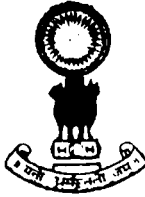


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## **Foreword**

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WE LIVE in the world where affluence and poverty coexist. In countries which are afflicted by poverty, we also see large scale illiteracy. Poverty and illiteracy seem to be constant companions. The poor find it difficult to send their young ones to school not only because they cannot afford the cost of education, but also because they can ill afford to lose an earning hand. Children are, therefore, forced to work in dingy factories and at the residences of the affluent few. The children of the unfortunate poor, dressed in tattered clothing and crying of hunger, work in houses where there is a vulgar display of riches. Writ large on their faces is the obvious question - why this injustice ? National and International agencies cry hoarse for the elimination of child labour and a plethora of laws are enacted by different countries to avoid child abuse, yet child labour and child abuse persist because we are trapped in a vicious circle. Unless poverty is eradicated, parents of the poor cannot afford to send their wards to school and unless there is education, poverty will continue to afflict the unfortunate families. It is then surprising that the population of street children is ever on the increase.

Unless the world community takes effective steps to break the vicious cycle and provide incentives to parents of the poor to send their wards to school, the malady will continue. One way of providing the required incentive is to set up institutions where traditional education is dovetailed with vocational training centres where the wards of the poor can learn and earn and also receive mid-day meals.

The time for platitudes has long since passed. It is now time to take concrete steps to prevent exploitation of children. The national and international agencies must work together, in a concerted manner, to eliminate the exploitation of children the world over, particularly in poor countries by providing them financial assistance to overcome this great human problem.

In India the population of street children is very large. Poverty and illiteracy are the main causes for a sizeable number of the young ones spending their valuable time on streets, in dingy factories or at the residences of the affluent. Because of poverty and misplaced notions, the drop-out ratio is high, more particularly in the case of the girl child. The problem cannot be solved unless we are able to send the young ones to schools. Free and compulsory education with incentive schemes of the type mentioned may perhaps be the answer. There should be a greater emphasis on educating a girl child for the simple reason that if the mother is educated, she can be



entrusted to see that her children are educated.

The miseries of the poor will only get aggravated if affluent countries ban import of goods manufactured through child labour. That is no solution to the problem. On the contrary, the affluent countries must try to lend economic assistance to poor countries to support their incentive schemes which would attract the child to school and encourage parents to send their wards to school.

Environment and health are inter-related. Clean environment without pollutants is the surest guarantee for a healthy nation. Unfortunately the attitude of a modern man towards ecology has been of thoughtless exploitation for personal gains. His greed blinds him to the fact that he is playing with the lives of his own children and grandchildren. Development at the cost of the environment has to be shunned. Since saving the planet from pollution and its adverse effects should be the concern of the human race, we must strive for eco-friendly development. If we care for our children, we must take every possible precaution to ensure a clean and healthy environment. Children of the poor who are generally under-nourished become easy prey to diseases caused by a polluted environment. Laws alone cannot help, what is necessary is public awareness - a concern for the next generation.

Economic upliftment of the poor can alone bring down the child mortality rate in poor countries. Lack of financial support is the main reason for inadequate health-care schemes and malnutrition. Not many developing countries are able to meet the cost for health-care services for the children of the poor. This is all the more pronounced in rural areas because of the low literacy levels, superstitions and the like. Added to this, environmental pollution has been responsible for causing health problems, it has particularly hit hard the under-nourished child. Environmental degradation and consequential adverse effects on children of the poor, have been responsible for the rise in the infant mortality rate.

I am glad this compilation touches all the three aspects bearing on the problems confronting the child. It will provide useful information to those interested in the betterment of the child's future and will hopefully help in formulating the right laws in the fields of human-health, environment and upliftment of the poor masses.

Chief Justice of India

New Delhi  
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