CHAPTER-VI

CHILD LABOUR WORKING IN ROAD SIDE *DHABA*:
A SURVEY
National Highway No. 5 (NH 5) connects the two metropolitan cities of Chennai & Kolkata and passes through the State of Orissa. For administrative convenience, Orissa with an area of 155,707 sq. Km. is divided into thirty districts. The N.H.5 passes through seven districts namely Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Cuttack, Khurda and Ganjam.¹ There are altogether twelve national highways in Orissa covering 3192.905 Kms. The N.H.5 is the oldest and the longest one covering 465.060 Kms.² The starting point of NH 5 in Orissa is Girisola in Ganjam district. It terminates at Jharpokharia in Mayurbhanj district, where it enters Jharkhand after the Jamsola gate.³

¹ See Appendix - I (Orissa Map)
² See Appendix-II (Proforma)
³ See Appendix III (Statement)
NH 5 is the main highway used for transporting goods from Chennai in Tamil Nadu to Kolkata in West Bengal along the Coromondal coast. The goods are transported by lorry services i.e., parcel vans, open trucks, long trailers, tankers etc. Therefore, to cater to the needs of lorry drivers, many dhabas or cheap roadside eateries have been put up, so that the lorries can be parked near the dhabas and drivers can take their meals. Sometimes they can also take a little rest and stretch their aching limbs. Almost all the dhabas provide services day and night to the lorry drivers.

The researcher chose this project because it is a comparatively unexplored area, as also because child labour is generally engaged by dhaba owners because it is cheaply available. The researcher has had to take great pains to move from Jamsola to Girisola across a distance of nearly 460 Kms from end to end. The scholar has also had to face a lot of problems in getting all information regarding child labour working in different dhabas because the owners looked at the scholar with great suspicion apprehending the scholar to be an officer of the Labour department out to book them for infringement of rules and file a case against them. Most dhaba owners did not allow the scholar to take snaps of their dhabas or of the children working there. With great
caution, some of the photos/snaps were taken of the children working in the dhabas in a casual manner so as not to arouse any suspicion. The researcher also collected data on the dhaba and child workers working in the respective dhabas by asking questions casually and indirectly both to the child worker as well as dhaba owner. For the sake of convenience, the researcher started his study from one end i.e., from Jamsola Gate in the north and proceeded southward.

6.1 Dhaba near Jamsola Gate

There are seven dhabas situated on the Orissa side of the border. Rest of the dhabas are situated across the border, in Jharkhand. As lorries are to obtain a gate pass from the Officer at Jamsola Gate, either to enter Jharkhand or Orissa, it requires a long time due to cumbrous official procedures. Therefore, at any point of time not less than 70 lorries are waiting for fairly long periods to obtain clearance to pass on. So the dhabas function round the clock in providing tea, snacks, lunch, or dinner to the lorry drivers and their helpers who perforce stop at the gate. Of the seven dhabas situated in Orissa, Badal Ghose Dhaba was selected for this research work.
There are only two child workers working in the said dhaba. Both belong to West Bengal. Their names are Ranjit Bera & Jadav Bera, 12 and 14 years old respectively. Badal Ghose, the owner of the dhaba, was interviewed along with Ranjit Bera and Jadav Bera. Both the children work either in cleaning the plates and cooking utensils or in helping the cook prepare the food.

They hardly get time to take rest. Usually, they occupy the cots meant for the lorry drivers, provided the cots are not occupied. Otherwise, they have to sleep on the floor. The researcher found that both the workers are allowed to take rest only at around 2 AM till early morning only i.e., 5 AM. after which they have to serve morning tea to drivers. They get Rs. 350/- per month as wages along with food. At night both the workers bid to fetch spirits and liquor for the drivers from the nearby liquor shop.
6.2 Dhaba at Jharpokharia

