

Implications of the State and Media, and Food Deprivation: A Case Study on Day-to-Day experiences of the Beggars in Medchal district of Telangana

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Abstract: *In the current scenario, begging is a major challenge in Indian society and also become a great hindrance to the aim of inclusive growth of India. Simultaneously, it violates the fundamental rights guaranteed as citizens. This paper purports to narrate the everydayness of beggars by drawing insights from the field survey research that broadly focused on food deprivation among disenfranchised communities. The study primarily attempts to highlight the complex social issues involved in the lives of beggars and argues that beggars cannot be clubbed under a monolithic category and multifarious factors precipitated marginalised people to involve into begging. Being a welfare state and as a part of development agenda, it is the foremost responsibility of the state to identify the poor and deprived people and recognize them as citizens and accordingly provide them various social entitlements. However, it is completely missing in the case of beggars. Since these people are not recognised by the state, they are, largely, being excluded from the state provided welfare benefits and remaining as poor. On the other hand, media epitomises them as “mafia” instead of recognising them as “poor” and their marginalities. Given this backdrop, this paper makes a critique of the state’s portrayal and media’s depiction of beggars as Mafias. This paper has included the detailed field insights to elicit the everyday struggle of the beggars.*

Key Words: Poverty, Everydayness, State, Food Security, decriminalisation of beggary

1. INTRODUCTION:

In a country like India where a majority of the population has been highly stratified into social and economic categories, the most deprived and disadvantaged sections are subject to experience various forms of subjugation be it social, economic and political. This continuous exploitation and exclusion pushed them into more vulnerability where still they cannot even access to nutritious food. With regard to beggars, beggary is, thus, considered as the most disrespectful profession where beggars depend on the alms of others. Khan (2013) argues that the beggar’s population is the poorest among the poor who are still thriving for one of the important basic needs that is food. Among the beggars, children are the most food insecure category and prone to malnutrition. It is also argued that beggars are the symbols of inequality and are an important issue of human rights which must be addressed immediately (Jain, 2017). Various Laws and provisions have been made under the Indian Constitution to protect the rights of every citizen of India but still people struggle for their basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, etc. Beggary is against the article 21 of the Indian Constitution which states that “right to live with human dignity”.

The total population of Beggars, Vagrants etc. in India is 4,13,670; with regard to beggars population in some Indian states like West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh are 81,244, 65,835, 30,218, 29723, 28695 respectively. These states stand in first five among the Indian states and union territories (Census, 2011). In addition to these figures, a poverty estimation study by Oxford University, brings out the fact that India is home to over 340 million destitute people and is the second poorest country in South Asia after strife-torn Afghanistan (Deccan Chronicle: 18 Jan, 2016). From the given data, it is evident that the population of beggars in India has been increasing gradually. As it mentioned, among the disadvantaged sections, beggars can be considered as extreme vulnerable segment in India. Since they belong to deprived section, they are subject to experience the social, economic and political exploitation and exclusion from basic rights such as health, education, employment, food security etc. that preserves them to remain in abject poverty. As a result, these groups take on beggary as only source for their livelihood. The beggars are not a monolithic category, there are multiple categories which include the children, physically and mentally handicapped, old aged, orphans, transgender, etc. and these categories live in dreadful conditions. The root causes of beggary include poverty, calamity and famines, draught, unemployment, landlessness, caste based labourer/marginalised group labourer etc. (Pande, 1986). For instance, transgender people who are mostly into begging are marginalised/excluded group where they are out of the mainstream society. Due to

the exclusion, they took beggary by compulsion. Another significant factor in beggary is caste based beggary which is seen in the Telangana state. There is a section of dalit community called *Gangireddu* community which is known as a professional begging community who visits houses with their festooned bull and ask for alms. Given this backdrop, this paper further discusses and highlights the problem of food security of these vulnerable communities and analyses the implications of the state and media which are portraying them as fake beggars.

