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**RELIGIOUS TOURISM AND CHILD LABOUR - A MENACE IN INDIA**

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12670145>

**ABSTRACT**

*The rise in popularity of religious tourism in India results in millions of pilgrims traveling to various holy places around the country each year. A sad reality, on the other hand, lies underneath the allure of the spiritual: religious tourism has a significant impact on the employment of children. This article explores the connection between religious tourism and child labor in India, shedding light on the continuous exploitative practices that occur at pilgrimage sites, religious festivals, and businesses that are associated to these activities, such as hospitality and souvenir production. The complex and multi-faceted phenomenon of child labor in religious tourism is influenced by a number of factors, including socioeconomic factors, cultural norms, and inadequate enforcement of labor laws. Because of the lack of educational opportunities and the prevalence of poverty, children who come from marginalized communities are sometimes coerced into working, which makes them all the more vulnerable. Even though there are international conventions and legislation that are intended to put an end to child labor, it is still a concern in today's society. This is due to deeply ingrained cultural beliefs as well as the financial benefits that come with using youngsters as laborers during the labor process. During the course of its investigation of the effects of child labor in religious tourism, this article sheds light on the ethical problems that are faced by several players, including religious institutions, tour operators, and government authorities. The efforts that have been made to put an end to child labor are also discussed, with a particular focus on the ways in which the public sector, nonprofit organizations, and private businesses need to collaborate in order to enforce existing legislation, increase educational possibilities, and give families that have been affected with alternative means of survival.*

**Keywords:** *Pilgrimage, exploitation, unionisation,, visionaries, deterioration, multifaceted, boycott, vulnerable*

**INTRODUCTION**

As a result of India's long-standing religious tourism sector, the country receives millions of tourists and pilgrims each year who travel to the numerous holy sites and festivals that are located

throughout the country. Not only do the holy cities that are located along the Ganges River and the famous temples that are located in the Himalayas have religious value, but they also serve as economic centers, which means that they generate employment opportunities and generate large amounts of money. On the other hand, the widespread use of child labor casts a shadow over the otherwise spiritual enthusiasm and economic gains that are being brought about.

In the context of religious tourism, the employment of children is a scenario that is both confusing and worrisome. In the hospitality and souvenir industries, as well as at religious festivals and pilgrimage sites, children are used in a variety of different sorts of child labor. They are not given the opportunity to play outside or receive an education, and they are generally required to work unsafe hours for a low wage.

There is a severe problem in India that requires fast and coordinated remedies, and it is caused by the intertwining of child labor and religious tourism. Despite the fact that religious tourism provides a number of individuals with opportunities for economic growth, cultural enrichment, and spiritual fulfillment, the exploitation of children undermines all of these positive features and perpetuates cycles of poverty and inequality. Child labor is a complicated subject, and it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of it in this context. Additionally, it is essential to take into account the fundamental rights of children in addition to the cultural significance of religious traditions.

The Right to Education Act and the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act are two examples of the legislation that India has enacted in the past to tackle the issue of child labor. These efforts have resulted in tremendous progress. Despite this, there are still challenges that stand in the way of growth, such as gaps in implementation, inadequate enforcement, and persisting socioeconomic disparities. The refusal of stakeholders to acknowledge and address the issue of the exploitation of children is a contributing factor in the problem that exists in the sphere of religious tourism, which is where cultural traditions and commercial activities intersect.

