brought under prostitution every year: 100,000 in United States alone; in Hong Kong and Taiwan, 40,000. About 30% teenagers (15 to 19) are forced into prostitution.

Of all children deprived of education, two thirds are girls. In developing countries, girls are considered a burden and destroying the fetus has become a frightening practice of violence against the unborn girl. In some Mumbai clinics 95% of female fetuses are aborted. This is acquiring epidemic proportions in India and China.

Some thoughts for the future

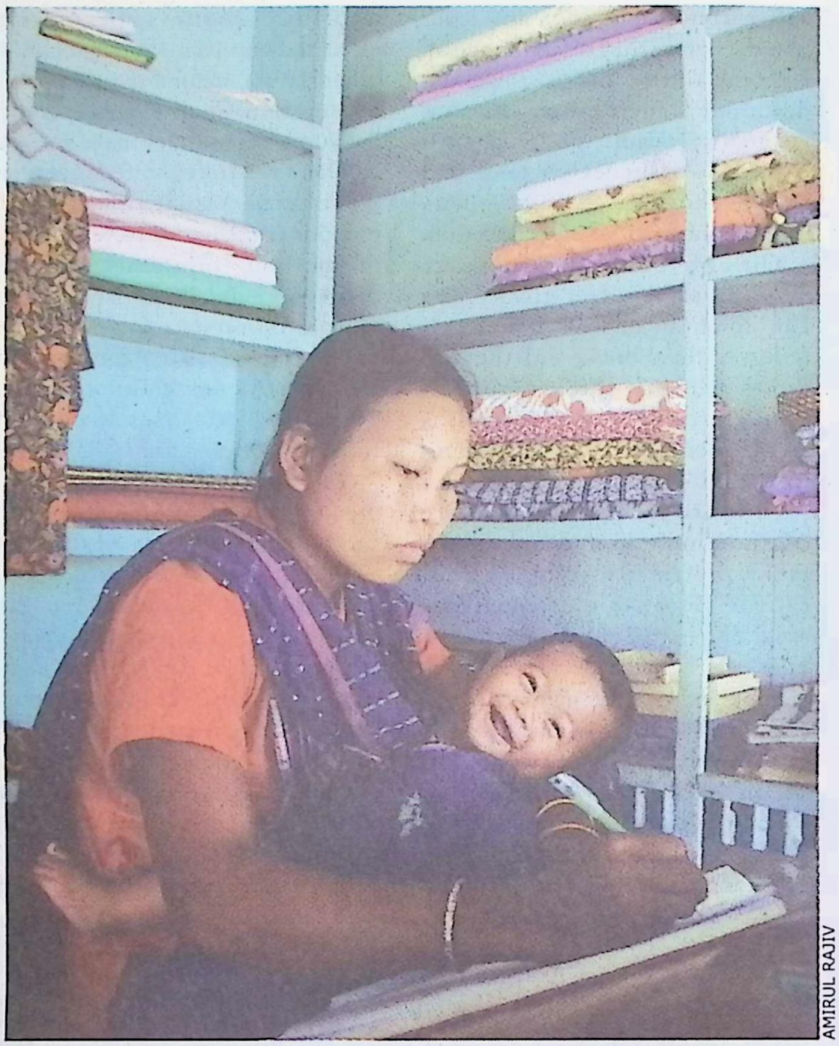
A lot of focus, human resources, and money has been put together to reduce violence against the woman, the girl. Yet, domestic violence in some of the most developed countries in the world, such as US, is only on the rise. Violence in the home leads to psychological disorder and violent behaviour in children.

The girl-boy distinction in early childhood leads to a cycle of prejudice and violence -- where the boy is the perpetrator and the girl is the victim. There are no winners here, and both boy and girl can lose their sensitivity and humanity -- even before they are grown up and able to understand and take responsibility for the violence that becomes a normal part of their lives.

So much is being done, and yet, so little has been achieved. On the one hand, at the micro level there is no alternative to "un"-learning processes at childhood; education for all; family values of equality and respect. For these to work, poverty has to be controlled and women/girls have equally go to be part of the productive process (which in fact it is, though often unrecognised).

The garments industry is a good example which brought a small revolution in the lives of poor women who could respectfully be an earning member of the family. But it is far from enough.

Children, who are part of the poor family's economy, have been squeezed out of garment factories as per ILO requirements. But where have the children, the little girls, landed -- on the street to be abused and exploited in a far worse manner than in the factory. From the frying pan into the fire.



AMIRUL RAJIV

Ground realities demand that laws should be sensitive to realities and not just be "idealistic" and hazardous for the child. The lesser evil is my recommendation here. Keep the child in the factory, make the employer pay for his or her education and for his or her meal, and let the child learn life skills to survive and help his or her family with dignity. This should be the law. This is what all factories must be obliged to do for child workers.

At the macro level, there must be greater global collaboration to stop the new slave trade -- child trafficking. There must be concerted vigilance over selling and buying points. Child prostitution must be banned and severely punished in the demand countries.

In the name of free market and capitalism, such evil practice cannot be permitted anywhere in the world. If there is no buyer there eventually will be no seller. At each point of this trade, nations must unite, both at the level of governments and at the level of civil society, and robustly address this international social disease.

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