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Is Poverty Truly Decreasing in a Progressing India?

As we step into a new year, one cannot help but reflect on the persistent question: Is poverty genuinely decreasing in a nation that is purportedly progressing? The statistics presented by our government often paint a rosy picture, suggesting that poverty has plummeted from nearly 22% in 2011 to under 5% in 2023-24. However, this narrative raises eyebrows, especially when juxtaposed with the stark realities faced by millions of Indians.

The economic landscape is fraught with contradictions. The rupee continues to fall, GDP growth is at a four-year low, inflation is on the rise, and household savings are dwindling. Unemployment is also increasing, leading one to question the validity of claims that poverty is decreasing. The recent tweet from the finance minister, citing a study from the State Bank of India, suggests that we can cease providing free rations to 800 million people. But can we really trust these figures?

The Tendulkar Committee, established in 2009, set a monetary poverty line that has since been adjusted. Currently, individuals spending less than Rs 1,622 per month in rural areas and Rs 1,994 in urban areas are classified as poor. This translates to a daily expenditure of merely Rs 54 in rural areas and Rs 66 in urban areas. Such figures seem almost laughable when one considers the rising costs of living. A family in an urban setting spends an average of Rs 132 just on vegetables, leaving little room for other essential expenses like education, clothing, and rent.

Critics, including Professor Rama Kumar from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, argue that the Tendulkar poverty line is not a true measure of poverty but rather a "destitution line." This perspective highlights the inadequacy of our current poverty measurement methodologies.

Nobel laureate Amartya Sen has emphasised the concept of multidimensional poverty, which encompasses health, education, and access to basic services

The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, which informs these statistics, relies on a flawed sampling method that skews results in favour of wealthier households. When jobs are scarce and real wages stagnant, how can we claim that poverty is on the decline?

The government's narrative suggests that 1.35 billion people have emerged from poverty, bolstering the middle class. However, this raises further questions. What miraculous changes occurred between 2023 and 2024 to warrant such a dramatic shift? The G-20 presidency may have provided a temporary façade, but the underlying issues remain unaddressed. The plight of the poor is often obscured, hidden behind a veneer of progress that fails to reflect the lived experiences of many.

Currently, there are at least five different estimates of poverty in India, with figures ranging from 34 million to 370 million. The last official estimate from 2011 indicated approximately 269 million poor people, a number that has not been updated in over a decade. This lack of reliable data hampers effective policy-making and resource allocation. How can we determine the necessary rations, subsidies, or poverty alleviation programmes without accurate figures? It seems that benefits are often distributed only in the lead-up to elections, with promises fading once votes are secured.

Moreover, poverty is not a monolithic issue. Nobel laureate Amartya Sen has emphasised the concept of multidimensional poverty, which encompasses health, education, and access to basic services. Transient poverty is a significant concern, with many individuals slipping back into poverty due to unforeseen circumstances, such as medical emergencies. Each year, around 100 million people are pushed into poverty due to illness or hospitalisation. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this issue, with over 230 million people falling into poverty and a significant portion of the middle class disappearing.

While the government has introduced initiatives like the Ayushman Bharat card, merely providing insurance is insufficient. Our healthcare infrastructure remains woefully inadequate, with out-of-pocket expenditures draining the savings of families. The question arises: can we not establish decent hospitals in every district? A robust healthcare system is essential for preventing individuals from falling back into poverty due to medical expenses.

Looking at our neighbours, China's poverty alleviation efforts serve as a compelling case study. In 2021, China successfully eliminated extreme poverty through a phased approach that connected rural areas with transport and communication networks. This comprehensive strategy brought 850 million people out of poverty, demonstrating that targeted interventions can yield significant results.

As we navigate the complexities of poverty in India, it is crucial to confront the uncomfortable truths that lie beneath the surface. The narrative of decreasing poverty must be scrutinised, and genuine efforts must be made to address the systemic issues that perpetuate it. Only then can we hope to create a society where the fruits of progress are shared by all, rather than a select few. The time has come for us to demand transparency, accountability, and a commitment to truly alleviating poverty in our nation.

comment



SHANTI MARIA FONSECA

The paradox "money does not buy happiness" sparked a new wave of thinking about wealth and well being. Happiness is a complex construct that cannot be directly controlled



them to act in morally reprehensible ways. By recognizing the potential dangers of greed, individuals can cultivate self-awareness and guard against compromising their values in the pursuit of material wealth or personal glory.

