Discussion
The researcher undertook this work to enlarge understanding with regard to an intriguing phenomenon namely whether the concept of morality and its emergence is a process which occurs naturally in a particular predictable pattern like for example cognitive or physical development, or is affected by certain conditions. If so, what would the change be like? Would adverse conditions like the experience of abuse affect the perspective of judging phenomenon on moral standards negatively or positively? The work of Kohlberg and Piaget present a developmental-stage paradigm of moral development, which reflects that certain characteristics are distinctive to each stage and a progressive evolution from one stage to the other stage occurs. Although moral development cannot be totally divorced from cognitive maturation, it is important to remember that Kohlberg and Piaget evolved their theory primarily in the context of children in normal life circumstances. The researcher felt curious to investigate whether a peculiar experience like abuse which laterally enters into the natural developmental path would divert or modify the process.
The present research was inspired by a sense of genuine concern and curiosity with regard to implications which practices like child abuse may have for the individual and the society. The fact that some children for no fault of theirs but due to force of circumstances are denied a normal childhood and have to work when in fact they should be playing, going to school and carving their future is a slur on the society. This slur becomes even more unforgivable if during the process they suffer abuse and adverse consequences having life-long implications are forced upon them. This is contrary to the dictates of human justice, compassion, and equity. Observation of rampant abuse of working children and the forlorn, depressed, sometimes nonchalant and precocious expression on their faces moves one immensely. Values and moral principles are distinctive key features of human existence. If abuse affects these important systems, we may say that it is a dehumanising force, which needs to be curbed at all costs.

Results reported in chapter four give an overall picture of our findings. It may be noted that children who have been subjected to abuse manifest differences on moral judgement, moral practices as well as values when compared to non-abused children. Furthermore, the difference is indicative of the fact that the abused children have inferior moral judgement, inferior moral practices and a bias towards material values over the non-material values, which are normally considered to be higher, more
distinctively human values. Under moral judgement, four components were studied and in all the four components, the abused children were markedly lower. This difference of abused and non-abused is present across both the gender groups, abused males differing from non-abused males, abused females differing from non-abused females, all differences being to the disadvantage of the abused. It may be argued that abused children belong to a particular stratum which itself is disadvantaged, so even if they had not been abused, they may still have been unable to learn higher values and moral principles because of their restrictions and limitations. This argument cannot prevail, because a comparable sample of children with the only difference being that they were non-abused was studied and it is with this sample that comparisons were made. Although drawn from the same strata, non-abused children were found to have advantage over the abused children on all dimensions studied. Thus, our basic concern is very well founded namely that experiences of abuse cast adverse influences on core personal characteristics. Intensely disturbing information in this regard is given by Teicher (2002) who opines that maltreatment at an early age can have enduring negative effects on a child’s brain development and function. Even size of brain may be affected. Antisocial behaviour may result from childhood abuse; this may be attributed to over excitation of the limbic system, the primitive
midbrain region that regulates memory and emotion. The presence of intense early stress sculpts the brain to exhibit various antisocial, though adaptive behaviours. Worse, the damage is not like a software problem, amenable to reprogramming via therapy, it is irreversible damage.

The comparison of the high and low age groups is indicative of the fact that moral development occurs in children as a progressive change. Therefore, the higher age groups showed a better score on all the components of moral judgement as compared to the lower age groups. Somewhat similar results were seen in the non-abused children sample, where we found the upper age group having better moral judgement but here the contribution for this was of the best moral answer. It is interesting to note that in neither of the two groups a difference in values was seen between the two age groups. This is reflective of the fact that values evolve even more gradually and the small age difference between the two age groups was not a significantly discriminating gap. Concerning the tendency of moral judgement scores which increase with the increase in the age, Kohlberg's assumption seems to be well founded in that individuals cover the stages of moral maturation with the progress in age. This notion was strengthened in Indian social system when Saraswathi, Sunderasen and Saxena (1980) found clear evidence of a shift
from stage 2 to stage 3 of moral judgement between the ages 10 to 15 years.

It is distressing to note that although, moral judgement of abused children does increase with age, it is much below their non-abused counterparts. This strengthens our contention that abuse mediates in the normal development of moral judgement. The findings of Buchsbaum and associates (1992) also support that abuses (sexual, physical and emotional) in the earliest stages of development are problematic for moral development. Inspired by Vygotsky’s theory and other social constructivist theories, Miltenberg and Singer (2000) suggested that certain moral problems amongst abused children are connected to moral confusion and insoluble moral dilemmas. In an earlier paragraph we have already discussed how neurobiological damage results from abuse and causes irreversible defects on many fronts including moral.

