



Research Paper

## Begging as a Social Crime: A Case Study of Haridwar

Arun Kumar, *Research Scholar, Department of Law, Amrit law College Dhanauri, Uni-Veer Madho Singh Bhandari Uttarakhand Technical University Dehradun, Uttarakhand*

### ABSTRACT

The goal of the current study is to examine the begging as a crime and problems beggars in the Haridwar district of Uttarakhand confront and the government assistance that they have received. It also makes recommendations for improving their socioeconomic conditions. The investigation shows that the primary issues faced by beggars include poverty, unemployment, a lack of electricity, cleanliness, drinkable water, and suitable housing, the absence of a ration card, a lack of funds for their daughters' weddings, a variety of diseases, etc.

The help received from the government by the beggars merely are voter identity cards and ration cards. This study demonstrates that this section of population is the poorest among the poorest who are still thriving for one of the traditional basic need, that is food, what may be predicted about the status of the other remaining needs (Clothing and shelter). The new additive modern needs (health, education and recreation) are the heavenly dreams to them.

**Keywords:** issues, beggars, government services, and Haridwar.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

India currently faces two of the most pressing issues: first, it must meet the soaring demand for food and other consumer goods, and second, it must enervate the widespread poverty brought on by the country's constantly growing population. As a result, there is a persistently large and gaping shortage of food for the Indian population. A higher need for food, energy, water, land for human settlements, better public infrastructure, and amenities for a minimum standard of living are all results of the population's exponential increase. Unfortunately, due to widespread unemployment, underemployment, and poverty in the nation, poor people are unable to meet even their most basic needs. As a result, the socioeconomically disadvantaged poor people in the lower strata of society are forced to engage in begging in order to survive.

Even while the issue of begging is commonly considered to be an old one, determining its exact inception is extremely difficult. Numerous studies demonstrate that it wasn't present in early societies, where tiny groups of kin would cohabit and support one another. Mutual aid served as a form of self-defense and security for the clan, or perhaps the entire tribe. (Henderson, 1904: 5; Ottaway, 1975: 11) Begging has developed into a phenomenon that is now connected to private property. Early cultures viewed begging as an honorable conduct and offering alms as a holy activity. Almsgiving was a custom that was done during ancient religious feasts. The difficulties of daily living and the persistence of traditional supports for economically dependent groups, such as polygamy, prostitution, slavery, clientage, and vassalage, however, limited the growth of the practise (MOLSA, 1992: 4). Beggary was never an issue in traditional Indian civilization since the socioeconomic structure included measures to prevent it. In the past, people's religious beliefs in India supported begging because they thought it was a means to honour the Almighty, but now it has evolved into a profession because it requires little work on the part of the beggar to earn his or her living.

The act of begging constitutes a criminal offence in most Indian states<sup>1</sup> and territories including Delhi, Bombay, Andhra Pradesh, Hariyana, West Bengal and the Gujarat with penalties ranging from two years to ten years' imprisonment. In each of these jurisdictions, begging, to 'beg alms' or loitering with intent to beg is framed as a strict liability offence, that is, mens rea need not be proved in order to establish the offence. This sub-stantially limits the bases upon which a charge of begging may be defended, and as a result, most of those charged with begging plead guilty and incur a penalty The only criminal law defence available to those charged with begging is not that it was necessity but it was by chance the defendant who was on the footpath without any intention and work. Thus, in seeking to defend beggars, recourse must be made to arguments that question the validity of the laws prohibiting begging.

There is a long history of legal measures against begging. The first legal measure against beggary and vagrancy in India was the European Vagrancy Act, 1874, which was meant to deal with vagrants of European descent. For common people, the general power of prevention of offences security provisions could be launched according to Code of Criminal Procedures (Act V of 1898). Under Section 109 any magistrate was empowered to ask any person without any 'ostensible means of subsistence, or who can not give a satisfactory account of himself' to execute a bond, with sureties, for good behaviour up to one year. These provisions were used to arrest and detain different undesirable populations and vagabonds. Vagrants or beggars were also subjected to various penal provisions under different local acts.