2. METHODOLOGY:

This paper adopted a case study method¹ which was an in-depth study on the everyday struggles of the beggars. A field survey conducted in the Medchal district of Telangana during the period from March 2019 to May 2019, which broadly focused on food deprivation among disenfranchised communities. Besides, in July 2019 few in-depth- interviews were conducted with Beggars which consisted of beggars from different categories such as mentally and physically disabled, children, old aged, etc. belonging to Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The field survey was undertaken in Keesara mandal of Medchal-Malkajgiri district² in Telangana. The field area is 40 km away from the Hyderabad city where most of the labours work in Hyderabad in different places and stay in the Keesara and its surroundings. The secondary data was collected through books, articles, reports and other government documents. Subsequently, some of the daily newspapers i.e. Deccan Chronicle (2016), The New Indian Express (2016), The Hans India (2015), The Siasat Daily (2010), Times of India (2010), The Hindu (2007), etc. were also reported the plight of the beggars.

Scholars like Dreze (2013), Mander (2011), Khera (2009), Thorat and Lee (2005), Swaminathan (2004), etc. examined policies related to food security. The arguments of these scholars highlight the loopholes and limitations in the policy and its failure in implementation by the state functionaries. However, there are very few studies (EPW 2013, EPW 2010, and Ramanathan 2008) which critically argue on criminalising beggary by “The Bombay Prevention of Begging Act of 1959 where it has led to the callous treatment of those who are “ostensibly poor” and in the denial of rights to them. Apart from this, there are no such studies which focused in an in-depth manner on beggars and their everyday struggle in access to food. Therefore, this paper highlights the need for a sociological study on beggars and their social experiences, given the fact that they are quintessential category of people who are deprived not only of shelter but also of food. In fact, it is observed in the field study that these people are being excluded from the food security programmes. Thus, it is understood that there is a need for a broader understanding on food deprivation of beggars and everydayness of their lives. The present study also attempts to fill the literature gap through empirical observations. Before moving to the discussion on the exclusion of the beggars from the food security provisions and their ostracisation by the state, the following paragraphs briefly bring out some of the legal development with regard to beggars.

3. THE BOMBAY PREVENTION OF BEGGING ACT (BPBA) OF 1959:

The first of its kind with regard to the beggars is the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act (BPBA) of 1959. According to the Criminal Procedure Code section 55 (1), a person who has no ostensible means of subsistence or who cannot get a satisfactory account of him/herself is regarded as destitute, vagrant or a beggar (Rafiuddin, 2008:6). These people depend on others by seeking alms for their survival and family members as well. Beggary in India, however, is considered as a crime where a person found begging will be sentenced minimum of one year and maximum of three years in the Certified Institutions even the giver also be fined with some penalty. It is argued that “the anti-begging act is merely a manifestation of this anti-poor attitude. In all its brutality, it exercises power to hide poverty behind the walls of the Certified Institutions” (Rao, 1981).

The state, considered begging as a crime on one hand, and ironically denied access to various government welfare and developmental programmes due to lack of proper documentation on the other. In this regard, the paper advocates the de-criminalisation of begging and, as a part of humanist approach, it argues that the state must fulfil the basic necessities of every citizen of India including food, shelter, cloths and health care, education and employment. Though the state has succeeded in initiating various welfare schemes to fulfil the needs of its citizens, the poor implementation of those welfare schemes failed to address those needs and thus, led some of the poorer sections to remain in abject poverty and pushed them to involve in beggary. It is also argued that there is a need to promote capacity building among the poor through the skill development which actually leads them to the development of socio-economic aspects and helps the beggars to become self-dependents rather dependents. Sen’s (1999) one of his arguments applicable here as he argues, “person’s ‘capability’ refers to the alternative combinations of functioning

¹ According to Burns (1997:365), ‘In a case study the focus of attention is the case in its idiosyncratic complexity, not on the whole population of cases’ (cited in Kumar, 1999).

² The district is a newly re-organised district in the Telangana state by its state government on 11 October 2016. Earlier it was part of the Rangareddy district.

that are all feasible for his/her to achieve capability is thus a kind of freedom: the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations". The state, therefore, must ensure the socio, economic and political freedoms of the people to achieve a holistic human development.

4. NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY ACT OF 2013: A HUMAN RIGHT BASED APPROACH:

The National Food Security Act of 2013 (Right to Food Act) has been initiated to ensure the food security of the poor. The primary objects of the NFSA is (i) to cover 75 per cent of the rural and 50 per cent of the urban population under the TPDS through which the food grains are provided in subsidised prices. (ii) Nutritional support to women and children through the ICDS and MDM programmes. (iii) The pregnant women and lactating mothers entitled to receive Rs 6000 under Maternity benefit in Anganwadi centres (Sinha and Patnaik, 2016). The point to be highlighted that how far these provisions are available to the beggars? If these laws are access to the poor, then why the poorer sections choose beggary for their everyday survival? Food security is inevitable considering the record of India as one of the highest undernourished children as compared to African countries (Mander, 2011). The proportion of children suffering from undernourishment is relatively higher among SCs and STs as compared to children of the other categories (Ramaiah, 2015). It is argued that why not the state is taking care of the people those who are physically and mentally handicapped, children, old aged etc. These people roam on roads, eat spoiled food found in the dustbins, and sleep in front of the closed shops. The field insights revealed that the poor have different constrains where they did not have access to food and shelter and they live in a dreadful conditions, which forced them to choose beggary for their survival. Here, a field insight has been given where the researcher interviewed an old aged woman, aged 80 years old from a temple where she was begging.

The conversation is follows: Case I

The respondent is a resident of Keesara Gutta village of Keesara mandal. She lives in a small single room house nearby the temple along with her two family members (Son and grand-daughter). She belongs to a Scheduled Caste community (Madiga). She goes to the temple and does begging every day and she has been doing it from the past 7-8 years. She has a widower son; her daughter-in-law has passed away. From the conversation with the respondent it is observed that due to the ill health of her son, she become the breadwinner of her family and she earns money from begging. On an average she earns Rs. 30-50 in a day and sometimes Rs. 100 mostly in Sundays. The reason behind her dependency on begging is as her son has been suffering from ill health and she is an old woman. Thus, she forced to choose beggary, the only source to get/earn money for the survival of her family. She said that there was no person from the NGO's or rehabilitation centres come and helped them. Her daily food intake sometimes restricts to one meal in a day that too less nutritious. The researcher asked "how are you surviving in 30-50 rupees?" She replied in Telugu language (a regional language of Telangana state), "*emundhi bidda entha vachina dhantlane thinala saripothe thinala ledhante upasam pantam*" (we have to adjust with whatever the money I got through begging. If we get the money, we take the food otherwise we go for sleep with an empty stomach). Similarly, the day-to-day experience of another beggar who is a resident of Keesara from Scheduled Caste community too revealed the struggles of beggars.

The conversation is follows: Case II

Respondent is a resident of Keesara village, Medchal-Malkajgiri district of Telangana. She is around 75 years old. When the researcher found her, she was begging in front of a road side shop (Kirana General Store) with torn clothes. She looks very thin and sick. The researcher went to her and introduced himself and interviewed her.

He asked, "from how long are you in this beggary?" she replied, "5-6 years". Then the researcher probed again, "how much you earn per day?" She replied, "50-60 rupees per day". The researcher asked her, "Amma (mother), can you tell me your personal reasons for begging on roads as you look very old in age and not much healthy too"? She replied, "paisalu leka (no money), thindi leka nayana (no food)." Then the researcher tried to get her accessibility to the government schemes like old aged pension and food security card, she said "no", then researcher asked, "did you apply for the old aged pension scheme and food security card? She replied, they are asking for the different identity proofs to get the pension and ration card, I do not have any documents to show them. The process is also very difficult to apply as we have to visit different government offices. I can't go to anywhere due to my ill health, and even if i go and meet the concerned government officers, they will not respond to us as we don't have any documents in our hands. The researcher asked, "where do you stay"? She replied, "I stay on the foot path in different places. Then the researcher asked her "don't you have a family and house"? She said "no". Researcher also asked her "do you get any support from the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) and rehabilitation centres"? She replied, "no".

