The present paper attempts to understand beggary as a growing socio-economic problem and an extreme form of destitution and poverty in urban India. It analyses beggary from a developmental perspective and as an inevitable outcome of exploitation and criminalisation of poor under the vicious force of political economy. The present discourse further explores the possible solutions to deal with beggary under the existing Beggary Laws, the role of NGOs and Civil Society.

Dr. Sumita Sarkar is Assistant Professor (RM&IR), Research Cell, Bharati Vidyapeeth’s Institute of Management Studies and Research, Sector 8, CBD Belapur, Navi Mumbai 400 614.

INTRODUCTION

A large section of the population in our country lives below the poverty line. The inevitable option of livelihood is popularly known as ‘begging’. The term ‘beggary’ is also often used synonymously with ‘destitute’. Though Marx had distinguished ‘destitute’ from the malnourished, unemployed and beggars and addressed them together as ‘unoccupied’, the most commonly observed occupation among the destitute is begging. Begging comes to them as a negotiated exchange somewhere between a gift proper and market transaction involving a transient relationship of obligation of giver to receiver in which the ‘beggar’ has power deriving from coercive subordination (Staple, 2002). Destitution is the extreme form of poor. Poverty and poor are interwoven phenomena and thus need to be understood in the wider socio-economic context of development.

In India, ‘poverty and pauperism’ are not atypical phenomena; the act of beggary was always considered to be noble. The popular term ‘bhiksha’ (alms) in Hinduism, Jainism and in Buddhism are well known. Even having emerged as an unorthodox religious philosophy, Muslim also believed in ‘Zakat’. However, although ‘beggary’ has its roots in religious mendicancy, it has socio-economic ramifications which have made it a major social problem of the twenty-first century.

It could be argued that poverty and beggary emerged in India as serious social problems after the disruption of the joint family system and the removal of production from home to the factory. The modern method of production has resulted in the accumulation of wealth.
Failure to give adequate attention to the social arrangements has given rise to the appalling evils of industrialism and urbanism to which the workers the world over have fallen victims. It has also disintegrated the village economy, so much so that owing to unemployment and poverty thousands migrate from rural areas to cities and other urban areas in search of livelihood making the situation even worse. Furthermore, industrial accidents, unemployment, disease and old age of people below the poverty line especially in urban areas have forced them into beggary.

A careless development under hurried industrialisation; urbanisation and marketisation generated more expropriation of capital with rapid socio-economic growth in the country in last few decades. But the wealth remained confined in the hands of rich business and the elite class. As a result, it has also encouraged the process of victimisation and criminalisation of the minorities, downtrodden and the poor masses in the country. The outcome is an increase in poverty in general, and begging in particular. Beggary primarily is indicative of extreme poverty. It is the absolute failure on the part of an individual to sustain effectively through certain means of productivity and livelihood.

**Focus of the Paper**

The present paper looks at beggary as a growing socio-economic problem and an extreme form of destitution and poverty in urban India. The paper tries to analyse 'beggary' from a developmental perspective and as an inevitable outcome of exploitation and criminalisation of poor under the vicious force of political economy. Poverty as well as beggary have been treated as highly vulnerable and dynamic conditions, embedded in everyday life of urban India. The present discourse further explores the possible solutions to deal with 'beggary' under the existing Beggary Laws, the role of NGO's and of Civil Society.

**POVERTY: A DEVELOPMENT–UNDERDEVELOPMENT DEBATE**

Beggary, poverty and social exclusion overlap in a complex way and can be understood better under developmental paradigm. The process of uneven development or underdevelopment has created uneven distribution of wealth and progress in India. The changing dynamics of population especially in urban areas, imbalanced regional growth, and pace of industrialisation and urbanisation are the obvious outcomes of such a developmental approach. Individualisation and atomisation, domination of one group in society over others by virtue of wealth and power, frustration of disadvantaged sections of society, staggering dimensions of social, economic and political marginality of groups — are the essential components of the changing dynamics of today's development.
Economist Dudley Seers posed a basic question about the meaning of development from the right perspective when he asserted, ‘The questions to ask about a country’s development are: What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to inequality? What has been happening to unemployment? If all three of these have become less severe, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development.... If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially all three have, it would be strange to call the result ‘development’, even if per capita income doubled’ (Seers, 1969: 3).

The characterisation of development with its lofty goals is certainly very attractive but the realisation of such a process has been a complicated task. Relooking at the implementation of the development model over the last few decades we could assess the failure in the human development and offshoot of the so-called material progression of an advanced human society.

