A REGIONAL AND TEMPORAL ANALYSIS OF VARIATIONS IN URBAN POVERTY IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Urban poverty in India has been consistently declining over the past five decades due to economic reforms, industrialization, and various government initiatives. This study analyzes the spatial and temporal variations in urban poverty across different states and time periods. The research is based on secondary data from the Census of India, NSSO, NITI Aayog, and RBI reports, employing descriptive, analytical, and comparative research methods. Findings indicate significant disparities among states, with Bihar (31.23%) and Manipur (32.59%) having the highest urban poverty rates, whereas Goa (4.09%) and Himachal Pradesh (4.33%) recorded the lowest. Over time, urban poverty decreased from 49.01% in 1970-71 to 13.7% in 2022-23. Key contributing factors include the Green Revolution, economic liberalization, expansion of the IT sector, and targeted welfare schemes such as PMAY, NULM, and Digital India. Despite fluctuations, particularly in 2010-11, government interventions like Aadhaar-linked subsidies and direct benefit transfers have effectively reduced poverty levels. However, challenges persist due to rising urban migration and socio-economic inequalities. The study underscores the need for inclusive policies, employment generation, and better urban infrastructure to further alleviate urban poverty and ensure sustainable development.

***KEYWORDS**: Urban Poverty, Regional Variations, Temporal Analysis, Poverty Alleviation, Socioeconomic Factors, Economic Disparities, and Social Justice.*

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Introduction

Urban poverty rate is the percentage of people living in urban areas in a country or state who are living below the poverty line. The poverty line is usually defined as the minimum income or consumption expenditure level required to meet the basic needs of an individual or family such as food, clothing, housing, education and health services. Various methods are used to measure urban poverty in India. Tendulkar Committee (2009) considered minimum calorie intake as the main standard for measuring poverty based on consumption expenditure. After this, Rangarajan Committee (2014) adopted a more comprehensive approach to calculate the poverty line and also included the expenditure on essential goods and services. Poverty is assessed by including various aspects of health, education and standard of living through the Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI). Apart from this, detailed analysis of consumption expenditure and socio-economic conditions is done in the surveys conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) and NITI Aayog. The Government of India has taken several initiatives to assess and reduce urban poverty. Schemes like Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM) and Smart City Mission have been launched for poverty alleviation. Apart from this, poverty data is compiled by Planning Commission (now NITI Aayog), NSSO and Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). Jan Dhan Yojana, Aadhaar linked subsidy and urban employment schemes have been implemented under digital and financial inclusion. Measurement of urban poverty is necessary because it helps in policy making, ensures equitable

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distribution of resources, provides an opportunity to move towards development in line with international standards and necessary measures can be taken to improve living conditions in rapidly growing cities.

A review of research work on urban poverty in India shows that extensive studies have been done on this subject. De and Tripathi (2016) studied the economic aspects of urban poverty in India and evaluated the role of planning and government policies. Pathak and Mishra (2018) presented a comparative study of various government programs for poverty alleviation. Kumar and Sharma (2020) in their research analyzed various parameters of health, education and standard of living to understand the multidimensional nature of urban poverty. Gupta (2021) studied the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of the urban poor and the NITI Aayog report of the National Institute of Urban Affairs (2023) analyzed the latest government data and schemes, which help in measuring and addressing urban poverty. Keeping this fact in view, the researcher has attempted to do a spatial and temporal analysis of urban poverty in India in this research work, such as-

Objectives

- The first objective of this research is to analyse the variation in the level of urban poverty in different states of India, so as to understand in which areas poverty is more severe and which geographical and economic factors are responsible for this.

- The second objective of this research is to analyse the changes in the level of urban poverty in different time periods (such as decades or years), so as to find out whether urban poverty has increased or decreased and which socio-economic factors have been effective behind this change.

Data Sources & Research Methodology

The presented research work is entirely based on secondary data. Under this research, the researcher has utilized data from the 2011 Census, reports from the National Sample Survey Organization on the topic of "Urban Poverty and Employment," reports from NITI Aayog, reports from the Reserve Bank of India, and data used in various research studies. All the aforementioned data have been obtained from the official websites of the respective institutions. This research paper is based on descriptive, analytical, and comparative research methods. On one hand, under the descriptive research method, the researcher has presented details related to the spatial and temporal variations of urban poverty in India. On the other hand, the analytical research method has been used to assess the spatial and temporal variations of urban poverty in India in a more detailed manner. Similarly, the comparative research method has been employed to compare the spatial and temporal variations of urban poverty in India.

