

## The Educational Status of the Child Labourers and the Special Schools in Gem Polishing Industry of Jaipur<sup>1,2</sup>

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**KEY WORDS** Child Labour. Gem Polishing Industry. Working Conditions. Special Schools. Vocational Training.

**ABSTRACT** The study was conducted in the walled city of Jaipur. Majority of the parents favoured sending the children to school irrespective of the sex of the child. Many parents were of the opinion that if male children learned work, it would be useful to them later on. Majority of the parents favoured providing vocational training to boys, and only 4.9 per cent of the total parents were in favour of sending girls for training. As far as the working children were concerned 42.4 per cent of them had formal schooling, 17.1 per cent had dropped out and 40.5 per cent had never attended school. The special schools were started in 1988. As of 1992, there were 20 such schools in Jaipur city. The minimum age for enrollment is 8 years and the maximum age 11 years. In the schools the same text books are being used. However, certain lessons which are not relevant to the urban settings are deleted for the syllabus. Besides formal education they have other vocational courses in crafts. In these schools, 60 per cent are boys and 40 per cent are girls. There is one Gem Stones Artisans Training School (GATS) in Jaipur. The main objective of GATS is to impart the latest technical knowhow of gem cutting and polishing and up date knowledge of scientific developments in the field of gemology. To make use of their skills to improve their economic condition, steps should be taken to co-ordinate the activities of special schools and GATS. In other words preference should be given to the students that who passed out from special schools.

### INTRODUCTION

In India, universalization of primary education and eradication of child labour are two vital issues that have received serious attention from the government since independence. About 92

percent of the villages have been provided with facility for four years of schooling at least. Most of the state governments have passed the compulsory primary education Act. Simultaneously, the Indian Government has shown serious concern for working children. The government has also constituted committees and commissions to inquire into the causes and consequences of child labour and has suggested measures to reduce the incidence of child labour and ameliorate the conditions of child work.

In 1986, the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 was passed which is the culmination of government thinking on the problem of child labour. The provisions in the Act make the employment of children before completing 14 years of age prohibited, in certain hazardous occupations. The occupations include among others, rail and road transport, beedi making, manufacturing of shellac, matches, cement, soap, explosives and fire works, mica cutting and splitting, tanning, building and construction works, factories, plantations and merchant shipping which are considered hazardous for health and development of children.

Realizing that legislations alone will not be able to eradicate the employment of child, the Government of India has formulated the National Policy of Child Labour which deals with action programmes in the field of education ( through special schools), health, nutrition, integrated child development and employment. Jaipur's flourishing gem industry is as old as the city itself and child labour in the industry is a serious problem. The Social Welfare Division of the Planning Commission of India has undertaken the responsibility of inquiring into various aspects of employment in ten major hazardous industries in different parts of India. With the sponsorship of

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the Planning Commission, the Indian Institute of Health Management Research, Jaipur conducted a study on the issues related to child labour in gem stone polishing industry in Jaipur city. In this paper, an attempt is made to discuss the educational status of the working children and the functioning of the special schools.

It is understood that in the above said ten areas, action plans have been taken up by the Ministry of Labour for the welfare of working children. The action plan regarding educational aspects purports the following:

1. Formal and non-formal education of the working children; and
2. Setting up of the special schools for the child worker's where provisions of education, vocational training supplementary nutrition, health care etc. will be made. If necessary stipend will be given to children taken from the forbidden employment to compensate their earnings.

In this paper, an attempt is made to assess the educational status of the working children, the functioning of the Special Schools and the Gemstone Artisan Training School. Here the main objectives are to study :

1. The socio-economic background variables like literacy levels, socio-cultural factors etc.
2. The types of households from which child labour is recruited i.e. female headed, deserted, divorced, male head of the family incapacitated etc.
3. The functioning of the special schools for the child workers for imparting general education and vocational training; and
4. The adequacy of the special schools set up under the child labour project by Ministry of Labour and their use to the children.

### METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of an exhaustive understanding, both formal and informal patterns of explorations were attempted. The total data gathered was on the basis of survey and observation methods. An attempt was made to record valid and reliable information, to the maximum possible

extent. This demanded number of visits to the work places of child workers, their homes, and their employers.

### SAMPLE

The total sample for the study consisted of three categories of individuals:

- (i) The working children,
- (ii) Parents of the working children,
- (iii) Government functionaries, medical practitioners, and school teachers.

