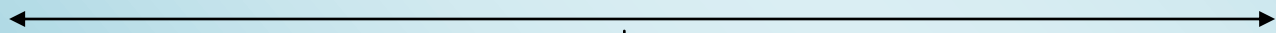


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## POVERTY: CURSE OF HUMANITY

**DR. AMIT BHOWMICK**

Assistant Professor & HOD, Department of Sociology, Nur Mohammad Smriti College,  
Dhuliyān, Murshidabad, West Bengal

### POVERTY: MEANING & CONCEPT

The meaning of poverty is not that easy as several factors minutely related to poverty, though it seems to be very easy task in general, but many differences are observed in the opinions of various sociologists about the poverty with the change of place and time. Sometimes the concept of poverty changes in variation of time, and places. When the economical status of a nation changes, especially with the advancement of economy, the concept of poverty also changes accordingly. In general the indication of poverty may be the inability of an individual to meet with the bare minimum need for survival, included with foods, cloths and shelter. In this case emphasis is made upon the lowest line of poverty for a man to live on. Poverty exists, when one is not able to get sufficient food and necessities of life. Poverty is in general understood by material deprivation, living with low income and low consumption, primarily a condition of poor nutrition and poor living conditions of human being. However, family income plays a vital role in deciding poverty, as it is directly concerned with health and education levels which may be the cause or the result of low income. The concept of poverty differs with the change of location or country. Sometimes idea of poverty of the same place changes in change of time. India represents a dichotomy in development. It ranks nineteenth in world industrial production and twelfth in total gross national production (GNP), yet it has a large population that is extremely poor. In case of real gross domestic product (GDP), in purchasing power parity terms India ranks 134<sup>th</sup> among 174 countries. But, in terms of real GDP per capita, India ranks 141<sup>th</sup>, Pakistan is 100<sup>th</sup> and China is 123<sup>th</sup> (Outlook, February 14, 1996). In U.S.A. a person earning 2000 dollars a month will be called poor, where as in India a person earning Rs. 500 a month will be called poor. Sociologist, Thomas Gladwin, in his book named as “poverty”, has emphasized upon the inequality, to explain poverty. Inability to raise voice against social institutions, powerlessness to improve one’s living conditions, social deprivations in case of high vulnerability in adverse situations etc. may be the reasons associated with poverty and income of a family in a society. So, poverty is considered to be a problem only when obvious differences are seen in economic status, among the members of any society, comparing the evaluations of those differences are made.

### DEFINITION OF POVERTY:

It is very difficult to give a true definition of poverty so as to arrive at a clear understanding of poverty and its causes, and make a comprehensive policy so as to eradicate poverty completely from the society. John L Gillin asserted that poverty may be regarded as “that condition in which a person either because of inadequate income or unwise expenditures, does not maintain a scale of living high enough to provide for his physical and mental efficiency and to enable him and his natural dependants to function usually according to the standards of society of which he is a member.” Prof. R. Dutta & K. P. M. Sundharam, in their book “Indian Economy” defined

poverty as that “Poverty can be defined as a social phenomenon in which a section of the society is unable to fulfill even its basic necessities of life.” As Goddard puts it, “Poverty is insufficient supply of those things which are requisite for an individual to maintain himself and those dependants upon him in health and vigour” In the words of Adam Smith, “A man is rich or poor according to the degree in which he can afford to enjoy the necessities, the conveniences and amusements of life.”

### **POVERTY AND ITS TYPES:**

From the above discussions, it is important and wise to remember that there are differences between absolute poverty and relative poverty. In case of relative poverty, it is the differences between the rich and the poor, where poor people are deprived of wealth in compare to the rich people. But, in case of absolute poverty there is no comparison made between rich and poor, in this case the poor people cannot earn and meet the bare minimum need to fulfill daily life. Other than this, we come across a type of poverty which is the state of below poverty line, which is most critical state of poverty, seems to be a complete curse to be a member of human society.

### **FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR POVERTY:**

Gillin listed three factors as primarily responsible for poverty.

- Incapacity of the individuals, which may be due to a faulty heredity or to the environment.
- Unfavourable physical conditions, such as poor natural resources, and climate and weather, and epidemics.
- Maldistribution of wealth and imperfect functioning of our economic institutions. Of these three factors the last two factors are primarily responsible for poverty in India.

