

# Impoverished Beggary in India

## A Case Study of Telangana State

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## 1. Introduction

A convenient starting point of begging is to define and clarify the issues associated with the definitions of begging. Because Massey et al. (2010) noted that begging is a conceptually complex and contested term. Beggary is defined as a psycho-socio pathological phenomenon (Singh, 2007). According to the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act (1959), begging is “soliciting or receiving alms in a public place, whether or not under any pretence such as singing, dancing, fortune-telling, performing or offering any article for sale, or entering on any private premises for the purpose of soliciting or receiving alms, exposing or exhibiting with the object of obtaining or extorting alms, any sore, wound, injury, deformity or disease whether of a human being or animal, or having no visible means of subsistence and wandering, about or remaining in any public place in such condition or manner, as makes it likely that the person doing so exist soliciting or receiving alms.”

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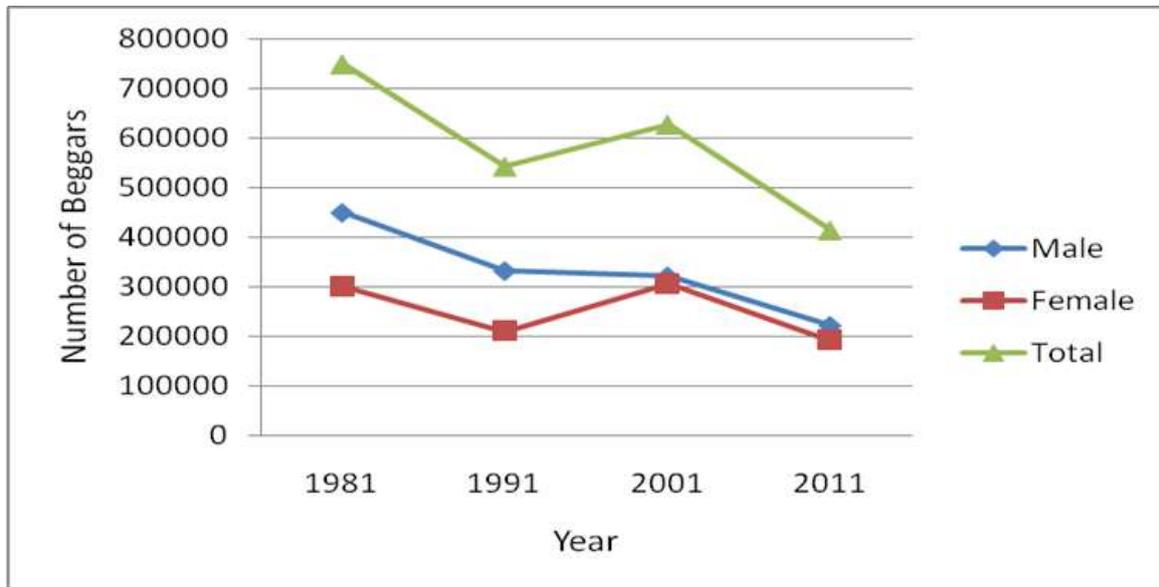
**Acknowledgement:** *This paper is drawn from a larger study titled “Impoverished Beggary in India: Telangana State” conducted under S.R. Sankaran Chair (Rural Labour). The study report was presented and discussed in a faculty forum held on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2020. We are thankful to all faculty members who participated in the discussion and especially to Prof. Rajendra P. Mamgain for providing detailed observations on the presentation. The usual disclaimer applies.*

Beggary is regarded as a crime or social evil or a social problem (Singh, 2007). It occurs when there is lack of basic needs such as income, food, shelter, and basic education and health services. Over years, the magnitude of beggary in India has been declining but still, it is widely prevalent in different parts of the country. As per the Census of India (2011), 4.13 lakh persons were reported to be beggars in the country. West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh (erstwhile), Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Assam, Odisha and Gujarat have the largest number of begging population. These States are also known for poverty, which is an underlining cause of beggary.

## **2. Trends and pattern of beggary in India**

The extent and magnitude of beggary at both national and sub-regional levels is decreasing. It is noteworthy that the incidence of beggary in India has been declining since the 1980s, though there were ups and downs over the years (Graph 1). The number of beggars has decreased significantly during the 1980s. A number of factors, including high economic growth in general, and high agricultural and industrial growth leading to decline in the incidence of poverty, may have contributed to the drop in the incidence of beggary during this period. However, the number of beggars in the country has increased during the 1990s, mainly due to an increase in the number of women beggars during this period. One noticeable thing is the rise in the number of widows since the 1990s. Contrary to the 1980s, the performance of Indian economy in general, and the agricultural sector as well as social sectors was very poor which contributed to rural distress and in turn affecting the livelihood conditions of the poor. This may have triggered the increase in the number of beggary in the countryside.

As per the Census of India (2011), the population of Hindus constitute 79.80 per cent of India's population, and their percentage in the number of beggars is relatively high (72 per cent). Muslims make up 14.23 per cent of the total population, and their percentage in the number of beggars is relatively low (25 per cent). The percentage share of beggars from Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism and other religions are 0.88 per cent, 0.45 per cent, 0.52 per cent, 0.06 per cent and 0.30 per cent, respectively.



**Graph 1: Number of male and female beggars in India, 1981-2011**

Source: Various issues of Census Report from 1981 to 2011.

**Table 1: Share of beggars in the population by religions (in per cent)**

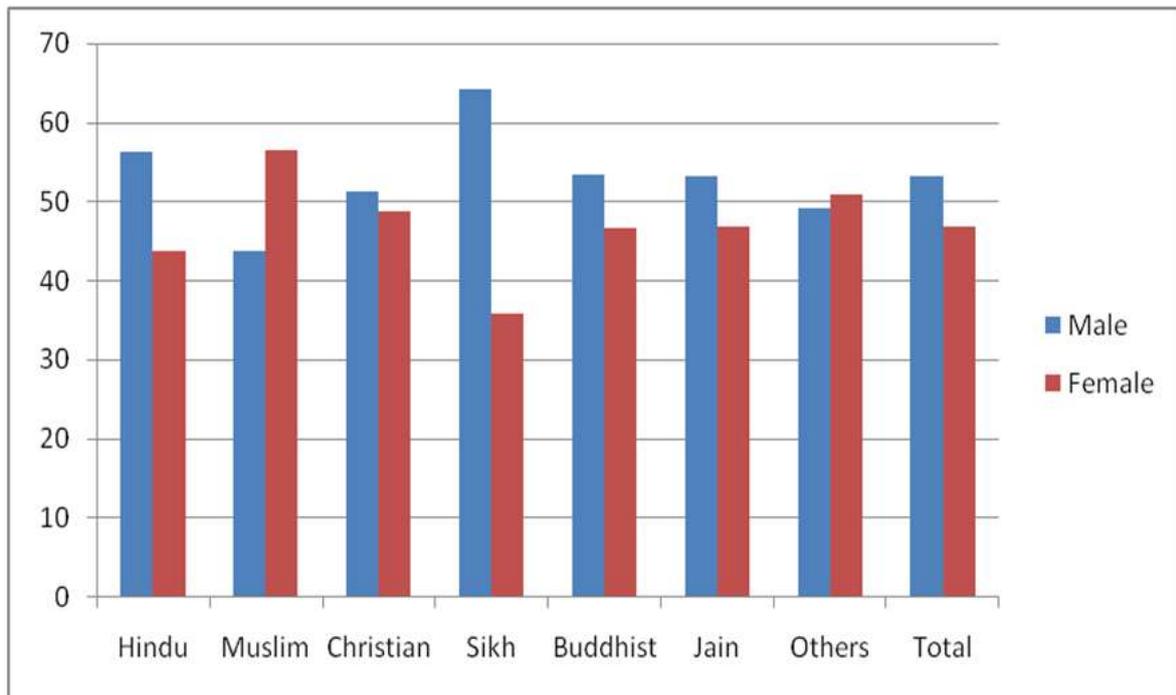
Religions	Share in India's population (in %)*	Share in beggar population (in %)**
Hinduism	79.80	72.20
Islam	14.23	24.90
Christianity	2.30	0.88
Sikhism	1.72	0.45
Buddhism	0.70	0.52
Jainism	0.37	0.06
Others	0.66	0.30
Not known	0.24	0.62
Total	100	100

Note: \* as a percentage of the total population; \*\* as percentage of total beggars;

Source: Census of India, 2011.

