

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The problem of child labour is the curse of humanity. The problem is concerned with the children whose childhood is lost and they live in scarcity and poverty. It is the problem of those children who in spite of playing and studying bear the responsibility of eradicating poverty of their family, being themselves in the tremendous poverty. The prevalence of child labour is the vital and striking issue in human resource development. Those lovely and innocent children are not only engaged hard and hazardous works but they become prey of sex exploitation of the sexy giants of the society also. Child labour is usually defined as participation of children between the ages 5-14 years in gainful activity.

Child labour is not restricted within a particular place, particular district, particular country but it is to be considered as a global problem. Across the globe, to a lesser or greater degree, visible or invisible, admittedly or otherwise, child labour exists. Decades have rolled. We are in the era of globalization. But yet things are not changing much fast for children living in rural areas, especially for the children of the poorer segments of the society, rather it deteriorates. Article 24 of the Constitution of India provides that no child labour below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine to be engaged in any hazardous employment. Article 45 says: 'the state shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years'. The child labour laws were cleverly violated and by passed by the unscrupulous employers due to the inadequate and ineffective enforcing as well as monitoring machinery (Narayana, 2006).

Child labour is social problem grown fundamentally due to poverty, unemployment, increasing population, backwardness and ignorance. Labour has been placed high status in our country. Labour has been considered as a work of dignity and prestige as it is called 'Work to Worship', but forced labour by the children against their will, capacity

and ability is certainly a social and economic crime and is prevented by law (Thakur, 2001).

The number of child labour is increasing from year to year. Some reasons are economic situation of their family, lack of employment opportunities for the adult members, and preference of the employers to hire children to save on production costs. The child losses all the pleasures of life and potentials of growth and development.

There is worldwide awareness and laws have been enacted to prohibit children from being employed. Illegal recruitment of children still continues. There is also a great scope for exploitation and abuse of child. The social workers and activities from the trade unions are finding it difficult to help the child because of the existing legislations and other social factors. Such workers do not get proper empirically verified research data on the nature, causes and conditions of child labour, on one side, and feelings and aspirations of the children on the other (Gomango, 2001).

In India, child labour has been seen as an economic phenomenon. The relationship between children and work is dictated to a great extent by the state of economic development or the system of production prevalent in a country. Consequently a change in the economic system of production brings about a change in the structure of the labour force and correspondingly a change in the economic role of children. Thus, with the onset of industrialization and the prospect of wage labour, children have been progressively employed in industry as well as domestic and commercial establishments (Weiner, 1991).

So far, child labour has been accepted because it is believed to have economic basis that fit into a demand-supply framework. In the demand side there are two sets of reasons why employers prefer to use children, one of them deals with the fact that employing children is a cheaper and more stable proposition and hence a more profitable one children can be employed at much lower wages than adults and made to work longer period. The piece rate system of remuneration to child labour benefits only the employers. Children do not form unions, they are less likely to change jobs quickly, at the same time, they can be easily laid off should the need arise without any form of compensation. The other reasons why there exists a demand for children in the work

force are to do with special characteristics of children which lend themselves to employment in certain industries. In general children are considered "more active, agile and quick and feel less tired than adults in certain jobs". Also they can be cleared, admonished, pulled up and punished for faults without jeopardizing relations (Singh and Mahanty, 1980).

On the supply side, the most commonly cited explanation given for child labour is the poverty of households that supply children to the labour force. The perceptions that exist towards children and work are dictated by the low economic status of families where children are seen as economic assets. It is contended that families of the working children are so poor that their very survival is threatened by them from the labour force thus, children are in various activities including working as family labour in a household enterprise, assisting in contracts undertaken by parents, taking over various household duties to enable parents to do other work, and working outside the home as cheap labour in small factories, commercial and domestic establishments. The cost category often forces them to spend large amounts of time away from their homes working in conditions not conducive to their health and safety. Not only do the children earn their own livelihood and often that of others as well, they allow parents to spend more time on income generating work by taking charge of household duties. Further greater importance is given to the learning of skills from an early age, as opposed to school education as it is believed that school curricula detach children from the village economy, creating aspirations for white collar jobs that are hard to get. The skills on the other hand will enable them in securing employment in their adult life. Thus, child labour is considered as a kind of process and in no way detrimental to the child's development and finally the quality of the schools (those that exists at all), is so poor that parents are induced to send their children to them and children are not motivated to attend either. Hence, it appears that the overall economic situation coupled with a lack of proper educational facilities justifies the persistence of child labour.

In India, the bulk of urban child labour is unpaid, particularly those engaged in household activities in their homes and those supporting their parents and other family members at work sites such as construction and mining. However, the micro level study reveals that urban working child's earning vary between 0 to 200 to 300 rupees per month, depending on the nature of their work are paid on piece rate basis, weekly basis

contract basis and monthly basis, depending on the nature of their work. Again there exists wage discrimination between adults and child workers and male and female child workers.

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 secure a niche in the labour market. 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 lowers their earnings. Costly adult labour is substituted by cheap and meek child labour. Thus employment of children puts pressure on wage rates, demand and earnings of adult labour. The employment of relatively cheap child labour was helped to accelerate the process of capital accumulation and profit margin of the producers by raising the overall rate of exploitation. Karl Marx, "capitalist in its blind unrestrainable passion and wolf's hunger of surplus labour, oversteps not only the moral, but even the merely physical maximum bounds of the working day. It usurps the growth, development, and healthy maintenance of the body". Through the use of improved technique of machines and employment of women and children capitalist producer tries to increase his profits and surplus value. Under the capitalist system, "the workman sold his own labour power, now he sells wife and child". It is clear that profit motive leads to employment of women and children and thereby their exploitation (Marx, 1875).