Particularly in countries that are not industrialized, such as India, the proliferation of child labor is a serious problem that is among the most urgent issues facing the entirety of the world. The nation is still being put to the test with regard to the problem of workers who are children. Despite the fact that the majority of India's child laborers are employed in a variety of industries, including but not limited to wafer fabrication, precious stone cleaning, cover weaving, glass and bangle making, and so on, the tourism sector is rapidly becoming one of the most lucrative emerging markets in the world. Common labor managers play a crucial role in attracting locals to work in this sector. Based on the findings of the 2014 International Labor Organization (ILO) Global Report, it has been determined that the tourist business has an impact on 218 million children all over the world. In the present moment, India holds the unusual distinction of having a greater number of young people of working age than any other country in the world. On the other hand, studies conducted in India have revealed that the tourism business is a breeding ground for child abuse. These investigations have also unearthed a variety of other social, ecological, and economic repercussions that the tourism sector has on the country. Official figures from India indicate that there are 15 million young people employed in the tourism industry; however, estimates from informal sources range anywhere from 70 million to 90 million such individuals. But at the same time that the benefits of the travel industry are continuously expanding, which is attracting a large number of new businesses, the risks linked with child labor are also substantially increasing. The

circumstances that lead to child labor in India are typically similar and center around concerns like as poverty, a lack of access to quality education, societal rejection, and segment pressure. This is despite the fact that there are both common and unusual forms of child labor in India. In order to protect the most vulnerable workers from hazardous and unpleasant working conditions and to prohibit minors from being compelled to perform work that they find uncomfortable, numerous regulations pertaining to child labor have been implemented. These restrictions have been used to safeguard the most vulnerable workers. Babies are recruited by businesses to work in conditions that are below acceptable standards, for low wages, and for long hours. A number of historic laws have been enacted by the government of India in an effort to put an end to the employment of children. In this study, an attempt will be made to explore and outline the factors that contribute to the prevalence of child labor in India. Not only does the article include a comprehensive analysis of the laws and policies that control child labor in India, but it also covers the regulations that govern the guarantee of child labor in India.

The Indian Constitution, which was ratified on January 26, 1950, is a comprehensive document that lays out the framework that governs the political concepts, methods, and powers of the government, as well as the fundamental rights and obligations of its inhabitants. It was adopted on that day. The Right to Education Act of 2009 and the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986 are two examples of the countless pieces of legislation that have been passed in order to defend and safeguard these rights since their inception. The welfare and development of children in India, as well as the preservation of their rights to education and protection from exploitation, are all protected by these Acts, which play a crucial role in such matters.

#### The Right to Education Act, 2009

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, which is more often referred to as the Right to Education (RTE) Act, was passed into law on August 4, 2009, and it went into effect on April 1, 2010. Children in India between the ages of 6 and 14 were granted the basic right to get an education as a result of this historic law. The key provisions of the Act are as follows:

**Free and Compulsory Education:** It is a requirement of the Act that every child between the ages of six and fourteen years old has the right to receive an education that is both free and mandatory at a neighborhood school until they have completed their primary education.

**Responsibilities of Government and Local Authorities:** In accordance with the Act, it is the responsibility of the relevant government and local authorities to guarantee that every child is provided with an education that is both free and mandatory.

**No Detention Policy:** No kid may be held back, expelled, or made to pass a board examination until they have completed their primary education, as stipulated by the Act.

**School Management Committees (SMCs):** A School Management Committee (SMC) is required to be established under the Act in order to oversee and monitor the running of schools and to guarantee that the requirements of the Act are implemented.

**Infrastructure and Teacher Standards:** The Act establishes requirements for the requisite credentials of instructors, as well as criteria for the infrastructure of schools and the ratio of teachers to students.

**Prohibition of Physical Punishment and Mental Harassment:** It is expressly forbidden by the Act to subject children to physical punishment or mental abuse while they are attended school.

**Inclusive Education:** All children, including those from disadvantaged groups and those with disabilities, are guaranteed equal access to school according to the Act, which places an emphasis on inclusive education.

**Quality Education:** The Act places an emphasis on the significance of receiving a high-quality education and includes provisions for evaluations of student performance that are both ongoing and thorough.

Literacy rates have greatly improved across the country as a direct result of the adoption of the Right to Education Act (RTE Act), which has also led to a large increase in the number of students enrolling in schools. On the other hand, problems like as inadequate infrastructure, a lack of available teachers, and poor educational standards continue to exist and need for ongoing efforts and enhancements.

