Conclusions and suggestions
CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In every society, various new problems have arisen as a result of industrialisation and urbanisation. The problem of child labour, which is distinctly visible in contemporary urban industrial societies, is one of them. Forced by the circumstances, many children in such a setup, particularly in slums, chawls and on streets, are constrained to spend a large portion of their life by working in various industries, vocations/occupations as wage labourers and/or self-employed doing odd jobs. This study of working children is conducted in Ahmedabad which is the premier industrial city of Gujarat State.

Any social problem as an empirical reality has various aspects such as demographic, economic, psychological and social. This study has tried to highlight the social aspect of the problem of the working children using techniques of data collection accepted by sociologists and presenting it in terms and concepts used in sociological writings.

In order to locate these children, a list of 4166 children attending non-formal education classes in various slums and chawls of eastern and western areas of the city was prepared in consultation with project officers, supervisors, and class teachers of four voluntary organisations responsible for implementing non-formal education schemes. Another list of child workers was prepared with the indirect help of Presidents of Diamond processing and Pottery, Ceramic manufacturing units of Ahmedabad and a list of street children was obtained from "Sarjan" and "Gantar" voluntary organisations working for those children. Thus from the list of 4672 child workers, 459 were systematically selected for the present study. The selection of sample was partly systematic and partly purposive. In order to have a comprehensive view of the problem, along with 459 child workers, 366 parents/guardians and 203 employers were selected to unfold the nature of the problem.

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHILD WORKERS, PARENTS/GUARDIANS/EMPLOYERS.

Profiles of child workers, parents/guardians, and employers covered in the study reveal that among child workers, a little less than 2/3rd are boys and the percentages of male parents/guardians and employers are 70.8 and 92.6 respectively. The average age of child workers is 12.79 years and those of parents/guardians and employers 42.12 years and 39.89 years respectively. This means that a majority of child workers (both boys and girls) join labour force by the time they attain 12 years. A majority of parents/guardians and employers fall in the middle age group.

Hindus formed the majority among the child workers (80.4%) and among the employers (76.40%), while Muslim child workers and employers constitute 18.2 per cent and 19.2 per cent respectively. A little more than 2/3rd (68.70%) child
workers and nearly 1/3rd (32.55%) employers belong to Scheduled caste/tribes and backward classes. Thus a majority of child workers come from vulnerable deprived sections of the society particularly Scheduled castes/Scheduled Tribes and backward class communities.

Slightly more than 1/4th (28.10%) child workers and 48.4 per cent parents/guardians are illiterate, whereas with the exception of 9.35 per cent employers all other employers are educated. Amongst the employers 60 per cent have education up to high/higher secondary and above. Sex-wise, illiteracy is slightly higher among girls than boys the percentages of those studying above 5th standard being 45 and 42 respectively. There is a significant variation in the level of education up to primary standard among child workers of different castes and communities, but high caste child workers have higher percentage among those studying beyond primary standard. This suggests that there is a significant difference in the educational levels of children belonging to caste Hindus and others. Illiterate parents/guardians sometimes are apathetic to the education of their children in general and girls in particular. Thus the level of education of parents/guardians is extremely low which directly/indirectly acts as a cultural constraint on the progress of education of the children. The relatively lower educational levels in case of female children may be also attributable to social taboos that still exist in the minds of the vast majority of parents/guardians of the child labour.

A majority (60.6%) of the child workers belong to various districts of Gujarat and 83.6 per cent belong to rural areas. More than 2/3rd (69.75%) of the child workers indicated Gujarati as their mother tongue. Parents/guardians of 11.7 per cent of child workers have migrated to Ahmedabad during the last 15 years and about one third have migrated to the city in search of jobs due to abject poverty, failure of agriculture and unemployment in their native place. Their average years of stay in Ahmedabad is 16.75 years.

THE FAMILY MILIEU.

Slightly more than 2/3rd child workers belong to nuclear family. 81.6 per cent have eight or less members in their family. This is against common belief that large families contribute more to the child labour population and from these families higher percentages of boys than girls are in employment. Similarly only small percentage of child workers (2.8) are orphans and 17.2 per cent have only one parent. The average size of the family of the child workers is 6.7. Castes/Community wise it is highest (6.96) among non-Hindus and lowest (5.9) among caste Hindus. Average number of earning members in the households including child worker(s) is 3.81 and the average number of child workers in the household is 1.82. Thus, largeness of the size of the family is responsible for sending the child to work and earn for himself/herself and support the family financially.

A little less than 7/3rd (62.7%) families of child workers live in their own one-room-osari (covered out space).
Kuccha (huts/chapra) accommodation. Only 41.3 per cent have drinking water facilities whereas 3/4th use public lavatories but facility of electricity is available to 33.4 per cent houses.

A majority of families of child workers have insufficient facilities of water and lavatories in their own houses.

The occupational status of parents (both mothers and fathers) of the child workers in general is low, as a little more than 1/4th (27.67%) fathers are either dead or unemployed (due to closure of textile mills and ancillary industries) and old age. Similarly more than 1/3rd (37.25%) mothers are either housewives or have died and overtly not working. Among employed parents 48.58 per cent fathers and 42.05 per cent mothers are employed in Production units and Job and repair work units and the per cent of fathers engaged in self-employed and odd jobs is double that of the mothers. Comparing occupational status of fathers and the child workers, it is found that nearly 1/2 (48.59%) fathers and nearly 2/3rd (65.2%) child workers are found employed in Production units and 1/3rd boys are in the Job and repair work units. This indicates that the parents are concerned about the future prospects of their children, especially boys, because certain skill oriented jobs have better prospects. Thus becoming mechanics or technicians becomes the dream of the urban poor which is realised by the few only. But in case of girls, they are provided training in such jobs, which may not involve much physical strength and are less skill-oriented, which may give them respectable earning even if they want to work after marriage or during any other exigencies (Girls belonging to Padmashalli, Khosti, Scheduled castes and Muslim community) because in these castes and communities training in particular trade/occupation is a precondition for the marriage of girls/daughters.

Thus parents often look for bright and secure future for their children and try to help them with such jobs in a situation where these children are forced to seek employment basically for their survival.

Regarding economic status of the households of the child workers, the average monthly income of the household works out to be Rs. 1302 and the average monthly expenditure Rs. 1278/-. The average monthly income of the child workers is Rs. 279.4. 79.48 per cent of the child workers contribute 30 per cent to their family income and 81.87 per cent contribute up to Rs. 300 per month. The per capita income of the family goes down from Rs. 226.9 to Rs. 164.2 when the contribution of the child income is deducted from the income of the family. Thus the child's contribution to his/her family income is significant, which means many a time child workers save the ship of the family from being wrecked. Another important finding is that a little more than 1/2 households have no borrowings and only 25 per cent families have debts. The main sources of borrowing are conventional sources and employers (both of the child workers and the father or mother). A majority (3/4th) of the households have
This shows that poor families try to live within their economic limits and child workers contribute a significant proportion of the total monthly family income in significant number of cases. This again points to the conditions of economic distress among the families of the child workers.

