Chapter – 4

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE FACTORY OWNERS AND CHILD LABOUR

To obtain the unbiased and detailed information about the socio-economic conditions of factory owners and child labours, I took the interviews of the factory owners and seven in-depth case studies were also undertaken. I put the question to the factory owners about their previous and present economic status, how they grow economically and socially and so on.

Child labours were also interviewed and observed with respect to their socio-economic status.

In the first section the socio-economic profile of the factory owners will be discussed along with the socio-economic profile of the child labours.

4.1 Demographic Trends of Respondents

Ansaris constitute 40 per cent of the total Muslim population of the district, and 90 per cent of these Ansaris are in one way or the other related to some aspect of dari (cotton carpet) making. About 25-30 per cent of Ansari population make up the portion of factory owners, while the rest are involved in manufacturing.

The average family size of factory owners is seven members. Very few have four-five members. Among the respondents interviewed it was found that most of them (80 per cent) are first generation businessmen, while only around 20 per cent have inherited the businesses from their families. Most of these business owners are young; and are of the opinion that since large number of
people are required to handle the businesses. Therefore they have large families. Out of the total number of factories surveyed, 15 per cent are under Hindu’s ownership and they also have large families like those of the Muslims.

4.1.1 Age Trends

At the time of field work it was found that 75 per cent of the respondents are in the age-group 40-50 years, and only 25 per cent of the population came from the age group 26-40 years.

The members of the 25 per cent (i.e. the members who are in the age group of 26-40 years) group do not independently run their factories, rather, they seek consent and guidance from their elders, that is the 75 per cent (the people who are in the age group of 40-50 years) group. At the time of decision making, both the groups have to be present to perform their duties.

The average marriageable age here is 25-30 years for males. According to a respondent, Rafeeq, the proper age for males should be 25-30 years and for females 18-24 years at the time of marriage. A marriage at the appropriate time plays a positive role in the development of a new generation. A considerable number of marriages have been taken place between these two broad age groups.

4.1.2 Housing Conditions

Most of the factory owners are concentrated in Pakka Bagh, Qaziara, Sheikh Sarai, Patiya, and Nawan tola areas of old Sitapur. A few factory owners have built their houses in New Sitapur, while some reside in Khairabad and Laharpur. Businesses is not carried out from the houses. The houses are
big, spacious and well maintained. The luxuries of life such as air conditioners, modern cars and other basic necessities such as refrigerators and televisions are found in all these homes. Most of the housing establishments enjoy joint family status. In fact, during the survey of the locality of respondents from this group, it was found that no nuclear families existed. Inside these houses, the families which are basically joint families, enjoy several facilities which are typically the mark of nuclear families, such as separate cooking areas, drawing rooms, vehicles etc.

Although more than 70 per cent of the factory owners have their ancestral plots, it is not at all necessary that they build on this particular land only. As a matter of fact, it was found that 30 per cent of these people had bought their own plots of land to build houses. Although the houses are big and a great emphasis is laid by the owners on their standard of living, the areas around the houses are not usually clean; this is because of their location in the older areas of Sitapur, where the roads and streets are yet to be concretized.

Businesses are carried from factories and godowns which are located away from these houses.

4.1.3 Health

Health gets its due attention by the factory owners. Although many of them have not been inoculated during their childhood, they are aware of and concerned about their children’s immunization, and consult experienced doctors. For ailments such as cough, cold, fever, diarrhea, etc, they consult the best physicians they have in town; and for complicated cases or chronic ailments, they consult doctors in Lucknow and even Delhi. It has been
observed that a number of our respondents suffer from heart ailments; some have renal problems while some others suffer from sugar problems. In the past five years, there have been a couple of deaths due to heart and renal problems.

A notable fact was that though these people work in dust infected areas, no evidence of asthma, tuberculosis or bronchitis were found; the reason for this being that manufacturing processes such as weaving, knotting and clipping are not carried out in factory premises. Also, offices for conducting businesses are located in the very front area of the factories. Dyeing, collection and packaging are usually done at near end of the factories. The work done in the factory is supervised once or even twice a day by supervisors appointed by factory owners.

4.1.4 Education Trends

To make an assessment of the social and technological advancement of the factories, the literacy rate of the respondents was examined. The respondents were divided into 3 categories, the first category belonged to those who had received no education at all, the second category was of those who had been to school for some period of time but had dropped out, the last category was of those who had successfully completed their education, and were either graduates or post-graduates.

It was found that around 40 per cent of the respondents came into the first category. They had not received any education and their parents had also not been aware of education and its benefits. However, those who are aware of the benefits of education, but their financial conditions did not allow them to
avail education. When asked as to how they conducted their official paper work, they replied that they had appointed ‘munims’ (clerks) for this purpose.

