

POVERTY IN INDIA: UNFOLDING SOME FACTS FROM UTTAR PRADESH

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Poverty in post-independence India has been observed and estimated in a number of ways. The task is to get rid of poverty. The paper examined how the people at the bottom of the Indian economy survive and why the people in poverty, in spite of being intermittently engaged in multiple occupations, remained inter-generationally poor. Based on both quantitative and qualitative data collected from rural and urban areas of Uttar Pradesh, the paper concluded that the counting of people as a number living below money-based poverty line did not help much in lifting the poor above the line. Fulfilment of basic needs with 'food first' in the need-basket has to be ensured, the paper opines, through engaging the poor in productive occupations on a regular basis. Uplifting the poor requires that the state implements the tasks revealed through need-based plan chalked out by the people at the bottom.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most outstanding observations on poverty with reference to the developing countries is 'a country is poor because it is poor' (Nurkse 1953: 4). The explanation perhaps lies in the 'exclusion induced poverty' (Thorat 2011:6) that prohibit the poor people in a 'poor' country from coming out of the low-level trap – it is inter-generational poverty of the same set of people. This was because of the initial conditions embedded in the social identity by tribe-caste-community-gender philosophized by birth-linked occupations; occupational immobility observed as a derivative of inherited skill. The economic conditions show organizing production on the labour-intensive contour for the majority at the bottom of the social pyramid without revealing what was diagnosed as labour-intensive was really drudgery that dehumanized the generations by deprivations from education in childhood disabling them for education-weighted capacitated participation in labour market in adulthood.

In the domain of uses and control over resources-technology-output, the firm as the producer pays wages that the labourer receives. Wages constitute a component of the cost of production that the firm plans to minimize. The labourer, responsible for low productivity, is paid low wage rate. The sequence is the following:

Low-quality job – Low productivity – Low wages – All wages consumed –
Absence of savings – Similar/same job – Low wages – Poverty –

Low productivity per labour-hour is identified as the reason for poverty. A section of the low-productive labourers seen as disguised unemployed in agriculture was anticipated to be released for use in non-agriculture. This did not work because while surplus labour was economist's idea or estimation based on hypothetical marginal productivity of labour on land, surplus labourer had to be actually identified and released to be sent to industries for productive employment. The capital-centered choice of techniques and irrelevance of to-be-released labourers from agriculture meant their non-absorption in organized industries to expand its employment horizon. Pauperization continued unabated for prolonged dependence of rising population on land-based activities with declining share of primary sector in national income. However, the labourers outside the circumference of capitalist industrialization created their own economic space by being engaged in a number of economic activities in the unorganized sector for survival.

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During India's early 1950s, based on the estimates for all classes, expenditure on consumer goods per person was about Rs. 22 per month of which about Rs. 13 was spent in cash and Rs. 9 was the value of consumption of home-grown food and home-made articles. Housing was primitive in villages and extremely in deficit in urban areas. The supply of nutritive foods was meager although nearly two-thirds of the total expenditure was spent on food items. The level of living thus was extremely low (Mahalanobis 1985: 22-23). In value terms, home production was 40.9 per cent of household consumption during early 1950s.

The division of the population between the poor and the non-poor is distinctly defined by 'poverty line' drawn to count the poor in India (GoI 2014:32; Dandekar & Rath 1971: 24-29; Rangarajan & Dev 2014: 1; GoI 1993; GoI 1997; Tendulkar and Jain 1995:1373-1374). The planners in India became concerned for the exclusion of the poor from the consequential benefits of development. This concern was also linked with the 'elite guilt' of 'being prosperous in a country with so many poor people' (Sarkar 2008:441). The reason why prolonged poverty does not lead to dissent is 'because a huge amount of intellectual effort goes into making it appear acceptable' (Basu 2011: 158). In India, in spite of accelerated economic growth with eleven five-year plans completed so far, mass poverty persists. Economic growth as a time trend of the macro national output left a sizeable section of the population below minimum acceptable level of dignified living. The Planning Commission of India until January 2011 estimated 'poverty ratio' (that is, the percentage of people living below the poverty line) following the Commission-constituted Expert Group (Lakdawala) methodology that estimated declining poverty ratio for each of rural and urban areas in India during 1973-74 to 2004-05 with the number of poor varying between 300 million and 330 million for India. The all-India poverty ratio was computed as a weighted average of state-wise poverty ratios (GoI 2014:13-14).

