



Research Paper

Economic Life of Beggars in Aligarh District

¹Dr. Menka, ²Prof. Jabir Hasan Khan, ³Tarique Hassan

¹Post Doctoral Fellow (ICSSR) Department of Geography Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh-202002, (UP) India Mob: 09358488072

²Department of Geography Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh-202002, (UP) India Mob: 09719259683

³Senior Research Fellow, Department of Geography, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh-202002, (UP) India

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ABSTRACT:- The present empirical study aims to analyze the economic life of beggars. The study 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 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, without access to standard housing and household amenities. The study reveals that majority of the population of beggars' households involves in the begging activity and followed by other economic activities. On an average, there were 2-4 earning hands and dependent in each household. Average daily income of the beggars by begging is ₹ 51-100 per day.

Keywords:- Begging, Occupation, Aligarh.

I. INTRODUCTION

The problem of begging is a universal phenomenon but it is more pronounced in 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 behavior 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

*Corresponding Author: ¹Dr. Menka

¹Post Doctoral Fellow (ICSSR) Department of Geography Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh-202002, (UP) India Mob: 0935848807

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.

Aims and Objectives

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

- i. to examine the working and non-working population among beggars' households in the Aligarh district,
- ii. to analyze the employment structure of the beggars in the district,
- iii. to find out the subsidiary occupation of the beggars in the study area,
- iv. to inspect the average daily income of beggars through begging activity.

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, Akrabad, 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.

II. 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 work life 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.

III. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Table 1 shows the block-wise distribution of working and dependent population within the selected beggars' households of the Aligarh district. An analysis of data about the number of earning hands per household depicts that the majority of the households have 2-4 earning hands in the district as well as in all blocks of the district. More than 80 per cent of beggars' households of the five blocks (Chandaus, Atrauli, Gonda, Tappal and Khair) fall under this category. Around 20 per cent of sampled households have only one earning hand within their family in the four blocks (Bijauli, Iglas, Lodha and Dhanipur), while, Dhanipur and Akrabad blocks recorded nearly 20 per cent of beggars' households

Table 1: Block-Wise Percentage Distribution of Working and Non-Working Population of the Beggars' Households in Aligarh District, 2009

Name of Block	Earning Hands				Number of Dependents				
	One	2-4	4-6	>6	No	One	2-4	4-6	>6
Lodha	22.6	69.8	7.6	-	15.3	4.5	62.8	17.0	0.3
Dhanipur	22.2	54.2	22.2	1.4	9.7	16.7	55.6	16.7	1.4
Akrabad	14.1	62.5	21.9	1.6	3.1	12.5	62.5	20.3	1.6
Gonda	-	91.3	8.7	-	-	13.0	17.4	60.9	8.7
Iglas	26.9	73.1	-	-	1.9	3.8	76.9	13.5	3.8
Khair	13.8	82.8	3.4	-	13.8	6.9	65.5	13.8	-
Tappal	11.4	84.1	4.5	-	-	2.3	52.3	31.8	13.6
Chandaus	2.4	97.6	-	-	-	12.9	63.5	23.5	-
Jawan	17.9	71.4	10.7	-	17.9	10.7	46.4	25.0	-
Atrauli	6.4	91.5	2.1	-	10.6	19.1	31.9	36.2	2.1
Bijauli	27.2	64.1	8.7	-	5.4	14.1	53.3	21.7	5.4
Gangiri	11.8	79.4	8.8	-	5.9	7.4	64.7	19.1	2.9
Aligarh	17.5	73.9	8.4	0.2	8.6	9.2	58.5	21.3	2.4

Source: Calculation is based on sample survey.

With 4-6 earning hand in the district. These two blocks also recorded the highest number (above 6) of earning member within their households. It is from the above analysis that Dhanipur and Akrabad blocks have recorded the highest number of earning hands because of the nearness to the main urban centre.

The further examination of data given in Table 1 depicts that the dependent population among the beggars in the district explains that almost all the blocks have the highest proportion of dependent population per household in the category of 2-4 dependents except in the blocks of Gonda and Atrauli where the category of 4-6 dependents were recorded highest. An in depth analysis of the table also shows that highest percentage of beggars with no dependent population was found in the Jawan block (17.9 per cent), followed by Lodha (15.3 per cent), Khair (13.8 per cent), Atrauli (10.6 per cent), Dhanipur (9.7 per cent), Gangiri (5.9 per cent), Bijauli (5.4 per cent), Akrabad (3.1 per cent) and Iglas (1.9 per cent) blocks, Moreover, all the blocks have more than 20 per cent of sampled beggars' households in the category of 4-6 dependent, in which, the highest percentage (60.9) of the dependents under this category was found in Gonda block, while, Tappal block contributed the highest percentage (13.6) of dependent population in the category of more than 6 persons. It may be concluded

that in almost all the blocks of the district, 2-4 dependent population per household recorded highest except in the blocks of Gonda and Atrauli.