WASTAGE AND STAGNATION

Enrolment and retention in schools are considered today as crucial factors for a literate society. Nearly 3/4th of the child workers had attended the school at different points of time. Slightly less than 2/3rd (61.62%) boys as against 53.98 per cent girls and 84.48 per cent children of caste Hindus were enrolled in school at the appropriate age i.e between 5th and 6th years. This shows that enrollment of boys in school is significantly higher at the right age and caste Hindus appear to be more particular in sending their wards to school at the appropriate time compared to other castes in spite of special benefits/concession in terms of fees, books, dresses and scholarship given to the latter by the government. In Indian society, boys are given preference over girls in education even in poor families. School enrolment among working children has a direct link with the educational background of the parents as nearly fifty per cent parents were found illiterate in the present study. Economic compulsion of scheduled castes/tribes and middle castes group families constitute the single largest factor responsible for the working children not attending the school. Social and customary reasons have been found to be another important factor for not sending (especially girl child) to school by non-Hindus and socially and economically backward castes. Thus economic hardship of various castes group especially scheduled castes/tribes and Baxi Panch (backward classes) and "gender bias" due to socio-cultural constraints are responsible for not enrolling children in schools.

A very large majority (92.12%) of child workers discontinued their studies before completing primary education at different points of time. Sexwise there is no significant difference between the educational level of boys and girls as majority of them left studies before completing primary education. Poverty and bad economic conditions of the family and scholastic backwardness of the child figure as two important causes for the child workers dropping out from school, the ratio between boys and girls being 5:4. Nearly 1/4th girls had to leave their studies due to socio-cultural factors, i.e., responsibility of younger sibling. These household work are important reasons for their low enrolment and high dropout rate. Similarly besides economic compulsion, socio-cultural factors and scholastic backwardness are the important factors for child workers of scheduled castes/tribes and middle castes dropping out of schools at different points of time. 44.83 per cent caste Hindu children discontinued their studies not only due to economic compulsion and scholastic difficulties but also due to natural/personal reasons. Thus, there is a close relationship between education of the child and the need for them to take up jobs for helping their families financially.
and keeping them alive. Unless these conditions are improved the problem of literacy and school dropout will persist and children will be forced to engage in some economic activity to help and supplement the income of their families.

Slightly less than 2/3rd (64.41%) child workers used to help their families in sharing both domestic chores and work responsibilities before and after school hours. 61.34 percent girls shared only domestic responsibilities. The number of boys sharing work responsibilities is 2.5 times more than girls which clearly indicates that due to differential sex roles in Indian society, boys are considered more suitable for work outside their homes than girls. Except for 23.10 percent child workers, rest of the school going children considered that domestic and work responsibilities have negatively affected their studies, the percentages of boys and girls expressing negative effects being 34.81 and 42.34 respectively. The study further reveals both positive and negative reactions of child workers leaving school. Those expressing feelings of sorrows and relief are more or less in equal proportion. Sexwise these facts dispel the notion that children of low socio-economic stratum by and large have to engage themselves in gainful work both in family and outside after school hours. It also proves that if children of low socio-economic stratum fail to pursue their studies up to higher level, it is not only because they have to work simultaneously but also because their home and social environment are unfavourable and inhibitive.

ECONOMIC PREDICAMENT, WORKING CONDITIONS AND THEIR IMPACT

The average age of entering the work life as reported by child workers is 10.15 years. Sexwise it is 10.3 years for boys and 9.87 years for girls, which shows that girls enter the work life much earlier than boys. The percentage of girls decreases with increase in age indicating that girls start earning much earlier than boys. An average Indian father does not prefer to send his daughter to work after she attains puberty but prefers to keep her at home and train her in household activities. Similarly, the average ages of entering work life by non-Hindus and scheduled castes/tribes children are 9.73 years and 10 years respectively, whereas for caste Hindu children it is more than 10 years. More than 2/3rd (70.21%) children working in service and commercial establishments entered work life before completion of 10 years, while in the occupations/vocations which are heavy and require more physical strength and skill, children enter work life when they attain sufficient physical strength and mental maturity. The average age of actually entering the work life by the child according to parents/guardians was 9.8 years whereas average desired age for their child to enter work life was 15.36 years. It can be safely said that children’s entry in the job is not only determined by age and sex of the child but also by the economic and socio-cultural milieu in which he or she lives. Some compulsions of the life of parents/guardians also force them to send their children to work and earn rather much earlier.
A little more than 3/4th (76.47%) child workers have never worked anywhere before the present employment and the remaining have the experience of working in one or more jobs as part-time/full-time workers. The ratio of full-time work among boy and girl workers is 2:1. A little more than 2/3rd (68%) of the total full time workers are from scheduled castes/tribes and non-Hindus pursuing menial, casual and unskilled jobs and work for 6 to 14 hours per day. Their wages/earning vary from Rs.150 to Rs.350 per month as indicated by the child workers and their parents/guardians. With the exception of 5.70 per cent child workers all other have left their previous job. Besides other reasons, the most important reason for leaving previous job as revealed by child workers and their parents/guardians were bad working conditions and desire for career advancement.

Thus a large majority of child workers have no experience of working before the present employment and those who worked have left their jobs due to bad working conditions.

Poverty and economic hardship of the families has been one of the strong forces for high incidence of child labour. A little less than 1/2 (43.79%) child workers have taken over adult role of earning members of their family and 57.65 per cent parents/guardians have helped their children to work as wage earners/or engaged in self-employed activities primarily due to closure of textile mills, repetitive failure of agriculture, large size of family, repayment of family debts and above all children themselves desired to supplement the income of their families. Slightly more than 1/3rd (35.31%) child workers and nearly 1/4th (24.59%) parents/guardians avered scholastic backwardness of the child, socio-cultural factors, and desire to make the child skilled craftsmen as other important reasons motivating the child to take up the present employment. A majority of child workers of both sexes and of almost all castes and religious groups send their children to work due to economic constraints of the family and 1/4th caste Hindu parents/guardians advanced scholastic backwardness of their children for sending them to work. Only 15.60 per cent parents/guardians of middle castes group put their children to traditional family occupation as they consider it an accepted and normal way of socialising their children. Thus poverty, economic compulsion of the families, scholastic backwardness of children and socio-cultural factors of various castes and communities force children to join labour market. Those belonging to scheduled castes/tribes constitute the biggest group who are compelled to join labour force due to economic reasons. Along with it religion, caste and ritual prejudice and customary expectations of some of their communities regulated the nature of workers in various vocations.

The strength of workers in various establishments varies from unit to unit and industry to industry. It varies from less than 5 to more than 100 workers. A little more than 3/4th (77.05%) Service and commercial establishments have less than 5 workers while 59.60 per cent
of Production units have more than 26 workers and 41.54 per cent of Job and repair units have strength of 6-15 workers.