Jharpokharia Chhak is the junction of NH 5 and NH 6, which connects Mumbai with Kolkata via Sambalpur. It is situated under Jharpokharia Police Station of the Mayurbhanj District. There are only Four dhabas located near the junction. It is open till midnight. One of the dhabas is known as Tikli dhaba after the name of its owner. This has been chosen for the research work. There are only two child workers working in the dhaba. One of the workers is eleven year old Sri Sunil. He alone was available when the researcher reached the dhaba. The other worker had gone home as he was not keeping well. Both the workers are from a nearby village. They got only Rs. 250/- as monthly wages along with food. Both the workers either help the cooks prepare food or in cleaning the dishes and plates. The owner allowed the scholar to ask Sunil some questions after being told the purpose and nature of the study. Sunil said that he manages to sleep on the bench, and that he usually took his dinner at 1.00 AM., when all lorry drivers had either left the dhaba or had slept. Sometimes he was called by lorry drivers to massage their tired limbs. His interest and willingness in massaging was clear because he earns good tips out of it. He also serves country and foreign liquor to the drivers. He works here as his father insists on the
work, even against his will. He was reading in a nearby school.

Plate No.3: Tikili Dhaba, Jharpokharia- Mayurbhanj.

6.3 Dhaba at Baripada

Baripada town is the headquarter of the Mayurbhanj district. The national highway bypasses the small town. The bypass has only four dhabas situated beside it. The researcher selected only one dhaba as a large number of lorries were parked near it. The owner of the Dhaba is a Bihari popularly know as Fathu, for which the dhaba is known as Fathu dhaba. When the researcher reached the dhaba it was about 2 PM. and the dhaba was crowded by lorry drivers and helpers. Many were in a fairly drunken stage. Only one 13 year Scheduled Caste old boy, named Kamala See, was busy
providing water, onion to the customers dining. He was also washing the plates and supplying drinks to the lorry drivers. His monthly remuneration, as was stated by Fathu in response to an indirect question, was Rs. 600/- only. The dhaba owner did not allow me to talk with Kamala See, the child worker. However, Fathu informed me that Kamala See is the son of one Paramasewar See who owns a patch of agricultural field in a nearby village. Two brothers of Kamala See are reading in a nearby school where as Kamala See came here with his father to work here. The usual working hours of Kamala See were from 10 AM. to 10 PM i.e., 12 hrs.

Plate No.4: Fathu Dhaba - N.H.5, Baripada, Mayurbhanj.
6.4 Dhabas in Balasore

Two Dhabas namely, Shakti Dhaba & Saptagiri Dhaba were selected for this research work in the district of Balasore. One of the dhabas is situated near Fakir Mohan University and the other near Birla Tyres which is an industrial area. Lorries come to the area either to unload or load goods. Both the dhabas are well known dhabas due to good preparation of food and the excellent services provided day and night.

6.4.1 Siva Shakti Dhaba

Kuna Das is the owner of Siva Shakti Dhaba. Two children are engaged in serving food and they were each paid Rs.400/- per month. The working hours for both the child workers was from 5 p.m to midnight, the peak hours for business.
6.4.2 Saptagiri Dhaba

It is a larger dhaba in comparison with Siva Shakti dhaba. It provides food as well as toilet facility to lorry drivers and helpers. The owner has, therefore, employed nearly nine persons for cooking, serving food and cleaning the plates and dishes. Out of the nine, four are child workers. All the four workers are between 10 and 14 years of age. The owner did not allow the scholar to speak with the children. However, after staying there for nearly an hour, their names were ascertained. These were Baya, Makara, Madan and Chakra. That they were from nearby villages could be ascertained from the cook. The fathers of all the workers were employees of Birla Tyres. They come every month to the Dhaba to collect the money only.
6.5 Dhaba at Bhadrak

Sagar Inn is situated near Bhadrak town. It is not like other dhabas, and is fashioned more as a regular restaurant. Food available is costlier than those found in dhabas. Facility for taking rest is also not provided. There is only one child worker working in Sagar Inn whose name is Banguru. Banguru is aged about 13 yrs. He had been brought by his grandfather who is a drunkard. He collects the money from the owner of the dhaba every month. Bangaru only clears the tables and cleans the plates. His service is required whenever there are customers in the dhaba, be it day or night. Since Banguru stays in the dhaba, he is always available for work even for 24 hrs.

