POVERTY IN ODISHA: DEMYSTIFYING PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

LULUBALA NAYAK

(Research Scholar, Ph.D.), Department of Politics and International Studies, School of Social Science and International Studies,, Pondicherry University, R.V Nagar, Kalapet, Puducherry. Pin- 605014

Received: June 21, 2018

ABSTRACT

Poverty is one of the most dangerous threat to human existence. At the most fundamental level, food, shelter water, healthcare, are some essentials for the survival of human being. The absence of these essentials characterizes poverty. But in the contemporary period poverty can no longer be understood purely in economic terms. It has now become a highly multi-dimensional aspect in day-to-day human life. Odisha became a separate linguistic state on 1st April 1936. The land has a rich legacy of heritage, culture, history, and abundant natural resources. Sadly it is also known to the world as a land of poverty. Even after a slew of measures, Odisha is yet to be pulled out completely from the handcuffs of poverty. It has adversely affected the lives of people in multi-dimensional aspects. Starvation, malnutrition, labour migration etc. that subsequently follows poverty, has become a threat to healthy human existence in the state. In this context, this paper will give the theoretical underpinnings of poverty and intends to evaluate the prevailing scenario and its adverse impacts on the human lives in Odisha state. It will also try to re-examine the seminal causes of poverty in Odisha. The paper aims to critically analyse various ongoing poverty alleviation measures in the state along with the revelation of existing loopholes and to finally come up with some constructive suggestions to overcome the menace of poverty in Odisha.

Keywords: Poverty, Odisha, Poverty Alleviation Programme

I: Introduction:

“Poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being.” The conventional view links wellbeing primarily to command over commodities, so the poor are those who do not have enough income or consumption to put them above some adequate minimum threshold.” (Haughton & Khandker, 2009). As above said, people who do not have enough financial facilities to access the basic threshold are regarded as poor. This view sees poverty entirely on monetary terms but gradually, various other dimensions took place about the concept. Amartya Sen articulated the broadest approach to well-being and argues that the well-being comes from ‘capability’ of a person of function in society and poverty occurs because of lack of key capabilities of individual which includes inadequate education, income and health or lack of political freedoms. Thus, there are many pushing factor which creates poverty such as inadequate or poor health, insecure incomes or education, or a sense of powerlessness, or low self-confidence, or the absence of rights such as freedom of speech and express and so on. Viewed in this way, poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon and a threat to human survival and security. Therefore efficient measures should be taken to reduce poverty and hence it can be possible to keep poor people on the agenda of mainstream.

“India is recognized as a poor country even after 72 years of independence. Especially in the Rural Sector of India, the condition is worse. Though during the planning periods the national income of India and the per capita income has increased, social welfare has increased, literacy level has risen and people have been able to fulfil more and more of their requirements but poverty (and specially Rural Poverty) is still present in its alarming form.” (Sadiq, 2017). India is recognised as one of the developing country with high level of growth rate on one side and people are dying out of hunger and starvation on the other. Some intensifying factors behind this evil are unemployment, traditional production techniques, political causes, superstitions, adverse environment and climate, natural calamities and caste system etc. “One of the ironies of our rapidly developing and increasingly progressive world is that poverty continues to remain widespread and rampant, and the vulnerable population seems to have grown ever more vulnerable” (ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, 2011). It includes poor health, low earning, lack of required assets, political powerlessness and social degradation and discrimination. Growth is not the sole objective of economic policy. “Poverty is an extremely complex phenomenon, which manifests itself in a range of overlapping and intertwined economic, political and social deprivations.” (More & Singh, 2015). It is necessary to ensure that the benefits of growth accrue to all sections of the society. “Eradication of poverty is thus an important objective. Human beings need a certain minimum consumption of food and non-food items to survive.
However the perception regarding what constitutes poverty varies over time and across countries.” (More & Singh, 2015).

“Odisha is one of the rare states that has enjoyed long period of political stability and continuity of its economic policies since March 2000, when Naveen Patnaik took over as chief minister for the first time. Odisha is also blessed with abundant natural resources, especially minerals, forests, and ground-water. Given all this, it should have been one of the richer states of India. But ironically, it is not. Its per capita income is the fifth-lowest and poverty the sixth-highest among the states”(gulati, 2016). Formerly Odisha was a prosperous hub for maritime business. It has a very well documented trade relations with many nations including Bali, Sumatra, Indonesia etc. Poverty is now being an unstoppable obstacle on the way of its development, people of Odisha are still dying out of hunger and living a very minimal life. Currently millions of people are dying because of this multidimensional evil called poverty. So this is the high time of taking initiative towards the end of poverty and beginning of an ideal Odisha without poverty. To achieve objectives, we first have to understand the existing situation and reason behind that, then we can find the way forward.