It was found that 35 per cent of people belonged to the second category i.e. those people who had joined school, but had dropped out for one reason or the other. About 95 per cent of these respondents said that they had left off their education to support their parents, in their businesses. Some of these respondents had completed high school, and some had gone upto the intermediate level. None of the respondents had gone to any higher level of education, 5 per cent of this group could not provide accurate information regarding their drop out status.

25 per cent of people interviewed belonged to the third category and they were found to have completed their graduation and postgraduation degrees. These people have received education because their parents had realized the merits and demerits of education. In this category both males as well as females are educated.

4.2 Economic conditions of the Respondents

Economically the respondents were found to be financially strong. Except for a few factory owners, most of the respondents have worked hard to expand their business.

The respondents are economically very strong. They expand their business and thus become financially strong. In this section the previous and present economic status of the respondents will be discussed.
4.2.1. Previous Economic Status

As already mentioned earlier, barring 2-3 respondents, the majority of them have set up their businesses themselves. About 25-30 years ago, the *dari* (cotton carpet) industry was not as well established as it is today, although the district has always been known for its *dari* (cotton carpet). The mode of production differed greatly from the present mode.

In the past, due to shortage of finances, the *dari* (cotton carpet) manufacturers dyed the yarn in their houses with the help of their family members. After this, the yarn was distributed to the weavers for weaving. Knotting and clipping was once again done in their homes. Then the completed *dari* (cotton carpet) was sold on cycles in the *Durrie Mandi* (*dari* (cotton carpet) market). Business, then, used to be carried out from homes, and all family members were involved. *Dari* (cotton carpet) making was then a very slow process and hence the production of the *dari* (cotton carpet) was a slow one. However, the factory owners worked hard to improve their economic situations.

Some factory owners took loans from the bank, while some mortgaged their properties. With the money they got, they concentrated on improving their productions. They improved the quality of their yarns, hired skilled workers and increased their numbers to expand their business. They made efforts to increase their contacts with parties which could help them generate more business. They tried to complete their orders on time in order to receive more orders. The profit money generated from their business was put back into the factory for enhancing production.
**Gufran**, a factory owner, said that in the past business was difficult, and the *dari* (cotton carpet) that he sold did not fetch him the required rates. But when he came into contact with parties from Panipat and Rajasthan, they suggested that he can take loans or mortgage his property to enhance production. Having followed this advice and worked hard, Gufran is now a successful businessman with an annual turnover of more than one crore; and all this is in a span of 20-25 years.

### 4.2.2 Present Economic Conditions

The present economic conditions of most of the respondents is sound. All the respondents now use their own capital to enhance their business, but sometimes to meet large production, in the beginning, they may use money from the yarn dealers or avail mortgages. Earlier, about 10 years ago, only two or three respondents do export work. But now, about 50 per cent of the respondents have started export work.

Improvement in their financial conditions have led them to educate their children, who then get involved in the family business, thereby finishing the demand for outside help. However, they sometimes still appoint clerks for official work.

Due to increased economic growth, the respondents have a high socio-economic status. Respondents have properties worth crores with many of them having no less than 3-4 four wheelers. They have well established factories and lavish homes. They now use advanced technologies to enhance their production.
Rafeeq Ansari’s firm is one which uses advanced techniques. They have a branch in Delhi and have employed a computer engineers to design their dari (cotton carpet).

The respondents said that they all tried to improve the quality of their dari (cotton carpet), because of the surplus money which they can now utilize for enhancing quality and production. Economically the factory owners have now made themselves very strong.

In the sections which follow; the child labours and their socio-economic conditions have been discussed.

4.3 Socio-Economic Conditions of the Child Labours

The socio-economic background of the child labours is discussed on the basis of information collected during the field work. Various aspects of social and economic conditions of child labour have been taken into account to have indepth knowledge of the prevailing conditions of child labour.

4.3.1 Demographic Characteristics

Ansaris constitute about 70 per cent of the child labour population. The communities of washer men, butchers, barbers and oil pressers constitute the rest of the 30 per cent working population of child labours. It can be observed that at every stage of dari (cotton carpet) manufacturing, the Ansaris play a dominant role, be it as factory owners or middlemen, weavers or child labours. There are two reason which account for this; one is that the Ansaris are in majority in the district; and the second is that they want to bring about the upliftment of their community, so they hire their fellow clansmen, and employ people from other communities only when they have no options available.
The entry level age for child labours into the workforce is 9-14 yrs. None of the respondents surveyed were below 9 years of age. Dari (cotton carpet) industry being the dominant industry in this area, it was found that majority of the population was involved in this occupation. 60 per cent of the respondents were found to be involved in the dari (cotton carpet) manufacturing, while 40 per cent comprised other works such as embroidery work, agriculture, rickshaw pulling, while still others worked outside the villages.

