

## CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

Child Labour is a matter of great concern to many developing Countries like India. It has become a socioeconomic problem which deprives children of their childhood, potential and dignity. The World is home to 1.2 billion individuals aged 10-19 years. India has the world's second largest population with largest number of child labourers. The main causes of child labour include poverty, unemployment and excess population but poverty is the primary cause behind this issue. Working children are the objects of extreme exploitation in terms of toiling for long hours of minimal pay and generally these labours work in hazardous factories. Unless the standard of living improves at the lower levels of society, children will be forced to work. Therefore, the most essential part in this regard is the effective implementation of policies and strict enforcement of labour laws in India. The government of India has also taken various other initiatives to eliminate child labour problem. "There can be no keener

revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children"

**Keywords:** Child labour, Socio-economic problem, Poverty.

### INTRODUCTION

Child labour is a worldwide phenomenon. Any child out of school is a child labour. Most of the child labourers are engaged in agriculture and allied subject like livestock, foresting and fisheries. In the urban areas, children work in dhabas, eateries helpers and in trucks and domestic services. They have to work long hours in bad and unhygienic conditions with fewer wages. The latest available estimate from NSSO (200708) reveals that in India around 5 million children are economically active in the labour market which accounts for more than two percent of the total child population between the age group of 5-14 years. It is estimated that there are 60 to 115 million working children in India which was highest in 1996 according to human rights. The Government of India has classified

child labourers in two groups i.e. main worker and marginal child. Main workers are those who work 6 months whereas, margin workers work less than 6 months during the year. Child labour is therefore an unforgivable waste of precious talent prevalent in many third world countries and India has come to nasty distinction of possessing the largest child labour force. The National Census 2001 of India estimated 12.7 million child labourers aged 5-14 years out of a total population of 253 million children. Census 2001 office defines Child Labour as participation of child less than 17 years of age in any economically productive activity with or without compensation, wages or profit. Such participation could be both physical as well as mental. Realising the deprived and vulnerable condition of children, the law makers of the country have always accorded a privileged status to children. Therefore, Article 24 of Indian constitution prohibits child labour whereas; various initiatives are taken by the government to eradicate the worst form of child labour. The Right to Education Act, 2009, which came into force on April 1, 2010, has made free and compulsory education to all children between the age group of 6-14 years.

## HISTORY OF CHILD LABOUR

The prevalence of child labour has more or less in all periods of time through varied in its nature and dimension, depending on the existing socio-economic structure of society. It is saddening to note that India is the largest employer of child labour. In the past, child labour has been a part of the social organization in which most of the children used to help and accompany their parents. Child labours in the different periods have a chequered history and present a vivid account of child sad plight which is discussed below.

### 1. CHILD LABOUR IN ANCIENT INDIA

The child labour in Ancient India cannot be denied because the slaves of tender age were owned for doing low and dishonourable work. The children were often less than 8 years of age and they were born as slaves, lived as slaves and died as slaves unless the master was not pleased to monument them. In Ancient India child slaves were sold or purchased like commodities. We have also yet not been able to escape with this shameful menace that there was

violation of child rights from the ancient time because, it was the duty of the king to educate every girl and boy where parents were punished for not sending their children to school called ashrams. The activities of the students in the Gurukula cannot be assessed as child in modern sense because, it was a residential education system by staying in guru's home and help him in day today life and earned their way by contributing their labour to the operation and maintenance of the school .We can also see several indications related to child exploitation from ancient texts of Arthashastra of Kautilya. During the fourth century B.C, Kautilya also prohibited the purchase and sale of slave children below 8 years of age. Children, however, helped their parents in house hold activities and family crafts.

## **2. CHILD LABOUR IN MEDIEVAL PERIOD**

The medieval period has also haunted the minds of many social reformers. A class of landless labourers came into existences that

were often bonded to large land owners. The labourers used their children in their economic activities and the children were introduced to traditional craft at a young age. The children were engaged as trainees under the guidance of their parents. They were sold by their parents because of economic necessity. It may be thus stated that the child labour in medieval India was quite rampant and rulers turned a deaf ear to the problem of child exploitation. They turned money at the altar of the children work.

