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CHILD WORKERS IN DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONS

SOME CASE STUDIES

In the preceding chapters, portrayals of children working in various occupations have been provided. However, it is felt that fragmented and sub-divided description fails to give a comprehensive account of any of the occupations. With a view to overcoming this and other weaknesses, a few case studies of child workers engaged in different occupations are presented here. In these case studies, effort has been made to cover as broad a spectrum of various vocations as possible within the available resources.

1. AGARBATTI MAKING WORKERS

GARGI

Thirteen year old Gargi is a Hindu and belongs to Barot caste. This caste belongs to OBC (Other Backward Class) category and is included in the list of Bad Ranch castes/community of Gujarat State. Traditionally, Barots or Brahmins were used to sing songs or bravery in the praise of kings in their royal court. They also used to entertain the kings and their council of ministers with their songs. They were supposed to keep genealogical records of caste Hindus. In Rajasthan, these Barots are called Bhat-Maran and in Saurashtra region they are called Badhvis, son of goddess. Gargi hails from Nadiad, District Kheda. Her father is aged 45 years and mother 37 years. She is the eldest child in the family. She has two sisters and a brother. Her brother attends the school, but the sisters are not sent to school. Gargi has studied up to the 3rd standard. Her family lives in a housing society called Indira Sarib nagar opposite water tank, Bapunagar, Ahmedabad for the last seven years. The family resides in a small pucca room measuring 8 or 9 square meters and an osari. But basic amenities like water and latrine are not easily available to them. For water they have to depend upon public water post, which is always crowded with large number of neighbourhood people jostling with one another for their turn. That leads to quarrels and sometimes physical fights. So is the case regarding latrine facility. Latrine blocks are always dirty and present a veritable sight of filth and dirt. There is a constant health hazard due to insanitary conditions. The household belongings consist of two cots, two tin boxes, a few utensils, and about a dozen pieces of crockery and some shabby beddings. Two wooden stools and a small table constitute the furniture. The house has electricity connection. They cook their food on primus stove. Gargi said that her father once owned property at Nadiad. He sold the property and wasted money in gambling, drinking, entertaining friends and merry making. For the last 10 years he is not doing any work except enjoying the earnings of his children and wife. Her mother Chanchal ben works as an aya in V.S. Hospital as badli worker. Gargi and her younger sister work in an unregistered Agarbatti manufacturing unit in Bapunagar which is at a distance of 1 1/2 km. from their residence. The owner of agarbatti manufacturing unit is a lady, Rajput by caste and belongs to a village near Jodhpur in Rajasthan.
She started this business eight years before, when her husband died in an accident. There are 29 female workers, out of them 21 are less than 14-year-old girls. The work is carried out in this unit on a piece rate wage system. The production of agarbatti is carried out outside the residential premises in the open. The place is covered by plastic sheet and gunny cloth. The working time is 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. There is no facility of latrine but there is only single bathroom for all these workers. Two pitchers of drinking water are kept for workers. After taking a cup of tea, in the early morning Gargi and her younger sister reach the work place at 8 a.m. and work upto 7 p.m. with a rest interval of one hour, during which they go home for lunch. Both the sisters produce 8000 to 10000 agarbatti in a day and they together earn on an average Rs.30/- per day. Both the sisters never enjoy Sundays and other holidays as they take lump of incence dough home and try to prepare the same stuck as they do usually. Otherwise they are not given food by their father. Once Gargi’s father told both the sisters to bring money home even if they have to sell their body. Market uncertainty has an adverse effect on the work assignment of the child workers. Monsoon also reduces the production potential of the establishment which in turn reduces the average income of the workers. Gargi’s lady employer is very kind. She helps both the sisters with advance money during illness and monsoon season, but as the employer exercises control over the quality of the product they sometime deduct earning for poor quality of work. No bonus is given except 500 gram sweet and Rs.11 on Diwali festival. Gargi said that in this work the health hazards are very grave. The inhalation of odour of color and poor quality of perfumes can affect their health which can cause breathing problems in the long run. She does not like sweeping the floor at the end of the day. Other girls at the work place have nice relations with Gargi. Expressing the hard nature of her life, Gargi said that some times she gets fed up with her life but she has no other place to go but to stay in the same house and its surroundings. She said that she has no future and was found frustrated and disgusted with her life in home.

BEEDI MAKING WORKER

KRISHNARI SIDDHAWhatsApp

Krishnari is a nine-year-old Hindu girl. She is Padamshali by caste. The Padamshalis are fine silk weavers hailing from that part of Maharashtra which is on the border of Andhra Pradesh. In Gujarat, they have been included in the list of OBC (Other backward class) and are also covered in the BAdi Ranch category. Krishnari’s family hails from a village in Bidar district. She has a younger sister of seven years. Her mother is illiterate and deserted handling the family of three. She has not sent her daughter to any school. Krishnari’s father aged 35 years was working in a powerloom factory at Ochav. He deserted the family four years back and never came back. At present, the family lives in Khubhar ni Chawl in Saraspur labour area. The mother has been living in this chawls since she got married. The dwelling is a small unit with tin shade. The family possesses a cot, about

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a dozen brass and steel utensils and same crockery piece. There is a water tank inside the house and an independent electric connection. The rent of the hut is Rs.50/- per month.

Krishnari, her mother and a younger sister together roll beedis at their residence. They roll nearly 150 to 200 beedis daily and all together get Rs.25 to Rs.50 per day. The family rolls beedis in the same room in which it lives, with the result that the whole room gives a tobacco smell. Krishnari said that there is no fixed time for rolling beedis. She helps her mother in cooking and other house hold activities. After finishing the household work at 9 am she sits with her sister and mother and work upto 1 pm. At about 3 pm, after finishing lunch she again starts her work and continues upto 7 p.m. Then again from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. the family continues the beedi rolling work. They work for 9 to 10 hours per day. She said, if I don't work, who will feed us. If we want to live and live respectably, we have to work and work hard. The contractor also exploits us by rejecting about 10 to 12 per cent beedis and gives 850 to 900 leaves against 1000 leaves. Her mother said that they work for seven days and get labour of their work worth six days. Thus one day's labour is being deducted by the contractor by rejecting their beedis, when asked, why her husband deserted her, she said that her husband was a liquor addict and used to play work matka. Once he lost Rs.3000 in gambling. He drank heavily on that day and came home at 12 at night and asked for money. She refused as she had no money so she was beaten by him. After two days, he again came dead drunk with a friend and asked her to sleep with his friend which she refused and so she was beaten by him. After a week he took her savings worth Rs.1000/- and some gold and silver ornaments and sold them to a local money lender and paid the money to the person as payment of money lost in gambling. When she asked about all this, he again thrashed her. Later on she called her parents and brothers who taught him a lesson. Her husband went away and never returned. She said that her husband has once sent message to her that he should come and take him back home, which she declined to do. She said that in her community women are exploited by menfolk. Regarding her place of work, she said, it is dingy, dark and stuffy. Rolling beedis is their community occupation. Even girls who go to school have to roll beedis in their leisure time as it is a pre condition for the marriage of a girl. She said that she is quite happy as she is helping her mother but she remembers her father when she see father of other children of her locality bring goods for their children. She said as she is deprived of love and affection of her father it is nothing but her mis-fortune.

