Chapter- I
The concept of girl child labour

Girl children and their labour is a multi-dimensional problem that needs thorough understanding, since it involves varied issues that affect the basic fabric of the society. At the outset one has to differentiate ‘work’ of a child from ‘labour’ and define who is a ‘child’ and what constitute ‘girl child labour’.

Child labour is a sub-set of child work and it is only when child work threatens the health and development of children it becomes child labour\(^1\). But on the other hand socialisation of the child through work is cited as the basic reason for making the child work since it is said to develop skills and induct a sense of belief and experience which is important for them to enter into adult lives. But how far these claims are true has to be probed in order to find the exact reality of how many children particularly the girls’ are exploited under the above claims.

In India there are several Acts which specifically regulates and prohibits employment in various places, occupations and processes has different age levels for specific works and lacks uniformity in definition in prohibiting children under 14 years from exploitative work and labour. Beginning from the Factories Act of 1948, which prohibits children under 14 from working, there are other acts\(^2\), which has varied age ceilings from 12 to 17 years. But this study follows the definition of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986, which defines ‘child’ as who has not completed 14 years of age.
It is to be noted that according to 'The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986' except in the process of Family based work or recognised school based activities, children are not permitted to work in occupations involved in: - railways; carpet weaving; cement manufacturing; cloth printing; beedi making; mica cutting & splitting; manufacturing of matches, explosives, fireworks; soldering process in electronic industries, etc. But in reality the case is different, where it is found that child labour especially girl child labour are toiling in their homes in home based industry like beedi. Therefore it will useful to have a clear-cut definition of what is meant by girl child labour.

*What is girl child labour?*

A suitable definition that this study adopts is “any work done by a Child (14 years) which involves physical and mental strain that hamper the development of the child in a given period of time, with or without the consent of the child”.

More importantly it is to be noted that most of the studies done on child labour have mainly concentrated on the male child labour and only few studies have been done on the situation of girl child labour and some of them are looked below:

Myron Weiner's book relates the question of child labour to India compromising policies on compulsory education raises the level of the problem's analytical importance and poses the issue as pre-eminently political. Weiner has rightly observed certain reasons for the prevalence of child labour and the low level of primary education. First, is that child labour is seen as an unfortunate consequence of India's low per-capita income but is in fact sustained by government policies. Second,
the expansion of compulsory primary education is in the interest of lower class, whereas the interest of middle-class is primarily concerned with the expansion of government expenditures on higher education. Third, child labour is part of Indian government's industry strategy to promote small-scale industry to expand exports and thus is largely a pre-industrial, pre-capital component of labour force. Although Weiner had highlighted the role of hierarchical caste system and the low-literacy level of girl child labourers, he has only taken a general view of reviewing and strengthening the public policy and has not specifically suggested measures to counter the twin problem of girl child labour and primary education.

Neera Burra in her book has done extensive study on the brassware industry in Moradabad and gem polishing industry in Jaipur on how the girls are inhumanly exploited in these industries through the system of sub-contracting, where their work is under paid and the working atmosphere is pathetic.

Gulati and Olga Nieuwenhuys have both dealt with the girl’s labour in the coir industry of Kerala. The former studied mainly on the poverty that forces the girls to indulge in the coir trade and how as the education of the girls suffer. The latter deals with the overall scenario of the villages taken, which make the girls indulge into coir work due to their poor economic condition and also because of cultural and religious reasons.

Helen Sekar’s study and the Madras Institute of Development studies, study on the Match industry in Sivakasi deals with the issue of girl child labour. Helen Sekar has systematically brought out the situation in which the girls in Sivakasi are exploited through the small unorganised workshops in and around Sivakasi where
they have to toil in under hardships on a piece rate basis. The study done by Madras Institute of Development Studies, shows female gender as a whole is the main target for the ruthless exploitation by the contractors in Sivakasi and there exists job segregation, where the men are given supervisory jobs and the girls are confined to the piece rate jobs only.

Praveen Nangia, in his book\textsuperscript{10} has attempted to find out the socio-economic factors, which play a significant role in pushing children into the labour force and the repercussions of early employment, which are faced by the society in general and the children in particular. His study brings out the various factors that contribute to child's pseudo-mature nature and its consequent ill effects in and around Delhi. But he has, dealt-mildly the low educational status of girl child labourers and has not dealt elaborately to alter the present situation. He has agreed in the end that child labour is a socio-economic-demographic phenomenon, which can be reduced and eliminated by a multiplicity of actions both by government and public at social as well as individual levels.

Sumi Krishna in her book\textsuperscript{11} has dealt the issue of girl child labour in global context specifically focussing on the right of the girl children in the South Asian context. Her study focus on how primary education can be effectively implemented in these countries and the factors, which prevent it from happening. But her work would have been more wide reaching if some kind of empirical data was substantiated for her claims.

