

Rekha DHAR
Pearl Academy, INDIA

“Fashion and Ethics – A perspective on India”

Abstract:

The paper examines the state of child labour laws and practice in the fashion/garment industry in India. It scrutinizes in a hyper active consumption environment the issue by examining the consumer apathy. Drawing parallels from developed economies to analyse how the cycle of evolution moves in favour of the children and how the cycle could be bought forward to save millions of children in India their childhood.

Methodology

The study was exploratory in nature, the areas were consumers of New Delhi region only, and generalisations of the results should be approached with some caution. One on one interviews with consumers across economic strata were conducted to evoke a consideration for social issues in their buying behaviour. Interviews with factory workers were also conducted, (though due to secrecy no pictures or names were allowed to be reproduced). Social organisations workings in this particular field were examined.

Limitations

Due to a ‘socially politically’ incorrect value proposition most people (garment manufacturers, retailers and designers) were unwilling to be drawn into a ‘controversial territory’ – therefore, unwilling partners in discussions.

Value

A large number of forums advocate the potential that exists in the consumption atmosphere in India and the opportunity for growth – seldom do we discuss the issues that surround and sustain this growth (the lack of policy, gaps in awareness and deficient moral values and the horrifying impact it creates). If this diabolic trend is allowed to flourish, it will continue to rob millions of children of the joys of childhood.

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1) The India story : a societal and economic overview

1.1: The Indian social structure: is very closely linked to traditional beliefs. Indian society is multifaceted to an extent perhaps unknown in any other of the world's great civilizations a nation of multifarious groups. The ethnic and linguistic diversity of Indian civilization is more like the diversity of an area as variable as Europe than like that of any other single nation-state.

Access to wealth and power varies considerably, and vast differences in socioeconomic status are evident everywhere. The poor and the wealthy live side by side in urban and rural areas. It is common in city life to see a prosperous, well-fed man or woman chauffeured in a fine car pass gaunt street dwellers huddled beneath burlap shelters along the roadway. In many villages, solid cement houses of landowners rise not far from the flimsy thatched shacks of landless labourers. Even when not so obvious, distinctions of class are found in almost every settlement in India.

Urban-rural differences can be immense in the Indian Society. Nearly 74 percent of India's population dwells in villages, with agriculture providing support for most of these rural residents. In villages, mud-plastered walls ornamented with traditional designs, dusty lanes, herds of grazing cattle, and the songs of birds at sunset provide typical settings for the social lives of most Indians. In India's great cities, however, millions of people live amidst cacophony--roaring vehicles, surging crowds, jammed apartment buildings, busy commercial establishments, loudspeakers blaring movie tunes--while breathing the poisons of industrial and automotive pollution.

1.2: Incredible India!!! A major economic force: More and more has been written about the social and economic turnaround of India. India is piped to be a major economic force by 2025 courtesy BRIC report (Goldman Sachs). The consumer psychology and buyer sentiment has been immensely positive and aggressive. Despite the 'meltdown' – the market remains 'cautious' but optimistic.

Since the introduction of economic liberalization in the early nineties, India today is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. It is ranked 13th most powerful economy in the world. In terms of PPP (purchasing power parity), India is in fact the 4th largest economy in the world. An exceptionally high growth rate in terms of GDP 8%- 9% is slated to continue.

India remains less urban than its counterparts in Asia, but definitions vary.

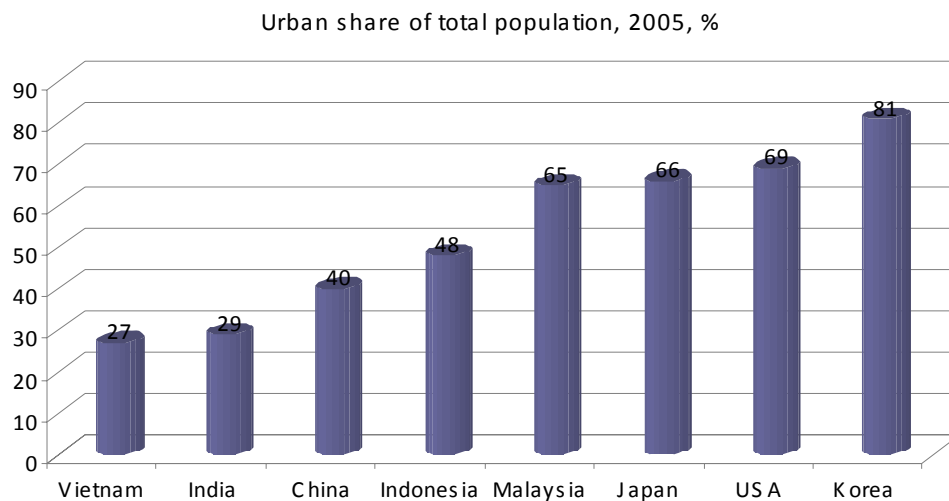


Fig -1 Source: UN World Urbanization Prospect 2005, MGI India Consumer Demand Model V 1.0