The Table 2 gives an idea about the occupational structure of the sampled population of beggars' households. Table 2 reveals that 71.3 per cent population of beggars' households were involved in begging activity, followed by the labourer (16.1 per cent), showing own art (4.1 per cent), cobbler (4.1 per cent), animal care (1.9 per cent), rag picking (0.9 per cent) and remaining (3.2 per cent) were engaged in other activities. The block-wise analysis of data shows that out of the total working population, more than two-third people were involved in the begging activities in all the blocks excluding the blocks of Dhanipur (52.3 per cent), Gonda (64 per cent) and Bijauli (68 per cent). The second most important occupation adopted by this population was their engagement in labourer work which contributes about 10 to 25 per cent of the total working population in all the blocks of the district except Khair block (6.0 per cent) where secondary occupation was cobbler. The highest percentage (23.5 per cent) of labourer work has been witnessed by Atrauli block, where as, it was lowest in the Khair block (6 per cent). Moreover, the highest proportion of working population of Bijauli block (14.8 per cent) were involved in showing their own art, followed by Akrabad (8.6 per cent), Dhanipur (6.3 per cent), Lodha (3.1 per cent), Chandaus (2.1 per cent), Khair (1.5 per cent) and Atrauli (0.8 per cent). Remaining five blocks (Gonda, Iglas, Tappal, Jawan and Gangiri) of the district did not record any share in this activity.

Table 2: Block-Wise Percentage Distribution of Occupational Structure of Population of the Beggars' Households in Aligarh District, 2009

Name of Block	Occupation							Total
	Begging	Labourer	Showing Art	Animal Care	Cobbler	Rag Picker	Others	
Lodha	74.7	14.3	3.1	2.2	0.3	3.0	2.4	636
Dhanipur	52.3	16.5	6.3	4.0	9.7	-	11.4	176
Akrabad	71.8	17.7	8.6	-	0.9	-	0.9	220
Gonda	64.0	20.2	-	1.8	14.0	-	-	114
Iglas	75.2	12.0	-	-	12.8	-	-	117
Khair	70.2	6.0	1.5	1.5	7.5	-	13.4	67
Tappal	81.1	18.9	-	-	-	-	-	106
Chandaus	70.3	22.9	2.1	3.1	-	-	1.6	192
Jawan	80.0	12.9	-	-	2.9	-	4.3	70
Atrauli	70.5	23.5	0.8	1.5	0.8	-	3.0	132
Bijauli	68.4	14.4	14.8	2.5	-	-	-	237
Gangiri	75.7	12.7	-	2.9	-	-	8.7	173
Aligarh	71.3	16.1	4.1	1.9	2.7	0.9	3.2	2240

Source: Calculation is based on sample survey.

Animal care was the fourth occupation found in the sampled population of beggars for their survival and has the highest share in the Dhanipur block (4.0 per cent), followed by Chandaus (3.1 per cent), Gangiri (2.9 per cent), Bijauli (2.5 per cent), Lodha (2.2 per cent), Gonda (1.8 per cent), Khair (1.5 per cent) and Atrauli (1.5 per cent). However, fifth economic activity was cobbler which has been recorded highest in Gonda (14 per cent), followed by Iglas (12.8 per cent), Dhanipur (9.7 per cent) and Khair (7.5 per cent) blocks and lowest in Lodha block (0.3 per cent). The four blocks namely, Tappal, Chandaus, Bijauli and Gangiri did not have any data regarding the cobbler activity. Rag picking was the only economic activity which was found in Lodha block particularly in the city areas. Khair block have contributed the highest percentage (13.4 per cent) in others economic activities i.e. driving, work on *bhatta* (bricklines factory), factory, band, etc., while, the blocks of Gonda, Iglas and Bijauli have no share in this activity.

Plate 1
Occupational Structure of Beggars in Aligarh District



The percental distribution of subsidiary occupations of beggars is given in Table 3. The secondary occupations which were mainly adopted by the selected beggars were labourers work either manual or agricultural (since these beggars are neither skilled labour nor possess any technical or academic qualification), animal care, selling items (vendor), cobbler, playing with musical band and others activities.

Table 3: Block-Wise Percentage Distribution of Subsidiary Economic Activities of Beggars in Aligarh District, 2009

Name of Block	Subsidiary Occupation						
	Labour	Animal Care	Selling Items	Cobbler	Band	Others	No
Lodha	15.4	4.1	3.4	0.7	-	32.4	44.0
Dhanipur	29.2	8.5	-	11.3	11.3	16.0	23.6
Akrabad	67.2	-	-	-	-	1.7	31.0
Gonda	59.3	-	-	18.5	-	11.1	11.1
Iglas	59.2	-	-	12.2	-	8.2	20.4
Khair	48.3	-	-	-	-	-	51.7
Tappal	68.2	2.3	-	-	-	-	29.5
Chandaus	60.0	5.9	3.5	-	-	-	30.6
Jawan	32.1	10.7	28.6	-	-	-	28.6
Atrauli	74.5	-	-	-	12.8	-	12.8
Bijauli	91.0	1.3	-	-	-	-	7.7
Gangiri	25.0	14.3	28.6	-	-	3.6	28.6
Aligarh	42.7	4.3	4.1	2.8	2.0	13.6	30.6

Source: Calculation is based on sample survey.

