

GIRL CHILD BONDED LABOUR IN COTTONSEED FIELDS

*A study of two villages in Rangareddy
District of Andhra Pradesh*

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PREFACE

The present study 'Girl Child Bonded Labour in Cottonseed Fields' shows new forms of exploitation of girl children in cottonseed farms. These girl children working in cottonseed fields are subjected to the pressures of the market economy which forces them to join the labour force as cheap labour (in place of adults). All kinds of myths are circulated to ensure that they are made available. It is shocking that these new forms of exploitation are being accepted unquestionably by everyone. We all know that it is uncivilised to pledge a girl child- which has not been done before in this area. Yet, we seem to be accepting it as if it has always been in existence-this must be exposed and condemned and girls need to be liberated.

The MV Foundations attempts in Rangareddy District are currently in the direction of building an atmosphere to enable child labour join schools. One of the ways in which MVF has been doing this is by having camps for out of school children, to prepare them to enter formal schools-into classes according to their ages. In the initial stages, it was far more difficult to give confidence to the parents, as the environment to support the girl child's education was not available. Thus, many children had to protest, cry, sulk, and boycott work to bring pressure on parents. Some even escaped from homes to join in the camps. After seeing the transformation of their daughters, even the most stubborn parent was converted into accepting the stand of the girl children. Now, there is gradually a shift in the social milieu. Seeing the benefits of the programme, several parents are willing to withdraw their daughters from work, and send them to schools.

The MV Foundation has so far been able to withdraw over 5000 girl children from work in all these five years. This summer alone, more than 1000 girls rushed to the bridge course camps. Parents have shown remarkable resilience into accepting their girls in school. They had to make several adjustments but are willing to do so. They aspire for the unfamiliar and hope for a future for their girl children, which they themselves were denied. The most important factor to make this possible is the conviction that girls including those belonging to the poorest families deserve schooling and education. The girls who came out of work are pathfinders, shattering the age-old arguments denying them their basic human rights. Their acts of courage and determination are the seeds sown for the well being of future generations of girls.

There is a lacuna in the preparedness of the education system and the officialdom to receive these children. There are not enough teachers nor are there rooms. Most schools do not have toilets. There is also a lack of sensitivity to the social circumstances and the background of the girls' road to education. In fact, this is true not just of the Education Department, but of the Labour, Welfare, Women, Health, and Police Departments as well. At no time do these departments review their programmes in reference to the girl child. Nor do they see the need to come together and work out a plan of action. Some how, the girl child is unseen and it is time that all institutions are geared to reach out to her and protect her in her endeavour to access schools.

It is in this context that the present study would be of value. It alerts us to the alarming rate at which girls are being employed in agriculture. It is estimated that more than 2,00,000 girl

children in AP are engaged in cottonseed fields alone, as bonded children. In Rangareddy District, this number is about 2,500. I hope that studies of this nature will provide scientific evidence to build a concerted action against child-labour in the region

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INTRODUCTION

A new system of employing girl children as 'bonded labourers' has come into practice in recent years in the rural South India.¹ The main reason for this is the introduction of hybrid seed production - particularly cotton - in this area in the early 1970s. An important feature of hybrid cottonseed production is that it is a highly labour intensive crop and almost entirely depends on labour of girl children. Girl children are employed on long-term contract basis through paying advances and loans to their parents by the seed producers who have agreements with the large scale national and multinational seed companies.

It is estimated that nearly 4 lakh girl children (7-14 years) are employed in cottonseed fields.² This number is greater than the combined total strength of children employed in carpet, glass bangles, gem polishing and limestone industries in India³. 90% of the labours employed in cottonseed fields are exclusively girl children. In no other industry does one find such a high employment of girl children. Of the total labour force in all industries currently known to employ child labour (such as carpet, match, glass, beedi making, gem and stone polishing) children don't exceed 30%⁴. Within this 30%, majority of them are boys. Hybrid cottonseed is the only industry that survives almost entirely on girl children.

Hybrid cottonseed production is concentrated in South India particularly in the Telangana and Rayalaseema regions of A.P. and Northern districts of Karnataka. Telangana and Rayalaseema regions of A.P. alone account for 55% of the seed production in India. The hybrid cottonseed production is concentrated more in Mahaboobnagar and Rangareddy of Telangana area and in Kurnool district of Rayalaseema. Mahaboobnagar in Telangana region, one of the most backward districts in the entire country, ranks first in the production of hybrid cottonseeds. In the year 1997-98, while nearly 40 thousand acres of land is under cottonseed cultivation in the country, 10 thousand acres of cultivation is in the Mahaboobnagar districting alone⁵.

Hybrid cottonseeds are produced through special ways. This seed production and the system of child labour are both interrelated. The main objective of this study is to examine the nature of working conditions of the girl children and the specificity of employing them in certain operations in hybrid cottonseed production.

The report is presented in five sections. The first section describes the various aspects of cottonseed cultivation in the state. The second section gives the details of villages where the survey had been conducted and the details of the seed producers and the girls working there. The third section examines the labour and employers relations in cottonseed production. In the fourth section, the reasons behind employing girl children in the cottonseed fields are examined. Fifth section is devoted to the analysis of the impact of work in the seed production on girl's education and contribution of girl's income to their families etc. Concluding remarks and important observations of the study are presented in sixth section.

SECTION-I

SOME ASPECTS OF HYBRID COTTONSEED CULTIVATION

Crossing two different varieties produces hybrid seeds. The seeds produced in this way will have hybrid vigour and can be used for only one crop. Where as ordinary seeds can be used for any number of crops. Significant differences exist between producing the hybrid cottonseeds and producing the ordinary cotton. Seed crop requires special methods of cultivation. In seed crop, male and female varieties are grown separately and the pollen grains of male flower are crossed with the egg of female flower. Unlike crops such as paddy and jowar, in hybrid cottonseed production, cross-pollination has to be done manually. This is the most important activity in hybrid seed production. In the entire cultivation, this work alone requires 90% of labour and 45% of the capital.

From sowing to harvesting

Two to two and half months after sowing the seed, the plant starts blossoming. Subsequently the flowers keep blooming for seven months. Mean while, the crossing should be done as and when the flowers blossom (the same day or the very next day). Before the female flowers result into fruits, crossing should be done with the male flowers. Otherwise female flowers turn into fruits and produce only ordinary seeds. Every day in the evening, they identify the female flowers that should be crossed the next day and put on polythene bags over them. The next day morning they pluck the male flowers and cross them with the female flowers that have been identified last evening. This job has to be done every day regularly without fail.

Table 1: Crop calendar for different activities in cottonseed cultivation

Different Activities	Time
Ploughing, Sowing	April-May
Fertilising	May
Weeding	July-August
Flower cross pollination	June-January
Spraying pesticides	July-November
Harvesting cotton kapas	October-February

Generally, hybrid cottonseed cultivation starts in the month of April or May. From then onwards, the work regarding this crop keep continuing till January, February of next year (Table-1). In the month of April or May, they start ploughing the land, sowing seeds, applying the fertilisers. According to the necessity, they have to pull out the weeds 4-5 times in the months of July and August. From June and July they have the work of cross-pollination. This work has to be done regularly till the month of January every day. The task of spraying the pesticides would be from July to December to protect the crop from pests. The pesticides are sprayed once in a week or 10 days depending on the necessity. The job of taking out cotton starts from October that continues till February.

Different types of works - requirement of labour days

If we examine the labour days required for each work, 90% of the total labour days are required for the work of cross-pollination alone (Table-2). Total 2216 labour days are required for the cultivation of one acre of hybrid cottonseed crop. Of these, crossing work requires 2000 days (90.2%), 25 days (1.1%) for spraying pesticides, 25 days (1.1%) for weeding, and 100 days (4.5%) for taking out cotton.

Gender division of labour

When we examine the different types of work and the division of labour in them, it is evident that to a large extent the cottonseed cultivation is totally dependent on the labour of girl children. Mostly girl children are employed in the two important major works (cross pollination, picking up cotton kapas), which need nearly 95% of the total labour days (Table-2). Women are mostly employed in the remaining works like sowing seeds and pulling out weeds. Only men are employed for ploughing the land, applying fertilisers and spraying pesticides.

Table 2: Gender division of labour-requirement of labour days for different activities (per acre)

Activity	Gender Division	No. of Labour Days (Approx.)	Percentage
Ploughing	Only adult male	5	0.2
Sowing	Adult females and girls	8	0.4
Fertiliser application	Only adult male	3	0.1
Weeding	Adult females and girls	25	1.1
Pesticide application	Only adult male	25	1.1
Cross pollination	Almost girls	2000	90.2
Harvesting kapas	Mostly girls	100	4.5
Other activities	Only adult males	50	2.2
		2216	99.7

Note: In most of the places in Telangana and Rayalaseema , the girl children are exclusively employed for cross-pollination work. Though there are few areas in Kurnool and Mahaboobnagar districts where boys and adult females also employed for this work their proportion is negligible. Even in these areas also about 90% of the labour employed for cross-pollination work are girl children only.