While analysing the male-female ratio among beggars, about 53 per cent of India's beggars are males and the rest of them are females. Almost all major religious communities like Hinduism, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, etc., have a similar trend, except Islam. It was noted that the percentage of female beggars was higher than that of male beggars in the Muslim community in the

country (Graph 2). While doing the field study, it was noted that the number of female beggars<sup>4</sup> from Muslim community was higher than that of male beggars in Durgahs in Warangal. Coming to a question as to why the number of female beggars is higher than that of male beggars among the Muslim community is important. Despite the fact that Muslim women have relatively more restrictions, the number of women beggars from the Muslim community is high<sup>5</sup>.



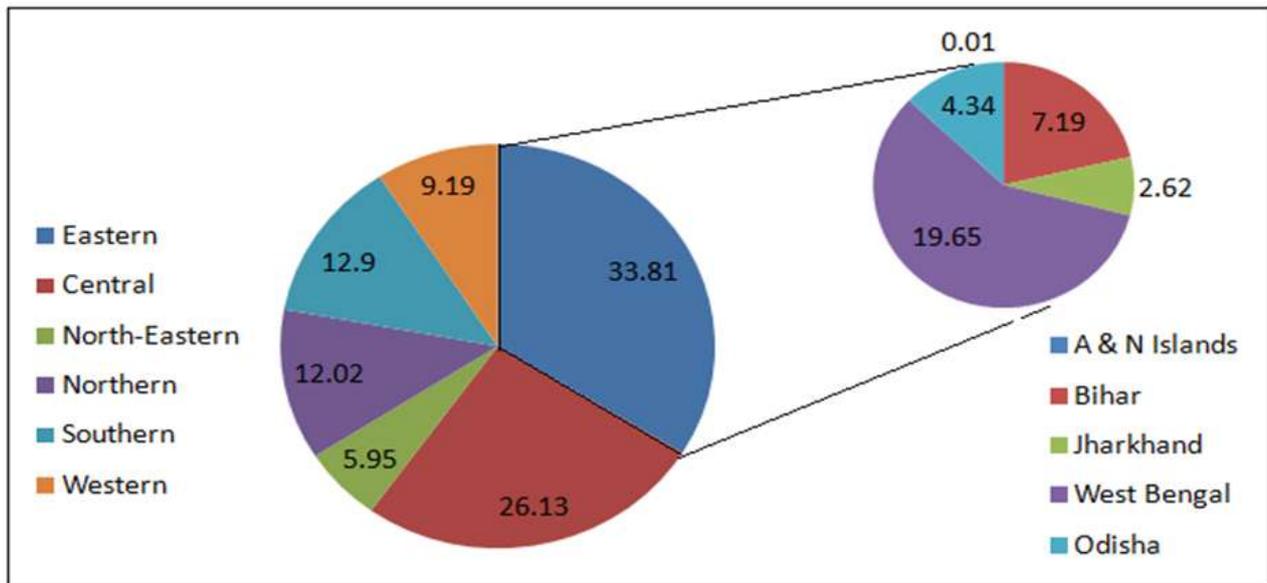
**Graph 2: Gender-wise distributions of beggars by religions (in per cent)**

Note: Values in the parentheses are percentage; Source: Census of India, 2011.

It was found that about 60 per cent of India's beggars reside in the central and eastern regions (Graph 3). The central region comprises mainly Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh and the eastern region covers Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Odisha. One could notice that the concentration of poor people or the percentage of population below poverty line reside in the eastern and central regions is high. More than 410 million people live in poverty in the Indian States, including Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, as per the study of the University of Oxford (2010).

<sup>4</sup>We can easily identify Muslim women beggars due to their dress code. While doing fieldwork, it was observed that some women beggars used to wear burqa in order to hide their personal identity and to earn more income as Muslims are relatively liberal in charity, especially during the *Ramadan* month.

<sup>5</sup>It was observed that the dress code of Muslim women may also encourage begging because *burqa* does not reveal the face of Muslim women beggars.



**Graph 3: Region-wise shares of beggar population, 2011 (in per cent)**

Source: Census of India, 2011.

### 3. Rationale of the present study

In South India, Andhra Pradesh (erstwhile) stands first in terms of the population of beggars. Hyderabad was one of the princely States which enacted the prevention of beggary law in India in the early 1940s due to the increase in problems caused by the practice. The problem of begging is growing in the city of Hyderabad; however, there is no proper estimate on beggars is available. The history of the estimation of beggars in Hyderabad dates back to the 1950s. A “Report on a Socioeconomic and Health Survey of Street Beggars in Hyderabad and Secunderabad City Area” by the Indian Institute of Economics (1956) roughly estimated that 5,000 beggars were present in Hyderabad and Secunderabad cities. A study conducted by the Council of Human Welfare (2005) estimated that there are 10,466 beggars in the city. In a span of 50 years, the growth of the beggar population has been more than doubled. Destitution, homelessness and immigration of beggars are the major reasons for the doubling of beggars in the city. Very recently, the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) evacuated about 9,000 beggars, including child beggars from the city. The problem of beggary in urban areas is increasing due to four reasons: increase in migration of beggars; increase in distress migration; increase in slum population; and incidence of urban poverty. Urban areas have been witnessing a huge inflow of migrants including beggars and displaced labour

force from the rural economy because of the relatively higher employment opportunities, prosperity and urban amenities. Besides, the advancement of transportation is a critical factor in the migration of beggars. Keeping this in view, the S.R. Sankaran Chair conducted a research study on beggars in the State of Telangana.

### **3.1. Methodology**

Although finding beggars in developing States like Telangana is not a tough task, getting their consent for an interview is quite difficult. Further, they are hardly found confining at certain locality for a considerable length of time. Some frequently keep on shifting their place. In this scenario, developing a sampling frame was found to be a formidable task. Therefore, the study has chosen to employ a convenience sampling method. The sample population was selected from two cities namely, Hyderabad and Warangal Urban District in Telangana. The information from beggars was collected from nearly 35 areas in Telangana. The enquiry was carried out with no judicial powers, police assistance and help from NGOs. Using a convenient sampling technique, a total of 394 beggars were selected from the selected cities and rural areas. Of these, 17 were child beggars<sup>6</sup>. The number of female beggars and male beggars were 196 and 198, respectively. About 60 per cent of the total samples were collected from cities or urban areas, and the rest of 40 per cent of samples were collected from rural areas. Further relevant information for the study was collected from field observations, photographs, informal interviews and discussions with beggars, especially the key informants. The Census Report, Annual Report of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Empowerment, and Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) were used for obtaining secondary data.

### **3.2. Objectives of the study**

The study aimed to analyse the extent and factors associated with beggary in Telangana. The study also intended to analyse the socio-economic implications of begging and a way forward to rehabilitate able-bodied beggars. The specific objectives of the study were as follows:

- 1) To study the socio-economic characteristics of beggars;

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<sup>6</sup>Children in the age group of 05- 14 years.

- 2) To identify factors that influence people to resort to begging as a means of livelihood;
- 3) To analyse the types, nature, pattern and methods of begging; and
- 4) To study the livelihood status of beggars in Telangana.

