CHAPTER V

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1. Sixty-five per cent of the units are situated on the roadside and thirty-five per cent are situated in interiors which have no good approach roads. Transportation of bricks from such kilns and supply of coal ash etc., to them is very difficult. In spite of such difficulties, the units are established in the interior because of the availability of suitable soil or water in sufficient quantities.

2. The units are concentrated on Hubli-Karwar, Dharwad-Kalghatgi, Dharwad-Haliyal and Dharwad-Alnavar roads. The main reason for such concentration is the availability of soil suitable for brick-making in the above areas. South of Hubli and East of Dharwad, the soil is not suitable for brick production as it is black cotton soil.

3. In 90 per cent of the units visited, only workers or watchmen were available and the real owners were not available. The kilns are supervised by the owners on occasional visits to the units once or twice a day. They rely upon trusted workers.

4. The workers at the site used to be nervous at the very sight of unfamiliar visitors and used to ask the researcher
peculiar questions like, "Are you from a government department?" or "Have you come from tax department?" etc., They were not willing to disclose the name of the owner of the kiln. Most of the kilns were contacted through the people who were close to the kiln owners like the building contractors, engineers, close relatives and friends of the brick kiln owners. Thus maximum efforts were made to collect genuine information.

5. Ninety per cent of the producers have no fixed place for the production of bricks. Every year they go in search of a new area with suitable soil and water.

6. Those having fixed places of production were found to get the soil from distant places but they were having good water supply sources like ponds and natural wells in the places of production.

7. Only the big producers were having their own lorries which were used for carrying soil to the kilns and finished brick from the manufacturing site to the site of the purchasers.

8. Small and medium producers depend to a very great extent on tractors for the transportation of the finished bricks to the sites of the purchasers. These producers feel that the cost of transportation with the help of tractors is cheaper
when compared to the cost of transportation with the help of trucks.

9. Forty per cent of the brick—producers, started brick-making as they were forced to quit their original family avocations. The introduction of power looms eliminated the scope for operation of handlooms and those who were earning their livelihood by operating handlooms now took to brick-making. With the introduction of aluminium and steel utensils, the potters were forced to stop the production of earthenwares and they also took to brick-making as brick making was the only alternative which can be started with little skill and with the use of available resources in the area to a very great extent.

10. The workers are mainly agricultural labourers. During the rainy season they are fully engaged in agricultural operations and during the remaining part of the year they work in the brick kilns. Thus, the brick units provide a good alternative source of livelihood to the landless agricultural labourers during the off-season.

11. The brick industry employs all categories of workers, i.e., male, female and child workers in almost equal proportion. Much training or skill is not required for the workers in the brick kilns. Too much of physical strain is not put on these workers. Some of the activities like soil cutting,
mixing, etc., require more physical strength and such operations are entrusted to the male workers. For carrying water and for carrying green bricks to the kilns, both male and female workers are used. Child labour is used particularly for laying the bricks on the open ground after their removal from the moulds for sun-drying. Both male and female workers are used in the moulding operation.

12. A majority of the workers are members of the same family. In 85 per cent of the units surveyed, the moulding team consisted of husband, wife and their children. The moulding team is paid on piece rate and the amount is paid to the head of the moulding team and the distribution of the amount among the members is completely left to the team itself.

13. Only ten per cent of the units had independent watchmen/supervisors. In the remaining units, the moulding team (family members working in the moulding team) are provided with a shed and are made to stay at the work site and they supervise the kiln throughout the season. Of course, they are paid extra wages for this watchmen duty.

14. The workers are paid on weekly basis. Except for the watchmen wages, the wages of the remaining workers are calculated on piece rate basis but the payment of the wages will be on the Tuesday of every week. Thus Tuesday is
considered as pay day for the workers. As the workers are paid by the quantity of the work done, there is no scope for shirking of work by the workers. Because of this reason, the brick production work never requires close watching by the owners.

15. One moulding team is capable of moulding 2,000 to 3,000 bricks per day of 8 hours. Thus the kiln employing one moulding team, will be in a position to produce about 2,50,000 to 3,00,000 bricks, in one season consisting of 6 to 7 months as the bricks are not produced during the rainy season.

16. To avoid the uncertainty, usually the brick manufacturers make advance payment to the workers, even before the starting of the brick production season. Ten per cent of such workers never turn up. This is one of the usual risks faced by the producer's of bricks. In some cases necessary precaution is taken by the producer making the workers execute a bond before advancing the money.