The term ‘development’ no longer symbolises material progression. Instead it has surfaced into widespread inequality and discrepancies between the poor and rich and has provided us with a more dehumanised world. Unplanned, erratic and unconcerned (or imposed?) pursuit of development has caused chaos and disorder in the society. Going by Frank’s (1967) observation, the relation between development and underdevelopment is not just a comparative one but is related to the common historical process of exploitation and exploited. But it has given a look of neo-colonialism where the tools today come through a much liberal package of developmental processes, such as, globalisation, marketisation, privatisation and so on. Such policies have created stiff competition for developing nations.

Thus the ideology ‘survival for the fittest’ is practiced under the pretext of human and democratic trade affairs. The consequences are obvious in sharply growing marginalised and downtrodden classes on the one hand and consumerism and erosion of values among people on the other hand. The concept of marketisation has made all aspects of life and the life of a human being a commodity. An outcome of such developmental anomie is growing poverty as well as more exploitation and criminalisation of the same. The carriers of the brunt are again the third world nations like Latin America, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, China and the like.

India, despite being the largest democracy in the world, has a sizeable proportion of its population live at an unacceptable level of poverty and deprivation. According to the Indian Economic Survey Report (2002), poverty in rural and urban areas has been constant with 40 per cent of the population remaining below the poverty line and deprived of the basic minimum of livelihood. The Human Development Index (HDI) has used several indicators to measure the well-being of the people. It is based upon a combined measure of longevity, literacy, access to basic goods and services, women’s empowerment, per capita
income and so on. India is 55th in the list of developing countries ranked according to the main human poverty index. In India, 135 million people lack access to basic health services, 171 million people lack access to safe drinking water and 640 million lack basic sanitation facilities. Twenty-one per cent of the population in India is undernourished and 53 per cent of its children under the age of five are underweight. The rate of male literacy is 60 per cent and female literacy is 40 per cent. The heart numbing realities are flagrant contradictions of the dream of social development. The poor, in fact, are deprived of having a minimum desirable standard of living.

Moreover, urban India also faces a unique problem of growing density of population. According to the 1991 Census, about 2000 persons per square kilometre and 5.01 per cent of the country's population live in extreme dense conditions of inhabitation with Greater Mumbai as the highest ranking in population (16,368,084) followed by Kolkata (13,216,546) and Delhi (12,791,458). Urban India has 11.55 per cent of the total population living below the poverty line (Planning Commission Report, 2001). Such socioeconomic and cultural trajectories are also manifested in various other forms of poverty, which include morbidity and mortality from illness, malnutrition, lack of shelter (mainly in the city); thereby increasing the number of homeless people and pavement dwellers, beggary and vagrancy, and above all social discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion of such poor sections of population from the mainstream of life and development processes. The picture is graver in the urban areas of the country especially in the cities as beggary, vagrancy or homelessness are on rise. Tulsyan (2008) reports in an online news article that 'a recent study titled Living Rough: Surviving City Streets, conducted over 2006–07 by the New Delhi-based Centre for Equity Studies, shows that though the homeless exist in our country in large numbers, the society at large tries to render them invisible, and shockingly, attempts to blame the homeless for their situation. The study, which was supported by the Planning Commission, explored the realities of homeless life in four Indian cities: Delhi, Chennai, Patna and Madurai. Three hundred and forty respondents were interviewed for the study.'

Beggary in urban India appears to be just another manifestation of a larger socioeconomic problem characterised by low incomes, high unemployment rates, rising cost of living, rates of population growth, inappropriate public policies and continued rural-urban migration and displacement. Thus the cardinal reason for most of the different categories of beggars to earn a meagre living on the streets, near religious places and other collective quarters of the cities is poverty precipitated by different factors and events. The beggars as an impoverished underclass presently find themselves in multifaceted and extreme destitution which can generally be characterised by chronic food shortage/insecurity, illiteracy, homelessness or poor housing or
Beggary: A Form of Social Exclusion

Poverty or ‘daridrata’ means ‘roving’ and implies the breakdown of community or social disorganisation. Whereas, beggars are the extreme form of poverty who are reduced to personal disorganisation and are victimised under the process of moral, political and social exclusion. It may also lead to unpunished violence to person, and the extreme seizure of assets or the complete destruction of ‘soul and self’. The denial from employment and social exclusion (in terms of acceptance and tolerance) of this section of population appeared to be justifiable and legitimised by the majority who practice it.

