CHAPTER -5
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As a child I, along with my younger sister, would often wonder as to why Sita, a girl child, almost our age, who was a constant companion and help to her mother, Shanti- our domestic help, did not go to school like us. My mother’s brief answer to the query-“their poverty”- only evoked pity. We started sharing some tidbits and toys with her. In that spell of sensitivity, we even tried our skills at teaching her. It continued for six months or so, till the duo left for their native place.

With age, I came to terms with social realities. Sita, once my priority, almost disappeared from my active memory. However, on opting for Master’s in Sociology, a systematic pursuit of understanding social reality, Sita was back on the scene. In hind sight I realized that whatever we did for her in our childhood innocence was just symbolic, the social reality was far too complex to admit of such solutions at the level of an individual.

I got an opportunity of studying the world of child labour in the form of a Dissertation- Activities of Children: A Sociological Study of Migrants in a Slum Area of Chandigarh. The problem, in a more refined and comprehensive form, suggested itself as a topic of research at the doctoral level – the present study.

For people in our social group, the first encounter with child labour takes place inside our own households where we ourselves are beneficiaries of this practice.

As children, our sensitivity to fellow children, who accompany their mothers to help them perform petty chores for us, remains symbolic; it seldom goes beyond tokenism. In the process of ‘growing up’ we become, largely, insensitive to this issue because of social acceptability of child labour.

However, as a student of sociology, I got an opportunity to address this problem at the Master’s level in the form of a Dissertation – Activities of Children: A Sociological Study of Migrants in a Slum Area of Chandigarh. The problem suggested itself as a topic of research at the doctoral level – the present study.
As explained in the introductory chapter, our findings are based on the information collected through (a) Structured Interview Schedules, (b) Interview/Observation,(c) Discussions/Interaction, and (d) Personal Contacts.

The main objectives of our study, were:

1. To examine the socio-economic background of children engaged in labour, i.e., to focus on the demographic, economic, work and household profile/status of the families they belonged to;

2. To enquire about the set of socio-economic circumstances which compel children to participate in labour. In other words, to capture the socio-economic milieu which generates child labour;

3. To study the consequences of child labour by exploring the world of our respondents in terms of their activities, i.e., type of work, working conditions, i.e., hours of work, health hazards, remuneration etc and nature of exploitation (economic, social, sexual etc) and risk at work;

4. To make a comparative study of child labour falling in different labouring divisions – self-employed; un-paid family trade; wage-employment; un-paid family help, and begging. These labouring divisions engulfed the categories such as (a) children who worked as part of family labour and those who worked for outsiders, (b) paid and un-paid labour, (c) children who live on the streets and those living on their own (d) male and female child labour, (e) children who are engaged solely in labour and those who work as well as attend school, and

5. To conduct case studies of children engaged in labour

Our universe comprised child labourers in the informal sector in Chandigarh, who were: (i) living with family and working (either with family (A1) or outside (A2) and going to school (ii) living with family and working either in the family (B1) or outside (B2) and not going to school, (iii) staying away from home (either with employer (C1) or on the streets (C2), or independently (C3)). Our sample consisted of 240 child labourers from the above defined universe. In order to go about this exercise successfully, we decided to follow the snowball sampling technique which involved selection of a sample by starting with a small selected group of respondents and asking these for further contacts.
For collecting the requisite data a structured interview schedule was used. Since information about the child and his/her parental household was required, so two sets of questionnaires were prepared – one, catering to the child labourer and the other to his/her household. In addition to all this, in depth interviews were also conducted in respect of the ten respondents to cover the case studies. Later on, after sorting out the schedules, the data was systematized and coded (on coding cards) for generating requisite tables and arriving at generalizations. For this purpose we relied on mean as a measure of central tendency. Elementary graphic techniques like bar charts and pie diagrams were also used.

Main Findings of Our Study:

Let’s commence with the demographic and socio-economic profile of the respondents

- We have in our sample 114 (47.5%) male children as against 126 (53.5%) female children. Almost 2/3rds of the children, i.e., 154 (64.17%) belong to 11.14 years age group) 47 (30.83%) children are 6-10 years of age and only a miniscule 5% fall in ≤ 5 years age category.

- As far as age at entry into the profession was concerned our study revealed that on an average a child started working when he/she was 8.71 years of age; the male child started working after completing 9 years and the female child started slightly early at 8.33 years. The age distribution, both of boys and girls brought home the point that girls made their appearance as child labour at a relatively younger age than boys.

- As far as the educational status of these child labourers was concerned, it was found that 123 (51.25%) of those were illiterate and 117 (48.75%) literate. Among the illiterates, the percentage of female children was greater (53.66%) as compared to the percentage of the male children (46.43%). Of the total literates, the highest percentage (70.09%) was of those who had primary education, then come those who received middle-standard education, (27.35%), followed by 2.56% children, who had qualified matric. Thus, illiteracy and low educational attainment go hand in hand with child labour. Also, among the illiterate children in our sample, 71 (60.68%) were school dropouts. These children comprised
29.58% of our total sample. Among these school dropouts the proportion of males was marginally higher (16.25%) as against the females (13.33%). 148 (61.67%) of our child labourers want to be at school, showing their clear preference for studies.

• Regarding the religion and caste background of these children, expectedly the major chunk (88.75%) are Hindus. Next to the vast majority of Hindus, we have Muslims (8.33%), Christians (1.25%), Sikhs (90.83%) and Parsis (0.83%). Among the Hindus the highest percentage is those of lower castes (92.02%), where SCs are 67.35%, OBCs are 30.10% and BCs are 2.55% and only 7.98% child labourers belong to the higher castes. There seems to be an obvious connection between lower Castes (among Hindus) and Muslim community with child labour.

• Also with exception of one female child, whose native place is Chandigarh, the rest 239(99.58%) were either migrants themselves living of their own (41 i.e. 17.08% have come from other states and live on their own) or form a part of family migration (there are 199 such cases, which form 82.92% of our sample). Uttar Pradesh contributed the most to the pool as 100 (41.76%) children belonged to this state. This was followed by the states of Haryana (15.83%), Tamil Nadu (12.5%) and Punjab (10.42%). Other states, put together, contributed 17.5% to that lot (42 child workers). In our sample there are also 4 (1.67%) children who hail from Nepal. It seems that migrants find the going tough in foreign land and so many a times make compromises which they would not make in their native places.

Working conditions of the sampled child labourers

• These sampled child labourers were involved in 5 major labouring divisions. These being; self-employment - 81 (33.75%), unpaid family trade -15(6.25%), wage-employment - 98 (40.83%), unpaid family help -17 (7.08%), and begging - 29(12.08%). A large member of children in our sample, i.e. 98(40.83%), were into wage employment, most of them worked for outsiders and got paid for it.

• Majority of the children engaged in labour 199 (82.92%) are doing so while living with their families, which is contrary to the existing notion
that familial care protects children from the hazards of labour. Also, among these 199 children, the percentage of female children at 60.80% was much higher than the male children, (39.2%), showing an absolute gender disparity. Among the children living away from home and working 41(17.08%), 36(7.80%) were males and only 5 (12.20%) were females.

