created for the Coolies, by the Coolies themselves, outside the sphere of organised political parties and outside the institutional framework of the state, has given them not only a visibility but also a viability. However, this does not mean they have been indifferent to state politics. The GCS, through

its interaction and alliance with the much older BCS, is well aware of the relations of power in the local situation where they operate and are engaged in organising concrete struggles to resist all forms of oppression and injustice. The BCS, apart from being a movement, has tried to fill in social gaps, where the government or market forces have not been active.

## 10.2. Macro Changes

In recent years, however, the macro-reality, and the political economy, have changed, and they will continue to change. The BCS and the GCS need to link their micro-level struggles with broader macro-level processes like the influence of market forces – going under the rhetoric of globalisation – and extend that consciousness in order to understand and explain the local problems in the wider context of national and international systems of hegemony and exploitation. Globalisation refers to basic, more or less rapid change in the technical, social and trade sectors and implies shifts in production and ownership and the increased segmentation of market and the transfer of public resource into private hands. These changes are evolving rapidly, but the implications have not been fully understood. The BCS and the GCS should become gradually conscious of the need to probe into the real forces – the earlier feudal lords are bound and steadily being replaced by new actors – underlying the problems of poverty,

In this new scenario of globalisation, there is a need for the Coolies to understand the implications, the concomitant processes, and devise strategies through which they should arm themselves against it. What they are faced with now is a different model of capitalism than the one that existed just twenty years ago – a switch from the European to American model – which has made countries all over the world to fall in line with it, with an overriding emphasis on technology.

This emphasis on technology is being manifested, say, in the way in which governmental priorities have shifted from basic needs and socialist dreams, to such priorities as defence research. The growing militarization of countries, where even developing countries like India are forced to discard old weaponry and go in for new, sophisticated ones, robs the poor of their share of the economic cake. The use of military technology has had and continues to have hazardous effects on social and ecological systems. Overemphasis on technology has had a profound impact on the political, economic, social, and security domains. Most importantly, it has destroyed the resource base of the people – particularly of the poor, like the Coolies. Each of these impacts needs to be individually addressed.

As the state begins to withdraw from its responsibilities (it has already withdrawn, particularly in the field of higher education), the poor the world over – and this is no different for the Coolies – will be forced to fall in line with the forced modernisation ideals and processes. Twenty-five years ago, when the Coolies began organising, the state was seen as a mediator, it could ameliorate the problems of the masses, and protect the vulnerable. However, sadly, the state today seems to have betrayed the masses, and instead has come into the clutches of the dominant capitalistic classes. One might even go to the extent of saying that the state is increasingly turning anti-people. While there is a lowering of taxes on the rich, as an incentive for them to play a better and bigger role in the market, the masses are being pushed into the unorganised sectors with no important role in the productive, organised sector. There is a free play of the market with its emphasis on modernisation and technology, backed by a state that is entirely and truly supported by corporate capitalism.

The most dangerous and chilling aspect of social tensions in the wake of globalisation is the growing restlessness of the lower tiers of society as opposed to the growing crystallisation of the ruling classes – and these are not the middle peasant *Ryots* who were the enemies twenty-five years ago – corporations, bureaucrats, courts of justice, and even the state. This restless-



ness and revolt from the bottom and lower tiers of society has helped in releasing strong religious, linguistic, and cultural sentiments rooted in fundamentalist ideologies, pitching people against people. This is an extremely serious development, which has crystallised into religious fundamentalism, and the formation of sects and cults. This could undermine the caste and class basis of social interaction amongst the Coolies by attempting to communalise it. There is a chance that parochial forces could operate at the grassroots because of increasing exploitation and insecurity created by the market forces. This is what the Coolie Sangha should be wary of – of bowing down to narrow parochial processes and issues at the cost of the social fabric that has been carefully built up over the last 25 years. This could eat away into the strength and base of the very foundation on which the Coolie Sangha itself has been built. In the process, the unification across narrow caste and class lines, which has been a proud and unique achievement of the BCS and, by extension, the GCS, could well be lost.