However, it must not be overlooked that for these marginalised poor sections, expulsion from moral and political society, and exclusion from work or from social protection by the state (governance) leads to deprivation from the fundamental right to work or from the preconditions for day-to-day economic reproduction of their labour as citizens of any democratic nation-state. These are also some of the many conditions necessary for accumulation of wealth (Russel and Malhotra, 2001). This is how poverty, and beggary as an extreme form of poverty, enters into the political economy. It implies a process of exclusion and exploitation and is legitimised by culture; a culture of marketisation and consumerism and institutionalisation of beggary as an ‘offence’.

City and the Beggars: The Indian Scenario

It is unfortunate that although the Ministry of Social Welfare has given due thought to the problem of beggary, there is no current data on what the actual beggar population in the country is except what is provided by the Census data of 1971. It recorded, 10,11,679 beggars and vagrants of which 5,91,501 were males, 4,20,178 females. The population might have increased manifold in 2004 due to population explosion and huge influx of migrants into urban India. A series of secondary data on urban population, density, and slums may give a probable approximation of the beggar population in urban India.

In India about 300 million people live in the cities and population explosion growth is an average of 2.4 per cent every year due to rural-urban migration (Census Report, 2004). In India there were 218 cities with a population of more than 100,000 in 1981 and in 1991 there are 816 cities with the same population. Major cities like Mumbai (12.5 million), Kolkata (10.836 million), Delhi (8.38 million), Chennai (5.3 million), Hyderabad (4.27), and Bangalore (5.27 million) contain more people than all the population living in the state of Kerala and two-thirds of the people living in Tamil Nadu (Census Report, 2000). An average of 60 per cent of all the population in the above cities live in
slums. For example, Bangalore, which was called the “Garden City” of India, had more than 430 slums with 400,000 slum dwellers in 1989. In Mumbai there are 10,000 people living as pavement dwellers, 150,000 prostitutes and 20,000 beggars with 60 per cent of the population living in the slums of the city. Delhi has more than 100,000 homeless pavement dwellers (about 4 per cent of the homeless population of India). The beggars in the cities can be seen swarming roads, bus stops, railway stations, and religious and tourists places — almost everywhere.

- 607 towns have reported slums.
- Total slum population consist 40,297341 people, holding 22.58 per cent of the total urban population in India.
- Largest slum population is registered in Maharashtra.
- About 1 per cent of India’s total population lives in Mumbai slums.
- About 6 per cent population of Mumbai city lives in slums.
- Proportion of slum population to total population in the city varies from 41.33 to 1.18 per cent (Kerala having the lowest proportion).
- Literacy of slum population has been found to be very high in urban India varying from 88.08 per cent to 55.46 per cent.

**Source:** Census Report India, 2001.

The behavioural manifestations of certain clusters of beggars, the nature and pattern of begging is largely influenced by the social milieu, religion and community criteria they are attached to and come from, and in large part, are an outcast of the same. For example, a section of the destitute that clusters in the main commercial pockets of the city would follow certain strategies to beg which would vary from the section that clusters near religious places before devotees or at the time of a pilgrimage. Within their own clusters they also maintain a sense of bonding and a ‘we feeling’ and would not like to mingle with other groups of beggars. These are largely observed in metropolitan cities in the form of ‘organised begging’. Ethnic traits are predominantly observed in groups of beggars coming from particular areas of certain states or regions. Social interaction, lacking depth both in the past and the present, are reflected in terms of lack of support, competition and conflict.

**The Way Forward**

Having discussed all these aspects of poverty and beggary under the broader context of socioeconomic development and of political economy, it is important to highlight a few strategies that can address poverty in general, and beggary in particular. A series of impact assessments undertaken by the Planning Commission, World Bank, DFID and UNDP have reported that urban poor identify employment, assets, saving and income as key determinants of their well-being. This is also crucially related with the upliftment of destitute beggars in urban
India. The exclusion from work and social life are the complex and critical realities under which urban beggars live. Thus, security and the right to livelihood are the two building blocks before urban India to deal with the issue of urban beggary.

