CHAPTER - VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION
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Child labour is an inevitable social evil. The problem of child labour is on the increase today in spite of the legal sanctions and constitutional provisions against it. Child labour is that form of work a child is engaged in, it is detrimental to the growth and development of the child. In the cities, towns and villages of our great nation, one can see young children at work, earning their livelihood and supporting their families with as much responsibility as any adult. The poignant stories of child labourers are still heard and yet to be investigated.

A happy childhood is the right of every child and to provide it is the concern of the parents, the public and the democratic government. But the juvenile labourers are burdened with responsibilities from the very moment they are able to walk and talk. The sight of small kids toiling hard in inhuman conditions in beedi, slate, balloon, match, bangles manufacturing and a number of other factories, and working as rag-pickers, construction workers and cleaners of the utensils in hotels and restaurants is common.

It has been found that children, no doubt, were working even in the past. But the work during those days was not hazardous or harmful. It did not pose any obstacle in the development of a child. But child labour today is an extreme form of human exploitation where innocent children are forced to undertake hard and dangerous work for their survival. With the onset of industrialization and urbanization the scale of this painful reality
is increasing year by year. In the modern industrialized society employers prefer child workers to the adult workers as child labour is cheap. Moreover the children normally are more submissive, easy to be controlled, sincere and hard working. For child workers there are no strict rules of payments, receipts, terms and conditions. Today child labour has become a blot on the conscience of society. Child labour is prevalent in almost all the countries, predominantly in the developing countries of the world. Ninety per cent of the child labour is concentrated in the underdeveloped countries of the world. Incidentally India possesses the highest child labour force in the world. According to 1981 census about 17.36 million children were engaged in labour which constituted approximately 6 per cent of the Indian labour force. The census of India in 1991 estimated the number of child workers as 1,42,17,588. In India millions of children spend a major part of their daily life in hazardous works and at the same time millions of youth are unemployed.

Many studies have revealed that children are exploited in various ways. There are some economic activities, which are intrinsically pernicious. And some are harmful because of lack of essential facilities—uncongenial working environment, overwork and unhygienic situations. In a nutshell it is doubtless that all the works done by the children today are injurious to their health.

Beedi, lock, glass, slate, match and fire works, power loom industries etc., are the examples of intrinsically pernicious industries. Though some activities like diamond-cutting, gem-polishing, zari-embroidery etc., are not hazardous by themselves, continuous sitting in the same posture in dim lights, lack of air and light have made them hazardous.
The children who are paid extremely low wages are forced to work over-time to increase their income and thus are exploited. It is possible to minimize these problems if the employers change their attitude towards these children, that is, if they start thinking not only in terms of maximum profit but take into consideration the well-being of these children seriously.

Neera Burra in her article “Health Hazards” (1988) has given a clear vision of the exploitation of children in various industries in modern industrialized Indian society.

Nearly 15000 children work on power looms in Bheewandi of Maharashtra. In this industry these children suffer from weak lungs leading to bronchitis and tuberculosis because of inhalation of cotton and linen dust.

Children are preferred to adults at the looms as the nimble fingers can work faster than those of adults with limited movements. But these delicate hands get destroyed and infected soon. They work for 18 hours a day. It has been found that maintenance of the same posture for hours and the intricacy of the work often leads to physical deformities and loss of eye-sight of these children.

Ninety per cent of the carpet production of our country is undertaken in carpet weaving units of Uttar Pradesh called ‘Dollar Land’ since 765 crores of foreign exchange is earned by this industry. As per the report of Chopra and Mallik - 1987 in Jammu and Kashmir in the carpet industry nearly 7000 children worked for 8 to 10 hours a day.