#### 4. Key findings and discussion

While the Hindus constitute about 85 per cent of Telangana's total population, and their percentage in the number of beggars is low (79.7 per cent). But the Muslims form 12.7 per cent of the population, and their percentage in the number of beggars in the State is high (20 per cent). The OBCs make up about 51 per cent of the population, and their percentage in the number of sample beggars is high (58 per cent). Similarly, the SCs occupy 16 per cent of the State's population, and their percentage in the number of sample beggars is high (31 per cent). However, STs constitute 9.0 per cent of Telangana's population, their percentage in the number of sample beggars is low about 6.5 per cent. Likewise, the general community occupies about 24.0 per cent of the State's total population, and their percentage in the number of sample beggars is very low (0.26 per cent)<sup>7</sup>.

The respondents were asked to answer as to how long they have been begging. Around 85 per cent of beggars reported that they have been begging since 2008. Of these, 86 per cent belong to SCs and OBCs, which means that a lot of people from the backward communities like SCs and OBCs opted begging for the last 10 years in the study areas. One-third of beggars were engaged in begging for the last 6 to 10 years.

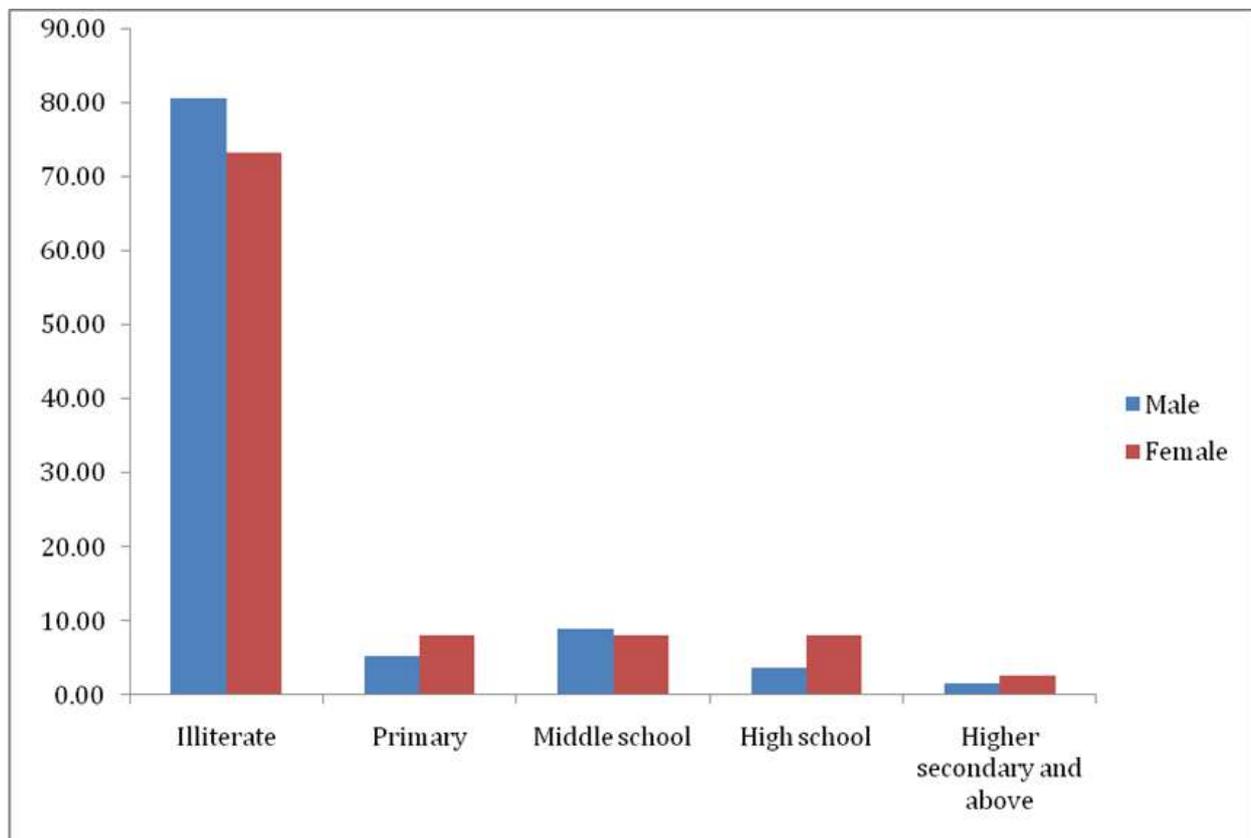
Education, skill, knowledge, abilities and other related characteristics are important for economic activity and generation of income. The educational level of beggars in terms of gender is given in Graph 4. It is noteworthy that more than four-fifths of beggars are illiterates<sup>8</sup>. About 84.5 per

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<sup>7</sup>During the field work, it was observed that some beggars do not want reveal their social background like caste due to psychological factors like shame, inferiority complex, etc., especially, beggars who belong to general caste want to hide their social background while responding to the questions when asked.

<sup>8</sup>This result is consistent with the secondary data. India has 3.72 lakh beggars of whom 21 per cent are literate, having passed senior secondary certificate exams and above (Census of India, 2011).

cent of male beggars and 79 per cent of female beggars from the Scheduled Castes are illiterates. It was noted that about 77 per cent of male beggars and 73 per cent of female beggars from OBCs are illiterates. Backwardness of these communities might have affected human capital and capabilities. There are 26 beggars who studied up to 10th standard and above. There were some female beggars with education up to 10th or more. The reasons that drove persons with education, including women, to begging include lack of employment and safety net. In the case of women, it is high level of gender inequality in rights, human development, access to assets and employment<sup>9</sup>, and widowhood. In some cases, widows face socio-economic exclusion due to lack of family and community supports. From the field survey, it was noticed that widowhood is one of the major causes of begging among women<sup>10</sup>.



**Graph 4: Gender-wise educational levels of beggars**

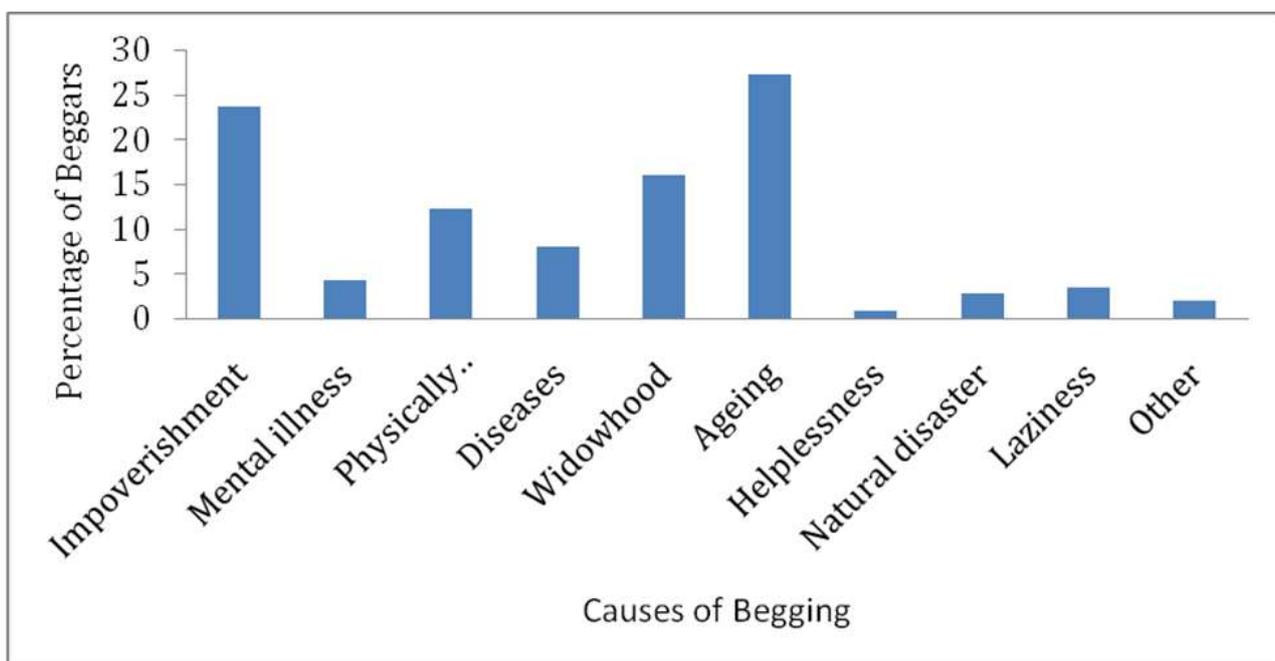
Source: Field survey.

