

**CHILD LABOUR: SOCIO-ECONOMIC CAUSES AND STEPS TOWARDS ELIMINATION
(WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INDIA)**

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Introduction:

Children of today are the future citizens of tomorrow. Children are the important assets of the society. Every child has the right to enjoy his childhood. They have the right to education, recreation and development of their personality. But it is harsh reality that in many countries of the world, children are denied their physical, mental and psychological development. In the global society approximately out of 153 crore children about 25 crore are 'Child Labour'.

Child labour problem is universal one. This practice has been vogue since long in India. In rural areas child labour is being used in agriculture and other household works. With industrialization they are employed in hazardous occupations.

As we March into 21st century demand for removal of and action against child labour is becoming stronger. For, the elimination of child labour practices has come to be identified as a global challenge. But despite statutory provisions, the practice is continued unabatedly.

Objectives of the Research Paper:

1. To study the concept of child labour.
2. To study the estimates of child labour in India
3. To study the socio-economic causes of child labour.
4. To examine the child labour elimination efforts and the magnitude of child labour in India.
5. To find solution for elimination of child labour practices.

Methodology:

The research paper is based on secondary data available through census reports, NSSO reports, publications of Government of India, References books, websites

Definition of Child Labour:

Gurupada Swamy Committee (1979) : 'Child Labour' can broadly be defined as that segment of the 'child population', which participated in work either paid or unpaid.

I.L.O. (1983) : 'Child Labour' includes children prematurely leading adult lives, working long hours for low wages under condition damaging to their health and to their physical and mental development, sometimes separated from their families, frequently deprived of meaning education and training opportunities that would open up for them a better future.

Homer Folks (Chairman of the US National Child Labour Committee: Child labour as "...any work by children that interferes with full physical development, their opportunities for a desirable minimum of education or their needed recreation."

Report on the worst forms of child labour (2005) : 'Child Labour' means any which by its nature or employment conditions is detrimental to a child's physical, mental, moral, social or emotional development.

Child Labour World-wide Phenomenon :

The problem of child labour is such that it can hardly be legislated away as its roots lie in object poverty and backwardness of the society. However it is the responsibility of the government, NGOs and responsible citizens of each country to take all possible steps to put an end to the problem of child labour. But the problem of child labour is a global phenomenon.

According to International labour organisations Bureau of statistics, the number of working children in the world in age group of 5-14 years is 250 million (Nielsen and Dubey, 2002)

The problem of child labour in developing countries has drawn a considerable attention. South Asia is the home to the largest number of child labourers in the world. A conservative estimate puts the number of such children (5-14 years) between 20-30 million in five countries - India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh of South Asia (World Bank 2001).

Table No.1**Working Children in South Asia (million)**

| Sr.No. | Country | Working Children (5-14 years) | Total Number of Children (5-14 years) |
|--------|------------|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. | Bangladesh | 5.05 | 35.06 |
| 2. | India | 11.2 | 210 |
| 3. | Nepal | 1.66 | 6.22 |

| | | | |
|----|-----------|------|------|
| 4. | Pakistan | 3.3 | 40 |
| 5. | Sri Lanka | 0.47 | 3.18 |

Source : Human Development Report in South Asia 2003

Despite the fact that various laws have been enacted to ban child labour in almost all South Asian Countries, the problem of child labour still persists and the region has the largest number of working children in the world.

Estimation of Child labour in India :

There are varying estimates of the number of working children in the country due to differing concepts and methods of estimation. The 55th Round of the NSSO in 1999-2000 indicates that there are about 10.4 million working children. NSSO survey 2009-10 working child are estimated 49.10 lakh.

Table No.2

Child Labour in India (1951-2011) (in crore)

| | | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Year | 1951 | 1961 | 1971 | 1981 | 1991 | 2001 | 2011 |
| No. | 1.34 | 1.45 | 1.07 | 1.36 | 1.13 | 1.26 | 0.43 |

Source : Different Census Report of India, 1951 to 2011 GOI

As per the different census reports (from 1951 to 2011), India had 1.34 Cr. Child labours in 1951, 1.45 Cr. in 1961, 1.36 Cr. in 1981, 1.13 Cr. in 1991, 1.26 Cr. in 2001, 0.43 Cr. in 2011. According to this official data during the period 2001-2011, it indicates that child labour incidence in India has declined significantly. But in India still there are 43,53,247 (Census 2011) children are engaged in economic activity.