A little more than 1/2 (52.22%) of these establishments employ between 2 and 5 child workers and 20.68 per cent employ only one child. The establishments employing between 2 and 5 child workers in Job and repair work units, Production units and Service and commercial establishments constitute 73.33 per cent, 35.62 per cent and 44.26 per cent respectively. The ratio of adult to child in service and commercial establishment is 1:5, in Production units it is 1:2.5 and in Job and repair units it is 1:2. Thus service and commercial establishments and Production units employ more child workers in comparison to Job and repair work units.

Regarding reasons of employing child workers in various establishments, a little less than 1/3rd (31.52%) employers said that they have obliged poor families by giving their children work and remuneration for fulfilling their personal needs, 50.54 per cent employers stated that the children were employed due to their inherent qualities like sincerity, honesty and innocence and the fact that they are easy to handle and are amenable to discipline and cannot organise themselves in trade union. The remaining employers have given jobs due to caste, community, religious and other communal and sentimental considerations.

As far as the system adopted by the employers for the recruitment of child labour is concerned a little more than 1/2 (54.19%) have employed children at the request of their parents/guardians and relatives and a little less than 1/4th (23.68%) have employed children at latter's personal request. The remaining employers were approached by adult workers, co-workers and some of the employers either brought the child from their native place to be trained as skilled worker or have observed the child working elsewhere and having been impressed by his/her honesty and sincerity offered him or her job. Thus 2/3rd employers prefer personal qualities for recruiting the children in their establishments.

A big segment (52.70%) of boy child workers work on fixed monthly wages in occupations/industrial activities like automobile repair, engineering and metal work, hotel and restaurants, shoe-chappal making, shops and ceramic industries, etc. About 2/3rd of the girl child workers work in agarbatti and beedi-making units, sewing stitching, embroidery, patch work, diamond cutting and polishing, colour and construction work as piece rate wage earners. While 50.62 per cent of caste Hindus work as piece rate wage earners and 1/2 of non-Hindus work on fixed monthly wages, child workers belonging to scheduled castes/tribes and middle castes group work on fixed monthly wages as well as piece rate jobs. Similarly, 55.17 per cent employers of various establishments especially from Job and repair work units and service and commercial establishments make payment of wages on monthly basis and the remaining pay wages either daily or weekly on piece rate basis.
Thus employers find child workers especially attractive on account of their innate or perceived characteristics such as docility, speed and visual acuity and they can be paid low wages and because they offer flexibility in situation of fluctuating and unstable market conditions.

Nearly 3/4th (73.86%) child workers either stay on the work premises or very near to it and a very large majority (94.35%) do not use any means of transport to reach the workplace. Except for children who are self-employed or are working in hotel and restaurants or in odd jobs others have fixed time for reaching and leaving the work premises.

None of the parents/guardians has presented/produced any medical certificate of fitness to employers before and after getting his/her child into the job. None of the employers has asked for medical certificate of fitness either from parents/guardians and/or from child workers before and after employing the child. No parent/guardian has paid any amount to any body before and after getting job for his/her child.

A large majority (89.62%) of parents/guardians have not made any arrangement for the training of their children. 53.20 per cent employers said that the nature of job in their establishment is so simple that it does not require any formal training and the children learn to do the work while on the job. Other employers were not very specific about the period of training as they were of the view that it all depends upon the learning capacity of the child. In some or the vocations period of training various from one to four months, i.e. in agarbatti, beedi making, diamond polishing, rangati, sewing stitching patch work, etc., in Diamond cutting and polishing, some employers charge Rs. 600 to Rs. 1000 as fees for training, which, is returnable to the child every month along with his/her earnings. 10.28 per cent parents/guardian said that in automobile repairs, engineering and metal work, shoe chapal making, colour and construction work, etc., the training period varies from 2 to 4 years. Some of the employers of automobile repairs units, and engineering and metal work units, give pocket and travelling allowances to the child workers during the period of training.

None of the parents/guardians has faced any difficulties in finding job for the children. A little more than 3/4th (78.51%) parents/guardians, relatives and friends found jobs for their children and 2/3rd parents/guardians of scheduled castes/tribes and 55.96 per cent of middle caste parents/guardians helped their children in getting the present job. 2/3rd parents/guardians had not made any special efforts to send their children to work but nearly 1/4th had to make special efforts to accept the present job by making their children conscious and convincing them about the poor economic conditions of their families. Only 14.18 per cent parents/guardians wished to help their children to learn the family occupation. Thus a large majority of parents/guardians faced no difficulties in finding job for their children and no special efforts were made by them to
send their children to work and earn for their families.

According to employers of various establishments, the working hours vary from 7 to 15 hours. A large majority of child workers (80.60%) and according to 93.7 per cent parents/guardians children required to work between 7 and 12 hours per day. Average hours of work as indicated by child workers, parents/guardians and employers are 9.7, 9 and 9.8 respectively. Average hours of work for boys are 9.45 and for girls it is 8.17 because girls are not allowed to work after 5.30 p.m. in various establishments. Average hours of work as reported by child workers and employers in Production Units, job and repair work units and in service and commercial establishments are 9.32 and 8.52; 9.52 and 8.4 and 10.57 and 10.49 respectively. The average highest hours are found in odd jobs which is 11.67. This means that a majority of the children work for more than stipulated hours as laid down in various labour and industrial legislations which according to children should not be made to work for more than 5 hours in a day. Thus child workers are highly exploited by the employers by compelling them to work for longer hours in urban unorganised sector.

Nearly 3/7th (73.20%) child workers are assigned work by employers, supervisors, contractors, Mukadams and only 10.56 per cent are assigned work by parents/guardians relatives and co-workers. A little more than 3/4th (76.3%) take tea before leaving for their daily work. A majority (3/4th) of the child workers make their own arrangement of lunch and tea. Except for some of the tea shop and restaurant boys, most of the domestic servants and children working in shoe chappal making units are provided the facilities of tea and food by their respective employers. Thus most of the child workers have to make their own arrangement of tea and lunch.

Nearly 1/2 (46.8%) parents/guardians do not consider it necessary to visit the work place of their children as they work along with them and 20 per cent parents/guardians visit the work place of their children weekly and/or on wage day Remaining do not visit the place of work of their children. During visits to the work place only 11.75 per cent parents/guardians try to know the progress of their children.

Generally, there is a system of allowing rest period to the child workers during noon hours in various establishments. Except 2.83 per cent child workers others get rest interval during working hours which varies from half an hour to two and a half hours. A little more than 1/4th (28.76%) child workers enjoy half-an-hour rest during work and 45.75 per cent enjoy one-hour rest during the working hours. Similarly 45 per cent employers keep one-hour recess for the child workers and another 1/3rd (33.01%) keep it for half-an-hour. According to 39.3 per cent parents/guardians their children get half an hour recess and 47.3 per cent parents/guardians said that their children get one hour rest interval during work. A majority of child workers do get rest interval during working hours. However, they get no rest as most of them have to take meals during this time and some of them take bath during this time. Thus a large majority of child workers get recess which varies from half
an hour to one hour.