It has been consistently demonstrated that begging is intimately linked to poverty and homelessness.<sup>6</sup> For the majority of those who beg, it is a last resort to supplement their inadequate income, allowing them to avoid engaging in less acceptable alternatives such as theft, prostitution and drug dealing. Most people who beg report that this activity makes them feel humiliated and demeaned, indeed, many state that begging puts them at risk of violence from members of the public, police and/or other people who engage in begging as a means of survival.

Although begging is often distinguished from other types of informal street-level economic activity, including busking, pavement art, windscreen cleaning and unlicensed street trading, the motivation for engaging in these activities is often the same. Many of those who beg choose to offer some kind of service to their patrons to instil an element of reciprocity into the exchange, to avoid the stigma attached to being considered 'a beggar', or to avoid prosecution by disguising their begging as a lawful activity. A distinction is also commonly made between begging and more 'accepted' forms of solicitation such as club fundraising and charity drives, even though the aim of all such activities is identical: to request money for a purpose where no tangible reward is provided to the donor.

In the nineteenth century, the number of the poor increased when the British introduced agrarian reforms that had a long-lasting effect on the Indian economy. Additionally, the Industrial Revolution forced indigenous craftsmen onto the streets, leaving them with no other choice than to beg. The extended family system disintegrated as a result of British economic policies, which forced people to leave their villages and go to the towns.<sup>7</sup> People who already lived in cities had nuclear families and lived on low incomes, so those who arrived from villages could not be accommodated by them. Those who had based their households in the town while deriving their main income from agriculture also suffered from great economic losses, reducing their family incomes. They tried to reduce their burden by breaking down their families. Traditionally, the joint family system took care of weaker members of the family: orphans, the aged, widows and the sick and the crippled. Now such family members were forced to leave the family house and live on the streets.

### **Social crime**

Social crime is a type of crime that is defined by its impact on society as a whole, rather than just the individuals involved. It includes acts that violate social norms, such as discrimination, hate crimes, and white-collar crimes. Social crime is often characterized by its harm to the community or society, rather than just the victim.

Examples of social crimes can include:

- Discrimination based on race, gender, religion, or other factors.
- Hate crimes, which involve violence or harassment motivated by prejudice.
- Environmental crimes, such as pollution or illegal dumping.
- White-collar crimes, which involve nonviolent financial crimes committed by individuals in positions of trust or authority, such as embezzlement, fraud, or insider trading.
- Cyber-crimes, which include hacking, identity theft, and online fraud.

### **Begging as a social crime**

Begging can be considered a social crime in some societies, including India, where it is illegal in many states. Begging is viewed as a public nuisance, and it is often associated with poverty, homelessness, and unemployment. Begging can have negative consequences for the individual, society, and the economy. It perpetuates the cycle of poverty by discouraging people from seeking employment or engaging in productive activities. It can also lead to an increase in crime, as beggars may turn to criminal activities to survive. Moreover, begging can also be organized and controlled by criminal networks, which may exploit vulnerable individuals, including children and women, and use them for illegal activities, such as prostitution or human trafficking. However, it is essential to recognize that not all beggars are criminals, and many may be forced into begging due to circumstances beyond their control. Some people may resort to begging as a last resort when they have no other means of survival.

## **AIMS & OBJECTIVES**

The following precise aims have guided the current study's development:

- i. To pinpoint the socioeconomic issues that beggars face,
- ii. To offer corrective actions for enhancing their socioeconomic situation.

## **STUDY AREA**

Haridwar is a city located in the Indian state of Uttarakhand. It is situated on the banks of the holy river Ganges and is considered one of the seven holiest places in Hinduism. The name "Haridwar" translates to "Gateway to God" and the city is known for its numerous temples and spiritual significance.

Haridwar is a popular pilgrimage destination for Hindus, who come here to take a dip in the Ganges to wash away their sins and attain salvation. The Kumbh Mela, a major Hindu festival that is held every 12 years, also takes place in Haridwar.