State wise statistics of child labour in India :

As per various census reports there are the regional variation of child labour in India.

Table No.3

State wise statistics of child labour in India

(Some selected states)

(Age group 5-14)

(Percentage shown in the bracket)

(Figures in Lakh)

| Sr. No. | State | Statistics of child labour | | | | |
|---------|--------------|----------------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| | | 1971 | 1981 | 1991 | 2001 | 2011 |
| 1. | Andrapradesh | 16.28 (15.13) | 19.51 (14.30) | 16.62 (14.5) | 13.63 (10.83) | 4.04 (9.29) |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 2. | Uttarpradesh | 13.27 (12.38) | 14.35 (10.52) | 14.10 (12.5) | 19.28 (15.31) | 8.96 (20.58) |
| 3. | Madhyapradesh | 11.12 (13.34) | 16.99 (12.45) | 13.53 (12.0) | 10.65 (8.46) | 2.86 (6.57) |
| 4. | Maharashtra | 9.88 (9.19) | 15.58 (11.42) | 10.68 (9.5) | 7.64 (6.07) | 4.96 (0.11) |
| 5. | Karnataka | 8.09 (7.52) | 11.32 (8.30) | 9.76 (8.7) | 8.23 (6.53) | 2.49 (5.72) |
| 6. | Bihar | 10.59 (9.85) | 11.02 (8.10) | 9.42 (8.3) | 11.18 (8.87) | 4.51 (10.37) |
| 7. | Rajasthan | 5.87 (5.46) | 8.20 (6.01) | 7.74 (6.9) | 12.63 (10.03) | 2.52 (5.79) |
| 8. | West Bengal | 5.11 (4.76) | 6.05 (4.44) | 7.12 (6.3) | 8.57 (6.81) | 2.34 (5.38) |
| 9. | Tamil Nadu | 7.13 (6.63) | 9.75 (7.15) | 5.79 (5.1) | 4.19 (3.33) | 1.51 (3.47) |
| 10. | Gujarat | 5.18 (4.82) | 6.17 (4.50) | 5.24 (4.6) | 4.86 (3.85) | 2.50 (5.75) |
| 11. | Orissa | 4.92 (4.58) | 7.02 (5.15) | 4.52 (4.0) | 3.78 (3.00) | 0.92 (2.11) |
| 12. | Punjab | 2.33 (2.17) | 2.17 (1.59) | 1.43 (1.27) | 1.77 (1.41) | 0.90 (2.07) |
| 13. | Haryana | 1.38 (1.28) | 1.94 (1.40) | 1.10 (0.97) | 2.54 (2.01) | 0.53 (1.22) |
| 14. | Himachal Pradesh | 0.71 (0.66) | 1.00 (0.70) | 0.56 (0.50) | 1.08 (0.85) | 0.15 (0.34) |
| 15. | Delhi | 0.17 (0.66) | 0.26 (0.19) | 0.27 (0.24) | 0.42 (0.33) | 0.26 (0.60) |
| 16. | Kerala | 1.12 (1.04) | 0.93 (0.70) | 0.35 (0.31) | 0.25 (0.21) | 0.21 (0.49) |

Source : Compiled from various census, GOI.

As per compare to total child labour in India in 2011 the high magnitude is found in Uttar Pradesh (20.58%), Bihar (10.37%), Andra Pradesh (9.29%), Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Gujarat where the incidence of child labour is more than 5%. In the backward region (low literacy rate, low infrastructural development, less diversification) the percentage of child labour is high.

Socio-Economic causes of Child labour :

Due to limited resources and more mouth the feed, children are employed in various forms of work.

A) Social Causes :

Certain social factors determining the child labour practices are being outlined below.

i) Illiteracy : Parents illiteracy is positively linked with child labour. Illiterate parents do not realize the need for a proper physical, emotional and cognitive development of a child. As they are uneducated, they do not realize the importance of education for their children.

ii) Parent's perception : In rural areas, parents consider a multitude of male children primarily as an economic assets and as family bread earner. Illiterate and ignorant parents have been found to prefer their child to learn a skill or vocation at her/his childhood so that the child becomes a skilled worker at the age of 15 or so.

iii) Urbanisation: Growth in urbanisation has directly contributed in expanding the magnitude of child labourers in India. Growing employment opportunities in urban informal and unorganized sectors have attracted the wage earners. Not-school attending children of the poor families in rural area have caught up that opportunity quickly.

iv) Family Tradition: Continuation of family tradition, such as, gold smithy, pottery, carpentry, fishing, cultivation, trading, repairing etc. is a pride and/or economic compulsion.

v) Bigger Family size : Bigger family size has come to be identical both as basic cause of child labour, continuation of child labour practices and determinant of family poverty, rather than to be considered as consequence of child labour practices and poverty determined.

