Chapter 1

Introduction
INTRODUCTION

Today, the world is in transition in terms of integration of economic activities between nations on a global scale. Developing countries compete to get a higher share in the world market for products, which are in increasing demand by consumers in the developed countries. The competition seems to be based rather on minimizing cost of labour than on maximizing the skill of labour. Child Labour and bad labour conditions are increasingly related to this phenomenon.

Though the integration of economic activities in the world have always existed, today the process takes place on a larger scale and has to satisfy demand in a tighter time schedule. Developed countries still shift labour intensive parts of their production to 'cheap labour economies' and to save time, they subcontract work to their local informal sector because of its fast and flexible working methods. Developing countries, which often have huge debt problems combined with unemployment, need to access the international markets and therefore stimulate export-oriented industries to generate employment and foreign exchange with which they partly solve their balance of payment problems. The majority of developing countries like China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, to mention a few, have a competitive edge on cheap bulk consumer products like bed sheets, garments (e.g. T-shirts, shirts and nightwear), shoes, and also on carpets and some food products. But, their competitive edge is based on the availability of a large, cheap, docile and flexible workforce; mainly women and children of the poorest section of society who are employed in the informal sector where terms and conditions of employment are poor. Employers of labour intensive industries in developing countries, subcontract parts of the production to smaller units which often are unregistered, and/or deliberately divide the industrial establishment into small
units to escape the laws which regulate labour conditions. Exploitation of the workers is the consequence of this process, workers are often unregistered, temporary, unorganized and are getting less than minimum wages for long hours of work without the protection of social security. Also the web of divided subcontracted units makes it more difficult for labour inspectors or controlling bodies to check on violations of the existing (labour) laws and human rights.

The process of international integration of economic activities through liberalizing international trade has pushed more workers into the informal sector of both developing and developed countries. In the developing countries, more than in the developed countries, this has led to the economic exploitation of children in the production of goods both for the export and the domestic market. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), more children are possibly involved in the urban informal sector than in the agricultural sector because of fast growing migration into the cities and the decentralization of production units.

Child labour is a universal problem, it exists all over the world but it is concentrated in the developing countries (98%). At present the number of working children in the world ranges between 100 and 200 million according to the International Labour Organization, and the number is growing. The population in the developing countries show sustained growth rate, which only increases the magnitude of the problem of child labour. Since few years, the international media frequently and widely cover the fact that children are used as economic assets in certain manufacturing, processing and mining industries. The reports on the toil and sweat and inhuman exploitation of children working in manufacturing (export) industries like the carpet, glass and garment industry in India and garment industry in Bangladesh have shocked the international community deeply. The international community became aware of its own link with the bad working conditions and the child labour problem in export-oriented industries catering to western consumers, resulted in international
pressure of various kinds. For example, a proposal, known as Harkin’s Bill was made by U.S. to ban all imported materials made by children.

In the countries where child labour exists, it is often stated that poverty is the main reason why children are sent to work and that poverty should first be solved to eradicate child labour. But, as experts state, ‘child labour also perpetuates poverty as children become part of the destructive inter-generational cycle of repetitive impoverishment’, ‘child labour adds to unemployment of adults as they take the jobs of as many unemployed adults, reduces the need for technological innovations which is so essential to the expansion of exports-, holds wages down and, hence, increases the number of families living below the poverty line’. Two important causes of child labour as stated by many labour experts are the vested interest of employers in cheap child labourers and the inefficiency and inadequacy of existing primary education facilities. The first cause implicates that child labour serves the interest of employers; they can pay low wages, extract more work, make maximum profit and remain free of any labour unrest. Child labourers are also victims of physical, mental and sexual abuse by employers. The second cause implicates that children lose interest in education because Government schools are often poorly run and maintained, lack teaching materials and (motivated) teachers.

India is the country with the largest number of working children. There are no up-to-date and generally, accepted statistics on child labour in India, official estimates vary between 17 million and 44 million- child labourers under 14 years of age. Estimates made by respected NGOs range between 55 million and over 100 million. In the latter number all the children between 5 and 14 years who do not attend school are included. India has a total population of over 1000 million people, which shows the magnitude of the child labour problem in India.

1 Mandelievi.ch, E. Children at work. ILO Geneva, Switzerland. 1979
The majority of the child labourers in India work with their parents in the agricultural sector. Mainly girls work as full-time housemaids, often for the middle class. Children, (boys and girls), work in factories and workshops where they clean and pack food, weave carpets, sew and embroider garments, glue shoes, carry molten glass, cure leather, make matches, locks and firework, and polish gem stones, to mention a few occupations. Besides, children work in restaurants and a large number are self-employed, hawking everything from cigarettes to flowers. Girl child even sell themselves as prostitutes. Other work children are involved is scavenging and sorting garbage, crushing bricks and stones, working in road constructions and mines.

While there are conflicting data regarding the number of children who are employed in the workplace, 'it is observed that the economic exploitation of children in India is extensive and appears to have increased over recent years'. Another observation is that child labour imposes a great cost on the economy of India in terms of 'the opportunity lost to develop the country's human resources.

India's competitive position in the world market is now partly based on the fact that it can provide both domestic and foreign investors with the cheapest, most flexible and docile workforce which is mainly working in the informal sector and 'of whom the majority consists of children and women, who are self employed, casual, contract, temporary, seasonal or migrant workers'. Industries and workshops, which operate in the informal sector in India, do not come within the purview of labour legislation, labour unions are opposed by these industries and workers are hindered to organize themselves; no collective bargaining agreement exists in the unequal relationship between the employer and the (child) worker, to improve the terms and conditions of their work.

'A healthy child gives birth to a healthy nation'. Pandit J. Nehru once remarked: "But some how the fact that ultimately everything depends on the
human factor gets lost in our thinking of plans and schemes of national development in terms of factories and machinery and general schemes. It is all very important and we must have them but ultimately of course it is human being that counts and if the human being counts, well, he counts much more as a child than as a grown up.”

Pandit Nehru was very clear in his mind about the significance of child which was reflected in his policies of child welfare and more so in his emotional attachment to the children of the world. But the fact remains that the children, the potential wealth of a country, are the most neglected and ill-nourished lot in most of the developing countries of the world. While a considerable percentage of our child population fall pray to death before they reach 5 years of age, millions of those who survive do not even get minimum familial and national support to shape themselves as healthy and effective citizens of the country. On the contrary, when they need all the warmth and affection, they get exposed to the unhygienic and half starved world. Sometimes forcibly and sometimes out of compulsion to feed their living and to support their families at the cost and risk of their own life. A scientific study of the problem of child labor is necessary to understand its different facts. But prior to that it is important to define the term “Child labour”.

