



CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Background: Child labour is not a new phenomenon to our age, it has existed in one form or another in all historical times" children in India have been associated with work from time immemorial. The work they were asked to undertake used to provide them an opportunities for direct fulfilment of their natural abilities and creative potentialities and this was conducive to their healthy growth and development.

The objective of the present paper are:

- (1) To describe the historical aspect of child labour in different era in India.
- (2) To analysis the global view on child labour

The present paper represent an historical cum descriptive. It is to enquire in to the social phenomenon on with care i.e to scrutinize the existing material related to the phenomenon under investigation so as to gain new in sight into it. The literature of the paper were drawn a wide variety of secondary sources. The employment of children in India, in the form of slavery, was mentioned even in Kautilya's Arthashastra of 3rd Century B.C. in medieval period, children were normally placed as trainees under artisans and craftsmen certain crafts depends totally on the employment of children. In agrarian society, children work according to their capacities, and their work was always considered as a part and process of socialization under quasi – feudal relation of production, parents obligations were often involved all families working for land lords. In 18th Century industrial revolution in England, gave a new turn to the history of mankind it brought a change in the overall economic and social order. Which was for distinct them earlier period. After industrial revolution, the large number of children therefore was appointed by the millowners and later by factory owners. Secondly, the demand for child labour in 'agricultural' sector also increased due to the migration of adult men flock to industrial towns. The terms 'child labour' is at times used as a synonym for 'employed child' or 'working child' in this sense it is co-extensive with and work done by a child for economic gain. But more often them not, the term "child labour" in used is a social sense. It suggests some thing which is harmful, unjust and full of exploitation. The child labour (regulation and prohibition act, 1986) characterised the child labour as a 'National challenge' or a national concern. We have taken up this challenge and the struggle is still in its infancy stage. The national child labour programme (NCLP) inaugurated in august 1987 was a step in the right direction. The international programme on elimination of child labour IPEC take our attention to the ultimate objective or any response to the problem of child labour.

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INTRODUCTION

Participation of children in work is not a phenomenon peculiar to our age. It has existed in different forms in every society through human history" (Mendelievich. E, 1979 : 3) has rightly observed : "To a greater or lessor extent, children in every type of human society have always take part and still do take part in

those economic activities which are necessary if the group to which they belong is to survive" it has been pointed out in the report of the committee on child labour (Govt. of India 1979: 8), also, child labour is not a new phenenon to our age, it has existed in one form or another in all historical times".

The objective of the present paper are:

- To describe the historical aspects of child labour in different era in India.

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- To analysis the global view on child labour

The present paper represent an historical cum descriptive. It is to enquire in to the social phenomenon on with care i.e to scrutinize the existing material related to the phenomenon under investigation so as to gain new insight into it. The literature of the paper were drawn a wide variety of secondary sources. Historical data were collected with the help of official and non-official records, published from time to time census handbook. Reports published in News magazine, documents of the voluntary organization studied conducted in the areas relevant for the purpose. Children in India have been associated with work from time immemorial. The work they were asked to undertake used to provide them an opportunity for direct fulfilment of their natural abilities and creative potentialities and this was conducive to their healthy growth and development. When the structure of our society was not so complicated, various occupation used to be pursued on the caste lines within the frame work of the joint family system in which the pleasures and pain; property and poverty and business and idleness used to be shared by all the members according to their capacity and needs of all members used to be fulfilled within the available family resources. The system was based on the principle of each for all and all for each, under this system elders used to insure that opportunities for fullest development of children became available to them and all obstacles. In the way of their proper development were timely removed. They used to see that the work done by children provided them creative opportunities equipping them with healthy experiencies and their was no adverse effect of work on the personality of children.