India will become the fifth largest consumer market in the world by 2025

Aggregate private consumption, 2005-2025, Billion, \$, 2000

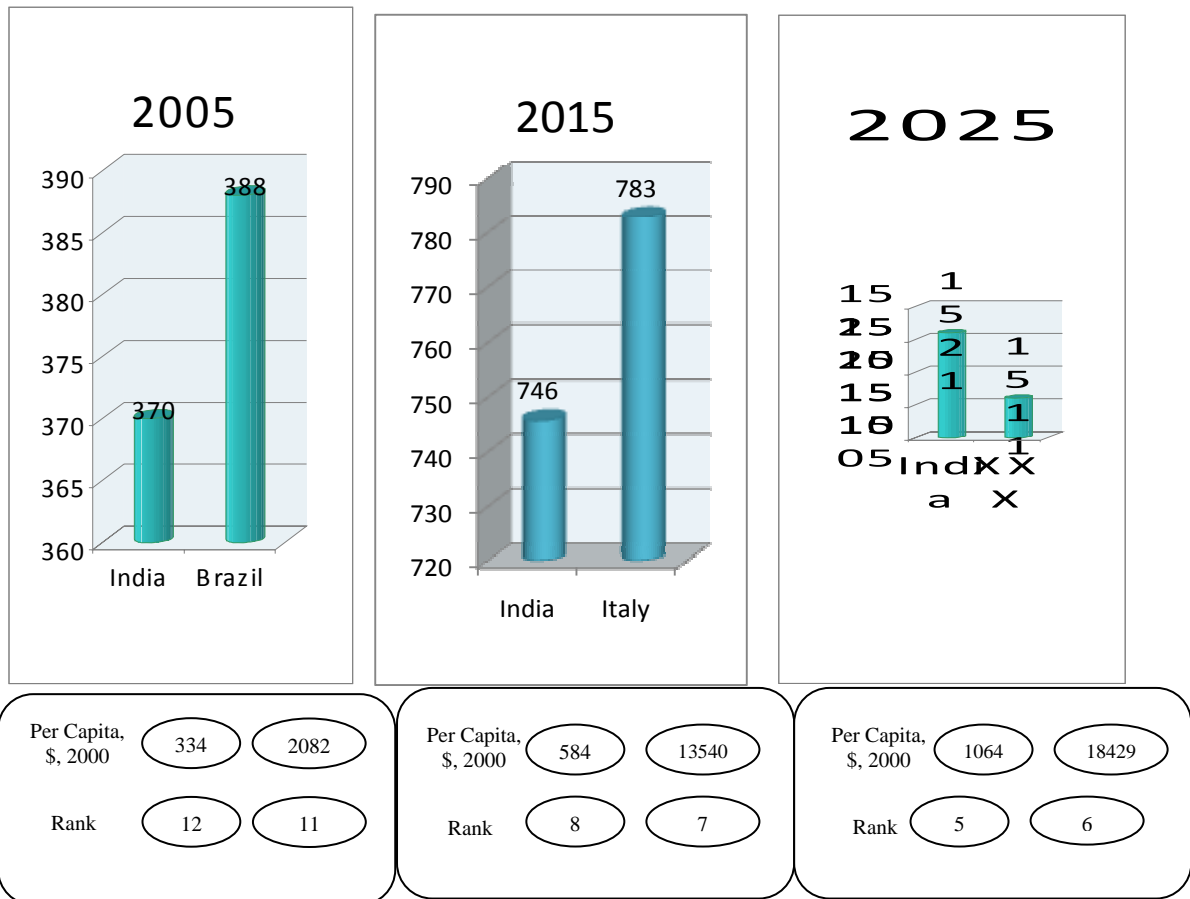


Fig -2. Source: Global Insight; UN Population Division: MGI India Consumer Demand Model V 1.

The sheer size of the population and its fast growing middle class creates a huge market for all kinds of goods and services – delivered in the rapidly developing modern retail environment.

At the same time, India remains relatively poor in terms of the proportions of population in poverty. According to ADB (Asian Development Bank) report, about 35% of the Indians are living on less than Rs.55per day. India is still a country of massive wealth disparities and faces challenges of not maintaining its high economic growth but also of distributing the economic benefits more widely.

1.3 Societal Paradigm: Post independence (60 years +), the regulatory environment in India, pushed heavily into 'self-reliance' gave domestic industry to develop and create a base ready to compete with the west. Licensing rule – starved the industry of competition and created basic –functional values dominating the production and consumption.

The mantra of the 'middle-class' being the acquisition of the basic needs of life "Roti, Kapada aur Makaan" (Food, Clothing & Housing). Brought up on the philosophy of simple living and high thinking – generations brought up on 'rationed' supply of food, transport(waiting list for two wheelers ran into months) and housing(which was a distant dream for all).

While THIS was the story up until the '90's in main-land India, rural India (about 70% of the country), grew and developed with its own pangs of total dependence on Govt. machinery for all its needs. Media too was restricted to Government run Single television channel and radio belting out farmer advice or rationed supply of Bollywood music.

In essence the market of today in India is about 15 years old – in hyperactive mode of consumption, tasting its 'equality with the West' – "Let me enjoy the Good Life..." Replacement models of mobile phone (as an indicator) are down to 7-8 months, buying a flat – age getting nearly halved (from 50 years to 30 years or less) (inference drawn from age of home loan applicants).