A generally valid definition of child labour is presently not available either in national or international context. Any such definition turn upon the precise meaning we attach to two components of the term child labour, i.e. ‘child’ in terms of its chronological age and ‘labour’ in terms of its nature, quantum and income generation capacity. Thus a child labour is differentiated from an adult labour on the basis of age. The term child labour is at times used as a synonym for employed child. In this sense, it is co-extensive with any work done by a child for gain. But it is not more commonly the term child labour suggests something which is hateful and exploitative. Rancis Blanchard,

Former Director General of International labour organization states that “a first problem is one of definition inherent in the nations of child work and labour”.

The term child labour has been defined in various ways by various thinkers and organization. Homer Folk, the Chairman of United States National child labour committee define child labor as:

“…………… any work by children that interferes with their full physical development, their opportunities for a desirable minimum of education or their needed recreation”

According to VV Giri, the late president of India, ‘child labour’ has two aspects. Firstly as an economic practice and second as a social evil. In the first context it signifies employment of children in gainful occupations with a view to adding to the labour income of the family. In the second context the term is now more generally used in assessing the nature and extent of the social evil it is necessary to take into account the character of the job, on which the children are engaged, the dangerous to which they are exposed and the opportunities of development which they have been denied’. Child labour is viewed no less a scourage affecting the destiny of the child then his malnutrition or morbidity. However, one must take a distinction between child labour and exploitation of child labour, both are a problem though of different orders.

Child labour as distinguished from work experience has mostly negative attributes. Work as direct fulfillment of child’s natural abilities and creative potentialities is always conducive to his healthy growth. But work when taken up as a means for the fulfillment of some other needs, becomes demanding in character and deleterious in its impact. The basic attributes of work are purpose, plan and freedom but when they are conspicuously absent, work

becomes labour. Child labour assumes the character of a social problem as much as it hinders, arrests and distorts the natural growth processes and prevents the child from attaining his full blown man- hood. “When the business of wage earning or of participation in self or family support conflicts with the business of growth and education, the result in child labour. The function of work in childhood is primarily developmental and not economic”⁸

The International labour organization states “Child labour includes children prematurely leading adult lives, working long hours for low wages under conditions damaging to their health and to their physical and mental development, sometimes separated from their families, frequently deprived of meaningful education and training opportunities that could open up for them a better future”⁹

In India there is hardly any statutory provision which defines the term “Child labour”. Generally age criteria are used to differentiate a child worker from an adult labourer. According to Article 24, of the Constitution of India. “No child below the age of 14 yrs shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment”.

Child labour, despite several national and international efforts for its elimination continues to be a major political, social, economic and moral challenge. Out of an estimated 210.8 million children world over, between ages 5-14 who are engaged in some form of economic activity, 186.3 million children fall within the strict definition of child labour and of these 111.3 million children could be included in the category of children working in hazardous work.¹⁰

In India, the problem of child labour has been haunting the policy makers for quite some time and legislations have been used at different points

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⁸ Encyclopedia of social sciences, vol 3 pp. 412-13
⁹ Report, Director General ILO, 1983
¹⁰ ILO Report 2002
of societal development starting with the Factories Act of 1881, to combat the problem of child labour. After independence, the Constitution through Article 24 prohibited the working of children in factories, mines and other hazardous employment and at the same time the state through DPSP, as laid down in Article 45, sought to secure compulsory education for children. Over the years, several Acts have been enacted prohibiting the employment of children in different hazardous activities and several committees have been set up to assess the child labour situation. These culminated in the formulation of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 (CLPRA) which prohibits the working of children in the listed hazardous occupations and processes. At the same time it was realized that without improvement in the causal factors, more legislation was ineffective. Therefore, during 1980’s the GOI initiated several rehabilitation programme to withdraw children from work and prevent them from entering into the labour markets.

Participation of children in work is not a phenomenon peculiar to our age. It has existed in different forms in every society throughout human history; child labour has existed from the time immemorial. Children in every society have assisted in the activities characteristic of their social group. To a lesser or greater extent: children in every type of human society have always taken part, and still do take part, in those economic activities which are necessary if the group to which they belong is to survive\(^{11}\). The children used to work in family based occupations under the supervision of adult family members considering the fact that the work should not exceed the capacity of the child, as it might have adverse effect on his personality. They used to carefully assign the work -qualitative as well as quantitative, suited to the stage of development of the child. Children, infact were given apprenticeship training in these family based occupations in the form of agriculture or family based crafts and trades to prepare them to gradually take up various adult roles. Children used to work without any fear and with full freedom in congenial

familial surroundings and were given a sympathetic and humane treatment. The work thus was not detrimental to the healthy upbringing but was instrumental in their proper personality growth and development. Children were provided with opportunities to prepare themselves through the actual work and training was given to them to take up effective responsibilities later on.

Childhood, it is said in the most beautiful period of one's life, a time of fun and frolic without any worries or tensions. However, some children are destined to work from early in life. The problem of child labour is steadily increasing and has become rampant in every society as they are exploited by greedy and ruthless employers who get cheap labour out of them. Children are physically and emotionally too tender and frail for the kind of work taken from them. Working children are employed to dangerous machines, tools, chemicals etc. this effects their health tremendously and endanger their lives. They may become handicapped for life thus shortening their life span. Poverty and poor living standard force parents to engage their child in such hazardous occupations and they succumb to an employer's greed and exploitation. It is seen that child labour often results in educational deprivation, social economic disadvantage, retarded physical growth and development.

The incidence of child labour has persisted in many developing countries and at present has taken a serious dimension. The evil of child labour is deep rooted in socio-economic stratification, restricted job opportunities, prevailing poverty situation and slum culture in urban areas too has aggravated the problem of child labour. Most of the families living below the poverty line suffer from alienation, illiteracy, malnutrition, inferiority, social evils, discrimination and pessimism. The parents from these deprived sectors compel their children to become early wage earner thus they share the burden of maintaining and taking responsibility for looking after the well-being of their families. The child is regarded as an insurance policy by their parents against any eventuality or misfortune. Although the country is facing growth and development in various sectors along with technological advancement but still
it did not adopt effective measures in curbing and abolishing the problem of child labour. We talk about social and sustainable development but in due course, we tend to neglect the development of children employed and engaged in such hazardous establishment and factories.

Children working in various occupations are not only exploited but even brutally abused and physically assaulted. It is evident that child labour makes the children physically, psychologically and mentally ill. It not only disfavours general physical vigour and energy, it may aggravate defect and ailments, long hours of work, late hours of night work, continuous sitting or use of single set of muscles and indoor confinement in dusty and unhygienic atmosphere further poses a challenge for the growing child. The working children get a sense of inferiority as a result their mental growth retards.

Child labour is as much a cause as a consequence for adult unemployment and underemployment. It at once supplements and depresses the family income. As reported, the freedom of majority of child workers is arrested, as they are not allowed to breathe in a free atmosphere. When their physical and mental growth suffers, the nation loses a vast potential of human resource. It thus represents premature expenditure than savings. Child labour was an accepted part of economic and cultural behavior in much of the developed countries till 19 century. After the industrial revolution these children were made to work in various industries and factories where they were exposed to extreme hazardous situations and were not only exploited but also abused. They became victims of personal aggrandizement, greed and lust. The injuries that child labour inflicts upon the children are atrocious and at the same time it injures the society as well. In fact, child labour often retards any form of technological advancement, that would other wise be possible.

