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Beggars and Begging in Aligarh District

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Abstract:

The present empirical study aims to analyze the begging activities of beggars in Aligarh district. This work is based on primary source of data, collected through the field survey and direct questionnaire to the respondents in the Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh during 2009. The study reveals that the majority of the beggars involved in this activity by their birth and the preferred time for begging is from morning to evening because at this time they receive higher response of the donors. Almost all the beggars ask both cash and kind as alms. A large section of beggars used direct method of begging. Nearly, half of the beggars visited the places of begging by their foot and remaining half also used bus, cart, cycle, etc. as sources of mode of transportation.

Keywords: Beggars, Begging, Aligarh

1. Introduction

The problem of begging is a universal phenomenon but it is more pronounced in the developing nations. The only difference between the begging system of the western countries and in the case of India is the way of begging. Beggars get money in developed countries by performing their arts and skills but in India they are getting money only on the basis of sympathy or on the mercy of society. They are found everywhere in public places, such as filling stations, restaurants, banks, super markets, mosques, churches, etc. Moreover, deviant behaviors such as theft, thuggery, violent and criminal behavior, and vandalism are listed as some of the vices associated with street begging (Adedibu & Jelili 2011, 17-24; Tambawal 2010 cited by Namwata et al. 2012, 133-143; Adedibu 1989, 25-40).

Najafi and his colleagues (2004, 23 & 31) conceived that since begging is a behaviour in conflict with the ethical principles of the society, it should be considered as preventive/deterrent crimes. Furthermore, they believed that considering it as a crime, is not logically justifiable and its range should be limited by no criminal and preventive actions. However, begging has been a traditional profession in India as charity is considered one of the noblest of human virtues according to Hindu tradition (Dhruvasan 1963, 10-12). Beggars request food, money, clothing and other items from passersby. They have many reasons for asking for assistance and can be found in many locations worldwide. Beggars tend to present a negative image of a particular location. The presence of beggars is perceived to be indicative of larger social ills or issues and can cause others to avoid beggar-inhabited areas (Clapper 2012, 1). Begging is commonly defined as the act of stopping people on the street to ask for assistance, for example in the form of food or money (Bose and Hwang 2002, 477-479; Collins and Blomley 2003, 1).

Begging is a social ill whose implications for city economy and environment call for concern of urban planners. The negative impacts of begging on social and physical environments are obvious in the tendency of beggars to delay and obstruct free flow human and vehicular traffic and their high propensity to generate dirty materials either as waste or as parts of their belonging (Jelili 2006 cited by Namwata et al. 2010, 53-60). Adedibu (1989, 25-40) also observed that begging also has implications for the economy of the nation as beggars depend on the already overstretched workforce.

Begging has been a serious problem confronting many urban areas across the globe. The situation becomes worse when it confronts urban areas of less developed nations. Despite the pronounced manifestation of this problem in developing countries, people still regard begging as a normal phenomenon (Adedibu 1989, 25-40; Ogunkan and Fawole 2009, 498-503; Tambawal 2010 cited by Namwata et al. 2012, 133-143; Adedibu and Jelili 2011, 17-24). According to Bromley (1987, 23-24), modern societies viewed begging and the presence of beggars on the streets as a social problem. Many of the systematic efforts to document the problem of destitution and begging have come from America. The menace of street begging as a potential threat to the environmental, economic and social survival of humanity, societal fabric is evident (Ogunkan and Fawole (2009, 498-503; CRISIS 2003, 1-9). People engaged in begging themselves also recognized begging to be a 'problem'. To them, it's harsh, humiliating, demeaning, degrading and frustrating (Lynch 2005, 521; Rowntree 2000, 1-2). The continued relevance of begging as both a political and a public policy problem is evidenced by extensive media coverage of the issue in recent years, together with governmental consideration of the regulation and governance of begging (Lynch 2005, 520; CRISIS 2003, 1-9).

The society has always had a low tolerance level for the beggars and the panhandlers. Begging, considered by many to be anti-social behaviour and it is also less tolerated in a more suburban residential community. Beggars often have criminal records, but they are nearly as likely to have been crime victims as offenders (Scott 2002, 6). As Lee and Farrell (2003, 300) convey,

“...conventional wisdom regards begging as a deviant activity, engaged in by the stigmatized poor that carries significant costs and is disapproved of by a majority of citizens.” Aggressive begging may create an intimidating and unsightly atmosphere, negatively impacting the quality of life of residents, while, adversely affecting businesses and tourism. The increasing visibility of people begging is generating much public discussion and debate about the causes of begging and possible ways to address it. Many view the beggars as undeserving of help and their begging activity as a result of pathological, self-induced and self-selected circumstances (Esmonde 2002, 63-86; Wilson 1991, 14-19). While, it is true that a small number of people “choose the lifestyle”, the vast majority are begging because of a lack of other alternatives.

