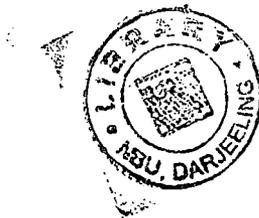


**SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF
CHILD LABOUR IN SILIGURI CITY
OF WEST BENGAL**

Thesis submitted for the Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) degree (Arts) of the
University of North Bengal
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**This is to certify that Shri Manna Mukherjee has done
doctoral research under my supervision on the topic entitled "Socio-
Economic Background of Child Labour in Siliguri City of West
Bengal".**

**I am satisfied with his commitment to the present research
which he has completed successfully. The thesis may be placed to the
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CHAPTER – ONE

INTRODUCTION

Problem of the study :

The term “child labour” is used as a synonym for “employed child”. In this sense it is co-extensive with any work done by a child for gain. It is something hateful and exploitative. The concept of child labour is inevitably intertwined with three difficult-to-define concepts; “child”, “work” and “labour” (Singh, 1992). All those persons who are engaged in an economic activity but are less than 14 years of age have been taken as working children. Child labour in restricted sense, means the employment of a child in gainful occupations, which are dangerous to their health and deny them the opportunities of self development (Saha, 1992). The Indian Constitution provides for protection of children. According to the Article-24, no child below the age of 14 years shall be employed in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employments. The Article-39 (c) and 39- (f) are also in this regard (Sinha, 1991). Poverty seems to be the most significant cause of child labour. But it is to be remembered that poverty is not the only cause. In many cases, children work because they have nothing else to do. Further, illiteracy, ignorance and lack of awareness also contribute towards proliferation of child labour. According to the report by the ‘Indian Social Institute on Child Labour’, 80 per cent of all child labourers belong to scheduled castes and tribes that have been exploited and marginalized in India for centuries.

The child labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 sets out some occupations and processes as hazardous and prohibits the employment of children therein and in other employments provides for thorough regulation of the conditions of work of the children. It brings about a change in the definition of ‘child’ under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 and the Plantation Labour Act, 1951. The Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 and the Motor Transport Workers Act, 1961 restrict the upper age limit of a child to 14 years. The Act prescribes that the children should not be put to work continuously for more than 3 hours at a stretch spreading over not exceeding

6 hours. Double employment on same day has also been prohibited. It further provides for no overtime and no work for children between 7 p.m. and 8 a.m. A child worker must be given a weekly holiday and be provided with at least one hour of interval for rest on working days. Necessary arrangement for the health and safety for the children employed in any establishment should also be there. The penal provisions under the Act provides imprisonment for a term ranging from 3 months to 1 year and or fine ranging from Rs. 10,000/- to Rs. 20,000/- for employing a child in prohibited occupations or processes. Repeated offence on this count invites a punishment of imprisonment from 6 months to 2 years. For contravention of other provisions of the Act and rules framed there under, the prescribed punishment is simple imprisonment which may extend to one month and or fine which may extend to Rs. 10,000/- (Government of India Report, 1996).

At present there are thirteen major legislature enactments, which provide legal protection to children against exploitation. These legislations provide the minimum age, minimum wage and certain working conditions, and regulate their working hours. The legislations are :

- Factories Act, 1948.
- Minimum Wages Act, 1948.
- Plantation Labour Act, 1951.
- Mines Act, 1952.
- Merchant Shipping Act, 1958.
- Shop and Commercial Establishment Act,
- Motor Transport Workers Act, 1961.
- Apprentices Act, 1961.
- Employment of Children Act.
- Children Pledging of Labour Act, 1938.
- The *Beedi* and Cigar Worker (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966.
- Atomic Energy Act, 1972.
- Child Labour (Prohibition and Prevention) Act, 1986. (Singh, 1992).

Almost all the developing countries of the world have various children's laws in their land to safeguard their rights (Singh, 1992). The Constitution of India is also committed to the protection and promotion of the welfare considerations over the economic ones. It was not surprising therefore, that a series of committees and commissions have been appointed by the Government of India, either specially on the question of child labour or on labour conditions in general, which give us insights into the problem and suggestions to alleviate it. These are :

The Royal Commission on Labour (1929)
 The Labour Investigation Committee (1944)
 The National Commission of Labour (1966)
 Gurupadaswami Committee on Child Labour (1966)
 Sanat Mehta Committee (1986) which deserve special attention

(Chandra, 1998).

The world's population of working children is yet to be counted accurately. Because it is often illegal and clandestine. Child labour lies beyond the reach of conventional labour statistics. New survey methods are penetrating the screen of obscurity, which for too long has concealed the problem for public view. The findings reveal a tragedy of far greater magnitude than earlier. Some 250 million children between the ages of 5-14 are working in the developing countries – 120 million full time and 130 million part time. Some 61 per cent of this or nearly 153 million are found in Asia; 32 per cent or 80 million are in Africa and 7 per cent or 17.00 million live in Latin America (Chandra, 1998). These estimates are based on a new and more accurate methodology recently tested by the ILO's Bureau of Statistics in Ghana, India, Pakistan, Senegal and Turkey. The child labour-force are 16.6 per cent in Pakistan, 18.8 per cent in Brazil, 19.5 per cent in Bangladesh, 12.4 per cent in Indonesia, 20.9 per cent in Thailand. 27.3 per cent in Turkey, 8.2 per cent in Egypt and 6.6 per cent in Argentina. Sri Lanka has a lower percentage of child labour, i.e., 4.9 per cent (Chanda, 1998).

According to an estimate of the ILO (1975), there were 52 million child labours in the world (Ahuja and Jain, 1998). The South-East Asian countries accounted for 55.77 per cent followed by the remaining Asian countries 17.50 per cent, Africa 19 per cent and South America 6 per cent. As regards India, various unofficial estimates place the number of child labourers between 44 million and 100 million. According to the National Sample Survey, there were 16.33 million child labourers in 1972-73 and 17.36 million in 1983. Europe has 1.34 per cent, North America 0.57 per cent and Oceania 0.19 per cent child labour. In South-East Asia there are 29.0 million. In remaining parts of Asia 9.1 million, Africa 9.7 million, South (Latin) America 3.1 million, Europe 0.7 million, North America 0.3 million, and Oceania 0.1 million. The total is 52.0-million child labour in world (Ahuja and Jain, 1998).

Today, India is the home of largest number of working children. According to the Census there were 11.29 million child labour in 1991. However, according to an estimate of the ILO (1996) there were 12.07 million full time child labourer and 10.50 million marginal child labourers. Whatever may be the actual figure of child labour, the important point is that the child labour phenomenon in India is on the rise, and it shows that India has a substantial number of working children to be tackled (Chandra, 1998).

According to the 1991 Census of India the state wise distribution of child workers of 10-14 years of age group is follows : Andhra Pradesh has 1,661,940, Assam - 3,27,598, Bihar - 9,42,245, Gujarat - 5,23,585, Haryana - 1,09,691, Himachal Pradesh - 56,438, Jammu & Kashmir - 2,58,437 (1981), Karnataka - 9,76,247, Kerala - 34,800, Madhya Pradesh - 1,352,563, Maharashtra - 1,068,418, Manipur - 16,493, Meghalaya - 34,633, Nagaland - 16,476, Orissa - 4,52,394, Punjab - 1,42,868, Rajasthan - 7,74,199, Sikkim - 5,598, Tamil Nadu - 5,78,889, Tripura - 16,478, Uttar Pradesh - 1,410,086, West Bengal - 7,11,691, Andaman & Nicobar Islands - 1,265, Arunachal Pradesh - 12,395, Chandigarh - 1,870, Dadra & Nagar Haveli - 4,416, Delhi - 27,351, Daman and Diu - 941, Goa - 718 (1981), Laxhadweep - 34, Mizoram - 16,411 and Pondicherry - 2,680. According to the Census, state-wise figures reveal that Andhra Pradesh is at the top of list, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Bihar. The lowest number of child workers is found in Laxhadweep among all states and Union Territories (Chandra, 1998).

About 50,000 children between three and half to 15 years ($3\frac{1}{2}$ - 15 years) of age work in the match and fire work industry in an around Sivakashi (Tamil Nadu) (Jain, 1993). About 20,000 children work in the stone quarries in Kerala and many more in the state industry in Markapur (Andhra Pradesh) and Mandsaur (Madhya Pradesh). Nearly 28,000 children work in the mines in Meghalaya, owned by the private entrepreneurs. Nearly 20,000 children work in the fish freezing and processing units in Quilon (Kerala). In Trivandrum, about 10,000 and in Tiruppur, about 8000 children are engaged in the handloom industry. In Tiruchirapalli (Tamil Nadu) and Trichur (Kerala) about 7,000 children, mostly girls are engaged in the *beedi* industry. Working children numbering 110,000 are found in the lock industry

of Aligarh. The state of Jammu & Kashmir conducted a handicraft census in 1978-79 and revealed a total number of more than 27,000 children in the handicraft industries in the state. In the glass industry of Firozabad (Uttar Pradesh) about 25 per cent of the 2 lacs workers employed are children below 15 years of age. In the pottery units of Khurja (Uttar Pradesh) out of the total workers of 20,000 nearly 5000 are children below 14 years of age. Nearly 13,000 children out of a total work force of 60,000 are in the gem polishing industry of Joipur and Rajasthan. The condition of the domestic worker depends on the socio-economic status of the family employing him. Perhaps the most dangerous demeaning and destructive of self worth is the job of scrap collectors or rag pickers. The number of children working in the brassware industry in Moradabad has been estimated as 1800-2000 (Tripathy, 1997).

The West Bengal Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Rules 1995 have restricted the working hours of a child labour to maximum of 5 hours a day or 30 hours in a week, and it provides for fixing the working hours in such a way that a child labour gets a reasonable opportunity to take formal or informal education. The rules further provide for well cleaned, well ventilated and well illuminated working place with good sanitation and hygienic condition. Half-yearly health check up of every child labour by a qualified medical practitioner at the cost of the employer has also been prescribed. Necessary provisions have also been made for health, safety and other aspects of child labour in the said rules. Thus, the Policy and Act clearly recognise the fact that, the child labour cannot be wiped away overnight. Both envisage for progressive elimination – elimination is to start with hazardous employments, and the problem in non-hazardous employment is to be tackled by mitigating the hardship of child workers through betterment of the working condition by way of regulation (Government of West Bengal, 1995).

Table – 1
Distribution of Working Children in West Bengal

Sl. No.	Districts	Child Workers			
		Boys	Girls	Total	No. of Child Workers per 1000 persons
1	Calcutta	13,978	6,593	20,571	6.22
2	Howrah	11,778	2,050	13,828	4.66
3	24 Parganas	65,254	9,504	74,758	6.96
4	Hooghly	22,128	6,034	28,167	7.92
5	Midnapur	37,857	12,787	50,644	5.51
6	Nadia	32,405	3,623	36,028	12.15
7	Murshidabad	38,061	8,241	46,302	12.66
8	Burdwan	32,450	7,265	39,715	8.21
9	Birbhum	19,573	2,917	22,490	10.72
10	Bankura	16,956	5,303	22,259	9.37
11	Purulia	14,620	8,261	22,881	12.34
12	Malda	24,515	5,993	30,508	15.01
13	West Dinajpur	40,611	5,024	45,635	18.97
14	Jalpaiguri	24,515	5,993	30,508	13.76
15	Cooch Behar	26,661	2,272	28,933	16.33
16	Darjeeling	7,004	4,295	11,299	11.03
TOTAL		427,365	96,160	529,525	9.58

Source : Census of India, 1981.

The highest number of child worker in West Bengal is in undivided West Dinajpur district (South Dinajpur and North Dinajpur districts) where they are 18.97 per cent per 1000 persons and lowest number of child worker is in Howrah district – being only 4.66 per 1000 persons. Second highest number is found in Cooch Behar district being 16.33 per 1000 persons of the labour force. According to 1991 Census, 593,387 are main child workers, 118,304 are marginal child workers and total child workers are 711,691 in the age group of 0 – 14 years. It is revealed that in West Bengal children are engaged in as many as 32 types of work starting from ploughing to smuggling and begging (Chaurasia, 1998).

Child labour problem is not the minor problem in Siliguri town of Darjeeling District of West Bengal. A large number of children (05-14) age group are engaged in different types of works. Most of them are ragpickers and remaining children are

engaged in hotels, restaurants, garages, small manufacturing companies etc. These children are migrants belonging to various communities and linguist groups. They live in different slums in Siliguri town. Their socio-economic and living condition is very precarious. They always suffer from mal-nutrition, anaemia and many other diseases. They are fully ignorant about community health. Alcoholism is the main problem among the slum dwellers. According to 1981 Census, 11.03 per thousand persons are child labours in Darjeeling district. Out of 5 lakhs of people of Siliguri town 1,60,192 live below the poverty line. Child labourers mainly come from these families who are engaged in different hazardous works for livelihood.

Sociological understanding of child labour probably can reveal the real causes of prevalence of this group in our society. Our attention is naturally drawn towards knowing of the social background of child labours, their caste and community background, family income, literacy, religion and many socio-cultural background. These may help the planner and policy makers for eradication of child labour from the society.

Review of Literatures :

A large number of studies are available in the field of problems of child labour in Indian society. These are mainly done by sociologists and economists. The studies which are relevant for the present research have been briefly reviewed to get the knowledge of the work on child labour already done.

Saha's (1992) study of child labour was performed in the unorganised sector of Kashmir. It confined to the Papier-mâché, Hotels and *Dhabas*, carpet weaving, and domestic services. A total 200 children were interviewed under this study. Besides, some adult workers, labour leaders, child welfare activists, intellectuals and medical practitioners were interviewed to know their views about the cause and implications of child labour. The phenomena of child labour were same as found in the rest of the country. It observed the nature of employment and exploitation of child labour as age-old phenomena. Besides historical perspectives, this study also dealt with the concept, nature and desirability of child labour. It traced the causes and effects and factors generally responsible for the employment of child labour, viz., inadequate income of parents, illiteracy and ignorance of parents and large family size of

parents. It concluded that child labour was a socio-economic problem. It was beyond doubt that children were forced by circumstances to do work at a tender age when they should have been in school. It concluded that despite a plethora of legal measures enacted at the national and state levels employment of children in almost all sectors of economy continued unabated. It looked difficult though not impossible, to abolish this practice in the years to come. It brought to light the plight of children working in carpet-weaving, papier-mâché, hotels and *dhabas* and as domestic servants in Jammu & Kashmir. The working condition of children engaged in various establishments and the ill effects of such work were also studied. It also focused attention on the growing exploitation of children in selected sectors of economy. Certain remedial measures to put the employment of children at the minimum, if not to do away with it completely, suggested comprehensive socio-economic programmes and educational upliftment of the weaker sections of the society and a total change in the attitude of the society towards child labour.

Jain's (1993) study in the carpet weaving industry was undertaken to analyse the situation of child workers in Jammu & Kashmir state with a special focus on girl child workers in the industry similar to the Saha's study as described in the previous paragraph.

Sharma and Mittar (1990) focussed on the role of child labour in the informal sector in Patiala, a class I city of Punjab, as the base and utilised information collected from 110 working children engaged in various occupations. Child labour, which existed in the formal sector, could more frequently be found in the informal sector. The main causes of it were the unemployment, poverty and indebtedness of the households. The employment of children in the informal sector is preferred, because the employers considered it as a source of cheap labour and quick profits. Out of the listed households, only 115 households had at least one working child each, five households were such where children were working in formal sector enterprises. This study focused on the socio-economic characteristics of the sampled households belonging to the working children. Besides, the age, sex, caste, education, marital and parental status and employment status of the working children had been analysed.

The households which supplied child labourers were having a sizeable proportion of their population between the age of 6 and 14 years. This was in fact an age in which the children should be in the schools. Since the children were sent to work, it was expected that they were deprived of even the elementary education which led to the low educational level of the households from where they were drawn. It was further observed that three-fifths of the population did not have any formal education. Nearly one-fourth of the population had studied up to primary level and another 6.23 per cent had studied up to middle level. No formal education and low level of literacy among the population were perhaps responsible for the placement of a large number of heads of household in the informal sector activities, such as rickshaw pulling, bangle selling, washing of clothes, petty trade, rag-collection, hawking, repair works, etc. Female-working children constituted only a negligible proportion of the working children. Nearly two-third of the working children were from scheduled castes and backward classes. However, a comparatively higher proportion of working children belonging to this category were of non-migrants. Nearly one-tenth of the children were found to be married. The child marriage was found to be more prevalent among the migrants than natives. Nearly one-third of them were addicted to smoking or taking *zarda*, etc. The mean earning of the working children was Rs. 168.18 per month. The mean earnings of the migrant children were much higher than that of non-migrant children. The income differential between migrant and non-migrant children was due to their placement in technical and non-technical occupation.

Mittal's (1994) study on child labour in 'Chikan' industry and allied works was undertaken by their own household in the area of Daliganj in Lucknow city. The study consisted of the child workers engaged in chikan work in Daliganj area. The method of random sampling had been used for selecting fifty children for intensive interview on the socio-economic and occupational aspects of child labourers in chikan industry.

The word 'Chikan' according to one school of thought appeared to have its roots in the Persian language being a derivative of 'chikan' "chakan", chikeen meant a kind of cloth wrought with in followers with a sort of needlework. Chikan embroidery was just like a shining feather in the artistic cap of Lucknow. The art of

chikan embroidery was mostly confined within the walls of old localities of Lucknow but later on, it stretched within a radius of about 100 k.m. from north to south, west to east of Lucknow. About 50,000 to 60,000 people were engaged in this art, and it had become a profession of the members of the Muslim families and it is passing from generation to generation. The majority of children in this trade had been the females. The highest number of children doing the chikan work has been found to be in 10-12 age groups. All the respondents had been from Muslim families. Overwhelming majority of the cases had been encouraged by their parents to join the chikan work. Keeping up of the family tradition has been the general reason behind the respondents coming for chikan work. Only a lesser number of children were trained for the chikan work. The majority of respondents had been in the chikan work for more than one year. The educational standard of the children interviewed was very depressing with the state of affairs regarding the educational background of the children. One must look at the government's policies already existing with regard to the education of children. The health of the majority of the child workers had been very poor. The long working hours often left no time for the child workers for any other household activities. The child workers were not paid any fixed wages. They were paid on piece rate basis. The pathetic situation about the payment system in the chikan work was that quality of work was not given due importance in payment of wages to the workers. It was very clear that female child workers had less time than male child workers. In between the working hours they also had to assist in household activities. Nonetheless, the female child workers had some preferences for the recreational activities. Singing, dancing, radio-listening, television watching, indoor games were some of the preference of the child workers for their recreational activities.

Chandra Mowli's (1992) study of the '*Jogin*' system in Andhra Pradesh which was derived from the word '*Yogin*', meaning a "girl-saint". "*Jogin*" was defined as a larger number of small girls traditionally or superstitiously dedicated to the village gods, but eventually abandoned to the woods to the caprice and avarice of more mortals. The system of this custom was totally different from that of prostitution. Very often people did mistake the *Jogin* as a form of the '*Devadasi*' system. To call *Jogin* as the '*Devadasi*' system was a travesty of truth. It was generally done either

out of ignorance or out of mischief. The result was the same in either case. Today *Jogins* system could be found in Nizamabad. This was the pathetic plight of very young girl belonging to the scheduled castes, who were brutally exploited even to this day, euphemistically labelled as *Jogins*. A girl aged five to nine years was married in an elaborate ceremony to *Patharaju*, the god she was painted with turmeric powder from head to foot, dressed in yellow, a *mangalasutra* was also tied on behalf of the god, and there was eating and drinking for all the guests. She continued to live with her family and when she attained puberty she was initiated into her actual role by the village *patil* or anybody who controls the village. Then depending on her physical attractiveness, she became the mistress of some rich man or ended up as a 'one-night-stand' for all and sundry to keep her body and soul together.

There were 5,000 *Jogins* in Nizamabad district and a total of 30,000 elsewhere. They included both the young and old. It was found that more than 40 per cent of the women were suffering from leucorrhoea and sexually transmitted diseases. Most of them were suffering from severe condition of ill health. The '*Jogin*' system clearly came under the category of bonded labour. In this sense, every *Jogin* was a bonded labour, since she was not free to take part in the labour market, especially in the initial phase of her bondage to any particular landlord or her employer. Krishna Kumar (1997) and Maitra Sinha (1996) had studied on the same field.

Singh's (1992) study was undertaken in different localities of Ahmedabad among the 200 child labourers who were engaged in the restaurants, hotels, laris, garages and household activities. Out of 200 child labourers there were 199 children in the age group of 8 – 14 years and one child was seven years of age. Majority of the child labourers came from families each consisting of five to seven persons while some of them had 10 or more members in their family. Most of the child labourers had illiterate family members. The monthly family income of more than one-third of the child labourers was Rs. 701.00 and above, and of the rest it was below Rs. 701.00. Two-third of the child labour had either one or two earning family members. Only one-fifth of the child labourers saved Rs. 51.00 to 61.00 and 2 per cent of them saved Rs. 15.00 to 20.00 monthly. Majority of the child labourers did not have any property but a few of them have their own lands and houses. Most of the child

labourers lived in slums. Child labourers under study worked for 11 to 12 hours a day but those who were engaged in household chores did not necessarily work for 11 – 12 hours a day. Most of them did not involve themselves in risky work and also did not suffer from any diseases related to their work. Almost all the child labourers except five have good work atmosphere. More than 50 per cent of the child labourers had expressed their desire to study, to play and to go to school. The respondents themselves seemed to be very keen on continuing further studies. Unfortunately, due to socio-economic circumstances they were unable to pursue. Interestingly, the child labours were in no way less intelligent than the children of the same age group who pursued formal education in schools. The child labours expressed their desire to go to school for education even after finishing their work each day. It may thus be concluded that the child labours were required an opportunity for informal education.

