

History of Beggars in India: A Sociological Perspective

Sharanappa¹, Dr. Veerendra Kumar N²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Vijayanagara Sri Krishnadevaraya University Ballari-Karnataka.

²Ass. Professor Department of Sociology Vijayanagara Sri Krishnadevaraya University Ballari-Karnataka.

ABSTRACT:

“Begging, a social scourge, has become a relatively common profession in India. This study History of Beggars in India with considerable social and economic consequences. The phenomenon of begging is often viewed through the lens of poverty. Begging and beggars are two different concepts. Begging is the act of asking someone for money, goods, food, and other things. India has the largest population in the world; the Varna institution and the joint family system have had important bearing on the problem of beggary in ancient India. According to Dr. Murthy, the former "defined the scope and methods of mendicancy, distributed the social burden of poor relief and prevented hap hazard and promiscuous begging", Today, not only has beggary increased in its magnitude but also become a major concern for the society as well as the economy. Studies have shown that beggary is not an isolated phenomenon but an amalgamation of many background problems such as poverty, if one ever walks by the roads of an Indian city, one can find thousands of people sleeping on the footpaths with the street dogs. We judge them at a very quick glance, but we do not have the proper answer to why they beg India has no central law on beggars. Though anti-begging laws are there in most of the states and Union Territories. This beggar community is huge in India; this large community consists of orphans, children, old age people, unemployed people, folk singers, transgender and others. The good number of beggars in a country shows its high poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and inequality. Criminalising or prohibiting begging is not a solution to the problem, but it is important to look deep into the causes of begging and work on them. Through the present study an attempt has been made to focus on the types of physical disability of beggars reasons for getting into begging profession daily earring of beggars in India. Study of the historical profile of beggars in India. To analyse of the demographic profile of beggars in the study. To identify of the challenges faced by beggars in the study.

KEYWORDS: Beggars, religion. Society, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy.

INTRODUCTION:

“Begging, a social scourge, has become a relatively common profession in India. Begging is not considered a subject of highly academic analysis so far in countries like India; it is taken as a usual street side social challenge like prostitution, or vending. Thus, the definition and theorization of the same is not yet properly done. There are two simple solutions to begging in practice, either begging is accepted or begging is criminalised. The books of history generally

bypass the topic with short paragraphs. If we need to seek the naked description of begging and the personal emotions and feelings of the people suffering from this social disease, we need to deep dive into the contemporary literary representations of begging and have a comparative study with history. From an academic viewpoint, beggars can be considered as a symbolic subject of study. As a tangible expression of contemporary poverty, the begging phenomenon can highlight social, economic, cultural and structural inequalities. Begging has been analyzed through a range of methods and lenses, including human rights, history. Those who are involved in this act are known as beggars. They are asking someone for a favour to fulfil their basic needs such as food, clothes, water, and other things. Beggars are that part of the poorer society where they are unable to fulfill their basic needs. However, in recent, if someone is begging, it does not mean that they have no medium to fulfil their basic need. But it is very interesting in recent times that begging has also become a profession for most of the beggars. Begging is one of the most visible forms of poverty and social exclusion in India. According to 2011 census, there are 413670 beggars and vagrants are live in India. The definition proposed by the Census of India offers some contrasting points with this legal definition. Beggars are primarily defined as non-workers, namely economically unproductive during the year preceding the date of enumeration. The census provides several clarifications.

Beggary might be the consequence of adverse economic condition or distress. But, poverty alone cannot be held responsible because all those who live on poverty line do not take to beggary. A man begs not only when he is poor but also when he is unemployed or underemployed. Another cause of beggary is social disorders like the breakdown of joint family, anomie, cultural conflict, community disorganization, faulty socialization etc. generally sociological studies and researches have centered round such causal enquiries and often suggested measures for managing the problem of beggary within the existing socio-economic. The natural calamities such as earthquakes, flood, tsunami, hurricane and drought compel people to leave homes, leaving everything behind them and under circumstances of immediate needs, the persons who are unable to find work feel compelled to beg to save themselves from starvation and death. India's traditional method of charity which is enjoined by religion keeps him both alive and mobile.

