

Chapter 7

DESTITUTION IN INDIA AND PERU

Barbara Harriss-White

Inspired by the research on the many dimensions of poverty presented in this book, this chapter differs from the rest in three respects. First, it is centrally concerned with questions of process, which by the very nature of their data bases, the other empirical chapters cannot examine. Second, it is concerned not simply with poverty but with the very poorest of the poor: those who ‘have’ nothing (in terms of assets), ‘are’ nothing (in terms of political and social status) and contend with ferocious obstacles to the exercise of agency (i.e. can ‘do’ virtually nothing in terms of realising their capabilities). Although destitution becomes dramatically massed and visible at moments of extreme events such as famine, war and environmental disasters, I will not discuss it through those prisms.¹ I will argue that the mundane condition of destitution is not well conceptualised as extreme poverty, but that the existence of the word suggests that it is a qualitatively different condition. Instead, destitute people are a social category which exists within the territorial boundaries of a society but from which society evidently wishes to rid itself.² So third, this chapter is concerned with ‘policy’ in the sense of society’s response. It finds that both state and society are implicated in antagonism towards destitute people, whether they are conceived as problems in social work or in development.

To build this exploratory analysis I have used literatures on India and Peru, although because this literature is unsystematic, idiosyncratic and treats the topic obliquely, this chapter -

¹ That conflict can cause destitution and that Peru’s civil war was ethnicised is argued in a careful sifting of evidence by A. Figuero and M Barron, 2005, ‘Inequality, Ethnicity and Social Disorder in Peru’ *Working Paper* 8, Centre for Research on Inequality, Security and Ethnicity, QEH, Oxford

² it is evident from Roy Gingsack’s research on the self-destructive behaviour of certain street children in Latin America that some destitute children and young adults internalize the process of social degradation and also wish to be rid of themselves (R. Gingsack, 2006 *Young, Damned and Banda*. Amsterdam, Amsterdam School of Social Science Research).

unlike the rest of the book - cannot be rigorously comparative. I have also used my personal field experience with destitute people and NGOs working with them in India in 2002 and 2005.³ The method of the chapter is to examine economic, social and political processes leading to destitution; then to map destitution onto the approaches to poverty researched in this book; to examine coping relations and finally to consider the significance of this conception of destitution for policy responses. Since destitution is an economic, social and political phenomenon, each aspect will be examined in turn.

Economic aspects of destitution

It is useful to begin with insights from development economics. Here, destitution is a twofold kind of deprivation in the >space= of income or monetary poverty. It involves, first, the absence of any control over assets and, second, the loss of access to income from one=s own labour. As a state, it is a contradiction in terms because the complete absence of assets and income spells death. There can be no such thing as long-term destitution. The specification of medium- or long-term destitution then cannot avoid a value judgement of what might constitute a >nearly complete absence=. One accepted measure is >a quarter of median rural income=,⁴ but in fact this threshold is quite arbitrary. It is a convenience for statistical treatment.

³ The primary field material introduced into this essay was obtained from two field visits to a settlement of beggars in rural Chhattisgarh State and to homeless people and drug addicts on the streets of New and old Delhi at night. It was organised by ActionAid, India, in January 2002 and by Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan (Movement for Shelter for the Homeless) in December 2005. Angela Ruiz-Uccelli researched the Peruvian material.

⁴T. Hyat, 1999, >Appendix: Definition of Destitution= unpublished research, Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford

These economic definitions allude to a process of loss, one which deprives a person of control over assets and income. While loss of assets leads to loss of income from rent or production, loss of income may also be a labour-market phenomenon resulting from the denial or the unavailability of wage work. What deprives people of their control over assets and labour? Economists have focussed on hysteresis phenomena - sequences of events in which losses of certain crucial assets are triggered which act as a ratchet, and which trigger other losses in turn, after which things can never return to their previous state. Such events include accidents, profligacy (addictions) and >natural= disasters as well as health deprivation in the >space= of capabilities; they are accompanied by debt.⁵ People are pitched into increasingly continuous periods with increasingly less assets. The detail of this process of destitution, which is also known as >coping= or >survival= is known to vary depending on the quality, lumpiness and complementarity of assets, the timing and the terms of trade of their dispossession, their gendered ownership and their implications for a person=s capabilities. A plausible common sequence involves the progressive liquidation of small stock, livestock, consumer goods and eventually the failure to protect from sale the key productive assets, female assets (gold and other moveable collateral) before male assets (land).⁶

⁵ Work-related accidents and disease is a major cause of adult disability (S. Erb and B. Harriss-White, 2002, *Outcast from Social Welfare: Adult disability and Incapacity in Rural South India* Bangalore, Books for Change)