Tripathy's (1997) study on the socio-economic and living conditions of migrant child labourers from the draught prone regions of Orissa. Most of the migrant child labourers hailed from the tribal societies who were unskilled and landless agricultural labourers. They migrated to the distant places of Kashmir, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Uttar Pradesh and many other states. They engaged themselves in earth cutting, road making, textile works, etc. Employment in unorganised sectors had been over-pressured because of such shift of rural poor and unskilled labourers who supplied their children to be employed in hazardous occupations. Labour migration and consequently the migration children as labourers is a historical phenomenon in a backward tribal dominated state of Orissa.

A similar study was undertaken by Maharatna (1997) among the four villages in Birbhum district of West Bengal.

Aziz's (1979) study was on the problems of agricultural labourers in the perspective of rural development in Mysore. The nature of the rural labour market was such that it did not provide prospects of agricultural labourers. It was characterised by highly seasonal employment and attracted a substantial number of women and children. The low-income households provided a large number of women in the rural labour force. Thus among the landless and the nearly landless families, 43 per cent of the workers happened to be females, as against 33 per cent in the case of families with holdings of over five acres. Similar trends were observed in respect of

children. Thus in a district of Uttar Pradesh it was found that in the households with over 15 acres of land, boys under the age of 15 did not participate in the labour force at all. But among the agricultural labourers and households owning less than 15 acres of land, 45 per cent to 49 per cent of the boys in the age group of 11 to 15 years were in the labour force. These trends suggested that the participation rate of women and children in the rural labour market were inversely related to the levels of incomes. As a result, growth of agricultural labourers by exerting a downward pressure on agricultural wages would again create conditions like increased participation rates of women and children, which in turn would further worsen the wage situation.

To understand the nature of employment and working conditions the labourers were divided into herd boys and adult labourers. The herd boys were mainly young boys of the school-going age who on account of economic pressure had been forced to take up jobs with landlords as herd boys. The main duty of these boys was to lend cattle, collect cow dung and many other odd jobs. Wage was paid annually to the guardian of the boy either in cash or kind but the amount paid was negligible as the boy used to get food, shelter and clothing from the employer : Like the herd boy, the adult labourers also stayed in the lodge provided by the employer. It was stated that the adult labourers did not have set working hours, they were supposed to be working round the clock. There were also said to be no set type of work to be done. They were asked to perform all kinds of jobs depending on their physical ability. Besides works in the agricultural land the attached labourers used to take the produce to the market, guard the employer's house, garden and other property, and take care of cattle. But the wage paid for the work was meagre compared even with the low wages paid to the casual labour.

Saxena (1986) estimated the number of child workers engaged in earning a living instead of receiving education, general as well as vocational which was so necessary to equip them for their future lives. The majority of child labourers were engaged either in agriculture or farm related work or in the unorganised sector. This sector accounts for children working as servants in homes, canteens, wayside shop and as vendors, porters, scavengers and shoeshine boys. In the plantation areas, considerable numbers of children were employed, mainly in the harvesting of tea and coffee. Children in plantations started working from the age of 6 or 7 only. The great

majority of workshop did not use any mechanical power, but employ a large number of wage earners. These factories and workshops were outside the Factories Acts and there had been no separate legislative provision for them except for *Beedi* workers. There were others like shellac, mica splitting, carpet weaving, glass bangles and various small-scale industries. The observations of the committee on child labour were quite significant. The existing situation in respect of child labour in India could still be summarised as one of "continuing drift". Though there was little evidence of children at work in the organised sector of industry and in certain pockets of the country. The overall position was as had been observed by the Whitley Commission nearly 50 years ago. Bulks of the children continue to be employed in the rural environment. While most of them worked without wages, there was an increasing number amongst them of children employed for wages and also of many working on jobs which were hazardous quite a large number of children residing in rural areas were also employed in cotton industries, where again the regulation by law was minimal, there was still a large-scale migration of children from rural environment to urban areas. These children took to employment in smaller establishments in cities under varying exploitative conditions. The regulation by law of employment of children covered only a fringe of these occupations and ironically even where regulation had been sought, the enforcement was extremely half-hearted and tardy.

Bhatty (1996), Dasgupta (1997), Jain (1996) studied the similar problems regarding the child labour in India.

Pandhe's (1979) study was mainly based on official and semi-official reports. There were several laws regulating the employment of children in various occupations. Their purpose was to protect the health and well being of children. The Royal Commission on Labour (1929-31) described at length the extremely unsatisfactory employment and working conditions of child workers. According to Census report the number of child workers in Delhi increased by 40 per cent during 1961 to 1971. The duties of workers covered almost all household chores, such as scrubbing the floors and cleaning the rooms, washing linen, cleaning household utensils and in some cases, cooking and serving food, other duties included making beds for the entire household and so on. National Institute of Public Corporation and Child Development, New Delhi conducted a detailed survey on working children in

Bombay in 1978. The study was undertaken at the instance of the development of social welfare among the working children aged 6 - 15 years in different industries. The survey revealed a total of 5939 children of whom 14.7 per cent had already joined the workforce. A sex-wise distribution of these working children showed that 67.4 per cent of them were boys and 32.6 per cent girls. On 21 December 1976 the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Resolution proclaiming 1979 as the International Year of the Child (IYC) with general objectives of promoting welfare of children. The resolution called upon the UN agencies to contribute to the implementation of the objectives of the year, the purpose for which an inter-agency advisory group was formed in early 1977. Since March 1977, the ILO had participated in general inter-agency advisory group meetings. The nature of the discussions indicated that certain points regarding ILO policy concerning working children needed to be clarified and analysed. The purpose of this exercise was to enable the ILO focal points to co-ordinate interdepartmental activities in a clearer perspective so that the ILO inputs for the preparation of the International Year of the Child, 1979, adhered to a coherent policy pattern.

Joe (1997) and Remington (1996) studied on the similar problems of child labour.

Ahuja and Jain's (1998) study conducted in a village in the district of 24 Parganas (North) West Bengal revealed that children were engaged in as many as 32 types of works starting from ploughing to smuggling and begging. In the cause of direct wage employment in manufacturing units producing brassware, match sticks, diamond and precious stone jewellerys, carpets, locks and other such products, children were exposed to harmful chemicals, handling of dangerous machines and other similar hazards. The child workers were put under serious psychological strain by denying permission to meet their parents, relatives and friends. The child maidservants were treated badly and were sometimes physically and sexually assaulted by the employer. All these adversely affected the physical, mental, spiritual and intellectual development of a child. This study was designed to present some demographic and socio-economic aspect of child workers. The plea that child labour was a painful necessity in a developing country like India. However the consequences of child labour in terms of health, social and economic status and the

general quality of life were alarming. The study revealed that such a cause-effects-syndrome could degenerate our future human resources, unless controlled rigorously. Child labour remained wide spread throughout the world – for many millions of children, work in an ordeal, a source of suffering and exploitation and an abuse of human rights. The demographic policy recording child labour should be to control population. To tolerate child labour was neither morally justifiable nor a good social policy. This waste was awful, because future economic and social development is contingent on the quality of human resources.

Vora's (1996) study on the issue of child labour had been highlighted at international and national forums. A series of initiatives since the 1990's had made child labour the subject of debate in the government circles, the media and had become part of public discourse. India had the largest number of child labour in the world. The estimates of child labour in India were 13.6 million, according to 1981 census. More than 80 per cent of the working children in India belonged to rural areas who worked in the primary sector of the economy. According to the 1981 Census about 86.4 per cent of the child workforce was employed in agriculture and allied activities. It was estimated that about 8 per cent of the total child labour force worked in the export sector. More occupations and process involving large numbers of child labourer were outside the purview of the law. The child labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 covered only 15 per cent of the working children. The prominent sector where children were employed were agriculture, cattle tending, stone quarries, construction, carpet industry, glass and bangle industry, lock industry and so on. Obviously, their children were susceptible to diseases affecting the lung, eyes, skin and other vital organs of the body. It was advocated that child labour was due to poverty, unemployment, population explosion and illiteracy in the developing countries. He believed that the lack of social awareness and concern, absence of political will and prevalence of social myths in favour of child labour was the main reasons for the perpetuation of child labour. Illiteracy, unemployment and poverty were high in child labour dominated areas.

Parveen (1990), ILO (1990), Das and Dhar Vemuri (1992), Banerji (1997), Krishna (1996), Ahuja (1991) and many other scholars had studied similar problems of child labour in India.

Verma and Agnihotri (1981) examined that the childhood was a time for growth, laughter and learning, but millions of children now carried responsibilities beyond their tender ages. To ban child labour completely would rob most of them of their subsistence. It was a grave economic necessity, in many cases, poverty forced a child to work under the adverse conditions. They desperately needed a few rupees given to them. What was needed was a comprehensive legislation giving adequate safeguards and amenities to working children. There was no compulsion to ensure decent working conditions or responsible hours. To prohibit child labour below the age of 12, free and compulsory education till 14 years was essential but difficult to enforce. The duration of work should be limited to four and half-hours a day not exceeding 27 hours a week so that these children could be educated by condensed courses and sit for state board or University examination. Non-formal education should be the responsibility of the state or of institutions employing a large number of children to set up child welfare centres by the trained social workers. Besides educational and recreational facilities these children also needed nutrition and medical care. These Centres could deal with the grievances of child labour. If such a bill was enacted and enforced, perhaps the child workers could look forward to a slightly better deal in life.

Prasad's (1988) study was based on the data collected from among the tribal *rejas* of Ranchi district of Bihar. The study was on the various socio-economic aspects of the tribal *rejas* working in different occupational categories like construction work, brick-kilns, transportation of raw materials, industrial complexes, etc. at Barjatu, Dhurwa, Namkom, Ratu road and Kanke areas. Only 300 respondents had been interviewed amongst the tribal *rejas* deployed at various labour centres in and around Ranchi town. In this study altogether three hundred tribal *rejas* belonging to five different occupational categories had been included.

The tribal *rejas* belonging to the age groups 5 – 10 and 11-15 years worked in brick fields, transportation work and in various construction works and earned Rs. 10 – 15 a week in comparison to Rs. 20 – 25 earned by an adult *reja*. During the survey of three hundred tribal *rejas*, 7.7 per cent *rejas* belonged to the age groups of 5 – 10 and 11 – 15 years.

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Sooryamoorthy's (1998) conducted research among child labourers of three major cities of Kerala, namely, Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi and Kozhikode. A total of 1905 child workers were interviewed. Nearly one-third of the child labourers in the cities of Kerala work as helpers in various workshops. Of this, 58.45 per cent of the child labourers worked as workshop assistants in Thiruvananthapuram. Child labourers engaged as street vendors constituted 26.15 per cent of child labourers' force. Kochi was reported to be the city with the maximum number of child workers working as vendors. The other major occupations where children were engaged in a large number were shops and hotels.

The survey indicated, that, 15 per cent of the children worked in hotels and as assistants in shops or establishments at night. Children did not enjoy any privileges as workers. The wages were not given regularly. They were not also paid when the children were on leave on health grounds. Fifty eight per cent of them had revealed that they had experienced wage-cuts for the leaves taken. The studies in the three cities, revealed the fact that the children belonged to the backward sections of society were either Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes or Other Backward Classes. Except in Kozhikode, the Hindus were in the majority. Kozhikode being a place with a predominantly Muslim population, Child workers were mostly from this community. The study suggested elimination of this menace in Kerala in three ways : Preventive measures that could check further inflow of child labour into the existing child labour force; ameliorating of the working and living conditions of the children who could not be rehabilitated effectively; and rehabilitation of child workers for whom rehabilitation was possible and required. The focus necessarily needed to fall on the vulnerable sections of society who were more prone to this social evil.

Chattoraj (1990) stated that the problem of child labour had been a worldwide problem. Industrialisation on a large-scale led to the employment of children in factories, workshops and other unregulated occupations. India had the largest child labour force in the world i.e., 16.5 million, most of them were below the age of 14 years. It became a matter of deep concern to find out ways and means, which might put an end to the employment and exploitation of children who were forced to join the labour stream. For this purpose data relating to child labour were taken from the census reports of 1961, 1971 and 1981. A child worker is one who worked for the

major part of the day and hence was normally deprived of schooling opportunity. Children working for a few hours outside their school timings are not included. In the developing countries considerable improvement in the school enrolment had helped in bringing down the incidence of child labour. These were laws prescribing the minimum age, minimum wages or other working conditions for various categories of labour covering factories, mines, transport, shipping, shops, pledging of labour of children, employment of children and conditions of employment of *beedi* and cigar workers. Some of these specially prohibit the employment of children. Our Constitution also provided for protection of children. According to Article 24, no child below the age of 14 years should be employed in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment. Article 39 (c) and (f) were also relevant in this regard. In spite of these provisions, the employment of children had been continuing in violation of the protective and preventive measures.

The studies of Satyarthi (1996), Panicker (1998), Sinha (1998), Chandra (1998), Anandharaja Kumar (1998) and Sahoo (1990) studied were more or less similar to that of Chatteraj (1990).

Bhangoo (1990) attempted to find out the magnitude and problem of child labour in its various dimensions based on a survey on 100 such workers in the industrial and non-industrial sectors of urban Surat. It was found that child labour was the product of action and interaction of numerous factors and social force, the fundamental element being the poor economic structure of the families of child workers. Added to this the poor and uneven development of capitalism and the consequent rapid inflow of ruralities and the relative weakness of the democratic institutions in the country had generated child employment on a mass scale. The solution to this problem would be the movements by action groups or trade unions, united challenges from the working people themselves, supported by other democratic and progressive forces.

Most of the children at the age of eight went out to supplement either the income of the family or to carry out minor household chores. About 86 per cent of child labourers belonged to backward castes. Insignificant representation of the upper caste was understandable in terms of correlation of caste and class, but little representation of the Scheduled Castes remained inexplicable. As such, it appeared

that although caste had been the context with which all the economic indicators were evaluated. One tended to see the weakness in the approach, more or less explicitly. This indicated that both migration to urban set up and employment of children were relatively restricted to the lowest socio-economic strata and was more conducive to a comparatively higher socio-economic strata who might have faced alienation leading to depeasantisation due to the development of agriculture.

Sinha's (1991) study was conducted in Calcutta, as the working children were more exploited in urban areas who had to face various occupational hazards and temptation of other urban vices. To unfold the nature of this problem, 800 child workers had been selected for study. The main cause for abnormal increase in the number of child labour was due to the flow of migrants from the villages to the urban areas in search of employment as a result of disintegration of village economy and pervading poverty among the landless and working classes. Children began their life in the city by joining the labour force of their traditional occupations. Most of the children were however found to be employed in the unorganised sector also. The highest concentration was 5 – 7 workers in an establishment. As soon as the child got an employment, he lost the freedom of playing and mixing with other children. The long hours of confinement in the dark unhealthy places could only be compared with slavery. But the extent of exploitation did not end there. Children are not allowed to enjoy holiday when occasion demands. The rest period is also affected, having generally no-good or healthy place to retire, and by doing domestic chores of the employer and at times in personal bickering. The standard of literacy among the child labour was very low.

The most sordid aspect unearthed by this study was the existence of so-called 'bonded-labour' in the city of Calcutta. Here 'bonded' child workers could not become free until the debt incurred by their fathers was fully repaid by their labour. Most of the working children in Calcutta were migratory in nature; they found to the city from the family of under privileged class to supplement the family income.

Mishra (2000) critically examined constitutional and legal provisions, the national policy and programme of action, international instruments and recent international initiatives, and the role of NGOs, trade unions, central employers'

organisations, and the media. He also examined the statutory role of public interest litigation.

The studies on child labours of Chaurasia (1998), Pankaj (1995), Garain (1995), Pande (1996), Teghrainan (1997), Buddhapriya (1995) and Shobhana (1998) were more or less on the similar areas.

Jain's (1993) study on "Child labour in the match industry of Sivakashi" was based on the data collection through unstructured interviews with 115 child workers and their parents. The children interviewed were drawn from 10 villages of the Sivakashi Panchayat Union and Sivakashi town. Sivakashi was one of the first grade municipal towns in the Kamarajar district of Tamil Nadu. Children interviewed were between 4 and 14 years old, though a good proportion of children of 3 years were found assisting their mothers in the match factories. As regards places from where the sample hailed, most of the children who worked in the match factories were from rural areas and were transported by factory buses everyday. A significant proportion of children came from Sivakashi town and walked down to the factories. Most of the child labour were from families with irregular income and therefore, used to supplement their family income. Moreover, the majority of parents wanted their male children to attend school. Thus the burden of supplementary income falls mainly on girl children.

The work places were congested, improperly illuminated, full of chemical odour and poorly ventilated. Complaints were common about lack of drinking water in the factory premises and non-availability of toilet facilities. It was observed that the children had to carry heavy wooden frames with wooden scales and iron bars weighing 4 kg each to be exposed to the sun or to the chemical. Though the normal working day in the match factory was between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., children used to work for 12 hours on an average, daily under tiring conditions for 6 to 7 days a week, without a break, for months together. Children take a short lunch break of 20 to 40 minutes. By and large, the wages were paid as follows : 0.55 paisa for filling one frame, 0.60 paisa for making 144 inner boxes; 0.25 paisa for making 144 outer boxes and 0.60 paisa for labelling 300 boxes.

Ghosh's (1992) study had been carried out in Calcutta among the street children. Out of 2301 sample children interviewed for the study all were under the

age of 0 – 15 years. This study was mainly based on the nature and extent of the problem of the street children, physical, psychological and social needs of street children for their growth and development etc.

Children belonged to two major religious communities, Hindu (82.7 % and Muslim (17.3%). The majority of these children belonged to the Scheduled Caste (52%) and Scheduled Tribes (6%) respectively. The present study showed that all the families living in the street of Calcutta had migrated to the city for various reasons from different states of India and also from Nepal and Bangladesh. Of the street children brought under the study 30.4% had been found to be doing some kind of work while the rest 69.6% did not any work. Though most of the street children were rag pickers, many of them also pursued a variety of vocations. The condition of working children was very miserable in all respects. About 18.8% children were working for 7 to 9 hours a day, 18.4% for 10 to 12 hours and 2.8% were working for above 12 hours a day. They were forced to work for an indefinite period and in hazardous conditions, the working street children had a very small income.

Phillips's (1992) study of the Street Children of Indore had identified :

- (1) The Children on the street;
- (2) The children of the street;
- (3) Abandoned children.

The street children were scattered all over Indore, particularly near Cinema houses, in public parks, at bus stands, railway station, busy market centres, parking places, etc. Since they kept on moving from one place to another.

The study analysed physical, psychological and social conditions of the street children and prepared a plan of action for corrective/rehabilitation services for the street children. The total sample consisted of 300 street children. The children made a living as shoeshine boys, rag pickers, domestic servants, porters, hotel and tea stall workers, beggars etc. Out of the 300 sampled children 86.3 per cent were boys and 13.7 per cent were girls. Most of the street children were born in the city of Indore. Out of the total sample of 300 some 7 per cent cases were reported to be married. Most of the street children were illiterate, and about 24.7 per cent had some schooling up to the primary level. It is indeed a matter of concern that 40 per cent of the street children had no permanent place to live. They slept on pavements, at bus stands, on

the railway platform, etc. Most of them had a large family ranging from 5 to 8 members.

A large number of the children came from weaker sections – Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes or Backward Classes. The children of the age group of 10-14 were working at tea stalls, garages and in hotels. The children of the younger age group live by begging. Their employers did not provide working street children with any facilities. Many of them had complained of inadequate wages, heavy workload, and torture. At tea stalls and in hotels they worked for 12 – 14 hours with low wages and no job security. This study considered their health conditions, disability, illness, etc. It was found that some 1.7 per cent were handicapped children. When enquired about the illness in the previous one year, it was revealed that the street children had suffered from diseases like tuberculosis, measles, fever, gastric trouble, skin diseases and wounds. Children, who worked with the adults, imitated adults and behaved like adults on the street. Street children in their early childhood got addicted to drinking, *bhang*, tobacco, *ganja* etc. About 48 per cent of these children were addicted to one vice or the other.

Kewalramoni's (1996) study was based on an empirical study of 167 cases of child abuse and the problems of its victims. The survey on child abuse was conducted in one small town in Rajasthan a few years ago to explore the nature, extent and ethiology of child abuse; to identify the patterns of child abuse, to determine the association between selected socio-demographic variables and child abuse; to evaluate the applicability of existing theoretical explanations of child abuse on the Indian society. More boys than girls were found to be the victims of physical and emotional abuse, but among the sexually abused children, the overwhelming majority (70 per cent) was girls. It was found that boys were earning more than girls. More than three-fifths of the abused children were living with their both parents, 19 per cent with one parent. Some children were victims of more than one type of abuse, but they were included in one of the three main categories, depending upon the major type of their abuse. Out of the children living with both of their parents, 54 per cent were the victims of physical abuse, 40 per cent of emotional abuse, and 6 per cent of sexual abuse. Surprisingly, families with both parents in comparison to broken families pointed out more cases of abused children.

Bhir's (1989) study was made in the greater Bombay among the children who were employed as hotel/restaurant workers, domestic servants, garage workers and shoe shiners. This survey highlighted that children employed in these sectors were an under-privileged lot entering the work force at an early age because of dire economic necessity. This was evident from the study of the economic background of the children and their parents. The average size of the family was five members and the average number of working members was three, 50 per cent of whom were children. The average family income was Rs. 529 per month, the child workers contributing about 30 per cent of it. If these children were to be removed from the work force, the average family income would come down to around Rs. 350 per month. A majority of the children were migrants who came to Bombay mainly in search of job. A majority of these children lived in slums and on pavements. Some of the shoe shiners even lived on railway platforms. The housing conditions of those who lived in slums were deplorable with no proper facilities of sanitation and hygiene. Only 32 per cent lived in non-slum areas, a majority of whom were domestic servants living with their employers. On an average, the children had enter the work force as early as 10.6 years of age, their age being 12.7 years, The main reason for this was that earning was imperative to them. Thus only about 14 per cent of the children reported that they were going to school.

The average income of the children was Rs. 102 per month. Some discrimination was observed in the wages paid to adults and those paid to children, especially in hotel/restaurants and garages. During the initial period of training they were not paid for the work they did, the period of apprenticeship ranges from 6 months to 1 year. The hours of work of the children were very lengthy, and the type of work was strenuous.