A void will be created where the ordinary suffering masses do not have a strong forum to redress their deprivations and grievances. ADATS and the Coolie Sangha will need to fill this void. It is here that the Coolies have to reaffirm their faith in themselves. There needs to be an effort to redefine the scope and range of the movement. An effort needs to be made to open up new spaces particularly in making the state realise its responsibility for welfare of the masses and garnering the state benefits – and in the private areas of civil society. In the wake of globalisation, where the poor could get disenfranchised and marginalised, the empowerment of the Coolies cannot be neglected, particularly of women and children who are disproportionately represented, and invisible. Moreover, globalisation reinforces a sexist and patriarchal ideology. It increases the feminisation of poverty. This is one more reason why the fight must continue, rigorously. Equality between men and women is central to all struggles for empowerment. Without this, another world would never be possible. I see the BCS and the newer GCS as indispensable to combat the forces of globalisation. They are better placed than governments and parliaments to deal specifically, act quickly, and mobilise at the grass root level and understand the new social needs of the Coolies. Their role should not be just as a protest movement, but instead a creative attempt to look for concrete solutions to concrete problems.

### 10.3. Suggested Coolie Sangha Response

In the face of multi-faceted crises that are affecting the developing countries – poverty reproducing itself, gender conflicts, human rights conflicts, and the inability of the state structures to mediate between these tensions, there should be new responses. The strategy in future that the Coolie Sangha should follow is a continuous search for space through a continuous process of praxis. This will depend on the internal social structure of the movement, and the quality of leadership. A charismatic leader like Ram Esteves can further build on the existing change, helping in this new process of praxis. Since from now on, both GCS and BCS have to move on to new directions, fresh training for the staff to reaffirm commitment is needed.

The BCS and the GCS are playing the role of an alternative development organisation with special emphasis on values. In the current process of rapid globalisation, the value oriented nature of ADATS, BCS, and GCS will gain importance as a counterweight to the trend of market orientation. At a time when we have any number of internet kiosks, and super-information highways, and telecommunication centres and tele-linked health services, here is the BCS working quietly to usher in a revolution. It has been engaged in a fight against the dominant culture in order to create a human alternative. The community sponsorship programme of ADATS/SCNZ is a search for meaningful alternative, and a quest for an emergent culture and a more humane society.

The future struggle should be concerned with land, the type of agriculture practiced, environment, the rights and roles of women, their health, food and nutrition, the education of children, shelter and housing, the dispensation of justice, and dissemination of information. Of course, the Coolie Sangha has been working in most of these areas. They have to keep at it.

The Coolies should be involved in both political and non-political spheres. With rapid changes taking place, there is a need to work out new methodologies of organising and arriving at solutions of the social, economic, and technological issues involved. This implies that the Coolie Sangha has to insist on new norms and values, at least in local politics, and pressurise the local political institutions to respect those values. This would require a continuous process of reflection and action on the part of the Coolies. Besides, conscientisation will be required for all the new members and new CSUs.

The focus of the GCS and the BCS should increasingly be on building a cadre of dedicated workers that would help the Coolies, who are still poor and disenfranchised, gain access to financial resources, technology and health care resources. ADATS, BCS, and GCS should adopt the 3 C's – compassion, commitment, and competence – amongst their cadres if the emphasis is to be on holistic development. This way, ADATS, as it has successfully attempted until now, can shape an elite of dedicated workers/animators.

The macro-changes taking place are so rapid that it becomes impossible to formulate a framework for the future. But in spite of this, the central concern of the Coolies should be to understand these changes and formulate a direction for change. This needs to be a continuous process that should lead to action. For this to be achieved, a clearer vision and perspective of the type of social change desired and the methodology of bringing this change possible needs to be developed.

The challenge for the Coolies lies in the fact that the structural changes already made should be multiplied in a comprehensive and systematic way, with a new political commitment, taking into account the changing socio-economic and political circumstances. Any meaningful approach to social change must be technical, economic, political, and social. While recognising the new issues, contradictions and challenges that a changing polity continuously throws up, it must be kept in mind that, for the Coolies, the issues related to survival still reign paramount. Keeping in mind, the increasing poverty and inequalities, the future struggles of the Coolie Sangha should continue to evolve as it has around issues of livelihood, land, wages, individual dignity, and education of children.