The young converts to consumption (demographically and psycho graphically) have been moving at a high speed in every category in the process of discovering their economic freedom. There is a blatant indifference to most social issues including politics, manufacturing processes, ecology or any labour violations. This apathy has roots in two factors – the first , the developed countries have taken many years of process, regulation and awareness to build a strong enough consumer which can uphold 'moral' values of such causes – and boycott products – example *Outrage of consumers about Nike soccer balls coming out of Indonesian sweatshops or the GAP India story..*

Secondly, while being young, emerging economies have no excuse; the apathy has also roots in 'self centred' nature which takes a long drawn campaign to mould into sympathetic appeal this can be due to the **traditional beliefs of the Indians** societal systems.

2) West Side Story :

Let's examine how the developed countries evolved...

The consumer movement was founded on the belief that a customer who buys goods produced in sweatshops is as much at fault as the employer or the owner of that sweatshop. In 1940 Mary Dublin described the league's work as "an expression of the conviction that consumers have a far reaching responsibility to use their buying power and their power as citizens to advance the general welfare of the community".

This National Consumers League has represented the consumers who are concerned about the conditions under which the products have been manufactured for the last ninety eight years, with a simple motto: *to live means to buy, to buy means to have power; to have power means to have duties.*

The League's nearly has one hundred years of experience in fighting sweatshops and child labour underlines some basic truths which are applicable today.

"It is the duty of consumers to find out under what conditions the articles they purchase are produced and distributed and to insist that these conditions shall be wholesome and consistent with a respectable existence on the part of the workers." Josephine Shaw Lowell, founder New York City Consumers League 1891.

The information given above tells us that in the west the idea that people who buy goods (consumers) could have a say as to the conditions under which those goods were produced was born much earlier and this resulted in the passage of laws which helped in fighting child labour, protecting women against exploitation and in making the ideal of the minimum wage a living fact. (Editorial excerpt on NCL from The New York Times, December 9, 1949). This awareness about the *"consumers might have helped people to demand goods produced in ethical manner and boycott the goods produced in the sweatshops thus forcing all the manufacturers to produce their goods in an ethical manner and give their workers good working conditions as well as proper wages for their hard work"*. The work started by the league's nearly one hundred year ago has made a difference and news as below is an example of how this works in the developed countries:

Child sweatshop shame threatens Gap's ethical image" An Observer investigation into children making clothes has shocked the retail giant and may cause it to withdraw apparel ordered for Christmas ref: Dan McDougall The Observer, Sunday 28 October 2007

"The discovery of the sweatshop has the potential to cause major embarrassment for Gap. Last week, a spokesman admitted that children appeared to have been caught up in the production process and rather than risk selling garments made by children it vowed it would withdraw tens of thousands of items identified by The Observer".

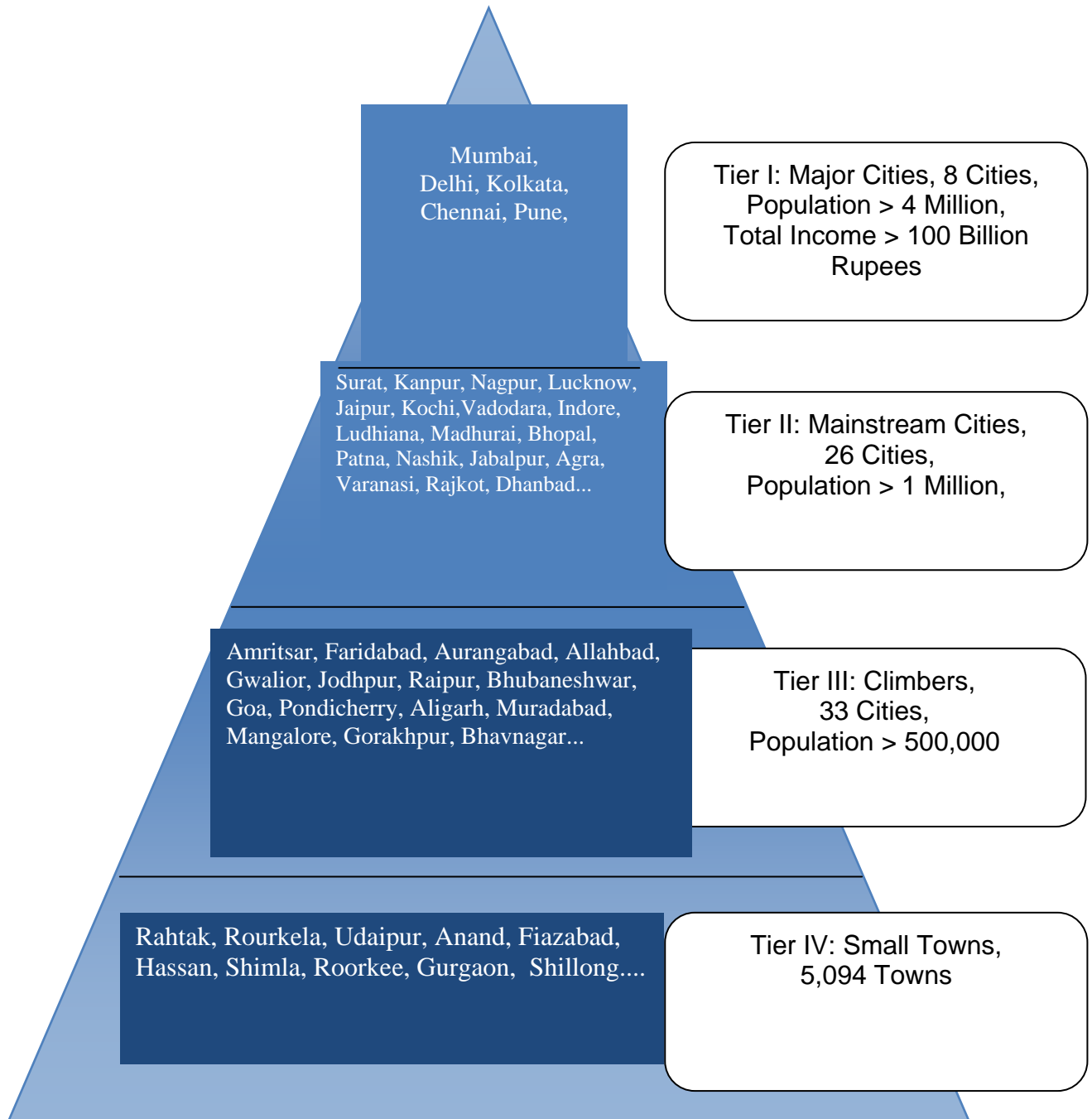
'Employing cheap labour without proper auditing and investigation of your contractor inevitably means children will be used somewhere along the chain. This may not be what they want to hear as they pull off fresh clothes from clean racks in stores but shoppers in the West should be thinking "Why am I only paying £30 for a hand-embroidered top. Who made it for such little cost? Is this top stained with a child's sweat?" The investigation was carried out in partnership with WDR Germany.