- In the dominant category (i.e., wage employment) the percentage of male children was, understandably, higher (55.10%). Even in the other polar category (the unpaid family trade), the percentage of male children was found to be higher (53.33%). Barring unpaid family help and begging, where the percentage of female children was overwhelming, 94.12% and 72.44%, respectively, everywhere else the percentage of male children was much higher than the female children. Here, we can sense the hold of tradition with the male being socialized to be the ‘bread-winner’, and female, the ‘home-maker’. It is pre-mature arrival of the future for them.

- Our study revealed that, on an average, a child put in 7.66 hours of work per day; these being higher for the male child (8.58 hours) as compared to the female child (6.83 hours). It might appear to be on the lower side, when compared with the findings of some researchers, however one cannot deny that for a child, even this much work implied loss of childhood. As far as taking rest was concerned, on an average a child got to rest for 0.36 hours daily, these being more for the male child (0.44 hours) as against the female child (0.28 hours).

- Also on examining the data in the various labouring divisions, we found that children faced the longest working day (9.33 hours), if they were self-employed and the shortest (5.47 hours) if they were engaged in unpaid family-trade.

- Besides the irregular working hours (peak and off-peak), adjustments which had to be made by these children towards their working environment included the physical and the social environment at work. Regarding the physical environment, 87 (36.25%) children found their work place to be quite spacious and 65 (27.08%) moderate. For the remaining, i.e. 88 (36.67%), being on the move throughout the day, this
aspect did not hold much relevance. As far as their social environment at work was concerned, 83 (34.58%) children reported that they were indifferent towards it, while 81 (33.75%) found it to be congenial. Quite matter of factly, 69 (28.75 %) reported it to be ‘chalta hai’ (workable) and only 7 (2.9%) recorded it to be hostile. We take this as some sort of a resignation on their part, leading to an acceptance of their circumstances.

• From the remuneration point of view also, we observed that the situation was no better. In our study the average monthly income of a child came to Rs. 689.52, a month (calculations were made out of 208 children, excluding the 32 children who were not earning).

For the 105 males, the average monthly income was higher, (Rs. 822.38) as compared to the average monthly income of the females (which was Rs. 554.08). In the context of the labouring divisions, it was noted that the average monthly earning of children was highest in wage employment (Rs. 734.90) per month. However, as far as hourly wage earning of children was concerned, we found it to be the highest for children who were self employed (Rs. 3.15). For the children who were involved in begging, the average monthly earning (Rs. 403.45) as well as the hourly wage earning, (Rs. 2.14) were the lowest, in monetary terms.

• Exploitation of this segment becomes evident when one takes stock of the children’s per hourly average wage/earnings. These children, engaged in remunerative work, spent on an average 7.77 hours a day and received a meager Rs. 3.09 per hour in return. It was because of all these factors that 124 (51.67 %) children were totally dissatisfied from their work.

Another thing that came to our notice was that both, the average monthly earnings and hourly wage earnings were in the favour of male children than the female children in the various labouring divisions except wage employment, where the per hour wage earning for females (Rupees 2.68) was slightly higher than those for the males (Rupees 2.26). All this is indicating that, in general, gender bias against the females is persisting in one form or the other.
Information about the households of these children showed that they belonged to 184 households. Out of the 184 households, 158 (85.87%) were male headed and 26 (14.13%) were female headed. An overwhelming majority of our child labourers, 206 (85.83%) belonged to male headed households and 34 (14.17%) to female headed households.

These households were characterized by large sized (more than 5 member) families. The female headed households were marked by numerical dominance of females on an average, may it be overall sex composition (which was 1.60 females per male for female headed households as compared to 0.9 for male headed households) or ratio of female children to male children (which was 1.35 for female headed households as against 0.97 for male headed households).

For the entire sample there were 1.25 children per adult. This ratio became high (1.85) in case of female-headed households, which indicated the excessive burden on them, while for male-headed households this ratio was 1.15.

The average age of the head of the household was 41.98 years. For the male headed households it was 42.76 years while for the female headed households it was lower, i.e. 37.26 years. Read along with the above, we are inclined to infer that the female headed households are relatively younger in the context of ‘Family life cycle’.

A vast majority, 158 (85.87) of these household heads were illiterate, showing that a definite link existed between the educational status of the head of the household and child labour.

An overwhelming proportion, (90.76%), of these households were Hindus, others (Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Parsis) forming a miniscule proportion (i.e., 9.24 %). Among these Hindu households, 92.81 % belonged to castes which were very low in caste hierarchy, these being scheduled castes, 107 (64.07%) other backward classes, 43 (25.75 %) and backward castes, 5(2.99%).
As far as the occupations of the household heads were concerned, we discovered that a majority of them 97 (52.72%) were working as casual labourers. Among the causal labourers, 39 (40.21%) household heads were construction labourers, 33 (40.02%) are rickshaw pullers, 15 (15.46%) are rag pickers and 10 (10.31%) were shoe shiners. Apart from the causal labourers, the other occupations in which these household heads were involved were; petty trade, 25 (13.59%), farming, 23 (12.5%), sweeping, 17 (9.24%), craft and skilled labour, 13 (7.07%) domestic help, 8(4.35%) and begging, 1 (0.54%). All these occupations were irregular in nature and low in social ranking and economic returns. This had a direct impact on the overall household income.

The average income of a household excluding the child’s income was Rs. 2148.08. For the male headed households this income was greater (i.e., Rs. 2262.72) as compared to the female headed households (i.e., Rs. 1453.53). The average income of a household including the child’s income came out to be Rs. 3014.84. For the male headed households this was higher (i.e., Rs. 3130.05) as against the female headed households (Rs. 2316.76). All this was due to the current phase of the life cycle of these families and the concentration of females in low paid activities besides sex discrimination. Hence, we found that a child contributed 28.53% to the total household income. This was more in the case of female headed households (37.30%) than the male headed households (27.71%).

Regarding the availability of amenities to the households, we found that though electricity was available to a majority of households, 146 (79.35%), it was still a dream for the remaining 38 (20.65%). Also, the fuel consumption of these households showed that even today they prefer conventional sources of energy. In our sample, 90 (48.19%) households used only wood, 72 (39.13%) used wood along with kerosene, 10 (5.43%) used wood and cow dung and only 12 (6.52%) depended on Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG).

On close enquiry we also found that a large number of our households, 84 (45.65%), got water from community taps, this was followed by 48
(26.09%) households who took water from taps near home. Another 16 (8.7%) households fetched water from water tankers. Public taps provided water to 10 (5.43%) of our households. Hand pumps formed a source of water for 5 (2.72%) of the households, and 2 (1.09%) households drew water from wells. While all these households had to make some effort in fetching water for personal use, only 19 (1.33%) households, were lucky enough to enjoy the luxury of having taps within their homes. Despite this problem, we found that safe and clean drinking water was available to almost all the households under study.

