

Human Trafficking For Labour Continues To Flourish In K'taka Thanks To A Well-Organized Racket That Spreads Tentacles Across States

Merlin.Francis@timesgroup.com

Just a week ago, police rescued 107 workers, many of them minors, from an incense-stick factory in Kanakapura, 57km from Bengaluru, where they worked and lived like slaves. Most of the bonded labourers were from Jharkhand, Assam and West Bengal.

"We worked for over 15 hours a day. We didn't get enough food. We were made to live in a shed inside the factory premises and asked not to move out," a rescued labourer told police.

"I was beaten up twice in the three months I've been here. Once, when my machine broke down and the second time when after close to 14 hours of work, I asked when we could sleep. The supervisors beat me with a pipe and kicked me on my stomach and leg," said Sandeep (name changed) from Jharkhand, who was among the 107 labourers rescued from Balaji agarbathi factory. The labourers believe that one of the workers may have died because of beatings.

The rescue, led the authorities to Tirupathur, in Tamil Nadu, from where 48 more bonded labourers were rescued.

In the startup capital, this news must come as a shock, but no. For, this is not an odd case. Though bonded labour was abolished in 1976, human trafficking for labour continues to flourish in the state, thanks to a well-organized racket that begins with agents visiting poor villages in West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha and Assam and promising easy jobs and handsome pay to people there. From there, the workers reach industrial hubs in Jigani, Hosur, Anekal and farmlands on the outskirts of Bengaluru, where they end up working as bonded labourers.

In north Karnataka, Mandya and Kodagu, labourers are given an 'advance', usually for the marriage of a daughter, or in times of emergencies. The labourer promises to work for the owner in order to pay off the debt, which, however, is rarely paid off.

NGOs estimate 2-3 lakh recognized bonded labourers in the state. According to Kiran Kamal Prasad of Jeevika, an NGO working with bonded labourers, 11,646 workers applied for release certificates in 2012. In 2013, 3,003 certificates were issued. The certificates are issued by the state government releasing the labourer from any form of debt to the 'owner'. "But ask anybody in the government how many bonded labourers there are in the state, and they will probably say none," Prasad said.

In 2007, the state government prepared an action plan to tackle bonded labour, but lower rung officials do not follow this, making identification harder. "The enquiry needs to be done at the labourer's residence or in a neutral office, but it's usually done at the landowner's home, where labourers are afraid to speak," Prasad said.

The Supreme Court has ordered that a census needs to be done every three years. "In 2012, a census did take place, but we do not know what happened to it," he said.

Only since 2013, when section 370 (Human Trafficking) of IPC was amended, did laws against bonded labour trafficking get strong, says Esther Daniel of IJM. "Section 370 provides for a minimum sentence of seven years for trafficking a person. In cases involving multiple victims, minors, or repeat offenders, the minimum sentence can go up to 14 years and it is a non-bailable offence," she said.

"The poorest of the poor are the most vulnerable and they need to be informed of what bonded labour is and how they can get out of it," Kiran Kamal Prasad said.

There's hope, however. Recently the state government announced that the compensation given at the time of release of a bonded labourer will be increased to Rs 24,000 from Rs 10,000 which will be paid in two installments — one at the time of release and the next in 6 months.

For the first time, the state government has also decreed that when a bonded labourer applies for a release certificate, it should be given within a month. The CEO if a zilla panchayat has to apply for the rehab package within one week.

FIGURE IT OUT

5 children from a family of seven rescued from alleged bonded labour at a brick kiln in Hoskote, in Feb 2014



31 children travelling in a KSRTC bus and Tata Sumo from Pavagada, Tumakuru, to a textile mill in Tamil Nadu rescued in April 2013



2-3 lakh bonded labourers in the state, according to NGOs



11,646 workers applied for release certificates in 2012
3,003 release certificates issued in 2013

₹24,000 compensation given at the time of release of a bonded labourer



1098 Union home ministry's anti-trafficking hotline, also child helpline

TOI

VICIOUS CIRCLE

ADVANCE: Bonded labourer is one who takes an advance and promises to work for the lender to repay it

ANNUAL WAGE

One who is promised an annual wage (in most cases between Rs 20,000 and Rs 35,000). However, this amount is not paid, with the owner claiming it is adjusted against the existing debt. The labourer borrows money for survival, compounding his existing debt

NO FREEDOM

Even if the labourer finds a better job with a higher pay, and offers to pay off the debt, he is not allowed to take it up

UNFAIR PAY

The minimum wage rule is ignored. If the owner pays minimum wages, a labourer would get Rs 269 a day for eight hours of work, and an annual salary of Rs98,185, way more than Rs 35,000