ADATS should help the BCS and the GCS, as it has done until now, to crystallise the new political ideology, having an economic perspective, through discussions and exchange of ideas. ADATS and BCS should together be able to stimulate analytical thinking in the GCS and help the Coolies by placing facts and events in their socio-economic, political, cultural and religious perspectives. At the same time, the model of development to be followed has to evolve from the actual situation of the Coolies.

For the Coolies, development should continue to be visible – benefits of children's education, employment opportunities, health, and solutions to problems – rather than being a distant dream of socialist ideology. For the sustenance of the movement, development has to continue to be localised and indigenised. For this, the local and organisational structures like the CSUs and Mahila Meetings at the village, Cluster, and Taluk levels have to become more functional and efficient, with increased technical proficiency.

Although development should continue to take place at the micro-level, getting locked into cocoons of micro-level activity can provide a sense of fulfilment and achievement, albeit on a limited scale. However, from the point of sustaining a movement, a constant dialogue between ADATS, BCS, GCS, and their Staff/functionaries on goals, both distant and proximate,



on perspectives and methodology, and interaction with support structures, is necessary. Having a pure ideological identity could lead to confusion. But a careful blend of ideological commitment and discipline, macro- perspectives and micro-level involvement, discourses with critical and involved outsiders, would weld together the inherent strengths of ADATS, BCS, and GCS, if they are to become viable as well as deep – a stable alternative in the process of social transformation in the region.

## 11. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 11.1. Conclusions

Coolie Sangha building has been very effective and Gudibanda has not lagged behind in building a dedicated cadre. The strategy has revolved around brave struggles to tackle issues of livelihood, land, wage and basic services. But the context has changed. Market forces have replaced feudal exploitation and oppression. Achievements can no longer be taken for granted. Active preparations need be made to sustain the future.

Developing individuality in Coolie children and enabling them to break free from ascribed roles is the biggest investment that can be made to ensure the posterity of the Coolie Sangha. Balakendra Teachers are doing an excellent job and have obtained impressive results. But they can really enhance performance to become facilitators/managers of a more holistic education effort which will serve a wider objective of relevance and sustainability. Children need to be given skills on better emotional functioning, development of values, developing self-confidence and improving skills to deal with changing demands of everyday life. This will become the most cost-effective way of strengthening their position and ensuring that individual members of their caste/class live up to their full potential. ADATS and the Coolie Sangha need to expand the Children's Programme to cover all non-SCNZ villages by developing appropriate strategies and mobilising resources.

### 11.2. Policy Recommendations

- ADATS needs to evolve a holistic Children's and Youth Policy which will have a vision statement, goals, objectives, and indicators. Education of children should facilitate the posterity of the Coolie Sangha through relevance and sustainability, and not be interpreted as academics alone. Local employment opportunities for Coolies need to be explored. The education that is given to Coolies should cater to this.
- The Coolie Sangha needs to develop a Child Focus which respects the development of individuality in children. For this, congenial child-rearing and child-socialisation practices need to be established and reinforced.
- Gender disaggregated data regarding access to and control over various resources should be collected and lead to a sharper gender analysis.
- The Coolie Sangha should recognise the centrality of government schools. They should intensify localised struggles to ensure that village schools are adequately staffed, infrastructure is in place and committed teachers appointed.

### 11.3. Programme Recommendations

- Basic problems of Balakendra centres should immediately be solved. Where children number above 35, additional Balakendra Teachers appointed and space arranged. Lighting arrangements and drinking water must be provided. Health Cards should be maintained on each child.

- Balakendra Teachers should be seen as facilitators. Monthly training on creative learning, child psychology, facilitation, etc. imparted in the Training Centre, should be further strengthened/supervised and realised at the Balakendras. For this, the role and capacity of Teacher Trainers and Case Workers need to be re-examined and enhanced.
- Children still display gestures of subordination. This has to be stopped forthwith. Violence-free and gender-responsive processes should be the norm.
- While making these above improvements, an effective monitoring system should be evolved. Balakendra Teachers should be actively involved in developing quantitative and qualitative indicators to monitor their performance.
- ADATS Staff should together evolve a programme for imparting Life Skills Education for children – problem-solving and decision-making skills that will help them, as women, deal with everyday life demands and challenges.
- School final students and their parents (including Balakendra Teachers, who are themselves products of the Children’s Programme) must be given base information, career guidance and adolescence counselling to help make informed choices. The Balakendra teachers and the older school children particularly should be given exposure and training to improve their communication skills in English.
- The month long “Familiarisation with Computers” training can be enhanced to include basic office management and skills needed to survive in a rapidly expanding urban environment.
- While improving VHW skills on preventive health care, nutrition, immunisation, etc. through periodic refresher training, attention must be given to make ALL Coolie women aware of basic health/hygiene issues and develop a pre-primary health care capacity.