• Though the water front offered some relief, the sanitation problem stared us in the face. The data on access to toilet-facility revealed that 89 (48.37%) of the households still used open spaces for the purpose, 40 (21.74%) households relied on community toilets, 33 (17.93%) households used toilets attached to their houses and, only 22 (11.96%) households enjoyed the facility of properly built toilets within their homes.

• The data on consumer durables possessed by these households was quite revealing. As far as means of transport were concerned, 64 (34.78%) households had cycles and only 2 (1.09%) had motor cycles. Television was owned by 77 (41.85%) of the households, among whom 45 (58.44%) had cable connection as well. Radio was owned by 12 (6.52%) households. A large number of our households 100 (54.35%) owned fans. Cooler was possessed by 19 (10.33%) households and 65 (35.33%) households could not afford a cooler or a fan. Also, in the sample only 13 (7.07%) households owned a fridge. Thirty (16.30%) households owned furniture and 1 (0.54%) household had a landline telephone connection. However, a basic utility item like a cooker was possessed by majority of our households 109 (59.24%) and only 4 (4.35%) households subscribed to newspapers, reflecting their poor literary status. From the above description, we feel tempted to brand these households as lower middle class. But this resemblance is spurious, for it is not backed by their income. It is imitative and pseudo as most of the consumer durables...
have been acquired second hand, courtesy the employer, either as
discards from the junk room or at a token payment.

It would be pertinent to pursue the reasons for the supply of child labour.

- According to the child labourers themselves, the most important cause for
  their entering the work force was low income/poverty of their families.
  These reasons forced 80 (33.33%) of them to start working so early. The
  next cause in line was question of survival which pushed 46 (19.17%)
  children into labour. This was followed by disinterest in studies and low
  household income, which was responsible for sending 44 (18.33%) children
  into the labour market. Similarly, for 44 (18.33%) children, illiteracy
  coupled with low household income was responsible for their working. Then
  there were 12 (5%) children who worked in order to learn the profession.
  This was followed by 8 (3.33%) children who engaged in labour in order to
  help their families and last of all 6 (2.5%) children who worked because of
  their complete disinterest in studies.

- As far as the reasons of child labour cited by the households were concerned,
  our study revealed that out of 143 households, 62 (43.36%) households
  claimed their low income/poverty to be the main reason responsible for
  pushing their children into labour. Futility of education and life experience
  was quoted by 51 (35.66%) households to be the cause of their children
  toiling at such a tender age and 30 (20.98%) households believed that their
  children were involved in labour due to their disinterest in studies.

- In addition to these reasons, our study also brought forward certain
  important causes of child labour. These were the occupation of the head of
  the household and low family income, large family size, illiteracy of the
  head of the household, caste, migration, disinterest in studies, family trade,
  involvement in households work and desire for a good life. Our study
  revealed that the occupation of the household heads of these children were
  irregular in nature and financially not very sound. This had a direct impact
  on the family income which was just Rs. 2148.08 a month excluding the
  child's earnings. This income increased to Rs. 3014.84 a month if the child's
  earnings were added to it. Thus, both of them (the irregular nature of the
  occupation of the heads and low family income) pushed the children into the
labour market. Also these (240) child labourers came from large sized (more than 5 member) families which encouraged these children to work in order to sustain themselves. It was also discovered that a deep relation existed between the educational status of the head of the household and child labour. In our sample, out of the 184 household heads, 158 (85.87%) were illiterate.

The analysis of our data showed that caste and child labour were somewhere linked as out of our 240 children, 196 (81.67%) belonged to low castes and only 44 (18.33%) belonged to high castes. Similarly, the phenomenon of migration and child labour share a close relationship. Our study revealed that barring one female child whose native places Chandigarh, the rest 239 children are either themselves migrants 41 (17.08%) or hail from migrant families 199 (82.92%). Also, disinterest in studies of the children was also an important cause for these children, 92 (38.33%) joining the work force as that seemed to be the only other reasonable alternative available. The families of these children also played an important role in inducting these children into work. Involvement in family trade was responsible for initiating 15 (6.25%) children into the labour force and 17 (7.08%) children were just involved in doing household chores instead of enjoying their childhood, among these 16 were females and only 1 male. The desire to lead a good life also resulted in these houses sending their children to work.

Involvement in labour at such a young and impressionable age can have a number of consequences for the child. These consequences can be both positive as well as negative, though the negative outnumber the positive. Among positive consequences of this phenomenon are the child’s economic independence, his/her contribution to the family income and the attitude of responsibility inculcated in him/her because of the employment activity.

- Our study revealed that the children retained 15% of their earnings which they spent on items like refreshments, clothes, cosmetics, addictive substances, entertainment, toys and some savings. Here, the share of earnings retained by the male children was greater as compared to the female children.
Also, this financial independence increased the autonomy of these child labourers, this was especially true for the 41 (17.08%) children who lived away from home.

In our sample, both, the male and female children contributed a major part of their average monthly earnings, i.e. 84.65% to supplement the family kitty. The males contributed 76.67% and the females 96.72% of their respective earnings to the family kitty. This percentage for females was much higher as compared to males. The contribution of these children substantial in helping the families in their economically hard times.

Also, involvement in work at such a young age made these children more responsible. From our study we discovered that out of 143 households, 110 (76.92%) claimed that their child/children had become more responsible after taking up the employment activity, whereas according to 33 (23.08%) household heads, there was no change in the attitude of their children since taking up the respective economic activity.

As far as the negative consequences of child labour are concerned, we find that they weighed heavily on the positive consequences. These negative consequences were – children missing out on education, defiance in their attitude, their exposure to outside world and increase in their vulnerability, their social exploitation, limited vision, low aspirations, poor physical and mental health, tendency to fall into the child labour trap. The practice of child labour also encourages households to have more children, thus promoting fertility at the household level.

Giving up on education is the child’s first major sacrifice among others. Our study showed that 148 (61.67%) children wanted to be at school, and these included 123 (83.11%) child labourers who had never been to school, implying a perceived deprivation towards education. Also, a large proportion (71.43%) of female children was inclined towards studying whereas only 50.88% of male children showed this preference. Already knowing (from chapter two) that the participation of female children in labour was greater (52.5%) as compared to the males (47.5%), all this indicated the gender bias prevalent in the society where females irrespective of their desire to study are pushed into the labour force as compared to the males who are less inclined towards studies.
Analysis of our data showed that these child labourers became defiant and started challenging the authority of their parents/guardians. On interviewing the parents/guardians of the children from 143 households, we found that 99 (69.23%) of these household heads felt that their children had started defying them and 44 (30.77%) felt that there was no change in their attitude. Also, exposure to the outside world at such a tender age made these children vulnerable. Out of the 126 female child labourers in our sample 15 (11.90%) females spent 5% to 6% of their monthly income on cosmetics. These female children served as extremely vulnerable targets.

