

CHAPTER - FOUR

SOME SELECTED CASE STUDIES

The study on the "Socio-Economic Background of child labour in Siliguri City of West Bengal" has been made among the children of eleven slums who are engaged in different types of occupations in the Siliguri Municipal Corporation area. These eleven slums are considered to be child labour dominated area of the city. Only three hundred eighteen children have been interviewed for the present study; eleven case studies have been collected from them considering the types of occupations in which they are absorbed. These case studies reflect the scenario of the socio-economic background of the child labourers under study.

Case Study - One

Paresh Bhadra, male, aged 14 years, Hindu by religion, belonging to the general caste category, having mother tongue Bengali, born in Siliguri, is unmarried and presently residing in Sarbahara Colony, Ward No. 28 of Siliguri City. His father migrated here approximately 25 years ago from Faridpur district of Bangladesh.

Late Pulin Bhadra was the father of Paresh. He died when Paresh was ten years old. He was a van-puller and died in a road accident. His mother is a maid servant who works in two houses. She earns only Rs. 400.00 per month. Father and mother of Paresh are illiterate. He has two sisters and three brothers. His eldest sister is already married. Paresh is next to the eldest sister. His next brother 'Ganesh' is a worker in a tea stall who earns Rs. 100.00 per month. Next to Ganesh is his brother 'Kanai' who is a gleaner and earns about Rs. 50.00 per month. Paresh's younger sister, aged 5 years, does not work. All these three brothers and two sisters are illiterate.

Paresh has been working in a garage for about a year. When his father suddenly died in an accident his mother was ill. His mother could not earn for maintaining the family of six members. The situation forced Paresh to search for a work. At the age of 10 years, he started his working life in a tea stall for Rs. 100.00 per month. But due to heavy pressure of

work in this tea stall he had to leave his work after nine months. Then he found a work of a cleaner in a truck stand. He used to earn Rs. 15.00 per day by cleaning trucks and continued his work for about seven months. One of his neighbours employed him in the present work in a garage. He now earns Rs. 300.00 per month. His working hour starts everyday at 9:00 a.m. in the morning and lasts till 07:00 p.m. with one hour's recess break. He gets one holiday a week. Besides this scheduled working hours, he has to do many other variety of works assigned by his employer for which he does not receive any additional wages. In spite of such huge pressure, he wants to continue his work. Sometimes the employer for neglecting duty punishes him. Moreover, altercation and beating are the common occurrences for him. Tea, Tiffin and treatment facilities are not provided by the employer. Everyday he gets up at 07 a.m. and after his morning fresh he takes tea and Tiffin. At 09 a.m. he arrives at his working place, at noon he comes back home and takes lunch and again goes to join his work. In the evening he comes back home and takes dinner, and then goes to bed. Sometimes he goes to cinema with some friends.

The living condition of their house is very bad. It is ill ventilated, uncleaned *kuchcha* house in a slum. This slum has grown on Railway land and is over-crowded. They have to use common latrine and bath place with other slum inmates. It is unhygienic and does not have drainage system. Skin diseases, water born diseases, sexual diseases, viral diseases are common among the slum dwellers. His mother is very weak and suffers from cardiac problem. He hands over the whole wage to his mother. Total income of his family is only Rs. 1200.00 per month. This meagre income is insufficient for his family. No movable property is found in their house. Due to this extreme poverty all the brothers and sisters remain illiterate, none of whom is ever sent to school.

The working place of Paresh is not so good. He has to do heavy work. His younger brother Ganesh and Kanai also work hard for their large family. According to his mother, child labour is desirable until and unless poverty is eradicated. Moreover, poverty eradication is necessary for amelioration the lot of child labour. She is ignorant about child labour Act, she only knows that child labour is prohibited. From his childhood Paresh gathered huge experience of life made him understand that hard work is the only means to survive. He had to help his mother for maintaining the family with a brother and a sister.

Case Study - Two :

Suman Mandal, aged 13 years, Hindu by religion belongs to the Scheduled Caste category. His mother tongue is Bengali. He was born in Siliguri city. His parents immigrated to this city about 55 years ago. His father was a van-puller who had been suffering from Tuberculosis at the time of fieldwork. His parents were illiterate. His father did not earn for the family, while his mother earned Rs. 1000.00 per month as a gleaner. Suman was younger between two sons of his father. His elder brother was a *khalashi* in a motor stand who earned Rs. 900.00 per month. Suman was a helper in a scrap shop and earned Rs. 400.00 per month. He started working for maintenance of his family when his father was infected by T.B. When his father became ill, Suman took up wage work for treatment of his father. Initially he started with selling coconut-pieces in the market. After six months he took up the present work.