RUKSANA

Ruksana is a 15-year-old Muslim girl, who lives with her family in a chawl behind city mill compound near Kantaria. Her father was a textile mill worker. He died of Cancer five years back. Her mother is suffering from T.B. She has five sisters and a brother aged 8 years. Two of the sisters are married and settled in Uttar Pradesh. Her family hails from Barabanki Uttar Pradesh. The family has
been staying in Ahmedabad since 1961. Her only brother goes to school, but neither she nor any of her sisters have ever gone to school. They were given religious education in a Madarsa. There is no elderly person to look after the family. All the four sisters together roll beedis on piece rate basis and by the end of the day they roll nearly 550 beedis and together manage to earn about Rs.50 per day. She said that her mother brings beedi leaves. Tobacco dust and thread from the contractor. The contractor has his office in the same chawl. The mother hands over the finished product to the contractor. Ruksana and her sister work for more than 12 hours a day. She does not feel bored with her work, for she works and completes it with other sister. They live in a chawl where most of the Hindu and Muslim women do the work of rolling beedis. The family stays in a single room on the first floor of the chawl. The room has no facilities of ventilation, bathroom and latrine. They get water from the public water stand post they use the only living room as bed room, work place, kitchen and bathroom. They use Municipal latrine blocks which are unkept and dirty. They had electricity connection but as they failed to pay the bill it was disconnected. They use kerosene lamp and cool their food on primus and Chulha. They have to buy fire woods from the local market costing Rs.50 per month.

Ruksana's family originally belongs to Barabanki in Uttar Pradesh. However, there is no one in their native place. They were landless, and have left the native place in search of livelihood. They came to Ahmedabad and settled down here. Ruksana's mother, Chandbibi has grown pessimistic. She said that they cannot leave Ahmedabad because they have no other place to go to. She also felt that there is no scope of better future for their family in the city. They will continue to slog and struggle for their day to day living, she ruefully stated. They have Hindus as their neighbours and according to the mother they are good and co-operative. She is worried about the marriages of her four daughters. As the family is quit religious, they observes fast during Ramzan month.

They have tea with bread for breakfast, for lunch they have Roti and Vegetable. In the evening they prepare Khichdi and shak. On festival occasions like Id, Bakarid, they prepare sweet dishes and non vegetarian food.

Ruksana said that her back aches and she gets headache at the end of the day. She said that some of the beedi making children have developed skin and eye diseases and their necks and back bones ache constantly, since they are required to bend for hours together. The contractor cheats them in various ways. He gives them less raw material and expects full weight and thus makes deduction from their earnings. Ruksana said that as a conservative Muslim, she is not allowed to go outside and do such work which would give her more remuneration. Her mother says that girls should stay back home and do the work which can be done within four walls of the house. She wants government to waive the loan of Rs.15,000/- as they have done for rural peasants. She said the government should provide with the same benefits which are provided to Scheduled Castes/Tribes and other
backward classes. She was worried about her future and said what would happen to them when her mother dies. With these words tears rolled down her cheeks.

3. CERAMIC WORK/POTTERY WORK

HANSI

Hansi, 11 years belongs to Scheduled Castes (Vankar - Charan). The family hails from Than, Surendranagar, Saurashtra. She lives in Parsia Ratta a Chawl near D-Colony, Mehsana, in the eastern part of Ahmedabad which is about 2 km from New Civil hospital. Her household consists of 10 members; herself, her father, mother, eight sisters and one -year-old brother. Her eldest sister is 20. None of the children has been sent to school. Two of her elder sisters are married and have settled down in Surendranagar and Banasalans. Her father is truck Driver who does not get work regularly. He works for about 15 days in a month and earns Rs. 700 per month. Hansi works along with her two elder sisters in the pottery factory at Saripur Bogha, a labour class locality.

The family has been living in the chawl for the last 20 years. The dwelling is a small unit with small space opposite the house. They pay Rs. 20/- as rent of the house. No basic amenities are available to them. For water they have to depend upon public water post. So is the case with regard to latrine facility. Latrine blocks are always dirty and present a veritable night of filth and dirt. There is a constant health hazard due to these insanitary conditions. Hansi’s house has no electricity connection. For lightning purpose they use kerosene lamp. They cook their food on Chula. They spend Rs. 60/- on fuel. The household belongings consist of two cots, one transistor, one bicycle, a few brass and aluminum utensils, about a dozen pieces of crockery and some shabby winter bedding. The family has to struggle a great deal to make the two ends meet.

Hansi’s working hours are from 8 a.m to 6 p.m with an hours break for lunch. The work place is at a distance of 2 km, they reach the work place on foot after taking morning tea and Roti. All the sisters carry lunch with them. One of the elder sisters is registered as regular worker in the factory register. The elder one and Hansi work for manufacturing cup-saucer. They have to produce a definite stock of cups and saucers at the end of the day their wages are calculated on the basis of stock produced. They together earn Rs. 50 per day. Being an unskilled worker, Hansi’s wages work out to be Rs. 12 per day. Her eldest sister had once taken an advance of Rs. 3000/- from the factory owner at the time of marriage of her elder sister. Some amount is deducted every month as instalment from their earnings. Hansi gets weekly holidays and other festival holidays. During the days of Diwali, the factory runs double shift i.e. upto 11 p.m. for which besides wages, they are provided separate accommodation in the factory premises to stay. The earnings become double the usual wages. The factory has separate facility of latrine and bathroom for women. The elder sister of Hansi gets bonus as per rules. Hansi prepares the lump of clay and hands over to her sister for making cups and saucer.

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on chakda. The green wares are placed in the sagger by her for drying and finally for loading in the kiln. Hansa said that when the material is mixed after crushing, a lot of dust comes out in various proportion which affects their health adversely. The major physical problem due to hard work are body ache, backache and headache. Besides this, her palms become very rough. During work they are not provided any protective material like gloves and mask for safety. She said that the wages paid to the workers are very low in comparision to the hard work they do. Her elder sister said that young girls who submit to the wishes of the supervisor and/or the employers get many benefits. Others do not get anything. She said that working in ceramic/pottery works shortens the life span of a person by 10 to 15 years. Most of the workers after 15 to 20 years of work in ceramic industry suffer from sollicitus and asthma. Hansa said that it was their family occupation. "If we want to live we have to work, there is no other alternative".

In the work premises other co-workers belonging to their caste are quite helpful and cooperative. In the production of cups and saucers, they help each other selflessly. Hansa said that she is very fond of study. She is ready to devote an hour daily if arrangement of such educational classes are made in their residential area.

**SHOE-CHAPPAL MAKING**

**BHURELAL**

Bhurelal is a 'Raygarh' (Scheduled Caste) boy of 10 working in a residential-cum-production centre of shoe-chappal unit in Sanjaynagar slum located by the Sola Road near The Gujarat Housing Board residential complex, Naranpura. Traditionally 'Raygarh' are chamar who hails from Rajasthan. Raygarh do the leather tanning work. Bhurelal belongs to a village in Jodhpur district in Rajasthan. He has studied upto the 2nd standard. He was compelled to leave his studies due to repetitive drought in his native place. He stays with his employer who is his distant relative and working with him for the last two years. Bhurelal has two elder sisters and two younger brothers. One of the elder sisters is married and stays with her-in-laws. His father manufactures 'Mojadi' in his native place. He has to struggle a great deal to make two ends meet.