As mentioned earlier, no analytical studies have been carried out in this particular area in Jaipur, hence it was not possible to have an estimate of the total child labour population for the project area. Few references are available in this regard. There are about 60,000 child labourers according to Neera Burra (1987), and 10,000 according to Gurupadaswamy Committee report (1981). Unfortunately, the first study does not mention the scientific methodology adopted to arrive at this figure. Thus on the basis of the estimates of Gurupadaswamy Committee report, and the availability of time and funds, it was decided to cover around 400 children, which comprises 4% of the total number of child labourers in the Gem Polishing Industry. The parents of each child had to be further contacted and hence 400 sampled families were included in the study. The gem polishing industry concentrates in the walled city of Jaipur. There are ten broad areas, where this work prevails. The concentration of child workers in each of these areas varied a lot, moreover, most of the area units were established in the owner's houses. This demanded a rough estimate of the total number of child workers in each area, so as to have a representative sample. Hence, an initial survey of these areas was done to find a rough figure of the number of working children in each area.

The ten areas were classified into four broad categories (I, II, III and IV) in a descending order on the basis of the concentration of child workers (Table 1). The information on the number of child workers in the areas was collected from the employers/industry owners in the respective areas. Thus, it was estimated that 40, 15, 25, and 20 per cent children, be selected from each of the category (I - IV), for the final sample. However, in the field, these figures could

not be strictly maintained, because of various reasons, viz. non-availability of cases, refusal of parents for participation and the like. However, an attempt was made not to deviate by more than  $\pm 5$  per cent of the estimated percentages. The details of the figures are represented in table 1. This way, a total number of 410 children comprized as the sample for the study, accordingly 410 parents were also included in the study.

**Table 1: Selection of Sample**

S.No.	Areas	% Estimated for Selection	% Available	No. of Children
1.	Subhash Chowk I	0.4	41.92	172
2.	Ghat Gate			
3.	Chand Pole II	0.15	12.68	52
4.	Char Darwaja III	0.25	23.66	97
5.	Jowari Bazar			
6.	Ram Ganj			
7.	Suraj Pole IV	0.2	21.7	89
8.	Jal Mahal			
9.	Agra Road			
10.	Bassbadan Pura			
Total				410

Both formal and informal attempts were made to study the various dimensions of the problems of involvement of children, in gem stone polishing industry. Two structured questionnaires were used one for the child and other for the parents. To explore about the functioning of the special schools, the interview guides were used for obtaining information from the government functionaries, labour officials and school teachers.

#### **PROFILE OF SAMPLE CHILDREN AND THEIR HOUSEHOLDS**

In the present study, 410 child labourers were studied. Similarly the same number of the respective parents were also included in the study.

**Table 2a : Background Characteristics (Percentage Distribution)**

Age Group (In Years)	Male	Female
0-6	5.8	6
6-11	10.9	7.8
11-14	11.1	5.6
14-18	0	6.1
18-60	18.8	17.2
60+	0.9	0.7
Total N	3065	

#### **Socio-economic Characteristics**

Table 2a reveals that 47.3 per cent of the sampled population is below 14 years and the age group above 60 years constitutes only 1.77 per cent of the population. Old age population is very less. On the other hand, child dependency ratio is very high. Female sex ratio is also found to be very low among the study population. Sex ratio is 772. The average family size is 7.5 which is large. The majority of the households are headed by males.

**Table 2 b: Background Characteristics (Percentage Distribution)**

Head of The Household	Per cent
Male	92.4
Female	7.6
Widowed	5.4
Divorced/ Separated	2.2
Average Family size	7.5
Religion	
Hindu	2.7
Muslim	97.3
Total N	410

However, 7.6 per cent households are headed by females (Table 2b). As far as the religious composition is concerned 97.3 per cent are Muslims and 2.7 per cent Hindus. However, no SC or ST is found engaged in this industry.

#### **Age and Sex Composition of the Working Children**

It was observed that the male children constituted 93.4 per cent of the total sample. It is assumed that the number of female children would be much more than what is reflected in the data. Because usually girls work within the house. They do bindai work on ultrasonic drilling machines. These machines do not make much sound while working. Hence such houses are not easily traceable. Further it is observed that most children enter the industry after 7 years. The majority of the child labourers belong to the 11 to 14 years age group (51.2 per cent). No girl child in the age group of 4 to 6 years is found working (Table 3).

**Table 3: Details of The Working Child And Sex of The Working Child (Percentage Distribution)**

Age Group (In Years)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Composition	93.4	6.6
4 - 6	0.9	
7-10	16.3	0.7
11-14	48.5	2.7
14+	25.1	3.2
Total N	410	

### Parents' Attitude Regarding Sending Children to School

The parents when asked to reflect upon their opinion on sending children to school, it was found that, a majority of them favoured sending the children to school irrespective of the sex of the child. However, as far as work was concerned no significant difference was observed, although they (Parents) did not prefer sending girls outside the house for work.

As for the reasons for sending boys to school majority of them expressed that, the boys could work as well as keep their accounts properly (66.8 per cent), further 27.3 per cent reported that, they would be able to earn their bread if they studied well. Those who did not favour sending the boys to school reported, they could not afford (Table 4).

