Social - psychological analysis of child actors in Kannada film and television

A Synopsis

Submitted to the University of Mysore for the partial fulfillment for the award of Ph.D.

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April 2011
Introduction

Of all the mass media we are exposed to, Film and Television seem to be the ones reaching out to the remotest corners of the world, because of its ability to communicate to people breaking barriers like literacy, language, time etc, which usually hinders the other media like newspapers or internet.

The origin of the name Film comes from the fact that photographic film (also called film stock) which has historically been the primary medium for recording and displaying motion pictures. Many other terms exist - motion pictures, pictures, the silver screen, the cinema, flicks and movies. Film is considered by many to be an important art form; films entertain, educate, enlighten and inspire audiences.

Television is a telecommunication system for broadcasting and receiving moving pictures and sound over a distance. The term has come to refer to all the aspects of television from the television set to the programming and transmission. The word is derived from mixed Latin and Greek roots, meaning "far seeing" (Greek "tele," meaning far and Latin "visus," meaning seeing).

The visual elements of Film and Television need no translation, thus giving it a universal power of communication.

Congregation of the two media

Though both Films and TV have had their own course of growth and development, and enjoy their increasing popularity with their own set of viewers and audience, they do not move like parallel lines which never meet. The two media do meet at various common points which are similar to each other in more ways than one. Apart from the fact that both belong to the ‘visual media’ and are graphic in terms of their communication, they are quite similar in terms of the processes involved in making them. The fundamental procedure followed for any project or production from beginning to end, that is - script-screenplay-casting-shooting-editing-music/special effects-preview-release/telecast is the same for both TV and Film production. This
is true, no matter to what genre the film or TV program belongs to. In the present scenario, the people involved in the work here are also common. With the exception of Film stars and a few highly specialized professionals, everyone from the technicians to the actors and from the spot boys to the directors would be a part of both media, or at least be open to projects from either media.

The character actors (those actors who are a part of the project apart from the lead actors) are usually the ones who would be open to doing roles in either media, especially in the case of the Kannada industry. This seems to be increasingly true in the current circumstances, as the time spent by the actor and the kind of work – in terms of creative satisfaction, popularity gained or the remuneration received is not very different in the two media (in the regional context). It therefore appears like, in the existing state of affairs, the actors would not mind switching media as long as they have good work which would keep them busy.

In the above phrase-‘would keep them busy’ the word ‘Them’ refers to the group of professional actors who have taken up performing as a profession at their own will and do it for a living. But the film and TV industry also houses individuals (as a necessity) who are not in a position to take their decisions on their own! This is with reference to the children in the industry. Out of the cast and crew and other members who belong to the film and television industry, Children form an important part, both on and off screen. The on-screen children – or “Child Actors” are usually the ones who seem get maximum appreciation for their talents, but also the ones with highly neglected Personal Lives.

The term child actor is generally applied to a child acting in motion pictures or television, and also to an adult who began his or her acting career as a child. This category of entertainers seems to be neglected in terms of their personal lives by the Law as well as the Society, which appears to be selfishly enjoying only the performances. A simple example would help in clarifying this situation. Further description of the problem would be elucidated based on this real-life example.

The 6-year-old boy was dangling five metres in the air. He was wearing a rubber suit. The studio lights were just above him. He was sweating. He had been there for 45 mins. The director needed him up there, hanging for however long it would take to complete the shot.
The mother warned that the child cannot be allowed more than 45 minutes in camera position. The mother wanted a decent break. The parents of other youngsters told her that he would be blacklisted if she continued to fuss, so she kept quiet and the boy was put back in the sling for another 45 minutes under the lights. This would go on for hours. There was nothing in the contract papers regarding this so she could not get legal help either, only because – Indian Law states that it is illegal to employ children below 14 years of age [Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986] but has no labour laws protecting actors under 14 years.

This is not a stray case of one boy in a film studio, but a large number of children face such situations almost everyday in the Indian film and TV industry. But the movie/TV industry (unlike the industries specified in the Act) is unusual, because in the normal course of its business, it has to employ underage people. So, there is a requirement of special steps and initiatives to be taken.

