SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This concluding chapter is a summary of the thesis. In summarising the nature and perspectives on the Boya migration, the chapter follows tradition by pinpointing the major conclusions of the study and evaluates their implications for (a) the Boya community at the place of origin and at the place of destination, (b) the prospects in the future of and for the community and (c) the prospects for further research and academic pursuits. There is a case-specific model of migration formulated to introduce the theoretical underpinnings of the case and implications for geographic analysis.

Perspectives on the Boya Migration

What follow are the major perspectives on the study of migration of the Boya community of Dharmapuri district to the city of Coimbatore. The Boyas are a traditional people with a distinctive culture of their own, valuing hard work and basic honesty in living. The Boya migrants, as inferred from the survey in 1990-91, have all come from 20 villages in the district of Dharmapuri, 9 in Uthangarai taluk and 11 in Harur taluk.

The Migration. The people of this community are a community of earthworkers, who, in the earlier times, and even today in the rural areas of the district, served the larger agricultural community in the digging and deepening of the irrigation and drinking water wells. At the city, however, they continue to do
somewhat similar earthwork, although it is different in its characteristics because it relates to construction. Thus, they now serve urban communities.

The Boyas have migrated to many cities and towns, because of economic compulsions of not finding enough jobs and not earning adequate to carry on living in the dry, rural parts of Dharmapuri. They have made their migration worthwhile in the city of Coimbatore for they make a decent living besides helping to improve the lives of their kith and kin, and the dependents in the rural origins, a lot easier through remittances and visits. Despite urban influence, the migrant Boyas have been able to retain the social ties with the rural origins. They also have made them stronger over the years through annual mass visits to attend the Mariamman, a supposedly benevolent deity of the community, festival every year. It is during these visits that the Telugu Boyas renew old relationships and enter into newer ones of complex social value, which hopefully would provide for social and economic security, if and when they decided to return.

The Causes and Consequences. That which attracts the Boyas to the city of Coimbatore is the job opportunity in residential and commercial constructions. The first migrants came to the city in response to an advertisement in the newspapers as stated twice earlier. Thus, the initial source of information on opportunities was the media. With passing years and swelling migrant numbers, the migrants themselves became the sources of information. They gave information to friends and relatives and indeed sponsored many of them in the city, providing assistances, lodging and boarding until the newcomers achieved a foothold.

That some Boyas had migrated to Coimbatore city even before 1976, as part of the general stream of migrants from the dry districts of the State is not in doubt.
Certainly, however, the biggest group of them came in with the FCI project. This gave a further fillip to those who followed in later years. They came and, finding jobs to their liking and wages handsome, stayed on to take advantage of the growing construction activity in the city. The growing population, the growth of industries and the vitality of the city of Coimbatore continue to attract the Boyas in large numbers. The presence of the Boyas in the city and their visits to their place of origin on periodic but regular schedules - four times a year - provide the Boyas in Dharmapuri with much needed information. The social ties, the altruistic community ties and the general attachment to one's own ethnic group act, as motivating forces for the migration of the Telugu Boyas.

The linguistic affiliation to the generally rich and prosperous Naidu community of the city, additionally, helps a large number of the Telugu speaking Boyas to work for the Corporate sector in constructional efforts. It was a contributory cause for their migration.

The migrants help the newcomer in a variety of ways, but most importantly in the search for employment during the initial period. The role of family ties in migration is one of great strength.

The propelling force for the Boya migration is a result of family decisions. In the Boya families, the family decisions are far more important, because collective responsibility and cooperation are the hallmarks of this traditional community. The micro-structure of social ties such as the ones in the families of the Boyas at the place of origin and destination, and the relational network at the intermediate level between the individual and the larger social structure has been seen to have many advantages for social uplift and economic welfare.
It has been found that, among the Boyas, who are traditionally earth workers with agricultural antecedents, there is an understanding that it is more difficult for a family to support itself, solely from the exploits of agricultural holdings. In recognition and in response therefore there has been a stream of migrants to the city. The advertisement, and probably the early migrants, aided the newcomers in the act as part of a grand survival strategy, to complement the families’ agricultural earnings with earthwork in the city, and to promote its access to wage earnings by sending some of its members to the city - either on a temporary or permanent basis.