### The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986

The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, which was passed in 1986, is an important piece of law that was enacted with the purpose of regulating the working conditions of specific organizations and preventing the employment of minors in certain occupations. Amendments were made to the Act in 2016 with the purpose of further strengthening the provisions that prohibit underage labor. These are the most important aspects of the Act:

**Prohibition of Employment of Children:** The Act makes it illegal to employ children less than 14 years old in any role or procedure, regardless of the vocation or process. The employment of minors between the ages of 14 and 18 in potentially dangerous jobs and procedures is likewise prohibited by this law.

**Regulation of Conditions of Work:** The Act governs the working circumstances of children who are employed in activities that are considered to be acceptable. These conditions include the number of hours, the amount of rest, and other welfare measures.

**Punishments for Violations:** The Act prescribes stringent penalties for employers who violate the provisions, including imprisonment and fines.

**Rehabilitation and Welfare of Children:** In order to facilitate the rehabilitation of children who have been rescued from abusive situations, the Act stipulates the establishment of Child and Adolescent Labour Rehabilitation Funds.

**Awareness and Enforcement:** In order to guarantee compliance with the Act and raise public knowledge about the ban of child labor, the Act requires the relevant authorities to carry out periodic surveys and inspections.

**Education and Skill Development:** In order to ensure that children who have been rescued from child labor are able to successfully reintegrate into the educational system, the modified Act places an emphasis on the significance of education and the development of skills.

Child labour continues to be a serious problem in India, despite the rigorous rules that have been put in place. Millions of youngsters are still working in a variety of occupations, and they are frequently working in dangerous situations. For the purpose of eliminating child labor, it is essential to continuously monitor, strictly enforce, and raise awareness among the general public.

### **Constitutional Provisions**

The Constitution of India contains several provisions that underline the commitment to education and the prohibition of child labour. Some of the key provisions include:

Article 21A: Because of this article, which was inserted by the 86th Amendment in 2002, education is now considered a basic right for children between the ages of 6 and 14, and the state is required to offer education that is both free and mandatory.

Article 24: Under this rule, it is forbidden to engage children less than 14 years old in dangerous jobs such as those found in factories, mines, and other similar establishments.

Article 39(e) and (f): It is the responsibility of the state to guarantee that children are not subjected to any form of abuse and that their infancy and youth are safeguarded against exploitation as well as abandonment on both a moral and material level, as stipulated by these provisions of the Directive Principles of State Policy.

Article 45: This article directs the state to endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.

Article 51A(k): This article, which was inserted by the 86th Amendment, places a basic obligation on parents or guardians to offer educational opportunities for their children between the ages of six and fourteen years old.

For the purpose of safeguarding the rights of children in India, these constitutional provisions, in conjunction with the Right to Education Act and the Child Labour Act, constitute a powerful legal framework.

### **Current Data and Challenges**

There are a number of obstacles that must be overcome in order to put these rules into effect, notwithstanding the legal foundation. The most current data indicate that:

school: Although there has been a major improvement in the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in primary school, the dropout rates continue to be high, particularly in populations that are marginalized. There is also cause for worry over the quality of education and the results of learning.

Within the age range of five to fourteen years old, there are around 10.1 million children in India who are employed, as indicated by the statistics from the Census dated 2011. Despite the fact that this is a decrease from the previous years, child labor continues to be a severe issue, particularly in informal sectors such as agriculture, domestic work, and small-scale enterprises.

Resources and Infrastructure: A great number of educational institutions are lacking in fundamental infrastructure, which includes classrooms, restrooms, and drinking water facilities. There are also substantial hurdles, such as a lack of available teachers and the requirement for improved training.

knowledge and Enforcement: The ineffectiveness of these laws is hindered by several factors, including a lack of knowledge among communities and parents on the rights and provisions, as well as by the ineffectiveness of enforcement procedures.