Bhurelal is living along with his employer in a small semi-pucca hut. Some of the basic services like water, latrine etc. are not easily accessible. They get water from nearby Municipal water post. In hut, there is a 'chokdi' where female members take their bath daily. Chokdi is also used for washing clothes and cleaning utensils. There is no latrine. All of them go out in open for defecation. Needless to say, defecation in the open field surrounding this slum locality and waste water flowing from chokdis of several huts add to the stagnant cess-pools. Flies and mosquitoes around; endanger the health of the people inside and outside this slum. Each slum-dweller does his/her best to keep his/her own hut clean to avoid insanitary conditions inside. But outside the hut there is no arrangement to drain out waste water. The dwelling has no electricity connection. They use kerosene
Bhurelal’s father was given Rs. 2,000/- in lieu of his work for a year. There are two other boys aged 18 and 16 years who work with Bhurelal. He gets up early in the morning at 5.30 a.m. and works up to 11 p.m. with a lunch break of one hour. He gets Rs. 5/- per week as pocket allowance. He gets two meals and breakfast from his employer. He gets three pair of underwear/baniyan and a pair of shirt also. He gets Rs. 150 as railway fare once a year. The employer meets the medical expenses when ever Bhurelal falls sick. In the morning after eating himself, he sweeps the dwelling, fetches water, fills the water tank and pitcher for use in kitchen for bathing. The wife of his employer serves him tea, stale rotla (loaves). He starts his work at 5 a.m. and continues up to 12.30 p.m. He helps the house wife in preparing food for the family. After taking lunch he again starts work at 2.30 p.m. which goes on up to 7.30 p.m. After dinner, which normally contains roti, dal and sometimes vegetable, he cleans the utensils of the house and does his work for an hour and goes to bed at 11 p.m. Thus besides working in shoe and chappal production, Bhurelal works as a domestic servant for all practical purposes, which he does not like. He is often physically tortured, beaten and abused by the employer. When asked about his future plans tears rolled down his cheeks and he said nothing except that he is a slave. He said that he lives in constant fear of his employer and obeys him without any question, complaint or resistance.

RANGATI:

IMRAN

Thirteen-year-old Imran has worked in a cloth printing factory from the time he was nine year old. He stays with his father, step-mother and siblings in a slum in Ram-Rahim nagar, Behrampura, behind Calico mills, near Infectious disease hospital (महामारी अस्पताल) on the eastern part of the city. The area consists of mixed population of Hindus and Muslims. His father works as a mason. The family originally belongs to a village near Sihore, in Bhopal district in Madhya Pradesh. They have been living here since 1972. Imran regrets that he has never had the opportunity to study or play, but his two younger step-brothers attend school regularly.

The family has a one room house with covered verandah and a small kitchen. They have to pay Rs. 40 per month as rent. They get water from the nearby cloth printing factory. In the hut there is a chokdi, where the female members take bath. Chokdi is also used for washing clothes and utensils. There is no latrine, all of them go out in the open near river bed for defecation. Needless to say, waste-water flowing from chokdis of several huts adds to the stagnant cesspools. Flies and mosquitoes abound, endangering the health of the people inside and outside this slum. Each slum dweller does his/her best to keep his/her hut clean to avoid in sanitary conditions inside. But outside the hut there is no arrangement to drain out waste water. Imran’s hut has
electricity connection. They use 'chulha' for cooking food. They also use kerosene stove. In the house except for a few winter covering made up of bits of old clothings and about a dozen aluminum and steel utensils the room is all bare.

This is the third contractor under whom Imran is working for the last eight months. He works from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. with one-hour lunch break. He is never given tea or breakfast by his mother when he leaves for work. He takes tea & breakfast at a tea-stall which is very near to his processing house. At noon, during lunch hours, whenever he visits home, he does not get enough food to satisfy his appetite. Imran’s father has taken advance money from the contractor, so from his wages a portion is deducted and he never gets more than Rs. 150 per month. He keeps Rs. 50/- with him and hands over Rs. 100/- to his father. During the days of leave he works in other processing houses and thus earns Rs. 80/- which he does not give to his father. Imran works overtime during Diwali and Id in other factories and he keeps with him the earning of overtime work and purchases things for his personal use. He spends his pocket money in smoking, gambling and watching movies. However, his mother does not like this. She always complains to Imran’s father, who often scolds, beats and abuses him without any fault. On the days when his father is out of town with his contractor, Imran does not visit home and stays either in processing house or with his friends. He does not get time to take bath and washes his clothes. At the time of interview there was layers of colour all over Imran’s face, hands and body there was boils on his body giving bad smell. He sometimes puts on the clothes of his friends. He generally takes bath on Sunday. He said that when he does not have money he visits mandirs where Ramroti is served regularly to the beggars.

Imran does not like the work of cloth-printing as it entails a lot of risk to health. Once he fell down from the printing table and got his right arm and leg fractured. Contractors and his co-worker took him to V.G.Hospital for treatment and friends used to visit him regularly. ‘Dardai Sarwar Mandal’, a voluntary organization bore all the expenses of his treatment. His step-mother never came to the hospital to enquire about his wellbeing but his maternal uncle took him to his residence for convalescence. No compensation was given to Imran except Rs. 100/- by the contractors at the time of admission.

Imran said that color and chemical used in printing spoils and sometime peals the skin. After working for more than 10 years, one gets asthma and tuberculosis. Imran said that working in Rangati shortens the life of a worker by 10 to 15 years. He said that when government officials visits the work premises, the contractor turns them out of the premises. He expressed dissatisfaction with the behavior of the contractor, his father and mother. He said that sometime he gets so much frustrated that he wants to run away from home.

When asked about his future plan he told the researcher that he would like to start his processing house when he grow young but he will not exploite small children and will
Twelve- year-old Mukesh of chamar caste (Scheduled Caste) is working in cloth printing factory for the last three years along with his mother and elder brother. His father died when he was five- years- old. The family stays in a chawl named Mansukhial ni Chawl, opposite infectious disease hospital, Behrampura. The family lives in one- room accommodation. Some of the basic services like water, latrine, etc. are not easily accessible. For water they have to depend upon public water standpost. There is no private bathroom or latrine. They use Municipal latrine blocks which are unkempt and dirty. They have electricity connection. They use stove for cooking food. The kerosene cost them Rs. 70/- per month.

Mukesh and his family originally belong to a village in Palanpur in Banaskantha district. However, there is none in their native place now. They were landless, and have left the native place some 50 years ago in search of livelihood. The family came to Ahmedabad and settled down here. His father was a worker in folding department of Calico Textile Mills, Ahmedabad. He was suffering from T.B. He died of this disease.

Mukesh studied up to the TV standard and left studies as his family was not able to bear the school expenses and the family was in great financial crisis. Circumstances compelled him to join cloth printing factory along with his mother. His elder brother had taken an advance of Rs. 3000/- from the contractor at the time of marriage of his elder sister. Mukesh and his mother are working under that contractor for the last two and a half years. About 60 per cent of the amount of advance has been paid back gradually. Mukesh's working hours are from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., with half-an-hour lunch break. He does not get his wages but his mother receives it. He gets Rs. 50/- as pocket expenses which he spends with his friends on tea, snacks and on movies. He complained that the contractor is a very hard task master and never allows anyone to sit idle for five minutes. If once chance someone sits, he uses abusive language irrespective of whether the worker is a male or a female. At the time of interview, there was a layer of color over Mukesh's face, hands and body. He was suffering from fever and cold at the time of interview. There were boils on his body giving bad smell. He said that he has to mix color and chemical with his hands and hand it over to the master craftsman. He told that during work, he has to work like a machine. This work is very tiresome and he suffers from physical and psychological fatigue. Whenever he feels sick, the contractor compels him to come to work and sometimes man handles him. He does not like the job. He is doing it under compulsion. Mukesh said, in all occupations, whether it is Rangati, garage work, working in Hotel in tea shop, the working conditions are very bad. They treat the child not as a human being but as a slave and/or animal. The child workers cannot do anything, as they are helpless and poor. The whole days' work does have a telling effects on him.
"I cannot even manage to stand up in the morning. My whole body aches but what to do, it is our fate. There is no holiday or leisure hours as such for me," Mukesh said.