Apart from its religious significance, Haridwar is also known for its natural beauty and adventure activities like trekking and camping in the nearby hills. The city has a rich cultural heritage and is home to various fairs and festivals throughout the year.

Some of the popular tourist attractions in Haridwar include Har Ki Pauri, Chandi Devi Temple, Mansa Devi Temple, and the Rajaji National Park. The city is well-connected by road and rail, with regular buses and trains connecting it to major cities in India.

Haridwar is located in the northern part of India, in the state of Uttarakhand. It is situated in the foothills of the Himalayas, at an altitude of 314 meters above sea level. The city is located on the banks of the Ganges river, which flows through the city from the north to the south.

Haridwar is surrounded by hills on three sides, with the Shivalik range of the Himalayas to the northeast. The city is located at the edge of the Indo-Gangetic plain, which is a vast fertile plain that covers much of northern India. The climate of Haridwar is tropical, with hot summers and cool winters.

The city has a total area of 12.3 square kilometers and is divided into several neighborhoods, including Har Ki Pauri, Kankhal, and Jwalapur. Har Ki Pauri is the most famous and crowded area of the city, as it is the site of the holy Ghat where devotees take a dip in the river.

The Rajaji National Park is located to the northeast of Haridwar, and it is a popular tourist attraction known for its rich biodiversity and wildlife. The park covers an area of 820 square kilometers and is home to a variety of animals, including elephants, tigers, leopards, and deer.

Overall, Haridwar is a beautiful city with a unique geography, situated at the foothills of the Himalayas and surrounded by hills and the Ganges river, making it an ideal destination for spiritual seekers and nature lovers alike

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF BEGGARS**

Begging is a significant socio-economic problem in Haridwar, with many people, including children, being forced to beg due to poverty and lack of opportunities. Beggars in Haridwar face a range of issues, including:

- **Poverty:** Many beggars in Haridwar come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and do not have access to basic necessities such as food, shelter, and healthcare.
- **Lack of education:** A significant number of beggars in Haridwar are illiterate, which limits their opportunities to find employment and escape the cycle of poverty.
- **Discrimination:** Beggars in Haridwar are often stigmatized and face discrimination from society. They are seen as a burden and a nuisance, and their begging is viewed as a nuisance rather than a legitimate means of survival.
- **Exploitation:** Beggars, particularly children, are often exploited by organized begging rackets, who force them to beg and keep a significant portion of their earnings.
- **Health issues:** Beggars in Haridwar often suffer from poor health due to their living conditions, lack of access to healthcare, and exposure to the elements.

To address these issues, the government and NGOs have initiated various programs and schemes aimed at providing education, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities to beggars in Haridwar. However, there is a need for a more coordinated and sustained effort to address the root causes of poverty and create more opportunities for those who are currently forced to beg.

## **GOVERNMENT'S SERVICES RECEIVED BY BEGGARS**

The government of Uttarakhand and various NGOs have launched several initiatives aimed at addressing the socio-economic problems faced by beggars in Haridwar. Some of these initiatives include:

- **Rehabilitation centers:** The government has established rehabilitation centers for beggars in Haridwar, where they are provided with food, shelter, and medical care. These centers also provide vocational training and education to help beggars acquire skills and find employment.

- **Anti-begging campaigns:** The government and NGOs have launched awareness campaigns to discourage people from giving money to beggars and to raise awareness about the exploitation of beggars by organized rackets.
  - **Livelihood programs:** The government has launched various livelihood programs aimed at providing alternative sources of income to beggars in Haridwar. These programs include training in handicrafts, weaving, and other traditional skills.
  - **Education and health care:** The government has launched programs aimed at improving access to education and healthcare for beggars in Haridwar. These programs provide basic education and healthcare services to ensure that beggars are able to access the same services as other citizens.
  - **Rescue operations:** The government has launched rescue operations to rescue children who are forced to beg and provide them with care and protection. These children are enrolled in schools or vocational training centers to ensure that they have a better future.
- Overall, these initiatives are aimed at addressing the root causes of poverty and providing beggars with the necessary support to help them escape the cycle of poverty and find alternative means of livelihood. However, there is a need for sustained effort and collaboration between the government, NGOs, and the community to ensure that these initiatives are effective and sustainable in the long run.