Objectives :

This study has been carried out among the child labourers of some slums of Siliguri town to understand their socio-economic background. Their socio-economic background will help to investigate the real causes of practice of child labour. The study of child labour will focus on the various aspects of the socio-economic life which form the basis of the objectives of the present study.

The child labourers belong to the age group upto the age of 14 years. Children of different ages are found to be engaged in different types of work. Then it is to be found that what types of work are suitable for what age of a child. What is the sex ratio of child labourers in these occupations and distribution of sexes in various occupations, what are the languages they speak as the child labourers are hailing from different castes and communities. Their marital status, migration to Siliguri slums, year of migration and education are also to be investigated.

A detailed study of child labourers of the different categories of work and occupations will be made. The following aspects will be investigated : What are their types of occupations ? Where are they engaged ? What are the terms and conditions of work ? Nature of work, working hours, working environment, wages, behaviour of employers, work facilities, nature of punishment for not being committed to work, and many other questions related to their specific occupations.

The nature of exploitation of child labourers, which may be economic in nature as well as socio-cultural in nature will also be investigated.

Attitudes of employers towards their child labourer's are working conditions, wages and other facilities will also be investigated.

To examine the future plan, ambition and attitude of child labourers.

Family background of child labourers is important to understand the causes of their engagement in various works, profession, income and educational level of their parents. The living condition, housing and health are also important aspects to understand the problems. Parent's educational background is related to the awareness of the Child Labour Act.

Family background of child labourers likes educational, economic, caste and occupational background of the family members' ~~sum~~ to be contributing to the growth of child labourers. These are to be investigated in details.

In what way incomes of the child labourers help their parental family. Various dimensions of child labourers, their attitude towards their work, attitude of their parents towards their occupations are to be investigated. To examine and assess the motivation of the employers of these children is an important aspect of the study. Sex ratio of the child labourers is also equally important to investigate to understand the role of girls and boys as earners. The rate of absenteeism of child labourers in their

work compared to the adult labourers is to be find out and also the reasons and nature of such absence of the child labourers to be investigated. Lastly, it is important to see whether child labourers are desirable for the society or not, and also to know that whether they are aware of the Child Labour Act to prevent the practice.

Relationship between child labourers and their employers, which may be economic, contractual and extra-economic in nature, are to be analysed.

To examine the social implications of child labour is an important task, which is to be explored. To suggest measures for removing the practices of child labour from the society is a difficult task, but an effort is to be made for developing this aspect.

Methodology :

Keeping the objectives in mind it was decided to collect field data to examine the socio-economic and living condition of the child labourers. The study began in August 1997 and covered a period of eleven months upto July 1998.

For this study at first I contacted the Siliguri Municipal Corporation, the Siliguri Mahakuma Parishad, the Department of Labour (Govt. of WB), and the Regional Director of Central Board for Workers Education. From the Siliguri Municipal Corporation I came to know that a large number of child labourers were found in eleven slums under the Ward No. 18 and 28.

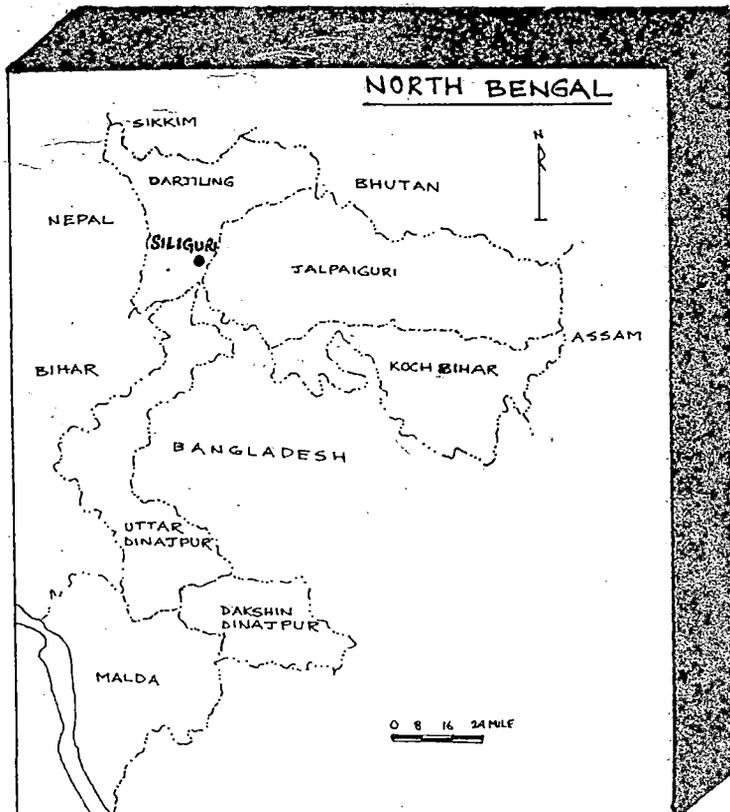
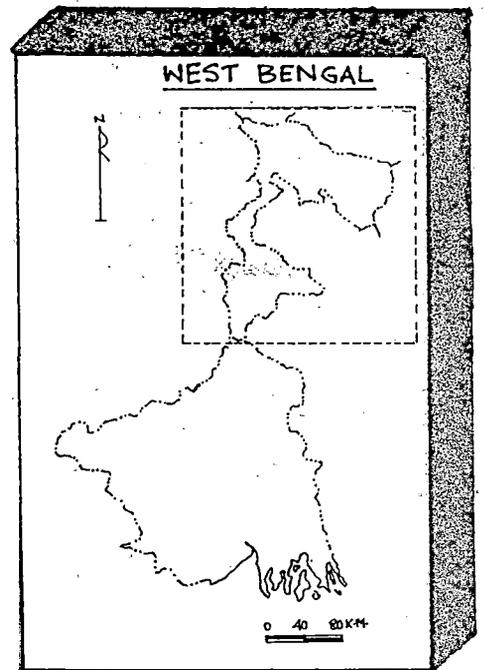
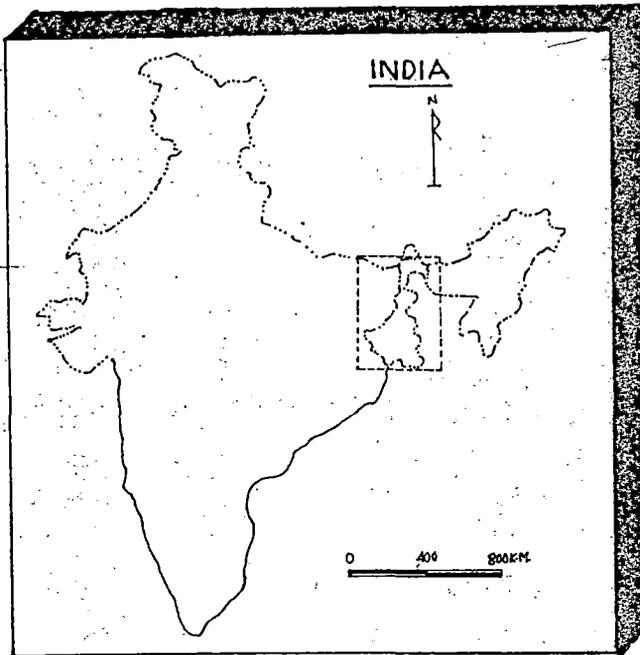
For collection of first hand data an interview schedule was prepared containing 79 questions. The schedule was divided into three parts : personal background of child labour, their family background and their employers. Before beginning of collection of data with this schedule a list of child labour was prepared where I could find altogether 318 child labourers in all the eleven slums. I decided to interview all these child labour and therefore no sampling was drawn out of it. While all 318-child labourers were interviewed their parents and employers were also interviewed. In addition to the primary data collection through the interview schedule secondary data were collected from various governments reports, journals, books, newspapers etc.

Observation method for collection of data is a powerful tool. Much of the data were collected through observation, which helped me to check, and recheck the

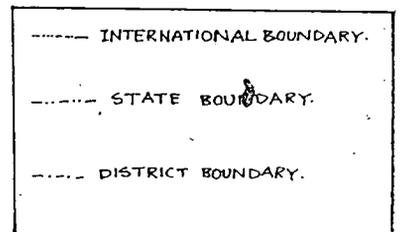
important data collected through the schedule. Many of the delicate matters, which were difficult to collect through interview or sensitive to the informants, were required to be enriched by more data collected through observation method.

All the data were analysed and qualitatively represented through writing.

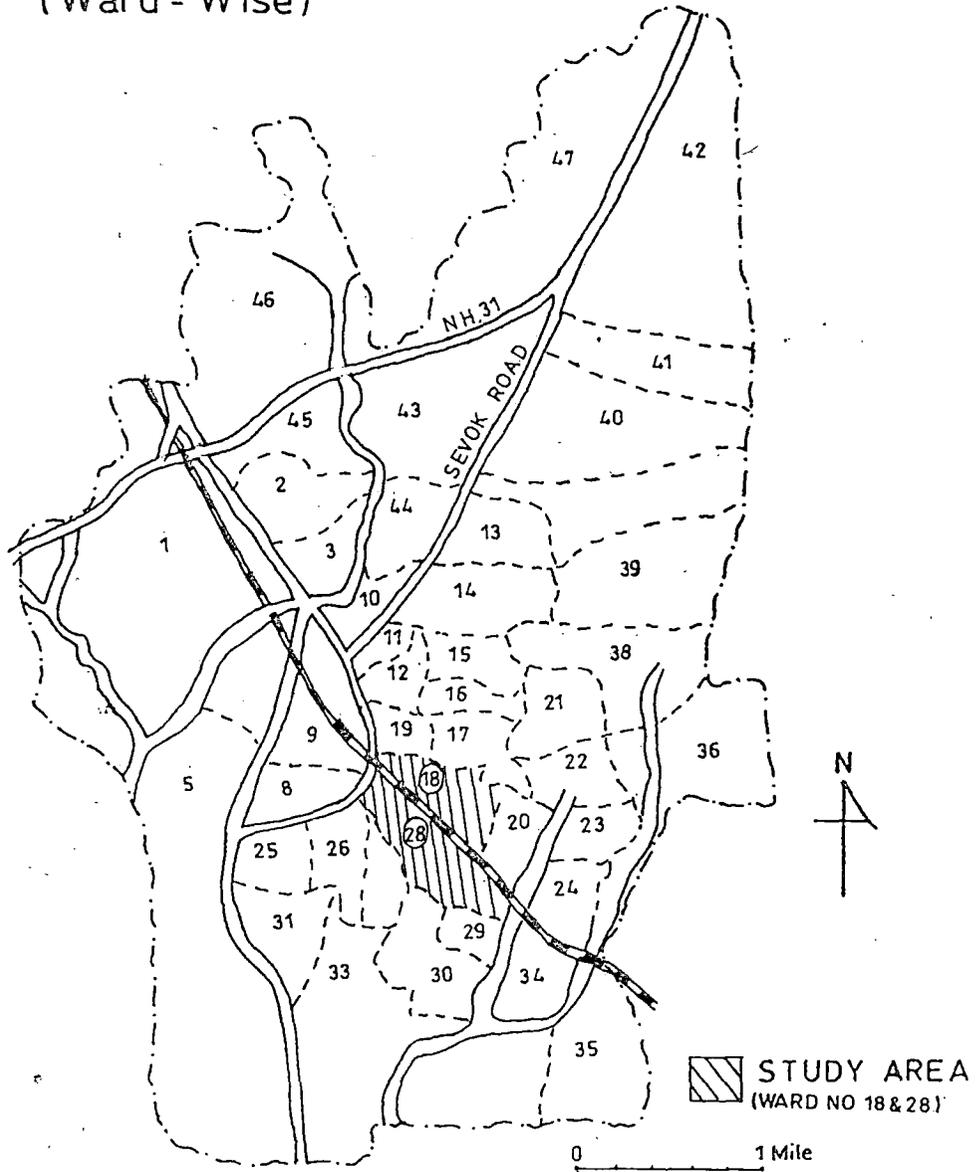
LOCATION MAP



BOUNDARY INDEX



SILIGURI TOWN (Ward - Wise)



CHAPTER – TWO

PERSONAL AND FAMILY BACKGROUND OF CHILD LABOURERS

Personal background :

The prevalence of child labour is generally attributed to the poverty of the individual households and backwardness of the society. The study on child labour in Siliguri town indicates that poverty, illiteracy and unemployment have forced the small children to enter into the labour market. The prevalence of child labour has been seen more or less in all periods of time with varied natures and dimensions, depending on the existing socio-economic structure of a society. In the past, child labour has been a part of the social organisation in which all members pooled their labour to produce for the subsistence and survival. This was and is particularly true for rural subsistence farming where the work of the child formed a part of the labour necessary for the reproduction of the system and value of labour taken as part of child's socialization for reproduction of the labour force.

The socio-economic study on child labour has been conducted in Siliguri among 318 child labourers. They are engaged in various types of occupations in different parts of Siliguri. Their personal background is analysed here on the basis of their age, sex, religion, caste, mother tongue, birth place, marital status, migration, nature of work, wages, education, punishment and future thought, etc. These components may help to get an idea about their personal background. If some components are excluded from this subject, it will not give their complete personal background and cannot make a complete idea about their personal profile.

Age Composition :

While selecting children for the survey, the only consideration is that the children selected for the study should be below the age of 14 years as per the definition of a child given by the Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act, 1996. Singh (1992) has indicated in the study of Gujarat that the working child labourers largely belong to fourteen years of age. The highest numbers of child labourers

working in hotels/restaurants are in the age group of 14 years and that is 36.36 per cent of the total number of children included in the particular service sector. The table (No. 2) shows the age of 318 children studied in the Wards 28 and 18 in Siliguri.

Table no. 2
Child labours and age groups

Age group	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
6 – 8	19	10.50	16	11.68	35	11.00
9 – 11	58	32.04	59	43.07	117	36.80
12 – 14	104	57.46	62	45.25	166	52.20
TOTAL	181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

The above table reveals that majority of the children belong to the age group of 12 – 14 years (52.20 per cent) followed by the children belonging to the age groups of 9 – 11 (36.8 per cent) and 6 – 8 (11 per cent). On an average, children enter into the labour market at the age of 6 – 8 years.

Sex Composition :

Pandhe (1979) has identified in Delhi that a good number of male children are engaged in various occupations. They are working in large numbers in tea-shops and dhabas, domestic service, shoe shining, auto repairing and cycle repairing shops, collection of rags and other waster materials, hawking of evening newspapers and home delivery of milk bottles. In the study area it has been identified that a good number of male children is engaged in different types of occupations. Among 318 children interviewed, 181 children are male and 137 children female. It is a common feature that male children work outside home where female children engage themselves mainly in domestic work in their own house and also outside. Table 3 shows the sex composition of the child labourers, where 181 (56.92 per cent) children are male and 137 (43.08 per cent) children female.

Table no. 3

Sex composition of the child labourers

Sex	Ward no. 28		Ward no. 18		Total	
	No. of child labourers	Percentage	No. of child labourers	Percentage	No. of child labourers	Percentage
Male	110	55.56	71	59.17	181	56.92
Female	88	44.44	49	40.83	137	43.08
TOTAL	198	100.00	120	100.00	318	100.00

Religion :

Multi-religious people live in different slums in Siliguri, they have migrated here for their livelihood. Hindu and Muslim people are more in number than any other religious people. In this study majority of the child labourers are Hindus and the rest belong to the Islam religion. Panicker (1998) also shows that Hindu children are more in number in carpet industry in Mirzapur and in match fire works in Sivakashi, they are 86.2% and 98 % respectively. The table 4 reveals that 136 (74.53 per cent) child labourers are Hindus and 45 (25.47 per cent) child labourers are Muslims.*

Table no. 4

Child labourers and their religions

Religion	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Hindus	136	75.14	101	73.72	237	74.53
Muslims	45	24.86	36	26.28	81	25.47
TOTAL	181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

Caste Composition :

Child labourers are found from among every caste group living in the slums. The majority of child labourers come from the lower caste groups and very few are from so-called higher castes. Table 5 shows the caste composition of the child labourers of whom 152 (82.08 per cent) belong to the general caste groups and only 29 (17.92 per cent) are scheduled castes.

Table no. 5
Child labourers and their caste background

Caste	Child labourer		Child labourer		Child labourer	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
General	152	83.98	109	79.56	261	82.08
Scheduled Caste	29	16.02	28	20.44	57	17.92
TOTAL	181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

Mother tongue :

Multi lingual people live in Siliguri, most of them are Bengali, Hindi and Nepali speaking people. Most of the Hindi-speaking people have migrated to Siliguri from Bihar and have taken shelter in different slums here. In this study majority of the child labourers have been found to be Hindi speaking and the rest are Bengali speaking. Most of them are born in Siliguri and a very few of them are born outside Siliguri. The table 6 shows the mother tongue of the child labourers. In this study, all of them are divided into two major language-speaking groups, i.e., Bengali and Hindi. Out of 318 respondents interviewed, 120 (57.74 per cent) are Bengali speaking and 198 (62.26 per cent) are Hindi speaking.

Table no. 6
Mother tongue of the working children

Mother Tongue	Child labourer		Child labourer		Total Child labourer	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Bengali	55	30.39	65	47.45	120	37.74
Hindi	126	69.61	72	52.55	198	62.26
TOTAL	181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

Marital status :

Now a days, the practice of early marriage has declined considerably due to the rapid growth of urbanization and modernization. Early marriage can still be seen among the people migrated from Bihar who have kept up their tradition till now. The range of age of the child labourers is 6 - 14 years; childhood ends with the attainment of 14 years of age. Most of the children under this study are un-married. They do not

practise early marriage because they know the demerits of it, very negligible Percentage of families practise early marriage due to their traditional beliefs. The table 7 reveals that only 2 (0.63 per cent) female child labourers are married and 316 (99.37 per cent) are unmarried.

Table no. 7

Marital status among the working children

Marital Status	Child labourer		Child labourer		Total Child labourer	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Married	-	-	2	1.46	2	0.63
Unmarried	181	100.00	135	98.54	316	99.37
TOTAL	181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

Migration :

Siliguri town is the second largest town in West Bengal, and it is the gateway to north-east regions of India. It is also a big labour market of the sub-Himalayan West Bengal where job opportunities are high. Due to these reasons a large number of people have migrated here to earn money for their livelihood.

Table no. 8

Migrant and non-migrant families of the child labourers

Migrant and non-migrant family	No. of families	Percentage
Migrant	158	89.27
Non-migrant	19	10.73
TOTAL	177	100.00

Table no. 8 shows the Percentage of the families of the child labourers who are migrants and non-migrants. All 318 child labourers have been interviewed from 177 families. Out of 177 child labourers' families 158 (89.27 per cent) are migrants to this town and only 19 (10.73 per cent) families are non-migrant.

The patterns of migrations are of different types among the respondents, these are inter-district migration, inter-state migration and inter-country migration. These

migrant people are living permanently or temporarily in various localities of Siliguri town.

Table no. 9
Patterns of migration

Patterns of Migration	No. of families	Percentage
Inter-district migration	37	23.42
Inter-state migration	107	67.72
Inter-country migration	14	08.86
TOTAL	158	100.00

Table 9 shows the patterns of migration. The inter-state migrations of families are highest in number, being 107 (67.72 per cent). Tripathy (1997) has examined in Orissa where Inter-state migrant child labourers are very high in numerical strength, 55 per cent inter-state migrants are engaged in various types of occupations. They have migrated from Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Assam state. Only 8.86 per cent of families are inter-country migrants who are lowest in number, and 23.42 per cent of families are inter-district migrants. In inter-district migration, migrants have come from Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, South and North Dinajpur district. In case of inter-state migration people have migrated from Bihar followed by Assam and Sikkim. In the inter-country migration, migrants have come from Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh.

Often people from various places have migrated to Siliguri for different reasons and purposes. Earlier, the population of Siliguri was very low. Immigrants have started to enter into Siliguri when it started developing. Different groups of people have migrated to Siliguri due to various economic opportunities, better communication, transportation, medical treatment and educational facilities.

Table no. 10
Period of migration of the families of child labourers

Period of Migration	No. of families	Percentage
5 Years back	11	06.96
6 - 10 Years back	13	08.23
11 - 15 Years back	11	06.96
16 - 20 Years back	22	13.92
21 - 25 Years back	21	13.29
26 - 30 Years back	23	14.56
31 - 35 Years back	14	08.86
36 - 40 Years back	20	12.67
41 - 45 Years back	14	08.86
46 - 50 Years back	05	03.16
51 and above Years back	04	02.53
TOTAL	158	100.00

Table no. 10 shows the migration periods of the families of the child labourers. During the last 26 - 30 years highest number of families, i.e., 23 families (14.56 per cent) are found to have migrated to the Siliguri city. It is very clear to say that the period of 1970-1975 was the time of highest incidence migration. Only 2.53 per cent of families migrated here 51 years ago. More than single factors have influenced their migration. Poor economy is the main cause that forced them to migrate to Siliguri.

Table no. 11
Causes of migration

Causes of migration	No. of families	Percentage
Economic problem	117	74.05
Familial problem	15	09.49
For taking job (better work)	26	16.46
TOTAL	158	100.00

Table 11 shows the causes of migration of the families of child labourers. Three factors have played important roles for their migration, namely, economic problem, familial problem and better job prospects. About 74.05 per cent of the

respondents have migrated here due to their economic problem. Only 9.49 per cent have migrated due to their familial problems, and 16.46 per cent have migrated for better job opportunities. Most of the child labourers' families have migrated here due to economic reason.

Family background :

Family is the main institution in shaping the child's personality. Therefore, the form and character of the family is of utmost importance for developing the child's personality. It has been seen that the form of a family is greatly affected by the social and economic changes that have taken place in recent years. But the basic biological and social needs, which guide the essential functions of the family, have not yet changed. Though some of the original functions of the family such as educational, economic, recreational and religious have been taken over by other social agencies, yet its basic functions, which centre round the bio-psycho-and social needs of man have not been affected. The importance of the family has been rightly summed up by Mc Iver and page (Mittal; 1994) in these words " of all the organisations, large or small which society unfolds none transcend the family in the intensity of its sociological society".