What food does the family eat? In the morning they eat roti with tea. In the after afternoon food, they eat Rotla and shak. In the evening, they prepare luchdi and shak. On occasions like Diwali and Holi etc. they prepare shira or sukhdi.

Mukesh’s mother Rakhiben is very cautious in managing her meager resource. She is a ration card holder. She always tries to store some foodgrains to avoid depending on others. There is no furniture. Vessels are essentially aluminum and brass wares. For clothes they visit Delhi Darwaaja or Dhalgharwad where old/second hand and new garments are sold.

Rukhiben is quite conscious and vocal about her rights as a casual Rangati worker. She is quite sympathetic and broad minded. She is very much in favour of some control over the arbitrariness of contractors about wage rates, worked load etc. She said that they are at the mercy of Mukadams and contractors. She felt that the cloth printing workers (Rangati) should come together and organise a struggle on the issue of work duration, minimum wages, etc. They should not accept work below the collectively agreed upon wages. Labour unions above could exert such pressure on contractors. But she felt that due to widespread unemployment and poverty formation of labour union is an uphill task. She want that the cloth printing workers with regard to basic minimum needs of survival to be protected. She want that the rights of cloth printing workers with regard to basic minimum needs of survival to be protected. She wants that the cloth printing workers with regard to basic minimum needs of survival to be protected. She wants that the cloth printing workers with regard to basic minimum needs of survival to be protected. She said there is no unity amongst the workers and expressed helplessness on this accord. She knows that by bargaining hard one can increase the wage rate by a rupee or 50 but she does not know who could do this."

DIAMOND CUTTING AND POLISHING

Harsh is a 12-years-old boy living in a working class locality in Bapunagar, Ahmedabad. He belongs to Gujar-Khastria Caste. He has studied up to the 6th standard. He hails from Vanda, Sabarlundla, Bhavnagar district, which is part of Saurashtra region of Gujarat State. His family consists of an elder sister and mother. Harsh had to leave his studies due to the untimely death of his father a year ago. His uncle and grandparents played foul game and did not give their share of property to him and his mother but compelled his mother to get married to one of his uncles, who is also a widower. As this offer was turned down by his mother, they got her signature on some legal documents and deprived them of the property right. His mother said that there was nobody in her parental family who could help her in getting her share in the property of her husband and she had no money to fight her case. She left for Ahmedabad, in search of livelihood and started working in a diamond unit in India colony, Bapunagar. Haresh and his elder sister have also joined their mother as diamond workers.
The family resides in a pucca house consisting of a 3 m x 5 m room one covered veranda measuring 2 m x 2 m and a kitchen. There is a Municipal tap inside the house and an independent electric connection. A house rent of Rs. 350/- per month is paid to the owner of the house. Two wooden beds, a table, two chairs and a ceiling fan furnish the room. One wall-clock, two attache cases, two tin boxes, about three dozen brass utensils, 20 pieces of crockery and three winter beddings constitute the belongings of the household. The mother and the sister earned about Rs. 1,200/- per month working in diamond industry. The mother of Harsh is happy with her work as she opines that no other work can give them as much as they get by working in diamond processing industry.

Harsh got training (three month duration) in "top making" of diamond. He works on piece rate basis and earns Rs. 20/- per day. He also contributes Rs. 400 per month to the family exchequer. He works for 9 hours, i.e., from 9 a.m to 6.30 p.m with half an hour break for lunch. The diamond unit is in the basement and there is only one urinal for 40 workers. Harsh said that there is no ventilation and the urinal gives bad smell. His co-workers are quite helpful and so is the employer. Since the day he has started working Harsh suffers from cold and cough. He works on the old type diamond Ghanti, in which he has to sit with folded legs on the floor. He complains about pain in his knees and suffers from should and back pain. He does not feel bored with this work. He aspires to study in the night school and would like to qualify for S.S.C. examination next year.

His mother cooks two meals. The morning meal consist of Pulse, rice, roli and shak. In the evening Khichdi with dal or fried Khichdi with milk. He takes tea and breakfast (nasta) during recess period. His mother is quite sensitive about the developmental aspect of her children with her restricted means and environment. She aspires to find out regular good job for herself. So that she could spend sufficient money and provide a better environment for the development of her children. She wants to see her son study up to graduate level so that he can get back his share of the property from his uncles and grandfather. Harsh would like to become an advocate and wishes to take back the share of the property by fighting in the court of law.

SHILLA
Shilia 14, a good looking girl and her brother Ramlesh, 12, years work in a diamond polishing unit at Nicol Road in Bapunagar labour belt on the eastern part of the city. Shilia has studied up to the 6th standard and her brother has studied up to the 5th standard. She belongs to Leuva Patidar caste and her family hails from a village in Amreli district in Saurashtra. Her father used to work in a textile mill which was closed down five years back. Even when her father used to work in textile mill, she, her sister and mother used to make artificial necklace at home and earn Rs. 20 per day. She used to do this work after school hours. Thus they used to supplement the family income. But with the closure of textile mills, the family started facing financial difficulty. Her father who is 47 year old, said
that he cannot work in privately owned handloom factory as the owners take work for 12 hours and pay Rs.30/- only. He does not work anywhere and waits for his provident fund and gratuity. He stays at home and plays cards with his age mates in the locality. The Shila's mother and sister work at home and earn Rs.15/- per day by making necklace. When her mother was asked about their ancestral property, she said that they had land in their ancestral village, but due to uncertainty of rains, her father-in-law had sold the property and came to Ahmedabad in search of job. He was also a textile worker and he managed job for his son (her husband) in the mill. So they do not have any property except the house in which they live. They reside in a small pucca room measuring 10 sq.mts with open courtyard of 6 sq.mts, the latter shared by two other families. The house has an independent kitchen as well as bathroom. At the entrance of the house is a common flush toilet used by four families. The household belongings consist of two cots, one black and white T.V. set, one sewing machine, one bicycle, containers of wheat and rice, an attache case and four tin boxes, about a dozen pieces of crockery, big brass utensils, steel utensils and some winter beddings. Three chairs and one table constitute the furniture. All the members of the household wear good clothes. The girls and their mother wear gold earrings and silver necklace. The family takes tea twice a day with biscuits, both in morning and evening. Food is cooked twice a day which consists of rice, dal and rotli and khichdi and milk in the evening.

Both Shila and her brother earn Rs.40-45 per day. The family thus earns on an average Rs.60 per day and other members do not find it essential to work anywhere. Shila and her brother work from 8.30a.m. to 6 p.m. with half an hour lunch recess. Shila makes top (Mathala) of the diamond and her brother bottom (Talia) of the diamond. Their diamond unit is on the second floor of the building. They work along with other workers in a single room where freedom of movement is very less. Shila is quite happy with the behaviour of the owner, as he looks after the girls. He is also a Patidar by caste. There are two latrine common to all workers on the second floor and there is no separate bathroom or latrine for the girl workers. The workers of the other three diamond units on the same floor also make use of these bathrooms and latrines. Shila said that her employer is a nice man but her supervisor frequently cut dirty jokes with girls and those who give response are given freedom in their work. She does not like sending her brother for fetching tea during the working hours as it spoils his time and reduces the earning. Shila once asked for advance for medical treatment of her mother. The supervisor told her that if she submits to his wishes, he will recommend her case to the employer. She refused to submit to his wishes, so she was not given advance, but she met the employer personally. He sympathetically listened to her and sanctioned advance. This has annoyed the supervisor further. She said that she did not talk to other co-workers and some of them used to pass unhealthy remarks about every girl, who is working in the unit, but gradually such things have subsided and no one except the supervisor says anything. As she is working on piece rate basis, no wages for Sundays and other holidays are given. No bonus, except a steel utensil on the occasion of
Oiwali is given. On reaching home shilla helps her mother in household chores. She has developed pain in her shoulder and suffers from backache. She said that the girls should be given higher education and they should be trained for women entrepreneurship. They should not be allowed to work in unorganized industry, where the employers evade various labour and other laws very easily. She intends to study up to 10th standard. She said that parents should not produce more children, if they cannot look after them and fulfill their needs. She said that when she grows up she will get married to a man who earns sufficient to support the family and fulfill the needs of her children and give them a comfortable living. Shilla was very confident when she talked and aspired for better future.

