

“Child Begging: An Anathema to Society”

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Abstract:

One of the most significant issues that exists in the nation today is Child Begging. India is a growing nation, and developed nations throughout the world applaud its economic progress and sustainability, yet it has not imposed a ban on Child Begging. Although there are many causes of child begging, the most prevalent ones include poverty, migration, lack of proper education, etc. The children have become a means of earning a living for human traffickers, which leads to a rise in the number of instances of child abduction and kidnapping. In the present time, child begging has become a multi-million-rupee trade for human trafficking cartels, and children are regularly inflicted with wounds, injuries and even maimed so that they become more pitiable and therefore draw more alms from a sympathetic passerby on the streets. To prohibit such activities, the government authorities, along with some non-government organizations such as the Ministry of Women and Child Development, NHRC, Bachpan Bachao Andolan, respectively, have taken various initiatives and launched many schemes for the betterment of such underprivileged children. This article will explore the problems and obstacles concerning child begging and also discuss existing laws, schemes and suggestions to prevent such practices in India.

Keywords: Child Begging, maiming, sympathy, poverty, cartels.

Introduction

Child begging is one of the most distressing social issues that affects millions of children worldwide. It is a form of exploitation where children are forced or coerced into begging for money or food, often at the cost of their education, health, and dignity. It represents a grim reality of poverty, exploitation, and systemic failure that deprives children of their dignity, education, and a chance at a better future. It not only deprives children of their right to education and a safe childhood, but it also exposes them to criminal activities, drug addiction, and violence. While some children beg out of sheer necessity, many are victims of trafficking and forced labor, suffering physical and emotional abuse in the process. This menace is not just a sign of economic hardship but a significant violation of human rights.

This problem is particularly prevalent in developing countries, where poverty, lack of education, and organized crime play a substantial role in its persistence. The sight of children begging on the

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streets, often in rags and suffering from malnutrition, is heart-wrenching and calls for immediate attention from governments, non-governmental organizations, and society at large.

Despite existing laws and policies against child exploitation, the menace of child begging continues due to ineffective implementation, societal ignorance, and a lack of proper rehabilitation programs. Tackling this issue requires a holistic approach, including strict law enforcement, public awareness, education, and economic support for families to ensure a better future for these children.

Child Begging in India: An Organized Crime

Child begging in India is not merely an outcome of poverty, but it is an organized crime involving human trafficking, forced labor, and exploitation. Criminal syndicates kidnap or manipulate children into begging, subjecting them to abuse and inhumane conditions. Despite strict laws, child begging remains widespread due to weak enforcement, corruption, and lack of public awareness. Addressing this crime requires a multi-faceted approach, including strict legal action, rehabilitation programs, and greater public awareness.

According to the 2011 census of India, child begging, which is controlled by pernicious cartels and mafia operating unchecked in various parts of the country, has forced over three lakh children into begging. The majority of children are forced into the modern bondage of begging because of parental destitution, drug addiction or organized crime groups, with the homeless, migrant children, slum kids, etc., as their main target.¹

One notable initiative shedding light on this issue is Balaknama, a newspaper run by street children in Delhi. Established in 2003, Balaknama reports on the lives of street children, covering topics such as sexual abuse, child labor, and police brutality. The newspaper has highlighted numerous cases of child begging and exploitation, bringing attention to the harsh realities faced by these children.

While specific statistics on reported cases of child begging are scarce, the efforts of organizations like Balaknama highlight the ongoing challenges and the need for continued attention to protect vulnerable children from exploitation.

According to Thomson Reuters Foundation, at least 300,000 children across India are drugged, beaten and forced to beg every day, in what has become a multi-million-rupee industry controlled by human trafficking cartels.²

¹ Adwitya Tajena, *Forced Child Begging: Poverty in India*, WORLD YOUTH ALLIANCE (Mar. 26, 2021), <https://wya.net/forced-child-begging-poverty-in-india/>.

² Anuradha Nagraj, *Traffickers in India forced 300000 children to beg in streets*, Reuters (June 1, 2016), <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/traffickers-in-india-force-300000-children-to-beg-in-streets-police-idUSKCN0YN5F7/>.