Some scholars attribute the segments of labour market and the co-existence of informal (or organized) sector with formal (or organized) sector for the creation of such employment conditions and wages in which many households supply child labour for wages in the labour market. The segmentation of labour market into 'sub-markets' is assumed to take place due to emergence and growth of capitalist relations of production because of the differentiation of peasantry and growing proletarianization of marginal and small farmers and the artisans. In their papers, Kerr and Gordon-Edwards have shown how increasing proletarianization associated with the growth of labour market leads to segmentation of labour force into 'sub-markets' with different employment conditions and wages. The segmentation of labour market is taken to be the basic

characteristics of a developing economy undergoing a transitional process of capitalist development wherein the capitalist relations of production emerge and grow in certain activities and areas. In that case, the precapitalist production relations of certain varieties also co-exist and enfold such employment conditions and wages wherein many households have to supply their family and child labour for subsistence. The prevalence of such production conditions also keeps the wage rate from rising in the economy because of an excess supply of labour.

The existence of sectoral dualism in terms of formal and informal sector (i.e.,organised and unorganized sector) is held to be another theoretical formulation of child labour use. It is said that a large part of the developing economy is informal or unorganized and so the households supply their family and child labour either for paid or unpaid work. Hence the existence of sectoral dualism at techno-economic organizational level of production and distribution, being the characteristics of the economy like India, is responsible for the supply of child labour in the labour market (Mishra and Pande, 1996).

Labour is demanded simply because there is labour market. Similar is the case with child labour which is demanded just because it has a market. Child labour is differentiated from ordinary labour in that labour, in the sense it is usually meant, has a strong bargaining power-there is trade union for protecting the interest basically of the laboureres (and in the narrower sense of the employers). Trade union is really strong in the organized sector. In the unorganized sector though there is little trade union, the interests of the labourers (say of agricultural labourers) are protected in many ways. But the child labourers have no union. There is none to look after their interests and to raise their grievances. Since child labourers are demanded there is definitely a supply side of it. Needless to say the supply of child labourers, especially in a highly populated underdeveloped economy like India, is infinitely high-even at a very meager wage many children will opt for selling their labour. When supply exceeds demand many a thing can naturally happen:

1. Wages are bound to be below or even lower.
2. There is no definite working hour which may vary between 10 hours and 14 hours or even more.
3. There is no security in service.
4. The employment is purely of temporary nature and the question of permanent absorption by the employer does not simply arise.
5. There will be more exploitation.
6. Buyers' market prevails, i.e., the buyers or the employers have the ball at their court and they can naturally do anything they like.
7. The indifferent attitude of the employers. They are eager for fulfilling their own interests, i.e., they are desirous of lowering their labour costs by hook or by crook.
8. There is no uniformity in the mode of payment of wages. Wages may be paid in either kind or cash or sometimes even no wage may be paid at all. Sometimes wage may be adjusted for the inherited debt.

In reality, the above facts take place and educationists, philanthropists, administrators, political leaders and even ordinary people raise hue and cry for removing child labour from every part of the country. But it has not yet been possible to do so and we are not sure when child labour will actually be removed from our country (Konar, 2001).

The distribution of child labour in different States appear to indicate certain correlations. States with a larger population living below the poverty line have a higher incidence of child labour. A higher incidence of child labour is accompanied by a high drop-out rate in schools (Mishra, 2000).

Gulati (1980) points out that there is a clear-cut sex differentiation between the work that male and female workers do in the coir industry of Kerala. While both boys and girls are employed in rotating the spinning wheel, cleaning and willowing the fibre, ratt rotating, and in the beating of husks one finds only girls doing the work. In the gem-polishing industry of Jaipur, girls are employed to pierce holes in beads for necklaces. It was traditionally a female job. In the brassware industry of Moradabad, polishing goods by the hand was exclusively a female's job.

In the match industry of Sivakasi, where approximately 45,000 children were employed, 90 percent were girls children below the age of 14 years. According to Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS), boys are exposed to jobs requiring skills while girls are left to piece-rated occupations that require little mental skills. The great preponderance of girls in this industry is due to the fact that the wages are much lower (Rs.3.50 to Rs.4.00 a day) than in any other occupation. MIDS observed that no one other than a child and that too, a girl, will work in the match industry at such low wages. Thus in the match industry, the larger number of girls in the work force can be justified by the fact that wages are so low and work so unskilled and monotonous that even boys are not expected to do the work.

Saikia (1984) in study on Assam found that in the case of large farmers, women spent on an average two hours per day on livestock and poultry activities. He also revealed that the average annual employment of children in farm activities was 57.53 days in marginal farms, 73.13 days in small farms and 89.37 days in medium farms.

Patil (1988) has discussed the conditions under which the children work in India vary widely across activities, across rural and urban population and across agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. The rural environment under which children work in agriculture and related fields represents more a problem of access to educational opportunities rather than threat to their health and physical development. The rural child workers are not subjected to unhygienic working conditions or the exploitation or strict supervision of employer, except under the conditions of debt bondage.

In urban non-agricultural activities, however, the child workers are subjected to various difficult conditions of work. In addition to denial of school, the working conditions in urban informal sector pose a serious threat to physical, mental and social development. Self employed children like the rag pickers are exposed to the exploitation of the middlemen to whom they must sell their collections. These child workers handle dirty, harmful and hazardous items like broken glasses, rusted metals and hospital wastage etc.

Kerr and Bakke (1990) have made it clear that with the growth of capitalist relations of production the structure of labour demand and labour utilization is radically

changed. It is associated with growth of labour market segmentation, by which the labour force is separated into sub-markets with different employment conditions and wages. This helps in increasing exploitation, breaking the class unity and weakening the bargaining power, allowing strong groups to increase their standards creating labour aristocracy, maintaining high wages for small members not for all due to excessive labour supply.