But after going through some of the above mentioned works, it can be felt that on the whole there is no significant work that focuses exclusively on the girl child
labour and primary education situation in the invisible homebased sector of the economy, which is fast growing due to the increase of the globalised markets especially like the beedi industry. This is because the studies done so far have focussed only on the linkages within the national level and did not probe into the dynamics involved in the exploitation of girls labour for the global capitalist as such which is more important in the present liberalised and globalised scenario. Therefore the following paragraphs will describe why the present study has chosen girl child labour in particular.

Why the study has chosen girl child in particular

The present study has chosen not child labour in general for its analysis but specifically girl child labour in particular because of the following reasons:

1. The situation of girls’ labour nationally as well as in the globally needs to be studied because of the internal dynamics involved.

2. Out of the child labour condition it is the girls who are most exploited due to their gender which in turn involves the social, cultural, religious matrix in addition to the general political and economic factors that dominate the perpetuation of child labour.

3. In spite of the focus internationally and nationally the plight of the girl child labour has not been uplifted to the level of the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

4. The situation of girl child labour of lately in the past has focussed on the visible forms, it has nor seriously dealt with the invisible form mostly in home-based work which are on the rise
Causes for girl child labour

*Economic factors*

(a) **Poverty:**

Poverty has been and still continues to be one of the main obstacles by not making the girls live a life of dignity and forcing them very early in their lives to lead a life of adult and toil for the family.

(b) **Unemployment:**

This is the another main factor, which has its impact directly as well as indirectly on the girls since the steady income of the parents results in having both monetary and morally to educate the girls in the family and not indulging them in work. But due to the unemployment of the elders in the family especially the men, the girls are forced into work for wages early in their childhood.

(c) **Unequal distribution of land and productive asset:**

The possession of lands in the hands of few always results in monopolising the area by them. Therefore steps have to be taken strictly by the state especially in the acquisition of lands otherwise the land owners will use the labour of the landless and their young children for their gains. This is one of the main reasons for the prevalence of child labour in the feudal setting even now.

(d) **Lop sided development in the society:**

Related with the above point is the one-sided development of the society mainly due to the lack of proper employment opportunities, which result in poor getting employed along with the children in menial and exploitative jobs. Therefore the state should strengthen the existing reformatory policies and programmes and find new
ways to streamline the differences.

(e) Absence of social insurance or age old support:

One of the main factors which makes the parents of the poor to make their female children to work and male to study more is the notion that girls’ education will only be benefiting the family in which she is going to marry and settle. Moreover education as such is viewed by the poor to be non-contributory in the immediate future and therefore is unnecessary. Therefore, we find that this serves as one of the stumbling blocks in educating the girl children and force them early into labour force.

*Demographic factors*

(a) Large family size:

Large size of the family due to the absence of proper knowledge of small family is one of the main factors which make the children work. The parents are mostly unaware that small family will help them plan more systematically and lead life in a better manner. Due to their ignorance and the false notion that more children will be contributing to the family income makes the situation worse. Therefore mass awareness is the only solution to this problem and thereby controlling the influx of child labour into the workforce.

(b) Illiteracy:

Nothing is more detrimental than illiteracy among the society. This is because illiteracy breeds ignorance and lack of confidence, which results in their exploitation in various ways. Moreover it is strongly felt recently and it is one of the main contentions of the present study is schooling can be the only solution to stop the practice of child labour, since children in school not only learn knowledge but also
develop their personality as a whole which is important for their lives.

*Social, Religious and Cultural factors*

(a) One of the main factors, which contribute to the increase in child labour in plural society like India, is the notion that poor should be working for the affluent who has the required things like land, workshops etc. Therefore the attitude of when one happens to witness the children of the poor are toiling does not make much difference in the society, which is widely divided by caste and class. This attitude has to be tackled foremost in a way that all people start viewing and respecting the rights and freedom which is there for each and every individual irrespective of the their economic and social status.

(b) In addition the religious views and customs also come as a blockade. It prevents the girl children from going out to study after a point of time particularly after they attain puberty. Therefore the mind set of the elders especially the males in the family to subjugate females through religion is one of the main reasons for increasing number of girl children confining to their homes doing monetary and non-monetary works.

Although the above factors which are pointed out as the causes for the girl child labour are important, there are other additional factors which specifically influence the perpetuation of girl child labour. They are as follows:

(a) Low status of women:

The status of women in general in the society plays an important role in determining the course of life. Therefore if the women are given low status in the particular place it is reflected in the type and kind of works, which they are allotted to
which is not equal to men. It ends up in having a clear cut gender discrimination in attitude and practice, which puts them in disadvantaged position and leaves them with little rights and liberty.