For instance, in 2015, Balaknama reported on a child marriage case, leading to protests and police intervention to prevent the marriage. In 2016, the newspaper uncovered that street children were being enlisted by police to remove dead bodies from railway tracks in Agra, prompting public outcry and action from the National Committee for Protection of Child Rights.

According to a report by the National Human Rights Commission, a child goes missing in India every eight minutes, which estimates that 40000 children are kidnapped there annually, and more than 25% of them are never found. However, the authorities in India do not adequately address child begging.³ These little toddlers are frequently disfigured, hurt and disabled to elicit sympathy for a pitiful sum of change. As a result of being bullied using physical abuse, drug use, and psychological compulsion, the children are suffering significant physical, emotional and mental stress.

They are assigned daily goals for their begging trips, according to the testimonies of the children who have been saved. Children are frequently kept under the influence of drugs. It's normal to see women posing as mothers holding a 'sleeping' child; in reality, the child has been drugged into submission. It is also uncommon to hear of incidents where newborns are rented out by labour-class mothers to make them seem more pitiful to onlookers.

A study conducted by the Karnataka State Legal Services Authority (KSLSA) provides a worrying insight into the plight of displaced child beggars in Bengaluru. This study was carried out by the Karnataka High Court's directions and gave information about the 720 children who are begging throughout the city. According to the report, 534 of them were coerced into begging. According to the KSLSA study, the beggar mafia and human trafficking networks both have a significant impact on pushing children into begging, and an investigation of these groups could aid in searching for many missing children.⁴

Surprisingly, Mumbai Police discovered that a large number of parents in Mumbai can live comfortably by merely forcing their kids into begging. They keep their children out of school while using the resources provided by the government under the Right to Education Act, of 2009. Even when their children were placed in shelters by the Child Welfare Commission (CWC), parents would visit the shelters to pick them up and force children back into begging.

In India, parental or guardian pressure and drug addiction are the main factors that drive children into child begging. According to a global study by Anti-Slavery International, drug addiction,

³ BAL RAKSHA BHARAT, *How children are forced into begging by cartels* (Nov. 02, 2016), <https://balrakshabharat.org/blog/child-protection/how-children-are-forced-into-begging-by-cartels/>.

⁴ DECCAN HERALD, *Act on Begging Mafia*, <https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/editorial/act-on-begging-mafia-977028.html> (last Updated 22 April 2021, 01:39 IST).

parental control, organized crime, and religious authorities are the main causes of child begging worldwide.

Child Begging: International Perspective

Child begging is a global issue affecting millions of children across different continents. Various benchmark standards have been declared at the international level to protect the interests of children forced to beg. Signatory State governments ratify those benchmark standards as treaties and bind themselves to their obligations. If a signatory State fails to take necessary action in compliance with the rules of an international treaty over a long period, it may face accountability.

Child begging has taken the form of an organized crime in which big mafias are working at the international level. Children are easy targets of these mafias. Children are trafficked from less developed countries to developing or developed countries and are forced into begging. As the first step at the international level, a special committee was established by the League of Nations to solve the problems related to the protection of the rights of children. The committee adopted the **Conventions Prohibiting the Trafficking in Women and Children (1921)**⁵. Child begging weakens children not only physically and psychologically, but also spiritually. As a result, the rescue and rehabilitation work of child beggars becomes a huge challenge. However, in 1924, the League of Nations adopted the **Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child**, which established the rights of children as a means of physical, moral and spiritual development.⁶ In the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the rights of children were shown not as the responsibility of the state but as the responsibility of adult citizens of all states. As a result, it would not be incorrect to suggest that the responsibility for eradicating child beggary and rehabilitating child beggars falls not just on signatory governments, but on all global citizens.

