

Anti-Slavery Bulletin

No 5, 2006

CHILDREN YOU HAVE HELPED

We wish to thank all our members and supporters who have worked so hard in the last 12 months in the fight against slavery and child labour. In this and subsequent issues we will profile six of these children. Three from our program in northern India: Titakashwar Sada from slavery, Subhash Kumar from pawn-slavery and Ajmer Ali Ansari from child labour; and three from our program in southern India: Ramappa Moogappa from pawn-slavery, Ravi (a slave since he was 8 years old) and Murugesha Rajappa, a bonded labourer.

TITAKASHWAR SADA



Titakashwar Sada, 14 year former slave

Titakashwar Sada is 14 years old. He comes from Patori, a village in the State of Bihar, the poorest State in India.

When he was about 9 years a middleman arrived in his village and took him away after deceiving his mother and father with false promises that he would provide Titakashwar with a good education and vocational training.

Instead, the middleman sold him to Ramraj Bind, a loom master in the village of Harcharanpur in Badoi District, near Mirazapur, who forced him to work at a carpet loom. Here he worked as a slave for 5 years. He was regularly beaten and made to work 10-15 hours a day. He was only fed half cooked rice and raw dal (pulses). He was severely beaten if he asked for food. Sometimes he had to sleep on an empty stomach. He did not receive any wages because he was a slave.

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RAMAPPA

Ramappa is 12 years and comes from Nidumakanahalli, Dinnahalli, Masti, in the taluk of Malur in the State of Karnataka in India.

He became a child pawn-slave (a bonded child labourer) when he was 12 years old. His mother was working as a wage labourer to keep her family. His father, who was a drunkard, borrowed 2,000 rupees for his sister's wedding from Narayanaswamy Gowda in Kadusonnehalli in Malur taluk. He worked every day from 4 am in the morning until 11 pm at night. He had to clean the house, take the cattle to pasture, water the fields, bath the cattle and wash the tractor. He ran away from his master on three occasions, but each time his master caught him, took him back to work and beat him for running away.

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WHAT OUR PROGRAM PARTNERS SAY

“support from [the] Anti-Slavery Society has catalysed BBA's efforts in [the] elimination of child labour in the carpet industry by rescuing them and breaking the myth of 'necessity of nimble fingers' in [the] weaving of quality carpets”.

— The Bachyphen Bachao Andolan
New Delhi, India



TITAKASHWAR SADA

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Tilkashwar was released two years ago after BBA activists and government officials under the supervision of Kailash Sathyarti, the Chairperson of the BBA, conducted a raid.

However, he started working again only after a year of his return to his village because his father, who had been suffering from a prolonged illness, had died and his mother, Bhutti Devi, could hardly live on her meagre wage of 300 to 400 rupees a month (about \$9) working as a landless agricultural day labourer.

When a BBA activist got to know this, he convinced Tilkashwar's mother to send him to Bal Ashram, which is a transit rehabilitation centre for child labourers. Tilkashwar hopes to become a tailor and is currently training to be a tailor. He is enjoying himself and is very happy.

SLAVE EMANCIPATION ORDINANCE IN GERMAN EAST AFRICA (now TANZANIA)



Bernard von Bülow,
Reich Chancellor of the German Reich

This year is the 100th anniversary of an ordinance issued by the Reich Chancellor (equivalent to Prime Minister) of the German Reich, Bernard von Bülow, in December 1904.

It provided that from January 1, 1906 all children born to slaves in Deutsch Ostafrika (German East Africa), now comprising Rwanda, Burundi and the mainland of Tanzania, would be free.



RAMAPPA

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Then Jeevika activists took him from his master's house. Now he is studying in 6th standard at the Jeevika residential bridging course and learning computer skills and tailoring. He is getting 3 meals a day and feels very happy. He is studying well. He wants to become a police officer.

WHAT OUR PROGRAM PARTNERS SAY

"Thank you for keeping in mind the needs of our organisation continuously for a number of years now, sending us very encouraging and appreciative letters and mobilising various financial supports. Your support and well wishes will continue to strengthen and nourish us in the difficult yet challenging and meaningful work of eradicating bonded labour."

— Jeevika/Vimukti Trust
Bangalore, India

INDIA



His Excellency John McCarthy, AO

The Society had a private meeting with the Australian High Commissioner to India, His Excellency John McCarthy, AO, on March 20, 2006, during which they discussed the problem of child slavery, bonded child labour and the trafficking of women and children in India.

WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR CONVENTION 1999

The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 1999 is to be signed by the Australian Government soon.

SLAVE EXODUS IN FRENCH WEST AFRICA



Engraving of a child in Banamba.