<sup>9</sup>See for details De Walle (2016).

<sup>10</sup>During the survey, we met a woman beggar and she was apparently mentally disturbed after the death of husband a few years ago.

#### 4.1. Causes of begging

While analysing the causes of begging, three causes are important: 1) destitution, 2) lack of care of the elderly population, orphans, widows, and disabled (physically and mentally) persons, and 3) lack of institutional supports. Each beggar has his/her own justification to do begging. During the field survey, beggars highlighted a number of causes like debt, crop failure, business failure, health problems, domestic violence, social exclusion, natural hazards such as drought, flood, etc., homelessness, accident, suicide, consumption of alcohol, divorce/separation, family problems, etc. (Graph 5). It is surprising to notice that about 52 per cent of beggars were previously worked as wage labourers in both farm and non-farm sectors<sup>11</sup>. They left the job due to several reasons such as crop failure, non-viability of vocation, etc., and resorted to begging.



**Graph 5: Main causes of begging**

Source: Field survey.

#### 4.2. Pattern of begging

The analysis of the pattern of begging is crucial to understand the causes of begging. For instance, if a person is found begging seasonally, it means that he or she has other sources of

<sup>11</sup>During the field study, it was observed many farmers and wage labourers in farm and non-farm sector became beggars due to many reasons like crop failure, debt, lack of regular employment, etc.

livelihoods. In the study, we found that around 79 per cent of the seasonal beggars were engaged in other vocations, such as farm and non-farm activities. For instance, a farmer or agricultural labour may force to beg during the agricultural lean season. There are other cases to note, for instance, a person may opt to beg during the festival seasons like Dusserah or Ramzan. Some persons beg once a week because they may have other sources of livelihood. In other words, begging everyday may be because of destitution but, begging once a week, fortnight, month or season may be due to lack of opportunities or employment<sup>12</sup>. A vast majority of sample beggars involve in daily begging from morning to evening (Table 2). So, it can be underlined that the first preference should be given to daily beggars, followed by weekly, fortnightly, monthly and seasonal beggars while rehabilitating beggars.

**Table 2: Pattern of begging**

Pattern	Frequency	%
Daily	343	91
Weekly	15	4
Monthly	5	1.3
Seasonally	14	3.7
Total	377	100

Source: Field survey.

### 4.3. Duration of begging

Duration of begging is very crucial in earning income. Around 94 per cent of beggars reported that they would start begging in the morning and stop in the evening (Table 3). During the field study, it was noticed that some beggars would come to the temples in the early morning and leave the place during the closing hours. For instance, those who beg on the temple premises would come at 6 A.M. and leave the place by noon. During the field survey, it was also noted that the gathering of

<sup>12</sup>Chennamma is 60 years old widow is living in Kadiri village in Ananthapuram, Andhra Pradesh. She has son and daughter. Presently, she is begging in Erragadda and Ameerpet areas in Hyderabad. She is earning Rs.50 to 100 per day. It is learned that she used to come to Hyderabad 10 to 15 days for begging in every month.

beggars is high on special days or puja (a ritual in honour of the gods) time at the temples, Fridays in Mosque or Durgas, and Sundays in churches. In other words, the gathering of beggars is high on special days at the pilgrim centres/religious destinations irrespective of the religion. Similarly, the gathering of beggars is high in tourist places, where beggars will come in the early morning and leave the place in the evening or night<sup>13</sup>.

**Table 3: Duration of begging**

Duration	Frequency	Per cent
Morning to evening	356	94.4
Morning to lunchtime	16	4.2
Lunchtime to evening	3	0.8
Morning and evening	2	0.5
Total	377	100

Source: Field survey

#### 4.4. Daily income<sup>14</sup>

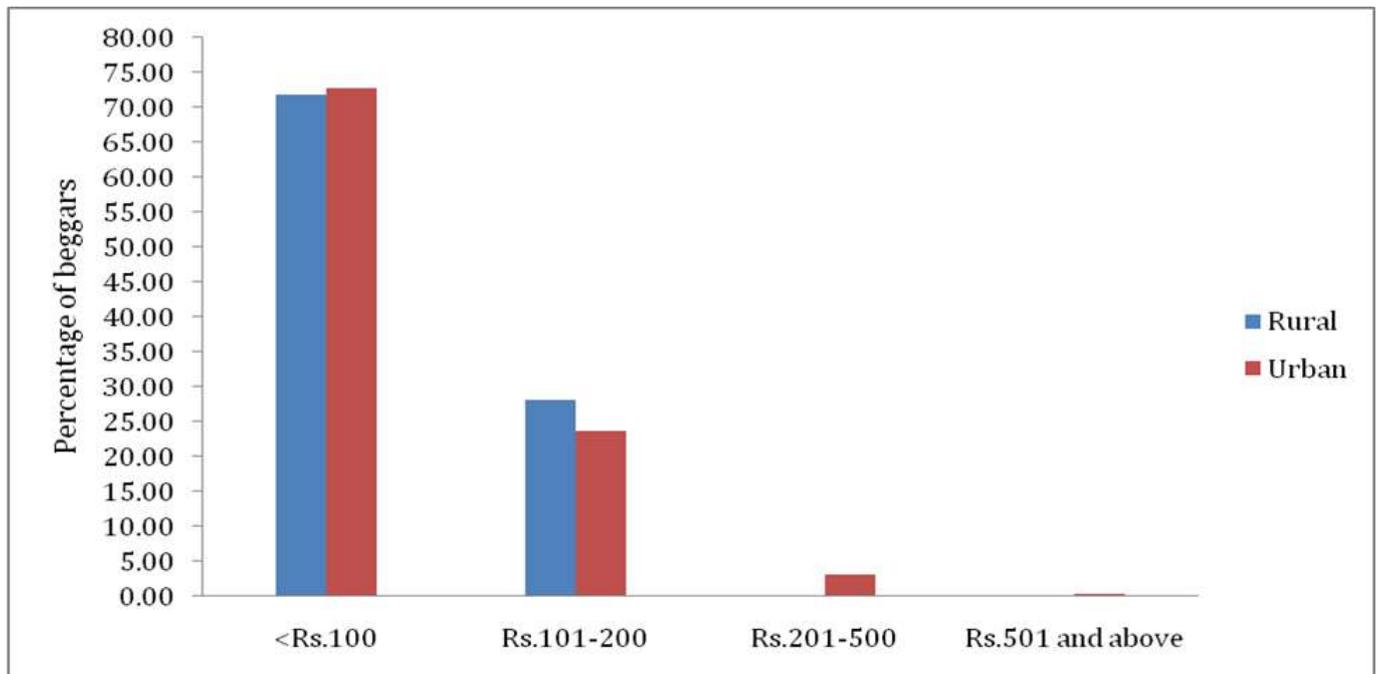
The income of beggars is uncertain. For instance, during the festival season like Dussehra or Bathukamma beggars will come to temples hoping that they may get more money. In other seasons, the expected amount of money they receive is low. The field survey of the beggars in Warangal was carried out during the Dussehra and Bathukamma festivals and many beggars were found gathered around the temples. In those days, beggars got more than the average income they receive in other seasons. In rural areas, it is very difficult to get Rs. 100 per day<sup>15</sup>. The average earning of beggars, according to gender and social groups, is given in Graphs 6 and 7. From the field survey, it was found

<sup>13</sup>During the field work, we saw lot of beggars are engaged in panhandling in tourist places like Birla mandir, Golconda Fort, Warangal Fort, etc.