Apart from the legal aspects of children acting in the media, there are issues about the child’s reaction to a lot of sudden attention and appreciation from friends, relatives and even unknown people. Children react differently, depending on their psychological abilities and the kind of support they get from the parents / guardians. But the major cause for how the child’s future would be, would depend on how the issues are handled.

In the above example, we also notice that the mother yields to the pressures when she realizes that ‘the child would be blacklisted if she continued to fuss’. In most of the cases, parental pressure on the child to ‘achieve’ at that age would be higher than child’s own desire to perform, this kind of discord combined with the child’s performance in various other spheres of life may result in internal psychological conflicts.

“We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today.”

- Stacia Tauscher
**Significance of Research :**

It is, hence, very important to treat children as individuals with their own ability to think and at the same time support and encourage the talents and abilities within the child. But it requires the effort of all the people around the child, including the parents, friends, relatives and most important of all, the employers to bring about a balanced solution into this conflict. But, by insisting that parents should take responsibility for their children - including being on set with them and supervising their welfare, the producers and even government have let themselves off the hook. The parents, on the other hand, with no authority to take decisions feel helpless. The situation gets worse because of no professional help available on the psychological front to both parents and children.

This study would enable in analyzing this existing discrepancy towards children in the Kannada industry in terms of the social and the psychological viewpoint of the child and the people around it.

**General Objectives :**

To examine the approach of the Kannada TV and Film industry towards children working within it

**Specific Objectives :**

To study –

- Social and legal norms which exist for the protection of child actors in Kannada film and television industry
- Psychological consequences as an outcome of the existing conditions of work
- Possible solutions and arriving at a meaningful and balanced resolution to the existing conflict
**Methodology of Research**:

**a) Sampling**:

Sampling is a of statistical research practice concerned with the selection of a subset for individual observations within a population of individuals intended to yield some knowledge about the population of concern, especially for the purposes of making predictions based on statistical inference.

Since there is no record of the exact population size of the fundamental set of research subjects, namely the child actors, arriving at the right number as a subset was not possible. Hence, 'Purposive Sampling' was adapted. This is a method of non-probability sampling where the researcher chooses the sample based on who they think would be appropriate for the study. This is used primarily when there is a limited number of people that have expertise in the area being researched.

The basic criteria used for choosing the subjects were -

1. Subject’s experience and familiarity with acting in films / television

2. Duration of working in this field and number of projects worked on

3. Willingness to share information with honesty and no bias

4. Availability and willingness to spend time with the researcher

**Geographical location of research** : Bangalore, which is very Cosmopolitan, has people from different Social, cultural and economic backgrounds. It is also the hub of Kannada television and film industries. Hence this was chosen as the core region for research. Small samples were also collected from other centres in the state like Mysore.
The samples were taken under five major categories for the different points of view required for the final analysis of the problem. They are -

- Child actors
- Parents of child actors
- Film & TV fraternity
- Psychologists
- Advocates

b) Instruments of Study :

- Interviews / Questionnaires
- Direct Observation
- Case Study

i) Interviews / Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. An interview is a conversation between two people (the interviewer and the interviewee) where questions are asked by the interviewer to obtain information from the interviewee

Main modes of questionnaire administration are:

- Face-to-face questionnaire administration, where an interviewer presents the items orally.
- Paper-and-pencil questionnaire administration, where the items are presented on paper.

The researcher opted for the face-to-face questionnaire administration where the researcher (as an interviewer) could speak and discuss incidents, opinions and issues directly with the subject. Administering the questionnaires personally to individuals has a number of advantages. The
person who is administering (the researcher in this context) has excellent opportunity to establish rapport, explain purpose & meanings which may not be otherwise clear. In the long run, the good rapport built may help in disclosing sensitive / personal information which may be very helpful for analysis, or even greater cooperation by giving updates at regular intervals. This is very factual and dependable as the responses are direct and are in writing.