This year is the 100th anniversary of the mass slave exodus in French West Africa

In 1906 thousands of slaves resisted their masters and ran away from slavery across a wide area of Afrique occidentale française (French West Africa). The exodus had started in 1905, but the French administration had forced them to return to their masters. The exodus resumed in 1906 in Banamba, a small town in what was then known as Haut-Sénégal-Niger and is now Mali. Most of the slaves returned to their own villages from which they had been taken. This great exodus continued for several years.

Earlier French colonial administrators had returned slaves to their masters on the pretext that they were vagabonds. Lieutenant Gouverneur (Lieutenant Governor) William Merlaud-Ponty refused to do so.

Slavery as a significant institution collapsed.

It finally came to an end after World War I when slaves who had enlisted in the French Army and who had fought in France on the western front returned home and, after having experienced freedom, and infected by the political rhetoric of the French Republic about liberty and equality, refused to resume their old roles as slaves to their former masters. However, many women continued as slaves.

SLAVERY CONVENTION



This year is the 80th anniversary of the Slavery Convention 1926 signed at the Palais Wilson (pictured) in Geneva.

NEPAL



His Excellency Graeme Lade

The Society briefed Graeme Lade, the Ambassador designate to Nepal, on December 8, 2005, on the extent of bonded labour in Nepal, the trafficking of women and children from Nepal into India, and the exploitation of children by the People's Liberation Army which is waging a so-called "People's War". The PLA is the armed wing of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist.



The Maoist insurgents have closed down schools in rural areas under their control and marched teachers and children away for political re-education.

Girl children are seized by the Maoist commanders and are forced into sexual servitude to the commanders.

The Society described the extent of the trafficking of women and children from Nepal into India, and the exploitation of children by the People's Liberation Army in the so-called "People's War". The People's Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist.

The Society pointed out that the Maoist insurgents have closed down schools in rural areas under their control and marched teachers and children away for political re-education.

Girl children are seized by the Maoist commanders and are forced into sexual servitude to the commanders. The People's Liberation Army had conscripted child soldiers.

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The following issues were discussed. AusAID is reviewing its Nepal programs. There were still less Australian tourists visiting Nepal, but that the numbers of tourists from India and UK had increased.

The Society expressed the Society's appreciation for the Australian Government maintaining a mission in Nepal and for funding development programs there.

CONVENTION ON PRACTICES SIMILAR TO SLAVERY



Palais des Nations, Geneva

This year is the 50th anniversary of the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery 1956 done at the Palais des Nations (pictured) in Geneva.

The Supplementary Convention supplements some of the existing provisions in the Slavery Convention dealing with slavery and the slave trade. However, it also covers the suppression of different forms of servitude which it regards as similar to slavery: debt bondage, serfdom, pawnage, forced marriage, the inheritance of widows and the exploitation of the children. It was adopted by a conference in Geneva of plenipotentiaries on September 7, 1956.

The Supplementary Convention had its origins in a recommendation by the Ad Hoc Committee on Slavery that the UN negotiate a supplementary convention to the Slavery Convention 1926 dealing with debt bondage, serfdom, pawning, forced marriage, and the exploitation of children under the guise of adoption.

It introduced a new concept of a "person of servile status" (article 7(b)). This is defined to mean a person in the condition or status resulting from any of the institutions or practices mentioned in article 1 of the Convention. It lists those forms of servitude in article 1.

BRENDAN NELSON



The Honourable Dr Brendan Nelson MP

Congratulations are extended to Honourable Dr Brendan Nelson MP, on being appointed Minister for Defence. He joined the Society and wrote an interesting article in the *North Shore Times* promoting the Society's work): The link:

www.brendannelson.com.au/news/default.asp?action=article&ID=102

ST STEPHEN'S SCHOOL, PERTH



We wish to thank **Lauren**, a schoolgirl at St Stephen's School, Perth, Western Australia, who organized a stand with material on the Society's work. St Stephen's School is a Uniting Church school.

SUPPORT

The Society is grateful for the support of **Monika Droste** and **Vivienne Bijok** and **Anthony Bijok**. For their continuing monthly financial support for the Society's work over many years.

WHAT OUR PROGRAM PARTNERS SAY

"The initiative on Rehabilitation of Carpet Children through Universalisation of Elementary Education with support from Anti-Slavery Society Australia has considerably contributed towards BBA's fight in liberating children caught in their economic exploitation in [the] carpet industry".

— The Bachyphen Bachao Andolan
New Delhi, India

“SOLD FOR SILVER”:



Janet Lim

Story of a Former Child Slave

Janet Lim’s autobiography *Sold for Silver* was republished in 2004. She was a mui tsai, a Chinese child slave.

