Children in almost all societies do one kind of work or another. But, the extent and nature of their work are influenced mainly by the structure of the economy and the level and pace of development. The growth of wage labour and industrial expansion are associated with a decline in child employment. The early stages of industrialisation, however, are marked by a high incidence of child employment, often under extremely poor and indeed exploitative conditions. In many developing countries, including India, children are found in all types of industrial and service establishments in urban areas in both the formal and informal sectors and also in rural areas in agriculture and its allied occupations. The present chapter mainly intended to inquire into the causes for prevalence of child labour in India, to examine the conditions of work under which the children are working. This chapter also deals with the consequences of child labour on the child in particular and the society in general.

3.1. CAUSES OF CHILD LABOUR:

3.1.1. Traditional based occupations:

In Agrarian societies work by children is an integral part of the socialisation process and a means of transmitting traditionally acquired skills from parent to child. Moreover, in societies at low levels of technological development the participation of all those who can contribute to domestic or non-domestic production is essential for meeting the consumption requirements of the household. Child work is therefore an essential part of the farm household’s survival. This situation is still prevalent in many parts of Africa and Asia and, to some extent, Latin America. In such societies, the division of Labour is largely based on sex, age and physical capacity. Children, until they reach a certain age, are involved in light and time-intensive activities while adults usually take up effort-intensive activities.

These patterns may be still found in India in artisanal workshops and small scale services like Carpet weaving, Carpentry, Pottery work, match works, bidi making, slate making, etc. In a survey of rural Uttar Pradesh it is noticed that in the poor families parents bring their first two or three children in their own occupation. To the later children they send to schools, if they are able to do so, or in some other occupation, or let them do nothing. It is also found in this study that father’s education and occupational status played a significant role in determining the occupational status of the children. Children assist their parents in ancillary tasks, acquire skills and gradually become fully fledged workers in family establishments or trades. Work of this kind is not without its problems, especially in relation to the health and safety of the children and to their schooling.

3.1.2 POVERTY:

Stronger than tradition is the factor of chronic poverty, responsible for the prevalence and perpetuation of child labour. Nearly half of India’s population subsists below poverty line. In the countryside, the distribution of land is most iniquitous. The lower 50 percent households own only 4 percent of the land. As many as 27.2 percent of the rural households are agricultural tenants and 30.4 percent agricultural labourers. Nearly one-third of the metropolitan population lives in slums. In Madras, 90.8 percent of the families of working children have an income below Rs.500 per month. In Bombay, 78 percent and in Delhi 88 percent of such families have a monthly income of Rs.500 and below.

In these families, the child since his very appearance in this world, is endowed with an economic mission. The child is compelled to shed sweat of brow to keep the wolf away from the door. In some families, when disease or other forms of disability upset the delicate balance of the family budget, there may not be any alternative but to send the child to work. These families cannot sacrifice the smaller gains of the present for the larger gains of future, as they do not have any surplus to sustain them. The income accruing from child labour may be a pittance, but it plays a crucial role in saving the family from a shipwreck. Economic compulsions weighed heavily on the consciousness of poor parents that they would not mind colluding with the child’s employer in

2. Nirmal Sawhney; “Occupational patterns of children in Rural Uttar Pradesh”, in K.Srinivasan (eds), Demographic and Socio-Economic Aspects of Child in India,(1979), 208-209
violating the law and putting the child under risks of inhuman exploitations. Poverty and child labour thus always beget each other and tend to reinforce themselves in families and communities. In agriculture, activities such as tending of cattle are tedious and time consuming. Their performance by children releases the adult members of the family for more productive work. The rocketing price of essential commodities has exacerbated the struggle for survival to ultimate limits and all man power resources available in the family including child labour have to be mobilised to cope with the situation. The urban environment composed of the myriad varieties of goods and services is too enticing for the poor child. It creates a deep sense of deprivation in him which prods him to earn so that enjoyment of some of the ‘dream objects’ may come within his access. Because of their poverty, parents not only cannot make any investment in their child’s development, they are also reluctant even to support them. They want their children to fend for themselves as early as possible, much better, if they become a source of income to the family. Moreover, they perceive several advantages in child’s taking up job, i.e. the job disciplines the child., it terminates his dependency, it protects him against the infection of delinquent culture. Children too, in many cases, have the fear of being discarded by their parents, if they do not earn and prove that they are useful to the family. Some studies reveal that a child’s income is a critical input to family survival. In the tea gardens of Assam and West Bengal, 33 percent of the household income is contributed by children. In Sivakasi, in about 60 percent of the households with working children, 2/3 of the total household income is contributed by children. In case of parental incapacitation, children become the sole bread winners4.

A particularly disturbing situation may arise in agrarian societies where land tenure patterns impose on tenants, sharecroppers and similar categories of workers obligations over and above household consumption requirements. In some cases, these obligations may take the form of providing the landlord a share of the farmer’s produce. But in other cases they might involve the provision of labour services, including those of children. The prevalence of such relations is known to lead to a severe and high incidence of debt bondage, giving rise to the phenomenon known as “bonded” labour which is prohibited by law, is still found in India. It is therefore pointed out that the problem of child labour in both rural and urban areas is principally one of poverty and unemployment.