Maintaining a strong moral compass entails making choices that prioritize empathy and integrity. Greed is the disease of discontentment. In reality it is not happiness that makes us grateful. It is rather the attitude of gratitude which heralds happiness in our lives. By appreciating the abundance of love, health, and happiness that already exists, individuals can break free from the grip of greed and cultivate an enduring mindset of gratitude and contentment.

Dalai Lama, a spiritual leader of repute, highlights how greed

"Greed are the handcuffs and gratitude is the key. Sadly sometimes we prefer wearing the cuffs to finding the keys." - Craig D. Lounsborough A cushy job, a perfect family, financial stability and a great social life! In this indefinite pursuit of happiness, how often do we spare a minute to thank for what we already have? The relentless pursuit of wealth and possessions can end up as a mirage: A pursuit that brings no lasting happiness. Rather we may truly find contentment by focusing on relationships, personal growth, and yet contribute to the well-being of others. Haven't we observed in life that one's overwhelming greed blinds us from recognizing the true value of what we already possess? Avarice, the other word for "Greed" Exhausts the person who is on an unending trail in search of happiness where it does not manifestly exist. Greed can turn a harmless individual into a ruthless monster. In order to overcome the human negativity, one ought to rewire the brain to be grateful: Grateful for every moment of our life. Greed distorts our perception of what truly matters in life.

Greed is a bottomless pit. It can corrupt individuals, leading

hinders our ability to find joy in the present moment. This quote invites individuals to reflect on how excessive desires for more and more can blind us to the beauty of simplicity and the happiness found in little things. By practicing gratitude and embracing sufficiency, individuals can reclaim their ability to appreciate and savor the simple joys that life offers. Buddha once said that there are two kinds of people who are hard to find in the world: "The one who is first to do an act of kindness, and the one who is grateful and thankful for a kindness done."

The Roman philosopher Cicero is credited with once saying "Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others". What he meant by this is that all other virtues that we aspire towards-happiness, hope, justice, respect, beauty etc. are made paler and less important. Greed may promise temporary satisfaction, but true fulfillment lies in appreciating the simple joys while fostering meaningful relationships and finding purpose beyond material wealth. Let these thoughts help us to navigate the complexities of our modern world, encouraging us to prioritize on being compassionate, grateful and harbouring a healthier perspective on 'success'. It's time to let go of our greed and embrace a life of true abundance. Real life is robbed from all those who are greedy.

The philosophy of gratitude versus greed can be summarized as the difference between focusing on what you 'have' versus what you 'don't have'. People who are grateful tend to be content with what they have, while those who are greedy are often covetous and want more. A grateful person will say "God gives, therefore my money is His, and I use it to glorify Him". A greedy person will invariably boast, I earn, therefore my money is mine, and I use it as I desire. People who are abidingly grateful sleep better, and generally enjoy good health. Like love and trust, gratitude is a way we react to other people in our lives, sometimes for who and what they are: lovable or trustworthy. Gratitude is a way we feel and act toward others. It is a primary way we situate ourselves in our relationships. A grateful mind is a great mind which eventually attracts a downpour of great benefits. While grateful people are generous. Ungrateful people are endemically miserly and greedy.

Why is gratitude so powerful? We ought to recognize

that there are good things in the world we've received. This doesn't mean that life is perfect. But when we look at life as a whole, gratitude goads us to identify some amount of goodness in our hum-drum life. Be grateful for life, every one of its details and your face will shine like a sun. Grateful people are like fertile fields: They give back what they have received tenfold. The human condition is such that, throughout life, we are profoundly dependent on other people, their care and concern for us.

When we're comfortable in expressing gratitude, say researchers, we experience fewer symptoms of physical illness; we exercise more; we sleep longer and better; and we report higher levels of positive emotion, exude greater optimism and a greater sense of connection to others. It is confirmed that grateful people hold the keys to a happy life. They are the harbingers of peace and progress in society.