The psychological and environmental influence of the family on the child is so deep, and it takes place so rapidly that psychologists say that the child acquires all the traits of his personality and character of his adulthood before the attainment of 5 years of age and, in some cases, even earlier. Since the family forms such an integral part of the child's life, it is essential to study his family background.

Size of the family :

During fieldwork, the average size of the family has been found quite large. The main reason is that they have the opinion that Islam prohibits family planning, and they also believe that they need extra hands to earn and contribute to the family income. Unfortunately, they cannot understand the underlying fact that large size of families means that there are extra mouths to feed. Large numbers of children who come from these families have been selected for this study.

Table no. 12
Number of Siblings per family

No. of Siblings	No. of families	Percentage
1 Child	04	2.26
2 - 3 Children	67	37.85
4 - 5 Children	75	42.37
6 Children	31	17.52
TOTAL	177	100.00

Table 12 shows that the highest number of families have 4-5 number of siblings, followed by the families having 2-3 number of siblings, six siblings and one sibling in the order. The average number of siblings per family is 3-4. In this study, 42.37 per cent of the families have 4-5 children, 37.85 Per cent of the families have 2-3 children, 17.52 per cent of the families have six children and 2.26 per cent of the families have single children.

Table no. 13

Size of the families of the child labourers

Family size	No. of families	Percentage
Within three members	4	2.66
4 - 5 members	52	29.38
6 - 7 members	82	46.33
8 - 9 members	37	20.90
10 - 11 members	02	01.13
TOTAL	177	100.00

Table 13 shows the size of family. The highest number of members, i.e., 10-11 members is found between 2 families (01.13 per cent). The families having 6-7 members are the second highest in number being 82, i.e., 46.33 per cent followed by the families having 4-5 members being 52, i.e. 29.38 per cent. Then there are families having 8-9 members being 37, i.e., 20.9 per cent. The lowest number of members, i.e. 3 is found in 4 (2.26 per cent) families only.

Child labourers with or without parents :

A good number of children are working under hazardous conditions in Siliguri, who do not have either father or mother or both the parents. They are compelled to work for long hours for low wages and under conditions damaging to their health, psychology and mental development. These children are deprived of healthy childhood, love and affection. Every parent has a vital role to their family for upbringing the children. In absence of them a child cannot develop mentally or physically.

Table no. 14

Child labourers with or without father and mother

Father	No. of families in %	Mother, no. of families in %
Alive	126 (71.19)	171 (96.61)
Dead	49 (27.69)	6 (3.39)
Missing	1 (.56)	-
Separated	1 (.56)	-
Total	177 (100.00)	177 (100.00)

Table 14 shows that 126 (71.19 per cent) fathers and 171 (96.61 per cent) of mothers are living with their children, 49 (27.69 per cent) of fathers and 6 (3.39 per cent) of mothers has died, 0.56 per cent fathers are missing and 0.56 per cent fathers are separated and live with their second wives.

Literacy of the parents of the child labourers :

Majority of the population of poverty-ridden section of the society are illiterate. They think about their present condition and never bother about the future. Similarly, future of their children is not their concern. They involve their children in earning from the very childhood for supporting their own families by contributing money. With this they remain satisfied. They do not feel the need of sending their children to schools for education. They are, thus deprived of any education and opportunity to achieve any higher occupation at the later age. As they are employed at the very childhood, they suffer from many diseases.

They are in this way transformed into wage labours when they attain adulthood (Saha, 1992). Ministry of Labour, Government of India, has mentioned tradition, poverty, lack of adequate awareness among parents for educating children, large family, unemployment and lack of land as the causes of child labour. Child labour is common in the lower socio-economic groups because of the lack of appreciation on their part of the role that education plays in improving life and living conditions of people. Adam (Saha, 1992) has predicted "The child labourers today will be the paupers of tomorrow, they are the boys and girls who will grow up without either formal schooling or knowledge of a trade; sooner or later, their youthful energies exhausted, they will become dull shiftless, drift less".

It is also stated that one of the major causes of child labour is said to be illiteracy and ignorance of parents. This leads to a lack of appreciation of education on the part of the parents and also limits the outlook towards life. Such parental handicaps are at once reflected in the child, as it is primarily in the family that the early socialization of the child takes place. Mittal (1994) has seen in his study that only 25 per cent of the children's fathers are literate and 74 per cent of the children's fathers are illiterate. Only six per cent of the children have lost their fathers. In his study only 10 per cent of their mothers are found literate. Educational statuses of fathers are better than that of mothers. In the families where both the parents are illiterate, children are bound to be called upon to take up some occupations to contribute to the income of the family. In my study, I have found that 25.40 per cent of the fathers are literate and 74.60 per cent are illiterate. While 11.11 per cent mothers are literate and 88.89 per cent of mothers are illiterate.

Occupations of the parents :

Most of the parents are employed in occupations requiring little or no skill. Most of them work in the unorganised sector. Unorganised sector has been defined as that sector which has not been able to organize itself in pursuit of common objectives. Casual nature of employment, ignorance, illiteracy of the workers, small size and scattered nature of establishments, and superior strength of employers are some of the characteristics of unorganised occupations. There is also little security of

employment or assurance of a stable income in these occupations. Under such circumstances parents have little choice but to send their children to work.

In the present study, 84.92 per cent of the fathers of the child labourers are employed and 13.49 per cent are unemployed, while 64.91 per cent of their mothers are employed and 35.09 per cent are unemployed.

Table no. 15
Types of occupation of fathers of the child labourers

Types of occupations	No. of families	Percentage
Sweeper	12	11.22
Rickshaw/Van puller	13	12.16
Maker of Shoe, Bi-cycle, Rickshaw, Mattress, Small wicker basket etc.	06	5.61
Mason, Painter, Carpenter	11	10.28
Seller of Vegetable, Cloth, Clove, <i>Fuchka</i> (one type of fast-food) Country liquor, Fish, Broken things, etc.	09	8.41
Barber	04	3.74
Tailor/Sack sewer	07	6.54
Gleaner/Rag Pickers	03	2.80
Driver	04	3.74
<i>Beedi</i> binders	03	2.80
<i>Chowkidar</i>	05	4.67
Tea stall owner and hotel owner	04	3.74
<i>Khalashis</i>	01	0.93
Vendor	05	4.67
Beggar	01	0.93
Wage labourers	19	17.76
TOTAL	107	100.00

Table 15 reveals the different types of occupation of the fathers of the child labourers. In this study 11.22 per cent fathers are sweepers, 12.16 per cent rickshaw/van pullers, 17.76 per cent wage labourers, 5.61 per cent engaged in making shoe, bi-cycle/rickshaw mattress and small wicker basket; 10.28 per cent are involved in the work of masonry, painting and carpentry, 8.41 per cent sell vegetables, cloth, clove, *fuchka*, country liquors, fish and broken things etc.; 3.74 per cent barber, 6.54 per cent tailors, 2.80 per cent gleaner or rag pickers; 3.74 per cent driver, 2.80 per cent *beedi*-binders, 4.67 per cent *chowkidar*, 3.74 per cent tea stall and hotel owners; 0.93 per cent *khalashis*, 4.67 per cent vendors and 0.93 per cent fathers are beggars.

Table no. 16

Types of occupation of the mothers of the child labourers

Types of occupations	No. of mothers	Percentage
Sweeper	13	11.71
Maid Servant and mid wife	28	25.22
Seller of firewood, vegetables, fruits, fish, soil, maize	15	13.51
Mason labour (helper)	21	18.92
Tea stall owner	06	5.41
Chocolate packing, <i>fuchka</i> preparation, <i>beedi</i> binding, sewing	11	9.91
Gleaner/Rag pickers	17	15.32
TOTAL	111	100.00

Table 16 shows different types of occupations of the mothers of the child labourers. Among the mothers of child labourer 11.71 per cent are sweeper, 25.22 per cent maid servant and midwife, 13.51 per cent sellers of wood, vegetables, fruits, fish, soil and maize; 18.92 per cent mason labour, 5.41 per cent tea stall owners, 9.91 per cent engaged in chocolate packing, *fuchka* preparation, *beedi* binding and sewing and 15.32 per cent mothers are gleaner or rag pickers.

Income of the parents of the child labourers :

It is of immense importance to look at the family income. One of the major causes of child labour is low income of the family along with its general poor economic condition. The family income comprises of the income of the head of the household, and income of the other members of the family, that is, wife and children or of any other person living in the family. The unwillingness on the part of the family members to disclose the actual income has left a wide margin of error to get the real picture of income of the families of the child labourers. The estimated family income has been calculated along with the secondary sources of income of the family members. I have depended on the observation method to check the income by the standard of living of the family. It has been revealed that income of the families is not sufficient for maintaining the family.

Table no. 17
Monthly income of the child labourers family

Monthly income of the family	No. of families	Percentage
Within Rs. 1000	24	13.56
Rs. 1,001 - Rs 1,500	42	23.73
Rs. 1,501 - Rs 2,000	50	28.25
Rs. 2,001 - Rs 2,500	31	17.52
Rs. 2,501 - Rs 3,000	25	14.12
Rs. 3,001 - Rs. 3,500	05	2.82
TOTAL	177	100.00

The total income of all members in a family has been included in the monthly family income by which Table no. 17 shows the percentages of the different income groups. As found in this study 13.56 per cent family belong to 1000 and below income group, 23.73 per cent family to Rs. 1001 - Rs 1,500, 28.25 per cent to Rs. 1,501 - Rs 2,000, 17.52 per cent to Rs. 2,001 - Rs 2,500, 14.12 per cent to Rs. 2,501 - Rs. 3,000 and 2.82 per cent family to Rs. 3,001 - Rs 3,500 income group.

Views of the parents of the child labourers :

The problem of child labour is basically an offshoot of the problem of low income of parents to support a large sized family. For maintenance of children of the large family, poor parents are forced to fill up the deficit of the family budget by the little wages earned by their children.

Many parents argue that they are forced to send their children to work due to lack of opportunities of education, which can provide vocational training. Some of the parents have reported that they are education-conscious and appreciates that education can improve their lot. They do not think that only poor economy is responsible for making of child labour. Sometimes, bad association of a child may be avoided by employing him to do some work and earn.

Table no. 18
Parent's view of desirability of child labour

Parents' view of desirability of child labour	No. of parents	Percentage
Solution of economic problem	68	58.12
Solvation of economic problem and development of <i>bastee</i>	11	09.40
Development of <i>bastee</i> culture	07	05.98
Could not replied	31	26.50
TOTAL	117	100.00

Table 18 explains the arguments of the parents on the desirability of child labour. In this study 58.12 per cent of the parents argue that solving economic problem and maintenance of children are reasons for sending them to the labour market; 09.40 per cent of the parents have argued that for solving economic problem and development of *bastee* they have to send their children to work. Only 05.98 per cent of the parents have stressed desirability of child labour for development of *bastee* culture and 26.50 per cent of the parents did not have any reply.

It has been mentioned earlier that child labour is a socio-economic problem, the principal causes of which are poverty, large family, and absence of opportunities of education, illiteracy and ignorance of parents. Solvating basic problem is necessary for the ameliorating the lot of child labour, it may be solving economic problem, provision for compulsory primary education for the children and over-all development of the slums where they live.

Table no. 19
Parents' view of amelioration of the lot of child labour

Parents' view	No. of parents	Percentage
To solve their economic problem	49	41.89
To change their dirty culture	18	15.38
To send the children in the school and to solve the economic problem	15	12.82
Could not reply	35	29.91
TOTAL	117	100.00

Table 19 shows the parents' view of ameliorating the lot of the child labourers. The arguments of the parents for ameliorating the lot of child labourers are very important to prevent this social problem. The overall opinion highlights the two major points :

- (i) Proper policy to solve their economic problem.
- (ii) Compulsory primary education for the children.

This study reveals that for removing this problem about 41.89 per cent of the parents have urged in favour of solving their economic problem, 15.38 per cent of the parents have wanted to change their dirty culture of the slums, 12.82 per cent of the parents are eager to send their children to school for compulsory education for which economic support by the government is essential. However, the common opinion is to remove poverty of the people. Only 29.91 per cent of the parents do not have any reply to the questions.

The provisions for abolishing child labour in the Indian Constitution. These are :

1. No child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory or in any hazardous employment (Article - 24).
2. Childhood and youth are to be protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment (Article - 39)(f)
3. The state shall endeavour to provide with in a period of 10 years from the commencement of the Constitution free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years (Article - 45).

It has been revealed from the present study that a few parents are aware of the Child Labour Act, a few parents known about it partly and most of the parents are not aware of this Act.

Table no. 20
Parents' idea about the Child Labour Act

Idea about the Child Labour Act	No. of parents	Percentage
Rightly known	02	1.71
Partly known	14	11.96
Don't know	44	37.61
Could not reply	57	48.72
TOTAL	117	100.00

Table 20 shows the idea about the Child Labour Act among the parents. Only 2 (1.71 per cent) parents have been found to be aware of this Act. According to them, the Act prohibits the employment of children in certain occupations, who are below the age of 15 years. In this study 14 (11.96 per cent) parents are partly aware of this Act and 44 (37.61 per cent) of the parent do not know of the Act. The majority of the parents 57 (48.72 per cent) have not been able to reply.

Diseases of parents :

Parents of the child labour are exposed to various diseases under the unclean and unhealthy working conditions prevailing in unorganised sector. Working in hazardous occupations exposed to toxic gases, vapours, fumes, dusts, smoke, etc. are responsible for diseases of lungs, respiratory system, throat, ear, eyes and skin. They also suffer from various chronic diseases like T.B., Asthma, Anaemia, diseases of nerves and skins. The combination of poor nutrition and bad working conditions reduces their life span. Hazardous works like making of *beedi*, tobacco, alcohol, *ganja*, *bhanga* etc. affect their health.

The present study shows the diseases of the fathers of the child labour. During the period of fieldwork 53.17 per cent of their fathers are found to be suffering from various diseases and 46.83 per cent are found in normal health condition.

Table no. 21

Diseases suffered by the fathers of the child labourers

Types of diseases	No. of fathers	Percentage
Leprosy	04	5.97
Liver problems	05	7.46
Asthma & respiratory problems	02	2.99
Tuberculosis	14	20.90
Blindness	03	4.48
Mad	01	1.49
Malnutrition	08	11.94
Skin disease	17	25.37
Other diseases	13	19.40
TOTAL	67	100.00

Table 21 shows the types of diseases suffered by the fathers of the child labourers at the time of fieldwork. The study reveals that 4 (5.97 per cent) of the

fathers have suffered from leprosy, 5 (7.46 per cent) from lever problems, 2 (2.99 per cent) from asthma or respiratory problem, 14 (20.90 per cent) from tuberculosis, 3 (4.48 per cent) from blindness, 1 (1.49 per cent) from madness or nerval problem, 8 (11.94 per cent) from malnutrition, 17 (25.37 per cent) from skin diseases and 13 (19.40 per cent) from other diseases.

As compared to diseases suffered by their fathers there is not much difference in the case of their mothers. It is reported that 52.63 per cent of mothers have suffered from various diseases while the rest, i.e., 47.37 per cent have not reported any diseases suffered by them during the period of fieldwork.

Table no. 22

Diseases suffered by the mothers of the child labourers

Types of weakness or diseases	No. of mothers	Percentage
Nerve problem	01	1.11
Tuberculosis	04	4.44
Malnutrition	29	32.22
Skin diseases	23	25.56
Other diseases	33	36.67
TOTAL	90	100.00

Table 22 shows different types of diseases suffered by the mothers of the child labourers during the time of fieldwork. It is revealed that 1 (1.11 per cent) of mothers have suffered from nerve problem, 4 (4.44 per cent) from tuberculosis, 29 (32.22 per cent) from malnutrition, 23 (25.56 per cent) from skin diseases and 33 (36.67 per cent) from various diseases.

The problem of drug addiction :

Ahuja (1991) has pointed out that the problem of drug addiction is the major problem among the slum dwellers. Slum people are habituated with taking alcohol, cannabis and other sedative drugs. Family, peer group associations and surrounding atmosphere are the primary influences upon the direction which individual takes and maintains in his life. In this study drug use among the parents and their children are influenced by the lack of parental affection in the family and social environment. This study reveals that 29.36 per cent of the fathers are addicted to taking alcohol and

cannabis. It is also found from the study that majority of slum dwellers are addicted to taking liquor, cannabis, etc. *beedi* and tobaccos are the common things among them. Some children also take *beedi* and tobacco.

Property :

Property refers to both moveable and immovable types. The families of the child labourers do not have any land property. They live in the slum and they do not own any land of these slums. These slums have grown up on the public land and Railway land. They have settled down on these lands generally and have constructed their houses for living permanently. They possess some moveable properties like rickshaw, bi-cycle, van, radio, tape-recorder, television etc. No valuable luxury goods have been found in their houses.

Table no. 23

Families of the child labourers settled on land

Nature of house and land	No. of families	Percentage
Rental house on public land	06	03.39
Settled on public/vest land	108	61.02
Settled on Railway land	63	35.59
TOTAL	177	100.00

Table 23 shows the families settling on various types of land. In this study, only 6 (3.39 per cent) of the families are living in the rented houses, 108 (61.02 per cent) of the families are living on the vested or public land and 63 (35.59 per cent) families are living in the houses constructed on the Railway land. A large number of the families of the child labourers have illegally occupied the government's vested land and railway land. Due to their poor economy they are not able to purchase land for construction of their own houses.

The present study reveals that a large number of the families of the child labourers do not have any moveable property. They constitute 59.32 per cent of the families who live from hand to mouth. Only 40.68 per cent of the families have some moveable properties. Their economic condition is better than the rest of the families. Among these families only 6.94 per cent have cattle, 34.73 per cent have domestic

fowls and 58.33 per cent have bi-cycle, rickshaw, van and radio, only two black and white. 12" televisions are found among those families.

The findings of this study indicate the narrow and congested land with improper drainage, lack of drinking water and inadequate sanitary conditions. These houses lack in privacy, and the small *kutchcha* houses offer little protection from rain, cold or sweating heat conditions. Dwellers use water from public tube-well in the near vicinity. They have to use common latrine and commonplace for bath. It is interesting to know that the houses acquire electric connections illegally by hooking system from the street light posts. All the families use the corner beside their house as kitchen. In this study 23.73 per cent of the families are found living in the *kutchcha* houses and with ill ventilation, 21.48 per cent are in *kutchcha* houses and in unclean situations, 0.56 per cent *kutchcha* houses and in clean condition, 15.82 per cent are in the semi-*pukka* houses with ill-ventilations, 7.34 per cent are in semi-*kutchcha* and uncleaned conditions and 31.07 per cent families are living in the uncleaned and ill-ventilated houses.

CHAPTER - THREE

NATURE OF WORK OF THE CHILD LABOURERS

Types of work :

In Siliguri children are found to work in different shops, restaurants, hotels, garages and construction works. They are engaged as vendors, scavengers, rag pickers, shoe-shiners, petty-hawkers and wage labourers particularly loading and unloading of goods. The elders to help in smuggling goods, drugs, etc. and also for selling liquor use some children. Child labour implies something different that children under the 14 years of age are being exploited, or over-worked or deprived of their rights to health or education or to childhood. It hampers their health, their overall physical, mental and social growth. In the slums under my study in particular, children are engaged in different types of works as rag pickers, restaurant or hotel workers, tea stall workers, garage workers, helpers to shopkeepers, maid servants, sewing workers, sweepers, *khalashis*, rickshaw/van pullers, wage labourers, small traders, hawkers, etc. They have taken up these jobs because these works are available to them on low wages. They prefer to work within the Siliguri City.

Table No. 24

Child labourers and their works in Ward No. 18 and 28 (Eleven slums)

Nature of Works	Child labourers		Child labourers		TOTAL Child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
GLEANERS/RAG PICKERS [Collecting iron, plastic, Glass, coal etc.]	98	54.4	76	55.48	174	54.72
RESTAURANT OR HOTEL WORKERS	5	2.76	-	-	5	1.57
TEA STALL WORKERS	8	4.42	-	-	8	2.52
MAID SERVANTS	-	-	44	32.11	44	13.84
GARAGE WORKERS	7	3.87	-	-	7	2.20
WORKERS OF DIFFERENT SHOPS [Jewellery, stationery, cloth, bi-cycle repairing, typing, lottery, hard ware radio, <i>kamarshala</i> etc.]	21	11.60	-	-	21	6.60
CHOCOLATE AND CHAW-CHAW PACKING	-	-	5	3.65	5	1.57
SEWING	3	1.66	1	0.73	4	1.26
HELPERS [Painting, smith motor-binder, carpenter, fish stockiest, to take the nursery students in the school]	6	3.32	-	-	6	1.89
SWEEPER	5	2.76	-	-	5	1.57
<i>KHALASHIS</i> (Truck cleaner)	4	2.21	-	-	4	1.26
RICKSHAW OR VAN PULLER	7	3.87	-	-	7	2.20
SELLER [Fish, vegetable, maize-fry, <i>fuchka</i> , etc.]	12	6.63	11	8.03	23	7.23
WAGE LABOURERS	5	2.76	-	-	5	1.57
TOTAL	181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

The table 24 reveals the distribution of child labourers in various occupations. Out of 318 child labourers 174 (54.72 per cent) are gleaner/rag pickers, 5 (1.57 per cent) work in hotel/restaurants, 8 (2.52 per cent) in tea stall, 44 (13.84 per cent) are maid servant, 7 (2.20 per cent) in garages, 21 (6.60 per cent) work in different shops, 5 (1.57 per cent) are engaged in chocolate and chaw-chaw packing, 4 (1.26 per cent) in sewing, 6 (1.89 per cent) are helpers, 5 (1.57 per cent) sweepers, 4 (1.26 per cent) *khalashis*, 7 (2.20 per cent) rickshaw/van pullers, 23 (7.23 per cent) sellers and 5

(1.57 per cent) are wage labourers. It is seen that child gleaners/rag pickers are more in number and the second highest position is for the maidservant.

