

29-07-2005 - Further discussion on Abolition of Child Labour Bill, 2005 moved by Shri Iqbal Ahmed Saradgi on 13 May, 2005

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The House shall now take up Item No.43. When the House was adjourned last time, Shri Chandrappan was on his legs. I would request him to continue his speech.

Sir, I was speaking about the seriousness of the problem of child labour in our country. It is a very painful fact when we know that one-fourth of the child labour in the entire world is in India. That is the magnitude of the problem. Of course, it is a problem very much related to the socio-economic situation in the country.

It is because child labour is a reflection of poverty. The poor people who cannot make both ends meet, they think that their children also should make some earning so that they could lead a little better life. They do not think in terms of sending their children to school. Instead, they send them to work. If such a situation continues, this problem cannot find a solution. So, our approach should be treating it as a very important socio-economic problem and then trying to find remedy from that level so that these children are helped and they will go to schools and *Balwadis*.

There is no dearth of laws. Even our Constitution says that children from 5 years to 14 years of age should be provided compulsory education. That is the fundamental law. There are so many other laws speaking about how bad child labour is and how we will find the solution. But the problem is that it persists with us. As you know, these children are working in very dangerous occupations. They work in factories that make crackers, salt, kilns, gem polishing, agriculture, carpet making etc. They also work in most of the traditional industries. So, how to find a solution to this gigantic problem is the concern of the House when we are discussing this problem.

Now I have a few suggestions in this regard. One is that there are so many schemes under implementation. If you examine those schemes how they are being implemented, it is found that very tardy implementation is taking place. There is no sense of urgency. There is no concern that this country has to find a solution to this problem. That attitude should change. That is the first thing. If that attitude is changed that means the promise that we made to ourselves, to this country and to this House that by the end of the Tenth Five Year Plan we will find a solution to this malady and if we are serious about it, then we will have to provide more funds. We have to do this with a great sense of urgency. But that approach is not seen either from the Central Government or from the State Governments. We have to change our attitude.

As regards the legislation about child labour which are preventing it, discouraging it and threatening punishment and all that, if need be, they should be given more teeth. I do not say that more laws are required. Rather than giving teeth and introducing more legislation, there should be a political will at every level to ensure that these laws are implemented properly. Some assurance should come. This House should express itself that the concerned legislation will be implemented. I think now the style of implementation should also change. We have Panchayati Raj system. There are three-tier Panchayats. If we ask them to play a role in creating awareness among the masses that this malady should find a solution, that will go a long way in sending the message to the people.

Secondly, it is not only a question of reaching the message to the people, but the Centre as well as the States also will have to find enough resources so that the problem could be solved by providing sufficient financial support.

The earning of the child becomes an important part in conditions of poverty, especially in most backward regions and amongst the most backward section of our population. Take for example the fishermen community. They live in the coastal regions. The children of this community are engaged in various types work relating to fishing. It so happens because they are poor. They should be supported. Then let us take the case of entire north India, the Hindi speaking States, this is one area, if you consider it as one unit of the country, then you would find that most people are backward and illiterate here and child labour is in pre dominant in this part of the country. Special emphasis should be given and special efforts should be made by the Government in these States to find a solution to this problem.

Sir, I mentioned about the fishermen community and also about the Hindi speaking States. Generally speaking, amongst the Muslim community you would find that there is a lot of child labour. Poor in that community should be given sufficient support so that the children belonging to this community goes to school, rather than to factories. I would think that enough emphasis should be laid on these aspects and programmes in this regard should be implemented with all seriousness. If the Government has the will and the determination to solve this problem, then the Government of India should take the initiative and call a meeting of all political parties in the country and have discussion about how the Government proposes to approach this issue, how they are going to tackle this issue, to what extent financial support could be provided, how programmes meant to check this menace could be implemented speedily. All these things should be discussed at a meeting of all political parties at the national level. After that, the various NGOs and other mass organisations should be asked to carry the message to the people and help in implementation of the programmes meant to check this problem of child labour. With greater support, greater involvement of different sections of the society, greater involvement of the Panchayati Raj institutions and with greater emphasis to tackle the problem where it is more serious like I mentioned about the backward communities and amongst the children of northern India, probably the Government would be able to tackle this problem more effectively than what it is doing at present.

There is an immense possibility that we would get a big support to our effort from international organisations like the ILO. We are probably not approaching them with enough emphasis and projects. Maximum effort should be made to get their support in solving this problem. It is not only the international organisations, apart from the ILO, but there are also other organisations and NGOs who could help the Government in its effort. We should take the support of the NGOs. They could provide the finance. We can get financial support from other countries as well. If all these are amassed and then if that is distributed amongst the weaker sections and they are given the requisite support, then their children would start going to school, rather than going to the factories for work. That would create a condition where we will be able to find a solution to this problem.

I had mentioned about the children belong to the dalit community, tribal community, fishermen community, children belonging to the Muslim community and also children of backward states and regions in the northern India.

Sir, you may not ring the bell. I would not take much time and I am going to conclude soon.

What is that infrastructural support that we will have to provide? If financial assistance is provided and conditions are created for the children to go and study, then they will go to school. We must have many more Anganwadis. The ICDS Scheme should be further extended so that every child will have an Anganwadi in the neighbourhood. If they have it, then they can go and study there. Not only that. Anganwadis should provide more facilities. At the moment they are providing certain facilities. But they should be further strengthened it. They should provide not only mid-day meals, but also nutritious food, education in health and hygiene etc. More primary schools should be set up in places where it is needed. We have to approach it as a socio-economic problem. We will have to find out which are the areas which

are most affected. We have to get international support. We can organise national meeting of political parties, mass organisations and NGOs and spread the message to the people utilising the panchayati raj institutions.

With all this, I think, we will be able to find a solution to this problem. Then, what is required is a time-bound programme and the whole country should be mobilised so that a solution is found to this problem. If the Government agrees with this approach, then I think, we will be able to find out some kind of solution to this problem in the near future. I hope this House will agree with all these proposals. I support the Bill.