4. Report of the Committee on Child Labour, op.cit.p.10
3.1.3 Lack of Proper Schooling facilities in Rural Areas:

In many far-flung areas of the countryside, schooling facilities are scarce and inaccessible. Of the 547,672 villages in the country as many as 48,566 do not have schools and 167,382 rural schools are functioning with just one teacher a piece5. Despite the increase in the number of primary schools and teachers, the student - teacher ratio has worsened over the years, from 35.7 in 1950-51 to 60.5 in 1990-916. In most places, the school presents a drab and dismal picture and holds little attraction for the child. Many children are forced to stay at home because their parents cannot afford the prescribed minimum of uniform, books and stationery, etc. Schooling of children is eschewed by them also because it not only touches their pockets but deprives them of the income that accrues from child labour. Stagnation and wastage, comparatively low in lower classes but high in higher grades, lead poor children to drop out of the school system. As many as 73 percent of boys and 80 percent of girls drop out through primary and middle school education. It is found that the dropout rate is much higher in slum areas, drought-prone villages and among marginal families7. According to 1991 census report, over 99 million children were enrolled in primary schools as against 150 million child population in India, ages among 6 and 14 years. It also states that, only 52 percent of enrolled primary school children reach Grade V8. In rural areas, the clash between timings and periodicity of the school system and those of agricultural operations often endanger amongst the poor school-going children's tendencies for temporary withdrawal or permanent drop-out specially during times of sowing and harvesting. This is adversely affecting school enrollment and attendance.

3.1.4 Unemployment:

Adult unemployment and seasonal employment generally lead their children to work at an early age. According to a study9, labour is employed on the average for 189 days in agricultural pursuits. There are other rural employments which exist but the overall position would appear to

5. Ibid, p. 11
6. The Right to be a Child, Unicef, (1994), 16
7. Report of the Committee on Child Labour, op.cit., p.11
8. The Right to be a Child op.cit., p.15
be 100 days in the year of total unemployment. During the period of unemployment many women migrate to cities with families and beg with babies in their arms. They are, therefore employing their children from infancy for begging is an important employment, especially now, and children of the infant group are exploited while older children are pests in every part of the city including railway stations where begging is prohibited by law but where it thrives as officials turn a deaf ear to the wails of boys and girls. Another study revealed that two fifth of the children seek their work because their adult wage earners were unemployed and nearly two - third of children were at work because their adult worker had no employment or had some part-time jobs and one- third children went to work due to the serious cuts in the pay of their adult\textsuperscript{10}. Family allowance is given in a number of countries like Australia, Newzealand, United Kingdom, and France, etc., to the needy families, so that people may have adequate standard and may not be forced to send their children to the labour market. In India there is no such family allowance as can be given to the needy families\textsuperscript{11}.

Spectre of unemployment may be another strong deterrent and disincentive to the weaker sections for putting their children in the school\textsuperscript{12}. Increasing volume of unemployment among the educated youth, undermine the faith of the poor in the efficacy and pay off of education. Majority of parents make a very definite choice between education and an early job, as even if the child goes to school there is no guarantee of a job at the end of education, whereas, if the child is trained in a skill, even if he is not earning at that time, it is seen as an asset for the child's future earning capacity.

3.1.5 Migration:

Migration in another important reason for child labour. In a large number of developing countries technological innovations in agriculture have been accompanied by increasing landlessness and rural differentiation. This led to the search for wage employment in commercial farms, especially plantations, as well as to a rapid migration away from rural areas. A consistently fast growing population, and the small and declining size of agricultural land holdings led to the massive pauperisation of rural families forcing quite a significant section among them to migrate to the cities in search of jobs. Children especially from poor families are forced into the labour market to work

\textsuperscript{10} Kulshreshtha, J.C., "Child Labour in India" (1978), 14.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., P. 15
\textsuperscript{12} Report of the Committee on Child Labour, op.cit., p. 11.
either individually or as part of contracted family labour. Migration has a disturbing influence on the educational pursuits of children. Among all the migrant children in the cities the plight of the children of migrant construction workers is perhaps the most miserable as they move from site to site in search of jobs.

There is a positive correlation between the number of migrants and the proportion of the child migrant labour. In Bombay, 80.5 percent of the working children were found to be migrants. Another study found that out of 287 slum families of working children in Bombay only 10 percent considered themselves as native.

### 3.1.6. Ignorance and Illiteracy of Parents:

In India, the lower socio-economic groups of population are illiterate. They only think about the present time which is their sole concern and worry. They never think of the future. It is ignored by the parents that their children may have bright future if they are educated and if they sacrifice the smaller gains of the present. A study reveals that children coming to labour market were from low literacy groups of society. About 44 percent are illiterate and another 33 percent parents of children are of low literacy group. Therefore, large majority of illiterate guardians are desirous of having money in the place of intelligence.