Biswas has rightly remarked that ‘*The status of a place can best be judged by the number of its beggars*’ (cited by Cama 1945, 1). Mukharjee (1945) pointed out that “*Beggary is a symptom of social disorganization*”. The major factors making for its prevalence are to be found in the breakdown of the socio-economic structure of the country. Beggars in India are the victims of an unbalanced socio-economic system. They are amongst the most vulnerable people in our society and show the low economic condition of that group. These are the human degradation to the lowest extent, and a menace to the healthy society. Most of them are the product of economic deprivation, destitution and neglect. Thus, beggars are the most deprived section of the society who begged for sustaining their livelihood, living in abject poverty and on the mercy of people.

2. Aims and Objectives

The main thrust of this paper is to analyse the working life of beggars. The main objectives of the study are;

- to examine the duration engaged in begging activity,
- to find out the preferred time of begging,
- to study the various methods of begging,
- to inspect the nature of alms, and
- to observe the sources of mode of transportation.

3. Study Area

The Aligarh district, a medium sized district, is spreading over an area of 3700.4 square kilometers in the Western part of Uttar Pradesh. It occupies the north-western part of the Uttar Pradesh, which is a fertile region of Ganga and Yamuna Doab. The district lies between the parallels of 27°29' and 28°11' north latitudes and meridians of 77°29' and 78°38' east longitudes. Its boundary touches the boundaries of five other districts (Bulandshahr, Badaun, Mathura, Hathras and Etah) of the Uttar Pradesh and one state (Haryana) of India. At present, the district is divided into five tahsils namely, Kol, Khair, Gabhana, Atrauli and Iglas for the purpose of land record keeping, land revenue collection, judicial administration, etc. These tahsils are further sub-divided into 12 development blocks namely: Atrauli, Gangiri, Bijauli, Jawan, Chandus, Khair, Tappal, Dhanipur, Lodha, Akraabad, Iglas and Gonda.

According to 2001 Census, the district accommodates a residential population of 29, 92, 286 of which 29 per cent was classified as urban and 71 per cent as rural. The general density of population in the district was 820 persons per sq. km. However, it was 607 persons per sq. km. in the rural sector and 5,949 persons per sq. km. in the urban sector. The general sex ratio that is the number of females per thousand males was 862 in the district, whereas, the figures for the rural and urban areas were 856 and 876 respectively. The literacy rate in the district is 58.5 per cent and the male literacy rate is 71.7 per cent and females are 43.0 per cent literate while, the percentage of literacy in rural and urban population was 56.5 and 63.2 respectively.

4. Data Base and Methodology

This study is based on primary source of data that have been collected through field survey in the Aligarh district. The survey was carried out during 2009. The villages have been selected on the basis of stratified random sampling. According to 2001 Census, the district had 1210 revenue villages of which 1180 were inhabited. The inhabited villages were stratified into three categories based on the size of population, so that, all types of population and villages may get reasonable representation in the samples randomly drawn for the survey. Keeping in view the constraints of time and cost, it was decided to collect data for this enquiry from 6 per cent villages of each category. Six per cent villages (70) were selected out of the 1180 inhabited villages and for the selection of households, 25 per cent beggars' households were randomly selected from each selected village of the district. All the 13 towns of the district were selected for the survey. Six per cent wards from each town and 25 per cent households of beggars from each ward were randomly selected for the study. Altogether, 892 households were selected for the present study, in which the rural survey consisted of 496 households and the urban survey comprised 396 households for collection of information about the begging activities of beggars. After the field work was over, the data collected by using individual slips were scrutinized and were processed in tabular forms in percentages according to the requirements of the various facets of the study.