Finding and Discussion

Analyzing the data of 2022-23 according to the number and percentage of population living below the urban poverty line, it is clear that the situation of urban poverty varies in different states and union territories. States and union territories with very high urban poverty (more than 20 percent) include Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Uttar Pradesh and Chandigarh. Among these states, Bihar has the highest urban poverty rate of 31.23 percent, while Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of urban poor at 11884 thousand. This rate has been recorded at 32.59 percent in Manipur, which is the highest among all states.

States with high urban poverty (15 to 20 percent) include Karnataka, Nagaland, Odisha and Dadra and Nagar Haveli. Among these, Odisha has an urban poverty rate of 17.29 percent, while in Karnataka 3696 thousand people are living below the urban poverty line. In Nagaland and Dadra and Nagar Haveli, this rate has been recorded at 16.48 percent and 15.38 percent respectively.

Gujarat, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, West Bengal and Daman and Diu come under the category of medium urban poverty (10 to 15 percent). Among these, West Bengal has an urban poverty rate of 14.66 percent and the total number of urban poor is 4383 thousand, while in Gujarat 2688 thousand people are affected by urban poverty with 10.14 percent poverty.

States with low urban poverty (5 to 10 percent) include Andhra Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Delhi and Puducherry. In this category, Maharashtra's urban poverty rate is recorded at 9.12 percent, in which 4736 thousand people are below the poverty line. In Delhi, this rate is 9.84 percent, while in Punjab it is 9.24 percent. States like Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Puducherry have relatively low urban poverty.

Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Sikkim, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep fall in the category of very low urban poverty (less than 5 percent). This rate is recorded at 4.09 percent in Goa, 4.33 percent in Himachal Pradesh and 4.97 percent in Kerala. In Sikkim, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep, this rate is 3.66 percent, 0 percent and 3.44 percent respectively, which shows that urban poverty is very low in these areas.

According to the overall data of India, the total number of people living below the urban poverty line across the country in 2022-23 was 53125 thousand, which is 13.7 percent of the total urban population. These figures clearly show that urban poverty is regionally unevenly distributed and exists in a more severe form in some states. The challenge of urban poverty is particularly severe in states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand, while many states and union territories of South India have relatively low urban poverty rates. Given this inequality, the government needs to focus more on state-specific policies and schemes to effectively reduce urban poverty.

Table 1: Number and Percentage of Population below Urban Poverty Line, 2022-23

Urban Poverty Level	State/Union Territory	No. of Persons (Thousands)	% of Persons
Extremely High urban poverty (more than 20 percent)	Arunachal Pradesh	66	20.33
	Assam	921	20.49
	Bihar	3775	31.23
	Chhattisgarh	1522	24.75
	Jharkhand	2024	24.83
	Madhya Pradesh	4310	21.00
	Manipur	278	32.59
	Uttar Pradesh	11884	26.06
	Chandigarh	234	22.31
High urban poverty (more than 15 to 20 percent)	Karnataka	3696	15.25
	Nagaland	100	16.48
	Odisha	1239	17.29
	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	28	15.38
Moderate urban poverty (more than 10 to 15 percent)	Gujarat	2688	10.14
	Haryana	941	10.28
	Rajasthan	1873	10.69
	Uttarakhand	335	10.48
	West Bengal	4383	14.66
	Daman and Diu	26	12.62
Low urban poverty (more than 5.00 to 10.00 percent)	Andhra Pradesh	1698	5.81
	Jammu & Kashmir	253	7.2
	Maharashtra	4736	9.12
	Meghalaya	57	9.26
	Mizoram	37	6.36
	Punjab	982	9.24
	Tamil Nadu	2340	6.54
	Telangana	938	6.8
	Tripura	75	7.42
	Delhi	1646	9.84
	Puducherry	55	6.3
Extremely low urban poverty (Less than 5 percent)	Goa	38	4.09
	Himachal Pradesh	30	4.33
	Kerala	846	4.97
	Sikkim	6	3.66
	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	0	0
	Lakshadweep	2	3.44
All India		**53125**	**13.7**

Source: Reserve Bank of India. (2024).