Length of Present Work:

It is a common feature that child labourers do not remain engaged in any particular work for a long time. Those who are engaged in hotels/restaurants/tea stalls or in any other works under employers, cannot continue for a long time in a particular type of work. They generally leave the works due to mental and physical torture, rough behaviour, impatient ness, etc. of the employers. The children who work independently as ragpickers, sweepers, rickshaw pullers, chocolate packers, etc. generally engage themselves for six months or for a year in a particular work at a stretch. Thus, during their working life child labourers may engage themselves in different types of works and at different places under different employers.

The table 25 shows the length of present service of child labourers under study. Majority of the children have been found to be working for about 7-12 months in a particular work, their number is 148. i.e., 46.54 per cent of the total child labourers. Only 88 child labourers (27.67 per cent) have been found working for about 1-6 months, 54 child labourers (16.98 per cent) for about 19-24 months, 13 child labourers (4.09 per cent) for about 13-18 months, 11 child labourers (3.46 per cent) for about 31-36 months and only 3 child labourers (0.94 per cent)

Table no. 25
Length of present work of the child labourers

Length of present service	Child Labourers		Child Labourers		Child Labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 – 6 months	47	25.96	41	29.93	88	27.67
7 – 12 months	91	50.28	57	41.60	148	46.54
13 – 18 months	5	2.76	8	5.84	13	4.09
19 – 24 months	31	17.13	23	16.79	54	16.98
25 – 30 months	-	-	1	0.73	1	0.32
31 – 36 months	7	3.87	4	2.92	11	3.46
37 – 42 months	-	-	-	-	-	-
43 – 48 months	-	-	3	2.19	3	0.94
TOTAL	181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

are found to be working for about 43 – 48 months and only 1 child labourer (0.32 per cent) has been found working for about 25 – 30 months.

Table no. 26
Length of working life of the child labourers

Length of work	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 year	129	71.27	85	62.04	214	67.29
2 - 3 years	42	23.20	41	29.93	83	26.10
4 - 5 years	8	4.43	7	5.11	15	4.72
6 - 7 years	2	1.10	2	1.46	4	1.26
Above 8 years	-	-	2	1.46	2	0.63
TOTAL	181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

Table 26 shows the length of working life of the child labourers under this study. Most of the children are found to be working for about one year only. Their number is about 214 (67.29 per cent). Only 83 children (26.10 per cent) have engaged themselves for about 2-3 years, 15 children (4.72 per cent) are working for about 4-5 years, 4 children (1.26 per cent) for about 6-7 years and only 2 children (0.63 per cent) are found to be working for longer period, i.e., more than 8 years. It is interesting that girl children are found to be working for the longest period, i.e., 8 years and above.

Previous employers where he/she has already worked :

Child labourers do not work for a long time under one particular employer. They generally work under more than one employer during their working life. Some employers pretend to show sympathy on the child labourers and thus exploit them. Apart from mental tortures, often the employers assault them physically. This ill treatment forces the children to move to another employer.

Table no. 27
Number of previous employers under whom child labours already worked

Numbers of employer	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
One employer	7	35.00	5	25.00	12	30.00
Two employers	6	30.00	14	70.00	20	50.00
Three employers	3	15.00	1	5.00	4	10.00
Four employers	3	15.00	-	-	3	7.50
Five employers	1	5.00	-	-	1	2.50
TOTAL	20	100.00	20	100.00	40	100.00

The table 27 shows the number of previous employers where he/she has already worked. All total 40 children have been found to work under one and more employers. Out of them 20 (50.00 per cent) children work under two employers, 12 (30.00 per cent) children under one employer, 4 (10.00 per cent) under three employers, 3 (7.50 per cent) under four employers and only one child work under five employers.

Satisfaction of work :

Child labourers do not work continuously in one type of work. Naturally they are not satisfied with what they do. They are compelled to do the work under pressure of their family in spite of inhuman condition of work. But most of the time they cannot express their feelings. It is clear from the present study. The employers disfavoured the employment of child labour have said that working at the tender age under harsh working conditions for long hours and at low wages has a dangerous impact on child psychology. As a consequence, the child labourers feel insecure and have an inferiority complex. This hampers the growth of their personality. In addition to the disadvantage of those who employ them as such, they manifest their internal reaction in job dissatisfaction which badly tells upon the quantity and quality of production extracted from them in duress.

Table no. 28

Opinion about present work of the child labourers

Opinion about work	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Satisfied	165	91.16	131	95.62	296	93.08
Not satisfied	16	8.84	6	4.38	22	6.92
TOTAL	181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

The table no. 28 shows the opinion of the child labourers about their present works. As revealed here 165 (93.08 per cent) child labourers have expressed their satisfaction with their works and only 16 (6.92 per cent) child labourers are found not satisfied with their work.

Other works of the child labourers :

Children are found to be engaged in helping their parents in running their shops, planting on the forest land, wood cutting for commercial purposes, road

construction on contract, etc. The children, generally, work with and on behalf of their parents. Parents would like to expedite the completion of contract work and therefore, press their children to assist them in the work. Children generally dig earth, carry loads of mud or mortar, prepare mortar, remove debris, cut and bend iron rods. These are the jobs in which the child workers engage themselves, which is the hardest, tiresome and hazardous with little promise or prospects. It has been found that only 9.12 per cent children are engaged in various other works, and 90.88 per cent children have been found to do some other works. It is very interesting to note that all the children intend to do some works. They want to do works for economic reasons.

Habit of absent from work :

Absence from work is one of the common characteristics of the children because the sense of responsibility has not fully developed in their immature mind. Consequently, most of the time their employers suffer due to absence of the child labourers. As a result, some employers are compelled to deduct money from their wages and they consider some child labourers according to their rate of absence. In this study, it was also identified that those who work independently, do not⁹⁰ regularly to the work.

Table no. 29

Rate of absence in a month of the child labourers

Absent in work in a month.	No. of male child labourers		No. of female child labourers		No. of total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 - 2 days	10	5.52	7	5.11	17	5.35
3 - 4 days	20	11.05	30	21.90	50	15.72
5 - 6 days	40	22.10	28	20.44	68	21.38
7 - 8 days	47	25.97	24	17.52	71	22.33
9 - 10 days	31	17.13	27	19.71	58	18.24
11 - 12 days	17	9.37	14	10.21	31	9.75
13 - 14 days	6	3.32	4	2.92	10	3.14
15 - 16 days	5	2.76	3	2.19	8	2.52
17 - 18 days	5	2.76	-	-	5	1.57
TOTAL	181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

The rate of absence of the child labourers is seen from the table 29. Out of 318 child labourers 71 (22.33 per cent) are absent from work for 7-8 days in a month. It is

the maximum rate of absence. Only 5 (1.57 per cent) are absent for 17-18 days. The other rates are, 17 (5.35 per cent) child labourers are for 1-2 days, 50 (15.72 per cent) for 3-4 days, 68 (21.38 per cent) for 5-6 days, 58 (18.24 per cent) for 9-10 days, 31 (9.75 per cent) for 11-12 days, 10 (3.14 per cent) for 13-14 days, and 8 (2.52 per cent) are for 15-16 days.

Under this study, 101 children have been found working under employers. In spite of irregularity in attendance only 31 (30.69 per cent) of the child labourers have been paid wages by their employers and 70 (69.31 per cent) of them have not been paid any wages. The rest of the child labourers have not been found to work under any employers; they have been found as independent workers with their families.

Persons who motivated the children to work :

There are some persons who have influenced the children to work on wages. They are sometimes family members, and at times friends and non-kin's. While others are kin's.

Table no. 30
Persons motivated the children to work on wages

Persons motivated the children to work		No. of male child labourers		No. of female child labourers		No. of total child labourers	
		Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Family members	Father	37	20.44	2	1.46	39	12.26
	Mother	34	18.78	91	66.42	125	39.31
	Elder brother	29	16.02	20	14.60	49	15.41
	Elder sister	6	3.32	15	10.95	21	6.60
<i>TOTAL</i>		106	58.56	128	93.43	234	73.58
Non-kin's	Friend	38	21.00	5	3.65	43	13.52
	Neighbour	22	12.15	3	2.19	25	7.86
	Employers	9	4.97	-	-	9	2.83
<i>TOTAL</i>		69	38.12	8	5.84	77	24.21
Kin's	Relatives	1	0.55	1	0.73	2	0.63
<i>SELF</i>		3	1.66	-	-	3	0.95
<i>OTHERS</i>		2	1.11	-	-	2	0.63
GRAND TOTAL		181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

From the table 30 it has been found that 43 (73.58 per cent) of the child labourers have been motivated by their family members i.e., father, mother, brother and sister. Only 77 (24.21 per cent) have been motivated by non-kin's like friends,

neighbours and employers, 2 (0.63 per cent) by their relatives, 2 (0.63 per cent) by the other persons and only 3 (0.95 per cent) child labourers have engaged themselves on their own.

Income of the child labourers :

The earnings of the labourers have a great significance for them as they primarily determine the standard of living of their families. The earnings of the workers have been ~~far~~^{to worker} inadequate to enable them to make their both ends meet. As a result, most of the workers are kept at starvation level. The actual wages differ from worker^{to worker} depending on the degree of skill, age and performance. These workers are subjected to economic exploitation by using various corrupt devices. Firstly, there is no fixed method of payment of wages. Sometimes they are paid in cash and sometimes in kind, i.e., poor quantity rice or wheat flour etc. Instead of daily wages, the employers stick to fortnightly payments and these too are not made regularly. No proper accounts are maintained. The child workers, being ignorant, are unable to calculate their wages correctly.

OCCUPATIONS AND PERCENTAGES

Table no.31
Occupations and income of the child labourers

TOTAL	551 - 600	501 - 550	451 - 500	401 - 450	351 - 400	301 - 350	251 - 300	201 - 250	151 - 200	101 - 150	51 - 100.	50.00	Monthly income in Rupees
174	3	-	2	1	4	-	81	3	55	15	8	2	Gleaners/Rag pickers
54.72	1.72	-	1.15	0.57	2.30	-	46.55	1.72	31.61	8.62	4.60	1.15	Percentage
5	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	2	-	-	Restaurants or hotel workers
1.57	-	-	-	-	-	-	60.00	-	-	40.00	-	-	Percentage
8	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	4	2	-	-	Tea stall workers
2.52	-	-	-	-	-	-	25.00	-	50.00	25.00	-	-	Percentage
44	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	-	25	2	-	-	Maid servants
13.84	7	-	-	-	-	-	38.64	-	56.82	4.54	-	-	Percentage
7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	5	-	Garage workers
2.20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	28.57	-	-	71.43	-	Percentage
21	-	-	2	-	3	-	-	2	7	3	4	-	Workers of different shops
6.60	-	-	9.52	-	14.29	-	-	9.52	33.33	14.29	19.05	-	Percentage
5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	3	-	-	Chocolate or Chaw Chaw Packing
1.57	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40.00	-	60.00	-	-	Percentage
4	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Sewing
1.26	-	-	-	-	100.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Percentage
6	-	-	1	2	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	Helpers
1.89	-	-	16.67	33.33	16.67	-	16.67	-	16.67	-	-	-	Percentage
5	-	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	Sweeper
1.57	-	-	-	40.00	-	20.00	-	-	40.00	-	-	-	Percentage
4	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	-	-	-	Khalashis
1.26	-	-	-	-	-	-	25.00	-	75.00	-	-	-	Percentage
7	2	1	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Rickshaw pullers
2.20	28.57	14.28	28.57	-	28.57	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Percentage
23	-	-	2	-	-	1	1	-	4	7	8	-	Sellers
7.23	-	-	8.70	-	-	4.35	4.35*	-	17.39	30.43	34.78	-	Percentage
5	1	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Wage labourers
1.57	20.00	-	40.00	20.00	20.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Percentage
318	6	1	11	6	15	2	106	9	101	34	25	2	TOTAL
100.00	1.89	0.31	3.46	1.89	4.72	0.63	33.33	2.83	31.76	10.69	7.86	0.63	Percentage

The data on wages are included in table no.31. The data indicate that so far as the monthly wages are concerned there are 106 (33.33 per cent) child labourers belonging to the Rs.251-300 monthly income group, 101(31.76 per cent) belong to the Rs.151-200 income group, 34 (10.69 per cent) are in the Rs.101-150 income group, 25 (7.86 per cent) in Rs. 51 - 100 income group, 15 (4.72 per cent) in Rs.301-400 income group, 11 (3.46 per cent) in Rs. 451-500 income group, 9 (2.83 per cent) in Rs. 201-250, 6 (1.89 per cent) in Rs. 401-450 income group, 6 (1.89 per cent) in Rs. 551- 600 income group, 2 (0.63 per cent) in Rs.50 only and only 1(0.31 per cent) child labourer belongs to Rs. 501-550 income group.

Among the rag pickers 46.55 per cent earn Rs. 251-300 per month while only 0.57 earn Rs. 401- 450. The hotel and restaurant workers earn lower than the rag pickers, 60.00 per cent of them earn Rs. 251- 300 and 40.00 per cent of them Rs.101-150, 50.00 per cent of tea stall workers earn Rs.151- 200 and 25.00 per cent of them Rs.101-150 and Rs. 251-300. The maidservants earn more or less equal wages earned by the tea stall workers. About 56.82 per cent of them earn Rs. 251- 300 and 4.54 per cent of them Rs. 101-150. About 71.43 per cent garage workers earn Rs.51-100 and 28.57 per cent earn Rs. 201- 250. About 33.33 per cent workers of shops earn Rs. 151-200 and 9.52 per cent earn Rs.451-500. Sixty per cent of packing workers earn Rs.101-150 and 40.00 per cent earn 201-250. All sewing workers earn Rs.351-400. Among the helpers 16.67 per cent earn Rs. 451-500 and 33.33 per cent earn Rs. 401- 450. Among the sweepers 40.00 per cent each earn Rs.401- 450 and Rs. 151-200 which 20.00 per cent Rs. 301-350. Among the *khalashis* 75.00 per cent earn Rs. 151-200 while 25.00 per cent earn Rs. 251-300. Among the rickshaw pullers 28.57 per cent earn Rs.351-400 each Rs. 510-550 and Rs.551- 600. Among the sellers 34.78 per cent earn Rs.51-100 while 4.35 per cent earn Rs. 251- 300 and Rs. 301- 350 each. Among the wage labourers 40.00 per cent earn Rs. 451- 500 and 20.00 per cent each earn Rs. 351- 400, Rs.401- 450 and Rs. 551- 600.

Wages of child labourers :

Majority of the adult labourers consider that child labourers are undesirable because the employers use it as a tool to reduce the bargaining power of adult workers. They argue that the employers substitute child labourers in lieu of adult workers whenever the latter demand higher wages or register to work for longer hours under bad conditions. They

further state that both adults and children equally perform certain jobs. Hence, the employers find it advantageous to employ children instead of adult workers. Thus, child labour is undesirable as it increases adult unemployment and influence to reduce the wages of the adult.

Table no.32

Wages of child labourers

Wages	No. of male child labourers		No. of Female child labourers		No. of total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Lower than that of adult	39	21.55	17	12.41	56	17.61
Slightly lower than that of adult	132	72.93	113	82.48	245	77.04
Equal to that of adult	10	5.52	7	5.11	17	5.35
TOTAL	181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

It is revealed from the study that 245 (77.04 per cent) of the child labourers get slightly lower wages compared to the adult labourers and 56 (17.61 per cent) get very low wages as compared to the adult labourers and only 17 (5.35 per cent) child labourers get equal wages compared to the adult labourers in the similar occupations.

Satisfaction of child labourers with the wages :

I have seen that the child labourers have to do different types of works, and sometimes they also collect pieces of iron, plastic, glass, paper etc. for selling in the market. It has been observed that the child labourers are satisfied with their wages in some works where they independently work. They can bargain with their customers for reasonable rate of wages. On the other hand, some child labourers fully depend on their employers. In the occupations of hotel/restaurant workers, garage workers and maidservants, they are in a bitter position. In these cases employers intend to give them minimum wages in return of maximum work. As a result, child labourers are not satisfied with their works and wages.

Table no. 33

Child labourers satisfied or not satisfied with wages

Opinion about the wages	No. of male child labourers		No. of female child labourers		No. of total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Satisfied	124	68.51	94	68.61	218	68.55
Not satisfied	57	31.49	43	31.39	100	31.45
TOTAL	181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

In this study, 218 (68.55 per cent) of the total child labourers are found to be satisfied with their wages, and only 100 (31.45 per cent) of them are not satisfied with their wages. Those who have been doing work independently have to collect reasonable wages. Child labourers are satisfied with wages, who sell fruits, vegetables, fish and pull rickshaw/van.

Other facilities to the child labourers :

The child labourers under study do not get any additional facilities, except a very few instances, from their employers. They are usually under the pressure of the employers to do more works in addition to usual daily routine works. Sometimes, a very few employers give them additional facilities like tiffin, meal, old or new garments and medicines at the time of illness. The study reveals that out of 101 child labourers who have worked under various employers about 55 (54.46 per cent) child labourers get some sort of additional facilities provided by their employers who are kind enough to them. The remaining 46 (45.54 per cent) of the child labourers do not get any additional facilities from their employers.

Table no. 34

Nature of additional facilities given to the child labourers

Nature of extra facilities	Male child labourers		Female child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Tiffin	7	46.67	31	77.5	38	69.09
Lunch	1	6.67	-	-	1	1.82
Tiffin and lunch	5	33.33	5	12.5	10	18.18
Tiffin, lunch and garments	2	13.33	4	10.00	6	10.91
TOTAL	15	100.00	40	100.00	55	100.00

The data reveals that out of 55 child labourers who enjoy additional facilities 38 (69.09 per cent) get some sort of tiffin, 10 (18.18 per cent) get tiffin and lunch both, 6 (10.91 per cent) get tiffin, lunch and garments while only 1 (1.82 per cent) gets only lunch.

This study reveals that out of 101 child labourers who have been working under various employers, about 15 (14.85 per cent) child labourers enjoy treatment facilities by their employers at the time of illness and the remaining 86 (85.15 per cent) of the child labourers do not get any treatment facilities at the time of illness by their employers. So they are depending on their parents or any family members at the time of severe illness.

Working hours :

The length of working hour has direct impact on the physique and health of children. The experiences of labour economists and production managers have proved that there is a positive correlation between hours of work and worker's productivity. But the employers seem to be unaware of these correlations so far, as they without exception fix longer hours of work for labour working in their workshops. Most of the child labourers work every day in a week, and those who are working under their employers, have to work for 6 days a week.

Table no. 35

Working hours in a day of child labourers

Working hours in a day	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1 - 2 hours	-	-	-	-	-	-
2 - 3 hours	-	-	-	-	-	-
3 - 4 hours	8	4.42	18	13.13	26	8.18
4 - 5 hours	25	13.81	32	23.36	57	17.92
5 - 6 hours	62	34.26	59	43.07	121	38.05
6 - 7 hours	23	12.71	17	12.41	40	12.58
7 - 8 hours	12	6.63	3	2.19	15	4.72
8 - 9 hours	7	3.87	1	0.73	8	2.51
9 - 10 hours	9	4.97	-	-	9	2.83
10 - 11 hours	3	1.66	-	-	3	0.94
11 - 12 hours	29	16.02	2	1.46	31	9.75
12 - 13 hours	1	0.55	-	-	1	0.31
13 hours and above	2	1.10	-	-	2	0.63
Whole time (for ever)	-	-	5	3.65	5	1.58
TOTAL	181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

Table 35 shows the working hours in a day of child labourers. It is revealed that 38.05 per cent of the child labourers work for 5- 6 hours a day, who are mostly gleaners/rag pickers. They work independently. While 17.92 per cent work for 4-5 hours, 12.58 per cent for 6 -7 hours, 9.75 per cent for 11-12 hours, 8.18 per cent for 3-4 hours, 4.72 per cent for 7- 8 hours, 2.83 per cent for 9 - 10 hours, 2.51 per cent for 8 - 9 hours, 0.94 per cent for 10 - 11 hours, 0.63 per cent for 13 + hours, 0.31 per cent for 12 - 13 hours in a day and only 1.58 per cent child labourers live in the working place as whole time workers.

Table no. 36

Working days in a week of the child labourers

Working days in a week	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
05 days	8	4.42	-	-	8	2.52
06 days	54	29.83	47	34.31	101	31.76
07 days	119	65.75	90	65.69	209	65.72
TOTAL	181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

Table 36 explains the working days in a week of the child labourers. From this study it is found that 65.72 per cent of the child labourers work 7 days a week and 31.76 per cent 6 days a week. These workers work mainly under some employers. They have to work for 6 days a week and only 2.52 per cent of the child labourers work 5 days a week.

Recess break :

In hotels and *dhabas*, the child labours work from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. with a recess of two hours during the summer season and during the winter, they work from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. with two hours recess break. Thus they work for 15 hours and 14 hours during summer and winter respectively. The domestic servants usually start their work at 8 a.m. and continue up to 10 a.m. and again from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. in a day. Some domestic servants usually start their work when all members of the employers family are in their beds and they finish their work when the last members of the family goes to his or her bed. They do get certain hours of recess after preparing and serving breakfast, lunch and dinner. But strictly speaking, this is a misnomer to call it recess. Rather these are the soft hours of work. In this sense, it will be appropriate to say that they do not get any recess. In fact, they

have to be ready for work round the clock. The employers have complete freedom as there exists no legislation to regulate the hours of work. Those who have been doing something independently have to work from 8 a.m. to 12 noon and 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. in a day. Moreover, they work on an average from 9-10 hours and enjoy one to two hours of recess break.

Table no. 37

Recess break for the child labourers

Hours of recess break	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Within one hour	41	22.91	-	-	41	13.10
1 - 2 hours	22	12.29	-	-	22	7.03
2 - 3 hours	20	11.17	20	14.93	40	12.78
3 - 4 hours	96	53.63	114	85.07	210	67.09
TOTAL	179	100.00	134	100.00	313	100.00

The table 37 shows the recess break for the child labourers. In this study, 67.09 per cent of the child labourers enjoy recess break from three to four hours, because most of them are gleaner/rag pickers and others are maidservants, sweepers and sellers. They work independently. Only 13.10 per cent enjoy one-hour recess break a day. They work in hotels, restaurants, garages etc. About 12.78 per cent enjoy two to three hours recess break. They are rickshaw/van pullers, sellers, *khalashis*, etc. and only 7.03 per cent enjoy recess break from one to two hours. They have to work in chocolate packing, *beedi* binding, etc. It is important to note that only 5 children work in the employers' houses on whole time basis.