Generally, the employers keep their establishments closed for a day in a week, but some time due to shortage of raw material, over-production, reduced demand of goods, communal riots, religious and social functions at their homes they keep their establishments closed and for these days wages are not paid to the workers. Besides, the employers keep their establishment closed during national and religious holiday. About 2/3rd (64.92%) child workers and according to nearly 2/3rd (63.66%) parents/guardians their children get regular weekly holiday once in a week. 47.43 per cent parents/guardians mentioned that their children do not get wages for weekly holidays but child workers working in ceramic, automobile repair, engineering and metal work, domestic servants and shop assistants get wages for off days and national and religious holidays, whereas 13.15 per cent workers get a day off once in a fortnight. 46.64 per cent child workers do not get any other holiday except scheduled holidays and weekly holidays another 1/4th remain absent from work as and when they desire. Only 14.0 per cent occasionally remain absent during sickness, marriage, death, etc at home or whenever there is staggering.

More than 3/4th (76.69%) child workers and 2/3rd (68.7%) parents/guardians express that children get both national and religious holidays and about 1/4th (22%) parents/guardians stated that their children seldom observe all national and religious holidays, 43 per cent parents/guardians revealed that their children do get wages for such national/religious holidays. Those who are engaged in ragpicking, scrap collecting and colour and construction work, and are porters, coolies and ceramic workers do not observe any of these holidays as they work over time and earn more during these days.

Thus a majority of child workers get weekly off besides national and religious holidays. Children who are working on fixed monthly wages do get wages for these days, but those who work as piece rate wage earners neither get wages for weekly off days nor for national/religious holidays, but they get more wages due to overtime work which child workers with fixed monthly wages do not get.

As a general practice in unorganised sector there is no provision of ordinary or sick leave for the child workers. This entirely depends on the "pleasure" of the employers. If we leave out piece rate wage earners, who may absent themselves from work at their own expense, in case of child workers working on fixed monthly wages/allowances the actual practice with regard to accounting for absence from work varies from activity to activity and even from unit to unit. More than 1/2 (57.3%) child workers engaged in various industrial activities getting piece rate wage, and those who are self employed and do odd jobs need not take formal permission from their employers for remaining absent from work. A majority of employers (82.26%) and parents/guardians (79.4%) said that the child workers are not given any casual leave and 94.88 per cent employers and 82.1 per cent parents/guardians said that their children are not given any benefit of earned leaves. Similarly, 84.4 per cent employers
and 85.9 per cent parents/guardians affirmed that the child workers are not provided medical leave also. 89.07 per cent parents/guardians said that employers of their children have never provided any medical relief to their children during some accident on the work premises. A little more than 1/4th (29.54%) child workers got casual leave without wages and only 14.16 per cent child workers got leave with wages during previous year (mostly in automobile repair, engineering and metal work and domestic service). Only 2.85 per cent child workers mostly of Automobile repair and Engineering and metal works got earned leave and a few availed sick leaves also. All these leaves varies from 5 to 12 days per year a few of them are helped by their employers in getting medical treatment. It may not be out of place to mention that employers of Shoe-chappal unit provide earned leave of 30 days to their child workers and also bear their medical expenses during illness and give them to and fro fare after the end of a year to visit their native place.

Thus a majority of the child workers do not get any other leave except Sundays or other regular off days and a few national and religious holidays, but a few employers of automobile repairs, engineering and metal work and shoe chappal making do provide some leaves to their child workers and also help them during their sickness.

A large majority of child workers are paid very low wages and a few of them do not receive any wages during early period of employment or are paid Rs.10 to Rs.15 per week as pocket and transport allowances. But once they are assigned independent work, they receive wages. The average monthly wage/earnings of the child workers is Rs.321.55. The average monthly income/earnings of the child workers as reported by parents/guardians is Rs.260.47 per month. The average monthly earning/wages of boy and girl child workers are Rs. 341.30 and Rs. 265 75 respectively. The highest average earnings of child workers is found in odd job which is Rs.453.69 and lowest is Rs.238.17 in service and commercial establishments. More than 3/4th (79.30%) child workers consider their earning as sufficient to meet the personal needs, yet about 1/2 (52.07%) are satisfied with their earnings, others want to enhance their monthly income/earnings from the present level to get a monthly wages/earnings upto Rs.400/-. More than 55 per cent middle castes, scheduled castes/tribes child workers are satisfied with whatever wages/earnings they get while little less than 1/2 (46.53%) castes Hindu child workers desire to enhance their earnings to more than Rs.400/- per month. Similarly 43 per cent of child workers working in Production units want their monthly earning to be more than Rs.400/- as they want their wage rates to be revised.

A majority of the child workers are satisfied with the present level of wages/earnings but children of Production units and caste Hindu wish to increase their wages, from whatever they get at present.

An overwhelming majority of parents/guardians (87.42%) directly/indirectly receives wages/earnings of their children. As per the information given by 3/4th employers
they pay wages directly to child workers. A little less than 3/4th (72.33%) child workers directly receive their wages/earnings in which case the percentages of boy and girl child workers are 62.21 and 82.43 respectively. This means that the percentage of girls whose earnings/wages are not received by their family members is less than that of boys. This indicates that girl child workers appears to be more responsible towards 'their families than boys as most of them hand over their earning/wages to their family members.

Thus, a majority of child workers both boys and girls directly receive their wages/earnings from their employers which they hand over to their parents.

More than 2/3rd (69.28%) child workers do not get bonus. This is also indicated in the replies of the parents/guardians of child workers. However, 44.33 per cent employers said that they give bonus in cash and/or in kind to their child workers, on Id/Diwali. Amongst those child workers, who do not get bonus, 21.35 per cent expressed desire to get bonus. 42.06 per cent child workers want to get medical relief during illness both in terms of leaves and cash allowance and only 19.8 per cent want to be covered under some insurance scheme during illness/accidents. A little more than 1/4th (28.76%) child workers want their rates of wages to be revised. A microscopic percentage of child workers expressed to get all those benefits which are provided to adult industrial workers of organised sector because they feel that they do not work less than any industrial workers. Only 29.63 per cent child workers get loans/advance from their employers and 2/3rd (67.5%) employers have also provided some portion of wages as advance to the parents/guardians of the child workers and 44.32% employers have also given loan to parents/guardian of the child workers which is not more than the summated amount of 4 to 5 months wages/earnings of the child workers, which is recovered from the wages of the child workers in some instalments every month.

Thus a majority of the child workers do not get any other fringe benefits except loan and advances.

