CHAPTER - II

HISTORY OF CHILD LABOUR IN PROJECT AREA AND NEAR BY AREA AND DETAILS OF SLATE MANUFACTURING

BACKGROUND OF CHILD LABOUR:

According to ILO, an estimate of 120 million children between ages five years and fourteen years work as full time labour. Out of this child labour 60 percent are in Asia. India has the distinction of employing largest number of children in the world. Table below shows the distribution of child labour in states of India.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.NO</th>
<th>NAME OF STATE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF WORKING CHILDREN IN LAKHS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ANDHRA PRADESH</td>
<td>32.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>BIHAR</td>
<td>18.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>GUJARAT</td>
<td>10.35</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>KARNATAKA</td>
<td>18.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>MADHYA PRADESH</td>
<td>28.51</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>MAHARASTRA</td>
<td>26.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>ORISSA</td>
<td>11.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>RAJASTHAN</td>
<td>13.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>TAMIL NADU</td>
<td>16.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>UTTAR PRADESH</td>
<td>24.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>WEST BENGAL</td>
<td>10.15</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The state of Andhra Pradesh has the highest number of child labour in the country. According to 1998 census the state of Andhra Pradesh has 14.7 percent of the children employed in the state, which is nearly 7 percent of the total children in the whole of the country, as
the national average is only 3.6 percent. Out of the above 32.72 lacks of child labour, 90 percent are working in rural areas and 10 percent are in urban areas. Majority of them are in agricultural sector and about 5 percent are in manufacturing, processing, services and repairs. Unfortunately the state of Andhra Pradesh also accounts for largest number of girl child labour in the country, with 16.8 percent of total female child labour in the country. The intriguing question is why the state of Andhra Pradesh tops the list of child labour, when it is not the poorest state in the country.\(^9\)

The slate industry at Markapur is about ninety years old and was the main center for writing slate manufacturing in India. The stone writing slate mining is now stopped and the present state of affair is design slate export to the European countries, Srilanka and Malaysia. The slate industry is a major source of employment to the people of four mandals, Markapur, Tarlupadu, Donakonda and Konakanmitla, while card board, sheet and plastic writing slate industry pertains to the Markapur town and its vicinity. Slate mines from which raw design slate layers are extracted constitutes major employment base for nearly 75 percent to 80 percent of the population of surrounding forty five villages. Slate mines are spread over 2600 acres of land in four mandals. Trade union members and the others put the total number of workers employed in the mines as 70,000 in forty five villages, of which more than 15,000 are children

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\(^9\) UN system in India-position paper on child labour- ILO area office, New Delhi 1998 (p.4).
below fourteen years of age. Most of them (about thirty percent) are children below twelve years.

During the earlier period, writing slate industry was a house hold industry. But in 1954 it was mechanized by using light machinery with manual labour. During 1960 the power is employed for machinery in stone polishing and cutting as well as frame cutting and polishing. The Markapur slate exporters association was registered in 1961. There are some working units called as “bodibandalu” which are established to under- take cutting of raw slate stones into required sizes of writing slates as well as the design slates. The Markapur design slates are supplied to Srilanka, Indonesia, South Africa, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. The period 1970-80 was considered as golden decade in slate industry of Markapur.

However after 1980 the slate industry showed the signs of decline but latter due to development of design slate, in 1990’s, the child labour increased in slate mines. Markapur town can be divided into two parts if one follows the Tarlupadu to Yerragondapalem bus route which pass from south to north of the town. Most of the factories and mines are spread on the eastern part of the town towards the railway station and Rayavaram village.10

PHYSICAL AND GEOGRAPHIC CONDITIONS OF MINES AND THE SURVEY AREA:

The thirty four slate mines under study are spread over four mandals namely earlier part of Kurnool, Guntur and later after formation of Prakasam district in 1970, they came under Prakasam district Markapur, Tarlupadu, Konakanamitla and Donakonda in the Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh. These four mandals have similar geographical and climatic characteristics, but fall in two separate revenue divisions, while Markapur mandal is in Markapur revenue division and the remaining fall under Kandukur revenue division. These mandals were this district is bounded on the north by Guntur district, on the south by Cuddapah and Nellore districts and on the west by Kurnool district and on the east by the Bay of Bengal. The district lies between 15 degrees and 16 degrees north latitude and 78°.43’ and 80°.25’ eastern longitude. The present slate mines falls in an upland area consisting of large tracks of low shrub forests diversified with rocky hills and stony plains which form a distinctive feature of the district. Ninety percent of the soil is red and rocky whereas only five to ten percent is black soil. Most of the soil is not suitable for agricultural crops due to poor irrigation facilities and poor ground water levels. The land looks like a waste land in the form of hills, shrubs, stony plains and hence not suitable for cultivation of the agricultural crops. The structure of soil is rocky and hard rather than loose and sandy. The water retention power is low. The average rainfall is very low such as 650mm. as per the weather forecast office.
at Ongole (district head quarters) and the department of agriculture, government of Andhra Pradesh. Most of the rainfall occurs during the south west monsoon season. The rainfall is low, erratic and uncertain leading to severe water problem and drought. Only one river flowing is Gundlakamma, which is not trapped properly. Government has taken up Velugonda project for trapping water from Krishna River and from rains.\textsuperscript{11}

**EXTENT OF CHILD LABOUR IN MARKAPUR SLATE MINES:**

The slate mines are spread over a vast area covering nearly 2600 acres in four mandals namely Markapur, Tarlupadu, Konakanmitla, Donakonda of Prakasam district. About seventy five percent of the population, from nearly forty villages depends on the work in slate mines. Out of this about twenty five to thirty percent are children. The following are main villages from which the children are employed and the sample mines are situated nearer to these villages.

Rayavaram, Thummalacheruvu, Chennareddipalli, Kethagudipi, Kalajuvellapadu, Garladinne, Markapur, Darimadugu, Yachavaram, Pothalapadu, Donakonda,

Gajjalakonda, Kondivaripalli, Tarlupadu, Meerjapeta, Gollapalli, Rettlapalli, Peda obayapalli, Rolagundapeta, Malavari palli, Obayapalli, Gorrelamadugu, Goguladinne, Surepalli, Nayudupalli,

\textsuperscript{11} Jagruthi society- Activities at Markapur and the outline of ILO-IPEC action program, position paper-District collector Ongole-1999, pp.5-7.
Mannevaripalli, Moddulupalli, Ganugapenta, Chilakalapalli, Bhuvanapalli, Anantavaram, Budhapalli, Pedanagulavaram, Lakshnakkapalli, Rammakka palli, Konakanmitla. The work in mines (whether writing slate or design slate) involves the following five stages.

1. To mine the stone and remove the raw slate layers.

2. To carry the slate stones to outer area.

3. To carry the wastage like dust, mud and stone chips etc from the mines.

4. Transportation of stones from mines to house holds units and factories.

5. To cut the raw slates into required sizes and packing.

Generally women and female child labour are employed from third to fifth stages. The state government usually lease out the mines to few individuals for few years. For instance the major portion of the mines at places like Kethagudipi, Pothalapadu, Rayavaram, Meerpeta and Chennareddipally are leased to the family of Buchirayam (who has migrated from Nellore district) and they enjoys the lease rights.

The lease holder will give the mine on sub-lease system to the local people. The leading industrialists at Markapur R.Venkata reddy, Chinnakasi reddy, Gayam Venkatreddy are some sub lease holders. These sub lease holders give the small patches ranging from 40feet*
40 feet pit to the pit owners like Marri Subbarayudu, Ch.Guravaiah. They in turn employ the labour who is from vaddera community including child labour depending on the nature of the work with minimum wages.

