

Trends and Patterns of Population, Development and Destitution in India

By

*Dr. P. K. Bhargava**, *Dr. D.G.Satihl****, *Dr. G.M. Hiremath*** and *V.B Joshi***

Introduction:

Destitution is an economic, social and political phenomenon. The very poorest of the poor people are destitute and are socially expelled. For survival, each human being requires income or transfers of food, clothing and medicine. Majority of destitute acquire these resources from begging and various types of dirty labor work that are rejected by the casual wage labor force. They also involved in theft and worked in the illegal distribution of legal and illegal goods such as hard drugs. Especially for elderly destitute and disabled people, orphaned and abused children, mentally ill etc., begging is the only option.

Since independence, India has made significant progress in addressing the poverty through agricultural and rural development programmes. Government of India has initiated various developmental activities viz.; employment generation programmes, productive assets transfer, institutional credit and subsidy programmes of rural housing, drinking water and sanitation and special programmes to assist destitute. It is heartening to note that despite various attempts and endeavors by the government from time to time after independence to reduce poverty, the problem of destitute population remains quite high because of additional unfortunate factors such as prevalence of HIV and deaths due to natural calamities such as, floods, earthquakes, etc.

Economists, sociologists and researchers have studied the effects of population growth on development in general and poverty, in particular, using various ratios and indexes such as Head Count Ratios (HCR), Sen's poverty index, poverty gap and income gap ratios etc., However, little effort is made to analyze the situation of poorest of the poor people such as beggars and vagrants. Keeping the above facts, in view, an attempt has been made here to study the trends and pattern of destitution in India using the state level data on pattern of destitution - beggars and vagrants, collected for various censuses from 1981 to 2001.

Objectives:

The main objectives of the paper are to:

1. To present population growth, development and poverty scenario in India;
2. To analyze age-sex differential in the destitute population;
3. To study the state-wise pattern of destitute population in India; and
4. To understand the condition of destitution, to map it against other dimensions of poverty and discusses causes and consequences of destitutions.

* *Director, Population Research Centre, Dharwad- India*

** *Research Analyst, Population Research Centre, Dharwad- India*

*** *Indian Institute of Health Management and Research, Banglore- India*

Data and Methodology

The paper uses the secondary data from various sources, such as Registrar General Census of India, Sample Registration System, Central Bureau of Health Intelligence and Human Development reports.

Results

Demographic and Socio-Development Scenario- India

In the post-independence period of 30 years (1951 –81), the population of India grew from 361 million in 1951 to 685 million in 1981 i.e.; 324 million people. From 1981 to 2001 the population grew by 343 million during the period of just 20 years. The annual compound growth rates of overall as well as urban population were higher during the decades 1961 –1971 and 1971 –1981 compared to other decades 1981 –91 and 1991 – 2001. The average annual rate of growth registered a declining trend (2.11 to 1.99 percent during 1991-2001). This is a welcome trend, which should be strengthened. (Table 1)

Table 1
Population growth in India by residence (millions)

Year	Total	Growth	Rural	Growth	Urban	Growth
1951	361.1		298.7		62.4	
1961	439.2	1.98	360.3	1.89	78.9	2.37
1971	548.5	2.25	439.1	2.00	109.1	3.29
1981	685.2	2.25	525.7	1.82	159.5	3.87
1991	844.3	2.11	627.1	1.78	217.2	3.14
2001	1028.6	1.99	742.5	1.70	286.1197	2.79

Life expectancy and literacy level are the indicators of improved quality of a population. Life expectancy at birth was 41.2 years for the decade 1951–60. It was 41.9 years for the males and 40.6 years for females. Over the years (decades), the average expectancy of life improved considerably and reached to overall 67 years for the period 2001-06. For males it was 63.9 years and 66.9 years for females. Table 2 also reveals that the increase in life expectancy at birth was higher for females compared to males in all the decades except 1951 –60. This is largely the result of an improvement of maternity services and better care of the children as evidenced by declining trend of infant and child mortality. Greater care of women due to change in attitude towards women has also contributed to higher life expectancy of the female population in India. In recent years, the public health measures taken under the various plans have further reduced the death rates and contributed for increased life expectancy.