This article takes this relationship between sociological research on the beggar and concepts of citizenship a step further by arguing that the set out in 1950s India, shaped sociological approaches to poverty and the enjoyment of civic rights or projection of duties. In this discourse, the prerequisite for the enjoyment of rights was the absence of forms of absolute poverty, represented in the figure of the beggar. Beggary is a symptom of social disorganization and the widespread custom of alms-giving by individuals and institutions by which the disability, helplessness or social inadequacy of the beggars has been sought to be mitigated in India. Begging generates various reactions from people; some see it as a sign of poverty and lack of services including affordable housing for marginalized groups. Governments have not taken this problem seriously and measures taken by government are adequate and effective, although initiatives taken by some NGOs are proved successful, which show that if adequate and effective measures should be taken, then rehabilitation of beggars can be done successfully. Most of the Indians consider it a moral duty to give charity, but any intelligent man can easily appreciate the fact that giving the charity amounts to uphold the this social and moral cancer, i.e. 'beggary' in the society. Beggary cannot be uprooted from our society, unless we stop encouraging beggary. Begging flourishes because the community tends to be generous to beggars. If we seriously consider the social and moral aspects of beggary, we should not offer the charity to beggars. There are many ways to these most

marginalized section of the society and bring them to main stream of society. Considering these facts, researchers have conducted a study to analyse the need of people's participation in eliminating beggary. As per the definition of Mysore Prohibition of Beggary Act, 1954, "Beggary contains wandering from door to door, soliciting alms, exhibiting or exposing sores, wounds, bodily ailments or deformities, or making false pretence of them for exciting pity for securing alms".

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

- Mukharjee (1945) in his study viewed that beggary as an indicator of social instability. He analyse that most of the people beg because they are poor, unemployed, disabled, or have no family support. Kumarappa (1945) also found that begging is a big issue and its proper solution can be possible through only government action.
- Thakker et al. (2007) conducted study socio-demographic variables and assessed the psychiatric morbidity and distress among the inmates of 'Beggar Home'. The Subjects were 49 inmates of Beggar Home situated in India. The study also revealed the high scores on GHQ among the beggars suffering from the psychiatric illness.
- Khan et al. (2013) conducted an in-depth case study on the socio-economic status of beggars in Aligarh district, Uttar Pradesh. The study revealed that poverty, unemployment, inadequate housing, lack of access to basic amenities like water, electricity, sanitation, and unavailability of ration cards were the predominant causes of beggary in the study area. This study emphasized the urgent need for targeted welfare schemes and vocational training to uplift the socio-economic status of beggars.
- People's Union for Civil Liberties, Bangalore Chapter (2011) conducted a simple Public Beggary Survey in Bangalore city during Jan-Feb 2011 to assess the public perception and to some extent build awareness on the issue of beggary. Results of the survey revealed that people strongly favored a more responsible and humane role by the government towards beggars. Study suggested that the legal framework for dealing with the poorest in the society needs to be re-written to be more facilitative in nature, directed towards providing for their basic needs and health care, with provisions for rehabilitation and integration, and a life of dignity for all.
- Bhikshavratti Mukti Abhiyan (2015), mission engaged in Rehabilitation of beggars and Education for all, has made many successful attempts to rehabilitate and assist the beggars to start a dignitary means of earning. In June 2015, this mission has helped 205 beggars to get Ration Card and assisted to make Aadhar card for another 100 beggars further to get pension under social schemes of UP Government
- Pandey (2015) termed the beggary as social stigma. While speaking at Samajik Samaveshan Sabha at Dr. Shakuntala Mishra National Rehabilitation University, Lucknow on 28 April 2015, Eminent Social activist Dr. Sandeep Pandey told that beggary is a stigma in our society. He insisted for effective and honorable measures to be adopted by government and civil societies to rehabilitate beggars.
- Patel (2016) reported the peril condition Beggars' home in Lucknow city. He reported that with the annual budget of app. Rs. 50 lakh, the physical and managerial condition of the beggars' home is so pitiable that none of beggar is rehabilitated since 2010.
- Badlav (2016) has initiated to provide medical help to beggars having poor health or physically handicapped. In course of action 20 beggars were taken to KGMC, Lucknow get treatment. Apart from these, 13 beggars were rehabilitated successfully by helping to start small business.