In independent India, the Planning Commission started constituting committees to measure poverty since early 1960s. The 1962 Working Group suggested monthly per capita consumption expenditure of Rs. 20 at 1960-61 prices as poverty line taking into consideration the recommendation of 'balanced diet' made by the Nutrition Advisory Group of the Indian Council of Medical Research (GoI 2014:9). The Nutrition Expert Group (1968) suggested calorie norm as 2400 kcal per capita per day in rural India and 2100 kcal in urban India, the monetary equivalent of this estimated calorie requirement was based on the 28th Round (1973-74) NSS data on household consumption. Accordingly, 'consumer expenditure (food and non-food) of Rs. 49.09 per capita per month was associated with a calorie intake of 2400 per capita per day in rural areas and Rs. 56.64 per capita per month with a calorie intake of 2100 per day in urban areas. This Monthly Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE) was termed as poverty line' (GoI 2014:9-10). An Expert Group (Tendulkar) was constituted by the Planning Commission in 2005 that followed Lakdawala methodology (GoI 2014:17). Calorie norm remaining unchanged, the line was revised by price changes over years to follow (Jones & Sen 2001:215). Based on MPCE of Rs. 972 in rural areas and Rs. 1407 in urban areas as poverty line for all-India at 2011-12 prices, 29.5 per cent of the population lived below poverty line in India in 2011-12 following Rangarajan method that was 30.9 per cent for rural and 26.4 per cent for urban areas. The Expert Group (Rangarajan) reverted back to the previous practice of having separate all-India poverty line baskets for rural and urban areas (GoI 2014: 33, 63, 66, 69).

The growth-oriented development for the first fifteen years of uninterrupted planning in India aimed at a product-mix far from the needs of the poor. Mass poverty was an offshoot. The country experienced the impact of partition in 1947 by the enormous influx of the dispossessed refugees from the Bengal border of British India and again unrecorded influx of people from East Pakistan just ahead of and immediately after its being an independent country, Bangladesh, in 1971. Since mid-1960s to mid-1970s the eastern region of India experienced both economic crises and political turmoil around right to land and food some of which were internal manifestations of forces that operated internally and internationally.

Post-independence India's initial plan strategy relied on distribution of the benefits of growth by 'trickle down' that was diametrically opposed to India's immediate pre-independence People's Plan, 1944 (Srinivasan 2013:3). There was a delayed consensus that 'trickle down' of growth failed in India (Chakravarty 1987: 51) with necessity for growth to be distributed (Seers 2011:13; Radhakrishna 2015: 69). The ruling polity announced 'Garibi Hatao' in 1972 that became one major objective in the Fifth Five-Year Plan of India (Kurien 1972:2493). The state-directed development paradigm thus re-oriented its course from growth-led 'trickle down' during 1950s and 1960s to removal of poverty during 1970s, fulfilling 'minimum needs' during 1980s, market-orientation since early 1990s, and pledge for 'inclusive' growth since the first decade of the 21st century (Rao 1973: 1465; Guhan 1980:1975-1976; Planning Commission 2008; Planning Commission 2013).

The purpose of the paper is to observe how the people at the bottom of the economy survive and why they remain inter-generationally poor. The paper rests on both household survey-based quantitative data and participatory qualitative data. We covered Uttar Pradesh (UP) for both structured and unstructured observations. The rest of the paper is structured as follows. In Section I we present quantitative and qualitative facts focusing on food domain of the poor. In Section II we analyze food-based poverty with observations from UP. In Section III we put forward the reasons why the poor remains inter-generationally poor. Finally, in Section IV we offer concluding comments.

QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE FACTS

A binary bracketing of population as poor and non-poor is a naïve attempt to understand poverty (Matthews 2008:1036). The BPL Census/Survey 1992 (Income approach with annual household income limit Rs. 11,000), 1997 (Expenditure approach based on five indicators with annual household income limit Rs. 20,000), 2002 (13 Score-Based Ranking to indicate quality of life of households) show repetitive attempts to bracket the poor by indicators with subsequent errors of inclusion and exclusion of the poor identified in these surveys (Ram et al 2009:66-67; Sundaram 2003:896-897). The identification and hence bracketing of the people by visible material indicators like food, clothing, housing, consumer durables, transport and communication, health care, and education is one way to understand poverty. But the problems may lie in access to and use of such material goods by combinations.

Unearthing Food Domain of the Poor

People at the bottom, mostly outside the organized sector in India, live by fulfilment of food-oriented basic needs. Drawing the food-based poverty line fails to encompass facts like home-based production for self-consumption in rural India that really means collective consumption, and

second, consumption of essential food-items in urban slums purchased in the market for second-phase consumables like the residue after the first-phase purchase by the non-poor is complete. First-phase food-consumables for the non-poor and residue food-consumables for the poor are cardinally non-comparable. We encompass urban slums on the assumption that most of the poor of the rising urban population in India live in slums.

The ways the poor access food are distinctly different from the ways the non-poor do it. A visit of the rural courtyard adjoining the katcha house or the common-open space in a slum will reveal the unhygienic conditions of swallowing food by the children, including the unclean utensil-container of cooked food and unclean hands used to take food. Regular purchase of medicine soap for use by each member of the household is beyond the budget of the poor. Cardinal counting of the poor bypasses the possibilities of nutrition-differential by cross-sections.

The question is also on time-spacing of food taken per day, if food is taken at all every day by each member of the household of the poor. Because of food-links with other physiological functions and economic occupations, the quantity of food that the poor takes at a time is sharply different from the quantity that the non-poor takes apart from the privilege of the non-poor to take food with proper time gap in keeping with the quality of the food-mix. Each of quantity and quality of food being divergent for the poor and the non-poor, bracketing people by non-differentiated food-based poverty may raise questions.

Poor people get cooked food distributed by religious institutions, food from begging in urban areas, cereals collected by the sides of the railway tracks when downloaded from wagons, residue cereals from the 'mandis' (wholesale market), low-priced cooked food from community kitchens (like Daal-Bhaat Yojana run by the Government of Jharkhand), food collected from CPRs, Mid-Day Meal (MDM) in schools, meal from Anganbaadi, and meal shared informally in community support system that complicates what type of food the planners have in mind to calculate the minimum necessary food for nutrition. The children of income-poor households are sent to earn while they learn work-skill in motor garages, roadside eateries (Dhavas) and so on. By implication, the children get residue food in Dhavas that ensure their food-cum-job security.

Most of the food-takers are scarcely quality-conscious in India; the poor are disadvantaged more for the compulsions to take non-potable food. One example is wheat imported under PL 480 in India from the US prior to mid-1960s followed by drought-cum-food deficit during late 1960s when the last takers – generally adult women – of cooked food in households dependent on Fair Price Shops (FPSs), including some non-poor households, had to take half-boiled wheat to kill appetite or eat boiled lump of 'khud' (broken rice) to imagine elimination of hunger.

Poor people are distanced from quality food – they take food as only a quantity that offsets the adverse impact of daily drudgery on their health and that retains their capacity to work for longer hours. The children of poor households are forced to join any odd job that creates long-term barriers for them to come out from poverty. The resistance to hunger by entry into the lowest segment of the labour market traps them. Poverty, thus, is a cause for food-deficit by quantity-quality and also a consequence of undernourishment.

Poor households rarely own consumer durables like refrigerator, even if second hand (unless they use 'katiya' or cost-free illegal electricity connection) and hence remain incapacitated to cook more than what they consume per day – it has two immediate implications: one, they remain generally

underfed, even if not all the members intra-household, in absence of optimality in estimated food requirement per day for they cannot afford production of waste, and second, the fuel (generally cow dung cake, leaves, non-timber forest residue) that they use is totally burnt, it cannot be readily switched off, showing often non-optimum utilization of fuel. In this food-fuel matrix, it is difficult to calculate nutrition of the members of the poor household.

