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# Children's Portrayal of Employers' Power on Bt Cotton Farms in India

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## Abstract

In this paper we focus on the politics of employing child labour in Bt cotton seed production which is fully controlled by MNC and domestic players in the private sector. For this, we decided to use drawings as a method of data collection with tribal children who worked on these farms. This was because these children did not completely understand the language we spoke and drawings suited tribal children who were not able to articulate fully their beliefs and emotions using spoken or written words as understood by us. These drawings provided insights into conscious as well as unconscious thoughts and feelings of children's experiences at work. These were followed by interviews that were recorded for further analysis. At the beginning of the season, labour contractors transported children from tribal villages to work on farms. These children are resources to be easily exploited by control mechanisms that included physical violence. In almost all the drawings the employer seemed to be omnipresent clearly indicating the power dynamics. Some children depicted this by drawing the employer who wielded a stick to instil fear or even physically assaulted them. To escape this abuse they hid behind Bt cotton bushes waiting for their perpetrator's temper to cool. Obviously, their drawings portrayed a sense of isolation heightened by the fact that they were denied basic amenities and wages promised vowing to never return to these farms. However, it is only campaigns by activist that reduced the numbers being transported year after year.

**Keywords:** child labour, India, control, power

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