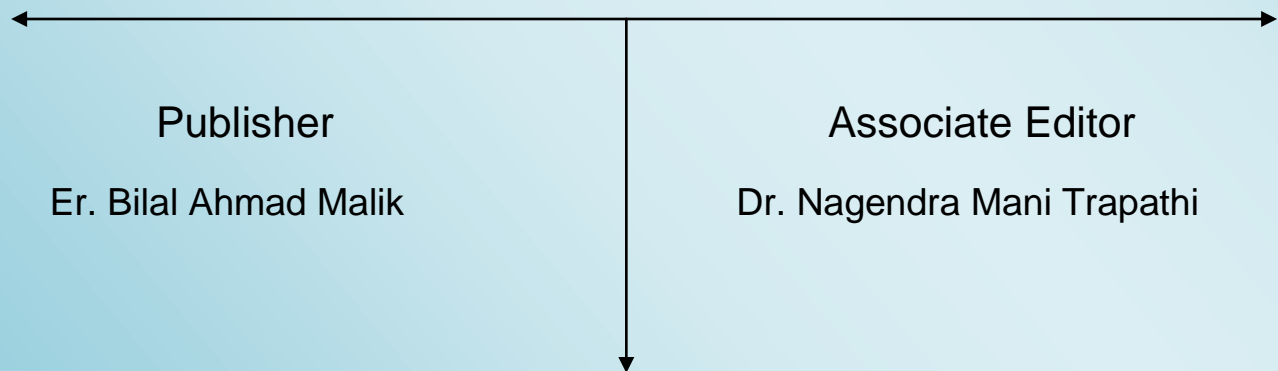


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CHILD LABOR AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Child labor has been an international concern because it damages, spoils and destroys the future of children. The problem of child labor is a serious matter not only in India but also in other developing countries. It is great social problem. Children are the hope and future of a nation. Yet, there are millions deprived children in our country who have never known a normal, carefree childhood. The law in Indian soil says that any child below age of 14 cannot be employed either in a factory or office or restaurant. In fact, India's international business has been severely affected in many cases because child labors, violating human rights, have been used in some stage or the other in manufacturing, packaging a transport of those items. And, in a large number of cases of export of ready-made garments, prawn and several other items from India has been rejected on grounds of child labor.

Keywords: Child Labor, Big Social Issue, Impact, Society, India, International Concern.

INTRODUCTION

Child labor is a big social issue in our country as well as abroad which everyone must be aware of. Let your kids and children know what is child labor, its causes and what prevention measures are. India has many crises affecting it at this time. Among them is the important and sad issue of child labour. There are approximately 60 to 115 million child labourers in India (Human Rights Watch, 1996). Most child labourers work in the agriculture field but most organizations for human rights focus on the bonded labourers in the cities. Bonded child labour "refers to the phenomenon of children working in conditions of servitude in order to pay off a debt" (Human Rights Watch, 1996). In bonded child labor a creditor loans the parents a small amount of money in exchange for their child's labor. The labor is extremely cheap and the children work until the loan can be paid off in one lump sum. This almost never happens because the interest rates are greater than the wages of the child.



FACTORS IN CHILD LABOR

Poverty and lack of proper education aid child labour. In rural areas poverty affects 39% of the population and in urban areas poverty strikes 37% of the population (International Labor Organization). Families need as much money as possible to survive and the children provide needed income. The children of families don't get an education and become illiterate. From working since the age of four or five they wear down their bodies and die at the age of forty or fifty passing on their debts to their children. Without an education it makes it near impossible for them to get out of poverty as adults. Their children after inheriting their parents' debts are forced into a life of poverty, which creates an almost never-ending cycle. Sometimes the creditor of a child will release the child in favor for younger children, which helps some but then they have no education and are forced to continue in poverty