By employing children, manufacturers are often able to retain perpetuated method of manufacturing which are unnecessary and antiquated. The typically indigenous industries like Beedi making, match production and
textile manufacturing for instance, are made possible through the cheap availability of child labour. Greed for profit alone makes it necessary for exploitation of tender fingers to curl tobacco leaves, to paste stickers on match boxes and to spin cottons in a textile mill. The same tasks can be carried by mechanical means; instead ingenuity and innovated skills are allowed to lie dormant because the labour of children is cheap and plentiful.

The concept of social welfare state enunciates that every citizen must get security and protection from the state so that he may lead an honorable and dignified life. The principle is more applicable to children for their healthy growth as potential citizens of the society. Children for this purpose must be socialized adequately so that they develop their potentialities properly. The bitter reality is that instead of going to school and training centers, the innocent boys are employed in industrial units and factories, spend considerable time toiling tirelessly. They somehow and manage to feed themselves and other members of the family at the cost and risk of there own life. Due to various issues such as vulnerability of children, the prevalence of discriminatory practices, the lack of protection, damage to education, health and development, and perhaps worst of all, the involvement of children in illegal and dangerous task has given rise to legislation and policy. These concerns have gained importance in the recent year. As a result of a great awareness of the need to recognize the right of children, including working children, the realization that they are engaged out side the house hold economy and are increasingly exposed to various form of employment and social setting can be dangerous both to their physical and moral development\textsuperscript{12}. Due to widespread poverty and less job opportunities for adults, the children that were supposed to be in school and play grounds are being sent to work places for meager income to earn the livelihood. The essence of any legislation is to protect and safe guard interest of the people from the onslaught of exploitation of any form or nature, infact laws are the expressions of collective conscience of a society. These are

enacted to regulate the affairs in a satisfactory manner. Children are the most valuable assets of any nation, and child labour in any form is injurious to their physical, mental, moral and social development. Therefore special resources are urgently required to protect them from previous kind of adverse effect from employment undertaken by them; various provisions are also made at the national and international level\(^\text{13}\). It is also widely accepted that because of the widespread poverty and array of institutional constraints facing governments, the immediate abolition of child labour will not be possible. These obstacles have led to reassessment of the traditional approach to child labour and brought about a striking evolution in public policy, which go beyond exclusive reliance on legislation and enforcement and encompasses short and long term measures in such areas as the provision of services, protection and adequacy. This shift in attitude and approach is not confined to government. Indeed, another crucial development is the increasingly important role of non-governmental organization in the comparison against child labour and in the protection of working children\(^\text{14}\).

**Child Labour in India: Retrospect and Prospect**

Child labour is not a new phenomenon. It existed in different form in its history. Asia is thought to have the largest child worker population. India alone is officially said to have 17.36 million child workers, more than anywhere else, comprising 5.9 percent of the total labour force. Some 93% of these child workers are in the rural areas\(^\text{15}\). Out of estimated 210.8 million children in the world between the age group 5-14 years who are engaged in some form of economic activities, children fall within the strict definition of child labour and of this 111.3 million children could be included in the category of hazardous work\(^\text{16}\).

\(^{13}\) Shah, Nazir Ahmad, ‘Child Labour in India’. Anmol Publication, Delhi, 1992, p. 44-50

\(^{14}\) Bequele, Assefa, Op. cit., p. 9

\(^{15}\) Bjorkman, James Warner; The changing Division of Labour in South Asia: Manohar Publications New Delhi, 1987.

\(^{16}\) Ibid, p. 60.
CAUSES OF CHILD LABOUR

The causes of child labour are numerous and varied. No single factor alone is responsible for the social problem. The various causes of child labour are all intrinsically interrelated. The various causes of child labour are as follows.

1. **Poverty:** Widespread poverty is one of the major causes of child labour in the Indian subcontinent. In a country like India where around 33% people live below poverty line, where families are large in size, a general opinion is that any addition to the family income helps to ease the burden of very tedious existence of sub human condition and more mouths to feed in a family forces a child to engage in employment in hazardous factories or are compelled to work at home based level. Their income supplements the family income, manages medical expenditure and other contingencies that demand extra money in hand.

2. **Increased profits:** The employers see Child labour as a cheaper commodity. Employers feel that since children provide the same productivity as adults and in several cases even more at a lower cost, so is recognized as a means of less expenditure and increased profits. Easy availability and accessibility to children employment has given the employers a boon to hire children at low prices thereby increasing their productivity. Child labour exists not because children are workers that are more able but because they can be hired for less money.

3. **Easily Amenable:** For a number of task employers prefer children to adults as children have less developed ego and status consciousness. Because of this they can be put to demeaning jobs without much difficulty as children are more active and quick. Employers find them more amenable to discipline and control.

4. **Lack of Education Facilities:** In adequate and poor educational facilities as well as the negligence of the enforcement of free and compulsory education for all children below the age of 14 years leads to child labour. Because of
poverty and ignorance their families are not able to afford the expenditure on education however less it may be. Lack of proper monitoring and supervision among children has been tremendously increasing thereby resulting in child labour.

5. **Illiteracy and Ignorance of Parents**: In India the lower groups are illiterate. They think only of the present and not of the future. A seminar on ‘Employment of Children’ indicated that child labour is prevalent extensively in lower socio economic group because of the lack of opportunities on their part of the role that education plays in improving life and living condition of the people. Lack of education among parents often leads to ignorance and thereby increases the illiteracy rates. It was observed during the course of survey that although in some cases parents’ inspite of being illiterate showed eagerness in education as they recognized the importance and need of education but due to economic pressure they were compelled to send their children out to work.

6. **Laxity in Enforcement of Protection Labour Legislation**: Over the years various laws have been enacted, implemented and programmed with regard to child labour. The most recent enactment was the Child Labour (Prevention and Protection) Act 1986. This Act prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 years in certain industries while specifying, their working conditions in other industries where their employment is not banned. Legislative measures and various other enforcements could deter the growth of child labour but in cannot completely abolish the evil of child labour.

7. **The Unorganised Nature of Job**: Child workers are not organized on line in trade unions and hence they cannot fight for their demands. The underlying causes of child labour cannot be contributed simply to one factor or the other but owes to a combination of factors. Professor Gangrade is of the opinion that child labour is a result of various factors such as customs, traditional attitude, lack of school or lack parental interest to send their
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children to school, urbanization and industrialization migration. Besides these, certain other factors responsible for child labour are absence of a father, unemployment, poor standard of living, deep social prejudice, disinterest in studies, negative attitude of the parents towards child welfare, irresponsibility of the male members in the family due to drug addiction, alcoholism, inadequate measure of social security and ineffective law enforcement machinery etc.

