

GIRL CHILD EDUCATION VS LABOUR: A CHALLENGE

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Abstract: India, the largest democracy in the world, paradoxically bears the scourge of having tens of millions of girl child labourers living a life of bondage and slavery. Use of girl child as labourers is rampant not only in the agriculture sector but also in industries such as match box, leather, carpet, sarees, stone quarries, gems cutting and polishing, brick kilns, and many more. Intensity of work, hours of work and working conditions have been undergoing major changes since the advent of industrialization during the last two hundred years. Broadly these three can be either hazardous for the development of a child into a productive and normal adult worker or could be non-hazardous. The use of a girl child is evident everywhere except inside of a class room. The scenario of Girl Child education in India thus seems impossible. How can we speak of education and its impact on women and children when child labour in general and Girl Child labour in particular is such a glaring issue?

Key Words: Child Labour, Gender Bias, Governance, Industrialisation, Discrimination, Rehabilitation, Centres.

Introduction: The prevalence of girl child labour is a slap on the conscience of society. It harms not only the present generation but also the posterity. The origin of girl child labour can be due to illiteracy, poverty, inequality, failure of social welfare schemes, population explosions, etc. The root cause lies in the economic insecurity of families that result from job loss. Natural calamities & sickness of parents in poor families that are often in debt & have no savings. Therefore most of the parents decided to engage their children in some work in fact to use their time productively and sent them to work or took them along themselves being as their helping hand. Childhood is the time to get the best physical, intellectual & emotional capacity to fulfil this duty towards the nation & to one's own self. However this rule of nature has been crumpled by the ever growing men are of girl child labour: if one conceives the idea of girl child labour, it brings before the eyes the picture of exploitation of little, physically tender, illiterate and under-nourishes children working in hazardous & unhealthy conditions. Most girl children in rural areas are found working in agriculture, many work as domestic labours; urban children work in the trade and services sector while some other work in manufacturing and construction. Some girl child aging from four-years-old doing petty jobs to sixteen to seventeen years olds helping out on the family farms. Those working in factories and are slaves at agricultural farm are at times they are denied freedom of movement-the right to leave the workplace & visit their families. Some are abducted & forced to work. In the present scenario of India the status of girl has deprived off due to the inferior thought of the society and male dominance can be clearly be visible. According to the 2001 Indian census, overall male - female ratio was 927 females per 1000 males. However, the 2011 Indian census

shows that there are 914 females per 1000 males. During the last decade the number of female children to male children in the youngest age group fell from 945 per 1000 males to 927 per 1000 males. The study is being conducted in the state of Odisha. The overall population in the state of Odisha is 41,947,358 according to the census 2011. From the entire population of Odisha, the male population is 21,201,678 and the female population is 20,745,680. The child sex ratio is 934 per 1000 males and has decreased as compared to 979 in the last census. The literacy rate of Odisha is 73.45 percent with male literacy at 82.40 percent and female literacy at 64.36 percent. The total literates in Odisha are 27,112,376 out of which the males are 15,326,036 and females are 11,786,340 respectively. Before the Industrial Revolution society did not had alternative programs like schools or others programs that the children could go and because of it. Most of the children working as agricultural workers frequently work for long hours in the heat, heavy loads of grains, are exposed to toxic pesticides and suffer high rates of injury from sharp dangerous tools. Children working in factories often work near hot furnaces, often handle hazardous chemicals. They work in glass blowing unit where the work harm their lungs, damages their eyes & causes disease like tuberculosis, asthma and bronchitis. Some are even injured in fire accident. If they are injured and incapacitated, they are mercilessly discarded or by their employers. Most of the girls working for long hours for little or no pay and they are even subjected to verbal and physical abuse at times even sexual abuse. The main cause of girl child being enforced to child labour is that of sex discrimination. As per the thoughts of the society that girl child being liability will tomorrow get married and take care of in-laws. So it's a wastage and foolishness to spend money on her education. So, in