Berstein Henry (1992) has identified the following dimension of poverty:

- Lack of livelihood strategies.
- Inaccessibility to resources (money, land, credit).
- Feeling of insecurity and frustrations.
- Inability to maintain social relations with others as a consequence of lack of resources.

As per Ram Ahuja, three concepts are often used to define poverty:

- The amount of money required by a person to subsist.
- The life below a minimum subsistence level, and living standard prevalent at a given time in a given place.
- The comparative state of well-being of a few and the derivational impoverishment of the majority in society. The last approach explains poverty in terms of relativity and inequality. Whereas the first two

definitions refer to the economic concept of absolute poverty, the third definition views it as a social concept, in terms of the share of total national income received by those at bottom.

### **Views on Minimum Economic Requirement for a Man to Live on:**

As per this view it is seen that the poverty line varies in relation to economic situation of a man in the society. The status of poverty line is decided on the basis of some required economic values. These requirements are broadly considered as physical health, ability, nourishment of children, defending self respect and social participation. But, in reality poverty line is decided on the basis of bare minimum requirement of commodities or calories for survival of a man. Sometimes the line of poverty is decided on the basis of minimum employment requirement. From this angle of view poverty is an inability to fulfill the physical need of the people and such necessities are food, nutrition, shelter and physical health. To buy such services one need to have a secure employment which varies as per the change of places and that is quite natural. In India poverty is decided on the basis of calorie intake by an adult. The minimum calorie requirement of a physical worker in India, in village area is 2,400, and in urban area it is 2,100 calorie- and what is called as the poverty line in respect to food calorie requirement. The minimum expenditure in terms of money required to buy such food calorie is to be called as minimum food expenditure. The people who cannot meet this need are called poor. As per the planning commission report in 1960-61 Rs.20 was poverty line food expenditure for village people and for urban people it was Rs.25. In 1978-79 it was Rs.76 in village and Rs.88 in urban area. In 1984-85, Rs.107 and Rs. 122 in 1993-94 Rs.229 and Rs.264 respectively. In 1996-97, 29% people were living below the poverty line as per the planning commission reports.

### **Views on Minimum Living Standard in certain Time and Place:**

In this type, the idea of economy of absolute poverty is discussed. In general in this, it is pointed out about the bare minimum food, required shelter for living, cloths, education and health. Three directions have been taken care of in this opinion.

- Relieve from physical labor, hunger and requirement of shelter etc. are mostly emphasized in this.
- Maintaining a good health by intake of proper food items is taken care of, in this case.
- Minimum most requirements are important for a human being to live in.

### **Views on Comfortability of a few, and Difficulties of many in the Society:**

In this, the standard of living is very important. Living standard is a deciding criterion of poverty in every society, on which poverty factor is depended. As per this thinking everything is very essential, which are required to live a peaceful life, and not being in a position to fulfill all those need is to be called a state of poverty. This is infarct a comparison between the upper class and the lower class of people living in a particular society. Social scientist, Harrington has rightly explained regarding this. As per his opinion everyone in this society has certain believes and values, based on these aspects and on the contemporary technological development, every requirement of an individual will have certain standard of living, food intake, health and education. Deprivation against these needs leads a man to face poverty.

## CAUSES OF POVERTY:

**(01):** By many thinkers, one particular cause is always emphasized upon, and as matter of facts there are numerous causes of poverty, and are at the same time complex in nature. Some of the causes are when personal in nature, while others are of geographical, social and economic. It is still a debate about the appropriateness of task of analysis of poverty - whether it is the task of a sociologist or of an economist.

**(02):** As far as India is concerned, ours is a country which is rich in natural resources, but we could not yet exploit them properly, as still a vast area of land remained uncultivated. Other than this, our traditional style of cultivation may be the reason, for what the production rate is very low. As our industries are not well developed, a vast majority of people depends upon agriculture alone. In addition to this, our wealth is not equally distributed because of poor system of economic planning. Reason being, materials are sometimes wasted, when many are living without food.

**(03):** Poverty itself is a cause when a poor man does not have anything to eat, and inadequate diet makes him physically weak and reduces his efficiency to do the work, and this way, his income is reduced. For the same reason he cannot progress in his life and remains in the same position of poverty.