In India the total literacy rate has increased from mere 18.3 percent in 1951 to 65 percent in 2001. The male literacy rate has increased from 27.2 to 76 percent and that of female literacy rate from 8.9 to 54.3 percent during the same period. (Table 3)

Table 2
Life expectancy at birth in India

Period	Males	Females	Overall
1951-60	41.9	40.6	41.2
1961-70	47.1	45.6	46.4
1971-81	54.1	54.7	54.0
1993-94	59.7	60.9	60.3
2001-06	63.9	66.9	67.0

Table 3
Literacy rate by sex in India

Year	Person	Male	Female
1951	18.3	27.2	8.9
1961	28.3	40.4	15.3
1971	34.5	46.0	22
1981	41.4	53.4	28.5
1991	52.2	64.1	39.3
2001	65.4	76.0	54.3

During 1950-51 and 2000-2001 net national product at factor cost (at 1993-94 prices) rose by 693.9 percent but on account of a rise in population by 134 percent per capita NNP rise by 179 percent. The annual average growth rate of national income works out to be 4.2 percent (compound) and have per capita income to only 2.1 percent. With a decline in the rate of growth of population, the net increase in per capita income will rise, but a higher growth rate of population is a retarding factor to raising the levels of per capita income in the country. (Table 4)

Table 4
National Income and Per Capita Income in India 1950-51 to 2000-01

Year	Net National Product at Factor Cost (Rs. Crore)		Per Capita Net National Product (Rs.)	
	At 1993-94 Price	Percent change	At 1993-94 Price	Percent change
1950-51	132367	--	3687	--
1960-61	192235	45.2	4429	20.1
1970-71	270597	40.8	5002	12.9
1980-81	363417	34.3	5352	7.0
1990-91	614206	69.0	7321	36.8
2000-2001	1050891	71.1	10313	40.9

Source: National Accounts Statistics - 2004, Central Statistical organization.

Population & poverty

From the Table 5 it can be seen that the percentage of population below poverty line has decreased in both urban and rural areas and overall it declined from 55 percent to 26 percent during 1973-74 to 1999-2000. However, the interstate variation in the existence of poverty has increased from 132.5 percent in 1973-74 to 166 percent in 1999 – 2000. The correlation between population and number of persons below poverty line is high and positive in all the periods ranging from 0.84 to 0.98. (Table 6) The high correlation between indicated that higher the population of a state higher will be the poverty and hence there is a need to have optimum level of population for the utilization of finite resources.

Table 5
Incidence of poverty in India

Year	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Persons (Lakhs)	Percent	Persons (Lakhs)	Percent	Persons (Lakhs)	Percent
1973-74	2612.9	56.4	600.5	49.0	3213.4	54.9
1983-84	2519.6	45.6	709.4	40.8	3229.0	44.5
1993-94	2440.3	37.3	763.4	32.4	3203.7	36.0
1999-2000	1932.4	27.1	670.1	23.6	2602.5	26.1

Table 6
Inter state variation in the incidence of poverty

Year	Mean	Standard deviation	Coefficient of Variation	Correlation coefficient
1973-74	103.7	137.4	132.5	0.98
1983-84	104.2	147.3	141.4	0.94
1993-94	98.4	152	154.5	0.92
1999-2000	80.1	132.8	165.8	0.84

Trends and patterns of beggars and vagrants (1981-2001)

Table 7 gives the trends in the growth of destitution (beggars and vagrants) population during 1981-2001. According to Census of India there were 750307 beggars and vagrants in India in 1981. Out of total about 2/3rd were in rural area and 1/3rd in urban area. During 1981-91 there was slight decline in destitute population but it has increased during the decade 1991-2001. Sex-wise distribution of the destitute population indicates that in both urban and rural areas proportion males destitute to total destitute slightly increased during 1981-1991 but decreased during the next decade i.e.; 1991-2001. Reverse pattern has been observed for the females.