This helpless condition of the respondent highlights the immediate need of the government to recognize her as a citizen and provide her the basic identity cards such as Aadhaar and voter ID and also issue food security card. The respondent's case is one of the examples as many beggars are in this same condition with no recognition from the government even as a citizen let alone reaching the government's welfare and developmental benefits to them. Another aspect in the case that these beggars are not even getting the support from the NGOs and other rehabilitation centres for their upliftment of the socio-economic conditions.

This is a report of an informal interview with a disabled person (V) who is begging at a temple in Keesara Gutta, Medchal district of Telangana.

The conversation is follows: Case III

The respondent is a disabled person (visually handicapped), resides in Ankireddy Palli village, Keesara Mandal, Medchal-Malkajgiri district of Telangana. He belongs to Backward Caste (Gangireddu³ community) and he is 46 years old. Few years ago the respondent was the master of *Gangireddu*, who takes the ox to door to door for begging food, money and used clothes. The respondent's father was also into that profession till his death. After his father's death, the respondent was continued in that profession for few years but later he stopped as the income was not sufficient for the survival. Thereafter he had gone for stone cutting work for few years. Unfortunately, few years ago, he met with an accident and lost his both eye sight. He consulted different doctors from different places to get back his eye sight. Finally, it was made clear that he will not be getting back his eye sight. Since then he was forced into beggary for his survival due to his poor socio-economic conditions. Then he chose Ramalingeshwara Swami temple, Keesara Gutta, which is a famous temple in Medchal-Malkajgiri district of Telangana as a begging spot which is 6 km away from his village. He goes in the morning at 8 am to the temple by an auto and return by evening every day. He has a wife and three daughters. His wife stays at his home and younger daughter is always with him to look after him. His elder daughters got married. He studied 4th standard at his village.

The researcher asked the respondent, "does anyone has come to you and offered a skill development training at the rehabilitation centres?" he replied, "no". Then, the researcher explained about the rehabilitation centres that they would take all the beggars and offer them some skill development trainings at rehabilitation centres for the self-employment and get them free out of the beggary. He said that "it would be better if there is anything like that but we were not aware about this and nobody has come to us". The researcher also asked, "you are a disabled person, so are you getting any pension from the government"? He replied "yes, I have been getting 1500 per month". Then the researcher asked, "what are the reasons which forced you to beg although you are getting pension, under disabled category, from the state government"? Then he replied very seriously, "pottakellaka nayana (to feed my stomach) naaku mugguru biddalu, bharya; nenu thinale vallaku pettala, nenu guddonni emchestha cheppu" (I have a wife and three daughters. I have to feed myself and also my family members. I am a blind person what work can I do outside?). My wife's health is also not well and need to take care of her."

The researcher said, so nobody has come to you from any NGO or rehabilitation centre! *He replied, "yes, one day a news reporter had come to us and took our photos" Then the interviewer asked, "why"? he said, "I don't know but he said he will help us", then researcher posed him "what kind of help"? he said "I don't know, he just took our photos and went off, he did not help us in any means." He is also requesting that if the government provides us around Rs. 50,000 loan, we will try for any self-employment like running a general store or any other work to get free out of this beggary. He said that there are many people who are dying due to ill health and lack of food (starvation deaths). Earlier, there were many people used to come but for every 2-3 months there will be a death. 'B' (a beggar in the same location) was also a beggar in this temple. She was alone, no family member and no shelter to stay. She died due to ill health and lack of food. B's death can be considered as a "starvation death" where she did not get food regularly. When the interviewer asked him about ration card and food grains, he said that he has been taking only rice from the fair price shop which is very bad/poor in quality.*

As the narration depicts, the respondent has the desire to move out from begging and to start any self-employment activity if the state provides some loan. Secondly, it is also clear from the above quote that the caste based practice of begging, which Dalits even if dissociated from it, however, the poverty chain again forces them into begging. Another significant finding in this case is that there are starvation deaths among the beggars due to lack of food. There are some rehabilitation centres for beggars which are providing them skill development training, shelter

³ Gangireddu community is a professional begging community who takes an Ox and decorates it with coloured clothes and flowers.

