

8th Standard- Social Science

Civics-Law and Social Justice

Enforcement of the law is important to protect the rights of minorities from the majority. In order to ensure the abolition of child labor, the government has to regularly inspect the factories and punish those who violate the law.

Many of these laws have their basis in the Fundamental Rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. For instance, Right against Exploitation:

- According to this right, no one can be forced to work on low wages or under bondage
- No child below the age of 14 years shall be employed in shops, factories or mines.

The EPA (Environment Protection Act), 1986 came into force soon after the Bhopal Gas Tragedy and is considered umbrella legislation as it filled many gaps in the existing laws.

The Environment Protection Act authorizes the central government to protect and improve environmental quality, and control and reduce pollution from all sources. It prohibits or restricts the setting or operation of any industrial facility on environmental grounds.

According to the 2001 census, over 12 million children in India between the age group of 5 and 14 worked in various occupations. In 2006, the Government of India amended the Child Labour Prevention Act.

Minimum Wages Law deals with the wages of the workers, ensuring that they are not underpaid and this is updated every year.

There is also a law to protect the interest of the producers and consumers in the market. So, laws are there to ensure the relationship between the worker, consumer and producer. They are governed in an un-exploitative manner.

Markets tend to be exploitative of people. Therefore the government makes certain laws to protect people from such exploitation. These laws try to check unfair practices in the markets.

Private companies, contractors, etc. in order to make maximum profits might deny workers their rights and not pay them wages.

In this regard, there is a law on minimum wages which ensures that workers are paid fairly.

The government is also keen to protect the interests of producers and consumers in the market. There are also laws for them.

These laws ensure that the relations between the worker, consumer and producer are governed in a manner that is not exploitative.

Well, laws are there to protect various interests. But what is important in this regard is the implementation of these laws. Unless these laws are enforced it will be difficult to protect the weak from the strong.

To ensure that every worker gets fair wages, the government has to regularly inspect work sites and punish those who violate the law.

Through making, enforcing and upholding these laws, the government can control the activities of individuals or private companies in order to ensure social justice.

In October 2006, the government amended the Child Labour Prevention Act, banning children under 14 years of age from working as domestic servants or as workers in dhabas, restaurants, etc. It made employing these children punishable offense.

Bhopal Gas Tragedy is the world's worst industrial tragedy that took place in the year 1984. Union Carbide (UC), an American company, had a factory in Bhopal in which it produced pesticides. At midnight on 2 December 1984 methyl-isocyanide (MIC), a highly poisonous gas, started leaking from this VC plant which took numerous lives. Among those who survived, many developed severe respiratory disorders, eye problems etc. Children developed peculiar abnormalities.

The disaster was not an accident. Union Cabinet had deliberately ignored the essential safety measures in order to cut costs.

Although UC stopped its operations, it left behind tons of toxic chemicals which have seeped into the ground to contaminate water.

25 years later, people are still fighting for justice, for safe drinking water, for healthcare facilities and jobs for the people poisoned by UC.

Now the question arises why Union Carbide set up its plant in India.

Foreign companies usually come to India for cheap labor. Here, they can save costs and earn higher profits.

Lower working conditions including lower safety measures are used as ways of cutting costs. In the UC plant, every safety device was malfunctioning.

In India, there is so much unemployment, that there are many workers who are willing to work even in unsafe conditions in return for a wage. Employers take advantage of this.

The government must ensure that safety laws are implemented. It is also the duty of the government to ensure that the Right to Life guaranteed by the Constitution is not violated.

The Bhopal disaster shows lacking on the government's part. There were weak safety laws and these too were not enforced.

Government officials refused to recognize the plant as hazardous and allowed it to come up in a crowded locality. In this way, the safety of the people was disregarded both by the government and by private companies.

In the year, the Bhopal gas tragedy took place, there were few laws protecting the environment in India. The environment was treated as a free entity and any industry could pollute the air and water without any restrictions.

The Bhopal disaster brought the issue of the environment to the forefront.

The Indian government introduced new laws on the environment. Henceforth, the polluter was to be held accountable for the damage done to the environment.

Laws were important not only for the workers but also for those who might be injured due to industrial accidents.

- One of the prime responsibilities of the government is to make appropriate laws and to enforce them. Laws that are weak and poorly enforced can cause a serious disaster.

Consumer: One who buys goods for personal use.

Producer: A person or an organisation that produces goods for sale in the market.

Investment: It refers to the money that is spent to purchase new machinery or buildings or training so as to be able to increase production in the times to come.

Hazardous: Condition that is full of dangers.