FOOD-BASED POVERTY: UNSTRUCTURED AND STRUCTURED OBSERVATIONS

The calculation of ‘money-centric’ poverty line rests on receiving minimum necessary calorie required per person per day from food (Subramanian 2012:13). The adequacy of diet and impact of food on nutrition varies by climate, gender, age, and nature of works (Bardhan 1973:249, 251). So we need to move away from a “fetishist” focus on goods as such to what goods do to human beings (Sen 1986: p. 29). While nutrition is an end-in-itself for an individual, nutrition also aims at higher productivity. While nutrition is a barometer for an individual, food security refers to the household. Productivity is institutionally-technologically conditioned so that the poor individual at the bottom of the labour market exhibits low productivity reflected in low wage rate. This apart, most of the members of the poor household remain engaged in multiple paid and unpaid occupations that make estimating household income difficult (Collins et al 2009:38).

Unstructured Observations on Poverty in Uttar Pradesh

The unstructured observations presented below enveloped the selected poverty-belts in Uttar Pradesh.

Example 1

In rehabilitated rural settlements of households displaced because of acquisition of land for setting up of industry, the type of food the children of the poor households had access to was roti/chapati (indigenous bread) prepared early in the morning for consumption by the children generally on broken dirty plates. The children had no fixed time – they used to have food as and when available (Observations of households in Nai Basti, Maikala village, Allahabad district, UP, 2014).

Example 2

We observed in a slum in the city of Allahabad the poor purchased post-sale in the first-hand market residue of the skin-meat for conversion into meat-like lump applying arduous labour hours to cook with mix of spices to be potable. At the current price per kg. of Rs. 120/- of dressed chicken in the market of the city of Allahabad for the non-poor buyers, the residue that is extracted from around 10 kg. sold is one kg, the latter sold at Rs. 20/- to the poor buyers. The residue is physically transformed to make it a lump for cooking and consumed in dinner by all the members of the household. This is far from the imagined shift in consumption habit of the poor in favour of meat as the large-size household cannot afford to buy vegetables by Rs. 20 to feed all. Such consumption of ‘low-cost raw food converted family utility maximizing cooked food’ is compulsion-driven (Observations and Interviews in Dhaikar/Dom Bastee, Yamuna Bank Road, Allahabad city, UP, 2014).

Be the food taken individually or collectively, a monetary calculation on nutrition-qualifying food per person per day is perhaps not possible (Kozel & Parker 2003:386-387). The poor households access food often by enhanced time-spacing that reduces the frequency of absorbing food per day. Many of such strategies for survival depend on the actual and expected food items available for the household. The poor hardly can afford to purchase adequate edible oil at home. The poor

households cook raw food often using residue of fish-oil discarded by the non-poor households in the raw fish market that is cardinally non-comparable with the quantity of edible oil the non-poor purchase from grocer's shop. Interpreting this as consumption-shift of the poor in favour of non-foodgrains food items like milk-meat-fish-fruits is questionable for the fact that the poor have access to the market for these products different from the market for the non-poor.

Table 1

Sample Households by Rural-Urban, District Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh				
Area	Blocks/Slum	GPs/Ward	Number of Households	%
Rural	Shankargarh	Goisera	48	32.0
	Koraon	Khiri Ramgarh	49	32.7
	Rural Total		97	64.7
Urban	Slum (Allahabad city)	Ward No. 55 (Yamuna Bank Road)	53	35.3
	Urban Total		53	35.3
Total Households (Rural + Urban)			150	100.0

Source: Field Survey, November, 2014.