order to engage her, she is either sent to work in a factory or agricultural field or household servants. Girl child labour is a serious problem worldwide. Therefore it needs to be eradicated from within. To develop the nation, firstly one should start with one own self. Therefore to make our nation called as developed country from developing country, educated citizen of the country must initiate to the girl child labour issues. Girl child labour is a significant problem in India, the root cause is poverty. Other factor affecting as such is gender discrimination. In India girls are most likely to be said to be liability. In most of the cases we see that if a girl is born to a family either she is killed or if she survives, after attaining the age of 4 to 5 years she is engaged in household work especially in the rural areas girls are found working at an early age. Later she is sent to work in a factory, agricultural field, construction area, or for being as a maid servant. The position of India in terms of girl child labour is not an appreciable one; with a credible estimates ranging from 60 to 115 million, India has the largest number of working children in the world. Whether they are sweating in the heat of stone quarries, working in the fields 16 hours a day, picking rags in the city streets, or hidden away as domestic servants, these children endure miserable and difficult lives. They earn little and are made to work more. They struggle to make enough to eat and perhaps to help feed their families as well. According to the census 2001 figures there are 1.26 crore working children in the age group of 5 - 14 as compared to the total child population of 25.2 crore. there are approximately 12 lakhs children working in the hazardous occupations or processes which are covered under the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act i.e. 18 occupations and 65 processes. As per survey conducted by National Sample Survey Organisation in 2004-2005, the number of working children is estimated at 90.75 lakh. As per census 2011, the number of working children in the age group of 5 -14 years has further reduced to 43.53 lakh. It shows that the efforts of the government have borne the desired fruits. According to the statistics given by Indian Government there are 20 million child labourers in the country, while other agencies claim that it is million. Girl child labour is a conspicuous problem in India. Its prevalence is evident in the child work participation rate, which is more than that of other developing countries. Poverty is the reason for child labour in India. The meagre income of child labourers is also absorbed by their families. The paucity of organized banking the rural areas creates a void in taking facilities, forcing poor families to push their children in harsh labour, the harshest being bonded labour. Odisha is a State of the India Union located along the eastern coast of the peninsula. The State is located between 17° 49' and

22° 34' North Latitude and 81° 29' East Longitude. The State of West Bengal on the Northeast, Jharkhand on the North, Andhra Pradesh on the South, Chhattisgarh on the West & Bay of Bengal on the East bind it. Owing to its geographical position, the reason is often being considered as an extended portion of north India or as an annexure of South India. The whole state lies in the Tropical Zone and is divided into four district tracts; viz the northern plateau, the Eastern Ghats, the central tract and the coastal plains. The State is drained by three great rivers the Mahanadi, the Brahmani and Baitarani and some lesser rivers, all of which flow into the Bay of Bengal. The State sprawl across 1, 55,70759kms, which constitutes the share of 4.74% of total landmass of India. The State comprises of 58 Sub-Divisions, 147 Tahasils, 314 Community Development Blocks, 6128 Gram Panchyats, 103 Urban Local Bodies and 51349 Revenue Villages There are 30 districts, which are administrative units of the State with Collector as the head. Orissa is a fascinating land of world with charms and glamour. There are scores of places, which can be of great interest. More than one third of the state population, around one crore is below 18 years. Therefore, the future and strength of the state lies in a healthy, protected, educated and well developed child population. To neglect of child protection issues not only violates the rights of the children but also increases their vulnerability to abuse, neglect and exploitation. Government of Odisha is allocating 91% of child budgetary resource to children's education and only 9% to child development, child health and child in difficult circumstances all combined. Moreover, it has a greater tilt towards non-plan expenditure. The state spends on an average 16% of their total plan budget and 8% of non-plan budget on children. The need of the hour is to change the direction of the child budgetary resource allocation towards development to see a better future for the children in the state. Children of Odisha work in different occupations such as agriculture and allied works, collection and processing of minor forest produce, domestic work/help, hotels/motels/road side Dhabas etc. Apart from these occupations, children are also engaged as apprentice, which is taken as normal process of growing by their parents and communities. Mute acceptance towards this normal process of growing in the name of child-help has encouraged child labour in our society, which needs to be discouraged. In 2009, state has approved a State Plan of Action for Children (SPAC: 2009-2012), which commits to ensure all right to children up to the age of 18, as per article-1 of the CRC. It is in accordance with the National Plan of Action for Children-2005. Study by different NGOs claims that 15% of Odisha's child population within the age group of 5-14, works as