<sup>14</sup>Beggars will get not only money, but also other items like food, water, cloths, cigarette, etc., as charity. Thus, non-cash items (kind) are converted into cash at current prices, e.g. the price of one litre mineral water is Rs.20.

<sup>15</sup>From the field survey, it was found that no beggar is getting more than Rs. 200 per day in rural areas in Telangana. One probable reason for this is that villagers pay less money and other items as charity in rural areas. In urban areas, beggars may get more income because urban people can give more due to their income level is high.

that the earning of beggars is relatively better in urban areas while income moves above Rs.200. The earning of female beggars is relatively higher while income moves above Rs.1 00 (Graph 6 and Graph 7). This is why many beggars migrate from rural areas to urban areas for begging. It is interesting to note that female beggars are earning more income than male beggars per day<sup>16</sup>. The daily earning of beggars from SCs and STs is better compared to OBCs. The factors influencing beggars who earn less than Rs.100 per day are illiteracy, ageing, poverty, disability, widowhood and diseases. Education is not at all an important factor as far as the earning of beggars is concerned. But, the timing of begging is a very crucial factor. Beggars need to spend more time to earn more. A vast majority of beggars who earn Rs.100 to Rs.200 daily had to beg from morning to evening. It was reported that seasonal beggars are not earning much.

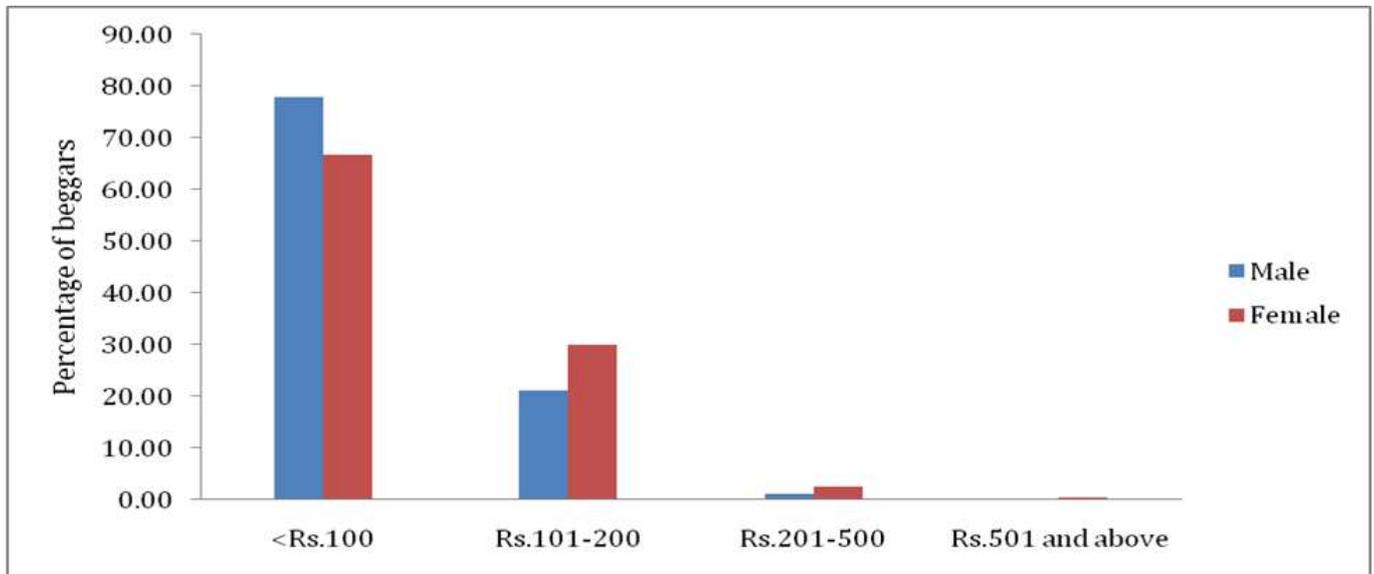


**Graph 6: Daily income of beggars by area**

Source: Field survey.

The probability of getting more income is high among beggars who were begging from morning to evening in urban areas than those in rural areas. During the field study, it was observed that women beggars in urban areas were earning more than those of rural areas.

<sup>16</sup>Women beggars will get more sympathy from others, especially women beggars carrying babies. It may lead to higher earnings.



**Graph 7: Daily income of beggars by gender**

Source: Field survey.

During the field study, it was observed that beggars have devised some strategies to earn more like changing the duration and pattern of begging. For instance, beggars gather in front of churches on Sunday morning, Friday afternoon in mosques, and Monday and Saturday morning in temples in both rural and urban areas<sup>17</sup>. The probability of getting money from the visitors of pilgrim/religious centres like church, temple, mosque, etc., was higher than that of other places/centres. During the fieldwork, our team members saw one devotee giving Rs.10 to each beggar after visiting the temple. Since money given to beggars as charity is high during the festival days, the gathering of beggars is considerably high in such centres<sup>18</sup> these days.

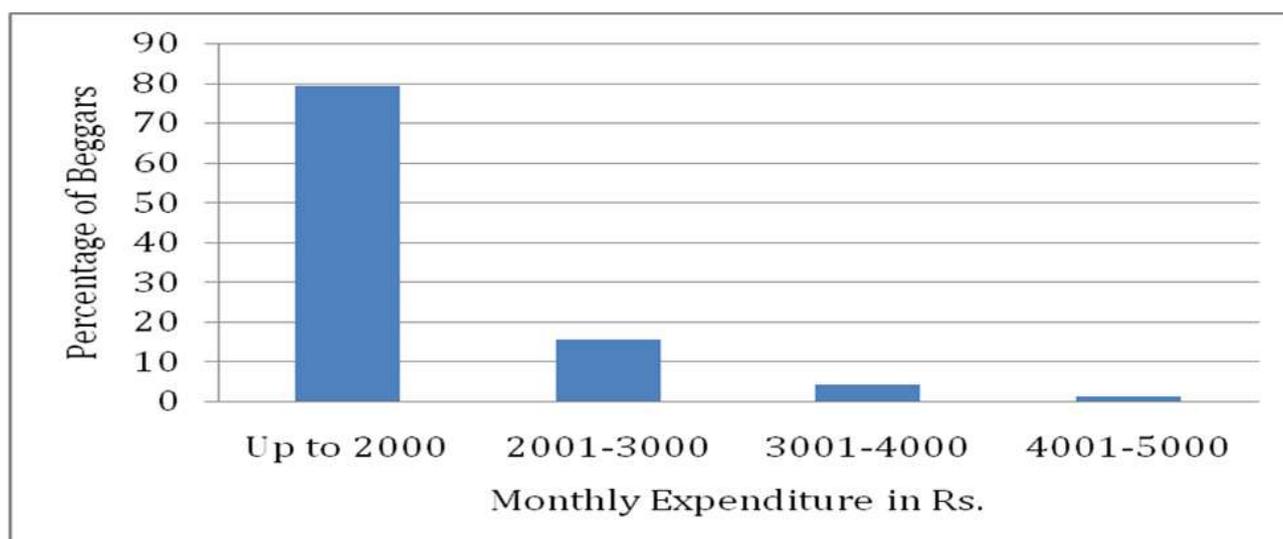
#### 4.5. Expenditure pattern

It is difficult to find the daily or monthly expenditure pattern of beggars. One of the major reasons for this is that the beggars' income is uncertain. About 80 per cent of the sample population reported that their monthly expenditure is less than Rs. 2,000 (Graph 8). Of them, the majority of beggars belong to OBCs and SCs. Interestingly, the beggars who spent less than Rs. 2000 per month

<sup>17</sup>In the initial days of the survey, we faced problems in finding beggars. After a few days, we found beggars moving around the religious/pilgrim centres; the number of beggars is notably high on special days in such centres.