OVERWORK

Bonded labourer usually stays on the farm and works for over 12 hours a day, and no overtime is paid to him

BONDED TO SERVILITY



UGLY TRUTH: (Clockwise from left) Poverty has pushed an Odisha family to work for measly wages in a brick kiln on the outskirts of Yadgir town; (below, left) A room in the Kanakapura incense-stick factory from where 107 bonded labourers were rescued recently; (inset) Workers of a brick kiln near Yadgir live in squalid conditions



Five-member family works for ₹600 per week

A five-member family from Balangir district of Odisha has been working as bonded labourers in a brick kiln on the outskirts of Yadgir town for a year. The whole family gets just Rs 600 per week as wage.

The family, including three children, says poverty pushed them to work in the kiln and no one forced them. They live in a hut that has no doors. As water and reptiles enter their house during heavy rain, they have to spend their nights outside under the open sky.

However, this is not an odd case. Around 20 people are working in similar conditions at a chicken farm and a silk farm in Itaga village near Kalaburagi. Suryakant, a resident of Khanadal village near Itaga, gets just Rs 40,000 for a year here (around Rs 110 per day). The labourers, who work from 6am till 10pm, are not even provided food by the farm owners.

Jeeta Vimukthi Kanrataka (Jeevika), an NGO working with bonded labourers, has identified around 240 bonded labourers working in farms and 600 others working in bricks kilns of Yadgir and Kalaburagi districts.

Last year, 10 bonded labourers in Yadgir and 23 in Kalaburagi received release certificates and Rs 20,000 each from the state government. Subsequently, they have also been getting Rs 400 per month. —TNN



Looking back: A labourer before he was rescued from Hangarahalli quarry in 2000

Hangarahalli case that created political furore

At the turn of the century, the infamous Hangarahalli case exposed how the age-old bonded labour system thrived in Mandya with the patronage of corrupt officials. The case had created political furore and sparked off heated debates across the nation.

In a covert operation, farmers' organization Karnataka Rajya Raita Sangha (KRRS) freed five dalit labourers, who had been chained and made to cut granite rocks by a stone quarry owner at Hangarahalli village of Srirangapatna taluk. KRRS activists also freed hundreds of other quarry workers who were working night and day.

Investigation by the Corps of Detectives (COD), and independent enquiries by various progressive organizations found that Puttaswamygowda, the owner, was running the quarry without valid licenses with nexus of officials of several departments.

Finally, Puttaswamy, and three others were sentenced to two year imprisonment. The trial saw many twists as most of the witnesses and even some of the rescued labourers turned hostile. However, photos taken by TOI played a pivotal role in exposing the plight of the bonded labourers and proved to be a key evidence in the case. —TNN

Look out for human trafficking in your backyard

There are many misconceptions about bonded labour trafficking. While many people know it is an issue, few believe it exists in their area.

Many think bonded labour trafficking occurs primarily in agricultural industries and rural contexts, which could result in people being less vigilant about other industries such as various types of factories, quarries, brick kilns and even houses — in the form of domestic work or sexual servitude.

There is often a misled emphasis on bonded labour trafficking as a poverty issue, a minimum wage issue or a contract issue. While these can be factors, bonded



TORMENTING TIME: As many as 48 labourers were rescued from a factory in Tirupathur, TN, where they faced abuse regularly

labour trafficking is a serious criminal issue that occurs because perpetrators exploit the poorest and most

vulnerable through deception and coercion.

People who are trafficked are often restricted in several

MY OPINION

ESTHER DANIEL
INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION,
BENGALURU COORDINATOR

ways, such as not being able to speak the local language, they do not go back to their home town, even for important festivals/family obligations, labourers (especially from out of state) moving around in large group controlled by one or two people in railways stations or bus stands.

If everyone works together to identify bonded labourers and report it, we could see perpetrators being held accountable. When you find someone in a situation where their freedom of movement or their freedom to be employed anywhere is restricted, or if you notice abuse, call 1098, the union home ministry's hotline.

There are signs that may indicate bonded labour and the public can help in identifying and reporting them. For instance, labourers/domestic workers may live and sleep at the facility which they work, they do not leave the facility in which they work, or are supervised when they do so,

Baywatchers save 99 lives in 6 years at Panambur beach

Stanly.Pinto@timesgroup.com

Mangaluru: The Panambur Beach Tourism Development Project (PBTDP), a first-of-its-kind initiative in the country to develop and operate a beach privately, has made Panambur beach one of the safest along the west coast, with better patrolling and trained lifeguards.