Due to poverty, child beggars are forced to beg to fulfil their basic needs, and these children are deprived of their basic rights. For the protection of their basic rights in 1948, the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** declared a core set of human rights. Although most of these basic rights were granted to both children and adults, two of them were designed specifically to defend the rights of children. **Article 25(2)** recognizes that “motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and support”, and **Article 26** deals with the “right to education”.⁷ However, the most important step taken by the United Nations General Assembly at the international level in the field of children’s rights was the adoption of the policies of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1959.⁸ The 10 principles of this declaration emphasize providing children with special protection,

⁵ International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children, Sept. 30, 1921 – Mar. 31, 1922, 9 L.N.T.S. 415 (1921).

⁶ Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Sept. 26, 1924, L.N. O.J. SPEC. SUPP. 21, 43 (1924).

⁷ G.A. Res. 217 (III) A, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Dec. 10, 1948).

⁸ G.A. Res. 1386 (XIV), Declaration of The Rights of The Child (Nov. 20, 1959).

a healthy life and equal development opportunities. So that children can benefit from social security advantages like appropriate nourishment, housing, recreational and medical services, education, and protection from all sorts of neglect, cruelty, and exploitation. The **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966**, also adopted most of these rights.⁹ The year 1979 was designated as the International Year of the Child. The United Nations General Assembly then approved the **Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989**,¹⁰ which came into effect the very next year. It prioritizes the best interests of the children and makes provisions for the custody and guardianship of children who have either been abandoned or whose parents are no longer alive. It guarantees fundamental rights, such as the right to be raised by parents and to have a parent-child relationship, as well as the right to life.

In 1990, New York hosted the World Summit for Children. Delegates from all across the world signed the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection, and Development of Children, as well as a Plan of Action for Implementing the Declaration, with deadlines of the year 2000. In 1999, the **Convention relating to the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor** was adopted by the International Labor Organization.¹¹ The main goal of this was to highlight the importance of new instruments for the ban and abolition of the worst types of child labour.

Encouraging the ratification and full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was included in the **United Nations Millennium Development Goals** in 2000. Not only this, the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography were also included.¹² In 2002, 11 years after the World Summit for Children, for the first time, the United Nations General Assembly held a special session to specifically discuss children's issues.¹³ The session called upon all members of society to join a global movement to protect children's rights to make the world fit for children.

Child beggars are often disabled children who are deliberately lured into begging or are forced to beg due to their poverty and helplessness. To put an end to child begging, it is essential to protect these children. Neither the **Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Handicapped Persons, 1971**¹⁴ nor the **Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 1975**¹⁵ provide any special provision for disabled children. However, the preambles of both declarations are evocative of the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, whose 5th principle declares that children with physical,

⁹ G.A. Res. 2200 (XXI) A, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Dec. 16, 1966).

¹⁰ Convention on the Rights of the Child, Sept. 02, 1990, 1577 U.N.T.S. 3 (1989).

¹¹ International Labour Organization (ILO), *Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention*, June 17, 1999, C182.

¹² G.A. Res. 55/2 A, United Nations Millennium Declaration, Resolution Adopted by The General Assembly (Sept. 18, 2000).

¹³ G.A. Res. S-27/2 A, A World Fit for Children, Adopted by The General Assembly (Oct. 11, 2002).

¹⁴ G.A. Res. 2856 (XXVI) A, Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons (Dec. 20, 1971).

¹⁵ G.A. Res. 3447 (XXX) A, Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (Dec. 09, 1975).

mental, or social disabilities shall receive “the special treatment, education, and care necessary for their particular situation.”

Child begging is a global issue that affects millions of children across various countries. While often linked to poverty, homelessness, and economic disparity, child begging is increasingly recognized as a form of organized crime and human rights abuse. Countries worldwide face challenges in eradicating child begging, with varying degrees of success depending on government policies, legal frameworks, and social welfare programs.

This article explores child begging from an international perspective, comparing the situation in different regions, analyzing global legal responses, and highlighting efforts to combat this exploitation.