3) The Indian perspective:

To know the Indian perspective we have study the growth of *the Indian consumer* and then the *Indian child labour laws*:

3.1) Indian consumer & consumption behaviour: At what price?

Classification of cities & towns



Fg-3 Population for each city estimated using the average urban household size (from MGI Model) & the estimated number of household in each city from NCAER

Source: The Great Indian Middle Class, NCAER, MGI India Consumer Demand Model V 1.0, MGI

3.2: Spending pattern will evolve markedly over the next 20 years

Share of average household consumption, % thousand, Indian Rupees, 2000

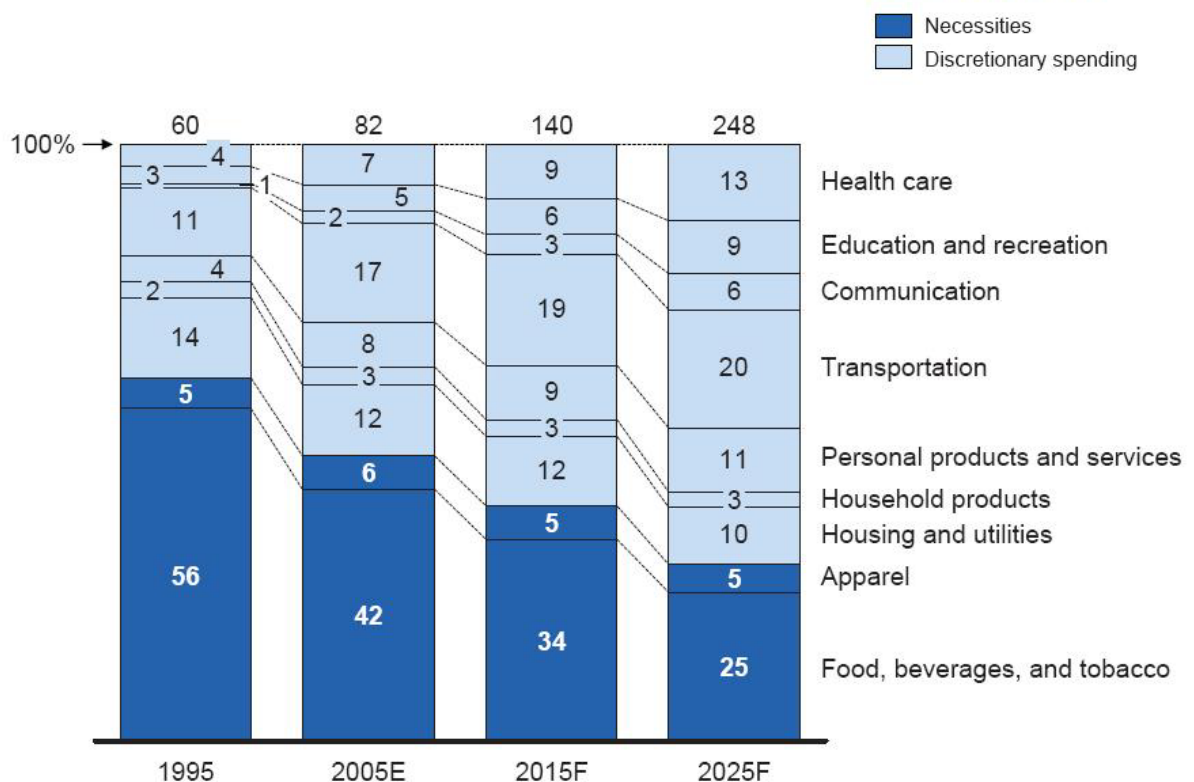


Fig-4 .Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest integer & may not add up to 100%

Source: MGI India Consumer demand Model V 1.0

Fig-3&4, demonstrate the base of consumer spends across town classification and the volume of spends they are going to generate in the future. *With the complex and fluid environment, the re-invention of Indian consumer – has seen dramatic increase in the consumption of apparel.* A key 5% of the share of spends (NCAER fig-1) gives a high impetus to the category. Not only are Indians lapping up clothing brands at high speed – they are constantly on the look-out for *value deals* as the consistent factor which drives their purchase.