### 3.1.7. Absence of Provision for Compulsory Primary Education:

Absence of the provision for compulsory primary education is an important cause of child labour. Child labour and non-schooling of children have a significant linkage to each other. In India, primary education is not compulsory. Article 45 of the Indian Constitution declared that the State shall endeavor to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years. Since this is Directive Principle of State Policy, it cannot be enforceable in a court of and unlike Fundamental Rights.

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14. Kulshreshtha, J.C. op.cit., p. 16
15. Article 37 of the Constitution of India.
Though forty-seven years have passed since the Indian Constitution went into effect, 'the goal of Universal Primary Education' remains as elusive as even before. In 1986, the Government of India, by adopting the New Education Policy, has moved away from its earlier objective of establishing compulsory primary education and removing all children from the labour force. The Government would endeavor to provide voluntary part-time, non-formal education for working children rather than press for compulsory universal primary education. 1991 census report provides that 99 million children as against 150 million children's ages 6-14 years, are enrolled in primary schools. But, only 52 percent of these enrolled children have completed V grade. It means that nearly 100 million children's ages 6-14 years are not in schools. These non-schoolgoing children are the main source of child labour. The result is that India is the largest single producer of world's illiterates and child labour.

3.1.8. Child Labour : its Legality :

Another important cause for the prevalence and perpetuation of child labour in India is that child labour is not treated as illegal in India. Indian Constitution, under Article 24, prohibits child labour in factories, mines and in hazardous works. But, it does not prohibit child labour in cottage industries, family households, restaurants or in agriculture. Indian Government had accepted child labour as a harsh reality and that it was neither feasible nor opportune to prevent children from working in the present stage of economic development. Government would no longer ban child labour in India, but would instead seek to ameliorate the conditions of working children. The Government of India, had legalised child labour, by enacting the Child Labour (Prohibitions and Regulation) Act, 1986, which prohibits the employment of children below fourteen years in certain occupations and processes, while permitting child labour in some other works and establishments under regulating conditions of work. The Act imposes no age limit on the employment of children in permissible occupation. Even in the prohibited occupations, the prohibition is carefully circumscribed to provide exemption from this provision to any workshop carried on by the occupier with the aid of his family or to any school established by or receiving assistance or

16. 'The Right to be a Child', Unicef, op. cit., p.15
recognition from the Government. In result, for instance, the 1986 Act prohibits the child labour in match and fire works, but does not prohibit, if the same work is carried out in family-run workshops. The later phrase exempts, government-run apprenticeship programmes to teach children carpet weaving, even though child labour in carpet weaving falls under prohibited occupations. Thus, the Act legalises the child labour and clearly speaks of the dominance of vested interests.

The provision of providing free lunches, medical and other welfare facilities to the working children in the match and fire works and in the carpet weaving industries, meant that the government was inducing children to continue to work in hazardous industries. This is due to the government’s apathy towards child labour and is linked to keep certain sections of people poor and certain areas perpetually underdeveloped.

The General Manager of the Handloom and Handicrafts Export corporation (HHEC) said that a ban on child labour in the carpet industry would be suicidal for exports. The HHEC is a government organisation that runs 200 training centers for children, many well below the age of fourteen years.

Obeete Private Limited manufacturers and exporters of hand-knotted carpets have circulated a paper written by V.R. Sharma, a Director of the company, saying that the government’s intention to levy a cess on employers to help ameliorate the conditions of working children will be detrimental to the carpet industry. Sharma feels that such a move on the part of the government would increase the cost of wages by 50 percent and any legislation to regulate the wages of children would be impossible to implement. It is important to note here that by effecting to this threat, the government dropped its intention to levy a cess on employers to help ameliorate the conditions of working children. Therefore, there is no mandatory provision in the 1986 Act, to levy a cess on the employers.

In 1983, the Tamil Nadu Government announced that it would ban Child Labour, the secretary of All India Chamber of Match Industries, Mr. A.D. Amirthalingam said that if child labour was prohibited, the factory owners would go for machanisation or diversification of business. Another factory owner further went to say “if there was a ban on child labour we will go in for the contract

19. Exemption Provision to Section 3 of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act. 1986
20. Walter Fernandes, “Child Labour in India” SOCIAL ACTION, November (1985), 44.
21. Ibid., p. 45.
system and revive the practice of making matches in house”\textsuperscript{22}. The Government perhaps is not able to go against the “will” of these entrepreneurs, it did not take any step to prohibit child labour in match industry. Interestingly, the Director of the Ministry of Labour, Government of India, said that “in Sivakasi (the site of India’s match and fire cracker industries where 45,000 children are employed), we understand that child labour in factories has gone down. They have in fact gone to the smaller units, the cottage type small units, which are not covered by the Factories Act. This is bound to happen. This is a positive sign. It is a move towards reduction and abolishment of child labour\textsuperscript{23}.