**Questionnaire construction**

When properly constructed and responsibly administered, questionnaires become a vital instrument by which statements can be made about specific groups or people or entire populations. In order to make maximum use of this tool of research, the researcher, in consultation with a psychologist and counsellor, prepared three different sets of questionnaires to be administered to the different groups of subjects. The important highlights of the questionnaire thus prepared were-

- The questions were kept open-ended so as to enable free flow of information and encourage possible discussions.
- The order of the questions was such that an answer to one question was not influenced by the previous one.
- The questions in the beginning were more generic in nature, helping to build a rapport and gradually got into more specific issues.
- Simple lie-detection was adapted (depending on the researcher’s perception) by asking a previously asked question again later in the interview by framing it differently.
The questionnaire thus formed was used throughout the research process, wherever necessary. A copy of the questionnaires used is present in the Appendix section for reference. But since it was a face-to-face administering, the researcher sometimes varied the order of questions or added / skipped some depending on the responses that were given by the subject.

ii) Direct Observation

In the context of this research, the researcher visited the location of work where child actors were shooting. Special permission was taken to be present on the set for the whole time. This also helped the researcher spend time observing the on-goings for the entire time, and occasionally interacting with a few people in requirement of relevant information. The observation was done both for a film shoot as well as a television shoot, separately. Though the researcher was allowed to take photographs, there were reservations about publishing the names of people involved.

iii) Case Study -

A case study could be defined as a research strategy, an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context. The researcher, through this method intended to look at the lives of adult individuals who had gained a lot of popularity as child actors during their childhood. This would help in looking at the similar instances that present child actors might be facing with viewpoint that is retrospective, and also understand the possible outcome the child actors may have to face in their future lives. Apart from collecting information about their career graph and their filmography, the researcher also spoke to them individually to collect their opinions and share their experiences. This definitely added a new dimension to the research process.
Summarized Analysis

I] Interview

a) Child actors:

Though these child actors seemed very cheerful and energetic at the first instance, their interviews reveal the actual picture of their conditions. The important points that stood out of the interview were –

- Only 1 child had something positive to say about the shooting schedules. Maximum number of them had negative opinions or complaints.
- Maximum number of children like going to a picnic, followed by a film function, indicating that their objective is mainly to have fun
- With the choice of roles too, they had their options and preferences, but the reason for that too seemed fun and curiosity. But the actual decision was always taken by parents and the choice was never with the child. More than half of the group depended on the family for any kind of decisions
- Most of the children either had physical problems like loss of appetite or frequent illness like fever or stomach upsets. Some displayed short temper and irritability.
- No special care for babies in terms of environment or food. Events like avoiding vaccinations or delaying a feed were reported in order to aid shooting.
- Most of the kids have no time for other social activities, even if they are interested. 40% of them only watch TV during free time.
- All of them display hesitation in making new friends or trusting people.
- They have good knowledge of their earnings and mention their ambitions of buying cars and property.

- All of them have future career ambitions like any other child of their age, again based in fun and fantasy. But some have already decided that they will have to be in this industry for the sake of their parents.

From the above points, it is clear that these children are, like any other child of their age, keen on having fun and enjoying. They find meeting stars and wearing new clothes to be very interesting. But the more serious aspects, like the shooting schedules which interrupt their play and school seem to be very irritating. The fact that they hesitate to make new friends also shows the impact of being a popular star and the mistrust that they have developed in people. The researcher also noticed the attempts of these children to behave and talk in an ‘adult-like’ manner through their body language and opinions to certain issues.

b) Parents of child actors :

- About three-fourth of the parents intentionally introduced the child into the industry with their efforts, some even work ate giving them the training required.

- Most of the parents believe that they cannot be too choosy and demanding. They say it is important to ‘adjust’.

- The quality of time spent between the parent and the child is very low.

- Majority of the parents do not know about the child’s friends, and say that there is no time.
- Most of the parents did not know about the child’s interests in other activities. The reason stated is lack of time.
- Everyone is happy to see their child getting popular as actors/stars.

It seems very apparent that the parents are quite keen on having their child in the entertainment industry. It is their attempt to manage their own jobs, households and their child’s education along with the additional ‘career’ of their child that makes them sound like they have no time for anything else. But as individuals, as the researcher perceived, most of them seemed friendly and understanding. They, sometimes felt helpless as there seemed very less support from the Government/unions or the law when they were in need. It is the competition and the ambition to be better than the other at all times which motivates them on these lines.

c) The Employers (producers and directors)

- 50% feel it is interesting and challenging to work with children. The other half feel that it is additional responsibility.
- No training or learning opportunities given for skills like language, memory, acting
- 80% accept that there is negative exposure for the child on the set.
- Only half of them respect the child’s opinion
- 50% blame the parents for the problems
- Most of them accept that pay-scales are not much for children, unless they are stars
- No or very minimal safety measures or extra precautions taken on the set when the child is present.