### **The tourism industry and child labour**

Due to the fact that the International Labour Organization (ILO) believes that between 13 and 19 million children are employed in the official tourism industry, it is quite probable that travel companies and travelers themselves benefit from child labor without even being aware of it. They, on the other hand, rarely inquire about who was responsible for cleaning the room, washing the vegetables, or making the craft. Regardless of whether or not we are aware of it, the use of child labor has been a factor in our vacations. Because of the lack of visibility, travellers and businesses are cautious to ask questions about the situation.

On the other side, child sex tourism has garnered a very significant amount of attention and is being vigorously condemned by the vast majority of travel businesses. It makes advantage of the infrastructure that is utilized by the tourism industry and directly involves travelers. When provided with the appropriate data and direction, this demonstrates that travel companies are capable of having a major impact. If we are able to put an end to child labor in all of its forms, including sexual exploitation, then it is only logical that we will also be able to put an end to child labor in the commercial sector.

Because those working in the tourism industry will have a greater understanding of the factors that contribute to child labor and the ways in which it affects their company, they will be better positioned to design solutions. By providing financial support to educational efforts and making certain that individuals working in the tourism sector are compensated fairly for their work, the tourism industry has the ability to make a contribution to the reduction of child labor. However, this tendency is being driven by underlying issues such as poverty and restricted educational opportunities. These are the factors that account for this trend.

### **Types of work children do in tourism**

Even though the tourism industry is dominated by international corporations, the majority of jobs in the industry are held by individuals working for small businesses that are typically operated by families. Small and medium-sized tourist firms are responsible for employing the great majority of people working in the tourism industry. According to the WTTC, this potential number could reach as high as 80 percent. In addition to the fact that many of these jobs are part of the informal sector, the working conditions for these jobs might vary significantly. Generally speaking, work hours are lengthy, jobs are not guaranteed, employment is seasonal, pay are low, unionization and collective bargaining are not allowed, labor rules are frequently violated, and there are few opportunities for training, as stated by the International Labor Organization (2011). Another factor that contributes to the deterioration of the situation is the fact that the workforce is mostly made up of women and is also getting younger.

**Table1: Risk perceptions of child labour in different tourism sectors**

Sectors	Risk Perceptions
Accommodation	High
Catering/food and beverage	High
Excursions/recreational activities/ entertainment industry	High
Tour operating/transport	High
Souvenir production	Low/Medium
Selling of souvenirs	High

The equations demonstrate that children who work in the tourism business are at a significant risk of being sexually exploited and abused, despite the fact that occupations in the tourism industry may not appear to be particularly hazardous at first appearance. Because working in the tourism business often entails direct engagement with adults, even if it is frequently concealed from public view, this is the reason why this is the case. There are a lot of employment that are not very tightly monitored, with the exception of manufacturing jobs, which are simpler for the government and/or the police to keep an eye on.

### **OBJECTIVE**

1. In order to understand the appeal of the tourism sector to children
2. In order to understand how the tourist sector and labor regulations may work together to end the issue of child labor,

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Data Collection:** Secondary data collected from Books, Magazines, Newspapers, Research Articles, Research Journal, E journals, UNWTO Report, Report of Tourism Ministry.

### **Reasons why children work in tourism: push and pull factors**

According to Pluss (1999), there was a rise in the number of children who were contributing to the workforce around the world. "Growing poverty and the lack of educational opportunities in many parts of the world, in addition to the growing pressure of globalization," were the elements that, in her opinion, would have an impact on tourism and were therefore responsible for this surge. She believed that these factors were responsible for the increasing number of tourists. After that, she went on to argue that youngsters were drawn to work in the tourism business because of the low earnings that adults received and the demand for affordable and flexible labor. The cycle of child labor that Stop Child Labour has produced is a clear demonstration of how parents and children get trapped in poverty. This is because child work is directly related to poverty. A 'necessary evil,'

if you will, because a great number of families simply do not have the financial means to send their children to school.



