IMPACT OF CHILD LABOUR ON THE
ECONOMY OF SAHARANPUR

Child labour is a major problem in the world today. Many children in poor families go to work site because of poverty. They are not given a fair chance to move out of the poverty trap into which they have been born. Child labour is hard reality in the world. The phenomenon is multidimensional and multi-layered. The Gurupadaswamy committee has observed that labour becomes an absolute evil in the case of child when he is required to work beyond his physical capacity, when hours of employment interfere with his education, recreation and rest, when his wages are not commensurate with the quantum of work done and when the occupation in which he is engaged endangers his health and society. In a comprehensive way ILO defined that child labour includes children primarily leading adult lives, working long hour for low wages under conditions damaging to their health and to their physical and mental development, separated from their families, frequently deprived of meaningful educational and training opportunities that could open up for them a better future.

A child is an assets as well a liability to the parents, society and to the nation as a whole. A child is an adult of tomorrow and this adult is expected to play an effective role in the nation-building activities. It has to discharge duties of good citizen. But all this depends on the way the child is allowed to grow into youth and subsequently adulthood. Concern about the child of
various international bodies has resulted in well thought out United Nations. Character of Rights of children and in the form of conventions and recommendations set forth by International Labour Organization (ILO)

Every child labour is first a child with all the needs alike other children. It need the opportunity not alone for the physical growth but also for its mind and personality through all the activities and experiences belonging to childhood. This adverse effect on childhood affect the future of a country’s economy adversely.

The phenomenon of child labour clearly demonstrates the vicious circles of poverty and unemployment. In India child labour is prevalent on a very large scale because of mass poverty and widespread unemployment. When children are compelled to enter labour force it harms full physical development of teenagers and they are unable to get their reward. Low nutritional intake makes them weak. They are unable to maintain their health and consequently the effort demanded for work and ultimately had to revert to further unemployment. The availability of cheap, low-cost child labour also leads to unemployment of adults and lower their earnings. Costly adults labour is substituted by cheap and meek child labour. Thus employment of children puts pressure on wage rates, demand and earnings of adult labour. We see that the employment of relatively cheap child labour has helped to accelerate the process of capital accumulation and profit margin of the producers by raising the overall rate of exploitation.
While the developed industrialized nations are approximately free from the incidence of child labour, the developing countries like India are having heavy concentration of child labour. In these economies, child labour is widely prevalent not only in agriculture or small-scale sector but also in manufacturing and export earning industries. Employment of children is not only a reflection of poverty but also of socio-cultural framework with deep-rooted illiteracy and traditional outlook of people in the under developed countries.

In developed countries children normally work in agriculture and few in urban areas. Overwhelming majority of children work in agriculture and allied activities in family and non-family undertakings during holiday or outside school hours and specially at harvest and showing time. In urban areas, the establishments, such as hotels and restaurants activities such as delivering news papers, milk etc. and other number of light confessional jobs like body-sitting during holidays attract the teenagers.

In developing countries children work more dominantly in agriculture sector often along with their parents either in the family or outside on neighbor’s farm. However, the service sector also offers tremendous scope for many of these children to undertake small jobs such as working in hotels, repairing and workshops working as messengers, packers, car washers, petty craftsman and doing some odd jobs on the street, like vendors, fruits selling etc.

The child labour problem is therefore a complex problem. As it is essential for a child to get introduced to a work, it is also necessary for adults to
see that work does not hamper its normal growth and the child is always able to
derive maximum benefits from the provisions that it should as its right.

Child labour is probably one of the most potent and also the most
regrettable evils in today’s society. We keep emphasizing that children are
the rising future of the world, and then we hinder their rise. Even after 64
years of Independence, we have not been able to successfully ensure the
proper growth and welfare of our children. The government has introduced
various schemes to combat child labour, but none of them has been
appropriately implemented till date. The babus sit and fill their coffers while
our children continue to be tortured and persecuted day after day and we do
nothing to improve their predicament. A major factor of rampant child labour
is too many children in a family, as is the case in Saharanpur.

The poor and illiterate families are unaware of the ill-effects of a large
population. There is severe lack of awareness among the masses in this case.
There are 8 to 10 children in a family, the parents are poor so they cannot
afford to educate and raise them all. As result, they send their children out to
work and earn money at a very early age. The little children are forced to
sacrifice their childhood and they are made to handle dangerous tools in the
age when they should only be playing with toys or educating themselves with
books. These children remain illiterate, work in pitiful conditions, fall ill and
sometimes even die while trying to earn money to support their family. Any
registered Industry, either small scale, Medium Scale or Large Scale does not
employ skilled or unskilled labourers below the age of eighteen years. These industries even deny hiring underage contracted employees.

Mostly the unregistered industries, cottage industries, hotels, motels, grocery shops, vegetable and fruit shops, hawkers, newspaper and magazine suppliers and sellers on the road-side, iron smiths, gold smiths, milk suppliers, two, three and four wheeler automobile machines, beedi workers, printing presses, card board packaging materials manufactures, polythene manufactures, tailoring and embroidery shops, weavers, carpet weavers, utensils and crockery makers, safety match box and crackers manufacturers and several other innumerable industries and business are responsible for child labour.

In many of these business, it is the father who inducts his own children in support of his livelihood. If he chooses to send his wards to school, he employs other children in the society, who neither have a business of their own nor could go to school because of insufficient earnings of their parents.

Uneducated families, daily bread-winners, hand-to-mouth labour, large families with scanty income choose to send their wards for earning or at least to take care of their livelihood themselves. There are families that remain uneducated generation to generation due to their suppression as bonded labours by several land owners. Full families, including children work for these land lords.
Traditional beggars, who never want to shed their sweat and earn. As long as the time-honored free feeding is available in India, these beggars will only multiply and spread to all parts of the country. Occasionally their children, on not getting any sufficient money, tend to work.

The deserted street children. They are abandoned by their parents due to illegitimacy in their birth or poverty. The children having no support from relatives in case of death of their parents, escapes from home due to several reasons, children of frequently quarreling parents under alcohol influence, etc.

The unluckiest of the lot are the female children, who are employed to work, though under a homely atmosphere, suffer too much due to the cruelty of their masters at home. Their masters treat these hapless girls like slaves or less than that and budge them to work sometimes inconsistent to their capacity. These voiceless children bear the brunt of all sorts of whips, beats, slaps on the cheeks and burns on their delicate bodies. The proven best babysitters, are scantily dressed. underpaid, ignored during their illness and expected to work anytime of the pay and any hour at night.

Saharanpur city is famous for its wood carving industry. But nobody notices that thousands of young children toil day and night to produce the arty-crafts which are so popular around the world, for which they are paid a pittance. They are forced to work in horrible, unhealthy and unhygienic conditions which lead to the spread of various diseases. The parents of these children are poor and hence they force their children to work in this industry.
These children become very skilled in the carving of wood but at the cost of their education.

Wood carving requires exceptional skill and patience to be successful and the children are the best suited for such kind of jobs. The children working in this industry fall terminally ill, contract diseases like asthma and tuberculosis, end up losing their eyesight, and destroy their lives. All because their parents don’t have money and the society does nothing to help them.

Another major industry here is the fireworks industry. There are large factories where little kids are forced to make fireworks and crackers in abominable conditions. Many children die every day in these factories. The toxic materials used in making these crackers injure and deplete the health of all the children who work there. Accidents are very frequent in such factories and many children end up losing their lives in these accidents.

The reason child labour is so attractive to businessmen that they don’t think twice about destroying the children’s lives, is that it comes cheap. Every businessperson dreams of cheap labor. It is said that a child is like soft clay; it may be molded into any shape before it matures, after it is impossible to change its shape. Children are the most skilled workers for such industries as they learn quickly and make fewer mistakes. Moreover, they are not paid much, due to which the blood-money made by the businesspeople in the form of profits is used to fill their own coffers only. They keep getting richer while the children keep getting poorer along with being awfully exploited.
The most innocent phase in human life is the childhood. It is that stage of life when the human foundations are laid for a successful adult life. It is the phase when we are carefree, fun-loving, learning, paying ..... Go back into your childhood and for most of us, there are beautiful memories. And how wonderful to have grown up with such carefree abandonment while we had parents, grandparents and others looking after us. But, this is the story of not too many children.

Yes, there are far more children scarred and tormented. They hate their childhood. They would do anything to get out of the dungeons of being children and controlled and tortured by others. They want to break-free from this world. Some manage to get out and get a better life, but many continue to be where they are, not out of choice, but force.

**IMPACT OF CHILD LABOUR ON THE ECONOMY OF SAHARANPUR**

Society as such has never approved child labour. It is only the circumstances that make the society accept child labour, if it is to be considered evil. Child also temperamentally never likes to work, as strenuously as any adult would do. So these little adults, if not kept employed then remain under constant treat of unemployment and there are at a loss of adequate food shelter and clothing for themselves. Being exposed to ‘adult life’ at an early age creates numerous problems for the child labour itself. As many of them are working for long hours even during night with least protection from polluted environment at the place of work and under constant
mental and physical strain, their growth becomes somewhat stunted and some of them become useless for any other jobs in their adulthood than what they out of necessity do in their childhood. The work lays them open to the risk of exploitation. Those who are working for wage earning are the most vulnerable to exploitation. In few cases those working without wage are also equally exploited.