Cost of production

When compared to other commercial crops like tobacco, groundnut, sunflower etc., more capital is required for cotton crop. Hybrid cottonseed production requires even more capital. Ordinary cotton crop requires around 10-15 thousand rupees of capital per acre, whereas, seed production requires nearly five times more i.e., 50-55 thousand rupees. In this, the expenditure on human labour alone is nearly 52%. The expenditure on fertilisers and pesticides is nearly 28%. The major part of the expenditure on human labour (93%) goes in the form of wages to girls who do the work of cross-pollination, picking kapas etc.

Table 3: Approximate cost of cultivation of one acre of hybrid cottonseed

S.no	Details	Total (Rupees)	Percentage
1	Land rent	4000	8.0
2	Fertilisers	5000	9.9
3	Pesticides	9000	17.9
4	Labour charges		
	a) Ploughing	500	0.9
	b) Sowing	170	0.3
	c) Weeding	425	0.8
	d) Cross pollination	23000	45.7
	e) Harvesting kappas	1400	2.9
	f) Applying pesticides&fertilisers	725	1.4
	Total labour	26200	52.0
5	Others	6000	12.4
Total		50200	99.8

Note: These estimates are for 1996-97 crop year.

The method of marketing

The companies, which produce and sell the hybrid seeds, have proliferated due to the increase in the usage of these seeds in the state in recent years. Apart from the small companies (Gopikrishna seeds, J.K. Seeds, etc.) which are confined to a few districts, bigger agro companies - Proagro, Mahyco Seeds, Padma seeds, Pravardhana seeds, Nallamala seeds, Amarswary Agro Tec. etc., have entered in this field which are selling their products state and nation wide. In recent years many multinational companies such as Monsanto, which have collaborations with the local companies, have also entered in to cottonseed market. In 1997 Monsanto one of the leading multinational seed company entered into collaboration with Mayhco, which is one of India's leading hybrid cottonseed marketing company.

These companies are depending mostly on the local farmers for the production of seeds that they are marketing. They come to a pre crop agreement with the farmers who come forward for the seed production. They buy seeds from these farmers and do the marketing in the name of their company. They explain the farmers before hand the precautions to be taken in the production of seeds. From the farmers, they buy only those seeds that are produced according

to the conditions of their company. In case they get more fake seeds (above 15%) due to problems in seed production, the companies do not buy those seeds. It is the farmers' total responsibility to produce genuine seeds. These companies not only supply foundation seeds to the farmers but also supervise their ways of cultivation. The price of seeds is determined beforehand. After the harvest, the farmers do not have to face problems with marketing, as they would be having agreement already with the companies. Some companies also provide the farmers with some capital.

Yield - profit and losses

Depending upon the type of seed and region, the crop yield varies. In the year 1996-'97, in Parigi Mandal of Rangareddy district in the Telangana region, 'Savitha' one of the popular hybrid variety of seed gave an average yield of 700 Kgs. of cotton per acre. Every 100 Kgs. of cotton gives 70 kilos of seeds and 30 kilos of cotton. According to the agreement with the company, the price of one-kilo seeds is Rs.240 and Rs.60 for one Kg. of cotton. The total income is Rs.1,30,200. After deducting the production cost of nearly Rs.55,000, the remaining Rs.75,200 is net profit. That means there is an opportunity of getting an average of 50% profit. (As there are chances of getting profits on a large scale, many big farmers are migrating from Coastal Andhra districts to the districts of Telangana and Rayalaseema and starting cottonseed cultivation.)

Concentration of cottonseed fields in the districts of Telangana and Rayalaseema

The Green Revolution, which started in the late sixties, has introduced the usage of hybrid seeds. One of the main aspects of Green Revolution is growing crops using hybrid seeds. Initially the farmers belonging to the districts of Guntur, Prakasham and Krishna in Coastal Andhra started using them. From 1965-1980 cotton was grown abundantly in these districts using hybrid seeds. From 1980 onwards, the crop yield started declining in these districts as various kinds of pests started spreading. Since then, many farmers from this place migrated to the regions of Telangana, Rayalaseema and to Raichur and Bellary in Karnataka and started cultivating cotton. Availability of land on lease at cheaper rates, lower labour wages, less prone to pests as cotton was not grown before (pest free zones) etc. have encouraged farmers to migrate to these regions. Usage of hybrid seeds in the cotton crop in these areas is started by only these

farmers from Coastal Andhra. Gradually even the local farmers undertook the cotton cultivation. At present cotton is a major commercial crop in these regions.

Even hybrid cottonseed production also first started in Coastal Andhra and later spread to these regions. The cottonseed cultivation is concentrated more in Mahaboobnagar and Rangareddy districts of Telangana and in Kurnool district of Rayalaseema because of the suitable climate for seed production, availability of lands, most importantly the low labour wages and availability of plenty of child labour. Mahaboobnagar, which is a drought prone area and well known as one of the most backward districts in India, occupies first place in the production of hybrid cottonseed in India. The main reason behind this is the availability of very cheap labour especially working girl children. All the leading companies in the country which produce and market the hybrid seeds are showing a lot of interest for getting into agreement with the farmers in this region to market the seeds produced here. At present in these districts, cottonseed cultivation is carried on mostly by those who have migrated from coastal Andhra.

SECTION-II

SURVEY VILLAGES, DETAILS OF WORKING CHILDREN AND EMPLOYERS

As already explained the role of girls is vital to the cottonseed production. Why are only girls employed in cottonseed cultivation? Under what circumstances are these children working in the fields? What kind of working relationship do they have with their employers? In order to examine these aspects thoroughly we have collected details about the working conditions of these girls working in cottonseed fields in two villages i.e., Madaaram and Chityala in Parigi Mandal of Ranga Reddy district in Telangana region.

Madaaram

Madaaram village is 7km. away from the Parigi Mandal centre and is near the highway that goes to Vikarabad and Chevalla. The total population of this village is 2,336. In that men are 804, women are 871, 350 boys and 311 girls who are under 14 years. There are 472 children whose age is between 5-14. Among them school going children are 369 and non-school going are 103. Among the school going children, there are 203 boys and 166 girls. Among the children who don't go to school, 49 are boys and 54 girls. There are 208 children whose age range between 9-14. 141 children among them go to school. Those who don't go to school are 67. Among those who don't go to school, 32 are boys and 35 are girls. 29 children among them belong to scheduled castes, 37 belong to backward castes and only one comes from forward caste (Table-4).

Table 4: Details of non-school going children in Maadaram village (1997-98)

Caste	Age	Boys	Girls	Total
Scheduled Caste	5-8	3	6	9
	9-14	15	14	29
Backward Caste	5-8	8	6	14
	9-14	10	16	26
Muslims	5-8	5	5	10
	9-14	6	5	11
Forward caste	5-8	1	2	3
	9-14	1	0	1
Total		49	54	103

Source: Child Labour Survey. 1997 M.V. Foundation, Parigi

The total land in Madaaram Revenue Village, which is under cultivation, is 1900 acres. Cotton crop is cultivated in 785 acres in the year 1997-'98. The other crops include jawar, maize, blackgram, chilli, groundnut, red gram etc. Cottonseed is being grown in this village since the year 1987. In the year 1997-'98, two acres of land is under the cultivation of cottonseed. 18 girl children are working in this. In this village, half of the girls who are not going to school in the age group 9-14 are working in these fields only.

Chityala

Chityala village is 12 km. away from the Parigi Mandal Centre and is on the highway, which goes towards Shadnagar. The total population of this village is 1,617. There are 586 men and 607 women. Children below 14 years are 414. There are 317 children whose age is between 5-14. Among them, 224 are school going and 93 are non-school going. Among the school going children, 124 are boys and 100 girls. In non-school going category there are 45 boys and 48 girls. The children between 9-14 years are 165. 74 of them don't go to school. 37 of them are boys and 37 are girls. Among these children, 44 of them belong to Scheduled Castes and 30 belong to backward castes. There is nobody from forward castes.

Table 5: Details of non-school going children in Chityala village (1997-98)

Caste	Age	Boys	Girls	Total
Scheduled Caste	5-8	3	4	7
	9-14	20	24	44
Backward Caste	5-8	5	7	12
	9-14	17	13	30
Muslims	5-8	0	0	0
	9-14	0	0	0
Forward caste	5-8	0	0	0
	9-14	0	0	0
Total		45	48	93

Source: Child Labour Survey. 1997 M.V. Foundation, Parigi

Cotton is the main crop even in this village. Total land under cultivation is 2,050 acres. In the year 1997-'98, cotton crop is grown in 920 acres. Paddy, jowar, maize, red gram, black gram etc. are also grown.

The cottonseed cultivation has started in this village from the year 1992. In the year 1997-98, cottonseed is under cultivation in 5 acres. 35 girl children are working in this. Girls from neighboring villages also come here to work in these fields.