Janet’s father loved her, and she has fond memories of her father. After her father died, her mother and stepfather sold her to a dealer as a slave when she was 7 years old. She cried furiously as she ran after them, but the gates closed behind them. She was chained to a post, and lived with other children who were sold. The pretty girls were sold as kongchu or amaksan — brothel slaves — while the other girls, including Janet, were sold as mui tsai. She was sold to a very wealthy man in Singapore, and she was shipped from China to Singapore. She worked for him and his wife as a child domestic worker. She was beaten and was fed the leftovers. Her owner tried to fondle her at night. His wife intended her to become her husband’s concubine when she reached puberty.

The colonial regulations required the registration of all mui tsai in the colony. Janet assisted another mui tsai to escape, who went to the authorities. An official arrived at the home and Janet was taken away from her owner. She was educated at a Church of England missionary school, and later became a trainee nurse.

She was evacuated from Singapore, but was captured by the Japanese in Sumatra. After the end of World War II she completed her training as a nurse and ultimately became a hospital matron. Janet married an Australian doctor. She has three children. Both she and her husband lived in Hong Kong before coming to Australia. She retired to Brisbane.

Mui tsai was one of the most ubiquitous forms of servitude which were once common in China and amongst the Chinese diaspora.

Mui tsai existed in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong (which was then a British Crown colony), Macao (which was then a Portuguese colony), the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States, North Borneo and Sarawak (British colonies which now form part of Malaysia), Brunei and Singapore. It was a traditional institution which was usually referred to by its Cantonese name mui tsai (meaning “little younger sister”), which became the generic name for the institution, although it was known by various names in different parts of China.

There was a long and arduous campaign to eradicate it.



Winston Churchill in 1922

In February 1922, Winston Churchill, who was then the Colonial Secretary, decided to abolish mui tsai, against the advice of the colonial administrators. He said:

“I am not prepared to go on defending this thing [...] no compulsion of any kind will be allowed to prevent these persons from quitting their employment at any time they like. I do not care a rap what the local consequences are.”

He directed the Governor of Hong Kong to issue a proclamation stating that the status of mui tsai was no longer recognized and girls who were grown up might leave. He hoped the institution would end in a year.

Unfortunately, he did not complete the task because there was a change of government and he left office.

The governors of the colonies usually engaged in stalling tactics such as enacting legislation and assenting to it, but not proclaiming it (so that it did not come into effect) or not enforcing it, or posting notices in places where they would not come to the attention of the mui tsai girls.

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After the victory of the People's Liberation Army in the Chinese civil war against the forces of General Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang, and the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese authorities cut off the supply to the Chinese diaspora overseas. Occasional instances of mui tsai came to light in Hong Kong and Singapore in the 1950s.

The descendants of those Chinese owners who now live in Australia regard mui tsai as an act of charity in saving the mui tsai from infanticide, starvation, or a life of toil with her parents.

Because of the stigma associated with being a mui tsai, most, when they grew up, were reluctant to speak about their childhood. Janet Lim was an exception.

CHILD LABOUR IMPROVING



The International Labour Organization (ILO) has announced a decrease of 11% in the number of child labourers. Some 218 million children aged 5-17 work as child labourers, the ILO found, down from 246 million in its last report four years previously.

Guy Thijs of the International Labour Organization, making the announcement, described the results as a breakthrough, saying that an end to child labour "is in our grasp" for the first time.

The last four years saw a dramatic decrease in the numbers of children working in dangerous industries, such as with hazardous chemicals and the sex trade. Compared to a global fall of 11% in the overall number of children working, the number of children working in hazardous conditions fell by 26%. About 126 million children work in hazardous conditions.

The number of young children in employment around the world fell by 33%.

There was great progress in Latin America as a whole, where two-thirds fewer children now work, compared to four years ago. The ILO hailed Brazil as an example of real progress, where the number of 5 – 9 year-olds in work fell by 60%. China and Thailand were also singled out for special praise by the ILO.

Nevertheless there were areas of concern.

Although the numbers fell the most in Latin America, there was little change in Africa.

In sub-Saharan Africa — struggling to fight an HIV/AIDS epidemic — the numbers remained unchanged, with 26% of all children — 50 million — in work.

The largest numbers of children working are still to be found in Asia, where 122 million work, a decline of 5 million.

Under the ILO's Minimum Age Convention, ratifying states must specify a minimum age at which children are allowed to begin work. Most countries set this at 14 or 15 years.

Young people under 18 are considered under-age for work hazardous to health, safety or morals.

"We are now at a stage that countries actually put money into efforts to eradicate child labour and really take it seriously. That, I think, is really what is going to make a difference", Guy Thijs said.