(b) Patriarchy:

Patriarchy especially in developing countries like India is seen in all walks of life more specific in rural side, where the decision making power lies with the patriarch or the male member of the family. Therefore direct steps to counter it might result in counter productive reaction in the minds of those who are used to exercising it for a long time. Gradual steps have to be made in moulding the mindset of the society making them to view girls and women as equals and not someone inferior to them.

(c) Vested capitalist interest:

The interest of the capitalists in accumulating capital for their personal gains has been a continuing phenomenon all over the world. Therefore it is nothing new in a changed globalised scenario. It has become more easy to have link for their exploitation of the weaker section especially women and girls' labour in producing the commodities which at present in demand in an increased consumerist culture. This has resulted in more trade being catered towards the demand of the global capitalist having nexus with the local capitalist. Steps have to be taken seriously to curb this otherwise the girl labour in remote village will be exploited by the capitalist sitting in far away continent. Of late the recent trend which substantiates this and which the present study is more concerned is that of a worrisome new trend in youth smoking. Massachusetts health officials recently released the United States first official study
on the teenagers smoking skinny, sweet-flavoured and highly potent cigarettes called beedies that are hand rolled in India and faddishly popular among young Americans.

(e) Inadequate state action:

Lack of political will is one of the main root causes for the failure to curb child labour and for the effective implementation of universal primary education, State has to be rigid and well planned in tackling the problem of girl child labour specifically since it involves all the above factors acts as obstacles for girls to be in school.

The above factors that were seen as perpetuating the girl child labour mainly result in the violation of the rights, which are supposed to be enjoyed by the girl child in general. The following paragraphs will try to look into the Convention on the Rights of Children in general in which the rights of the girl child form an important part.

Convention on the Rights of Children

The provisions of the Convention apply for four main areas of child rights, namely, survival, development, protection and participation.

*The Right to Survival*- the survival rights includes provision of adequate food, shelter, clean water and primary health care. These are the basic rights for the survival of the child.

*The Rights to Develop*- Development rights include access to information, education, cultural activities, and opportunities for rest, play and leisure, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
The Right to protection- The child must be assured of protection not only from the violation of the above rights, but also from all kinds of exploitation and cruelty, arbitrary separation from the family, and abuses in the justice and penal systems. Protection is also vital for especially vulnerable groups among children like abandoned children, street children, abused children, displaced children etc. Children must also be protected against use and sale of drugs, as well as from armed conflicts.

The Right to Participation- Participation rights include the right to express opinion and to have these opinions taken into account in matters affecting the child’s own life, and the right to play an active role in the community and society through freedom of association.

The present study will look into how the above said rights are violated especially in the lives of girl children, who are engaged in the household based industry, where these rights are practically non-existent since they work and spend most of their time inside their homes with limited interaction with the outside world.

Rights inside the family

Family is the main place where a child learns about his/her rights and also it shapes their minds. But if one category of children is discriminated due to their gender then the problem starts in the home itself. This can be seen in the lives of the girls who do not have certain things, which has to be equal with the siblings who are in opposite gender. They ignorantly lead their lives, without knowing this, in subjugation. This is truer in the case of the girls who are forced into home based work inside their homes. Here the State’s role is limited and it does not want to enter inside
the family. State therefore has to devise ways in influencing indirectly and voice support for the children inside their homes.

Rights outside the family

Constraints on rights of the girl outside the family also contributes to their subjugation because the mobility is dependent on the rights and the amount of the freedom they possess which makes them to venture outside their homes either for education or for work. In many cases this gets blocked due to the prevailing traditions and customs, which combined with religious and patriarchal attitude of the society, curtail their movement. The State’s role in general is vital in regulating the rights outside the family.

Situation of Girl Child Labour in India

Girl children in developing countries like India are exploited through wage, quasi-wage, and regular employment with or without pay. They are concentrated in informal and unorganised sectors where they are mostly involved in home-based production, which is, totally exempted form the purview of legislation, child labour Acts and factory laws. This is because of the spread of casualised work, which often arises from poor women’s desperate attempt to survive outside the organised sector.

In both the developed and developing parts of the world, there has been a steady increase in the size of the underground economy throughout the 1980’s. A widespread concomitant increase of homeworking, particularly in the manufacturing sector, has been its predictable outcome. While concern for child labour dates back to our constitution (Article 24) the concern for girl child labour is a recent
phenomenon. Even in the National Policy on child labour there is no separate consideration of girl child labour who has special problems.

Girl child labour as such is not illegal in India, though laws prohibit the employment of children in certain factories, which are hazardous. Children are permitted to work in agriculture, in services, and in cottage industries when conditions are worse than factories. The worst affected lots are therefore young girl labourers who have the additional responsibility to look after the household and siblings along with their tedious work outside.

