CHAPTER I

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CENTRAL THEME:

Children are a nation’s asset and called “fragrance of a nation”. They basically need food, education and health care. In India, poverty, ignorance and ill health are still acting as serious impediments to the progress of the children. A child in Tamil Nadu is not different from a child of any other State in the country in the larger sense. The main concern should be for the social, ethical and cultural development and emotional integration of the children. With the growth and expansion of formal education, a child is mostly bogged down in academic curriculum which does not cater to the need for his all-round growth.

A special focus on the integrated growth and development of the child and many problems which are to be taken care of even before his birth is taken now-a-days. It also emphasizes the need to recognize the fact that if the human society has to be built on strong foundations, the development of the child can be ignored only at nation’s peril. Today India is facing the question of helping to make it possible for the children to grow up healthy and happy so that they become balanced and matured and adult members of the society. Hence, the requirement today is not only better standards in education, but also a systematic program for developing the children into capable and responsible citizens. But children are normally utilized for assisting their parents in their family. They are not forced to do the work to break their backbone and health hazardous work. Hence the ‘Child Work’ is not considered as nefarious and to be condemned. On the other hand when the modern industries developed children were forced to do work to
augment the family income on account of grinding poverty and the absence of any means of livelihood. They work beyond their capacity in the unhygienic place and more hours in the hazardous industries. As sociologists observe

"Labour becomes an absolute evil in the case of child when he is required to work beyond his physical capacity, when the hours of employment interfere with his education, recreation and rest, when the wages are not commensurate with the quantum of work done and when the occupation he is engaged endangers his health and safety".

This is nothing but 'Child Labour'. Hence the responsibility of Government's duty is to eliminate child labour and make the nation as a "nation free from handicapped".

The 'Child labour' has its own long history when the whole family started to live on its own income to lead a decent life. In the cottage industries as well as in the agriculture children usually assist their parents. In such a system they learned their traditional profession as apprentice.

This concept of apprentice has been changed due to Industrial Revolution since it introduced. In this system 'factory system' evolved and labours are classified as adult, adolescent, women and child labours. The traditional meaning for 'labour' has been changed as "Labour is the investment of physical strength which may be covered as wages depending upon its value". Further 'labour force' is classified as 'industrial labour' and 'agricultural labour'. Hereto, male, female and children are recruited as
labours according to the need of the factory. Female and children are exploited by giving low wages and extracting more work.

Exploitation was initiated by the economic benefit of the industrialists at the expense of health and decent life of women and children. This exploitation created a social problem i.e. 'Child Labour' which nurtured an ignorant, uneducated and unhealthy society. Due to continuous work they suffer in physical and mental abilities. Faculty development declines. Hence future is blank to those labours. The longevity of life is reduced. Philosophers like Hengal, Karl Marx, Rousseau and others condemned it as 'social stigma' and cried that appointment of children should be stopped. So they preached against the appointment of children in factories. Hence a new cadre called 'Child Labour' is introduced in the working class movement.

Welfare measures were implemented to regularize the a) working condition b) wages c) working hours etc. of the children working in the factories. But however the child labour continues and exploitation is not dispensed with altogether.

In these circumstances International Labour Organization, an offshoot of the League of Nations, has served for further social justice and world peace. India as one among the first ten founding, non-elective and permanent member of the ILO has, therefore, a special mandate and special place in this international forum. The ILO has recognized children as representing the most tender, formative and impressionable stage of human development and has enacted many conventions to prohibit child labour in different sectors and under different conditions. The conventions are of more general applicability such as these relating to the safety and health and also include specific provision relating to working children. Serious problems of exploitation of children are
also examined by the ILO in the framework of ILO Conventions No. 29 concerning forced labour.

There are a number of other international treaties relevant to child labour and protection of children from its intolerable forms. Foremost among them is the "UN Conventions on the Rights of Child" which has been adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and has been ratified by the 191 member states including India. This is the most comprehensive treaty on the rights of children when it defines as "Persons under the age of eighteen unless age of maturity is attained earlier". It seeks to protect a wide range of children's rights, including the right to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with their education or to be harmful to their health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development.

India as a member of ILO has to comply with all its recommendations for the welfare of the industrial labourers. Hence India implemented its recommendations in all its states including Tamil Nadu. In such a way the Match and Fire Works industries of Virudhunagar, one of the 29 districts of Tamil Nadu, were also brought under the purview of those rules and regulations.