Children affect and are affected by such type of labour market in many ways. They make them available as a cheap labour force. They are unorganized, with a need for income, vulnerable by nature and age and more exploited than other labour groups. Child workers, being used as apprentices help labour market. Segmentation permitting them to enter into the labour force.

Choudhury (1991) analysis makes it crystal clear that child labour in India is more a rural than an urban phenomenon. Approximately 90 per cent of the working children are in the rural areas, engaged in agricultural and allied activities. Cultivation, agricultural labour, forestry and fisheries account for 84.9 per cent of child labour.

In urban areas, manufacturing, service and repairs account for 8.64 per cent of child labour. A sizeable number of percentage of child labour in urban and semi-urban areas is in effect rural labour forced to migrate to urban areas due to poverty and other economic compulsions. Of these, only 0.8 per cent work in factories. The unorganized and informal sectors, both in urban and rural areas, account for almost the entire child labour force. The distribution of child labour in different states appears to indicate certain co-relations. States with a larger population living below the poverty line have a higher incidence of child labour. A higher incidence of child labour is accompanied by a high drop-out rate in schools. The incidence of child labour is partly linked to the level of socio-economic development of an area and partly to the attitude of the parents, employers, and socio-cultural compulsions.

Lloyd (1994) has shown that the existence of child labour negatively correlates with per capita income, infrastructure development, school enrolment ratio, the position of women in society and female participation in non-agricultural work. It positively

correlates with parental poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, underemployment, and the percentage of the labour force in agriculture.

On this relationship, Lloyd suggests that the larger the size of the household, the more limited will be the participation and progress of the child in school and the less the parents' investment in schooling. Lloyd's review reveals that the magnitude of the effect of household size is determined by at least four factors. • The level of socio-economic development. The effect of household size is larger in urban or more developed areas; • the level of social expenditure by the state (the effect of household size is less if state expenditure is high); • family culture (the effect of household size is weaker where extended family systems exist; e.g. through child fostering); • the phase of demographic transition (the effect of household size is larger in the later phases).

Grover (1994) has analysed the attitudes of parents to their daughters are not merely a result of not being able to place an economic value on the latter's contribution to the family, but the giving of dowry at the time of marriage makes the girl a positive burden to the parents in comparison with her brothers. One immediate consequence is that education is denied to girls. Therefore, the female working children have a relatively poor educational background compared to that of the boys. This is primarily because girls start working at an early age and poor families do not give much importance to the education of girls. The family loses more if they send a daughter to school than if they send a son.

The gender-based inequalities pervade almost all aspects of the growing girl's social and cultural environment. Family structure and social values influence the girl that she grows up looking upon herself as inferior and subservient, entitled much less to everything, than a son and is given less education, less health care, less status, less authority and virtually without any choice. The values that operate in the patriarchal family are internalized at an early age, as a naturally indispensable part of life. Thus, the girl child is made to acquire qualities of submissiveness, weakness, self-sacrifice and silent suffering. She learns to be acquiescent-first as daughter, and sister and then as wife and finally as mother. Deprived of her childhood rights the young girl's prospects for all-round development are severely stunted.

Neera (1995) had reported that due to the introduction of mechanization in the process of production, the tasks hitherto performed by female workers were taken over by men to perform with machines, thereby relegating the female workers to further unskilled and menial jobs. This is true in the case of gem-polishing and brassware industries. In the gem-polishing industry, the job of making holes in beads was essentially a female job in which hundreds of girls were employed. But, due to the increased international demand for gem stones, an ultrasonic machine has been introduced to do the work. Though it is a relatively simple gadget, no where are girls seen doing this work on machines. The wages paid to male workers performing this tasks on machines are many times more, as the output was much larger than what girls were used to produce manually. Similarly, in the brassware industry, most of the work was done by females. Earlier in this industry there were female workers constituting more than 50 percent of the total workforce. However, now their participation has fallen to less than 10 percent. The reason for this state of affairs was that with the greater demand for brassware abroad, there has been an introduction of machinery in many of the processes which were formerly the preserve of female workers. The job of polishing, particularly of goods which were coloured was done exclusively by women and girls at home using chemicals. Now, men do this work in workshops on machines and earn many times more than the women who used to do it at home. Another female preserve was the job of chilai (scraping) and most of the girls were engaged in this work. But with the introduction of grinder machine, women and girls have more or less lost working opportunities in this field. Only those jobs that cannot be done on machines are given to women and girls to do at home for mere pittance. Thus, changing demands and consequent technological changes have deprived women and girls of incomes they used to generate.

Thus in almost all industries, this phenomenon is repeated, boys going to work in skill based industries and girls engaged in unskilled low paid wage work but wherever mechanization has been introduced, leading to higher wages, boys have taken over the work which girls were doing earlier.

Narod (1995) states that there are 50,000 child worker that employed in gem and diamond polishing enterprise located in Surat in Gujarat. In the diamond cutting industry, children handle machines in small ill-ventilated rooms and they are subjected to heavy dust, highly dangerous fume and large noise. Likewise in the slate industry of Mandsaur, Madhya Pradesh, thousands of children are working. They cut plates of shale into small pieces with electrically operated saws, a process, which emits dense clouds of a fine light dust, which the workers constantly inhale. The result is silicosis or pneumoconiosis, a lung disease, similar to, but much deadlier than tuberculosis. This disease is the cause for fibrous changes in the lungs. Lungs are gradually eaten away, patients suffer respiratory troubles, begin to spit blood and then die a painful death. Children at the age of 12 and even less are forced into this fatal work to support their poor and sick parents.