LAWS AND POLICIES

India seems determined to eradicate child labor when looking at its laws. The Bonded Labor System Act of 1976. Every child is innocent, pure-hearted and full of life. A child is associated with his or her childhood; which is the most beautiful phase of a child's life. It is the time for play, study and being oneself. A section of children get to enjoy their childhood and enjoy a family environment, school life, studying, playing, making friends and pursuing their heart's desire. Be it the urban or rural sector, childhood is what makes a child into a true person. In the rural areas children are seen to help their parents in their work and have their share of fun as well. But, are all children fortunate enough to have a happy and fun filled childhood? It is a question that we should ask ourselves and become aware of a harsh reality - Child Labour! Child labour exists in several forms across the state and country. We see so many children who are deprived of their childhood and do not get the opportunity to enjoy life as children should do. They do not play, study or go to school. They are striving hard to earn their living by working in roadside stalls, shops, markets, railway platforms, restaurants, dhabas and in several households as domestic helps. Children are seen doing odd jobs such as polishing shoes, washing dishes and utensils, cars, buses, auto rickshaws and taxis. They are not paid well and are seen as a cheap source of labour that makes them vulnerable to exploitation by the masses. These children are seen to toil beyond working hours and are seen slogging their lives out for a meal or for a few pennies to support their families who are below the poverty line. In reality, these children should be in schools and doing all the things that normal children do. In context to the law of the land, child labour is a crime and whoever encourages it should be punished severely, so that innocent children aren't deprived of their childhood. Every child has a right to education as per the laws of the state and country; and it is time that we begin implementing the same effectively to get rid of this menace that is destroying the economy and future growth of the country. The country and state should ensure that child labour is banned and every child has secure and happy childhood. In our own small way, we should also not encourage child labour in our homes and neighbourhood and discourage those who think of employing children as domestic helps or making them do all kinds of odd jobs.

In the words of William Shakespeare - 'Children are the fathers of men'. If this holds true, then we should ensure every child's childhood. We should work for a brighter future and a progressive Indian society. Steps should be taken to educate and help these children who are victims of child labour and securing their future, instead of depriving them of their childhood. There are some schools, institutions and organizations who have taken up the task of educating street children and getting them to enjoy their childhood like any normal child. After all they are also Indian citizens of the Republic of India, whose constitution is for the people, of the people and by the people.

Child labour means that children are forced to work like adults and take part in an economic activity. According to the ILO International Labour Organization this is applied to people up to age fifteen, or seventeen in case of dangerous work. Even though only about a fourth of the ILO members have ratified the respective convention, this age limit is generally accepted.

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.

Child labour is fundamentally different from casual work done by children, like guarding other children, or helping here and there. Child labour is forbidden in most countries.

There are two kinds of work that minors can do:

1. Some work they do is acceptable, as it is only light, or easy to do. Children can also do it while they are well-integrated into the family. This kind of work can be done in addition to an education the children are getting.
2. The other kind of work is difficult to do, or it is physically exhausting. It may be dangerous, the children may be required to work for long hours and in humiliating clothing.

In general the second kind of work is usually labelled child labour. Estimates are that up to 350 million children are affected by child labour, eight million of these are affected by one of the worst forms of child labour: they are child soldiers, they are forced into prostitution, they are used for child pornography, they are child slaves, debt bondage or affected by human trafficking.

There are many prejudices against child labor in the Western world: Very often such cases are known through scandals made by the mass media: In that manner, a working child is often seen as a slave, working in a sweat shop in a third world country, producing textiles, or as one of the street children in South America. The reality is different though: Such shops exist all over the world, also in countries like the United States or Italy. The fact that child labour is involved is often hidden: More than three quarters of this work is done in the sector of agriculture, or it has to do with activities done at home, in the context of the family. If child-slaves exist, they are only a minority. This form of work done by children also existed before industrialisation and globalisation, the two phenomena have made it more visible, at best.^[6]

EFFECTS OF CHILD LABOR

- There are very bad effects of child labor for our society, which forces some children to steal things from others in order to satisfy their daily living. Many small girls are even made to indulge in prostitution
- Child labor shifts the interest of the Child from Education and can increase the criminal nature of the child. This can exploit the future generation.
- Child labor also kills the Freedom of the child along with the creativity loss.

SOLUTIONS TO CHILD LABOR

- ❖ The Child labour laws need to be strictly enforced by the Government.
- ❖ The general public need to be made aware of the severe consequences of Child labour.
- ❖ An increasing in employment opportunity for adults would help in overcoming the problem of poverty and child labour.
- ❖ Government should ensure that child gets the opportunity to go to school
- ❖ Government should start schemes for child labours to reduce poverty as well as child labour

CONCLUSION

If the boy or girl takes up a small job as a domestic help or restaurant boy against a nominal salary of 1000-2300 per month, he does not get enough time for primary and secondary education and is most likely to remain completely illiterate, unskilled, perhaps with a weak health and will have to remain unemployed or be engaged as unskilled labor when he is grown up. Hence in his own benefit and interest no child should be engaged as labor both from legal point of view as well as the child's future interest.

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