

Editorial

Poverty can be defined as the inability to secure the minimum standard of living appropriate to society. It has been argued that there are three main causes of poverty namely individual, culture of poverty and social structure. The first thought was propagated by those who believe that if an individual ends up in poverty due to their own fault as they are lacking of hard work and initiative. This thought was rooted in the functionalist approach of sociology. It maintains that poverty is a good thing for society since it propagates the survival of the fittest. The culture of poverty concept was introduced in 1959. It was argued that the lifestyle of the lower socio-economic class fostered behaviours and attitudes associated with poverty. Hence, no amount of economic rehabilitation could help alleviate the poor. Finally, the social structure approach was propagated and stated that poverty is unjust social conditions and pointed out that the middle and higher classes had a vested interest in the poor. Within the Indian context, many unique causes of poverty have been identified. The first is the rapidly rising population. Such a high population raised the demand for consumption of a limited number of resources. The second is low agricultural productivity due to lack of capital, technology and fragmented land holding. The next cause is unemployment which is present in the form of both underemployment and disguised unemployment. Social factors have also contributed to poverty through the caste system, gendered laws of inheritance and a lack of infrastructure. It is believed that political factors like British exploitation of natural resources also led to a weakened Indian economy. Government of India had launched many poverty alleviation programmes time to time for the benefit of the poor. At the same time, unemployment has often been described as the most significant social issue in Indian society. Government of India has taken many steps to create employment in the form of employment generation schemes. Similarly, illiteracy is a major barrier to development since it results in unskilled labour. India has also suffered at the hands of communalism for too long. Therefore, it calls for the day that the government and the citizens must work together towards harmony. Symbolic gestures are not enough for minorities as they must be empowered through literacy and employment.

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