Sir, Thomas Halland, Director of Textile industry in India said that, if child labour is banned, it would upset the organisational set up of many factories. He further added that the principal industry employing children was textiles in the Ahmedabad area and much of the machinery in those Textile factories had been specially made for children. If children were forbidden to work, the machinery would become obsolete\textsuperscript{24}.

Sir, L.P. Watson, member of Legislative Assembly, also a owner of the factories where children were employed, stated that India should not ratify the draft convention of the International Labour Organisation regarding the minimum age. His plea was that introducing a minimum age for children in industry would be detrimental to the interests of the children and the country. As Watson said, today also employers defend the continuance of child labour in factories by stating that the poor children need to work in order to support their families. They also said that by employing children, they are in fact performing a social service. It is pertinent to note here that till now India has not ratified the Minimum Age Convention No. 138\textsuperscript{25}.

3.1.9. Child Labour is Cheap Labour:

Employers justify child labour by saying that they are the ‘saviours’ of the children, if they do not provide employment to those children they would starve or become beggars. But, this is only

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p.47
\item \textsuperscript{23} Interview with Ms. Meena Gupta, Director, Ministry of Labour, Published in \textit{THE LAWYER} August (1988).
\item \textsuperscript{33}
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ibid.,
\end{itemize}
partially true. The employers have a vested interest in perpetuating child labour. Employers prefer child workers to adults because child labour is cheap labour to buy. Children will do almost the same amount of work as an adult, but they cost less in terms of wage and maintenance. Child workers are a greater source of profit. They generate surplus value for the employer. In many cases' industries employ children as cheap labour, while their parents sit idle because, from the employer's point of view, little children spell big profits UNICEF points out that child exploitation is not an accident. Children are not hired at the same rates as adults for the same work but at much lower rates.

3.1.10. Children are more amenable to discipline and control:

Children have less developed ego and status consciousness. They are also less afflicted by feelings of guilt and shame. Children can be put on non-status or even demeaning jobs without much difficulty. Children are more active, agile and quick and feel less tired in certain tasks. They can climb up and down staircases of multistoried buildings several times during the day, carrying tea and snacks for employees of offices located in those buildings. They are also better candidates for tasks of helper in a grocer's shop or an auto-garage. Employers find children more amenable to discipline and control. They can be ruthlessly bullied by adult supervisors without fear of protest. Being of an impressionable age, they can be socialised by the employer according to his taste or demands of the situation.

3.1.11. Children are required for certain tasks:

In certain industries like the carpet industry, and the electronic assemblies, children are required because they have nimble fingers and good eyesight. There are certain crafts in which highest degree of sophistication and excellence cannot be achieved unless learning is initiated in childhood itself. No fineness can be acquired if fingers have lost their suppleness and became stiff at the time of initiation. Child labour is thus justified on the ground that it trains the child's fingers in the

27. Ibid.
required skill. Unless the fingers were trained at an early age, their adoption later would be difficult. A similar logic is advanced for children engaged in acrobatics and circuses^{28}.

3.1.12. Child workers are not organised:

They are not organised on the lines of trade unions which can militantly fight for their cause. As such, children have to submit silently to the excesses visited on them by their masters. They can be coaxed admonished, pulled up and punished for defaults without jeopardising relations. A child worker at best is a lonely worker who can afford no showdown with his employer. Further, since working children are not shown on records, employers do not follow the labour laws applicable to workers^{29}.

3.2 CONDITIONS OF WORK:

Exploitation is an over-used term. Its existence and its extent in any given situation can always be points of contention. But few would quibble about the prevalence and severity of child exploitation in some parts of the world. The employment of children in tasks or under conditions that jeopardise their physical and mental well-being, the extraction of profits from child labour by paying low wages, the denial to children of their right to play, to learn, to enjoy a normal childhood. What makes such exploitation especially offensive and serious is that children are far more vulnerable than adults in physical, psychological and organisational terms and hence far more susceptible to extreme subordination than any other category of workers. The conditions under which children are working are briefly explained hereunder.

3.2.1. Low Remuneration and Excessive Hours of Work:

The exploitation of child workers in terms of remuneration is reasonably well known. There are many reports of children receiving no pay. Such is the case of many so-called apprenticeship schemes found in small enterprises and informal sector settings. Where they are paid, they almost

29. Ibid., p.13.
invariably receive low wages. This appears to be one of the reasons for the widespread use of child labour, especially in small enterprises, the formal sector and agriculture30. Children are also subjected to methods of remuneration, such as piece-rates, that place undue strains upon them and are vulnerable to abuses, such as unjustified deductions or third party payments, relating to the protection of their wages31.

In India, according to the Minimum Wages Act 1948, different minimum rates of wages may be fixed for adults, adolescents and children and for children, the hours of work fixed is four and half hours for six days a week. Besides statutory fixation of hours of work, there is yet another statutory requirement in all the Acts that no child shall work at night, i.e., between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m.32.