Protection of Child Beggers in India: Constitutional Framework

After everything is said and done, the startling reality is that India still lacks any definitive regulation or statute on child begging. Because of this, market participants have the chance and advantage to risk the lives of young children to profit without worrying about being punished. However, some provisions in the Indian Constitution as well as in many national and local laws exist to protect the interests of these children. Yet, those provisions are either so weak that they cannot be used to stop the despicable practice of child beggary prevalent throughout the country or little to no steps have been taken towards their implementation. Equality and dignity for the individual are guaranteed under the Constitution and enforceable by the Courts.¹⁶

The Constitution of India provides several provisions against child exploitation, forced labor, and trafficking, which can be applied to combat child begging. While the Constitution does not explicitly mention “child begging,” its provisions ensure the protection, welfare, and rights of children.

Right to Equality- It ensures that all children, including those forced into begging, are treated equally before the law and have access to justice. However, these unfortunate children do not get equal treatment in any way. When other children of their age have a healthy and happy upbringing and decent educational opportunities, these children confront starvation, poverty, and exploitation only.¹⁷

Right to Life and Dignity- It guarantees every child the right to live with dignity, which includes protection from begging, abuse, and exploitation. The Supreme Court has interpreted it to include the right to rehabilitation and protection for children engaged in begging.¹⁸

¹⁶ The Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, No. 10, Act of Parliament, 1994 (India), § 2(1)(d).

¹⁷ The Constitution of India, art. 14

¹⁸ The Constitution of India, art. 21

Right to Education and Compulsory Education- The state is bound to offer obligatory and free education to children aged 6 to 14 under the Right to Education Act, 2009, helping to prevent child begging by ensuring they stay in school. However, according to the foregoing debate, the majority of child beggars are between the ages of 6 and 14 years. As a result, there is an immediate need to enact strict laws to implement this right to education.¹⁹

Right against Exploitation- It prohibits human trafficking and forced labor, which includes forcing children into begging. It also prohibits the employment of children below 14 years in hazardous jobs, which includes forcing organized begging that puts their health and safety at risk.²⁰ The irony is that poor and helpless youngsters are frequently forced to participate in such activities. An even more horrible reality is that, aside from undertaking such dangerous work, these children's sole alternative is to beg, which is exceedingly detrimental to their future.

Health and Strength of Tender Age of Children- mandates the state to protect children from abuse, exploitation, and conditions that hinder their development. Unfortunately, the reality goes beyond these provisions; most homeless children are the product of abandonment. These children live in deplorable conditions, subjected to various sorts of exploitation by the begging mafia.²¹

Early Childhood Care- The state is directed to provide early childhood care and education, preventing children from being pushed into begging.²²

Duties of Parent or Guardian- It imposes a fundamental duty on every Indian citizen who is the parent or guardian of a child aged 6 to 14 to provide educational opportunities for his or her child.²³

Protection of Child Beggars in India: Legislative Framework

There is no specific act on beggary made by the parliament; many states and Union Territories have used the Bombay Act as the basis for their own laws.

Bombay Prevention of Begging Act (BPBA), 1959 aims to criminalize begging and provide rehabilitation for those engaged in it. It includes provisions for the protection of children in the context of begging. Any person who employs or causes a child to beg is punishable under the Act. This includes compelling, encouraging, or using a child for begging purposes. This punishment may include imprisonment or a fine.²⁴

¹⁹ The Constitution of India, art. 21A.

²⁰ The Constitution of India, art. 23, 24.

²¹ The Constitution of India, art. 39(e) & (f).

²² The Constitution of India, art. 45.

²³ The Constitution of India, art. 51A(k)

²⁴ Section 11 of The Bombay Prevention Of Begging Act, 1959, **Penalty for employing or causing persons to beg or using them for purposes of begging:** Whoever employs or causes, any person to solicit or receive alms, or whoever having the custody, charge or care of a child, connives at or encourages the employment or the causing a child to

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 provides that a child found begging or living on the streets is considered a child in need of care and protection and is entitled to rehabilitation.²⁵ It criminalizes the use of children for begging. Any person who employs or forces a child to beg can be punished with imprisonment up to 5 years and a fine of 1,00,000.²⁶

Several penal provisions criminalize child begging, trafficking and exploitation. These provisions target begging mafias, human traffickers, and individuals who force children into begging, ensuring legal action against offenders.

