

Literacy-Attempt for the Child Labour

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Abstract – Literacy is the basis for lifelong learning. It empowers individuals, communities and improves the quality of life. Literacy helps to reduce infant mortality, curb population growth, eradicate poverty, reduce gender disparity and ensure sustainable development, peace & harmony. The Constitution (Article 21A) made it obligatory for the government to provide free and compulsory education to all children till the age of 14 years. The RTE ACT-2009 has made a historic moment for the children of India. But miles to go to make the UEE a reality. The target year of SSA to reach the goal is 2015 which would hardly be achieved. Still today one in five children leaves school before reaching grade 5 and almost one-third before reaching grade 8. The ILO has recently estimated that some 217.7 million children ages 5 to 17 are engaged in child labour around the world. Of these, some 126.3 million are caught in the worst forms of child labour. In India if you take the children up to 14, according to Census-2010, the total number of children in the workforce is 1,26,26,505 - almost the same as previous census of 2001. In spite of utmost efforts why we have failed to reach the disadvantaged section of the society with the formal primary education system? What are the main causes behind the severe problems of illiteracy together with the problem of child labour? Is there any way-out to solve the problem of illiteracy among the child labour? If the parents of the *out of school children* are convinced in such a manner that they can consider expenditure, even on primary education, in terms of time and money, as one kind of *investment*, their attitude towards education may be changed to the positive direction. In such a situation they may send their wards for primary education instead of sending them for work. If the parents are not ready to forgo the scope of earning by their children *separate arrangements for making them literate* may be attempted for those disadvantaged children beyond their normal work time. This may be termed as *Need Based Non-Formal Education*. It is the combination of *preliminary education and simple training side by side*. Training programme for that particular work actually in which they are engaged or they have got interested, will have to be conducted.

Keywords – Child Labour, Main Worker and Marginal Worker, Non Formal Education, RTE-Act, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, Sustainable Development.

I. INTRODUCTION

Literacy is the basis for lifelong learning. It empowers individuals, communities and improves the quality of life. Literacy helps to reduce infant mortality, curb population growth, eradicate poverty, reduce gender disparity and ensure sustainable development, peace & harmony.

The Constitution (Article 21A) made it obligatory for the government to provide free and compulsory education to all children till the age of 14 years. This was to be achieved by 1960. Unfortunately, the target dates have had to be repeatedly extended. The modified education policy

of 1992 further revised the target date by the end of the last century. The target year of SSA to reach the goal is 2015 which would hardly be achieved. The RTE ACT-2009 has made a historic moment for the children of India. But miles to go to make the UEE a reality. The goal continues to be elusive even today. On the other hand though there is an improvement in enrolment, quality aspect of elementary education is still questionable. Even with some commendable efforts one in five children leaves school before reaching grade 5 and almost one-third before reaching grade 8. In its 2002 India Education Report, the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration stated that discrimination continues to obstruct the access of *Dalit* children to education. *Dalit* lagged behind the general population by as much as 15 per cent in literacy. According to UNESCO's Education For All Monitoring Report - 2003, shockingly, one third of the 900 million global illiterates i.e. 300 millions were Indians. The 'Education For All' (EFA) Monitoring Report, released by UNESCO in 2013, cautioned that India is at risk of not achieving the Millennium Development Goal of "universalization of elementary education by 2015. According to this report Gross enrollment rate is still 50 in the world. In the low income countries it is only 17 whereas in East Asia & Pacific 62 and South & West Asia Gross enrollment ratio is not more than 50.

In 2005, UNESCO ranked India, with 35 other countries, in the lowest category. Once again, the UN body said that it's doubtful that India together with 53 other countries will achieve the Education For All goal of 100 per cent enrolment in primary schools by 2015. In the year 2012 Annual Status of Education Report (Rural)—2012 states that still 3.5 % of the children between 6-14 years of age remain out of school in India.

