



ROLE OF 'BACHPAN BACHAO ANDOLAN' FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS

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ABSTRACT

Children are not only the future citizens but also the future of the nation. The concept of children's rights emerged in the nineteenth century, when social reformers began advocating protection for children in the workplace. Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) is India's pioneering child rights organisation working towards the elimination of all forms of exploitation against children and for free and compulsory education of all children. It was founded in 1980 by Kailash Satyarthi. BBA has been successful in changing the fate of over 82,000 children rescued from exploitation, in achieving important anti child labour and trafficking laws, and in raising awareness among the public. BBA is playing an important role for protection of child rights.

We should more careful about child's rights because they cannot protect their rights themselves. Children are mentally and physically immature. Children need special safeguards and care. Children are not only the future citizens but also the future of the nation. Biologically, a child is a human being between the stages of birth and puberty. The UN Convention on the Right of the Child defines child as "A human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."¹

The concept of children's rights emerged in the nineteenth century, when social reformers began advocating protection for children in the workplace. At the beginning of the 20th century millions died in the First World War and many more were orphaned by the fighting. The League of Nations was formed after the war. As an inter government organization its aim was to try to protect basic human right standard. Around the same time Eglantyne Jebb, a British teacher, took action. Eglantyne Jebb helped found Save the Children and drafted the Declaration on the Rights of the Child which was subsequently adopted by the League of Nations. This was designed to put pressure on the post war government to protect children's rights.²

In 1924, the League of Nations adopted the Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child. It was the first declaration of the rights of the child. It was a historic day- the first time specific rights for children were recognised. The Fundamental needs of children were summarised in five points. The document discussed the well being of children and recognised their rights to development, assistance, relief and protection.³

In 1948, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Article 25 (2) recognized the need of motherhood and childhood to



“special protection and assistance” and the rights of all children to “special protection”.⁴

On 20 November 1959, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Declaration of the Rights of the Child, based on the structure and contents of the Geneva Declaration original, with ten principles. It marked the first major international consensus on the fundamental principles of children's rights.⁵

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child (commonly abbreviated as the CRC) is a human rights treaty which sets out the civil, political, economics, social, health and cultural rights of children. The UN General Assembly adopted the Convention and opened it for signature on 20 November 1989. It came into force on 2nd September 1990, after it was ratified by the required number of nations. The convention is divided into 54 articles.⁶

Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) is India's pioneering child rights organisation working towards the elimination of all forms of exploitation against children and for free and compulsory education of all children. It was founded in 1980 by Kailash Satyarthi. Kailash Satyarthi is an Indian children's rights and education advocate and an activist against child labour. He was born on 11 January, 1954 in Vidisha, a small town in Madhya Pradesh, a state in India. Even as a child he was a very compassionate individual. His real name is Kailash Sharma. He studied to become an electrical engineer but this profession gave him no satisfaction. While in his twenties, he ditched a lucrative engineering career to work for the welfare of child labourers. He formed the Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA)- literally meaning, 'Save Childhood Movement' in order to create awareness about this widespread evil and to rescue children from the clutches of bonded labour. He has been honored with several awards for his relentless humanitarian work, including the Nobel Peace Prize for 2014 which he shares with the Pakistani activist Malala Yousafzay.⁷

