

Poverty, Education and Child Labour in Aligarh City-India

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ABSTRACT Child labour is commonly associated with poverty. However, the empirical evidence on this link is weak. Child labour in India is to be found in almost every sector of the informal economy. Children are to be found working in workshops and small factories, in *dhabas* and restaurant, on the street as well as domestic servants. It is generally assumed that as household wealth increases children will be progressively withdrawn from labour activities in favour of schooling. Being out of school and deprived of education, the world of prospects, possibilities and opportunities is closed for them. Any work that denies them their right to education must therefore be regarded as hazardous. This paper analyses the relationship between education and the phenomenon of child labour in Aligarh city. Poverty is really the most important reason for child labour and consequently low school participation in the city. Parental motivation for education and the quality of education are other factors being highlighted in the search for the reasons of low school participation and high incidents of child labour. The study shows that as children are enjoying their right to education, there are changes in the existing socio- economic formation towards greater participation and confidence of the people.

INTRODUCTION

Child labour is a wide-ranging problem of the society, especially in the underdeveloped countries and nations that are in a development stage. It is a cause of major concern for the government. Children work and exert for various reasons and the prime and the top reason is poverty and illiteracy and the induced pressure in their life so that they can escape from this plight of poverty (Khan 1979; Gangrade and Gandhi 1983; George 1990).

Child labour is generally speaking, work for children, which harms them or exploits them in some way (physically, mentally, morally or by blocking access to education). In other words, child labour includes children prematurely leading adult lives, working long hours for low wages, under conditions damaging to their health, to their physical and mental development, sometimes separated from their families, frequently deprived of meaningful education and training opportunities that could open up for them a better future" (ILO 1983).

The issues and exclusion of education and poverty are intricately related to child labour. Poverty provides the potential condition of putting children to work. The children are also forced to earn livelihood for themselves as well as for their families and it prevents them from realizing their full potential (Weiner 1991; Mishra 2000; Zutshi et al. 2006).

Child labour and the worst forms of child labour, as defined by International Labour

Organization (ILO) Conventions, damage children's health, threaten their education and lead to further exploitation and abuse. UNICEF does not oppose work that children may perform at home, on the family farm or for a family business – as long as that work is not a danger to their health and well-being, and if it doesn't prevent them from going to school and enjoying childhood activities. Based on the 2001 census, 252,000 children are engaged in *beedi* manufacturing and 208,833 in the construction sector. An estimated 185,595 children are employed as domestic help and in *dhabas* (small roadside eateries), 49,893 children work in auto-repair workshops.

Within the existing social framework, many times a child has to accept his family occupation and assist his parents, considering the fact that he has to accept his family tradition from a tender age not attending school irrespective of the degree of poverty. In some cases, parents wish their children to work to keep them occupied and off the streets so that they do not get into mischief or be tempted to drift into vagrancy. Children also work when they do not perform well at school and have no alternative available. In some instances, the home situation compels children to work and earn independently. When a family migrates from rural area to town, it faces the unknown labour situations, which brings instability and insecurity for the family for which children are to work for survival of the family (Singh 1980; Suman 1998).

Objectives

The researcher attempts the following objectives:

1. To explore the socio-economic conditions of child labour households.
2. To find out various reasons for the emergence of child labourers in Aligarh city.
3. To find out working hour of the child labour in Aligarh city.
4. To determine the average income of the children and their contribution to the family.
5. To identify the various types of child labour.

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive cum analytical study. It portrays the problems and socio-economic characteristics of children working in Aligarh city and tries to provide solutions. A survey based on a sample of 380 child workers was conducted in the various sectors of economy in Aligarh city. Only primary sources of information have been made use of in the study. Primary data for all categories of child workers were collected through personal interview using interview schedule. As regards the sample method, the researcher adopted random sampling. 380 working children were selected from different areas randomly and interviewed. Since they did not know English, the researcher used to explain them in Hindi and their responses were noted down in the proper column of the questionnaire.

Different tools of empirical research viz., interview with child labourers with the help of structured and guided schedule, formal and informal discussions and participant observations etc. form part of the methodology of the present study. A field diary had also been maintained to note down the off-coming comments for analysis. The data and information so collected have been tabulated, analysed and presented in a report form. Table 1 show the surveyed child labour population in Aligarh city.