child labours including those who work on their family's farm. In Odisha, there is a preference among employers for girl child as part-time domestic workers, as studied by Department of Applied Economics, Utkal University in 1997. The study found that nearly 90% of girl children started to work before they completed 12 years of age. More than 75% belonged to the age group of 12-14 years. In addition, a study carried out by Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL) in 2001 on child domestic workers of Odisha, reveals that lack of regular income by the head of the family (mostly daily-wage earners or small cultivators and fathers addicted to liquor) was a major reason for the incidence of child domestic labour. Intense poverty in backward areas where alternative avenues for earning are non-existent is responsible for the practice of child domestic workers. However, the status of primary education in Odisha is at alarming situation as per the Annual Status of Education Report-2008 (ASER-2008) published by a prominent NGO of India, named Pratham. The report says in Odisha approximately 25% children (06-14) are out of school, 32% children in class one cannot identify letters, 32% children in class five able to do division, 56% children in class five are able to read text book of class two and 66% children in class five able to tell time from clock. Only 4.5% students going to private schools are doing better from those in state government schools. This research conducted from 2005-2006 to 2007-2008 in 30 districts, 883 villages, 17588 houses and 30,996 children of 03-16 years. School dropout percentage in Malkanagiri is 21.9 %, Rayagada is 17.7%, Koraput is 17%, Nabrangpur is 16.3% and Mayurbhanj is 14.9%. Girl child in Odisha work in different occupations such as agriculture and allied works, collection and processing of minor forest produce, domestic work/help, hotels/motels/road side dhabasetc.They do not go to school. Many of them have been working since the age of four or five, and by the time they attain adulthood they may be irrevocably sick and deformed they will certainly be exhausted, and in this way they are debarred from enjoying the basic human rights, which are essential for the advancement of one's personality. Apart from these occupations, children are also engaged as apprentice, which is taken as 'normal process of growing' by their parents and communities. Mute acceptance towards this 'normal process of growing' in the name of child help has encouraged child labour in our society, which needs to be discouraged.

Certain Suggestive Measures:

- **Emphasis on education:-**The biggest factor responsible in controlling the problem of child labour is education. Education is the prime motivator and a very important factor for eradicating child labour and economic development. Through proper and effective

education children will get a focused direction towards their career and employment. Education will also help in breaking the psychological tradition set in certain rural areas where child labour is very much evident and habitual. It will help in laying modern and efficient foundation for sustainable developed economy. Education of parents also helps in eradication of girl child labour, the parents are the pillar of their children. If they are educated they will always want their children to be educated. This helps in the development of economy and nation respectively.

- **Public involvement program :-**it is a known fact that an individual can help a lot in solving this problem. A conscious effort of the people living in a society to act as responsible citizens and stand against this social evil is the needed. In order to motivate the people, the government must introduce certain involvement programs where the public are awarded certain nominal prizes or money for reporting any child labour incidence which they observe.

- **Expansion of child labour laws :-**Our existing Child Labour Act of 1986 fails to incorporate the child labour occurring in various sectors like agriculture sector and domestic industry where the child labour rate is maximum. The laws have more focused on hazardous form of work which is also very much destructive for the health and growth of the children. Therefore this requires a serious thinking to amend the existing laws for curtailing the problem of child labour occurring in other sectors.

- **Establishing special school's :-**If child labour is banned on wide scale there will be many unemployed child labourers who would be deprived of money and other needs. Therefore in order to attract such children, government must establish certain special schools where the children are educated and also provided with vocational training and some sort of apprenticeship from which they earn certain nominal money for carrying out their nominal earnings to support their family and basic needs. Through this we will be able to decrease the child labour incidence rate and also improve the educational level.

- **Special rehabilitation centre for orphans and under privileged children:-** The most vulnerable prospective child labourers are the poor orphans. Since they don't have any place to go, they are often the soft targets for various child labour touts. They are often victimized and traumatized for the worst form of child labour. In order to overcome such malpractices the government must focus on establishing certain rehabilitation centers for these children where they should get proper support and care to ensure their smooth development.

- **Better governance:**-Many programs have been introduced for tackling the problem of child labour. The Indian government and other agencies have been successful in tackling this problem to some extent. This success is just like a dot on the entire board. Since this problem is quite deep rooted and wide spread it requires much more initiatives. The government should increase the number of labour inspectors to industries ratio for having governance.

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