Experience suggests that when the family subsistence makes emigration a need, the most likely to migrate belong to the most easily dispensable labour force, which, in a majority of the castes of the Indian people, is constituted mainly of young men and women. Males however have the advantage of absorption over females by the urban labour market, particularly in the semi-skilled occupations such as earthwork.

The family links with non-migrating relatives facilitate, in part, the maintenance of the temporary nature of migration to the city: otherwise, more permanent displacements would be more likely.

An important aspect of the ties with the family remaining in the place of origin is the transfer of money through regular and periodic remittances. This contributes to the redistribution of earnings between urban and rural areas. The remittances also contribute directly to the maintenance of the rural population. It is asserted that the dominant role of urban-rural remittances is in the furtherance of interests of the migrant and such remittances are insurance premia meant to protect
the migrant against the problems associated with the loss of his current urban employment, lay-offs, disability or illness.

The places of origin are all villages close to each other, with social ties and networks established in the historical past. They could usefully cooperate in the sending of migrants as well, now to different cities. The Boya migrants, who numbered 977 at the time of the field survey in 1990-91, are scattered in eight different localities of the city. However, they live either in slum-like environments or as squatters on the pavements. They live in ramshackle hutmens or in portable/detachable shelters made out of their own ingenuity. They nevertheless have an active family life, keeping alive the rural life styles, cultural traits, customs and solidarity at the city locales. In effect, they have established over the years a social network that is as worthy as the one at the origin.

There are a considerable number of migrants living on the pavements. They often live frugally as they have not yet secured a foothold. Their possessions are few in number. They are neither dispossessed of their relatives and friends nor disowned by the community. They are in active communion with the parent communities/groups. It is only a phase and there are brighter times to come, when they will also obtain some decent housing. By then, they would have become consolidators. A particular characteristic of this community is that a majority is composed of nuclear families. The groups living adjacent to the Electricity Board Office, Tatabad, in Coimbatore are a case in point. They retain close ties with kinship or caste groups for socialising and transmitting or receiving the information from villages of their origin. A small group of the Boya migrants have a common kitchen where they cook food jointly.
Migrant families living on pavements reflect some widely shared perceptions on employment potentialities and wage levels prevailing from time to time. A child’s expectations of what the future has in store is dependent on the nature of access the family ties are able to create. For a small boy of the Telugu Boyas, who comes to the city with an elder brother or parents, the probability of gaining access to a mainstream vocation (earthwork) on reaching adolescence is fairly high. In contrast, the child of a family engaged in earthwork gets condemned to a marginal vocation on reaching adulthood. In the samples interviewed, we have not come across any example of a child from a marginal vocation (earthwork) who graduated or moved up in occupation.

Most migrants prefer pavement dwelling which of course lacks privacy and amenities. The location however provides easy access to information on job opportunities. The hutment- dwelling migrants have captured urban spots with locational goodwill and have established hutment housing (with palmfronts). The huts can be easily dismantled and are one-roomed, disjointed without proper ventilation, but they give protection during the rains.

The huts are both land crowded and use crowded. In close community living, there are reasons for quarrels over trivial matters; but in the fight against the common enemies, the Boyas are always together and their squabbles are forgotten.

The liking for urban life is influenced by the age at the time of arrival, the duration of urban residence and education. Ties develop with the length of residence. The migrants arriving in the city at a higher age show a greater attachment to the rural area and being used to rural life, find it difficult to adjust and adapt to the urban environment.
The older migrants are therefore more inclined to return to the rural origins than the younger ones, who almost always make the city their home rather quickly. But social ties with the origin being what they are, close on religious and cultural contexts, they never lose their roots. New arrivals however are likely to indicate a preference for the rural environment which they have just left. However, with the increasing length of urban residence, links with the city become stronger, and the migrants develop a taste for urban living and they often make plans to settle down permanently. The return migration for the Boyas is becoming a rarity.

