CHAPTER II

Methodology and Data Base

2.1 Statement of the Problem

The state of Kerala is widely acknowledged for its remarkable achievements in the social front. Kerala’s performance in the spheres of social and economic development has been substantially better than the others. The state is credited with features such as high level literacy, prolonged life expectancy, low infant and maternal mortality rates, better birth and death rates, a sex ratio which is favourable to women, improved health care facilities, low rate of school drop-outs, efficient public distribution system etc. Indeed, Kerala is the only state in India that has achieved demographic transition from a regime of high birth rates and death rates with the lowest natural growth rate of population today. The distinction between rural and urban areas is less sharp in Kerala than other parts of the country. The most radical implementation of land reforms, and micro-level planning (people's planning) in India has been taken place in Kerala. Kerala’s accomplishment shows that the wellbeing of the people can be improved, and social, political, cultural conditions transformed, even at low levels of income, when there is appropriate public action.

In spite of the tremendous achievements in the socio-economic scenario, the state of Kerala has not able to keep its children away from labour force. A recent study conducted by the Ford Foundation shows that Kerala ranks 9th position in
social sector reforms in India. Though the work participation rate in Kerala is very low compared to other states, official reports show that the problem of child labour exists in Kerala as the rest of India. Child labour contributes 20 per cent of the GNP and 8 per cent of the work force in India. Kerala can be proud of her position as she has a relatively low incidence of child labour. The child labour situation in Kerala has certain distinct characteristics compared to the situation prevailing in other states (Sooryamoorthy, 1997; Immanuel, 1997; Patrick, 2000). There is a heavy concentration of child labour in the age group 10-14 with higher proportion of them being males.

In contrast to the situation prevailing in other states, child labourers are absent in formal sectors of Kerala. Again, migrant child labour is the most visible form of child labour in the state. Most working children are found in the unorganised sector and in marginal occupations on the streets viz., urban informal sector, which does not come under official estimates. As in the other regions, the incidence of domestic child labour is declining over time. Child work participation rate in 1991, in Kerala was 1.9 per cent as against the all India average of 7.1 per cent. The 1991 census shows that there were 34,800 child labourers in Kerala, of which 28,590 are main workers and 6,210 are marginal workers. The survey conducted by State Labour Department, in 1996 indicates a figure of 10,067 of which 1,081 are in hazardous occupations (Kurian, 1999). The actual figure of working children in Kerala is somewhat different because most of the working children are migrants, and thus do not come under the official statistics of Kerala. Whatever may be the
estimates, it is a fact that children are working in the state. Of the working children in Kerala, a sizeable number are from the neighbouring districts of Tamil Nadu. Of the various unorganised sectors of Kerala, migrant children working in hotels, restaurants and teashops are prominent. Kerala has the largest number of migrant children engaged in work compared to any other state in India. At present migrant child labour is the dominant and most visible form of child labour in Kerala. This ultimately brings barrier for development of an efficient and healthy labour force. On the other hand, existence of child labour as cheap labour brings problems of unemployment and underemployment, which is the most crucial one in Kerala.

Kerala, being an economy with a developed tertiary sector, the major chunk of child labour is found in the service sectors. Working children in the hotel industry, including restaurants and teashops etc. and the household service sector was found rampant. A considerable number of children are also working in sectors like trade and commerce, construction, agriculture, stone breaking, brick manufacturing and automobile workshops, among others. In the coastal areas of Kerala, working children are mainly found in fishing and fish processing, and coir making. A sizeable number of these working children are migrants from the neighbouring states, especially, Tamil Nadu.

It is obvious that in a society the importance of child welfare cannot be over emphasised because the welfare of the entire community, its growth and development depends on the health and wellbeing of its citizens. Children are a supremely important national asset and the future of a nation depends on how its
children grow and develop. The great poet Milton put it in admirable words when he said the "child shows the man as the morning shows the day". The physical and mental health of the nation is determined largely by the manner in which it is shaped in the early stages. Children are the soul of a nation. This is why there is growing realisation in every part of the world that children must be brought up in an atmosphere of love and affection. This will enable them to acquire self-confidence and self-respect and a balanced view of life with full appreciation and realisation of the role they have to play in the nation building process, without which the nation cannot develop and attain real prosperity because a segment of its society would otherwise be left out of the developmental process.

2.2 Significance of the Study

The importance of the present study stems from the fact that very few studies analyse the problems and prospects of migrant child workers. No study has been conducted so far on the question of migrant child labour in Kerala. Apart from the studies conducted by Sooryamoorthy (1997), and Immanuel (1997) with the assistance of ILO- IPEC, no state-wise scientific study has been made in the state on the issue of child labour. These studies do not analyse the problems and prospects of migrant child workers. Therefore, the direct impact of any problem on their living and working conditions and on their households has not been measured. In fact to my knowledge there are no empirical studies of migrant child labour in hotel industry of Kerala. Sector wise statistics are not available. One reason for this may be that such studies are difficult to come, because of the scattered nature of the hoteliering industry. The issue
of child labour has been a widely debated subject today and has acquired more prominence because of discussions on the relationship between international trade and labour standards in the context of World Trade Organisation (WTO). Moreover, the Supreme Court of India recently took a historical decision to check child labour. While Kerala has registered enviable improvements in several sections, the continuance of migrant child labour has to receive the attention of our social movements, political parties and policy makers. It is being recognised all over the world that children also have rights and child labour amounts to a denial of these rights. Social relevance and urgency of this problem warrant this study.