A majority (66.67 per cent) of parents/guardians give pocket money to their children. This is true with respect to replies of 60 per cent of child workers. The remaining do not get pocket money as their personal needs are fulfilled by their parents/guardians. A majority of the parents/guardians know how and where the pocket money is being spent by their children. Most of the child workers spend it on films, snacks, sightseeings and articles of personal use. The boys use their pocket money buying eatable and enjoying films and a few spend money on smoking, gambling and drinking, while girls use a part of it to purchase things which add to their personal look and part of it they save.

Thus the girls appear to be more practical in spending pocket money than boy child workers.

As far as provision of various physical facilities at the work place is concerned nearly 2/3rd (64.5%) employers
provide protection to the child workers against sun and rains and also ventilation facilities at the work premises. A large majority of employers (91.1%) have drinking water facilities available on their work place and only one third establishments have urinals, latrine and bathroom facilities on the work premises. Only 1/3rd employers provide recreational facilities to their child workers and another 21.9% take child workers to the nearest hospital to the nearest hospital/doctors for treatment and medical care at the time of accidents on the work premises. But self employed children and those pursuing odd jobs, do not have any such facility due to nature of their job and most of them have to work in open with no fired place, without shelter in all weather and seasons. Their work places are dirty/congested.

A large majority (81.96%) of parents/guardians expressed their views that the job which their children do are to their liking as 38.52 per cent parents/guardians said that their children like the job because the latter want to help the family, 23.67 per cent parents/guardians indicated the liking of the children for the present job as they wanted to become skilled craftsman. On the other hand nearly 2/3rd (65.14%) child workers like the nature of the job and did not express any difficulty in performance of their job. More than 1/3rd (39.87%) like it due to economic gains and the percentage of boy and girl child workers are 46.63 and 36.15 respectively. 12.84 per cent boys like their jobs because of bright career prospects. 21.96 per cent boys and 14.11 per cent girls do not like the job because of its risky, tiresome and harmful nature. 65 per cent of those in odd job and 53.98 per cent of self employed dislike the job as they desperately do the job in spite of its risky, tiresome, dirty and harmful nature.

Regarding the environment of their work place nearly 1/2 (51.2%) of the child workers said that their work environment is just good, while 41.38 per cent consider it congested, stinking and lacking in proper shelter with no safety and is full of fume, odour of chemical and colour. They work on the road side work with heavy machines and tools which are meant for adult workers, etc., The percentage responses of boys and girls for such an environment are 42.57 and 37.26 per cent respectively. A majority of child workers working in service and commercial establishments, odd jobs and those who are self-employed appear to be very negative about the environment of the work place compared to those working in Production units, Job and repair work units as they have no fixed time and place of work and they work under the continuous threat of policeman, Municipal employers goondas and watchman.

In spite of the risky nature of work and dirty, congested unsafe and stinking environment of work place, a majority of the parents/guardians (71.6%) do not observe any change in the physical health of their children ever since the latter started working and 62.57 per cent parents/guardians opined that their children have not suffered any major injury, others (14.46%) stated that their children have developed skin diseases. septic the skin of their hands peel off, hands become very rough and they
occasionally suffer from fever, backache, knee pain, eyesore, etc., Only 9.02 per cent parents/guardians stated that if a child is injured on the work premises only initial expenditure of treatment is borne by the employers. Regarding suggestions of parents/guardians for making improvement in work environment, more than 2/3rd (69.9%) did make some suggestion, and nearly 1/3rd (34.4%) suggested improvement in wages and working conditions and another 1/3rd (32.00%) made suggestions for better physical facilities at the work place/premises.

In spite of the fact, that there is risk to the health of the child workers due to the nature of work and non-availability of certain facilities, needed for safe working conditions, a majority of parents/guardians and child workers expressed their liking for the job but few of the parents/guardians and child workers did express dissatisfaction with the work environment and gave suggestions for its improvement also.

A little more than 3/4th (76.91%) child workers have not become victims of any bad habit. This is corroborated by observation of about 3/4th (74.58%) parents and guardians about the positive change in the behaviour and habits of their children. More than 96 per cent child workers were never apprehended by police, only 3.71 per cent boys were apprehended for gambling, bootlegging, drinking, stealing, etc. 11.47 per cent parents/guardians opined that their children have become arrogant, defiant and irresponsible and they evade household responsibility. 5.19 per cent parents/guardians reported that their children have got into bad habits like smoking, gambling, drinking and eve teasing. Most of the children both boys and girls spend their leisure time in almost similar activities except that a section of boys are found to be more outgoing than girls as they spend most of their leisure time in loitering around and sightseeing.

Thus a large majority of child workers have not inculcated any bad habit and in spite of the facts that they work with adult workers and live in slums and there is not much difference in the mode of using leisure by boys and girls.

A large majority of employers (70.92%) punish child workers for their disobedience. Nearly 2/3rd (63.54%) employers punish the child workers, if the latter do not work properly. Employers of Production units and service and commercial establishments are found comparatively harsher than those of Job and repair work units. In case of the latter 45.34 per cent do not take action but provide guidance for improvement in their work. A majority (85.23%) of employers believe in punishing the child for remaining absent from work without information. These employers not only scold but also deduct some amount from the wages of the child worker due to their absence from work. Similarly 84.73 per cent employers believe in inflicting punishment on the child workers if they find that the child workers have deliberately caused damage to some part of the machinery or to the raw material. The employers not only scold, beat and abuse the
child workers but also deduct the equivalent amount of damage from his/her wages. More than 1/2 (57.63%) employers take punitive action at the time of quarrel/fight amongst child workers or between the child workers and adult workers. In case of theft/stealing committed by the child workers on the work premises, a large majority (96.55%) of employers inform the parents/guardians about it, physically punish the child workers and try to recover the stolen article from them and as a last resort inform the police and terminate their services.

Thus most of the employers take various types of punitive actions against child workers for disobedience, improper work, absentism, causing damage to raw material or machine, quarreling on the work premises and deterrent action for committing thefts.

A little more than 1/2 (54.49%) of the child workers are on good terms with the employers. According to child workers their employers comparatively are harsher to boys than to girls and in the same manner, the employers of service and commercial establishments seem to be less sympathetic in their behaviour towards the child workers in comparison to the employers of Production units, Job & repair work units to whom the employers teach skills. Regarding behaviour of the co-workers with the child workers a majority of them (62%) expressed that their fellow workers, including adult ones, have good relations with them. Among those who experienced non-sympathetic behaviour from their fellow workers there are more boys (7.04%) than girls (2.13%). Furthermore, more child workers working in job and repair units, service and commercial establishments expressed non-sympathetic behaviour of their colleagues compared to those working in other units. A majority (59.2%) of parents/guardians expressed satisfaction with the behaviour of employers with their children and 2/3rd parents/guardians expressed satisfaction with the behaviour of co-workers with the child workers. Thus a majority of child workers and their parents/guardians are happy with the cooperative and sympathetic behaviour of employers and the co-workers toward child workers.