### **Recommendations to improve socioeconomic condition of the beggars**

Improving the socioeconomic condition of beggars is a complex issue that requires a multi-pronged approach. Here are some recommendations:

- **Provide access to basic necessities:** Beggars often lack access to basic necessities like food, shelter, and healthcare. Governments and non-profit organizations can provide access to these necessities through soup kitchens, shelters, and health clinics.
- **Skill development and vocational training:** Many beggars are illiterate and lack employable skills. Providing vocational training and skill development programs can help them acquire skills that they can use to earn a livelihood.
- **Education:** Education is a powerful tool that can help beggars break out of the cycle of poverty. Governments and NGOs can provide basic education to beggars and their children to help them acquire the skills they need to improve their lives.
- **Rehabilitation programs:** Many beggars are addicted to drugs or alcohol, which makes it difficult for them to escape poverty. Rehabilitation programs can help them overcome their addiction and get back on their feet.
- **Empowerment through microfinance:** Microfinance can be a powerful tool for empowering beggars by providing them with small loans that they can use to start a small business. This can help them become self-sufficient and improve their socioeconomic condition.
- **Sensitization programs:** Society often stigmatizes beggars, which makes it difficult for them to reintegrate into mainstream society. Sensitization programs can help raise awareness about the plight of beggars and reduce the stigma associated with begging.
- **Government policies and initiatives:** Governments can implement policies and initiatives that promote the welfare of beggars. For example, they can provide subsidies for housing, education, and healthcare, and create job opportunities for beggars.

Overall, improving the socioeconomic condition of beggars requires a comprehensive and coordinated effort from all stakeholders, including governments, non-profit organizations, and society at large.

### **Factors Leading to Begging**

Begging is a complex issue, and there are several factors that can lead to it. Here are some of the common factors:

- **Poverty:** Poverty is one of the primary factors that lead to begging. People who are unable to meet their basic needs, such as food, shelter, and clothing, may resort to begging as a means of survival.
- **Unemployment:** Lack of employment opportunities can also lead to begging. People who are unable to find work may turn to begging as a way to earn a living.
- **Physical or Mental Disabilities:** Physical or mental disabilities can make it difficult for people to find work or perform certain tasks. People with disabilities may turn to begging as a means of survival.
- **Lack of Education and Skills:** Lack of education and skills can also lead to begging. People who lack education and skills may find it difficult to find work or earn a living, and may resort to begging as a means of survival.
- **Family Disruption:** Family disruption, such as the death of a breadwinner or the breakdown of a family, can also lead to begging. In some cases, people may resort to begging to support themselves and their families.

- **Addiction:** Addiction to drugs or alcohol can lead to begging. People who are addicted to these substances may find it difficult to hold down a job or earn a living, and may resort to begging to support their addiction.
- **Social Marginalization:** Some people may be marginalized by society, for example, due to their ethnicity, caste, religion, or gender. This can make it difficult for them to find work or earn a living, and may lead to begging. Overall, addressing the underlying factors that lead to begging, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of education and skills, is essential for reducing the prevalence of begging. It requires a coordinated effort from all stakeholders, including governments, non-profit organizations, and society at large.

### **Causes Of Begging**

Begging can have multiple causes, and they may vary from person to person. However, some of the most common causes of begging are:

- **Poverty:** Poverty is one of the leading causes of begging. People who lack access to basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter may resort to begging as a way of survival.
- **Unemployment:** The lack of employment opportunities can also lead to begging. When people are unable to find work, they may resort to begging to support themselves.
- **Homelessness:** Homelessness is another common cause of begging. People who are homeless may not have access to basic needs, and they may resort to begging as a way of survival.
- **Disabilities:** Physical or mental disabilities can also lead to begging. People with disabilities may find it challenging to secure employment or perform certain tasks, and they may resort to begging to support themselves.
- **Addictions:** Drug or alcohol addiction can also cause people to resort to begging. Addiction can lead to a lack of income, employment, and social support, making begging the only option for survival.
- **Social marginalization:** Some people may face social marginalization due to factors such as their ethnicity, caste, religion, or gender. This can lead to discrimination and a lack of access to opportunities, which may cause them to resort to begging.
- **Natural disasters or conflicts:** Natural disasters or conflicts can cause displacement, loss of property, and loss of income, which may cause people to resort to begging.