Around one lakh children from the age of five comprising mostly girls are toiling in unsafe conditions in the matchstick and fire-works industries in Sivakashi and Shrivilliputtur and some
places in Kamaraj district in Tamil Nadu. They are always under the risk of explosions and accidents. Vishwapiya Iyengar narrates the awful conditions of health that these children are facing as follows: "Children mixing chemicals in the boiler room get lungfuls of toxic fumes, suffer high degree of intense heat and run the risk of being badly injured in fire accidents. Children who stamp frames on the metal sheet too suffer heat, toxic fumes and excessive strain on the arms and shoulders for they have to remove and place the heavy frames with great rapidity. Delay of a second can cause the entire frame to go up in roaring flames which causes instant death."

The children working in balloon industry inhale the dust and chemicals and get respiratory lining burnt leading to pneumonia-bronchopneumonia, cough, breathlessness and even heart failure.

About 10,000 children are working in the lock-making industries of Aligarh. Most of these children engaged in polishing the rusted metals suffer from tuberculosis and other respiratory diseases. Moreover the children working in electroplating workshops suffer from breathlessness, asthma and severe headache.

These children work in temperatures as high as 1040 and 90 per cent of these children suffer from pneumoconiosis, a condition which leads to tuberculosis, Dr. Apurva Chaturvedi says' "it takes just 3 or 4 years to destroy their lungs in the dangerously polluted atmosphere of the glass factories".

The workers in the slate industries get a dreadful disease called silicosis. They suffer from respiratory problems, then start to vomit blood and ultimately die. In the effort to save these elders the children are forced to enter into slate factory work and face the
same fate. People working in these factories breathe their last before they reach the age of forty years because of the inhalation of slate dust.

According to the survey report of UNICEF thousands of children of 6 to 14 years of age are working in various small units of beedi industries. Most of these children suffer from tuberculosis as they inhale the smell and dust of tobacco and nicotine.

These activities directly affect the health of the children and often they are fatal. Some other activities are not hazardous by themselves but they are made harmful because of lack of facilities, long hours of work, low wages, incongenial working environment, and cruel treatment by the employers etc. On the whole, whatever may be the type of activity, child labour involves the denial of the rights of the child to stay with the family, get education and enjoy the childhood.

Working in hotels, teashops, dhabas and bars may not be so harmful to adults but has an impact on physical, mental and intellectual development of children. The food they get and the treatment they receive are also significant. These children have to live at the mercy of their employers. Even for their smallest mistakes they are punished severely. Children often have the problem of long hours of work without rest and holidays, which makes them feel tired. In spite of their hard work they are not paid fair wages. There is no job security. A pledged child is like a slave to the agent till the loan taken by the family is re-paid. Sexual abuse takes place in many cases.

It is in the past few years that the problem of child labour has entered the public consciousness with some persistence. The debate on this subject was initiated when government announced
its intention in 1985 to introduce fresh legislation to deal with the phenomenon of child labour (Lalitendu, Jagadeb., Dhir Kahnu Cheran, J. Ksharadendu quoted by Pati 1990).

This study is carried out in Hubli-Dharwad Twin City of Dharwad district, as an effort towards bringing awareness about the problem of child workers.

It is based on the survey of 176 boys working in 61 hotels situated in the market area, which is the heart of the city of Dharwad.

The main tool used for the present study was a pre-coded structured interview schedule.

The questionnaire schedule was prepared in English but since most of the respondents were young and illiterate, questions had to be asked in the regional language that is Kannada, which was known to almost all the respondents. Keeping in mind the objectives of the study the questionnaire has been divided into five sections.

Each section throws light upon one aspect of the life of child labourer. The information collected through this questionnaire was coded and through computer processing, frequency tables were prepared. The statistical analysis used in this study were frequency, percentages and chi-square values. Chi-square test was applied to find out the association between variables.

The main focus of the study was to examine the socio-economic background of the families in terms of the size and pattern of the family, age, habits of the parents, occupational pattern and income of the parents, property owned by them,
indebtedness, literacy status of the parents, attitude of parents towards child labour etc.

Another important aspect of my study was to identify wage pattern, hours of work, working conditions, atmosphere at work place, attitude of the children towards work and self-perception, the relationship of the child labourers with the employers and co-workers.

