



# Nehru's views on Poverty and Hunger

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**Abstract :-** This Paper contains the views of Pt. Nehru regarding the eradication of poverty and hunger. In India poverty is a hunger. Never having three basic meals a day. Poverty is not being able to send your child to the school. Poverty is watching your child die a senseless death from malnutrition or Diarrhea brought on by unsafe drinking water. Poverty is lack of representation and lack of freedom.

**Keywords :-** Eradication, Phenomenon, Economic Growth, Multi-Dimensional, Socialism, Idealism Poverty Alleviation Programmes.

**The Concept-** Poverty is a situation that gives rise to a feeling of a discrepancy between what and has and what one "should have". What one should have is internal construct; hence each person's feeling and experience of poverty is individual and unique. But the feeling of "Powerlessness" and "resourcelessness" is possessed by all poor people. Bestern henry (1992) has identified the following dimension poverty.

1. Lack of livelihood strategies.
2. Inaccessibility to resources (Money, Land & Credit)
3. Feeling of insecurity and frustrations.
4. Inability of maintain and develop social relations with other as a consequences of lack of resources.

In India poverty is a hunger. Never having three basic meals a day. Hearing your children cry themselves to sleep because there is no rice and dal to give them. Poverty is not being able to send your child to the school. Poverty is not having a job. Poverty is insecurity and fear; is living one day at a time. Poverty is watching your child die a senseless death from malnutrition or diarrhea brought on by unsafe drinking water. Poverty is lack of representation and lack of freedom.

Poverty is pain. Poor people suffer physical pain that comes with too little food and long hours of work; emotional pain stemming from the daily humiliations of dependency and lack of power; and the moral pain from being forced to make choices such as whether to use limited fund to save. The life of sick family member, or to use their same funds to feed their children.

If poverty is so painful why do the poor remain poor? The poor are not lazy, stupid or corrupt- why, then, is poverty so persistent? The problem has to be explored from two perspectives: one is from the realities, experiences and perspectives of poor men and women themselves; and the other is from institutional perspective focusing on the informal and formal institutions of society with which poor people interact.

Thus poverty can be defined as the inability to secure the minimum consumption requirement for life, health and efficiency. It is a social phenomenon in which a section of society is unable to fulfill even its bare necessities of life. It is generally held that countries of third world exhibit mass poverty. This is not to deny the existence of poverty even in developed countries. In countries of Europe and America; poverty can be still observed poverty in India is grim affair and is a negation of human dignity.

### **Nehru's Views on Poverty:**

Nehru agrees with the concept-of poverty above in his views, poverty is a situation in which people are socially insecure, morally isolated, economically weak and inefficient, living below their subsistence level and are dominated by rich class. In such a state there is class struggle and the economic power is concentrated in fewer hands. He observed "The person who is poor cannot, because he is poor, work hard and efficiently and there for his capacity to work becomes less and less. Poverty pulls him back and he does not make progress. On the other hand, the person who enjoys good health good education and good surroundings, increases his capacity for work and produces more and more the result is that so far as normal economic forces at work are concerned they tend constantly to widen the gap between the well to do and those who are not well to do. This applies to countries as to individuals".<sup>1</sup> He adds further, "we are struggling to get out of the morass of poverty, and to reach the stages of what is called the "take off" into sustained economic growth. We want to cross the barrier of poverty and reach the stage where growth becomes relatively spontaneous. The under developed country is on the side of the barrier.

There are certain cumulative process at work which in developed country, tend to encourage its growth further and further and which; in an under developed country pull it back all the time. The poor becomes poorer. Poverty becomes its own curse."<sup>2</sup> Thus Nehru views poverty as a barrier which hinders economic growth of a country. It is not by poor but by the system as a whole.

### **Poverty is Multi-Dimensional:**

Poverty never results from the lack of one thing, but from many interlocking factors that cluster in poor people's experiences and definition of poverty. Dimensions of poverty that are important to poor people can be categorized as-

- 1- Many factors converge to make poverty an interlocking multi dimensional phenomenon.
- 2- Poverty is routinely defined as the lack of what is necessary for material well being especially food, but also housing, land and other assets.

- 3- Poor people's definitions reveal important psychological aspects of poverty. They are acutely aware of their lack of voice power and independence that subjects them to exploitation;
- 4- The absence of basic infrastructure -particularly roads, transport and water emerge as a critical concern-lack of affordable electrical power is major concern;
- 5- Illness is often dreaded, because of the experience that is plunges families into destitution because of the lack of health care, the cost of available health care; schooling is irrelevant in the lives of the poor;
- 6- Poor people focus on assets rather than on income of link their and lack of physical, human, social and environmental assets to their vulnerability and exposure to risk.