**(04):** People of under developed countries are not in a position to go for a high income, as the income is very low, there will be very low savings, and level of investment will also be very low, which indicates lesser availability of machinery and equipments in the economy. At the same time the productivity will be low, which results low income, and this system goes on continuously and thus creates a vicious cycle of poverty.

**(05):** Ill health can be one of the reasons due to that a man is unable to work and his income decreases, or major portion of his income is spent in curing. This way when poverty increases, sickness increases, and when sickness increases, poverty increases again because of insufficient nutrition.

**(06):** Accident may be another cause of poverty. When an earning member of a family meet an accident, the income of the family totally stops, and faces poverty either temporarily or permanently. It appears as sudden threat to the poor family life. Poor families do not have proper planning to support any emergency.

**(07):** Mental breakdown is also a serious cause of poverty, for what a man become incapable of doing any job, and faces poverty. Sometimes mental problems makes a man mentally imbalance to continue his social life, and insanity continues which causes poverty.

**(08):** A man who is illiterate cannot get a good job, and earn very less money and face poverty, and on other hand many a person remain illiterate because of poverty. Illiteracy makes a man inefficient to thing in a right way to earn his livelihood. A man who is illiterate cannot have good managerial power to utilize his skill and efficiency to earn money.

**(09):** There are many persons who are so lazy that though there are plenty of job opportunities, and they remain poor. If someone earns little more money, his tendency is not to work for the rest of day, thinking the day will pass easily with the money already earned. Now when in case of any urgency, like medical illness etc. cannot be managed very easily and go for loan which becomes extra burden to pay.

**(10):** Emotion and demoralization both are some of the causes of poverty in the society, evil habits like tacking liquor, gambling, prostitution etc. In these cases people are demotivated towards the ill habits and expense much money and invite poverty.

**(11):** Because of improper family planning people go for number of children and unable to provide sufficient support to bring up their children, and face poverty. The number of children should be in fact according to the family income and expenditure.

**(12):** When an earning member of a family died prematurely, then the entire family members faces poverty. The family members pass a painful life in want of money to pull on the family for the later period of their life. Unfortunately, in India, people are not yet much educated about the life insurance policies, and there is no government policy for pension for the businessmen or self employed persons.

**(13):** Unwise and improper planning in family expenditure may cause poverty for a family. Proper management of family expenditure is not taken care of because of deficiency of knowledge about home management.

**(14):** If the weather and climate of place is not favorable or friendly, then it adversely effects the production of any industry, as well as production in agriculture. Extremely hot or cold weather thus reduces the whole production system, and because of that people face poverty.

**(15):** Natural calamities are many times responsible for poverty, Because of flood or earth quake people loss their wealth and agricultural properties. Sometimes heavy or less rainfall causes serious damage to the agricultural production, and people face poverty.

**(16):** Incase of absence of natural resources, like minerals, water, and suitable land. Many people who depend upon these resources face poverty; especially the people who reside in desert, hilly area suffer from extreme poverty.

**(17):** There are many countries in the world, which are though economically developed, but because of unequal distribution of food and wealth, many people become the pray of poverty. Sometimes, because of the above reason, rich remain rich, and poor remain poor, especially in capitalist economy.

**(18):** When, in case of people living only on agricultural production, come across various kinds of problems, like unscientific production process, insufficient pesticides, insecticides, fertilizers etc. Superstitions by land owners also cause the farmers to face poverty.

**(19):** Sometimes because of unwise or improper economic policy become the reasons for poverty to increase. At this stage it is also important to note that illiteracy plays a vital role in deciding the good or bad for making family policy for its better supports from all corners. People should thus plan and act perfectly to get rid of their poverty.

**(20):** Unemployment is a big problem for the educated youth now-a-days. People do not get proper employment as per their skills, ability, experience and qualification, and which lead them to poverty. Increase in the population because of high birth rate and low death rate are also directly responsible unemployment and ultimately for poverty.

(21): A huge number of people in India, who are either homeless or living in unhygienic conditions, like slums on footpaths. This causes them to face health problems and faces many diseases. These unhealthy and frustrated people continuously became the pray of poverty.