Cotton fields' Subba Rao

The owner of the cottonseed fields in Chityala and Madaaram villages is Chinnam Subba Rao. He is also called as cotton fields' Subba Rao. Subba Rao holds a speciality in the Parigi Mandal. He was the one who started using hybrid seeds for the cotton crop cultivation in this mandal. It is he who also started hybrid cottonseed cultivation.

Subba Rao was a small farmer belonging to Nujillapadu village of Prakasham district in Coastal Andhra region. With some experience in the cotton crop cultivation in his village, he migrated to Madaaram village, Parigi Mandal in the year 1986. Since then he went on growing cotton. In 1986 he started the cultivation of cottonseeds in two acres. As the region was suitable, he gradually expanded the cultivation of cottonseed fields. In the year 1997-98 he is cultivating cottonseed fields in a total of 70 acres in Madaaram, Chityala of Parigi Mandal, Nascal and Doma and ten more villages in Kulkacharla Mandal. There are 13 supervisors who stay in each village and look after the work regarding the fields. All these are those who migrated from the Prakasam District. Subba Rao himself brought all these people for assisting him in the seed cultivation. All of them are his close relatives and friends.

Subba Rao is the manager for all these people. The transactions with the cottonseed companies - investing the capital and all other works are looked after by Subba Rao himself. Presently he is living in the village Chityala. He supervises the seed cultivation by going around all the villages and giving suggestions to the supervisors. Subba Rao and the supervisors share an agreement. According to this agreement, Subba Rao arranges all the necessary capital for the crop. The profit is shared half each by Subba Rao and the supervisors.

Subba Rao not only sells the seeds produced in his fields to companies but also markets the seeds himself through Gopikrishna Seeds Company established by him. He sells most of his yield through other companies and only a small portion through Gopikrishna Company.

Details of the children working in the fields

We have noted that 18 girl children in Madaaram village and 35 in Chityala village are working in cottonseed fields. Among them, there are 19 whose age is between 7-9 years and 34 between 10-14 years.

When we examine the socio-economic background of these children, majority of them belong to the Scheduled Castes. Of the total 53, 26 (48.3%) of them belong to Scheduled Castes and 19 (38.7%) of them belong to backward classes. No child from forward castes is working in the fields (Table-6)

**Table 6: Caste background girl children working in cottonseed fields
In Maadaram and Chityala (1997-98)**

Caste	Age	Number	Percentage
Scheduled caste	7-9	10	19.3
	10-14	16	29.0
Backward caste	7-9	6	12.9
	10-14	13	25.8
Muslims	7-9	3	4.8
	10-14	5	8.1
Forward caste	7-9	0	0
	10-14	0	0
		53	99.9

The details about the families' economic conditions of all the children working in the fields are not available. If we examine the details of 24 families, a majority (70.8%) of them are either landless poor or those who own two acres or less land and depend mostly on wage labour. The remaining families (29.2%) who own land of between 2 to 6 acres mainly have their own cultivation and undertake wage labour for additional income (Table-7).

**Table 7: Class background families of girl children working in Cottonseed fields in
Chityala & Maadaram**

Class	No. of families	Percentage
Landless labour	4	16.6
Poor peasant	13	54.2
Small peasant	7	29.2

Note: poor peasant- those who own below 2 acres and also depend mainly on agricultural labour
small peasant- those who own 2-6 acres and also partly depend upon agricultural labour

SECTION-III

LABOUR - EMPLOYER RELATIONS

Time has changed. These are not the golden days where one can get the work done by threatening, thrashing or scolding the labour. They will revolt if we do like that now. They have a lot of awareness. Even we have to change along with the time. If we respect and look after them well, they too will work well. Otherwise no."

Cottonseed field supervisor, Madaaram.

As already noted the cultivation of hybrid cottonseeds depend mainly on human labour and most importantly on the labour of girl children. Under what conditions are they working in the fields? What kind of relationship do they share with their employers etc. are examined in this section.

Method of taking children into work

The method which is followed by the seed producers for taking children into work is very interesting. When they want to start seed cultivation in any village, they first find out whether there are enough working girl children in the village. Only after that do they consider other aspects regarding the field.

The owners first go to the village and enquire about the children in Harijan colony (where scheduled caste people live) where agricultural labourers mostly reside. They do house to house survey. Their survey is similar to the survey conducted by the government for population census. They find out details like how many girl children are there in every family, their age, whether they would work or not. Later they meet the parents of the children and enquire how many of them would come forward to send their children for work throughout the year. Only after having the confidence of getting adequate number of children for work that they consider the other aspects of the seed production (fertile land, irrigation facility etc.) and then decide

whether to start seed cultivation there are not. Generally they start the cultivation in April or May. This programme of surveying takes place two months before the cultivation is started.

After they decide for seed cultivation, they settle agreements with the parents of the children. In this agreement, they make a strict rule that the children should be sent regularly and only for their work. The daily wages paid to the children also are decided in this agreement. The labour wage is the same throughout the year. They have to work throughout the year at the predetermined labour wages. Wage is paid only for the days worked. Wage is not given on the day when there is no work in the field. With regard to number of working hours per day the agreement is vague. The owners do not specifically mention about working hours. They say that it is enough if they work like all others.

The owners give the parents of the children some money in advance so that they abide by the agreement. The money is given in two instalments: once before the crop is started and once after it is started. Rs.100-200/- is given before the crop is started and after it is started they give Rs.1000 - 1500/-. Whether the parents of the children ask for or not, they give the money in advance to somehow make them abide by the agreement. They don't charge any interest on this money given in advance. This money will be deducted from the wages after they work.

Regarding the money given in advance to the labourers, Cottonseed field supervisor in Madaaram states "*We need the children for work in the cottonseed field all through the year. If the children stop coming in the middle, we would be at a loss. So we take the agreements from them in advance. If they have to abide by the agreement we need to give them some money in advance. If we don't give, there is a danger of them quitting work in the middle and going to work for others.*"

Not only do they give money in advance, they even lend small amounts to some parents. They charge interest for these loans. Thus, by giving advances and loans, owners try to keep labour under their control as far as possible. All the girls working in the cottonseed fields, at present in the Madaaram and Chityala village have joined the work only through the above mentioned method- their parents settled agreements with the seed producers and sent these children to work.

When we examine the details of 24 children, the parents of the 22 children among them have accepted at least some amount in advance from the owners. Only two did not take any money in advance. They themselves refused when the seed producers offered them some amount in advance. Parents of 8 children have even taken some money as loan. Table-8 gives the details loans and advances taken from seed producers by the parents of working children.

Table 8: Details of loans/advances taken by the parents of working children from employers

Amounts (Rs)	No. of families taken advances	No. of families taken loans
100-200	3	0
201-500	6	2
501-1000	5	2
1001-2000	5	3
2000-3000	3	1
	22	8

Although the children have to work only for one crop season according to agreements, they are compelled to work for years together at a single employer because of the money taken in advance and as loans by their parents. 75% of the children who are working in the fields at present have worked even last year. 62.5% have been working since 2 years and 12.5% working since five years (table-9).

Table 9: Number of years working with the same employer

Duration	No. of girls	Percentage
Since 5 years	3	12.5
Since 4 years	3	12.5
Since 3 years	5	20.8
Since 2 years	4	16.6
Since 1 year	3	12.5
Present year	6	25.0
	24	99.9

Wage rates

We have noted that the wages paid to the children are decided before hand. The wage rates vary depending on the children's age. In Chityala, this year, they are paying Rs.12

daily to each girl whose age is between 10-14 years and Rs.10 each to girls below that age. In Madaaram village, they are paying Rs.14 to girls between 10-14 years and Rs.12 to those younger than them (Table-10)

Table 10: wage rates paid to girl child labour during 1993-1998

Year	Age	Wage (Rs) per day	
		Chityala	Maadaram
1993-94	7-9	7	8
	10-14	8	10
1994-95	7-9	7	8
	10-14	8	10
1995-96	7-9	9	10
	10-14	10	12
1996-97	7-9	9	10
	10-14	10	12
1997-98	7-9	10	12
	10-14	12	14

One reason for the higher rate in Madaaram village is that the cottonseed cultivation started there from 1984 itself. Whereas in Chityala, it started from 1992. Every alternative year they increase the wage by a nominal one or two rupees only to show the difference. Not only that, the demand for labour is more in Madaaram village than Chityala. In the Year 1996 Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiah Foundation, a voluntary organisation working on the issue of child labour in Rangareddy District made a few girls discontinue the work in the cottonseed fields and put them in school.

The wages that are paid to these children in these villages are much lesser when compared to the wages given to the adults. For adults in Madaaram, men get Rs.25-30 daily, women get Rs.15-20 and in Chityala Rs.25-30 for men, Rs.15-18 for women depending on the work they do. The wages that are paid to girls working at cottonseed fields are more than the wages paid to the boys working as bonded labourers. Rs.250-350 is paid per month to the boys working as bonded labourers in these villages.

