



CHILD LABOUR IN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR OF INDIA -ISSUES AND SUGGESTIONS

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ABSTRACT :

The time when the children aged five to fourteen (5-14) years of age should be in the educational institutions pursuing education at schools is the privilege of approximately 20-30 per cent of them only. In India it is a well known fact that majority of the population resides in the rural areas as per the 2011 Census report. The children in the rural areas are seen to be in the schools and the agricultural farms. This is a normal tendency in the rural areas because most of the children unknowingly work in the farms along with playtime during the school hours of their lives. Infact this is indirectly termed as child labour either they work in their family owned farms or in others field. It is affecting the development of the country to a great extent and the development of the children. The children in this process face lot of issues related to health as they get exposed to dust, sunlight, chemicals used in agriculture and so on. Due to poverty and lack of proper awareness the parents usually allow the children to engage in the agricultural activities that will lead to a

major set-back to the programmes of the government and the fullest development of the children in our country.

KEYWORDS : Agricultural sector, Child Labour, Right to Education, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Rural Population, School.

INTRODUCTION

In rural India majority of the population resides and is mainly dependent on agriculture or agricultural related activities. They have small and medium sized farms and the owner of the farms and his or her family members work in it. If they have the children then they also often involve in the works imitating their parents and in course of time they learn the work and along with school education work in the farms at leisure but on some occasions they work in the agricultural fields by remaining absent in the schools to complete the works and helping their parents or to support the family.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To study the nature of child labour practice in India.
2. To study the factors responsible for child labour practice in India.
3. To identify the issues responsible for child labour practice in India.
4. To suggest measures for overcoming child labour practice in India.

WAGES PAID TO THE CHILD LABOURERS

The child labourers in majority cases are the unpaid workers and several children who work in others fields are paid small amount of wages on daily basis or after the completion of the work. It is important to note that the works of the children that affect their schooling is taken into consideration as child labour in this context. In India Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar are the states where the practice of involving the children in the agricultural and related activities happens to be the largest (Source: Save the Children).

Sl.No.	Name of State/UT	No. of working children in the age group of 5-14 years as per 2011 census report
1.	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	999
2.	Andhra Pradesh	404851
3.	Arunachal Pradesh	5766
4.	Assam	99512
5.	Bihar	451590
6.	Chandigarh (Union Territory)	3135
7.	Chattishgarh	63884
8.	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	1054
9.	Daman and Diu (Union Territory)	774
10.	Delhi (Union Territory)	26473
11.	Goa	6920
12.	Gujarat	250318
13.	Haryana	53492
14.	Himachal Pradesh	15001
15.	Jammu and Kashmir	25528
16.	Jharkhand	90996
17.	Karnataka	249432
18.	Kerala	21757
19.	Lakshawdeep (Union Territory)	28
20.	Madhya Pradesh	286310
21.	Maharashtra	496916
22.	Manipur	11805
23.	Meghalaya	18839
24.	Mizoram	2793
25.	Nagaland	11062
26.	Odisha	92087
27.	Pondicherry (Union Territory)	1421
28.	Punjab	90353
29.	Rajasthan	252338
30.	Sikkim	2704
31.	Tamil Nadu	151437
32.	Tripura	4998
33.	Uttar Pradesh	896301
34.	Uttarakhand	28098
35.	West Bengal	234275
36.	Total	4353247

Source: 2011 Census Report

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES AND CHILD LABOUR PRACTICES

To protect the children from the issues of child labour the government in India and the state governments have formulated numerous programmes to protect them and pursue their education without any absentee issue. The major programmes like Mid Day Meal Scheme, Right to Education etc. The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 states that it prohibits the employment of the children below the age of fourteen years in sixteen kinds of jobs and sixty five types of processes that are considered as hazardous to the children's health living. The Central Government of India has been implementing the pre-vocational skills and non-formal education since 1988 in various states. The Anganwadies in India are playing a crucial role in children's lives by providing them with basic education, love, affection, food and so on. The Ministry of Women and Child development department is very crucial throughout India in safeguarding the interests of the children.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILD LABOUR IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

The major factors responsible for engaging child labourers in the agricultural sector are mentioned below:

1. Agriculture is a labour intensive

The agriculture is labour intensive and involves huge workforce. So, to cut down the expenditure the farmers usually encourage and motivate all the family members on the field and in this process the children also get involved as they like to stay with their parents all the time and unknowingly learn to work and in this way and due to various other factors the child labourers are increasing in our country.