In the serap shop where Suman was working had inhuman working conditions. He had to work for all seven days in a week and 12-16 hours in a day. His employer forced him to do additional work without any additional wages. Suman handed over the major portion of income to his mother for their livelihood, and he kept a small amount of money with him for personal use. Due to heavy work load Suman wanted to give up that work for a suitable work.

The daily schedule of work started like this - Suman woke up at 7 A.M. in the morning. After morning fresh and breakfast he went to work. He used to come back home for lunch and returned to his work. After the work was over in the evening he used to come back home. Suman's family did not have any land of its own. A *kuchcha* house was constructed on Railway land where they were still residing in a slum. Monthly income of Suman's family is approximately Rs. 2500.00 which is insufficient for maintenance of their family. His mother said that poverty influenced them to send their children to work, although child labour Act is not unknown to her.

Case Study - Three :

A girl, Tinku Goswami, aged 10 years, was a resident of Prankrishna Colony of Siliguri city. She was a Bengali Hindu girl and was not yet married. In 1982 her parents migrated here from Islampur town of a neighbouring district. Tinku was the eldest of five

daughters of her parents. Since last one year Tinku had been engaged in chocolate packing work for which she used to earn Rs. 200.00 per month.

Tinku's father was a gleaner and earned Rs. 400.00 per month. Her mother also earned Rs. 200.00 - 300.00 per month. Both the parents were illiterate. Her father is a physically handicapped person, her mother maintained the family somehow. Tinku's mother did chocolate packing in Bonny Poopins Chocolate Factory in Siliguri. Tinku also joined her mother last year. They used to do this work at home. The factory supplied the chocolates to their home and they packed the chocolates. For packing one thousand chocolates she used to get only Rs. 5.00. Tinku worked for 3-4 hours a day. Tinku read upto class three but she had to discontinue due to economic pressure. She was interested in continuing her study and to get good employment. Apart from this work of chocolate packing Tinku used to help her mother in the domestic work and looked after her younger sisters.

The total monthly income of her family was only Rs. 900 - 1000 per month. Due to this meagre family income her parents were forced to send her second sister for work. Parents were not well aware about the family planning. They live in a *kuchcha* house in a slum that had grown up on the Railway land. The unhealthy condition of the slum did not provide any drainage system. They had to be content with the common bath place and well which they used to share along with other neighbours.

Case Study - Four :

Sujit Das, aged 12 years, belonged to a Schedule Caste category. He had not yet married. He was born in Dinahata of Cooch Behar district. They migrated from the birthplace to Matangini slum of Siliguri in 1992. Sujit worked in a hotel and got Rs. 80.00 per month. He had been doing this work for about six months.

His father, aged 45 years, was illiterate. He worked as a helper to a mason in the construction work and earned Rs. 700.00 - 800.00 per month. His stepmother worked as a chocolate packer who was also illiterate. She earned Rs. 800.00 - 900.00 per month. Sujit and his brother helped their mother in packing work. Sujit's father earlier was a rickshaw-puller in Dinahata, Cooch Behar district. Then he migrated to Jalpaiguri town and became cook in a hotel. After a year he came to Siliguri to live in this slum.

Sudhir, father of Sujit was habituated with taking alcohol and had been suffering from the respiratory problem. Gradually he became weak and could not do much hard work. Sujit's stepmother took up chocolate packing for maintaining the family. Both the parents motivated Sujit to take up a work in a teashop. Sujit got a work of Rs. 50.00 per month in a tea shop but after four months he took up a work in a hotel as he was not satisfied with the work and wages in the tea shop. In the hotel he got Rs. 80.00 per month. Daily his work started at 08 in the morning upto 09 at the night. There he got tiffin, lunch and dinner. Sometimes the employer also punished him, which could be physical torture and curtailment of wages for neglecting duty and absence. In the hotel he used to clean utensils, serve meals and water and assist in cooking, etc. His future plan is to open a hotel like that. In the family his stepmother did not treat him equally with her own sons. The monthly income of the family was not adequate at all. No saving was possible at all. The condition of their *Kuchcha* house and the slum was extremely unhygienic. The slum was built on the Railway land. Use of common bath place and toilet were the usual features of the slum. The civic authority did not extend drinking water facility to them. Vitamin deficiency, skin diseases, water born diseases, respiratory diseases etc. are the common health problems of the slum dwellers. They demanded free medical check up camp, free compulsory primary education in their locality, and good opportunity to work. They were fully ignorant about the Child Labour Act. They only knew that working at minor age was so much harmful but due to economic problem they were forced to send their children to work.