**Figure 1: Cycle of child labour perpetuating poverty**

Maggie Black came to the conclusion that the emphasis placed on "push" causes rather than "pull" factors was connected to the fact that the kid worker is frequently portrayed as a victim. She brought up several very good arguments, such as the fact that not all workplaces mistreat or abuse children, and that young people do volunteer to work in some countries where it is considered socially acceptable for them to do so. For a description of the pull and push factors, please refer to the table that follows.

**Table 2: The push and pull factors**

Push Factor	Pull Factor
Poverty	Quick money
Migration	Contact with foreigners
Trafficking and criminal exploitation	Wide range of job opportunities for young people without education/skills
Exploitation or family distress and/or breakdown at home	



Traditional cultural customs: parents are ok with children working	
Desire to have consumer goods	
Lack of legislation protecting children and ineffective implementation of laws	
Lack of schools, education and training	
Lack of decent work for adults	
Lack of social protection	

The International Labor Organization (ILO) states that because children are "less aware of their rights; less troublesome; more willing to take orders and perform monotonous work; more trustworthy; less likely to steal, and less likely to be absent from work," employers prefer to use children in the tourism industry. This is because children are less likely to be absent from work. It is also suggested that there are a number of other factors. Although it should not come as a surprise, the tourism business is still not known for its high earnings or respectable working conditions.

### **Impact of Child Labour on society**

The sex trade in corporations is responsible for the deaths of over two million children per year. Many of these children are coerced into engaging in prostitution or, in the case of others, are coerced into enrolling in the city to solicit or work for other enterprises. This is done in order to alleviate the financial burdens that they are experiencing. The high danger of direct interaction with both locals and visitors makes children who work in tourism-related activities more susceptible to sexual abuse and the transmission of HIV/AIDS. This is due of the high likelihood that they will interact with both groups. Children can lose their strength and possibly die as a result of working situations that are so deplorable that they include long hours, unreliable labor, low pay, and other similar conditions.

**Table 3: Physical, moral and psychological impact**

Physical	Moral	Psychological
Fatigue from long working hours physical harm (violence, chemicals, abrasions- hazards associated with the work) HIV-AIDS, other sexually	Exposed to drugs, sex, violence exposed to adult behaviours lack of schooling too much independence	Low self-esteem marginalised from society stigmatised and lonely loss of a safe upbringing / childhood stress

### **Impact of Labour laws on Child Labour**

In India and other nations that have not yet industrialized their economies, child labor is a significant issue. The legislature of India has enacted new legislation and taken concrete steps in order to put an end to this issue. Laws pertaining to child labor were enacted in order to safeguard the most vulnerable workers from hazardous and deplorable working circumstances.

It is against the law for anyone under the age of fourteen to be employed, as stated by the legislation.

It was in 1986 when the government made the decision to revise the Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act in an effort to safeguard children from the long-term consequences of working in dangerous conditions and for extended periods of time. In accordance with this statute, a child laborer is defined as an individual who is working while being under the age of 18 in the United States.

In addition, the government of India has acknowledged the National Charter for Children, which was initially published in an Indian newspaper on February 9, 2004, with the purpose of ensuring that children are afforded the right to life, health, nutrition, education, protection from financial and other forms of abuse, the right to be a part of a family, and the opportunity to express themselves. These boycotts are only one of the numerous steps that have already been implemented by both the federal government and state governments to safeguard minors from being abused and from being forced to work. The following is a list of laws that pertain to the placement of children in employment:

- Children [Pledging of Labour] Act (1933)
- Employment of Children Act (1938)
- The Bombay Shop and Establishments Act (1948)
- Child Labour -Prohibition and Regulation Act
- The Indian Factories Act(1948)
- The Motor Transport Labourers Act(1961)
- Bidi and Cigar Labourers (Condition of Employment) Act (1966) State Shops and Establishments Act