As stated above the children in their tender age if given very odd jobs such as carrying heavy loads working in constant chemical polluted plants, performing acts of various nature in unhygienic conditions etc., then their physical and mental development becomes abnormal. This situation later affects the society & economy at large, keeping their speech, infatuation for short lived and cheap things, and most importantly and inferiority complex. Depending upon the type of job and involvement in it, the child is also exposed to the infectious diseases or develops some deformity. Some of the impacts on health of a child which affects our society and economy adversely are:

- Working in wood carving industry requires constant bending over the craft. The meticulous attention with fixed posture for long hours gives strain to their eyes as well develops back pain. According to physicians, partial deformities are the causes of long hours of work and typical working conditions.
- Night work, continuous standing, sitting or use of single set of muscles, indoor confinement in noisy factories, exposure to dust, beat,
carrying heavy loads, lifting heavy weights, contact with industrial poisons all are harmful for the child. Carrying heavy loads and working in cramped position in small factories can cause deformity, particularly of the bones.

- Starting work from early age has also been found to stunt the physical growth, height, weight and normal expansion of the chest etc.

- Fatigue, especially cumulative fatigue, lowers the psychophysical tone and heightens suggestibility, it is an important factor in the development of neurotic tendencies in children.

- Lack of adequate sleep caused due to long hours of work and heavy work, increases the rate of accidents as well as reduces growth. Children, especially in manufacturing sector are more prone to accidents and occupational hazards.

- Crowded conditions increase the risk of a wide range of communicable diseases. Some child exploitations such as prostitution, has the risk of sexually transmitted diseases as well as psychosocial problems.

- Working children are unable to participate in leisure and recreational activities and, therefore, lose the psychosocial benefits otherwise needed for them. It has been observed that a child labour soon develop a habit of smoking and liquor drinking. Some of them also become drug addicts or spend time in gambling, smuggling or similar criminal activities.
There are jobs that may jeopardize a child's psychological and social growth more than physical growth. For example, domestic job can involve relatively 'light' work. However, long hours of work, and the physical, psychological and sexual abuse to which the child domestic labourers are exposed, make the work hazardous. Studies show that several domestic servants in India on an average work for twenty hours a day with small intervals. Moral hazards generally refer to dangers arising from illegal activities in which they are many times forced to be engaged, such as trafficking of drugs, the sex trade, and for the production of pornographic materials".

Due to poverty, large number of working children are already suffering from malnutrition. This lowers their resistance and makes them all the more vulnerable to diseases of various types.

Whenever the child labour works in a family vocation it does not receive remuneration towards its work though its parents are benefited monetarily. The child develops habit of borrowing money initially from there own house, and later leading towards large debts from other sources outside. What child earn is not always used for its welfare and in effect child remains undeveloped. Work does not allow the child to make use of educational and vocational facilities otherwise available to non-working children. Such a situation restrain its mental development.
Children’s attention span is shorter as compared to that of an adult. They get bored soon. Therefore, there is more danger of reducing quality of product. Some situations are even harmful for their lives in the sense that children are more prone to accidents.

**POSITIVE IMPACT**

**Enhancement of family income:** Child labourers engaged in wood carving industry earn whatever money they can and support their family. Thus, it helps in the well-off survival of their family and prevents them from becoming indebted, to some extent. As most of the poor labourers keep a large family, only parents’, income is not sufficient to nourish the children properly. So, child labour leads to better nourishment of children.

**Share in family responsibility:** Child labourers hold a sizeable share in family responsibility. First, they contribute in the family income and thus look after its nourishment, shelter, dressing etc. Next, they earn and reduce the possibility of their family being indebted. Also, many-a-times, due to some reasons, parents need to take loans from money-lenders. Mostly they are unable to pay a heavy interest plus loan money and need to throw their children to work for the moneylenders so as to compensate for the debt. Thus, child labour helps the poor financially.

**Low cost of Production:** A very beneficial point of child labour employment is for the manufacturers. They don’t need to spend much on the little kids who are not even aware of how much more they deserve for their
toil. The producers make the child labour work more than their capability and give a meager pay for it. Moreover, there is no possibility for any collective union or by the child labourers. All of it relaxes the producer and gives him a huge profit in the production process.

**Enhanced carving by flexibility of labourers** :- Child labourers have got enormous flexibility in their hands and fingertips. this advantage of their helps them to carve beautifully and skillfully on the wood. The delicate and mesmerizing handiwork on wood raises the price of articles adding on the list of profits for the producers. So, the producers try to employ as many children as possible to earn maximum money. Child labour thus contributes to GDP of Indian economy.

**Increase in Export** :- As the child labour is made to do more work than necessary, there is more production which leads to more income. The increase in production also raises the export to other regions of the country and even different countries. Thus, there is an increase in foreign exchange that leads to the development of the Indian economy.

      Every coin has its two sides, so, child labour holds a very good impact on the economy of Saharanpur. It increases the income of the poor, thus makes their lives better. Further, no single person is burdened with the responsibility of a family as it is shared among parents and children both. Financially, it is a very profitable aspect for the producers as they need not pay much for the toil of petty children. Moreover, the extremely beautiful
carving done by them modifies the work and increase the selling price of the goods manifold. This ultimately increases the export and foreign exchange which increases the GDP of Indian economy. In the above ways, child labour is very beneficial for the betterment of our city, and our country. But it is really desirable that the child labour should be provided healthy working conditions and sufficient payment.