

The Problem of Beggary in India

“He who begs timidly court’s refusal.”

— Seneca

In India, the tradition of charity is as old as civilization itself. The true Indian culture calls upon every man or woman to part with some of his or her earnings to help the poor and needy.

The problem of beggary should not, therefore, be seen in isolation as it has its roots in the basic infrastructure of our society. Beggary is not new to India. It is an age-old practice. Many a time in our history books we can read about some king or noble man who periodically distributed gifts amongst the poor. Our holy men and ‘sanyasis’ who lived away from cities used to come to the cities to collect some alms or meals. But today beggary has become a profession. One can find beggars at all busy crossings, at the railway stations or the bus stands, at busy corners, near temples and gurudwaras and at all other places where people are likely to visit. They give out pathetic cries and present pathetic looks. They have different ways of coaxing the innocent people into parting with a coin or two, an article of dress or a part of their food. Many of these beggars are perfect hypocrite and swindlers. Even though they are hefty and sturdy, they are not prepared to earn their living by putting in honest labour.

Many a time the government has taken steps to ban this evil practice. Legislations have been enacted. Beggary has been banned, but it has made no difference. No law can be effective unless it has a social support.

Beggary is a blot on the face of any society and thus it should be tackled and wiped out like any other contagious disease. It is only with the active co-operation of the people that the problem of beggary can be solved. It is true that poverty is one of the main causes of beggary. The government should come out with rehabilitation schemes for the beggars. Able bodied men and women should be encouraged to work. It is only possible if the rich decide not to help the poor in becoming beggars. The old and the infirm should be sent to state run charity houses. Religious institutions and social and charitable trusts should be set up to cater to the needs of such holy men or sanyasis as choose to renounce this world and dedicate themselves to the Almighty or to the service of mankind.

Lack of the proper awareness is one of the causes that makes people accept this evil of begging without protest. Awareness can only come through

education. Only if people are educated, they will come forward and cooperate with the government in fighting out this evil. Laxity on the part of the authorities is also encouraging beggars. On account of vested interests, the government also hesitates to burn its fingers by using force.