Table 7
Growth of destitute population in India 1981-2001

All Area					
Year	Male		Female		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	
1981	450419	60.03	299888	39.97	750307
1991	332556	61.26	210319	38.74	542875
2001	321694	51.25	305994	48.75	627688

Rural Area					
Year	Male		Female		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	
1981	303604	58.88	212071	41.12	515675
1991	200319	59.20	138053	40.80	338372
2001	201429	48.77	211604	51.23	413033

Urban Area					
Year	Male		Female		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	
1981	146815	62.57	87817	37.43	234632
1991	132237	64.66	72266	35.34	204503
2001	120265	56.03	94390	43.97	214655

The age distribution of the destitute population indicates that there is an increase in young (age < 15 years) destitute during 1981 to 2001 from 9.26 per cent to 17.14%. Similar trends have been observed if males and females destitute considered separately (Table 8 a). Also, similar pattern has been observed when data for the rural and urban sector examined, separately. In rural area the proportion of young destitute increased from 8.79 % to 18.58% from 1981 to 2001. The respective proportion for the urban area found to be 10.30% and 14.38% (Table 8 b & c). Tables also indicate that the proportion of young destitute found to be more in urban than that in rural areas in 1981, its proportion become approximately equal during 1991 and later in 2001 reverse was found true - proportion of young destitute found to be more in rural than that in urban area in 2001. It has also been observed that during the decade 1981-1991 there was slight decline in the proportion of older destitute (60+) and than it has again increased during 1991-2001, both in urban and rural areas. Sex-wise proportion of older destitute population shows that for all the three decades in rural area proportion of older female destitute was higher than that for males. However, in urban area there was no significant sex-wise difference in the proportion of older destitute population.

Table 8(a)
Age–sex distribution of destitute population in India 1981- 2001
(All Area)

1981						
Age Group	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0-14	40704	9.04	28790	9.60	69494	9.26
15-34	122454	27.19	69293	23.11	191747	25.56
35-59	175474	38.96	105964	35.33	281438	37.51
60+	111787	24.82	95841	31.96	207628	27.67
Total	450419	100.00	299888	100.00	750307	100.00

1991						
Age Group	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0-14	32012	9.63	24212	11.51	56224	10.36
15-34	91171	27.42	52042	24.74	143213	26.38
35-59	127468	38.33	73863	35.12	201331	37.09
60+	81905	24.63	60202	28.62	142107	26.18
Total	332556	100.00	210319	100.00	542875	100.00

2001						
Age Group	Male		Female		Total	
	Num	%	Num	%	Num	%
0-14	56662	17.61	50921	16.64	107583	17.14
15-34	67735	21.06	62421	20.40	130156	20.74
35-59	103540	32.19	89334	29.19	192874	30.73
60+	93757	29.14	103318	33.76	197075	31.40
Total	321694	100.00	305994	100.00	627688	100.00

Table 8(b)
Age–sex distribution of destitute population in India 1981- 2001
(Rural Area)

1981						
Age	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0-14	26309	8.67	19024	8.97	45333	8.79
15-34	77807	25.63	40638	19.16	118445	22.97
35-59	117966	38.86	74741	35.24	192707	37.37
60+	81522	26.85	77668	36.62	159190	30.87
Total	303604	100.00	212071	100.00	515675	100.00

1991						
Age	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0-14	19118	9.54	14984	10.85	34102	10.08
15-34	50906	25.41	29530	21.39	80436	23.77
35-59	74519	37.20	47006	34.05	121525	35.91
60+	55776	27.84	46533	33.71	102309	30.24
Total	200319	100.00	138053	100.00	338372	100.00

2001						
Age	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0-14	39679	19.70	37045	17.51	76724	18.58
15-34	38258	18.99	34069	16.10	72327	17.51
35-59	59176	29.38	59102	27.93	118278	28.64
60+	64316	31.93	81388	38.46	145704	35.28
Total	201429	100.00	211604	100.00	413033	100.00