5. Result and Analysis

The Table 1 gives an idea about the distribution of number of years engaged in begging activity by the beggars of Aligarh district. The data envisages that all the blocks of the district have about 80 per cent beggars who adopted this occupation from the time of their birth (because their parents were already involved in this occupation) except Lodha block which have less number of beggar population in this category. The highest begging by birth was recorded in Gonda and Gangiri (100 per cent) blocks and lowest in Lodha block (72.9 per cent). Four blocks namely, Akraabad, Iglas, Atrauli and Bijauli have nearly 90 per cent of selected beggars who started begging from their birth (from the time when they were able to do this activity). Beggars who starting begging from less than five years was recorded highest in Lodha block (10.8 per cent) and no beggar was found in seven blocks (Dhanipur, Akraabad, Gonda, Iglas, Khair, Jawan and Gangiri) of the district in this category. Lodha block have the highest percentage (7.3) of

beggars who starting begging before 5 to 10 years, followed by Iglas, Dhanipur and Bijauli blocks. Under the category of 11-20 years of begging, Chandaus and Jawan blocks recorded the highest (about 11 per cent) beggars. A very small percentage of beggars were found during survey who joined begging before 20 years and this category was witnessed in the five blocks (Akraabad, Lodha, Chandaus, Dhanipur and Bijauli) of the district. Lodha and Bijauli blocks were the only two blocks that have beggars in all the categories.

Name of Block	Time of Starting Begging				
	By Birth	Before (years)			
		1-4	5-10	11-20	> 20
Lodha	72.9	10.8	7.3	6.6	2.4
Dhanipur	88.9	-	4.2	5.6	1.4
Akraabad	93.8	-	-	3.1	3.1
Gonda	100.0	-	-	-	-
Iglas	90.4	-	5.8	3.8	-
Khair	93.1	-	-	6.9	-
Tappal	88.6	4.5	-	6.8	-
Chandaus	81.2	5.9	-	10.6	2.4
Jawan	89.3	-	-	10.7	-
Atrauli	95.7	4.3	-	-	-
Bijauli	93.5	5.4	1.1	2.2	1.1
Gangiri	100.0	-	-	-	-
Aligarh	85.5	5.0	3.1	5.2	1.2

Table 1: Block-Wise Percentage Distribution of Number of Years engaged in Begging by the Beggars in Aligarh District, 2009

Source: Calculation is based on sample survey

Table 2 provides the information about the preferred times of begging in the Aligarh district. An examination of data shows that more than 80 per cent beggars in all the blocks of the district preferred to go for begging during day time except Lodha block (77 per cent). Four blocks namely, Lodha (19.3 per cent), Atrauli (18.3 per cent), Bijauli (17.9 per cent) and Akraabad (17.2 per cent) of the district witnessed the beggars who were not bound to time and go anytime for begging.

Name of Block	Times of Begging				
	Morning	Noon	Evening	Night	All Time
Lodha	26.1	25.7	25.2	3.7	19.3
Dhanipur	39.2	39.1	21.7	-	-
Akraabad	30.6	29.9	22.3	-	17.2
Gonda	37.1	37.1	25.8	-	-
Iglas	36.7	37.4	25.9	-	-
Khair	35.4	35.3	29.3	-	-
Tappal	39.0	27.7	33.3	-	-
Chandaus	37.9	37.1	25.0	-	-
Jawan	35.4	35.4	29.2	-	-
Atrauli	32.3	25.7	23.7	-	18.3
Bijauli	29.1	28.6	24.5	-	17.9
Gangiri	37.4	37.4	25.2	-	-
Aligarh	32.9	31.8	25.4	1.0	9.0

Table 2: Block-Wise Percentage Distribution of Times Duration of Beggars for Begging in Aligarh District, 2009

Source: Calculation is based on sample survey

Table 3 provides the information about the distribution of various methods of begging. The data depicts that in all the blocks of the district, slogan method was mainly used by beggars for begging purpose excluding Dhanipur (34 per cent), Khair (35.4 per cent) Akraabad (36 per cent) and Atrauli (44.6 per cent) blocks. These four blocks (Dhanipur, Khair, Akraabad, and Atrauli) adopted the method of showing their own art at the first priority rather than slogan method because most of the beggars of these blocks belong to the Nat, Banjara, Sopera, etc. The highest percentage of slogan method was recorded in the Tappal block (98.8 per cent) and lowest in Dhanipur block (34 per cent).