Map 1
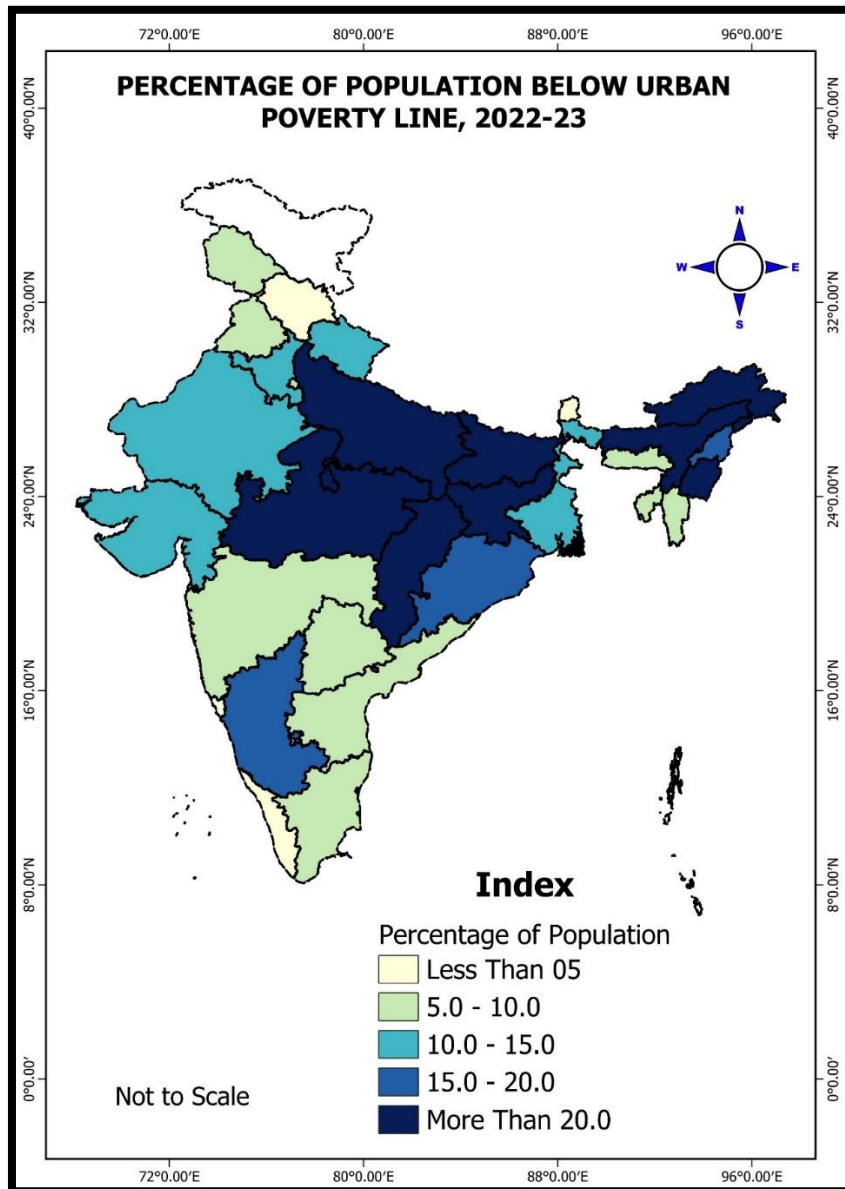
Analyzing the number and percentage of population below urban poverty line in India, it is clear that urban poverty has been continuously decreasing in the last five decades. In 1970-71, the number of urban poor was 60046 thousand, which was 49.01 percent of the total urban population. During this period, the process of industrialization and urbanization was in its initial stage in India, but the schemes for poverty alleviation were not implemented effectively on a large scale, due to which urban poverty remained at a high level.

In 1980-81, the urban poverty rate decreased to 40.79 percent and the total number of urban poor became 70940 thousand. This decline was mainly the result of the initial efforts of the government's poverty alleviation schemes and economic reforms. In this decade, India tried to reduce poverty in rural areas through the Green Revolution and various schemes, which indirectly affected urban poverty as well.

In 1990-91 the urban poverty rate declined further to 32.36 percent, while the total number of poor was recorded at 76337 thousand. During this period India adopted the policies of liberalization, privatization and globalization, which led to industrial development and increased employment opportunities. However, at this time large-scale migration from rural areas to urban areas also took place, due to which the decline in the rate of urban poverty was relatively slow.

In 2000-01 the urban poverty rate declined sharply to 23.62 percent, while the total number of urban poor was 67007 thousand. This decline was mainly due to the expansion of the information technology sector, investment in urban infrastructure and the impact of various social welfare schemes. The government launched special schemes for poverty alleviation, which helped in controlling urban poverty.

