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REGIONAL ANALYSIS OF VARIOUS PLACES OF BEGGING

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ABSTRACT

The present empirical study aims to analyze the places of begging selected by beggars for begging activity. 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 majority of the beggars preferred to go for begging in the residential areas, markets and religious places and remaining in the functions, railway station, etc. A bulk of beggars preferred to go for begging outside their native places and the share of beggars who move even the other states of India for begging purpose is recorded high in the urban areas as compare to the rural areas of the district.

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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 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

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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 various places of begging. The main objectives of the study are;

- i. to observe the various places of begging frequently visited by the beggars for begging in the district,
- ii. to inspect the variations in the number of places visited by beggars for begging in a day in the study area,

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.

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 various places of begging opted by beggars for begging activity. 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.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Table 1 provides the information about the major areas of begging frequently visited by the beggars. The data shows that beggars of all the blocks of the district selected residential areas and the markets at the first priority for begging purpose. All the blocks of the district have more than 35 per cent beggars those have chosen residential areas for begging

activity excluding Lodha (31.7 per cent), Gonda (32.3 per cent) and Khair (33.5 per cent) blocks and highest of it is recorded in the Iglas block (54.2 per cent) and lowest was found in Lodha block (31.7 per cent).

Table 1: Block-Wise Percentage Distribution of Major Areas of Begging frequently visited by the Beggars in Aligarh District, 2009

Name of Block	Places					
	Residential Areas	Markets	Religious Places	Functions	Railway Station	Others
Lodha	31.7	26.7	30.5	0.8	5.7	4.6
Dhanipur	43.6	43.6	8.5	4.2	-	-
Akrabad	37.9	32.5	17.2	12.4	-	-
Gonda	32.3	19.4	45.2	-	3.2	-
Iglas	54.2	42.7	1.0	2.1	-	-
Khair	33.5	29.9	27.4	-	-	-
Tappal	47.5	47.5	5.0	-	-	-
Chandaus	43.1	36.5	14.7	5.6	-	-
Jawan	40.0	40.0	20.0	-	-	-
Atrauli	44.2	43.3	9.6	2.9	-	-
Bijauli	43.0	41.6	6.5	7.5	1.4	-
Gangiri	38.7	38.7	22.7	-	-	-
Aligarh	39.0	35.2	19.0	3.1	2.2	1.6

Source: Calculation is based on sample survey.

Markets were at the second place, opted by the beggars for begging activity and highest of it is recorded in Tappal block (47.5 per cent) and lowest in Gonda block (19.4 per cent). The third most frequently visited place of begging was religious places which was recorded highest in Gonda block (45.2 per cent), followed by Lodha (30.5 per cent), Khair (27.4 per cent), Gangiri (22.7 per cent), Jawan (20 per cent) and Akrabad (17.2 per cent) blocks. Lodha block have recorded higher number of beggars who visited religious places because most of the famous religious places (Jama Masjid, Baba Barchi Bahadur Dargah, Achleshwar Dham, Chamunda Devi mandir, etc.) of both the religions (either Hindu or Muslim) are situated in the same block where these people get positive responses from the donors side. The beggars of Habura caste in the blocks of Gonda, Khair, Jawan, Chandaus, Dhanipur, Atrauli and Bijauli used to go to the religious places of Delhi, Kurukshetra, Gudgaun, Agra, Mathura, etc. for begging purpose. Few beggars also preferred to go for begging on certain days especially Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday because in these days these people get more alms

from the religious minded donors. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday are famous in Hindus because of the Lord Shiva, Hanuman, Vishnu and Shani dev respectively in the form of *Prashad* and the day of Friday has an immense religious significance for Muslims because they used to offer Jumma's Namaz compulsory once a week by purifying themselves and they pay some amount of money to beggars in the form of Zakat or Sadka and Thursday is also famous for Shrines (e.g. Baba Barchi Bahadur Dargah). Functional places i.e. marriage or death ceremonies, male child birth, religious places, recorded in the seven blocks (Akrabad, Bijauli, Chandaus, Dhanipur, Atrauli, Iglas and Lodha) of the district, and, the highest share (12.4 per cent) of it is found in Akrabad block. Only three blocks (Lodha, Gonda and Bijauli) of the district recorded the railway station as a place of begging out of which Lodha block contributed the highest percentage (5.7 per cent). Other type of places includes university area, bus stands, medicals, banks, etc. and these places were opted by beggars in Lodha block because it is near to the city. The data given in the Table 2 depicts the areas of begging and number of areas (villages and towns) visited per day by the beggars of the district. It is clear from the table that the highest percentage share of beggars who moved within the block was recorded in the Lodha block (90 per cent) and the lowest was in Bijauli and Akrabad blocks (less than 10 per cent).

