

Cultural Construction of Poverty in India

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Abstract

The paper focuses mainly on the cultural perspective because it is a promising alternative discourse on poverty. Its central premise is that poverty is not only an economic problem but also a social problem. As a result, multiple factors, culture-oriented, come into picture which promote poverty and make poverty a cultural construct. The paper demonstrates how certain sets of negative cultural traits construct and promote vulnerability and poverty among the people who are entrapped into poverty perpetually because those traits are reproduced from one generation to the next. There is no attempt in the paper, either to measure the economic effect of the values and attitude on poverty, or to make a critical analysis of the cultural approach, although directly or indirectly the critical points reflect in the paper. The paper, not only demonstrates the qualitative effect of the negative set of cultural traits on poverty but it also offers a cultural solution to poverty. It is based on secondary sources, personal observations and the logic of arguments.

Keywords: Culture, efficient and deficient values, human and social capital, biogenetic, cultural reproduction

Introduction

The problem of poverty is a social problem. The resource-inequality, inadequate opportunities and their unfair distribution in the society are not the only factors responsible for poverty but also the positive values and attitude to work on the one hand, and the negative values and attitude to work on the other, respectively promote, as well as, impede social development. These are 'efficient' and the 'deficient' values and attitude. It is an irony of history that we always speak of this problem, show our concern about it and make efforts to eradicate it but it continues to persist perpetually.

Although, in India the extreme poverty is effectively reduced. As per the World Bank estimate, in India in 2011, 268 million people could survive on less than 1.90 dollar a day but it has now declined to 50 million people. According to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the proportion of people living below the poverty line declined from 37.2 % in 2004-5, to 29.8 % in 2009-10 to