II: METHODOLOGY:
The researcher have adopted historical and analytical method in making the study. The researcher was dependent on both primary and secondary data. Primary data includes documents and reports released by India and Odisha governments, NGOs and other organizations on the topic. Secondary data includes books, articles, journals, Newspaper readings informations collected from various websites and blogs etc.

III: OBJECTIVE:
In this context, this paper aims to give the theoretical underpinnings of poverty and intends to evaluate the prevailing scenario and its adverse impacts on the human lives in Odisha state. The paper will understand poverty in a broader manner and impact of poverty on society in general and individual in particular. The paper also aims to critically analyse various ongoing poverty alleviation measures in the state along with the revelation of existing loopholes and to finally come up with some constructive suggestions to overcome the menace of poverty in Odisha.

IV: WHY IS ODISHA POOR?:
Biswamoy Pati defined Odisha as “This is a region marked by the co-existence of the 15th and the 20th centuries remain a mystery due to the lack of serious attempts to explore the reasons for its present state.” (Pati, 1993). Odisha, though is very rich in mineral and forest resources, it is in very much lime light for its growing poverty. Poverty and its following features like malnutrition, lack of adequate livelihood, starvation and unemployment dominates social, political and economic phenomenon of Odisha. Earlier Odisha was very famous for its rich culture and socio-economic profile. There is evidence that ancestors of Odisha has commercial ties with Java and Sumatra. But the modern time has witnessed decline in the scenario and resulted in to mass poverty. Odisha’s society, earlier was a feudal dominated society. Feudal and landlords used to exploit people, which has also resulted in to poverty. Besides that the exploitation of colonial power has also contributed to the growth of poverty. Living more resources with the hand of few people has resulted in to landlessness on many peasants and working class people, which has further worsen the matter.

"As per the 2011 census, the total population of Odisha is 4,19,74,218 out of which the rural population is 3,49,70,562 and urban population is 70,03,656”(Census of India, 2011), which shows 80 percent of the state population lives in rural areas and people over there, exceedingly depend upon agriculture for their livelihood. Hence its economy to a great extent depend upon agriculture, but there is lack of infrastructural development in agricultural sector. Agriculture is the primary occupation of rural people in the state lack scientific management, which does not assure standard level of production thus the economic condition of vast majority, is not economically forward. Most of the peasants are landless and poor. So there is lack of capital to invest in agriculture. Due to lack of education and accessibility to Modern technology, rural people are still not very aware of profitable agricultural procedure. There is also lack of fertiliser, seed, and other necessary equipment. One of the major problems is irrigation. Though the state has availability of water resources, yet more than half of the lands do not have irrigation facility. The other most important thing is storing facility. Sometimes due to this problem, farmers are forced to sell their product on a low price. All the above circumstances became favourable to the middle man and deny farmers to get equal fair of their product. Beyond the above mentions reasons for poverty, there are some major factor that causes poverty in Odisha. They are as follows:
IV.I: Unemployment: Unemployment is the reflection of poverty and the most emphatic reason behind growing poverty in Odisha. Due to lack of opportunities, either people remain unemployed or underemployed. A majority of these people belongs to rural marginal farmers, and other vulnerable sections.

IV.II: Corruption: Various poverty alleviation programmes has been taken by the government for eradication of poverty, such as MGNREGA, Food Security Act, MukhyamantriMahilaSasaktikaran Yojna, Adhaar Yojna, Biju PakkaGhar Yojna, Health Missionetc. All these schemes have taken for the welfare of the poor people. Yet corruption has become a hindrance in achieving this goal. Because of corruption the policies could not become fruitful.

IV.III: Gender Inequality: It has been analysed that in India poverty rates of employed women is higher than employed man and it is mainly because of income pulling. For the same work particularly in unorganised sector, women are paid less wage which makes them vulnerable economically. Because of gender based restrictions, women is not allowed to work in many fields.

IV.IV: Lack of education: "Odisha ranks 25th in literacy rate ranking among the States of India with literacy rate of 72.9 per cent. According to the census of 2011, the number of literates in Odisha is 2.67 crore out of which 2.13 crore are recorded only in rural areas. The literacy rate of 2011 census is 72.9 per cent which is less than the national average. Districts like Nabarangpur have not yet even crossed 44 per cent"(SURAJBHAN, 2016). Education is a medium of social development and egalitarianism. For poor people it is difficult and impossible to access education as they have work for their livelihood, so instead of going to schools, they have to turn back to their livelihood.

IV.V: Social Customs: In Odisha, varnashrama dharma is strictly followed by the people and as a result of this, a sudra cannot be a trader or a vaisya can only earn bread by trade. Their birth becomes the deciding factor for their occupation. In the words of K. V. Verghese, "Caste system acted as a springboard for class exploitation with the result that the counterpart of the poverty of the many is the opulence of the few. The second is the cause of the first." (Mondal, 2012). Because of the belief system they spend a lot in rituals and social function which makes them financially vulnerable.