4.3.2 Housing Conditions

It was found that the housing conditions of the child labours were not good at all; 80 per cent of the child labours lived in Kuchcha houses; 15 per cent of the child labours lived in semi-pucca houses and only 5 per cent lived in completely pucca houses. More than 70 per cent householders lived in their ancestral homes, while 10 per cent of the households were setup by purchasing land. 20 per cent of the workers were found living in rented house. The Kuchcha houses have mud walls with thatched roofs. In semi-pucca houses, only one room and in some houses, the toilets were found to be pucca. And in the pucca houses, one or two rooms, along with the toilets were pucca.

Generally, the houses are not so big, most of the houses have one or two rooms, and may be with or without verandahs; a courtyard with toilets was also present; 95 per cent of the houses did not have a proper kitchen. They made use of the courtyard, where there was a wooden stove, for preparing food. They also had makeshift wooden stoves which could be used inside the houses, in case of crisis such as rain and extreme summers and winters; 95 per cent of
the respondents collected firewood from the nearby forests and made use of cow dung as fuel for the stoves.

In remote areas, water facilities are also not adequate. A couple of government hand pipes can be found in such areas. Few houses have installed their own hand pipes, while majority of the respondents use the government hand pipes, wells or neighbour’s hand pipes. All family members at times fetch water when it is needed.

The respondents reported to usually sitting and sleeping on the floors. A few of them used beds. In summer, sheets are used for sleeping on, while arrangements were made in winter for warmer sleeping solutions.

Though the majority of the houses are kuchcha, the surroundings of the houses are kept clean, which, however, cannot be adequately maintained in the rainy season.

It was also observed that there was no electric facility at all, although electricity poles have been erected long back. A block, Parsendipurwa, in Laharpur tehsil, still does not have even electricity poles. All respondents used kerosene oils or candle to light up their homes. Due to this unavailability of light, the working hours, depends upon the seasons.

4.3.3 Educational Status of the Respondents

Undoubtedly, education plays an important role in the life of a person. Education is an important tool for developing the personality of a person, and for inculcating social values in him. It is necessary for a healthy society, and is an important ingredient of social development.
The educational status of child labours was found to be very low. The children worked during school hours and hence, had no opportunity to attend school. A significant factor discouraging children from attending school is child labour, and shortcomings of the education system itself (Yadav, 2005).

Although the enrolment ratio of the students increased by 30 per cent in the past few years, but the literacy rate of the respondents did not show any increase.

According to NSSO (1997), attendance rate of the children are poorest (and dropout rate of the school the highest) in the lower per capita expenditure group in rural areas.

Poor education system, lack of awareness among parents of child labours and the involvement of children in the work force are major factors responsible for keeping the children from joining school on a regular basis. Of about 60 per cent of the children enrolled in various schools, only 35.40 per cent attend school regularly. But even the conditions of these students are not so bright. They are not taught properly because the schools are located in remote areas, with very few teachers and improper classrooms.

Due to the government schemes of scholarship and distribution of cereals, enrolment ratio has increased. And although 75 per cent attendance is compulsory, hardly 30-35 per cent students attend school regularly. The rest of the students attend only on and off, but on the days approaching the day of distribution of cereals and scholarships, the attendance rises considerably. The teachers do raise objections but usually relax the rules on the request of the parents of the students.
Despite the increasing trend of enrolment rate, the literacy rate has shown no rise. The drop out rate begins from the first class itself; only 10-15 per cent manage to complete fifth standard. Female education is lower than the male education ratio. Only 20 per cent of girls have joined the school and hardly 5 per cent girls have completed their education upto fifth standard. Parents are least interested in the education of the girl child because of their so-called traditional values and the domestic works that the girls can put in the household.

4.3.4 Health and Hygiene

I concentrated on two aspects of health programmes and health status; the first was the immunization of the children with vaccines such as BCG, Polio and Tuberculosis; and the second was the awareness of these vaccines, and their importance.

From the field study, it was found that 95 per cent of the population were aware of the vaccination but they gave little importance to immunization. They pointed out that it was not possible for them to take their children all the way to the district hospital at Sitapur, they also said that inspite of not being immunized they were leading healthy lives. When asked about oral polio vaccines, they responded that it would affect the fertility of their children (this was found to be a common myth harbored by the illiterates, especially the Muslims).

About 95 per cent of the children were not immunized against any diseases. It was also found that child labours worked in unhygienic conditions, they constantly inhaled dust, because of this they could suffer from tuberculosis, cough and asthma, but they were still not immunized. When asked
if they consulted doctors when they became ill, they replied that for small illnesses, they did not even take medicines; however, if the illness got serious, they took medicines from the medical stores.