- 90% say that their sets are not accident proof

- More than half of them have no idea of the child’s whereabouts when he/she is not required for the scene.

- 60% of them do not know anything about the child after the project is completed.

- Majority of them do not take parents seriously.

- Children are not given any special excuses in case of unprofessional behaviour.

- Majority of them accept that the adult stars are always given priority on the sets.

The above group seems divided by half in a majority of issues. It is also apparent that the children are not treated with any special concern. They are treated like any other adult actor both in terms of facilities provided or the treatment given for unprofessional behaviour. Here the adult actor does not include the ‘stars’ as their treatment is on a different scale altogether. It was also noticed by the researcher that though the parents and the children themselves seemed to prioritise their looks, the employers claim that they would choose the child based on the requirement for the role and the character that they would play and not the best-looking child. It also seemed obvious that though the children are treated on par with the other adult actors, the parents are the neglected lot in terms of facilities given. But the responsibility of the entire well being of the child even during the shooting is thrust upon them.
Case Studies

This is a section which studied the individual cases of the child actors of the yesteryears, who are adults now. Each case is unique and cannot be clubbed for summarizing. But the common points of view and the opinions that stood out in their responses were put together in order to aid the process of analysis.

- All of them entered the industry when they were 5-6 years or below.
- Parents played an important role in their careers and handling of money.
- Dates of shooting clashing with that of tests or exams were very common. No consideration was shown from the production house in this case.
- No one [except one] continue to act as a full-time profession, as an adult.
- Most of them intended to act as adults, but faced problems in being accepted in their new roles.
- No one has friends from the industry on the personal front. They have all been professional relationships.
- Some of them speak of the disillusionment they faced when they were not given the same respect and recognition they got as children.
- All of them are willing to stand-up for the cause of the welfare of child actors. Some have very specific ideas of what areas need to be improved for this cause.

The common opinion was that they did not realize what effect this job would have when they were adults. Though they faced problems, it was also fun to skip school and gain respect and recognition from society. But they all accept that a proper support system is necessary for child actors.
III] Direct Observation

The researcher personally attended the shooting of both a film as well as a Television serial in order to get first hand information about the shooting schedules, work environment, conditions under which children are, during the shooting etc.,

The actual names of the project, producer/director and the actors have not been mentioned anywhere in the research dissertation upon the request of the concerned people. The researcher was granted permission to visit the set only on the condition that they will not be disclosed. Hence they would be referred to with their professional posts (ex: ‘director’, ‘production manager’ etc.)

a) Kannada Feature film –

The key issues that stood out during the researcher’s visit were that the planning and scheduling of work was very well done in coordination with the actors and their conveniences. But the prioritization of the production team towards the lead actor [heroine] changed all the planning. All the decisions taken on the set were centered on the heroine and her conveniences. From re-scheduling the scenes as she arrived late to compromising on the shot as she refused to go barefoot on the slush, it was made sure that the star was not put to trouble.

The two boys on the shooting set also had to bear the brunt of these last minute changes. Though they were prompt in their discipline and performance, they had to waste an entire day doing nothing. They also had to miss an extra day of school causing trouble with the submission of project work at school for no fault of theirs. The production, amidst all this seemed un-apologetic towards the whole thing.
b) Kannada television serial –

Though television does not have ‘big stars’ like in the films, the situations here are a little tricky to handle. With low budgets and time being major constraints, there are a lot of compromises that have to be dealt with. In the present experience that the researcher had, a severe case of dehydration was not treated as required, with not even a mention of a doctor. Safety equipment was done away with, quoting the shortage in budget.

But on the brighter side, the scenes were being planned while keeping the boy’s exams in mind, so as to not inconvenience him. Also, upon the mother’s insistence, the height of the tight rope walk was reduced making it safer for the boy to walk on it.