According to a report published by the Department of Women and Child Development, the number of girl children in the country is nearly 200 million and in spite of the Constitution and legal priorities for protection, development and welfare of the children, the girl child in India does not enjoy an equal status with boys. This is more in Southern States like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, where child labour seems to be predominantly a matter of gender. For example, in Uttar Pradesh boys constitute the over-whelming majority of child workers in industries, classified as hazardous, whereas girls predominate among the child workers in the match and fireworks, and beedi industries in Tamil Nadu.

The girl child labour is estimated to be 0.7 million in India, but the actual number may be much higher and the figure of 1991 census shows the girl child labour is on an increase in the hazardous occupations than earlier. The majority of girl child labour, as a result, are found in hazardous work of match and fire works in Sivakasi (TN), slate and pencil work at Mandsaur (Madhya Pradesh) and Markapur (Andhra Pradesh), tobacco/beedi making works all over the country, glass bangle making in
Ferozabad, gem polishing in Jaipur and many other informal sectors like agriculture etc.

The principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child provide the world with a vision of what the 21st century could bring - children and adolescents living in stable and nurturing homes and communities where, with adult guidance and protection, they have ample opportunities to develop the fullness of their strengths and talents and where their human rights are respected. But what is happening in a developing country like India is contradictory. This is because the parents are misguiding their children into the labour force rather than putting them into school and retaining them. Along with this the trap of capitalist exploitation under which they are caught results in their children sucked into the labour force. The following paragraphs will try to give a picture of the girl child vis-à-vis primary education in India and its implications to the present study.

**Girl Child labour and Primary Education**

Education is an essential and cost effective component of any comprehensive strategy to eliminate child labour. Education is a right. Education is also an enabling right that enables children and adults to exercise many of their other rights throughout their lifetimes. It is readily available in terms of access, affordability, quality, and relevance and is a critical factor, both in preventing child labour and in providing children who have been removed from child labour, with a more appropriate environment to grow and develop. Children tend to be available and become more ready to participate in child labour when education is not available or when the
available form of education does not meet the criteria of affordability, quality, and relevance. To reach a comprehensive strategy requires close integration of economic and fiscal policies along with policies of labour, education and training.

The fact that children were not at school did contribute a reservoir of cheap labour in a market, which in any case was characterised by relatively depressed wages because of unemployment and under employment. These two failures of compulsory primary education and the persistence of child labour misuse are thus closely inter-related. So enforcing primary education emerges as a way of protecting the child, especially girls, from both recalcitrant parents and truant employers.

In the analysis of the census reports, it is found that there is high incidence of female child labour in India, which, in turn is reflected, in the poor educational status. Deprivations of education based on the prejudice/bias against girls are evident from school enrolment and drop out rates in India. In rural areas, however, the dropout rate can be high, even at the primary school level. The question remains whether children drop out of school because they have to work or whether they work because they have dropped out of school for other reasons.

The Planning Commission reported on the neglect of girls in the educational area, where the primary school enrolment data for 1986-87 reveal a gender gap of 2:1 male: female ratio in the primary school and 3:1 in the middle school. The Kothari Commission noted this blatant disparity in education.

It is to be thus noted that one of the major obstacles in the path of universalization of primary education in India is the poor enrolment rates of girl children. This is because the education of the girl child is viewed as an area of low
priority by the majority of Indian parents in the rural sector and in the economically
distressed sections of the urban sector. More so, education in the case of the girl is
considered to be expendable item because of her low social status. Their early
childhood years are burdened with domestic chores. The self-image that society
creates for is one of worthlessness, servitude and dependence. She learns to be
submissive and quiescent, first as the daughter then as a sister and later as a wife and
mother in a socially inhospitable environment. Moreover a girl is considered to be an
unnecessary expense and as someone who will never contribute in the future to the
family income. This is because the investment in education of the girl child in terms
of capital, time and effort is borne by the parents, but the returns from her education
are seen thus to be enjoyed by her husband's family.

In addition to all these factors regarding the girl's education, there are many
school-related problems by which many girls in rural areas discontinue their studies.
Obstacles to female education stem from factors like distance and shortage of female
teachers in rural areas, demand for labour for girls for household and other religious-
cultural factors like early marriage, restriction on physical mobility of girls etc. It is to
be noted that the girl children are normally forced to drop out of school due to poverty
and other economic reasons. This is due to the belief among the parents that boys are
meant for work outside their homes, while girls should be confined to be household
chores and domestic work.

One of the main argument of the present study is that, in spite of the provision
of universal primary education where the school going children should be in school
the census data's on the other hand shows a considerable sum is not going and still
remain in the work force due to certain reasons. Therefore, the present study aims to analyse this category of children of the workforce and to devise ways to put them into the school. In addition, there are children excluded from the regular registered and many children despite of being enrolled do not attend regularly and are involved in the workforce. Therefore if these children are also included in the number of children who are not getting regular education, which they are supposed to get, the total becomes high and makes the drive for universal primary education a farce.