**GARAGE—AUTOMOBILE/REPAIR WORK**

**ASLAM**

Aslam, aged 13, works in a motor garage for the last three years. The garage is situated outside Delhi Darwaja, opposite Jehangir Textile Mill and a Muslim graveyard. The garage has 17 workers, out of which four are boys under 14 years. The youngest one is aged 10 years and works in the garage for the last six months. Aslam's family stays in Ahmedabad in Hussain ni Chawl near Dudheshwar water tank. The family lives in this area for the last twenty-five years. They pay Rs.50/- as rent for the house. The house contains a room and a kitchen. Aslam's mother has built a bathroom in the open space. They get water from the public water stand-post. There is no private latrine. There is no electricity connection in their dwelling so they use kerosene lamp. They cook food on chulha by using firewood. They spend about Rs.100/- per month on firewood alone.

Aslam's family originally hails from a village in Khandwa district (Madhya Pradesh). Aslam has three sisters and two brothers. Two elder sisters and his mother stitch clothes at home and a brother works in a tea stall in Dudheshwar. Aslam has studied up to the 4th standard. He had to leave his studies as his father divorced his mother and married another woman and started living separately. The total monthly income of the family is Rs.1200/-Rs.1500. The contribution of Aslam in the total family income is Rs.150/-. The house contains two sewing machines, out of which one was purchased with the help of state social welfare advisory board and the other a second hand machine, was purchased by Aslam's mother from a tailor shop. Besides sewing machine, one cot, an old table, two chairs about a dozen aluminum and steel utensils and a couple of quilts and mattresses form the possessions of the household.

Aslam's working hours are from 9.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. with rest interval of half an hour. He takes breakfast when he goes to garage in the morning and visits his home during lunch hour. The foreman told about Aslam that the boy is very sincere, intelligent, hard working and can perform some of the repair work independently. Aslam's main tasks are to pass tools to the foreman at work, cleanse the spare parts and do the repair work under his guidance. The garage remains closed on Sundays. Along with his other colleagues Aslam performs
Friday prayer regularly. He gets about 12 holidays in a year. He gets bonus twice a year. The employer said that he prefers to employ Muslim children and further added that it would take another three years for Aslam to learn the skills matching that of an adult mechanic. He gets Rs. 150/- as wages plus bonus of Rs. 100/- at the time of Id and Diwali and he approximately earns Rs. 100/- as tip from Seths and car owners. Except wages, Aslam does not hand over other amount to his mother. The employer bears all medical expenses during the illness of the child. Aslam said that his work is very hard and his body and clothes get soaked with oil and dirt, hands and face get black and the body sweats yet he likes the work as he wishes to become a foreman and would like to open his own garage when he grows up. The owner of the garage is from Karnataka. He also started his career as a child worker in a garage. He knows the difficulties faced by the children. Therefore, he tries to provide maximum facilities to the children to learn and grow as a respectable human being.

Aslam appears to be satisfied with his employer. He spends the money which he gets as bonus on his clothes and the money which he gets as tip for his daily use. During leisure time, he watches the film show and Chitrahar programme and other serials on T.V. He does not play with the boys of his locality but helps his mother on Sundays. Aslam wants to attend night classes if it is arranged in their area. During the leisure time he needs newspaper and magazine on films.

MOHAMAD OMAR

Mohamad Omar is 14- old. His family hails from Aaramgarh, Uttar Pradesh. At present, they reside in a slum behind Karbala Mosque in Khanpur at a distance of about half a kilometre from Cama Hotel. Mohamad’s father is an auto rickshaw driver. He has three sister and a brother. His father left his home in Uttar Pradesh and came to Ahmedabad in search of job. He was working in weaving unit of Vaveland Textile mill. Due to the closure of mill, he became unemployed and remained without job for more than two years. During that period, Mohamad Omar discontinued his studies and started working in a garage as casual worker. Later on under some government scheme for urban poor his father purchased an auto rickshaw. At present, together they earn Rs. 1500 per month. Mohamad Omar’s mother, his elder and younger sisters make paper and plastic flower, paper garlands, etc., on piece rate basis. For a family of seven person their per capital income is Rs. 200/- per month. This is indeed a low income in a city like Ahmedabad where the cost of living is very high.

The family stays in a slum. Their hut is on a rental of Rs. 3/- per month. Some of the basic services like water, latrine etc are not easily accessible. For water, the family has to depend upon the Municipal tap. They use municipal latrine block which is unkempt and dirty at time, instead of using municipal latrine the members of the family go for defecation in the river bed. They have no electricity connection. They use kerosene lamp and cook food on stove. They have to buy kerosene from the local market as the stock
of kerosene available on ration card is not sufficient for the family. The fuel costs them between Rs.50 and Rs.75 per month. There is no furniture in the house. Vessels are essentially of aluminum and brass. There are a few winter beddings.

Mohamad Omar works in a garage situated near Nagri Eye Hospital, Opposite police quarter on the western part of Ahmedabad city. The owner of the garage hails from Bulandshar, Uttar Pradesh. The garage is owned by two Muslim brothers. The elder one is a President of Ahmedabad Motor Garage Owners Association. There are about 18 workers in the garage. Omar is working there for the last two years. He gets Rs.100/- as pocket and conveyance allowance. He also gets tips from the car owners and thus manage to get another rupees 100 per month. The working hours are from 9 am to 6 pm with half an hour recess for lunch. Mohamad Omar is not regular in his work. He remains absent from work without information. The boy said that his foreman is very strict and harsh and some times physically tortures him. He showed the researcher the mark of screw driver on his hands and thigh. He get a bonus of Rs.21/- both on Id and Diwali. He gets a pair of clothes and some sweets from the owner of the garage as "Iddi", at the occasion of Id. The children are provided tea once a day by the employer. He harbours the hope that he will get Rs.600 to Rs.800 per month when he fully learn the job. The garage owner prefers to employ Muslim boys, because he is of the opinion that in the coming days educated person will not get job and this will be so with Muslim boys. Therefore, if children belonging to his community are trained in automobile repairs or engineering industry, they will not beg or die of hunger and this training will help them to earn their own bread. He said that he recruited children out of compassion and consideration of their welfare. The owner said that he never deducts wages for the absence of the boy but tries to make him regular in work. He helps the boy financially during his illness also. He said that he sometimes faces difficulties due higher turn over because as soon as these boys learn the job they leave in search of a better one. Omar said that the job entails heavy work and he gets tired by the end of the day. During off days, he enjoys with his friends and spends the amount on eatables, smoking, tea and video films. Mohamad Omar wanted to open his own garage when he grows up. He expressed that he would like to trained boys of his communities in motor and car repair works.

The father of the boy is quite sensitive towards the development aspect of his children within his restricted means and environment, but due to large size of the family and the daughters of marriageable age, soaring prices, he feels helpless.