Despite the fact that the public authority is employing boycotts as a method to lessen the likelihood of child labor, this approach does not address the fundamental issue that is causing the problem. Despite the fact that efforts are currently being made to reduce poverty, which is the fundamental driver of child labor, genuine recovery cannot take place until the circumstances of neediness and, by extension, the job opportunities available to the family are taken into consideration and addressed. Consequently, in an effort to eliminate child labor, the government of India has enacted regulations that have never been seen before and issued punishments to those responsible for the problem. Experts from the government, social groups, worker's guilds, business visionaries, and a few non-governmental organizations are taking the lead in leading the charge to rescue the youth workforce at both the federal and state levels. In spite of all of these efforts, the general public's viewpoint on the issue of child labor has not altered.

### **Suggestions for Improvement**

It is suggested that the following solutions be implemented in order to overcome these issues and improve the execution of the Right to Education Act and the Child Labour Act:

**Strengthening Infrastructure:** There is a critical need for investments in school infrastructure. Improving the learning environment and lowering the number of students who drop out of school may be accomplished by ensuring that all schools have sufficient classrooms, sanitation facilities, and access to clean drinking water.

**Teacher Training and Recruitment:** It is possible to improve the quality of education by addressing the shortage of teachers through the implementation of enhanced teacher training programs and the implementation of frequent recruiting efforts. Continuous professional development and support for educators are also vital components of the education system.

**Community Awareness Programs:** It is possible to minimize the number of children who drop out of school and the number of children who are employed by raising awareness among communities and parents about the significance of education and the legal measures that prohibit child labor. Concerning this matter, community-based initiatives and campaigns have the potential to play an important role.

**Stricter Enforcement and Monitoring:** Increasing the effectiveness of the mechanisms for law enforcement by conducting routine inspections, increasing the severity of the fines for infractions, and establishing comprehensive monitoring systems will guarantee compliance with the laws. It is also possible to investigate the utilization of technology for monitoring in real time.

**Rehabilitation and Support for Rescued Children:** In order for children who have been rescued from workers to successfully reintegrate into society, it is essential to provide them with extensive rehabilitation and support services. These services should include education, vocational training, and psychological therapy.

**Collaboration with NGOs and Civil Society:** By working together with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and organizations that are part of civil society, it is possible to expand the scope of initiatives that are designed to eliminate child labor and to promote education.

**Policy Reforms and Updates:** It is imperative that these laws and policies undergo periodic reviews and updates in order to address newly emerging difficulties and integrate best practices. This will guarantee that these laws continue to be relevant and effective into the future.

## CONCLUSION

In addition to the requirements of the constitution, the Right to Education Act of 2009 and the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986 come together to provide a comprehensive legal framework that is aimed at protecting the rights of children in India. There are still a number of obstacles to overcome, despite the fact that there has been substantial progress done in terms of lowering child labor and boosting access to school. A united effort on the part of the government, civic society, and the community at large is required in order to address these difficulties. India has the potential to move closer to realizing the constitutional vision of a country in which every child has the opportunity to receive a quality education and grow up free from exploitation. This can be accomplished by strengthening infrastructure, improving teacher training, increasing awareness, ensuring stricter enforcement, and providing comprehensive rehabilitation for children who have been rescued. When it comes to agricultural nations, one of the most significant obstacles that stands in the way of social advancement is the employment of children as laborers.

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It is implied that youngsters in today's society do not have access to the fundamental necessities that were usual when they were younger, and as a result, they yearn for the carefree days of their childhood. It was unanimously agreed upon that legislation alone will not be sufficient to solve the issue of child labor, which has its origins in poverty and a lack of education. The only way to address this issue is through an approach that is comprehensive, multi-faceted, and focused on achieving specific goals. According to the findings of a statistical analysis, the youth problem will not be resolved unless the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil culture workers, and executives from the tourism business together to put an end to it. In order to ensure that the arrangements and enactments are carried out with an exact spirit, it is essential to envisage them.

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