It is essential to address the underlying causes of begging to tackle the issue effectively. It requires a multi-faceted approach that includes providing access to basic needs, education, employment opportunities, and social support. Governments, non-profit organizations, and society at large can play a crucial role in addressing the issue of begging.

### **Difficulties Faced By The Beggars**

Beggars often face numerous difficulties, including:

- **Lack of basic necessities:** Beggars may lack access to basic needs such as food, water, shelter, and healthcare, making their living conditions difficult and unsafe.
- **Social stigma and discrimination:** Beggars are often stigmatized and discriminated against by society. They may be subjected to verbal and physical abuse, harassment, and even violence.
- **Health problems:** Beggars may suffer from various health issues, including malnutrition, dehydration, infections, and injuries, as they do not have access to proper healthcare and hygiene facilities.
- **Exposure to extreme weather conditions:** Beggars often have to spend long hours outside in extreme weather conditions, such as heatwaves, cold temperatures, and rain, which can cause health problems.
- **Vulnerability to crime:** Beggars are often vulnerable to various forms of crime, including theft, assault, and sexual exploitation, due to their economic and social status.
- **Lack of education and skills:** Beggars may not have access to education and skills development programs, making it difficult for them to escape the cycle of poverty and begging.
- **Addiction:** Some beggars may be addicted to drugs or alcohol, which makes it difficult for them to improve their situation and may further compound their problems.

Overall, these difficulties make the lives of beggars extremely challenging and create a cycle of poverty that is difficult to break. It is essential to provide them with access to basic necessities, healthcare, education, and social support to help them improve their situation and break free from the cycle of poverty and begging.

### **Government Schemes Availed By Beggars**

Beggars often do not have access to government schemes and programs that are designed to improve their socioeconomic condition. However, some government schemes that they may be able to avail of include:

- **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP):** The NSAP is a social security scheme that provides financial assistance to the elderly, widows, and persons with disabilities. Beggars who are eligible for the scheme can receive a monthly pension.

- Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY): The PMAY is a scheme that aims to provide affordable housing to the urban poor. Beggars who meet the eligibility criteria can apply for a house under the scheme.
  - Swachh Bharat Abhiyan: The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is a cleanliness campaign that aims to make India clean and free of open defecation. Beggars who live on the streets can benefit from the campaign by having access to clean public toilets.
  - National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM): The NULM is a scheme that aims to reduce poverty and vulnerability of the urban poor by providing employment opportunities and skill development training. Beggars who are interested in learning new skills can benefit from the scheme.
  - Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM): DAY-NULM is a scheme that aims to reduce poverty and create employment opportunities for the urban poor. Beggars who are eligible can receive financial assistance to start their own businesses.
  - Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS): The ICDS is a scheme that aims to improve the health and nutrition of children below the age of six and their mothers. Beggars who have children can benefit from the scheme by accessing nutrition and health services.
- It is essential to increase awareness among beggars about these schemes and provide them with the necessary support to avail of them. The government and non-governmental organizations can play a crucial role in this regard.

### **Awareness About Beggar's Rights And Responsibilities**

Awareness about the rights and responsibilities of beggars is essential to ensure that they are treated with dignity and respect. Some of the basic rights of beggars include:

- The right to live with dignity and without discrimination.
- The right to basic necessities like food, clothing, and shelter.
- The right to access healthcare facilities.
- The right to education and skill development opportunities.
- The right to be protected from violence, harassment, and abuse.