The paradox "money does not buy happiness" sparked a new wave of thinking about wealth and well being. Happiness is a complex construct that cannot be directly controlled. However, happiness is a subjective experience and once we change the way we perceive the world, we begin to cherish, and create happiness for others. In 1972, Bhutan chose to pursue a policy of happiness, rather than focus on economic growth (GDP). Today, this little nation is ranked among the happiest, ranking on top amongst nations with far superior wealth. The pursuit of happiness which is a universal need has been a human pursuit since times immemorial, and is fast gaining meaning and scientific recognition. Happiness is contagious and when we spend time around happy people, we're likely to get a huge boost to our happiness as well.

Although the benefits of economic development have created substantial gains in living standards, health outcomes, and health care systems, it has also created new health problems. Stress is not only upsetting on a psychological level but also triggers biological changes in our hormones and blood pressure. Happiness seems to temper these effects, or atleast help us recover more quickly. Scientific studies have discovered that happiness a product of gratefulness can make our hearts healthier, our immune systems stronger and our lives longer..... An attitude of gratitude is the KEY!

(The writer is a social scientist and a Sr. practicing criminal lawyer).

Gratitude - the science of Health and Happiness

people'sedit

PILLAR OF NATION BUILDING AND PROGRESS

JOSEPH LEWIS D'SILVA

The future of any nation lies in the hands of its youth. Students have always upheld the democratic values maintaining an open-mindedness to challenge dictatorial government. In hopeless situations, they become rays of hope and the conscience keepers of society. Therefore, young individuals, above the age of 18, who wish to reform political practice must first stand for the qualities of a good leadership. Not everyone can be leader; if it happens, then there will be no followers.

Good leaders are the ones who select the well-being of society as a whole; rather than that of the individual or sectarian interests. A good leader keeps self-interest and selfishness in check. They understand the feelings, attitudes of their people leading them to achieve a particular goal; by courageously giving them optimistic directions.

A bad leader is corrupt and damages the common good by diverting resource meant for public welfare, into private hands. They weaken accountability procedures and contributes to dishonesty allowing personal interest to influence decision-making and policy operations.

A future leader should have these qualities. (a). A clear vision for the future and must be able to effectively persuade the public in one's talk and lead people, even in difficult times. (b).Should have sufficient knowledge to understand politics, economics, law and international relations. (c).Should be able to take practical decisions and stand by them, even in the face of opposition. (d). His reasoning must be logical --- and not get distracted by whims and fancies of his mind. (e).Should have a servant-like attitude, as exemplified by leaders, such as, Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln and Churchill. These leaders served their people selflessly. (f).Should have moral principles of honesty, trustworthiness and refuse to be driven by self-interest; and should be above blame or faults. He should not be possessed by self-interest. When Swami Vivekananda lost his father and his family, he was at serious crossings; he had the choice of serving one family or millions of families, he chose the latter.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's exact quote regarding leadership is: "Everyone is a leader --- leading somewhere --- either on the right path or astray; either by telling followers in ways that confuse them and cause them to lose their inherent goodness or by leading them towards wisdom and joy. Everyone has this capacity to instill or destroy faith.' According to him, leadership is not just about guiding others, but about fostering wisdom, joy and goodness in the world.

Sri Aurobindo, was a leader. He was arrested in 1908 for his involvement in the freedom struggle, particularly related to his connections with the revolutionary movement. He was imprisoned for nearly a year but was later released. Sri Aurobindo, experienced during his year-long imprisonment, that his true mission of life was, 'to help transform human nature, and make it possible for the world to become a much better place to live in' which was something more important than the country's freedom. So, after his release from prison, he stepped out of the Freedom Struggle, with the message that the nation must wait for the "God-sent leader" who will mobilize people to liberate the country. After a decade later, Mahatma Gandhi emerged as a leader. Gandhi absorbed some of Sri Aurobindo's ideas about spiritual awakening and nationalistic unity; although Gandhi's approach was distinct, focusing on non-violent civil disobedience.

In conclusion, leadership is not merely a position of authority, but a role of service, vision and moral integrity. The world needs leaders who are not only knowledgeable and capable but who also have the heart and determination to lead with compassion, honesty and wisdom.

viewers alike around the globe have praised the video's creativity and simplicity.

