



CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA: CAUSES, GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

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ABSTRACT

As we talk of moon landings and technological advancements we are becoming unconcerned about the realities around us Child labour in India is a human right issue for the whole world it is a serious and very extensive problem, with many children under the age of fourteen workings in various hazardous occupation. Though for the protection of these children the Indian government passed a plethora of laws and specific policies to address child labour. In reality, India has the world's largest child labour population Dada peer of Karnataka Munna Raja of West Bengal, Sundararajan of Chennai, and others are the few among them. In most cases, the benefits of their work never reach their hand, which money will reach in the pockets of either parents or the contractors. These children will get bad food and worst health there are excess of laws to prevent this cruelty but most of them are not working properly this study mainly dealt with, what are the causes of child labour in India. How do government policies affect it? What are the major effects on children due to hazardous labour?

Key Words

Child labour, human right, rural pockets, Low income, faulty educational system, unorganized sector, rapid urbanization, Kautilya, child labour Act, National Human Rights Commission

Introduction

As we talk of moon landings and technological advancements we are becoming unconcerned about the realities around us. Child labour in India is a human right issue for the whole world. It is a serious and very extensive problem, with many children under the age of fourteen workings in various hazardous occupations. Thoughts for the protection of these children the Indian government passed a plethora of laws and specific policies to address child labour. In reality, India has the world's largest child labour population. Dada peer of Karnataka muunna raja of west Bengal, soundararajan of Chennai, and others are few among them. In most cases, the benefits of their work never reach their hand, which money will reach in the pockets of the contractors. These children will get bad food and worst health. There are excess laws to prevent this cruelty but most of them are not working properly. This study mainly dealt with what are the causes of child labour in India? How do government policies affect it? What are the major effects in children due to hazardous labour?

Causes of child labour in India

Child labour in India is a human right issue for the whole world there is about 218 million child labour under the age of 14 worldwide and 15 million in India. 85 % of them are from rural pockets. It is a very serious problem with many children under the age of fourteen working in tanneries, in a commercial establishment, on the plantation, on apprenticeship, glass blowing units and making fireworks and so on obviously, the children working in so-called debt servitude are particularly vulnerable and heavily exploited. They are often exposed to severe occupational hazards which can lead to stunning deformities other health hazards and feature debilities quite apart from working long hours in dreadful conditions for appallingly low wages there are many recorded instances of maltreatment and corporal punishment by employers. In general, the hazards that such children and other child workers in vulnerable situations face are not only physical but also cognitive social, and emotional; and in most cases, they are damaged for life as themselves. Some of the important causes for child labour in India are following

1. Extreme poverty of household

Although multifarious Causes are responsible for the widespread of child labour in developing country the extreme cause poverty of in the household is the main cause. Generally, the death, disease, physical and mental disability of the principal earner of the household are the major causes of extreme poverty of the household from their child labour is drawn. For poor household child are a great advantage because every working child means an additional income to the family.

In most families, children are conceived as one of the earning members of the family. Sometimes for the debts of the family child will give a bond to the person to lend money to the parents. Children from these households are not sent to school to make them available for the labour market. It has also been observed that "To a greater or lesser extent in every type of society children have taken part in the domestic economy and in other economic activities which are necessary for the survival of the family as well as the group to which they belong". Amidst the child labour until the poor families are provided with some alternative source of income. All the sample surveys reported in the front line, November 2006, says that "they have to work because they are poor."

2. Widespread unemployment and underemployment among adults.

Another important cause of child labour is the widespread unemployment among adults from the lower-income strata of the population. The large size of families with low income, lack of educational facilities, illiteracy of parents, and ignorance of the household regarding the ill effects of labour on the future and health of their wards are some other causes of child labour. Besides, inadequate, irregular, or no family income is also responsible for child labour. It is reported that child labourer was also indirectly contributing towards household income by performing household chores and other menial time-consuming activities to free adults especially women from household chores to perform more productive and important tasks.

3. Faulty Educational System.

The faulty educational system is also responsible for child labour. Child labour and non-schooling of children have a significant linkage in the poor sections of the population. In many remote areas of the countryside, schooling facilities are not only scarce but also inaccessible. In many cases, the schools are in such a critical condition that neither the children nor the parents have any attraction for schooling. In many rural areas, the timing of school coincides with the main agricultural operations. However, in some states like Punjab during the harvesting season, the schools are closed so that children can help their parents in various agricultural operations.

"Even in countries where education is free or where books, uniform, and mid-day meals are provided, as in some Indian States, attendance may still be low. This is because one of the major indirect costs associated with schooling is the loss of a child's earnings. It very clearly states that all these things that happen in the way of children are economic backwardness.

4. Excessive population growth due to high birth rate

Excessive population growth due to the high birth rate among poor masses is also a contributing factor to the large supply of child labour in India. The existence of a growing, unorganized sector and rapid urbanization which open new avenues of employment for children are also some of the causes of growing child labour.

5. Cheap availability of labour.

Finally, the important cause of child labour is that it is cheap and becomes an attraction for employers to employ it. Employers prefer children because children can be paid less and exploited more. In many cases, children are liable to do more work than the adult. Studies by Vidyasagar (1994) and Raja (1993) on child labour in the match industry prove it. Children in such industries wake up in the early morning 4' clock, get boarded into the factory bus, and sleep in the way, reach the factory at 5'O' clock and further sleep if permitted or start the work immediately and continue the work till 8 p.m. the children do not mind the long working hours as the wages are being paid on a piece-rate basis. These are some of the reasons for child labour in India.

In nutshell, the problem of child labour in rural as well as urban areas is mainly due to poverty, unemployment, low levels of development, and unequal distribution of assets.

Archaeology of law of Child Labour in India

From the very ancient period, child labour prevailed in India. i.e. even before the 321 B.C in most cases, it was in the form of child slavery, Kautilya during the regime of the Mouryas (321 B.C – 185 B.C) codified some rules in a spirit of the abolition of child slavery that proves the existence of child labour in India. In the medieval period that is during the regime of Mughal kings (1200-1700 A.D) exploitative child labour practice was most prevalent. It was mainly due to the increasing human population pressure and recurrence of famine and these rulers do nothing to improve the condition of child and adult labourers'. During the British period number of laws passed in India affiliated with child labour, which became the foundation of later child labour reforms.

Child labour in British India

Under the patronage of the East India Company, certain industrial organizations grew in the 18th and 19th centuries involving the employment of a large number of artisans especially in weaving, carpentry, silk, etc sectors. Gradually the speed had increased. Such a grim situation unleashed a lot of socio-economic problems. Amongst those employment of children of tender age was identified as one of the burning issues of the 18th century.

Child labour in post-independent India

No changes were observed in the child labour scenario of India immediately after independence. In 1948 on average, daily over 11,444 child labourers were found working in different factories in the country. This period can be divided into two phases based on the effort put forward by the Government.

(a) First phase

First phase eleven major enactments, the years the passing these acts as follows; 1948 – two major enactments on factory and minimum wages, 1949 – Employment of children act, 1951- The plantation Labour act, 1952- Amendment to the Mines Act, 1958- The Merchant of Shipping Act, 1961- Beedi and Cigar Workers Act, Shops and Establishment Act of the same year, The contractor Labour Act of 1970.

(b) From the early 1980s, several events took place, which made child labour a national issue debated in various public fora. Two such major cross-current events sensitizing the issues are;- Frightening volume of child labour estimates and the formation of NGOs for fighting the menace of child labour. Another important change that took place in child labour enactment was the passing of enactment of the child labour Act in 1986.

After that a National policy was adopted on child labour in 1987 this was to remove the social backwardness of the children. With these, two programs were started- the International program of child labour (IPECL) and the child labour Action and Support program. Adoption of the convention of the Rights of the child in 1989 was one of the important enactments to eliminate child labour. The CRC, 1989 has, so far, been ratified by 191 countries including India till 2001. Finally, the formation of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and Child Labour was made a great change in the exploitations of the child labourers in the country. However, it is found that of the total child labour force of Asia, India shares 26.4% (and of a total population of Asia, India shares 24.1% population) in 1971, 19.9% (25.5%) in 1981, 40.6% (27.6%) in 1991 and 16.5% (29.8%) in 2001 Sources:1, Human Development Report,2000.2, World Development Report, 1999/2000.

India's share of child labourers may not fall further due mainly to the inefficiency of the child labour elimination project and programs, unabated population growth, and inter-regional migration of child labourers. Thus in short, though their plethora of laws to protect the children from child labour and to give proper education, even now India is the largest country having the highest child labour population in the world

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