In another instance, in the balloon factories of Dahanu in Maharashtra, children's work includes mixing rubber with chemicals, colouring balloons and testing each balloon with gas. A thick pall of dust and chemicals covers the rooms, which are small, cramped and ill-ventilated. Children work nine hours a day, six days a week and inhalation of dangerous gases in the room can cause pneumonia, cough, breathlessness and even hearth diseases. In the powerloom industries, children suffer from byssinosis. This disease is caused by cotton dust and fibre, which get embedded in the lining of lungs and lead to tuberculosis. There are an estimated number of 15,000 children working in powerloom industry of Bhiwandi in Maharashtra.

Tripathy (1996) had made a short account of the children enter the job at the age of 5 to 7 years and continue to work. This is concentrated in Mirzapur- Bhadohi-Varanasi region. The rooms in which work is health are ill lighted, the floors are damp or dung-smearred. The lower half of the body has to be in damp pits to keep the height of the roof low, or otherwise children are required to work squatting on the floor in the same posture the whole day. Skin and eye diseases are quite common among these children due to unhygienic working conditions and continuous concentration in making knots as per the requirements of designs. The number of working children in the carpet belt went up as the Government of India set up carpet training centres in the Mirzapur area. This

carpet belt stretching from Mirzapur to Varanasi is known as 'Dollar Land' since it accounts for 90 percent of the total carpet exported from India.

Likewise, in the glass bangle industry of Firozabad one quarter of the work force are children under 14 years. The temperature in the furnaces in the glass bangle and glass blowing industry ranges from 700oc to 1400oc. Children are engaged to carry iron rods to the tank furnace to draw out molten glass. They run with this molten glass to the adult bangle maker. They have to run rapidly on a floor strewn with glass pieces in order that the molten metal does not become cold before it reaches the adult workers who turn it into bangles.

Another glaring case is observed in Sivakasi, a township famous for crackers, fireworks, matchboxes, and printing presses in Tamilnadu. The children work in sheds rolling explosives into crackers and arranging matchsticks in neat rows of collapsible wooden boxes. The working day is 10 hours long and 7 days a week just for a paltry remuneration. Many child workers have been killed in accidents of explosives in the firework units of Sivakasi. The main risk in the match industry is due to the use of chemicals. Children working in the boiler rooms mixing chemicals inhale toxic fumes, suffer high degree of intense heat and run the risk of being badly injured by fire accidents.

Saini (1998) noted that census estimates are generally considered as underestimates. Despite the controversies relating to reliability of one method over the other, it is noticeable that the incidence of child labour is alarmingly high. There are a large number of child workers who are not covered by census enumerators or sample surveys, who are outside the scope of the term "worker" as defined by census and whose work is disguised and clandestine. Added to this disturbing phenomenon of huge number of clandestine child workers, in recent years, the children from neighboring countries of Nepal and Bangladesh are sneaking into child labour market in cities like Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai etc. making problem still more complex.

Raj and Chauhan (2001) analyses the problem of child labour in Indian education. In many villages in India, school facilities are absent or available only at distant places. Parents are reluctant to send their children to neighboring villages to attend school.

Dropout rate in the schools is higher in such cases. It is observed that out of total number of children in India in the age group of 6-14, fewer than half attends school. The incidence of child labour is closely related to school dropout rate.

As a consequence, India has turned out to be the largest producer of non-school going child workers. Most child workers in India are illiterate, while in nineteenth century England and in the United States, child workers were at least able to read and write, since they were generally in school for six years, the period of compulsory education. In India most child workers have never attended school or have dropped out before completing four years of schooling, the minimum period needed to acquire literacy.

Thus the education system in India is clearly a contributing factor for the increase in the magnitude of child labour. Many schools in remote places are of poor quality and chances of upward mobility are so bleak that expected return is not equal to the sacrifice made. It is true that many children drop out of school because they have to work, but it is equally true that many become so discouraged by school that they prefer to work. Thus given the low quality and implied costs of educational services available to the poor, many parents, despite being illiterate and having themselves worked as children tend to consider an early entry into the labour market rather than schooling as the best way to equip their children with skills useful for their future as adults.

Girl Child Labour

A review of the available literature on child labour and girl child labour provides an understanding of the problem confronting the nation as a whole. While much has been written about the differential status of girls and boys with respect to health, nutrition and education, not much is known about the working girl (Burra, 1995). Even during the International Year of the Child (1979), due emphasis was not accorded to girl child as a concept. It was only after the declaration of SAARC decade of girl child (1991-2000) the significance of studying girl child as a subject gained momentum. As a result of which a national action plan (1992), was prepared which state that "this action for the girl child will help sustain the consciousness aroused all

over the country and achieve the goals set for brighter future of the girl child in India within this decade" (Gowarikar, 1993).

Study by Devaki (1990) points out that cultural and heritage factors influence the working of child labour-girl or boy. The distinct contrast between girl and boy child workers in Rajasthan and West Bengal was brought about in this study. In Rajasthan girls are introduced to work both at home and work place in preference to the, boy child labour. In contrast boys are introduced to work in preference to girls both at home and work place in west Bengal.

Jain and Chand (1991) revealed that girls between 9 and 19 years worked much harder in agricultural fields, animal husbandry than boys of the same age, but they work less than boys in non-agricultural labour. The authors opine that the work participation rate depend on the type of work and facility available. Another important finding was that on the whole the age structure of the girl child work force is lower than that of males. This picture is reinforced by the higher rate of non-enrolment in schools and school dropouts among girls than boys.