Ranking various job components and the level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction from each of the components, it is found that co-workers' behaviour with the child workers ranks first as an overwhelming majority of child workers (86.07%) expressed satisfaction with this component. Satisfaction with wages/earnings and length of work hours rank second and third, their percentages being 69.72 and 63.22 respectively, while child workers' satisfaction with employers' attitude and behaviour ranks fourth (62.17%). Regarding opinions on the physical conditions at the workplace, the responses of the child workers were equally divided between satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Lastly, an overwhelming majority (96.75%) of child workers expressed dissatisfaction with the component of job security as a majority of them had to continue their employment at the mercy of the employers. This information demonstrates that the percentage of those who are satisfied with different job components is significantly higher than that of those who are
dissatisfied. Moreover, a majority of child workers are found to be dissatisfied with the physical environment as well as with insecurity prevalent in the jobs.

Nearly 2/3rd (65.1%) of the child workers have expressed overall satisfaction with their present job. Among them 3/4th of the girl child workers and child workers in job and repair work units and production units expressed satisfaction with the present job, while 2/3rd of those pursuing odd jobs and a little more than 1/3rd of service and commercial establishments and self-employed expressed dissatisfaction with the jobs.

Thus except due to physical environment and job insecurity, a very large majority of child workers and their parents/guardians feel satisfied with the present job of their child workers.

PERCEPTION OF CHILD LABOUR

An overwhelming majority (94%) of parents/guardians consider education necessary for the growth and development of their children. 60 per cent stated that education up to the 10th standard is sufficient for them and 1/4th of them suggested education up to the 4th standard specially for girls. A majority of parents/guardians (89.2%) of caste Hindus wish to educate their wards up to the 10th standard and above similarly 2/3rd of scheduled castes/tribes and middle castes parents/guardians corroborate the opinion of parents/guardians of caste Hindu. Thus a large majority of parents/guardians of child workers consider education up to SSC as necessary for better prospects of the child workers, but due to poverty and socio-cultural constraints they have to withdraw the child on or before completion of primary education.

A little more than 1/4th (29.85%) of the child workers do not favour employment of children during their tender age, i.e., below 14 years, while the rest favour employment of children during tender age as 1/2 of the girl child workers want to be a source of economic support to their families while 1/4th (26.69%) boy child workers favoured working during tender age as they would like to become skilled craftsmen by the time they attain youth. The remaining child workers want to keep themselves busy as they want to keep away from bad company. Elliciting the opinion of the parents/guardians, 80 per cent parents/guardians expressed that child should start earning between 15 and 18 years. The average normative age of work for the child as stated by parents/guardians is 16.32 years.

Thus it is parents/guardians who consider that the proper age of work for the child is above 16 years and minimum education for their child is S.S.C (Standard X) but a majority of child workers consider the appropriate age for a child to work is less than 14 years due to their desire to be an economic help to their family and to learn the tricks of the trade as early as possible.

Highlighting preference for education or work, more
than 1/2 (56.6%) of the parents/guardians consider that education is more important than work. A little more than 1/3rd of the parents/guardians prefer work to education, while the interest of the family is the focal point. A little more than 1/2 (54.64%) of the parents/guardians favour education while 1/3rd favoured work only. Hence, 53 per cent parents/guardians of child workers wanted non-formal education for their illiterate, dropout children as they believe such system of imparting education would better their child's prospects and 45.35 per cent parents favoured 5 to 7 hours per week for the purpose. Supporting the views of the parents/guardians 57.30 per cent child workers showed inclination to attend nonformal education classes during leisure time without disturbing their regular work schedule. About 2/3 (64.24%) of the boys and 1/2 of the girls showed their willingness to devote four hours and more per week to such classes. A large majority (98.12%) of caste Hindu children showed their willingness to spare time for such classes for better educational attainment, which is in conformity with the prevailing norms.

Thus, not only that the majority of parents/guardians give preference to education over work, but child workers also do the same without disturbing their job schedule. However, due to their economic and socio-cultural constraints, they give preference to work but education is no less important as they want to improve their future with more educational attainment also.

Slightly less than 1/3rd (31.42%) of the parents/guardians felt that their children should not work while at school as their studies suffer and 2/3rd (67.2%) consider that schooling and earning can go simultaneously. 1/2 of the caste Hindus do not agree that earning and learning go simultaneously while 1/3rd of the scheduled castes/tribes and 43.2 per cent of the middle castes parents/guardians say that learning, working and earning can go together. This is due to abject poverty that they desire to put their child on work immediately after completion of schools.

Seventy per cent parents/guardians felt that some vocational trade should be taught to children along with their normal school curriculum before they reach the age of 15 years. Regarding the nature of trainings 45.98 per cent parents/guardians prefer mechanical, technical and automobile repair for boys and 20.22 per cent parents/guardians suggested training in tailoring, embroidery, needle work etc for girls. 92 per cent parents/guardians desire that such training should be organised under government auspices. A majority of caste Hindus (2/3rd) and non-Hindu parents/guardians favoured useful vocational training for school dropout while scheduled castes/tribes parents/guardians advocate manual, casual labour work for the school dropouts, as they consider that the child should economically help their family.

Thus a majority of the parents/guardians favour separate type of vocational training for boys as well as girls during regular schooling time as well as for school dropouts. But parents/guardians of vulnerable section of
society prefer labour and/or manual work for economic support to the family.

Regarding opinions of parents/guardians and child workers about their preference for self employment as against wage employment, little more than 1/2 (57.74%) child workers prefer to start independent work, only after attaining sufficient experience and skills, while the parents/guardian hold views contrary to that of the child workers as 1/2 (56.56%) of the parents/guardians want their children to work under an employer as wages earners. This is because they don't have sufficient investment to make and their poor economic condition demands regular, steady and assured income for the family which is possible only through wage employment and not through self-employment. Thus children do not want to work under somebody's direction, which means they do not want to be exploited any more when they grow up, young, while the parents/guardians do not foresee any better alternative than wage employment.

Nearly 50 per cent parents/guardians were of the view that children who neither go to school nor work anywhere are more likely to become delinquent or anti-social than those who work.

Reacting to, whether the parents/guardians would like their children to work if their family income is supplemented by the amount equivalent to that which their children contribute to the family purse, 41.31 per cent parents/guardians said that they would like their children to work fearing that the idle child would become vagabond and indulge in antisocial,criminal activities while 25.61 per cent parents/guardians said that they would arrange some useful vocational training for them for their bright future.

An overwhelming majority (93.19%) of child workers of both sexes and of all castes and 7/4th (76.39%) of the employers, 89.52 per cent parents/guardians of both sexes castes and religious group are not in favour of total abolition of child labour, instead all respondent child workers, employers and parents/guardians wish that working conditions of child workers should be improved. A large majority (98.63%) of parents/guardians and 93.11 per cent of employers favour its total abolition in hazardous occupations.

Thus child workers, parents/guardians and employers are not in favour of total abolition of child labour but favoured its abolition in hazardous occupations and further advocate that conditions of work should be improved. If child labour is to continue in India it is to continue in India.