Potential Hazards of Child Labour

In unregulated sweatshops occupational hazards and risks are enormous. Children often work with poorly maintained and dangerous machinery and, in intrinsically dangerous work situations such as mining, glass making. Even on the streets children can be subjected to the constant threat of traffic accidents and street violence. Exploitative sweatshops often have an especially pernicious effect on child’s health. Excessive noise can lead to hearing loss, and hot, damp or dusty conditions leads to the transmission of communicable diseases. In manufacturing factories, children can be exposed to toxic substances such as glue in shoe production. Even being outdoors is not necessarily an escape; many children in modern agriculture are exposed to lethal chemical pesticides. Broadly there are three categories of potential hazards of child labour namely 1) Physical 2) Cognitive 3) Emotional, Social and Moral.

1. Physical hazards

There are jobs that are hazardous in nature and effect child labourers immediately. They affect the overall health condition, strength, vision and hearing ability. One study indicates that hard physical labour over a period of time stunts a child’s physical stature by up to 30% of their biological potential. Working in mines, quarries, construction sites and carrying heavy loads are

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some of the activities that put children directly at risk. Jobs in the glass and brass work industry in India, where children are exposed to high temperature while rotating the wheel furnace and the use of heavy and sharp tools, are clearly physically hazardous to them. Children, no doubts are visually impaired and their auditory functions too are damaged.\footnote{UNICEF, ‘The State of World’s Children’, 2000, Oxford University Press, Oxford.}

2. Cognitive hazards

Education helps a child to develop cognitively, emotionally and socially and needless to say, education is often gravely reduced by child labour. Cognitive development includes literacy numeracy and the acquisition of knowledge necessary for normal life. Work may take so much of a child’s time that it becomes impossible for them to attend schools and even if they do attend, they may be too tired to be attentive. Inadequate schooling and improper socialization retards the reasoning capacity of a child, thus it effects the mental development of a child.


There are jobs that may jeopardize a child’s psychological and social growth more than physical growth. The whole existence of a child as a potential adult comes to a halt with such emotional, social and moral hazards. For example a domestic job can involve relatively light work. However long hours of work and the physical, psychological and sexual abuse to which the child domestic labour are exposed to make the work hazardous. Studies show that several domestic servants in India on an average, work for 20 hrs a day with small interval. According to UNICEF survey about 90% of employers of domestic workers in India prefer children of 12 to 15 years of age. This is mostly because they can be easily dominated and obliged to work for long hours and can be paid less than, what would have to be paid to an adult.
worker. Moral hazards generally refer danger arising for children in activities in which they are used for illegal activities such as, trafficking of drugs, the sex trade and for the production of pornography. The maid servants employed in a household is often subjected to sexual advancement and exploitation.

The arrestingly evident hazards of work such as bangle making and bonded labour should not blind people to the less obvious hazards that many millions of working children may be exposed to around the world. More than glass goes into making the beautiful bangles of Firozabad, they contain the labour of children, working under condition of great stress and hazards. The factors employ 200,000 people including 50,000 children who are paid less. The government has prohibited the employment of children in such factories but they are hired nevertheless. They work alongside adults on part of furnaces where the glass bangles are baked within temperatures ranging from 1,500 to 1,800 degree centigrade. Sliding the sheets of bangles into and out of the ovens, children are exposed not only to extreme heat but also to the asbestos from which the baking sheets are made. Those children assigned to press the bangles against a whirling wheel in order to cut patterns into the glass often suffer serious cuts and gashes. No first aid treatment is available nor is care provided for the diseases of the skin, respiratory tract or the eye, which commonly result from the work. All form of labour detrimental to the minds, bodies, spirits and future of millions of children must be exposed and understood as hazardous in order to eliminate such labour by the end of the decade. Though not all work is hazardous, but much of it is, children are exposed to chemicals, pesticides and dangerous equipment in farms and factories. They endure repeated infections and long hours of work so physically arduous that their growth is stunted and their mental development stalked. Forced to become adults before they have finished being children, they bear burdens and responsibilities beyond their strengths and years.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Children are universally recognized as the most important asset of any country. The future of the society depends on how well the children are reared and trained to fulfill their adult roles. In societies where sheer survival is behest with difficulty, children suffer in respect to their development and growth. The absolute poverty of parents compels children on the one hand to work and on the other, parents have no time to look after their well being. Several studies have been conducted by different researches to know and understand the problems and conditions of child labourers engaged in various occupations. These studies are not only of academic interest but also depict the miserable condition of would be citizens of a free country. A drive through these studies would reveal the grim reality of life which a child endures round the year.

Out of an estimated 211 million children in the world over in the age group 5-14 years who are engaged in some form of economic activity, 186 million children fall within the strict definition of child labour (ILO 2002). In addition it is estimated that there are about 8.4 million children who are engaged in intolerable forms of child labour. This includes 1.2 million in trafficking, 5.7 million in forced bonded labour, 3 million in armed conflict, 1.8 million in prostitution and 6 million in illicit activities. The Asian Pacific region harbours the largest number of child workers in 5-14 years age group, 127 million constituting 19 percent of the total population of children. In 1998, the International Labour Organization estimated that 13% of children between the ages of 10 and 14 in India were working. According to the Census of 2001, there are 12.5 million working children in the age group of 5-14 years as compared to child population of 252 million in India and according to census of 1991, there are 11.28 million children under the age of fourteen years in India. Over 85% of this child labour is in the country’s rural areas, working in agricultural activities such as farming, livestock, rearing, forestry and

This labour is outside the formal sector and outside industry. Moreover nine out of ten working children work within a family setting. Working in family based occupation; these children also develop skills in certain traditional crafts thus augmenting the human capital formation of India’s developing economy. The problem of child labour has so far been addressed by research as well as action programs mostly from the labour supply side – dealing with why children make themselves available as labourers. Although poverty and the need for income is generally believed to be the most important reason for child labour, other reasons are also mentioned such as high fertility and large family size, the tradition of children following their parents footsteps and low education of parents. There is however virtually no objective studies from the demand side.

The Centre for Operation Research and Training (CORT) in collaboration with International Labour Organization, Geneva, undertook a study of over 50,000 children who were generally believed to be engaged in the hazardous glass industry. It was commonly held that children were necessary to carry the rod with molten glass on the top as they could run fast and their body size enabled them to navigate better in the cramped work sites. The focus of this study was not the child and his /her family background but the industry. An attempt was made to understand whether adults can substitute for children or whether children bring a unique and irreplaceable skill, thus according to this study children possessed no such unique or irreplaceable skill, as could make their employment indispensable in the glass bangle industry and secondly their percentage was highest in the jobs required least skill. The plight of child workers is indeed painful. A visit to any glass unit shows at a glance that at least 25% of the workers present are children. Child labour is so important for the glass industry that if factory owners did not employ children, their production would go down by 25%. The owner of a big glass bangle factory

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went to the extent of saying that the glass industry cannot function without children, they run much faster than adults and therefore production goes up.

