CONCLUSION

In the Tamil Society the children were considered as the wealth of their family as well as nation. The education of the children was not only considered as the prime factor to get respect in the society but also even from is mother. This can be understood through a Sangam poem written by Pandya ruler Ariyapadai Kadantha Nedunchezhian. In his Sangam poem (Puranannanuru No.183) he says, “A mother who has more than one children gives respect only to a child who advances in education though he is not the elder”. (Appendix ). The Tamil Saint Thiruvalluvar says “Arithmetic and Alphabets are the two eyes of the humanity (Appendix ).

This was the conceptual idea of philosophers about children as depicted in Tamil literature but practically children were utilized to assist their parents in their occupation like agriculture, crafts, trade and commerce and learnt their traditional profession i.e., ‘KULAKALVT’. The traditional occupation continues as ‘father after son. This gives an idea about the society, which perpetuates the traditional profession through children. Though children were engaged in family profession they were permitted to get education in their village schools to learn arithmetics and memories Auvaiyar’s “Athisudi” etc., the assistance of the children to their family profession was not viewed as an evil in those days.

The theory on ‘labour’ has been changed since the Industrial Revolution i.e., from the 19th Century onwards. The Industrial revolution, which took place in England, made a thorough change about the concept of ‘labour’. Due to the growth of capitalism, corporate bodies developed and big industries came into existence in joint venture to manufacture goods. The “Factory system” thus came into existence. The independent
villagers who professed their traditional “Caste trade” independently turned as labourers to work under new conditions under one roof along with hundreds of labourers sharing the work under the supervision of some body else.

The growth of industrial labourers ultimately led to the “Working class Movement” due to insecurity nature of their job, working condition, working place, wages, bonus etc. Further the factory owners who invested money with the profit as the prime motivation pressed the labourers for more work. When the division of labour occurred the labour system was changed. The workers were classified as male, female and child labourers. The industrialists appointed more number of women and children to do some work and extract work from them beyond their physical capacity. They were forced to work in the filthy atmosphere i.e., in sanitary condition, less wages, more working hours without lunch break etc. Due to the continuous work the labourer’s health was affected. Hence the philanthropists, philosophers, and trade union leaders raised their voice against exploitation. The Government came forward to mitigate their sufferings.

In the working class movement the weaker sections viz. women and children were given priority. The Government also realized the fact about the Children’s condition in the factory. The school going children were compelled to do work beyond their physical capacity. By various welfare-measures the Government tried to regulate the ‘Child Labour’ since it realized that the children were sent to the factories due to poverty. The Government took action to regulate the working condition, working hours and age of the child labours. Factory Act, 1881 stressed the production of age certificate of the child labourers from the firm.
These regulations were not enforced properly because of non-co-operation of the factory owners, parents and even the children. They never abstained from attending the factory due to poverty. These poverty stricken children were also diverted from schools to the factory since they did not like to go to school due to aversion towards educational system. They considered that there might not be better future if they go to school and get education. They further were of opinion that they have to depend upon somebody else to push them into a job. At the same time they dreamt that they could enjoy the adolescent life by going to picture, eating in the hotels, smoking etc. Since the three different groups viewed the 'Child Labour' in different ways there was no conspicuous effect of the Government law on them. Hence the Government itself revised its regulation, as a child below 10 years should not be allowed to do work instead of its earlier prescribed age i.e., 14. Even this did not make any telling effect on engaging of child labour. It first created a 'child labour abolition fund' and passed number of resolutions to regulate the child labour. The Government of India also realized that one quarter of its society was under 'Child labour', which after a generation would produce a generation with 'Underdeveloped faculty' i.e., unhealthy generation.

In the meantime various International Forums realized that the child labour should be abolished step by step because it rooted deeply in the society. Many conventions of ILO put forward suggestions and also created an International Fund to meet the expenditure. India, as a member country took series of steps to implement the recommendations of ILO conventions.

With the assistance of ILO the Government of India sponsored many new schemes for the regulation of child labour. It allotted funds in its five year plans to
mitigate the sufferings of the younger generation. It enunciated a National Policy and formed the Board of Child Labour to implement the schemes. The State Governments were also asked to execute its scheme through various cross root committees such as state and district level committees and NGOs.

Since Match and Fire Works Industries situated in Virudhunagar district is harboring the child labour the State and Central Governments, and ILO initiated some pilot projects in this area to eliminate the child labour. Though very seriously the Government executed number of acts on various aspects of child labour like Act 1933, 1938, 1948, etc., the child labour was not eliminated.