During pre-independent period the British Government has passed many factory acts in order to regulate the wages, working hours and condition of the place etc., of the industrial labours. In the post-independence period also many labour welfare measures were passed. By those laws and acts the child labour was regularized but not abolished totally.
CENTRAL THEME AND SCOPE:

The breeding industries of child labours are lock industries, Beedi making, Net Weaving, Silk Weaving, Handloom Weaving, Carpet Weaving, Printing Press, Gem Cutting, Quarries and Match and Fire Works. The Researcher being a resident of Virudhunagar area, the chief district of manufacturing of matches and fire works of not only in Tamil Nadu but also in India, has happened to see the working children from morning 5 A.M. to 8 P.M. They get no other breaks to relax except 15 minutes of lunch time. So their health and mental faculty are oppressed severely. Most of the child labours are engaged in box filling, roll making, labeling and other works. They suffer from various dangerous diseases like back pain, piles, TB etc., because they are sitting at one place for more than 4 hours continuously for meager daily wage of Rs.20 to 30. Their payment is not commensurate to their hard work. It is pathetic that they even do not know that they are exploited.

Observing all these drawbacks the Researcher wanted to find out reason why the blooming buds are nipped, even in the 21st century. Hence the Researcher has chosen the topic the “Child Labour in Match and Fire works Industries of Virudhunagar District: Issues and Solutions (1920 – 2000 A.D.)” for her research.

The Matches and Fire works industries may be called as “Twin Sisters” or “allied industries” due to their nature as well as manufacture system. Further the fire works is nothing but the extension of matches. Hence these industries are inseparable. The Virudhunagar district is selected because it earned the nick name “Cradle of child
labour”. The town Sivakasi is called as “workshop of Matches and Fire Works Industries of India”.

The period for the study is limited i.e., 1920 to 2000 since the first Match Box Company was established in Sivakasi in the year 1923 which revolutionized the life of the people of that area. Since the year 2000 A.D., is the target year for the Government to eliminate the child labour out of hazardous industries like Match and Fire Works Industries, the period for the study is restricted within 2000 A.D.

Hence the researcher found that this period may be convenient to collect data and analyze and synthesize whether the Government is able to abolish the pernicious system. Sincere efforts were taken to present the research matter in a neat and systematic way to make the readers understand the theme of the work and get awareness on the necessity of abolition of child labour.

The Researcher presented also hopes that this thesis may create awareness among the people about the need of giving education to their children for their better future. Further she expects that this work may also induce the future researchers to study deeply and work for total abolition of existing child labour as well as recommend alternate work for such children and the Government burden.

**REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES:**

In narrating the predicament of children working in the Match and Fire works and explosives factories of Virudhunagar district, the researcher has drawn secondary data available in numerous reports brought out by social researchers in industries of social science research of repute and standing. The Researcher is grateful to the academic and
social researchers who have spent enormous amount of their time, energy and resources to undertake the field studies to design questionnaire to elicit information, and to document and analyze voluminous information in order to arrive at useful conclusion.

The problem of Child Labour has been studied from various angles from 1979, either at National level, State level, Regional level or Industry level. It has been taken by the Government and non-Government Organizations, to find a permanent solution to this problem. Most of the Scholars, Planners, Researchers and Technocrats have analyzed the problem of child labour from various angles as follows:

**Neera Burra** (1995) in her book *"Born to work"* has analyzed the socio-economic condition of child labourers working in the various hazardous industries like Lock industry of Alligargh, Gem polishers of Jaipure and Potters of Khurja. She lamented the pathetic conditions of the child labours in Match and fire works industries of Sivakasi also.

**Lakshmidhar Mishra** (2000) in her book *"Child Labour in India"* described Government efforts to eliminate the problem of child labour in India.

**J.C.Kulshretra** (1978) *"Child Labour in India"* tells about causes of the child labour like poverty, ignorance of parents, absence of family allowance and compulsory education besides analyzing how the inadequate legislations are also responsible for the continuation of the child labour.

**Rao** (1986) *"Child workers – A Demographic perspective"* in Social Welfare, found that most of the child labourers working in unauthorized sector are illegal.
Jain (1981) in his survey entitled "Child Labour – A need for Social Awareness" in ICCW News Bulletin, states that the girls who formed 50 percent of the child labour were mostly given low wages or no wages.

Helen R. Sekar (1992) in her thesis “Child labour in Match and Fire works Industries at Sivakasi”, discusses the working condition of the children who are working in Match and Fire works Industries of Sivakasi. Because of getting jobs in the industries at the age of ten or so the people of this area are not worried whether the new born children is a girl or boy. They think that botheration of bringing up the children is only up to ten years and after wards they would become earning member of the family, she further explains.