With the new found ‘confidence’ and spending power – personality transformation has seen the advent of ‘looking good’ as a key factor of development. *Apparel*

plays the most important role in the wardrobe of this new consumer. Wearing big brands, (the latest in the west better be available here –and right now). Key influencing factors being – media (television, magazines (Vogue, Cosmopolitan, Elle all have India Editions) and movies. Fashion and owning the latest in gadgets – are the primary considerations on parameters of your social and glamour quotient.

In the current scenario the fashion retail industry is booming the brands are growing and are rapidly including accessories, footwear, and home to offer an entire gamut of products besides apparel. The focus of all the brands is to sell , the strategies formulated to sell the maximum .There is no thought spared for anything except to sell and to be the best and first in all areas of selling. There is no thought spared for the ethics in fashion retail industry in India.

3.3) The Indian child labour laws:

Poor children in India begin working at a very young and tender age. Many children have to work to help their families and some families expect their children to continue the family business at a young age. The children begin working at a young age due to economic reasons, doing so allows them to break from some social constraints. Children perform a variety of jobs: some work in embroidery units, brassware factories, make carpets and matches; others work on plantations, or in the home. For boys the type of work is very different because they often work long hours doing hard physical labour outside of the home for very small wages. Children are often exploited and deprived of their rights in India.

Indian government has been taking various initiatives and proactive measures to tackle the menace of child labour in India. The first act relating to child labour was the enactment of children (pledging of labour) act of February 1933. Since then there have been nine different legislations relating to child labour. The government formed the first committee way back in 1979 (Gurupadaswamy committee) to study the problem and to make some recommendations. It found the inextricable connection between child labour and poverty and illiteracy. The committee concluded that as long as poverty continues it would be difficult to eradicate child labour and hence any attempt to abolish it through legal procedures would not be practical. The committee put forward the only alternative available which was to ban child labour in hazardous areas and to regulate the working conditions in other areas.

Based on their recommendations *the child labour (prohibition & regulation) act* was enacted in 1987. The government of India is determined to eradicate child labour in the country. The world's largest child labour elimination program is being implemented at the grass-root level with free primary education targeted for nearly 250 million involving a large number of non-governmental and voluntary organizations. Special investigation cell have been set up to enforce existing laws.

The allocation of the Government of India for the elimination of child labour was \$10 million in 1995 – 1996 & \$16 million in 1996 – 1997 which has been increased to \$ 21 million now.

The Indian constitution has incorporated provisions to secure compulsory universal elementary education as well as labour protection for children. In Article 39 of the directive principles of state policy pledges that “ the state shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing that the health and strength of workers men, women and the tender age of children are not abused, and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength, that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner, and in conditions of freedom and dignity, and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation, and against moral and material abandonment.

Following this commitment and being a party to the UN declaration on the rights of the child 1959, India in 1974 adopted the “*National policy on children*” which reaffirmed the constitutional provisions and stated that “It shall be the policy of the state to provide adequate services to children both before and after birth and through the period of growth to ensure their full physical, mental and social development. The state shall progressively increase the scope of such services so that within a reasonable time all children in the country enjoy optimum conditions for their balanced growth.

On December 2, 1992 India reaffirmed the “Convention on the rights of the child” which came into force in 1990. This implies that India will ensure wide awareness about issues relating to children among the government agencies, implementing agencies, media, judiciary, public and the children themselves. The Indian government endeavours to meet the goals of the convention and to amend all the legislations, policies and schemes in order to meet the standards set in the convention. India is also a signatory to the “World Declaration on Survival, Protection and Development of Children”. A *national plan of action* has been formulated by the department of women and child development under the ministry of human resource development following the commitment made at the world summit.

The child labour (prohibition & regulation) act 1986 of India prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 years in factories, mines, or in any hazardous employment. It also regulates the working conditions of children in any other permitted employment.

Notification banning employment of children below 14 years as domestic servants or in hospitality sector

In the month of July 2006, the Indian Government brought an amendment in the *Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986* banning the employment of children under 14 years of age as domestic servants or servants or in *dhabas* (roadside eateries), restaurants, hotels, motels, teashops, resorts, spas or in other recreational centres, effective from 10 October 2006.

AND THE DARKNESS CONTINUES...

Completely ignorant and oblivious of factors of exploitation that exist behind the scenes- children are employed in factories because their 'nimble' fingers deliver better embroidery a very delicate work involving hand and eye coordination at rates as low as INR 30 per 6 hours versus an adult who gets INR 125 for 6 hours.



The Indian EXPRESS

EXPRESS Newsline

NEW DELHI | TUESDAY | JUNE 7, 2005

29 kids rescued from zari export workshop

AIMAN MUSTAFA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 6

TWENTY-NINE children being forced to work in a zari workshop were rescued today in a raid in Janakpuri, west Delhi.

The raid was organised by the police, Labour Department and an NGO. The police learned about the workshop in Raghunagar after a seven-year-old ran away.