Table 8(c)
Age–sex distribution of destitute population in India 1981- 2001
(Urban Area)

1981						
Age	Male		Female		Total	
	Num	%	Num	%	Num	%
0-14	14395	9.80	9766	11.12	24161	10.30
15-34	44647	30.41	28655	32.63	73302	31.24
35-59	57508	39.17	31223	35.55	88731	37.82
60+	30265	20.61	18173	20.69	48438	20.64
Total	146815	100.00	87817	100.00	234632	100.00

1991						
Age	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0-14	12894	9.75	9228	12.77	22122	10.82
15-34	40265	30.45	22512	31.15	62777	30.70
35-59	52949	40.04	26857	37.16	79806	39.02
60+	26129	19.76	13669	18.91	39798	19.46
Total	132237	100.00	72266	100.00	204503	100.00

2001						
Age	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0-14	16983	14.12	13876	14.70	30859	14.38
15-34	29477	24.51	28352	30.04	57829	26.94
35-59	44364	36.89	30232	32.03	74596	34.75
60+	29441	24.48	21930	23.23	51371	23.93
Total	120265	100.00	94390	100.00	214655	100.00

Table 9 provides sex ratio of the destitute population for all the three decades. It can be seen from the table that overall sex ratio of the destitute population was 67 females per 100 males according to Census of India 1981. In 1991 it has slightly decline to 63 and then it sharply increased to 95 in 2001. The analysis also indicates that from 1981 to 2001 the sex ratio of the destitute people has increased more in rural than that in urban areas. Moreover, in rural area total number of female destitute outnumbered male destitute in 2001. Here the sex ratio has increased from 70 in 1981 to 105 in 2001. It is also evident from the table that in rural area sex ratio for the older destitute increased tremendously during the decade 1981-2001 In 2001 sex ratio of the rural area for destitute 60+ found highest (127) . For the young destitute (<15 years) it is evident from the table that there has been regular increases in the sex ratio from 19981 to 2001 both in rural as well as the urban area. In rural area it has increased from 72 in 1981 to 93 in 2001. Similar figures for the urban area have been calculated to be 68 and 82, respectively.

Table 9
Sex ratio of destitute population by broad age group

1981			
Age	Rural	Urban	Total
0-14	72	68	71
15-34	52	64	57
35-59	63	54	60
60+	95	60	86
Total	70	60	67

1991			
Age	Rural	Urban	Total
0-14	78	72	76
15-34	58	56	57
35-59	63	51	58
60+	83	52	74
Total	69	55	63

2001			
Age	Rural	Urban	Total
0-14	93	82	90
15-34	89	96	92
35-59	100	68	86
60+	127	74	110
Total	105	78	95

State-wise differentials of beggars and vagrants 2001

Table 10 presents the distribution in destitute population in 35 states and UTs of India. It can be seen from the table that majority of destitute population is concentrated in two major states viz.; Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. About 1/3rd of the total destitute people live in these two states. Out of the total destitute in these two states 3/4th of them are in rural area. It is also found that larger segment of the destitute are concentrated in majority of the demographically backward states in India. These are Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan in addition to Uttar Pradesh. In these states majority of destitute are rural areas. Though, Maharashtra is demographically better state but contributed more destitute people. In fact, in this state out of the total destitute more than 2/3rd are in urban cities especially in Mumbai.