**Dimensions of the BoyaMigration to Coimbatore**

There is support for most hypotheses above in the analytical survey. The data collected from 403 sample Boya migrants in the city of Coimbatore have been subjected to different statistical applications. The most important findings have emerged from factor analysis, with seven dimensions of migration extracted. The seven dimensions are:

1. Decision to Move
2. Improved Income from Employment at Destination
3. Causes of Migration
4. Risk in Migration
5. Uncertainty
6. Perceived Non-availability of Jobs
7. Risks and Uncertainties
The first dimension is concerned with decisions, the second with stimulation and the third with the causes. The fourth and the fifth dimensions are of migrant perceptions which are reinforced also in the seventh. The uncertainty is made very clear by the sixth factor dimension.

The 'decision to move' has been motivated by financial (0.789), decisions in the family (0.681), female wage difference between origin and destination (0.581) and type of assistance at destination from friends and relatives (0.409). In the decision to move, the migrants have been greatly motivated by the assistance expected from and rendered by friends and relatives at Coimbatore, the place of destination. This is clearly brought about by the analysis. 'Improved Income from Employment at Destination': This dimension also has four variables: male annual expenditures (0.786), female annual expenditures (0.743), male wage differences between origin and destination (0.454) and reasons for migrating to destination (0.474). This dimension exemplifies that the personal wishes can be met in terms of demands.

'Causes of Migration' as the third dimension has given advice to friends and relatives at origin, a variable indicating a motivating force for migration (0.863), decisions on family matters (0.829); female annual expenditures (0.487) and period of unemployment at destination (0.409). The friends and relatives as causes of migration and their impacts on decisions on family matters such as making moves to effect migration, even when there is some period of unemployment at destination are important conclusions. 'Risk in migration' has two variables, perceived prospects at destination loading -0.838 and improvement in living conditions at destination loading -0.582. The variables are indicative that first there is a risk in migration because of both perceived prospects and perceived improvements in
living conditions at the destination which are still thought of as fluid and uncertain. There is still a lurking doubt in the minds of the migrants about their futures and their prospects in life.

'Uncertainty' with five variables, namely, members following migrants into destination (-0.703), type of assistance at destination (-0.685), members accompanying migrants to destination (-0.65), number of visits to origin (-0.584) and decisions in the family (-0.496), are indicative of further doubts about improvements in living conditions at the place of destination. In the dimension 'Perceived non-availability of jobs', there is a support for uncertainty, and age loads on the dimension with -0.777 and perceived length of job availability at destination with -0.646. This can only mean that if we go by the interdependence we wish to see in factor dimensions, with age there is greater doubt as to the length of job availability at destination.

In the 'Risk and uncertainties' dimension, the variables loading negatively significantly are members who made decisions to move (-0.73) and the period of unemployment at destination (-0.519). There is a reiteration of risks and uncertainties in this because the decisions made to move to the place of destination is of doubtful authority even while the risks in unemployment at destination is not so severe.

Of the 403 migrant-respondents, 271 see the Decision to Move as the right decision while the rest (132 migrants) see it as perhaps the wrong one, primarily because migration itself is risky. On the other hand, 252 of the migrants interviewed view improved income from employment at destination as a positive sign for staying on while the others (151) view it in a negative context because of fears of non-
availability of jobs. Ironically, however, only 187 respondents think positively of the causes of migration whereas the others (216) think otherwise. More than half the respondents (214) have a positive outlook on the risk in migration which is quite reassuring while the rest (189) have a negative outlook. This means that a majority wishes to take risks, preferring a life at risk than one without it. Uncertainty is also positively felt by 205 of the respondents while the rest (198) look upon it as problematic.