ALIGARH CITY, THE SURVEY AREA

Aligarh is located 27°53'N latitude and 78°04'E longitude, at a distance of 130 km to the south-east of Delhi on Delhi-Kolkata railway line and Grand Trunk Road. Aligarh is an

Table 1: Location of the child labour in Aligarh city

S. No.	Surveyed areas	Numbers	Percentage
1	Upper Kot	53	14
2	Jamalpur	57	15
3	Dodhpur	46	12
4	Shamshad Market	27	7
5	Kela Nagar	38	10
6	G. T. Road	34	9
7	Agra Road	30	8
8	Railway Station	53	14
9	Purani Chungi	42	11
Total		380	100

Source: Based on field survey 2011

important town of Uttar Pradesh. The total area of Aligarh city is 33.98 sq km and its total population is 669087 of which 356725 are males 312362 are females by Census of India (2001). The literacy rate in the city is 65.38 percent and the male literacy rate is 75.85 and females are 54.16. Muslims constitute nearly one-third of the Aligarh's total population. Since independence Aligarh has grown from a small town to an important centre for industry and learning. There are three factors, which have contributed to the development of Aligarh. These include the establishment of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) during pre-independence period, the growth of trade through the establishment of light industries, and its demarcation as the district headquarters which gave it administrative importance (Fig.1).

SOCIO-ECONOMIC COMPOSITION OF CHILD LABOUR IN ALIGARH CITY

Employment of children is a reflection of numerous social, economic and demographic factors. The family background of the respondents assumes more significance because it is the family where the child learns the basic skills to cope with social norms, values and demands. It has its own pattern of interpersonal relations, acts as an agency for socialization which in turn is affected by the socio-economic conditions of the family.

Age-Sex Composition

Table 2 shows the Age-Sex composition of the child labour. An analysis of the data in this table shows that the highest percentage of child workers is in age group 12 to 14, which consti-

