



SELF-RELIANT INDIA THROUGH REHABILITATION OF BEGGARS: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

India is among the world's biggest democracies. Beggars have been omnipresent in all stages of civilisation and society. Begging has been a traditional profession in India since ancient times. The holistic development of the country begins through the grass root level which is through the most underprivileged section of the society. Therefore for making India self reliant, initiative has to be taken to develop its vulnerable sections. This article reviewed the problems and rehabilitation of beggars literature with the question in mind: How development and self reliance of beggars will eventually leads to self reliant India? Considering the recent developments, the government reports and research papers are reviewed. The researches shows that several steps have been taken, particularly inclusion of vulnerable sections of the society through the developmental schemes, vocational trainings, involvement in the small scale industries, with the help of self help groups it became effective for the involvement of the underprivileged section that is beggars.

KEYWORDS: Beggars, Self-Reliant, Development.

INTRODUCTION

Unfortunately, despite rapid economic growth in recent years, begging in India is still a big problem. In India begging is much more tolerated and in certain cases even encouraged. Begging has been a traditional profession in India since ancient times. Charity is considered as one of the noblest of human virtues according to Hindu tradition (Dhruvasan 1963, 10-12). Among Muslims 'Zakat' or almsgiving is done during Ramzan (Ramadan). Giving to the poor is regarded as one of the highest duties for any Christian. In Buddhism begging by holy men is ascribed value because it is believed that it teaches them humility and enables them to break away from all forms of material bondage.

According to the 2011 census, India is home to 4,13,760 beggars in which 2,21,673 were males and 1,19,997 were females. A survey conducted by the Social Welfare Department of the Delhi government (2009) stated that begging seems to have turned into something of a lucrative 'profession' for some. A survey done by the Social Development Centre of Mumbai (2004) revealed similar attitude. The majority of beggars see it as a profitable and viable profession. Of the 5,000-odd beggars surveyed on the streets of the capital, 4 turned out to be postgraduates—supplementing their monthly salaries by going around begging over the weekends—6 graduates and 796 who had studied up to the secondary level. A study published in the International Journal of Psychological Rehabilitation by Dr Yogesh Thakker et al. (2007) indicated that most of the beggars had a history of addiction, psychiatric illness in the family and poor attitude of family members towards them.

It is found that Reasons for begging varied from family profession/survival/poverty to funding healthcare and earning something extra for personal and family use. Children were mostly found begging in groups either with their family members or friends or alone. (Begging for a Childhood Analysis of Child Beggars in Delhi)



REHABILITATION OF BEGGARS

Government of India and various governmental as well as non-governmental organizations come up with programmes to attend the needs of the underprivileged people of our country, that is, the beggars. Rehabilitation by means of education or therapy brings beggars into a more normal state of mind, or into an attitude which would be helpful to society, rather than be harmful to society. (SARKAR, Volume 68, Issue 4, October 2007) In the long run, it is the State's responsibility towards its citizens that has to be reconsidered and will remain a socio-economic problem of growing urban India. The problem of beggary can be addressed by checking the rate of population growth. There will always be beggars and begging on the street or public places of urban India unless the issue of poverty is addressed.

According to study what needs to be realised is that pushing beggars behind bars won't eliminate the root cause which results in beggary, rather it only adds to the problem. In order to eliminate the presence of beggars from society, the reasons and factors which result in the generation of beggars need to be eliminated and not beggars themselves. (Sahiwal, 2019)

The development of social welfare activities over Five Year Plans reveals that it was only one or two Plans (for example, the Seventh Plan) where greater stress was laid on the institutional services for catering to specific requirements of the destitute and the beggars. The rest of the Plans have remained a routine follow-up of the social welfare activities on the part of the states with limited thought to secure the rights of beggars. There are quite a few attempts that can revive the conditions of the destitute beggars by the Government such as: 1. A comprehensive legislation may be applicable across the country and act as uniform and standardised services for the eradication of beggary. 2. A proper vigilance on city beggars and housing them in Government Homes/Shelters with the proper motive of rehabilitation. 3. Increasing the number of Government Homes/Shelters for the beggars in the city and other urban areas. 4. Improving the quality of Beggars Homes where it just does not become a repetition of living in sub-human ways. 5. Provision of free medication and sanitation are two important aspects that the state can look into by regularising Anti-Beggary and Prevention Acts. 6. Acting on the provision of IPC (363A) to prevent forced beggary and exploitation by organised criminal gangs in the city. 7. Providing more Vocational Training (VT) to increase the job opportunities and making VT mandatory. (SARKAR, Volume 68, Issue 4, October 2007)

In order to make rights and claims a reality, it is pertinent that police officials, staff of Service/Correctional centres, and all other concerned authorities are properly trained and sensitised towards- Legal provisions and safeguards - Social, physical and mental condition and predicament of beggars (Sahiwal, 2019)

There should be Training facilities may be given in handicrafts/ cottage and small scale industries and other technical avocations of general nature, work houses for able-bodied persons who may be imparted training in different types of industrial trades and steps may be taken to secure employment for them in order to rehabilitate them permanently, otherwise they may resort to begging again. There may be separate homes or institutions for children where they may be given training along with general education. (Mohapatra, 1992)

ROLE OF NGOS

In recent decades, international organisations like Oxfam, DFID, CRY, CARE are exerting their initiatives to understand the dynamics of 'poverty' in the developing world, but there is a lot to be done by the indigenous NGOs in securing the social and political right of life of



poor beggars in urban India. Few efforts that can be made by NGOs are as follows: • Mobilising the civic bodies to prevent forced beggary/organised beggary. • Creating more rehabilitation centres, even in joint collaboration with public rehabilitation centres. • Improving the quality of vocational training programmes. • Able-bodied male beggars can be provided with industrial training so that they can directly enter the labour force. • Awareness campaigns, mobile medication facilities and a legal approach could be adopted by these NGOs for the ethical, moral, social, economic and political rights of the beggars in urban India. (SARKAR, Volume 68, Issue 4, October 2007)

To effectively deal with the problem of beggars Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights has made following recommendations:

- It is essential to increase the number of family shelters, drop-in-shelters, ren-baseras where children along with their parents can stay. Night classes and other services can also be centered around such places.
- The government should ensure that appropriate services of doctors, counsellors, and social workers are provided to these children.
- Localized target oriented community based programmes should be planned and administered at the points where the child beggars congregate mainly with their families. Parents need to be counselled to spare their children for education and skill development since majority of children stay with their families.
- Multi pronged intervention strategies are needed in rural areas to reduce migration from rural to urban areas. Employment possibilities for adults should be increased dramatically in those rural areas from where large-scale out-migration is taking place. (Begging for a Childhood Analysis of Child Beggars in Delhi)

CONCLUSION

Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere forms the first goal of the 2030 Sustainable Development agenda. Therefore through the review of literature, importance of building our vulnerable sections and empowering them to take charge of their own lives has been a need of the hour. With the help of planning and effective implementation of government schemes will eventually lead to the empowerment of beggars. Engaging NGOs, community workers and empowering them to spread awareness and sensitization programs towards the schemes and vocational trainings of the beggars will be beneficial for poverty alleviation.

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