It also appeared that these children were not only exploited by outsiders but also by their own kith and kin, especially females. In our sample there were 17 (7.03%) such children who were engaged in household drudgery. Among these children, all were females, 16 (94.12%), except 1 (5.88%) male.

In addition to all this, working at such a tender age limited the vision of these children to the occupation they were already doing. Our study revealed that 89 (37.08%) children wanted to continue with the work they were already doing. Even those children who wanted to change their occupation, i.e., 104 (43.33%) wanted occupations which were in the periphery of the work they were already doing and 47 (19.58%) children did not want to work at all.

These children were low on aspirations as well. We found that out of the total 240 children, 147 (61.25%) were resigned to fate. Only 93 (38.75%) had some aspirations. Of these, 63 (67.74%) wanted to get a permanent government job, 12 (12.90%) wanted to be teachers, 11 (11.83%) wanted to join the armed forces, 6 (6.45%) wanted to become film stars and 1 (0.42%) child wanted to be the Prime Minister of our country.

Such children were often exposed to severe occupational hazards. In our sample a vast majority, 186 (77.5%) children complained of health related problems at work. In terms of physical health, 156 (83.87%) complained of fatigue, 27 (14.52%) children complained of dirt and infectious surroundings as being responsible for risking their physical health and 3 (1.61%) children found traffic hazards like accidents and pollution at work a source of anxiety.
• Also out of the total 186 children, 33 (17.74%) complained of scolding, fights/bullying, physical and verbal abuse at work. Out of these 33 children, a major proportion i.e., 28 (84.85%) complained of physical and verbal abuse. Here, among these of children there were 18 (64.29%) males and 15 (53.57%) females. Also, 4 (12.12%) children, 1 (25%) male and 3 (75%) females, complained of receiving scolding at work and 1 (3.03%) male child had to face fights/bullying at work.

• Due to the prevalence of the practice child labour, children are seen as economic assets by the financially deprived households, promoting the notion that the more hands there are to earn, the better it is. Our study revealed that a majority of the children (181, i.e., 75.42%) used abusive language. Only 5 (2.08%) street children consumed addictive substances like cigarettes and gutkha.

• Moreover after a day of work, these children were left with negligible time for leisure. The analysis our data revealed that on an average a child put in 7.66 hours of labour a day and got to rest for half an hour at work. A male child worked for 8.85 hours a day and took rest for a quarter less than an hour daily, where as a female child worked for 6.83 hours per day and got to rest for almost half an hour a day, at work.

• Such a child who works the entire day and remains uneducated will have low productivity as an adult. The child will acquire no skill and as an adult will have to send his/her children to work full time, thus falling into a child labour trap. In our sample of 240 children, there were 194 (80.82%) who were presently not in school and thus at a greater risk of falling into this trap.

These facts portray the pitiable condition of children belonging to certain segments of our society and, the insufficiency/inadequacy of the efforts made in this direction and policy pronouncements. It would, therefore, be in order to examine as to what has been done at the international, and the national level to tackle this problem.

Before undertaking this exercise, it is important to mention that for studying the efforts taken at the international and national levels, we relied on the secondary sources of data already available. However, our discussion on the various government and non-government organizations in Chandigarh is based on our
personal visits to these places. Let us also clarify that this exercise is in ‘no way’ an examination or evaluation of the role of these organizations in dealing with this social problem, rather it is just a description of the various efforts made by them both in their endeavor to remove the malady.

The International Scenario

The deplorable condition of numerous workers, (including children) their exploitation, with no consideration for their health and their family lives was becoming less and less acceptable, and a need for an organization like International Labour Organization (ILO) was felt, which was thus created in 1919, at the end of the First World War at the time of the peace conference which convened first in Paris, then at Versailles.

According to the ILO (2006), there were about 317 million economically active children aged 5 to 17 in 2004, of whom 218 million could be regarded as child labourers. Of the latter, 126 million were engaged in hazardous work. The corresponding figures for the narrower age group 5 to 14 year olds are 191 million economically active children, 166 million child labourers and 74 million children in hazardous activities.

For ILO, the issue of child labour has been quite significant that is why ILO made ‘abolition of child labour’ its goal in the very year of its creation by adopting the minimum age (industry) convention, 1919 (No. 5), which prohibits the working of children of less than 14 years of age in industrial setups. ILO instruments on the subject are the minimum age convention 1973 (No. 138) and recommendation, 1973 (No. 146). According to the preamble of convention No. 138, the time has come to establish a general instrument on the subject which would gradually replace the existing one’s applications to limited economic sectors with a view to achieving the total abolition of child labour (Kaur, 2005). Because of its cultural bias, very few developing nations had ratified this convention until the late 1990’s. This forced the ILO to adopt conventions on the worst forms of child labour, 1999 (No. 182) which was less culturally biased and it tried to establish a common standard for child work, which even the developing countries would find acceptable.

In addition to this, the International Labour Conference adopted a resolution on child labour and identified important research lines and conceptual development
in the area of child labour which still contribute to the International Program on the Elimination of Child labour (IPEC). This IPEC came into existence in 1990 with the object to providing motivation regarding implementation of practical program connected with child labour and to provide technical advisory service and assistance to member countries whenever asked for.

Besides ILO, other UN Agencies and Instruments like World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF are also working together to curb the problem of child labour. A very important step in this direction was the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924 adopted on Sept. 26, 1924 by League of Nations, commonly known as ‘Declaration of Geneva’. Whereas the need for such special safeguards has been stated in the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924, and recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the statutes of specialized agencies and international organizations concerned with the welfare of children, the Declaration of Rights of Child was again proclaimed by UN general assembly in 1959. It assured protection to children against all forms of neglect, cruelty, and exploitation. (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Geneva, Switzerland, 1997-2002)

This was followed by The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20th November 1989 and came into force on 2nd September 1990. The Convention which was adopted by 159 countries sets out these rights in 54 articles and two Optional Protocols. It spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere have: the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. The four core principles of the Convention are non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child. Every right spelled out in the Convention is inherent to the human dignity and harmonious development of every child. The Convention protects children's rights by setting standards in health care; education; and legal, civil and social services.

By agreeing to undertake the obligations of the Convention (by ratifying or acceding to it), national governments have committed themselves to protecting and ensuring children's rights and they have agreed to hold themselves accountable for
this commitment before the international community. State parties to the Convention are obliged to develop and undertake all actions and policies in the light of the best interests of the child. (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Geneva, Switzerland, 1997-2002)

The UN Commission on Human Rights adopted a program of action for elimination of child labour in 1993 involving measures like raising awareness among people, providing educational and vocational training to prevent the child labour exploitation providing social action to help families of other children, developmental aid, stipulation and application of labour standards, providing primary education for all and support from international agencies.

In addition to all these international efforts, the western human rights credentials sought the inclusion of 'social clauses' in the GATT agreement and through the instrumentality of the WTO tried to impose restriction on the free flow of products and process in which children were employed. (Singh, 2003)

**The Indian State and Child Labour**

India too could not have afforded to ignore the issue under such international pressure and moral commitments. Even independent of this, India’s political leadership showed sensitivity to the issue which was clearly apparent from the way in which the Indian constitution was framed.

