5.1. SUMMARY:

5.1.1 'Child labour' is not a new phenomenon to our age - it has existed in one form or another in all historical times. But from sometime now it is considered to be a global problem in view of its extent and nature of exploitation of child labour. At present child labour occupies a significant portion of world’s labour force. However, in comparison to developed countries, developing nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America are witnessing majority of working children. Among the countries of the world India is reported to have maximum numbers of working children. They are found working in organised as well as unorganised sectors of employment of both rural and urban area.

5.1.2 Assam is also no exception in this case. In official records they are found working in organised sectors like tea estates, various factories and industries, etc. Their presence in unorganised sectors like, small manufacturing units, repairing workshops, transport sectors, etc., as well as in agriculture sectors in Assam cannot be denied.

5.1.3 Guwahati being the capital city of Assam and the biggest commercial and industrial centre of entire North East India houses a large workforce including child labour. They are found in both organised and unorganised sectors of employment in the city. Of course, the unorganised sectors seem to provide ample scope to these poor children in the city. They can be easily spotted working in numerous number of restaurants and hotels, road side tea stalls, dhabas, small automobile repairing shops and garages.
poverty is the basic factor that leads children to labour. Thus it is related with the development. So poor economic development, high illiteracy rates combined with poor environmental resources help strengthen the problem.

5.1.6. Thus it is not too surprising that India, a developing country housing a population that is second largest in the size amongst the countries of the world and nearly half of which are living under poverty line and high illiteracy rates, has the dubious distinction of having the largest population of child labour in the world. Worldwide child labour population is estimated at around 250 million. Various estimates put the figure for India between 44 million to 100 million. In India child labour is a deep rooted problem and considered as one of the social evil in the society. Many Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO), individuals and media are making hue and cry against it in recent past. Even the Supreme Court of India had to intervene in the matter through its judgement delivered on 10th December, 1996. On the part of the Government of India many legislations have been enacted time to time aiming at regulating and prohibiting employment of children in occupations. Some of them ever dates back to pre-independence period.

5.1.7. Assam, a small but strategically located in the North-Eastern part of India, is also no exception in case of problem of child labour. It is well known that State’s large number of tea estates have been employing children in their workforce since their inception. Besides tea estates and other organised sectors, unorganised sectors of the State are also known to have some children in their rolls. But in Assam which is one of the most underdeveloped and economically backward State of India, bulk of the child labour are in the unorganised sectors. Thus, in urban and semi-urban areas, children are found working in restaurants, road-side tea stalls, small repairing workshops, small manufacturing unit, etc. In cities and larger towns children picking re-usables from garbages are common sights. They are also found working in well-to-do households as domestic helpers.
5.1.8. Guwahati, the capital city of Assam and the place of the present study, is the biggest and most important city of the entire North-East. It is a fast growing city with burgeoning commercial and other similar activities. It is not surprising that a large number of children are found working in its various activities. It provides ample opportunities of earning to poor children. Seeing these large force of working children in the city the researcher was prompted to undertake the present study, and, which has been fitted as 'A Study of Child Labourer in the Greater Guwahati Area of Kamrup District with Special Reference to Education.' Researcher has felt it necessary to give some emphasis on the educational aspect of the working children as education is very much necessary for child's mental and intellectual developments and to face the future in the present day world. The Supreme Court of India while declaring judgement in the case of M.C. Mehta versus State of Tamil Nadu (dated 10 December, 1996) observed, "............appeal lies at the back of the saying that 'child is the father of man.' To enable fathering of a valiant and vibrant man, the child must be groomed well in the formative years of his life. He must receive education, acquire knowledge of man and materials and blossom ...." The Constitution of India has also promised free and compulsory education to all children upto 14 years of age.

5.1.9. Thus the study has been carried out with the following objectives:

1. To study the present condition of working children (9 to 14 years) in the Greater Guwahati area.
2. To study the causes and factors responsible for children working in different unorganised sectors in Greater Guwahati area.
3. To study the nature of children working in different sectors in the Greater Guwahati area.
4. To study the impact of education on working children in the Greater Guwahati area.
To achieve the above objectives researcher drew 200 samples of children working as restaurant boys, garage boys, bus handymen, domestic helpers and rag pickers in the city. As the study was primarily based on data of samples, interview was seemed to be the only effective tool for the study. Hence, interview schedules were developed as given on Appendix.

5.1.10. All the above points covering definition of child labour, prevalence from historical time to present, causes and effects of child labour, international and national scenario, steps taken internationally and nationally to prevent or regulate it, etc., has been discussed in details in Chapter - I 'Introduction.' Socio-economic profile of the sample drawn for the study, description of the place of the study, objectives and tools for the study, etc., have been elaborated in Chapter - III 'Methodology.'