The Panambur project lifeguards have saved 99 lives since 2008, the latest being just a couple of days ago, of a Bengaluru youth. After PBTDP took over, Panambur emerged as the most popular beach in coastal Karnataka, according to the department of tourism.

The beach, located 1km off NH66 near New Mangalore Port, receives an average tourist footfall of 20,000 during weekends and about 5,000 during weekdays — the highest for any of the 41 beaches in the three coastal districts. In the past two years, monsoon footfall has also been on the rise. With the crowds come along challenges too.

PBTDP CEO Yatish Baikampady, who quit his banking career to work full-time in this initiative said: "The challenge with more footfalls is safety and cleanliness. More people means more garbage. We had thefts too. A gang operated during the season, which is a common thing in all popular destinations — they would pick car locks and remove valuables. Earlier, there was bike lifting, which stopped

THE BEACHSIDE STORY



0 Victims of drowning (past year)
99 lives saved (from 2008)
750m of beach patrolled
12 lifeguards on weekends

Supervisors have revenue-sharing model with stalls and parking fee, apart from regular salary
₹8,000 salary paid to beginner
Lifebuoys, life-saving surfboards, life kit, harness used in rescue missions

ped after the introduction of CCTVs and regular patrolling. CCTV cameras installed by police at the parking lot and at the beach have not been working for some time. If they are maintained, lifting valuables from cars can be prevented to a great extent."

The other major problem is the public, especially youth, who violate instructions on jumping into the sea at a particular spot, or when the sea is rough.

"If we don't allow them to get into the sea in the main area, they try in a free area. On a busy weekend, we have to manage a crowd of 20,000 in a 750m area with 12 lifeguards. During the fishing season, the Coastal Security Force deploys two personnel to help us," he added. "We tackle the cleanliness problem manually. Litterbugs are warned

by lifeguards who use whistles to warn the offenders to use dustbins. It is disconcerting to see the attitude of people who display their best civic sense when they go abroad, but leave it behind when they land here," Baikampady said.

"This problem can be tackled if powers are given to us to fine violators through marshals, not only here but all over the city. But at the same time, there has to be a rehabilitation plan as incomes will dwindle after some time," he added.

On leaving his bank job, Baikampady says: "Though initially it was saving of lives that brought me to the beach, later I thought of approaching the issue holistically, which gave birth to the project. But it needed my full-time involvement. This was also necessary to build confidence among my boys."

REMEMBRANCE — SHARING MEMORIES —

4th Death Anniversary
K. SREEDHARAN M.A.LLB
26.09.1933-08.06.2011

'Our Hearts are filled with fond memories we remember you every minute with silent tears' Mrs. Sreedharan & Family Members.



With profound grief we inform you the sad demise of our beloved
SH. RAVINDER SEN BASSI
On Sunday, 7th June, 2015
CHAUTHA/UTHALA will be held on Tuesday, 9th June, 2015 between 4 – 5PM at Malharaja Agarsain Hall, Ashok Vihar, Phase – I, Delhi – 110052

In grief:
Prem Lata Bassi (wife)
Jyoti & Rohit Bahl (Daughter & Son-in-law)
Vivek & Seema Bassi (Son & Daughter-in-law)
Vinay & Monica Bassi (Son & Daughter-in-law)
Dhruv, Pallavi, Siddhant, Mallika, Anandini, Armaan (Grandchildren)
Tel: 9810720304 & 9940122645

All staff members of : Aryan Granites and Monuments Pvt. Ltd.

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Smt. R. MOTIBAI
(Retd. HM, RBANMS, GGS, Ulsoor)
W/o Late G. Raju
left for heavenly abode on 7.6.2015
Deeply mourned by Lokesh, Parimala & Family
Ph : 080 - 25293308

DEATH ANNIVERSARY

In Remembrance
14th DEATH ANNIVERSARY



D.B. SHIVAGANGAMMA
(Ganganamma) Dyamasandra
08-06-2001
Dear Amma,
"You have left us 14 years ago. Your love, affection are evergreen in our hearts"
"May God Rest Your Soul in Peace"
We always remember and miss you.
Fondly Remembered by :
UMA, (Daughter)
Rakshita & Ajaitsurya (Grand Children)

VAIKUNTA SAMARADHANA

SAD DEMISE



Sri A S MURTHY
Born on : 30-11-1923
Died on : 29-05-2015
May his soul rest in peace
Son, Daughter in law,
Daughters and Sons in law
Vaikunta Samaradhane
on 10-06-2015 at
SAMAJA SEVA SANGHA
Jayangar 2nd Block,
Bangalore

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