The children lacked proper nutritional diet, because children’s families couldn’t afford it. The children responded that they hardly got milk, eggs etc. for breakfast, they generally had tea with bread and chapattis with vegetables or chutney for the other principal meals. They hardly consumed meat, pulses or rice in their meals. Due to this absence of nutritious diet and presence of heavy workload, the children got malnourished easily.

4.4 Economic Conditions of Child Labours

Having discussed the social aspect of child labours, let us move to the economic conditions of the child labours. In this section, we will deal with the income patterns of the child labour and their families, their land holdings, household conditions, their debt handling and loans.

The economy of Sitapur district is mainly dependent upon agriculture, followed by trade, commerce and industry. Areas far away from Sitapur and its immediate tehsils and blocks are dependent upon agriculture only, while these areas are depend upon trade, commerce and industries. As already discussed in Chapter 2, the business of sugar mills, rice mills and dari (cotton carpet) making industries are flourishing here.

The dari (cotton carpet) making industry, a major business of this area, is also a huge source of employment although it is an unorganized sector. The industry is also very much responsible for the preponderance of child labours.
For the survey to extract the true nature of economic conditions of child employment, 100 households have been taken up for study, out of which 40 per cent are engaged in the *dari* (cotton carpet) making industry, while the rest are employed in other sectors such as embroidery work, agriculture, and working in dhabas and hotels.

The 60 per cent of child labours who are employed in the *dari* (cotton carpet) making professions are involved in knotting. The age for involvement of children into this profession is usually 9-14 years.

### 4.4.1 Pattern of Employment and Income

An attempt has been made in this study to attain indepth information about the economic status of child labours; the reasons and means for coming into this profession, collection of wages etc.

Majority of the workers are not directly recruited by the factory owners; either middlemen or supporters are responsible for their employment. Infact, people who are involved in weaving and knotting themselves contact middlemen or suppliers, for employment, because the more they work, the more they will earn.

Children do knotting and clipping either in their homes or outside their houses. Generally children work outside their houses, because knotting and clipping require supervision. Being indirect employees, they usually do not have choices of place of work. It was not found that children below 7 years take up this profession yet.

Children of the age group 9-14 are usually involved in knotting and clipping and not weaving, because the process of weaving requires long legs,
for which the minimum age is 17-18 years. The forceful crossing of the shuttle of the weft thread through the warp requires considerable strength which normally grown ups possess.

The income of these workers vary from child to child. During the peak season the workers earn more, and naturally off season does not see them earning as much. During the peak season, children work for around 10-12 hours to complete the order given. But despite the load in work, children do not receive overtime.

The average income of the children varies monthly from Rs. 600-650. Some children who were beginners earned lesser wages than their senior; because being beginners they didn’t work as efficiently as their seniors. The average income of the child workers in the beginners category is about Rs. 300/- per month. So, on an average, the daily income of the child worker is Rs. 10/- per day.

Wages are usually collected by their parents from the employers. The children receive pocket money from their parents, when they want something. Otherwise, the rest of the savings is used to run the household. Most of the children work because they have to help raise their socio-economic condition, to help their family.

Since the parents need even this meager amount earned by the children to run the household, many children become permanent earning members of their family. A child labour, Arif (13 years) says that he earns for his family so as to help them, and that is why nobody has the right to interfere in this activity.
An attempt made to know why parents put their children into the workforce, resulted in the reply that since the parent’s incomes were not enough to sustain their household expenditure, the children had to be brought into the work stream.

The average income of the families working in this employment sector ranges from Rs. 2300-2400 monthly. A family with two earning members earn above Rs. 2400-2700. A family with more than two earning members earn between Rs. 2700-3000 in a month. Due to these low wages the parents need additional income, because this will help them in their bid for survival.

4.4.2 Land Holding

Land holding is an important symbol for one’s economic status. The majority of the respondents did not have land except those on which these houses were built left to them by their forefathers. Most of their lands were not more than 1½ bighas each. Land holding were poor because people did not have more than what they needed to survive. So, these people are unable to buy land to strengthen their economic conditions.

4.4.3 Debts

Generally, it is assumed that people borrow form the rich when they need money. But in the research area, it was observed that the respondents avoid taking loans form credit societies and banks, because of the heavy interest rates. They say that they are not in economic conditions to pay off their debt at the allotted time, therefore they do not take loans.

Some respondents did take loans from the district industry offices. Such offices offer the respondents carry interests and loan returning schemes. If
the respondents return their loans on time, then they can get subsidies. The *pradhan* of the area plays an active role in helping people get loans from the district industry office.

Some respondents were also found to borrow money from their better off relatives and friends. Sometimes employers also give money to parents of child labours to oblige them to make their children put in more work, but this usually happens during the peak season of *dari* (cotton carpet) making.