**BEGGARY AND THE ROLE OF A WELFARE STATE**

India's beggary laws are a throwback to the century old European vagrancy laws that overlook the crucial difference between official text and practical reality. In other words, instead of addressing the socio-economic angle of beggary, it tries to criminalise it. Bombay Beggary Prevention Act, 1959 makes begging in public places a crime and the Act describes a beggar as ‘...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 exists by soliciting or receiving alms’. If one takes the definition forward, one can state that it is not a simple condition of deprivation, expulsion and exclusion. It is also a denial of citizenship, right to live and work. Under certain conditions (e.g., state development projects often induce displacement of large sections of people, and further, such displacement often backed by state and corporate bigwigs fail to compensate or rehabilitate evicted poor people) the law and the institutions of development may actively cause extreme situations of destitution—and as a result—the practice of beggary.

The Beggary Act of three major metropolitan cities, viz., Delhi (since 1961), Mumbai (since 1959) and Kolkata (since 1943) makes begging in public places a crime and a punishable offence. The scheme is explicitly punitive and aggressive in nature and acts as an anti-poor legislation for the 'beggars and the poor' aiming more at elimination of beggary rather than rehabilitating them.

Referring to the study *Living Rough: Surviving City Streets*, Tulsyan (2008) writes, “Under Indian laws, homeless beggars are treated as criminals and booked under various beggary laws. The Bombay Beggary Prevention (1959) Act defines beggars as anyone soliciting alms and who have ‘no visible means of subsistence’, including those who sell small articles at traffic lights and other public places. When penalised, beggars or homeless persons have to face hearings at a special court and may be sent to an institution, or can bail themselves out by paying money. The main issue of beggary as a problem is highly neglected by the law and simply fails to address the issue of beggary. Officials of the social welfare department, assisted by the police, conduct raids often in the city’s highly populated areas, tourist spots, stations and alongside temples to pick up beggars, who are then tried in a special court and if convicted, sent to a certified institution. For example, in Delhi, the homeless are especially scared of a van called Seva Kuteer. This van rounds up the homeless and beggars and they are put in beggars' jails for up to three years. The children at the
railway station call the days of raids as ‘chhapa din’, literally meaning days of raids, and escape from the station as quickly as they can whenever these occur, writes Harsh Mander, Director of the Centre for Equity Studies and the author of the consolidated report on homelessness in four cities, in the study.”

The Beggary Prevention Act in all major cities also suffers from serious lacunae. Firstly, it targets anyone who appears ‘poor’ and ‘destitute’. Thus a rag picker or a migrant labourer who may have never begged can be picked up randomly and kept behind the bar for up to two to three years at a stretch. Secondly, the nature of the act itself is punitive and makes the poor criminally responsible for their position. Both definitions are nebulous and open to the vagaries of time and the whims of an inspector.

The study Living Rough; Surviving City Streets shows that 15 per cent of the respondents in Delhi were arrested for living on the streets, 14 per cent for begging, and 5.5 per cent for other crimes. In Chennai, 5 per cent reported being arrested for living on the streets or begging, and 6 per cent for other crimes, whereas Madurai reported 7 per cent being arrested for begging, and 8.5 per cent for sex work and other reasons. In Patna, 7 per cent of the respondents were arrested for living on streets, and two men for begging. This is likely to be a significant underestimate, because of the stigma of arrest, both for crimes and for begging that homeless people themselves carry, Mander writes in the study’ (Tulsyan, 2008).

Thus, vagrancy or destitution is considered a crime as is begging and must be prevented under the Beggary Act.

The state varies greatly in its complicity with begging. It appears to be most complacent in rural areas and small townships and most intolerant in cities and comparatively larger urban agglomerations. A large number of beggars under the pretext of being destitute though are in unlawful activities such as organised and forced begging (as a profession), drug selling, prostitution, mobile and squatter trading which are the lot to be punished under the law. A survey conducted in 2007 of pavement dwellers and beggars in the city of Mumbai by a group of postgraduate students of Bharati Vidyapeeth Institute of Management Studies and Research, CBD, Belapur (as part of their corporate social responsibility project) revealed that organised begging has become a lucrative option for the migrant poor population coming to the city. Their average earning is about Rs. 120–200 per day, especially the beggars who are skilled enough to beg in a strategic location or at commercial places in the city.

A similar study conducted by the Centre for Media Studies, a Delhi based research group, found that the average earning for a beggar in Delhi city was Rs. 50. According to this report, 90 per cent of Delhi’s beggar population are migrants from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar who left their home under sheer poverty and were pushed to earn
a living in the city. With no sense of belonging to the place and no employment opportunity, easy money through begging makes this population vulnerable later to petty theft and crime.

