

03. Poverty as a Challenge

1. Describe how the poverty line is estimated in India.

In India, the poverty line is estimated based on the minimum level of consumption expenditure required to meet basic needs like food, clothing, education, and health. The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) collects data on consumer expenditure to identify who falls below this line. Earlier, poverty was measured by calorie intake—2400 calories per day in rural areas and 2100 in urban areas. Later, the Tendulkar Committee (2009) updated this method by including other necessities such as education and healthcare.

2. Do you think that present methodology of poverty estimation is appropriate?

The current method gives a clear numerical estimate, but it's not perfect. It focuses mainly on income and consumption, ignoring vital aspects like education, health, housing, and social discrimination. Hence, it's partly appropriate—useful for statistics, but not sufficient to measure real poverty, which is multi-dimensional.

3. Describe poverty trends in India since 1973.

- In 1973–74, about 55% of India's population lived below the poverty line.
 - The figure fell to 36% in 1993–94, 26% in 2000, and around 22% in 2011–12.
 - Although the percentage has declined, the absolute number of poor people remains large due to population growth.
 - Poverty has reduced faster in states with higher economic growth and better public welfare programs.
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4. Discuss the major reasons for poverty in India.

Poverty in India is a result of both historical and economic factors. Colonial rule drained India's resources and left the economy weak. After Independence, economic growth was slow and could not create enough jobs. Unequal land distribution, high population growth, and low literacy rates added to the problem. Social discrimination and lack of access to education or skills have also trapped many communities in a cycle of poverty.

5. Identify the social and economic groups which are most vulnerable to poverty in India.

- [i] Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs)
- [ii] Rural agricultural labourers and casual urban workers

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- [iii] Women, children, and elderly people within poor families

These groups face limited access to land, education, and stable employment, making them more vulnerable than others.

6. Give an account of interstate disparities of poverty in India.

Poverty is unevenly distributed across states.

States like Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh have high poverty levels, while Kerala, Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu have much lower levels. These differences exist because some states have experienced faster economic growth, better infrastructure, population control, and effective implementation of anti-poverty programs, while others have lagged behind.

7. Describe global poverty trends.

Globally, poverty has declined but not evenly. China and Southeast Asian countries have reduced poverty rapidly through industrial growth and investment in human development. In contrast, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and parts of South Asia still face high poverty rates. Developed countries have low poverty, but economic inequality persists within them.

8. Describe current government strategy of poverty alleviation.

The government focuses on combining economic growth, targeted programs, and social development to reduce poverty. Economic growth creates jobs and income, while programs like MGNREGA (2005), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, and National Rural Livelihood Mission directly support poor families. The government also emphasizes education, health care, and empowerment of weaker sections to ensure inclusive growth and break the cycle of poverty.

9. Answer the following questions briefly:

(i) What do you understand by human poverty?

Human poverty means deprivation in terms of basic human capabilities such as access to education, health care, nutrition, clean water, and shelter. It's about poor quality of life, not just low income.

(ii) Who are the poorest of the poor?

The poorest of the poor are those who are deprived even of basic needs — often women,

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children, and elderly people from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and landless labourer families.

(iii) What are the main features of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) 2005?

- Guarantees 100 days of wage employment per year to rural households willing to do unskilled work.
- If work is not given within 15 days, the worker must be paid an unemployment allowance.
- Aims to improve livelihood security and create durable rural assets.
- Gives priority to women and ensures transparency in implementation.

Sources: NCERT Notebook – Economics Class 9

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