Kidnapping or Maiming a Minor for Begging, this section criminalizes the abduction or kidnapping of a minor (below 18 years) for begging. If a person kidnaps, abducts, or forces a child into begging, they can be imprisoned for up to 10 years and fine. If a child is maimed (physically harmed) to make them appear helpless for begging purposes, the punishment is life imprisonment and a fine. The organized begging rackets deliberately injure or disable children to invoke sympathy and increase earnings from begging. This provision helps penalize such inhumane practices.²⁷

Unlawful compulsory labor (including begging), this section provides that forcing a child into begging is a form of forced labor. Anyone who unlawfully compels a person to labor (including labor) can be punished with imprisonment up to 1 year, a fine or both.²⁸

Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 was enacted to prevent human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, but it also covers forced begging, especially when linked to trafficking and organized crime. Many children involved in begging are trafficked and exploited by criminal networks, making this act crucial to combat child begging.

Procuring, Inducing, or Taking a Child for Prostitution or Begging provides that if a person procures, induces, or takes a minor (below 18 years) for prostitution, begging, or any other form of exploitation, they can face Imprisonment of 7 years and a fine. This section is used to prosecute traffickers and agents who force children into begging.²⁹

Detaining a Child in a Place of Exploitation (Including Begging Rackets) provides that if a child is confined in a brothel, begging syndicate, or any place of exploitation, the person responsible can

solicit or receive alms or whoever uses another person as an exhibit, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years but which shall not be less than one year.

²⁵ Section 2 (14) ii of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

²⁶ Section 76 of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

²⁷ Section 363A of Indian Penal Code, 1860.

²⁸ Section 370 of Indian Penal Code, 1860.

²⁹ Section 5 of Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956.

be punished with a minimum of 7 years imprisonment (extendable to life imprisonment). This helps to rescue children trapped in organized begging mafias.³⁰

Seduction of a Minor into Prostitution or Begging provides that if anyone encourages or forces a child into prostitution or begging, they can face imprisonment of 7 years (extendable to life imprisonment). This section helps prosecute adults who exploit children for financial gain through begging.³¹

Causes of Child Begging

Child begging is a multifaceted issue rooted in various socio-economic and structural causes. Some of the key factors contributing to this menace include:

Extreme Poverty and Economic Hardship- The primary cause of child begging is extreme poverty. Many families, unable to afford necessities, force their children into begging as a means of survival. The lack of stable employment opportunities further exacerbates the problem, pushing families into a state of desperation.

Organized Begging Syndicates- In many parts of the world, child begging is not just a consequence of poverty but also a result of criminal exploitation. Organized gangs and begging syndicates kidnap or coerce children into begging, often subjecting them to physical abuse to garner sympathy from the public. These children are treated as commodities, and the money they collect goes into the hands of the traffickers.

Lack of Education and Awareness- Education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty, yet many children engaged in begging remain out of school. A lack of awareness about the importance of education, coupled with financial constraints, prevents them from accessing basic learning opportunities. Instead of attending school, they are forced to roam the streets, begging for alms.

Parental Neglect and Orphanhood- Many children engaged in begging are orphans or have been abandoned by their families. Without any guardianship or support system, they are left to fend for themselves, making them highly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Some parents, due to drug addiction or lack of responsibility, also neglect their children, pushing them into begging for money.

Government and Societal Negligence- Despite laws and policies in place to protect children, weak enforcement allows child begging to persist. Corruption, lack of funding, and inadequate child welfare programs contribute to this failure. Society also plays a role, as many people choose to

³⁰ Section 6 of Immoral Traffick (Prevention) Act, 1956.

³¹ Section 9 of Immoral Traffick (Prevention) Act, 1956.

ignore the issue or, in some cases, unknowingly encourage it by giving money directly to child beggars instead of supporting sustainable solutions.

Solutions to Eradicate Child Begging

The issue of child beggary is extremely terrible in India. It is the harsh reality that the small children who will shape the future of the nation are scurrying around the streets, marketplace, and other public areas, begging for a few pennies while putting their lives in danger.