The question that thus arises is, who is to be criminalised through Acts and legislations? Besides able bodied beggars in the city, there are old women and men, children (with physical and mental disabilities) who need protection and care but also fall under the penal jurisdiction and judiciary. For example, organised begging, which often involves maiming, is widely seen as being exploitative and coercive, but there is a startling lack of documented evidence on this. The Indian Penal Code (Section 363A) deals with the kidnapping/maiming of a minor for the purpose of begging. However, the police seem intriguingly unwilling to use this and prefer to book unwanted elements like homeless people and drug addicts in their area under the Bombay Act, as their responsibility then stops with the arrest. Thus, the current institutionalised approach to beggars merely serves to punish the destitute without aiming to help or reform them. Driven to begging, these people are often unemployed; the aged, people with physical disabilities or drug addicts remain helpless.

Furthermore, the Indian laws on beggary can throw up some complex questions on social categories and disciplining power of the state. The enforcement of the laws (Section 109 and 15 of the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973) involves the removal and incarceration of such people.

The state as such has done very little in dealing with the beggary problem in the cities and urban areas of the country except for a few night shelters. Absence of public toilets, public health institution and homelessness has worsened the situation of beggars in urban India. Beggars are an unrecognised section and also have been excluded from socio economic productivity. Vulnerability of beggars forces them to live in a sub-human state, with the State blissfully unaware of its responsibility.

The subject of beggary does not specifically figure in any of the lists contained in seventh schedule of Constitution. The Ministry of Law is of the opinion that is should be dealt with by the State and the Union territory. Many states and the Union Territories are operating anti-beggary programmes under their own laws. It is further observed that there is no Anti Beggary Act in eight states and in four Union Territories, for example, Rajasthan and Pondicherry respectively (Pande, 1983).

Beggary thus remains a crucial issue to be addressed by the state and existing legislation in India. The issue of recognising and combating structural injustices in society and expanding livelihood options for the marginalised — in a growth driven and now booming multi million dollar economy is probably a good idea. But simultaneously it is crucial to have an inclusive legal system that
incorporates the welfare of the socially excluded sections such as beggars or the destitute. In a welfare state, it also becomes a primary duty of the state to provide adequate security to all its citizens, especially to the poorest and most vulnerable section of the society. The development of social welfare activities over Five Year Plans reveals that it was only one or two Plans (for example, the Seventh Plan) where greater stress was laid on the institutional services for catering to specific requirements of the destitute and the beggars. The rest of the Plans have remained a routine follow-up of the social welfare activities on the part of the states with limited thought to secure the rights of beggars. There are quite a few attempts that can revive the conditions of the destitute beggars by the Government such as:

1. A comprehensive legislation may be applicable across the country and act as uniform and standardised services for the eradication of beggary.

2. A proper invigilation on city beggars and housing them in Government Homes/Shelters with the proper motive of rehabilitation.

3. Increasing the number of Government Homes/Shelters for the beggars in the city and other urban areas.

4. Improving the quality of Beggars Homes where it just does not become a repetition of living in sub-human ways.

5. Provision of free medication and sanitation are two important aspects that the state can look into by regularising Anti-Beggary and Prevention Acts.

6. Acting on the provision of IPC (363A) to prevent forced beggary and exploitation by organised criminal gangs in the city.

7. Providing more Vocational Training (VT) to increase the job opportunities and making VT mandatory.

However, poverty-led begging and homelessness do not arise in urban spaces independent of other related developmental dynamics. In India, hence, the problem cannot be resolved within its confines alone. The existing administrative approach of the State addresses the issue from the wrong end. The real solution lies on the part of the State judiciary and the Law to recognise the structural injustice in society and expand livelihood options in the national economy. But it is also important that a legal system does not persistently exclude the most vulnerable sections (beggars for example) from the development process.

The Role of Community: It has already been argued that beggary is not the outcome of a consumer market economy of the post-industrial era only but also the loss of morals and values where destitute beggars are simply treated as ‘trash’. Common citizens deny them their entitlement to social support, political legitimacy and citizenship to live and work.
Thus social responses to poor and destitute ‘beggars’ are contradictory. On the one hand, society follows and develops the law as it is practiced. The selective violation of rights is sanctioned by the society on the other hand. It initiates social expulsion and therefore rejects the relationship of accountability. It also indulges the notion of justice involving ‘stigma’ which permits harsh oppressive treatment towards ‘beggars’ outside the law. (Menon, 2002; Sen, 2001). The justification of such behaviour also involves the fear of criminality — particularly theft and of the consequences of addiction/victimisation. It involves views on ‘idleness’ and its lack of worth, the stigmatisation of occupations as physically dirty, anti-social and illegal (drugs) and notions of ugliness and beggary as a challenge to modernity.