Structured Observations on Poverty in Uttar Pradesh

We took a sample of 150 households from both rural and urban areas in the district of Allahabad in UP. SC BPL households as a percentage of total BPL households was 24.3 in Allahabad district that was 33.5 for the state of UP by 2002 BPL Census. The 2002 UP BPL Census shows absence of STs in Allahabad district (GoUP 2015). Based on three indicators, namely, i) BPL and AAY cards as percentage of total cards, ii) SCs as percentage of total population, and iii) inhabited villages as percentage of total villages connected with pakka road, we selected the blocks. SCs as percentage of total population in 2011 in the selected blocks were respectively 34.4 and 30.7 (Census of India 2011). We selected the Gram Panchayats (GPs) having highest BPL and AAY card holders as percentage of total card holders in the Panchayat in the block. Of the sample households, 97 were from rural areas selected from two GPs, one each from two blocks, Shankargarh and Koraon, in the district. By religion, all the randomly selected households were Hindus that covered by castes SCs, OBCs, and General. Of the 185 registered slums in Allahabad city, we selected one at the Yamuna Bank Road, inhabited mostly by the Dhaikars living at the bottom by caste hierarchy. 94.3 per cent of the selected slum households and 55.7 per cent of the selected rural households were from SCs. Of the respondents, Male: Female was 2:1 (Table 1).

We selected the sample by cardholding by types. All the households in the slum were landless. 46.4 per cent of the selected households in rural areas were landless. We observed SC households more disadvantaged relative to others by selected economic indicators (Table 2). Selected indicators portraying poverty of households are portrayed in Table 3. Based on participatory observations and responses from the households, we describe the nature of food of the poor and the non-poor in Table 4.

Living on CPRs

The puzzle how do poor households live below some threshold money income per period is partially solved once collection of food-fuel-fodder by the poor from common property resources (CPRs) is calculated. The CPRs, unless annexed by the local dominant people, are mostly accessed by the rural poor; the urban CPRs also show the space for survival of the urban poor.

Table 2

Households by Castes by Selected Economic Indicators, District Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh

Indicators	SCs		Others		Total	
	No./Unit	%	No./Unit	%	No./Unit	%
Households						
Average Size	5	4.8	7	15.2	6	4.0
Working Members	2	1.9	2	4.3	2	1.3
Land Holding of Households						
Landless	88	84.6	10	21.7	98	65.3
Landowners	16	15.4	36	78.3	52	34.7
Average holding (Acre)		1.09		3.22		2.57
Income (Rs.) per Month						
Up to 1,000	3	2.9	2	4.3	5	3.3
1,001 to 2,000	7	6.7	1	2.2	8	5.3
2,001 to 4,000	25	24.0	11	23.9	36	24.0
Above 4,000	69	66.3	32	69.6	101	67.3
Mean Income (Rs.)		5,108.00		8,439.00		6,129.00
Households dependent on wage-labour	84	80.8	28.3	80.8	64.7	80.8
Expenditure (Rs.) per Month						
Foodgrains	1898.00	47.6	2339.00	42.1	2033.00	45.5
Other food Items	1252.00	31.4	1459.00	26.2	1315.00	29.4
Non-food Items	841.00	21.1	1763.00	31.7	1124.00	25.1
Total Expenditure (Rs.)	3990.00	100.0	5561.00	100.0	4472.00	100.0
Fulfilment of Foodgrains Consumption per Month from different Sources (Kg.)						
Self/Cultivation	11.4	14.2	70.7	64.9	29.6	33.3
Wage Exchange	6.1	7.6	0.7	0.6	4.4	4.9
Open Market	40.2	50.1	25.3	23.2	35.3	39.7
Fair Price Shop	22.6	28.2	12.2	11.2	19.4	21.8
Total Consumption	80.2	100.0	108.9	100.0	89	100.0

Note: Others include OBCs and General Castes.

Source: Field Survey, 2014.

Often urban garbage, railway tracks and platforms show the food reserve and domestic necessities for the poor. The urban CPRs also include public utilities like sources of water for drinking, cooking, cleaning and bathing provided by local government apart from abandoned public and private buildings, open space under the flyovers and concrete easy-entry easy-exit roadside concrete pipes for make-shift housing that become for the poor components of life-support system.