- Malarvizhi and Geetha (2016) [10] conducted a comprehensive study on the socio-economic issues of beggars in Coimbatore City. The study revealed that beggary is not only a result of poverty, but also due to illiteracy, unemployment, family disintegration, illness, and lack of care. The study identified that beggars faced many challenges such as harassment from municipal authorities, fellow beggars, and exposure to health hazards. This study also found that most beggars were unaware of their rights and unable to access government welfare schemes. Beggars have only voter IDs and ration cards. They recommended providing shelter, employment opportunities, healthcare, and awareness programs to improve the livelihoods of beggars.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To study of the historical profile of beggars in India.
- To analyse of the demographic profile of beggars in the study.
- To identify of the challenges faced by beggars in the study.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN:

This research is based on both quantitative and qualitative data. Due to a lack of accurate statistical information on the beggar population in India. The present study is mainly qualitative in nature and exploratory cum action research design is used to find out the effective methods to eliminate the beggary the begging after implementation of action plan adopted to eliminate beggary and rehabilitating them through a dignitary means of earning.

HISTORY OF BAGGERS IN INDIA:

According to Census of India 2011, there were 413670 beggars and vagrants in India which declined to 6, 27,688 in 2001. In spite of, 20 States and 2 Union Territories of India i.e. Begging is defined in Indian law as soliciting or receiving alms in public place by exposing wound, injury, deformity or disease whether of himself or of any other person or animal. It is the practice of imploring others to grant a favor, often a gift of money, with little or no expectation of reciprocation. Begging employs about hundred thousand men, women and children with revenue of Rs 180 crore, as per 2001 census. Despite India's rapid economic growth in recent years poverty and begging in India are still big problems. The poverty is real and people beg because they do not have any alternative. Elderly, crippled, patients, single mothers and children fall in this category. However, begging is quite often carried out in organized gangs. It is most prevalent at tourist places. This includes important monuments, railway stations, religious and spiritual sites, shopping areas and traffic intersections. The beggars are also often quite persistent. People are often approached by a child or woman with a baby for credibility. The baby is often rented for begging. Beggars can be very professional. They guard and fight over territories. Some beggars also use religion as for common people a beggar seeking alms is an opportunity to earn God's blessings. Beggars carry photographs of various deities while asking for alms. Others promise to organize a prayer from the money collected. The transvestites apply fashionable cosmetics, wear female clothes, acquire artificial feminine postures and dance.

Governments in India have not taken this problem seriously probably because giving and seeking alms has the sanction of various religions in India. Begging was first declared a crime in British India in 1920, and the law was updated as the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act in 1959, and extended to other States including Delhi. This law provides for the jailing up to three years in special "beggars' courts",

which can be extended to ten years in case of second and repeated “offences”. Under this law seeking of alms, was deemed an offence including by singing, dancing, fortune-telling, performing or offering any article for sale. The definition included those having no visible means of subsistence. Thus it made destitution a crime, punishable by incarceration. Since many beggars suffer from leprosy and mental illness, it implicitly criminalizes these ailments as well. Begging has been restricted or prohibited in many countries to preserve public order or to induce people to work rather than to beg. The welfare state of the 20th century greatly reduced the number of beggars by directly providing for the basic necessities of the poor from state funds in the developed world. Aggressive panhandling or persistent or intimidating begging has been specifically prohibited by law in various jurisdictions in the United States and Canada.