Engineering and Metal Works

RANJIT SINGH

Ranjit, a Rajput boy of 14, works in an Engineering workshop at Retiawadi, Gheekanta near Sandesh News- paper office. His family hails from Rajpina, in Bharuch district.
in South Gujarat. He lives with his parents in a chawl behind Kabirsi-parsi no Kabristhan, Shahpur. Two of his elder sisters are married, who live separately with their in-laws and one younger brother aged 9 and sister aged 7 go to school. His father is a driver in Ahmedabad Municipal Transport Service.

The family resides in a small pucca room measuring 8 sq mtrs and a kitchen of 4sq mtrs. They get water from nearby privately owned water post. They get water regularly. At the left corner of the house, there is a chokdi, where female members take their bath daily. Chokdi is also used for washing clothes and cleaning utensils. They use municipal latrine blocks which are unkempt and dirty. They pay Rs.30/- as rent of their dwelling. The household belonging consists of a cot, a radio, a TV a bicycle, a sewing machine a few utensil about a dozen pieces of crockery and some winter bedding. The head of the household has a fixed income of Rs.2000/- per month. Besides salary, he earns Rs.250/- as overtime. His income is supplemented by Ranjit's average earning of Rs.250/- per month. His father is indebt heavily (of Rs.50,000 which he took at the time of marriage of his daughters). Ranjit was very good in studies but due to financial stringency, he left his studies after passing the V standard and started working as a helper in an engineering workshop. He gets up early in the morning at 6 am and fills water for the family and helps his mother in the household chores. After taking tea and "Bhalri" in the morning as breakfast he reaches his workshop at 8.30 and works upto 7 pm. He gets an hour for lunch break. His lunch consists of Roti and subji which he takes along with him when he goes to work. He learns to operate the lathe machine and gets Rs.250/- as wages per month. He is working in this workshop for the last two years. He said that his family does not chalk out budget of the household expenditure and his father wastes money to the extend of Rs.500/- per month on liquor. Money in the family is spent in haphazard manner. He does not take any pocket expenses His employer offers him tea twice a day. His workshop is on the road side and is very dingy with no ventilation. For natural call during working hours he has to use public urinals/latrines. There is no place of rest in the workshop, but drinking water is available. He likes the job and wishes to become a skilled mechanic and would like to set up his own workshop. On Sundays and other holidays he does not waste time but utilises and sells artificial jewellery and plastic wares on the road side in front of Bhadhra temple, Lal Darwaja. He said that he becomes tired at the end of the day and his hands have become very rough. He is satisfied with his job because his employer is very considerate and helpful. He was given bonus last year equivalent to half of his wage. The employer never deducts the wages, when he falls sick.

The members of his family wear good clothes, though not very clean. Food is cooked twice a day. Every week they cook meat also. This boy is anxious and wanted to improve the financial status of his family. He is worried about the future, as his father does not save for rainy days.
Salochana, 14, hails from a village in Latur district which is part of Marathwada region of Maharashtra. She is a Mahar, (Scheduled caste). She is a construction worker working along with her mother. She has two elder brothers and one younger sister. Both the elder brothers are married. One of them is settled in Amravati and the other lives in Nagpur. (Maharashtra) Her father is paralytic and cannot work. She has never gone to school. The family lives in a hutment colony near Bhirdbhanjan Hanuman temple about 2 k.m. from Saraspur. No one in the family goes to school.

At present, only Salochana and her mother earn for the family. Both of them do labour job in construction work. Salochana said that she gets work for 15 to 18 days in a month with a daily wage of Rs.25/=. Together, they earn Rs.750/=-, i.e., a family income of Rs.25/=- per day for four persons. Indeed, the income is below subsistence level in Ahmedabad city. One can imagine how difficult it would be for this household to manage their living with such a small income. Also they live in rented hut and have to pay Rs.75/- per month towards rentals. That further affects their purchasing power.

Salochana has been living in this hutment colony for the last 12 years. Her dwelling is a small unit with some space around. Basic amenities are not available to them with ease. For water they have to depend upon public water post which is always crowded with people. Quarrels and physical fights are quite frequent. So is the case with latrine facility. Latrine blocks are always dirty and present a veritable sight of filth and dirt. There is a constant health hazard due to this insanitary condition. Salochana's hut has no electricity connection. For lighting purpose they use Kerosene lamp. They cook their food on stove. They spend about Rs.70 to 80 per month on fuel, i.e., Kerosene.

Salochana's father migrated to Ahmedabad about 25 years back. He was a textile mill Badli worker. He had to leave the job due to closure of the textile mill. He has a habit of drinking liquor and he told the researcher that he can do without food but not liquor. He migrated to Ahmedabad because of the continuous harassment of the Caste Hindu. His relatives still live in his native place. They have no agriculture land. They also work as casual labour in the village. Salochana's mother has to struggle a great deal to make the ends meet. Her mother said that for the last eight years, she has been going to casual labour market daily. She gets work for 15 to 18 days in a month. Rest of the time she has to spend waiting for the contractor or Muladam. As she is not getting work regularly, her mother and Salochana are keen to work as unskilled labourer in a factory. The difficulty expressed by her mother is that as they have no influence, it is difficult to find work in factory. For the last eight years their economic condition has progressively worsened. Salochana's younger sister works as a ragpicker, when her mother does not get work in the market. She also accompanies her daughter and collects the waste material. Salochana is terribly unhappy about her
present living conditions. She is also pessimistic about her own future. "Our condition will not change for the better", she sighed. She further said that the contractors/Mukadams tries to take benefit of the youth of a girl. Her mother always has to be with her as a shield. They work for 8 to 10 hours a day and sometimes they do not get time to take their lunch. They work so hard and tedious in position that if they become little careless they can easily meet with an accident. During accidents except simple medical treatment, nothing is paid as compensation and there is no organisation or legal body which comes to their rescue. In spite of the hard life they lead they are rebuked by contractor even if they get late by 5 minutes or go to answer the call of the nature. Salochana feels that her work entails hard physical labour. She has to work barefoot and all the day remain exposed to sun. She has to help in household chores after the day’s long tiresome work. Her employment is insecure and wages are pitifully low. She wants the government to take some constructive steps for their betterment. She is not very hopeful of a favorable future.

Hotel, Restaurant and Tea shop Workers

The closure of textile mills has led to tremendous pressure on women and children in Ahmedabad. Vijay, an 11 year-old boy studied up to the 3rd standard. He works in a restaurant in Meghaninagar on the north-eastern side of Ahmedabad. The family hails from a village in Pali-Marwar, Rajasthan. They belong to Khumbar (Potter) caste included in the other backward castes/communities of Rajasthan. The family stays in Lalivali Chawl near D, Colony, Meghaninagar. The family is living in Ahmedabad since 1958. Vijay has three brothers and three sisters. Two of his elder sisters are married and live with their in-laws in Rajasthan. His father was a mill worker, who was rendered unemployed due to closure of textile mills. At the time of interview his father was working in a powerloom factory situated in one of the industrial estates in B.I.D.C., Naroda. He is 45-year old and suffers from tuberculosis. His mother and one of his older sisters are construction workers. Vijay and his elder brother have left studies and joined as hotel worker. His elder brother works in a restaurant, opposite Civil Hospital, Ahmedabad. Vijay works in the restaurant where total strength of workers is six. There are three child workers and the remaining are adult workers.