The boy said, "We weren't beaten usually, but after I had a fight with one of the other children, mullaaji beat me. So I ran away and met a hotel owner who asked me if I would work for him and gave me food. Later, when I was taken to the police I told them

A black and white photograph showing a group of children sitting at long tables in a workshop. They appear to be working on embroidery or similar crafts. The room is filled with tables and equipment.

what we were doing."

"We worked for about 20 hours, from 9 am to 3 pm and after our lunch we would work till 3 in the night. For this we got paid Rs 10 per week and Rs 20 per week for senior workers," said 11-year-old Shamshad, who was rescued in the raid.

Most of the children are from Sitamarhi district in Bihar and have been employed for the better part of a year. The workshop mainly produced zari work for export.

Kailash Satyarthi, the director of NGO Bachpan Bachao Andolan said, "We coordinated between the various agencies so that the house could be raided... It's important that the children should be rehabilitated as soon as possible and given good education."

Rustom Ansari, who was also rescued from the workshop, said, "My father is very old and my mother is not alive. I want to study and don't want to go back."

"Though my father sent me to school initially, I wasn't interested in studying, so he had to finally send me to Delhi," said Shamshad.

N.K. Kanojia, the Assistant Labour Commissioner said, "We are going to book the owners Sagbir (singh) and Mohammad Shabbir under the bonded labour laws which have a maximum imprisonment of up to three years is possible." When asked about the buyer of the finished zari work, he said, "We don't know that as of now."

We worked for 20 hours. For this, we got paid Rs 10 per week and Rs 20 a week for 'senior' workers — 12-year-old Shamshad

Freed child labourers try to get on with life

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: About 30 children rescued from a *zari* workshop by an NGO, Bachpan Bachao Andolan, on Monday night have been sent to rehabilitation homes.

The shifting was carried out under the supervision of the sub-divisional magistrate and the labour department. The process of sanctioning rehabilitation benefits to the children, who belonged to Sitamarhi district in Bihar, is under way.

According to Kailash Satyarthi, chairperson of the NGO, "The parents have been informed and they would reach Delhi by Thursday. Since these children have been declared bonded labour, they can avail rehabilitation benefits and stay in Prayas observation homes in Jehangirpuri for six months."

Meanwhile, the rescued children appeared both happy and melancholic. Happy because they would finally bid adieu to the subhuman existence they were subjected to. Sad, because they might be back to their



CAPITAL EXPLOITATION: Children at a Delhi factory that was raided.

village with no meals and electricity.

Explaining the procedures factory contractors adopt for trafficking children into Delhi and Mumbai from poverty-stricken areas, Satyarthi said the employers keep in touch with locals who know the vil-

lagers personally. Taking advantage of their illiteracy and ignorance, the parents are lured into sending their children to bigger cities "to study and earn". Upon reaching the city however, they are made to work 15 hours at a stretch and not paid even a single penny.

Masina Khatoun, a 10-year-old among the rescued lot, said she used to cook meals for everyone there. The beastly behaviour meted out to them is evident from the fact that about 30 children worked, slept and ate in a small room. They usually worked from 9 am to midnight, but didn't get paid anything apart from accommodation and meals.

Munna Ansari, a 16-year-old, said, "I worked for 12 hours a day. As my father does not work, I am the sole earning member of the family." Saddam Hussain, 10, who has studied up to class I, said, "I used to work as an apprentice with a tailor, who beat me everyday. I came to this place, but it turned out to be no better."

Most of these 30 children came to Delhi as either they were the only earning members or could not continue school.

"I was forced to take up a job since there was no teacher in our village. But here I had to work 16 hours a day and was beaten when I made the smallest of mistakes," said 13-year-old Dabba.

130 kids freed from zari units

KAVITA CHOWDHURY
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 7

AT THREE in the afternoon, it's pitch dark in the zari embroidery unit in Pijanji, Kotla Mubarakpur. Around 30 children are huddled over wooden frames, in the light of a few candles. Around 130 of their counterparts from four such units were rescued today but in the rest of Kotla, it's business as usual.

When the *Newsline* team stepped into these units, posing as "boutique buyers", suspicion hung in the air.

Most of these children, the oldest among them not into their teens, are from villages along the Bengal-Bihar border. There are almost 1,000 of them in 500 units in the area, between 30 to 40 of them packed into 12 feet-by-30 feet rooms with no window. From 9 am to midnight, they embroider lehengas, kurtas and salwars, with or without light. And after midnight, the frames are put away so they can sleep on the floor.

The youngest is eight years old. He is ordered to duck under the frame as soon as we start clicking photographs. The



PHOTOGRAPH BY SHARMA



children don't know who they work for, their *seth*. They are generally supervised by older

boys, *karigars*. The only wage they get during their "learning period" of more than two years is a measly Rs 100 per week. Says Umesh, (name changed), all of 10 years: "We eat after work at one in the night. In the afternoon, the *maalik* feeds us. We try and save whatever we can to send home."

"We initiate action when we get a complaint," says DCP (south) Praveer Ranjan. "We are empowered to take action on our own, but you have to realise that we have to coordinate with other

agencies so that we have a place to keep these children."