The factors, which are mainly responsible for the children to get employed, were also studied in terms of economic, social, cultural and emotional (psychological) factors.

I have discussed the characteristics of child workers in terms of age, education, caste and religion, native place and migration etc.

The following are the criteria of child labour in this study:

1) A boy below the age of 14 years,

2) A boy who is working in a small or medium hotel for wage in cash or in kind,

3) A boy who is working under an employer as a full time or part time worker, and

4) A boy who is not attending the school regularly during the day

The earlier chapters give a clear picture of the magnitude of the problem of child labour at the global, national and state level. The data show that the proportion of child labour is less in the developed countries. It has been found out that in general the practice of child labour is more prevalent in poor countries where there are no resources infrastructure, basic amenities for children,
such as educational institutions, vocational training centres and the like. The increasing unemployment among the adult population also plays an important role in pushing children into the labour force.

The ILO states that in Africa, where one child in three has to work, the rate of child labour is the highest in the world. It is reported that children make up 17 per cent of the continent’s work force, Asia alone harbors about 72 per cent of the world’s child labour force, whereas Southern European Countries have a small proportion of child labour. No credible evidence is available so far regarding the prevalence of child labour in Central and Eastern Europe. Probably this lower rate of child labour may be attributed to factors like the high level of economic development, implementation of advanced educational facilities and careful enforcement of child labour laws.

Less developed countries are confronted with two major problems: high fertility and a lower level of education. Employment of children at a young age is an important cause for the persistence of those problems. Though the ultimate aim of these developing countries is to eradicate child labour, the socio-economic and cultural factors come in the way of this endeavor.

India is a poor country with a high fertility and low literacy rate. As per the Report of National Family Health Survey (1992-93) the crude birth rate in India is 28.7 and 58.9 per cent children between 6 to 14 years are attending school. In other worlds 41 per cent of children of school going age do not go to school. The over all literacy rate is 56.7 per cent. Thus the proportion of illiterates is high. Hence child labour laws in India have remained only on...
paper. The scale of adult unemployment on the other hand is on the increase day by day.

“All the legislations (strategies) even if implemented effectively, will not address the root of the problem. Half the battle will be won when free and compulsory education becomes available to all children upto age of 14. In states like Kerala, where “the education for all” mantra has been made a reality, child labour is unheard of” (Editor, Times of India 8.4.1997)

The Demographic Transition Theory has specifically pointed out that in a backward agricultural economy, a child is considered to be an asset. Dr. Hajira Kumar (1999) says, “Parents of poor class, usually, see their children as economically ‘productive units’ with least possible investments. In rural areas one can often witness that some parents wash and bathe their cattle but not their children because children will be productive without bathing also”. In a developed industrialized, urban setting, however, a child becomes more of a liability than an asset. This change in the economic value of children is supposed to be one of the multifarious forces, which have brought about the demographic transition, along with the economic transformation in the Western world. (Sumati Kulkarni, 1979).

An overwhelming majority of the population in India being of agriculturists, a child here is considered as an asset and as a consequence the proportion of children below 14 years in the total population is high. No wonder, therefore, the proportion of child labour is also significantly high.
Peasants need high fertility for the economic benefits gained thereby. A clear connection between poverty and the economic gains of child labour is also established.

A close scrutiny of the demographic characteristics of child labour shows that children at a tender age have little education, belong to small families and mostly migrated from rural communities.

As far as the age composition is concerned, in this sample 94 per cent of the children are between 11 and 14 years and of them 70 per cent belong to the age group 13-14 years.

According to the survey report of UNICEF thousands of children of 6 to 14 years of age are working in various small units of beedi, industries.

A child is neither expected nor does it wish to take up a job, unless someone or the circumstance compels him/her to do so. Children naturally, would like to play or learn and to be loved and pampered by the parents and not wish to labour hard. The present sample reveals that 78 per cent of the child labourers are forced or at least motivated by someone like father, mother, friends and relatives and 22 per cent of these have chosen to work themselves due to the situation.