The connection between the labour and original lease holder does not exist. The village labour leaders who maintains group of children, were developed by the pit owners according to castes like Reddys, Vedderas, kappus, SC/ST and others.

For instance, in the harizanpalem (place where some particular sect of people stay and is named after the sect) of Kethegudipi village, a batch of twenty to fifty children are registered under a lady leader. She will send the child labour to different mines.

The mine work is carried out in between 7:00am to 6.00pm. The children are employed with wages of Rs.40/- to Rs.80/- per day. The labour leaders (who sponsor the child labour) do not keep the list of those working children, under their supervision, beyond a week. The slate mine workers are kept not only in perpetual bonded situation, but also forced to work. Since the labour usually borrow money from pit owners and hence they have to work hard to repay the money. The mine owner does not keep any attendance registers. The mines are very steep from 30 to 70 ft and work is carried out in a crude and unscientific manner. In case of any injuries, minimum medical facilities are not available near the mines. Besides injuries
and deaths which are the main occupational hazards, the mine workers mainly children are prone to respiratory problems. The women workers complain of disorders and abortions as they are working from childhood. The development of design slates, used in building construction work, has given foreign market to Markapur slates. This has tremendously increased the demand for child labour also in the mines.¹²

**MANUFACTURING PROCESS AT FACTORIES AND HOUSEHOLD UNITS:**

The manufacturing process of slate consists of three different stages. The first stage is mining. The child labour is mostly used in the mining process. The second stage is cutting of the raw slate layers into required sizes which, perhaps is one of the most hazardous job undertaken in slate manufacturing process. The third stage of the writing slates requires polishing, applying black color, fixing in wooden frame, enameling etc. In present days the third stage is not taken up but in place, design slate manufacturing is taken up. This design slate needs polishing of outer edges and cutting them to required size. The three stages will carry twenty steps and each step exhibit wide varieties of work with regard to nature of working processes and type of material and workers are employed as per requirements as observed by the researcher at mines and factories. As

¹² Markapur, combating child labour problems- Position paper of NCLP-1997 and observation at mines and details got from supervisors at the mines.
noted earlier the cutting of raw slate layers into required size is most hazardous job. In most of the cases the rough slate layers are cut into different sizes, mostly in open spaces without any shelters such as near the mines, near the houses or nearer to the factory premises. This is done with the help of simple hand tools. While cutting the slate, the worker is bent over it and directly inhales the dust particles of the slate stones. A considerable section of children below the age of fifteen years are employed.

**Stone writing slate manufacturing process:**

In the manufacturing stages, the first stage involves in cutting the layers of slates of required thickness and cutting into different sizes 6” * 4”; 7” * 5”, 8” * 6” and 9inches * 7inches or according to the orders. Mud polishing and nice polishing are the two next main stages. In these two stages the main task is to polish the surface of the raw Slate. The difference is that while in mud polishing stage the raw slate is turned into a smooth one with the use of machinery, and in nice polishing the smoothening is done by hand with use of small stones. The children, mostly girl children, are employed in these polishing activities. In the manufacturing of writing slates, the coloring is done mostly in house hold units. The black color is made by mixing various ingredients containing powder obtained by burning the tree leaves, and a seed from a tree and some chemical powder. After coloring, the writing slates are fixed in wooden frames process of cutting, polishing and fixing in wooden frame is extremely hazardous.
More than seventy percent workers employed in this work, have respiratory diseases. The complete space where these processes are being carried out is completely with wood-particles and polish powder particles and workers are covered with dust. Fixing nails is another important stage were only children are employed, especially girl children. The employers prefers children because they say children are particularly suitable to take up this work, as they can hold tiny nails very easily (they say as nimble fingers) which compared to adult workers.13

**Manufacturing of Card Board, Enamel and Plastic Writing Slates:**

These units are situated at Markapur town. The essential inputs like tin, metal and plastic boards are brought from places like Bombay and Calcutta. The first stage in the slate manufacturing is cutting tin or plastic or cardboard into required sizes as per the order. These sized pieces are sent to acid oxidation. Mostly children aged below fourteen years are working here.