<sup>18</sup>A study of Council of Human Welfare (2005) found that the percentage of beggars lives and begs in religious places are 44 per cent and 34.7 per cent, respectively. Religious places are centres of beggary.

for food and non-food items mostly come from urban areas and were illiterates. The field study revealed that the monthly expenditure of around 58 per cent of the total elderly beggars is less than Rs. 2,000 although they have a lot of health problems. As regards the expenditure, the probability of under-reporting is high among beggars. Many beggars were prone to alcohol drinking and also addicted to the use of tobacco, intoxicant and other such items. The lion's share of income of beggars was consumed by food, medicine, alcohol, tobacco and entertainment, showing the quality of life of beggars.



**Graph 8: Monthly expenditure on food and non-food items**

Source: Field survey.

#### 4.6. Financial inclusion of beggars

Bank accounts play a vital role in the economic and financial activities of modern society. But, more than half of the rural and urban population did not have access to bank accounts (Singh et al., 2014). One would be not surprised to see that more than 50 per cent of beggars did not have formal access to the banking sector, of which, 82 per cent did not know banking procedures and 86 per cent did not have ATM cards (Table 4). Among those who lack access to bank, 62 per cent are urban beggars, around 52 per cent are women, 48 per cent are elderly, 75 per cent are illiterates, and 85 per cent are SCs/STs and OBCs. Illiteracy is one of the major constraints for beggars to open bank accounts<sup>19</sup>. Financial inclusion of beggars is a critical factor for extending public services/government programmes to them.

<sup>19</sup>Since the most of beggars were illiterates, they do not know how to do banking procedures and operate ATM cards.

**Table 4: Response of beggars for the following questions**

Questions	Yes (in per cent)
Do you have bank accounts?	41.4
Do you know banking procedures?	18.0
Do you have ATM card?	13.8

Source: Field survey.

#### 4.7. Health conditions of beggars

The diseases may be curable and preventive in the beginning, but in the long run, they may become chronic and incurable. Individuals resort to begging due to several diseases that make them disabled. During the field visit, we have found many beggars affected with leprosy in both rural and urban areas of Warangal urban district. About 18 per cent of beggars in the study area were leprosy-affected. As a part of fieldwork, the research team visited the leprosy colony in Warangal and found all of the inmates are resorted to begging. Their living conditions are highly pathetic in the colony and highly excluded. In many cases, both the husband and wife were found leprosy-affected and they had resorted to begging. It was found that there are no sufficient facilities like drinking water, sanitation and medical for them in the leprosy colony in Warangal.

It is not unusual that health problems among beggars are very high. The instances of skin diseases and leprosy in beggars are reportedly high (Table 5) as they are living in an unhygienic environment. The practices of consuming unsafe drinking water, open defecation, not having regular bath and quality meals, wearing dirty clothes, spending lot of time in public spaces, polluted areas, etc., cause them health problems.

**Table 5: Health problems among beggars**

Health problems	Per cent*
Other skin diseases	83(22.13)
Leprosy	60(16.00)
Heart problems	16(4.27)
Stomach problems	16(4.27)
Cholesterol	15(4.00)
Blood pressure	13(3.47)
Tuberculosis	11(2.93)
HIV/AIDS	10(2.67)
Injuries	8(2.13)
Blood sugar	1(0.27)
Other diseases	88(23.47)
Multiple diseases	40(10.67)
No health problems	14(3.73)
Total	375(100)**

Note: \* values in parenthesis are percentages; 2 persons have not reported data.

Source: Field survey.

From the field study, it was noted that two-thirds of beggars who suffer health problems have undergone treatment in government hospitals. Those affected by leprosy are staying in the colonies meant for them. Mukherjee (1945) has observed that “leprosy with its accompanying disablement, disfigurement and social oppression is one of the principal causes of beggary in India.” Leprosy forced many persons to resort to begging in the Warangal Urban District area. However, it may be noted that disease will not necessarily lead to begging if there is a livelihood support system for diseased persons<sup>20</sup>.

#### 4.8. Rehabilitation of beggars

The awareness of rehabilitation centres is very low among beggars as hardly anyone visited such centres. During the field study in Warangal Urban district, the survey team visited one of the urban shelters for the homeless. The manager of the rehabilitation centre informed that there are 30 inmates in the shelter, of which, about 10 are still engaged in begging for daily meals. The shelter for

<sup>20</sup>During the field survey, we met many persons who resorted to begging due to leprosy, TB, HIV/AIDS, etc. We have visited one or two leprosy colonies in Warangal and found that those living in leprosy colony are mostly engaged in begging because no one gives them jobs.

the homeless will provide dinner only to their inmates but, the breakfast and lunch should be taken from outside by the inmates themselves. Since the inmates did not have access to daily meals (breakfast and lunch), some used to beg from morning to evening. Some beggars do want to stay at the rehabilitation centre but, for others, such centres are not acceptable because of the behaviour of staff and poor living conditions.

**Table 6: The response of beggars for the following questions**

Questions	Yes (in %)
Do you want to quit begging?	46.2
Do you have any information about any rehabilitation centre?	8.5
Have you visited any such centre?	0.8

Source: Field survey.

When we asked them about the kind of rehabilitation measures they prefer for themselves and family members, the beggars made a variety of demands including housing, social security, welfare measures, employment, old-age home, food and clothing, supports from the government to start small or petty business, medical/health facilities, education for their children, loans, land, leprosy colony, family supports, health and other such medical insurance, support from NGOs, PDS, and other livelihood supporting mechanism such as safe drinking water, basic amenities, etc. Most surprisingly, no beggars demanded a rehabilitation centre for them. It means that nobody is interested to stay in the rehabilitation centres.

## Case Study of Rehabilitation Centre

Amma Nanna Anada Ashramam (ANAA) works for rehabilitating mentally retarded persons and hence, it is also known as an orphanage for the mentally retarded destitute. This rehabilitation centre is located at Choutuppal in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district of Telangana. This NGO, also known as Ashramam, has been registered (Regd. No. 59/2010) and started working since 2010 under the leadership of Gattu Shankar. He is the founder of the Ashramam.

ANAA had started working with 10 inmates in 2010. But the number of inmates has increased every year. At present, there are about 430 mentally retarded orphans as informed by the caretaker of the Ashram. Those beggars who do not have mental illness will be handed over to family members by the centre. Of the total inmates, 370 are males and 60 are females. There is no child or able-bodied beggars at the centre. Initially, there were child beggars and women beggars carrying babies. Later, they turned into the rehabilitation of mentally retarded orphans. Among the inmates, 10 are visually challenged, one is HIV positive and some have other diseases. However, there is no reliable information on the health problems of inmates.

The centre has good infrastructure, both physical and manpower and well-equipped facilities to take care of the inmates. As regards human resource, there is 12 staff at the centre - three females and nine male staff. Besides, one rural medical practitioner (RMP) and psychiatrist are also at the centre. Food is being served regularly to the inmates. There are three halls for inmates - two for males and one exclusively for female inmates.

Donation is the main source of revenue for the centre. Gattu Shankar said that, on average, the centre will get Rs.80,000 as income through donations every month. As of now, the centre got three major donations in the form of Rs.14 lakh from the State Bank of India, Hyderabad for purchase of van; Rs.49 lakh from Astra Microwave Products, Hitech city for construction of meeting hall, water plant, toilets, bathrooms, etc., and Rs.16 lakh for construction of building for inmates. It was learned that the centre will spend, on average, Rs. 5 lakh every month for food, accommodation, maintenance of building, electricity, water, medical, etc.