Case Study - Five :

Promod Sahani, aged 13 years, male and Hindu. His mother tongue is Hindi. He is unmarried and born in Siliguri. His parents migrated here from Samastipur district in Bihar approximately 28 years back. Promod is now engaged in the work of sack sewing at Khalpara, Siliguri. His employer is a sack merchant. Promod and his father are working there. He earns Rs. 2.00 for sewing one bag, which comes approximately Rs. 300.00 per month. He works seven days a week and 8-9 hours a day. The employer does not provide him with any additional facilities like medical help etc. He is not given any holiday or leave. He hands over all his earning to his father.

Tirkeshwar Sahani, father of Promod, aged about 42 years, is an illiterate person. He earns approximate Rs. 900.00 per month by sewing bags. He has two sons and two daughters of whom Promod is second. Promod's elder brother is physically handicapped who is 17 years old. Promod's one sister is aged 6 years and the youngest one is 4 years old. Promod's mother, aged 33 years, is illiterate. She got married to Promod's father at the age of 13 years only. Promod's father was earlier a rickshaw puller but after having four children he shifted his occupation to bag sewing. But this occupation could not provide sufficient money to maintain the family of six members. Then his mother started to work as a maidservant. When Promod was 13 years of age, his mother became very ill and the family suffered economic crisis. At that time Promod was motivated by his father to work in sack sewing. He was interested to take education but his parent was unable to admit him in the school. Promod is not satisfied with his work and the wage. In the morning he wakes up from bed and takes tea and tiffin. He goes to the work at 9 a.m. and works up to 7 p.m. At the noon he comes back home and takes lunch. Moreover, he gets one hour recess break in the noon for lunch. He is suffering from Vitamin deficiency and malnutrition. Promod is interested to take education, to play games and to watch television or cinema but he does not get any time to enjoy all these. Sometimes the employer for neglecting duty punishes him.

Family income of Promod is approximate Rs. 1200-1300 per month but he feels that the monthly earning is insufficient for the maintenance of his family. Saving is not possible; no movable property is possible to purchase. Promod's family is living in a slum, which occupies the Railway land. Siliguri Municipal Corporation has constructed one common bath place, well and low cost sanitation for the slum dwellers. The surrounding environment is in unsanitary condition and unhygienic. Their house is ill-ventilated and semi-*Kuchcha* type. They have occupied approximate 90 sq.ft. land where they have constructed two rooms for living. Promod wants to give up this work and intends to get better work for better wage. He does not know about Child Labour Act, or the ill effect of child labour in the society. His parents are not completely aware of the Child Labour Act. His father only knows that to work at minor age is not good for health, but he was helpless.

Case Study - Six :

Putul Thakur, aged 10 years, unmarried girl is a Hindu. She speaks Hindi and is born in Siliguri, presently residing at Lichu Bagan Colony of the Ward No. 18. Her parents came from Sunsari district of Bihar tentatively 15 years ago. Poverty was the main reason behind their migration. Putul is a maidservant, she has been working in one house at 'Ghogomali', Siliguri. The employer gives her Rs. 100.00 and nothing else. Late Suresh Thakur was her father, who was a wage labourer and illiterate. They belong to barber caste. Due to poverty they were forced to come to Siliguri in search for better jobs. He took the work of a wage labour at 'Khalpara', Siliguri, his work was to load and unload goods. He earned approximately Rs. 1500.00 per month and this was sufficient to maintain his family. Putul is the second daughter of her parents. After the death of her father her mother took up work as a maidservant for maintaining the family. Her elder sister also took the work as maidservant. Since their income was not sufficient to maintain their family. As a result, Putul started her working life also as a maidservant. Putul works from morning to night and her works includes cleaning of utensils, helping in the kitchen, taking care of baby, serving food to the members of the employer, room cleaning etc. She gets sufficient food. Putul is interested in education but now it is not possible due to poverty. Since last six months she has been working in a house, but she is not satisfied with this work.