They are given certain amount of work for specified period. The slates are then painted by liquid paint. These slates are kept in heat chambers (kilns) at 670 degrees Celsius for ten to fifteen minutes. This work is also entrusted to child labour. Finally these slates are taken to moulding machine in order to fix the frame of different

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colors. After fixing the frame, the extra edges came out of frame are removed by female child labour. An interesting aspect of these units are that children and women are brought to work by a contractor, who provides them work for ten to fifteen days in one factory and latter on, he takes them to other factory for the same type of work. The contractor in turn distributes the wages to the children, after deducting some amount as his commission.

**DESIGN SLATE MANUFACTURING:**

The design slates are mainly used in building construction, as a decorative wall design. It is mainly attracting the foreign market. The design slates are now exported to Sri-Lanka, China, Japan and Arabian countries. Hence it has become a major and main product of manufacture of Markapur slate mines. At every stage of this manufacturing, child labour is increased in four folds than employed in writing slate manufacture.

The raw slates are cut into sizes in the factories or outside the mine itself.

The cut raw material is sliced into thin sheets by slicing machines. At every stage of manufacturer, for lifting the mud and slate pieces from mine and machines at factory, cleaning the machines, disposal of waste material, the child labour is employed. Use of child labour is increased in grading and packing the slate.
HAZARDOUS OCCUPATIONS-SLATE MANUFACTURING:

Every stage of operation from raw material to packing is a hazardous operation. The mining work at very deep and steep ranging from thirty to seventy feet is very much dangerous and hazardous. Accidents are common phenomenon and child labourers are forced to live in miserable conditions through out their life, if any accident takes place. Cutting the raw slate layers into required sizes is one of the hazardous jobs under taken at slate manufacturing units. While cutting, the worker bends over and directly inhales the dust particles of the slate stones. Considerable section of children especially boys are employed in this work. The children are employed at the mud polish stage. Nice polishing is exclusively by women and female children. Coloring is done mostly at household units and is exclusively undertaken by women and girl child labour.

The children are employed in fixing the nails and bolts. The employers prefer children as they can hold tiny nails very easily with their fingers and fix the nails faster when compared to adult workers. Male child labour is employed in enamel, plastic and card board slate manufacturing. The child labourers are contacted with diseases due to their work at unprotected oxidation of slates and dipping in hot water mixed with chemicals and painting work.

The female child labour are employed in plastic slate work, where the excess edges are cut from the slate after fixing the wooden
frames. Children are used in fixing beads and alphabets to the slates and attaching company tags and keeps slates for packing.

The design slate manufacturer has been using child labour at all stages. The average working hours of the children per day is seven to eight hours and extended to ten hours. They will come to work by walking long distances to reach their work places.

About half of the children walk two to three kilometers daily to reach their work place and remaining children are coming by their own or public transport (as per the analysis). Most of the working children especially girls are also made to assist in the house hold work such as fetching water, fire wood, cleansing houses, utensils, washing cloth, cooking etc. In slate mines regarding the daily wages, the children get Rs.70/- to Rs.80/- and most of the children get below Rs.80/- day. However in the factories and companies the wages are based on piece rate system.

Regarding the condition of health, the children in this area are suffering with fever, cough, measles, TB and other respiratory disorders. Sore throat, dis-pigmentation of hair, bleaching of palms and fingers are commonly reported disorders by the working children. They are falling sick very often. Insufficient medical services have forced them to live with the ailments through out their life time.
Children, in the project area, report about body pains, respiratory problems and heart problems.14

**Nature of operations arising from the ownership/lease rights on mines:**

The nature of operations, wage structure and employment in mines greatly vary with the type of ownerships and type of lease rights over the mines. The state government gives the mines to few individuals on lease systems. For instance a major portion of the mines in Kethegudipi, Pothalapadu, Rayavaram, Meerpeta and Chennaraddipali villages are leased out for the families hailing from Nellore and West Godavari districts and local MLA and some other political leaders. They have sub leased the rights to some contractors called pit contractor and some reddy families. In return of sub leasing, the original lease holders get the following benefits from the contractors or pit contractors.