The obligation of civil society to support the justice for the poor and beggars cannot be overlooked. The community should realise the rights of the destitute, poor and the beggars. The value of charity and well-being cannot only be restricted to charities during religious festivities and rituals, and in collecting ‘divine credit’ of welfare. The issue of welfare has to be realised in the form of right of inclusion of the beggars to have a place in social life and in the labour force.

**What Can a Community Do?**

Given the fact of steadily increasing number of beggars in the cities and other urban areas of India, the role of community becomes important. The responsibility, the citizens could consider as a political and social obligation to have and create a better living environment for themselves and for these thousands of floating destitute beggars all over the cities. People have their own prejudices and stigma attached to the words ‘beggars’ and ‘beggary’. A concept of self-help groups emerged as a popular term in many advanced communities of the western world decades ago and has gradually penetrated India as well. A self-help group of neighbourhood community based organisation, action group (short term and long term), and Voluntary Committees with a clear agenda of preventing, curing and rehabilitating destitute beggars can be formed. In Mumbai, the ‘Mohalla Committee’ has already shown much success to recreate a better hygienic, social and safe environment. Similar practices can be exercised in other urban areas. Few recommendations can also be considered such as:

Forming a medical team for the prevention of infectious diseases through beggars, free medication to them can be regularised in each respective neighbourhood of cities and in other suburb townships.

A self-help group can be formed to reach out to the roaming population of beggars in the respective locality and help them by providing work or bring them in touch with public or voluntary organisations for vocational training and other rehabilitation measures.
Community based organisations can keep a sharp vigil on organised beggary (through maiming and physical force) in their own neighbourhood and inform the law and order agency.

The stigma that persists in people’s minds has to be rationalised through awareness programmes. But it is also important to check on their criminal record and other unlawful acts of the person before they are brought back into the mainstream of life and work. Able-bodied women with child/children can be absorbed as domestic servants with a proper registration of work permit and an official identity.

The concept of charity and benevolence is an age-old concept of philanthropy in India. A ‘City Fund’ can be formed by the city people to regularise the charitable trust for food, medication and shelter for sick, aged and disabled beggars who are dependent on mainly religious mendicancy for their livelihood.

The Role of NGOs

It was soon after the Second World War that Non-government Organisations (NGOs) emerged as a part of the Civil Rights Movement in USA. It was nothing but an active and organised face of a civil society. The demand was the support for life and the right of equality. The social workers have been blamed that they are more confined to providing services for destitutes, the homeless, broken families or juvenile delinquents rather than addressing the issue of poverty embedded in the social structure of injustice and inequality. As Moorthy (1989) asserts, social service should have a proper blend with social work as all social service (samaj seva) is not social work. Social work should contain the community based and community oriented service programmes (Gore, 1988) and render social services through them. It also should aim to apply social work skills.

The issue here is embedded injustice that appeared as a reality of social construction of poverty and poor. The institutionalisation of beggars and the criminalisation of beggary could be considered as one such major aspect of state regulated strategies that are ignored and practiced by the mass to suit themselves.

In recent decades, international organisations like Oxfam, DFID, CRY, CARE are exerting their initiatives to understand the dynamics of ‘poverty’ in the developing world, but there is a lot to be done by the indigenous NGOs in securing the social and political right of life of poor beggars in urban India. Few efforts that can be made by NGOs are as follows:

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

Furthermore, NGOs can also implement Gandhiji’s constructive programme on a micro-level basis where NGOs can work at the community level and address beggary and destitution in respective localities of the area. They can also attempt to make the government agencies follow the same ideology while implementing their welfare and rehabilitation programmes which tend to seclude the sections of the destitute and beggars instead of bringing them into the mainstream of social life.

CONCLUSION

In the long run, it is the State’s responsibility towards its citizens that has to be reconsidered and will remain a socio-economic problem of growing urban India. The problem of beggary can be addressed by checking the rate of population growth. There will always be beggars and begging on the street or public places of urban India unless the issue of poverty is addressed. The immediate plight of the beggars is multidimensional but complementary and supplementary strategies should be the art of any poverty reduction programme. Nevertheless, implementations of such policies are hardly sufficient especially in a highly disputable multi-political party democracy like India. In order to develop rational priorities based on cost-benefit criteria, data on the number, the need and the conditions of the impoverished are necessary.

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