2. Lack of education

The farmers and many other parents who are illiterate and ill-educated they don't have the awareness that the education is going to play in the lives of their children in several decades. This greatly affects the growth of the children and their future may become full of ups and downs and their may not be stability in their lives.

3. Poverty

Majority of the farmers and parents in our country come under the category of Below Poverty Line. There are many reasons for their poverty but due to this poverty they are unwilling to send their children to the schools because they expect them to work in shops, industries or in the agricultural sector for the money they are paid in order to support their families and this will spoil the future of the children.

4. Disguised labour

The children working in family farms without attending their school usually work as disguised labourers and on several occasions they are also engaged in the labour intensive jobs after they attain several skills especially in the agricultural sector.

5. Protection of children

The parents who happen to be the farmers usually leave early in the morning and return late afternoon or in the evening and their children who happen to be very young and innocent are not left behind but take them along with them and in later course of time these children learn the agricultural related workers and usually are observed as workers as disguised and this hampers their development in all respects.

6. Nuclear families

The trend of joint families is gradually decreasing and the families are getting divided though they reside in the same villages or in other places. This process has made the divisions in agriculture and the nuclear families are finding it difficult to work because the parents or their old age parents take up the agricultural activities but in agricultural sector as there are many small and major works and need to work regularly the nuclear families are engaging their children in the agricultural sector due to poverty and this is proving to be fatal to the development of the children.

7. Seasonal employment in agriculture

The children in the farmers families are joining the schools to some extent but they are usually absorbed in the agricultural sector mainly during various seasons and all the farmers are busy in this sector.

8. Affection and love of parents

Many parents have lot of affection and love for their children that they don't send them to the schools but take them along with them to the agricultural fields and these children by watching their parents gradually learn the work and unknowingly get absorbed in this sector.

9. Lack of awareness

The farmers or agricultural labourers who happen to be the illiterate neglect the idea of sending their children to the formal or informal educational institutions and they not anticipate the future of educated children and involve them in the agricultural sector and these in course of time become active child labourers in this sector.

10. Debts

The farmers in almost all the states and union territories have taken loans through the banks and money lenders to invest in the agricultural sector and for other purposes and due to low productivity in this agricultural sector are unable to repay the loans and make contracts with the rich farmers or work in their farms along with their children to support their families and in order to repay the debt and in many instances get fed up of their lives and end up committing suicide.

11. Educating about agriculture for their future security by the parents

The farmers think that if their children learn and work in the agricultural fields they may take up the works in its fullest form because after they become aged and when they cannot work and become dependent their children will take care of them and remain with them and on the other hand if they get good education and earn a job and travel to different regions then they may find it difficult to spend their old age without their children so the farmers think it better that their children learn and involve in the agricultural sector and if they work hard then they can earn equally well what they earn in the industries or in the government offices.

12. Imitating other parents who are engaging their children in agriculture

The farmers are trying to imitate the elders of farmer friends, neighbours and relatives who have trained their children and are actively involved in agriculture and are earning well enough to support their families. This imitation is encouraging them to involve their children in the agricultural sector as part time and full time agricultural workers either in their fields or in others fields actively.

Effects of child labour in the agricultural sector on children

The child labourers working in the agricultural sector either knowingly or unknowingly is hindering the development of the child to the fullest extent. It is the time when the child has the right to be shown love, affection, care, education, food, clothing, shelter, playing and so on but all these normal activities in the lives of the children get disturbed due to involving them in the labour sector either in their own farms or in the others farms. The child at this age of 5-14 shows more interest to remain with their parents and this tendency proves fatal to the child when he/she is involved as agricultural workers. It will create a major identification between the way of life led by the child going to the schools and the child enrolled in school but engaged in the agricultural sector as a labourer. It affects his/her understanding level, language, grammatical usage, behaviour, attitude, way of life, dressing, cleanliness, nutrition, health, imagination, writing skills, learning skills etc. The child labourers are usually looked down upon by the people and within his/her age group and even if they continue in the schools within their areas they are always addressed with disrespect and the teachers and other people try to exploit them by getting the works often for free because they are either seasonal workers or part time workers due to their poverty or lack of awareness by their parents. The children happen to be very active if they are fed well so the rich farmers always try to employ them by offering them low wages and free food because they work hard for more hours than usually the labourer does in the agricultural sector and this tendency is rarely questioned by the law enforcing agencies because they very rarely visit the agricultural fields to inspect these activities regularly due to routine paper works in their office.