Aparna (1991) has focused that the girl child will be in any combination of the family work patterns like: domestic work, non-domestic work and wage work. The clear, pattern that emerges is that girl children in the age group of 5 to 8 years are involved in domestic work. As they grow older, between the ages of 13 and 15, they do all types of work, but predominantly wage work. Another significant point was that at no stage the girl child is free of domestic work; the variation is only in the time spent on this or any other type of work. It was also revealed that the total number of hours spent on work increased progressively with age. The study demonstrates that with a certain increase in family size, the number of respondents doing wage work increased. Further, the study focused that over two-thirds of the girl children, whose brothers do not attend to work, were engaged in domestic work only. If the girl child has no sister, she has to perform only domestic work. If the brothers go to work, it was manifested that about 60 per cent of girls did wage work along with domestic work.

Usha (1991) examines the concept of girl child labour in India, the extent of the problem and the working conditions. The lower position of girls in the society under-value girl child labour compared to the male child labour. Besides occupational hazards, girl children are vulnerable to sexual abuses both at the place of employment and at home when they are left to themselves. Since poverty is the main cause of child labour, girls from poor background, confront severe exploitation along-with other traditional social disadvantages. She concludes that a microscopic analysis of girl child labour demonstrates that the concept of child labour is sex specific and not only is there sex specificity in occupations but, there are also differences in the ramifications for girls and boys. Girl child labourers have to pay a heavier price than their counterparts.

Shanthi (1991) marshals a whole range of statistical data to substantiate the girl child's life time of deprivation and discrimination in India. According to her younger girls do not go to school or drop out, stay around the house doing and learning household chores because that is seen as their future role, and the girls want to do them well so as not to being dishonour to the family after they are married. The girl child looks after the siblings and accepts a subservient role to the boys. She does not run or play to develop her body. The author aptly puts it by saying that stunted child becomes a small mother. A small mother gives birth to a small baby and in turn grow less as well.

Sudesh (1992) made an attempt to find the reasons of girl child employment. It was inferred that low level of income of the parents, failure in school, dominance of carpet industry in the region as household and non-household industry are the factors which influenced the girl children to employ themselves. Among childrer employed in the carpet industry, breathing problems, body aches, joint pains, finger aches and loss of eyesight, feeling of general weakness in the body etc. are common health hazards experienced among the children.

Ghouse (1992) depicted that many girls though they are living with their parents, have to earn to meet their essential needs. The parents are so poor that they cannot support their children. The health conditions of girls are more precarious. The

girls on the street are disgusted with the life they lead and each one of them is keen to come out of her present life.

Vijaya Kumar (1992) demonstrated that the prevalence of girl child labour is more in beedi industry compared to male child labour. The analysis of data revealed that children in match industry, beedi manufacturing units, and in the workshops are working minimum of 9 to 12 hours and even upto 15 hours per day. Moreover, it was found that girls work longer hours in all the age groups compared to boys.

Rao and Mallik (1992) in their study pointed out that most of girl's basic requirements are inadequately met and usually they are in the age group of 6 to 10. Their general health is moderate though they are under-nourished. They are deprived of adequate clothing medical treatment, health checkup, education and training.

Rita and Kalpana (1993) study reveals that the children assumed responsibilities at the age of 8, and most of their childhood is spent in doing various jobs both within and out of the house. Discrimination based on sex is a common complaint. While boys are given a lot of freedom, the girl children are over burdened with work. Health and nutrition of the girls is neglected.

Chandramouli (1993) highlighted the incidence of inhuman crime introduced by religion (Hindu) evolved as a custom, where the girl child is physically and economically exploited.

Narayana's work (1993) focuses light on gender discrimination, problem of social development in the third world, human development index and the Kerala model of human development. Though employment of boys and girls are associated with several abuses, girls are more abused. Education constituting the pillars of socio-economic development deserves highest priority.

Meera and Neeta's (1993) study on various aspects of female child labour in India, reveals that, several economic and social factors are responsible for the prevalence of large scale female child labour in India. Poverty being the important cause, old traditions and social customs do supplement for the prevalence of child

labour. The death of parents and other factors force the female child to become labourer.

Pandey's (1993) study indicates that majority of the street children are working children. However, boys out-weigh the girls in having some employment. All the working street children work in the household and hidden sector of informal economy. They do the unstable casual work for which they get poor wage and have no bargaining power. They work for full time even beyond the adult working hours. The girls do not have adequate clothing. There is utter lack of educational facilities and vocational training. The community is indifferent to the street girls.

Asha's (1993) study revealed that 20 percent female children who never had any education did not have any aim for their life and did nothing to improve their future life. The children took the job of domestic work to supplement the income of the family. Some other reasons were failure in studies, to help the mother in her works and to raise funds to study further. The duration of job was 2 to 10 hours per day. None of them get weekly off. The study concluded by saying that most preferred job for a female child was that of a domestic worker at a nearby place of their residence. All the children had to take up the job due to the economic need.

Sohoni (1994) analyzed the problems of girls and their right to childhood. According to her when the right is denied or diluted because of gender, the loss is immeasurable and inexcusable. In poorest contexts, it is only poverty but also her gender which is suspected to form the basis for lack of fulfillment. Like womanhood, girlhood, shares the burden of discriminatory treatment irrespective of societal or personal socioeconomic levels. Even where choices between the genders are not related to basic issues of living and survival, the spirit and essence of girlhood are still diminished.

Chowdhry (1995) in his study analyzed the gender discrimination against the girl child in relation to health, nutrition, education, work participation and adolescence. According to him, gender bias has made the girl child to limp in her progress. A girl child generally never enjoys her childhood and is hastened to become mother. She is deprived of her girl hood and ultimately responsible for producing unhealthy,

malnourished and illiterate girls. The cycle continues and as a result, the process adversely affects the quality of Indian society.

