



## Child Labour in India is it a Curse?

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### ABSTRACT

*Laws exist in all continents of the world to prevent the exploitation of the child. Various seminars are being held, resolutions passed and plans of action drawn up on the protection of children, yet not much could have been done about child protection and the problem grows out of proportion day by day. So, child laws have to be radically re-thought and re-written from the perspective of rights of the child, in terms of policy and accountability.*

### KEYWORDS :

Child Labour is not restricted with in a particular place, particular district, particular country but it is to be considered as a global problem. Across the globe, to a lesser or greater degree, visible or invisible; admittedly or otherwise, child labour exists. Decades have rolled. We are in the era of globalization. But yet things are not changing much fast for children living in rural areas, especially for the children of the poorer segments of the society, rather it deteriorates. -

Laws exist in all continents of the world to prevent the exploitation of the child. Various seminars are being held, resolutions passed and plans of action drawn up on the protection of children, yet not much could have been done about child protection and the problem grows out of proportion day by day. So, child laws have to be radically re-thought and re-written from the perspective of rights of the child, in terms of policy and accountability.

The employment of children is a curse not only for the child but also for the society as a whole. Moreover, socio-economic reasons such as poverty, backwardness, illiteracy etc. force children in to the workforce. The child who goes to work forfeits not only his childhood but also fair chance to leave behind his gloomy past. He loses his 'chance to receive education and raise his status in life. Article 24 of the constitution of India Provides the no child labour below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine to be engaged in any hazardous employment. Article 45 says: 'the state shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.' The child labour laws were cleverly violated and by passed by the unscrupulous employers due to the inadequate and ineffective enforcing as well as monitoring machinery.

#### Causes behind child labour:

There are innumerable causes behind child labour. But families have the primary responsibility for caring. for the protecting children. Main cause of behind the child labour are given below.

- Poverty
- Child's desire to work.
- Large family size.
- Parents inability to provide education.
- Death of parent.
- Ill habituated father.
- Accidents of father and less earning capacity.
- Unemployment problem.
- Population growth.

#### Child Labour In India

India has the dubious distinction of employing largest number of children in the world. According to 1991 census, 11.2 million children in the age group of 5 to 14 are employed in our country. This accounts for 1.35 percent of the total population, 4 percent total working population and 3.6 percent of the total child population of the country. More than 90 percent of the working children are in rural areas and most of them are employed in agriculture and allied activities. These

figures are contradicted by several Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and also do not reflect the complete picture of working children as the census ignores the "no where children" which is a residual category of child population who are neither at school nor reported to be economically active as full time or marginal workers. They are either doing nothing or performing household work not classified as economic activity, and has not been recorded in either of the categories of full time or marginal child labour. Where as, World Bank Report (2000) estimates the child labour in India to be 60 million. "Given the uncertainties of definition and the complexities of enumeration. it is no wonder that estimate of child labour vary so greatly in India.

#### Constitutional and Legislative Frameworks

The Indian government's policy is to prohibit the employment of children in hazardous other occupations.

- According to article 24 the constitution has made the protection of children in below 14 years a guaranteed and enforceable right in this article of Indian Constitution.
- According to article 39(e) at tender age children should not be abused citizen.
- Should not be forced by economic necessity to enter vocations unsuited to their tender age and strength.
- Article 45 states "the state shall endeavour to provide within a period of ten year from the commencement of this constitution for free compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years."

#### Working Avenues

The main concern for India is its children working in hazardous industries such as in the production of glass, brass, locks, gems, matches, fireworks, slates, tiles, stone polishing, quarrying and mining, bidi making, etc. Besides, children are also employed in agricultural fields, rag-picking, selling eatables and as domestic servants. We can say that there is no activity without the employment of child labour. Child labourers existing in aforementioned sectors work under humiliating conditions without having any freedom to express the torture they undergo and in fact they are deprived of their healthy childhood. Millions of children all over the world today are working many in servitude and under hazardous conditions. A large number of children of tender age are being exploited, and compelled to work for long hours for low wages of hectic assignment.

#### Why Do Children Work?

The vast majority of children labours to make living for their families and/or for themselves. Children take part labour work as the adult family members are unemployed and the parental earnings are insufficient. Their parents do not have the capacity to earn enough. The growing cost of living also makes their lives miserable. Moreover, poor quality schools, poor standards of living, lack of family orientation, low literacy level, backwardness, lack of livelihood resources, crisis in agriculture-loss of crop and debt trap towards studies and desire to earn-all

these reasons together slowly pull the children away from education and finally they drop out to become child labours.

### Why Child Labour Is Preferred?

(a) They work less remuneration than adult labourers. (b) They are more flexible mentally as well as physically and can be moulded and pressurised easily into the exploitative tactics of the employers. (c) Child Labour is not only very cheap to the employers, but also trouble-free since they can't organise agitations by themselves. (d) Children cannot demand any overtime, nor the medical and other similar benefits. (e) Employers prefer children more amenable to discipline and control.

### Health Hazards

Labouring at an early age has many adverse consequences for children. The adverse consequences of children working in hazardous occupations are numerous. Firstly, it poses a challenge to the safety of the workers. Secondly, health hazards have more long-term implications interims of making the person invalid for any work at early age. Various studies have shown that the impact of the hacedious work begins to show in its severe form only after 2-3 years interims of morbidity, fever, cold, cough, dysentery, body ache and weakness. T.B and other respiratory problems (Bimal 2000).

The ILO Report of the Director General in the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the International Labour Conference 1983 observed that the vulnerability of working children to health hazards is increased by the high incidence of malnutrition and under nourishment, in contrast to their increased requirement for energy utilisation to perform heavy work activities. The incidence of communicable diseases in always higher among these children. Children come into close contact in work situations with infective cases of tuberculosis and other similar diseases serve malnutrition. Anemia, hard labour fatigue and inadequate sleep make them more susceptible to infectious diseases.

### Conclusion

It is high time that a start should be made to eliminate all forms of child labour in every country, to save a greater part of humanity from their ruin. The most heartening development in our country in the last two years has been the commitment of the Government of India to the elimination of child labour especially of children working in hazardous industries. But the evidence seems to point out that child labour exists primarily because human beings are willing to exploit children for their own advantages and other economic benefits. However, it is felt that the problem of child labour can be tackled only when the attitude and morality of parents, exploiters and society at large get changed drastically. Let us hope that the lot of children improves their life in the 21st century and children have automatic access to education and good health care in the liberalization and privatization and globalization spree let us not forget our children.

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