Monthly income of her family is Rs. 900-1000 approximately, and this earning is not sufficient for the maintenance of the family. Saving is not at all possible. Her family lives in this slum in a rented house by paying a rent of Rs. 50.00 per month. This slum is very congested, dirty and built on government's land. The Siliguri Municipal Corporation has constructed common bath place, well and low cost sanitation for the slum dwellers. The slum dwellers are mainly wage labourers, maidservants, rickshaw/van-puller and vegetable sellers. Only 10.53 per cent child labourers are living in this slum who belong to the age group of 5 - 14 years. The slum, as described by the informant, was extremely unhygienic, throughout the year they suffered from many water born diseases. Skin diseases, Vitamin deficiency, malnutrition etc. were very common among the slum dwellers. They were fully ignorant about the Child Labour Act as well as its ill effect on the society.

Case Study - Seven :

Ratan Kirtyania, aged about 13 years, male, Hindu by religion belong to non-Scheduled Caste. He is unmarried and speaks Bengali. His birthplace is Siliguri and is residing at Kshudiram Colony, Ward No. 18, Siliguri. They migrated here from Faridpur district of Bangladesh about 28 years back. In 1971 his father came to Siliguri to enquire about suitable work for livelihood. Ratan is a helper to a carpenter and he has been doing this work for the last one and half year. He earns Rs. 25.00 per day, but he does not get daily work. He gets work approximately 20 days in a month and earns about Rs. 500.00 per month. He has to work 8 hours daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and gets one hour's lunch break at noon. His father motivated him to do this work but he is not satisfied with the wage he gets.

Dhaniram Kirtyania aged 45, is his father. He is a literate person. He came to Siliguri with his father when he was 17 years. His father was a carpenter and Dhaniram helped his father in this work. He married Gita from their same slum when he was 25 years. Now in their family they have six members. Dhaniram has three daughters and two sons. Ratan is the eldest son, younger sister is of 12 years of age, she is a maidservant. The younger brother is of 10 years of age, he is a gleaner. Three children of his family have been working for livelihood. Dhaniram is now mentally imbalanced and cannot earn for the family. He was addicted to *ganja* or cannabis. His earning was insufficient to maintain his large family. His wife worked as a maidservant to help the family. She wanted to send her children to school for education. Ratan wants to continue his work for supporting his family. He is interested in learning to write his name and address. He wants to be a good carpenter in future and is ambitions to start a furniture shop. He keeps only Rs. 4.00 to 5.00 daily from his daily wages as his pocket money and the rest of the wages is handed over to his mother. Sometimes he goes to see the cinema with his friends. Ratan wakes up in the morning and after performing some work in the house and taking tiffin he goes to work. In the noon he comes back to his house for lunch and again joins the work. In the evening he comes back home and after doing some domestic works he gets sleep. He had to follow more or less this routine daily.

The monthly income in their family is near about Rs. 1000.00 to 1200.00 but this is not sufficient to maintain their family. Savings from the earning is not possible. Gita and her children have been suffering from malnutrition and vitamin deficiency. In this slum

23.29 per cent children are engaged in different types of work who are aged from 5 years to 14 years. Gita, her husband and their children live in the semi-*Kuchcha* house constructed on 120 sq.ft. land and the house is ill-ventilated. No movable property can be found in their house. She has no idea about the Child Labour Act. She only knows that child work is prohibited, but she was fully helpless. According to her, poverty eradication and job opportunity are the primary requirements of the slum dwellers.