An interesting result was seen with respect to comparison of males and females of each of the two groups studied. In the abused group, males and females did not differ on moral judgement when taken as a whole but out of the four components of moral judgement only in one component, difference was seen. Males were significantly better than females on best moral answer. On the other hand, amongst the non-abused sample there was significant difference between males and females on moral
judgement. The females were significantly better on moral judgement than males. In both the samples one gender distinctiveness was commonly observed and that was in relation to moral practice. The females of both the abused and non-abused sample were superior to males in terms of moral practices. This falls in line with the child rearing patterns according to which parental focus on teaching and encouraging moral virtues amongst girls is more marked than for boys. The fact that males are better in their understanding of what should be the best moral answer but are actually poorer in moral practices is also a reflection of environmental inputs which permits the male child to get away with less emphasis on moral practices than the girls. This gender difference in morality reflects the influence of Indian culture which according to Gupta (1994) tends to emphasise relationship in the family and kin group and due to differential socialization, girls become a member of an independent web of relationships. This emphatic role-taking by Indian children especially girls may be reflected in the moral behaviour similar to the care perspective postulated by Gilligan (1982). In Kohlberg’s theory, stages 4 to 6 emphasize justice. According to Gilligan justice tends to be encouraged in males whereas morality of females emphasizes “ethic of care” and ethics of care is a practically oriented concept, thus differences in moral practice.
Nunner-Winkler (1984) has a philosophical proposition regarding this sex difference in morality which is a "consequence of an inability to recognise and stand up to one's own need. In other words, women take a softened approach because they prefer to present themselves forcefully for the issues in the society. Davar (1999) explained it at the phenomenological level and argued that women are more socially 'enmeshed', which is opposed to being self oriented and even autonomous. On a day-to-day basis, they assume the task of caregivers more than men do specially in the Indian context.

We also studied the dimension of severity of abuse. It was observed that severity of abuse did not have any impact on moral judgement or values. Psychological impact is a complex phenomenon, there is not simple relationship between intensity of pressure or quantum of adverse stimulus and amount of consequences. Thus above affected moral judgement, moral practice and values but finer gradations on the continuum of severity could not be distinguished. This appears to be a relative picture of the phenomenon. Findings which reflect the true status of a phenomenon are hardly ever sensational, or fit totally into expected blocks. However, the results obtained when we took into cognisance the three types of abuses namely sexual, physical and economic were interesting. It was found that it is physical abuse which is associated with lower moral judgement and
inferior moral practice, but since physical abuse was experienced by each and every element of the sample this is in fact the picture of the total sample. There were significant difference in subjects subjected to severe, moderate and mild physical abuse in terms of moral judgement, moral practice and values. Surprisingly no difference was observed amongst the severely sexually abused from those moderately and mildly abused. In view of a large number of findings which emphasize the importance of impact of sexual abuse our observations are important. Perhaps they reflect the fact that even a mild intensity of sexual abuse may have the same impact as severe abuse. But more comprehensive studies can give a proper answer. Furthermore, sexual abuse generally involves less or no violence and a subject of children's curiosity. On the other hand, physical abuse has a direct impact on child's physique and bruises him emotionally. These harsh experiences become genuine reason for their drift from the path of morality. The investigator feels inclined to take into consideration another important aspect. The physical abuse is so clear-cut and unambiguous carrying with it physical suffering and pain which can be tangibly experienced. Therefore, within the hedonistic perspective which is the child's primary perspective physical abuse has a clear existence. Sexual abuse is usually perpetuated by adults and the child during his early stages of development may sometimes interpret all adult behaviour as moral and correct
behaviour. At that stage it may not be perceived as a great exploitation; later on when concept of sin relating to sexual activities is driven home socially, the feeling of sin and exploitation may dawn on the child. The concept of sexual abuse is the most complex and in all probability, the full impact can be gauged with the help of studying personality factors of the child than through just a limited behaviour like moral judgement and values.

An important finding which may disturb those who feel social responsibility is that besides having their own construct of moral judgement, abused children have shown deviation in their actual moral behaviour. Kohlberg in his theory predicted a very specific relationship between moral thought and behaviour: the two should come closer together with the movement of individual towards the higher stage of moral maturity. This relationship of moral understanding and moral motivation is explained by Rest (1983) who says that once children adopt a moral logic, children are upset when this logic is violated. As a result, they gradually realise that behaving in line with the way one thinks is an important part of creating and maintaining a just social world. However, for us the crucial question is why there is disparity to a high degree in moral judgement and moral practice amongst abused children, but not so amongst non-abused, when in fact they belong to the same age group. Thus, our basic contention
that the experience of abuse adversely affects moral development is strengthened.

Blasi (1983) however adopted a middle pathway and viewed the relationship between moral thought and action as a moderate one. He argued that moral behaviour is also influenced by non-cognitive factors, including emotions of empathy and guilt and a long history of experiences that affect moral choice and decision-making. This conclusion gives us the liberty to suppose that abuse is one of the factors which are moderators in the association of moral thought and moral act. Keeping in view the socio-economic condition of abused children we may also refer to the social-learning view point which considers cultural and sub-cultural groups responsible for the content of their members' morality. Theorists like Bandura and Mcdonald (1964) experimentally demonstrated how a child's tendency to make a moral decision with or without regard to the intentionality of a misdeed could be altered. Children who experience abuse, generally work in a pre-shaped abusive environment, void of moral concepts and care. Instead, it is full of immoralities and sometimes such issues which come under the purview of abuse for a child. These experiences accompanied by physical, sexual and economic hardships produce an environment conducive for immoralities to be internalised in the child’s behaviour. As John Locke argued in his essay *Concerning Human Behaviour*, human behaviour as well as knowledge
is derived from experiences. Man's character is not predetermined but is shaped by the life he leads and by the milieu in which he lives.