## **3. CHILD LABOUR IN MODERN INDIA**

During the modern period, British rule and its role towards Indian education can be evaluated from the recommendations of charter-1813, by which British Viceroy's desire to develop a cream of literate masses which could be India is blood and English is taste. Child labour underwent a dynamic change in British India. The new economic forces unleashed by capitalism destroyed the family base economy and a large number of labours were

displaced due to mechanism of agriculture. The uneven development of industrialization gave a new look to the history of mankind and brought a change in socio-economic order.

## **CAUSES OF CHILD LABOUR**

The Plight of Child labour is very deplorable. It has roots in the social conventions, traditions and morals of society and the children have been exploited due to these customs, morals and values. Therefore, child labour is a multidimensional problem in India. The main causes of child labour are poverty, unemployment and excess of population. The parents of child labourers are mostly unemployed, desperate for secure employment and income. Child labour is a socio-economic problem. It has been officially stated that, "Child Labour is no longer a medium of economic exploitation but is necessitated by economic necessity of the parents and in many cases that of the child himself" Many children work outside their homes as domestic servants, cut off from friends and family. Most of the children work in both formal as well as informal sectors wherein they are engaged in small scale industries which has negative

impact on the physiological as well as psychological levels of child. Some major factors that give rise to child labour are as under.

### **Economic Backwardness**

Economic factors are stronger than socio-cultural factors responsible for perpetuation of child labour because most of the child labours belong to destitute families. They don't have much choice and the main cause of sending their children for work is poverty which compels parents to send their children for work at inappropriate jobs for their survival. Regarding monthly expenditure of the families, it is found that their monthly incomes are higher than their monthly expenditure which compels parents to indulge in such activities.

### **Educational Backwardness**

It is surprising to note that 45.33 percent of the child labourers' parents are ignorant and illiterate and also unaware of the evil effects of the menace of child labour. The problem of child labour is wide spread among the low income groups who are educationally backward and uneducated person is generally unaware of things which an average person is required to know. There is

not as much as culture of education like East Asian Countries. Child labour is also considered as the result of the poor having more number of children and the children of such families become the victims of child labour due to lack of faith in the formal education. The parents believe that working children will be equipped with many skills for the future. But in many cases lack of interest in schooling is also making the children to prefer for work because of their inability to conceive of an alternative. Many communities do not possess adequate school facilities. Social Backwardness Many working children belong to different religions where status of a child could be expected to act as a barrier to their primary education. Such people are victims of deep social prejudices, poor standard of living and other evils of society. Social and cultural deprivations are responsible factors of child labour. Therefore the lack of exposure and access to education lead to levels of literacy among people belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

## **EVOLUTION OF CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA**

The Government of India has taken certain initiatives to control the menace of child

labour in India. Several laws and policies are made for proper growth and development of children and protection of children from a variety of exploitations and elimination of child labour from the country. The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (1986) was the culmination of efforts and ideas that emerged from the deliberations and recommendations of various committees on child labour. The most significant among them were the National Commission on child Labour (1966-1969), the Gurupadaswamy Committee on Child Labour (1979) and the Sanat Mehta Committee (1984). The National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Scheme was launched in 9 districts having high child labour endemicity and this scheme is presently approved for 270 districts in 20 states of the country for the rehabilitation of child labour. The Children are provided formal and informal education along with vocational training with a stipend of Rs 100 per month. There was Identification of child labours through survey and awareness campaigns. The most important judicial intervention in the action against child labour in India was the M.C. Mehta case (1996) in which Supreme Court, directed the Union and state governments to identify all

children working in hazardous processes and occupations, to with them from work, and to provide them with good quality of education. India under the ILO's IPEC Programme on child labour is covering more than ninety thousand children with direct funding by the ILO office to NGO's In 2005, the M.V. Foundation, an NGO working on child rights brought a public interest litigation petition which argues that child labour up to the age of compulsory education is unconstitutional and is a negation of rights under Article 21-A which provides free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years IPEC launches a Convergence Project against Child Labour in September 2009 which covers 5 states- Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Orissa and Jharkhand.

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