Y.S. Reddy’s (ed.) (1999) “Child labour in India” reveals that more than 50,000 children from the town and neighbouring villages are exploited in Fire works industry in and around Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu, where they work for more than 12 hours a day for a small sum of Rs.5 to 8 per day and describes about the pathetic condition of the families of Sivakasi area.

Smithu Kothari and M. N. Kulkarni, in their articles entitled “There’s blood on those match sticks: Child Labour in Sivakasi”, and “Match making children in Sivakssi” in Economic and Political Weekly of 1983 stated that the working girl children are more (two third) than the boys and this made the industrialists to exploit those innocent girls more as they wished. Further Smithu Kothari also critically explained the condition of the working children in Match and Fire works Industries in the article entitled ‘Exploiting the young’ in India today. Further they explained that how the
Government measures helped for the curtailment of the child labour though it failed in the elimination of the child labour totally.

UNICEF's "The State of World Children" (1999) which focuses on child labour exclusively deals with the convention on the right of the child. It deals with a positive investigation of key action taken for the eradication of child labour in hazardous industry.

The Report of "Ramanathapuram Sub-Committee" appointed by UNICEF under Area Development programme (1994) to study the child labour at Virudhunagar and Tuticorin Districts, examined the various dimension of child labour. This found that child labour is more prevalent in rural areas than the urban areas. The participation of the children in work was very high for males compared with girls. In its view, the social, economic and financial conditions are held responsible for the working of child labourer in Match and Fire Works Industries at Virudhunagar district.

A few Committees like a) Harbans Singh Committee, 1976, b) Gururbadhaswamy Committee, 1979, c) Hari Baskar Committee, 1984, etc., have undertaken studies on child labour (in both rural and urban areas) particularly in the Match and Fire works industries. These committees were appointed by the Central and State Governments. These reports explained the causes for the continuation of child labour as well as rehabilitate measures for the upliftment of the child labours.

Though some books belonging to different discipline like economics, sociology and psychology also deal the problem of child labour based on a Secondary data. But they are limited in scope since did not give a comprehensive and integrated picture of the problem. But these studies have helped in realizing the magnitude of the problems, the
sociological profile of the children and their parents, the factors that contribute to the incidence of child labour in Match factories, and possible solutions.

In narrating the predicament of children working in the Match and Fire Works and explosives factories of Virudhunagar district the researcher has drawn secondary data available in numerous reports brought out by social researchers in industries of social science research of repute and standing. The Researcher is grateful to the academic and social researchers who have spent enormous amount of their time, energy and resources to undertake these field studies to design questionnaires to elicit information, and to document and analyze voluminous information in order to arrive at useful conclusions.

**HYPOTHESIS:**

After studying books, Government and private reports and discussions with the staff of Non governmental and Government organization on child labours, and on personal observation certain hypotheses were framed. Those hypotheses are as follows:

"The main cause of the child labour is poverty of their family and their environment. It refers to the illiteracy and low educational status among the family members. The child labours are mostly satisfied with their work. Because they get pocket money they are satisfied in their desires. So their mind is fixed on work and they enjoy their life. This situation make them to have very poor interest in studies. And in this area most of the parents get loan from their owners. So to clear the loon their parents get loan to work at low wages. The child labour problem is a continuous one in Virudhunagar district".
METHODOLOGY:

In order to write the thesis on the problem of child labour of the Match and Fire Works Industries of Virudhunagar District of Tamil Nadu (India) the Researcher has collected information on:

a. Emergence of child labour in the Match and Fire Works Industries of study area
b. What was the socio-economic position of Virudhunagar district which was responsible for the availability of cheap labour
c. ILO Conventions’ recommendations
d. Evolution of Labour and Factory Acts to eradicate the child labour
e. Rehabilitation measures for the relieved child labourers and their settlements.

Hence the Researcher has followed a plan of methodology as follows:

a) Study of various research works previously written on this problem
b) Collection of materials from research articles
c) Study of ILO Reports on child labour problems
d) Study about the real impact of the child labour on the society by interviewing the working children in Match and Fire Works Industries of Virudhunagar, the children in National Child Labour Project, Special School Children by getting their answer to Researcher’s Questionnaire and analyze the answers and find the real problem of child labour in the industry, family and society
e) Interviews with the Government officers, Industrialists and others to get their experiences
f) Study the Government Records, Orders, Proceedings etc
g) Study the Collectorate, and Municipality records
h) Study the Journals, Newspapers, Reports etc
i) Study various cases and judgment on child labour

On the basis of the above study the Researcher analyzed the factors and synthesized them into the thesis form.