The present study intends to analyse the incidence of child labour in the hotels, restaurants and tea shops of Thiruvananthapuram district to know the socio-economic and demographic background of child labourers and their parental families, and to study the situational factors forcing the children to become child labourers in the hotels and restaurants, and analyse the living conditions of the child labourers after getting employed and to know about the problems confronted by the child labourers, and suggest measures to solve the problems of child labourers.

2.3 Objectives

The study has been undertaken to achieve the following objectives:

1. To study the socio-economic and demographic background of the migrant child labour in Kerala.
2. To study situational factors forcing the children to become child labours in the restaurants.

3. To find out the causes of child labour

4. To find out the contribution of the child labour to the family income.

5. To find out the reason behind the increasing migration

6. To analyse the living and working conditions of the child labourers after getting employed in the restaurants.

7. To assess the nature of exploitation and extent of abuse.

8. To find out the employer-employee relations

9. To identify the bad habits of the migrant children

10. To suggest measures to solve the problem of child labour and their rehabilitation.

2.4 Hypotheses

Following are the hypotheses of the study

1. In Kerala migrant child labour is more widespread in unorganised sector than in organised sector.

2. Reason other than economic lure the children to seek employment.

3. There is a positive correlation between the size of the family and the incidence of child labour.
4. Child workers who migrated to Kerala belong to lower social strata.

5. There is a relation between the expansion of the hoteliering industry and child labour.

6. Hotel and restaurant owners are able to pass on the reduction of costs due to the employment of child labour to the customers.

7. There is a positive relationship between adult labour migration and child labour.

2.5 Site of the Study

The study is conducted in the district of Thiruvananthapuram, where there is a large concentration of hotels restaurants and teashops. Thiruvananthapuram, the southern most district of the state is bounded on the north by Kollam, Kottarakara and Pathanapuram taluks of Kollam district, on the east by Ambasamudram taluk of Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu, on the south and south-east by Vilavankodu taluk of Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu and the west by Lakshadweep sea. The district takes the name from Thiruvananthapuram, the district headquarters and capital of Kerala State.

The district stretches between north latitudes 8° 17' and 8° 51' and the east longitude 76° 41' and 77° 17'. The district has four taluks, viz., Chirayinkil, Nedumangad, Thiruvananthapuram and Neyyattinkara.
The area of the district is 2192 sq. km, which accounts for 5.64 per cent of the total area of the state. The district headquarters is located at Thiruvananthapuram.

Total population of the district as per 1991 census is 2956650. It consists of 1475594 males and 149056 females. Rural population of the district is 1948407 (95301 males and 993106 females) and urban population is 998243 (492293 males and 505950 females).

The universe of the study is the small and medium size hotels, restaurants and teashops of Thiruvananthapuram district.

2.6 Sample

Total sample of the study was drawn from three categories of individuals.

1. The working children (150)

2. Parents of the working children (20)

3. Employers (20).

2.7 Methodology and Data Sources

To prove the hypotheses spelt above, inferences have been drawn from primary sources as no other work has been done in this area before. However for comprehending the conceptual framework, use of secondary sources has also been made use of extensively. For the purpose of exhaustive understanding, both formal and informal methods were used. The data gathered relied primarily on survey and
observation method. An attempt was made to record valid and reliable information to the maximum possible extent. This demanded a number of visits to the work places of child workers, their homes, and their employers.

Apart from the use of survey and participant observation for gathering data, some tools of rapid appraisal like focus groups and key informant interviews were employed. This yielded vital qualitative data for the research. For collecting primary information interview technique has been used. Separate schedules were prepared and were administered by the researcher himself with a view to securing information from the three kinds of respondents - child workers, parents of child workers and their employers. Besides information collected through structured schedule, some typical case studies have been done for in-depth analysis. These cases are intended to provide a more comprehensive picture of the exploited children.

The researcher, to gather more information about the problem, also conducted informal discussion with the adult hotel workers and health inspectors of the corporation. During the course of the study a number of social activists, medical practitioners, officials of Ministry of Labour, Non Governmental Organisations, and academicians were contacted. Again, certain key persons in government were interviewed for collecting more information about the question of migrant children working in Kerala.
2.8 Type of Study

The study is basically descriptive in nature. Descriptive research includes surveys and fact finding enquiries of different kinds. The major purpose of descriptive research is description of the state of affairs as it exist at present. The methods of research used in descriptive research are survey methods of all kinds, including comparative and co related methods. It is a fact finding approach related mainly to the present and abstracting generalisations through the cross-sectional study of the present situation.

2.9 Research Design

The design of the study is descriptive in nature. According to Wilkinson and Bhandker (1977) a descriptive type of research tries to portray accurately the characteristics of a particular situation or group or individual. Hence the researcher describes the socio-economic background, working conditions legal awareness etc. of the child labour.