From the time of its independence, India has committed itself to be against child labour. According to Article 23 traffic in human beings and beggars and other similar forms of forced labour are prohibited and any violation of the provisions shall be an offense punishable in accordance with the law (Constitution of India cited in Human Rights Watch 1996, p 29). Article 24 of the Indian constitution clearly states that "No child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or employed in any hazardous employment" (Constitution of India cited in Jain 1985, p 218). Article 39 (e) directs State policy such "that the health and strength of workers . . . and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength" (Constitution of India cited in Human Rights Watch 1996, p 29). These two articles show that India has always had the goal of taking care of its children and ensuring the safety of workers.
The Bonded Labour System Act of 1976 fulfills the Indian Constitution's directive of ending forced labour. The Act "frees all bonded laborers, cancels any outstanding debts against them, prohibits the creation of new bondage agreements, and orders the economic rehabilitation of freed bonded laborers by the state" (Human Rights Watch 1996, p 30). With regard to child labour, the Indian Government implemented the Child Labour Act in 1986. The purpose of this act is to "prohibit the employment of children who have not completed their 14th year in specified hazardous occupations and processes" (Narayan 1988, p 146).

An important advancement in government policy occurred in August of 1994, when then Prime Minister Narasimha Rao announced his proposal of an Elimination of Child Labour Program. This program pledged to end child labour for two million children in hazardous industries as defined in the Child Labour Act of 1986, by the year 2000. The program revolves around an incentive for children to quit their work and enter non-formal schooling - a one hundred rupee payment, as well as, one meal a day for attending school (Human Rights Watch 1996, p 119-120).

It has been observed that "the overall condition of the education system can be a powerful influence on the supply of child labour" (Grootaert and Kanbur 1995, 193). The concept of compulsory education, where all school aged children are required to attend school, combats the force of poverty that pulls children out of school. Policies relating to compulsory education not only force children to attend school, but also contribute appropriate funds to the primary education system, instead of higher education (Badiwala, 1998).

Article 45 of the Constitution of India states that "The State shall endeavor to provide within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years" (Jain 1985, 219).

In terms of legislative measures, the most significant attempt to deal with the problem of child labour has been the child labour (prohibition and regulation) Act 1986. The child labour (prohibition and regulation) Act of 1986, which was extended in 1999 to encompass more employment activities and prohibit the employment of children under 14 years old in 13 occupations and 51 work processes. These include carpet weaving, any work involving soldering, electronics, cement manufacture, work in slaughterhouses and the manufacturing of matches, explosives, fireworks and bidi and cigarettes. While child labour in the specified sectors and activities is prohibited, children are permitted to work up to six hours per day in other sectors.

In keeping with the above approach, National Policy on Education (NPE), was formulated in 1986, modified in 1992. The objective of this policy has been that education should play a positive and interventionist role in correcting social, and regional imbalances, empowering women, and in securing rightful place for the disadvantaged and the minorities. Also, to achieve these objectives, a number of programs are being implemented, out of which the two flagship programs of the government are ‘The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan’ and ‘The Mid-day Meal Scheme’.

The goals of Sarv Siksha Abhiyan are - to put all children of 6 to 14 years of age, in school/EGS (Education Guarantee Scheme) center/ bridge course by 2005, to bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010, work for universal retention by 2010 and to focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life.

Under the MDM (Mid-Day Meal) scheme, cooked mid-day meal with a nutritional content of 450 calories and 12 grams protein, is served to children studying at primary level, in government, government aided and local body schools; and in Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS)/ Alternative and innovative education (AIE) Centers.

National Policy on Child Labour (NPCL) was also formulated in August 1987. The action plan outlined in the policy for dealing with the problem of child labour included: Legislative Action Plan, which would ensure that there is
enforcement of child labour act and other labour laws, to stop the working of
children in hazardous activities, and, also, regulation of their working-hours, and
conditions, in the non-hazardous activities, as well; Developmental Program and
Schemes to Alleviate Child Labour, through which the government plans to run
various poverty alleviation and employment generation schemes to target children
engaged in labour and their families, and Project Based Plan of Action, which aims
at starting projects in areas where there is high occurrence of child labour. Keeping
this in mind in 1988 the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) scheme was
launched in 9 districts of the country. Under the scheme special schools are being
run for children withdrawn from work. Here these children are being provided
formal/non-formal education along with vocational training. A stipend of Rs. 100
per month and supplementary nutrition is also being provided to them. The scheme
also makes provisions for their regular health check-ups and prepares them to join
the main stream schools.

Now the coverage of NCLP scheme has increased from 12 districts in 1988 to
100 districts in the 9th plan to 250 districts during the 10th plan. Under the 10th Plan
also a number of efforts are being made to corner the problem of child labour. Some
of the main points of the 10th plan strategy are as follows:

- Focused and reinforced action to eliminate child labour in hazardous
  occupations by the end of the plan period.
- Expansion of National Child Labour projects to additional 150 districts.
- Linking the child labour elimination efforts with the scheme of Sarva
  Shiksha Abhiyan of Ministry of Human Resource Development.

In addition 21 districts have also been covered under the INDUS scheme (which
is a scheme for rehabilitation of child labour in cooperation with US Department of
Labour). For the districts which are not covered under these two schemes, the
government is providing funds directly to the NGO’s under the Ministry Grants-in-
aid scheme for running, special schools for rehabilitation of child labour.

Latest Developments:

Also, now, in its bid to wipe out child labour, the state has from October 10,
2006 decided to ban the employment of children below the age of 14 as domestic
helps and in dhabas, tea shops, restaurants, hotels, and resorts. In the past also the
government servants were not allowed to employ young children as domestic helps. This was however a partial ban. This has now been expanded and no child may be employed by any person, household, or business. In case somebody disobeys the law, he or she has to pay a penalty of a jail term ranging from three months to two years with or without a fine that could range from 10,000 to Rs. 20,000. This amendment has been made under the child labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986.

However, the new order has triggered conflicting reactions. While a number of NGO’s have welcomed the “much-delayed” move, several others are skeptical about the effectiveness of the ban, especially in the light of government’s failure to monitor, much less rehabilitate children who are working in sectors where the ban is already in force. On top of this, there a hum about the desirability of the new ban as some see child labour as a by product of poverty, as often it is these children who add to the family income.

In its attempt to put an end to these issues, the Government of India has proposed an ambitious scheme for child protection. The Union Women and Child Development Ministry proposes to combine its existing child protection programs under an ambitious Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) to create a strong protective environment for children, diversify and institutionalize essential services for children and mobilize inter-sectoral response for strengthening child protection. The ICPS aims to prevent violations of child rights through appropriate punitive measure against perpetrators an abuse and crimes against children and to ensure rehabilitation for all children in need of care and protection. This would be done by improving regulatory frameworks, strengthening structures and professional capacities at national state and district levels.