The ILO has recently estimated that some 217.7 million children ages 5 to 17 are engaged in child labour around the world. Of these, some 126.3 million are caught in the worst forms of child labour. Roughly 122.3 million children ages 5 to 14 are economically active in Asia and the Pacific, 49.3 million in Sub-Saharan Africa, 5.7 million in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 13.4 million in other regions. Among working children ages 5 to 14 in the world, 69% are employed in the agricultural sector, 9% are employed in the industrial sector and the remaining 22% are employed in the services sector. With 122.3 million economically active children ages 5 to 14, the Asia and the Pacific region has the highest number of working children worldwide. Many worst forms of child labour are a problem in the region, including child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, bonded child labour, child domestic work, hazardous child labour, and the recruitment and use of children for armed conflict or

drug trafficking. A high tolerance for child labour in many countries and political volatility and conflict in certain others (e.g. Afghanistan, Nepal, Indonesia and Sri Lanka) exacerbate the problem and can hinder the implementation of action against it. In addition, a large number of children in areas affected by the tsunami in Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India are vulnerable to entering child labour.

II. PRESENT CHILD LABOUR SCENARIO IN INDIA

Present-day child labour scenario of India may also be reviewed from the following three tables where category-wise number and percentage of male, female and total number of child labour are given (Table I, II, III). Age specific distribution of the child labour in India is also available in the census report -2010.

Table I: Population of Main workers in Census 2010

All India Main Workers	Male	Female	Total
5-9 yrs	501890	308209	810099
10-14 yrs	3070300	1858116	4928416
15-19 yrs	15098122	5448644	20546766
Total India	18670312	7614969	26285281
% of child labour to total workforce	7.78%	10.47%	8.41%
Total workforce (all ages)	239923441	72708941	312632382

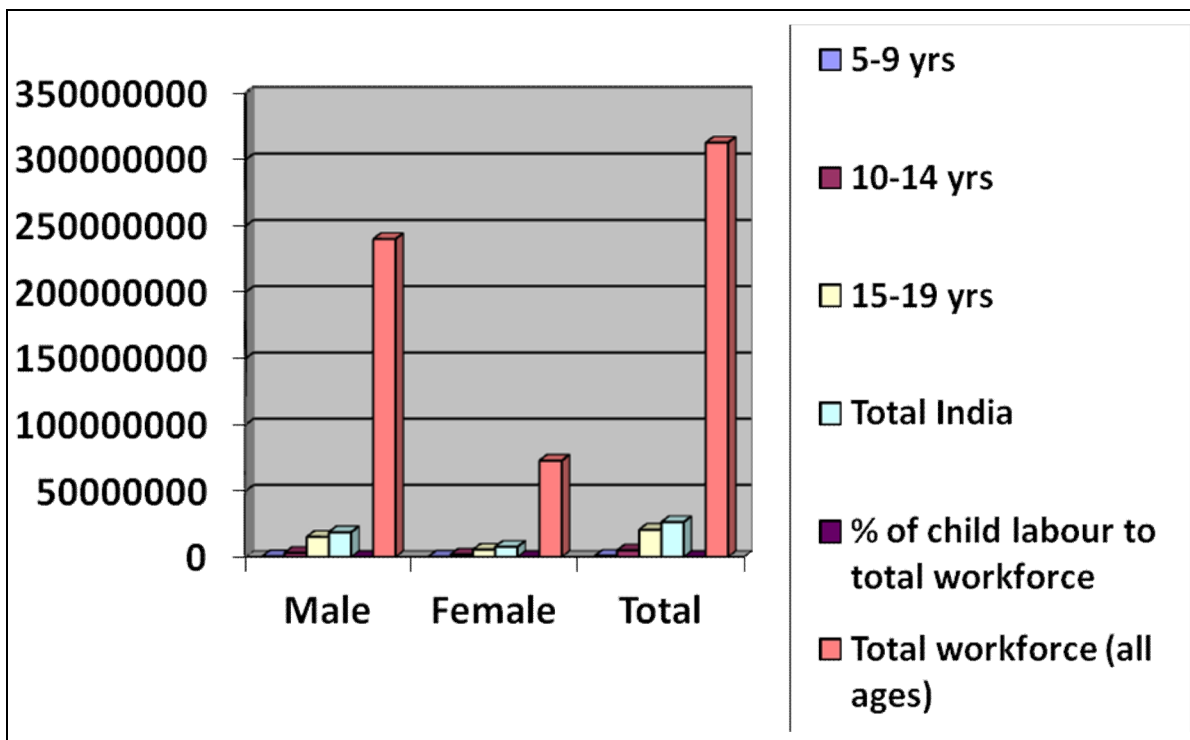


Fig.1. Column diagram of main workforce –male, female & total

Table II: The Census 2010 reports population of children in Marginal Workers of India