## 12. APPENDIX I : DETAILS OF VISITS & DISCUSSIONS

20-7-2003, Sunday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductory discussions with Ram Esteves</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion on methodology with Project Director, Asst. Project Director, Extension Worker, and Gudibanda Field Assistant</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translating Checklist into Telugu with IT Professional</li> </ul>
21-7-2003, Monday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalising Telugu Checklist</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion on indicators with all Field Workers, Mahila Trainers, Children's Programme Staff, Project Director, Asst. Project Director, Extension Worker and Field Assistant at the Bagepalli Campus</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to Yellodu and Gundlapalli <i>Balakendras</i></li> </ul>
21-7-2003, Tuesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessing Database and discussion with Extension Worker</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion on Indicators with Gudibanda Staff at Gudibanda campus</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to Muthyalammagudi and Bapujinagar <i>Balakendras</i></li> </ul>
23-7-2003, Wednesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessing Database</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion with Project Director and Extension Worker</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to Eradipalli and Beechaganapalli Government Schools</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to DLDP works at Korepalli</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to Korepalli <i>Balakendra</i></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions with Mahila Trainers at Gudibanda campus</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to Beechaganapalli CSU Meeting</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to Korepalli Mahila Meeting</li> </ul>
24-7-2003, Thursday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions with Extension Worker</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with Gram Panchayat Member and School Development Management Committees representing CSUs at Gudibanda</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions with VHWs at Gudibanda at Gudibanda campus</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions with <i>Balakendra</i> Teachers at Gudibanda campus</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to ADATS Training Centre</li> </ul>
25-7-2003, Friday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions with Extension Worker and accessing database</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions to finalise Report format</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to Malligurki and Merupalli <i>Balakendras</i></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to Malligurki Mahila Meeting</li> </ul>
26-7-2003, Saturday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions with various VHWs, CSU and Mahila Meeting Representatives at Bagepalli campus</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to ADATS Training Centre</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions with Educationists</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions with weekly Coaching Class participants at Bagepalli campus</li> </ul>
27-7-2003, Saturday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions with various VHWs and Mahila Trainers of Mittermari area at Bagepalli campus</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions with various CSU and MM Representatives at Bagepalli campus</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions with Case Workers at Bagepalli campus</li> </ul>
28-7-2003, Monday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report Preparation and discussion with Project Director</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions with the Doctor on Annual Health Check-up and follow-up</li> </ul>
29-7-2003, Tuesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to Kondreddipalli Cluster Meet</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to Government Primary School at Kondreddipalli</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to Pulkuntapalli <i>Balakendra</i></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to Marappagaripalli <i>Balakendra</i></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to Polnayakanapalli Mahila Meeting</li> </ul>
30-7-2003, Wednesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion with Field Workers, Mittermari area, at Bagepalli campus</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion with Cluster Secretaries and CSU Representatives at Bagepalli campus</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion with <i>Balakendra</i> Teachers</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to Venkatapura <i>Balakendra</i></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to Bandolpalli Balakendra</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to Venkatapura CSU Meeting</li> </ul>
31-7-2003, Thursday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions with BCS President and Taluk Secretary</li> <li>• Visit to Kanagamakalapalli Cluster Meet</li> <li>• Visit to Hanumantharayanapalli Balakendra</li> <li>• Visit to Kanagamakalapalli Balakendra</li> <li>• Visit to Kanagamakalapalli Mahila Meeting</li> </ul>
1-8-2003, Friday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions with Gram Panchayat Member and SDMC Members from various Mittermari CSUs</li> <li>• Discussion and Report preparation</li> </ul>
2-8-2003, Saturday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion and Report preparation</li> </ul>

### 13. APPENDIX II : BIBLIOGRAPHY

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