Kiran (1995) highlights the status of the girl child in socio-economic set up with reference to rural girls. In rural India, the girl child suffers from parents' bias as the daughters are treated as liabilities while the sons are treated as assets. The girls are also facing severe discrimination with regard to nutrition, health care and education. The status of girl child is directly linked with her mother's status which is considered as inferior in rural India.

Sneh's (1995) study shows the hindrances to education experienced by girls in India. To her, education continues to be viewed as a preparation for employment and therefore, parents with scarcity of resources prefer to spend money for the education of their sons rather than daughters. Another factor is that girls are considered as other's property. Because the girl child after her marriage will go to her husband's house, the family does not consider it wise to make investment for her education. The author views that the infancy and childhood determine how the girls grow up and consequently how they are neglected both in the family and society

Rekha (1995) examines the social change on some important aspects of tribal girl child. The girl children at the tender age of 7 or 8 are subjected to jobs involving physical labour and exertions which may affect her health permanently. The study brought to light that because of some occupational hazards at the tender age the girl may tend to have diseases.

Divya (1995) examines the situation of girl child within her own family, based on field study of 600 mothers in Maharashtra. The author appeals for changing the attitude of society and people towards girl children. The parents should forgo the idea that the daughters are burden for the family. Data pertaining to influence of traditional values, social institutions of family, kinship and marriage have been accumulated. It was revealed that 25 per cent of the sample parents expressed that indifference at the birth of girl child. Child labour contributes about 20 per cent of India's GNP. They account for over 8 per cent of the national work force. The sooner India makes primary education universal and compulsory, the greater will be the fall in the rate of

illiteracy and subsequently, fall in the incidence of child labour (Tripathy and Pradhan 2003).

The study conducted by Pramilla (1995), reveals that the girl child's very right to be child and enjoyment at her childhood is denied to her by burdening her with too much work life. Apart from the household chores she works in the fields, and in poverty stricken families. She is made to work as part time servant. She is exploited at work, made to work in hazardous occupations and abused even sexually by the male employers. All this denies her the participation in childhood games, leisure time or any entertainment which are essential for her healthy development.

Murali (1995) presents the family and environmental context of the deprivations faced by the girl child in India. According to him, the girl child gets doubly affected being a female and a child. She gets the lowest priority when it comes to resource allocation in terms of food, health care, access to education and training, rest and leisure time activities, inheritance and so on. On the other hand, she carries out family labour tasks, often as much as her mother. He recommends the need to empower families in terms of knowledge, attitude and skills to enrich family interactions and relationships.

The incidence of child labour in urban areas is proportionately small. However, in terms of rigours of work and environmental condition the working child in urban areas is not much better off. The urban working children engaged in unorganized sectors more frequently are employed in restaurants and hotels, cotton ginning and weaving, carpet weaving, stone-breaking, brick-kiln, handicraft, construction work, domestic help, car-cleaning, distribution services like milk and paper, employment in shops and establishments, self-employment such as vending, boot-polishing and score of other such odd services. Girl children are discriminated against in schooling opportunity. Parents feel that children should earn for upkeep and for dowry, right from childhood. Another reason for girls to remain at home is to take care of younger siblings and attend to household chores to relieve the adults for productive jobs.

Illiteracy and low levels of education among the parents were found to be, major contributory factors for child employment. The poor education of the parents

gets them only poorly paid jobs, which keeps them along with their parents in perpetual poverty. The survey points out that about two-thirds of the parents were either illiterate or dropout and had been forced to work in their childhood. And when the children also join the workforce due to parental influence, this becomes inter-generational and there is no hope of freedom for these children to come out of this oppressive socio-economic exploitative structure. The girls joining the beedi works during their early childhood is perhaps due to the fact that the girls would normally attain puberty at any time after the age of 12 years. Therefore, their parents seem to be reluctant to pledge their daughters who have crossed 12 or 13 years. The other reason is that as the girls are more accommodative and adjustable than the boys, more numbers of girls than boys were pledge at the ages between 6 and 12 years (Gomango, 2001).

Usually the girl child helps her mother to perform different household activities. The household activities consume larger amount of labour and time of the mother. In this case often the girl child has to share the household burdens. She is not sent to school because in that case mother plight becomes more oppressive. Because of the education of girl child the position of mother is adversely affected. This is one of the important reasons for wide differences in dropouts and enrolment rates of male and female child (Shandilya and Khan, 2003).

The demand for child labour comes from all three sectors of the economy. Generally, they are employed in agriculture sector, helping in agricultural operations like sowing, weeding, harvesting and threshing. Over 80 percent of child workers are employed in agriculture sector. Next to agriculture, child workers are employed in sectors allied to agriculture such as livestock, forestry, tea plantation and fishing. They account for nearly 6 percent of all child workers in the country. Cottage and household industries constitute the third important sector in which child labour is concentrated, i.e., about 4 percent of all child workers are working in handicrafts industry of Jammu and Kashmir; lock industry in Aligarh; diamond-cutting industry in South Gujarat; carpet industry in Mirzapur; glass industry in Ferozabad; and in several other locations (Amandeep Kaur and Kuldip Kaur, 2003).

Girl child workers face greater exploitation compared to their male counterparts. Most of the girls in the urban areas work as domestic workers, where they are subjected to various forms of exploitation and abuse. Working as domestic servants, they become more vulnerable to sexual exploitation compared to male children. Cooking, cleaning, child care and other domestic duties not termed as child labour are to be performed by a girl child because of which she is unable to go to school and is deprived of recreational opportunities. Such domestic work is economically important because it frees parents to go out and earn. In its more invidious form, girls work in urban homes with so called relatives as 'maids of all work', on call virtually all day. Domestic work is not only an unrecognized form of economic contribution but also remains unappreciated as a form of child labour. Significantly, while the work of girls in rural India is very visible, this is not so in the urban unorganized sector.