BBA is the pioneer organization of India working to end child labour, child trafficking, and provide free education for all children since 1980. The vision of Bachpan Bachao Andolan is “to create a child friendly society, where all children are free from exploitation and receive free and quality education.” Its focus has centred on ending bonded labour, child labour and human trafficking. It has so far freed 85,000 children from servitude, including bonded labourers, and helped in their successful re-integration, rehabilitation and education. In 1989, BBA formed the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (SACCS), a network of more than 750 civil society organisations who worked to end forced labour in South Asia. BBA has also organised forums against child labour, for example the Parliamentary Forum Against Child Labour in 1992, The Religious Forum Against Child Labour in 1993 and the Trade Union Forum Against Child Labour in 1994. In 1991, it initiated the 'Anti Firecracker campaign' to highlight the plight of young children involved in the manufacturing of fire crackers. It also launched the Fairplay Campaign in 1996, which drew attention to child labour in the manufacturing of sports goods in India. To build public awareness on child labour, BBA has organised several long marches. This included the 5000 km long Indian March Against Child Labour from Kanyakumari to Delhi in 1995, The South Asian March from Calcutta to Kathmandu in 1996 and the 1998 Global March Against Child Labour. The latter was an 80,000 km long March across 103 countries, which saw the impressive participation of 7.2 million children, women and men demanding an international ban on child labour. The Child Labour Free India Campaign Organised by BBA in 2012, was a national campaign, which comprised a series of events and activities and was directed towards the demand for a blanket ban on child labour in the country.⁸



In 2001, BBA organised and led a six months long campaign across India with a 15,000 km long march called the Siksha Yatra. BBA continues to be at the forefront in the fight for free and compulsory education. Recently BBA has assisted the Government of India in defending the constitutional validity of the Rights to Education Act. The Founder of BBA Mr. Kailash Satyarthi was also elected the first chairperson and then the President of the Global Campaign for Education.⁹

BAL MITRA GRAM

BBA Started Bal Mitra Gram (BMG) or Child Friendly village programme in 2001. BMG is an innovative idea of BBA to create model villages in India, which are free from all types of child exploitation and promote child right issues.

A Bal Mitra Gram is a village, where:

- All children are withdrawn from work.
- All Children are enrolled and retained in school.
- Children form a Bal Panchayat (Children's Assembly).
- Children's Assembly gets recognition of Gram Panchayat and they work together on all issues related to children.
- Empowered and developed village community.

This model has been implemented in 400 village in 11 state of India. Girls are the 50 per cent child heads (Bal Sarpanch) of these villages. BMG has developed democratic consciousness in 4000 children in India. It has rescued more than 200,000 children from child labour till now.¹⁰

In 2013 Razia Sultan, one of the children from their child friendly villages, won the first United Nations Malala Award for spreading education among child labourers.¹¹

BBA has filed the first complaint for the missing children of Nithari in 2006 under the assumption that the children were victims of trafficking. BBA pioneered the first consulted effort in the country on the issue of missing children and its linkages with trafficking. The Research established that every six minutes a child goes missing in India and over a 100,000 children go missing in the country each year.¹²

MUKTI ASHRAM

Found in 1991, Mukti Ashram was the first centre in India for rescued bonded laborers. Since 2007, Mukti Ashram has emerged as a model for providing immediate support and access to services for children rescued from child labour and trafficking. In the short-term home, children receive food, clothing, shelter, medical aid, psychological and legal assistance, recreation and everyday care.

BAL ASHRAM

Bal Ashram was established in 1998 and located in Rajasthan. Bal Ashram serves as a long-term rehabilitation and training centre of Bachpan Bachao Andolan that specializes on the needs of victims of child labour. Bal Ashram's main focus lies in providing quality education, vocational training and skill development as well as showing compassion and giving love to the children. Bal Ashram is a place where the children can lead a normal, happy and dignified life. So far over 1,765 children has undergone rehabilitation at Bal Ashram since its inception. In the year April 2012 to March 2013, 80 Children received training in formal education non-formal education, vocational training and personality development at Bal Ashram.

On 7th June 2012, BBA and partner organisation in Karnataka launched a state level campaign under the banner 'Bangalore March for Right to Education'. In March 2013 BBA team in Tirupur, Tamil Nadu launched a three months long campaign called "From work to School" to sensitise people against



child rights violation.¹³

CONCLUSION

BBA became the first organisation in India which highlights the issue of child labour. It has been fighting against serious form of child labour in India for over 30 years. BBA has been successful in changing the fate of over 82,000 children rescued from exploitation, in achieving important anti child labour and trafficking laws, and in raising awareness among the public. BBA is playing an important role for protection of child rights.

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