The application of factor analysis to the economic aspects of migrant Boyas in the city of Coimbatore has given rise to seven other dimensions. They have for interpretative convenience been grouped into (a) 'assets and durables', 'employment and improvement', 'income', 'debt in family' and 'remittances' (the first block of five dimensions) and (b) 'perception on job' and 'perception of future and income' (the second group of two dimensions). The impression from the first block of dimensions is that the migrants have bettered their economic prospects in the city, taking advantage of the employment opportunities offered by the construction sector of the economy. The force behind their migration has however been the economic needs at home in the origins, especially debt in the family. The migration has also helped in the migrants and their kith and kin at the origins becoming economically independent, as far as possible. The second block of dimensions indicate on the other hand that the migrants still fear the difficulties in obtaining jobs at the city, especially when the perception is that the jobs are hard to come by. The remittances to the people at the origin are a sign of the well-being of people at the place of destination which motivates further migration. That the positive factors outweigh negative factors is well brought out by the analysis.
Overall, the Boya migrants perceive an improvement in their economic and social well-being over that of the place of origin, the district. About a third of the migrant respondents feel it is far better in Coimbatore than in Dharmapuri district. About 65 per cent of the respondents (or 262) feel it is better in the city than in the district. Three of the respondents however indicate that it is not-so-good to be here at the city.

Visits, Remittances and Social Ties

There is evidence in the study that the migrant Boyas are in constant touch with the place of origin through regular but periodic visits to the villages of origin. All the 403 respondents have made regular visits to the villages of their birth. They have also visited the village as visitors-in-turn. The visits generally occur four times a year: The first is January for the Pongal festival (or harvest festival). The second is in April-May, when the festival of Mariamman is held in the villages. For the convenience of the visiting migrants, marriages are also solemnised in the month of Chitrai (April-May). The community dining connected with the Mariamman festival and the wedding feast help in the reestablishment and renewal of social ties with the community people. The third is in July-August when the migrants taken the family, kith and kin, to Theerthamamalai on religious vow and for offering sacrifices. The fourth is in October, on the third Saturday of the Tamil month Purattasi to take the family, kith and kin, to the Thirumala hills in Andhra Pradesh. The four visits are obligatory on the part of migrants, the renewal of social ties is its a corollary.

Many migrants send money home for a variety of purposes. Repayment of debts and household expenses are the main reasons for such remittances. The remittances also indicate their rural rootedness as yet, while at the same time
explaining their wish to break out of traditional subsistence and do well economically through hard work.

The study proves that the remittances are significant but that as income increases, there is only a slight increase in it. Neither the income of the migrant nor the need of the dependant household at the origin has any significant impact on the remittances. There is support however for the hypothesis that with the increasing income of migrants, there are increasing investments, mostly real estate back home at the origins. This, peculiarly, creates a situation where improved incomes result in greater borrowing against future payments. Yet this increase is relatively small and is salutary.
The Community, the Family and the Food Habits

The community has its own specific culture, although it is a definite subculture of the Hindu stock in the country. Religious and cultural activities mark the community as coherent, interdependent and reciprocal. The family is the basic unit of organisation. The food habits in the rural Dharmapuri origins are as yet traditional, bordering only slightly on the modern, especially in terms of habits with beverages. On the other hand, the food habits in the city of Coimbatore are not dramatically different but consist of urban food items. On the whole, however, the food consumed by the people at the place of origin and destination are relatively nutritive. The food consumption is tuned to the calorific needs, although the meals cannot be considered entirely balanced. The migrant earthworkers, being heavy workers, tend to consume food that would provide stamina all through their hard labour. There is concern for men on the part of women, and vice versa. Women also take care of children and their calorific needs. In effect, there is no starvation. There are at times excesses in food habits and the life of the migrants is characterised by lavishness as well as frugality. Lavishness is enthusiastically displayed in the celebrations of festivals and weekend feasts and treats for the family.