CORT⁵ (Centre for Operational Research Training) in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation, labour market policies branch carried out two studies on child labour in carpet and glass bangle manufacturing industry in 1993. These studies examines the economic of child labour in the glass bangle,⁶⁴ carpet⁶⁵ and diamond cutting and polishing industries,⁶⁶ from a perspective that seeks to answer, whether child labour is an economic gain or a social cost. The key question addressed in these studies of the carpet, glass bangle and diamond industries were:-

- Do children have irreplaceable skills that adults do not have?
- Are they more productive?
- Do they cost less?
- Why do these industries employ children, what possible benefits do the employers of these children have?
- What would be the cost implications to the industry of eliminating child labour?

In the carpet industry, of all the various processes and stages in carpet production, child labour is concentrated in weaving. Various reasons have been given for this. One is the nimble fingers arguments where the thin fingers of children are supposedly convenient for weaving. The two measures of carpet quality used are i) knots per square inch and ii) design difficulty. The data

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collected for the two measures of quality show that there is little or no relationship between the use of child labour and carpet quality. Although there is a tendency for the use of child labour to be lower on lower quality carpets. In the glass bangle industry the process of manufacture is broken down into six separate stages and involves six sets of enterprises that restrict themselves only to one particular type of work. At the first stage the spring bangles are produced at a glass factory and involves work at the furnace and handling, colouring and shaping the molten glass into a spring form or rings. The subsequent process like straightening, linking up the edges of glass spirals, joining the edges, hardening them, cutting designs into them and colouring the bangles are done in separate stages by small enterprises.

Table 1.1: Percentage of children at different stages of production and level of skill required in glass bangle industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of production</th>
<th>% of children (a)</th>
<th>% of children (b)</th>
<th>Level of skill design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glass factory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrier</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>Less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinning</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>More</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporting</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>Less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straightening</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>Less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joining</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>Less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardening</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>Less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colouring</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>Less</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The above data clearly observes and highlights the percentage of children among workers in the glass bangle industry. First, in all the stages of production, child labour work alongside adult labourer. The percentage of
workers that are children is highest in the stages of production that requires the least skill. Within the stages of production where several different activities are performed, children do the least skilled of these activities. In short children are not necessary for the bangles industry in terms of their providing unique and irreplaceable skills. In the diamond industry, a diamond is processed in four stages i) giving shape to the diamond on the lathe (ghat) ii) cutting facets on the diamond (pahel) iii) polishing the head of the diamond (muthala) iv) polishing the base of the diamond (taila). Children are engaged generally in the last two stages – polishing the head and the base – as they are relatively easier. Thus all these three studies come to the conclusion that children do not provide irreplaceable skills (in the sense that adults are unable to do the activities that children perform). However in the glass bangle industry the daily productivity per worker is between 12 to 13 tora (12 or 13 double dozen) bangles per day for different production stages. Children are commonly asked by employers to work slower and take longer hours to achieve the same output as their adult counterpart.

Child labour is a sensitive subject in the glass bangle industry these days mainly because the local government departments have been sent circulars asking officials to check up on the size and dimension of this problem. There are approximately 50,000 children working in the glass bangle industry or even more than that. One of the studies conducted by Neera Burra,27 revealed that when asked about the nature of the work a child is engaged within the glass industry, it was revealed that children are employed in almost all the processes of bangle making and glass blowing and many of these processes are extremely hazardous. Children were seen carrying molten glass on a 7-foot iron rod (called labya) from the furnace to the adult workers and back to the furnace. Even the Department of Labour reluctantly admits that nearly 85% of the total child labour force was engaged in this activity. Children run at great speed so that the molten glass does not harden before it can be fashioned by the adult

worker. Children are also seen sitting in front of furnaces where the temperature was said to be about 700°C. In many of the factories where children were drawing molten glass from tank furnaces in which the temperature was between 1500°C - 1800°C the face of the child was not more than six to eight inches away from the opening of the furnace. Children in the glass industry are virtually playing with fire but in spite of frequent burn injuries and accidents, injured workers are rarely seen in factories.

Various studies had been conducted in the context of child labour depicting the plight and agony of children engaged in hazardous occupation. Similar story is of the children working in glass factories of Firozabad. Neera Burra\(^\text{28}\) surveyed the glass factories and presented a detailed report about the horrifying conditions of the child workers. It has been estimated that nearly 50,000 children below 14 years of age are engaged out of a total workforce of nearly two lakhs, though the official estimates are far behind this number. Children are involved in almost all kinds of processes in bangle making. Children sit infront of furnace where the temperature is said to be about 700°C and in some factories the temperature in 1500°C to 1800°C from which molten glass is taken out by children of tender age. The floor of the work place was found stein with broken glass and naked electric wires were seen everywhere. The noise in these factories is deafening and there was hardly any space to move without bumping into somebody. The children are prone to many diseases in addition to frequent accidents. They are preferred because of their cheapness and quickness.

Debasish Chatterji\(^\text{29}\) also finds the conditions and environment of glass factories pathetic and miserable. Children have to work in extremely hot temperature that endangers their health and life span. These children generally inhale silica dust, an essential raw material and carbon dust which cause asthma, bronchial spasm and a host of other respiratory disease. They work at a


\(^{29}\) Chatterji, Debasish, 'Child Labour in Glass Industry'. Surya, India, June 1986.
stretch throughout the day with a lunch break of only 15 minutes and for such hard work they get Rs 16 a day. The irony is that the owner refuses to employ workers on permanent basis. Children are erred in all various phases of bangle making and glass blowing. About 85% of them are employed in carrying molten glass on a seven foot iron rod called labya from the furnace to the adult worker and back to the furnace. Children as they are small in stature have to go close to the fire where they collect molten glass from the burning furnace. Child labour is intolerable when children are forced to work for long hours, poorly paid. It is exploitative when children’s physical and psychological health is damages through brutal and hazardous working conditions.

Another study in the area of glass bangle industries indicated that such factories employee 200,000 people including 50,000 children who are paid less than the average wage. The government has prohibited the employment of children in such factories, but they are hired nevertheless. Sliding the sheets of bangles into and out of the oven, children are exposed not only to the extreme heat but also to the asbestos, from which the baking sheets are made. Those children assigned to press the bangles against a whirling wheel in order to cut patterns into the glass often suffer serious cuts and gashes. No first aid treatment is available nor is any care provided for the diseases of the skin, respiratory tract or the eye, which commonly result from the work.

The glass bangle industry at Firozabad has no doubt attracted a lot of unfavorable attention because of the number of children employed. The National Labour Institute took up a small project from the beginning of May 1988, and decided to study the economics of the glass bangle industry in Firozabad. For this purpose discussions regarding the consequences of eliminating child labour for this particular industry were taken into consideration with the officials of the state labour department as well as with officials of the state industries department.