There is a huge gender bias in the incidence of child labour. In urban India more boys than girls work as child labourers though, in percentage terms, they are substantially lower than in rural India. In rural India, the proportion of boys working as child labourers has declined from over 10 percent in 1961 to over 5 percent in 1991. The gender difference is substantially larger in the states of northern India but relatively smaller in the rest of India. A large majority of girls still work in the agricultural sector of rural India (Muthuraja, 2000).

Anandalakshmi (1991) analyzed the data accumulated from traditional craftsmen's families. According to her, the practice of socialization begins early in a child's life. The girl child is at disadvantage as the tradition of India is to over indulge the male at the cost of the female. The study reveals that around the age of six, the girl child is engaged in various works in the households. Some of the female children were found employed for wages. The study conducted in the Muslim households of Varanasi depicts the discrimination among boys and girls. While the boys are constantly playing on the streets or watching the activities associated with weaving, young girls are denied the equal opportunity of playing in the downstairs. The girl's activities are stereotyped and experiences are monotonous.

Burra (1995) exhibits that the work of the girl child is invisible and this invisibility has serious negative consequences in terms of her status within the family which in turn determines her role in the family and society. To her, bulk of the female working child population is found in rural areas. She reveals that there is a strong sex typing of rules as regards the work that male and female children perform in agriculture, household and the unorganized industry and even certain jobs are categorized as female jobs. Girls are employed in low paid or low wage unskilled jobs which do not necessarily lead to skin formation.

She views that in the journey of life, the destination of female child is marriage. When parents do not receive even minimum wages themselves, they can hardly afford not to use their children. In case of home based labourers, the vicious circle continues. To her, “where the child is a girl, she is prevented from going to school, leading to inevitable cycle of no education, low skills and low earning capacity, thus, perpetuating homework with it is exploitatively low wage”.

A girl child is not merely a child with the biological signs of the female sex. She is made into one by social construction. This relates to the gender roles she has to play practically from birth. A girl child is hardly prepared for the political and economic participation on which ‘gender empowerment’ is measured.

The future well-being of the women and children in India largely depends on the future of ‘girl child’. As the status of the girl child is a measure representative of deprivation, the gender-class-ethnicity chain of oppression is best confirmed by facing the multi-layered problems of girl child.

The declining sex ratio, disparity in education and health sector, sexual exploitation, traditional and orthodox attitude towards girl child etc. have played havoc in the future mother of this country.

It is imperative to mention that health indicators pertaining to the female child are also generally less favourably placed, when compared with the corresponding male variables. Access to a utilization of health services is much less for girl children,

when compared to boys as revealed by hospital admission records and independent surveys.

Girl children in urban slums and living on their own in the streets are at the risk of contracting HIV, AIDS and STD due to sexual abuse and exploitation. Many get married at the young age of 12 or 14 years and are frequently forced to change partners, thus increasing their susceptibility to sexual transmitted diseases.

The constant neglect of the girl child has been the focus for quite some time and the global attention has been drawn towards her economic plight and social degradation. The struggle for human rights has identified the girl child as priority target and brought worth into focus her status for empowerment.

The girl child is considered to be a lesser child in our society. She continues to be neglected at all levels and discrimination against her is rampant in all strata of society irrespective of class, caste and economic conditions.

The existing profile of the girl child indicates adverse female-male ratio, low nutritional status, and high female infant mortality rate, low enrolment of girls in school and high rate of school dropouts among girls. Lack of access to vocational skills and training, a high rate of participation in the unorganised sector and hazardous industries and unacknowledged contribution in the household economy and national development are other significance indicators of her law status.

The mortality rate is high among girls due to the systematic and deliberate discrimination right from the birth-now even prior to birth. Shockingly, the most inhuman violence against the girl-child has been introduced by the modern scientific advancement. Amniocenteses are widely being used for prenatal sex determination and abortion of the female foetuses. Serious demographic imbalances leading to degenerating socioeconomic conditions are bound to be created because of these adverse social attitudes towards the girl-child in the family.

“The girl child is abused by being burdened at home with labour like cooking, cleaning and taking care of the younger siblings which is not even considered as

contribution to the household economy. Besides, the poverty stricken parents make small girls take up work as domestic help in a number of houses as part time workers or full time servants. The plight of the girl child labour is precarious and she is exploited sexually, abused by the male employers” (Bishoy, 1991).

In poor families with a large number of children, their employment is considered an economically rational behaviour. Most of the children, particularly, the girls are kept out of school to engage in various kinds of household activities. They grow illiterate and ignorant so as to repeat the life pattern of their mothers of repeated childbearing, ill-health and exploitation of daughters (Bhatt, 2001).

Many children, especially girls, do miss educational and recreational opportunities because of a heavy domestic burden. Though domestic work does not of itself produce an income it is economically important because it facilitates adult work, freeing parents to go to earn money. Such domestic work can begin very early, in developing countries, where the starting age can be as low as five or less. Though girls often carry the heaviest burden of preparing food, cleaning the house, washing the clothes and looking after younger brothers and sisters, boys too, in countries as diverse as Peru, Jamaica and India, play their part (Fyfe, 1989).

A common attitude toward child labour in India is to accept it as an unavoidable consequence of poverty. Given the low quality and implied cost of the education services available to the poor, many parents, having themselves worked as children, tend to consider an early entry into the labour market, rather than schooling, as the best way to equip their children with skills useful for their future as adults.