State-wise sex ratio of the destitute population indicates that there are 13 states and UTs that have sex ratio > 100. These states and UTs are Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura and West Bengal. The highest sex ratio of destitute found in Assam (209) followed by Tripura (188). Analysis also shows that in rural sector

highest sex ratio of destitute found in Daman & Diu (300) followed by Assam (219). The overall sex ratio of destitute in India is higher in rural (105) than that (78) in urban area. (Table 11)

Table 10
State wise distribution of destitute population in India – 2001

States	Destitute Population		R-U%	
	Number	%	Rural	Urban
ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS	45	0.01	68.89	31.11
ANDHRA PRADESH	50092	7.94	62.39	37.61
ARUNACHAL PRADESH	131	0.02	67.18	32.82
ASSAM	28449	4.51	93.77	6.23
BIHAR	53416	8.47	88.88	11.12
CHANDIGARH	206	0.03	9.22	90.78
CHHATTISGARH	17881	2.83	69.37	30.63
DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	41	0.01	82.93	17.07
DAMAN & DIU	11	0.00	36.36	63.64
DELHI	4408	0.70	3.22	96.78
GOA	413	0.07	35.59	64.41
GUJARAT	16693	2.65	40.74	59.26
HARYANA	10344	1.64	50.62	49.38
HIMACHAL PRADESH	1401	0.22	75.09	24.91
JAMMU & KASHMIR	6404	1.01	67.44	32.56
JHARKHAND	14147	2.24	68.33	31.67
KARNATAKA	23352	3.70	59.36	40.64
KERALA	7817	1.24	63.89	36.11
LAKSHADWEEP	0	0.00	0.00	00.00
MADHYA PRADESH	36320	5.76	68.55	31.45
MAHARASHTRA	49539	7.85	37.53	62.47
MANIPUR (Excl. 3 Sub-divisions)	332	0.05	79.22	20.78
MEGHALAYA	442	0.07	82.81	17.19
MIZORAM	68	0.01	73.53	26.47
NAGALAND	385	0.06	71.69	28.31
ORISSA	27386	4.34	66.69	33.31
PONDICHERRY	297	0.05	18.52	81.48
PUNJAB	18435	2.92	36.33	63.67
RAJASTHAN	38575	6.11	60.00	40.00
SIKKIM	82	0.01	73.17	26.83
TAMIL NADU	14136	2.24	37.97	62.03
TRIPURA	2631	0.42	88.29	11.71
UTTAR PRADESH	98610	15.63	73.82	26.18
UTTARANCHAL	3523	0.56	59.13	40.87
WEST BENGAL	104927	16.63	72.02	27.98
TOTAL	630940	100.00	65.78	34.22

Table 11
Sex ratio of destitute population by states in India – 2001

State	Rural	Urban	Total
ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS	63	75	67
ANDHRA PRADESH	104	75	92
ARUNACHAL PRADESH	100	153	115
ASSAM	219	111	209
BIHAR	105	77	101
CHANDIGARH	111	99	100
CHHATTISGARH	106	118	110
DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	143	133	141
DAMAN & DIU	300	75	120
DELHI	112	51	52
GOA	99	61	73
GUJARAT	78	60	67
HARYANA	48	46	47
HIMACHAL PRADESH	80	58	74
JAMMU & KASHMIR	75	64	71
JHARKHAND	105	95	102
KARNATAKA	118	99	110
KERALA	87	62	77
LAKSHADWEEP	0	0	0
MADHYA PRADESH	73	74	74
MAHARASHTRA	91	131	114
MANIPUR (Excl. 3 Sub-divisions)	177	130	166
MEGHALAYA	125	77	115
MIZORAM	85	100	89
NAGALAND	103	49	84
ORISSA	91	62	80
PONDICHERRY	67	58	60
PUNJAB	77	57	64
RAJASTHAN	89	47	69
SIKKIM	71	69	71
TAMIL NADU	102	83	90
TRIPURA	182	242	188
UTTAR PRADESH	72	53	67
UTTARANCHAL	62	44	54
WEST BENGAL	170	111	150
TOTAL	105	78	95

Discussion and Conclusions

All societies in the world have destitute people. The differences in the case of India are their large numbers and invisibility. The present analysis reveals that though there was slight decline in destitute population during 1981-1991 but it has increased during the decade 1991-2001 and especially proportion female destitute increased during the later decade both in rural and urban areas. There is also an increase in young (age < 15 years) destitute during 1981 to 2001. It is true for both sexes and sectors- rural-urban wise. Though, during the decade 1981-1991 there was slight decline in the proportion of older destitute (60+) but it has again increased during 1991-2001, both in urban and rural areas. Sex-wise proportion of older destitute population shows that for all the three decades in rural area proportion of older female destitute was higher than that for males. The survival condition of the destitute in India is very shocking. They are in extreme income poverty. Majority of them are physically malnourished, sick, disabled and some of them are working-age addicts, sex workers. Empirical evidences show that destitute people are deprived in education, and are illiterate.