M Pradyu, Kannur

Crime rate soars in Goa

In the past year, 2024, South Goa witnessed a significant rise in murder cases compared to 2023. In 2023, only 9 murder cases were recorded in South Goa, whereas this number increased to 13 in 2024. According to police statistics, most of these crimes occurred in the Salcete taluka, where the growing number of non-Goan migrants is cited as the main reason. In 2024, South Goa recorded 10 cases of attempted murder, which was the same number as in 2023. However, in 2022, this number was only 7. The analysis of various crimes indicates that the increase in criminal activities in Salcete is primarily due to migrant workers from states like Karnataka, West Bengal, Odisha, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Maharashtra. Among these, 70% of the workers live alone, and crimes often result from disputes under the influence of alcohol. It is evident that the lack of moral and ethical education is a key factor in the rise of crimes, corruption, and atrocities. To curb crime rates, efforts must focus on providing moral education to the public and ensuring prompt enforcement of strict punishments. Such measures could lead to a noticeable decline in criminal activities.

Sagar Shirodkar, by email

letterstotheeditor

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All letters must contain correct postal address and telephone number. Letters are liable to be edited for brevity.



genocide of the captive Palestinians by an Israeli Occupation Force funded and lethally armed by the world's economic, political and military superpowers.

This certainly wasn't the first freedom rebellion by the Palestinians - nor the first genocidal suppression of a rebellion conducted by colonial occupier Israel.

Nazi Germany would have had instant peace had it abandoned its racial supremacist ideology: an ideology which proclaims Germans 'Herrenvolk' ('Master Race'); and Jews, Slavs and gypsies the Untermensch (Sub human) and all of Europe its Lebensraum (living space).

Likewise, if it's true peace the world is after, it must stop arming and funding Israel's racist 'We-are-the-Chosen-People-and-Palestine-is-our-Promised-Land' programme.

Sadly, India's Tata and Adani companies have been supplying arms that enabled Israel's Gaza genocide.

On June 6, in the aftermath of Israel's bombing of a United Nations shelter at the Nuseirat refugee camp in Gaza, the Quds News Network released a video of the remains of a missile dropped by Israeli warplanes.

Amid the tangled parts, a label clearly read: "Made in India."

It's supremely tragic that a nation that has felt the yoke of colonisation has armed a settler-col-

oniser in its genocide against an occupied people.

David Albuquerque, Queensland, Australia

Bainguinim should not become Sonsoddo

After several setbacks, the state government is reportedly gearing up to issue a fresh tender for the fifth time for the much anticipated Solid Waste Treatment plant at Bainguinim. It may be recalled that the Goa Waste Management Corporation (GWMC) initially floated a tender in 2019 for a solid waste treatment plant at Bainguinim.

However, due to various challenges, the process lapsed. The facility was proposed to cater for Tiswadi and the neighbouring taluka of Ponda which have seen rapid urbanization and development. There are residential complexes, a hospital and schools near the site. A political slugfest has erupted over the proposed waste treatment plant between BJP MLA from Cumbajua Rajesh Faldessai and the Minister for Waste Management. The proposed site for the waste treatment plant is not very far from the UNESCO World Heritage site at Old Goa. There are several churches at Old Goa which have historical and spiritual importance. It is an important tourist attraction for lakhs of tourists

visiting Goa. A garbage treatment plant in close proximity will raise a lot of issues. The putrid smell emitting from the garbage treatment plant will fill the air. There could be fire incidents just as in the case of Sonsoddo. Bainguinim should not be the place to treat garbage generated in Panaji and the surrounding areas. It would be prudent for each constituency to have its own waste treatment facility. Bainguinim should not be converted to another Sonsoddo.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Indian Footballer's reel record

It is really exciting and delightful to know that the Instagram reel of an Indian youngster has found a place in the Guinness book of World Records, for the most-viewed Instagram reel, surpassing a staggering 554 million views and the number increasing day by day. In the reel, we see Muhammad Rizwan, a talented freestyle football player from Kerala, kicking a football with precision from a distance, sending it soaring behind a waterfall's rocks, where he and his friends had gone for a visit. The incredible kick and the astounding moment left even him visibly astonished. The clip though seemingly simple yet an awe-inspiring stunt became popular instantly.

Football lovers and casual