Among the child labourers interviewed, 83 per cent were Hindus. And the rest were Muslims and Christians. Hindus dominate the sample.

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Among the Hindu respondents nearly half were from the middle caste and a little less than that were from the lower castes, and very few from upper castes.

As against this general notion that child labour is contributed by the larger families, the present survey shows that an overwhelming percentage of (82%) respondents belonged to nuclear families with less than 7 members. Our hypothesis that family size and child labour are conversely related is therefore rejected.

The profile of the sample shows that a majority of the respondents are migrants from rural areas. Even the hazardous industries in urban areas are dependent upon the child workers from rural areas.

In the cities of India, nearly 39 per cent of child workers were migrants according to the 1961 census. The percentage varied between 82 in Assam to 13 in Jammu and Kashmir. The general observation is that wherever the total number of migrants is high, the proportion of migrant child labour is also high. In certain types of jobs like working in small hotels and restaurants, mainly migrant children are preferred. Hence a large number of children migrated to cities to get employed. In the present study also an overwhelming majority of the respondents are migrants.

A large number of migrant child labourers prefer service in hotels because they get food, shelter and often clothing. In some cases children migrate along with their parents. But in many cases, only children migrate in order to get employed. The
problems of the migrant child labourers are various and peculiar. They are often separated from their parents and family members at a young age.

The migration of parents as well as children comes in the way of the schooling of those children. In the present study 30 per cent of the children are illiterate and the education of 42 per cent of child workers is limited to the primary level only. In other words 98 per cent of the children have education below the secondary level. Almost all of them are dropouts. (Thus the hypothesis stating that there is a converse relation between lack of education among children and child labour is accepted.)

Education is one of the most important leverages of upward mobility in society. Education enhances the thinking and reasoning capacity of an individual. The child labourers are denied this basic right of getting education and acquisition of knowledge. Had these children were educated at least, they might have had the knowledge of the legislation concerned to children and the provisions and facilities provided to them for their protection and development.

In this sample 69 per cent of the child labourers and 68 per cent of their parents are ignorant about the labour laws. Moreover, in a majority of hotels the labour laws are not followed. The labour inspectors are not strictly and honestly implementing the law.

In this sample the working children did not have the knowledge of many languages also. 66 per cent of them knew only Kannada and 29 per cent of them knew two languages.
Not only the children but also a majority of their parents were illiterate. In this sample 56 per cent of fathers and 74 per cent of mothers were illiterate and 22 per cent and 11 per cent respectively have had only primary education. This illiteracy of parents is also an important factor, which is responsible for the low level of education of their children and their taking up jobs. Significantly a large number of children have illiterate parents.

Thus the hypothesis that there is a positive correlation between illiteracy of the parents and child labour is accepted.

Because of low level of education of the parents, their occupational status is lower and it leads to poverty, which in turn leads to child labour. In this sample it is clear that most of the parents are daily wage earners. Some of the parents are even unemployed. It has also been found out that a large majority of the parents’ monthly income is less than Rs.2000, which means they are very poor. Regarding their ownership of property it has been found that less than 1/4th of them own small pieces of land and less than 1/3rd parents have their own small houses in which they live. In a nutshell it is clear that the parents of child workers neither have enough monthly income nor have sufficient property. The income from their property is insignificant. Due to the low income, which is insufficient for their livelihood, their savings are also little. Not only do they not have savings but may also have the burden of debt. Most of them have loans up to Rs.10,000 and a few of them have even more than Rs.10,000 loan. In a number of cases widows have the burden of loans of their dead husbands and in many cases the young boys have the burden of loan, as they are the earning members of the family. The source of a loan is also as
important as the extent (amount) of loan taken. Because the loan taken from the money lenders and friends goes on increasing because of a high rate of interest and these poor people can never repay the loan at all. This loan is taken by these poor parents mainly for reasons such as marriage, hospital expenses, day-to-day expenses etc., which are for non-productive purposes. In spite of their scanty income they have to pay the interest on loan. Thus they are caught in a vicious circle of loan and low income. All these factors make it clear that the socio-economic condition of the parents of child workers is miserable.