**Table 4: Attitude of Parents Regarding Sending Children to School (Percentage Distribution)**

Parents' Views On Education	Per cent
<i>In favour of sending boys to school</i>	91.2
<i>Reasons for sending *</i>	
If they study well, they can earn their bread	27.3
Nowadays the educated are well respected	2.7
Though we like to send, we have no means	1.9
Education will be useful for doing business & keeping accounts	66.8
He can read letters & newspapers	20
For getting a job	1.9
<i>Reasons for not sending</i>	
Due to poverty	9.7
Not beneficial	0.9
<i>In favour of sending girls to School</i>	86.8
<i>Reasons for sending *</i>	
They can be independent	23.6
If they start adult education, we will send her	0.9
For acquiring knowledge	60.5
They can learn good habits	16.3
<i>Reasons for not sending</i>	
In our community, we do not like to send them to school	3.6
Due to poverty, we could not	1.5
Total N	410

\* Percentages may exceed 100 because of multiple answers

### Attitudes of Parents on Vocational Training

Further, it is observed that, majority of the parents prefer that, their children should learn the skills, only after 15 years of age. This means, actually parents do not want their children to start working at a very young age. Other than the 410

children taken as sample, there existed an additional number of 367 child workers in the 410 sampled households. This indicates the main reason for child labour in the industry was poverty (Table 5).

**Table 5: Attitudes of Parents on Vocational Training (Percentage Distribution)**

Vocational Training	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
In favour of providing vocational training for boys	86.8	4.9
Parent's Perception of the age at which children should get skills		
Less than 10	8	1.7
10-14	4.4	1.7
15-18	46.8	23.4
Total N	410	

### Educational Status of the Households

A majority of the heads of the households are illiterate (Table 6). Only 25.8 per cent of them have studied upto the primary level and 94 per cent upto the secondary level. The educational level in the case of male headed house-

**Table 6: Education Level of Family Members (Percentage Distribution)**

Education Level	Per cent
<i>Education level of the heads of the households</i>	
Illiterate	62.9
Primary and below	25.8
Secondary	9.4
Beyond secondary	1.9
Total N	410
<i>Education level of wife in case male headed household</i>	
Illiterate	89.7
Primary and below	6.8
Secondary	3.2
Beyond secondary	0.4
Total N	379
<i>Education level of male children (3-18 years)</i>	
Illiterate	51.6
Primary and below	38.2
Secondary	9.4
Beyond secondary	0.8
Total N	1048
<i>Education level of female children (3-18 years)</i>	
Illiterate	66.7
Primary and below	29.2
Secondary	4
Beyond secondary	0.1
Total N	698
Total number of households	410

holds is even lower as only 6.8 per cent of them studied upto the primary level and 3.6 per cent beyond the primary level. Regarding the literacy levels of the children, nearly 50 per cent of male children and one third of the female children are studying. The others are not attended the school.

#### *Educational Status of Working Children*

Interestingly, a good number of the working children are attended/attending school (59.5 per cent) (Table 7). Those who attend school, go to industry during the other half of the day. Drop-out rate is rather high (17.1 per cent). Probably, it is difficult for the children to do both the things at the same time. School going children need extra time for home-work and to complete their home assignments. The fact is that if the child is working, the industry owner may not allow the child to stop doing the work. Ultimately, this may result in discontinuing school. Parents are also not very much convinced about the value of education. When they were asked about their opinion regarding education in general, they give reasonable answers. But, when it comes to themselves, they reply in different way. They often see education as a means of getting a job after acquiring degree.

**Table 7: Schooling Status of the Working Children (Percentage Distribution)**

<i>Schooling of Child</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Formal schooling	42.4
Never attended school	40.5
Number of drop-outs after Primary or Secondary school	17.1
Total N	410

They know how bad the employment situation in the country is. Hardly anybody looks on education as a means not only of getting a job, but also betterment through understanding things properly in one's day to day life. This attitude of the parents can further be supported by the following incident. When the special schools were being started, an initial door to door survey was done to have an idea of the number of children, eligible for admission to the schools. During this time many parents refused to admit having a child in that age group. It was only after the stipend of Rs. 100/- that was paid to the family, more and more children emerged for admission.

When they were asked about the reasons for discontinuing the schooling, many of them replied that they had family problems or other economic reasons. A few of them reported that the boy was mischievous or not interested in studies (Table 8).

**Table 8: Reasons for Discontinuing Schooling (Percentage Distribution)**

<i>Reasons for Discontinuation</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Due to family problems	11.4
Mischievous / not interested in studies	15.7
Other reasons	72.9
Total N	70

#### *Special Schools*

It is in keeping with the national policy that the Government of Rajasthan started the Child Labour scheme for Children employed in the gem polishing industry in Jaipur. In April 1988, under the Co-operative Societies Act, the Bal Shramik Pariyojana Sansthan (BSPS) was established in Jaipur. The Bal Shramik Pariyojana Sansthan decided to open special schools to provide non-formal education to children working in the gem polishing industry. The responsibility of running and managing these schools was given to Lok Siksan Sansthan, a voluntary organization in Jaipur.