All India Marginal Workers	Male	Female	Total
5-9 yrs	495494	534927	1030421
10-14 yrs	2711397	3146172	5857569
15-19 yrs	5821090	5929351	11750441
Total India	9027981	9610450	18638431
% to total workforce	25.90%	17.67%	20.89%
Total workforce (all ages)	34859808	54374298	89234106

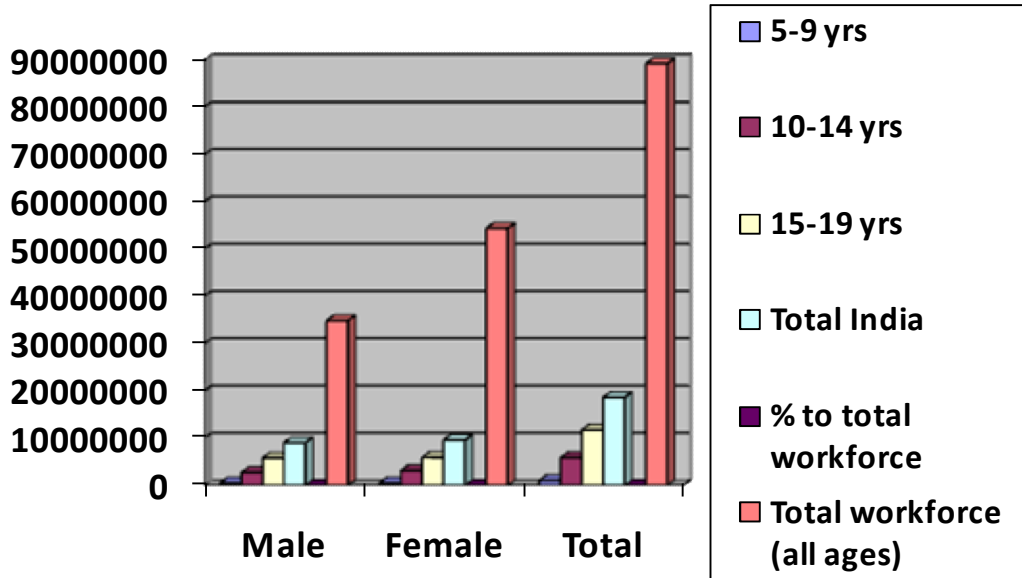


Fig.2. Column diagram showing Population of Children in Marginal Workers

Lets us see the picture when both Main workers and Marginal workers are combined which is shown in table-(iii).

Table III: Combined Main workers and Marginal workers

All India Total Workforce	Male	Female	Total
5-9 yrs	997384	843136	1840520
10-14 yrs	5781697	5004288	10785985
15-19 yrs	20919212	11377995	32297207
Total India	27698293	17225419	44923712
% to total workforce	10.08%	13.55%	11.18%
Total workforce (all ages)	274783249	127083239	401866488

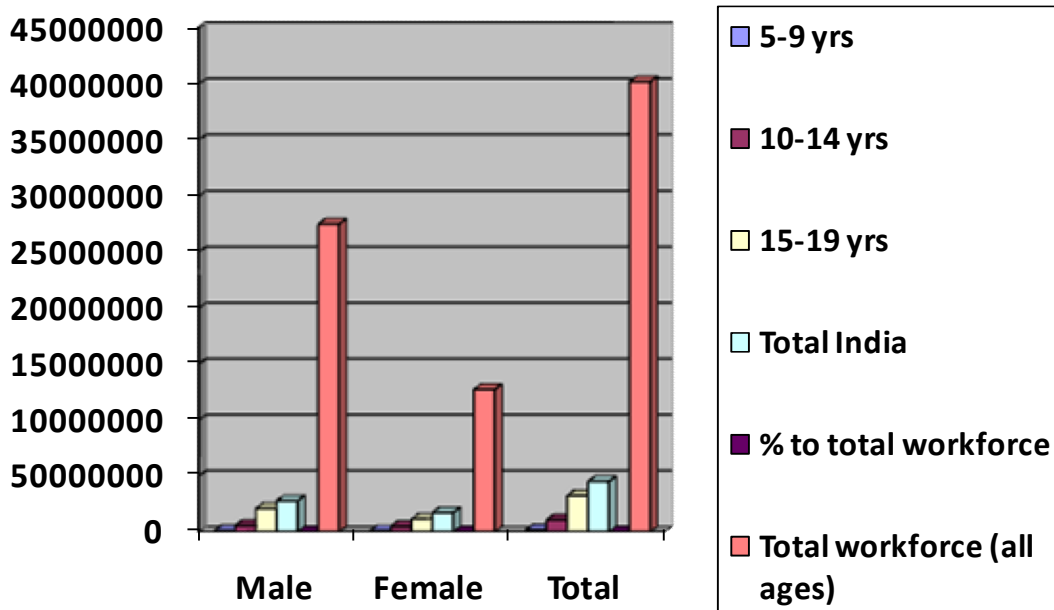


Fig.3. Column Diagram showing both Main workers and Marginal workers (combined)