The block level analysis of the subsidiary economic activities in the district reveals that seven blocks namely Khair, Lodha, Akrabad, Chandaus, Tappal, Jawan and Gangiri have more than 30 per cent beggars whose main occupation was begging and the highest percentage of whole time begging was recorded in the Khair block (51.7 per cent) and lowest in the Bijauli block (7.7 per cent). Similar to the general beggars of the district, labourer work was the secondary economic activity which recorded highest in all the blocks except Lodha and Gangiri blocks in which selling items (28.6) and other occupations (32.4 per cent) have the highest percentage share respectively. Seven blocks of the district viz., Bijauli, Atrauli, Tappal, Akrabad, Chandaus, Gonda and Iglas have more than 60 per cent beggars whose main subsidiary occupation was labour work and the highest percentage of it was observed in Bijauli block (91.0 per cent) and the lowest in Lodha block (15.4 per cent). Second common subsidiary occupation adopted by the beggars was animal care which was found in the seven blocks (Gangiri, Jawan, Dhanipur, Chandaus, Lodha, Tappal and Bijauli) of the district in which Gangiri block recorded highest (14.3 per cent) and Bijauli has lowest (1.3 per cent). The third subsidiary occupation was selling items which was mainly found in only four blocks (Jawan, Gangiri, Chandaus and Lodha) of the district, in which Jawan and Gangiri blocks have the highest percentage (28.6 per cent) of beggars engaged in the selling of items, whereas, lowest was recorded in the Lodha block (3.4 per cent). However, around 18.5 per cent beggars of Gonda block was involved in cobbler activity, which was highest among all the blocks, followed by the blocks of Iglas (12.2 per cent), Dhanipur (11.3 per cent) and Lodha (0.7 per cent), while, two blocks of the district (Atrauli and Dhanipur) have share of band as a subsidiary occupation in the district. Six blocks namely, Lodha, Dhanipur, Gonda, Iglas, Gangiri and Akrabad have contributed the share of others economic activities because these blocks are nearer to the Aligarh city in which they received more chances of other sources of income. Among these, Lodha block has the highest percentage (32.4) and lowest (1.7) in Akrabad block of the district.

Table 4 envisages the daily income of beggars through begging practice. An analysis of the table explains that beggars of all the blocks of the district received average daily income ₹ 51-100 except Lodha and Akrabad blocks and the highest percentage of it is recorded in the Iglas and Tappal (76.9 per cent) blocks. Five blocks (Iglas, Tappal, Chandaus, Jawan and Khair) of the district have more than 70 per cent and four blocks (Dhanipur, Khair, Bijauli and Gangiri) of the district have more than 50 per cent daily income under the ₹ 51-100 category. Average daily income of ₹ 20-50 was recorded highest in Lodha block (53.6 per cent) and lowest (3.4 per cent) in Iglas block, while, the

Table 4: Block-Wise Percentage Distribution of Average Daily Income of Beggars in Aligarh District, 2009

Name of Block	Daily Income				
	<20	20-50	51-100	101-200	>200
Lodha	5.5	53.6	34.5	5.8	0.6
Dhanipur	6.6	16.5	54.5	22.3	-
Akrabad	14.4	44.7	31.2	9.8	-
Gonda	18.4	33.3	35.1	13.2	-
Iglas	-	3.4	76.9	19.7	-
Khair	1.5	6.1	69.7	13.6	9.1
Tappal	-	3.8	76.9	19.2	-
Chandaus	-	3.6	71.9	24.0	0.5
Jawan	1.4	12.9	70.0	15.7	-
Atrauli	9.1	34.1	44.7	12.1	-
Bijauli	8.9	21.5	53.6	14.3	1.7
Gangiri	1.2	11.6	65.9	21.4	-
Aligarh	6.1	29.2	50.4	13.6	0.7

Source: Calculation is based on sample survey.

Average daily income of ₹ 101-200 witnessed highest in Chandaus block (24 per cent) and lowest in Lodha block (5.8 per cent). Average daily income less than ₹ 20 recorded highest in Gonda block (18.4 per cent) and lowest in Gangiri block (1.2 per cent). Four blocks of the district namely, Khair (9.1 per cent), Bijauli (1.7 per cent), Lodha (0.6 per cent) and Chandaus (0.5 per cent) have earned above ₹ 200 as daily income by begging.

IV. CONCLUSION

This work conclude that nearly, two-third of the working population of the beggars' households involved in whole time begging activities and rest are also do other works i.e. labourer, orchestra, animal care, shoe polish, rag picking. Majority of beggars have 2-4 earning members and 2-4 dependents within their household. The main secondary occupations adopted by the selected beggars are labourers work either manual or agricultural (because they are unskilled and illiterate), animal care, selling items (vendor), cobbler, *playing with musical band* and others activities. The average daily income of the beggars in the district was only ₹ 51-100 per day. Nevertheless, the economic status of rural beggars is much better than their urban counterparts. The following suggestions may be put forward to improve the socio-economic status of beggar population in the study area:

- i. 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.
- ii. The adult able-bodied male and female beggars should 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.
- iii. 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.
- iv. 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).

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