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In bangle glass work, children of 10-15 yrs of ages are engaged in various processes as some of which are such where the employment of young person is prohibited. Though the law prohibits engaging children in organized sector, yet there was an increase rate of child workers at home based industries.

The home based units which are highly unorganized, dispersed and scattered include a major chunk of woman and child workers who work, as a part of the family labour. With the introduction of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 which exempted family labour from the purview of law, there appears to be a decline in the incidence of child labour in the organized sector with a corresponding increase of child labour in the informal home based sector. The working children in these home based units have become invisible and are not a part of the counting process and are therefore not accounted for. Thus, one can say that the incidence of child labour has not reduced but more and more working children are now entering the hidden areas of work. The wage payment of children in such bangle units are done on a daily basis as children engaged in these units are hired on a day’s contract and their employment is through a kind of contractor called ‘work in charge’. Surprisingly there are no minimum wages fixed for glass bangle workers. Minimum wages were first introduced in 1974 for glass bangle and blow glass workers. In 1981, a revision of wages took place by a government order in 1982, a high powered tripartite committee and another government order was issued for revision of wages only for the bangle industry. The tripartite Committee of labour leaders, union members, employers and government officials fixed the minimum wages and a government order (J.O No.4560 (ST) 0/36 – 1 – 637/51/81 Lucknow dated (November 12, 1982) was passed. However after the 1981 government order, the glass industrial syndicate filed a writ petition in the Allahabad High court against minimum wages for bangle workers. It is said that the High Court slapped a contempt of court order on the Uttar Pradesh Labour Secretary for insisting upon minimum wages for glass bangle workers. The state government withdrew the
government order of 1982 by government order no. 4195-36-3-55 dated 25.11.1983. Since then no minimum rates of wages have been fixed by the state government and the wages which were being paid according to the government order dated 12-11.82 continues and no increase invariable dearness allowance is given due to rise in price index. Later due to the labour agitation in April, 1985, the minimum wages were increased for different categories by a settlement before the Deputy Labour Commissioner, Agra.

However the present system of wage payment at Firozabad is different as there exists a differential wage structure for different work. The skilled workers are paid best in the industry at the rate of Rs. 250-400 per shift. The unskilled workers in the factory perform the majority of the task here with wages ranging from Rs. 60-125 per shift. These workers according to their nature of their jobs are locally referred to as gundiwallas, bubblewalas, bhattiwalla, gulliwalla, muthaiya, giniya etc. Except in the factories the payment of labour is done on a piece rate system. Women and children are generally employed only at the household level of bangle production. They are engaged mainly for sadhai, judai, katai, chaklai and hill chadana. The wages on these jobs are on piece rate basis and the amount of work is done is measured in terms of the tora, (12 bangles) and for every tora, payment of Rs. 1.65 was being made for sadai, Rs 2.75 for judai and Rs. 1.40 for chaklai (interwining the bangles to prevent them from breaking. The children work both at the factory level as well as at the household level. The proportion of child labour in the latter is much higher than the former. Children perform a variety of jobs at the household level. Children are employed in large numbers in back breaking process, which in include jhalai, judai and hill chadhana, and in pakai bhatti, thus they are paid accordingly. It needs to be mentioned here although the work in the factories is officially divided into three eight hour shifts and the factory owners claim to run three shifts, yet in reality there are only two twelve hour shifts, thus the workers whose wages are fixed in term of the eight hour shift are made to work for 12 hours with the wages of eight
hours. The workers in the factories are hired from any of several labour mandis in the city where the workers gather in search of employment twice a day before the shift begin. The workers are also hired though the ‘jaggaiya’ who work as labour agents in the factories. The places where such labour mandis are found in Firozabad are Hazipura, Kotla Mohalla, Bhaunagra and Meera Ka Chauraha also (for the night shift). Thus because of the inadequate income and to supplement their family income, the children are engaged on such employment along with their family.

In this glass bangle industry, children are engaged in all sorts of hazardous jobs involving handling of red hot glass, blowing and cutting the unwanted portion of the goods manufactured in these factories. Several children at a tender age work under inhuman condition with bandages and burn injuries. They suffer from heat, stress and run the risk of sustaining cuts and burns. Children are employed in large numbers in back breaking processes some of which like ‘jhalai’ (bringing the cut ends level with each other), ‘katai’ (creating grooves) and ‘pakai’ (baking) are highly hazardous. As the worker holds the bangles close to the whirling wheels on which ‘katai’ is done the glass dust, the heat of the whirling wheel and sometimes the whirling wheel itself touches the fingers of the worker injuring him. The ‘judai’ (joining the ends to form a ring) is done on acetylene flames in dingy huts. The worker inhales both the glass fumes, acetylene furnace, dust and other pollutants. The pakai is done on a three tiered ovens, on steaming asbestos sheets pulled out of the furnace, a child speedily arranges bangles for pakai. The study team appointed by the state government in April 1986 has observed in its report that although the operation of ‘jhalai’ is not hazardous but the operation of baking bangles where child labour is employed for placing bangles on thin sheets covered with silica paste is insidiously hazard in nature. The study team has therefore suggested that ‘pakai’ bhattis could be bought under the purview of provisions of section 85 of the Factories Act.

Child labour in the glass bangle industry is being justified in the name of poverty. A little known fact is that child labour exists in an area where there is rampant adult unemployment and under employment. The labour department which rarely investigates the incident of child labour in glass factories did however conduct an investigation in April 1986. The committee was headed by the Deputy Labour Commissioner, Agra and the Assistant Director of Factories (Medical). The committee during the course of its inspection found that children as young as 10 years of age were working but the processes in which they were engaged did not call for excessive strength or activity, but they were engaged in such activities which were extremely hazardous and life threatening. The labour committee report on April 1986 admits that while children under the age of 14 years are prohibited from working under the Factories Act, yet they found all the glass blowing and glass bangle making factories employing children.

Children do all manner of jobs in glass factories. Children are undoubtedly the most common victims of many industrial accidents because their bodies cannot take the trauma of such accidents easily. There had been various estimates of employment of child labour in the glass industry. Mishra and Pande (1996)\(^3\) assumed the ratio of child labourers in the labour force is 40 percent, 105,000 children are working in the factories and at the household level. Neera Burra (1986)\(^4\) estimated 200,000 total workers with 150,000 adults and 50,000 children. Debasish (1986)\(^5\) talked of 150,000 total workers 40,000 child labour whereas, Prakash (1986)\(^6\) put the figure of total workers at 75,000. The official figure reported by the Labour Department estimates that there are 65,000-75,000 workers and that children constitutes only 13 percent of the labour force. Others put child labour at 25,000 (Krishna 1996 and

Weiner 1991). Anker et al. (1998) refer to another department of labour figure 14,000 children in a labour force of around 50,000. Thus on the basis of careful analysis they put the figure at 60,000 workers of which 9400 to 11,000 were children, constituting 16 to 19 percent of the workforce. Thus Firozabad emerges as having the highest incidence of child labour (21.56%).