1954, “Begging contains wandering from door to door, soliciting alms, exhibiting or exposing sores, wounds, bodily ailments or deformities, or making false pretence of them for exciting pity for securing alms” As for the legal definition of a beggar, it can be traced back to the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959 which defines this as anyone, “having no visible means of subsistence and pleading for or receiving alms in communal places where or not under any relevance such singing, dancing, fortune - telling performing tricks and selling articles, exposing or exhibiting any sore, of the purpose of obtaining or exhorting alms. Further it also defines begging to mean exposing or exhibiting, with the entity of gaining or extract alms, any painful, wound, injury, deformity or disease whether of a human being or beast

BEGGING ACROSS THE STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES OF INDIA, 2011

STATES	NUMBER OF BEGGARS			BEGGARS PER 100,000 POPULATION		
	PERSONS	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	56	22	34	15	11	19
Andhra Pradesh	30218	16264	13954	36	38	33
Arunachal Pradesh	114	59	55	8	8	8
Assam	22116	7269	14847	71	46	97
Bihar	29723	14842	14881	29	27	30
Chandigarh	121	87	34	11	15	7
Chhattisgarh	10198	4995	5203	40	39	41
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	19	7	12	6	4	8
Daman & Diu	22	15	7	9	10	8
Delhi	2187	1343	844	13	15	11
Goa	247	131	116	17	18	16
Gujarat	13445	8549	4896	22	27	17
Haryana	8682	6504	2178	34	48	18
Himachal Pradesh	809	504	305	12	14	9
Jammu & Kashmir	4134	2550	1584	33	38	27
Jharkhand	10819	5522	5297	33	33	33
Karnataka	12270	6436	5834	20	21	19
Kerala	4023	2397	1626	12	15	9

Lakshadweep	2	0	2	3	0	6
Madhya Pradesh	28695	17506	11169	40	47	32
Maharashtra	24307	14020	10287	22	24	19
Manipur	53	33	20	5	6	4
Meghalaya	396	172	224	13	12	15
Mizoram	53	33	20	5	6	4
Nagaland	124	65	59	6	6	4
Odisha	17965	9981	7984	43	47	38
Puducherry	99	54	45	8	9	7
Punjab	7939	5197	2742	29	35	21
Rajasthan	25853	15271	10582	38	43	32
Sikkim	68	46	22	11	14	8
Tamil Nadu	6814	3789	3025	9	10	8
Tripura	1490	607	883	41	32	49
Uttar Pradesh	65835	41589	23976	33	40	25
Uttarakhand	3320	2374	946	33	46	19
West Bengal	81244	33086	48158	89	71	108
India	413670	221673	191997	34	36	33

CONCLUSION:

This study highlights the complex socio-economic realities of beggars at the India. Begging here stems not just from poverty but from long-standing marginalization, illiteracy, and limited access to welfare schemes. The presence of children and youth in begging signals deeper systemic failure. Despite temporary arrangements during the Mela, beggars continue to face exploitation. Addressing this issue, there is requires sustaining government efforts through targeted education, employment opportunities, social security programs, and rehabilitation initiatives to ensure long-term inclusion for this vulnerable section of society.

Studies have shown that beggary is not an isolated phenomenon but an amalgamation of many background problems such as poverty, if one ever walks by the roads of an Indian citys, one can find thousands of people sleeping on the footpaths with the street dogs. We judge them at a very quick glance, but we do not have the proper answer to why they beg India has no central law on beggars. Though anti-begging laws are there in most of the states and Union Territories. This beggar community is huge in India; this large community consists of orphans, children, old age people, unemployed people, folk singers, transgender and others. The good number of beggars in a country shows its high poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and inequality. Criminalising or prohibiting begging is not a solution to the problem, but it is important to look deep into the causes of begging and work on them.

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