Regarding the effects of abolition of child labour on child and their families, an overwhelming majority (93.9%) of child workers 92.9 per cent parents/guardians and 92.02 per cent of employers mentioned that it will have harmful effects on children and their families because it will increase the problem of poverty and will force child workers to delinquency and anti-social behaviour. Regarding its effects of families again a large majority (89.3 per cent) of child workers foresee negative and ill effects of the abolition of child labour on family
organism as some of thorn were of the view that the family
members will be forced to indulge in anti-social and criminal
activities.

Regarding the effects of abolition of child labour
on industry/business only 20.69 per cent employers felt
that it will have negative effects on industry and 42.86 per
cent employers opined that they would be compelled to employ
more adult workers in place of child workers and their profit
margin will be reduced. The employers of production units,
service and commercial establishments admitted that their
work has survived due to availability of cheap amenable
docile child labour force. Expressing their views on
abolition of child labour on poor and backward classes a very
large percentage of employers (89.17%) said that it will
adversely affect the poor and increase the miseries of the
backward class, but 48.53 per cent employers of job and
repair work establishments pointed out that more employment
would be generated for the unemployed.

Thus a large majority of child workers
parents/guardians and employers expressed negative effects of
abolition of child labour on children, their poor families
and majority amongst employers argued that their
production, profit will be reduced but more employment
opportunities for adults will be generated.

Regarding employers' knowledge about various
legislation concerning child labour a little more than 1/2 of
the (57.65%) employers are ignorant about any of such
legislation and a little more than 1/4th (29.02%) of them had
partial information, only 13.30 per cent employers have fair
knowledge of different Acts.

A little less than 2/3rd (60.6%) of the employers was
not in favour of any legislation which prohibit child labour
and a little more than 1/4th of the (27.10%) were not in
favour of any legislation due to widespread unemployment,
miseries and abject poverty in the country in general and
Ahmedabad in particular. This is because of the crises in the
textile industry. They further added that it would
increase crime, delinquency, destitution, prostitution,
beggary and destruction. Another 1/4th (27.59%) of the
employers favoured legislations as they consider their
childhood is being abused without any fault of the child.

Expressing views regarding difficulties faced by the
employers in implementation of any legislations meant for the
child, 34.98 per cent of the employers said that poverty
stricken parents would send their children to work under the
guise of apprentice or hide them and ask children to run
away, 30.5 per cent employers expressed the view that they
would convert regular workers as workers employed through
some agency or start giving work at the residence of the
children as is the case with beedi, agarbatti, sewing,
stitching, patch work, etc. Lastly 13.31 per cent employers
expressed the view that as the government machinery
responsible for implementing various legislations does not
improve the existing pieces of legislation it will not be
implemented in true letter and spirit.
Regarding visits of various government officials of various departments, a majority of the employers said that the former are not interested in implementing various provisions of laws. The officer takes their due share on and before Diwali/Idd and never come till next Diwali/Idd. A few other employers were of the view that dishonest government officials provide them guidance in flouting the various provisions of law.

Thus a majority of the employers of various establishments are not interested in implementing any legislation meant for the welfare/development of the child workers in true spirit fearing that it will affect their business, profit, and prosperity. The government officials also help the employers in evading the various provisions of legislations meant for the well-being of these children.

From the foregoing analysis, it is evident that child labour is deeply rooted in the socio-economic fabric of our society. The causes of the persistence of child labour in India include poverty and unemployment, vested interest of the employer, inadequate educational system and lack of awareness on the part of the parents in particular and society in general, about the implication of child labour for their development. In order to deal with this social problem, it may not be proper to rely on any one single approach so a comprehensive integrated approach is required.

A number of social scientist and other professionals (among them Alvin Weinberg and recently Amitai Etzioni and Rechard Remp in their Technological Shortcut to Social Change) have shown that it is possible to reduce the intensity of at least a few social problem through the strategic use of technological means. Such techniques do not of course remove the problem but they can improve circumstances while efforts of a broader, more far reaching and sociological nature continues (Marton. et al, 1976: 754-755).

**SUGGESTIONS**

The present study indicates that total abolition of child labour is neither possible nor desirable so long as there is widespread poverty and unemployment. Far from solving the problem, its total abolition will further aggravate it. Therefore, for even and all round development of the country, the problem of unemployment will have to be tackled by providing employment to at least one adult male member in each poor family in general and scheduled castes/tribe, backward class and minorities in particular. The government has already launched many programmes for alleviating the problem of urban poverty, e.g., Nehru Rozgar Yojna, is one of such programme. Proper implementation of such programmes in the slums of the city will definitely uplift families from poverty line. This will not compel parents to send their children to work or earn for supplementing their family income but instead to send them to school for a better future.
Similarly, for rehabilitation of the workers of closed textile mills, Gandhi Labour Institute, Ahmedabad, has launched a rehabilitation scheme, which is financed by National Renewal fund. Every care should be taken to see that this scheme is implemented in true letter and spirit which may help the families of the workers of closed textile mills to lead a respectable life and not send their women and children to seek work for survival.

The Government of India has taken a number of preventive and ameliorative, both constitutional and legislative, measure, for prohibiting and regulating the employment of children in various vocations/industries, but this social evil has not been eliminated yet. Recently, The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 has been enacted to safeguard the children from this evil and exploitation; but the conditions of Child Labour remains unchanged. Apart from inherent loopholes in the legislation, the greedy employers always want to cash on the loopholes that are there in the legislation; what is more appropriate is to change the way in which social order perceive such behaviour as form of disease, rather than a manifestations of such evil. Besides, the law enforcement officials are very slow, apathetic and corrupt. They deprive the children of all the benefits of the existing laws. Therefore, some deterrent and punitive actions should be taken against those government officials, who help the employers in flouting various provisions of law meant for ameliorating the conditions of child labour. The most positive step so far taken by the Government as a follow-up to the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 is of setting up of a technical Advisory Committee in each state to review and advise on Child Labour engaged in hazardous occupations. In 1987, the government announced a National Policy on Child Labour which promised action on three fronts: a legislative action plan, a development programme to benefit the child labour and a project based action plan in area where children are commonly engaged in wages and quesi wage employment. In the initial stage 10 projects in 10 different parts of the country have been identified to cover 30000 workers; but during all these years it has been observed that due to constant interference of local politicians and elites, the very purpose of these projects got defeated and programmes introduced for the welfare of the families of child labour are likely to favour non-child labour families. In order to ensure the benefits of these programmes to families of child workers, sufficient and strict vigilance is required in the selection of beneficiaries using criteria which are both specific and sensitive.