If you take the children up to 14, the total number of children in the workforce is 1, 26, 26, 505 - almost the same as previous census of 2001. The real picture emerges when you start adding the child work force in the ages 15-19. One could argue that 19 year olds ought to be excluded from the calculation of child labours. However the Census does not, as yet provide that data. However, a detailed analysis of the same shows that vast bulk of 15-19 yr olds have not completed 10th. So, they have been in the workforce before they turned 18. For the sake of discussion we have to include this age group (15-19) in the workforce.

The shocking news is that 11% of the workforce of India is child labour. One in every 10 workers in India is a child! If you allocate a tenth of India's GDP to this share you can see India's Child Labour has a stake in India's GDP. A detailed analysis of the various sectors presented in the census data for both main and marginal workers clearly shows that some sectors are more prone to child labour than others.

III. MAIN CAUSES

In spite of utmost efforts why we have failed to reach the disadvantaged section of the society with the formal primary education system? What are the main causes behind the severe problems of illiteracy?

Keeping in view all other factors, it can be said that one of the main factors responsible for illiteracy lies in poverty. The children of the poor family are to work for maintaining their family from their childhood. Perhaps their parents consider it wastage of time and money to send their wards to school instead of sending them to work for earning whatever little amount it may be. Their attitudes towards education is negative. As a result those children remain out of school with or without enrolment.

IV. STEPS TAKEN SO FAR

The school system has expanded multifold at all levels during the last five- six decades. Yet it is difficult to conclude that the system has been able to meet the educational needs of all section of the society. Operation Blackboard, Literacy Movement and some other programmes taken so far have yielded some positive results which is not up to the mark. Although promoting education for all, the programme is not designed to provide 'equal' education for all. Much advertised programmes such as the Education Guarantee Scheme, promote parallel systems of education in which less qualified, under paid, local para teachers are replacing trained professional teachers. Compulsory Education Bill, 2003 which follows the 86th amendment to the Constitution making right for all children in the 6-14 age group fundamental right . *The Sarva Shiksha Abhijan (SSA) was designed as the government's flagship programme to achieve universalization of elementary education. But what does one do when the flagship itself is flawed?*

The national programmes of nutritional support to primary education (popularly known as the Mid-Day Meal programme) was launched on 15th August, 1995.

The UPA government has introduced a *cess* of 3 per cent on all central taxes in order to finance the commitment to universal access to quality basic education. All those attempts resulted in improving the literacy rate but those did not yield the desired result so far as the UEE is concerned. *Ultimately we have the RTE- 2009, the effect of which is yet to be assessed.*

V. STEPS MAY BE TAKEN

If the parents of the *out of school children* are convinced in such a manner that they can consider expenditure even on primary education, in terms of time and money, as one kind of *investment*, their attitude towards education may be changed to the positive direction. In that case they may be interested even in primary education. And only when the poor parent's old thoughts & ideas about primary education is changed then they may send their wards for primary education instead of sending them for work . If the parents are not ready to forgo the scope of earning by their children *separate arrangements* may be made for those disadvantaged children beyond their normal work time .This may be termed as *Need Based Non-Formal Education. It is the combination of primary education and simple training side by side. Training for that work actually in which they are engaged or they have got interested, will have to be conducted.*

VI. EXPLANATION

The controversy about whether expenditure on education is or is not investment may still be unsettled, but the belief in what Professor Kindleberger and some other economists have said about the importance of education to economic development is now fairly widespread. It is estimated that for a number of countries having such divergent backgrounds as house of Chief, United Arab Republic and Ivory Coast on the one side and United States, U.S.S.R., United Kingdom, France and Denmark on the other, only about 1/5th to 2/5th of the annual increment in the national product may be contributed by investment in the traditional factors of production namely, land and capital. This means that investment in non-traditional factors (and education would be, perhaps, the most important one in this group) contributes something between 3/5th to 4/5th of the additional annual flow of output in these countries. One would, therefore, not be unjustified in supposing that education, by and large, is an investment rather than consumption. For example: Amount of investment in education is a major contributor to the long period growth in the U.S. economy (more than half). Primary enrolment rate alone had positive (2.66) and significant contributor to growth of per capita income in South Korea between 1960 to 1985.(Ref : Dani Rodrik : The Economy of Asia 1952-1988). This happens because there is positive externality of education.