Working hours

There are no specific working hours for the children working in the cottonseed fields. Generally they work for 9 to 9.5 hours per day. Some times they work for even 11 hours. They are at the disposal of their employers from 7 AM to 6.30 or 7 PM. Generally they work in

the fields daily from 9 AM until 6 or 6.30 PM. However, whenever the work is more, they go by 7.00 AM and work till 6 or 6.30 PM. In the afternoon they are given one-hour interval for lunch. In the words of Lakshmi who is working in the fields since 5 years, *"except in the night, we have to go into work whenever they call us during the day time. Daily we get into work one hour earlier than all other labourers in the village. We come back very late than everybody in the evening. Some times they ask us to come very early for work. Those days we work right from early morning until evening."* In comparison to the daily labourers in these villages, the children in the cottonseed fields work for many more hours. The daily labourers work for 7.5 to 8 hours. They get into work at 10 AM and work until 5.30 or 6 PM.

Incentives to children

The employers provide various types of incentives to the children for making them happy and for getting more work done through them. Children like games, songs, and food, T.V., watching movies etc. very much. According to the children's nature, the employers are including all those programmes, which they are interested as a part of their work.

Once in a month or 15 days they take the children for movies to the nearby town on their own expenditure. They hire a jeep or a tractor for taking them. Not only that, after they come back from work, they show them movies on video and get the work done. After the raw cotton is ready, they cut them with scissors and make a heap near the house and then they separate cotton from seed. This work is done happily by the children while watching the T.V. They give the children chocolates and biscuits while they are working. They conduct competitions among them in the work and tell them that who ever does the work fast, they would be getting ribbons, bindis, etc. Some times they even fulfill the promises. They conduct games now and then during lunchtime and in the evening. Some employers are even giving tiffin boxes to the children working in their field.

In the view of the employers, these are the ways to make children work more. In the words of cotton field supervisor from Madaram, *"Children like games, songs, movies. They like eatables. If we find out what they are and make them happy, they listen to us and do every work we ask them to do with enthusiasm... Children get tired while working. Isn't it? We make them happy in order to help them over come the tiresomeness and make them work more. That's why*

we do all these. The expenditure on them is not much. What we spend on their movies, eatables, etc., is not a big amount. If we spend Rs.10 on them this way they do for us Rs.100 worth work."

It is evident that these incentives are very much needed in making the girls prefer the work in cottonseed fields to other works. In these villages, girls are employed in various works like weeding, planting the paddy saplings etc. However, among all these works, only cross-pollination in cottonseed fields is attracting the girls mostly. In the words of 11-year-old Bhagyamma who insisted with the parents upon joining the work in the cottonseed field, *"If it is cottonseed field work, we have all the children of our age. We can work together. They take us for movies. Show us T.V. They give ribbons. There won't be any of these things in other works"*.

Until now we have examined the method of taking children into cottonseed fields, the wages that are paid to them, the method of making the children work more and other aspects. What kind of labour arrangements are these aspects indicating? We find mainly three kinds of labour arrangements in the villages of Telangana. (1) *Jeetham* system (Bonded labour system), (2) Daily wage system, (3) Contract system.

(1) *Jeetham* system: The main feature of the system of *Jeetham* is giving loans on the security of labour and enforcing the labourers to work till it is compensated. Those who work according to this agreement are called *Jeethagallu*. The wages for *Jeethagallu* are decided before hand. A particular amount is determined per year or per month. In this agreement, the labourers are totally under the control of their employers. They should do every work they have been told to. There is no rule like working only for some particular hours in a day. They have to do whatever work their employers ask them to do and whenever they ask them to. They have to continue with their employer till they clear the loan. The labourers are not only exploited of their labour but also undergo physical assault frequently. The employers even do things like abusing and beating them⁶.

Bonded labour system was in vogue prior to 1950 during Nizams' rule. The labourers used to languish generations together in this system. This '*Jeetham*' system is nothing but the modern

form of bonded labour system. But there is no bondage of generations involved in this. It is found that even this '*Jeetham*' system is diminishing now a days.

2) Daily Wage System: In this system, the agreement between the employer and labourer is limited for only one day. The wage is paid for one day's labour. Generally, they have to work for eight hours per day. The labour has the freedom to work with different employers.

(3) Contract System: In this system, the wage is fixed not on the basis of working hours but on the basis of amount of work done. The labourer is free to determine how the work should be done and the time to be taken. Generally in the contract system, the agreement is settled between the employer and a group of workers. The employer settles the agreement with the group leader. The employer does not have any control on who all the group should constitute and how they should work. The system of contract is in practice more in works such as paddy transplanting, harvesting, cotton harvesting etc.

The nature of relationship between the employers and the girls in cottonseed fields do not exactly fit in any one of those three systems mentioned above. This is a new method in labour agreements. But in this method, the features of *Jeetham* system are seen more.

Similar to the *Jeetham* system, even in this, debt or money in advance is taken by mortgaging labour. The labourers have to work with the employers till the debt is repayed. In the same way, the other features of *Jeetham* system like, not determining specific working hours, making them work for a long time and working at a single employer for many years can be observed.

But, like in the *Jeetham* system we don't find subjection of workers to degradation, physical abuse, making them do all kinds of works, determining the wage per month or annum instead of a day and other things.

Keeping the labour somehow under their control and getting more work done with them is seen in both the two methods. However, like the employers in *Jeetham* system, the cottonseed employers do not threaten or abuse the labour in getting the work done. According to the changing times, they are also following new methods to keep the labourers under control some how or the other. They observe the nature of the labourers and good with them, they make

them feel that they are doing good to them and get more work done, thereby trying to keep them under their control.

SECTION -IV

REASONS FOR EMPLOYING GIRL CHILDREN IN COTTONSEED FIELDS?

We have already noted that girls are exclusively employed in the cottonseed fields for the cross-pollination work. Why are only girls taken into this work? Can only girls do this work of cross-pollination? Can't anyone else do?

The cottonseed producers give the following reasons in support of their contention that only small children, especially girls can do the work of cross pollination.

1. The flower crossing work in seed production involves a lot of dexterity. It needs to be done carefully, patiently and delicately. Lot of concentration is needed while doing this work. The children especially girls can do this work properly as they are having nimble fingers. More over, if it is children they can do this work very fast also. The girl children are more suitable to do this work than boys because they exhibit lot of patience while doing the work.
2. The adult females cannot do this work especially when they are having monthly periods. If they do this work when they are having periods, it is inauspicious, harmful and might result in failure of crop.

The above-mentioned reasons by the employers are not truths. They purposefully spread these notions. They are important and strong political and economic reasons behind spreading these notions. Though the employers donot publicly admit so, they do agree that they have other reasons for preferring girl children for seed production works. The following interview of the author with the supervisor of cottonseed fields in Madaaram village makes this point very clear. Part of the original is given below: (For full interview, see appendix.)

I = Interviewer (Author), R = Respondent (Supervisor)

Why are only girls employed in cottonseed production?

I: Why do you employ only girls in the seed fields? Can't others do this job?

R: Only children can do the work in the seed field. Grownups cannot do.

I: Why?

R: The work of cross-pollination lasts for 6-7 months. This work has to be done daily and regularly. The crossing should be done on the same day the flower blooms. If that becomes late, fake seeds are produced. Only children can do this work well, with care and patience. This work has to be done very delicately. The plucking of flowers, crossing the male and female flowers should be done very carefully. The hands of the children are delicate.

I: You said that children do this work well. Then, why do you employ only girls? Why not boys?

R: Boys also work well. But they don't take as much interest as the girls take. Not only that, generally boys are not available for labour. These days many are going to school. Many of them want to get their sons educated. If there is one girl and one boy in a family, they think of sending the girl for labour and boy to school. They don't think about sending their son to labour.

I: In many places, there are many boys going for work instead of school. Isn't it?

R: Very few who have no other go are sending their children for labour. Otherwise many people, even in the families of labour, are sending their sons to school. Look! In this place itself how many girls and boys are going to school. If there are 10 boys, there are 4-5 girls.

I: It is true. Tell me this. Do the girls become unfit for this work once they attain puberty? Is it sinful/harmful to do work during menstrual period? Many told me the same thing. I had been to labour peta (Harijan colony) before I came here. Even there, a person called Balakrishna told the same thing.

R: There is nothing of that sort. Our elders say that the women should not do anything in the time of their periods. They say it is harmful. That is why they think like that. We don't take into work the girls who attained puberty. Because, if we employ them a lot of women would be after us asking for work. We need only children. The agreement with them that 'adolescent children and adults are of no use!'

I: Do you yourself tell this when you go to a new village for cultivation?

R: Yes. We tell this in advance when we go to a new village inquiring about labour. Otherwise, people would be after us. We also provide work all through the year. So everybody comes with hope, as there would be work every day.

I: You tell that only to avoid grown ups and not that you believe it. Do you?

R: That is it. After all we are educated. Don't we know even that?

I: Even grown-ups can do this work carefully. Isn't it?