Further it has been found in this research that even the earnings of their young children is also utilized for the livelihood of the family members. A significantly large portion (75%) of the earnings of the child workers is used for daily expenses and for repaying the loan. The earning children themselves do not know for what their earnings are expended. Thus the children do not have any other alternate but to go for work, for the maintenance of the family.

Due to the chronic poverty the parents fail to provide even the basic needs like food, clothing, shelter, health-care facilities and recreation to their children.

A large chunk of the working children are not satisfied with these needs at home. Thus children are compelled to take up one or the other occupations even at the cost of their desire to be cared, loved by their parents, by other members of the family and the desired to get education. For working children earning is the first priority. They are deprived of the opportunity to educate
themselves and lack of education ensures that a child remains an unskilled labourer with low wages forever. Hence it may be concluded that poverty and child labour are positively correlated.

Along with economic conditions the emotional background also influences the life of children. Family atmosphere plays a most important role in moulding the personality of a child. In this study it has been found that in the case of half of the child workers the parents had a cordial relationship with each other and nearly half of them had borne hostile relation. Because of the hostile relations of parents, some children felt like going away from home and some others were confused.

Only 30 per cent of fathers and 63 per cent of mothers are not strict in dealings with their children and the remaining are strict. Moreover it has been found that a large number of children get a scolding, physical punishment, sometimes even without any fault. It may be because of the alcoholism of their fathers. Many times the children are the victims of frustration-aggression syndrome of their parents. These parents spend much of their earnings for satisfying their bad habits like alcoholism, smoking, gambling etc., and thus the young children are compelled to go for work. For these children who are already deprived of many facilities, punishment by the parents becomes unbearable and hence they leave home and take up some work. Hence the hypothesis stating that lack of emotional attachment on the part of parent/parents may support child labour is accepted.
Most of the children employed in hotels are given cleaning work, which is monotonous and back-breaking. Further, almost all the children (96%) work for 10 to 12 hours a day.

The salary paid for their work is not satisfactory. A large majority (89%) of the children working in hotels receive the salary of less than Rs.800/- per month. Most of them do not get any income other than salary (in cash) but they get something in kind—in the form of uniform, food etc.,

A large number of children get less than Rs.100 and 10 per cent of them get no money for their personal expenses. A major portion of this small amount is spent on watching movies and another portion for buying snacks and clothing. Watching a movie is a major source of entertainment for these working children. Watching vulgar movies have an adverse effect on the innocent minds of these young children. Only 4 per cent children are found to have the habit of reading. Due to lack of proper guidance, these children often read books of cheap taste, which has an adverse effect on the personality of these children. Some boys are the victims of gutka and tobacco chewing, smoking habits, which affect their health. During this formative age proper guidance, care and control are essential for the proper personality development.

A few boys have small savings. Some wish to utilize their savings for establishing some petty business in future. Some others saved money for their sister marriage, brother's education and for repaying fathers loan. It is surprising to note that these children, instead of complaining against their parents for not
brining them up properly, they consider it their responsibility to work for the survival and welfare of the family.

In violation of the Child Labour Act 1933, some children are pledged for a small amount of money, by their parents.

Though the complaints about health problems such as putrefaction, cracks, lack of sleep and rest, burns and wounds, over heat etc., were made by a few boys working in hotels, they were not so serious.

Some children are scared and feel depressed when quarrels take place in the hotels. But, by and large, these working children have cordial relations with their employers, co-workers and the customers.