IV] Comparative Study

This conflict of child actors facing the problems of child labourers, at the same time being inevitable for a creative industry like films and television is common to all the countries who produce movies and television content on a regular basis. This was a study conducted to compare the manner in which another country has dealt with this conflict and its outcomes. The United states of America is one of the few countries of the world that produces films and television content on a similar scale as that of our country / state. Hence the child actor situation in America was studied for comparative purposes.

Tracing the history, it was noted that similar controversies and issues had sprung up while dealing with the way children in the entertainment industry were working.
Issues like - should this kind of child work be legitimized,

- the finances and regulation of timings,
- ownership of earnings,
- competitive pressure on parents as well as children

The study looks in detail about how these issues were dealt with and finally quotes examples of the present laws that are followed in the state of Texas and the state of California, when children are employed in the entertainment industry.

**Interview with an insider** -

In order to take the comparison closer to the present study, the researcher interviewed a parent who is an actor himself in America, and has two children who are actively involved in acting for television and advertisements there. The same questionnaire used for interviewing the parents in Karnataka was used to interview the American parent (Greg Collins). This interview reveals how the stringent laws protect the welfare of children on the set, while making sure their education and social life is not hampered. A small default from the production could result in the entire production being banned.

The researcher also mentions an example of how, inspite of all the protection that the law provides, things could go wrong. This is an example of the life of the actor Jodie Sweetin, who started acting at a very young age, but later fell into the trap of drugs and alcohol and spoilt not only her career, but also her personal life.
V] Opinion from Experts

The data that was collected through the interviews was presented before a set of experts, which included legal experts, psychologists and authorities in the system.

Fr. Anthony of the Juvenile Justice board was surprised as to why this aspect was not looked into so far by anyone. He says Protections under unions/associations is not possible, askids have to be accepted as labourers if they have to be a part of the union. If that is not legal, then protection under the union is not possible. He suggests that a separate set of laws be framed for this industry.

Vasudev Sharma of chairman of CWC says that this is a socio-political issue. Child actor cannot be fully categorised and has not been done so far in the legal pages of the country. I think this is an issue that will not change and will remain so, as no one would bring a complaint so far.

Ms. Jayamala, President of the KFCC says that it is fine to have children and have not come across any issues so far. She also thinks that extra precaution is not required for children. I would hold the parents responsible and they can complain to us. But I have not received any complaint so far.

Geetha Sundaraman, Child Psychologist and Counsellor says that children will gain a lot of confidence, and the ability to face people with poise. It will improve their dictum and memory in the process. But an all-round exposure is required at this age for a positive personality development, even if the parents intend to focus on this for his future thinking that the child is very talented and excels in this field.
Summary and Implications

Children constitute an important and inevitable component of any entertainment industry workforce. Whether it is production of fire crackers, manufacturing of toys, or making of cinema and TV serials, children are utilized in various capacities and in a variety of roles. In some contexts, children just serve as manual workers, but in theatre and motion picture (including TV) industries they play the roles of actors, besides being used in other capacities. Because of their meek physical conditions, mental make-up still in the making, oscillating moods, and parental mediated contacts with the industrial management, they encounter special problems and undergo different work experiences than their adult counterparts. The physical and psychological demands of the work situation may result adversely on their physical health and psychological well being. The inability to cope up with the expectations of the work environment may cause frustration, loss of confidence, lower self-esteem, and in general, overall growth of personality and future professional development and performance.

The situations of child actors are unique and require careful consideration. The core issues involving child actors may be listed:

1. The children in acting situations are removed from their natural life situation involving childhood activities and social relationships. Since they enjoy a special status among their peers, they are bound to be looked upon as “different,” and are expected to behave differently. The child actors may respond naturally to these expectations and may begin to behave differently keeping in tune with their newly acquired special status. This may
result in loss of peer contacts, play activities, household chores and all other beautiful things in a child’s life. The consequence of these deprivations is a kind of fantasy life which may adversely affect the development of “true self.”

2. The schooling of child actors will naturally get disturbed and the academic achievement may suffer due to irregular school attendance, withdrawal of attention from school curriculum, and disturbed academic schedule. Special arrangements have to be made to compensate for the losses in school, and these arrangements may not be adequate substitute.