R: They cannot do it as properly as children. Not only that, the grown ups are a headache. The work needs concentration. They have to search every plant for flowers in its branches and between the leaves carefully and do the crossing. This work cannot be done while chatting and with out concentration. Grown ups have a lot of avocations. They don't work properly chatting with others. Children listen to whatever we say and thus the work can be got done. Grown ups waste time for things like smoking, passing urine etc. We can't control them as we control the children.

I: That is true. However are all the grown ups the same kind?

R: 99% they are like that. Not only that they can't do as quickly as the children. One girl can do the work of three grown ups. Daily they have to go around the field for many times plucking the flowers and crossing. Grown ups get tired going around for just 2-3 times. Children can go around any number of times.

I: That is true, Grown ups can't go around patiently as the kids.

R: Grown ups come leisurely at 11a.m into the work. As soon as it is 5.00 p.m. they start back home. Even when asked, they don't do the work left over in the field. They ask for more money. These kinds of problems won't arise with children. They come by 9 a.m. in the morning and stay late in the evening. They even work for an hour more when they are asked for.

I: There would be a difference in the wage rates. Isn't it?

R: Yes. Grown ups demand for more. We don't have to give that much to the children

I: How much are you paying now to the children?

R: Rs.14/- per day. The agreement is made before a year. We give the same all through the year. Last year it was Rs.12 and before last year it was Rs.10.

I: How much is it for grown-ups now?

R: Now it is Rs.17/- for women and Rs.30-35 for men. Moreover, here in Telangana, we have to give an extra of 2 or 3 rupees for liquor. Many people here consume liquor.

I: Children work well, quickly and carefully. It is easier to control them. If it is grown ups they won't be under your control. They don't do the work carefully and quickly. Moreover you have to pay them high.

R: Yes.

I: That is why you prefer children. Not that anybody except children can do this work. Isn't it?

R: Yes. In cottonseed cultivation, more than half of our capital goes to the labour charges. If we employ grown ups, the expenditure becomes double. What will remain for us?

If we examine the above interview, two aspects are clearly understood (1) The employers themselves are spreading some notions in order to avoid taking adults into the work (2) There are strong political and economic reasons behind taking children into work.

It is very advantageous for the employers to employ children as labour. We have noted that about half of the capital is spent on only labour charges. The more the labour charges are cut down, the more are the chances for profit. It is profitable for the employers to take children into work because the wages paid to them are much less than the wages paid to the adults. Apart from the variation between the wages given to the children and adults, they can even make the children work for a longer time. Moreover, work in the field can be done faster by children than the adults. As mentioned in the above interview, in the view of employers, they can make one girl do the work that is done by three adults.

Another important aspect in this is, it is easier to control the children than adults. They listen well to whatever they say. They never talk back to their employers. They never grumble that the conditions at the working place are bad. If it is children, the employers have more control on labour process. However, the employers do not have any control over other aspects in the cottonseed cultivation - seed marketing, prices of fertilizers, of pesticides, etc. The idea of keeping at least the labour process under their control encourages the employers to take children into work. Less wages, can get more work done; can have more control; that is why they are employing girls into the cottonseed field works and not that this work needs special skills that only children have and adults do not.

SECTION - V

IMPACTS OF EMPLOYING GIRL CHILDREN IN COTTONSEED WORK ON THEIR EDUCATION AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE FAMILY INCOME

We have examined the labour relations in the cottonseed fields and the reasons behind taking only girls into work in the third and fourth sections. In this section we will find out what kind of impact the cottonseed production is having on girl's education, to what extent are the families depending on their children's earnings etc.

We have noted that all the girls working in the cottonseed fields fall in the age group of 7-14 years. This age is a very crucial stage in the life of children. In this age they should be studying at school and playing with the children of their age.

There are many reasons for not sending girls to school. However, in the regions where cottonseed production is going on, the main reason for not going to school is only because the girls are working in the cottonseed fields. In Chityala village, of the total 48 non-school going girls 35 (72.9%) of them, and 18 (33.3%) of the 54 girls in Madaaram village are working in the cottonseed fields.

Moreover, it is known that, cottonseed cultivation is the main reason for girls dropping out from the school. Out of the total 53 children working in the fields, 36 of the (67.9%) discontinued the school and joined the work.

We learnt that the seed producers offer debts/advances to the parents of the children. They extend these debts/advances in a very crucial time of summer when work wouldn't be available properly in the village. During this time it is natural for the poor families, who depend only on labour, to face financial problems. It is in this time that they mostly run into debts.

The seed producers offer debts/advances to the parents of the children at that particular time in order to take advantage of that situation and settle agreements for sending their children to work. Because of the help rendered by the seed producers, the parents have a lot of pressure to send their children as they somehow try to keep the word respecting the agreement settled. The intensity of this pressure compels the parents to even make their children discontinue the school and join the work.

In the year 1995, the government took up a large-scale programme to admit non-school going children into schools (Back to School Programme) through National Child Labour Project. As a part of this programme, the government organised special training camps in summer for the children and tried to join the participants in the government schools. The training camps organised in Parigi mandal got good response. In the villages of Madaaram, Chityala, nearly 36 girls working in cottonseed fields participated in these camps and later joined government schools. Many of them got seats even in government hostels. But 28 of them discontinued school even before one month and went back to work again in the cottonseed fields. When the reasons for the children to discontinue the schools are examined, the agreements settled by the seed producers owners with parents of the children by giving them loans/advances is known to be the major reason.

With the fear that the cottonseed cultivation might stop in the middle if all the children who are working for them till now, participate in these camps and later join the school, the cottonseed producers extended debts/advances on large scale (every year they used to give Rs.500 - Rs.1000/- per head. This year they gave Rs.1000 - Rs.2000) to the parents of the children. The parents took money and made agreements with the producers. In order to keep their word with the employers they forcefully stopped their children from going to school,

who had joined school after participating in training camps, and sent them to work in cottonseed field.

Role of children's earnings in family income

We learnt that the parents, after taking loans/advances from the employers, are sending their children into work. Why are the parents taking loans/advances by pledging girls' labour? To what extent are these families depending on the earnings of children? etc. In order to study these aspects deeply, we examined a sample of five families.

Many problems were faced in collecting details about the personal incomes of family members. In many families, apart from the daily wage labour, the members are having their own cultivation. It is easy to calculate the money earned from daily wage labour. However, as the family members collectively work on own land, the problem comes at the distribution of income between the family members that has come from land. Not only that, when the income is calculated, a period of one year is to be taken into consideration. However, due to the lack of time and resources, it was not possible to collect the details of the incomes of family members for a period of one year. One month's time (Jan 1 to 31) is taken as sample and with the help of details like what kind of works are done, how much is paid for each work etc., it is estimated to what extent are the family members contributing to the family income. The income from own farm work is calculated on the basis of wage income they get if they employed as labourers. The details regarding these families are given below:

Family-1

Lakshmi is 10 years old. She is working in cottonseed field since two years. Lakshmi has a mother, father and a younger brother. They belong to Scheduled Caste. They don't own any land. The family is dependent totally on daily labour. Lakshmi never went to school. When she was old enough to go to school, their parents kept her at home itself, as there was nobody to look after her younger brother. She kept on looking after her brother until she was eight. Later she joined the work at cottonseed field in order to repay the loan taken by her parents.

In the month of January, Lakshmi worked for 30 days and earned Rs.420/-. Her father who worked for 18 days earned Rs.500/-, her mother, who worked for 24 days earned Rs.408/-. In the family income, Lakshmi's earnings constitute 31.6%.

Family-2

Lakshmi, Bhagyamma are sisters. Lakshmi is 13 year old and Bhagyamma is 9 years. They have a younger sister, elder brother, mother, father. Brother is studying Intermediate in college and sister is in the school studying first class. They belong to scheduled caste. Lakshmi since 6 years and Bhagyamma since 2 years are working for a single employer at cottonseed fields. Their family has dry land of 5 acres. The father i.e., Balakrishna does own cultivation and also does the work of hired musician. The mother, apart from own cultivation, goes even for daily labour.

Before the children undertook work, Balakrishna used to go for agricultural labour. But since 5 years, he stopped going for agricultural labour. He has the habit of even consuming liquor. He not only gives nothing at home from the money he earns but also spends the money earned by children for his needs. It is known from the information given by his wife that after children started going into work, Balakrishna is not being regular to work and even lessened working on his own land.

When we examine the works done by the members in the family, details of the income they are earning, it is known that children are working more than the adults. In the month of January, Lakshmi and Bhagyamma earned Rs.784/- in 28 days by working in cottonseed fields. Their mother earned Rs.306/- by working for 18 days (8 days daily labour, 10 days work on own land), father earned Rs.480/- by working for 9 days (3 days of daily labour, 6 days work on own labour). Half (49.9%) of the family income is earned by only Lakshmi, and Bhagyamma.

