



POVERTY IN INDIA STILL SEVERE HUNGER AND POOR

BANOTH REDYA NAIK

Master Of Social Work(MSW)

University PG College

Abstract

India dreams to develop into a superpower but a third of the world's poor still lives here. India is one of the fastest developing economies in the world but also a home to the largest number of malnourished children. Majority of India lives in villages and at the same time rural India is facing the hardship of poverty much harder than urban India. Though India is growing economically but the growth of this kind is creating two much demarcated societies – one poor and another rich. Prevailing poverty and hunger continue to haunt the economic growth and making it further slow.

Keywords: Poverty, Hunger, Economic growth,

Introduction:

Poverty refers to a situation when people are deprived of basic necessities of life. It is often characterized by inadequacy of food, shelter and clothes. In other words, poverty refers to a state of privation where there is a lack of essential needs for subsistence. India is one of the poorest countries in the world. Many Indian people do not get two meals a day. They do not have good houses to live in. Their children do not get proper schooling.

International poverty line is US\$ 1.25 per day (PPP) and as per the World Bank report 32.7% of the population in India lives below the poverty line whereas 68.7% survive on less than US\$ 2 per day. 45% of children in India are malnourished. India has the worst infant mortality rate and it is even worse than Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Although Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is showing an impressive growth over a period of time but because of poverty regional, economical and social disparity has increased to manifold. These are few of the daunting and much talked about facts related to poverty in India.

Goal 1 and 2 of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) envision eradicating poverty and ending hunger by 2030. A brief look at the statistics tells us the extent of the problem. An astounding 767 million people in the world are poor while those who do not have enough to eat are estimated to be close to 800 million.

Poverty is a multidimensional concept, which involves reduction in choices to pursue freedom. So is hunger. Two recent reports try to clear the haze on measurement and yield some pertinent insights on poverty and hunger. These are the the Global Hunger Index (GHI) of the International Food Policy Research Institute and the Pathways to Reducing Poverty and Sharing Prosperity in India (PRPSPI) of the World Bank.

Poor people are the depressed and deprived class. They do not get proper nutrition and diet. Their conditions have not sufficiently improved even long after over 65 years of our



Independence. Numbers of poor are declining but only in few states such as Punjab, northern Haryana and Kerala and not in Bihar and Assam. Traditionally disadvantage sections of the society including schedule caste and schedule tribe, indigenous peoples and dalits are still poor in spite of many efforts.

But why despite all the efforts and schemes to eradicate poverty, India is still a poor country? Why does India continue to be poor after 69 years of independence? Corruption, lack of education, distribution of wealth, population explosion, caste system, mentality, and mismanagement is some of the widespread causes of poverty in India. For an example, India has the largest public food distribution system for the poor in the world. Yet 21% of adults and half of India's children under five are malnourished. With inflation, price of all the essential commodities such as fruits and vegetables is increasing that is also increasing the number of people relying on subsidized food. Because of prevalent corruption, quantity of food grains recommended to be subsidized never reaches the needy and poor completely. According to an Asian Development Bank study, "A sustained 10% increase in domestic food prices could push an additional 64 million people, or almost 2% of Asia's 3.3 billion people, below the poverty line of \$1.25 a day".

Reasons why India is still a poor Country:

Corruption

India, if not completely but is almost synonymous with the word corruption. Numerous scams in the recent years explain the saga of corruption. Almost all the government departments are affected from it. Corruption is regarded as one of the biggest reasons of poverty in India.

Corruption in the Public Distribution System (PDS) is the worst of its kind. The leading source of corruption in India is entitlement programmes and social spending schemes that are meant for the welfare of our society. For an example - Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA), a \$9 billion program planned to offer 100 days of employment annually for the rural poor. But MNREGA failed because of corruption and mismanagement. Just like MNREGA, the National Rural Livelihood Mission met the same fate. It was planned to empower.

Though government is putting efforts to have an "inclusive growth" but corruption is playing its role. So all such programs designed for poor and needy failed to impress and help them. Instead poor are even denied of their basic right and needs. Corruption is just like an endemic in India. It leads to social inequalities and hit economy of our nation. Funds granted to uplift the poor are misused. Poverty is further worsen by the administrative corruption. As per the data compiled by Bloomberg, near about \$14.5 billion in food was plundered by the corrupt politicians in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

Economic policies

It is believed that economic reforms started in early 1990s are responsible for the fall down of rural economy in India. It also led to the agrarian crisis. Because of high debt, poor farmers



are left with no other choice than to commit suicide. According to official statistics, number of farmers committing suicides has also increased since 1997. The new policies by the government encourage farmers to switch to cash crops in place of traditional crops. But this has led to a manifold increase in farm input cost which ultimate resulted in the economic burden and thus poverty. Also villages in India are not self sufficient like they used to be. The rural youth is mostly not well educated, lack skill and even not interested in farming. All these are enough for a disastrous and poor future. Government should come up with plans to make villages self-reliant. Skill based education must be provided to the youth.

Mismanagement and faulty development model

Much of the fund raised or allocated to the anti poverty schemes is consumed in administrative cost. So the entire chain that is formed to help the poor does not allow this to happen.

High population growth rate

Ever increasing population is not a direct cause of poverty but it is an effect. It is rightly said that excess of everything is bad. This is true in this case as well. More people mean the need of more resource, food etc. But if this surplus is trained in a right way then it can take part in the economic development of the country.

