

India seems to be one of the very few countries in the world where beggars are not only tolerated but are even encouraged with the result that many of them are so prosperous that they refuse to give up their profession.

One of the reasons why we have so many beggars in India is because we have a tradition of holy men living on charity. These holy men lead a religious life and so society considers it its moral duty to support them. Centuries ago this may have been true but today in changed circumstances these holy men are proving a burden on society. Instead of living on society they can contribute to its good.

The case of blind or lame or infirm persons who have become beggars is different. They cannot lead a normal life and so they beg to earn their living and they seem to earn a decent amount. The result is that many who are too lazy to work, pretend that they are blind or lame and take to begging. There are also organised gangs which carry on beggar-business. Occasionally we also hear stories of children being kidnapped to be trained to beg.

Begging is a social evil and should be eradicated. This can be done by opening beggar-houses for the really needy ones and sending others to reform homes, where they should be taught some useful trade or trained in some skill. Such people as want to practice charity, should be encouraged to help towards running beggar-houses or reform homes ; greater vigilance on the part of the authorities and a greater amount of co-operation on the part of the public.

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A Social Evil of Begging

Begging in India is encouraged instead of being discouraged. Many of beggars are reluctant to abandon it. It is because of prevalent traditions of holy men who live on charity, and get complementary support from the people. The case of disabled persons is different as they cannot earn by working. Several organized groups kidnap children and train them for begging. Begging is a social dilemma which must be eradicated. This can be done by opening beggar-houses to rehabilitate and integrate them into a society. The people who want to practice charity must support beggar-houses.

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