During the course of the meeting with some local trade union leaders and industrialists some general information about the number of children employed, the industries and the nature of works on which they are employed in the reasons for their employment in large numbers in the match industry and some of the problems of child labour have become available to her. It also becomes clear to her that it would not be necessary for the scholar to visit all or even a large number of industrial establishments because the pattern followed is approximately the same from one industry to the other. Wages are paid through the industry on a piece-rate system and the rates are uniform. Visits to only a few establishments coming under different categories such as large medium and small, registered or unregistered, etc., would give her an adequate idea of the proportion of child labour to the total labour employed, their background, their working conditions, the level of earning and related problems. Therefore, only a few factories have been visited as samples for this study. For the purpose of this study the Researcher has depended more on discussions with those concerned.

To elicit information from the unions and the industries the Researcher circulated separate questionnaires. In the case of the industries, out of 76 registered factories to whom the questionnaire was circulated, 68 have replied, the Researcher has made use of this information in this regard.
The Researcher also conferred with the officials of Virudhunagar district Collectorate and the Sub-collector, Sivakasi as well as with the official of the labour and Factories Department to elicit their views. The Researcher could thus get their response to the statements or suggestions made during the discussions at the time of factory visits.

The officials of the other Departments like Chief Educational officer and the District Educational officer of Virudhunagar, District Medical Officer, E.S.I. Corporation District Health officer, Madurai and Ramanathapuram districts, Assistant Director of Industries and Commerce, Madurai, District Harijan Welfare officer, Ramanathapuram district, Backward classes welfare officer, Ramanathapuram District, District Employment officers, Madurai and Ramanathapuram and the Inspectors of Factories were also associated with the study. She solicited their views at special meetings held with them. They explained the scope of the facilities available within their frame work and those which could be provided for the benefit of child labour. Some of them were good enough to express their view on the desirability or otherwise the need and the reasons for the employment of child labour and even offered suggestions for the future.

In an effort to collect reliable data for the purpose of this study, a survey of the villages where the ‘workers’ reside, the composition of the families of workers employed in match and fire works industries, average number of children of the families employed in such factories, the common disease with which the children are affected and the incidence of sickness reported in E.S.I. Hospitals, etc., were collected through questionnaire and used as corroborative evidences.
DIFFICULTIES FACED DURING THE STUDY:

The Researcher referred to the inadequacy of statistical information. The biggest difficulty the researcher has faced in course of her study is the inadequacy of statistical information. It is well known that the employment of children below 14 in many industry and more particularly in match and fire works industries completely prohibited both under the Factories Act and the Employment of Children Act 1938. Yet children are being employed in these industries in large numbers. Such employment is therefore, illegal. The result is that no statistics about the employment of children are being maintained and whatever statistics are available are not reliable. The researcher has come across varying figures of employment of children in the industry. They vary from 10,000 to about a lakh, similarly, it has been to ascertain correctly the wages of children employed in the match industry because in most cases the records of wages or payments did not cover all the children actually employed and actual payment.

Even the employment agencies do not have the correct information on the subject. The officers of the Labour Department who have been helping in this study have made various assessments based on such information as was available with them and also on the basis of the answers that were elicited during the course of interviews or discussions with various interested persons as well as questionnaire issued to the individual units.

In the absence of any reliable statistical data about the extent of the problem of child labour in the match and other industries in the district, the researcher thought personal visits to the factories would enable her to form an idea.
On the basis of correct information, either furnished or ascertained on the basis of actual visits, the researcher had to make her own assessments and to some extent even guesses. She has to record her impressions without any supporting data or evidence. Also she has to use qualitative expressions or adjectives where she should really be quoting facts and figures.

**SOURCE OF THE STUDY:**

In order to present the thesis the Researcher has made whole hearted attempt to study various types of sources.

1. The Researcher first referred the Government sources such as Acts, Reports, Labour department Records which helped her to know the evolution of policy of the Government on the eradication of child labour. Government acts from the First Factory Act, 1882 to the Abolition of Child Labour Act, 1986 were studied thoroughly.