In all five members in Vijay’s family work and total income is Rs.1000/- per month. It is not much considering the cost of living in Ahmedabad. The family has been staying in the present accommodation for the last 30 years and the rent of the house is only Rs.10/- per month. It is a pucca house with an open courtyard. They get water from the public water standpost. There is no private bathrooms or latrine. There is electricity connection in his dwelling unit. They use Municipal latrine blocks which are unkempt and dirty. The family possesses two cots, one cycle, about a dozen brass utensils and the same number of crockery pieces.
Vijay reaches the hotel at 7 am daily and works up to 10 p.m. He reaches his work place after washing hands and face. He told the researcher that he takes bath once a week i.e. on off days. He gets tea and breakfast from the employer twice a day and is allowed to go to his home for lunch. He gets Rs.150/- per month as wages. He got into smoking and drinking habits due to the company of adult workers. Whatever he gets by way of tips from customers is spent on smoking and drinking. He gets only one paid holiday in a month and that is taken up in washing his clothes and visiting his friends. His hands are swollen and full of scratches. Vijay does not like carrying several cups in his small hands as once he was hit by careless customer upsetting the tea cups and spoiling the customer clothes, which caused irritation to the customer and the employer. He was beaten so mercilessly that his nose started bleeding. Nobody came to his rescue. He reported that during winter season, due to cold and continuous working in water his hands develop scars and quite often start bleeding. No medical treatment in such cases is given by the employer. On the contrary at the time of breakage of crockery, the equivalent amount is deducted from their wages. During illness, no wages are given and no money for medical treatment from the employer is given. The verbal abuses are quite frequent. Vijay said that the employer treats him as a slave. The employer said that children are always eager to find employment in bigger hotels because of the allurement of getting tips there. He further said that if the employer shows little leniency towards these workers, they start wasting time. One of the adult hotel workers said that these employer are butchers and they want to take maximum work from them but are not ready to pay their dues. He said unfortunately there is nobody in this city who can organise them and fight for their rights. Vijay, has no future plan, as he said that the poor have no choice but to work and spend life in poverty.

Domestic Servants 'Ramas' Ghardhatis.

SUKHI

Sukhi is a young girl of 12 years and works as domestic servant. She lives with her parents in a slum in Gulbai Tekra, Navrangpura, western part of Ahmedabad. She belongs to Marwadi-Vagri caste. She is illiterate. She has nine members in her family. Besides mother and father, she has four brother and two sisters. Two brothers are married and are living in the same locality. One of the sisters is married and lives with the husband in a slum area called Ramdevnagar, Jodhpur Tekra, Ahmedabad. One of the brothers goes to school and the other is engaged in making plaster of paris idols. Both Sukhi and her mother work as domestic servants and have four houses, where they work. Her father is 56 years old, who was rendered unemployed due to closure of textile mill. They have been staying in Ahmedabad for the last 70 years. At present, her father works as a casual worker in one of the textile processing houses at Narol. He earns Rs.700/- per month. and Sukhi and her mother also manage to earn Rs.300/- per month. For a family of six, the total income of Rs.1000/- per month is very low in a city like Ahmedabad where cost of living is decidedly very high.
They do not have to pay rent for their hut. Some of the basic services like water and latrine facility, etc. are not easily accessible. For water they have to depend upon public water post which is always crowded. So is the case as regards latrine facility. Many young girls, women can be found defecating in vacant plots and on footpath also. There is no electricity in her dwelling unit. They use kerosene lamp. They cook food once in a day on chulha by using firewood. They spend Rs. 70/- per month on firewood alone. The house has no furniture of any kind. It is an empty hut, with two cots, a few earthen, brass and aluminum vessels, primus stove, oil can and a few tin containers. Besides utensils, it contains a few winter covering made up of bits of old cloths.

The family had migrated about 70 years ago from Narwar, Rajasthan because of the successive drought conditions in the state. The family migrated in search of employment bread. They do have land in their native place but they have not visited the place for the last two decades. Most of the neighbors are from different villages of Narwar and belong to the same Vagris - Marwadi community. They have very good relations with them. They celebrate all religious festivals. She said that Social Service department St. Xaviers College helps their people with medicine, education facilities and sometimes with food also.

Sukhi wakes up at 5 a.m. and by 7 a.m. she completes all her household work with the help of her mother. At 7.30 a.m. she with her mother starts her work. She cleans utensils, sweeps the floor and washes clothes of the family in all the four household. She gets Rs. 90-100 from each household and gets food daily from two of these houses. Thus whatever money she contributes to the family coffers, a portion of the amount is to paid to the money lender as interest for the loan his father had taken at the time of the marriage of her sisters and so far the family has not been able to get back their ornaments once mortgaged to money lender. Her father has the habit of drinking also. These things have kept the family in dire poverty. She said that they have no future.

Sukhi is a little aggressive in nature. She does not tolerate unnecessary words spoken by the employers as she work sincerely and never likes anybody to meddle with her work. She once left work of one Parsi family because of the same reason. She has no other liking, habit or except watching films full of violence (fighting). She stated that usually the employers exploit their servants both physically and otherwise. However her employers are good. She does not get any leave regularly, but whenever she has some work, she gets leave and as and when she needs money or advance, she gets from the employers. One of the lady employers gives her a pair of clothes on Makar Sankranti and Diwali also. She said that in their community girls are given no opportunity to study. Some one should make efforts to start classes in our locality she said. She is of the view that girls should not be pressed to marry early and work hard. She further desired that the government should help the domestic workers, or more women organisation should come forward to help them, so that their working conditions
Rel’ba is a 10-year-old girl living in a working class locality in Juna Vadaj, Ahmedabad. She belongs to Scheduled Caste Vankar community. She has studied up to the 2nd standard. There are seven members in her family, she has two brothers and three sisters. One of her younger sisters aged 8, goes to primary school nearby. Her father and mother are construction workers. She along with her elder sister is working as a ragpicker.

The family stays in a rented house and pays Rs.75/- as rent for the house. Her hut is an example of the poorest person’s dwelling. No furniture or fixture of any kind. Neither table nor chairs. It has a cot, a couple of tattered winter bedding, half a dozen of aluminum utensils and a few other clothes to wear. All the belongings are heaped in a corner on the open space and covered with a sheet or patched up plastic. Most of the children sleep on the floor. The family gets water from public water standpost. They use open space around for bathroom and latrine. There is no electricity connection in the dwelling unit. They use Kerosene lamp. They cool food on firewood.

The family cooks only once in the morning, food consisting of rice, vegetables and chutney. Meat and fish are prepared once in a fortnight depending upon the availability of resources. Tea is taken only once in the morning. Washing is done once in a week. Bath is taken once in a week. Her mother said that they do not get work (Kadiu Kam) regularly. They get work for only 10 - 12 days in a month.

Relha leaves her home early in the morning after taking tea and collects scraps till 1 p.m. Then after washing hands and face, she takes lunch and rests for two hours or so. She again leaves for the same work at 3.30 p.m and returns home by 7.30 p.m. She said that she toil to this work because her other friends of the locality are also doing the same job. She brings all the collection home. In the evening her mother sorts out the materials and sells them on alternate days. Relha said that when she goes out to work, many times she feels thirsty and gets headache. Her hands and feet get injured and many times bleed when she gets into the garbage bins. People residing in bungalows hurl abuses at her and her colleagues, when they reach the dust bin to collect the waste. She, however, does not like the work. She earns Rs.25/- per day but does not get a single penny as pocket expense. Besides the work, she helps her mother in household chores. She gets very little time to play. She said that she along with her friends devise their own games. Her father is very strict. He scolds her and sometimes beats her if she refuses to do household chores. Regarding future, she smiled, blushed and kept mum.
Jayanti is a 10-year-old boy. He belong to Chamar (Rohit) Scheduled Caste. His family consists of parents, 3 sisters and two younger brothers. They live in Gandhinagar Tehsil, Junagadh, Ahmedabad. His grandparents migrated to Ahmedabad during the country's partition. Originally they belong to Rapar taluka ofutch district. His father is a cobbler and his mother works as domestic servant. Jayanti has studied up to the 3rd standard and left his studies as his father was not in a position to bear the school expenses. Moreover, his teacher used to beat him.