B) Economic Causes:

In India economic factors such as poverty, backward agricultural practices, low wage rate, necessity of supplementing the family income for subsistence etc. are considered as the major determinants for the existence of child labour practices.

i) Poverty: The inadequate income within the families puts a pressure on all members of the family including children to extend financial support.

Child labour becomes inevitable in poor families due to the following reasons-

a) To minimize the risk of interruption of the family income, b) Less cost of having children, c) Children as economically productive units.

ii) Backward Agricultural Practices : The backward agricultural practices followed by such poor farmers and their activities allied to agriculture require more labour to be incorporated in the family work force. The children of minor ages get way into the family labour force and form an integral part of the household economy in rural areas.

iii) Improvement in Transport and Communications : Due to improvement in transport and communications mobility of people has increased several times. So not-school attending children belonging to poor rural or urban families have found their way to engage themselves in hotels, shops and commercial establishments in urban centres.

iv) Indebtedness and economic compulsion : The debt bondage system Compels Children to accept employment in the families of land-lords to repay the debt made by their parents and it is observed from generation to generation. Due to indebtedness and poverty pressure compels the children to migrate from the villages to work in urban centres.

v) Absence of social security : In absence of adequate social security, the children of the poorer families have to take the responsibility of the family members at the event of accidental death of parents.

Steps Towards Elimination of Child Labour:

UNICEF has formulated a five point principles for the eradication of child labour.

- (i) Primary Education for all Children.
- (ii) Teaching to child labour during leisure time.
- (iii) Some financial assistance to family and parents of child labour.
- (iv) Formulation of law to release the child labour from painful and hazardous work.
- (v) Formulation of law to prevent child from bonded labour.

The Government of India has introduced several steps for regulating the child labour employment. They are as follows:

- 1) Right to education (The Constitutions of India - Article 21 A)
- 2) Prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour (Article 23)
- 3) Prohibition of employment of children in factories, mines etc. (Article 24)
- 4) Certain principle policy related to health, opportunities, facilities to development, protection against exploitation and moral as well as material abandonment to be followed by state (Article 39 (e) & (f))

- 5) Fundamental duties of parents or guardian to provide opportunities for education to his child, below the age of 14 years.
- 6) Amendment to the Factories Act (1948)
- 7) The employment of children (Amendment) Act 1949 & 1951 (14 Years)
- 8) The Plantation labour Act (1951)
- 9) Amendment to the mines Act (1952)
- 10) The Merchant of shipping Act (1958)
- 11) The Motor Transport Workers Act (1961)
- 12) The Beedi and Cigar Workers Act (1966)
- 13) The Employment of Children Amendment Act (1978)
- 14) The child labour (Prohibition and Regulation Act (1986)
- 15) The National Child labour policy (1987)
- 16) National Child labour projects (1988)
- 17) Child Labour Cell (1990)
- 18) National Child Labour Resources Centre (1993)
- 19) INDUS, 2000 (Indo-American Project)

Suggestions :

- 1) Central and state government may take up such efforts in co-operation with the local NGOs in order to execute the action plans for abolition of child labour in the country.
- 2) The NGOs may provide financial help, guidance and monitoring from time to time to ensure 100% enrollment of children in the primary and secondary stage of education.
- 3) Media should be mobilized to create awareness on child labour issues and special media campaigns would be launched, efforts would be made to make use of all possible and replicable modes of media campaigns, such as publishing articles in the news papers, magazines, small films, radio jingles, talk shows, slide shows etc.
- 4) Task forces should be constituted to monitor and steer the plan of action at state level, District level and panchayat level.

Conclusion:

India has created various legislations which can be utilized effectively to save children but abolition of child labour is not only a responsibility of government and also not possible by the

government alone. So NGOs, political parties, sociologists, journalists, social workers, writers, artists, panchayati Raj Institutions and we all the responsible citizens of India should take concerted actions.

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