IV.VI: Industrialization: Odisha is full of natural resources, yet in case of industrialization it lacks far behind. Different of minerals like iron ore, bauxite, chromite found here on a large amount. Though the state manage to establish some of large scale industries, yet its’ profit are not of far reaching and not fulfilling welfare needs of its people. Small scale village industries has been neglected in the state which is resulted in growing rate of poverty. Due to globalization different traditional occupation like art and craft has lost its relevance. This has further worst the matter.

IV.VII: Model of Development: Most of the people of the state live in remote rural areas. But the model of the development of the state resembles centre periphery model. People those who are in the periphery suffers the most. There is lack of infrastructure, opportunity, and scope for them. Different developmental policies were limited to centre area only. To reduce the gap various policies were adopted by the Government like Biju KBK Yojna and Western Odisha Development Council etc. there is a gap between the theory and practice of the plan and policies.Due to this, expected result is yet to come regarding the eradication of poverty.

IV.VIII: Adverse Environment and Climate: Cyclone and other natural disasters in Odisha is another reason behind its poverty. Agriculture in Odisha is mainly dependent on rains. Sometimes, due to less rainfall drought occurs and sometimes due to heavy rainfall crop is destroying. These natural calamities have also been responsible for poverty in Odisha. Thus, the adversity of the environment and the climate has a deep impact on growth of the state.

IV.IX: Centralization Model of Planning: The power of policy formulation and allocation of fund has been given to the government which is there in the capital city and the representatives of the respective places are generally belongs to a rich family and has a very less idea about the real condition of people. Unequal distribution of land assets and centralisation of land in few people causes a gap between poor and rich. So power should decentralize towards state and to local bodies to give chances to people decide which would be best suit to them.

V: WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?: To bring out changes in current era, there is a need to analyse the circumstances and according to the need of the people, effective steps can be taken to eradicate poverty. Though Dalit, Adivasis and Women constitute a major portion of Odisha's population their condition is vulnerable in the mainstream society. To uplift them from the situation, each section of the system must be promoted to develop themselves. Besides that people are unaware of poverty alleviation programmes and policies. So necessary action needs to be
taken to reach the people the benefits of the policies. Means of livelihood, proper education, and skill development must be given to the people. Small scale industries and small scale production should be promoted by the government and People must be inclined to developmental process. They must be encouraged to take participation through local bodies and various policies must be discussed in details at Gram Sabha. So that people will be more conscious about their rights and duties. “Bohidar and Mohanty emphasise that this is inevitably associated with a struggle against capitalism and the social system associated with it” (Pati, 1993). Special focus must be given to the sector of agriculture and industries. Agriculture and industrialization must go side by side. Measures need to be taken to make agriculture more productive and profitable. State should promote small scale investment and production. Strict action should be taken for corrupt people who stands as an obstacle in poverty eradication. And employment opportunities should be created in order to give employment to the unemployed youth and other sections. Last but not the least, there is a necessity of collective responsibility to achieve the goal. Everybody should realise their rights and duties and above all their role in the developmental process. The government needs to take efficient step on the question of Orissa’s regional identity and the process of development, “the question of linking the tribals, the dalits, the peasants, workers, women, the students and the middle class in a movement for restructuring the basic anomalies of Orissa” (Pati, 1993). “Western part of Odisha including Kalahandi, has captured worldwide attention due to extreme poverty, low socio-economic status, and climatic conditions. Major factors affecting poor status of the district includes economic status, literacy level, rainfall and crop pattern, calamities like droughts and flood, destitution, migration to count a few” (Vikash, 2014). “When one works in an occupation one is interested in, and paid according to one’s productivity, it is possible to move up vertically. There will naturally be adequate motivation to work, and also the scope to innovate. Such institutions empower various sections of society, thus enhancing plurality. Providing quality education, health facilities, infrastructure, and good governance to all are the basic ingredients of building inclusive issues rather than on the political and emotive issue of the demand for a special status.” (Samantaraya, Sahoo, Mallick, & Bhuyna, 2014). To give economic security to the unemployed action can be taken in following three areas. “Formalization of informal jobs through stronger employment regulation; improvement of protection mechanisms for people who have no access to formal employment; and increased access to other productive assets that facilitate income generation in the absence of formal employment opportunities” (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), 2010). “Policy making needs to take into account the fact that the restructuring of the global economy, together with wide-ranging economic reforms, is increasing the size of the informal economy worldwide” (Bauer & Thant, 2010). Hence, policies, government and plans should be people centric and work towards the political, socio cultural and economic welfare and development of the people.

References
1. ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK. (2011). understanding poverty in india. NEW DELHI: ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK.