Holidays :

In Siliguri town, the child labourers who work under different employers have to work six days a week, because they enjoy one weekly holiday. Besides this, they enjoy special holidays at the time of strike. They also get one holiday during "*Durgapuja*". Maidservants do not get any holiday as well as others. They have to pray for leave to their employers. Those who work independently are fully free from any bindings.

Table no. 38

Holidays of child labourers

Holidays	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Yes	22	39.29	1	2.22	23	22.78
No	34	60.71	44	97.78	78	77.22
TOTAL	56	100.00	45	100.00	101	100.00

Table 38 shows the holidays enjoyed by the child labourers. In our study, out of 318 child labourers only 101 child labourers work under different employers in Siliguri town. Only 22.78 per cent of them enjoy holidays given by their employers and 77.22 per cent do not enjoy any as their employers refuse to give them. In this group of child labourers maidservants are more in number.

Table no. 39

Holidays in a year of child labourers

Holidays in a year	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Within 20 days	2	9.09	-	-	2	8.69
21 - 30 days	1	4.55	-	-	1	4.36
31 - 40 days	2	9.09	-	-	2	8.69
41 - 50 days	15	68.18	1	100.00	16	69.57
51 - 60 days	2	9.09	-	-	2	8.69
TOTAL	22	100.00	1	100.00	23	100.00

Table 39 shows the total holidays of child labourers in a year. In this study, 69.57 per cent of the child labourers enjoy 41 - 50 holidays in a year, 8.69 per cent children enjoy 20 days, 31 - 40 days and 51 - 60 days respectively. Only 4.36 per cent child labourers enjoy 21 - 30 holidays in a year.

Table no. 40

Number of child labourers paid during holidays

Paid for holidays	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Yes	14	63.64	-	-	14	60.87
No	8	36.36	1	100.00	9	39.13
TOTAL	22	100.00	1	100.00	23	100.00

Table 40 explains the percentage of child labourers who get and don't get any payment during holidays. It has been observed that 60.87 per cent of the child labourers get payment and only 39.13 per cent don't get payment during holidays.

Medium of entertainments :

In Siliguri many child labourers are habituated with watching cinema, television and with gambling by evasion of work or during leisure time. Generally they have to gamble and watch cinema and television for their entertainment and as a recreation they have to stick to these habits. In the study only 34.28 per cent of the children get opportunities of entertainment and 61.95 per cent do not. Only 3.77 per cent (only males) get chance; which is very rare (see Table no. 41).

Table no. 41

Entertainment of the child labourers

Entertainment	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Yes	84	46.41	25	18.25	109	34.28
No	85	46.96	112	81.75	197	61.95
Very rare	12	6.63	-	-	12	3.77
TOTAL	181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

Table no. 42

The media of entertainment among the child labourers

Medias of entertainment	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Cinema	75	89.29	4	16.00	79	72.48
Television	2	2.38	21	84.00	23	21.10
Cinema and television	3	3.57	-	-	3	2.76
Gambling	2	2.38	-	-	2	1.83
Cinema and Gambling	2	2.38	-	-	2	1.83
TOTAL	84	100.00	25	100.00	109	100.00

The above table 42 shows the percentage of child labourers who have the scope of different media of entertainment. In the study, only 109 child labourers can resort to these habits and the rest are not habituated to these. Among the child labourers 72.48 per cent are able to watch cinema, 21.10 per cent are habituated to watch television, 2.76 per cent watch

both cinema and television, Only 1.83 per cent are gamblers and the same percentage of child labourers are gamblers as well as cinema viewers.

Expenditure :

The most important factor forcing children to take up employment is poverty. In India where 60% of the population live below the poverty line, due to poverty parents are compelled to send their children to seek employment. Children are forced to work with a view to supplementing the family income. In my study in Siliguri, most of the child labourers are compelled to handover their whole income to their family and a very few of the child labourers handover their major portion of income to their family. They keep some amount for their own use to spend for Tiffin, tea, cinema etc. Negligible number of child labourers who have titular income, do not handover their income to their family, because they try to spend that income for their own consumption to take Tea, Tiffin, sometimes meals, watching cinema, etc. Major portion of the child labourers handover their income to their parents as a supplementary earner of their family. It is evident from this study that they are completely unable to save any money from their income after use for their family. They are in a position to live from hand to mouth.

Table no. 43

Child labourers' contribution of income to their families

Contribution of income to their family	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Whole income	91	50.27	96	70.07	187	58.81
Part income	87	48.07	41	29.93	128	40.25
Not give	3	1.66	-	-	3	0.94
TOTAL	181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

In ~~this~~ study 58.81 per cent of the child labourers handover their whole income to their family, 40.25 per cent give a portion of their income and 0.94 per cent do not contribute their income to their family. These child labourers do not earn any fixed amount (Table - 43).

Education :

Child labourers and their illiteracy have direct link with poverty. Many children work, because there is nothing else to do. Many children do not go to school because, schools are too expensive for them. A good number of female children discontinue their studies to look after their younger brothers and sisters at home when their parents go to work. There is also discrimination in educating female children. The illiterate parents do not realize the importance of educating their children. They are unaware of injustice done to the children by making them work instead of sending them to schools. They are also ignorant about the rights and needs of children. Some parents, even though realize the importance of educating their children, are compelled to send their children to work due to economic pressure. A large number of parents of poor families find no meaning in children's education, as there is no guarantee of job in future. They prefer to send their children to work at an early age instead of sending them to school with the hope that the children will at least acquire a skill or learn a trade by the time they become adults.

The migrant labourers and those who are engaged in construction and seasonal work cannot even think of sending their children to schools as the whole family moves from place to place in search of work. Their children also move along with them working and supplementing the family income.

Table no. 44

Literacy level of the child labourers

Status	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Literate	22	12.15	23	16.79	45	14.15
Illiterate	159	87.85	114	83.21	273	85.85
TOTAL	181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

Table no. 45

Educational level of the child labourers

Education	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
I - II Class	7	31.82	6	26.09	13	28.89
III - IV Class	5	22.73	10	43.48	15	33.33
V - VI Class	10	45.45	6	26.09	16	35.56
VII - VIII Class	-	-	1	4.34	1	2.22
TOTAL	22	100.00	23	100.00	45	100.00

In our study 45 (14.5 per cent) child labourers are found literate and 273 (85.85 per cent) illiterate (Table no. 44). Among the literates, 16 (35.56 per cent) child labourers have studied upto V - VI standard, 15 (33.33 per cent) upto III - IV standard, 13 (28.89 per cent) upto I - II standard and only 1 (2.22 per cent) upto VII - VIII standard (Table - 45). Only 3 (6.67 per cent) of the literate child labourers are found to continue their studies while 42 (93.33 per cent) have discontinued (Table no. 46). There are three causes of discontinuation of education; 31 (73.81 per cent), 8 (19.05 per cent) and 3 (7.14 per cent) child labourers discontinued their studies due to economic reason, family problem and self-negligence and bad atmosphere respectively (Table no. 47).

Table no. 46

Continuation and discontinuation of education

Continuation of education	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Yes	3	13.64	-	-	3	6.67
No	19	86.36	23	100.00	42	93.33
TOTAL	22	100.00	23	100.00	45	100.00

Table no. 47

Causes of discontinuation of education

Causes of discontinuation	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Economic problem	16	84.21	15	65.22	31	73.81
Familial problem	-	-	8	34.78	8	19.05
Self negligence and bad atmosphere	3	15.79	-	-	3	7.14
TOTAL	19	100.00	23	100.00	42	100.00

Nature of punishment :

The basic requirement for normal psychological development of child is warm and accepting environment, stable parents who can understand child's emotional needs, conversational interchange, opportunities to play, discipline, supervision and support. Psychological development of child also needs increasing autonomy, independence, interaction with other children and opportunities to learn. Each of these basic requirements are jeopardized if children are put to work. Children are compelled to work for long hours,

which deprive them of education, play, recreation, love and parental affection. Generally, their employers separate working children from their parents for days, even months and years. Employers of child labourers are generally rude and rough, neglectful, unsupportive to the emotional needs of children. Their employers physically, emotionally and sexually abuse working children. Psychologically disturbed children may take to nightmares, ill temper, lying and stealing habits. Consumption of drugs, alcohol and tobacco smoking are often some of the ways they choose toward off their despair and feelings of inadequacy. Aggression, anti-social behaviour and delinquency are often the efforts children take recourse to boost self-esteem or may serve them as self punishing behaviour for them who often feel inadequate and worthless.

In our study 62 (61.39 per cent) of child labourers are found to be punished by the employers and only 39 (38.61 per cent) are not punished. About 30 (48.39 per cent) of the child labourers are punished by altercation and ^{money} curtailments and 20 (32.26 per cent) are punished with altercation and beating while 12 (19.35 per cent) child labourers are punished with altercation (Table no. 48).

Table no. 48

Nature of punishments given to child labourers

Nature of punishment	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Altercation	8	18.61	4	21.05	12	19.35
Altercation and beating	18	41.86	2	10.53	20	32.26
Altercation and money curtailment	17	39.53	13	68.42	30	48.39
TOTAL	43	100.00	19	100.00	62	100.00

Employers' behaviour in the view of child labourers :

Children who work under any employer always feel worry. They remain scared every moment of works, because the employers' behaviour with the children is peculiar or odd. The employers try to get the work done by any way and to fulfil this purpose, sometimes they play the role of affectionate relation or threat them. The main purpose of the employers is to get the allotted works done and try to extract excess labour from them. They sometimes pretend to be affectionate with the children, but it is fake. A very few employers try to keep really good relation with the child workers, but most of them show brutish behaviour. Opinions collected from the child labourers show that 45 (44.56 per

cent) of them get bad behaviour from their employers, 39 (38.61 per cent) have experienced indifferent behaviour from their employers and only 17 (16.83 per cent) are satisfied with the good behaviour of their employers (Table no. 49).

Table no. 49

Behaviours of employers toward child labourers

Behaviour of employers	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Good	10	17.86	7	15.56	17	16.83
Bad	8	14.28	37	82.22	45	44.56
Indifferent	38	67.86	1	2.22	39	38.61
TOTAL	56	100.00	45	100.00	101	100.00

Health of the child labourers :

The worst effect of the practice of child labour is that it leads to physiological and psychological deformities in the child. The longer hours of work, bad and unhygienic working conditions lead to retarded growth, orthopaedic diseases (like Kyphosis, scoliosis etc.) respiratory problems, cardio and gynaec problems (in case of female) are common among the working children. They also feel insecure and suffer from an inferiority complex. Working children are easily exposed to biological disorders. Unclean, unhealthy working conditions prevailing in unorganised manufacturing units. Contaminated drinking water and polluted air, which affect their health causing diarrhoea, typhoid, malaria, jaundice etc. and jeopardize biological growth of children resulting in reduced life span.

Sending children to work or employing them means depriving them of their legitimate rights of childhood. Practice of child labour jeopardizes the possibilities of their becoming productive adults and to take their legitimate place in the society. Putting children to work may be temporarily beneficial to the family, but casts heavily to the child as an individual, its family and the society at large. Unhappy and disturbed childhood experiences do not offer sound foundation to their future growth and development. Poor children are generally malnourished, but their work increases their energy requirements and leads to calorie deficit. If they suffer from anaemia, fatigue and inadequate rest and sleep, they become more susceptible to infectious diseases. Children working in hazardous occupations exposed to toxic gases, vapours fumes dusts, smoke casting impairment of lungs, respiratory system, throat, ear, eyes and skin. By the time working children reach

adulthood, they suffer from chronic diseases like tuberculosis, asthma, anaemia and diseases of nerves. Exposure to loud noise at tender age impair children's hearings affect blood vessels, cause fatigue stress, nervousness and psychiatric illness in adulthood. Child labourers are exposed to work involving chemical reactions inhale poisonous gases, fumes, dusts and smoke which impair the functioning of lungs, livers, kidney, eyes and skin. Since children undergo a process of growth and development they are more susceptible to occupational hazards casting impairment and disorders in the biological system. During our fieldwork it has been found that 180 (56.60 per cent) of the child labourers have been suffering from various diseases while 138 (43.40 per cent) have no health problems at the moment.

Table no. 50

Types of diseases suffered by the child labourers

Types of diseases	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Mal nutrition	43	42.58	37	46.83	80	44.45
Skin disease	17	16.83	12	15.19	29	16.11
Liver and respiratory problems	19	18.81	17	21.52	36	20.00
Any other weakness	22	21.78	13	16.46	35	19.34
TOTAL	101	100.00	79	100.00	180	100.00

Table 50 explains, types of diseases suffered by the child labourers. In this study, 80 (44.45 per cent) child labourers have been suffering from malnutrition of whom 42.58 per cent are male and 46.83 per cent are female; 36 (20.00 per cent) suffering from liver and respiratory problems; 35 (19.34 per cent) suffer from various diseases such as reproductive tract infections, tuberculosis, leprosy, respiratory problems etc. and only 29 (16.11 per cent) of child labourers suffer from skin diseases.

Causes of child labour :

Ahuja (1997) has stated that in a country like India where over 40.00 per cent of the population is living in condition of extreme poverty, child labour is a complex issue. Children work out of necessity and without their earnings the standard of living of their families would decline further. A large number of them do not even have families or

cannot count on them for support. In these circumstances, the alternative to work may be idleness, destitution or worse, crime.

Employers give certain justifications for employing children to suppress their guilt feelings. They say that the work keeps children away from starvation. They are prevented from committing crimes, which they would have indulged in if they had no jobs. The bureaucrats have told that the total eradication of child labour is not feasible because the government cannot provide substantial alternative employment to them. The social scientists believe that the main cause of child labour is poverty. The children either supplement their parents' income or are the only wage earners in the family. It is said that 29.9 per cent of the total population of India or about 25 crore 23 lakh people live below poverty line. Of these, 20.6 crore are living in rural areas and 5.17 crore in urban areas. The highest number of persons living below the poverty line is found in Uttar Pradesh (4.48 crore), followed by Bihar (3.36 crore), Madhya Pradesh (2.24 crore) and Maharashtra (2.14 crore). These persons are forced to send their children to work in factories etc. Another reason is that child labour is deliberately created by vested interests to get cheap labour. The third reason forwarded for the existence of child labour is that it benefits industries. For example, the carpet industry of Uttar Pradesh, which employs 75,000 children, earns about Rs. 150 crore a year in foreign exchange. In 1993, the export earnings were estimated to be about Rs. 350 crore.

A great majority of children have reported that their parents have sent them to work in order to supplement their earnings, which are invariably too meagre to support their large family. Most of the child workers are found to be drawn into the work places as no adult wage earners exists in their families. By taking jobs at the tender age children play the role of a family supporter. Another reason for the prevalence of the child labour was found to be the illiteracy and ignorance of the parents. Some of the child labour, forming a small minority, attributes child labour to their desire to satisfy their personal needs in so far as their parents, on account of inadequate income, could not provide them anything beyond the bare subsistence. Some of the literate child labour have stated that bleak employment opportunities for educated youth is the important reasons that have deterred their parents from sending them to schools.

Table no. 51
Showing the reasons for taking jobs among the child labourers

Reasons for taking jobs	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Inadequate income and large family size	82	45.30	70	51.09	152	47.80
Absence of adult wage earner	2	1.10	3	2.19	5	1.57
Illiteracy and ignorance of the parents	72	39.78	54	39.42	126	39.63
Bleak employment opportunities	1	0.55	-	-	1	0.31
Desire to satisfy personal needs	7	3.87	2	1.46	9	2.83
Large family size and ignorance of the parents	17	9.40	8	5.84	25	7.86
TOTAL	181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

Table 51 explains the different causes behind taking up jobs of the working children. In this study 152 (47.80 per cent) child labourers take up jobs to supplement the inadequate income of their large family (where 45.30 per cent male and 51.09 per cent female), 126 (39.63 per cent) take up for illiteracy and ignorance of their parents, 25 (7.86 per cent) take up jobs for their large family size and ignorance of parents, 9 (2.83 per cent) want to satisfy personal needs, 5 (1.57 per cent) take up work for absence of adult wage earner, and only 1 (0.31 per cent) child labourer take up job due to bleak employment opportunities.

Working conditions of child labourers :

Ahuja (1997) has pointed out that children work in dangerously polluted factories whose brick walls are scarred with soot. (black powder in smoke) and there is an oppressive smell in the air. They work near furnace, which burn at a temperature of 1400° centigrade. They handle dangerous chemicals like arsenic and potassium. They work in glass blowing units where the work exerts their lungs and creates diseases like tuberculosis. Among the working children, many are the main or major wage earners in the family who always remain worried about feeding their dependents. The migrant child workers whose parents live in some far off city or village are generally in despair. Some work for 9 to 10

hours including night shifts. When the factories are fully functional, they are paid not more than Rs. 500 per month, all of which they hand over to their 'guardians' who do not give them even a rupee a day for tea during the night shift. There are times when their bodies ache, minds fog, hearts cry, spirits bleed, but on orders of the employer they work for 10 to 11 hours at a stretch. A large number of child workers in Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra have sunken to chests and thin bone frames, which give them a fragile look. They look like rag dolls, limp, unwashed and scraggy. They wear coarse and badly tailored clothes. Many of them have scabies on hands, arms and legs. The heads of a few are tonsured probably because the skin on their skull has developed severe infections. A large number of child workers are virtually confined in small rooms under inhuman conditions and in the most unhygienic surroundings. They are either school dropouts or have not seen any school at all. They earn a very meagre wage and work in most unsafe conditions. The hazardous conditions take their toll. They suffer from tuberculosis, asthma, bronchitis and backaches. Some are injured in fire accidents. Many become unemployable even at the age of 20. If injured or incapacitated, they are discarded mercilessly by their employers (Ahuja, 1997).

One of the striking feature of child labour in our study is exploitative condition under which children work. Children generally are paid very low wages in almost all occupations. In many occupations children are paid at piece rates. This places an undue strain on them. There are also unjustified deductions or third party payment. Some contractors reject a certain percentage of the workers' output as substandard. Thus, they deprive them of full payment for their output. Numerous studies indicate that children are found working in some works for long and even excessive hours without sufficient break for rest and leisure. Children are found working even upto night especially in eating place, street trades etc. Same is the case with most of the female servants whose services must be available nearly at all times.

Table no. 52

Working conditions of the child labourers

Working conditions	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Good	9	4.97	4	2.92	13	4.09
Bad	27	14.92	13	9.49	40	12.58
Moderate	145	80.11	120	87.59	265	83.33
TOTAL	181	100.00	137	100.00	318	100.00

Table 52 shows the working conditions of the child labourers. In our study 265 (83.33 per cent) child labourers have reported that the working condition is moderate and they work to their livelihood. It is clear from their opinion that they are trying to adjust their employers and works. On the other hand, 40 (12.58 per cent) child labourers have communicated that they are doing work under bad working conditions. They are trying to give up those works because they have to work in highly hazardous conditions as construction labourers, and in small manufacturing factory, only 13 (4.09 per cent) of child labourers are doing work in good working conditions. They get some facilities from their employers.

Future thought :

Working children always remain under the mental and physical pressure. They spend their whole income to support their family. They do not have mental peace. They have no capital to start a business of their own in future for their family. Most of them are in the dark about their future. So they are helpless. Very few child labourers think superficially about their future. It is clear from their overall opinion that they do not think seriously about their future life. As they remain under constant mental and physical pressure and cannot develop themselves. They remain poverty ridden, exploited, and helpless under the social circumstances. They appear as a cause for backwardness of the whole nation.

In this study it is very painful to notice that most of the child labourers know nothing about their future and also cannot think anything about their own future life. Among 318 child labourers 194 (61.01 per cent) could not give any reply regarding their future thought. At the same time they suffer from frustration. Other 92 (28.93 per cent)

child labourers reply negatively about their future. They have not thought anything about their future. Only 32 (10.06 per cent) child labourers have some positive thinking about their future life. The table no. 54 depicts the various future thinking of 32 child labourers. They want to be garage owners, drivers, hotel owners, rickshaw owners, motor binders, smiths, shopkeepers and also government service holders. It is assumed that they want to improve their condition depending on the works they have been doing so far. Out of 32 child labourers 14 (43.75 per cent) intend to open own shop in future, i.e. shoe shop, lottery shop, stationery shop, fish shop, cycle, jewellery and tea stall; 5 (15.63 per cent) child labourers want to be hotel owners, because they are working in hotels at present; 4 (12.50 per cent) want to be drivers; and 3 (9.38 per cent) want to be masons, painters and carpenters; 3 (9.38 per cent) would like to purchase rickshaw/van; only 1 (3.12 per cent) child labourer each are interested in owning a garage, want to be motor binder and government service holder. It is observed that child sweeper wants to take government service in future, as it is their traditional work.

Table no. 53

Types of future thought among the child labourers

Future thought	Child labourers		Child labourers		Total child labourers	
	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Garage owner	1	3.22	-	-	1	3.12
Driver	4	12.90	-	-	4	12.50
<u>Different stall owners</u> Shoe, Tea, Lottery, Stationery, Fish, Cycle, Jewellery	13	41.94	1	100.00	14	43.75
Hotel owner	5	16.14	-	-	5	15.63
Rickshaw/Van owner	3	9.68	-	-	3	9.38
Motor binder	1	3.22	-	-	1	3.12
<u>Smith</u> Mason, Painting, Carpenter	3	9.68	-	-	3	9.38
Govt. Service	1	3.22	-	-	1	3.12
TOTAL	31	100.00	1	100.00	32	100.00

Employer's opinion :

The employers generally advance the argument that by employing children they increase the income of the worker's family, which needs to be supplemented and save the children from being lazy, idle and falling into bad habits. The majority of the employers

believe that the children who begin their working life at the early age become industrious. They also train themselves to be skilled workers during childhood. The child can easily pick up various works. The employers had their own reasons to offer in defence of their practice of employing children. A large majority of employers defended child labour employment on the ground that it lowers down the cost of production, as they are cheaper in relation to adult workers. Some employers argued that they employ children to help the poor and downtrodden families just to supplement their family budget deficits. The children are employed because they have low bargaining power and, hence, can be hired at lower wages and made to work for longer hours and under bad working conditions.