Campaigns and new laws have helped reduce child labour, Guy Thijs said, raising hopes that many types of child labour could be eradicated in a decade.

Guy Thijs was one of the keynote speakers at the child labour conference organised by the Society and other organisations at Monash University, Clayton, Victoria, in 1995.

This confirms our own data. Since 1995, we have seen the decline of child labour in China and particularly in Thailand. In our programs in India we have noticed that nearly all the children (except for members of scheduled tribes) are school dropouts at the upper primary level, unlike five years ago, when the children rescued were mostly illiterate and had little or no schooling.

FOREIGN SLAVE TRADE ACT 1806



Houses of Parliament, Palace of Westminster,
London.

This year is the 200th anniversary of the Foreign Slave Trade Act 1806 (46 Geo III c 52), which received the Royal Assent on May 23, 1806. It prohibited British subjects from transporting slaves to the territories of a foreign (ie, non-British) state. It came into force on January 1, 1807.

The British were at war with Napoleon, Emperor of the French, and his allies, at the time.

It was promoted as a necessary war measure, but it was actually a covert measure against the foreign slave trade. It did not affect the slave trade to British colonies.

SLAVE TRADE ACT 1807

Next year is the 200th anniversary of the Slave Trade Bill, which prohibited British vessels engaging in the slave trade, which became law on 25 March 1807. It did not abolish slavery, but only prohibited British ships being involved in the slave trade.

'SLAVERY: UNFINISHED BUSINESS'

The University of Hull, through its newly established Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation (WISE), intends to mark the bicentenary of the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807 by hosting a conference entitled 'Slavery: Unfinished Business' in Hull, 16-19 May 2007. It is inviting papers on the subject. For more information, contact:

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THOMAS CLARKSON



Thomas Clarkson

This year is the 160th anniversary of the death on September 26, 1846 of Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846), one of the early British abolitionists.

He interested William Wilberforce in the issue.

He was a leading member of each of the three early Anti-Slavery Societies:

- the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade (later, the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade), founded in 1787;
- the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions, founded in 1807; and
- the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, founded in 1839.

He worked tirelessly, gathering evidence for Wilberforce.

His most famous work is his drawing of the hold of 'The Crookes', a slave ship, showing how slaves were tightly packed together for the Middle Passage. You can see a reproduction of his drawing in almost every child's history book.

He survived an assassination attempt by slavers.

When the Slave Trade Bill 1807 was passed, the great English poet, William Wordsworth, wrote his poem about Clarkson, which begins with the words:

"CLARKSON! it was an obstinate
hill to climb".

Clarkson's next task was the abolition of slavery itself, which was finally achieved by the Slavery Abolition Act 1833.

Canon John Clarkson, a direct descendant of Thomas Clarkson, is an active member of the Society's governing body.

INDIAN HIGH COURT DECISION

On September 13, 2006 the Delhi High Court directed the government to submit a comprehensive plan and policy on how it intends to carry out the rescue and rehabilitation of all child labourers, including domestic labourers, in Delhi.

The Joint Labour Commissioner, Piyush Sharma, who was present in court during the hearing, was directed to file an affidavit setting out this information.

As many as 425 children had been rescued in November 2005 from illegal sari factories in Shahdara. Of these, 265 were below 14 years of age.

They were sent to the shelter with a charity. The charity later informed the government's Child Welfare Committee that as it was unable to look after the children. No proper plan for rehabilitation of these children had been prepared and most found their way back to other factories.

The court directed the government to submit a reply on whether the children were handed over to their parents or sent back to their homes.

A petition had been filed demanding that all government departments and agencies rescue child labourers across the city, especially those engaged in sari manufacture.

The Indian Express commented that "the raid had exposed the lack of planning and implementation of the rehabilitation process of the government.

Since October 10, 2006 employing children as domestic workers and in shops and roadside eateries (known as dhabas) has been banned.

ETIKO FAIR TRADE SOCCER BALLS



Child labour free soccer balls

Nick, the importer, is now selling soccer balls from Pakistan. They can be purchased in Oxfam shops.

Nick told the Society that he saw no evidence of children sewing soccer balls in Pakistan, although he saw other forms of child labour. He saw the monitors who were present to ensure that child labour was not involved.

They can only be purchased in Oxfam shops and other non-mainstream outlets.

You can also order on-line:

<http://www.etikosports.com.au>

<http://www.nosweatstuff.com.au>

FIGHTING SLAVERY TODAY

Fighting Slavery Today is the newsletter of the Anti-Slavery Society. Further information may be obtained from:

THE ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY
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www.childlabor.net

The Anti-Slavery Society — Fighting Slavery Today!