The NGO 'Bachpan Bachao Andolan' under whose initiative the raid was carried out along with the labour department and local police, say the owners make money both ways, on labour and the product. "Its cheaper for these factory owners to employ these kids. Where they would have to pay a Rs 120 to an adult *karigar*, they get away by paying Rs 20-25 to a kid," says a volunteer. And while the children earn not more than Rs 100, every piece of what they make sells not less for a few hundreds.

The case which was lodged after the raid conducted today, was under the provisions of the Child Labour Act and the Juvenile Justice Act. The NGO is pressing for the Bonded Labour Act to be invoked against the owner.

Rahul, 12, however, doesn't think he's a bonded labourer. He hasn't seen his mother and younger sister for more than a year now but is defiant: "Nobody can stop me from going home whenever I want, once I become a *karigar*."

Excerpts from an article -Fashion's dirty secret: 3p-an-hour child labour

"The campaigners say this is what the fashion industry must do to eradicate child labour. They are calling on designers and high street chains to guarantee that children have not made any part of their clothes, bags and shoes.

The international fashion industry's dirty secret is hidden in hundreds of cramped, dusty workshops on the outskirts of Delhi where an estimated 100,000 children work up to 14 hours a day.

The largely Muslim slums in Delhi's Selampur and Kalakar suburbs could not be more remote from the glamour of the catwalk. In narrow lanes with open sewers, there are hundreds of one-room workshops, in each of which up to 15 children are forced to work long days for less than 3p an hour.

The workshops are filled with children from some of India's poorest states, including Bihar and Jharkhand. In one of 10 workshops visited by The Sunday Times sat Fayaz, who appeared to be no older than eight, and Darinder, who claimed to be 15, but looked 12.

The two boys had been taken out of school in Bihar and brought to Delhi by their families. They were sitting back-to-back on a thin, rough carpet, each stitching tiny, glistening beads into patterns on pink chiffons stretched taut on wooden frames.

They and 11 other children worked from 9am to 9pm, with an hour's lunch break, they said. They have one day off a week. They sleep on the floor beneath the zari frames.

Fayaz has an angelic face but his expression is fearful. He checks the boss is not listening before saying he does not know how old he is. "I earn 300 rupees (£3.50) a week. I miss my friends," he said. "I went to school and I miss it."

According to the anti-slavery Save Childhood campaign, thousands of children receive no pay for the first year until they are "trained". A fashion trade expert who works for the group said: "There are thousands of workshops like these and 90% of them use child labour." Ref: [The Sunday Times](#) **October 15, 2006** **Dean Nelson, Delhi**

Kailash Sathyarthy of the Global March against Child Labour, said: "These children lose their opportunity to enjoy their childhood and they lose their constitutional right to an education. It is contemporary slavery." Babs Mahil, a British-Indian designer who has made embroidered clothes for Tony and Cherie Blair and Richard Branson, urged the British fashion industry to back the campaign. "If you're subcontracting, you should know who you're giving work to," she said.

Though, the above article is dated Oct 2006, sadly speaking the situation has not improved, it remains the same or has become worse.

My focus is the issue of child labour, therefore; to understand the young consumers and their reasons for the apathy towards social issues such as: child labour, human rights, product safety, consumer rights, social compliance ..., the observations and findings are as follows:

4) The author, through a research:

(Respondents indicative number 50, profile – young upwardly mobile consumers), attempted to scratch beneath the surface to understand the basic – level of information and ignorance, the findings paint an obvious picture.

4.1) Findings:

a/ While most respondents are aware of a large section of Indian population being young, are also aware of facts like 14% being below 14 years of age.

b/ Are socially observant enough to see child labour in practice at roadside restaurants, domestic help, manufacturing units in embroidery units etc. this is approved by all respondents as a way of life –‘Destiny’.

c/ Responsible – to the limit that feels that, deprived of the opportunity to work, the children would be in abject poverty and lead an impoverished life.

d/ Feel the need of employment for these young children as a means to ‘feed’ their families.

e/ Shop in organised and unorganised environment.

f/ However, interestingly rate the factor of source of apparel & ethical manufacturing are at the bottom of their considerations while purchasing. design, quality & price being the key factors.

g/ Are the ‘aware’ minority of ethical trading but ignorant practitioners?

This, being the first hand response – is symptomatic of the malice in the social fabric – complete immunity of the issues that surround ethical trading. The fact of the matter is that the Indian consumer has just started to enjoy the extra buck earned and enjoy, therefore, he is totally oblivious of the issue of who is making the product, where is it being made etc. Also, the fact that what he or she were looking at in the magazines of developed countries is available to him here in his country is a great matter of achievement.

This also is the deep root of the issue i.e. –poverty, whereby, a justification is granted to the cause of poverty combatant – “if they don’t work...they will perish...which is worse.”

The child labour continues to exist in India, the question is why? *Why don't the parents educate their children? People are so poor that they cannot survive if their children went to school?* Most of the parents **do not see the usefulness of education - for a reason** that their children will *not* get a job even if they were educated .The parents of these children are illiterate, and they do not understand that their kids need to get education. *My maid told me that she knows many jobless graduates. Education, she told me wisely, is of no use. It's a vicious cycle. Lack of skills translates into poverty and poverty forces the parents to place their children in small sweatshops to earn the living.*

The main cause as I see is the large families .The population control drive has not been so effective in India, some religions observed in India propagate “it to be a crime to control the natural process of birth , – the common strong belief is God’s will”. Hence, the numbers will keep increasing.....