2.10 Pilot Study

The researcher to assess the feasibility of the study conducted a pilot study. In order to make sure the co-operation of the hotel/restaurant owners, the researcher collected a letter from the president of the Thiruvananthapuram District Hotel and Restaurant Operators Association, after some informal discussions with the object and purpose of the inquiry. With that letter the researcher approached five hotel employers and ascertained their willingness to respond positively to the study.
2.11 Research Tools and Techniques of Data Collection

For collecting information interview technique has been used. Separate schedules were prepared in Malayalam and were administered by the researcher himself with a view to securing information from three types of respondents - child workers, parents of child workers and their employers.

The schedules for collecting information from child workers contained, besides personal information about the child, information regarding his family background, his educational status etc. Moreover, factors responsible for their migration and entry into the labour market, nature of migration, working conditions and their impact, relation with his employer and view regarding child labour etc also have been recorded.

The second schedule for parents contained mostly open-ended questions. It sought to collect information regarding family background, economic status, factors responsible for migration to city, awareness about the working and service conditions of the child workers, views regarding their expectations of the government on welfare of the children etc.

The third schedule was for employers. In the schedule information about the establishment of the hotel, number of workers, type of work assigned to the children, reasons for their employment etc were included. In addition to these, nature of recruitment of the children, their attitude regarding various types of behaviour of the children, reactions of the employers about the existing labour legislation, and child labour as such, were also measured.
2.12 Pre Testing

Pre-testing of the interview schedule was done with five respondents and the interview schedule was finalised for data collection with certain modifications.

2.13 Field Work

Field work for the study was carried out in two phases. During July 1998 to April 1999, the researcher visited the field for data collection. The researcher devoted about ten months to collect primary data from working children and the parents of the working children and the employers. The researcher had to visit each hotel/restaurant three to four times to secure the permission for interview. The time selected for interview was based on the convenience of the respondents. The researcher also visited the native places of the migrant children to collect information regarding their family background, nature of land and patterns of cultivation, reasons for migration, rural background and power structure.

2.14 Data Processing

The entire data collected were edited for consistency and completeness. Thereafter it was coded, processed and tabulated with the help of a computer. Frequency, percentage and measures of central tendency were obtained for further analysis and interpretation.

2.15 Scheme of Chapterisation

The study is organised into eight chapters.
The first chapter deals with introduction and a detailed review of literature on child labour in India and Kerala.

The second chapter is on methodology, which includes objectives, hypotheses and significance of the study as well as the sources of data.

The third chapter analyses the issues, dimensions and determinants of child labour in India and Kerala. A discussion on forms, magnitude and correlates of child labour such as poverty, landholding, household size, education, migration, gender etc. are examined and reinterpreted in the light of various reports.

The constitutional, statutory and developmental policies and measures taken by the Government of India over the last few years and their effectiveness and loopholes are analysed in the fourth chapter.

The fifth chapter analyses the socio-economic and demographic background of the migrant children working in the hoteliering industry of Kerala. It also discusses the push and pull factors of migration.

Situational analysis of the migrant children working in the hoteliering industry is presented in the sixth chapter. It discusses the working and living conditions along with the wage structure, mode of payment, types of work, employer-employee relations, work hazards and the abuses they face.

The seventh chapter deals with the employers' and parents' responses about child labour. It also discusses the reason for the preference of children to adult
workers, and children's perceptions about their future. Ten case studies are given at the end of this chapter.

The eighth and final chapter lists the major findings and concludes the study with some policy recommendations.

2.16 Difficulties Faced in the Data Collection

Children being immature, sometimes it was difficult to get adequate answer from them. Sometimes the children could not follow the questions. Moreover, fear and anxiety compelled them to remain silent, which led to wrong answers in many cases. Much information had to be elicited, therefore, through observation. Sometimes help of the senior workers was also sought for some of the information. While asking questions, the movement and total behaviour pattern of the child was observed.

Exact enumeration of children working in various hotels, restaurants and teashops was not available, therefore, a lot of difficulties were faced by the researcher in identifying and making list of the child workers for the purpose of the sampling.

During the first contact for getting information the employers gave specific number of child labour, but when contacted the second time, in order to canvas the interview schedule, they reported that they were not employing any child labour. So, lot of effort was made to convince them about the utility and purpose of the study, which ultimately motivated them to furnish information.
Since the employers know that child labour is illegal, they were reluctant to allow interview. The researcher had to convince them that the data collected would be used exclusively for the purpose of the study and not for disclosure or publicity.

The children were either under observation of the employers or the adult workers even at the time of interview. So the children were not ready to speak frankly.

The children were doubtful about the purpose of the interview. Since there was no time to establish proper rapport, some children were hesitant to speak out.

At times, the researcher was not allowed enough time to interview the children. Though the interviews were not at the peak hours of the business, there were restrictions on the time allowed by the employer.

Despite these limitations, the researcher tried his best to have a real picture of the situation by conducting discussions outside the work place with adult workers.