Name of Block	Methods of Begging					
	Slogan	Silent	By Showing Art	Showing Inability	Using Animals	Others
Lodha	42.3	39.1	0.7	4.3	4.7	9.0
Dhanipur	34.0	3.0	40.0	3.0	12.0	8.0
Akrabad	36.0	1.1	58.3	1.1	2.3	1.1
Gonda	48.6	8.3	43.1	-	-	-
Iglas	64.0	-	36.0	-	-	-
Khair	35.4	-	60.4	2.1	2.1	-
Tappal	98.8	-	-	-	1.2	-
Chandaus	85.3	-	14.7	-	-	-
Jawan	60.0	38.2	-	1.8	-	-
Atrauli	44.6	-	55.4	-	-	-
Bijauli	54.8	-	34.6	0.9	8.3	1.4
Gangiri	78.7	-	21.3	-	-	-
Aligarh	53.2	13.6	24.5	1.8	3.4	3.4

Table 3: Block-Wise Percentage Distribution of Methods of Begging opted by Beggars in Aligarh District, 2009

Source: Calculation is based on sample survey

The silent way of begging was recorded highest in Lodha (39.1 per cent) and Jawan (38.2 per cent) blocks and few beggars of the blocks of Gonda, Dhanipur and Akrabad also used silent way of asking for begging. Khair block have the highest percentage (60.4) of begging by showing their art, followed by Akrabad (58.3 per cent) and Atrauli (55.4 per cent). Six blocks (Lodha, Dhanipur, Akrabad, Khair, Jawan and Bijauli) of the district recorded some beggars who usually used the exhibition of their deformity for begging and it is recorded highest in the Lodha block (4.3 per cent). The beggars of six blocks namely, Dhanipur (12 per cent), Bijauli (8.3 per cent), Lodha (4.7 per cent), Akrabad (2.3 per cent), Khair (2.1 per cent) and Tappal (1.2 per cent) have recorded some beggars using their pet animals i.e. monkey, snake, etc. for begging activity and it was highest in the Dhanipur block (12 per cent). The beggars of four blocks namely, Lodha (9 per cent), Dhanipur (8 per cent), Bijauli (1.4 per cent) and Akrabad (1.1 per cent) used others methods of begging. Lodha, Dhanipur and Akrabad were the only three blocks in which beggars have adopted all the methods of begging and get more alms as compared to rural areas because these blocks are located at the peri-urban area of Aligarh city.

Table 4 provides the information about the nature of alms received by the beggars of Aligarh district. About 98 per cent of the total selected beggars have received both cash and kind from the donors. In all the blocks of the district both sources (cash and kind) of alms was taken by the beggars except Lodha (94.8 per cent) and Atrauli (97.8 per cent) blocks in which they got either cash or kind at a time. About 5 per cent beggars received only cash from the donors because they did not prefer to take cooked food or clothes from anybody. Bijauli was the only block which recorded some percentage of beggars who takes only kind along with cash and both (cash and kind). From the above analysis of the table it is clear that more than 95 per cent beggars took everything offered by donors because they were poor and had no choice for selection from both (cash and kind).

Name of Block	Nature of Alms		
	Both	Cash	Kind
Lodha	94.8	5.2	-
Dhanipur	100.0	-	-
Akrabad	100.0	-	-
Gonda	100.0	-	-
Iglas	100.0	-	-
Khair	100.0	-	-
Tappal	100.0	-	-
Chandaus	100.0	-	-
Jawan	100.0	-	-
Atrauli	100.0	-	-
Bijauli	97.8	1.1	1.1
Gangiri	100.0	-	-

Aligarh	98.1	1.8	0.1
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Table 4: Block-Wise Percentage Distribution of Nature of Alms for Beggars in Aligarh District, 2009

Source: Calculation is based on sample survey

Table 5 depicts the percentage distribution of means of transportation used by beggars for covering long distances for begging purpose. An examination of data reveals that all the blocks of the district recorded the highest percentage (mostly vary from 33-50 per cent) of beggars who moved to the places for begging by their foot and the highest percentage share of it is recorded in the Lodha block (74.0 per cent) and lowest in Atrauli and Khair blocks (33.7 per cent), while, more than 30 per cent of beggars who used buses as a means of transportation in all the blocks of the district excluding the Lodha and Iglas blocks, and the highest of it, was recorded in the Bijauli block (37.0 per cent) and lowest was in Lodha block (13.1 per cent). Cart was the third means of transportation used by the rural beggars and the highest share of it was in Chandaus block (34.6 per cent) and lowest in Akraabad block (3.1 per cent). Iglas block contributed the highest percentage (20.8 per cent) of beggars who used cycle for moving from one village to the other surrounding villages, followed by Bijauli (12.5 per cent), Gonda (11.7 per cent), Akraabad (10.9 per cent), Atrauli (6.4 per cent), Dhanipur (6.4 per cent), Jawan (5.1 per cent), Lodha (3.6 per cent) and Gangiri (2.9 per cent) blocks for begging activity. The other sources including train, auto-rickshaw, cycle-rickshaw, etc. as a means of transportation to move to different places (villages, towns, blocks, district and states) for begging, it was highest in the Gonda block (10 per cent), followed by Dhanipur, Atrauli, Lodha, Dhanipur, Akraabad, Khair, Bijauli and Iglas blocks.