1). Rs.150/ per lorry load ie. 10 tons of slate layers.

2). Rs.50/ extra for each load of writing slate layers.(if writing slate)

The employment of workers and payment of wages to the workers are entirely borne to the pit contractors and sub leased holders. Depending on the nature of work the sub lease holders

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14 NCLP, Markapur-Sensitization program on child labour problems-NCLP, Rayavaram, Markapur.
usually employ 20 to 40 workers. After completion of one pit they abandon that area and move to a new pit. As the employment in the mines of pit contractors depend on contractual terms. There exist no direct connection between original owner or original lease holder and workers employed in various pits. Most of the workers employed in these mines like those extracting the raw slate layers are children and women. Some times contractor, who supply and commands a group of children, is employed with some contract and hence even the pit contractor has no direct connection with child labour employed. Information obtained from different village child labour contractors brought to light that workers belonging to various castes like Reddys, Vadderas, SC/ST, Kapus and others have distinct groups under the sole control of their caste leaders. Under each group twenty to forty children and few women are employed.

The work in mines is carried out in single shift. The shift extends between 7:00 am to 6:00 pm. Thus shift has work for ten to eleven hours. Interval for rest and lunch is provided within these working hours but of no fixed time. Children get wages less than that of adult. The leaders of child labour or supervisors do not maintain the attendance registers or keep the list of those working under them. Mine workers are not entitled to welfare benefits like PF, ESI. Mines act 1952 is applicable to all the mines, but there is no effective machinery ensuring the proper implementation of legal provisions related to the slate mines. Minimum wages act does not apply to the
slate workers. Consequently, the slate mine workers are forced to live in dire-economic conditions.

Even though all members in a household find employment in slate mines, their earnings are not sufficient to meet their basic necessities. Slate mine workers often borrow money from their mine owners or local money lenders. Sometimes this amount extends beyond Rs.10,000/- and because of this debt the mine workers are put in a difficult situation.

Firstly they cannot demand high wages. Secondly they cannot change the employer, unless he/she redeems the loan which is owned either to the mine owner or pit contractor. Most of the slate mine workers are thus forced to live in bondage. In case of any accident causing instant death or injury, it is very difficult of find the name of the worker injured as there is no record of that worker. The mines are very deep and steep ranging from thirty to seventy feet. The entire work in the mines is carried out in a crude, unscientific manner without providing for safety measures. Most of the mines are deep without any proper stair case or steps. The result is that accidents or injuries are a quite common phenomenon in the mines. In any case of any fall, or accident, death is the instant result. In case of any injuries, minimum medical facilities are not available near the mines. In case of major accident, the worker’s family usually gets nothing in the form of accident compensation and further no attempt is made to bring such cases to the notice of authorities and police.
The mine workers are prone to respiratory problems, body aches. To overcome their body aches the child labour are prone to alcoholism. Many children complained of hard sores in palms and fever and cough.

The development of design slates and tiles and factories further increased the demand for raw slate layers and consequently the employment of children in the mines has increased greatly. The children have also become in-charges of family taking care of the family debt payments etc. Hence they have been in perpetual elderliness and think of marriage. This has led the child marriages, which has become a common practice. The girl children below age of fifteen are becoming mothers. (case-study-5). This is giving scope for the uncertain social system and most of the future of the children is lost. To conclude, the factors associated with socio-economic structure coupled with the local political conditions are indeed the main reason for the continuation of high intensity of child labour in the project area.\(^{15}\)

\(^{15}\) Sensitized labour market for children-Is it a demand side creation? A case study of slate industry in Markapur, Andhra Pradesh- Suman Chandra-1993 (pp.6-12).