The most basic and wisest of all investments in social and economic development of society.\textsuperscript{4}

The child of today cannot develop to be a responsible and productive member of tomorrow’s society unless an environment which is conducive to social and physical health is assured to him. Every nation, developed or developing, links its future with the state of the child. Children are the greatest gift to the humanity. The parents themselves live for them. Parents regain peace and happiness in the company of the children. The children signify eternal optimism in the human being and always provide the potential for human development. If the children are better equipped with a broader human output, the society will feel happy with them. Neglecting the children means a loss to the society as a whole. If children are deprived of their childhood – socially, economically, physically, mentally – the nations get deprived of the potential human resources for social progress, economic empowerment and peace and order, the social stability and good citizenry.\textsuperscript{5} It may be that the aforesaid appeal lies at the back of the saying that “child is the father of man”. To enable fathering of a valiant and vibrant man, the child must be groomed well in the formative years of his life. He must receive education, acquire knowledge of man and materials and blossom in such an atmosphere that on reaching age, he is found to be a man with a mission, a man who matters so far as the society is concerned.\textsuperscript{6}

Childhood is a universal human experience and every society has a vital stake in its children. The future and stability of a society depends on the quality of its children. Infact, in every child the

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\textsuperscript{5} Bandhua Mukti Morcha etc. v. Union of India and others AIR 1997 SC 2218, p. 2220.

\textsuperscript{6} M.C. Mehta v. State of Tamil Nadu and others, AIR 1997 SC 701.
foundation of a nation is laid. The proper development of the child is, therefore, imperative for the proper growth of a nation. This applies to the international community also. Obviously Child Welfare is of supreme importance to the mankind. Child welfare is an expression which means “the general well being of the child”. In all ages this has depended principally on the social valuation of children and the care accorded to them. At the present time the child is considered as an important social unit and is held to be entitled to all that makes for healthy living, sufficient recreation, schooling adapted to his natural learning methods, intelligent home care and the right to develop his abilities to their fullest extent." The expression refers to “the total well-being of the child. It includes not only the care of Maladjusted and delinquent children but also the development of child physically, mentally, emotionally and social faculties.8 In a nutshell, it ‘emphasizes the need of continuously taking into account all aspects of the child’s well-being and dealing with ‘the whole child’, not some isolated phase of his development”.9 The intense realizations, that what the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children.

The statement of objects and reasons appended to the Central Children Act, 1960 emphasizes the importance and protection of children as10

“Children are the most vulnerable group in any population and in need of the greatest social care. On account of their vulnerability and dependence they can

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9 Ibid.
10 The object and Reasons appended to the Children Act, 1960. The Preamble to the Act of 1960 puts the same theme thus: An Act to provide for the care, protection, maintenance, welfare, training education and rehabilitation of neglected or delinquent children.
be exploited, ill-treated and directed into undesirable channels by anti-social element in the community. The state has the duty of according proper care and protection to children at all times."

It is needless to emphasize that children are a nation’s strength and most important assets. India’s population of young comprises nearly 380 million children below the age of 14 years as per 2001 census.\textsuperscript{11} The status of children, who represent nearly 40\% of the ‘Human Capital’ of India, not only reflects the quality of life of people in the country, but also measures its Human Development Index. The Government considers the development of children as its key concern and firmly believes that in the ultimate analysis, it is childhood that holds potential and sets the limits for the future development of society. Today investing in the requirements and priorities of children is considered to be the sine qua-non of a developed nation.

In this work an humble attempt has been made to understand the various aspects of child’s interest, and to deliver one message that in the era of globalization, there is an urgent need to change the mindset of both government and the adult citizens with regard to children, the adults of tomorrow. Children of today are to be given due respect and their dignity should be protected by ensuring complete protection of their rights, which is essential for their all round development, only then they can be called as true torchbearers of the future world order.