In the meantime press media raised its voice against the existence of child labour in Virudhunagar area. It pointed out that if the child labour continued the next generation would be consisted of only visually, mentally and orthopadically impaired and truants, juvenile, delinquent children and younger people may roam the streets. The child labour will be eliminated if the Government took concerted measures more and more for the rural reconstruction. A survey undertaken by a leading journal says that Virudhunagar area may account nearly 80% of underdeveloped faculty younger generation when compared with the other area like Trichirapally, Kanyakumari etc., where child labour is insignificant. Virudhunagar District Matches and Fire works Industries were selected in the process of identification of hazardous industries since they are very harmful to the working children. Tamil Nadu Government stepped up its efforts to mitigate the sufferings of the child labourers and their parents by implementing various schemes recommended by the Harbans Singh Committee of 1976. Intensive measures were taken to eradicate the child labour from out of the Matches and Fire Works Industries of
Virudhunagar District. Identification process through various Government departments were undertaken by making the District Collector as the Chief Officer in the district level and by involving the NGOs for rehabilitate works. It was periodically assessed and served from 1976 onwards in order to find out how far the work of rehabilitation was succeeded. The surveys showed that the exploitation of working children is continued.

In the meantime the Centre pressed for the ‘Uniform Universal Code of India’ for total abolition of children by way of bringing one act covering all the subjects related to child labour. The Tamil Nadu Government through Haribaskar Committee assessed the execution of recommendation of Harbans Singh Committee in the Match and Fire Works Industries in Virudhunagar. It stressed for compulsory education to all children below the age of 14.

These committees stressed the need for giving non-formal education to the working children but no body came forward to get education after their working hours. Further normally the younger people would get up in the early morning at 4 A.M. and reach the working spot at 8 A.M. They would return back to their residence at 8 P.M. after their work with only an hour lunch break. They are all coming from the places of distance of 25 k.m. to 15 k.m. away from the working spot by pushing through themselves in to the company bus. The poverty condition, which is considered as a prime factor for child labour, is not permitting him/her to get education. Hence the Government went for compulsory education system by providing free noon-meal and nutritious-noon-meal and free book, tooth paste, chapels and cloths etc. The then Hon’ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu Mr. M.G. Ramachandran, in a public meeting, held at Sivakasi in the year 1983, said that “he was shocked on seeing the condition of
child labour in Sivakasi Match and Fire Works Industries. So he set himself to evolve nutritious noon-meal scheme for Children”. All these schemes never prevented the children from going to hazardous factory. Of course it had minor impact on the society. Many NGOs rendered their services in support of Government Schemes. However, the result is very poor. Why this is happening? Is the child labour could not be eliminated within the target period as envisaged? In 1996 the Prime Minister of India the Hon’ble Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, in his Independence Day message said that “We failed in giving education to 100% of Indian Children due to the child labour problem. So we should take serious step to eliminate it within a targeted period of 2000”. With this message the Central Government allotted funds and appointed a new committee which viewed that total elimination was possible only through strong and wide community based poverty alleviation programme. The Government Departments were recharged with new proposals, with the motivation of producing a “Child Labour Free Society” in the prescribed period.

The Central Government fixed the year 2000 A.D. as the target year to put an end for the exploitation. In order to achieve this goal the Government evolved a new strategy to meet this precarious condition. It formed various committees including technical committees, advisory committees, rehabilitation committees, etc., to create awareness among the people about the necessity of elimination of child labour. It conducted awareness campaign not only throughout the district but also throughout India. There was a good response from the people as well as children. Hundreds and thousands of children sought education for improving their educational standard. Some got training in
the vocational occupations. But still the exploitation is going on in the Match and Fire Works Industries unabated.

Constant and continuous efforts were taken. In Virudhunagar District some areas were selected as a “Project Area” to implement vigorous rehabilitation measures for the total liberation of the children from ‘child labour’.

According to this the following rehabilitate measures were undertaken.

1. Centres for Non-formal education, and Special Schools were opened in the factories, villages etc., Each student paid a sum of Rs. 100/- per month and Rs.2.50 per day. Books and cloths were supplied freely.

2. The Government openly declared to pay Rs.200/- towards the family of the child labours if they are prepared to send their children to schools. This system gave a rosy hope to the family of child labourer who were suppressed, oppressed and depressed in their lives.