A sample survey on employment of child labour undertaken by the Labour Bureau of the Government of India in 1981, covered some plantations and 50 factories in the organised sector. The daily wages of child worker’s in plantations varied from Rs. 2.00 to 3.05. In the cotton mills in Maharashtra, wages ranged between Rs.2.00 and Rs.2.05 per day and in Tamilnadu about Rs.3.00 per day. In Tirupur in hosiery units, children earned between Rs.1.50 to 5.00 a day. Members of Child Labour Advisory Committee, Uttar Pradesh discovered in 1985 that at the carpet industries of Varanasi and Mirzapur child labour was paid less than Rs.3.00 per day; at a shoe factory in Agra child labour earned Rs. 4 a day. According to the Unicef report, thousands of boys and girls between 8 and 14 years were paid only Rs.3 per day in the bangle factories of Ferozabad for 8 hours hard work33. According to one study, 20 percent of child labour in Calcutta gets no remuneration. Only 63 percent gets income under the highest income bracket, i.e. Rs. 75 tp Rs. 100 per month. Also, no remuneration for children working extra hours. This a contrary to the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 which stipulates extra hourly payment over and above the stipulated working hours. The study holds that in Delhi, child labour earns less than Rs.50 per month and in Bombay child labour

ers monthly earning is about Rs. 86 per month. It is held that the average income of a working child in India is a mere Rs. 90 per month\textsuperscript{34}.

Another major problem is hours of work. Numerous reports indicate that children in many settings, both in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors are found working for long and not infrequently excessive hours. Night work not uncommon, especially in small workshops, service establishments such as eating places and street trades. Other problems relating to working time are the absence or insufficiency of rest breaks during the day, of weekly rest and of annual holidays with pay\textsuperscript{35}. Working time is also one of the main areas of abuse in the employment of children and young persons in industrial sector. Among the most frequent violations of child labour laws is the working of hours in excess of the number permitted or at night beyond the times permitted\textsuperscript{36}.

The Report on Child Labour in Indian Industries, Labour Bureau, Simla, states that in most of the factories the hours of work as prescribed under the Act were not being strictly adhered to it was observed that in 44 cases out of 50, daily working hours of children varied between eight and ten hours as against four and half hours prescribed under the Factories Act, 1948. As regards the plantation sector, a maximum forty-four week has been prescribed for adolescents and children under the Plantation Labour Act, 1951. The data collected revealed that weekly working hours for children were more than forty-one in majority of the Plantation units. Operations Research Group, Baroda points out that 83 percent of tender age children in urban areas are found working for 7 to 12 hours per day. In the carpet weaving industry in Mirjapur, children are brought in from Palamau, Bihar and forced to work for more than 12 hours per day and paid no wages\textsuperscript{37}. In the nearly 500 stone crushing units in Bihar, more than 60 percent of the total manpower hails from the lower age group of children who put in 11 to 13 hours of work per day to quality for piece-rate payments. In the glass industries at Ferozabad, night work continues and children as young as 7 and 8 years work in the night shift. Children in Sivakasi have to leave home between 3 a.m. and 5 a.m. to get transported in lorries and buses to reach the match and fire works factories located 30 kilometers away.

\textsuperscript{34} Neera Burra, "Pay less, Get more work", \textit{op.cit.},p.22
\textsuperscript{35} Leela Dube, "The Economic Role of Children in India Methodological Issues", (1981).191
\textsuperscript{36} Premaviswanathan, “Child Labour in India”, \textit{THE ECONOMIC TIMES}, April 10 (1982).26
from their houses and return home between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. A survey of child labour in Calcutta reveals that the largest percentage of child labour works between 11 to 15 hours a day. According to one study on an average a child is forced to work between 12 to 13 hours a day even though the shops and Establishments Act clearly states that no child should be allowed to work more than 6 hours per day. It is clear that the Legislation on the hours of work in relation to children is being violated with impunity in the different industries employing child labour.

3.2.1. Hazardous work and unsafe working conditions:

Perhaps the greatest single cause for concern is the danger to their life and health posed by their employment or hazardous jobs or by the unsafe working environment in many agricultural and industrial undertakings where children work.

Underground work in mines has been in the past and continues in some instances even today to be a particularly flagrant example. But there are many others. In agriculture, which can be one of the most hazardous sectors for safety and health, child workers are exposed to dangerous machinery, constant physical effort and contact with chemical products such as fertilisers and pesticides. In construction, where children are often used for fetching, carrying and similar tasks, they are vulnerable to falls, to injuries from falling objects, to damage from the lifting of heavy weights and other types of accidents. Their lack of training and experience in handling tools, their short span of concentration, the use of unguarded machinery, the unsafe use of electricity, the shortage of gloves, goggles and other protective equipment and the insanitary state of work places resulting from dust, fumes, lack of hygiene, poor lighting and inadequate ventilation are all potential sources of accident and disease. Such dangers are compounded by fatigue due to excessive hours of work, undernutrition and the physical weakness of children.