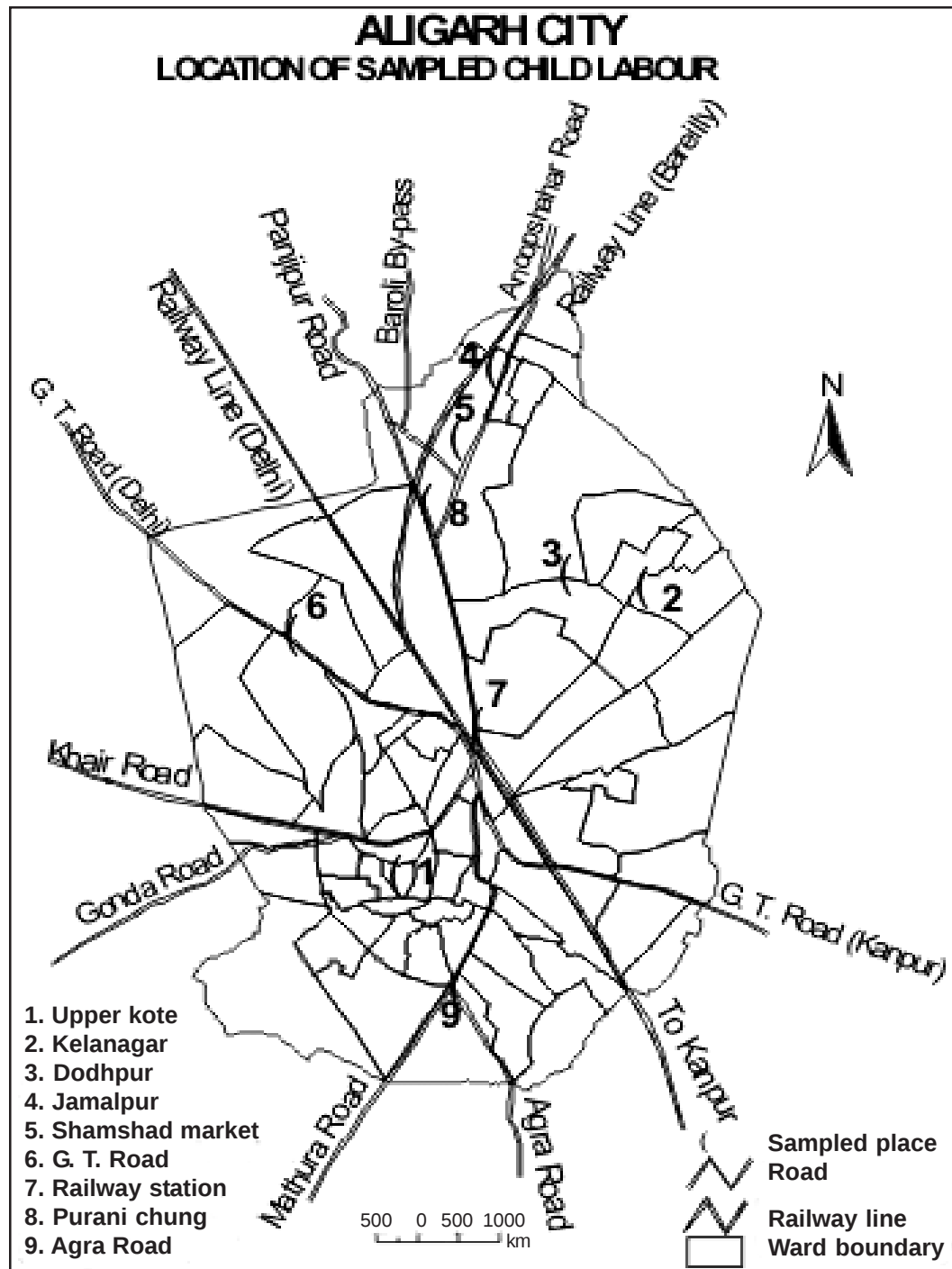


Fig. 1. Aligarh city: Location of sampled child labour

tutes 43 per cent of the total child labour population. Other major contributions are of the age group 9 to 11 and 6 to 8, which are 33 per cent and 18 per cent respectively.

Table 2: Age-sex composition of child labour in Aligarh city

Age group	Numbers		Total %	Cumulative percentage
	Male %	Female %		
Below 6	2	4	6	6
6-8	13	5	18	24
9-11	29	4	33	57
12-14	43	0	43	100
All	87	13	100	100

Source: Based on field survey 2011

The remaining 6 per cent children belong to below 6 years of age. In this survey the males contribute 87 per cent of the total child labour and girls contribute only 13 per cent while majority of those aged below 8 years work with their family members. There is no female child worker found in the age group of 12 to 14 years because of that, all of the work in this study is not favourable for that age group. A unique trend has been found in the table that as the age group increases, the percentage share of child labour also increases.

Religious Composition

The surveyed child labour falls into two religious categories viz., Hindu and Muslim. A substantial number of them were Muslims, accounting for 57 per cent of the total and Hindus, which was 43 per cent. Out of total male child labour population, about 45 per cent are Hindus and 55 per cent are Muslims, and majority of the total female child labour belongs to the Muslim community. The above information is given in Table 3.

Table 3: Religious composition

Religion	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total %	Cumulative percentage
Hindu	39(44.83)	4(30.77)	43	43
Muslim	48(55.17)	9(69.23)	57	100
All	87	13	100	100

Source: Based on field survey 2011

Educational Status

Education is of utmost importance for the proper growth and development of the indi-

vidual. It plays an important role in one's life in the sense that it helps in shaping the right kind of life style in the human beings. About 90 per cent of the child labour in various sectors in Aligarh are illiterate, 5 per cent can read and write only and remaining are literate only upto primary level. Children are unable to go to school because of the need to work, discrimination, or because of costs. In some places, it is believed that girls do not need an education, or that boys are better off working.

Occupational Structure

Table 4 indicates that eight categories of work are being undertaken by children in Aligarh city. Out of these eight categories, girls were engaged only in two types of work. These are domestic help and rag picking. But so far as boys are concerned, they are engaged in all types of work. The table shows that majority 26 per cent of the child workers were engaged in rag picking followed by *dhaba* workers/road side cafe 23 per cent. 10 per cent were involved in cycle / scooter repairing 17 per cent were mechanics followed by vendors (12 per cent) and some worked in tea shops/juice corners (5 per cent), 3 per cent worked as rickshaw pullers and remaining 4 per cent engaged in other activities like domestic help, barbers, washing cars and collecting firewood. Thus we see that children are engaged in all types of work no matter what their age.