2. Reports of the various committees appointed by the Government to study the problem of Child labour of India as well as Tamil Nadu. Harban Singh Committee 1976, Gurubadhaswamy Committee 1979, Hari Baskar Committee 1984, Sub-Committee report-A study of Ramanathapuram district concentrated on Match works Child Labour of Virudhunagar district and Tuticorin district 1994 etc.

3. Reports and Projects of ILO.

4. Judiciary reports and judgment on various cases are studied which provide information on the Child Labour of Virudhunagar district.

5. Ramanathapuram District Collectorate Records(1900-1985) and Virudhunagar District Collectorate records(1985-2000) were
also studied to understand the socio-economic condition of the 
people as well as the implementation of various schemes to 
mitigate the problems of Child labour.

Sivakasi(1985-2000), Aruppukottai(1985-2000), Sattur(1985-
2000) were helpful to find out the population of the blocks,
growth of the numbers of labour, Industrial workers etc.

7. Records of Match and Fire Works Industry at Virudhunagar 
district like Standard Fire Works.

8. Records of the National Child Labour Project Special Schools 
which are managed by the Government Departments as well as 
Non-Governmental organizations such as ASSEFA, VMMK, 
CONSO, MMSSS, SPEECH, SPIRIT, etc.

ii. There are some published works which deal with the socio-economic condition of 
the society of Virudhunagar district. Some deal with the general condition of Child 
labours. The following published works were helpful to the researcher as an “eye 
opener” and made her to understand the dimensions of the problem of the child labour:


3. C.B. Mamoria, “Industrial labour special security and Industrial peace in 
India”, 1984.


5. Helan R. Sekar, “Child Labour Legislation in India- A study in Restrospec and 
Prospect”, 1997


The following research articles were also referred by the researcher:


12. Tamil Nadu Match units highest incidence of child labour, Indian Express, August 2, 1983.


Theses studies have helped in understanding the magnitude of the problem, the sociological profile of the children and their parents the factors that contribute to the incidence of child labour in match factories, and possible solutions.

iii) Interviews were also done by the researcher with:

1. Mr. Prakesh Raj, The Project Director, NCLP, ILO Project, Virudhunagar District Collectorate, Virudhunagar.

2. Mr. Ramesh Kannan, Accountant-cum Clerk, NCLP, Virudhunagar District Collectorate, Virudhunagar.

3. Mr. E. Sinnamari, Assistant Director of Statistics, Virudhunagar District Collectorate, Virudhunagar.


5. Superintendent, Deputy Chief Inspector of Factories, Sivakasi.
6. The Project Director, ASSEFA, Erichanatham.
7. Mrs. Selvamani, Field Officer, ASSEFA, Erichanatham.
8. Special School Teachers and Students of ASSEFA, CONSEO, and VMMK.
9. The Project Director of MMSSS, Madurai.
10. The Project Director of CONSO, Madurai.
11. The Project Director of VMMK, Virudhunagar.
12. The Project Director of SPEECH, Srivilliputur.

Field work has done by distributing questionnaire to children who are working in the Match and Fire Works Industries like Kaleswari, Standard Fire Works etc., in order to collect the primary sources. These data were analyzed and synthesized. Finally conclusion has been arrived.

OUT LINE OF THE CHAPTERS:

After having studied with historical perspective, the Researcher has chapterised the thesis as follows:

The Introductory Chapter I gives the Central theme, the aim and Objective of the study, Selection of Topic and Scope of the study and the Plan of the Chapters. Further it also gives the review of previous literature on this subject methodology adopted to present the real facts, Outline of the Chapters etc. This reveals the Researcher real intention of writing this thesis.

The Second Chapter “Historical Retrospection of child labour in India with special reference to Tamil Nadu” focuses on the growth of child labour in India especially in Tamil Nadu in various industries.
The Third Chapter “Child labour in Match and Fire Works Industries of Virudhunagar District: Issues and Effects” tells about the growth of Match and Fire Works Industries in Virudhunagar district and the growth of child labour and their conditions and effects.

The Fourth Chapter “Legal measures to Ameliorate Child Labour in Match and Fire Works Industries” describes the early measures taken to regularize child labour. Further this also explains the increased efforts of the Government towards elimination of child labour, Committees by way of forming committees and creating awareness until the passing of the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act 1986.

The Fifth Chapter “A Leap Into Future Life: Rehabilitation of Child Labour” explains how the Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act 1986 is being implemented with Self-government and employers organizations up to 2000.

The Conclusion part of the research summarizes the findings and gives some suggestions for effective rehabilitation and sustainable development of child labours in Match and Fire Works Industries of Virudhunagar district.