Another difficulty is inherent in the fact that children working in rural areas, in urban informal sector workshops or as domestic servants in private household are not readily visible. An effective effort to protect children from work place hazards or abuses must therefore, begin by making the invisible visible. Experience clearly shows that significant public pressure is required to make progress on the child labour issue politically possible. As long as the general public, and in particular the middle and higher classes, consider that child labour is part of the harsh reality that makes good economic sense, the conditions for change will not be met (Narasaiah, 2001).

Child labour primarily occurs in export industries-Export industries are the most visible sector in which children work. Sector balls made by children in Pakistan for use by children in industrialized countries may be a compelling symbol. But we must not lose sight of the tens of millions of children all around the world who work in non-export areas, often in hazardous or exploitative conditions. In fact, only a very small percentage of all child workers are employed in export-sector industries-probably less than per cent (Kalpana Roy, 2000).

Effects of Child Labour

While some healthy work in childhood may be a social good and an national gain, child labour in general is a social ill and a national waste, as the economic necessity for wage earning to support the family, deprives the girl child of an opportunity for education, play and recreation, stunts her physical growth, interferes with the normal development of the child personality and thwarts her preparation for responsibility.

Effect on health: Main is the health hazard, which causes the following diseases various occupations:

- (a) Tuberculosis and bronchitis.
- (b) Muscle atrophy.
- (c) Weakening and malformation of bones.
- (d) Eye diseases.
- (e) Stunted growth.
- (f) Finger arthritis.
- (g) Damage to the finger nails.
- (h) Excessive fatigue malnutrition effects, functioning of endocrine glands.

Economic and social evils: Child labour gives birth to numerous economic problems such as the use of labour at its lowest productivity implying thereby an inefficient utilization of labour power:

- a) The practice of employing children permits unfair competition with adult labour, with the result that there may be an excessive unemployment of adult labour low wages and less satisfactory working conditions.
- b) Child labour tends to interfere with normal family life and encourages the breakdown of the social order child used to early economic independence starts an early sex life acquiring general diseases and addition to intoxicants. Generally, he/she marries young and starts early procreation.
- c) The worst effect of child labour is that it interferes with their education and minimizes the chances for their vocational development. They neither acquire skill nor do they receive any education thereby condemning them to a status of illiterate, oppressed and trampled worker for the rest of their lives.
- d) The effects of poor and unsafe working conditions in working children take the form of total accidents and accident that result in deformities. The vulnerability of children is increased by the high incidence of malnutrition and under nourishment and making them less resistant to debilitating diseases.
- e) Children, in some work situations, are exposed to physical and mental abuse. This involves long and often permanent separation from parents and, isolation sometimes amounting to virtual imprisonment and physical cruelty. Child participation in labour force activity reduces the potential for schooling and educational development. Given the low educational or skill content of many of the jobs in which working children are involved, the possibilities for acquiring remunerative or satisfying skills become still more remote, children, thus, find themselves locked in unskilled, low paying situations and permanently disadvantages in the labour market.

- f) There are also other kinds of deprivation from which child labourers suffer, including the absence of clear and written contractual agreements, the dearth of feeding programmes, health care facilities and other welfare services and the lack of insurance and social security. The regulation of employment of children by law covers only a fringe of enforcement of extremely halfhearted tardy.

Unless a systematic evaluation is made from time to time in respect of jobs in which children are employed and certain purposeful policy decisions are taken to meet the deficiencies the existing situation is not likely to undergo any dimensional, qualitative or quantitative change (Patel, Talati and Patel, 2001).

Child labour and girl child labour particularly are both a cause and consequences of poverty. Household poverty pushes children into the labour market to earn money to supplement family income or even as a means of survival. The existence of child labour perpetuates household poverty across generations, slowing economic growth and social development. It prevents children from gaining an education and skills that will lead to an adulthood of decent work opportunities. However, poverty is far from being the only factor at play. Inequality, lack of education, high dependence on agriculture in the economy as a whole, slow demographic transition, consumerism, as well as traditions and cultural expectation are among factors that play a role in the occurrence of child labour. Age, sex, ethnicity, social class and deprivation appear to interact to affect the type and intensity of work that children perform, as well as whether they work or not.

Family decisions concerning girl child labour are also influenced by the size and structure of the family. Furthermore, the increased numbers of children-and grandparent- headed households means increased pressure on children to work. There are many inter-linked explanations for girlchild labour. No single factor can fully explain its persistence or growth. Child labour is a matter of opportunity. A child from

an impoverished family may not have the option of going to school. A girl may be denied that opportunity because of cultural expectations that her work is at home. It is the way in which different causes, at different levels, interact with each other that ultimately determines whether or not an individual child becomes a child labourer.

The review of literature reveals that there are many studies on child labour in general, but specific studies pertaining to girl child labour are very limited. Even the few studies available are confined to a particular aspect of girl child labour. UNICEF (1997) felt that the research in the field of girl child is still in its infancy. ILO (1995) has identified girl child workers as one of the core areas for research and investigation. It observes that the work of the girls is often invisible and their problems and their survival strategies are often different from working boys. It called for the need to comprehend the still poorly understood links between community, economic conditions and child labour and to improve understanding of why in the same poverty stricken area, one finds settlements and high rate of child labour next to settlements with comparatively low rate. To fill this gap, the present study is designed to examine the various dimensions of girl child labour in depth in the study area, which would go a long way in enabling the planners, policy-makers, academics, researchers, NGOs, national and international organizations to have a right perspective of the problems of girl child.

Very little work has been done on the situation of girl child labour in India, especially in Kokrajhar district of Assam. There are, however, a number of studies on child labour in different countries, as well as, in India and Assam