A REFLECTION OF POVERTY IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Poverty is defined as the sum of several characteristics, including not only income and calorie consumption, but also access to land and credit, nutrition, health and longevity, literacy and education, as well as safe drinking water, sanitation, and other infrastructure. The study discusses and analyses multidimensional poverty indicators that reflect human and gender development and empowerment, as well as estimates of infant mortality and female literacy. It is investigated whether places with a high prevalence of severe income poverty also lack access to literacy, knowledge, nutrition, communication, and infrastructure.

Keywords: *Poverty, Population, India, Government, Economy.*

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Introduction

Poverty is the stigma on the forehead of the country. Rural areas are much more affected by this curse in comparison to urban areas. Indian planners had faith in the "Trickle Down Theory" in the 1950s and 1960s whose aim was to increase the growth rate of the economy but it was unable to eradicate poverty from the country. Thereafter, the planners formulated a new strategy for poverty alleviation. Later on, the community development projects, National Extension Service Scheme, and Panchayat Raj were the founder of specific measures, regarding poverty alleviation. these specific measures were set up to improve the living condition, raise the level of productivity, and increase employment opportunities.

Poverty in simple words means the lack of basic human needs like food, clothing, shelter, etc. According to the World Bank, "Poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being and compromises many dimensions. It includes low income and the ability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity. Poverty also encompasses a low level of education, poor access to clean water and annotation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice ad insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one's life."

Since independence, poverty has remained a prevalent concern in India. It is large-scale widespread estimated to have a third of the world's poor. A recent report by Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) states that 8 Indian states are poorer than 26 African Nations combines which totals to have more than 410 million people in the poorest of African countries. UNICEF shows that one in three malnourished children worldwide is found in Idia. 42% of children under five are underweight whereas 58% of children were found to be stunted. The 2021 Global Hunger Index (GHI) ranked India at 101 out of 116 countries.

Causes of Poverty

There are several causes behind poverty in India but the major causes are related to lack of education, poor health, and discrimination. The social aspects of poverty include lack of access to information, education, healthcare, political power, etc.

The caste system persists in the rural areas. People are divided based on their castes. There is a system of exploitation of poor low ranking groups by more prosperous high ranking groups Casteism is widespread in rural areas and continues to segregate Dalits but there has been a steady rise and empowerment of the Dalits through many new social reforms and reservations or quotas provided by the government to improve the conditions.

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The heat that the rural population is subjected to creates certain hurdles in their labor, resulting in lower production. Natural disasters such as floods, disasters, earthquakes, and cyclones wreak havoc on agriculture. Agriculture is said to be the main source of income for rural people; its decline and lack of output will undoubtedly be a big source of poverty for them. Unemployment and poverty are related to one another. Every year, lakhs of unemployed people are enrolled in employment offices. In addition to triggering a financial crisis, unemployment reduces a state's purchasing power. As a consequence, poverty results followed by increased debt. Inequality of income and the lack of employment opportunities lead to mass poverty. Even during the period of good harvests, the farmers remain unemployed for the entire year. Regional disparity is also crucial in this context. Mass migration from rural to the urban region is adding to the problems of unemployment and poverty.

There are several economic reasons for this: The first is the lack of agricultural productivity. Higher real incomes produce lower poverty, as does greater real income. Traditional farming techniques are still used in the agricultural sector, resulting in low production and, therefore, poverty. Furthermore, land and other assets are not equally distributed; land and other assets comprise the major source of income for rural residents. Operating holdings, as measured by size, are concentrated among a few farmers, resulting in widespread poverty for the rest of the population. Nearly 800 million Indians are considered poor. Many of them live in the countryside and work odd jobs to make ends meet. In rural areas, there is a lack of jobs paying a reasonable salary, so Indians flock to rapidly rising metropolises such as Bombay, Delhi, Bangalore, and Calcutta. Many of them expect a life of poverty and despair in the mega-slums, which are made up of millions of corrugated ironworks and lack clean drinking water, garbage disposal, and electricity. Poor sanitary conditions cause diseases such as cholera, typhus, and dysentery, and children, in particular, suffer and die from these conditions.