Children may be required to undertake:

I More hazardous tasks [for example creeping under moving parts of machinery to collect dust, holding welding parts together without any protection while the welder may be using protective equipment working in confined spaces to which they have easier access, such as the undercarriage for motor vehicles];

II "dirty work", such as cleaning with solvents, cleaning sewers;

III Certain types of homework involving exposure to toxic substances, for example gluing leather and footwear products\(^{41}\).

It is also important to note that children may be affected by exposure to airborne contaminants at levels that are much below what is considered safe for adults. There are certain occupations which have been classified as 'hazardous', yet there are some which do not fall into the category of 'hazardous'. But as far as a child worker is concerned, every occupation is hazardous for his well being, growth and development for it not only retards and stunts his growth and development, it completes the process of condemning the child worker to a bleak and brefit future\(^{42}\).

A survey in Murshidabad revealed a high incidence of Tuberculosis among the bidi workers and this was due to starting work at a tender age, long hours of work, excessive overcrowding and the peculiar posture during work which was an impediment to healthy development of the lungs of the children. In the handloom and carpet weaving industry, the children are packed into sheds, in long rows behind giant looms, feverishly picking warp and wool as the master craftsman gives instructions. The air is thick with particles of cotton fluff and wool, for long hours' children sit in crouched positions. Thus affecting adversely their physical growth and development. The nature of the work of rag pickers is most unhygiene. They scrounge dustbins and garbage dumps. While collecting rusted iron and other metal scrap, they receive cuts and injuries, etc. Apart from the risk of accident, conditions are worsened by the excruciating, unrelenting heat in the factory. A child worker has to approach the furnace at a distance of a foot to be able to snatch

\(^{41}\) Ibid., p. 14

\(^{42}\) Padmini Sengupta, "Child Labour as a Social Problem. Its causes, Effects, and Consequences", SOCIAL WELFARE, February (1976), 3
a loam of molten glass. The furnace temperature is 1300 degrees Celsius and the child worker is exposed to the heat at least 300 times in the course of an eight-hour shift. Children as young 8 to 10 years not only work in the Assam plantations but also spray pesticides without being provided with any protective clothing 43.

The below table is to give an idea of the health hazards in some of the occupation where child workers are employed 44.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Type of health hazard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bidi Industry</td>
<td>Chronic bronchitis and Tuberculosis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass Industry</td>
<td>Asthma, bronchitis, Tuberculosis, eye defects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handloom Industry</td>
<td>Asthma, Tuberculosis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zari and Embroidery</td>
<td>Eye defects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gem cutting and Diamond-cutting</td>
<td>Eye defects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction work</td>
<td>Stunts the growth of the child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rag pickers</td>
<td>Telanus, skin diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pottery</td>
<td>Asthma, bronchitis, tuberculosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone quarries/Slate quarries</td>
<td>Silicosis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Physical Abuse and other Psychological problems:

In addition to these sources of occupational hazards, children in some work situations are exposed to physical and mental abuse. This may take several forms, but perhaps the worst is that which involves separation from parents, isolating sometimes amounting to virtual imprisonment and physical cruelty. Children can be traded or

contracted out for long and often permanent separation from parents. They may be employed in a state of virtual bondage, as in the case of children who work and sleep in the same locked room. They may be sent as domestic servants, sometimes under the guise of ‘adoption’. At worst, children may be subjected to harsh practices, such as beating or starvation.45

These various forms of exploitation and abuse, excessive hours of work low remuneration, exposure to unhealthy and unsafe working conditions long and sometimes permanent separation from families, physical abuse and cruelty, are found in many work settings. They are not the only ones. There are also other kinds of deprivations from which child labourers suffer, including the absence of clear and written contractual agreements, the dearth of feeding programs, health care facilities and other welfare services, and the lack of insurance and social security. The effects of all these, together or separately, on the physical and mental development of the working child can be far-reaching and often irreversible.

3.3. CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD LABOUR:

The world-wide concern with child labour arises in large part from the implications for the child’s health, physical, educational and intellectual development and for his lifetime opportunities. These can be influenced by a number of factors. For example, the implications for health and physical development depend on such factors as the nature and intensity of the work and the working conditions. The impact on education and intellectual development and lifetime opportunities hinges on the skill-intensity of the work concerned and the availability of possibilities for schooling and training. Thus, the welfare implications of economic activity by children must be viewed in the light of the socio-economic context within which children grow and work.

In traditional and semi-agrarian societies as pointed out earlier, child work is viewed as a rehearsal for adult life. It is regarded as a way of preparing and training the child for the tasks of adulthood. As such, it can be a relatively painless initiation and transition. Given the absence of or the limited opportunities for vocational training, it performs an indispensable function in transmitting skills and in facilitating social adaptation. In addition, since children often work under the supervision of their parents, they do benefit from some form of protection, child work of this kind is

not generally characterised by exploitative practices. In deed, in this context, the notion of child labour has little conceptual or policy relevance.