and food under the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act (BPBA) of 1959. However, still we find the beggars in the rural and urban areas and the structural reasons are: poverty and unemployment on one hand, the failure of welfare policies on the other. The point here to be noted that since beggars in the study mostly are disabled and old aged people, which is actually the result of failure of the government policies. The policies such as food security, old aged/disabled pension schemes etc. If these policies could have implemented properly, they would have not been forced to choose beggary for their everyday survival. It is argued that “rehabilitation centres have systematically excluded beggars from public spaces and failed to protect liberty and freedom of the people” (Ramanathan and Pande, 2010). It is also evident in the field survey that most of the beggars are not even aware of the rehabilitation centres which are existed for them for the skill development programmes. It is clearly a systematic failure of the state functionaries where the rehabilitation centres are out of reach to the beggars and therefore they are forced and continued to depend on beggary for their survival. Hence, there is a need of immediate response to re-examine and relocate the policies for welfare of beggars and the prevention of beggary and destitution in India.

5. A VICTIM BLAMING APPROACH OF MEDIA:

The government of different states of India have been set up the “Zero Tolerance Zones” for Beggary. In particular, the state government of united Andhra Pradesh (AP) set up a Zero Tolerance Zone in Hyderabad in the year of 2000 during the visit of U S President, Bill Clinton. The Chief Minister of AP, implemented a scheme called “Beggars reimbursement” where all the beggars were shifted from Hyderabad to rehabilitation centre (The Hans India, 2015). Similarly, the AP state government also offered Rs. 5000 and free food to the beggars to stay away from the “Godavari Pushkhar Ghats (The Hans India, 2015)”. It is also found in Delhi, where the government of Delhi declared some areas as Zero Tolerance Zones in Delhi during the Commonwealth Games, 2010. All the beggars were shifted to *Sewa Kutir* (special home for beggars) (The Siasat Daily, 2010). Therefore, it is argued that on one hand the state instead of eliminating poverty and Beggary, it is displacing the poor people from one place to another to show India as “Beggars free Country”. On the other hand, the role of media is equally important to debate on the issue of Beggary. The media projected beggary as a Mafia than the compulsion of helpless poor and their survival. Some of the newspaper articles are publishing like, “98 per cent of beggars in Hyderabad are fake: Survey” (The New Indian Express: 2016); “City beggars not so poor after all” (The Hindu: 2016).

In principle, the media is to represent the voice of the civil society and especially the concerns of the down trodden people and put in front of the state. However, in the case of beggary, the media is projecting the innocent or real beggars as the Mafia and thus, as a consequence, the real beggars are also treated as the fake beggars and denied alms by the people. Similarly, it is argued that “one aspect of begging in urban areas that tends to be sensationalised by the media is that of begging rackets are under the control of criminal gangs. While such reports are no doubt true, however, all beggars on the streets are certainly not controlled by such gangs. Moreover, with regard to begging mafia, it is the job of the police to use Section 363 (A) of the Indian Penal Code which deals with crimes relating to kidnapping and forcing children to beg” (Dehumanising Beggars, 2010). In a newspaper article it was mentioned, “the survey by the Common Man Forum has revealed that there are nearly 25,000 beggars in Hyderabad, of whom five to six per cent are real, and the rest fake or pretending to be beggars” (Deccan Chronicle, 17 Jun, 2016).

However, it is to be mentioned that there are two categories in the beggary: (i) Organised Beggars⁴ and (ii) Real Beggars.⁵ As far as the organised beggars are concerned, they are linked up with the “Begging Mafia” where begging became a profession to earn money. Some group leaders use orphaned, kidnapped children, old aged, physically handicapped people and give them training for begging. Of these people, very few are provided basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter by their leader however there have been subjected to physical abuse and economic exploitation in the group and the leaders use them as their “bounded labourers” (Rafiuddin, 2008:60). Since few of the organised beggars are being provided such basic needs by the leaders which are not given by the state, thus, it compels them to work under the begging Mafia. Another category is Real Beggars as they exclusively depend on alms of others. Due to the begging Mafia, the real beggars also considered as the Mafia and they denied of alms from others because people think that they are also under the control of Mafia. Thus, there is an impact of begging mafia on real beggars. They are getting food neither from people nor from the state. Therefore, they are more prone to malnutrition and food insecurity.