5.2. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

As per the need of the study and according to the demands of the objectives, following major findings are sorted out after proper analysis and interpretation of all the tools in Chapter - IV 'Analysis and Interpretation of Data.'

I. Though the samples were taken on random basis they were from the age group of 9 to 14 years. Of these 22.0 percent were between 9 to 10 years, 43.0 percent were in the age group of 10 to 12 years and rest 35.0 percent were from the age group of 12 to 14 years. According to their original birth places 51.5 percent of the respondent were from rural areas and rest 48.5 percent were from urban areas. Sex wise only 25.0 percent of the 200 samples drawn were girls and the rest 75.0 percent were boys. It was also found that all girls in the sample were from domestic helper and rag picker groups and not a single girl was there from other three groups, i.e., restaurant, bus service and garage.

II. If we go through the reason given by the children opting for work there is no difficulty to conclude that basic reason was only poverty.
It was also reflected in the replies given by the children regarding their family income. All the children were from very poor families.

III. One of the major points of this study was education of these children. On the basis of the responses of the children it was found that a majority of them, i.e., 60.5 percent were illiterate. The rest 39.5 percent of the children were found to have education up to various levels. But it is interesting to note that of the literate children only 3 (i.e., 1.5 percent of the total children) were found attending school and rest were all school dropouts.

IV. To know the working and living conditions of the working children the first thing that comes to mind is how much they were earning. The study revealed that 73.5 percent were earning up to Rs. 300.00 per month and 7.0 percent of them were paid nothing in cash. 13.5 percent were found earning between Rs. 300.00 to Rs. 500.00 per month and earnings of only 2.0 percent were found to be above Rs. 500.00 per month. Respondents were also asked to answer whether other benefits such as food, lodging, clothing, etc., were provided or not. After analysing their responses, the general trend found was that incident of such benefits being offered was fewer as the monthly income get higher and higher. The above facts indicates only the pitiable working and living standards of working children.

V. The other factors that affect the working condition of working children are working hours, leisure time and leave. It was also found that an overwhelming majority of them (97%) were found working for above 8 hours a day. However, almost all of them did get breaks between working hours. But they were actually found working for hours which were not conducive to their mental and physical health. Majority of the domestic helpers reported that they had to work as long as the activity of the household goes on. They generally started their work in the morning when all the members of the family were still
in their bed and finished their work in the night when last of the family members went to bed.

VI. As education was taken as one of the important point of the present study, certain parameters of working children were studied against their educational status. As already mentioned, of the 200 samples taken 60.5 percent were illiterate, 35.0 percent were literate but school dropout and only 1.5 percent were found school going. To know the affect of educational status on the earnings of these children, their earnings were analysed against their educational status. Analysis as presented in Chapter - IV reveals that though most of the literate children were seemed to be earning more in cash than the illiterate children, their conditions were no better because night wage earners were given fewer in kinds.

VII. Analysis and Interpretation of Data presented in Chapter - IV also reveals that 84 out of total 200 children who expressed satisfaction over the present job and 62 of them were from illiterate group alone. On the other hand of the total 79 literate children 57 children were not satisfied with their present jobs. They had in their minds a better job and other plans for future. The above facts perhaps reflected the mental preparedness of the children to face the future. Barring some educated children were seemed to be in positive frame of mind and on the other hand almost all illiterate ones were in helpless frame of mind and had to accept what their fate had to offer.

VIII. To test the mental preparedness and attitude towards education children were asked to choose the following alternatives in the event of being provided free education:

(a) will abandon the present job and join school,
(b) will join school as well as continue to work and
(c) neither join school nor abandon the present job.

On analysis of the responses it was found that only 38.5 percent of the total children showed some interest in education, i.e.
preferred alternatives (a) and (b). But the important revelation from the analysis of the responses was that percentages showing interest in education, i.e., alternatives (a) and (b) showed increasing trend as the literacy levels increased. It signifies that education had some positive impacts on the mind of the children.

IX. Respondents were also asked to respond to questions on some of their personal matters such as habits, health problems, etc., which may be some pointers to their working and living conditions. Data on these, and discussions are also presented in Chapter - IV 'Analysis and Interpretation of Data.'

5.3. RESULTS OF CASE STUDIES:

Under the present research work, the researcher also carried some case studies to highlights the educational aspect of the working children. Case studies were carried out on 20 working children drawn from already sampled 200 children. This 20 children consisted of 4 children each from five employment sectors chosen. Again this 4 children from each group consist of 2 literate and 2 illiterate children. Details of case studies and discussions have been presented in Chapter - IV ‘Analysis and Interpretation of Data.’ Below the result of case studies are presented in summarised way -

I. All the working children chosen for case studies were from very poor families. Poverty was the only cause that compelled them to work. Poverty was also the only cause that came in way of providing school education or compelled them to leave school.