It is ironical but true that most of these children are happier in hotels than at home with regard to food, clothing shelters, health care, recreation, and hotel atmosphere etc.,

On the one hand children wish to be with their parents and family members and on the other hand they prefer to live in hotels also. This preference for hotels is mainly because they get food, shelter, clothing, recreation etc. along with some amount of money which they do not get at home because of the severe penury of their parents. Naturally they prefer to stay in concrete buildings (hotels) sometimes well-equipped buildings with water, light, toilet, and other amenities than to stay in small huts/small houses where there will be no facilities like light, water, ventilation, toilet and
with foul smell around. On top of it some have bad home atmosphere with drunkard father and so on.

Some children do get uniforms from their employers and some others buy some dresses with their earnings. As they earn they will be able to meet some of their needs. Even with regard to entertainment they are more satisfied in the work place as they can watch T.V., movies and enjoy city life. These young boys are attracted and fascinated by T.V. programs and movies. In their native villages no such entertainment facility would be available to them. Moreover as they are earning members and contribute to the economy of the family, they enjoy a better status in the family. Though 70 per cent of the boys did not like the work, more than 63 per cent boys did not have any idea of leaving their hotel jobs. From this it is clear that poverty, lack of facilities for contented life at home are the main reasons for children to work.

Most of the children would like to continue to work in hotels partly because they had no other alternative and partly because some of them aspired to rise in the same business. When enquired about the childhood and family background of many of the hotel owners or managers, it is was revealed that they were also workers in hotels earlier and their work experience in hotels enabled them to acquire their present position.

The working children interviewed were eager to know whether the interviewer was going to give any financial help or loan to start some new business. Many of them expressed their fear of being thrown out of their job any time. No wonder therefore many of them were against the abolition of child labour.
Appropriate formal education for children is important for their physical and mental development. Future employment opportunities, income earning capacity and occupational mobility are dependent on the child’s educational attainment. Lack of adequate schooling is likely to foreclose social mobility when the child grows up. Education, economic growth and development are inter-linked and they compliment each other. But due to severe poverty, the parents who are not at all worried about the future of their children can not send their children to school. For them an uneducated child is an asset, desire to be educated becomes a double liability because of loss of earnings, if the child does not work and expenditure on education, howsoever small. The parents prefer to buy food, clothing and the primary needs rather than books for their children.

Even if the school requirements are provided free of cost, the question posed before them is of immediate supplementary income. They prefer their children as immediate sources of earning to deferring this prospect to an uncertain date, when the child would complete his high school education and perhaps get a job in an economy where millions are still unemployed. Thus parents are very much responsible for the perpetuation of child labour.

Further, in the present survey it is clearly indicated that these children are comfortably placed in the hotels. Of course we can not deny the fact that child labour whether in a hotel or in any other factory, is the denial of the fundamental rights of the child to be educated, to be with their family members and to enjoy his childhood. But the question is if these children are removed from their jobs, do they join schools? Do they live happily with their parents?
Even after five decades of independence India has remained one of the poorest countries of the world. In India today nearly 40 per cent of the people are below poverty line. According to 1969 census 33.18 per cent were “destitute” and 21.54 per cent were in “severe destitute” conditions. These are the children who are not getting enough food to eat (leave alone good food), enough clothing to protect them from the vagaries of nature, and a house suitable to live in. They have their homes without any roof. Children do not have a proper place to sleep. Many children sleep on footpath. They are deprived of sanitary facilities, toilet and bath. The majority of children who live in slums, are thus subjected to health hazards. It is alarming to note that 53 per cent of our children are malnourished and 67 per cent of deaths under five are due to malnourishment. India still ranks 45th out of 193 countries on the basis of under five mortality rate and two million children under the age of one die annually in India (ICCW Journal 1998). These factors reveal that many of our families are unable to play their natural role. There are many families of child workers, which are headed by these children. Actually they are looked after by nobody, on the other hand, they look after others. Parents are not only ready but also eager to send their children to work. In many cases parents themselves compel or press their children into prostitution, begging, drug trafficking and many other anti-social activities.