In addition to the already existing mechanisms for child protection (which flow from the Juvenile Justice care and Protection of children Act 200C and National Plan of Action for children 2005) and the program for Juvenile Justice for children under difficult circumstance, children, Central Adoption Resources Agency and National Child Labour Project, the Ministry proposes to set up a state child protection unit in each state/UT and District Child Protection Unit in each district and the co-ordinations of various child protection services for the deprived, destitute children including the children in conflict with the law. The unit will also implement
supervise, monitor and evaluate the various child protection programs being implemented under the integrated child protection scheme including grant-in-aid schemes. Another important part of the Authority would be the state Adoption cell for regulating in country adoption of children. It will facilitate, supervise, and monitor all adoptions programs and agencies at the state levels in the CARA support.

This is, in brief, what the government has proposed to do but what really will happen and how far the government will be able to implement its protected scheme, only time will tell. In the meanwhile it would be worthwhile to study the role of various government organizations engaged in the process of eradication of child labour in Chandigarh, which is the area of our present study.

**Various Government Projects To Help 'Children In Distress', In Chandigarh**

1. Helplines
   (i) **Childline**

   Childline which is a Government Project of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (GOI) in partnership with state governments, NGO’s, International Donors, the corporate sector, concerned individuals and children. Childline is a national, 24 hour, free, emergency telephone helpline and outreach service for children in need of care and protection. The childline number 1098 is a toll free number that is common in all cities of India. Childline was initially started in Mumbai in June 1996 is currently operational in 67 cities. It aim to help out the most marginalized children between the age group 0-18 years and provides interventions of shelter, medical, repatriation, rescue, death related, sponsorship and emotional support and guidance. In Chandigarh one finds Childline operational in the Department of Pediatrics, Advanced Pediatric Center PGIMER, Sector 12, Chandigarh.

   (ii) **Women Helpline**

   The Women Helpline comes under SSCO operations, Chandigarh Police. It is a national, 24 hours, free emergency telephone helpline, (its number being 1091) that extends help to the women and children in distress.

   Children rescued with the help of Childline and Women Helpline (which usually involve police intervention) are either sent back to their own homes or
homes for the destitute and victimized like Nari Niketan in Sector 26 etc. as the case demands. Many times a case is registered against the offenders with the police.

2. Child Adoption Center

**Haryana Child Welfare Council**

This adoption center is under the additional charge of Director Social Justice and Empowerment. Recognizing the family as the best place for a child, the center makes sincere efforts to place an orphaned surrendered or relinquished child in a family through adoption.

3. Juvenile Home (Sector 25)

The Juvenile Home is incorporating three homes:

- Children’s home for neglected boys
- Observation home for boys in conflicted with law
- Juvenile home for boys after conviction as delinquents

The juvenile home functions under the juvenile justice act, the Chief Judicial Magistrate being the Chairman and the prominent social workers are the members of the committee. The children home for the neglected boy’s functions under the care and protection of children committee comprising a Chairman and four members. Under the Juvenile Justice Act the girls are sent to Nari Niketan, Sector 26, Chandigarh.

Thus, a variety of efforts are being made by the government agencies to deal with the problem of child labour. In addition to these, the government also provides funds to the various NGOs working in the city for the cause.

**The role of Non Government organizations in dealing with child labour.**

As far as the NGOs are concerned, their role in dealing with this issue has been quite noticeable. A great number of NGOs, both local and international are working in the field of child labour in India. Given below is a list of selected NGO’s along with their profiles who are working in this direction in India:

(i) **Action Aid India**: One area of focus of action aid India is education and lift out children (including street and working children). The NGO has 12 regional offices (in Bangalore, Bhopal, Bhubneswar, Kolkata, Chennai, Delhi, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, Mumbai and Patna.)
(ii) Butterflies: Butterflies provides alternative education as well as basic services to street children and working children in the New Delhi area.

(iii) CARE India: One of the main areas of activity of Care in India is girls’ education. The NGO works in 11 Indian states.

(iv) Child Relief and You (CRY): CRY targets underprivileged Indian children, including child workers. The NGO carries out child development initiatives all over India. It is based in Maharashtra.

(v) CICI ASHA: The NGO seeks to improve the quality of life of socially disadvantaged children living in urban areas through education, health and social mobilization. The primary beneficiaries of CINI ASH programs are street children, children living in slums and squatter colonies, and children of sex workers. The NGO is based in West Bengal.


(vii) CREDA (Centre for Rural Education and Development Action): The NGO’s work focuses on child labour related activities. It has undertaken projects for the elimination and rehabilitation of child labour around Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh).

(viii) Eklavya: Eklavya, in Madhya Pradesh is an NGO who is concerned with improving the quality of education, training teachers and evolving innovative curricula and teaching learning material for learners.

(ix) Global March Against Child Labour: The Global March Against Child Labour is a global movement against child labour. It has partners in over 150 countries and is based in New Delhi.

(x) Indian Institute of Education (IIE): IIE in Maharashtra focuses on the educational needs of working children. It believes that non formal education is a good substitute for working children and focuses on it.

(xi) Lok Jumbish: This NGO in Rajasthan tries to address need of children who have been out of mainstream education system through Sahaj Shiksha Kendra.

(xii) MV Foundation: The main thrust of this organization in Andhra Pradesh has been on bringing bonded child labourers and working children into the ambit of school education.
(xiii) **Prayas**: Prayas works with destitute, street and working children. It addresses issues related to lack of sensitivity and infrastructure for their rehabilitation, education and reintegration. Prayas covers Delhi, Bihar and the earthquake affected areas of Gujarat.

(xiv) **Salaam Baalak Trust**: This NGO works with street and working children in and around New Delhi railway station. It provides basic service to the children, including formal and non-formal education.

(xv) **Save the Children (UK) in India**: Save the Children works for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour. Currently, the international NGO runs three projects with working children in Rajasthan, west Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir.

(xvi) **M. Venkataramaiya Foundation**: One of the primary goals of the Foundation is to eliminate child labour by universalizing school education. The Foundation mainly works in Andhra Pradesh.

(xvii) **World Vision India**: World Vision conducts nine special initiative programs, targeting in particular street children, bonded child labourers and child victims of sexual exploitation.

Similarly, the important Non Government Organizations working in the city for child welfare include:

(xviii) **Aruna Asaf Ali Memorial Trust**

The Aruna Asaf Ali Memorial Trust’ was established in 1997. This trust works for causes like relief of the poor, empowerment and organization of women, children’s development, encouragement of cultural movements and the promotion of secular ideas. Its CLEC’s i.e. child labour education centers (named DISHA) are a very important part of the activities of Aruna Asaf Ali Memorial Trust CLEC’s objective is to provide a continuous coaching to these deprived children so that they are able to appear for the board level fifth, primary exams, which are a must if they are not to relapse into illiteracy. The trust also provides stipends, uniforms and books to children free of cost and motivates them to study beyond the primary level.

