


## Markets and Exploitation

Markets often look simple: buyers, sellers, producers. But behind this, there's often inequality and exploitation – especially of workers, farmers, and small producers.

 Exploitation – Unfair treatment to gain advantage, like paying workers less or selling poor-quality goods.

To protect people, the government makes laws that ensure fairness. These laws aim to:

- Ensure fair wages
- Protect consumers and workers
- Control pollution
- Prevent child labour



 Fig. – Worker in a textile mill in Ahmedabad facing unsafe conditions

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## Minimum Wages and Workers' Rights

 Minimum Wage – The lowest amount legally allowed to be paid to a worker.

- Without laws, employers may underpay workers
- Many workers accept low pay out of desperation
- The government revises minimum wages from time to time

 Law must not only be written, but enforced regularly – by inspections and penalties

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## Child Labour Law (2016 Update)

☐ Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986

☐ Amended in 2016:

- Bans children under 14 from all work
  - Bans adolescents (14–18) from hazardous work
  - Violators can get 6 months to 2 years jail or fine ₹20,000–₹50,000
- ☐ PENCIL Portal – A government website to report and monitor child labour  
(<https://pencil.gov.in>)



📷 Fig. – Child working at a roadside stall


## 💀 Case Study: Bhopal Gas Tragedy (1984)

- UC (Union Carbide) was a pesticide factory in Bhopal
- Gas leak of methyl-isocyanate (MIC) killed over 8,000 people
- Over 50,000 suffered long-term illness, injuries, and poverty


☐ The tragedy wasn't an accident — safety systems were faulty or missing

☐ UC had different safety standards in the US vs. India



 Fig. – Gas victims, mass cremation, Aziza's statement, child with deformity



 Fig. – Bags of leftover chemicals, protests by victims and factory workers

★ UC paid only \$470 million in compensation (vs \$3 billion claimed)

Even decades later, survivors still ask for:

- Clean water
- Jobs and healthcare
- Arrest of UC chairman (Anderson)

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## Why Companies Set Up in India

- Cheap labour
- Fewer safety and environment laws

- Long work hours for low pay
  - ▣ Cost-cutting by reducing safety and training leads to disasters

## ⚖️ Enforcement of Safety Laws

▣ Right to Life – Article 21 of the Constitution protects people from dangerous work conditions.

But:

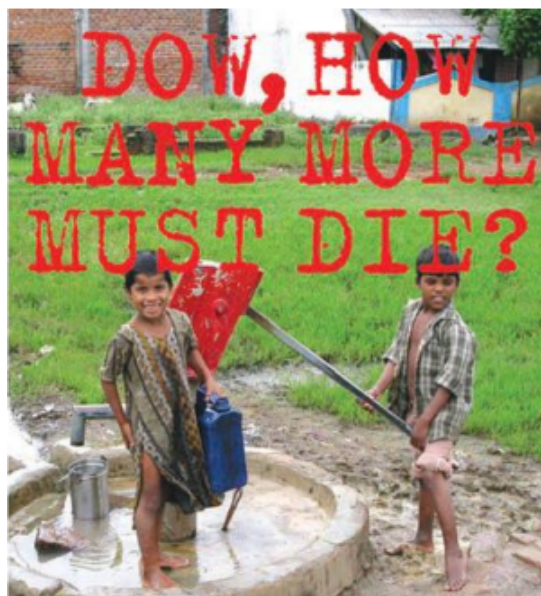
- Safety laws in India were weak
  - Even existing laws were not enforced
  - Bhopal plant was allowed in a residential area
  - Repeated gas leaks were ignored
- ▣ Governments often ignore rules for the sake of investment and jobs – putting lives at risk

## 🌿 Environmental Protection Laws

Before Bhopal, India had few laws on pollution.

▣ After 1984, laws were created to:

- Punish polluters
  - Hold companies responsible for environmental damage
  - Protect public health
- ▣ Subhash Kumar vs. State of Bihar (1991): Supreme Court ruled pollution-free water & air is part of the Right to Life



📷 Fig. – Polluted wells still used, contaminated water, new environmental laws


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## **Conflict: Clean Environment vs Workers' Jobs**

 Courts shut down polluting factories in Delhi

→ Good for environment

→ Bad for workers who lost jobs or moved far away

 Environmental protection should not hurt the poor.

The solution? Gradually move to cleaner technologies, with government support.



 *Fig. – Workers outside shut factories, rise in small exploitative units*

 1998 Supreme Court order: public transport in Delhi must use CNG → reduced pollution


 But diesel cars & rising vehicle numbers still pollute cities

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## **Conclusion: Role of Law and Government**

Laws are needed to:

- Protect workers, consumers, and environment
- Prevent child labour
- Ensure fair wages and safe workplaces
- Promote justice


 The government must not only make laws, but enforce them strictly.

 Citizens must also demand justice and hold companies & the government accountable.





 Fig. – Ship-breaking in Alang: foreign toxic industries shifting to India

 Advanced countries shift hazardous industries to India, Bangladesh, etc., due to weak laws here.

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## Glossary

Term	Meaning
Consumer	Person who buys goods/services
Producer	Person who makes goods
Investment	Money spent to grow a business
Workers' Union	Association of workers that demands fair treatment
Exploitation	Taking unfair advantage of someone's helplessness
Enforcement	Making sure the law is actually followed