Plate No. 7: Sagar Inn Dhaba, Bhadrak
6.6 Dhaba at Panikoili in Jajpur District

Ganga Restaurant is more or less just like a dhaba situated in Panikoili. Only one child is working in the dhaba for cleaning the plates and serving tea. His name is Akhaya Das, son of one Kailash Das. The dhaba owner did not allow the scholar to take snaps of the child and when he came to know that photo of the dhaba had already been taken threatened dire consequences if the scholar did not leave the area immediately.

Plate No.8: Dhaba named Ganga Restaurant- Panikoili, Jajpur.
6.7 **Dhaba at Cuttack**

Anand Dhaba is situated between Cuttack & Bhubaneswar. The owner Sri Anand Chandra Sahu received the scholar warmly and allowed the scholar to speak with the workers working in the dhaba. There were eight workers working in the dhaba and Anand Sahu, owner confidently said that no one working in his establishment was below the age of 14. Anand Sahu knows that employing Child Labour below the age of 14 in the dhaba during the night is illegal. He said many Govt. Officers take their food there, and therefore, he could not possibly infringe rules so blatantly with impunity.

But it is found that owners often conceal the age of the workers which can be seen from the photos attached below.

*Plate No.9: Dhaba named, Hotel Ananda, Vanapur, Cuttack*
6.8 Dhaba of Khurda District

In the heart of the capital city and near by city area there are 7 road side dhabas which provide day and night services to lorry drivers and helpers. Apart from that, many persons from the city come to the nearby dhaba during night to take their dinner due to the good food and cheap rate. But the researcher realised that as the dhaba owners permit the customers to consume liquor inside the dhaba premises and supply liquor to the customers, many persons usually come to the dhabas for dinner with drinks. The researcher opted "Maa Dhaba" as it is one of the dhabas among others.
where a good number of people and lorry drivers are taking their meals.

"Maa Dhaba" is situated in Patrapada which is only 12 Km from the Bhubaneswar railway station and it is just beside NH 5. Sri Arabinda Samal, owner of the dhaba was very cordial and allowed the researcher to put some question to his employees and even allowed taking a anap. There are nine persons employed for different purposes like cooking, supplying and cleaning. Out of nine employees, there are only two child workers working in the dhaba. They work only during the day time i.e., from morning to evening nearly 10 hrs with a daily rated wage of Rs. 20/- (Twenty only) with food.
Plate No.12: Rambha Dhaba, Ganjam

Plate No.13: (GIRISOLA) Unified Check Gate, Govt. of Orissa, NH 5, Jurisdiction of Collector, Dist. Magistrate, Govt. of Orissa, Ganjam, beginning Andhra Pradesh.
6.10 Girisola Gate

Girisola gate is situated in the Ganjam district, bordering Andhra Pradesh.

An Overview:

After extensive studies along the NH 5 it is observed that the child labour working in roadside dhabas work basically to earn money for his family. Such work is either done voluntarily, or on being compelled by his family. The compulsion from the family arises because the parents are unable to maintain him and view every individual as an economic asset, a potential bread winner. Most of the children working in the dhabas are not in a position to take the minimum amount of rest due to the arduous and uncertain nature of their job. Nor do they any of the creature comforts that could have made their lives less miserable. They are, as a rule, ill-clad, unkempt, and thoroughly dishevelled. Employers are not permitted by law to engage child labourers for work after sunset. But in almost all dhabas, whether owners admit the fact or not, all the child labourers are found to work beyond midnight. No employer has even hinted to the researcher about any medical facility provided to the child workers. The dhaba owners have admitted the fact that if the workers suffer even from fever, the workers have to go home, which means they are
unattended and possibly not paid for the period. Therefore, it is submitted that the appropriate authorities take due note of the abuse of the child workers and that measures are taken to ensure implementation of the laws to protect children and their health as the established law of this country provides for.

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