The portfolio of the rural poor in our study was limited to foodgrains, some domestic animals and its by-products like cow dung cake used as fuel, less than marginal landholding for subsistence farming for mono-cropping and its by-product for use as roof of house, CPRs-made katcha house having rope-bamboo made cot ('khatia'), and indigenous oven ('chulha'). No poor household owned high-cost productive assets like tractors, pump sets, water sources for irrigation. Living below subsistence level meant for them absence of savings. They had no access to banks to borrow for investment on marginal land. Through migration or displacement the rural poor becomes a dweller in an urban slum at the best. In case he was rural poor he earned real wage at subsistence level or below that; or he becomes a slum poor to earn wages in cash – the saving consequence is the same – zero or negative savings.

Table 3
Households in Poverty by Selected Indicators, District Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh

Indicator	Rural Poor	Urban Slum Poor
House Type	Mostly Katcha	Katcha or semi-pucca
Land Owned	Landless or Marginal Land Owned	No Land Owned
Clothes	Purchase by seasonal festivals; low priced	Need-based purchase any time; low priced; often second-hand by transfer
Education	Illiterate or below primary level	Same
Occupations	Unskilled labour mainly in agriculture	Inherited skill-based labour; engaged in multiple works
Product (Home-based / Sale)	Mostly home-grown cereals & vegetables with no sale-option	Cottage industry like basket making for sale
Consumer Durable Goods	No ownership of 'high price' durables	Same
Capital Goods	No ownership of 'high price' goods like tractor, pump set	No ownership
Livestock	Very few households owned cattle	Not owned
Savings Account in Bank	Possessed; single person (Male) account, used mainly to get government benefits; often non-functioning accounts	Same
BPL Cards	Possessed with errors of omission and commission	Same
Insurance (persons, crops, animals)	Absent	Absent
Fuel	Collected mostly from CPRs	Kerosene-Kanda# dependent
Borrowing Sources	Non-Institutional	Non-Institutional
Percentage of working population	Total (31.4%); Male (42.0 %), Female (19.2%)	Total (41.8%); Male (44.7 %), Female (38.9%)
Self-production (as % of total requirement of foodgrains)	46.0	0.0
Expenditure on food items (as % of total expenditure)	72.8	78.0
Per Household Expenditure on Food (Rs.) per month	1,995.00	2,102.00
Per Household Expenditure on Non-Food (Rs.) per month	1,063.00	1,777.00

Note: We relied on the sample respondents and visibility of consumer durables and productive assets. # Cow dung cake, generally self-prepared.

Source: Field Survey, 2014 (Author's calculations).

WHY DO POOR REMAIN INTER-GENERATIONALLY POOR?

The matter of concern for a national economy like India is that its one-third of the population continues to live in inter-generational poverty. Dispossession of resources keeps this size of population in poverty despite them being temporarily engaged as wage-labourers at the bottom of the labour market (Bagchi 1973:1505). The working hands not owning the working instruments, a part of the value that they produce gets siphoned off. We present below some observations from UP to explain why the poor remain inter-generationally poor.

Table 4
Food of the Poor and the Non-Poor, District Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh

Nature of Food	Non-Poor	Poor
Raw Food	High quality	Residue/waste or rich-rejected
Cooked Food	Well cooked, hygienic	Cooked somehow, mostly unhygienic
Time spent for Cooking	Organized, time-saving, modern fuel-using	Unorganized, labour-using, time-using, traditional fuel-using
Food Type	Quality-based, choice-based, high calorie	Quantity-based, collection-based, low calorie
Consumption Time	Regular fixed time	Irregular, constrained by available time and cooking time
Consumption Point	At home or outside (restaurants, hotels)	At home, work site, no specific location
Consumption Pattern	Single-point complete dish	Truncated incomplete dish
Determinants of Food	Health-dependent. Market prices are less important determinants	Health-neutral. Market prices are the primary determinants
Availability of Food	Self-produced (Rural) and market-based	Partially self-produced (Rural), market-based and food received as residue/waste

Source: Field Survey, 2014 (Author's observations).