Education policy needs a constructive change. The enrolment of children at primary stage should be done vigorously and alternative. Government of India has formulated the National Policy on Education, 1986, and National Policy on Child Labour to encourage children's education. The National Policy on Education puts a new thrust on universal enrolment and a substantive improvement in the quality of education. The policy envisages to launched a large and systematic programme of Non-formal Education for
If every school going child is to be given a stipend along with free nutritional meal (as in Gujerat State where a mid day meal scheme in primary school launched by the Government improved the enrolment and retention in school). The money in the form of stipend will offset the loss of income and free meal will ensure a better and healthy growth of the child. Along with general education, vocational training should be imparted to make them economically independent in their childhood. The educational programme will have to be different for children who are displaced from working unit. Many of these children may be in the age group of 11 to 14 years who have not attained even primary education. These children cannot automatically be brought into the mainstream of education at this stage. Hence, education programme for them have to be specially planned. The responsibility of providing them education should be assigned to non-government organisations. These organisations should concentrate on various slums to cater to the educational needs of the working children during suitable hours of the day, or on Sundays and other holidays or at night. Besides, the parents should also be motivated to send their children to non-formal classes. If these programmes are implemented well, they will certainly benefit the child labour.

Periodical health check-up and free medical treatment should be given to the children. Special emphasis should be given on physical hygiene as well as on the environment of the working place. Special medical centre/mobile medical centre dealing in occupational illnesses must be set up near work set-up and cooperation of organisation like Indian Council of Medical Research, Nutritional Foundation of India, National Institute of Occupational Health, Ahmedabad should be entrusted the task of doing research and indentifying disease associated with certain occupations and finding out their remedies should be entrusted to these institutes. Working children can also be covered by health insurance scheme. Mobile health teams could make regular weekly trips to the areas where the working children population is heavily concentrated. The scheme must also ensure relevant referral backup services.

A wide-spread advertisement programme through, Mass media and wall posters should begin denouncing big families. People must be made to realise the evil consequences of a big family.

Unlike the other vulnerable group like scheduled castes/scheduled tribes, women, etc, working children are handicapped in presenting their own case in two ways: i) they are not very mature enough to understand and present their own problems; ii) the duration in which children work is a transitory period and a short one at that; therefore, by the time these children become familiar with their problems and become capable of presenting them, they are already out of the category of working children and.
therefore, they do not receive any political support from any political party or trade unions. Even NGO's are not very enthusiastic in taking up their cause.

State governments may introduce a licensing system to employ child workers for wages. A directorate of child labour may be created. Children willing to go for wage employment must be enrolled with the said directorate. Persons willing to have child workers should obtain permission from the said directorate before they employ any child. Once the Directorate has the full information about all the child labour and their employing masters, it will not be difficult to enforce the provisions of any legislation in this regard. Every employer should be bound by law to intimate the government about service conditions of the working child. Although it is a difficult task, it is not impossible.

Employers should be convinced about the damage they cause by making children work and should be made to take oath that they would abstain from employing children. Fiscal and monetary incentives should be provided by the government to those factories in which there is a tradition of employing child workers. If they do not employ children, they may get tax rebate, soft loans, preference for raw material sanction, etc. Along with the practice of providing incentives there should be provision for disincentives also such as cancellation of licenses of those factories, which continue to employ children.

In order to curb the exploitative practice of the employers, the growth of trade union can certainly put a break to such employment practices. They should argue for substitution of piece-rate-wages with time wage system. This would enhance the earning potential of adult workers which, in turn, will reduce the incidence of child labour. The major central trade unions should cut across all their political barriers in raising their voice against most deplorable practice of employing children in hazardous industries like ceramic, construction work, etc.

Physical ability is the only criterion for recruitment of children. The ailing child has to take shelter on the footpath when he falls ill. So, by a comprehensive plan, effective steps should be taken to rehabilitate the ailing children who are no longer labourer.

Voluntary organisations also can play a very significant role in eliminating the practice of child labour. They should be primarily concerned with mobilising public opinion and also conducting awareness campaign/camps for various social group. Efforts should be made by the government to identify those voluntary organisations which work in the society's interest and they should be suitably rewarded. Steps should also be initiated to integrate the efforts of different voluntary organisations.

Parents should be made aware so that they should be considerate towards their children rather than being insensitive and onlooker of the exploitation. Adult education
can go a long way in achieving this goal.

Information campaigns should be organised to make people aware of harmful effects of child labour and to explain to them the possible alternatives. In this context the government should launch publicity rallies, campaign using mass media poster, leaflets, etc.

It is ironical that not many NGO's are working on the problem of child workers. It is suggested that these groups further promote awareness among the masses about the ill effects of child labour vis-a-vis its relationship with the exploitative market practice. These NGO's should pool and share their experience at various regional, national and international workshops, seminars and conferences in the area of child labour.

Some of the European countries and especially the US sponsored Child Labour Deterrence Act prohibit the import of goods produced by children. No doubt, this Act will adversely affect some of the industries with a high concentration of child labour but it is really good for the elimination of child labour in those industries. If it is accepted on a wider scale the employers will be forced not to employ child labour. The voluntary organisations can really play a yeoman role in combating this problem of child labour to a considerable extent.

A national child labour welfare fund may be created to meet the expenses of welfare programme of children.

People who try to solve such problems always scoff at any attempt to study them by researchers. They do not understand the importance of empirical research. Unless one has adequate related information one cannot envisage planning programmes, policies, etc., concerning such problems. Therefore, one must have the relevant information regarding a phenomenon. Gathering information possible only through field research. There is also a tendency to encourage research, but it is not linked with any policy or programme to improve the lot of the child workers. Therefore, research studies should be undertaken in this direction. A few of such areas is suggested as follows:

- Studies on the impact of laws relating to child labour should be undertaken in order to bring out strength and weakness of these existing laws.

- Studies should be undertaken on the problems of children working in hazardous occupations and a set of intervention strategies should be suggested.

- It is necessary to carry out evaluation studies of various national government programmes. Such studies are likely to throw useful light on the problems of enforcement of the programme.

- The problem of child labour is complex and its solution is not easy. It will be useful if some innovative experiments are made as action research projects. Such research projects will strengthen the
- As many social action groups, NGO's social activists are making efforts for the welfare/development of child labour, there is need to document their experiences and techniques adopted by them for lessening the intensity of the problem. It is, therefore, necessary to carry out studies of such attempts and examine the replicability of their models.

Child labour is certainly a tragic phenomenon. Beyond the travail of hard work often of manual kind for long hours in the city slums and densely, crowded localities what is even more distressing to see is that the children themselves become a commodity, rather than their labour being a commodity. Most of them are literally put to work by parents. It is generally found that parents themselves become indifferent to the physical and psychological exploitation of children. Thus, the child labour is a target of exploitation by the employers as well as the family. Such is the depth of dehumanisation of the society.

Children are not only the future of any nation but also its strength in reserve. They are the crops which feed the future, if they are healthy and active, educated and informed, disciplined and trained, the future of the nation is well ensured. But if they are wanting in the above aspects the tomorrow of a nation is doomed. Labour is worship, no doubt, but it must be expected of and exacted from those who are fit for it. And it is the duty of all concerned parents, employers, trade unions, society, government and voluntary organisations to achieve this objective.