Jayanti lives in a hut made of Bamboos, mud and tinsheet. During rainy season, they have to spend Rs.150 to 200 for some repairs. There is a small opening on the side walls that serves as ventilation. They get water from the public water post and use municipal latrine block. There is no electricity connection in his dwelling unit. They use kerosene lamp. They cool food on chulha by using firewood. They spend Rs.100/- per month on firewood alone. It is observed that each slum dweller does his/her best to keep his/her own hut clean to avoid insanitary conditions inside. But outside the hut there is no arrangement to drain out waste water. The family's possession consists of about a dozen pieces of utensils, a couple of tattered mattresses and a few other things. Food is cooked only in the evening. Rotla, dal or vegetables constitute the routine food of the family. Meat is cooked once in a month. Tea is prepared in the morning only.

Jayanti works independently of his father. He keeps brushes and shoe-polish in a dirty bag which he carries on his shoulder. He leaves home at 7.00 a.m. without taking tea or breakfast and sits near Gujarat High Court upto 4 p.m and earns Rs.9-10. He takes breakfast at the wayside eating house near the High Court. After this he moves here and there with his bag on his shoulder returns home by 5.30 p.m. Jayanti's monthly earning from shoe-shine work totals Rs.300- 350. He gives Rs.10 per day to his mother. His younger brother also does the same job and give Rs.7-8 per day to his mother. Jayanti's mother smokes beedi frequently eats pan masala once a day. His father earns Rs.50/- per day but he is a habitual drunkard and consume liquor worth Rs.20 per day. His father often quarrels and sometime beats his mother and children after drinking. All the working members of the family observe a complete holiday on Sunday when they do their bathing, washing etc.

Jayanti said that police and the inspectors of Municipal Corporation ill-treat them and do not allow them to sit in or occupy public places. During rainy season, i.e., for three months, he lacks work. During those days he works with Bhajia vendor and earns Rs.8/- per day. He also gets 'Bhajia' to eat.

In his leisure time he plays marbles. He neither has any desire to go to school nor to undergo any vocational training. His parents have never thought of educating him or helping him to develop in his work life. Jayanti wears torn
and dirty clothes. He roams around barefooted always anxious to get hold of a customer. When asked about his future, he smiled and said let fortune decide, he has nothing to say.

**STREET CHILDREN**

**ARIF**

Arif, a twelve-year-old Muslim boy, works as an unauthorised porter at Ahmedabad Railway Station. He hails from Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh. He left his family, when he was eight-year-old. He has never been to school. He has two brothers and a sister. His father deserted the family on the pavement and married another woman. His father used to beat his mother mercilessly. Arif’s mother found it difficult to feed her four children and she married another person. The step-father was a cycle-rickshaw puller and used to smoke ‘charas’ (an intoxicant) and drink. He used to treat all the four children cruelly and compelled Arif to work on a tea shop and the mother to beg in the public place. He used to snatch away the earning of the boy and her mother and spend it on drinks and gambling. Arif showed the signs of the burn mark of beedi on his body and forehead. One day, Arif’s step-father beat him so mercilessly that he became unconscious. Arif said nobody except his mother came to his rescue and told him to run away from home. As it was difficult for Arif to stay with the family, he quit his home at the age of eight and went to Banaras. There he started working in a tea stall at the railway station. The police used to harass him and twice he was sent to remand home. In remand home he made friendship with Sujid. From Banaras both of them came to Bombay. There also the police harassed them. He came to Ahmedabad. For the last one year, he has been working as unauthorised coolie at the railway station. He starts working at 4 a.m. and takes rest when there is no arrival of any train. In this manner, he is able to earn Rs.15 to 25 per day. During Summer/Diwali vacations urge at Ajmer and during marriage seasons with the connivance of the police and authorised railway porters, he reserves berth/seats in the train. Sometimes, he brings liquor from Nadiad and Saraspur and supplies it to needy passengers. This is how he manages to earn sufficient to support himself. He has no bedding, no permanent place to keep his belongings and no definite place to sleep. Sometimes he sleeps on the railway platform or in the train in yard. His bed consists of Newspapers and brick for head rest. Whenever he falls sick, his friend at the railway station takes care of him. He shares a part of his income with his friends of the railway station. He often shares food with his friends also. He said that even though they give share of their earnings to the police and railway employers, they continue to harass them. "The police is a big headache". They arrest him but after taking money they release him. Talking about customers he said that some people did not realised that they are human being. They sometimes treat them as slaves. He does not want to remain a porter throughout his life. He looks forward to better future and his ambition is to become a car driver. He has no plan to visit home, but he generally sees his mother and younger brothers and sisters in his dream. He remembers them and weeps for them, but he is helpless. He said that when the parents are not capable of looking after their children, why should they produce them. He said that he will die unnoticed.
Thirteen year old Vipen ran away from home, when he was nine-year old because of constant beating by his father for not earning enough. He said that all of them at home used to work this mother, father, brother, sister and himself. Yet there was not enough to eat or buy new clothes or repair house. His father and mother used to quarrel constantly and the children used to get beaten up. He never went to school but was forced to work on a tea stall. He did not know how much he earned. His father used to collect the wages. One day he stole Rs. 10/- from his father’s pocket and enjoyed eating sweets. His father hit him so hard and mercilessly that he bled from mouth, nose and head. Fed up with the life he boarded train and reached Bombay. In Bombay he begged for a few days at the railway station and on the footpath. Sometime he used to get his hunger satisfied with the leftover food of passengers. He was once nabbed by the police for the crime he had not committed. The police mercilessly thrashed him and put in lock-up under the charge of vagrancy, gambling and later on sent him to remand home. In the remand home, he made friendship with Hanif, who was a pickpocket and a drug-peddler. After his release from remand home, the drug-peddler took him to his gang leader, who used to get drugs like brown sugar, cocaine and liquor smuggled with the help of adults and children. Vipen worked for three months and earned handsome amount. With that he got new clothes purchased a wrist-watch, a pair of shoes and a gold chain. He started smoking and at time enjoying liquors also. One day, while he was sent to hand over stock of brown sugar in a hotel at King Circle, Bombay and in a guest house at Dadar, he was told about the police raid at the adda (den) of the gang leader. After collecting a part of the amount of the drug, he boarded a train to Ahmedabad instead of going to the adda (den). Since then he has never gone to Bombay. At present, his nature of work is not fixed. He sometimes works as a porter or tea, snack vendor or collects scrap or waste material. In Ahmedabad he has about 10 friends, who are also doing the same job. He said that they help each other and always share food and earnings. Their beddings are old newspaper. They sleep on the railway platform or under the bridge. Vipen has made friendship with waiting room attendants. The latter offer him tea, cigarettes and snacks. Vipen takes bath on alternate days in the bathroom of the waiting room. He plays cards, gambles and visits movies with his friends regularly. He visits Bhadra temple on every Tuesday. He along with his friends occasionally visits a temple near Prem Darwaja, where food (Ram-roti) is regularly served to the poor. He is very anxious to visit his family in Bihar and often remember his mother, brothers and sisters. But due to cruel and bad nature of his father he has dropped the idea of going home. He looks forward to a better future and close family ties. He has the ambition to get educated and wants to become a ticket collector or engine driver in Railways. He said that his ambition will not be fulfilled without education. The other ambition in life, he wants to become truck driver and to achieve this, he has made plans to save some money for driving lessons.