

## Poverty in India

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“Poverty is the sum total of a multiplicity of fact others that include not just income and calorie intake but also access to land and credit, nutrition, health and longevity, literacy and safe drinking water, sanitation and other infrastructural facilities.”

In India, it is estimated that about 350-400 million people are living below the poverty line, 75 per cent of them in the rural areas. More than 30 per cent of the population is illiterate. With women, tribal and scheduled castes particularly affected.

The main causes of poverty are illiteracy, a population growth rate by far exceeding the economic growth rate for the better part of the past 60 years, protectionist policies pursued since 1947 to 1991 which prevented large amounts of foreign investment in the country.

Poverty alleviation is expected to make better progress in the next 50 years than in the past, as a trickle- down effect of the growing middle class. Increasing stress on education, reservation of seats in government jobs and the increasing empowerment of women and the economically weaker sections of society are also expected to contribute to the alleviation of poverty.

‘Where there is no happiness for all, there cannot be happiness for any’. This is a fundamental truth successful nation around the world have discovered. They have structured their societies in such a way that though there may be inequalities in incomes and levels of enjoyment of the good things of life, the basics of a modern life are not denied to anyone.

What are these basics? Answers vary for each country. For India, these are; education. Health care, housing, water electricity, cooking fuel, old age support, sanitation, and employment. Providing these for all citizens is to both attack poverty and pave way for growth.

## Poverty

Poverty is one of the toughest problems that India is facing today. Quite oddly, in spite of all the progress that India has made during the years, the monster of

poverty has not been eliminated. A great segment of our society is still living below the poverty line.

The most distressing feature of our social system is that we have at present all the more glaring contrasts and disparities in incomes and life styles. Whereas on the one hand we have millionaires and even billionaires, on the other hand, we have teeming millions who cannot make both ends meet. And then with the rise in prices of essential commodities, their real incomes are further shrinking.

Nothing is without cause. Similarly, there are definite causes for this stark poverty. Illiteracy is one of such causes. The world has moved fast during the last some years. But the illiterate or semi-literate people are unable to keep pace with the world. Hence, they cannot find a job. Even if they are able to find one, it is not lucrative enough to enable them to earn enough for themselves and for their family. Hence, they have to lead a marginal life.

Many parents, particularly in rural areas and those belonging to lower strata of life are superstitious. They do not allow their children to learn new arts and services. They consider some arts such as singing, dancing, painting, etc. to be immoral even if their child has a strong aptitude for it.

Many people are lethargic and they do not want to do anything. Then there is so much corruption at all levels that they dare not take a risk in investing in any venture. Also cut-throat competition in every field discourages new entrants.

The remedy lies in a house to house survey. Seats in services should be reserved for economically weaker persons. Those who want to set up a small scale industry or start a business should be given liberal loans at low interests. Really indigent and helpless persons, particularly the senior citizens, the disabled and the widows should be given pensions and grants and subsidies

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India was once known as the land of plenty food grains. Foreign rule had changed India into a poor country. Poverty is the state of being poor. 26.10 percent of the total population of India live below the poverty line. According to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP), Human Development Report, 2003.

India was ranked 127th among 175 countries. People living below poverty line are deprived of basic needs of life. The chief causes of poverty are over-population, unemployment, slow industrial growth, etc. Poverty leads to many

social and economic problems. India was once known as the land of plenty. There were plenty of riches and resources. Foreign rule had changed India into a poor country. The Turks, the Mughals and the British reduced the resources to a great extent. Poverty is a serious problem of today.

Poverty is the state of being poor. It is the state of not having the minimum income to obtain the basic needs of life. These include food, clothing, shelter, education and health. Poverty leads to misery. It lowers the standard of living of human beings.

India has low per capita consumption of electricity. A large number of people still do not have access to clean drinking water and sanitation. They do not have the basic health facilities. In Orissa, extreme poverty has forced parents to sell their children for money. There are reports of farmers committing suicide for not being able to repay loans.

The main causes of poverty is over-population. The national income has failed to keep pace with the growing population. In rural i areas, poverty is due to low land base. There is low level of productivity in rural areas. The urban poor are largely due to the overflow of rural poor into the urban areas. The unemployment problem is another cause of poverty. The uneven distribution of l resources are other reasons of poverty. Moreover, the industrial growth in India is slow. There is a slow increase in the demand for labor. There is a rise in the cost of living also.

Poverty leads to man)/ problems in the society. It gives rise to child labour. According to the NSSO Survey (1999-2000), there are 10.4 million child labourers in our country. Poverty also leads to illiteracy, crime, corruption, prostitution etc.

With Fifth Plan, poverty eradication became a principle objective of economic planning. The Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozag Yojana (SGSY) was formed in 1999. The programmes merged with it are IRDP, TRYSEM, DWCRA, SITRA, GKY and MWS. Other programmes are the Annapuran Schemes, the Samagra Awaas. Yojana, etc. are other such schemes.

These schemes provided shelter, sanitation and drinking water to the poor. The Eighth Plan provided food, healthcare, education, employment and shelter to the weaker sections. The Tenth Plan is aimed at reducing poverty below 20 percent in the country by 2007.

Eradication of poverty is not an easy task. The alarming rate of increase of population should be checked. The Government should undertake effective steps

to make India a fully literate country. The Government has been successful to some extent to eradicate poverty.