



Child Labour in Pakistan

A Crime against the Future Generation of this Ummah

Among the various issues faced by the youth of Pakistan, child labour is one of the gravest in nature. Working in unhealthy circumstances at an early age, on low wages and no benefits, a child loses all opportunities of education, good health and an optimum future. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines child labour as:

1. When a child is working during early age.
2. He overworks or gives over to Labour.
3. He works due to psychological, social and materialistic pressure.
4. He becomes ready to labour on a very low pay.

So according to this definition and the definition of child by UNICEF any one below the age of 18 doing any type of work is basically child labour. In Pakistan the ratio of uneducated children has increased steadily over the years as has the percentage of children doing jobs of various kinds. According to the statistics released by International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2014, Pakistan has the world's third largest children workforce. According to a report by ILO, in 2012, around 12.5 million children were involved in child labour while 264,000 were reported in domestic child labour. The Executive Director of the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC), Sadia Hussain said that Pakistan faces the 'worst' form of child labour where workers are subjected to physical and mental torture. The last National Child Labour Survey was conducted in 1996 which estimated the number to be 3.3 million. Therefore, the number of children doing different kinds of jobs have increased tremendously over the years, with there being no credible recent data available, it is only estimated to be more than 12 million children.

Children working on Brick kilns along with their whole families, is another worst form of bonded labour, where the poor people are indebted to the kiln owners and when unable to pay the interest based loan they are literally forced to work there for the rest of their lives. Poverty is the biggest reason for such bonded labour and for all other kinds of child labour too. The government has failed to fulfill the basic necessities of the citizens like food, shelter, clothing, health and education facilities, resulting in the people being forced to send their small children to work so as to earn enough to feed the whole family. There is no state sponsored funding system for the poor, needy and destitute. They are provided neither decent jobs nor equal opportunities as compared to the elite class, who are filthily rich and are getting richer day by day under this Capital Based Capitalist system. According to Asian Development Bank, 12.4% of the population of Pakistan lived under the poverty line in 2015. (<http://www.adb.org/countries/pakistan/poverty>) According to Human Development Report 2009, 60.3% of Pakistan's population lived on under \$1 a day. This is an alarming situation where parents can neither afford to feed their children, nor to educate them or even take care of their health. The situation speaks for itself about the current system of ruling and governance, that is the infamous Capitalism which has forced the young and vulnerable part of the society; the children to take the burden of earning on their shoulders. The whole philosophy of Capitalism and its ideology revolves around making more and more money by any means whatsoever, having disregard for human lives and integrity. The Capitalist economic creed states that it is impossible to fulfill the needs of all human beings on this planet as the needs are unlimited while the resources are limited, and so they state that the stomachs of some people will always remain empty. However, they conveniently forget to acknowledge the raw fact that the world's richest 100 people earned a stunning total of \$240 billion in 2012, which is enough money to end extreme poverty worldwide four times over according to Oxfam, a leading international philanthropy organization. They also fail to distinguish between the basic needs of an individual like food, shelter, education and healthcare and his luxurious needs like cars, mobile phones, computers, air conditioners etc. This mix-up of categorization of needs leads to this erroneous belief that the world resources are not enough. Executive Director of Oxfam International Jeremy Hobbes said that concentration of wealth in the hands of the top few

minimizes economic activity,” From tax havens to weak employment laws, the richest benefit from a global economic system which is rigged in their favour”.

Accordingly, even the Capitalists are accepting the fact that the real reason of poverty is the uneven distribution of wealth. This issue is only solved by the Islamic Economic system, implemented under the ruling system of Khilafah, wherein the state applies the laws given to us by Allah (swt), implementing a unique law of collection of funds and their distribution, i.e. Zakat, Jizya, fay', Kharaj, Ushar and khums etc. Islam strictly forbids interest, usury, hoarding of wealth and taxes like GST, toll tax, wealth tax and income tax. It is haram to privatize public property so there is the public possession of such property as petrol, mines and factories based on such material. This public property is used for the good of all the citizens of the Islamic state (Caliphate) without charging on them any tax or profit. This reduces the price of public utilities like electricity, gas, water and petrol to a bare minimum. These and other Islamic laws make it easy for an individual to earn his basic needs while he is provided opportunities to earn his luxurious needs as much as possible. Also it is the responsibility of the state to provide basic needs to its citizens, a duty from Allah (swt) which they cannot deny in any circumstances. Education and proper health care is also part of the basic needs, the provision of which free of cost is the duty of state too.

Prophet Muhammad (saw) said:

«لَيْسَ لِابْنِ آدَمَ حَقٌّ فِي سِوَى هَذِهِ الْخِصَالِ بَيْتٌ يَسْكُنُهُ وَتَوْبٌ يُؤَارِي عَوْرَتَهُ وَجِلْفٌ الْخُبْزِ وَالْمَاءِ»

“The Son of Adam has no better right than that he would have a house wherein he may live, a piece of clothing whereby he may hide his nakedness and a piece of bread and some water.” [Tirmidhi, Haakim]

Moreover, the state will make sure that the servant of tender age or not, is treated kindly and justly, otherwise the employer is punished by the state. Abu Hurairah (ra) relates that he heard the Messenger of Allah (saw) say:

«مَنْ ضَرَبَ ضَرْبًا ظَلَمًا اقْتَصَّ مِنْهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ»

“Whoever beats the slave or Servant unjustly, revenge will be taken from him on the Day of Judgment.”

During the 1300 years of Khilafah, every child male or female had the opportunity to obtain education and free health care while every newborn received a special stipend from the state as a law implemented by Islam. No child was forced to do a job and the literacy rate was very high. Such was the level of education that every other person was a scholar, scientist or a statesman. Therefore the only way to eradicate child labour is to completely and comprehensively implement the system of Khilafah (Caliphate) upon the method of the Prophethood, that will provide the children and their poor families food, shelter, clothing and education and health care. As during the rule of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, the people wanted to pay Zakah but there was no one to receive it. Expenses of nursing and breeding of the newborn were paid from the treasury, and parents were given allowance for the newborn child. In the beginning, a child was given 100 dirhams per annum, which was increased later on. For the unclaimed children a stipend of 100 dirhams was fixed. Also during the reign of Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, the State Treasury (Bait ul Maal) was used to provide food during serious drought or famines to the people according to the family size, support the poor and disabled, to provide education to the children, to finance marriages of the unmarried poor or needy persons, to grant old age benefits, to give loans for economic activity, for granting Interest-free loans, to pay off the debts of persons under obligation, to pay blood money of doers in involuntary homicide, and to pay stipends to widows, married and unmarried women, young men and the immigrants. When a state takes the responsibility like this, does there remain any chance of injustice towards any one? Accordingly, this is possible only under the just laws of Allah (swt) and never under the manmade systems.

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