3. Since child actors are made to enact a variety of roles, they are bound to experience simulated horror, violence, crime and other kinds of disturbing situations. True, they are simulated situations; nonetheless, the impact of them on the growing minds can’t be just undermined. The children need be properly debriefed and counseled about these situations and their own involvement in these situations. Even after taking adequate remedial measures, there is no guarantee that children are free from some permanent damages. The cases of child actors taking to drugs, indulging in criminal activities, and experiencing depression and despair are abound.

4. Financial exploitation of child performers by their own parents and parental squandering of child actor’s earnings is somewhat common. A good example is the life of Shirley Temple.
5. Child performers seem to have difficulty in adjusting to life as adults. Stan Ziegler, a
psychologist who has researched child performers is of the opinion that “instead of
natural childhood of acne and budding breasts, they are pampered, protected and cared.
Suddenly that world ends and they are forced to make adjustment to the real world. Most
can’t.”


The factors listed out about make it abundantly clear that child actors and actresses encounter
unique situations and have to confront innumerable social and psychological hurdles. The study
has been more exploratory in nature and has identified some of these possible stumbling blocks
and impediments that beset child actors in their professional and personal growth.

Below are some of the highlights that stood out in the research -

- The children are innocent and usually accept everything that is given to them especially
  by their own parents without being judgmental with regard to its implications or effects
  on their lives. So, a child’s statement, when it says – ‘I am very excited to go for shooting
  and it is ok if I miss school, since I can make it up later with the help of friends.’ Cannot
  be taken on the face of it and discard the subject saying the child is happy – so there is no
  issue. The child may be happy to skip (the boring) school to do exciting things like meet
  film stars, wear costumes and act with them. (Example of Vijay Raghavendra may be
  invoked - * pg no). But it has to be looked at in a broader perspective and analysed with
  regard to both the advantages and disadvantages in the long term.
• Though simple psychological effects are noticeable at the young age, like restlessness, dressing up glamorously that is unnatural among peers of the same age, aversion for a specific food item, displaying moody behaviour, change in the kind of language used etc., they could be mistaken for normal ‘growing-up’ issues that even non-acting children face. But their actual consequence would become evident only after they grow up. But it is the duty of the society around it beginning from parents/teachers and the employers to recognise this at an early stage and support the child overcome it.

Awareness – all of the children interviewed knew the concept of ‘child labour’ (though some did not know the term ‘child labour’). The say that they feel bad for them and blame the parents. But when asked as to why they are in the industry, they are not too sure, but the only reason they give is usually the parent and their initiative.

• The overall approach of the film and television industry according to the present research is that – children are for granted or not taken too seriously. The chief cause being the fact that kids are meek and soft and would not fight or complain against them, unlike the adult actors, especially the ‘big stars’. This is proved by the fact that almost all of the actors interviewed have atleast 2-3 projects where their dues are unpaid, among various other complaints.

• Working conditions in the industry though are not the safest or the most comfortable for children, they are not necessarily toxic or harmful in the direct sense. But the information got by the researcher indicates that a good support system (which is completely absent) for children will go a long way in improving the environment of work for children,
thereby upgrading the overall state of affairs between child-parent, parent-employer and child-employer. This in turn is bound to have long-term effects for the children till their adult lives.

- According to an article (on page *) NCPCR (National Commission for Protection of Child Rights) has fixed the minimum age for child actors at 12 years in the year 2008. But no one in the film and television industry has a clue about something like this existing. Most of the employers were not familiar with the presence of such a commission in our country. The probable reason would be that child actors are not associated with labour or child rights.

  But going by the announcement by the NCPCR, it may not be practical to have children aged above 12 years for a role meant for a five year old. However the enforcement form the NCPCR also seems to have lost momentum and hence no effect is seen so far.