In India, many homeless people have migrated from rural to urban areas and in later they do not have addresses, which deprive those benefits from various developmental activities. In fact, the system of benefits for those below the poverty line is not accessible to destitute as they do not have any address. When migrated to urban area they search open spaces to live and sleep that are available near temples, mosques, churches, railways and bus stations. They also occupy physically and socially hazardous spaces such as land adjacent to polluted water bodies and garbage dumps. These areas are lack of clean environment. Public lavatories are generally not available and they go in open spaces or if available poorly maintained and not affordable. It may even be difficult to find drinking water. In both rural and urban areas destitute people are commonly addicted to alcohol, solvents, narcotics or hard drugs.

For the welfare of poor, aged and destitute an amount of Rs.36.67 lakhs was provided in 2002-03 and against this the anticipated expenditure is Rs.47.39 lakhs. The proposed outlay for the Annual Plan 2003-04 was Rs.161.43 lakhs. The schemes include Govt. orphanages and home for the aged by voluntary agencies. There are 25 orphanages covering all the districts out of which 4 have 100 children each and 21 have 250 children each. The orphan, deserted/ destitute/ abandoned children in the age group of 5-18 years are admitted in the orphanages. The children in the orphanages are provided free meals, shelter, clothing, books and note books, education and free medical facilities. A sum of Rs.15.80 lakhs is proposed for this scheme for 2003-04. But it is not enough to take care of all destitute people in the country in order to rehabilitate them particularly to street children and disabled vagrants. More financial resources and political will is required. Destitute children are in need of care and protection. Needless to mention that beggary must be 'prevented' under the Act.

References

Barbara Harriss Destitution in India: by -White Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford University, OX1 3LA, UK barbara.harriss@qeh.ox.ac.uk

Basu, Alaka Malawade, 1989, Is discrimination in food really necessary for explaining sex differentials in childhood mortality? *Population Studies* **43** (2): 193-210.

Cairncross, A.K., *Factors in Economic Development* p229

Gopal G.M., 2001, 'The Challenge of ending Poverty in India: Towards a new Approach' draft paper to the National Commission for the Review of the Working of the Constitution' (NCAER, New Delhi)

Hyat, T 1999, 'The definition of destitution' and 'The process of deprivation' unpublished notes for doctoral thesis, Oxford University.

Mander H., 2002, *Forgotten Lives: Public Policy and Poor People in India* New Delhi, Action Aid

Registrar General of India 2004, *Sample Registration System Statistical Report 2002*.

Registrar General of India; 1981, 1991 and 2001, Office of the Registrar General of India, New Delhi

Russell M and R Malhotra, 2001, 'Capitalism and Disability' pp 211-228 in (eds) L. Panitch and C. Leys 'A World of Contradictions' *Socialist Register 2002*. London, Merlin

Saith R., C Ruggeri-Laderchi and F. Stewart, 2002, 'Poverty: alternative realities, an overview' paper to the NCAER Workshop on Alternative Conceptualizations of Poverty, April 2002; R. Saith, 2001, 'Social Exclusion' www.qeh.ox.ac.uk; Working Paper Series

Sen, A.K. 2001, 'Exclusion and Inclusion' *Mainstream*, Nov 28th [p2 on South Asia Citizens Wire: <http://www.mnet.fr/aiindex>, Nov 28th 2001]

Singh I.P., 2001, ' Census of the Homeless: A Painful Farce and Assault' *The First City*, April, pp 56-59.