Family -3

Since 5 years Yadamma is working at a single employer in cottonseed fields. Her age is 13 years. She belongs to Scheduled Caste. Yadamma has two younger brothers, one school going

younger sister, father, and mother. Father is a mason. Mother goes for agricultural labourers. They own 2 acres of dry land. Father has the habit of consuming liquor. They get good income from father's work. He earns nearly 75 rupees per day. But he doesn't go to work regularly. If he works for 2 days he drinks and sleeps for the next two days. He doesn't give the money properly at home. Yamma's mother says that, if he is questioned, he asks back what they are doing with the money they earn. When Yamma's mother was asked 'Don't you like your child to get educated? Can't you survive if she doesn't work?' she said "Its good if our child gets educated. We would like to get her educated. What is the need to send our child to work if he (husband) goes properly to work and gives money at home?"

When the family members' income in the month of January is examined while Yamma earned Rs.360/- in 30 days, her mother earned Rs.390/- working for 23 days, her father who worked for 15 days earned nearly Rs.750/-. Her father spent only Rs.100/- from his income for the family expenditure. Yamma's contribution is 24% in the total income.

Family-4

Sathemma is 11 year old. She has two elder brothers, one younger sister, sister-in-law, mother, father. Sister is in 3rd class and one elder brother is studying 7th class. Another elder brother does own cultivation and goes for daily labour. As they had to get her big brother married twice (because his first wife took divorce), they got into debts and in order to pay them off, their father is working as a bonded labourer with cottonseed producer for Rs.4000/- per annum. They own 6 acres of dryland. In that, they gave 3 acres on lease for 3 years. Eldest brother has the habit of consuming liquor. He spends nearly Rs.200/- per month on this.

Sathemma is working in cottonseed field since 5 years. By the time she was old enough to go to school, her parents retained her at home as there was nobody to look after her younger sister. By the time she was 7, her father took loan from the cottonseed producer and sent her to work. In the year 1996 when the activists of Mamidipudi Venkata Rangaiah Foundation tried to join

her in the girlchild labourers training camp and give her education, her father forcefully brought her back and put her again in the cottonseed work.

In the month of January, the total income of the family members is nearly Rs.1194/-. In that, Rs.420 is earned by Sathemma who worked for 30 days, father earned Rs.350/- for 30 days, eldest brother earned Rs.850/- for 20 days, mother earned Rs.374/- for 22 days. Sathemma's contribution is 26.7% in the total family income.

Family-5

Balamani, Sukkamma are sisters. Balamani is 13 years old. Sukkamma is 11 years old. They belong to Scheduled caste. Balamani since 6 years and sukkamma since 3 years are working in cottonseed fields. They have two younger sisters, one younger brother, mother, and father. Their family owns 1/2 acre wet land. Their family is dependent mostly on daily wage labour. Mother and father have the habit of liquor consumption. Rs.250-300 per month is spent on this.

In 1995, Balamani, Sukkamma, participated in the training camp organised by government and later joined in school. But their parents forcefully stopped them from going to school and put them again into work. When they were studying in the summer training camp, their parents took Rs.2000 as advance from the seed producer and came to an agreement that they would send their children to work. To abide by the agreement, they stopped their children from going to school.

The total family income in January is Rs.1588/- Balamani, Sukkamma who worked for 30 days each earned Rs.690/- father earned Rs.430/- for 20 days, mother earned Rs.408/- by working for 24 days. The earnings of Balamani and Sukkamma in the family income is 41.8%

If we examine the details of 5 families stated above, we can clearly understand a few aspects.

- It is known that the girl's earnings in the total income constitutes an important portion if not a crucial one. Approximately 29.8% of the total income in these families comes from the children who work in the cottonseed fields. (Table- 11). A very important aspect to be noted

here is that, children are working more than their elders. In a month when children are working for 29.4 days approximately, women are working for 22.2 days and men are working for only 18.6 days. When we compare each one's working time and their income, while children are working for more days and earning less money, men are working for fewer days and getting more money. The reason for this is the difference between the wages paid to the children and adults.

Table 11: Details of No. of working days and income earned by different family members (Rs per month)

	Girls		Females		Males		Total income
	Days	income	Days	income	Days	income	
Family 1	30	420 (31.6)	24	408 (30.7)	18	500 (37.6)	1328
Family 2	56*	784 (49.9)	18	306 (19.5)	9	480 (30.6)	1570
Family 3	30	360 (24.0)	23	390 (26.0)	15	750 (50.0)	1500
Family4	30	420 (26.7)	22	374 (18.7)	50*	1200 (60.2)	1994
Family 5	60*	690 (41.8)	24	408 (25.7)	20	490 (30.8)	1588
	204	2674	111	1886	112	3420	7980

- In family 2 and 5, two girl children each and in family 4, two adult males are working. There are a total of 7 girl children. 5 adult females and 6 adult males working in these 5 families

Table 12: Average No. of working days and income earned by the family members

(Percentages)

	Days	Income
Girls	29.4	28.7
Adult females	22.2	28.3
Adult males	18.6	42.8

- The main reason for adults, especially men, to work lesser days than children mostly is not the non-availability of labour. Their dislike to work for lesser wages, laziness, notions that some works should be done only by women, girl children and not by them etc. are also some of the important reasons.
- After the girls started earning through labour, it is seen that men are gradually evading their family responsibilities. There is an increasing attitude in men that they don't have to work as the women and children are working and would look after the household needs. Not giving their earnings in the household indicates only this.
- In most of the families, members especially men are spending major part of the income on liquor as they got addicted to it. Nearly 20% of the family income is spent on liquor in families where they have addiction. In these families if the adults work properly and don't spend on bad habits like liquor consumption, they don't have to depend on the earning of their children.

SECTION-VI

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing pages we have examined various aspects regarding cottonseed cultivation, working conditions of girl children in cottonseed fields, the reasons behind employing only girls in the cottonseed production, the various methods followed by the employers in order to extract more labour from the girls, the impact of this work on the education of the children, role of the children's earnings in family income etc. The important points that have come to light in this study are given below.

1) An important aspect is that 90% of the workers in the cottonseed fields are only girls who are 7-14 years old. Girls are not being employed in any other crop cultivation on such large scale. Cottonseed cultivation depends mostly on human labour, needed more for cross-pollination work. This work alone demands 90% of the total labour days and 45.7% of the total expenditure. They are employing mostly girls for this work.

2) There is a notion that the work in cottonseed fields can be done only by children and not adults. This notion is created and propagated by the employers themselves. In reality, there are important economic and political reasons behind taking only girl children into work by the employers. It is very advantageous for the employers to take girls into work. Nearly half of the capital is spent only on labour charges. Hence, lesser the expenditure on labour charges, more are the chances for profit. They can pay lesser wages to children especially girls. Not only that, they can make them work for a longer time. It is easier to control children than adults. They don't rebel against their employers. They work as they are told to. They don't grumble that the working conditions are not good. Employers can have more control on labour process if they are children. They can get more work done by paying less, it is easier to control them. That is the reason why only girls are employed in cottonseed production work and not that there is a necessity for special skills which only children have and adults don't.

3) If we examine the method of children recruited into work, the wages paid to them, working hours, the methods of extracting work from them and other aspects, it is understood that the

girls working in cottonseed fields are undergoing a kind of 'bonded labour'. Giving loans on the security of labour, compelling them to work till the amount is repaid, not paying proper wages, making them work for longer time etc., are the features of bonded labour system. These features are seen in the labour agreements that are in practice in the cottonseed fields. But there is a difference between this and the bonded labour system (*Jeetham* system) that is in practice in the Telangana region. In this, there is no practice of looking down upon the workers, abusing them physically, making them do all kinds of works, determining wages per month or year instead of one day like the *Jeetham* system. The cottonseed producers are finding out the nature of the labourers and are trying to be good with them, by making them feel that they are doing only good to them, they get more work done and try to keep them under their control.

4) The cottonseed producers have started a new practice by showing interest in employing only girls by giving loans/advances on the security of labour. This new practice has brought about many changes in the perceptions of the parents and other elders regarding the girl children in the society. Considering children as workers and partners in the family responsibilities has emerged only out of this new culture.

5) The methods followed by the employers in seed cultivation are having bad effects over the literacy of girl children. There are many reasons for not sending girls to schools. But in the regions where cottonseed cultivation is going on, the main reason for the majority of the girls for not going to school is only working in these cotton fields. Not only that, for the same reason girls in these regions are discontinuing their studies. An important aspect to be noted here is that, in the villages surveyed, 36 out of total 53 children, discontinued school and joined the work in the cottonseed fields.