How does externality work?

- Transaction cost would be lower.
- Efficiency of Household Economy Increases.
- Better community health and life expectancy.
- Wider political and community participation (as a result economic efficiency of a country increases)
- Capital becomes more productive.
- Labour becomes skilled and quality improves leading to a rise in its productivity.

This is reflected in total factor productivity growth which was high in the U.S.A. In our case, it can be shown that *Need Based Non Formal Education* would be treated as an investment for the Economically disadvantaged section of the community which may be helpful for their livelihood in future. Through an operational project it can be shown that the parents of the economically disadvantaged children may be motivated and express their interests towards the *Need Based Non-Formal Education*.

VII. NEED BASED NON FORMAL EDUCATION

It is the Non-Formal Education organized on the basis of the NEEDS of the illiterate children who are presently at work instead of joining the formal schooling -these children may also be termed as illiterate child- labour. Need Based Non-Formal Education is a combination of *primary education* and *simple training* side by side. Training for that work actually in which they are engaged or they have got interested, will have to be conducted.

Though Non-Formal Education (NFE) occupies a special place in the achievement of target of Education For All (EFA) as because the system offers the remedy for the weaknesses of the formal system of education. But the problem of drop-outs caused by the formal system and stagnation in the same class is a great hurdle in the way of Universalized Elementary Education (UEE).

In this circumstances Non-Formal Education system with some modifications (Need Based Non-Formal Education) may contribute to reach the goal of EFA .

The huge number of children remains out of school mainly because their parents are not in a position to expect return from primary education. If it is possible to ensure that even primary education (Need Based Non-Formal Education) would pay them in future, then it may be possible to change the attitude of the poor parents and make their children literate which will lead to formation of Human Capital in near future.

VIII. OPERATIONAL PROJECT

An alternative literacy attempt for the child-labour may be made through Need Based Non-Formal Education. This is a simple combination of primary education & simple training for the poor non school-going children simultaneously. The children of the poor parents who remain out of school mainly engage themselves in the following fields for work :

- Join agriculture sector either as family labour or hired labour.

- Act as Bidi Labour.
- Brick-field Labour.
- Motor Garage Labour.
- Cycle Garage Labour.
- Labour in some other agro-based cottage-industries viz. Poultry, Pigary, Gotary, Bee Keeping etc.
- Labour in hotel or restaurant and some other shops.
- Labour in local non-agro-based cottage industries viz- Comb Industries, Paper Plate making, garments, footwear, carpet weaving, gem polishing, match works, lock making etc.
- others

IX. OUR TASK WOULD BE

- to identify the main sectors where they are being engaged floatingly or by chance.
- to choose any one sector from our own locality.
- to have talk to the guardians of the child labour.
- to convince the guardians towards the Need Based Non-Formal Education.
- to collect the children at a particular place beyond their work time. (after the guardians being convinced).
- to prepare instructional materials and plan for their education and training side by side. (training for that work actually for which they have got interested or any way they are engaged in , will have to be conducted).
- to make them literate (as consumption aspect) and trained (as investment aspect) simultaneously for several years .

Since it is a literacy attempt very simple things are to be included in the instructional materials. Every time when the child labours are assembled in a particular place ,say, local school building or club building ,simple language ,simple arithmetic etc are to be practiced for some times . For remaining times they may be provided with the theoretical knowledge of the same work for which they have got interested and are engaged presently .Practical part of the training may be conducted in the same work-field where they are actually engaged .

The whole attempt should be made to reach the goal of literacy for the economically disadvantaged children on the one hand and SELF EMPLOYMENT in future through primary education and training for several years. Through this literacy attempt the newly literate child , now grown up and trained, can also claim legitimate wage for his service in the same spot of work where they did not get wage at all before joining this NBNFE . The local school building and local experts available may be utilized for the education and training purposes.

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