In the case of *Harsh Mander v. Union of India* and *Karnika Sawhney v. Union of India*, the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi struck down about 25 sections of the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959, that made begging illegal in any way. The Hon'ble Judges have made it quite evident that begging is not an illness of any kind, and this attitude has caused stigmatization and eventually criminalization in society.

In addition to decriminalizing beggary, the prevalence of juvenile begging should receive particular attention since it is steadily damaging the nation's future. The entire society, as well as the local, state and federal governments, have an obligation to pay attention to this heinous act that continues to occur in society.

Role of Government and Other Authorities

On the one hand, the Indian Government has improved the condition of children through several laws. The same administration, however, had not taken steps to guarantee that children would not be homeless, beg, or subjected to social ills that inhibit their general development.

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is now working on a scheme to protect, care and rehabilitate beggars. The Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), currently known as 'Child Protection Services' being implemented centrally, known as 'Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNCP)', according to information released by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (JJ Act) defines CNCP in Section 2(14). According to Section 2(14)(ii) of the JJ Act, a child is considered to be a "child in need of care and protection" if they are discovered working against current labour regulations, begging, or living on the streets.

The State Governments/UTs bear the major duty for implementing the JJ Act correctly. According to ICPS, State Governments and UT Administrations get funding for a variety of purposes, including conducting situational analyses of children in challenging situations, establishing and preservation of many kinds of childcare facilities (CCIs). CCIs are used by the program to deliver institutional care. Children are given age-appropriate education in these CCIs as a kind of rehabilitation, either inside the institution or outside of it in a formal school system by combining

with other government or civil society initiatives and programs. Additionally, the scheme also offers family-based non-institutional care through adoption, sponsorship and foster care.

To combat the issue of child begging in the nation, the Central Government is working to put such programs into place that offer the homeless and poor housing, medical attention, and training in skill development. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has created a plan that aims to provide a wide range of essential services, including food, shelter, medical attention, counselling, and rehabilitation. Due to the growing numbers, particularly of women and children, the issue of child poverty and beggary is becoming a serious one that requires immediate attention and action.

Additionally, in order to improve accountability and transparency in the scheme's operation, the government intends to link each beneficiary's information to their UIDAI (Aadhar) number and keep such information in an electronic database.

- ***Strengthening Law Enforcement and Policies-*** Governments must take stringent action against human traffickers and organized begging syndicates. It must ensure strict punishment for those forcing children into begging, including longer prison sentences and higher fines. Strict laws should be enforced to protect children from being used as pawns in these criminal activities. Additionally, better implementation of existing child protection laws is essential to identify, arrest, and prosecute traffickers. The government should establish a centralized database for missing and rescued children to prevent re-trafficking.
- ***Providing Free Education and Rehabilitation Centres-*** Education is the most powerful tool to eradicate child begging. Governments and NGOs should establish free schools and vocational training centres for rescued children, ensuring they receive proper guidance and opportunities for a better future. Rehabilitation centres should also be set up to provide shelter and psychological support to these vulnerable children.
- ***Economic Support for Vulnerable Families-*** Addressing the root cause of child begging—poverty—requires sustainable economic solutions. Providing financial assistance, employment opportunities, and skill development programs for parents can help them support their families without resorting to child begging.
- ***Raising Public Awareness and Encouraging Responsible Giving-*** Public awareness campaigns should educate people that giving money directly to child beggars unknowingly supports organized begging networks. It should educate people about alternative ways to help, such as donating to credible charities or reporting cases of child exploitation to the authorities.
- ***Community Participation and NGO Involvement-*** Communities should take an active role in identifying and helping children engaged in begging. NGOs and social activists should work together to rescue, rehabilitate, and reintegrate these children into society. Local

businesses can also contribute by offering vocational training and job opportunities to their families.

Challenges to Eradicate Child Begging

Child begging remains a serious social issue in India, deeply rooted in poverty, trafficking, and organized crime. Despite strict laws and rescue operations, the problem persists due to various systemic and societal challenges.