Table 4: Occupational structure of child labour in Aligarh City

S. No.	Types of works	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
1	Dhabas/Hotels	23	23
2	Mechanic	17	40
3	Repairing work	10	50
4	Rag pickers	26	76
5	Tea shops/Juice corners	5	81
6	Vendors	12	93
7	Rickshaw pullers	3	96
8	Others	4	100
Total		100	100

Source: Based on field survey 2011

Wages

Wages determine the economic status of a household. The wages which the working children receive depend upon various factors like, nature of job-skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled;

duration of working hours; risk involved in the work; nature of employment - daily wage, contract or regular; etc. Table 5 indicates the income of child workers in the Aligarh City. The monthly earning of child labourers was calculated on the basis of type of work performed, hours worked and nature of payment they have received from all working days in a month.

Table 5: Monthly income of child worker

S. No.	Monthly income (Rs.)	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
1	Up to 500	9	9
2	500-1000	15	24
3	1000-1500	19	43
4	1500-2000	23	66
5	2000-2500	26	92
6	Above 2500	8	100
Total		100	100

Source: Based on field survey 2011

Table 5 indicates that majority of working children (26%) received a monthly income between Rs. 2000 to 2500. The wages of working children in Aligarh city ranges from Rs. 500 to Rs. 3,000 per month. There were 23 per cent children who earned between Rs. 1500 to Rs. 2000 per month followed by 19 per cent children whose earnings were between Rs.1000 to Rs. 1500 and 15 per cent earn Rs. 500 to Rs. 1000. Besides, there were 8 per cent children who earned more than Rs. 2,500 per month and remaining 9 per cent earned up to Rs.500 All the children received their income in cash, some on daily basis, some weekly and some monthly, depending upon the type of work they were doing.

Working Hours

As per the law, children should not work for longer hours. But in practice the law is not strictly followed. When asked them about their daily working hours, they gave a number of mixed responses which is presented in Table 6.

Table 6 indicates that irrespective of occupation, majority of child workers 32 per cent were found to work for 12 to 14 hours a day. The researcher were surprised to note that none of the children had normal working hours of less than four hours a day. More than 14 hours of work were undertaken by 15 per cent child work-

Table 6: Daily working hours of the child workers

S. No.	Working hours	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
1	Below 8	12	12
2	8-10	14	26
3	10-12	27	53
4	12-14	32	85
5	More Than 14	15	100
Total		100	100

Source: Based on field survey 2011

ers. There were 27 per cent children who were working for 10-12 hours a day. Only 12 per cent children used to work for below 8 hours a day and 14 per cent of child labour work for 8-10 hours, these children were self-employed.

Importance Given to Work

Table 7 indicates that about one-fourth of child workers gave importance to work because of poverty, 17 per cent said they wanted to earn money and same per cent, opined that it was due to parents' compulsion. Besides these, 15 per cent were not interested in studies, 11 per cent wanted to supplement family income, 9 per cent wanted to learn the work and 6 per cent had no earning member in the family. Thus, it is seen that a number of reasons have been given to prove that work is more important than education. It is clear from the table that majority of the child workers preferred to work, not only because of poor economic condition, of the family, or because they want to earn money, but also because neither the parents nor the children themselves were interested in school education. Both the parents as well as the child workers viewed life from the point of view of present small return without education, rather than future higher (probably) returns after a certain level of education.

Table 7: Cause of child labour

S. No.	Causes of child labour	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
1	Poverty	25	25
2	Earn money	17	42
3	Parent's compulsion	17	59
4	Not interested in studies	15	74
5	Supplement family income	11	85
6	Learn the work	9	94
7	No earning hands	6	100
Total		100	100

Source: Based on field survey 2011

Educational Level of the Family

Education acts as a catalyst for social upliftment enhancing the returns on investments for almost all aspects of developmental efforts, be it population control, health and hygiene, women empowerment or poverty reduction. Data from Table 8 reveals that literacy levels of the parents in the sampled are low. 67 per cent fathers and 79 per cent mothers could neither read nor write. A study of child labour indicates that only 8 per cent fathers and 2 per cent mothers had studied up to primary level, 13 per cent fathers and 5 per cent mothers read or write only.