It is understood that that there may be some fake beggars in the city but this type of articles may project that every beggar can be claimed as a fake beggar and denied of alms from the others. Therefore, they are deprived of food which is provided by people. On the other hand, there are many news articles in papers depict that all the beggars will be rehabilitated in beggars’ homes in different places (The Hindu, July 3, 2007; DC, January 18, 2016, etc.) It is

⁴ Organised Beggars work under a group leader who operate all the beggars and give them training for begging.

⁵ Real beggars are an individual category where they do not have any link with any group or Begging Mafia. They do begging for themselves and their family member’s survival.

argued that “the existing laws meant to deal with beggars that end up punishing them and criminalising their activities rather than rehabilitating them need to be changed (Begging for Attention, 2013). However, up to what extent these beggars have been rehabilitated? How many of them rehabilitated? We still find the beggars on the traffic signal etc. Field study observation reveals the day-to-day experience of a beggar who is mentally disabled person and lives in a vulnerable condition.

The observation is follows: Case IV

The researcher found a mentally disabled person, who looks physically very sick and thin and mentally abnormal. He was in dirty and scruffy appearance with torn and fetid clothes. His appearance describes that he did not take bath for past few years. He has a long hair and beard with so much of dust. He was picking some eatables from the road side dustbins and drainages. Then he moved on to a vegetable and fruit market and picking the spoiled fruits which were thrown by the shop keepers on the road. After few minutes, the researcher tried to talk to him but he was not in a position to respond to his questions. When the researcher was going close to him, he started shouting like hmmm.....aaaa.....yeee (there was no clear voice of him to understand what exactly he was shouting) and going away from the researcher. The beggar was just collecting the spoiled fruits and feeding to his stomach and moving one place to another.

It is understood that the respondent does not have any kind of security/assistance from the state in terms of access to state sponsored benefits and not even sufficient food every day, which causes to food insecurity and malnutrition. There are many people like him live in road side bus shelters, trees, pavements and eats spoiled food which found in dustbins, fruit and vegetable markets. It is, therefore, argued that the beggar, as a citizen of India, does not have any social and livelihood security from the state. On one hand, it is observed that there are no preventive actions against the beggary from the non-governmental organizations and rehabilitation centres for the people like him to get the treatment and give social security to his/their life. On the other hand, the media pretending these people as organised beggars and have links with the mafia which actually making these vulnerable people to deprived of livelihood security such as food and shelter.

6. THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL EXCLUSION OF BEGGARS:

The identity card of an individual issued by the government is essential for accessing various welfare schemes provided by the government. The state was made every welfare scheme linked with the Aadhar card which actually excludes the poorest of the poor to reap the benefits of various welfare schemes due to unavailability of the necessary documents to get the Aadhar card. However, the recent verdict of the Supreme Court states that now the Aadhar is not mandatory to get access to the welfare schemes. However the people had deprived of the welfare scheme benefits for the earlier decision of the government. In this regard, Agarwal (2013) opposes the government plans like the shift from food grain distribution to the cash transfers and linking the government welfare schemes with the Unique Identification Authority (UID) Aadhar. The author points out that by linking the government schemes with the Aadhar, it excludes some of the beneficiaries from accessibility. She questions the viability of linking Aadhaar card with various welfare schemes that the old aged people face difficulty in getting Aadhaar cards from the Aadhaar enrolment centres. If they do not enrol in the Aadhaar centre, as a result, they will lose the benefits from the government schemes. Therefore, the author opposes linking the government welfare schemes with the UID Aadhar. Even if they enrolled in the Aadhaar identification, the introduction of Aadhaar based bio-metric system also exclude most of the old aged people as the bio-metric authentication could not recognise the thumb impression of the old people due to their cracked thumb skin. It must be considered as one of the major errors of the bio-metric authentication. As a consequence, the old aged people could not draw their pension/food grains from the government and it is has more effect on the beggars where most of the beggars are old aged.