Poor moral practice of abused working children is an outcome of their abusive environment. As indicated by Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and other similar theories this status of moral judgement amongst abused children may be described as due to mutation. The culture of abuse which resides within the portals of child labourers workplace, slowly but surely interferes with the expected, normal status to present a different mutated picture. The primitive moral content of *homo moralis* is altered to a great extent. To cope with an unfriendly environment the child uses strategies which he finds effective. These strategies come naturally like behavioural reflexes, either to avoid or to cope although most of the time these strategies fall in the category of immoral acts or help to develop immorality.

One of the strategies which working children commonly adopt is the strategy of physical and verbal aggression. This is generally to defend themselves from physical abuse from employers or other companions, which is a common character of workplaces. To survive, one must be fit and aggression gives a feeling of superiority and in the process behaviours like rage, verbal indecency, revenge, aggression and non-respect are learnt.
Generally, working children face employer’s wrath including physical and economic punishment. In order to avoid such situation, children prefer to tell a lie, to deceive or other such immoral strategy which becomes a personal character of his life.

Elevated preference for material values over non-material values amongst abused children is another finding of this study and is an issue of concern. McGehee (1983) in the light of history of cottage industry consider that the role of work-life combined with adverse work conditions, social environment of family and work places help to develop their materialistic values.

A young child’s material values regulate his behaviour to the extent that he either fulfil his immediate wishes such as sweets or toys or uses it to gain regard and prestige within his/her peer group. For adolescents, money contributes to imparting a sense of independence and social status. So long as the individual is a minor and lives under the parental roof, he/she does not care about his/her monetary security even if the breadwinner of the family is unemployed. As soon as he himself has to face problems related to lack of money, he starts to view the money as a source of security.

Baumeister and Exline (1999) noted in a broad socio-economic perspective that modern economic relations presuppose that people are basically profit-maximizing and this tendency is seen as acceptable. But, when a desire for money leads to illicit
behaviour it becomes obnoxious in the society. On philosophical grounds the increased material orientation lies in the area of utilitarianism which focuses on the net consequences of an action which take into account material and non-material benefits. An action or a decision is good which yields the greatest degree of benefit at the least amount of damage or harm. Suar (2000) comments about the utility of the theory that immoral acts can be justified as desirable which provide substantial benefits.

The money-oriented behaviour may be justified as balanced or appropriate approach towards the attainment of wealth. Sometimes this behaviour changes due to circumstances such as abusive hardships and may turn into an "outrageous" approach towards earning of money. An increased level of material values amongst the poor abused children seems to be the outcome of this.

Thus, though the present investigation may not have elicited sensational findings it has provided important information with regard to the disadvantages which the status of abuse gives to young children in their formative years.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:

The actual conduct of research was immensely enlightening; because while interacting with abused children and observing and listening to them, information much beyond what the
questionnaires elicited was forthcoming. The researcher began to feel that analysis of the narrative and detailed case history would have been the best method for study of this nature. It was during detailed verbal heart-openings by some children that important information came to the researcher. One of such information relates to the role of a mother as perceived by sexually abused children. In a large number of children subjected to sexual abuse it was found that the mother was either actively promiscuous, lax or permissive in the sense that she did not discourage sexual overtures which employers made to her working daughter. This type of situation was reported a sufficiently large number of times to alert the investigator who began to discretely enquire into this aspect. It was also noted by the researcher that children in such situations were usually uninhibited in their expression about sexual abuse. Since this knowledge came to the researcher after a large amount of field work had been completed it could not form a part of the reported research but it should definitely feature under suggestion for further research. It needs to be reported that the maternal role should be focussed on.

Impact of child sexual abuse has been found maximally detrimental in samples across cultures. However, results in the present research do not show any significant impact of sexual abuse. The impact of sexual abuse is likely to be manifested later
Development of moral judgement is a phenomenon which occurs with the inculcation of moral concepts in children within the perspective of cultural milieu. During his fieldwork researcher had occasion to observe the cultural setting of working children with a microscopic vision. Blurred lines of demarcation were observed, dividing their culture on the basis of occupational groups or settings of locality. For example, groups of children working in lock and hardware factory were having somewhat different moral ideas in comparison to those who were employed as helpers at butcher's shop or garages. Likewise, rag pickers were having less similarity of character with those who were employed as helpers at small roadside hotels or dhabas. Furthermore, children living in one large pocket of locality were felt to be less similar with the children living in another. Obviously this is more a difference in manifestation of moral development rather than a difference in development per se, but nevertheless this aspect needs to be further studies.

Sexual and economic abuses did not show any significant impact on the behaviours under study. However, the graphical representation of the scores on these factors of sexually and economically abused children of both the genders separately reveals interesting trends. (See appendix – VI)
Trends of scores indicate that intra group movement of scores of moral judgement, moral practice and material values go in opposite direction, possibly minimising each other's effect. Future research may consider this trend to explore this phenomenon.