Example 1

The illiterate labourers migrating mostly from the poverty-belt in the states of Bihar and Jharkhand to the brick kilns in UP, even after working at piece rate per day for seven months at a stretch on a span of twelve months, and repeating the same work being in inter-kiln circulation over years, could not save money to purchase agricultural land or invest on the marginal land that they owned or purchase/maintain draught animals. The wages earned in the kiln-work calculated per month was much more than what they earned per month during four-month mono-cropping season in the rural economy. The saving of the labourers went to repay the outstanding debt to the landlord-lenders and adjustment of advance wages received from bricklords pre-production season, all in the rural economy (Interviews of Brick Kiln migrant labourers in district Sravasti, UP, 2013).

Example 2

In a slum in the city of Allahabad on the bank of Jamuna river inhabited by Dhaikars, people of bottommost caste, most of whom were illiterate, the household productive assets were some pieces of bamboo bought to be converted into baskets; each of the households had one dilapidated living room in a I-shape arrangement of rooms with common wall, the working space being the room itself and adjoining common kutchra corridor. The final products like baskets were for sale but absence of bargaining power kept these households below the level of subsistence. The producers were women members of the households. Large family size meant for them more working hands. The male members of the households were infrequently engaged at piece rate by local administration to do odd jobs (Interviews of Dhaikar households, Allahabad, 2014).

Example 3

The boatman at the bottom of the non-motorized ferry services for tourism/pilgrimage on the confluence of the rivers Ganga and Yamuna on the side of Allahabad city used to run around four trips per day, receiving per trip between Rs. 150.00 and Rs. 250.00, the bargaining done by the Munshi who used to look after boats assigned by the contractor (Thekedar), the latter rented-in

boats from boat owners. In this chain, the boatman earned on average Rs. 400.00 per working day of twelve hours, after paying rent to the Munshi, who in turn, paid to the Thekedar who, in turn, paid rent to the boat owner (Interviews of boatmen and Munshi, Saraswati Ghat, Allahabad, 2014).

All the examples imply that the asset-owning non-poor are capacitated to engage the poor as labourers to extract rent. Initial asset-holding by inheritance or accumulation by dispossession of others brackets the non-poor. The non-poor (generally high caste in UP) apply its social and political power to annex CPRs and to keep the poor (generally low caste in UP) distanced from the benefits of public utilities. In rural UP this phenomenon starts with the isolation of the inhabitations of the 'Harijan' (low caste) households by locating the public utilities distanced from their access to these utilities.

In consequences one is poor and the other is non-poor – the latter for possessing rent-yielding assets and the former for absence of it. In processes, poverty of a section was a derivative of dispossession of non-labour resources (Hall 2013:1585). A labourer supported by a machine in the organized sector lives above poverty line drawing a regular wage above the minimum wage rate declared by the Government. Had the same labourer been in the unorganized sector incapacitated by absence of working instruments, he would have remained perhaps below poverty line. Our observations confirm inter-generational poverty in UP mainly for those who are also at the bottom by castes. The observations from UP confirm poverty as both economic phenomena and social derivative.

Hence, the poor in India remains poor inter-generationally because of the following:

1. The poor remains engaged in low-quality low-wage works because caste hierarchy determines most of the occupations;
2. Low-wage is consumed and a part is used as interest payment on past borrowing, not saved institutionally;
3. Most of the poor remain excluded from institutional finance for financial illiteracy;
4. Absence of functional literacy and absence of formal education beyond a point make the poor institutionally obsolete;
5. Technological advancement, by non-access, makes them technologically obsolete;
6. Rural-based land-dependent job inter-generationally keeps them tied to land;
7. Borrowing, mainly for food and rituals, leads to never-ending outstanding debt leading to inter-generational dependence on the rural moneylender, often resulting in borrower's landlessness.