If these children are not provided with an opportunity to get employed, they become urchins, beggars and the juvenile delinquents. Employers argue (and the parents and children also seem to agree) that employers do some favour to the working children and their families by providing employment to these
children. Employers prefer child labour, which is more profitable as well as easily manageable. As long as poverty exists, the practice of child labour persists.

The present survey distinctly indicates that the children working in hotels are happier at their work place than at home. Hence they do not have any other better alternative than to go for work. (These children choose a living hell rather than starvation.) Hence reluctantly and indirectly working children themselves support the practice of child labour.

On the whole the parents, the employers and also the children join their hands in perpetuating this evil practice. In view of the fact, no other agencies can effectively work towards the eradication of child labour.

Some countries like Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, France and the USSR have some schemes for family allowance. In our country, such allowances to the families are lacking. The pension or compensation amount paid to the widows in India is too insufficient to maintain their family without the help of their children’s income.

The knowledge gained so far regarding the family background, socio-economic conditions, working conditions of juvenile employees and various causes for children to work and so on lead us to conclude that child labour though harmful will persist as long as low income, poverty, illiteracy of parents and dependance of parents upon children’s contribution prevails.
It is not an easy task to eradicate the problem of child labour, which has been perpetuated throughout history. With the onset of industrialization this practice has taken a different shape. Child work has changed into child labour, in the sense that today children are toiling hard for long hours in inhuman conditions as a result of which there is the denial of the educational opportunity and where there is exploitation of children.

Children should be provided with education and training in vocations of their interest so that they develop into productive and efficient labour force for the industries and agriculture of the next century.

The problem of child labour can hardly be solved by prohibiting the employment of children, unless the parents/the families of these children are provided with basic needs, such as food, shelter clothing, medical aid and free educational facilities. These could be provided for, by ensuring gainful employment to the adult members of the families of child workers. Creation of awareness among the parents is also an important task, as parents’ apathy is also an important cause of child labour. These poor parents should be provided with job opportunities with sufficient wages, which in turn improves the socio-economic conditions of the families of child workers. Parents should be penalized for not sending their children to schools.

A good and congenial work environment boosts the efficiency of labourers and raises the productivity. In this light, there is an urgent need to improve the conditions of these children at their work place. It is, however, necessary that the working hours
should be restricted, educational facilities provided and employers forced to finance the education of the children working for them.

The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulations) Act 1986 prohibits the employment of children in some hazardous activities but not in restaurants, family households and in agriculture.

Even the custodians of law appear to close their eyes on the large-scale child abuse occurring right under their noses.

A strict enforcement of provisions regarding hours of work, minimum wages, better infrastructure, facilities at the work place, provisions for education and training etc. are the immediate remedial measures.

It is clear that there is a desperate need for a comprehensive study and research on the issue of child labour in order to solve the problem in the long run and to improve the working conditions immediately.

Looking objectively at the situation will probably be more helpful than being sentimental about it. Idealism is fine, but it is more needful to be practical about it. The situation makes two things clear- one, we will not be able to stop the ills of child labour in the foreseeable future since hotel owners or other business people will look at things from the point of view of profit and child labour is cheaper than any other kind of labour. Secondly, eradicating poverty is only a distant possibility and poor parents will meanwhile require the money earned by their children. Thirdly, the officers in charge of child labour will never be able to prevent
child labour, particularly, because the business people will have their own ways of concealing the children if and when the officers come. Hence a practical way of looking at the situation is to persuade the business people to provide some facilities for teaching the three R's (reading, writing & arithmetic) Non-formal educational facility should reach every child worker after their duties for the day are over. when these children become literate, they would be on the road to a better way of life.

I am not at all arguing for child labour, but until it is eradicated, an attempt could be made to make poor child labourers more enlightened to some extent.

As Rabindranath Tagore says “A Nations Children are its supremely important asset and the nations future lies in their proper development. A healthy and educated child of today is the active intelligent citizen of tomorrow.”