Case Study - Eight :

Amar Routh, aged 13 years, male, Hindu, belongs to Scheduled Caste. His mother tongue is Hindi and was born in Siliguri and is residing in Lichubagan Colony, Ward No. 18, Siliguri. He is unmarried. His parents came here from Darbhanga district of Bihar about 21 years ago. Amar has been working as a sweeper for about one and half year and earns Rs. 300.00 to 400.00 per month. He has to work for 4-5 hours a day throughout a week. He works to support his family economically and to satisfy his personal needs. Amar has been motivated to do this work by some of his friends. Amar has four younger sisters and two younger brothers. Three of his sisters are gleaner and give their income to their mother. His sisters are aged about 17 years, 10 years and 9 years respectively. Amar also gives some money to his mother. Amar's father is 45 years old. He is illiterate and is working as a sweeper earning Rs. 1200.00 to 1500.00 per month. His father is addicted to drink and gambling. He spends a major portion of his income for this purpose. His mother is illiterate and also works as a sweeper and earns about Rs. 400.00 to 500.00 per month. There are six earning members in his family.

Amar does not get regular work. He gets 4 - 5 days work in a week. He has to spend a portion of his earning for tiffin, cinema, sometime meal etc. He is engaged in this occupation because it is his traditional calling. He gets lesser wages than an adult worker. He wakes up in the morning and takes tiffin, in the noon he comes back home for lunch and again goes to work. The income of his family is about Rs. 2000.00 per month. Saving is not possible from this meagre income. He is suffering from vitamin deficiency and malnutrition. They live in an ill-ventilated uncleaned house in the slum. They occupy about 110 sq.ft land.

Case Study - Nine :

Samsa Khatun, a Muslim girl aged 12 years, is unmarried whose birthplace is Siliguri. At present she is residing at Harijan Mazdoor Colony. They came here from Motihari district of Bihar about 28 years ago. Samsa is a gleaner since last two years and earns Rs. 300 per month. She has four brothers and two sisters. Md. Kashim, her father aged 45 years, is a wage labourer who earns Rs. 1200.00 per month. Both of her parents are illiterate. Smt. Saidu Khatun, her mother is aged about 32 years.

Md. Kashim came to Siliguri in 1971 from Bihar with his father. His father was a wage labourer who engaged Kashim in a garage in Siliguri. After the death of his father, he took up work of wage labour at 'Khalpara', Siliguri, when he was 24 years of age. Samsa's eldest brother aged 14 years living in Bihar with their grand mother. Her two brothers, aged 10 and 8 years, are working as gleaners. Rest of her brothers and sisters are too small to work. All of her brothers and sisters do not go to school. Her father was the main earner who motivated Samsa and her brother to earn for the family. Her father felt that child-education was necessary but he was unable to send his children to the school. When Samsa was 10 years old her father motivated her to do this work for the family. She earns daily Rs. 10.00 to 12.00. In the morning she wakes up and helps her mother in the domestic work. After that she takes some tiffin and goes to work. She collects plastic, glass, paper, iron, bottle etc. She carries one sack on her back and collects waste things. At noon she comes back home to take lunch when she helps her mother in the domestic work. Again she goes to sell those things in the market. At the end of the day she comes back home and hands over the money to her father. She remains engaged with work for about 6-7 hours daily. Apart from doing this work for earning she does not have time to participate in entertainment. She is complete blank about her future. Her father is willing to get her married after 2-3 years. But Samsa wants to continue this work for helping their family financially.

Monthly income of their family is about Rs. 2000.00 to 2200, which is insufficient to run the family. They do not have any movable property. They live in an unventilated uncleaned *Kuchcha* house constructed on 120 Sq. ft. land of the slum. About 15.79 per cent children of this slum are engaged in different types of works. Slum dwellers have to use common bath place and enjoy low cost sanitation provided by the Siliguri Municipal

Corporation. Lack of drainage facilities and pure drinking water are the common features of the slum. Samsa's brothers and sisters are under nourished and one of them has severe skin disease. Samsa and her father are ignorant about the Child Labour Act and its negative consequences.

Case Study - Ten :