Table 8: Educational level of the family

S. No.	Educational level	Father		Mother	
		Per-cent-age	Cumulative per-cent-age	Per-cent-age	Cumulative per-cent-age
1	Illiterate	67	67	79	79
2	Read or write only	13	80	5	84
3	Up to primary level	8	88	2	86
4	Dead	12	100	14	100
Total		100	100	100	100

Source: Based on field survey 2011

Occupational Structure of the Family

Parental occupation is a major variable which determines child labour. Majority of the parents of the child labour in Aligarh city are either unemployed or have no permanent occupation. The study reveals that majority of child labour belongs to wage labour families. Seasonal unemployment among the parents of the working children made it difficult to classify their occupation clearly. An analysis of the occupation of the family as shown in Table 9 reveals that all the members in child labour family were employed in low paying occupations, 38 per cent fathers and 14 per cent mothers were labourers and 17 per cent fathers and 5 per cent mothers were vendors. 12 per cent fathers of the child labour worked as rickshaw pullers, 11 per cent as mechanics and 7 per cent collected waste. 15 per cent of the child labour did not have fathers or had unemployed fathers, while 69 per cent mothers were housewives and 14 per cent child labour had no mothers.

Table 9: Occupational structure of the family

S. No.	Occupation	Father		Mother	
		Per-cent-age	Cumulative per-cent-age	Per-cent-age	Cumulative per-cent-age
1	Labourer	38	38	14	14
2	Vendor	17	55	5	19
3	Mechanic	11	66	-	-
4	Rag picker	7	73	8	27
5	Rickshaw puller	12	85	-	-
6	Dead/Unemployed/ House work	15	100	73	100
Total		100	100	100	100

Source: Based on field survey 2011

Size of the Family

The size of household has an important bearing on the determination of economic conditions of the households. Table 10 shows the size of the family in child labour households. Data reveals that the percentage of the family size increases with the increase of the family members. As regards the size of the family, 28 per cent child labour belonged to families with three to five members, 20 per cent has six members in their families while the majority of child labour has seven or more than seven members in their family. The average size of the families was found to be 6.45.

Table 10: Size of the family

S. No.	No. of family members	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
1	Up to 2	3	3
2	3	6	9
3	4	8	17
4	5	14	31
5	6	20	51
6	7 and above	49	100
Total		100	100

Source: Based on field survey 2011

Monthly Income of the Child Labour Family Excluding Child Labour

The economic profile of the families in Table 11 indicates a poor or marginalized status for majority of the families. About half of child labourers reported that the monthly income of their family is extremely insufficient. Out of these, 15 per cent fathers of the child labour are

either dead or unemployed. 23 per cent child labour belongs to the families with a monthly income of less than Rs. 1000 while 9 per cent families earn between Rs. 100 to Rs. 1500. 21 per cent families have monthly income of Rs. 1500-2000 and 14 per cent have Rs. 2000-2500, only 18 per cent families earn more than Rs. 2500 per month.

Table 11: Monthly income of the family

S. No.	Monthly income (in Rs.)	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
1	No income/Father unemployed/Dead	15	15
2	Less than 1000	23	38
3	1000-1500	9	47
4	1500-2000	21	68
5	2000-2500	14	82
6	More than 2500	18	100
Total		100	100

Source: Based on field survey 2011

Contribution Level of Children to Family Income

The findings of the study indicate that child workers' contribution to family income is quite significant. If we consider various income groups of child labour households, we find that children contributing more than half the income to their family. 28 per cent of children contribute 40 to 60 per cent of their family income and one fifth children contribute 60 to 80 per cent of their family income. About one-third of children share up to 20 per cent of their family income, in which about one-fourth of children contribute 20 to 40 % to the total family income. Only 8 per cent children contribute less than 20 per cent income to their family and 21 per cent children share more than 80 per cent to their family income (Table 12).

