

## The problem of child labour

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### ABSTRACT

Child labour is a multi-faceted problem. Various writers, journalists economists, sociologists, educationists, psychologists, social workers, constitutionists and lawmakers have contributed to understand it. The problem of child labour is not confined to India only but it is a global phenomenon. Most of the researches have been carried out in industrial sectors and lesser in informal and agricultural sectors. All most all the researchers agree that poverty is the most important reason for child labour. The harshest form of child labour is the bonded labour. The parents want that their children should earn their livelihood rather they should add some income to the family as early as possible as they cannot wait and pay the expenditure involved in their education. The big farm holders, industrialists, and entrepreneurs, hoteliers- all employ them for production. But no independent study on the contribution of child labour to the total production of India has been made so far. Article 24 of Constitution of India debar children from employing in hazardous works whereas article 45 of the Constitution declare free and compulsory education of children as his fundamental right. The child labour grows into weak, unhealthy, illiterate and prematurely adult labour, capable of earning meagre wages. Therefore, it should be a matter of great concern for the policy makers.

**KEY WORDS :** Child labour, Industry, Agriculture, WTO

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Studies on child labour have covered a large number of countries, like Philippines (Rialp, 1993), Brazil, Kenya, Italy (Chatterjee, 1992), Portugal (Williams, 1992), Spain (Searight, 1980), Italy (Valcarengi, 1981), India (Gupta and Voll, 1988) and Pakistan (Soudiere, 1990). Studies have been conducted for a large number of cities and states like Sivakasi (Vidyasagar and Babu, 2002), Ferozabad (ILO, 1988), Surat (Desai and Raj, 2001), Jaipur (Mathur and Ghosh, 2002), Rampur (Ghosh and Sekar, 2002), Markapur (Vidyasagar, *et al.*, 2000), Tiruppur (Jayaranjan, 2002), Ahmedabad (Sanon and Gupta, 1998), Baroda (Srinivasan and Gandotra, 1993), Meerut (Raj and Jha, 1999) and some states of India, like Orissa (Tripathi, 1991), Tamil Nadu (Jayaranjan, 2002), Uttar Pradesh (Srivastva and Raj, 2000) and Jammu and Kashmir (Kitchlu, 1987). The studies also cover some metropolitan cities like Delhi, Kolkata (Sinha, 1991) and Bangalore (Patil,

1986).

### Child labour in industry:

Most of the researches have been carried out in industrial sectors such as Pencil industry (Rao, 1980), Diamond cutting (Burra, 1998), Power loom (Barse, 1985), Carpet weaving (Juyal *et al.*, 1985; Gupta and Voll, 1999; Whittaker, 1988), Lock industry (Burra, 1987b), Pottery (Burra, 1987 a), Brassware (Burra, 1988), Match stick industry (Vidyasagar and Babu, 2002), Glass industry, Bidi industry (Mishra, 2000), Sports goods, Knife industry (Ghosh and Sekar, 2002), Hotel tourism and Catering industry (Black, 1995) and Knitting industry.

The studies by Mustafa and Sharma (1997), Kulshreshtha (1978), Sexena (1993) have pointed out that in rural sector of the country, boys at a young age are made to handle a plough, reap the harvest, cut and bring fuel from the forest, collect the fodder, catch fish from the village ponds, graze cattle and guard the crops in the fields, while girls do free the mothers or elders for working in the fields by looking after younger siblings and sweeping the house or sometimes accompany parents to work sites. Child workers in agriculture are either employed for wages

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