- **Organized Begging Mafia and Human Trafficking-** Criminal syndicates abduct, buy, or rent children and force them into begging. These mafias often maim or injure children to make them appear more helpless and evoke sympathy. Rescued children often return to begging as traffickers reclaim them through bribery or legal loopholes. Several police investigations in cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Hyderabad have revealed begging mafias earning crores annually by exploiting children.
- **Weak Law Enforcement & Corruption-** Lack of police action and corruption allow traffickers and begging mafias to thrive. Many cases of child begging go unreported or are dismissed as minor offences. Even when caught, begging mafia leaders escape punishment due to weak investigations and political connections.
- **Legal Gaps and Poor Implementation of Laws-** While IPC Sections 363A, 370, and the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 criminalize child begging, enforcement remains weak. The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 and the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986 have provisions to combat child exploitation but lack coordination in enforcement. Punishments for offenders are often lenient, allowing them to return to illegal activities.
- **Poverty and Economic Hardship-** Many children beg out of necessity due to extreme poverty and lack of support from their families. Some families force their children to beg as they see it as a source of income. Without alternative sources of income, rehabilitated children often return to the streets. In the slums of Mumbai and Kolkata, studies show that many children are sent to beg by their own families due to unemployment and hunger.
- **Lack of Public Awareness & Complicity-** Many people give money to child beggars out of sympathy, unknowingly funding begging mafias. Few citizens report cases of child begging, believing it to be a result of poverty rather than exploitation. Lack of awareness campaigns has failed to educate people on how child begging is linked to trafficking and forced labor.
- **Inadequate Rehabilitation & Social Support-** Government shelters are overcrowded and underfunded, leading to poor living conditions. Lack of proper education, vocational training, and employment opportunities forces many rescued children back into begging. Street children face stigma and are often denied access to schools and jobs, making reintegration into society difficult.

- ***Cross-Border Trafficking & Migration Issues-*** Children are trafficked from neighbouring countries like Nepal and Bangladesh into India for forced begging. Many migrant children lack identification documents, making it difficult to track and rescue them. Law enforcement agencies struggle with cross-border coordination, allowing traffickers to operate freely.

Conclusion

This issue of forced child begging should be regarded with grave concern as it is an urgent requirement. Every single individual possesses entitlement granted as fundamental rights by the Constitution of India, and the authorities should strive to ensure that all citizens receive their entitlement without any bias.

The way the laws are applied is the problem. Improper reporting and action lead to the creation of merely paper-based legislation. Regarding the existing provisions on child begging, it is highly recommended that these provisions be revised. It must incorporate additional clauses that address the broader scope of begging and focus on addressing the underlying causes of the issue. Examining the implementation of current laws as well as other pertinent laws like those about human trafficking and drug trafficking, needs to get more focus. More laws should be passed to enforce anti-begging, and steps should be taken to dismantle begging groups to resolve the problem.

Child begging is a societal curse that demands urgent action. It is not merely an issue of economic disparity but a severe violation of children's rights and human dignity. The eradication of child begging requires a comprehensive strategy that involves strict law enforcement, education, economic empowerment, and social responsibility. Every child deserves a safe and nurturing environment, free from exploitation and suffering. As responsible members of society, we must work collectively to put an end to this anathema and ensure a brighter future for all children.

The protection of child beggars' rights in India remains a harsh reality, as legal safeguards fail to prevent exploitation, abuse, and trafficking. A multi-pronged approach—combining strict law enforcement, rehabilitation, public awareness, and economic support—is essential to break the cycle of child begging. Every child deserves a life of dignity, education, and opportunity, and it is the responsibility of governments, law enforcement, and society to ensure their rights are upheld.

Child begging is a global human rights crisis that demands strong international cooperation. While some countries have successfully reduced child begging through strict laws and social programs, others continue to struggle due to corruption, poverty, and organized crime. A unified approach combining law enforcement, education, rehabilitation, and economic reform is crucial to ending this exploitation and ensuring a better future for children worldwide.