Table 12: Contribution level among child labour

S. No.	Contribution range	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
1	Below 20%	8	8
2	20-40%	23	31
3	40-60%	28	59
4	60-80%	20	79
5	Above 80 %	21	100
Total		100	100

Source: Based on field survey 2011

CONCLUSION

It is not possible to eradicate child labour without eradicating poverty. The regions where child labour flourish are characterised by inadequate economic growth, poverty, unemployment, over population and lack of basic social services, such as education and health care.

The main cause of child labour is poverty, unemployment, illiteracy of the parents and excess population. Among these, poverty is the primary reason for the existence of child labour and other factors are inter-related to each other. The researcher have observed that poor families have more number of children, so it becomes very difficult for them to survive on the income of only one family member which is quite less. So they make their small children their source of income. They make their children work in factories, shops, household work, even selling items on street. The employers who prefer child workers for many occupations further aggravate this issue. They get a docile or submissive work force of unorganised and non-unionised children who put up with low wages and exploitative conditions. Again juvenile work force is characterised by long working hours in sub-human conditions, very little money and practically no freedom nor any kind of social security.

Child labour in India is a grave and extensive problem. Children under the age of fourteen years are forced to work in various sectors of economy in Aligarh city. Child labour is one of the main components in these unorganised sectors of Aligarh city. Children pay extremely low wages, for which adults refuse to work, while forcing the youngsters to slave under perilous and unhygienic labour conditions. Many of these children are migrant workers, the majority coming from surrounding areas of Aligarh district and Bihar, who are sent away by their families to earn an income to be sent directly home. Thus, children are forced to endure the despicable conditions, as their families depend on their wages.

The situation of the children is desperate. Most work around twelve hours a day, with only small breaks for meals. Ill-nourished, the children are very often fed only minimal staples. The vast majority of migrant child workers who can't return home at night sleep alongside their work place, further inviting sickness and poor health.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Child labour is a significant problem in India. The prevalence of it is shown by the child work participation rates, which are higher in India than in other developing countries. The major determinant of child labour is poverty. Even though children are paid less than adults, whatever income they earn is of benefit to poor families.

In addition to poverty, the lack of adequate and accessible sources of credit forces poor parents to engage their children in the harsher form of child labour - bonded child labour. Some parents also feel that a formal education is not beneficial, and that children learn work skills through labour at a young age. The state of education in India also needs to be improved. High illiteracy and dropout rates are reflective of the inadequacy of the educational system. Poverty plays a role in the ineffectiveness of the educational system. Dropout rates are high because children are forced to work in order to support their families. The attitudes of the people also contribute to the lack of enrolment - parents feel that work develops skills that can be used to earn an income, while education does not help in this matter.

Changing the structure of the workforce and hiring a high number of currently unemployed adults in greatly improved work conditions is only the first step in this lengthy process.

A cycle of poverty is formed and the need for child labour is reborn after every generation. India needs to address the situation by tackling the underlying causes of child labour through governmental policies and the enforcement of these policies. Only then will India succeed in the fight against child labour. In conclusion poverty constraints and income opportunities play important role in the decision to send children to school or to work. Continuation of education for the long run will break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and backwardness and an inclusive process of national development on principles of equity and social justice is established. Therefore, it is one of the obligations of the state to take steps to ensure that every child is in school and that no child is engaged in work.

- ❖ There should be compulsory education to all school aged children because education helps children learn skills that will help them earn a living.
- ❖ The age of children should be amended from 14 years to 16 years.
- ❖ Children should be paid the same wage as adults; this will remove the economic incentive to employ child labourers.
- ❖ Children should be provided with non-formal job oriented education, such that it enhances their skill, which would enable them to shift to more remunerative satisfaction and less hazardous alternative employment.
- ❖ There should be a practical time bound standardization or uniformity programs to eliminate child labour.
- ❖ The legislature should define 'child labour' and thereby remove the confusion regarding the scope of child labour.
- ❖ The constitution should cast a duty on the guardian to send the child to school.
- ❖ Not only government but also every citizen takes to responsibility to give financial support to every economically poor family.

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