With this in mind the trust opened 3 such CLEC centers in Chandigarh in 1999, one in Janta Colony Sec-25, second in Azad colony Panchkula, and third in Guru Nanak Dev Lab Colony Mohali. The third one i.e. the one in Mohali is presently closed because of demolition of this slum colony.
The Aruna Asaf Ali Bhavan in Sec-44-A, Chandigarh, also runs there a CLEC and an open school for children. The CLEC at the Janta Colony, Sec-25 have in the period 2002 to 2005 produced 29 students who have fifth primary. Out of these, 16 have enrolled in higher classes. The Panchkula CLEC has sent 28 boys and girls for higher classes after coaching them to pass the primary level. 24 more children are currently studying in different classes of primary level.

The students who are able to clear these classes are helped (financially and otherwise) by the trust in seeking admission to various vocational centers or colleges in the city. Besides all this, for supporting the education of needy students, the Trust runs a donor scheme under which donations are raised to fund scholarships for these deprived children for courses up to the graduate diploma level.

(xix) Bharat Vikas Parishad

It is a non-government organization which was established in 1963. It runs various projects for pursuing social causes at the national level. In Chandigarh this organization is running various projects, SAHYOG being one such project which aims at helping needy and deserving school children. Under the project, students are selected after thorough scrutiny of each case. Most of the students selected are from city’s labour colony’s schools and helped in the form of books/stationery/uniform/shoes/tuition fees etc. A student once selected continues to receive help from the parishad till he completes his high school education. From 2005 even students of XI and XII have also been included in this project for aid in continuing their higher studies.

Bharat Vikas Parishad is an organization which indirectly caters to problems like child labour, juvenile delinquency and crime. By motivating children to study, and providing financial help, the organization channelizes their energies in the right direction. This helps to cut down a lot on school drop out rates, which if not checked would have serious repercussions.

(xx) Don Bosco Navjeevan (Chandigarh)

Don Bosco Navjeevan started the work for the young at risk in Chandigarh in July 2003. It is a part of the Don Bosco network spread over more than 145 countries providing various services to young people around the world. The network has secondary schools, senior secondary schools, colleges, formal and informal technical institutes, agricultural schools, social work centers, mass media production centers,
publication houses, rehabilitation centers for different categories of children and young at risk – Street Children, Slum Children, child labourers, drug addicts etc. They also receive aid in their project by the central government and union territory administration of Chandigarh. Though their department of social justice and empowerment. Its various activities include:

1) Providing street presence, alternative education, repatriation, life skills training, rehabilitation, and health care to street children (5-18 years).

2) Providing health care, alternative education, vocational training, like skill training, repatriation, rehabilitation to working children (10-18 years).

3) Providing remedial classes, vocational training open school admission adolescence education to school dropouts (10-18 years) slum children (10-18 years) and adolescent girls (12-22 years).

4) Providing emergency services to children in distress. (0-18 years).

5) Working for women empowerment and guiding youth in conflict with law.

With these ends in view Don Bosco Navjeevan has opened Balwadies in 15 Slums. These being – Azad Colony, Amb Sahib Colony, Bapu Dham Colony, Danik Bhaskar, Colony No. 5, Dadu Majra, Ghumar Colony, Guru Nanak Colony, Indira Colony, Maloya Colony, Mauli Jagran, Naya Gaon, Nehru Colony, Ram Darbar and Sector 52. Here children are not only taught to read and write but also given opportunities to exercise their talent like singing, dancing drawing etc. Health check ups are performed on regular basin. For the scholastic year April 2004 – March 2005, they had on rolls 436 children in 15 balwadi centers.

In addition children form slums, engaged in labour etc are encouraged to come to community centers where they are given tuitions. Remedial classes are organized for children studying in classes II and III. These remedial classes help in reducing drop out rates from schools. Also, in case the organization comes across victimized women and children, their case for admission to Nari Niketan or Juvenile Homes is taken up by the same.

(xxii) Durga Das Foundation

Durga Das Foundation is an organization in Chandigarh which is working for the cause of not so fortunate children. This organization is trying to impart education to the working children, slum children and street children.
It has opened three night schools, First in Hallumajra, second in Bapu Dham Colony and the third one in Indira colony Chandigarh. These schools are opened in the building Govt. schools in the respective colonies each school has about 50 children. These children are shoe shiners, rag pickers, begging, domestic workers labourers etc, coming from a very humble background. Each school has one teacher and one maid to cater to the needs of the children.

This school starts at 4 pm and closes at 6 pm. Refreshments like fruits/sweets etc are given here to students everyday on Monday’s they are provided a full meal by ‘DROP IN’ sec-24 a CITCO venture. The finding for these schools comes from ‘STRAWBERRY SCHOOL’ sector-24.

(xxii) Indian Council Of Social Welfare (ICSW) Chandigarh Chapter

ICSW is recognized branch of the Indian council of social welfare, central office Bombay which is registered under the Public Trust Act, 1950 and Societies Registration Act, 1860. ICSW Chandigarh Chapter started in April 1973. It is voluntary, non political, secular organization, providing help to the needy and economically weaker section of the society.

Among the various activities undertaken by the organization, the most important one is - The Khushree School for Street Children: ICSW is running a school for street children in Kumhaar Colony, Sector 25, Chandigarh. The aim of the school is to help needy children (Children engaged in labour, street children) who never attend to school. This school was started from 1.1.2001 and since its inception, the school has enrolled more than 120 slum children out of which 90 children have been admitted to regular schools. At present 30 children are enrolled. Here regular health check ups are provided to them and they are also given tips to maintain, good health as well as a healthy environment. ICSW Chandigarh Chapter is also running a family Counselling center at Karuna Sadan, Added by Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB).

(xxiii) Indian Council For Child Welfare, Chandigarh Branch Bal Bhawan, Sector 23, Chandigarh

It is connected to the National Bal Bhawan New Delhi. The ICCW Chandigarh has:
1) 50 Day care centers for working mothers at urban slums, villages in and around Chandigarh. About 36 buildings are built by the Chandigarh
Administration and some others are given by PGI, Sector 16, General Hospital, CSIO, Panjab University, Punjab Engineering College etc.

2) It has started special nutrition program (SNP) for children in 15 slums in Chandigarh. These slums include slums of Colony 29, Colony 30, Slums of Sector 25, 26 Sector 32 etc. to name a few.

3) ICCW has opened an institute for the rehabilitation of handicapped children named ‘Prayas’ Sector 38. ICCW believes that by rehabilitating handicapped children they can reduce problems like child labour, begging, suicidal tendencies in children.

4) It has opened a number of Balwadis and Anganwaris with a view to impart education to the poor who are engaged in other activities simultaneously.

(xxiv) Sikhya (The school of learning)

Sikhya school is run under the Guru Nanak Vidya Bhandar Trust. The vision of the trust all along has been to establish world class educational institution, which aim to empower the students with application oriented skills that have a direct relevance to both the national as well as international economic and business context.