#### 4.9 Incidence of migration

Beggars from Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh are begging in Telangana. Besides, beggars from various districts such as Nalgonda, Warangal, Mahabubnagar, Karimnagar, Sangareddy, Khammam, Aurangabad, Gulbarga, Bidar, Bellari, Guntur, Prakasham, Kurnool, Vijayawada, etc., are engaged in begging in Hyderabad city. During the field survey, it was observed that three different kinds of migration of beggars were observed that are as follows: 1) rural-rural migration; 2) rural-urban migration & 3) urban-urban migration of beggars. Migration of beggars has the greatest impact on the incidence of urban beggary<sup>21</sup>. Earlier, beggars used to migrate from one place to another within the city of Hyderabad. Due to advancement in transport system, the migration of beggars has emerged as a major phenomenon.

#### 5. Summary of Findings:

1. As per the Census evidence, the number of beggars across the country has decreased from 7.5 lakh in 1981 to 4.13 lakh in 2011. But, the share of women in number of beggars has increased.
2. The percentage of women from marginalised sections like SCs/STs and OBCs are also increasing.
3. The number of women beggars for every one lakh women is higher than that of male in some States and Union Territories (UTs), namely West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Meghalaya, Manipur, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep.
4. The percentage of beggars from the Muslim community in the total beggars are high, especially the share of women beggars among the community is high, largely due to poverty, widowhood, low education, lack of skills, and unemployment.
5. Urban centres are emerging as the hub of India's beggary system. Distress migration, migration of beggars and increase in slum population over years are contributing to this phenomenon.

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<sup>21</sup>Migration of beggars was a major factor for the high number of beggars in Hyderabad in the 1950s. During that time, beggars used to migrate from one place to another place in Hyderabad. Immigration of beggars within the city of Hyderabad was a major phenomenon in the 1950s (see report of Iyengar, 1956).

Agrarian distress in rural India, homelessness, urban prosperity, and advancement of transport system are critical factors in this phenomenon.

6. Migration of beggars has been emerged as a major phenomenon due to the growth of urbanisation and improvement in connectivity. Beggars are migrating from one place to another (e.g. rural to rural, urban to urban, rural to urban).
7. There is a positive and significant correlation between the slum population and the number of beggars, which indicates the lack of livelihood opportunities of slum people contributing to beggary in the urban centres. It also means that homelessness is one major factor of beggary in the country. During the fieldwork, it was found around 50 persons resorted to begging in Miyapur slum area in the city of Hyderabad.
8. Lack of care for disabled persons is a social problem, which in turn, leads to social problems like begging of disabled persons. One social problem may lead to another social problem. For instance, the ageing of destitutes may lead to begging.
9. The share of the elderly population is growing in the total population due to high life expectancy and high quality of life. However, lack of care for elderly persons is an emerging issue in many States. It was found that elderly persons were largely involved in begging both at the national and sub-regional level.
10. Children are the most vulnerable groups. It was found that children in large numbers are involved in begging at both national and sub-regional levels. A number of factors including poverty, child trafficking, lack of schooling, dropout, increase in the number of child orphans and beggar mafia have contributed to this.
11. A significant proportion of beggars are illiterate implying that most of them have low human capital.
12. Family begging is found to be highest in the study area. One-sixth of beggars told that family members were involved in begging. Factors leading to family begging are heredity and absolute poverty.

13. Landlessness is one major cause of begging. About 71 per cent of beggars have no land in the study area and the rest of them have tiny pieces of land. Some farmers are trapped into debt due to problems in farming such as crop failure, lack of viability of agriculture, etc., and later, they turned into begging.
14. A vast majority of beggars earning less than Rs.100 per day, irrespective of gender, and area. It is not sufficient enough to lead a quality life. Earning of beggars may vary according to the place of begging (like pilgrim centres, markets, bus stands), season (festival season like Dusserah, Ramzan, etc.) and duration of begging.
15. A lion's share of earning will be spent on food, health and alcohol, tobacco and other anti-social consumer items by beggars, particularly male beggars were addicted to consumption of above-mentioned items.
16. Beggars were excluded from social security and welfare schemes such as PDS, pensions, etc., in the study area. Major reasons for this are homelessness and landlessness.
17. It was found that a vast majority of beggars were excluded from the formal financial system like banking system and its services. The final inclusion of beggars remains a big challenge.

## **6. Policy suggestions**

There are two ways to solve this problem: prevention measures and curative measures (rehabilitation measure).

### **6.1. Preventive measures**

1. India's economic growth has not been fully converted into higher food consumption, let alone better diets overall, suggesting that the poor and hungry may have failed to benefit fully from the overall growth. There is a need for ensuring food security to every citizen of India by extending the services of the public distribution system to the needy and destitutes.
2. Statistics say that there are 1.7 million homeless people in India. An unprecedented growth of the slum population itself is evidence of the gravity of homelessness in the country. There is a

need for ensuring proper shelter for every citizen of the country. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) can play a critical role in the process of ensuring home to homeless people.

3. Landlessness is a growing problem in both rural and urban area. The Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC), 2011 points out that one out of three families living in villages is landless. There is a need for immediate provision of land to landless families in India.
4. About 5.4 crore (30 per cent) out of the total rural households depend on cultivation for sustenance. During the field survey, it was found that some farmers and members of farmers' families were begging due to indebtedness caused by crop failure and lack of viability. Some farmers, who borrowed money from private moneylenders, could not repay the money on time and thereby lost their land, and in some cases houses. So, there is a need for timely availability of credits to farmers from formal financial institutions like banks.
5. Field survey revealed that 80 per cent of beggars are illiterates. The SECC (2011) said that 23.52 per cent of rural families have no literate adult above 25 years, suggesting a poor state of education among rural masses. There is a need for proper training and improvement of skill of able-bodied beggars to help them leave begging and engage in livelihood activities.
6. Provision of health services is essential to eradicate beggary. Our survey revealed that many beggars have health problems. Leprosy is a common disease among beggars in Warangal Urban district. There is a need for extending medical treatment to these beggars. Since a vast majority of beggars are destitutes, the services of the public health system need to be extended to the poor.
7. During the field study, it was found that a vast majority of beggars depend on public tap for drinking water. It is not safe to drink such water directly because the probability of contracting waterborne diseases such as cholera, jaundice, typhoid, etc., is high. As a result of this, destitute/beggars are highly vulnerable to health problems.
8. According to the data provided by the government, in rural India, there are around 200 million people who still practice open defecation. It is highly prevalent among beggars. It will increase

vulnerability to health problems in society. There is a need for provision of public toilets in public places including the areas where the concentration of beggars is high.

9. Migration of rural people to urban areas has been growing. Distress migration of rural people raises more concerns. It was found that some migrants who initially got jobs, later resort to begging after losing jobs. It is understood that MGNREGS can play a critical role in preventing distress migration and thus, there is a need for providing more works and timely payment to MGNREGS workers.
10. It was found that tribal people are resorting to begging due to livelihood insecurity. This is mainly because of the alienation of individual and common property resources such as land and forests and also lack of accessibility of minor forest produces (MFPs) and non-viability of tribal agriculture.
11. Lack of care of the elderly population is becoming a social problem due to the breakdown joint family system and lack of sufficient social security and institutional supports. There is a need for effective social security measures and institutional supports to take care of elderly persons. Facilities in old-age homes should be improved and elderly pension needs to be enhanced every year. The coverage and effectiveness of an integrated programme for older persons need to be enhanced.
12. As noted, there is a positive and significant correlation between the number of widows and the number of women beggars. Some widows are excluded and are devoid of livelihoods. The coverage and effectiveness of programmes meant for women in general, and widows in particular, need to be enhanced.
13. Lack of care for disabled persons is one major social problem. Disabled orphans are largely involved in begging. One of the root causes of beggary is helplessness of disabled persons. There are Central government schemes such as Scheme of Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP), Scheme to Promote Voluntary Action for Persons with Disabilities (Deen Dayal Rehabilitation Scheme), Incentives to Private Sector

Employers for providing employment to persons with disabilities, etc. The coverage and effectiveness of these programmes need to be enhanced.

