

Alleviation of poverty

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In the post cold war period, geo-political realities started transformation into geo-economics. The emphasis from military started shifting towards economics. However, with this change, poverty also started assuming dangerous proportions and now-a-days poverty has become a big issue for the entire world.

Poverty may be of different sorts, i.e. intellectual poverty, educational poverty, economic poverty, etc. However, in the common parlance, by poverty we mean the economic poverty i.e. the inability of the people to arrange for themselves two square to arrange for themselves two square meal a day.

Poverty can be found in the developed as well as in the under-developed world. However, the poor of the rich countries are comparatively less impoverished than the poor of the Third World. For example, the people of the LDCs of Asia Africa and Latin America even lack basic amenities of life i.e. food, health shelter, clothing, etc. even the developed west is not immune to this menace.

In recent years, poverty has become a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Areas devoid of basic amenities of life can be termed as poverty stricken. At present, environmental degradation, sanitation, illiteracy, contaminated drinking water, social stratification can come under the domain of poverty.

There is no concise definition of poverty, many social scientists have defined poverty in their own way. Some have defined it in a narrow way whereas others have defined it in broader terms. Some of these stress upon the broad nature of the condition of poverty while others have focused only on the economic or more narrowly, on the income levels of the individuals. According to Andrew Websiter, "absolute poverty describes a situation in which people are barely existing where the next meal may literally be a matter of life and death".

According to Follies Chenery, "Absolute poverty can be measured in terms of absolute standard of living, in terms of calories intakes and nutrition levels, clothing, sanitation, health, education". Social deprivation is another dimension of the poverty. People are said to be living in poverty if they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in activities and have the living conditions and amenities.

are leading a miserable life.

Being a LDC, the Government of Pakistan allocates a meager amount of budget to health. Moreover, the doctor's unscrupulous attitude has forced the poor people to go for treatment from private clinics. They not only spend their entire savings on doctors, different medical tests, medicos etc but in the process also become in debts.

The existing resources of Pakistan can't match the demands of the ever-growing population of the cities. So, the number of poor increases in big cities.

Now the question is how to tackle the problem of poverty? For this, the following measures can be adopted. Education can play an important role in the eradication of poverty. It can improve the skills of the people and can prepare them for the challenges of the 21st century. It can cast its impact on the quality and quantity of occupational groups. It raises the creativity level of the people. It improves the economy and social mobility. However, all three methods of education i.e. formal informal and non-formal education should be updated keeping in view the challenges posed by the 21st century.

According to the census of 1998, 62 per cent of Pakistan's population is living in rural areas.

For the success of any future poverty alleviation programme or project it must be focused on the uplift of the areas of majority populace i.e. rural areas. There is the need of building up of cottage industries in rural areas in order to give the indigenous people chances of self-employment. In villages, poverty can be reduced to considerable portion if government and NGOs cooperate and collaborate with the local people in the process of starting of self-employment schemes.

Establishment of new cities will also considerably reduce poverty. With the establishment of new cities new vistas of opportunities will emerge. Moreover, the burden of population over old cities like Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, etc., will be considerably reduced.

The starting of big projects like construction of dams, canals, roads, housing schemes etc will generate a lot of employment opportunities. Moreover, our agriculture will be improved and we will be able to store water for our future needs.

Broadly, poverty can be defined as the denial of the basic human rights i.e. employment, education, health, clean drinking water and freedom of speech. In the contemporary world, poverty has assumed a multi dimensional phenomenon. It poses a serious challenge to the political structure of the Least Developing Countries (LDCs). Poverty may be caused by different factors.

Urbanisation is caused by the migration of the rural people to cities. When they come in cities, they abandon their main profession i.e. agriculture. They add to the problems of cities and the vicious cycle of poverty becomes tighter. It also results in the degradation of the city administration.

Inflation is also caused by poverty in spite of the best efforts by the government of President General Pervez Musharraf. The menace of inflation is still there.

Due to bad law and order situation in different parts of the country, foreigners as well as local people are afraid to invest their money. Moreover, the presence of many sick industries has further complicated the problems for common people, as they are unable to get jobs.

Futile customs, the most of the poor follow the footsteps of rich people in arranging marriage and other ceremonies. For this they usually borrow money from others. It further aggravates poverty.

Unemployment is another main cause of the increase poverty in an area where the people are jobless.

Education system here is inadequate. It is just producing clerks. Moreover, the children of the poor are not getting quality education.

Natural calamities also increase the poverty of a particular region e.g. during the floods of 1992, 50 per cent of Pakistan's civilian budget was spent on the recovery of flood affected areas. Recently, floods played havoc with the lives and property of the people of Rawalpindi, Mansehra and Buner districts. As a result, many people become poor over night.

In spite of the best sincere efforts of the Pervez Musharraf led government corruption has not been rooted out. It is a sort of cancer, which has engulfed the lives of common Pakistanis. Due to rampant corruption, the flow of money is restricted to few people and the common people

However, in the initiation of such mega projects, main emphasis should be laid on Balochistan, being the biggest province of Pakistan area wise. There is a need to construct sea-ports in the said province in order to create more employment opportunities.

God has gifted Pakistan with immense natural beauty. We can earn good amount of foreign exchange through our natural resources. However, the potential tourist spots are in shabby conditions like Murree. Moreover there is the need of upliftment of new tourist spots. Besides this, the infrastructure for tourism must be developed in order to attract more foreign tourists. If we compare ourselves with countries like Sri Lanka and Maldives, our performance is very poor in this regard and needs urgent surgery.

Unfortunately, we are far below the internationally recognised forestation area i.e. 25 per cent. At present, there are forests over 4 per cent area in Pakistan. This will look more ridiculous if we exclude the forest area of NWFP. In frontier, the total area of plantation is 17 per cent. Through mass media, the government should start a campaign for the plantation of more trees.

This will also generate more jobs. Social security schemes can be started for the lot of the poor people. The government should at least award employment opportunity to a single member of a family. Moreover health facilities should be extended to the poor people free of cost. Present set up of hospitals should be checked in order to provide free medicines to poor.

Every year, the government provides medicines worth millions of rupees but the reach of that medicine are restricted to poor people. In short at the moment, almost 1/3rd of the people are living below poverty line i.e. in extreme poverty. Poverty can be checked considerably. But it needs the collective approach of the rich Pakistanis, govt NGOs and other social organisations. Fear of God should be created among the rich people by the religious scholars to give proper zakat charity and donations for the betterment of the lives of poor people. In this way Inshallah, we will be able to check the tide of poverty up to a great extent.