The special schools were opened in a phased manner. The first five schools were started on May Day in 1988. Five more schools were opened on 1-07-1988, another five on 1-12-1988 and the last batch of five on 16-03-1989.

As of 1992, there were 20 such schools in Jaipur city. A maximum of 50 students are enrolled in each school. To be enrolled, the minimum age of the child should be 8 years and the maximum 11 years. The staff of each school consists of 4 part-time teachers and an assistant (peon).

Teachers work in two shifts i.e. 10 A.M. to 1 P.M. and 1 P.M. to 4 P.M. The method of teaching in the schools is formal. Though people say that the syllabus is too lengthy, the secretary of the voluntary organization feels that this much is required keeping in view the present circumstances. The same text books which are being used in other schools are used. However, certain lessons which are not related to the urban setting are deleted from the syllabus.

In these schools, besides the formal education they have other vocational courses to train them in such crafts as cane work, tie and dye work, rexine work, light electronic work, chalk making, candle stick making, tailoring and embroidery. Students are given free books. They are also provided a nutritious meal worth Rs. 2/- per day. Each student gets a scholarship of Rs. 75/- per month for classes I to III and Rs. 100/- per month for classes IV and V.

The sex composition of the students is 40 per cent females and 60 per cent males. All the students are below 14 years. They have examinations under the supervision of the same board as the other formal schools. After passing the Vth standard, they are admitted in class VI in high schools.

The Director of BSPS says that after passing V standard, only 50 per cent of the students go back to work in gem polishing and the others take admission in high schools. Once or twice a month, all the children are examined by doctors from ESI and Red Cross Society. They are given free medicine.

#### ***Gemstones Artisan Training School (GATS)***

There is a Gemstones Artisans Training School (GATS) which runs under the guidance of the Gem and Jewelry Export Promotion Council (GJEPC). It is one of the important developmental projects of the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GSEPC) set up with the assistance of the Ministry of Commerce, Govt. of India and the Govt. of Rajasthan in the service of the gem and jewellery trade.

The main objective of GATS is to impart the latest technical knowhow of gem cutting and polishing industry and upto date knowledge of scientific developments in the field of gemology to aspirants to turn them into skilled artisans.

There are three different types of diploma courses of six months practical and theoretical training. During the training, students are instructed both practical work as well as in theory. In practical work, they are taught how to achieve the desired shape, cut and polish and also how to operate the various indigenous and modern machines. In the theory part of the training, students are made to familiarise themselves with the methods of cutting and polishing, methods of identification, different cuts and shapes,

different instruments and machines together with their specific uses.

They give training for two sessions in a year. Each batch consists of 120 students. Secondary or equivalent educational qualification is required for admission to the school. Regarding the age for admission, the minimum age is 16 years and the maximum 35 years. They are trained on traditional as well as semi-automatic machines. Semi-automatic machines include ultra-sonic drilling machine, faceting machine, round beads lapping machine, gem carving machine, slab saw, trim saw, dual grinder, barrel finishing machine, lux machines for sawing and processing for beads and cabochons etc.

There is a counselling centre in the school which assists the interested gem artisans by providing the necessary information and guidance regarding bank loans, gem stones rough, employment opportunities, machinery and tools, the latest developments in the field of gemstones, gemology, cutting and polishing techniques etc. This centre has provided employment to a number of old students in the local gem and jewellery industry through its efforts. Interestingly, a good number of the child labourers are attending/attended the schools. However, drop-outs are high among them. Since most of their families are poor, many of them can not afford to send their children to school for full time. If the child is employed, partially the child's dependence will be reduced. At the same time, he may earn few hundred rupees every month, in most of the cases, the money is taken by the parents from the industry owner. Though the parents do not want their children to start work at a very young age, their poor economic conditions are forcing them to do so. In such circumstances, introduction of the special schools is a good alternative. However, the concerned officials should see the beneficiaries are drawn only from working children.

Presently in this area, the Special schools and Gemstones Artisan Training School, are functioning as two independent units without much coordination. Now, it is the time for the special schools to aim at getting their students into the Gemstones Artisan Training school. Similarly, the Gemstones Artisan Training School should also relax the qualifications for the students who are coming out from the

special schools. The principal of the school opined that the students should join at young age so that he/she can learn better. Once the continuous process of learning is made possible, after attaining the complete training, the child labourers can take up the gem polishing work as an independent enterprise. This kind of approach will certainly increase the efficiency of the gemstone polishing industry as a whole.

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