At the same time, beggars also have certain responsibilities towards society. These include:

### **Respecting the law and social norms.**

- Maintaining cleanliness and hygiene.
- Contributing to society by engaging in productive activities like work or education.
- Avoiding anti-social activities like begging with a threat, stealing, or indulging in drug abuse.
- Encouraging people to provide donations and alms in a lawful and respectful manner.
- It is essential to create awareness among beggars about their rights and responsibilities and to educate society about the same to ensure that beggars are treated with respect and dignity.
- It is also crucial to provide them with access to basic necessities, education, and employment opportunities to help them break free from the cycle of poverty and begging.

### **Begging as a social crime**

Begging is often considered a social crime as it is associated with various anti-social activities like theft, drug abuse, and even human trafficking. Beggars who engage in these activities can harm society and put themselves and others at risk.

Moreover, begging often perpetuates poverty, and individuals who beg are often marginalized and excluded from mainstream society. The practice of begging can also create a negative perception of the city or country, particularly among tourists and visitors, affecting the economy.

In many countries, begging is illegal, and those who engage in it may face legal consequences such as fines, imprisonment, or deportation. However, it is essential to recognize that begging is often a symptom of a more significant problem of poverty, lack of education, and social exclusion.

Therefore, it is crucial to address the root causes of begging by providing access to basic necessities like food, water, shelter, and healthcare, education and employment opportunities, and social support. By doing so, we can reduce the number of individuals who are forced to beg and help them to break free from the cycle of poverty and social exclusion.

## **II. CONCLUSION**

The overall analysis of the data reveals that, in both rural and urban areas, the main issues that these people face are poverty and unemployment, along with other issues like the availability of electricity, poor sanitation, a lack of potable water, inadequate housing, the lack of ration cards, daughter's marriage, various diseases, etc. Most of the challenges facing the recently settled beggars from rural areas relate to housing and

water. Nearly 6% of the district's beggars, 2% of those in rural regions, and 11% of those in urban areas have nothing in their homes and are struggling to survive. According to the data, the only government assistance given to beggars was in the form of ration cards and voter identification cards. A small number of beggar households also receive midday meals, 20,000 dollars to build houses through the Indira Awas Yojana, and widow and old age pensions of 1800 dollars annually. Beggars in urban and rural areas only receive below and over poverty line cards, as well as child scholarships and midday meals. Additionally, 1.3% of urban beggars and 8% of rural beggars reported receiving different sorts of government assistance for their socioeconomic issues.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations could be made to raise the socioeconomic condition of the begging population: Improving the socioeconomic condition of beggars is a complex issue that requires a multi-pronged approach. Here are some recommendations:

- Provide access to basic necessities: Beggars often lack access to basic necessities like food, shelter, and healthcare. Governments and non-profit organizations can provide access to these necessities through soup kitchens, shelters, and health clinics.
- Skill development and vocational training: Many beggars are illiterate and lack employable skills. Providing vocational training and skill development programs can help them acquire skills that they can use to earn a livelihood.
- Education: Education is a powerful tool that can help beggars break out of the cycle of poverty. Governments and NGOs can provide basic education to beggars and their children to help them acquire the skills they need to improve their lives.
- Rehabilitation programs: Many beggars are addicted to drugs or alcohol, which makes it difficult for them to escape poverty. Rehabilitation programs can help them overcome their addiction and get back on their feet.
- Empowerment through microfinance: Microfinance can be a powerful tool for empowering beggars by providing them with small loans that they can use to start a small business. This can help them become self-sufficient and improve their socioeconomic condition.
- Sensitization programs: Society often stigmatizes beggars, which makes it difficult for them to reintegrate into mainstream society. Sensitization programs can help raise awareness about the plight of beggars and reduce the stigma associated with begging.
- Government policies and initiatives: Governments can implement policies and initiatives that promote the welfare of beggars. For example, they can provide subsidies for housing, education, and healthcare, and create job opportunities for beggars.

Overall, improving the socioeconomic condition of beggars requires a comprehensive and coordinated effort from all stakeholders, including governments, non-profit organizations, and society at large.

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