- Drugs, cigarettes and alcohol – child actors are probably more prone to this, since they have the finances and also probably easy access since they spend a lot of time with adults. But psychologist Ms. Sundaraman says, if the child is inclined towards such things, their background or finances do not matter. We see children of rich parents or for that matter even some street children trying some of these. The only way to curb them would be through responsible upbringing and proper monitoring. Noted psychologist and former Bangalore University vice-chancellor Prof M S Thimmappa says, “These are major evils of a society. They have to be avoided or nipped in the bud. Otherwise they can have long-term effects. De-addiction centres give symptomatic treatment. They’ll
stop taking drugs, but the problem is a more deep-rooted one. Such problems will have a history of 10 to 15 years”. Some experts recommend correctional observation, while some suggest effective counselling. Dr M J Thomas, consultant psychiatrist at Sagar Hospital, says, “A child could take to any of these for three reasons: psychiatric problems including depression, out of curiosity, the third being those with anti-social personality disorders. In such cases, the de-addiction centre will only detoxify them and don’t do much to correct the disorder. They need a prolonged period of counselling,”

- **Swini Khara – An example of the irony and paradox of being a child actor**
  
  A very well known face in the field of hindi film and television, Swini Khara, was recently in the news for a very ironical reason. She was not allowed into the theatre which was screening her own film, because it had a U/A certification from the Censor board, which means children under 18 have to watch it under adult supervision! (refer newspaper article pg.no*)

  This is the case with most of the child actors in Kannada too, as Mr. Vasudev Sharma (*pg no) mentions “Ravichandran used kids in the most adult situations and scenes. They are also seen mouthing double-meaning and other adult dialogues or songs. It is encouraging to know that we have a strong governing body – ‘The Central Board of Film Certification’ to censor and control the films and its content for the audience to watch, even if they have the right to watch what they want with their money. This is a responsible move to enable people to choose the right kind of entertainment for them. But what is extremely disappointing is that, there is no governing body to check what
happens during the production of the entertainment content and whether it is suitable for the people involved in creating it.

So, very ironically, like the above example where even if the children are not allowed to view some sections like extreme violence, horror, or other adult material, it would be acceptable to have them present in such situations and perform such actions!

- Legally, there are some existing laws can be adapted (*pgno) for the time being but for long term usage, a separate set of laws needs to be made since their case is unique. They can neither be clubbed with the child labour group completely (though they do have a lot of similarities to them) nor can they be treated like a normal school going child (as they have a responsible job, earn money and face the media)

  1. Laws with regard to their support during shooting, in case of emergencies, special considerations like time / days of work ; kind of work etc
  2. A set of Rights as well as Responsibilities for the parents of child actors. They should know to what extent they can demand comforts for them and their child, at the same time have complete knowledge of their accountability for their child’s live and their duties as parents.
  3. Making sure the child’s education and recreation does not suffer, as they are the most important building blocks of growing up. It should be the duty of both the production and the parent to make sure the child’s mental balance is kept through the right amount of play and studies in between shooting schedules.
  4. A list of punishable acts and situations that have to be compulsorily avoided with children.
  5. A separate governing body for the welfare of child actors
Conclusion

Mike Davidow, in his book ‘People’s theatre – from Box office to the Stage’ speaks about theatre for children in Russia. The artistic director of the theatre Mr. Korogodsky says, the main aim of his theatre is to ‘Develop the talent of the Audience. To make the people of Russia, culturally and spiritually richer is the very essence of our theatre. This must not only start with childhood, but also done systematically. We want to open up the world to our children with all its complexities. We want to teach them to take joy in beauty. We want to make them better human beings. If the aim of the school is to educate minds of the children, ours is to educate their hearts”

This statement sums up all that has to be expected out of child actors in films and television. The objective of making children better human beings is a universal purpose for all adults alike. But the responsibility of making it for each child lies with everyone who is even remotely accessible to the child. A child’s mind is so sharp and inquisitive that it cannot be taken for granted. It cannot be generalised as to who or what will be a bigger influence on its mind or from where it can pick up and learn things.

Any activity that the child is involved in, should eventually help in making him/her a better human being. The trick is not in choosing the right activity, but making any activity right. The people around the child during the activity can make it right or wrong for the child. So it is everyone’s responsibility equally to make sure that the child is the focus and not their own selfish interests or egos. Rules, regulations, laws and norms can only go a certain distance. The rest of the distance has to be covered by the conviction in people’s minds in order to reach the final goal of having an audience with awareness and which is sensitive to the world around.
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