The numbers will keep increasing, and so will the child labour and the exploitation. *What hurts is the response of “most of the well read bred and well placed Indian in the apparel industry and outside strongly believe that these kids have no other option they have to work or should work to survive”. The uneducated workers & the manufacturers say that the developed countries are making unnecessary noise and to adhere to a strict code of conduct is just an additional burden on us. If I do not hire this child some else would.*

In an instance on Indian popular channel had very well known world renowned Indian designer justifying herself by saying that the children she gives the embroidery work will learn some skills and earn for themselves and did not think it was wrong to do so.

I do not see the light of hope, but of course I see a ray of light emerging, the fact that the developed countries too, took a long time to get the consumer together and significantly influenced to get these efforts culminate into 1938’s Fair Labour Standards Act. The leagues’ nearly one hundred years of experience in fighting sweatshops and child labour underscores some basic truths which are applicable today.

4.2) How do we do it? In India people still are not fully aware of the consumers might. Even though there are many people who are concerned about the child labour problem and there are various NGOs fighting the problem, a collective consumer effort is missing.

The government has made the policies and laws which are the back-end enforcement tools, **how to make these policies effective so that the exploitation of child labour does not happen** – the true enforcers would be the consumers who can put pressure and effect the change.

It is true that **most** consumers **do not** have the basic awareness of ‘a clean garment’ – do not understand the pitfalls of rampant exploitation of fellow human

beings, especially children. Moral up righteousness in the form of activist form – from consumers to put pressure can be only be evoked through a sustained campaign of the ills of background of manufacturing.

The key to any movement to change consumer perceptions and acceptance lies in a very ***strong awareness campaign*** against the '***unethical manufacturing***' of garments – the plight of the innocent millions needs to strongly brought about in a holistic campaign which combines the forces of all stakeholders in the system.

A social campaign will be a complete cycle of reforms to be brought into place to abolish the evil of child labour in garment manufacturing. This has to be strongly led by the awareness of such a practice to the consumer fore-front. Highlighting, brands that follow the practice and thereby become – 'clean' to buy.

The campaign needs to bring to the front the fact that if consumers can transfer their power to such a cause and be morally responsible – they can affect change in the system of manufacturing and retailing.

To bring this into practice we need to create a proper ecosystem that creates awareness- across main stakeholders, effects policy creation – against and for alternate sustenance of workers. The ecosystem of eradication as shown in fig -5 is a suggestion and a path that would lead to the movement to restore childhood to millions who suffer quietly, ***destined to be born*** and to earn as children to feed their large families.

4.3) Ecosystem of Eradication



Fig- 5

5) Remedial Suggestions:

- Labels should mention clearly whether child labour has been employed in the production of the garment. This would strike at the source of the problem and act as a deterrent.
- Striking at the root will discourage the poor to take up the course of menial jobs to fight poverty and avail of educational facilities provided to them free of cost.
- Punishment models for parents who see children as easy meal tickets and produce, as many as possible, children to increase the hands for earning.

- Stronger associations like Ethical trading, Fair trade, Rugmark, No sweat shop, should embrace the cause and spread world wide condemnation. There should be a boycott of buying products from the brands who do not comply with the code of conduct laid by the government. Constant monitoring and inspection should be conducted by the garment retailers.
- The Retailers should be made to sign a contract stating very specifically that the goods are not made in a sweatshop i.e. no child labour, forced labour, wages and benefits, hours of work, worker rights, and the health and safety.
- The West should not turn a blind eye towards the origin of the apparel and insist that a manufacturer is responsible for his sub contractors too (as often the price and over booking leads to getting work done from the small time contractor) .The contractors if used should be compliant with codes of conduct.

6) Conclusion & Limitations:

The author through this paper has attempted to bring to light the exploitation of the child labour. For social and economic reasons, has also attempted to highlight the current apathy of consumers towards such issues and the danger of letting – such issues take their own course in development and the harm that it would cause to generations.

To create an effective awareness campaign which will make the moral might of consumers be used in a constructive manner and make happy clean garments and children.

The author has worked with many International companies, one of them being Gap Inc. Sri Lanka and was actively involved in ensuring the vendor compliance for all the suppliers and making sure the code of conduct laid down by the company is followed &also the laws of the nation are adhered with. Therefore, the author has a strong belief that if determined to succeed there would definitely is a way .On the other hand the author has also worked with a number of European brands who not in the same league as Gap is, they do not have a strict code of compliance and many do not have any, for these international and Indian brands the suppliers exploit all kinds of labour to the get the best price!!!The irony is that there is no NGO who target these companies

7) Bibliography

- 1) National Council of Applied Research (NCAER) of India
- 2) Web Research
- 3) Bachpan Bachao Andolan (a NGO) involved in eradication of child labour
- 4) Appendix of 'child in India' – Smile – NGO in rehabilitation of children
- 5) Indian Society page -1995
- 6) NCL research : Apparel Industry Code of conduct : A consumer prospective on Social responsibility

Appendix: Definition of a Child in India

1/As per the child rights charter, a universal definition of "**child**" includes all persons under the age of 18.

2/40% of India's population is below the age of 18 years which at 400 million is the world's largest child population.

3/Few pictures taken by the author herself:



