

Child Labour In India

Essay No. 01

Child labour is a crime against humanity. Children are working when they are supposed to play and read. The sad thing is that they work under difficult conditions. The struggle for existence begins at a very early age for them. Everybody is responsible for this crime-society, government, individuals. Socio-economic conditions are directly responsible for child labour in India. The attitudes in society, the perceptions have still not changed. The rich or the employer does not stop himself from exploiting these tender age group children.

The condition is so pathetic that it demands urgent action. We often find children working at **dhabas**, restaurants, and a servant at home. The situation is alarming when they are employed to work in the **bidi** and carpet industries. They work under hazardous conditions. Children are also employed in glass, bangles, matches and brassware industries. Working conditions are very bad in these industries. Children are often infected with various diseases at a very young age and they suffer the whole life. Moreover, they are not paid adequately and work for longer hours. One estimate says that there are approximately 50 million child labourers. We also come across children labourers in agriculture and they are paid very little.

The greatest cause for child labour in India is poverty. More, than 40% of our population live below the poverty line. They are deprived of even two meals per day. It is understood then that how can they think for balanced and nutritious food. Poverty prevents children from going to school. Even if some go to school, they drop out later on as there is constant pressure to earn to support the family. The rising population among poor people accentuates the problem. That is why the goal mentioned in Article 45 of the Constitution for compulsory primary education below the age of 14 never became a reality. It was to be achieved within ten years since the enforcement of our Constitution. Primary education to children is of fundamental importance to the growth and development of a child. Drop out rates are maximum among poor children.

The social attitudes have not changed towards the deprived sections. The children are exploited by employers for being poor. The treatment at homes, dhabas and restaurants is not fair. The practise of child labour is very old. It became more since the establishment of factories by British rule. But the practice

is not in sight to end, instead, it is increasing because child labour is also cheap labour.

The efforts towards making compulsory primary education have not met with success. It has not become a movement. The Government alone cannot do it. Individuals, Non-Governmental organisations and various institutions can help towards making primary education a complete success. Though some of the initiatives of the state towards providing mid-day meals during school hours can help in increasing the enrolment of poor children, that is not enough. It has to see to it that the **dropout** rate does not increase otherwise the very purpose will be defeated.

The government has taken several measures to combat the menace of child labour. The Government introduced the Integrated Child Developmental Programme (ICDP) in 1975 and National Policy on Child Labour in 1987. Various legislative and administrative measures have been taken to improve the working conditions during work. It is impossible to eradicate child labour in one go because they will lose their earnings, which might put their existence in jeopardy. So it should be eradicated in a phased manner. First of all the working conditions under hazardous industries should be improved and later on the conditions should be made for their proper rehabilitation once they come out of those jobs.

The most important thing is that proper educational facilities should be provided along with the health care and training suitable to their temperament. In this way, they will not be deprived of basic education. Also, they will not fall victim to diseases like asthma, skin diseases and tuberculosis. In addition to this, they can also escape from juvenile crime, drugs and country liquor which they easily fall prey to. So their development has to take place in an integrated manner so that all the components for their development are equally addressed.

Child labour is basically a violation of human rights. When a child cannot enjoy his life due to the absence of freedom and multiple deprivations, he is basically denied opportunities that are essential for the development of full-fledged human beings. As a result, a child develops psychological problems like stress and emotional traumas, a lot of complexes. That is why some of the developed countries have imposed restrictions on their imports of products made out of child labour from developing countries. A complete ban of child labour is not again feasible for developing countries, but it can be done in the long run.

Child labour has to be stopped gradually but the sooner it is done better it will be. All favourable conditions should be made for the overall development of the child. Poverty has to be eradicated from its roots. Side by side educational arrangements should be given due importance. Rehabilitation programmes and

training programmes should follow in tandem with educational provisions. If not done in the time we will be depriving millions of children of their basic rights and it will not be helping humanity to prosper and grow to its sublime.

Child Labour in India

Essay No. 02

Child Labour is a phenomenon prevalent mostly in developing countries of Asia and Africa. This is not to be seen in the advanced countries of the West. The reason for this is very obvious, those who feel the need for financial support of the children only allow them to work and earn. In the Western countries, where education is compulsory, the question of children found working does not arise.

Let us analyse in some detail why, this child labour is commonly found in India, or for that matter in any of the developing countries. It is these countries only which have teaming millions of poor people. These poor people have to make every member work for his/her own food. With the earnings of all the members of the family, they can make their two ends meet. This same situation prevails in all the developing countries. I do wonder if any parents prefer to see their little children work for their food, instead of enjoying at school. When the school can only be a dream for the poor, we find the little boys at tea stalls, small restaurants, in mechanic shops, cleaning cars, and working as shoeshines.

We also see small girls engaged in industries like matchmaking, candle making etc. I am sure that, given a choice, all these parents would love to see these little slogging children enjoy their childhood at home or school, but how — is the moot point. The children who are working are adding their little mite to the family income, and it may be so that, if they do not work, they may not be blessed with even one square meal a day.

Besides this, if the child does not go to school, what does he do throughout the day. Time will be wasted, and he will only learn the wrong things of life, as, “An idle brain is a devil’s workshop”. So, in this situation, I personally feel that, though the condition is deplorable it is the lesser evil, and in the bargain, the child gets food to eat. From the side of the child also, it is a certainty that, if he/she is asked for a preference, it will be for going to school. So when both the parents and the children would prefer going to school then why this labour. It is obvious that they are thus working due to compulsions and not out of choice.

The compulsion is, of course, the meagre income of the family, who cannot afford to even feed the children if they do not work, and, besides this, a lot more comes into play for creating this unhappy situation. Our Governmental agencies, private agencies and NGOs, often shout from rooftops regarding this menace of child labour. This is a menace that is accepted by all and sundry but, by shouting about it and passing legislation for it, we do not reach anywhere near the solution of the problem. No one has as yet suggested some solution to the problem. When it is amply clear that, the children work to get their basic needs fulfilled, no one can say that it is wrong.

The practical approach to the problem would be that we attempt to find some means for providing for them, and then, the children can be forced to attend Government schools. In the absence of a practical alternative arrangement, it is no use just shouting about the problem. I personally feel that the Government should first provide for such families by means of subsidies, free ration and free education. Only after such provisions are made, and the Government gets the confirmation of the solution working smoothly and honestly, can we expect children to get out of the rut of working to earn a living from an early age when they should be enjoying and playing and of course, studying and learning

Another point closely linked with the problem of child labour comes to the fore when these young labourers grow up into suffering adults. They are absolutely hardened and most of them tend to become anti-social. Their feeling is, and rightly so that, why should they bother about any social norms, as, what has society given to them. With this attitude, when they enter the adult world they tend to take up professions that are tainted with the crime. They become smugglers, hardened criminals robbers and murderers. With such children having lost their childhood at the altar of poverty begins to believe and rightly so, that in this world what really counts is riches. With this forethought, they enter the world of crime, to become rich and enjoy. Thus we may say that these criminals are usually the creation of unhappy childhoods. So let us understand that child labour is not an isolated problem that has to be dealt with as a single problem but, it brings in its trail a host of more complicated problems which is the offshoot of this one. The biggest problem that follows the problem of child labour is the creation of a force of criminals, and thus an increased crime rate.

The only practical and feasible solution to this problem of child labour which can be conceivable in the present scenario is providing necessities to the families and making free education compulsory for all children. Before providing the essentials, no one can tell the poor that they should not allow their children to work, for, if they do not work, who will feed them-isn't this a pertinent question?

Child labour is not a problem that can be tackled by just talking and debating about it on various platforms. Neither can it be dealt with by making it illegal, as, no law can ban a person big or small from earning his bread. All this drama will not be able to fill the hungry stomachs of the poor. We must deal with the problem with a more practical approach and provide what the child earns. I am sure no child does this labour for fun. It is their necessity that makes them work. No one can deny that fulfilment of necessities has to be tackled before doing anything else. When the necessities are provided for, I am sure that, the problem that is defying a solution will automatically get solved by itself. Let us all get together and pledge to make the Government and other agencies take up a more authentic approach to this problem, and, I am sure, a solution will be at hand.