6) Most of the children working in the cottonseed fields are from the poor families. But it is found that there is no truth in the argument that it is only poverty that drives the parents to make their children work instead of educating them. Although the children's earnings from an important part of the family incomes, yet they do not play any decisive role. They are many ways for these families to fill in these gaps of income. We learnt that adults especially men

in these families are working for fewer days. The main reason for this is not the non-availability of work. Not only that in these families they are spending a major part of their income on the consumption of liquor. There is no need to depend on their children's earnings if the adults in these families work properly and do not spend money on habits like liquor consumption. Moreover, if children stop working, work would be getting done with adults with higher wages. That way work opportunities for adults increase and thereby help in increasing their income.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Studies have revealed that the system of bonded labour in agriculture was almost confined to adult males and boys. Employing women as a bonded labourer was rare, and girl children, completely unknown. A national survey conducted in 1976 on incidence of bonded labour in India had revealed that 97.7% of bonded labourers were men and boys, and only 2.3% of them were women. There were no girls working as bonded labour. In the case of women also, the employers did not directly take them as bonded labour - this came about subsequent to the demise of their husbands who were working as bonded labourers. See Sarma Marla, (1981) *Bonded Labour in India - National Survey on the Incidence of Bonded Labour*, pp. 20-22 and Patnaik and Dingwaney, (1985), *Chains of Servitude - Bondage and Slavery*, Samgam books, Madras, p. 259.

Bonded labour system was never the same all the time. It has been undergoing changes with the time. Prior to independence, bondage for generations together used to be a main feature of the bonded labour system. In order to repay the debt, a family had to work even for 2-3 generations at a single master. But working with a single employer for generations together has considerably decreased these days. The main features of the present bonded labour system are giving loans on the security of labour and compelling them to work till the money is repaid, working at a single employer for many years etc.

2. The estimates of total girl child labour employed in cottonseed production is drawn on the basis of data on total area under cultivation and the per acre requirement of girl children to do different works. It is estimated that per acre about 10 girl children are required every day to do different operations in cottonseed fields. In 1997-98, nearly 40000 acres were under cottonseed cultivation in India. In this Andhra Pradesh alone accounted for nearly 20000 acres.

3. Richard Anker, Sandhya Barge, S.Rajagopal and MP Joseph, have estimated the extent of child labour in different industries in India. According to their estimates carpet industry employs 1,15,000 children, diamond polishing - 1,50,000, gem polishing - 2500 and the glass bangles industry, 9428 to 11,126 children. (Richard Anker, Sandhya Barge, S.Rajagopal and MP Joseph eds ` *Economics of Child labour in Hazardous Industries of India* ' Centre for Operations research and Training, Baroda, 1998)

4. See Richard Anket, et.al.(eds) (1998), p.7

5. According to the estimation of Andhra Pradesh Seed Certification Agency, in the year 1997-'98 when the hybrid cottonseeds -Savitha, J.K.H 1, N4, N.H.H.44 etc. released by the government research institutions are produced in 15,407 acres in the state, 14 thousand acres (93%) in that are in Mahaboobnagar and Kurnool districts alone. In addition to this the private varieties of hybrid seeds

(released by private seed companies) such as P.s 45, P.S.215, and RCH2 etc. are grown in about 5000 acres. The private varieties of hybrid cottonseeds are concentrated more in Mahaboobnagar district. (see, Seed Industry in Andhra Pradesh: Issues for consideration, a report prepared by Seedsmen Association, Andhra Pradesh, 1998.)

6. See Shantha Sinha's paper 'Changing Landlord - Labour Relations, for more details regarding the *Jeetham* system that is in practice in Telangana region. Shantha Sinha(1992) Changing Landlord Labour Relations in Alokballa and Peter Bumke (eds) *Images of Rural India in the 20th Century*, New Delhi Sterling Publishers, pp.108-112.

APPENDIX

SOME EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW WITH SUPERVISOR OF COTTONSEED FIELDS IN MADAARAM

I = Interviewer (Author) R = Respondent (Supervisor)

I: Since how many years have you been cultivating the cottonseed crop.

R: Four years. Four years back for the first time we started this seed crop at a place near Anantapur. This is second year after we have come here.

I: You told that you belong to Nujillapadu of Prakasam District. Isn't it? Why did you go to Anantapur in Rayalaseema from there? Cotton grows well in Andhra region, isn't it?

R: At one time it used to grow well. These days there are heavy losses due to various kinds of pests. The labour there is a big problem. Even the land lease rates have also very high. There is not much development in Rayalaseema and Telangana as it is in Andhra. Here, the lease rates are low and the availability of labour is more. The wages of labour is low. As the place is more new than others there won't be much problem of pests. In our place we have to spend six to seven thousand rupees per acre on pesticides itself. Here we don't have to use a lot of pesticides. As we cultivate cottonseed, it is very convenient for it here. The land in our region is not very suitable for the cultivation of cottonseed. The red soil lands with the bore water facility are better than the black soil lands. Here in these lands the seed comes with more potency.

I: How did you get this idea of cultivating cottonseed other than ordinary cotton?

R: There is a person called Subbarao at our place. He is the leader for all of us. All the fields that we are cultivating now belong to him only. He came to this place 12 years back. Initially he was in this village itself. He raised this cottonseed crop for 4-5 years. He brought all of us to this place.

I: Totally how many of you have come to this place?

R: Totally we are 14 members. Subbarao is the manager for all of us. We all are going in different direction and cultivating cottonseed fields. Naskal and Chityala of this mandal and Sivareddipalli in Doma Mandal- our people are there in all these villages. Subbarao also stays at Chityala itself. It is four years since he has gone there from here.

I: You said that Subbarao is the manager for all of you. What do you mean by `manager'?

R: Manager means he goes around all the villages and inspects the fields. It is he who provides the capital for all of us for the cultivation.

I: He provides the capital. Does he give you any amount per month or year like salary?

R: There is no salary. We are all partners in these cottonseed production. In the profit our share is half and the other half goes to Subbarao.

I: Does he provide all the capital? Or do you also....?

Agreements with cottonseed companies

R: He himself looks after everything regarding the capital. We have agreement with the company.

I: Which company?

R: I donot remember the name of the company. It is situated in the Lal Bahadur Stadium Compelx in Hedarabad. The company fixes the rate before itself that they will buy the seed from us at a particular rate. With the company we write agreement papers.... This year according to the agreement with the company, the 750 grams bag or packet seeds is Rs.180. This year we are producing the SAVITHA a hybrid variety. The company people tell before itself: that if the seeds are not good or if the fake variety of seeds exceeds 10 or 15% they would reject the agreement. Our duty is to produce no fake variety of seeds.

I: Does the company give you capital in advance?

R: Little, they themselves supply us foundation seeds free. They give us 15 or 20 thousand rupees per acre in advance. The agreement with the company, taking advance and all is looked after by Subbarao.

Cost production

I: How much is the expenditure on each acre approximately?

R: Very high.

I: Can you tell approximately how much is it for each and everything.

R: Why approximately? I can tell precisely. We maintain accounts for all expenses. There is a book in which we have written last year's expenses. Have a look, you will get to know ...(looking at the accounts book) ... last year we cultivated two acres of cottonseed crop. The total expenditure was one-lakh five thousand rupees (Rs.1,05,000)

I: Including all the expenses?

R: Everything. Right from the land rent including labour charges, expenditure on pesticides, transport charges and everything.

I: Last year how much did you pay for the land lease per acre?

R: Rs.4,000/- for two acres its Rs.8,000/- electricity charges, bore repair charges amounted to Rs.1,900.

I: For Fertilisers?

R: Fertilisers -we used for two times. It was Rs.10,200.

I: Pesticides?

R: It was more for pesticides itself-nearly Rs.18,000/-

I: How much was it for the labour?

R: It was nearly Rs.55,000/- for the labour.

I: Labour means you employ mostly small children. Isn't it.

R: Totally only them. They do all the work in the field.

I: Other than children you also employ elder people now and then. Isn't it? Are they for ploughing and spraying pesticides?

R: Yes. But the expenditure is also more on them. We have employed a 'Jeethagadu' (bonded labourer) called Ramayya by name, look after the field. We pay Rs.5,000 per year. The expenditure on him is separate. Apart from his salary we have spent Rs.55,000/-.

I: In this Rs.55,000/- how much would you have spent on children?

R: Around 45,000. We write the expenditure on children separately. We can know if we have a look at the attendance book.

I: It is very interesting. Will you show me once?

R: Schoolteachers take attendance. Is it not? The same book. They are available at the Parigi bookshop. We write down all the names of the children and take the attendance daily. Look here (Shows a book) it's like this.

I: Its the attendance book itself! The names of the children's' fathers are also there.

R: We write even their parents' name. Because, there are many people who have the same surname and even same name. There are three children with the name of Lakshmi. The surname is also same for two of them.

I: Does 'X' mark indicate absence?

R: Yes. We calculate the total days - they worked in a month.

I: Don't you pay them on the day they haven't come for work?

R: How will we pay them on the day they haven't come for work.

I: What are these numbers beside the names? Rs.500 beside Lakshmi, Rs.1000 beside Yadamma...

R: That is the advance given to them. We give some money in advance. Later we cut in the wage that is paid to them.

I: Advance means is it given as debt?

R: As a debt itself.

I: When? After they join the work?

The method of taking children into work

R: Before they join the work. We make an agreement with the parents before itself that `you should send your children to our work all through this year'!

I: Could you tell us how this agreements is made?