3. The liberated child labourerces were given training in vocational jobs such as mat weaving, candle making, Binding works, some grafts, carpentry, type writing, Computer training etc.,

4. Followed special reservation of posts in Government Offices as SCs/STs.

5. Preference was given in the allotment of public phone booth, agency for distribution of cooking gas cylinders etc.

6. Assistance to run small shops with Government subsidiaries and Bank loans was extended.

In the meantime recently the Women upliftment programme under the name of “Mahalir Thittam” (Women Self-employment Programme or Self-Help Group) was
introduced. Hundreds of groups were formed consisting of 11-15 women members in each group. Virudhunagar District was brought under this scheme in the beginning stage itself. In this scheme the mother or any women member of the family of liberated child labour was given preference so that they could earn sufficiently and independently and thereby their children may be prevented from going to the factory at his or her early age. This created an awareness among the women folk. When the Researcher interviewed such groups, they proudly answered that “now we are sending our children to school which gives vision to our children but not to the factory which destroys their vision”.

When the Researcher visited various commercial banks they said that many young children stopped from going to industries and their parents are maintaining Savings Bank Account in their Banks due to the advice of NGOs and Government officials. One SHG member said “previously when myself and daughter of 10 years old and a son of 12 years old went to the match Industries their total income was Rs.80/- per day. For this paltry wage our health and education of children were put at risk. But now I earn Rs.120/- per day and my children are attending special schools without any risk of our health”. “And” she continues “like my children more than one hundred children are liberated from their industrial work and attending special schools and supporting their parents by assisting them in their cottage industries”. Further she adds, “I hope that my children will continue my cottage industry without any loan because I maintain a Recurring Deposit Account in Canara Bank”. The Researcher is opinion that this statement of the poor rural women may be one of the samples of the mothers of children who are working in the matches and Fire Works Industries of Virudhunagar area.
To put an end to this problem the researcher went on spot studies industries by industries and met various sections of the society. The respondents’ answers were analysed systematically and on the basis of their reply and personal observations the Researcher put forward the following suggestions for putting an end to the child labour:

1. Awareness programmes should be conducted to sensitize representatives of Employers, Employees, NGOs, Local body Leaders, District officials and the ex. Child labourers. The effort of the central government through CLEPs is worth appreciating. The government agency is principally responsible for abolition of child labour through its social welfare department. It may be suggested to set up a separate manifesto and maintain a continuous review of the adequacy of existing legislation. In the search of alternatives, to minimize child labour exploitation it is necessary to encourage programme of social action groups like voluntary organization of legal aid camps through law students and social workers to impart justice to the child victims so that exploitation of the child labour can be considerably reduced. The attempts made through CLEP to rehabilitate the child labourers are appreciable, but strict monitoring of the NGOs who run such schools is most needed as some of the NGOs falsely manipulated to show the required number. On enquiry it was found that the children who were already in the mainstream were also enrolled as special cases. Parents, attracted by the incentive also indulged in such malpractice. The solution to this problem would be to give up the target approach and insistence by CLEP to have at least 50 child labourers on NGOs, which is practically impossible.
2. To encourage the convergence of service of various departments for elimination of child labour, a state level workshop should be conducted in every month or even in a year. Teams, should be formed, comprising of all concerned departments (All field level) functionaries should have been notified as "Inspectors" under the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act 1986. It should be inspecting all factories, unregistered units and prosecution should be launched against all contrivance of the provisions of various labour enactments. The PWD Department should strictly instruct the contractors not to employ child labour and to eliminate boy mazdoor category. In case of any violation, license will be cancelled and the contractor will be black listed for a minimum period as the Government pleased. The executive authorities that are granting license, should insist that the applicant should not engage child labour and in case of any violation, such license should be cancelled.

Each District Collector should prepare a District Action Plan to eradicate child labour in their district. Action for implementation of the plan and for identification of child labour not yet identified should also be reviewed by each Collector every month and reported it to the Commissioner of Labour.