17. Part of the total requirement of funds is obtained by the brick-manufacturers in the form of advance from the buyers, particularly the building contractors. But these contractors purchase the bricks at very low price and thus it becomes a forced sale. Forty per cent of the units surveyed were suffering from this problem.
18. As the workers are from the same family and usually from same villages, they work with pride, unity and devotion.

19. The relationship between the brick kiln owners/manufacturers and the workers is so cordial that the workers look after the units as their own property. Even by mistake, they never disclose to outsiders those facts which they think are likely to have an adverse effect on the owners.

20. The District Industries Centre (DIC) does not provide any assistance to traditional brick units. They are of the opinion that the traditional brick-making process creates air pollution. They support only machine-made bricks. The traditional brick industry is not considered an industry according to their norms.

21. The brick manufacturers have to raise funds from financial institutions like banks in their own personal capacity and not in the name of the unit as such. The loan is given by Grameena bank and nationalised banks on the personal guarantee of the brick-manufacturer, supported by the guarantee of the surety. Considering the traditional-brick production activity as cottage industry (priority sector), the loan is given to these brick units (in the name of the producer) at 15 per cent interest. But the rate of interest
is not fixed as it is subject to Reserve Bank of India guidelines.

22. One major problem for the financial institutions is the absence of fixed assets for securing the loan.

23. The mobile nature of the brick units is another hurdle in financing this activity. Except for a few units having a fixed place of production, the remaining units are mobile in nature. These brick manufacturers move from one place to another in search of soil and water as per the requirements of brick production. Thus the financial institutions hesitate to advance loans to brick-manufacturing activity.

24. With a little more care and caution, the wastage in the process of production can be reduced and the quality of the bricks improved. If the soil is well cleaned by separating the hard particles, the cracking of the bricks in the process of burning can be controlled. Keeping a close watch on the bricks laid on open ground for sun drying, the destruction of bricks by dogs and other animals can be controlled.

25. The quality of the coal ash available in the market is said to be of low quality. Along with this, the attempt by the brick manufacturers to reduce the cost of production by mixing less quantity of coal ash ultimately affects the
quality of the bricks adversely. If the coal ash is not mixed in required proportions, the burning process is affected, which, in turn, affects the final output.

26. In a very few units the bricks are properly baked to the required degree of temperature. Properly baked bricks attain very nice ceramic quality and are very hard and will be quite durable. Good bricks produce a very nice metallic sound if beaten by a small rod or even at the touch of the fingers. Three to four per cent of the total units produce such good quality bricks and such bricks have good demand in the market and are sold at premium price. DMM bricks in Dharwad is one such example of quality bricks. Hubli bricks are said to be qualitatively better when compared to Dharwad bricks.

27. In spite of the poor quality, the traditional bricks are still demanded as the users are not ready yet to try new substitutes. The preference of the masons and the contractors for the traditional bricks and their multiple uses are the main reasons for the continuing demand for the traditional bricks. The masons and the workers have developed a sort of aversion towards new substitutes, particularly towards the cement blocks. They are of the opinion that the cement blocks affect their skin adversely. Besides they are not familiar with the new substitutes.
28. The increasing population and the consequent increase in construction activity in the twin talukas have equally contributed to an increase in demand for the traditional bricks.

29. Every brick is embossed with some kind of mark, which usually contains the initial letters of the brick manufacturer's name which is useful in identifying the brick of one producer from those of others. These initials work as brand names and help the producers to differentiate their products from the bricks produced by the competitors.

30. Bricks are never advertised by the manufacturers. Big manufacturers having their own trucks have put their brand name (initials embossed on the brick) on the trucks along with the picture of the bricks painted in colour on the body of their trucks. Usually the manufacturers or their agents visit the sites where construction activity goes on and give sample to the potential buyers and sell the bricks to them. They also maintain good contacts with the government contractors.

31. The buyer usually purchases on the recommendation of those who have already used, the bricks or their engineers or their friends. The building contractors usually provide financial assistance to selected brick-producers and buy
bricks from such producers and thus they enjoy a guarantee of supply of bricks in required quantities at highly reduced prices.

32. With the exception of a few contractors, most of the contractors never bother about the quality of the bricks. They buy from the suppliers who are ready to supply the bricks at the cheapest possible price. If the construction activity is supervised by the owner himself, importance is given to the quality of the bricks and the owners will be ready to pay a good price for good quality bricks.

33. Availability of water is one of the important factors affecting the location of the brick units and the quality of bricks is affected by the availability of water. But this factor never affects the quality of the bricks produced.

34. Use of better moulds, proper cleaning of the soil by separating the unwanted hard stones etc. and mixing coal ash in correct proportions will definitely improve the quality of the bricks produced. But ninety-five per cent of the producers are not giving much importance to quality.