Another aspect in the case of beggars is, “there are no central schemes specifically aimed at beggars, there are a number of poverty-eradication and employment schemes targeting the very poor that could accommodate them. However, almost all of them demand documents and identification papers that a majority of the beggars do not have” (Begging for Attention, 2013). Therefore, it is argued that due to not having the proper documentation and government issued identity cards like Aadhar, Ration and Voter, etc, these vulnerable sections have not only excluded from the welfare schemes such as old aged pension, Public Distribution System (PDS) but also from their civil and political rights to participate in elections as they do not have an identity to claim that they are the citizens of India. Another socially excluded category among beggars is the Transgender community where they are excluded from all the aspects of society such as social, economic and political. They are deprived of education and employment consequently led them to extreme poverty and then beggary. The transgender community is forced into beggary as they are discriminated by the social structure of the society. They have been considered as the most marginalized section and live away from the main stream of the society. Thus, the gender and caste discrimination within the

society compels them to involve in beggary as it is the only source remained left for their livelihood. However, it is found that through the criminalisation of beggary, the state like Karnataka, made moves to arrest transwomen begging on roads in Bangalore and the government claims to be “rehabilitating” them, they have no structures in place for this rehabilitation (Ananya, 2017). The gendered discrimination of transgender people in the society deprived them to access to education. It is, therefore, argued that had the state been taken any measures against the discrimination of the transgender they would not have been chosen beggary as their profession. It is the social structure and the state which compelled them to involve in beggary.

The beggars also excluded from the food distribution programmes in India. In particular, the Telangana state has initiated the “Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Rs 5 Meal”⁶ for the needy people. The scheme would benefit for the poor those who do not have access to food. However, the beggars are excluded in this scheme where the people from the government sector like bus conductors and drivers and other nearby shop keepers are taking the food who can afford to access the same at outside. Thus, the needy people like beggars have been excluded. Therefore, the state must take some measures to prevent the malpractices at the food distribution centres. So that the object of the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act that is “Beggars Free India” can be achievable.

7. CONCLUSION:

This paper attempts to argue that the poor – those who do not have any kind of source to survive – are choosing beggary as their source of livelihood. The reasons of poverty are multifold i.e. unequal caste structure and gender order and thus, beggars are not a monolithic category. These beggars are denied of begging by the state under the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, where the state imposed a ban by criminalising begging. Thus, these people are deprived of food and livelihood security. Criminalisation of beggary was not accompanied by substantial rehabilitation or alternative livelihood options for these beggars. Another important aspect is that these people are also projected as organised beggars (who are working under a group or Mafia) which actually affect their life as they are neither protected by the state nor by the alms of the people, as a result, they are more prone to malnutrition, ill health and subsequently starvation deaths. It is, therefore, argued that the state has been implementing the Anti-Beggary laws which have both positive and negative effects on beggars in terms of their food and livelihood security. On one hand the Anti-Beggary Act criminalised begging to make India beggar free, however, on the other hand it excludes the beggars from the public spaces and leaving them without showing any other livelihood alternatives.

Given this context, on contrary to the state, this paper advocates decriminalisation of begging which is a humanistic approach. It also urges for making provisions for the promotion of capacity building among the poor for reducing the negative effects of the Anti-Beggary Act on beggars in India. There might be organised or fake beggars involved into begging in the society however, whoever, the organised/unorganised beggars, beg to feed their stomach and get relive from hunger/starvation deaths. The Anti-Beggary Acts are good in a way that they prevent beggary and make India as a Beggars free. However, the appropriate measures should be taken up by the state for the prevention of Beggary through the promotion of various skill development programmes in the rehabilitation centres. It is true that there are rehabilitation centres existed in India which are providing them skill training, shelter, food, however, these are functioning in a half-hearted manner and hence still we find beggars in different public places. There is a need of re-examine/relocation of the welfare policies and the expansion of rehabilitation centres and food distribution centres across the country for the reintegration of the beggars into the mainstream society which make them to live a life with dignity.

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