The circularity confirms:

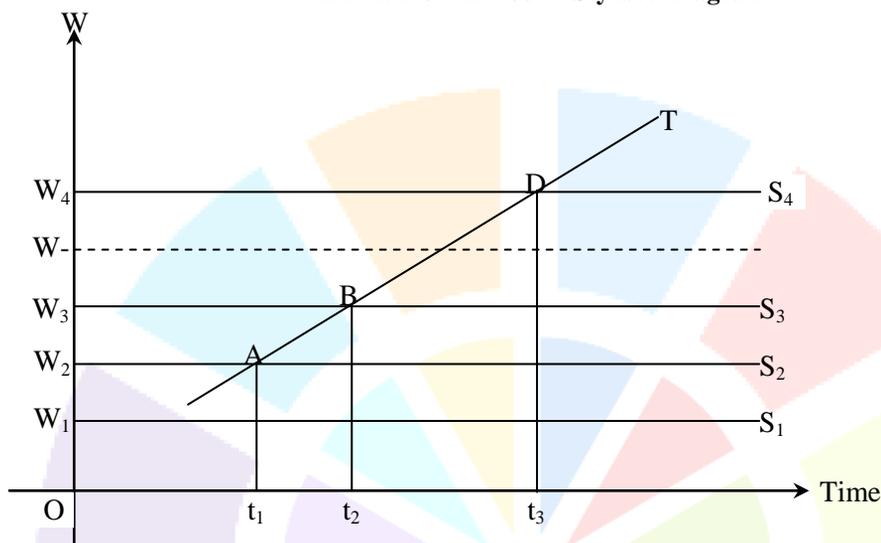
Low-quality job – low wage-income – all wages consumed – absence of savings – non-institutional borrowing – indebtedness – poverty – low-level education – low-quality job – and so on.

Time Path for Upliftment of the Poor

People at the bottom continue to have an evolved-from-within social support system that maintains their livelihood. India has a history of 'Begar' (people in servitude) where poor people living below the subsistence level, mostly from the bottom castes, were engaged to work for the well off households and paid wage at 'food rate'. In course of time population in the working age got engaged as wage-labourers to earn subsistence wage.

There are, thus, multiple horizons for the poor to try to move up; the physical time-span of each such elevation is unknown a priori. We present below, on economic time-span, this ladder for the poor (Please see Diagram 1).

Figure 1
Time Path of the Poor – Stylised Diagram



For time period Ot_1 , he moves on W_1S_1 that is starvation wage rate or slave/begging rate;

At time point t_1 , he reaches OW_2 – the survival wage rate;

In time interval $t_1 t_2$, he moves up from W_2S_2 to W_3S_3 that is from survival rate to subsistence wage rate;

At time point t_3 , he moves further up on W_4S_4 or industrial/urban wage rate;

In time interval, $t_2 t_3$, he experiences National Minimum Wage Rate, OWN .

Up to OW_2 , the poor struggles for survival. Livelihood strategy starts with OW_3 . The wage rate above OW_3 makes the poor aware of alternatives. Positive saving of the poor starts above OW_3 that is post-fulfilment of subsistence needs. In other words, a real wage rate above the level of subsistence may help saving by the poor. The line $ABD\dots$ shows the ladder for the uplift of the poor.

The target of the poor in one-generation work life is to reach the subsistence line – even if they reach it at a point of time, they may be pushed down for many reasons. Next generation of the poor household thus re-starts from the survival line showing inter-generational poverty.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Counting the people as a number living below money-based poverty line would have led to policy implications had the economy been mostly monetized with livelihood of people dependent on money-based exchange as opposed to the prevailing large non-monetized segment, the latter based on collection from CPRs, collective consumption, repetitive-cum-multiple uses of products received from several sources, and barter of home-produced output. Frequent money-based

headcount of the poor by expert groups in India did not throw much light on how to break the poverty trap.

The legitimacy of the state in political democracy is realized when it capacitates the people to fulfil basic needs. Fulfilment of basic needs with 'food first' in the need-basket has to be ensured through engaging them in productive occupations on a regular basis. The need-based output-mix rejects 'resource scarcity' assumption; initial finance required to support such output-mix can be mobilized through taxation on the super-rich by the Government of India. Uplifting the poor requires that the state implements the tasks revealed through need-based plan chalked out by the people at the bottom.

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