The average monthly expenditure of a household on food comes to Rs. 384, which is almost 52 per cent of the total expenses of Rs. 734, which includes besides food, clothing (Rs.82.40), cosmetics (Rs.58.70), bidi or cigarettes (Rs.73.00), drinks (Rs. 87.00) and entertainment (Rs. 49.00). The food expenditure includes money spent on rice (Rs. 31.10), wheat (Rs. 9.59), jowar (Rs. 10.22), ragi (Rs. 9.63), other millets (Rs. 23.64), others (Rs. 40.23), pulses (Rs. 1.81) and meat (Rs. 14.81) for each adult in the average family of three members. Each working male on an
7.1 A Model of Migration

**Human Flow**

**Origin**

- **Causes**
  - Rural Milieu
    - The Poor
    - Deprivation
    - Under and unemployment
    - Social inequality
    - Debts low wages real
  - Evaluation

- **Decision Making**
  - Household/family, individual
    - Stay
    - Move

- **Social and Economic Security**

- **Investments**
  - Land
  - Housing
  - Other asset
  - Repayment on debts

- **Renewal of Social Ties**

**Destination**

- **Consequences**
  - Urban Milieu
    - The migrant
    - Anonymity
    - Opportunity
    - Equality
    - High wages real and perceived
  - Perceived opportunity

- **Visits**
  - Economic
  - Social/religious

- **Earnings**
  - Wages
  - Savings

- **Remittances**
  - Economic
  - Periodic

**Return Migration**

**Human and Economic Flow**

**Consequences**

**Causes**
average gets 3000 kcal/day and the working female as much as 2400 kcal/day. The sturdiness of the migrants and their stamina for work are indicative of the required provision of nutrients to the body.

The Case-Specific Model of Migration

The case study reported here makes possible the construction of a model of migration, descriptive in content. The model presented in figure 7.1 is a generalised picture of the case, with certain additions. Most descriptions attempted in the pages above in summarising the dissertation support the content of the model. The model given has some basic theoretical underpinnings, because of the three most basic characteristics of the case.

1. The migration of the Boyas to the city of Coimbatore has resulted in a boon to the Boyas at the place of origin, because the remittances have made, and are making, social and economic improvements in their living. Migration can therefore be beneficial to the place of origin and not necessarily detrimental.

2. The mechanism by which the migrant Boyas retain/renew their rural rootedness is by periodic and regular visits for social and religious/cultural occasions. Their visits being several and in many cases on a turn basis, the social ties can be renewed, reestablished and in many cases may even be built anew. There is also indication that the ties of the migrants, even for those who do not make regular and periodic remittances, never get snapped. As such, the migrants by following social/religious/cultural visits and retaining them all through the years of absence from the origins make social existence rewarding and salutary, not only for themselves but also for those left behind.
Remittances having been made and the flow of money from the migrants channeled into investments on land, housing, other assets and also repayment of debts, the migrants build for themselves and their relatives a social and economic security which is long lasting. Visible improvements speak volumes of possible changes in the social and economic welfare of this community in the years to come. The community, which was once a community lacking in living spirit, now possesses a certain confidence in itself and in its members' hardwork. Such migration therefore can be encouraged without having to think that it would adversely affect both the origin and the place of destination.

In the context of the model, at least three remarks are also in order. The first relates to the information flow. Information on opportunities in the urban milieu flows to the media and people and this in turn flows to the origin, either directly to help in the decision-making, or through the cultural filters of friends and relatives. It is evaluated before being used in the decision-making and as a perceived opportunity of the potential migrants. All the three flows are indicated in the model, as (a) flows through the sources to the rural milieu, (b) to the decision-makers without the intermediaries and (c) to the intermediaries. The second relates to the decision-to-stay. In the case of the Telugu Boyas, in this study, we have not considered the question of stay at all, because our concern is exclusively with the migrants rather than non-migrants at origin. The model recognises the fact that of the once potential migrants, in the villages of Dharmapuri, there should have been some, if not several, who have decided to stay after having considered the option of migration to Coimbatore, and evaluation of information thereof. The third relates to social ties of a different nature. Of the migrants, there are some who own land and have it cultivated by relatives staying at home. They return invariably however
to the places of origin during harvest times, during which times they (a) take away some part of the returns from land and (b) renew old social ties with the labour, who may or may not be traditionally attached to them.