It is located in Sector 46-A, Chandigarh and it was started in 2006. At present the school is up to class VII. It has 14 teachers and around 650 students, though in future they plan to extent it up to class X or XII. Sikhya, the school of learning is a state of the art educational institution, with a focus to providing quality education exclusively to the underprivileged class (i.e. children who are poor and are either working on a casual basis somewhere or are not able to attend school as they have to take care of their younger siblings or just because they cannot afford the school fee). Its uniqueness lies not only in its client base but in the fact that all the facilities, be it section, professional coaching in sports, hobbies, meals, uniform, textbooks or value addition in skills and so much more are all provided to the students free of cost. The school has also made a provision for a crèche within the school premises where girls may leave their younger siblings while they attend school.
Theater Age’ is the result of hard work of Mr. Zulfiqar Khan, a man who dreamt of changing the lives of slum children through theater and drama. Its hub is in sector-24, Government High School, where children after their day of work get together and enthusiastically imitate the dialogues and gestures of their director Mr. Zulfiqar Khan. The actors in the play are no ordinary artistes some of them are shoe shiners, some rag pickers, some work as domestic servants and they all come form various slums around the city. What they share in common is a passion for acting and a great respect for their mentor Mr. Zulfiqar Khan.

Theater Age’, has transformed the lives of hundreds of slum children. Vicky was a 16 year old Urchin from one of the slums in the city, working with Zulfiqar changed him dramatically and now he has a job with the Border Security Force. Vijay Machal, a shoe-shine boy who passed his class VIII examination while attending Theatre Age, now conducts theatre work shop in a leading women’s college in the city. Veer Pal, a student of Zulfiqar is now working as a make up man for a serial shown on Patiala Doordarshan – The list is endless. According to Zulfiqar, Theater Age’ is the medium through which he tries to tap the intrinsic creativity of those slum children and bring about a change in their lives. For Zulfiqar theatre is the best way to rehabilitate these children as it teaches them what life is all about and at the same time acts as a ‘release’ for them – Mr. Zulfiqar established the Theater Age in 1992.

Mr.Zulfiqar gets the money to run the project form waste paper donated by residents of Chandigarh. Theatre Age currently comprise 25 slum children who assemble at the Govt. High School Sector-24 at around 2 pm. There they cook these meals for themselves, rehearse for their play, study, interact with one another and leave for their respective homes at around 8:30 pm. Theatre has got the slum kids addicted to acclaim and enabled them to rediscover themselves to start a new life.

Youth Technical Training Society (YTTS)

Youth Technical Training Society (YTTS) was started informally in 1980 and registered in 1986. YTTS is a non government organization (NGO) working for the down trodden through centers in twelve locations in Chandigarh, two in Ropar Dist of Punjab and four in Solan Dist.of Himachal Pradesh. In Chandigarh its

Projects being run by YTTS are:

1) **PUSTAK** – is a year long non-formal education nutrition and health programs for the poor children preparing them for admission to the formal educational systems. Pustak schools provide non-formal education at 3 levels primarily:
   - Pustak crèche (1 – 6 years)
   - Pustak school (6 – 10 years)
   - Pustak High (10 – 14 years or 14+)

2) **AASRA** – AASRA meaning support is YTTS’s effort for the street child. These are children working as rag pickers, dhaba workers, domestic help, and informal trainees with mechanics to keep themselves alive, and save some for their ‘family’. This also covers children of contain categories like pavement dwellers, brick kiln workers etc. Their particular problems need specialized support. YTTS provides them help through their normal intervention centers amongst normal children from deprived families but treat them as a group with special needs. YTTS also provides help to reunite them with their own families. Keeping this in view a twenty four hour drop in shelter has been made at Mauli Jagran which is primarily aimed at being used by the boys. Another night shelter ‘Vineet 17’ has been made in sector-17 for the street children. Here the children are provided with food and they spend their night there by paying Re 1 daily. They are also taught basic Maths, English and Hindi here.

3) **Childline** – ‘Children’ started as a students project at Tata Institutes of social sciences to include the ‘voice’ of the city of Bombay’s street children. This idea has spawned centers in 56 cities with over 150 partner NGOs and is ever growing.

Since 2003, YTTS is functioning as support organization for Child line in the city. In addition, it is performing the duties of the nodal organization on a purely
voluntary and honorary basis primarily to ensure networking providing documentation inputs and training organizations associated with childline.

YTTS maintains a close and intimate contact with advanced Pediaetric Centre Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, which runs the collaborative organization.

From the foregoing discussion it is evident that both the government and non-government organizations at global, national, and state levels are doing a lot for children. However, their efforts are not giving the desired results due to certain limitations of these programmes. A perusal of the various child related activities of the government and non-government organizations in Chandigarh shows that, the issue being catered to is not child labour but child rights at large, or the children being targeted are not child labourers but the deprived and needy children in the general. This being the case, both, the government as well as the non-government organizations are:

a) Busy providing educational facilities to these children,
b) Running shelter homes for them, and
c) Extending help to those who are in distress.

The issue of ‘child labour’ as such is not being directly addressed to by anybody. The various Laws formulated by the government in this direction seem to be a half-hearted effort. This is, specially true of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986. The act still talks of partial elimination of child labour from some of the occupations/processes. The scope of the act has to be widened, in terms of defining child labour, its area of operation and amount of penalty in case of failure to implement the act.

The present act tries to deal with the symptoms of the problem and not the problem itself. However, according to the recent amendment to the act, Government from October 2006 has decided to ban the employment of children below the age of fourteen as domestic helps and in dhabas, tea shops, restaurants, hotels and resorts. This seems to be a step in the right direction.

Making a law is much easier than actually implementing it. Enforcement of the law is an issue which needs to be catered to. However, rehabilitation of the child labourers needs to be attended to first. Without proper rehabilitation, there is a fear
of these child labourers are again becoming susceptible to exploitation. Here is where the non government organizations step in.

There has to co-exist a parallel attempt to address the root problems that prompt children to take up work in India. On interviewing the child labourers, we identified poverty, low income, illiteracy and lousy educational opportunities which breed disinterest in studies, amongst our respondents as the important causes of this malady-child labour. There is no point freeing children from employment if their families have no viable alternative source of income, because the child labourers will simply find themselves new work.

The non government organizations in our study have been addressing these issues independently. There lacks a coordination between their efforts and the policies formulated by the government. The NGO’s have been working independently with little support from the government. In one of our studies, we found that the base of an NGO, which was inside an unauthorized Jhuggi, was demolished along with the other Jhuggis. Since then the Jhuggi walas have found new homes, however the NGO still hunts for its new base.

This study has been a modest endeavour to look into the profile, causes, and consequences of the evil, i.e., child labour. Although, we have provided a brief discussion of the efforts made by the government, as well as the non- governmental agencies to wipe off this problem, however, as mentioned earlier, we have stopped short of assessing the strengths and weaknesses of these. The usual constraints faced by an individual researcher, and the parameters chosen for the study, mandated that. We are of the considered view that no study of the problem can be complete without the same, we are committed to undertaking the same for the Post-Doctoral work.