Inequality and Marginalization

'To be marginalized is to be put on the edges, and hence excluded from the privilege and power found at the center,' according to the Encyclopaedia of Public Health. "'Marginality' is so completely humiliating, for economic well-being, human dignity, and physical security," Latin remarks. Members of the dominant society will always be able to identify marginalized groups, and they will endure irreversible prejudice." According to the World Inequality Report 2022, India is a "poor and severely unequal country with an affluent elite," with the top 10% holding 57 percent of total national income, including 22 percent held by the top 1%, and the bottom 50% holding only 13 percent in 2021 Improved Agricultural Land Access and the State's Active Role in Planning Improved Capital Access Employment in the public and private sectors has improved.

Hunger, Malnutrition, and Stunting

Despite its remarkable economic progress in recent decades, India is home to one-third of the world's hungry children. The latest Global Hunger Index rankings show that India continues to trail behind its poorer neighbors, especially Pakistan and Bangladesh, on several child nutrition measures. On the index, India is placed 101st out of 116 countries. Early childhood malnutrition has a long-term deleterious influence on health and education. It also has financial ramifications for both the children and the communities in which they live. As a result, India urgently requires measures to combat childhood malnutrition. According to new research, providing more animal-sourced and vitamin A-rich meals to early Indian children will help lower malnutrition rates. Ownership of livestock and participation in the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program may help promote such dietary changes.

According to the latest round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS 2019-20), more than half of Indian states have seen a rise in child stunting (children who are too short for their age), and more than two-thirds have seen an increase in child underweight in the last five years (children too thin for age). The table below indicates which of India's 22 states has done the best and which has done the worst in combating child stunting and underweight. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on Indian children's nutrition outcomes in the last two years.

Poor Healthcare System

One of India's most important issues is a chronic shortage of medically qualified personnel, which includes doctors, nurses, paramedics, and primary healthcare workers. Rural areas, which account for over 66 percent of India's population, remain a source of concern. The doctor-to-patient ratio is still at an all-time low of 0.7 doctors per 1,000 people. In comparison, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 2.5 doctors per 1,000 people are needed. This is a long-term procedure that will take time to improve.

In India, current healthcare difficulties range from infrastructural issues to flagrant incompetence in the hospital administration's bureaucratic system. Let's look at a few of the more pressing ones, such as infrastructure concerns, child death rates, and unmanageable patient loads.

Health systems and regulations have a crucial role in determining how health services are delivered, utilized, and affect health outcomes. India's healthcare system is in shambles, but there is a glimmer of optimism and progress in the country's healthcare education.

Little or No Access to Clean Water

India is the world's second-most populous country, with a population of 1.38 billion people. More than 6% of the population lacks access to safe drinking water, while around 15% of India's population defecates in the open. It has been dubbed "India's worst water catastrophe" by the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog). According to the 2018 Composite Water Management Index (CWMI), by 2050, 6% of economic GDP will be lost, and by 2030, water demand will surpass available supply. Food security is also jeopardized due to severe water constraints in areas where wheat and rice are grown.

Lack of Education and Infrastructure

Some of the country's most difficult difficulties are population growth, teacher shortages, book shortages, and basic facility limitations, as well as a lack of public finances to support education costs. This is where India's children face their most fundamental obstacles. According to a report, higher education receives more than 30% of educational funds, leaving primary education in India in jeopardy. India is fourth among the top ten countries with the most out-of-school children in elementary school. Furthermore, the number of pupils that drop out of school is extremely high. Poverty is one of the key reasons behind this. Education is seen as a high-priced luxury among India's poor, and this unfavorable attitude is passed down from generation to generation. In India, girls account for a disproportionately large proportion of total out-of-school children. Serious socio-economic challenges arising from caste, class, and gender differences prevent children from having equal chances. Child labor in India and opposition to sending girls to school in certain sections of the country continue to be serious challenges. Millions of impoverished children will almost certainly never enter a classroom if the current pattern continues. Between the ages of 6 and 14, less than half of India's youngsters attend school. A little more than one-third of all first-graders make it to eighth grade. At least 35 million youngsters between the ages of 6 and 14 do not go to school. In the age bracket of 5 to 9 years, 53% of females are illiterate. Only 53% of Indian households have access to a primary school. Only 20% of Indian households have access to a secondary school.