Issues identified with the practice of child labour in the agricultural sector

- ✦ Lack of awareness by the farmers
- ✦ Lack of education by the parents
- ✦ Agriculture is labour intensive and children are the easy victims
- ✦ Poverty of the farmers
- ✦ Lack of basic facilities like free and pure drinking water units, 24 x 7 electricity, housing, health centres, godowns, markets, internet awareness, good quality seeds/fertilisers/etc.
- ✦ Parents work as agricultural labourers
- ✦ Repaying the loan taken by the farmers with the rich and payback by working in their farms along with family members

- ✦ Sick parents
- ✦ Remote villages are not visited by the inspectors to check the practice of child labours
- ✦ Negligence by the government law enforcing officials
- ✦ Loopholes in the policies formulated by the governments
- ✦ Negligence of the media in highlighting this issue as a national level issue
- ✦ Educated population in the rural areas are not worried about this issue and if an opportunity is provided then they try to exploit the children by offering works

SUGGESTIONS

- CCTV monitoring should be brought into practice to curb the child labourers in the agricultural sector.
- Frequent inspections should be conducted by the law enforcing officials
- Additional school teachers should be engaged by the education department to visit the agricultural farms to identify the child labour system and motivate them and their parents to send them to the school for their development.
- Educated population in the rural areas should be encouraged to motivate the child labourers to pursue education
- Government should introduce the scheme that can provide the farmers and agricultural farmers to get the monetary help quarterly for agricultural related activities
- Policies should be made that supports the agricultural sector and its dependents throughout the year to avoid farmer suicides
- Parents working as agricultural labourers should be identified and need to be provided with minimum guarantee wages or pension to save their families and curb child labour
- The farmers loans from all types of banks and in extreme cases the money borrowed by the money lenders for high rate of interest should be waived and cleared by the government
- The wages in the MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) should be increased so as to support the farmers
- The basic needs like pure drinking water facilities, advanced hospitals, houses, roads, electricity, schools with both english and regional language medium, underground drainage system should be available throughout India
- Corruption by the policies implementing agencies either by banks in offering loans or by the welfare policies implementing offices should be frequently monitored by the questionnaire method by the customers and beneficiaries and it should be kept secretly and strict action should be taken by the anti-corruption officials and media in punishing the corrupt officials.
- Organising the awareness camps to interact with the parents and relatives of the child labourers and trying to understand their issues and resolving them through single window system
- Educating the parents of child labourers so as to make them understand the graveness of the issue of child labour through oral interaction and several video shows
- Advertising the benefits of schemes related to education in the agricultural dependent regions to curb child labour
- Philanthropists should be encouraged to contribute the money or in other forms to attract the parents to send their children to schools
- The higher educational institutions should involve in motivating the parents surrounding their institution to send their children to the schools by highlighting the significance of education

CONCLUSION

The government should take effective measures to overcome this issue because the children of today are tomorrows future of our country. Dynamic policies need to be framed, implemented and evaluated every quarterly. The issue of child labour is not only present in the agricultural sector but in many other organisations and un-organised sector. The innocent children who are deviated from the education at appropriate age and driven into the chains of workers for the sake of family or to live for food and overcome their poverty result in poor human capital because it is estimated that in future India will have the population that is youth but what is the use if that majority population has been physical labour intensive and not skill based workers that can only serve to the

wishes of the owners either in agricultural sector or construction and industrial sector for a low wage. This issue of child labour should be taken up seriously and should be tackled effectively by all the stakeholders viz., Governmental agencies, non-governmental organisations, corporate, philanthropists, educated community, parents, owners of various enterprises, educational institutions etc.

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