14. Lack of care for child orphans and destitute children is a major social problem in India. The breakdown of the joint family system has affected the care of child orphans particularly. There are schemes for empowering these children such as the scheme of assistance to voluntary organisations for homes for infants and young children for promoting in-country adoption, programme of assistance for innovations in child development and welfare: national children's fund, etc. The coverage and effectiveness of these schemes need to be enhanced.
15. There should be proper enforcement of existing laws to prohibit human trafficking and begging mafia.
16. Giving alms to a beggar does neither help him nor society as a whole; rather the problem of beggary aggravates and encourages indolence in society. This idea should be disseminated through various types of media like social media, print media, television, etc. Thus, there is a need for intensive sensitisation as to increase consciousness of the futility of indiscriminate charity.

## **6.2. Rehabilitation measures**

This section gives some suggestions for rehabilitating the beggars who are currently involved in begging. For convenience, beggars can be divided into solitary and non-solitary beggars. Solitary beggar means s/he is resorted to begging for her/his survival only. Non-solitary beggar means s/he is resorted to begging not only for the survival of her/him but also family too.

1. There is uncertainty over the actual number of beggars in the country. In order to avoid this problem, a socio-economic census of beggars needs to be done at all-India level. The survey of beggars is inevitable as to frame the nature and extent of the rehabilitation.
2. If the beggar is an orphan or single, s/he should be taken to the rehabilitation centres.
3. Social security and welfare schemes like old-age pension, widow pension, PDS, etc., are to be extended to beggars at rehabilitation centres.

4. The rehabilitation centres should have skill development or training facilities so that beggars (excluding infirmity beggars) can be trained for alternative livelihood options. For instance, self-employment training such as tailoring, stitching, weaving, etc., can be provided to beggars at rehabilitation centres. These centres should have adequate infrastructures, both physical and human resources so that effective training could be given to able-bodied beggars.
5. The rehabilitation centres must have health centre facilities and related services.
6. There are schemes for disabled persons such as Scheme of Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP); Scheme to Promote Voluntary Action for Persons with Disabilities (Deen Dayal Rehabilitation Scheme), Incentives to Private Sector Employers for providing employment to persons with disabilities, etc. These schemes must be implemented properly and be extended to beggars at rehabilitation centres.
7. The rehabilitation centres must take an action to assure the financial inclusion and financial literacy of beggars.
8. Transparency and accountability of the rehabilitation centres must be ensured and social auditing of rehabilitation centres should be made mandatory.
9. Rehabilitation centres must have good infrastructure like building, kitchen, toilet, drainage, dormitory, transport, communication, computer, electricity, safe drinking water, skilled human resources, land, etc.
10. The rehabilitation of beggars is very difficult if the beggar has a family. We cannot take them into the rehabilitation centres. As noted, about 1.2 per cent depending on begging in rural areas of West Bengal. We cannot take such rural households to rehabilitation centres. Government has to extend all the programmes which meant for the poor to those families.
11. While attending to the requirements of families depending on begging, immediate needs like safe drinking water, medical relief, food, shelter, sanitation, etc., should be the prime focus, followed by rehabilitation through rebuilding basic infrastructure and ensuring livelihood security.

12. There is a need for a relief centre shelter for homeless families depending on begging. While allotting PMAY houses, the preference should be given to homeless beggars.
13. Some provisions are to be made to include people depending on begging (destitute, beggars, disabled, homeless, orphan and families) in the schemes/programmes meant for the poor.
14. There are schemes for the disabled, diseased, elderly, orphans, destitutes and widows for improving their lives and skills. There is a need of extending all these schemes to families depending on beggary.
15. Improve the socio-economic infrastructure in colonies of leprosy-affected persons and medical treatment for them.

### **6.3. An Action plan for NIRDPR**

NIRDPR can play a proactive role in the eradication of beggary in the State of Telangana by providing skill development and financial assistance to rehabilitation centres and also helping the opening of more rehabilitation centres for beggars.

1. Conducting a baseline survey of all beggars in the city of Hyderabad for getting a detailed scenario of beggary in the city.
2. Play an active role in bringing of all NGOs or individuals who work for the rehabilitation of beggars in Telangana.
3. Conduct training, workshops and seminars for NGOs or individuals who work for eradicating and rehabilitating beggars.
4. Provide skill development training at the rehabilitation centres of beggars.
5. Sensitise all stakeholders working on beggary and help them connect with the schemes and programmes of MoRD and other ministries.

## 7. Conclusion

Begging is a complex social phenomenon mainly due to the combined effect of one or two social problems. A combined effect of ageing and destitution may lead to beggary, or disability and destitution may lead to beggary. Thus beggary is a by-product of social problems such as ageing, destitution, landlessness, homelessness, disability, etc. Beggary appears when there are no basic needs, lack of care of elderly, widows, orphans, disabled and diseased persons and also lack of timely and effective coverage of institutional supports including, family, community and government. This underscores the solution to the problem. Government, non-governmental organisations and civil society can play a critical role in rehabilitating beggars and prevention of beggary in the country.

India is the fastest growing economy in the world with a growth rate of over 7 per cent. Also, States like Bihar and Gujarat are growing at a fast pace over years. In this context, the budget allocation at the Central and State government level for providing basic needs, including food, shelter, clothes, education, health, drinking water electricity and sanitation to poor people has to be increased. Apart from this, social security of vulnerable sections like the elderly, widows, disabled, diseased and child orphans need to be taken care of by implementing specific schemes for them. Government can also play a critical role in helping NGOs, which are working for the rehabilitation of beggars and other vulnerable sections, with financial and other resources. Beggars are potential human resources and they should be converted into worthy human capital and workforce for achieving a higher growth rate and ensuring inclusive development. We need to have a holistic approach for the elimination of social problems.

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## Shri S.R. Sankaran

S.R. Sankaran, a distinguished Civil Servant, is known for his commitments and actions for the upliftment of the poor and the marginalized. The seamless integrity between his life, ideas and work was the unique dimension of his personality. As a civil servant he took Constitution as a mandate and made every opportunity to put in practice the fundamental principles of equality, non-discrimination, justice and affirmative action in favour of the economically backward sections of the Indian society. He believed that his true vocation as a civil servant was to serve the people where the poor occupied the primacy of position. Within the poor his concern was about SCs and STs as they have been at the lowest rung of the social hierarchy, wallowing in chronic misery and deprivation and subjected to daily acts of injustice and indignity.

The transformative role that Sankaran as a civil servant played in the lives of the poor is exemplary to date. His deep understanding of the social environment of the poor is remarkable. In his view, the poor are typically unorganized, hard to reach, inarticulate and often visible by residing in periphery. Along with lack of access to land and other natural resources, lack of access to education makes them vulnerable to manipulation by adversaries leading them to internalize the ideology of dependence and submission. The conditions of poor can be compressed into five disabilities: (i) lack of access to land and employment, (ii) unfree labour, (iii) low wages, (iv) institutionalised discrimination, and (v) deprivation in social services. His work during his career and after retirement devoted to uplifting the poor by relieving them from such adversaries and organizing them. While working for the poor he had not only used his professional skills but also brought to bear on the problem of human touch and his impeccable moral values.

Sankaran was legendary civil servant, a crusader for social justice, a civil rights activist, a perceptive critic of development and public policy with extraordinary sensitivity, clarity, and above all, an epitome of compassion. A single social goal of his entire life's work was the reduction of contradiction between political and socio-economic inequality.

## S.R.Sankaran Chair ( Rural Labour)

S.R. Sankaran Chair (Rural Labour) is instituted at the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Hyderabad by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India with the objective of promoting research and constructive debates on issues that would enhance understanding and help in improving the world of work and the lives of rural labour. Collaborative research, seminars, workshops and policy dialogues involving institutions, organizations, policy makers and other stakeholders with similar objectives, and placing the results in the larger public domain through working papers, articles in learned journals, books and policy briefs are part of the activities set out for the Chair.



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