Despite having the world's second-largest pool of internet users, half of India's population does not have access to the internet. In India, more than 55,000 villages are still without cellphone service. To genuinely profit from the digital revolution, India should investigate the possibility of establishing a national digital institution that will support digital infrastructure investments, forge strategic relationships with the private sector, and bridge the digital divide. In isolated rural areas, India needs to improve last-mile connectivity. As with some traditional infrastructure projects, PPP principles could be applied in the construction of digital infrastructure. Traditional government infrastructure assets, such as post offices and other structures, could be utilized to provide digital services.

India and Japan have partnered to improve infrastructure in India's northeastern states, as well as establishing an India-Japan Coordination Forum for Northeast Development to carry out important infrastructure projects in the region.

Poverty Alleviation Programmes/Schemes

Since the 1980s, India has implemented several programs and initiatives to provide work to the impoverished so that they might earn a daily salary. Recent poverty-reduction efforts in the last decade include:

- **National Rural Livelihood Mission: Ajeevika (2011):** This program was started in 2011 by the Ministry of Rural Development. Its goal is to create jobs that will enable rural impoverished people to earn a stable monthly income. In order to accomplish this, self-help groups are developed in the communities to assist individuals who are in need.

- **The Fight Hunger First Initiative (FHFI) Program (2011):** It is frequently observed that, despite the establishment of several programs and schemes to assist those in need, the assets do not reach those who are most in need, whether due to exploitation, a lack of awareness, or other factors. The government launched the Fight Hunger First project in 2011 to strengthen

community access to entitlements and rights provided by government programs like employment, child nutrition, basic education, and food supplies. FHFI seeks to support and help the community and grass-root organizations in activating the Indian authorities to provide minimum social support in the sectors mentioned above.

- **Food Security Bill (2013)**: The Food Security Bill was introduced in Parliament in 2011 and became law on September 12, 2013, making it one of the world's largest food security programs. Beneficiaries will receive 5 kilograms of grains per person every month under the rules of this law, with rice costing Rs. 3 per kilogramme, wheat costing Rs. 2 per kilogram, and coarse grains costing Rs. 1 per kilogramme. The bill proposes meal entitlement for certain categories, including pregnant and nursing mothers, children aged six months to fourteen years, malnourished youngsters, disaster victims, and the impoverished, homeless, and famished.

- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna (2015):** The Cabinet launched this scheme in March 2015 with an overlay of Rs 1120 crore to give skill training to 1.4 million youth. Through the National Skill Development Ankuran Alok, this is done in collaboration with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. In India, there is a poverty problem. It caters to X and XII dropouts and focuses on assisting newcomers into the labor market.

Conclusion

Poverty is primarily a social function, as previously mentioned. The reason for this assertion is that Justice B.P. Jeevan Reddy, who was a key figure in the Mandal case, the case in which 27 percent of the jobs in the central government were reserved for other backward classes, maintains backwardness is primarily social. The reason a person may be viewed as backward is dependent on caste, occupation, and other factors, but one should not judge someone based on their social position. Justice B.P. Jeevan Reddy was right in his decision in the Ashok Kumar

Thakur case in 2008. The way to eradicate poverty from society is not to rely on economic means, but rather on the active participation of the community in a manner that changes historical injustices and leads the poor, irrespective of their caste or creed, to take advantage of all opportunities made available to them by the state and society. Bringing the impoverished into the mainstream of progress, and thus ensuring their value to the nation, is the only way the poor can contribute to progress.

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