(22): The education system in India is also responsible for poverty. There are huge number of educated people who are not employed as per their qualifications and quality. Job opportunity is very less in India. Where there is no proper system of job guaranty after completion of education. High cost of education is a big constrain in India for higher education, many are not in position to bear the cost of education for their children, and tries to curtail other expenditure of the family, which may lead to poverty at the end.

(23): Evil customs and traditions are among many reasons of poverty in India. Though people are putting sufficient efforts to earn their livelihood, but evil customs and traditions, like dowry systems in marriages, early marriage etc. make people to lag behind in the race of economical status.

(24): Improper training and management are other reasons of poverty in our country. Many people in India face poverty for the above reasons. Women, who are engaged in home management, are not trained in the field of home science, reason being the family suffers from poverty.

(25): Because of insufficient facilities of medical treatment, many people are not in a position to cure their diseases permanently, or they suffer from prolong disease, which lead them to physical inability, and at the end they face poverty.

(26): After the war is over, many people become refugees, which cause them heavy loss of their properties. Some of the people's fate becomes undecided about their citizenship for a long time. They in that case have to struggle a lot to start a new social life, in a new country. Most of them face extreme poverty in want of proper food, cloth and shelter.

(27): Sometimes evil social believes lead to poverty. People start believing the opinion of astrologers, *tantric* and religious preachers blindly. They loss their self confidence, and start depending on blind faith and lead an idle life, which causes them poverty.

### **POVERTY ALLEVIATION MEASURES:**

The reasons behind the poverty are different in nature, and many in numbers. The main reason is economic under development. The measures to alleviate the poverty may be of two folds, and they are described as follow:

(01) To reduce poverty completely from the society, it is important to reduce discriminations of financial imbalances from the society, by increasing overall financial development of the country. This way the exchanges will increase, and once exchanges increase, there will be an enhancement of job opportunities, and thus poverty can be reduced up to a certain extent. It is also to be noted that, there should be balances of opportunities that should be made available indiscriminately. There should particular types of economy which will provide supply of all required items of daily needs, including food, clothes and shelter. It is necessary that, corrective measures to be taken to generate employment opportunities.



### **Equal distribution to maintain a balance between Income and Expenditure:**

It is very important for a country to look forward to maintain a balance between the income and expenditure properly. The differences between these two aspects are to be reduced as far as possible. The corrective measures, towards the alleviation of poverty should be long term perspective with a vision of high achievement. The various areas, which are directly or indirectly associated with poverty, should be given priority, and a highest utilization of all the areas should be made possible to achieve the objectives. These measures may be as follow:

- a. To reduce unemployment.
- b. Process to reduce labor, with implementation of modern machine and tools.
- c. Overall development of agriculture, combining with its support services.
- d. Production of daily need items up to a height, more suitable to meet the requirement. At the same time distribution system also to be upgraded.
- e. It is also important to reduce the rate of items, which are of mandatory requirements.
- f. Reduction in disparity between income and wealth, which is also important to implement through taxation system.
- g. Check and control is required over population growth.
- h. Improvement of education system, and extension of the same to benefit maximum people.
- i. Health care and medical facilities should be improved such a way that it can be utilized for the benefits of all.
- j. Rate of development of economy should be improved up to a greater height for all round benefits of the people.
- k. Measures to improve the conditions of the slum dwellers.

### **CONCLUSION:**

To conclude, it is important to say that, to eradicate poverty from society, the whole planning system related to it should be changed. It is also to be seen that bureaucracy itself should take initiative in real sense to alleviate poverty. The negative tendencies of those, who are entrusted with the responsibilities, are another reason for difficulties towards the poverty eradication programmes. Almost all the programmes related to the poverty alleviation have not been taken seriously, in the initial stage itself, or sometimes, because of divergent opinions, it is not at all implemented.

So, the difference between the government agency and the local powers required to be broken immediately for easy and early implementation, and greater effect. A basic change in infrastructure is an urgent requirement, which is a big constrained toward poverty alleviation measures. If necessary, that can be rebuilt to

achieve the coveted goal. Power of administrations can be distributed to the beneficiaries for its optimum use. Otherwise poverty alleviation will remain as a dream unsuccessful, and as an evil in the society.

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