It is beyond doubt that children are forced by circumstances to do work in the tender age when they should have been in schools. The harmful effects of child labour can be seen in the form of their improper physical development, varied kinds of illness and physical deformities, damaged nervous system, and inability to express views. No nation should destroy its children's life that is the future possibilities of the country's prosperity and development.

The employers are of the opinion that child labour is not only abused but also exploited by the employers especially in the unorganised sector. Both boys and girls in their early teens or even less than that are cheated and deprived of their due by paying meagre wages. The tendency among the employers who have quick profit at low costs is a clear case of exploitation. Very often in the name of apprenticeship the child acts as a virtual servant to the craftsman on very low pay, running errands and performing menial jobs, which have no relation to the skill.

CHAPTER - FOUR

SOME SELECTED CASE STUDIES

The study on the "Socio-Economic Background of child labour in Siliguri City of West Bengal" has been made among the children of eleven slums who are engaged in different types of occupations in the Siliguri Municipal Corporation area. These eleven slums are considered to be child labour dominated area of the city. Only three hundred eighteen children have been interviewed for the present study; eleven case studies have been collected from them considering the types of occupations in which they are absorbed. These case studies reflect the scenario of the socio-economic background of the child labourers under study.

Case Study - One

Paresh Bhadra, male, aged 14 years, Hindu by religion, belonging to the general caste category, having mother tongue Bengali, born in Siliguri, is unmarried and presently residing in Sarbahara Colony, Ward No. 28 of Siliguri City. His father migrated here approximately 25 years ago from Faridpur district of Bangladesh.

Late Pulin Bhadra was the father of Paresh. He died when Paresh was ten years old. He was a van-puller and died in a road accident. His mother is a maid servant who works in two houses. She earns only Rs. 400.00 per month. Father and mother of Paresh are illiterate. He has two sisters and three brothers. His eldest sister is already married. Paresh is next to the eldest sister. His next brother 'Ganesh' is a worker in a tea stall who earns Rs. 100.00 per month. Next to Ganesh is his brother 'Kanai' who is a gleaner and earns about Rs. 50.00 per month. Paresh's younger sister, aged 5 years, does not work. All these three brothers and two sisters are illiterate.

Paresh has been working in a garage for about a year. When his father suddenly died in an accident his mother was ill. His mother could not earn for maintaining the family of six members. The situation forced Paresh to search for a work. At the age of 10 years, he started his working life in a tea stall for Rs. 100.00 per month. But due to heavy pressure of

work in this tea stall he had to leave his work after nine months. Then he found a work of a cleaner in a truck stand. He used to earn Rs. 15.00 per day by cleaning trucks and continued his work for about seven months. One of his neighbours employed him in the present work in a garage. He now earns Rs. 300.00 per month. His working hour starts everyday at 9:00 a.m. in the morning and lasts till 07:00 p.m. with one hour's recess break. He gets one holiday a week. Besides this scheduled working hours, he has to do many other variety of works assigned by his employer for which he does not receive any additional wages. In spite of such huge pressure, he wants to continue his work. Sometimes the employer for neglecting duty punishes him. Moreover, altercation and beating are the common occurrences for him. Tea, Tiffin and treatment facilities are not provided by the employer. Everyday he gets up at 07 a.m. and after his morning fresh he takes tea and Tiffin. At 09 a.m. he arrives at his working place, at noon he comes back home and takes lunch and again goes to join his work. In the evening he comes back home and takes dinner, and then goes to bed. Sometimes he goes to cinema with some friends.

The living condition of their house is very bad. It is ill ventilated, uncleaned *kuchcha* house in a slum. This slum has grown on Railway land and is over-crowded. They have to use common latrine and bath place with other slum inmates. It is unhygienic and does not have drainage system. Skin diseases, water born diseases, sexual diseases, viral diseases are common among the slum dwellers. His mother is very weak and suffers from cardiac problem. He hands over the whole wage to his mother. Total income of his family is only Rs. 1200.00 per month. This meagre income is insufficient for his family. No movable property is found in their house. Due to this extreme poverty all the brothers and sisters remain illiterate, none of whom is ever sent to school.

The working place of Paresh is not so good. He has to do heavy work. His younger brother Ganesh and Kanai also work hard for their large family. According to his mother, child labour is desirable until and unless poverty is eradicated. Moreover, poverty eradication is necessary for amelioration the lot of child labour. She is ignorant about child labour Act, she only knows that child labour is prohibited. From his childhood Paresh gathered huge experience of life made him understand that hard work is the only means to survive. He had to help his mother for maintaining the family with a brother and a sister.

Case Study - Two :

Suman Mandal, aged 13 years, Hindu by religion belongs to the Scheduled Caste category. His mother tongue is Bengali. He was born in Siliguri city. His parents immigrated to this city about 55 years ago. His father was a van-puller who had been suffering from Tuberculosis at the time of fieldwork. His parents were illiterate. His father did not earn for the family, while his mother earned Rs. 1000.00 per month as a gleaner. Suman was younger between two sons of his father. His elder brother was a *khalashi* in a motor stand who earned Rs. 900.00 per month. Suman was a helper in a scrap shop and earned Rs. 400.00 per month. He started working for maintenance of his family when his father was infected by T.B. When his father became ill, Suman took up wage work for treatment of his father. Initially he started with selling coconut-pieces in the market. After six months he took up the present work.

In the scrap shop where Suman was working had inhuman working conditions. He had to work for all seven days in a week and 12-16 hours in a day. His employer forced him to do additional work without any additional wages. Suman handed over the major portion of income to his mother for their livelihood, and he kept a small amount of money with him for personal use. Due to heavy work load Suman wanted to give up that work for a suitable work.

The daily schedule of work started like this - Suman woke up at 7 A.M. in the morning. After morning fresh and breakfast he went to work. He used to come back home for lunch and returned to his work. After the work was over in the evening he used to come back home. Suman's family did not have any land of its own. A *kuchcha* house was constructed on Railway land where they were still residing in a slum. Monthly income of Suman's family is approximately Rs. 2500.00 which is insufficient for maintenance of their family. His mother said that poverty influenced them to send their children to work, although child labour Act is not unknown to her.

Case Study - Three :

A girl, Tinku Goswami, aged 10 years, was a resident of Prankrishna Colony of Siliguri city. She was a Bengali Hindu girl and was not yet married. In 1982 her parents migrated here from Islampur town of a neighbouring district. Tinku was the eldest of five

daughters of her parents. Since last one year Tinku had been engaged in chocolate packing work for which she used to earn Rs. 200.00 per month.

Tinku's father was a gleaner and earned Rs. 400.00 per month. Her mother also earned Rs. 200.00 - 300.00 per month. Both the parents were illiterate. Her father is a physically handicapped person, her mother maintained the family somehow. Tinku's mother did chocolate packing in Bonny Poopins Chocolate Factory in Siliguri. Tinku also joined her mother last year. They used to do this work at home. The factory supplied the chocolates to their home and they packed the chocolates. For packing one thousand chocolates she used to get only Rs. 5.00. Tinku worked for 3-4 hours a day. Tinku read upto class three but she had to discontinue due to economic pressure. She was interested in continuing her study and to get good employment. Apart from this work of chocolate packing Tinku used to help her mother in the domestic work and looked after her younger sisters.

The total monthly income of her family was only Rs. 900 - 1000 per month. Due to this meagre family income her parents were forced to send her second sister for work. Parents were not well aware about the family planning. They live in a *kuchcha* house in a slum that had grown up on the Railway land. The unhealthy condition of the slum did not provide any drainage system. They had to be content with the common bath place and well which they used to share along with other neighbours.

Case Study - Four :

Sujit Das, aged 12 years, belonged to a Schedule Caste category. He had not yet married. He was born in Dinahata of Cooch Behar district. They migrated from the birthplace to Matangini slum of Siliguri in 1992. Sujit worked in a hotel and got Rs. 80.00 per month. He had been doing this work for about six months.

His father, aged 45 years, was illiterate. He worked as a helper to a mason in the construction work and earned Rs. 700.00 - 800.00 per month. His stepmother worked as a chocolate packer who was also illiterate. She earned Rs. 800.00 - 900.00 per month. Sujit and his brother helped their mother in packing work. Sujit's father earlier was a rickshaw-puller in Dinahata, Cooch Behar district. Then he migrated to Jalpaiguri town and became cook in a hotel. After a year he came to Siliguri to live in this slum.

Sudhir, father of Sujit was habituated with taking alcohol and had been suffering from the respiratory problem. Gradually he became weak and could not do much hard work. Sujit's stepmother took up chocolate packing for maintaining the family. Both the parents motivated Sujit to take up a work in a teashop. Sujit got a work of Rs. 50.00 per month in a tea shop but after four months he took up a work in a hotel as he was not satisfied with the work and wages in the tea shop. In the hotel he got Rs. 80.00 per month. Daily his work started at 08 in the morning upto 09 at the night. There he got tiffin, lunch and dinner. Sometimes the employer also punished him, which could be physical torture and curtailment of wages for neglecting duty and absence. In the hotel he used to clean utensils, serve meals and water and assist in cooking, etc. His future plan is to open a hotel like that. In the family his stepmother did not treat him equally with her own sons. The monthly income of the family was not adequate at all. No saving was possible at all. The condition of their *Kuchcha* house and the slum was extremely unhygienic. The slum was built on the Railway land. Use of common bath place and toilet were the usual features of the slum. The civic authority did not extend drinking water facility to them. Vitamin deficiency, skin diseases, water born diseases, respiratory diseases etc. are the common health problems of the slum dwellers. They demanded free medical check up camp, free compulsory primary education in their locality, and good opportunity to work. They were fully ignorant about the Child Labour Act. They only knew that working at minor age was so much harmful but due to economic problem they were forced to send their children to work.

Case Study - Five :

Promod Sahani, aged 13 years, male and Hindu. His mother tongue is Hindi. He is unmarried and born in Siliguri. His parents migrated here from Samastipur district in Bihar approximately 28 years back. Promod is now engaged in the work of sack sewing at Khalpara, Siliguri. His employer is a sack merchant. Promod and his father are working there. He earns Rs. 2.00 for sewing one bag, which comes approximately Rs. 300.00 per month. He works seven days a week and 8-9 hours a day. The employer does not provide him with any additional facilities like medical help etc. He is not given any holiday or leave. He hands over all his earning to his father.

Tirkeshwar Sahani, father of Promod, aged about 42 years, is an illiterate person. He earns approximate Rs. 900.00 per month by sewing bags. He has two sons and two daughters of whom Promod is second. Promod's elder brother is physically handicapped who is 17 years old. Promod's one sister is aged 6 years and the youngest one is 4 years old. Promod's mother, aged 33 years, is illiterate. She got married to Promod's father at the age of 13 years only. Promod's father was earlier a rickshaw puller but after having four children he shifted his occupation to bag sewing. But this occupation could not provide sufficient money to maintain the family of six members. Then his mother started to work as a maidservant. When Promod was 13 years of age, his mother became very ill and the family suffered economic crisis. At that time Promod was motivated by his father to work in sack sewing. He was interested to take education but his parent was unable to admit him in the school. Promod is not satisfied with his work and the wage. In the morning he wakes up from bed and takes tea and tiffin. He goes to the work at 9 a.m. and works up to 7 p.m. At the noon he comes back home and takes lunch. Moreover, he gets one hour recess break in the noon for lunch. He is suffering from Vitamin deficiency and malnutrition. Promod is interested to take education, to play games and to watch television or cinema but he does not get any time to enjoy all these. Sometimes the employer for neglecting duty punishes him.

Family income of Promod is approximate Rs. 1200-1300 per month but he feels that the monthly earning is insufficient for the maintenance of his family. Saving is not possible; no movable property is possible to purchase. Promod's family is living in a slum, which occupies the Railway land. Siliguri Municipal Corporation has constructed one common bath place, well and low cost sanitation for the slum dwellers. The surrounding environment is in unsanitary condition and unhygienic. Their house is ill-ventilated and semi-*Kuchcha* type. They have occupied approximate 90 sq.ft. land where they have constructed two rooms for living. Promod wants to give up this work and intends to get better work for better wage. He does not know about Child Labour Act, or the ill effect of child labour in the society. His parents are not completely aware of the Child Labour Act. His father only knows that to work at minor age is not good for health, but he was helpless.

Case Study - Six :

Putul Thakur, aged 10 years, unmarried girl is a Hindu. She speaks Hindi and is born in Siliguri, presently residing at Lichu Bagan Colony of the Ward No. 18. Her parents came from Sunsari district of Bihar tentatively 15 years ago. Poverty was the main reason behind their migration. Putul is a maidservant, she has been working in one house at 'Ghogomali', Siliguri. The employer gives her Rs. 100.00 and nothing else. Late Suresh Thakur was her father, who was a wage labourer and illiterate. They belong to barber caste. Due to poverty they were forced to come to Siliguri in search for better jobs. He took the work of a wage labour at 'Khalpara', Siliguri, his work was to load and unload goods. He earned approximately Rs. 1500.00 per month and this was sufficient to maintain his family. Putul is the second daughter of her parents. After the death of her father her mother took up work as a maidservant for maintaining the family. Her elder sister also took the work as maidservant. Since their income was not sufficient to maintain their family. As a result, Putul started her working life also as a maidservant. Putul works from morning to night and her works includes cleaning of utensils, helping in the kitchen, taking care of baby, serving food to the members of the employer, room cleaning etc. She gets sufficient food. Putul is interested in education but now it is not possible due to poverty. Since last six months she has been working in a house, but she is not satisfied with this work.

Monthly income of her family is Rs. 900-1000 approximately, and this earning is not sufficient for the maintenance of the family. Saving is not at all possible. Her family lives in this slum in a rented house by paying a rent of Rs. 50.00 per month. This slum is very congested, dirty and built on government's land. The Siliguri Municipal Corporation has constructed common bath place, well and low cost sanitation for the slum dwellers. The slum dwellers are mainly wage labourers, maidservants, rickshaw/van-puller and vegetable sellers. Only 10.53 per cent child labourers are living in this slum who belong to the age group of 5 - 14 years. The slum, as described by the informant, was extremely unhygienic, throughout the year they suffered from many water born diseases. Skin diseases, Vitamin deficiency, malnutrition etc. were very common among the slum dwellers. They were fully ignorant about the Child Labour Act as well as its ill effect on the society.

Case Study - Seven :

Ratan Kirtyania, aged about 13 years, male, Hindu by religion belong to non-Scheduled Caste. He is unmarried and speaks Bengali. His birthplace is Siliguri and is residing at Kshudiram Colony, Ward No. 18, Siliguri. They migrated here from Faridpur district of Bangladesh about 28 years back. In 1971 his father came to Siliguri to enquire about suitable work for livelihood. Ratan is a helper to a carpenter and he has been doing this work for the last one and half year. He earns Rs. 25.00 per day, but he does not get daily work. He gets work approximately 20 days in a month and earns about Rs. 500.00 per month. He has to work 8 hours daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and gets one hour's lunch break at noon. His father motivated him to do this work but he is not satisfied with the wage he gets.

Dhaniram Kirtyania aged 45, is his father. He is a literate person. He came to Siliguri with his father when he was 17 years. His father was a carpenter and Dhaniram helped his father in this work. He married Gita from their same slum when he was 25 years. Now in their family they have six members. Dhaniram has three daughters and two sons. Ratan is the eldest son, younger sister is of 12 years of age, she is a maidservant. The younger brother is of 10 years of age, he is a gleaner. Three children of his family have been working for livelihood. Dhaniram is now mentally imbalanced and cannot earn for the family. He was addicted to *ganja* or cannabis. His earning was insufficient to maintain his large family. His wife worked as a maidservant to help the family. She wanted to send her children to school for education. Ratan wants to continue his work for supporting his family. He is interested in learning to write his name and address. He wants to be a good carpenter in future and is ambitions to start a furniture shop. He keeps only Rs. 4.00 to 5.00 daily from his daily wages as his pocket money and the rest of the wages is handed over to his mother. Sometimes he goes to see the cinema with his friends. Ratan wakes up in the morning and after performing some work in the house and taking tiffin he goes to work. In the noon he comes back to his house for lunch and again joins the work. In the evening he comes back home and after doing some domestic works he gets sleep. He had to follow more or less this routine daily.

The monthly income in their family is near about Rs. 1000.00 to 1200.00 but this is not sufficient to maintain their family. Savings from the earning is not possible. Gita and her children have been suffering from malnutrition and vitamin deficiency. In this slum

23.29 per cent children are engaged in different types of work who are aged from 5 years to 14 years. Gita, her husband and their children live in the semi-*Kuchcha* house constructed on 120 sq.ft. land and the house is ill-ventilated. No movable property can be found in their house. She has no idea about the Child Labour Act. She only knows that child work is prohibited, but she was fully helpless. According to her, poverty eradication and job opportunity are the primary requirements of the slum dwellers.

Case Study - Eight :

Amar Routh, aged 13 years, male, Hindu, belongs to Scheduled Caste. His mother tongue is Hindi and was born in Siliguri and is residing in Lichubagan Colony, Ward No. 18, Siliguri. He is unmarried. His parents came here from Darbhanga district of Bihar about 21 years ago. Amar has been working as a sweeper for about one and half year and earns Rs. 300.00 to 400.00 per month. He has to work for 4-5 hours a day throughout a week. He works to support his family economically and to satisfy his personal needs. Amar has been motivated to do this work by some of his friends. Amar has four younger sisters and two younger brothers. Three of his sisters are gleaner and give their income to their mother. His sisters are aged about 17 years, 10 years and 9 years respectively. Amar also gives some money to his mother. Amar's father is 45 years old. He is illiterate and is working as a sweeper earning Rs. 1200.00 to 1500.00 per month. His father is addicted to drink and gambling. He spends a major portion of his income for this purpose. His mother is illiterate and also works as a sweeper and earns about Rs. 400.00 to 500.00 per month. There are six earning members in his family.

Amar does not get regular work. He gets 4 - 5 days work in a week. He has to spend a portion of his earning for tiffin, cinema, sometime meal etc. He is engaged in this occupation because it is his traditional calling. He gets lesser wages than an adult worker. He wakes up in the morning and takes tiffin, in the noon he comes back home for lunch and again goes to work. The income of his family is about Rs. 2000.00 per month. Saving is not possible from this meagre income. He is suffering from vitamin deficiency and malnutrition. They live in an ill-ventilated uncleaned house in the slum. They occupy about 110 sq.ft land.

Case Study - Nine :

Samsa Khatun, a Muslim girl aged 12 years, is unmarried whose birthplace is Siliguri. At present she is residing at Harijan Mazdoor Colony. They came here from Motihari district of Bihar about 28 years ago. Samsa is a gleaner since last two years and earns Rs. 300 per month. She has four brothers and two sisters. Md. Kashim, her father aged 45 years, is a wage labourer who earns Rs. 1200.00 per month. Both of her parents are illiterate. Smt. Saidu Khatun, her mother is aged about 32 years.

Md. Kashim came to Siliguri in 1971 from Bihar with his father. His father was a wage labourer who engaged Kashim in a garage in Siliguri. After the death of his father, he took up work of wage labour at 'Khalpara', Siliguri, when he was 24 years of age. Samsa's eldest brother aged 14 years living in Bihar with their grand mother. Her two brothers, aged 10 and 8 years, are working as gleaners. Rest of her brothers and sisters are too small to work. All of her brothers and sisters do not go to school. Her father was the main earner who motivated Samsa and her brother to earn for the family. Her father felt that child-education was necessary but he was unable to send his children to the school. When Samsa was 10 years old her father motivated her to do this work for the family. She earns daily Rs. 10.00 to 12.00. In the morning she wakes up and helps her mother in the domestic work. After that she takes some tiffin and goes to work. She collects plastic, glass, paper, iron, bottle etc. She carries one sack on her back and collects waste things. At noon she comes back home to take lunch when she helps her mother in the domestic work. Again she goes to sell those things in the market. At the end of the day she comes back home and hands over the money to her father. She remains engaged with work for about 6-7 hours daily. Apart from doing this work for earning she does not have time to participate in entertainment. She is complete blank about her future. Her father is willing to get her married after 2-3 years. But Samsa wants to continue this work for helping their family financially.

Monthly income of their family is about Rs. 2000.00 to 2200, which is insufficient to run the family. They do not have any movable property. They live in an unventilated uncleaned *Kuchcha* house constructed on 120 Sq. ft. land of the slum. About 15.79 per cent children of this slum are engaged in different types of works. Slum dwellers have to use common bath place and enjoy low cost sanitation provided by the Siliguri Municipal

Corporation. Lack of drainage facilities and pure drinking water are the common features of the slum. Samsa's brothers and sisters are under nourished and one of them has severe skin disease. Samsa and her father are ignorant about the Child Labour Act and its negative consequences.

Case Study - Ten :

Bhukra Pasman, a Hindu boy aged 13 years who speaks Hindi has not got married. He was born in Siliguri and is not residing in Harijan Mazdoor Colony. His father migrated here from Begusarai district of Bihar in 1961. Bhukra is a rickshaw puller in which he has been engaged since last six months and earns Rs. 40.00 to 50.00 per day. He pulls rickshaw about 4-5 days in a week for 5-6 hours in a day. He has four brothers and a sister. The sister is married. Bhukra is the eldest among all his brothers, his next two brothers are gleaners, who are aged 12 and 10 years. His youngest brother is 7 years old. His father Bachchu Pasman is aged about 50 years. He is illiterate and a wage labourer in Food Supply Corporation of India (F.C.I.) godown, who earns about Rs. 1800.00 per month. Anawar Sahaw Devi aged 40 is his mother. She is also illiterate and does not work. Bachchu came to less populated Siliguri town with his father about 38 years ago. From Bihar they migrated here in search of occupation. His father was a rickshaw puller. They lived in the N.J.P. (New Jalpaiguri) area for sometimes. His father was unable to maintain the family, therefore Bachchu and his elder brother were engaged some work. After death of his father Bachchu became a rickshaw puller and married Anawar Devi, when he was 27 years old. After a year he came to Siliguri Town Station area and lived separately with his wife. This area was recognized as a Mazdoor Colony by the Siliguri Municipal Corporation (Mazdoor means working man or manual labourer) He felt that rickshaw pulling is not gainful occupation now a days. He could not maintain his large family with the meagre income from this occupation. Later on when he got opportunity he became a wage labour in the F.C.I., Siliguri. Now he is 50 years old and cannot work hard. Gradually he became an irregular earner. Due to this reason his family became poverty ridden. Under such a situation Bachchu motivated his eldest son Bhukra to earn as a rickshaw puller. They purchased a rickshaw and Bhukra started to pull it. He earned about Rs. 700.00 to 800.00

per month. Bhukra's two brothers are gleaners who together earn Rs. 300.00 to 400.00 per month.