#### **Efforts to eradicate poverty & hunger in the Nehru era:**

Nehru observed- "our plan for future progress must cope with one amalgam and variety, we have in India, when I see there two heavy volumes of the report of the planning commission, my mind conjures up the vision of something vast - the mighty then as of nation building and remarking itself. We are all of us working together to make a new India not abstractly for a nation but for the 360 million people who are wanting progress as individuals and as groups."<sup>3</sup> But Nehru always kept in mind the national interest. In order to built a strong socio-economic structure of the country, Nehru first wanted to remove all the social ills and grave economic problems like mass poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, low standard of living, etc. for he was the opinion that a nation cannot develop at a factor pace unless it has a sound socio economic structure free from all evil. In his own words, "we want social security, but we have to recognize that social security, comes only when a certain stage of development has been reached otherwise we shall have neither social security nor any development."<sup>4</sup> Nehru was more concern with the problem of poverty as he said "When people are politically conscious they make demands. The common mass of humanity does not agree to pay the cost of progress at the cost of its own starvation. The problem which we have to face is how to cross the barrier of poverty without paying that terrible cost and without infringing individual freedom"<sup>5</sup>, Nehru also agreed that it is the economic democracy which can bring the real democracy and can remove the problem of inequality and class difference.

Nehru was deeply influenced by socialism and communism and he wanted to use socialism as a weapon to fight the social and economic evil of the country. He was the leading exponent of socialism in India. He did his best to spread the ideology of socialism in India. He observed "socialism is after all not only a way of life but a certain scientific approach to social and economic problems."<sup>6</sup> Nehru states further, "socialism is for me not only merely an economic doctrine which I favour, it is a vital creed. Which I hold with all my head and heart. I work for Independence because the nationalist in me cannot tolerate alien domination, I work for even because for me it is the inevitable step to social and economic change. I should like Congress to become a socialist organization and to join hands with the other forces in the world who are working for the new civilization"<sup>7</sup>. Thus Nehru's idealism was confronted with

practical problem the country was facing and he looked for a solution to remove poverty. Nehru felt the need of the democratic planning for solving Indian grave economic problem of mass poverty.

unemployment, food shorted etc, and for raising the standard of living and the advancement of the productivity. As result of this effort, the planning commission was set up with chairmanship of Nehru. He emphasized on planning for achieving the economic development together with social justice. Nehru was fully conscious that industrialization i.e. setting up of basic industries and big industries was fundamental to the rapid economic progress of the country. He laid great-emphasis on basic and heavy machine making industries as they were the very basis of industrial growth.

He gave too much importance to agricultural development also, Nehru was only concerned with the steady economic and social progress of the people and supported mixed economic system.

He was moving spirit-behind the community development program village, co-operative, and village panchayats, co-operative farming, state trading equalization of opportunities decentralization and delegation of executive power etc. He also emphasis on land reform as he hoped that land reforms, in addition to such institutional change would break up the old and stagnant class structure of the Indian society and remove all the prevailing evils In it.

#### **Poverty alleviation programmes in the post Nehru era:**

Various efforts have been made by the govt. of India, at the centre as well as at the state level. "As regards first, government has taken serious steps to enhance the growth in each sector. As a result, during the five decades of development, the real rate of growth of national income has increased at annual average rate of 4% and population has increased at an annual average rate of 2%. There is however, much disparity in the sectoral growth. The rate of growth of secondary and tertiary sector has been nearly doubled than that of the primary sector. The pattern of growth during five decade underline the link between growing poverty and unemployment in economy. The agricultural sector has been experiencing a slow growth during these decades. We could not become self reliant even in food grain also."<sup>8</sup>

The govt. has initiated various anti-poverty and employment programmes from time to time, such as Integrated Rural Development Programme, National Rural Employment Guaranty Programme, Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar yojna, Antyoday Anna yojna, Annpoorna yojna, Swarna Jayanti Shahri Rozgar yojna, etc. the common minimum programme of the UPA govt is also an appreciable effort in this direction. This programme seeks to ensure that reforms benefit this neediest segment of society, especially in the rural areas. This includes a focus on the Millennium Development Goals. These clearly reveal that theoretically we have talks a lot but practically we have yet to do much in the direction achieving a balance growth in accordance with equality and social justice, which have already been guaranteed in our constitution.

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