However, the situation changes when the system of work relationships prevalent in traditional rural societies breaks down under the impetus of commercialisation and urbanisation. The workload of children, the nature of their work, the employment relationship, the working environment, all these and others undergo fundamental changes. As a result child workers are often exposed to exploitation, unsafe working conditions and potentially serious long-term socio-economic disadvantages. Indeed, it is these aspects, namely the exploitative aspects, the ill-effects for the health and personal development of the working child. The deprivation in terms of education and training and the resulting adverse consequences for their future, that form the basis for national and international concern about child labour.

3.3.1. Safety and Health:

The effects of poor and unsafe working conditions on working children can be direct and visible. These take the form of fatal accidents or accidents that result in deformities. In view of the inadequacy of statistics on occupational accidents, especially in developing countries, it is difficult to obtain reliable figures, particularly data stratified by age. But information from some industrialised countries shows that the incidence of occupational accidents among child workers can be high. For example, according to one study in 1972, out of 517 people killed on British farms, 105, i.e., over one in five, were children under 15 years. An official report covering the year 1976 cited 108 fatal accidents, of which 31 were children.

Less dramatic but no less serious are the occupational health risks, which are often intertwined with socio-economic-related health problems and may be detected only after a long gestation period, to which working children are exposed. The vulnerability of children is increased by the high incidence of malnutrition and undernourishment. When children are required to perform heavy work activities that use up scarce reserves of energy, an imbalance arises between their energy needs and supply, thereby, weakening them further and making them less resistant to debilitating diseases.

46. James Challis and David Elliman, “Child Workers today”, (1579),28,
47. Elias Mendelievich, “Children at work”, (1979),47-48
There are also many other features of unregulated factory or sweatshop environments which lead to major health and safety problems for working children. In certain manufacturing processes - in glass works, for example, children are known to suffer from heat stress and run the risk of sustaining cuts and burns. In carpet weaving factories children are known to work doubled-up, squatting on planks, and as a consequence suffer from bone deformities in their lower limbs. In many electronic factories’ girls working for 12 to 14 hours a day on joining extremely fine wires suffer damage to eyesight within five to eight years. In charcoal and construction industries, children are engaged in loading and unloading or doing work too heavy for their physical strength. Child workers are also found in mechanical repair shops and foundries working in crowded, poorly ventilated, polluted and noisy surroundings. In many industries they work with machinery, tools and equipment designed for use by adults rather than by children. The risk of accidents is heightened by a lack of safety training and by failure to provide or to use guards for the machinery and personal protective equipment Creation of hazardous conditions for working children.

Excessive noise leads to hearing loss; excessively hot, damp or dusty conditions are also likely to create a milieu which favours the transmission of communicable diseases such as tuberculosis. Some diseases such as rheumatic fever, may have long-lasting effects on the cardio-vascular system. Gastro intestinal diseases thrive and spread in the absence of potable water and toilet facilities. Prolonged exposure to chemicals or toxic substances such as lead, mercury and benzene can also have serious consequences.

3.3.2. Education and Intellectual Development:

If the consequences of child labour for safety and health represent the most serious cause for concern about the immediate welfare of the child, the consequences for education and training are a major reason for concern for the child’s future development.

Child participation in labour force activity clearly reduces the potential for schooling and educational development. Children from poor families obviously do not have as much access to education as those from wealthier families. Even where educational facilities are available such

49. Ibid., p. 48
children cannot take sufficient advantage of them either because their parents cannot afford the direct and indirect costs of schooling or because they cannot accept its opportunity cost. The chances of benefiting from education diminish even further when they work, the more so the greater degree of drudgery of the work. Given the low educational or skill content of many of the jobs in which working children are involved, the possibilities for acquiring remunerative or satisfying skills become still more remote. Children thus find themselves locked in unskilled, low-paying, unpleasant and unsafe work situations and permanently disadvantaged in the labour market.

Evidence from industrialised countries suggests that the education and development of children who are combining school attendance with outside employment can suffer considerably if the work is fatiguing or the hours do not leave sufficient time for rest, recreation and school assignments. In almost all societies the labour market is segmented, with higher status, higher paying jobs clearly differentiated from those which involve unskilled work. In general, the possibilities for movements from the lower to the higher segments are limited. Often access to higher status jobs is determined by point of entry, which in turn is determined by educational and social qualifications. Hence schooling assumes an increasingly important and indeed decisive role in determining labour market entry and subsequent life-time opportunities. Children who are obliged to work in activities or in circumstances that prevent them from acquiring education or skills may be excluded from such possibilities and opportunities50.