It is therefore clear that higher female illiteracy and long entrenched social attitudes have kept the female child labourers on the increasing trend and it can be stated that in terms of educational levels of population, rural sections and female child especially those who work are the most deprived.

Therefore stress should be in providing basic primary education, which has to be quality education since the ability to claim and enjoy the rights of an informed and responsible citizen rests squarely upon a child's access to a good basic education. A quality education is one that encourages children's participation and critical thinking and is infused with the values of peace and human dignity and has the power to transform societies in a single generation. Furthermore, the fulfilment of a child's right to education offers protection from a multitude of hazards, such as a life consigned to poverty, bonded labour in agriculture or industry, domestic labour, commercial sexual exploitation or recruitment into armed conflict.
The Role of State and Girl Child Labour

State plays a vital role regarding the problem of girl child labour and for their education till primary level. But there is inadequate policy formulation and implementation in its legislation and other legal laws regarding girl child labourers. Fewer laws are applicable to the unorganised sector, so removal and regulation of girl child labour has thus become more difficult. For example, there is no specific legislation for the child working in the farm section, especially for the girl child.

The latest series of legislation is the 'Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, and this Act tries to consolidate the provision of earliest Acts with some modifications and improvements. But even this Act does not specifically regulate conditions of child labour working in agriculture. Moreover this Act exempts 'family work' or works done by a man, his wife and their children from the purview of the Act. Such circumvention of the law is also common in beedi and carpet weaving industry, hosiery and match industries, where the workforce is predominantly a girl.

In addition to this, lack of records of working children like age, birth certificates and inadequate legislation, which does not cover numerous small units where the claim is that children are working as a part of the family.

All of the above are the reasons why the evil of girl child labour still persists in our society despite strong legislative measures developed by the Government.

The Supreme Court in the wake of a public interest petition filed by lawyer
M.C. Mehta in December 1997 passed the verdict that a one-time contribution of Rs. 25,000 to a state managed fund should be made for their employees' education i.e. for the children employed in hazardous industry. In addition, employers will have to pay a fine of Rs. 20,000 for violating the 1986 Act, again to be deposited in a State scheme for child labourer's welfare and rehabilitation. In 1992, Justice Singh in Mohini Jain elevated one of the directive principles urging the State to ensure that universal primary education was elevated to be a fundamental right. It is to be studied how the State is going to deal with the two landmark judgements in the child labour issue which will have a significant impact on girl child labour situation.

In general, girls seem to fare worse than boys in primary education. Existing laws in many countries like in India go unenforced because political will and enforcement mechanisms are lacking. They are also ignored because there is little pressure or demand for their implementation. The most affected are not even aware of their rights and cannot, therefore, claim their legal entitlements. The lack of respect for existing laws demonstrates the deep-rooted social and cultural values implicated in the persistence. It is accepted that children have to provide for themselves or help support their families and there is nothing amiss about keeping girls out of school and at home to perform household chores. This attitude has to be changed.

**Conceptual Framework**

In India, girl child labour is mainly found labouring in household industries like Beedi as cheap labour to supplement their family income instead of attending school. This is an area, which has to be probed because work of girls here is usually
'invisible' or as Maria Mies calls, 'shadow work' since it is located in the domestic sphere and as a rule, household task and work defy quantification and monetary valuation. In addition, laws, policies, and programmes overlook them and officially they do not appear in census or other official statistics. Because of the lack of attention to "invisible" child labour there is little reliable data regarding its extent and even less about its impact on the lives of the children. This should be given high priority in terms of research and action, especially with regard to education.

Therefore, one has to look at the girl child labour not in isolation but having inter-linkages with politico-socio-economic perspectives. Firstly, girls have received the least attention from development planners and processes on account of both their age and gender. In that sense, they are 'twice denied' as pointed out and may a times in a worse position than even woman which is appalling if one has to bring their contribution into lime light. This is due to the gender disparities in the adult scheme of work and the invisibility in the informal or productive work force, which is reflected in the lives of girl child workers.

Secondly, planned development in the post independence period did not aim at regulating the anarchy of capital and capitalist exploitation in the unorganised industrial sector. Instead market protection and the exemption from state taxes of the so-called 'village and small industries' perpetuated the ruthless exploitation of women and especially girl children. This can be seen in the household industry like beedi work where the capitalist are taking advantage of the existing laws and legislation to shift their main labour force into family labour which does not fall under the purview of any laws or legislation.
Thirdly, the attitude of the State and capitalist is deeply reflected in terms of patriarchal structures, which shapes the subordination of women and girls. As a consequence, the society is dominated by on the one hand, the capitalist labour process in which exploitation occurs and on the other, the patriarchal sexual hierarchy, in which the girls are tuned to be mother, domestic labourer, consumers, by which they are oppressed and suppressed\textsuperscript{20}. It is to be noted that the state is one of the main agencies, which perpetuates the ideology of female-domesticity. This is because it has and occupies a unique position in reproduction of ideology due to its regulative and force of legitimacy and has implications for the relations between men and women\textsuperscript{21} and specifically in dealing with girl.