R: We need the children for work in the cottonseed field all through the year. If the children stop coming in the middle, we would be at a loss. So we take the agreements from them before itself. If they have to abide by the agreement we need to given them some money in advance. If we don't give, there is a danger of, they quitting work in the middle and going to work for others.

I: Do you charge any interest on the advance amount?

R: Nothing like that. He works for us. Isn't it? We will cut from that. What interest would we get? These are not the older days getting `interest' on labour advance.

I: Do the parents ask for money in advance? Or do you yourself give?

R: People with problems ask for it. To others, we ourselves give for the sake of our own safety.

I: You give the money in advance and make the agreement before the crop. Apart from that, do you again give any thing in the middle of the crops? Are there any instances where they abscond after taking the money in advance?

R: Generally no. Only one or two cases rarely.

I: How many children are there in your field this year?

R: Initially we had employed 22 children. There are only 18 members now. Two got married and left to their in-laws' houses. Two have absconded.

I: How many people are needed for one-acre field?

R: 10-12 children are compulsory for each acre. Now as the work is in the last stage, there are 18 children enough to do the work.

I: Are the children working with you now the same who worked for you last year?

R: Many had worked even last year. We employed 5 children newly this year. Some ten children are working for us since 2-3 years. We ourselves don't take them into work once they grow up. Some time back a girl had come here. Is not it? She is working for us right from her childhood.

I: Childhood means since how many years?

R: I think around 6 years. She is working from past 6 years for us. She is already a little grown. This year itself we have decided to stop taking her into work.

I: Why?

R: The children of that age are no more useful for this work. Once they grow up, they have more avocations, they don't work properly. They keep chatting. It is not beneficial for us. The work should be done very carefully in the cottonseed fields. Her father is a drunkard. He does not do any work worth penny. He comes to us and creates nuisance that even the girls wage should be given to him. Previously he himself used to come and take the advance amount. These days we have stopped giving. We are not giving to the girl's mother.

I: What age children work well in the seed field?

R: Children between 8-10 years are best there is no problem with them. We can instruct and get the work done.

I: You went around many places regarding the cultivation of cottonseeds. Isn't it? Anantapur and here. Please tell about your experiences. When you go to a new place for agriculture, whom do you meet first? How do you decide whether the land is suitable for cultivation or not?

R: If we go to a new place, village for the sake of cultivation, first we estimate whether we get surplus labour or not. Labour is very important for cottonseed.

I: How do you estimate? Do you meet the head in that village? How?

R: If we go to any village, here in Telangana they call Patel, in Rayalaseema they call Reddy. They are there in all the villages. We meet them first. We ask them that 'we are going to cultivate cotton seen in our place, we want your cooperation'. After meeting them we go to the colony where the labour is available and inquire there. The houses of all scheduled castes would be at one place. There we go to every house and ask how many girls below 14 years would be available.

I: Do you go to every house?

R: If we go to four or five houses in that colony, the whole neighbourhood would gather there. We ask the details about the children in the same way the population census is collected and like you people. Aren't you writing down now?

I: Like us means, do you conduct a survey?

R: Yes. If we have the confidence about the availability of sufficient children, we think about the other things.

I: Other things mean?

R: Whether or not we get the land on lease with bore facility. Water facility is very important. It is difficult to cultivate the cottonseed crop without water facility. It is not a big problem as in every place at least some land has bore facility.

I: You said that you go to SC colony for the details about the labour. Isn't it? Apart from Sacs there would be many people even in BCs who come to work. Isn't it? Don't you take down their details?

R: There are many people in BCs like Mutharajulu, Chakali, Balija, Mangali. Many of these people also come to work for us. We first go to SC colony because more labour is available there. The problem with the BCs is many of them have their own cultivation. Even if they have children, there is no guarantee that they would send them.

I: It is okay if there is adequate labour and land with water facility?

Advance and loans

R: These two are important. We talk about taking the land on lease and give some money in advance.

I: To whom?

R: To the owner of the land and to the labour.

I: Do you pay in advance even to the labour?

R: We have to give. Otherwise where is the guarantee that they would come into work definitely?

I: How much do you give?

R: We give an amount of Rs.100 or Rs.200 in advance and take their word.

I: Would Rs.100, 200 be enough?

R: It is given in advance. We again give later.

I: Later means when?

R: We generally start the cultivation in the month of May. We make the agreement with labour in January or February. There won't be any work in the first in the first two months. The work of the children will be only from July. We give them money in advance in January, February. Isn't it? The parents of the children start coming to us in the month of May after we start the cultivation. They we again give them Rs.500 or Rs.1000.

I: You give them money in advance before they get into work. Isn't it? In case if anyone doesn't turn up at work?

R: Generally it doesn't happen. They stand by word once we pay them in advance.. we pay them in front of a group of people. They are the witness for the given amount. In case anyone absconds, the other came forward as a witness for us to extract the given amount.

I: That is true. It has more weight if we give in front of some people... tell me one thing. I have asked many but nobody could answer properly. I believe that you can tell.

R: They cannot do it as properly as children. Not only that, the grown ups are a headache. The work needs concentration. They have to search every plant for flowers in its branches and between the leaves carefully and do the crossing. This work cannot be done while chatting and without concentration. Grown ups have a lot of avocations. They don't work properly chatting with others. Children listen to whatever we say and thus the work can be got done. Grown ups waste time for things like smoking, passing urine etc. We can't control them as we control the children.

I: That is true. However are all the grown ups the same kind?

R: 99% they are like that. Not only that they can't do as quickly as the children. One girl can do the work of three grown ups. Daily they have to go around the field for many times plucking the flowers and crossing. Grown ups get tired going around for just 2-3 times. Children can go around any number of times.

I: That is true, Grown ups can't go around patiently as the kids.

R: Grown ups come leisurely at 11a.m into the work. As soon as it is 5.00 p.m. they start back home. Even when asked, they don't do the work left over in the field. They ask for more money. These kind of problems won't arise with children. They come by 9 a.m. in the morning and stay late in the evening. They even work for an hour more when they are asked for.

I: There would be a difference in the wage rates. Isn't it?

R: Yes. Grown ups demand for more. We don't have to give that much to the children

I: How much are you paying now to the children?

R: Rs.14/- per day. The agreement is made before a year. We give the same all through the year. Last year it was Rs.12 and before last year it was Rs.10.

I: How much is it for grown-ups now?

R: Now it is Rs.17/- for women and Rs.30-35 for men. Moreover, here in Telangana, we have to give an extra of 2 or 3 rupees for liquor. Many people here consume liquor.

I: Children work well, quickly and carefully. It is easier to control them. If it is grown ups they won't be under your control. They don't do the work carefully and quickly. Moreover you have to pay them high.

R: Yes.

I: That is why you prefer children. Not that anybody except children can do this work. Isn't it?

R: Yes. In cottonseed cultivation, more than half of our capital goes to the labour charges. If we employ grown ups, the expenditure becomes double. What will remain for us?

I: What will you do in case you don't get children for work?

R: Why do think that children won't be available in country like us? If not this place, we find them in some other place.

I: That is true. In case a situation arises where you don't get children and you have to go ahead with your cultivation. What will you do? Whether or not the children are available, still there would be demand for cottonseeds. Isn't it?

R: What will we do? We will ask the company to increase the rate. The 750 grams bag is Rs.180. We will ask them to make it Rs.300 or Rs.400

I: What will happen then?

R: What will happen? He will increase the rates. He sells a bag in the market for Rs.350 or 400. He will now sell it for Rs.1000.

I: Tell your experiences in making the children work for you. Do you face any problem in making them work?

Incentives

R: There are no problems. It is easy to make them work on our instructions. But we have to observe their psychology and go according to it. Children like games, songs, movies. They like eatables. If we find out what they are and make them happy, they listen to us and do every work we ask them to do with enthusiasm.

I: Yes. What do you do to make children happy?

R: We take them for movie once in 10 or 15 days.

I: Where to?

R: Here itself ... Pargi.

I: By bus?

R: We take them on tractor. We hire a tractor, take them for a matinee show and bring back. We also take them by bus. We have a T.V. at home. We get VCR and show them movies now and then.

I: Is it?

R: We make them sing while they are at work. Conduct games. We say that we will give them chocolates or biscuits to whoever completes the work soon.

I: Do you do this daily?

R: Now and then. Children get tired while working. Isn't it? We make them happy in order to help them overcome the tiresomeness and make them work more. That's why we do all these. The expenditure on them is not much. What we spend on their movies, eatables, etc., is not a big amount. If we spend Rs.10 on them this way they do for us Rs.100 worth work.

I: Fine, you know child psychology well.

R: We are in this field since a long time. Isn't it? We have to behave according to the nature of the labour. Isn't it? Time has changed. These are not the olden days where we can get the work done with threatening, thrashing or scolding the labour. They will revolt if we do like that now. They have a lot of

awareness. Even we have to change along with the time. If we respect and look after them well, they too will work well. Otherwise no.

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