Children in the glass industry, like child workers everywhere, work due to poverty. The situation is so severe that scores of parents have left their children here, often taking a loan against them. Poverty has been created and perpetuated in Firozabad. The extreme exploitation of adult workers and their unhealthy conditions of work shorten their life span. These circumstances accompanied by a complete lack of welfare facilities for a worker, force parents to send young children to work. Since the workers cannot get employment in the factories for more than two or three days in a week or for more than four or five months in a year and there is a lack of alternative employment opportunities. The consequence is poverty, children are therefore compelled to work thus under circumstances of mental poverty when people do not have money to feed their children, the question of sending them to school does not arise, even if there are schools in the vicinity. It goes without saying that children working in the glass industry are usually illiterate. The problem of child labour in India has been persistence and its root causes may be seen as a result of traditional attitudes, urbanization, industrialization migration, and lack of schools or the reluctance of parents to send their children to schools.

The over all status of Firozabad in terms of education, health legislation or law enforcements had always been grim as the incidence of child labour is high which aggrevates to the other social problems like poverty, economic instability, high rate of illiteracy etc. Since the law in itself has the defect in its implementation, thereby giving the opportunity to the employers to continue their bangle production in an informal way.

Apart from the studies of bangle industry several studies had been conducted on child labourers engaged in other jobs as well. These studies depict the pathetic situation and appalling conditions in which these children work through out 10-20 hours a day. These children are exposed to variety of disease such as lung ailments, cough, etc, caused by continuous inhaling of wool fluffs, they also suffer from weak eyesight and pain in back and legs. In the area of carpet weaving in India various studies had been conducted by eminent scholars and researchers. Nazir Ahmed Shah, studied child workers in the unorganized sector in Kashmir Valley depicting the magnitude and plight of the children. Studies conducted among the sari and carpet weaving centres in Gauriganj area of Varanasi district by Ramesh Menon revealed that child labour usually hale from very poor families and are mostly in the age bracket of 6-16 years, the same goes for the carpet industry of Rajasthan and Allahabad thus depicting the same situations under which the child has to work for continuous hours and at a tender age threatening their life to various health hazards and a dark future. Juyal (1993) in his study for the International Labour Organization has produced a figure of 30,000 child labourers in the Badohi/Mirzapur areas. Today the carpet industry has tripled to $300 million with a corresponding increase in children employed in the industry of more than 300,000. The carpet belt in India is confined to four or five areas. In these areas 300,000 children are working while 400,000 adults are jobless.

Some of the unofficial sources estimates the child labour force in Sivakasi and the surrounding area at nearly 125,000 perhaps the largest single concentration of child labour in the world. The vast majority of child labourers in the match industry are girls. They are forced to work in order to earn their livelihood and to save for their dowry (Sekar 1992). Boys are also employed in the match industry but most of them work in the fireworks and printing

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41 Juyal, B.N. (1993). ‘Child Labour in the Carpet Industry in Mirzapur – Badohi, New Delhi, ILO.
industries as helpers, carriers etc. Simitu Kothari\textsuperscript{43} studied the match producing factories of Sivakasi and presented the profile of child workers. The study estimates the total work force to be 1 lakh out of which 45,000 are children. These children either work in their own village or are brought by organized transport to the small factories situated in and around Sivakasi. These children start their day between 3-5am and are back from their work place between 6-9p.m. Children are recruited through agents who pay advances to the parent. It is further revealed that children are between the age group of 3½ years to 15 years, girls out number boys by 3 to 1. The working conditions are detrimental to the physical and mental health. Children used to work in cramped situations with hazardous chemicals and inadequate ventilation. Mostly children were found illiterate and are prone to frequent accidents in addition to other diseases but no medical facility is available.

Lock industry of Aligarh is well known for its lock but at the same time it is worth notifying that it is also very famous with regard to the employment of tender aged children. Neera Burra\textsuperscript{44} studied the lock industry of Aligarh and estimated that nearly 7,000 to 10,000 children below the age of 14 years work in this industry for more than twelve hours inhaling vast quantity of metal dust and emory powder and earn only Rs. 5-10 per day. These children generally work on hand presses, electroplating, polishing pieces on buffing machines, in spray painting units and in the assembling and packing of locks. All these processes are dangerous and hazardous. Children often met with accidents and loose their hands and fingers in hand presses. Inhalation of chemical fumes and buffing and polishing also affects badly the health of these child workers. The lock industry is generally based on cottage centers situated in homes where there is no check on working conditions, hours of work or wages, children generally work till late night. The wages are not uniform and the payment is made on piece rate basis. Generally children earn Rs. 5-10 in electroplating, Rs.


15 a day in polishing for 12-15 hours day. According to the workers a child earns on an average Rs. 50 a month after an initial period of apprenticeship. After a few years they start earning Rs 125-150 per month for a nine hour work day. There were no medical facilities provided to these children.

Pragya Mehta\textsuperscript{45} studied the Beedi industries of Vellore in Tamil Nadu and presented an informative report on the exploitation of child workers, their working condition, socio-economic background and health hazards. The study reveals that poverty is the main reason which forces the parents to send their children to work. Children between the age group of 5-14 years are engaged in beedi making in and around Vellore. The work is done both in houses as well as factories and the daily hours of work are 10-12. Mostly children are bonded labourers because their parents had taken loan from the employers. These bonded labours are at the disposal of the money lenders or employers who make them work too long. They are even between up and ill treated. It was also observed that the children as well as their parents are illiterate, the seth or money lender cheats them by keeping no record of the money paid back. If the parents want to take their child off, the employers demand full money even after 2 or 3 years. The study further reveals that children working there often get habitual of beedi smoking and develop the disease like tuberculosis.

Asha C. Rajan S and Usha Ram\textsuperscript{46} studied some skill reeling centers and the focus of the study was the child workers. An attempt was made to study their working and employment conditions. The researchers found that there are around 311 registered silk reeling factories and each of these have on an average 16 basins employing around 25 labours almost entirely children in the age group of 8-14 years. No specified working hours are stipulated and children are made to work for about 10 hours a day. They also work overtime and are paid Rs.2-3 per 2 hours. The working conditions are miserable and


unhygienic. The entire area was polluted with allergens and the ground was damp as a result they get various disease like allergic dermatitis, fungal dermatitis, bronchial asthma and allergic bronchitis. The girl workers were most prone to diseases because of their poor nutritional status and in due course of time these girls become victims of tuberculosis. The children are made to work in poorly lit dingy and ill-ventilator rooms. No medical facilities are available in these units.