Finally, as a result of the above factors the access of the girl child into the world of basic knowledge and information, which is an important component of social and economic development, gets hampered. The net out come of this reflects in higher fertility rates, higher infant and child mortality, higher population growth, lower age at marriage, lower life expectancy and lower rate of participation. Notwithstanding these, there is a gap between the participation rates of boys and girls in primary education. This is a very important in terms of bringing social change and economic development and girls who are the main vehicle for this is deprived of education based on the prejudice/bias and is evident from the school enrolment and drop out rate as noted by Kothari Commission. Therefore steps have to be taken to bring a simultaneous advancement of girls both in social and economic aspects since one does not precede other but they are inter-linked and show progress together in society. The out come of this would be the elimination of girl child labour in many
works particularly in home based unorganised sector especially in the Indian context.

Scope of the Study

Why Tamil Nadu has been chosen for the present study

Tamil Nadu has been chosen for this study, because, in India, it has the dubious distinction of having the largest number of girl child labour (0.56 million) followed by Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka according to the Ministry of Labour. The state is notorious for employing girl children in match and fireworks industry in and around Sivakasi, hosiery industry in Tiruppur and beedi industry in Tirunelvelli, Vellore and Tiruchy. Therefore the present study is concentrating in knowing the situation of girl child labour and has selected Tamil Nadu due to the above mentioned distinction.

Why beedi industry is taken exclusively

The present study has taken the situation of girl child labour in the beedi industry particularly in the state of Tamil Nadu due to the following reasons:

Firstly, no intensive study on girl child labour has been done so far regarding this industry and the works which have been done in the beedi industry have concentrated only on the women beedi workers or the exploitative structure of the beedi industry and not the impact it has on the lives of girl children who drop out form school to do this hazardous job.

Secondly it is to be noted that beedi industry in Tamil Nadu constitutes one of the main areas where the concentration of girl child labour is highest although the
official records do not reflect and take this into account due to the unorganised and homebased nature of the job.

Thirdly, the recent increasing trend is seen in the global scenario linking the third world labour especially of women and girl children of the poor households in a remote village to the upmarket consumerist market of the developed world. Therefore products like beedi manufactured in the third world are in demand due to the low cost and easy productivity using cheap labour can also been in the case of Tamil Nadu. This can be seen in the latest incidence of the exports of beedi from India according to the 51st round of the National Sample Survey covering July 1994 to June 1995, has increased from 89,000 kg in 1994-95 to 1.1 million kg in 1997-98 and the export value has also increased from Rs. 17.9 crores in 1994-95 to Rs. 24 crores in 1997-98\(^2\). It is worth noting that there was a sudden increase in exports in 1996-97, which almost doubled from the 1995-96 levels. Of the total exports of Rs. 24 crores in 1997-98, the United Arab Emirates was the largest market, absorbing Rs. 13.8 crores, followed by the US, the second largest market importing beedies worth Rs. 2.3 crores\(^3\).

Fourthly due to the patriarchal nature of the State and domestic nature of the beedi work, large number of women and girl children in particular are engaged in beedi rolling. This works out a better proposition to the capitalist who control their lives without the outside world knowing, since unorganised family labour where these girl children are exploited does not come under any law or legislation. In addition the patriarchal values and strictures pave way for continuing their work along with other household chores without going to school.
Therefore, the present study will focus on the household beedi industry of Tamil Nadu taking the districts of Tirunelvelli and Vellore, where the concentration of beedi work is high. It is to be noted that the social and cultural constructs of gender relations, the existing power relations in society along with the disadvantages of putting out system all combines to create an exploitative situation in the beedi industry. The beedi making women and girls live and work in a male dominated industry where the manufacturer, the contractor and the consumer of the goods are all male and only the worker is female. It is to be noted that the beedi industry provides employment to over 40 lakhs people in India\(^{26}\). According to a Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) survey\(^{27}\), out of the 36 lakhs beedi workers in 1973, 28 lakh were working in their homes, 1.8 lakh inside the workshops and another 6 lakhs were engaged tendu leaf collection, used in beedi making. Moreover according to a WHO paper, "Women, Children and Tobacco", India's beedi economy provides employment for 40 million men and boys who collect the tendu leaves from the forests\(^{28}\). Another 60 million people, mostly women and children, are busy rolling the beedies at home and are subject to merciless exploitation by contractors and only about 10 percent of beedies are made in regular factories\(^{29}\). These figures illustrate the importance of the labour of children particularly females.