II. Whether they were literate or illiterate, their working and living conditions were very miserable except for the domestic helpers. Conditions of domestic helpers were appeared to be little better off because they were living with their employer and they were provided almost all their basic needs by the employer besides some cash. In case of one domestic helper, she was even found to be provided with her education by her employer.
III. Though literacy level of literate working children had no significant effect on their working and living conditions, their mental attitudes towards working lives and future were more positive than illiterate children. Most of the illiterate children were found adverse to education even if it was provided to them free of cost. On the other hand most of the literate children expressed their willingness to get education if opportunity was there.

IV. Case studies also showed that if the literate working children showed some definite goals in their minds for future, illiterate ones were found happy with the present arrangement and not sure of their future. They were seemed to be helpless as far as their future course of action was concerned and surrendered to their destiny.

5.4. CONCLUSION:

The study made here was restricted to Greater Guwahati area with some major sections of child labour. Findings of this studies are not expected to differ that much in respect of child labourer in other sectors of Greater Guwahati and for that matter the State as a whole. Findings of the study which depicted only the sorry plights of these unfortunate section of the society - the child labourer. Findings, which are perhaps not unexpected, tells us the story of neglected and exploited children working long hours for meagre earning, in unhealthy environment which are detrimental to realisation of full economic, psychological and social potentials of children.

It is also not true that nothing has been done to check the evils of child labour. It is considered a serious problem by the international community. The United Nations Organisation and the International Labour Organisation have been playing important roles in the process of right of a child and gradual elimination of child labour globally. Various conventions, forwarded by the UNO and the ILO are instrumental in formulating laws aiming at regulating and abolishing child labour in countries worldwide.
Indian laws relating to child workers have also been influenced by various conventions of the International Labour Organisations and the Declaration of the Right of Child, unanimously adopted by the General Assembly of the UNO in 1959. In fact, India has a large numbers of legal provisions regulating and prohibiting employment of children in various employments. Beside these legislative measures Government of India had in the past appointed committees to look into the question of child labour and had adopted number of policies. Among the important of these is the National Policy on Child Labour which was adopted in the Parliament on August 12, 1987.

Despite all these, child labour continues to be a serious, deep rooted and wide spread problem in India. Many attribute this to the loopholes in the existing laws, inadequate laws enforcement mechanism, practical difficulties in enforcing the laws, etc. It will also be very difficult to abolish child labour altogether in developing country like India where a high percentage of population live under poverty line and where illiteracy rate is very high.

Of course, many believe that compulsory primary education will reduce the problem of child labour to a great extent. In this regard UNICEF comments, “Education can liberate today’s child labourer and prevent children drifting into workforce in future .... the longer and better the education, the less the likelihood that a child will be forced into damaging work.” Neera Burra in her investigative work ‘Born to Work,’ wrote, “If there is at all a blueprint for tackling the problem of child labour, it is education.” Thus, the researcher wishes to conclude with the hope that the desire the Constitution of India has regarding free and compulsory education for all children upto the age of 14 years, will be fulfilled sooner than latter.

5.5. SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE STUDIES:

Child labour is a deep rooted and wide spread problem in India. Though their problem existed in India since a long time, no notable investigative literature was available until the year 1979, the year which was declared as the
International Year of the Child. Since then a large numbers of such literatures of great merit were published in India. Many of these works dealt with the problem of child labour at macro level and others gave us micro level or regional studies such as child labour issues in various states, cities, urban and rural areas, in particular employment, etc. All these works were helpful in bringing the issue to limelight, and put pressure on Government, and volunteer organisation and others to do the needful. But there is almost total lack of such works in Assam despite the known presence of large child labourers in the states, particularly in tea industry and unorganised sectors. Therefore, there are ample scope for future studies on the subject in the State. Thus, some suggestion have been made for future studies -

1. As Guwahati houses a large number of child labourers, studies may be made covering all the industrial and commercial establishments and other sectors of employments - both organised and unorganised.

2. Child labour in organised sectors of Assam.

3. Child labour in unorganised sectors of Assam.


5. Attitude of parents and employer in employing child labour with particular reference to Assam or Tea Industry, etc.

6. Legal and statutory aspects of child labour in India with particular reference to Assam.

7. Effects of labour on children’s mental and physical health.


9. Child labour in Rural areas of Assam.