Ever increasing economic inequality

India's growth model for sure has benefitted the businessmen but failed when we see that near about 213 million Indians go hungry every night. Rights of organized as well as unorganized workers are being violated. They are underpaid and not paid according to the industrial growth and ever rising inflation. Due to such a visible inequality each year millions of girls are sexually exploited and trafficked for money. At the same time child labour has also increased. Wealthy are acquiring more wealth. In such an inequal scenario, top 5% of households have 38% of the total assets of India whereas bottom 60% has merely 13% of the assets.

Lack of small scale sectors – Majority of economic policies and reforms are not friendly towards small scale industries. So these policies are making and creating bureaucrats but suppressing entrepreneurs.

Mentality of poor

Not only external factors but also the internal will of poor people to remain poor is an obstacle. You must have seen healthy beggars at red light. if they are asked to do task instead of begging then their simple answer is no. Even their kids do not go to school but just beg. They can never come out of this vivacious cycle of begging and poverty. To come out of poverty one has to change his or her mind. Poor must understand the importance of education and its lifelong benefits. There is no shortage of jobs in India. Even if you are not educated you have enough jobs like wrapping the color, adding buttons to the already stitched clothes



and sweaters, making boards for electronic goods etc. I have seen people earning from these kinds of jobs and sending their kids to school to have a better future.

India needs great political leaders to push the nation in a forward direction. Productivity and how to use human resource for the productivity must be focused. India must educate its every child so that a resource can be added. India must have a clear economic vision and a great system is place to execute this. Confused ideologies must be separated from the clear-cut and result oriented ones. India must be free from corruption to become rich.

Poverty in urban India: Just like most of the growing and developing countries, there has been continuous increase in urban population. Poor people migrate from rural areas to cities and towns in search of employment/financial activity. The income of more than 8 crore urban people is estimated to fall below poverty line (BPL). In addition to this, there are around 4.5 crore urban people whose income level is on borderline of poverty level. A income of urban poors is highly unstable. A large number of them are either casual workers or self-employed. Banks and Financial institutions are reluctant to provide them loan because of the unstable income. Five states that constitutes around 40% of all urban poor people of India are Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Odisha, and Madhya Pradesh. Around 35% of the total population of the four metro cities (Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai) consists of slum population. A large portion of people living in slums are illiterate.

Poverty in rural India: It is said that rural India is the heart of India. In reality, the life of people living in rural areas is marked with severe poverty. In spite of all the efforts, the condition of poor villagers is far from satisfactory. SCST population in the rural households, around 18.46 percent belongs to scheduled castes, and around 10.97 belongs to scheduled Tribes. Major source of income is Manual casual labour jobs and cultivation are the major sources of income for rural people. Nearly 51 percent of all households are economically engaged in manual casual labour and nearly 30 percent of them is engaged in cultivation. and Deprived people Around 48.5 percent of rural households are deprived according to the census.

Solutions

The measures that should be taken to fight the demon of poverty in India are outlined below:-

1. Growth of population at the current rate should be checked by implementation of policies and awareness promoting birth control.
2. All efforts should be made to increase the employment opportunities in the country, either by inviting more foreign investments or by encouraging self-employment schemes.
3. Measures should be taken to bridge the immense gap that remains in distribution in wealth among different levels of the society.
4. Certain Indian states are more poverty stricken than others like Odhisha and the North East states. Government should seek to encourage investment in these states by offering special concessions on taxes.



5. Primary needs of people for attaining a satisfactory quality of life like food items, clean drinking water should be available more readily. Improvement of the Subsidy rates on commodities and Public Distribution system should be made. Free high school education and an increased number of functioning health centers should be provided by the government.

Conclusion

Poverty is a national problem and it must be solved on a war footing. The government is taking a number of steps to mitigate poverty. Eradication of poverty would ensure a sustainable and inclusive growth of economy and society. We all should do everything possible and within our limits to help alleviate poverty from our country.

Poverty can be removed by awareness so that they can themselves make a check on increasing population. The only thing which is required is to keep a check on increasing births in the nation. People must know the value of education and political parties must be honest so that the future of India can be secured and INDIA must join hands with the developed and modern industrial countries.

References:

1. *Ramandeep kaur, "why indiaaa is still aa poor country?",maps of India, nov21,2013.*
2. *Getin Chamberlain,"Hunger in india: 'The real cause is lack of political will'", the guardian,14 sep 2010.*
3. *Vikash Pathak, "Essay on Poverty in India: Causes, Effects and Solutions", important india, Jan 29,2014.*
4. *Ghosh Jayati (2005), "The Right to Work and Recent Legislation in India", The Indian Journal of Labour Economics, Vol. 48 No. 4, Oct.-Dec., pp. 689-690.*
5. *Dandekar V.M. (1991), "Making Right to Work Fundamental" Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 26 No. 11/12, Annual Number March, pp. 697-698.*
6. *Himanshu (2007), "Recent Trends in Poverty and Inequality: Some Preliminary Results", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XLII. Feb. 10.*
7. *Amit Kapoor,Sankalp sharma,"Still seriously hungry and poor",The Hindu dec 02,2016*
8. *Charu Bahri,"Despite economic slowdown,india still can meet goals on poverty,hunger",smaartinvestor,oct 14,2017*