Implications and Prospects

There is unlikely to be any let up in the migration of the Boyas from the district of Dharmapuri, primarily because job opportunities in the construction sector in the city of Coimbatore do not appear to slacken. Hence, the Boyas would migrate to the city in the years to come but strictly in relation to their perception of prospects in the city. Although the migrants at present perceive migration as risky and job opportunities as uncertain, the Boyas will continue to migrate taking advantage of such jobs as are available. The Boyas have already established a two-way network of information flow, which would help in the process of migration and settling down in the city after due adjustment and rehabilitation. So, it would not be a problem for any of the Boya migrants to make a foothold as long as the jobs hold for them opportunities for economic improvement. As for the Boyas at the place of origin, the migrants are provide for every need, household or otherwise, and as such their social and economic well-being is assured. The continued remittances and investments at the place of origin in housing and assets would also provide economic security for both the Boyas at origin and the migrants at the destination.

The prospects in the future of and for the community are bright by the current perspectives. However, whether or not the economic opportunities would hold, in the light of ever increasing migration flows into the city, not only of the Boyas but also other communities, is a moot point. The Boyas are at present a specialised class of workers and this status is liable to change, if and when other
communities take to earthwork for want of jobs in other specialisations. If the latter speculation becomes possible, then the economic equation for the Boyas will be different.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

The study of communities such as the Boyas in the context of migration is an urgent need to understand the changing social and economic configurations in the place of origin and destination. In Indian geographic research, there is particularly a paucity of migration studies as regards the lesser known communities. A sociological paradigm for geographical analysis of migration needs to be worked out so that the subject of Indian social geography could become rich in perspectives.

A number of studies suggest themselves. Most importantly however a framework for such analyses deserves attention at present so that future research can be directed. Based on our own study of the Boyas, the following specific researches are needed.

For every single and specifically mobile community, there is an urgent need to document the process of migration in social (suppression/oppression induced), economic (economic opportunities) and socio-political (inequality, deprivation) contexts so that the way in which these same social, economic and political environments improve can be analysed and understood. With respect to the state or nation, what improvements occur as a result of public intervention and how such intervention affect in return migrational characteristics of the communities may also be studied. It should be in our interest to study and analyse personal behaviour as
regards migration so as to give migration/movement studies an individualistic flavour. In such studies however the personal behaviour as determined and/or modified by the culture of a group or subgroup may be of further importance in a social geographical context.

A particular need in migration research is in the study of the origins of migrants rather than destinations, for there is a great paucity in this field. Also what happens as a result of migrant-remittances to the social, economic and political environments at the origins can form an exclusive basis for community and/or general population based studies. The framework of analysis may however depend on the interactions between the state (or nation), the environment, the individual and the community.

In many a study on migration, the conclusions always point out to a majority of the migrants being engaged in informal activities and in this regard there is a lack of policy on the part of the state or the nation. So this could form the basis of another useful research project. In regard to policies, yet again, the policies of the government on migration may be analysed in-depth to evaluate (if such policies exist) and suggest (where there is no clearcut policy) comprehensive policies. Research also needs to be carved out on themes relating to migration and development and migration, community and development. A very scientific and technically competent study of the nutrition of migrant communities at the place of origin and at the destination may also be attempted. This can show how because of economic improvements the nutrition levels has changed. It should be possible also from such analyses to develop indicators of economic improvement, through migration and remittances back home. In the present study, there have been some difficulties in obtaining estimates of energy requirements of people
engaged in heavy work. This is partly because of the paucity of information on patterns of consumption and caloric intake in certain special groups of workers, in the Indian context. It is therefore suggested that the time spent in work and leisure by workers engaged in different but heavy activities in different parts of the country, and in different communities be collected over a fairly long period and analysed for patterns along with the food habits and changes in them, if any, in space and time in respect of geographic regions. Data related to the Telugu Boyas both at origin and at the destination may be collected to find out variations in work patterns and nutritional intake patterns. The patterns may then be used in explaining the consequences of migration.