3. The Socio-economic problems need to be addressed in amore integrated way to improve the economic status of the families to which such children belong including poor household with no means of income, socially backward communities and also the girls. The Adhi Dravida and Tribal Welfare Department’s ‘Development Schemes’ should target child labour families who are belonging to scheduled caste/scheduled Tribes.
4. Education must be made attractive both in terms of content and pedagogy. The recent attempt of the government both central and state, in introducing the practice of ‘Joy of learning’ is a welcome approach, which has attracted and retained more children. Education must be made as an important component of livelihood and it must be made compulsory and those who not attend school during the school age must be sufficiently penalized to improve the retention ratio. The Government should relax the formalities for admission of all rescued children. Special attention must be given to the girls considering more incidences of dropouts among girls. The parents should give up the idea that girls’ education is not an investment. So the parents must be motivated to understand the significance of education so that dropouts would be reduced.

5. Rural children and parents must be motivated to understand the significance and their contribution to development. The service of NGOs and women SHGs can be utilized in the rural areas in ensuring cent percent enrollment and bring down the dropout to as minimum as possible. There are already reports saying that one of the agenda of discussion of SHGs has been to ensure to send their children who are in the school going age. SHG could be utilized for convergence at ground level and they can be replied upon for total enrollment of children in schools and elimination of child labour. SHG have to ensure that there is no child labour in their Panchayat and they should monitor that every child should go to school if there is any dropout, they should counsel the parents and see that they are put back in school with the help of the authorities concerned and this should be one of
the major objectives of the SHGs. Not all the dropouts are child labourers rather a few of them have been influenced by peer group remain at home and such issues must be addressed through Grama Shabha, Mahila Mandals etc., motivating the children to go to school. The girl children should attend school while their younger siblings are taken care in Anganwadis in the school.

6. The present stipend amount for child studying in special school is Rs.100/- per month per child. This stipend Rs.100/- was fixed in the year 1989 and the cost of living during the past years has been increased much, warranting considering the increase in cost of living. A child in the match factory can earn Rs.150/- per week and therefore a child labour family will have to lose Rs.600/- per month by discontinuing the child from the factory and enrolling in special schools. On the parents demand the stipend may be increased. Hence the present stipend Rs.100/- per month of course, which should be in proportion to the day’s attendance of students in the school.

Similarly, the amount fixed for the provision of nutrition is Rs.2.50/- per day per child. This was also fixed during the year 1989, some 9 years back, considering the increase in the cost of living, the amount may be increased from Rs.2.50/- to Rs.4/- per child per day.

For purchase of educational materials, the amount provided is Rs.50/- per child per year. But the present cost of books for a III std. student comes to Rs.82/- and the cost of 6 notebooks required for a III std. student is Rs.85/- as fixed by Tamil Nadu Society. The total cost of books and notebooks comes to more than Rs.100/- per child per year.
Hence it is requested to increase the present provision Rs.50/- at least to Rs.100/- per child per year.

It also suggested to increase the payment of Instructors both the education, vocational and the school cashier-cum-Accountant employed in the special schools are being paid the consolidated pay of Rs.800/- per month as fixed in 1989. Many of the Instructors are trained in Secondary Grade. There is justification for increasing this considering increasing the salary of the Regular formal schoolteachers after the year 1989. The special school teachers as per order of the government of India are working all the days of every month whereas the highly paid regular elementary school teachers are working only for 20 days in a year. Hence the present rate of consolidated pay of Rs.800/- per month per teacher and school clerk-cum-Accountant may be increased to equal in bar with the government schoolteachers.

Child labour is a continuous one but in hazardous industries it can be eradicated. In order to control the emergence of child labour the Government implement some measures in education like “Compulsory Education”, “Joy of Learning”, “Universalization of primary education”, because education is the eye opener to get awareness. Then only the ambitions of the former Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu like Hon’ble Mr. K.Kamaraj, and Hon’ble Mr. M.G. Ramachandran who introduced Noon Meal Scheme and Free School Uniform and Nutritious, Noon-meal schemes in the primary schools respectively would be fulfilled and these schemes may reduce the dropouts from schools and “Universalisation of Primary Education” would be achieved.
Child labour cannot be eliminated unless and until the following measures will be undertaken. The problems behind the existence of system of child labour must be addressed in an integrated and co-ordinated manner:

i. The Industrialists must realize that making the children work at a cheaper wage to add to their profit is a sin.

ii. The children must also be made and be motivated to realize that their future will be dark without proper education.

The government must make the education compulsory and the parents who fail to send their children to school must be penalized. But there is a lack of political will to achieve “universalization of primary education” and also to increase the budget allocation to at least 6% which is warranted given the population of one billion and its growth rate. So only by developing a model plan all concerning agents who are responsible for the existence of child labour, the system of child labour can be eliminated.