3.3.3. Unemployment and Poverty:

Child labour has several consequences for unemployment and poverty. Looked at from the point of view of the household, it can be considered as a means of improving incomes or at least of somewhat restraining deterioration in incomes and consumption levels. Indeed, the contribution of child workers to family incomes can be substantial and it therefore can be viewed as a means of alleviating poverty at the level of the household. At the macro level, however, child employment is associated with higher levels of adult unemployment and greater inequality of income and wealth. Levels of adult unemployment may be raised by the participation of children. The employment of children may also help to maintain low wages for the labour force as a whole since, as cheap labour, they can be substituted for adults. Hence, through its impact on both the level of unemployment and the wage rate, child employment reduces the total income share of working households and thus

leads to increases in the degree of income inequality within society\textsuperscript{51}.

Child labour can also accelerate differentiation and wealth inequality through its effect on demographic behaviour. The micro-economic theory of fertility and empirical evidence suggest that child labour has a positive influence on fertility. Children in agrarian societies, in particular, are economically valuable to their parents in at least two ways, i.e., as a source of labour contributing to the household economy, and as a source of social insurance and support in old age. The economic value of children therefore favours larger families. But, this in turn leads, in the longer run, to greater subdivision and fragmentation of land and possibly also to landlessness. At the same time, to the extent that child labour is readily available for employment by wealthier peasants, it leads to greater differentiation within the peasantry\textsuperscript{52}.

3.3.4. Social Implications:

The economic effects of child labour also have their social implications. The adult unemployment and impoverishment results into unequal distribution of income, which in turn is responsible for labour displacement, migration, the break-up of family based units of social organisation. In such circumstances the child is exposed to social perils. Children who work at an early age, learn all the tricks of the trade, wallowing in filthy language, immorality, smoking, drinking and addiction to drugs and do not fit in the society except as goondas (anti-social elements), rogues and thieves\textsuperscript{53}.

3.3.5. Quality of Product:

Employer gets cheap labour from child and he being basically profit motivated, does not pay much attention towards the quality of product. The technical skill and an attention span of children is shorter as compared to that of an adult. They get bored soon. Thus the result is low quality of product\textsuperscript{54}.

\textsuperscript{51} Gerry Rodgers and Guy Standing, "The Economic Role of Children. Issues for Analysis" , (1981), 34
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., p. 35
\textsuperscript{53} Padmnisengupta, "Children Work to live", op. cit p. 11
\textsuperscript{54} K.K.Khatau, "Working Children in India", NATIONAL LABOUR BULLETIN vol.x1 (1985) 141
3.4. SUMMARY:

Children in almost all societies do one kind of work or another. But, the extent and nature of their work are influenced mainly by the structure of the economy and the level and pace of development. The early stages of industrialisation, however, marked by a high incidence of child employment, often under extremely poor and indeed exploitative conditions. This is the case in much of the developing world today. In many developing countries, including India, children are found working in all types of industrial and service establishments in urban areas in both the formal and the informal sectors and also in rural areas in agriculture and its allied activities.

If child labour is so positively harmful, why should millions of children join the labour force? The reasons may be obvious and obscure, and historical as well as contextual. Basically child labour is a socio-economic problem. Child labour is rooted in poverty. Unemployment, underemployment, migration to urban areas, precarious income, low living standard, insufficient opportunities for education and training, traditional beliefs, illiteracy and ignorance are its underlying causes. Children work because they must, for their own survival and that of their families. Employers generally prefer children over the adults because of cheap labour, unorganised and easy to control without fear of protest. On the other side, Lack of 'Political will' is the main cause of child labour in India. Inadequacy of the legislative measures and their effective implementation is the reason for the perpetuation of child labour in India.

Children work under extremely poor and indeed exploitative conditions. Often they are working for low wages and for excessively long hours under hazardous and unsafe working conditions that jeopardise their physical and mental well-being. Sometimes, children are subjected to physical abuse and cruelty by their employers. There also other kinds of deprivations from which child labourers suffer, including the absence of clear and written contractual agreements, the dearth of feeding programmes, health care facilities and other welfare services and the lack of insurance and social security.

The consequences of child labour are harsh realities. The children are vulnerable to health hazards since they suffer from incidence of malnutrition and under-nourishment in contrast to their increased requirement for energy utilisation to perform heavy work activities. It is estimated that one-third of the child workers die even before reaching their adulthood55.

55. Prem Viswandhan, op.cit., p.27
Child participation in labour force clearly reduces the potential for schooling and educational development. The impact is on access to schooling and subsequent performance in the labour market. Manual work or work that involves little skill acquisition is likely to leave children permanently disadvantaged in the labour market. Aside from the repercussions on health and on physical and mental development and the impact of these on the child's future performance, such employment conflicts with and is often carried out at the expense of schooling, and, this at a time when education has increasingly become a major vehicle for access to opportunities earning more satisfactory incomes and rising to better jobs. Children are also easy victims to the anti-social elements who push them into activities like black-marketing, smuggling, theft, drug-addiction, prostitution, etc. The child employment increases adult unemployment and maintains the wages at a lower level. It is felt that the abolition of child labour would generate the employment opportunities for the unemployed adults. The employment of children at an early age leads to low quality of product and to high rate of accidents due to lack of technical skill and attention over work.