In addition to this even though beedi and cigar works Act comes under the list of hazardous occupation for child labour girls continue to work since family labour does not come under its purview. As a result they are prone to occupational health problems like Tuberculosis, Asthma etc., as pointed by the study\(^{30}\).

In the district of Vellore, the poor economic situation of the people along with
the local traditions and customs, have made some of the laws like the Bonded Labour
(Abolution) Act, the Beedi and Cigar Act and the Child Labour Regulation and
Prohibition Act has not been effective in the lives of girl labourers who work as a part
of a family in their homes. Similarly, the system of production of beedies employing
home-based workers via contracting and sub-contracting is prevalent in Tirunelveli,
where girls without going to school are engaged in beedi working along with their
mothers in addition to other household chores which are invisible and unaccountable.

Therefore the study will try to focus the above said problems in the context of
two districts namely Vellore and Tirunelvelli in Tamil Nadu, where the girl child
labour in beedi industry is widely prevalent and to find the causes and consequences
for the perpetuation of girl child labour.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the nature, magnitude and invisibility of girl child labourers (below 14
years) in the household industry, particularly beedi industry in Tamil Nadu.
2. To explain girls pattern of high participation but low status in work force and
economic growth in beedi industry in Tamil Nadu.
3. To bring out the gender bias/prejudice in primary education and its impediments in
bringing social change in the society.
4. To examine the role of State and other institutions in relation with girl child labour
problem and policies regarding status of girl child.
5. To analyse the psychological & health aspects of girl child labour in connection
with her work and general living standard.
Hypothesis

1. Non-remunerative or partly paid work of girl child in the framework or capitalist and patriarchal exploitation leads to the worsening of their economic position and social status in society.

2. Compulsory primary education will hasten the process of bringing social change and development in the life of girl child labourers.

3. Gender bias in family, work and education is widely prevalent in home industry of Tamil Nadu and it is mirrored in the life of girl child labour.

4. Mass awareness and community participation in the main viable solution to bring about a change in the lives of girl child labour which will pave way for the desired change in society.

5. Girl child labour problem is acute in household industries like beedi due to the poor implementation and paucity of state laws and legislations.

Methodology

Data related to educational access and retention are indicating that it is certain forms of child labour that get the least attention, both in terms of the media and major data collection activities, but which have the greatest effect on denying children their right to education. Therefore keeping this in mind the study has carefully planned to bring out the data in the beedi industry, which is invisible to the outside world due to their work that is done in their homes.

The present study is an empirical one, which involves both analytical and
descriptive methods along with intensive fieldwork. Since the main objective of the study is to cover and bring out the situation of girl child labour and primary education in the household beedi industry in Tamil Nadu the two districts namely Tirunelvelli and Vellore which have substantial amount of girl child labour involved in beedi work are taken after a careful study.

To collect the data from the field study multi-stage sampling is used. The first stage is involved in the selection of two blocks in Vellore and Tirunelvelli respectively using random sampling method. In the second stage random sampling is again done to select two taking one village among the Village Pantheist from each block. Accordingly the villages Karuvanda in Tirunelvelli district in the South of Tamil Nadu and Virudampattu village in the district of Vellore in the North of Tamil Nadu is taken for the study. After this a quick door-to-door survey was done by covering households in each village, where the girl child labour is present by collecting information whether girl children were working or going to school. Based on this house listing, families with working girl children were identified and thereafter the working children and their households were surveyed. Accordingly, it is found out that in Karuvanda village, 21 households having 22 girl children working in beedi work inside their homes and likewise 24 households in Virudampattu village having 26 girl children in beedi work is found out.

For the collection of data interview schedule is used, this is because in some cases the respondents were illiterate and therefore interview schedule was much more reliable to get correct information. For this purpose two types of schedules were designed. First schedule pertained to the information from household and the other
pertained to the information from working children. The schedule relating to the working children was divided into three parts: Part I contained questions on general particulars common to all working children consisted of complete house listing with details about the size and composition of the family, education, general living conditions, earnings and activities at work. and part II and III contained specific questions on socio-cultural and Psychological and other health aspects.

In other cases to understand the difficulties of the work and the hardships faced especially by the girl children observation technique was used to get the real picture. In addition to know the exact plight of the girls in their family certain case studies were taken. This technique is used widely in interacting with the girl children because some of them were scared and some feeling uncomfortable to answer in front of their parents for some sensitive questions. Lastly regarding gathering information from the concerned government and non-government officials’ personal interview is used.