S.H. Venkatraman\(^47\) studied some units of hosiery in Tiruppur in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu. It is estimated that nearly 10,000 children are working in hosiery factory of Tiruppur. The study reveals that poverty is the main cause behind child labour. Children below the age of 14 years are working 9-10 hours per day and are paid meager wages of Rs.3-4 per day. Initially when the child starts work he is treated as learner for six months for which he is paid nothing. Most of the children are found to be school drop outs and had attained education upto 5\(^{th}\) level. Children are prone to diseases due to inhalation of cotton dust floating in the air. They get diseases like respiratory problems and tuberculosis. About 50% of the child workers suffer from these diseases in the units under study.

Nirmal Mitra\(^48\) describes the conditions of children workers engaged in slate industry. The study reveals that all the workers suffer with silicosis due to the fact that they work in dangerous atmosphere for their livelihood. The exploitation in slate factories is of high degree. The workers generally get inhuman treatment. No facility is provided to them and even for their wages they have to beg the munshis.

The researcher visited the village of Multanpur, of Piplia Mandi, Bahi Parusnath of two tehsils Mandsaur and Malhal of district Mandsaur. According

\(^47\) Venkatraman, S.H. 'Vested Interests' India Today, July 15, 1983.
\(^48\) Mitra, Nirmal 'The Slave Children of Mandsaur' Sunday, 14\(^{th}\) 1980.
to him the factories are “the torture chambers of various dimensions many of them poorly ventilated filled with silicon dust”.

Minu Jain and Bhavdeep Kang\(^4^9\) described the working conditions prevailing in the steel units of North Delhi industrial area. It is found that 15-20 people are employed in every unit out of which 3-4 are children. The work of these children is to wash the steel plates in acid. Children below 14 years of age are engaged in this work day and night. They work 8-12 hours a day and are paid Rs.300-350 per month. The acid fumes are unbearable and continued inhaling creates many problems for the workers, especially children, causing bronchitis and spasmodic cough. Burns are the obvious results of handling the chemicals and frequent handling of corrosive acid without adequate protection is very dangerous to life. In case any accident takes place, the worker injured does not get any compensation. Neither any medical facilities are available. The other various studies conducted in the context of child labour were like in Moradabad, in the brassware home based industries or in Bulandshaher district.

India claims to be the largest democratic and independent country in the world, yet 555 million children is employed in this country. Delhi has the largest number of child workers. Today the ratio of child workers in Delhi has gone to tremendous heights like around 45,000 child workers engaged in varied jobs like workshop, tea stalls, dhabas, domestic servants coming from eastern and north eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. According to one of the estimates there are nearly 4 lakh child workers in India comprising about 18 percent of the child population of the National Capital Territory of Delhi. Out of them about 30,000 work in the 5000 registered and 25,000 unregistered tea shops and dhabas; about 20,000 work in scooter and car repair shops and approximately 30,000 children are working as shop assistants and about 40,000

\(^{4^9}\) Jain, Minu and Kang, Bhavdeep, ‘Slave Labour in Capitalist Steel Units’ The Study Observer January 14\(^{th}\) 1988
work as labourers (agriculture, construction and coolies) and nearly 1,00,000 work as domestic servants (full time/part time).\textsuperscript{50}

A study of the working children in Bombay (Singh M. 1990)\textsuperscript{51} found that 20.6% of interviewed employers were employing children because they were quick and efficient, 12.6% preferred them because they were more amenable to discipline, some found them better suited for some types of jobs, 30.5% said that their plight had greater sentimental appeal, 9.3% were in favour of them as they were cheap and 1.9% favored because of their honesty. The basic reasons why parents are forced to put their children in such big factories and industries is due to extreme economic instability or poverty and illiteracy. The families are left with no other options as they feel that it is better to engage the child in some work instead of simply wasting time and their ability to earn money.

However in the stone quarries of the southern state of Tamil Nadu,\textsuperscript{52} children break stones into small pieces and carry explosives. In stone quarrying of Faridabad adjacent to Delhi, they work for seven days a week without any holiday or any off day, assisting their parents, only few are fortunate enough to attend schools that too only of it is within their territory. Children are also engaged in brick kiln operations and in the construction industry. The fireworks industry employs about 50,000 primarily girls, some as young as 10 or 11 years old. Children are also engaged in sports goods such as stitching and assembling soccer balls, volleyballs, and boxing and cricket gloves, in their homes or in small stitching centers. Small hotels restaurants and tea shops employ children to work in kitchens, clean dishes and utensils, serve customers and perform menial tasks. Children work six days a week usually for about 12 hours a day. Even if employed for domestic works, they hardly get any respite, it has also been reported that children often complain of sexual abuse or molestation,

\textsuperscript{50} Panicker, Rita and Mangia, Praveen, 'Working and Street Children of Delhi, National Labour Institute, Child Labour Cell, 1992 Noida.
\textsuperscript{52} Sreenivasan, M.A. 'Labour in India', Vikas Publication House. New Delhi, 1980.
beating or are forced to carry out heavy tasks which are beyond their capacity and strength. In the same way children employed in circuses are also compelled to perform for three to four hours a day risking their lives in often dangerous activities. Thus child labour in any form be it industry, factories, tea stalls or at domestic level, they suffer the same kind of exploitation, health hazards and deprivation of their basic physical and mental upbringing. They have been the most vulnerable groups primarily in every stage of their growth and development.

The various studies conducted regarding child labour in the various industries, formal or informal sectors, home based etc. confirmed the fact that child labour originates due to the prevalence of acute poverty in the society. It is quite natural that in a society where the distribution of income and wealth is highly skewed, the people from the lowest stratum of the society are bound to send their children to work in order to supplement their meager family income. The families of the child workers are also very backward educationally. It was found that the highest attainment of any family member was that he was just literate. This environment of ignorance and lack of education must have narrowed the outlook of the parents and they might have not realized the importance of education for their children. So the non realization on the part of the parents of the important role of education and their preference for work over education might have contributed to this social evil.

Though the working conditions differed from occupation to occupation, it has been found that the situations in which the child was engaged to work were bad and pathetic, the working hours were very long, with no holidays or hardly any leisure time was provided, the working hours were longest (13.5 hours per day for domestic servants, hotel and restaurant workers). The wages and earning of the child workers were also found to be very low. Generally the workers of higher age groups earn relatively more than the workers of lower age group, the living conditions of the child workers were also quite depressing and below the minimum standard. There were no medical facilities available
for children employed in glass industry, gem polishing, slate industry or carpet weaving etc. Children did not get any medical aid incase of illness or any other benefits. The problem of child labour is not a concomitant of modern society only rather has been there since the very dawn of human civilization. The reasons and factors responsible for this are varied and have been changing as the years passed on. Over the years the child labour has travelled from local forum and judicial members where its manifestation and verification are being debated and discussed. The industrial revolutions coupled with the changing life styles have added new dimensions to the problem. Today, as a matter of fact the problem is widespread and is not a characteristic of any particular type of economy. It is present even in the highly advanced countries of the world in a disguised form. However the plight of children working in the sector is more deplorable and needs to be abolished. The problem of child labour is more an economic scourge then a social evil. It is a system of under development and exists in all the developing countries.