

Why Carry Bricks When Shoulders are Intended to Carry Books? Child Labour—A Withered Bud

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Abstract

The employment of children in any work that deprives them of their childhood and interferes with their ability to attend the schools, which, in turn, is dangerous to the children both physically and mentally. They children who are engaged in child labour usually belong to poor sections of the society. They get into labour to support their families economically. Presently the children are employed in various industries like rubber industry, bidi-making industry, firecrackers making industry, agricultural industry and so on. Presently, the agricultural industry engages the maximum number of child labourer in India. Mostly the children of rural areas get indulged in such work. Though enormous number of laws has been made to prohibit child labour but unfortunately that has not been implemented yet. Despite of having the constitutional safeguards to prohibit the child labour still we are heading more and more towards employing the children and the reason behind this is that the child labourers are available on cheap rates and we can get more work from them because they cannot raise their voices. India is the country which is at the top of list for engaging child labourers in the world. Now, for the betterment of our nation, we need to stop such activities in our country because for the development of any nation, its youth need to be strong and well-educated, and it is the children of the nation, who, after attaining the certain age, become the youth of that country. So, we need to implement laws and introduce the schemes for the welfare and well-being of our children only then our country can achieve peace and prosperity.

Keywords: Employment, childhood, child labour, well-educated, implement, welfare

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INTRODUCTION

“The child is a soul with a being, a nature and capacities of its own, who must be helped to find them, to grow into their maturity, into a fullness of physical and vital energy and the utmost breadth, depth and height of its emotional, intellectual and spiritual being; otherwise there could not be a healthy growth of the nation “P.N. Bhagwati” [1].

Child labour refers to the employment of children in any work that deprives children of their childhood, interferes with their ability to attend regular school, and that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful. It takes place when children are forced to work at an age when they are expected to work, study and enjoy their phase of innocence.

Many children in India are quite strangers to the joy and innocence of the formative years of their lives. Instead of enjoying their early

steps on their life’s journey, they are forced to work under conditions of slavery. They have to toil long hours to eke out a living for themselves and support their families. Exploitation becomes a way of life for them and becomes very harmful to their physical and mental development. They are forced to inhabit an adult world, shoulder adult responsibilities, and suffer extreme exploitation.

Children are employed illegally in various industries. But agriculture is the largest sector where children work at early ages to contribute to their family income. Rural areas employ 85% of child labour in India. They are forced to work at young ages due to factors such as poverty, unemployment, a large family size, and a lack of proper education.

Article 24 of the constitution bans engagement of children below the age of 14 in factories, mines and other hazardous employment [2].

Article 21A and Article 45 promise to impact free and compulsory education to all children between the age of 6 and 14. Despite constitutional provisions against child labour, a large number of children continue to be exploited under hazardous work conditions. Poorly paid for long hours of work, they have to abandon their studies to support their family at an age when they are supposed to just play around and have fun. They are made to forego all the joys of childhood by a cruel and ruthless world.

BONDED CHILD LABOUR

Under this system, the child or usually child's parent enters into an agreement, where in the child performs work as in-kind repayment of credit. In urban areas, children of migrant workers mostly belonging to low caste groups such as Dalit's or marginalised tribal sections are pledged to work in small production houses and factories. Bonded child labourers are particularly subjected to mental, physical and sexual abuse sometimes even leading to death. In Orissa people sell daughters, 8 to 10 years old, as maid servants to the creditor in order to clear their debt.

In world's poorest countries, around 1 in 4 children are engaged in child labour. In 2017, four African nations (Mali, Benin, Chad and Guinea-Bissau) witnessed over 50% of children ages 5 to 14 working. Worldwide agriculture is the largest employer of child labour. The vast majority of child labour is found in rural settings and informal urban economy.

Despite legislation banning child labour, it has not been possible to completely stop the practice of hiring children as labour across the world. India is no exception to employment of children as labour; rather the country employs the largest number of child labourers in the world. In India the 2001 census found an increase in the number of child labourer from 11.28 million in 1991 to 12.59 million. Child labour in India is now not confined to the agricultural sector. In recent times children are engaged into activities such as *beedi* making, brick kilns, carpet weaving, commercial sexual exploitation, construction, fireworks and matches factories, *dhabas*, hotels, leather mines, silk, synthetic gems, etc. [3]

CAUSES OF CHILD LABOUR

Poverty, social inequality and lack of education are among the main causes of the child labour. According to UNICEF report, in rural and impoverished parts of the world, children have no real and meaningful alternatives as schools and teachers are not available. Also, the low paying informal economy thrives upon the low cost, easy to hire, Easy to dismiss labour in the form of child labour.

Lack of meaningful alternatives, such as affordable schools and quality education is another major factor driving children to harmful labour. Children work because they have nothing better to do. Many communities, particularly rural areas where between 60-70% of child labour is prevalent, do not possess adequate school facilities. Even when the schools are sometimes available, they are too far away, difficult to reach, unaffordable or the quality of education is so poor that parents wonder if going to school is really worth it.

CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD LABOUR

Children are exposed to accidental and other injuries at work. They should thus be protected to prevent social, economic and physical harm, which persist to affect them during their lifetime. Such injuries include:

- General child injuries and abuses like cuts, burns and lacerations, fractures, tiredness and dizziness, excessive fears and nightmares.
- Sexual abuse, particularly sexual exploitation of girls by adults, rape, prostitution, early and unwanted pregnancy, abortion, Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS, drugs and alcoholism.
- Physical abuse that involve corporal punishment, emotional maltreatment such as blaming, belittling, verbal attacks, rejection, humiliation and bad remarks.
- Emotional neglect such as deprivation of family love and affection, resulting in loneliness, and hopelessness.
- Physical neglect like lack of adequate provision of food, clothing, shelter and medical treatment.

- Lack of schooling results in missing educational qualifications and higher skills thus perpetuating their life in poverty.
- Competition of children with adult workers leads to depressing wages and salaries.
- Apart from the above, lack of opportunity for higher education for older children deprives the nation of developing higher skills and technological capabilities that are required for economic development/transformation to attain higher income and better standards of living.

CONCLUSION

Almost one-third of the world population consists of children. Therefore, they need to be cared and protected, to keep up and improve posterity. The government should bring down the incidence of child labour through reform and investment in education and laws banning child labour. The authorities need to introduce more and more schemes for the welfare of the children, for their education purpose, for their physical activities like organizing talent hunt programs so that even the poorest of the poor children's may get a chance for showing their talent in their respective fields. If we will focus more and more on our children, if we will provide them opportunities to focus on the fields they like, if we will focus on their health and education, believe me, the day is not so far when we will emerge as the most stable and the most powerful country of the world because it is only the children who after attaining certain age forms the youth and as we know youth forms the power hub of the country. Indirectly we can say that if any country wants to become, increase the literacy

rate, wants to achieve more and more awards in the field of sports, they need to focus more and more on the wellbeing of their children. The authorities and organizations need to work in tandem to free children engaged in labour under abysmal conditions. In fact, every citizen should take a pledge to never employ a child labourer, rather discourage others too from doing so as it has been rightly said by Abraham Lincoln that, "A Child is a person who is going to carry on what you have started. The fate of humanity is in his hands [4].

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