Bhukra Pasman, a Hindu boy aged 13 years who speaks Hindi has not got married. He was born in Siliguri and is not residing in Harijan Mazdoor Colony. His father migrated here from Begusarai district of Bihar in 1961. Bhukra is a rickshaw puller in which he has been engaged since last six months and earns Rs. 40.00 to 50.00 per day. He pulls rickshaw about 4-5 days in a week for 5-6 hours in a day. He has four brothers and a sister. The sister is married. Bhukra is the eldest among all his brothers, his next two brothers are gleaners, who are aged 12 and 10 years. His youngest brother is 7 years old. His father Bachchu Pasman is aged about 50 years. He is illiterate and a wage labourer in Food Supply Corporation of India (F.C.I.) godown, who earns about Rs. 1800.00 per month. Anawar Sahaw Devi aged 40 is his mother. She is also illiterate and does not work. Bachchu came to less populated Siliguri town with his father about 38 years ago. From Bihar they migrated here in search of occupation. His father was a rickshaw puller. They lived in the N.J.P. (New Jalpaiguri) area for sometimes. His father was unable to maintain the family, therefore Bachchu and his elder brother were engaged some work. After death of his father Bachchu became a rickshaw puller and married Anawar Devi, when he was 27 years old. After a year he came to Siliguri Town Station area and lived separately with his wife. This area was recognized as a Mazdoor Colony by the Siliguri Municipal Corporation (Mazdoor means working man or manual labourer) He felt that rickshaw pulling is not gainful occupation now a days. He could not maintain his large family with the meagre income from this occupation. Later on when he got opportunity he became a wage labour in the F.C.I., Siliguri. Now he is 50 years old and cannot work hard. Gradually he became an irregular earner. Due to this reason his family became poverty ridden. Under such a situation Bachchu motivated his eldest son Bhukra to earn as a rickshaw puller. They purchased a rickshaw and Bhukra started to pull it. He earned about Rs. 700.00 to 800.00

per month. Bhukra's two brothers are gleaners who together earn Rs. 300.00 to 400.00 per month.

Bhukra wants to continue this work but has become very irregular in earning. Bhukra wakes up in the morning, takes some tiffin and pulls rickshaw. In the afternoon he comes back home and takes lunch. He again goes to pull his rickshaw. He earns less than an adult rickshaw puller. He is weak and under nourished. Monthly income of the family is about Rs. 2500.00, but expenditure is more than that. They maintain their family in a miserable way, saving is not possible. Rickshaw is the only movable property, which they have. They live in a poorly constructed house of scrap metals, which is ill ventilated and constructed on 120 - 130 sq. ft. land in the slum. Bachchu and his son Bhukra do not know about the Child Labour Act and its negative aspects.

Case Study - Eleven :

Anil Sarkar, who is 10 years old is a Hindu boy and speaks his Bengali mother tongue. He was born in Siliguri and at present is residing in Sarbahara Colony, Siliguri town. His parents migrated here from Faridpur district of Bangladesh in the year 1974. Anil is a vegetable seller and earns daily about Rs. 10.00. He has been doing this work since last year. His mother motivated him to do this work. He goes to the Super Market of Siliguri daily and helps the vegetable sellers by cleaning and arranging vegetables in their shops in lieu of this the vegetable sellers give him some vegetables. He brings those vegetables and sells a portion of it in the slum and the rest of it consume in their own family.

Anil's father was an illiterate person and maintained the family by earning from van pulling. His mother is also illiterate, who works as a maidservant. Mother earns about Rs. 300.00 per month. Anil has three brothers and three sisters. Anil's elder brother, aged 16 years also pulls van and earns Rs. 30.00 to 40.00 a day. About 25 years ago Thakurdas came to Siliguri with his parents when he was 19 years old. Thakurdas was the eldest son. His father came to India for good opportunity and he took Indian citizenship. His father was a *Chowkidar* (Guard) in sawmill, but by that income he was unable to maintain his large family. As a result Thakurdas pulled the rickshaw. After the death of his parent he was married Ahalladi, then he was 26 years old and his two sisters were already married

and his younger brother was engaged in a hotel. After marriage Thakurdas established a separate nuclear family and purchased a rickshaw. In 1998 his father died, his elder brother started van pulling to earn something. His mother was engaged as a maidservant. But they could not maintain the family. Under this condition Anil started earning to help his family.

Anil works daily from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. In the morning after taking some tiffin, he goes to Super Market for work and by 12 noon he comes back home with some vegetables. After taking midday meal, he goes to sell those vegetables in the *bustee* market. He hands over the income to his mother. He wants to be a big vegetable seller in future. Monthly income of their family is about Rs. 1300.00 but this is insufficient. No savings is possible by them. His father wanted to send their children to the school for education but due to poverty it was not possible. Thus, children remain illiterate. The house where they live is more or less same in its condition as others.

Selling Firewood 📍



📍 Shoe shiner

Child Labour
in Hotel 📍