35. In spite of gross negligence and the inferior quality of the bricks (traditional) units are flourishing because of the heavy demand for the traditional bricks. The supply of
the traditional bricks has always fallen short of the demand for these bricks. Even poor quality bricks command a good price because of short supply of the bricks.

36. The price of traditional bricks peaks during the rainy season as there will be no production of bricks during the period. But now a few producers have started producing bricks even during the rainy season by providing shed facilities. In spite of this development, the bricks command a good price during the rainy season.

37. Broken bricks also have good demand as they can be used for activities like coba work on R.C.C. roofs etc.

38. Big manufacturers usually supply bricks to the Government and P.W.D. contractors directly. Such big manufacturers are financially very strong and are in a position to wait for the disbursement of the amount by the department, which takes five to six months or sometimes more. These big producers have their own trucks for the supply of bricks and because of the scale in which the bricks are produced, they are in a position to supply the bricks to the government departments at competitive prices.

39. Sincere efforts are going on to introduce better quality cheap substitutes for bricks. Hollow cement blocks, table-cut bricks, and hollow clay blocks and stabilised mud
blocks have come in the market. Hollow cement and solid blocks are manufactured in the Belur industrial estate near Dharwad on Poona-Bangalore high-way. The use of cement blocks in certain activities like construction of compound walls etc., reduces the total cost of construction by reducing the labour charges and by reducing the requirement of costly materials like cement. Plastering of the compound wall will not be necessary when it is built with cement hollow/solid blocks. The Malenad Brick Industries on Hubli-Karwar road is trying to introduce machine made bricks. But so far the impact of the substitutes is insignificant.

40. The agents and other middlemen engaged in the supply of bricks and other building materials buy bricks from the kilns and supply the same to the customers. They usually keep a margin of Rs.50 to Rs.60 per truck load of brick supplied. They always purchase bricks from the brick manufacturers on credit and make payment to the brick manufacturers only after receiving it from the buyers. Usually these agents and middlemen buy low quality bricks at the cheapest possible price and supply the same to the customers at a high price.

41. The customer is likely to be duped by the brick-manufacturers and also by the agents/middlemen if the customer is ignorant of the market conditions and the
prevailing practices. Low quality bricks are supplied at exhorbitant prices and cheat in the number of bricks supplied. The customer will not be in a position to count the bricks properly when the bricks are put in big heaps on the site of the purchaser.

42. The Centre for Application of Science and Technology to Rural Areas (ASTRA), Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) etc. conduct research on development of cheap and good substitutes for bricks. HUDCO has constructed some buildings in Bangalore using stabilised mud blocks and clay blocks which have proved to be cost-saving and better in strength. They are of the opinion that the use of these new substitutes reduce pollution and conserve fuel. For example, coal ash is not necessary for the production of stabilised mud blocks. As the process of production of these blocks does not involve burning, it reduces pollution and fuel consumption.

43. Machine-cut bricks have better load-bearing strength but the price of the machine-cut bricks is almost double that of the traditional bricks. Therefore, they should concentrate more on the production of stabilised mud blocks. The load-bearing strength of stabilised mud blocks (SMB) is better than that of the traditional bricks. Besides coal ash is not necessary for the production of
SMBs. Cement is used as binding material in the production of these blocks and firing process is not required. Because of this, it reduces pollution. SMBs can be produced even during the rainy season. But the production of SMBs requires very close supervision. Adjustment of the sand proportion according to the quality of the soil and of cement requires a good amount of training and technical knowledge. Because of these technicalities, the production of the SMBs is not likely to catch the attention of the entrepreneurs so easily.

44. Small Industries Service Institute at Gokul road, Hubli, is conducting short term entrepreneurship development programmes on traditional brick making but the number of programmes conducted by this institute is very much limited. The traditional brick making process is not encouraged by them because of their adverse effect on environment.

45. The recommendations of the All India Seminar of Brick-kiln Co-operatives held on 15th and 16th March, 1967 at Vithalbhai Patel House, Rafi marg, New Delhi under the Chairmanship of Sri. K. Arunachalam, Vice-Chairman, Khadi and Village Industries Commission, Bombay, for considering the brick industry as an industry (in those states where the brick industry is not considered as industry) and for
providing financial assistance to the brick industry on the security of the stock of coal ash, stock of brick etc., and the recommendations of the said seminar on the formation of a Federation of Brick-kiln Co-operatives were never implemented. It is said the KVIC is advancing loans to traditional brick makers if such brick makers become members of the Primary Co-operative Societies in their respective areas. But the brick manufacturers of the area deny the availability of such facilities.