The following, second chapter will give the broad theoretical framework, where the problem of girl child labour is dissected to locate the exact status of girls in the work force, which comes as the trickle down effect from the general situation of women. The chapter looks deeply into problem of the girl child labour, not as an isolated one but having relations with the structures that operate in the society and concentrates, why girls are working in their homes with or without pay and not going to school. For knowing the root cause of this problem this chapter finds out the reasons for women working for wages inside and outside their homes and simultaneously how they involve their daughters also into the profession. Added to
this chapter also supports the contention that the capitalists in the urge for the capital appropriation exploit and extract the surplus value of the local petty commodity producers especially the women and girl children's labour. Therefore this chapter moves on to find the linkages of how the labour of these women and especially girls are linked to the global capitalist who use both capitalism and patriarchy and have nexus with local capitalist who are exporting from the developing country. In trying to analyse the above said factors and their linkages the chapter begins by the classification of child labour, contemporary approach to girl labour, discussing the Marx's division of labour and his views on child labour and women, the inadequacies of pure Marxian approach to the present study, relevance of feminism for this study, the reasons for a combination of Marxism and Feminism and the recent development regarding this synthesis, role of patriarchy and gender division of labour and its dimension. These factors in the last have been fitted into the Indian context and towards the problem of girl child labour and primary education.

In the third chapter 'Nature and Status of girl child labour in Tamil Nadu' begins by discussing the magnitude and intensity of the girl child labour in Indian context and move on specifically focussing on Tamil Nadu. Initially the chapter looks into the girl child labour situation in rural areas where the intensity is more and move on to analyse the importance of growth of girls’ labour in industrial category, where there is slight growth in the manufacturing sector which is vital for the present study since it deals with the household beedi industry. The chapter also discusses the linkages with regard to primary education in Indian context and Tamil Nadu. Moreover the chapter gives an elaborate background of the home industry in India as
well as Tamil Nadu focussing extensively on the tobacco industry where the present study of girl child labour in beedi industry is concerned. Exploitation of various kinds through the structure of beedi industry, economic as well other forms will also form a part of the chapter. All the above is placed inside the dynamics that operate in the lives of girl child labourers.

The fourth chapter analyses the ‘Girl child labour in beedi industry in Vellore and Tirunevelli’ and its operational dynamics involving girl child labour and finding out its dimensions and intensity. The chapter looks at the background of the districts of Tirunelvelli and Vellore separately by taking into account the girl child labour situation. It discusses the role of the beedi industry in these districts and its general importance in the workforce. It then goes on to briefly analyse the girl child labour situation in the block level and looks into the selected blocks of Alankulam in Tirunelvelli and Katpadi in Vellore. Further it moves on to describe the structure of the beedi industry in the two villages selected namely Karuvanda in Alankulam Block and Virudampattu in Katpadi block. In addition the chapter brings out characteristics of the girl child labour in the village selected. More importantly the chapter gives a detailed general comparative analysis of the two villages selected dealing with age of entry, years of experience, types of beedi work, hours of work and leisure, situation of bonded labour etc. In addition a separate comparative analysis is done regarding the economic situation of the villages taken discussing the financial background of the parents in the households having girl child labour, how far the poor financial situation is a contributing factor towards perpetuating girl child labour, the extent of financial
support provided out of the earning of the girl child labour and the level of income vis-à-vis the extent of economic exploitation of the girl child labour.

The fifth chapter deals with ‘Social and Cultural factor: The Implications for Girl Child Labour’ and tries to find out in the specific composition of religious and caste in the village in relation with the girl child labour families surveyed. A careful analysis of the schooling in the respective villages is done to bring out the caste dynamics that operate in the enrolment. In addition the specific demotivating and problem in school are also highlighted to know the reason for the girls drop out of school. The educational background of the family is discussed to know about the how the family has viewed the education in their lives and how it is been reinforced in their decision of the education of their children especially the girl. An in-depth comparative analysis is made to differentiate between the educational status of girl child labour, siblings, parents, the influence of technology, self-perception and aspirations of girl child labour, role of capital accumulation, role of patriarchy, gender discrimination, etc., all under the social and cultural surroundings of the respective villages taken.

The sixth chapter will discuss ‘the Role of State and other intervention’ in the girl child labour problem and the health hazards faced by the girl child labour. The chapter will begin by analysing the recent developments done in the homebased industry in the international arena and will also look into the Indian context. This is because since the present study deals with the girl child labour problem in the homebased beedi industry this background is important to know the developments in order to find solutions to the problem. The chapter will then extensively analyse the
part played by Governmental agencies and its efforts towards the girl child labour problem and regarding the health problems faced by the girls working in beedi work, the role of Trade Unions and Non-Governmental Organisations, particularly UNICEF and ILO in this regard in Indian and Tamil Nadu context and more specifically in the villages of Karuvanda and Virudampattu in the beedi industry.

The concluding chapter will discuss the findings and offer concluding suggestions to the problem of girl child labour in general and specifically in relation to the beedi industry and with regard to the villages taken for the study in the state of Tamil Nadu.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

2 See Annexure.


Ibid.


Ibid.


Ibid.


Ibid.