Bhukra wants to continue this work but has become very irregular in earning. Bhukra wakes up in the morning, takes some tiffin and pulls rickshaw. In the afternoon he comes back home and takes lunch. He again goes to pull his rickshaw. He earns less than an adult rickshaw puller. He is weak and under nourished. Monthly income of the family is about Rs. 2500.00, but expenditure is more than that. They maintain their family in a miserable way, saving is not possible. Rickshaw is the only movable property, which they have. They live in a poorly constructed house of scrap metals, which is ill ventilated and constructed on 120 - 130 sq. ft. land in the slum. Bachchu and his son Bhukra do not know about the Child Labour Act and its negative aspects.

Case Study - Eleven :

Anil Sarkar, who is 10 years old is a Hindu boy and speaks his Bengali mother tongue. He was born in Siliguri and at present is residing in Sarbahara Colony, Siliguri town. His parents migrated here from Faridpur district of Bangladesh in the year 1974. Anil is a vegetable seller and earns daily about Rs. 10.00. He has been doing this work since last year. His mother motivated him to do this work. He goes to the Super Market of Siliguri daily and helps the vegetable sellers by cleaning and arranging vegetables in their shops in lieu of this the vegetable sellers give him some vegetables. He brings those vegetables and sells a portion of it in the slum and the rest of it consume in their own family.

Anil's father was an illiterate person and maintained the family by earning from van pulling. His mother is also illiterate, who works as a maidservant. Mother earns about Rs. 300.00 per month. Anil has three brothers and three sisters. Anil's elder brother, aged 16 years also pulls van and earns Rs. 30.00 to 40.00 a day. About 25 years ago Thakurdas came to Siliguri with his parents when he was 19 years old. Thakurdas was the eldest son. His father came to India for good opportunity and he took Indian citizenship. His father was a *Chowkidar* (Guard) in sawmill, but by that income he was unable to maintain his large family. As a result Thakurdas pulled the rickshaw. After the death of his parent he was married Ahalladi, then he was 26 years old and his two sisters were already married

and his younger brother was engaged in a hotel. After marriage Thakurdas established a separate nuclear family and purchased a rickshaw. In 1998 his father died, his elder brother started van pulling to earn something. His mother was engaged as a maidservant. But they could not maintain the family. Under this condition Anil started earning to help his family.

Anil works daily from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. In the morning after taking some tiffin, he goes to Super Market for work and by 12 noon he comes back home with some vegetables. After taking midday meal, he goes to sell those vegetables in the *bustee* market. He hands over the income to his mother. He wants to be a big vegetable seller in future. Monthly income of their family is about Rs. 1300.00 but this is insufficient. No savings is possible by them. His father wanted to send their children to the school for education but due to poverty it was not possible. Thus, children remain illiterate. The house where they live is more or less same in its condition as others.

Selling Firewood 📍



📍 Shoe shiner

Child Labour
in Hotel 📍



CHAPTER – FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The present study is concerned with the socio-economic background of the child labourers in Siliguri City of Darjeeling district. The majority of the children in this study has been male. The highest number of children doing the work has been found to be in 12 - 14 age group. Most of the respondents have been from Hindu families. Overwhelming majority of the cases has been encouraged by their parents to join the various works. Inadequate income of the family and large family size have been the major reasons behind the respondents' coming for work. The children are not trained for the works they do. The majority of the respondents have been in a particular work for one year. The children belonging to general caste category are more in number in this study. Hindi-speaking people are more among the respondents. Only two female respondents got married at the time of this study. Inter-state migrant child labourers are numerically high in this study and they have migrated here with their parents. In the year 1970-75 majority of the families migrated to Siliguri for their economic problem. In this study children are employed in different types of works. They are gleaner, restaurant or hotel workers, tea stall workers, maidservants, garage workers, sewers, helpers, rickshaw or van pullers, sellers and wage labourers etc. Absentee in work is the common characteristic of the "child labour". It is because sense of responsibility has not fully developed in their immature mind.

The earnings of the workers have been for inadequate to enable them to make their both ends meet. As a result of this, the mass of the workers are kept at starvation level. The actual wages differ from workers to workers depending on their degree of skill, age and performance. These workers are subjected to economic exploitation by using various corrupt devices. The data indicate in this study that so far as the monthly basis wages are concerned there are 33.33 per cent child labourers belonging to Rs. 250.00 - 300.00 monthly income group. The lowest percent i.e., 1.89 children belong to Rs. 550.00 to 600.00 income group. The length of hours of work has direct impact on the physique and

health of children greatly determining the efficiency and productivity of labour. Most of the child labourers are found to work seven days in a week.

In hotels and *dhabas*, the child labourers work during summer from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. with a recess of two hours for two time meals and one time tea. During winter they work from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. with the same recess break. Thus the spread of hours of work during summer and winter is 15 and 14 hours respectively. The domestic servants usually start their work at 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. in a day and some other start their work when all the family members are in their beds at the dawn. They do get certain hours of recess after preparing and serving breakfast, lunch and dinner. In Siliguri town those child labourers, other than the domestic servants, are working under employers, have to do work six days a week because they enjoy one weekly holiday and sometimes they enjoy special off day at the time of general strike. They also get one holiday at the time of DURGA PUJA, the great Hindu festival. Maidservants employed in houses do not get any holidays; they can only pray for leave to their employers. A few child labourers have the opportunity to go to cinema and gamble by the evasion of work or at the leisure time. Most of the child labourers handover their total income to the head of their family and a few child labourers handover the major portion of income to the parents and keep some money for their own expenses, for tiffin, tea, cinema etc. Negligible percentages of children who earn very little do not handover their income to their parents, because nothing is left over after their personal expenditure.

Child labourers and non-schooling children have a significant linkage among the poorer sections of the population. Many children work because there is hardly anything else to do. Many children do not have easy access to schools. Schools are either too expensive for them or not available to them. To many, schools are not at all attractive or interesting. A good number of children from backward classes, particularly female children, discontinue their studies to look after the younger brothers and sisters at home when their parents go out to work. There is also discrimination in educating female children. In Urban slums, in many cases, parents themselves are illiterate and do not realise the importance of educating their children. They are unaware of the injustice done to the children by making them work instead of sending them to school. Employers of child labours are generally rude and rough, negligent, unsupportive to the emotional needs of

children. Their employers sometimes physically, emotionally and sexually abuse working children.

Child labourers are engaged in different types of works in Siliguri town, mainly hotels, restaurants, house works, wage labours, gleaners, etc. Many of them are working under some employers and many others are doing work independently. They live in different slums. These working children exchange their labour every day from morning to night. It can be clear from the overall view that more or less all have to lead a common life style.

The worst impact of child labour is that it leads to physiological and psychological deformities in the child. Longer hours of work, bad and unhygienic working conditions lead to retarded growth, orthopaedic diseases (like Kyphosis, scoliosis etc.) respiratory problems, cardio and gynae problems (in case of female workers). A great majority of children have reported that their parents have sent them to work in order to supplement their earnings, which are too meagre to support their large family. Most of the child workers are found to be drawn into the work places, as there is no adult wage earner in their families. By taking jobs at a tender age children play the role of a family supporters. Another reason for the prevalence of child labour is found to be illiteracy and ignorance of parents. Some of the child labourers, forming a small minority, attribute child labourers to their desire to satisfy their personal needs. Inadequate family income cannot provide them anything beyond to bare subsistence needs. Some of the literate child labourers find bleak employment opportunities, which is one of the important reasons that prevented their parents from sending them to school.

One of the striking features of child labour in this study area is the pitiful and exploitative condition under which children work. Children generally are paid very low wages in almost all occupations. In many occupations children are paid at piece rates. This places an undue strain on them. There are also unjustified deductions. Numerous studies indicate that children are found working in some works long and even excessive hours without sufficient break for rest and leisure.

Child labourers always remain in the mental and physical pressure. They spend their total income for their family. Most of them do not have any imagination about their future. It is very clear from their overall opinion in this regard that they do not think minutely about future life.

Family is the main institution in shaping the child's personality. Therefore the form and character of the family is of utmost importance for developing the child's personality. It is found during the study that the average size of the family is large. The main reason is that they have the viewpoint that family planning is prohibited by Islam and they also believe that they need extra hands to earn and contribute to the family income. The average size of the respondents' family is eight per family. The average number of siblings of the respondents' families has been four per family. The percentage of respondents' father being illiterate is predominantly high. 88.89 per cent of the respondents' mothers are also illiterate. Most of the heads of the households are casually employed persons. None of the families surveyed have the income above rupees one thousand per month, the health of the majority of the child workers has been very poor. Among the child workers who provide answer regarding the question as to their diet and its quality, it is found that the majority are deprived of their full diet and good quality food. The vast majority of child workers either depend on the leftover food or the food bought from the market. To conclude, it can be said that the overflowing drains, big heaps of refuse, congested and crowded living dwells, absence of toilets etc. are harmful for the child workers and their family members. The above discussion makes it clear that female child workers have lesser time than male child workers. In between the working hours they also have to assist their own families in household activities.

Many children in Siliguri town today are working under hazardous conditions and it is noticed that their mothers and fathers have expired. A large number of children of tender age are being exploited, are compelled to work for long hours for low wages and under conditions damaging their health and physical, social, psychological and mental development. It is clear that one of the major causes of child labour is said to be illiteracy and ignorance of parents. This leads to a lack of appreciation of education on the parts of the parents and also limits the outlook towards life. Such parental handicap is at once reflected in the child, as it is primarily in the family that the early socialization of the child takes place.

Most of the parents are employed in occupation requiring little or no skill. Most of them work in unorganised sectors. Unorganised sector has been defined as that sector which has not been able to organise itself in pursuit of common objectives. Casual nature of employment, ignorance and illiteracy on the part of the workers, small size and scattered

nature of establishments and superior strength of employers, are some of the characteristics, of unorganised occupations. One of the major causes of child labour is low income of the family and general poor economic condition. The family income comprises the income of the head of the household and income of the earning dependants, that is, of wife and children or of any other person in the family. In this study it is observed that their family income is not sufficient for the maintenance of their family and they are not able to save any money. They consume their total income. The problem of child labour is basically an offshoot of the problem of low income of parents to support a large size family. With inadequate income even for the maintenance of children at subsistence level. These poor parents are forced to fill up the deficit of their family budget by the little wage earned by their children. Many parents argue that they are forced to send their children to work at their tender age because the present system of education being incapable of providing vocational training alongside the academics is full of danger in making their literate children unemployed.

Child labourers are easily exposed to biological disorders. Uncleaned and unhealthy working conditions prevailing in unorganised manufacturing units, contaminated drinking water and polluted air destroy immune competency and general ability to work. Viruses, bacterias and parasites easily enter into their body and affect - digestive system and cause diseases like diarrhoea, typhoid, malaria, jaundice etc. In addition to their hazardous work, they are engaged in different addictions i.e., *beedi*, tobacco, alcohol, *ganja*, *bhang* etc. which affect their body system and expose them to different diseases and early death. Addiction problem is the major problem among the slum dwellers. Most of males of the slums are habituated to taking alcohol, *ganja* or other kinds of sedative drugs.

Child labourers under this study live in the slums developed on public and railway land. The houses of the child labourers are constructed in the slum without proper drainage system; congested houses without ventilation system cannot protect them from rain, cold and heat. They use common latrine and common place for bath. They have in their houses electricity, which they have drawn from electric line of the streetlight. They use the corners of their houses as kitchen place. Poor income of the parents forces the children to be absorbed in various types of low paid occupations. Almost all of the parents are ignorant about the Child Labour Acts; a few parents are aware but cannot reply to the question related to the Acts properly. The employers feel that child labourers are essential because

children can easily pick up works with their delicate hands. Child labour has given rise to a number of socio-economic problems. It is beyond doubt that children are forced by circumstances to labour hard in their tender age when they should have been in schools. A large majority of employers defend child labour employment on the ground that it lowers down the cost of production, as they are cheaper in relation to adult workers. Some employers argue that they employ children to help the poor and downtrodden families. The children are employed because they have low bargaining power and, hence, can be hired at lower wages and made to work for longer hours under bad working conditions. Child labour is commonly interpreted in two different ways. First, as an economic practice and secondly, as a social evil. In the first context, it signifies employment of children in gainful occupations with a view to adding to the labour income of the family. It is in the second context that the term child labour is more generally used. In assessing the nature and extent of this social evil, it is necessary to take into account the character of the job in which children are engaged, the dangers to which they are exposed and the opportunities of development which have been denied. All the employers are not completely aware of the Child Labour Act. Most of the employers are partly aware of this Act. To this question they only argue that below 15 years children are prohibited to be engaged in occupations or works. To save themselves from this Act, they argue that they treat the children as brothers, nephews or as family members, but not as a labourer.

In the concluding part, it is to say that child labour is neither entirely a new phenomenon nor special to India. Infact, it exists in many countries of the world with varying degrees and magnitude. Children continue to constitute an important source of cheap labour. They are either required to help their parents in domestic work, grazing cattle and farming, or earning for their parents in labour market where they work in various places. The advent of high technology and economic development brought no change in the employment of child labour, which prevails now, in developed, and developing countries of the world. Child labour has become a common feature in many third world countries to which India is not an exception and despite adequate efforts in the direction of relief and rehabilitation, the problem continues to grow in an alarming proportion. The fact is that, this social evil is inextricably intertwined with other common problems making it a vicious circle. However, child labour in the developing countries cannot be combated without making primary education compulsory besides ensuring that the parents of

working children get adequate income. Child labour is basically a working class problem. Many a working class family, when faced with poverty and starvation, send their children to work so that they too may contribute to the financial needs of the family. Many employers prefer children for certain categories of work as they provide cheap labour and are more submissive. Consequently, these children are deprived of their opportunities of education. Further excessive demands of labour impair their health. On growing up they have no alternative except joining the ranks of unskilled workers with low wages and in turn, are forced to send their children to work. Thus, the working class is caught in a vicious circle and child labour becomes a permanent reality in the society. The present study makes a detailed analysis of the problems faced by the children in Siliguri town. The study has been made under the Siliguri Municipal Corporation in five slums as the number of child labour is very high there. These children are engaged in different types of occupations such as rickshaw/van pulling, hotels worker, wage labourer, gleaner etc.

The number of child labourer in Siliguri is alarming. Although children are found in the labour force in all the districts of West Bengal, the proportion of child labourer in Siliguri is very high. The female labour participation rate is comparatively low in Siliguri. Generally young female workers are pushed into various employments. This deserves serious attention, as female child workers suffer more than their male counterparts.

A high proportion of children lack formal technical training or skills. They are employed as labourers as cleaners, waiters in restaurants, sales workers, domestic servants, cycle repairer, gleaners and in a few other types of works. Working children have various health problems. There is a strong negative correlation between the child's health and the rate of child labour participation. Almost all the nutritional surveys indicate that more than 56 per cent of the children are suffering from malnutrition, anaemia, etc. Most of the diseases prevalent among children are due to exogamic causes and can be controlled. Most of these diseases are also common among the children belonging to the poor economic stratum and children from this section are mainly found in this labour force. Due to the poor environmental conditions working children generally suffer from ill health. Such children easily become prone to respiratory and communicable diseases. In other words, child labour can lead to long-term health problems. It is clear that child labour will never be fully eliminated until the causes on which it thrives are eradicated. Child labour is the product of poverty and uneven economic development in the country. In the long term,

improving the health and welfare of poor children, especially child labourers, will necessitate a much greater degree of self-reliance. But in the short term, there must be a continuation of the fight to improve the effectiveness of legislation, education, health and welfare services. Flexible strategies are necessary because rapid changes and new hazards are constantly emerging. Hence, there can be no final and complete answers when society is constantly evolving. Adequate schemes will have to be developed, with the co-operation of employers, to provide nutritious food for their employees. As for the remaining self-employed children, arrangements may be made where by they can purchase food at a subsidized rate.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR ABOLITION OF CHILD LABOURERS :

The evil of child labour exists in this country mainly because of wide-spread poverty and ignorance, and till these twin problems continue to exist, it will not be possible to affectively tackle the problem of child labour. With the present state of development in the country it is impossible to eradicate poverty and ignorance in near future. It is hardly of any use to take any step to abolish the practice of child labour which is not only unrealistic but is also likely to do more harm to the millions of poverty stricken people who are forced by their awfully poor economic condition to seek the help of their children to come out and work for their existence. To save the child labour from the greedy and crafty employers, the state government, social agencies and other voluntary organisations have a big role to play. Since the magnitude of the problem is too big and complex to handle by the state alone, the involvement of voluntary organisations becomes imperative. It is with these objectives the following suggestions are being extended which may be considered while considering the problem of child labourers by all those who are interested in it.

Protective Legislation :

To arrest the evil effects of child labour Article 24 of the Constitution of India provides for its complete eradication. But despite the lapse of about four decades the country has not reached the level of economic prosperity that would justify complete eradication of child labour. Hence, the state as an ad hoc measure, must bring the labourers under the purview of some protective legislations that would make registration

compulsory, give standard definition of child labour, regulate the hours of work, lay down the standard working condition and fix the minimum wages for the child etc.

Welfare Programme :

To ameliorate the condition of working children, it is suggested that the state must embark upon elaborate child welfare programmes, such as:

- (a) health care facilities;
- (b) grant of stipends; and
- (c) recreational facilities.

The government must, under field extension programmes, establish mobile hospitals to take care of the health problems of working children and provide them with the required medicines and treatment free of cost. Or else, every working child should be registered with the State Medical Department and be given a medical care so that he or she gets free medical treatment and medicine from the recognised government hospital.

It would be worthwhile after determining the levels of poverty of the working children to make a provision for the grant of stipends to them. This may reduce the number of child labour and increase the motivation to go to schools.

Recognising the inability of employers to provide recreational facilities to the working children, it is suggested that Sports Council of the State must draw sports schedule in such a way that the working children are involved. For this purpose, in every district of the state, branches of Sports Council should be spent to bring about the promotion of child sports like Volley ball, *Kabaddi*, Low jumping, Slow racing etc. The working children may take part in these sports during the recess breaks or at the day end after over of their works.

Educational Facilities :

The employment of child labourers denies the children's opportunity for receiving any formal education. As in view of the economic compulsions, the working children cannot be removed to the day time schools, it is suggested that the state must open morning time and evening time schools where the working children could be enrolled for education. In these schools, books and stationeries should be provided free of cost to these children. Thus children should also have access to educational opportunities, to get at least the basic

education and hopefully the basic vocational education, which would develop their potentiality to be workers and responsible citizens.

Voluntary Organisations for Welfare of the Child Labourers :

As the main cause of exploitation of child labourers is the lack of their own organisation or union, it will be in the fitness of things, if the child welfare activities organise themselves to ensure the welfare of child labourers. The office bearers of such unions must be drawn from among the social reformers, doctors, legal experts, religious luminaries and the human rights advocates. Only such unions can earn better working conditions for the working children and protect them from the abuse of human rights by their employers.

Lengthening of the recess breaks :

Sleep, rest and playing are among the important psychological and physiological needs of the child. As such, it is suggested that the recess break must sufficiently be lengthened to fulfil these needs. At present the recess break in the various activities covered under the present study are too small to allow children to sleep, rest or play. The breaks are even insufficient for comfortably taking meals or tea. The child labourers when over loaded with work do not get even a little time for rest, and hence tries to have a sigh of relief through resorting to intoxication and other unhealthy activities. Law must as such take into cognisance the need for lengthening the recess break.

Community based meeting and workshops :

The trade unions and social welfare agencies should organise community based meeting and workshops among the working children and their parents and guardians in their locality where they can exchange views and realise the need to take effective steps to better the lot of child labourer.

Fixation of minimum hours of work :

The proposed legislation should regulate minimum hours of work for child labour in unorganised sector. This will go a long way in minting the employers from taking exorbitant amount of work from the tender children. Night work should be totally banned,

the day work for the child should not exceed four to five hours a day with a recess break for rest and entertainment.

Good working conditions and fixation of minimum wages :

The proposed protective legislation must lay down construction of well-ventilated and lighted workhouses. The wages have a great significance for workers, than any other matter, it should therefore be in accordance with his needs and requirements. While fixing wages as such, the legislators must see to it that child labourers do not get lesser wages than that of their adult workers for the same kind and amount of work. In addition to fixing minimum wages, the law should prescribe minimum amount of stipend to the working children during the apprenticeship period.

Public Awareness :

It is suggested that a still more powerful public awareness on the problem should be generated through various media.

Detailed survey on child labour :

Detailed study will go a long way in helping the planners to have a correct idea of the nature and magnitude of the problem and consequently government can better deal with the problem.

Combating child labour is not an easy task. As it is a social evil, a social movement should be generated against this evil. Both government and non-government organisations need to develop a joint strategy and a comprehensive and pragmatic approach towards protection of working children of the world. The problem can be dealt with only through a series of short and long-term measure. The governments and the NGOs should arrive at a formula suited to the national, regional and local conditions. The governments may be more effective in using legislative measures and formulating policy to ensure strict adherence to certain minimum labour standards in the areas of employment, income and compulsory education. The NGOs can be more effective in the areas like advocacy, organising work, implementing small local projects etc. The governments and NGOs should function with in the framework of partnership. Only in this way their working may bring some good results in combating the problem of child labour.

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