The urban poverty rate was recorded at 20.9 percent in 2010-11, while the number of people living below the poverty line increased to 76470 thousand. During this period, efforts were made to provide employment and social security to the urban poor through MNREGA, National Urban Livelihood Mission and other schemes. Also, effective distribution of government assistance was ensured through policies like Aadhar Card and Direct Benefit Transfer.

The urban poverty rate further decreased to 13.7 percent in 2022-23, while the total number of urban poor was recorded at 53125 thousand. During this period, assistance was provided to the urban poor through Digital India Abhiyan, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Mudra Yojana and other social security measures. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the urban poverty rate declined during this period, which is a result of various welfare policies and economic reforms of the government.
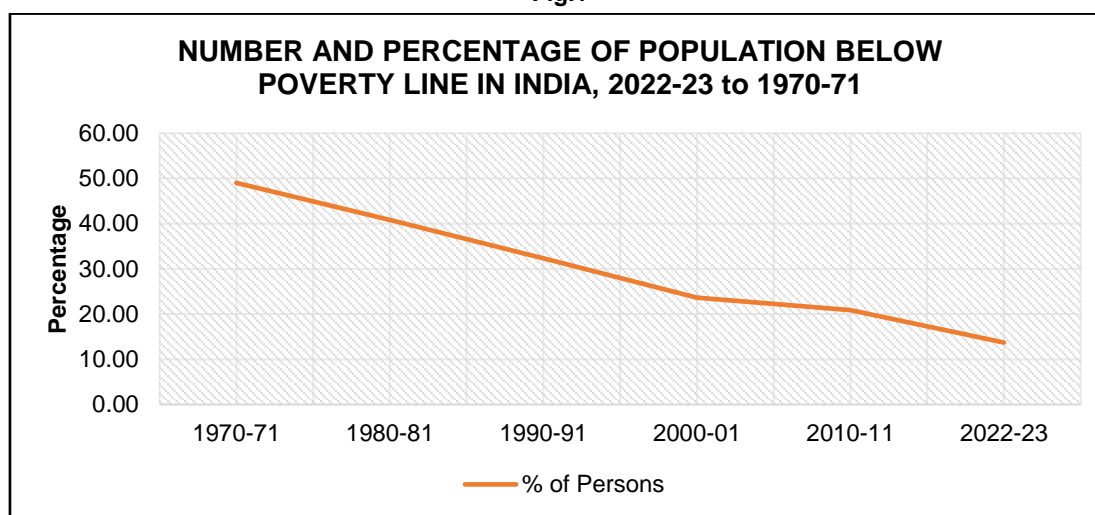
Overall, there has been a continuous decline in urban poverty in India from 1970-71 to 2022-23. Economic reforms, industrialisation, development of urban infrastructure and various government schemes have led to a decline in the number of urban poor and poverty rates. However, urban poverty still remains a significant socio-economic challenge that will require long-term and inclusive policies to eradicate it completely.

Table 2: Number and Percentage of Population below
Urban Poverty Line in India, 2022-23 to 1970-71

Year	No. of Persons (Thousands)	% of Persons
1970-71	60046	49.01
1980-81	70940	40.79
1990-91	76337	32.36
2000-01	67007	23.62
2010-11	76470	20.9
2022-23	53125	13.7

Source: Reserve Bank of India. (2024).

Fig.1

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION BELOW POVERTY LINE IN INDIA, 2022-23 to 1970-71

Conclusion

The level of urban poverty in India has been found to vary across different states. According to the data of 2022-23, urban poverty is in a very serious condition in some states, while its effect is relatively less in some states. States like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Manipur have recorded very high urban poverty rates, while states like Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Sikkim have recorded the lowest rate. The rate of urban poverty in India has been continuously declining from 1970-71 to 2022-23, which makes it clear that economic reforms, industrialization, development of urban infrastructure and government schemes have played an important role in poverty alleviation. While the urban poverty rate was 49.01 percent in 1970-71, it came down to 13.7 percent in 2022-23.

This decline has been driven by various government policies and schemes over the decade, such as the indirect impact of the Green Revolution, the liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation (LPG) reforms of 1991, the expansion of the information technology sector, and in recent years, policies such as Digital India, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Mudra Yojana, and Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). Although there was a temporary increase in urban poverty numbers in 2010-11, the overall trend has been of continuous decline.

Despite these positive changes, urban poverty still remains a significant socio-economic challenge. It is hampered by problems such as economic inequality, increasing urban population, and uncontrolled migration, which require inclusive and long-term policies to eliminate it completely. The government must focus on employment generation, education, health facilities, and strengthening the livelihoods of the urban poor to further accelerate the process of poverty alleviation.

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