

## What explains poverty in India?

If you think poverty in India is natural, think again. In fact I feel poverty in India is impossible. Yet it exists – it is one big puzzle. India is one of those rare countries in the world that is blessed with all right resources. We have lots of sunshine, abundant supply of sweet/ potable water, fertile lands and the last but not the least intelligent and hardworking people. True, all these resources are neither necessary nor sufficient to make a nation prosperous. There are countries which lack most of these resources yet developed and prosperous. India in spite of having all the resources is still a developing country even after 68 years of independence (you can't blame the British anymore). On many social development parameters we are competing with sub-Saharan countries. What explains this status? Honestly I do not have the complete answer, but, I guess, I have some clues. They are:

### 1. **Wealth destruction by the Government**

Government(s) in India, intentionally or unintentionally, actively or passively, directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly, willingly or unwillingly destroyed wealth on a massive scale. This process started immediately after our independence and is continuing.

### 2. **Reverse Robin Hood' syndrome**

Governments love to play the role, what I call, reverse Robin Hood i.e., 'rob the poor and pay the rich'. There were and are various government policies that have an inbuilt mechanism to make the poor poorer and the rich richer (or transfer the wealth from the poor to the rich).

### 3. **Wrong Economic Model**

Third reasons seems to be blind copying of western model of development (after all most of our leading economists /policymakers are western educated). This model of development

is capital intensive, energy intensive, consumption driven (often at the cost of environment) and urban centric. Our policy makers right from the beginning (more aggressively after the so called 1991 liberalization) adopted this model knowing very well that India's capital, energy resources are limited. I believe this model of economic development has pushed us to a status of a perennial beggar (for those evergreen greenbacks).

### 4. **Lack of 'awareness' and 'enthusiasm' on the part of society**

Indian society, even the educated lot, does not have awareness about what is happening around them nor has enthusiasm to participate in the process called 'democracy'. Due to such lack of awareness and enthusiasm over decades democracy in India has degenerated into a single point agenda of winning elections by hook or crook with its own consequences.

### 5. **Diminished self-respect**

If I am allowed to go on a slightly philosophical tangent, I feel, somewhere somehow we the Indians as a nation, as a community has lost self-respect (at least partly). A society that lacks self-respect cannot prosper.

### 6. **Failure of Intellectuals**

In any society the intellectuals have a sworn responsibility to fight injustice, to fight for public welfare and common good. On the contrary, in India, most intellectuals either left India for greener pastures or joined the ranks and files of 'exploiters' or still worse, became shoe shine boys of the exploiters. (A few with strong reactive attitude joined extremist/revolutionary groups like naxals).

Of course the above list is not an exhaustive one. For the sake of brevity I would say, the above points give an indication about where we might have gone wrong.

### **But is there a way out?**

Well, we should find 'a way out'. We should find 'a way out' if we wish to leave behind a just, fair and better society for our children.