



# Empowering Change: Exploring the Role of Childhood Labour in Shaping Indian Women's Political Careers

**Tapan Kumar Sarma**

Assistant Professor, P B Anchalik Mahavidyalaya  
Email - pbac528@gmail.com

**Abstract:** *Childhood labour is a pressing issue in India, where millions of children are forced into various forms of work at a young age. This article delves into the historical context of childhood labour in India, its impact on education and future prospects, and specifically focuses on the role it plays in shaping Indian women's political careers.*

*India has a long history of using children as labourers in a variety of occupations, including household work, manufacturing, and agriculture. Social conventions, ignorance, and poverty all play a part in the continued use of this practise. The International Labour Organisation estimates that 10 million children work in dangerous conditions in India, where there are the most child labourers worldwide.*

**Keywords:** *Labour, Child, Women, Politics, family.*

## 1. Introduction to The Historical context of childhood labour in India :

Childhood labour in India can be traced back to ancient times, where children from marginalized communities were often subjected to exploitative work. The colonial era further exacerbated this problem, as the British Empire exploited child labour for its economic gains. Children were forced to work in plantations, mines, and factories, enduring harsh conditions and depriving them of their right to education and a childhood.

Even after India gained independence, child labour continued to persist due to social and economic factors. Poverty, illiteracy, and lack of opportunities drove families to send their children to work, perpetuating the cycle of poverty from one generation to the next.

## 2. Impact of childhood labour on education and future prospects :

Childhood labour has a detrimental impact on education and future prospects for children. When children are engaged in work at a young age, they are deprived of the opportunity to attend school and acquire essential knowledge and skills. This not only hampers their educational development but also limits their future prospects for better employment and economic mobility.

Furthermore, child labour often leads to physical and mental health issues, as children are exposed to hazardous work environments and denied a proper childhood. The long-term consequences of childhood labour can include stunted growth, reduced cognitive abilities, and limited social and emotional development.

## 3. Childhood labor's influence on women's political careers :

The experience of childhood labour can have a profound impact on shaping women's political careers in India. Many Indian women politicians have emerged from backgrounds of childhood labour, and their experiences have shaped their political ideologies and determination to fight for the rights of marginalized communities.



The resilience and strength developed through surviving childhood labour often drive these women to become advocates for change. They understand firsthand the struggles faced by marginalized communities and are determined to create a more equitable society. Their personal experiences provide them with a unique perspective and fuel their commitment to address issues such as poverty, education, and child rights.

#### **4. Case studies of Indian women politicians who experienced childhood labour :**

Despite having worked as children, some Indian women politicians have achieved success. Mamata Banerjee, the current Chief Minister of West Bengal, is one such example. She was poor growing up and had to labour as a youngster to help support her lower middle class family. Her political career was moulded by her experiences, which also had an impact on the policies she adopted that put the welfare of underprivileged groups first.

Ms. Maneka Gandhi, a well-known politician and animal rights advocate, is another role model. She worked as a child labourer when she was young, which greatly influenced her ability to empathise with and care for others who were less fortunate. She has been a steadfast supporter of children's rights throughout her political career.

#### **5. Challenges faced by women politicians with a background in childhood labour :**

Despite their determination and resilience, women politicians with a background in childhood labour face unique challenges in their political careers. The deep-rooted sexism and discrimination prevalent in Indian society often undermine their credibility and hinder their progress. They encounter biases and stereotypes that question their capabilities and leadership qualities, solely based on their past experiences.

Furthermore, the lack of support systems and resources for women politicians from marginalized backgrounds adds to their challenges. Limited access to financial resources and political networks make it difficult for them to compete on an equal footing with their privileged counterparts. The intersectionality of gender, caste, and economic background further compounds the obstacles they face.

#### **6. Empowering initiatives and policies to address childhood labour :**

The Indian government has adopted several measures and regulations to address the issue of child labour. All children between the ages of 6 and 14 are entitled to free and compulsory education under the Right to Education Act, which was passed in 2009. By enabling access to a top-notch education, this law seeks to raise enrollment rates and decrease child labour. Additionally, the National Policy on Child Labour focuses on the rehabilitation and reintegration of child labourers into mainstream society. It emphasizes the importance of education, vocational training, and social support systems to break the cycle of childhood labour.

Various non-governmental organizations and grassroots initiatives are also working tirelessly to address the issue of childhood labour. They provide educational opportunities, vocational training, and support networks to empower children and their families. These efforts are crucial in ensuring that children affected by childhood labour have a chance to break free from the cycle of poverty and exploitation.

#### **7. Success stories of women politicians who overcame childhood labour :**

Despite the challenges, many women politicians in India have overcome their background in childhood labour and achieved remarkable success. Their stories serve as an inspiration to countless others facing similar circumstances.

Ms. Mayawati, the former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, is a prominent example. Born into a Dalit family and facing discrimination from a young age, she rose to become one of the most influential politicians in the country. Her journey from childhood labour to political leadership is a testament to the power of determination and resilience.



## **8. The importance of education and skill development in breaking the cycle of childhood labour :**

Education and skill development play a crucial role in breaking the cycle of childhood labour. By providing children with access to quality education, they are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to pursue better opportunities in the future. Additionally, vocational training programs can help develop specific skills that can lead to sustainable employment and break the cycle of poverty.

It is essential to prioritize education and skill development for children affected by childhood labour. By investing in their education, we empower them to break free from the confines of poverty and exploitation, and enable them to contribute positively to society.

## **9. Conclusion: The need for continued efforts to empower and support women impacted by childhood labour**

Childhood labour continues to be a pervasive issue in India, with far-reaching consequences for children's education and future prospects. The experiences of women politicians who have overcome childhood labour highlight the need for continued efforts to empower and support those impacted by this practice.

The core causes of child labour, such as poverty, illiteracy, and societal standards, must be addressed. We can enable children and women impacted by child labour to break away from its cycle by putting in place effective legislation, granting access to high-quality education, and fostering supportive surroundings.

Together, we can create a society that values the rights and well-being of every child, ensuring that no child's potential is lost to the clutches of childhood labour.

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