More than 2/5th beggars of all the blocks of the district contributed to the other blocks for begging except Lodha and Chandaus blocks, and the highest percentage of it is recorded in the Bijauli block (64 per cent). Other district of the Uttar Pradesh visited by these people for begging purpose was found highest in Chandaus (16.47 per cent) and lowest in Lodha block (1.74 per cent). Akrabad block contributed the highest percentage (28.11 per cent) of the selected beggars (Nats) who usually moved outside the state for showing their circus and staying upto six to seven months for begging, followed by Khair (20 per cent), Bijauli (14.13 per cent), Dhanipur (12.77 per cent), Gonda (6.7 per cent), Chandaus (3.12 per cent) and Atrauli (2.5 per cent) blocks. The data given in the Table 2 also deals with the number of places or villages visited per day by them for begging purpose. The data depicts that five blocks of the district namely, Gonda, Lodha, Khair, Chandaus and Gangiri recorded the highest percentage of beggars who visited only one place in a day and the highest percentage share of it is recorded in the Gonda block (87 per cent) and

Table 2. Block-Wise Percentage Distribution of Places of Begging and Numbers of Places Visited per Day by Beggar Population in Aligarh District, 2009

Name of Block	Places of Begging				How Many Places visited Per Day			
	Within the village or town	Other villages or towns of the blocks	Other districts of UP	Other states of India	No	1	2-4	>5
Lodha	89.9	6.9	1.7	1.4	5.6	77.1	17.4	-
Dhanipur	40.3	44.2	2.8	12.8	-	34.7	55.6	9.7
Akrabad	9.4	46.9	15.6	28.1	-	37.5	62.5	-
Gonda	30.4	54.2	8.7	6.7	-	87.0	13.0	-
Iglas	40.4	57.7	1.9	-	-	42.3	57.7	-
Khair	31.0	49.0	-	20.0	-	62.1	37.9	-
Tappal	54.6	45.5	-	-	-	29.6	70.5	-
Chandaus	49.4	33.0	16.5	3.1	-	51.8	48.2	-
Jawan	57.1	42.9	-	-	-	39.3	60.7	-
Atrauli	25.5	61.3	10.6	2.5	-	34.0	66.0	-
Bijauli	6.5	64.1	15.2	14.1	12.0	32.6	55.4	-
Gangiri	44.1	55.9	-	-	-	51.5	48.5	-
Aligarh	51.7	35.2	5.9	7.2	3.0	53.8	42.4	0.8

Source: Calculation is based on sample survey.

Plate 1. Places of Begging Visited by Beggars in Aligarh District



lowest in Tappal block (29.55 per cent). While, the highest percentage of beggars who moved 2-4 places or villages per day have been witnessed in the Tappal block (70 per cent) and lowest in the Gonda block because most of the beggars of this block visit only one place for begging. Dhanipur block was the only block which recorded beggars who moved above five places in a day and contributed about 10 per cent of the selected beggars especially in the urban areas of the block.

Conclusion

Most of the beggars preferred to move to the residential areas, markets and religious places of the district. Half of the beggars of the district preferred to go outside their own village or town

for begging purpose and the proportion of native places and the other states of India recorded high in the urban areas as compare to the rural areas in which beggars mainly move to the surrounding villages. Lodha, Jawan, Tappal and Chandaus blocks recorded the highest percentage of beggars who moved only within their native places, while, Akraabad block contributed the highest percentage of beggars (Nats) who went to the different parts or states of India for begging. Nearly, half beggars visit only one place in a day for begging purpose. The proportion of two to four places was recorded higher in rural areas (60 per cent), while, in the urban areas, about three-fourth people move only one place and gets enough amounts. Most of the blocks of the district have above 40 per cent of

beggars who visited two to four places or villages in a day and Lodha and Bijauli blocks have beggars who did not move to any place and stay only the single place of living. The following suggestions may be put forward to improve the socio-economic status of beggar population in the study area:

- i. 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*.
- ii. 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.
- iii. There should be provision for proper rehabilitation of migrant beggars.
- iv. 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.
- v. 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.
- vi. 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).
- vii. 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.
- viii. 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.
- ix. 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.
- x. 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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