

The the
corresponding
recommended calorie
norms by



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The existence of poverty is incompatible with the vision of an advanced, prosperous, democratic, egalitarian and just society implied in the concept of a socialist pattern of society. Elimination of poverty, therefore, must have the highest priority of society. Poverty can be defined as a social phenomenon in which a section of the society is unable to fulfill even its basic necessities of life. Poverty may be absolute or relative.

Absolute poverty of a person means that his income or consumption expenditure is so meager that he lives below the minimum subsistence level. On the other hand, relative poverty merely indicates the large inequalities of income. To quantify the extent of poverty and measure the number of poor in the country, professional economists have made use of the concept of poverty line. The planning commission has defined the poverty on the basis of recommended nutritional requirements of 2, 435, rounded as 2, 400, calories per person per day for rural areas and 2, 095, rounded as 2, 100, calories for urban areas. The average calorie requirement is estimated by taking into account the population composition by age, sex and occupation categories, together with the corresponding recommended calorie norms by the Indian council of Medical Research. In rupees the poverty line is the mid-point of the expenditure class in which the calorie needs are satisfied. On this basis, in rupee terms, the poverty line works out at Rs. 76 per head per month (i.

e. Rs. 912 per year) for rural areas and at Rs. 88 per month (i. e. Rs. 1056 per year) for urban areas, both at the 1979-80 prices. Poverty, however, is not equitable distributed throughout the country.

The percentage of population living below the poverty line in 1987-88 was 33.40 percent in rural areas, 20.10 percent in urban areas, and 29.90 percent all-India.

The number of poor people in the country has declined in absolute terms from 271.0 million in 1983-84 to 237.7 million in 1987-88. Region wise the Eastern Region of the country, comprising the state of Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal and Assam is the home to the largest proportion of population living below the poverty line-51.3 percent of the total population in the eastern region in 1983 lived below the line of poverty. The corresponding proportions were 43.

2 percent in the southern Region, 37.2 percent in the central Region 34.9 percent in the Western Region, and 8.3 percent in the Northern Region comprising the state of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. There has been a sharp fall in the incidence of poverty during the decade of eighties than ever before. The reasons for this are, (i) growth rate of GNP accelerated during this period; (ii) Anti-poverty programmes provided employment and assets to the needy, (iii) Increasing urbanization of the economy; (iv) growth of non-farm activities due to development of rural infra-structure: and (v) Higher growth rate in the eastern part of the country. In rural sector, the major group of the poor consists of agricultural labourers or those who own or have access to so little land that they are forced into wage labour to earn subsistence.

In urban areas, poverty can be identified with people who are unemployed, underemployed or employed in various low productivity occupations such as

porter age, street pending, etc, or employed in jobs either with insecure employed or with every low real wages. In most of the metropolitan cities, migrant worker are prominently amongst the poor. This segment of poverty, in fact, is the extension of the rural poverty itself.

The labour absorption capacity of land is always limited, and more often than not it seems to have reached the stagnancy level. The additional labour force unable to find profitable employment opportunities in these villages flock to the nearby towns and metropolitan cities in search of work. Thus they swell the rank of labour force in cities. The cities have failed to absorb even the existing force: any addition from outside only worsen the situation. The condition of the urban poor is further worsened by the fact that they are not producer of food. An important cause of poverty in India is the serious inequality of incomes, both in the rural and urban sections of the economy. This in turn is caused by differences in the ownership of assets land in the rural areas and material assets in the urban areas.

The government would have to develop multi pronged attack on poverty to be able to guarantee maximum good for maximum numbers. The steps which can be suggested to solve the problem of poverty are as follows: (1) Rapid economic growth; (2.) Increasing ' he rats of surplus generation in the economy; (3) Stepping up agricultural growth in the less developed regions where labour is abundant, wage rates are low and poverty is widespread; (4) Evolving new technology to step up production in rained agriculture; (5) Social development: (6) Infrastructural development; (7) Accelerating employment in the informal rural non-agricultural sector; (8) Improving the consciousness and education levels of the poor; (9) Strengthening of various

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beneficiary-oriented programmes. Poverty, however, can be eradicated only when the various facilities and concessions, programmed to be provided by the government for the uplift of the downtrodden actually reach them.

Then, there should be proper utilization of these concession and facilities.