Name of Block	Mode of Covering Distance					Total
	By Foot	Bus	Cart	Cycle	Others	
Lodha	74.0	13.1	7.5	3.6	1.8	389
Dhanipur	41.6	35.8	9.2	6.4	6.9	173
Akraabad	48.8	35.7	3.1	10.9	1.6	129
Gonda	38.3	30.0	10.0	11.7	10.0	60
Iglas	40.0	20.0	18.5	20.8	0.8	130
Khair	33.7	31.4	33.7	-	1.2	86
Tappal	39.3	34.8	25.9	-	-	112
Chandaus	35.0	30.5	34.6	-	-	243
Jawan	35.4	32.9	26.6	5.1	-	79
Atrauli	33.3	32.6	25.5	6.4	2.1	141
Bijauli	49.5	37.0	-	12.5	1.1	184
Gangiri	39.8	33.9	23.4	2.9	-	171
Aligarh	46.9	28.5	16.8	6.0	1.8	1897

Table 5: Block-Wise Percentage Distribution of Modes of Transportation of Beggars for Begging in Aligarh District, 2009

Source: Calculation is based on sample survey

6. Conclusion

This work concludes that majority of the beggars involved in this activity by their birth and nearly all the beggars ask both cash and kind as alms and the preferred time for begging is from morning to evening because at this time they receive higher response of the donors. A large section of beggars in the study area used direct method of begging in all the blocks of the district and some of them were begging by showing their arts, silent way, using animals, showing inability, etc. The beggars of Dhanipur, Khair Akraabad and Atrauli blocks adopted the method of showing their own art at the first priority rather than slogan method because most of the beggars of these blocks belong to the Nat, Banjara, Sapera, etc. Nearly, fifty per cent beggars visited the places of begging by their foot and remaining beggars also used bus, cart, cycle, etc. as sources of mode of transportation.

The following suggestions may be put forward to improve the socio-economic condition of beggar population in the study area:

- Slum clearance and better housing facilities should be provided to these people through various housing yojanas like Indira Awas Yojana (1985-86) in the rural areas and Rajiv Awas Yojana (2009) and VAMBAY (2001) in the urban areas to make slum free India because majority of beggars were living in the slums or huts.
- There should be provision for proper rehabilitation of migrant beggars. Beggars of Habura caste of usually visited the religious places of Delhi, Kurukchetra, Gurgaun, Mthura, Agra and Meerut for begging purpose. Therefore, government should develop agro-based and agro-allied industries in rural areas so that the poor people can get employment at their places of origin and it will also help to stop the movement of the poor people towards urban areas.
- Improve the literacy level of beggars and make them aware about the various government poverty alleviation programmes (Right to Education, Mid Day Meal, and MGNREGA etc.).

- The adult able-bodied male and female beggars should be detained in the existing poor houses. They are to be kept busy in the institutions through vocational education and some kind of productive activity. The programmes of vocational training like tailoring, sewing, spinning, mat weaving, book binding, gardening, mid-wifery, incense-stick making, cooking, catering, doll making, poultry and bee-keeping, carpentry etc.
- A special provision (pensions- National Old Age Pension Scheme) may be made for the cares of the aged beggars, who are not able to do any productive work.
- Suitable institutional care, with a view to achieve ultimate rehabilitation, should be provided to the dependent, homeless and destitute children who have turned to this profession of begging. Employment should be provided for widowed and separated destitute women (Aligarh city).
- Neither imprisonment fine nor legislation can solve the problem by themselves. It needs to be tackled in a humanistic, sympathetic, rational and scientific way. Effective legislation may be enacted to check begging among able-bodied persons.
- Give them kind and work, not money. Unorganized charity has to be channelized through the institutions of Beggar Homes for the effective rehabilitation of beggars.
- The government must include the help of NGOs, Social Workers and also the civic bodies, so that the cancerous growth of beggary can be eliminated. Academic researches on the issue should be encouraged from time to time to check and enhance the curbing of beggary problem.
- Media can play a big role for solving this problem because it takes very short time to reach everybody's mind and heart i.e. Slum dog Millionaire Movie.

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