INDIAN SETTING

The employment of children in India, in the form of slavery, was mentioned even in Kautilya's Arthshastra of 3th century B.C. it describes the existence of domestic slavery, in many prosperous households, where slaves were normally from low cast child slaves of less than eight years of age were known working in many nobles houses (Banarjee.s 1981:12). In medieval period, children were normally placed as trainees under artisans and craftsman certain crafts depends totally on the employment of children. The tradition still continuous in carpet weaving or cotton or silk weaving industries which provide employment to large number of children even today in our country. In agrerian society, children work according to their capacities and their was always considered as a part and process of socialisation, children of agriculturist had to perform specific tasks. Thus, many children were interested with the work that was time consuming, while elders were busing in more effort intensive labourious skilled tasks. (Rodgers and standing; 1979). The children from agriculturists families from their early ages started learning and functioning as participate and productive members of the family and community. children thus, from an integral part of the agricultural household economy. The receive training for various work roles and gradually start making construction. Under quasi-feodal relation of production, parents obligations were often involved all families working for land lords, more commonly adults were hired as labour to such low wages, that other family members including children had to remain engaged in extra work to meet households' subsistence needs glimpses, of this form are yet prevalent spordically in the form of bonded labour.

In 18th Century industrial revolution in England, gave a new turn to the history of mankind it brought a change in the overall economic and social order, which was for distinct than earlier period. Till than, the worker weather an 'adult' or a 'child' irrespective of his work place had his identity in the scenario. After industrial revolution, the change come about in the pattern of production i.e. adoption of new management techniques technology and ownership of assests. It brought along with it a change in human relations which was never enlisted before it attached the value to a labour of a person and the values determination was in the hands of employers. The large number of children therefore, was appointed initially by the millowners and later by factory owner. secondly, the demand for child labour in agricultural sector also increased due to the migration of adult man folk to industrial towns that children replaced of them to run various agricultural operations. The terms 'child labour' is at times used as a synonym for 'employed child' or 'working child'. in this sense it is co extensive with any work done by a child for economic gain. But more often than not, the term 'child labour' is used in social sense. It suggests some thing which is harmful, unjust and full of exploitation. In India, there is hardly any statutory provision which defines the term 'child labour' in precise terms even those various legislative provisions which prescribe the minimum age for the admission to employment in different vocations do not fix uniform age for reasons of variations in the nature of the operations in which children are employed. The working children are those who are under 14 years of age and who put in some work and receive returns in cash or kind or save money by rendering services for which the family would have to pay otherwise these children may or may not continue the work with their schooling.

The global view today

Globally the incidence of child labour decreased from 25% to 10% between 1960 and 2003, according to the world bank. Never the less, the total number of child labours remains high, with UNICEF and ILO acknowledging an estimated 168 million children aged 5-17 world wide, were involved in child labour in 2013. (wikipedia.org). At a UN seminar on child labour in 1985 while urging that the exploitation of child labour is an 'intolerabl evil' must be eliminated at the earliest, the conclusion was that the total elimination of child labour was a long term objective which would take many years to achieve interestingly official delegates from the developing coutries admitted that the child labour existed in their countries. There were laws regulating this legislative had been counter productive and had solved the problem. Most of the favoured regulation of child labour rather than banning. But India's child labour laws prohibition children from being employed in factories where wages are high, but not in cottage industries, restaurants, households and agriculture sector, where wages are low. Infact the agricultural sector stands out as the biggest single employer of child labour India. The union labour minister while introducing the child labour (regulation and prohibition act, (1986) characterised the child labour as a National challenge or a 'national concern' we have taken up this challnge and the struggle is still in its infancy stage. The National child labour programe (NCLP) inagurated in August 1987 was a step in the right direction. The International programme on elimination of child labour IPEC take our attention to the ultimate objective or any response to the problem of child labour. It is disturbing to note that international agencies like ILO can suggest that child labour be

regularised rather than banned even if this is to be only an interim arrangement it must be lost sight of that child labour is not only detrimental to the overall development of the child, but has grave consequences for society as a whole both for adults who are deprived of a job and for children, who instead of going to school to upgrade their skills, are put to work at a very young age (Mitra 1978; 552). Interestingly this change of attitude comes at a time when child labour is no longer a problem in developed societies. Whenever child labour exists in the economically developed nations, it affects only the marginalised, mainly migrants who does not count for much.

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