⁶ Scholars of the process of impoverishment in times of food scarcity and famine have distinguished coping from survival sequences. In general, coping sequences are those protecting property while survival sequences are attempts to protect the person - see (ed) J. Vivian, 1995 *Adjustment and Social Sector Restructuring* London, Cass, pp 131-2

Destitution is being conceived of here as an *individual* phenomenon because, by the time a person is destitute, they are usually an individuated remnant of a collapsed household.⁷ The process therefore requires the loss of insurance mechanisms - notably savings and credit - with which the members of a household (or a social unit larger than a household) protect themselves from these ratcheting events or shocks to consumption. Insurance may be lost by a change (increase) in the risk of shocks, by a run of uncertain events, by exclusion from a process of rationing both of the means of insurance and the beneficiaries of it, or by the imposition of constraints on the use of specific assets to smooth income or consumption.⁸ The process of loss of insurance may itself be sequenced - one such sequence would involve a loss of access to non-productive precautionary savings, loss of access to reciprocal, interest-free borrowing, loss of access to commercial loans at interest, loss of access to high interest money lenders, exhaustion of productive precautionary savings and reduction to a state of extreme vulnerability.

Turning to the loss of control over one's labour, two types of relationship are involved. In one, tactics are deployed by others to force unemployment, for example by preventing entry. The existence of socially regulated wages above a theoretical clearing wage will prevent some workers from being employed. There are specific social rules which determine the particular people who are debarred.⁹ Physical condition, being malnourished, disabled or bearing the signs of leprosy may lead to an exclusion which becomes self-reinforcing. Indeed, >disability= is understood in rural society in terms of a socially defined incapacity

⁷ Anthropological field research shows that this not always so, see the work of James Staples on the organisation of begging in and from Andhra Pradesh, 2002, >The Body in Society= unpublished chapter of a doctoral dissertation, SOAS, London. Later I discuss how social relations are retrieved and re-constituted.

⁸T. Hyat, 1999, >The definition of destitution= and >The process of deprivation= unpublished notes for doctoral thesis, Oxford University ; taimur_hyat@mckinsey.com

⁹ Caste, gender and age can be used to bar people from certain kinds of work.

for work.¹⁰ The second aspect of the loss of control is a culmination of what Sen has called 'unfair inclusion' rather than exclusion.¹¹ Forms of labour exploitation become increasingly threatening to the subsistence of labour and so to its day to day reproduction. Early on, the right to the asset of one's own labour may be forfeited. This right may be sold (bonded) to others. The concept of dependence may be transformed and the labour of non-labouring dependents sold or bonded. The most extreme tactics do not involve the sale of labour so much as the marketing of the body itself (as in the sale of blood or of organs)¹² or the renting of the body (as in sex work).

Social aspects of destitution

¹⁰ Erb and Harriss-White, 2002

¹¹A.K. Sen, 2001, 'Exclusion and Inclusion' *Mainstream*, Nov 28th [p2 on South Asia Citizens Wire: <http://www.mnet.fr/aiindex>, Nov 28th 2001]

¹² V. Ram 2002, 'Karnataka's Unabating Kidney Trade' and 'International traffic in Human Organs' both *Frontline* , vol 19 no 7, March 12th <http://www.flonnet.com/fl1907/19070730.htm>

It has already become evident that destitution is not simply an outcome of market exchange or >market failures= to be measured in the monetary domain, it is also the loss of enfranchisement or entitlements which are not price-mediated, e.g. the loss of access to >common= property and public goods and services, the disappearance of political legitimacy and citizenship i.e. the violation of political rights. It means the collapse of moral units above the level of the individual, the draining away of social support. In India, belonging to a scheduled caste/ scheduled tribe, being old and disabled , in Peru, being of Andean indigeneity, migrant, young and out of school, are serious conditions of multiple disadvantage¹³ but not sufficient conditions for the withdrawal of obligation. Rather, categories of people must be recognised as unworthy of exercising social claims and therefore rejected from relationships of accountability. Rather than being passively socially excluded (from a vector of entitlements from which the vast bulk of the population are also excluded ¹⁴) they may be actively socially *expelled*. No less than for assets and labour we have to ask what triggers such losses in customary and moral worth, such extraordinary transformations of social and political status and such an extreme violation of political, economic and social rights.

The transgression of norms of inclusion - of pure, >clean= practices, >healthy= sociality, >normal= sexuality and socially compliant behaviour - will be one kind of trigger for social

¹³ Belissa Rojas and Iris Roca Rey, 2002, Pobreza Y Exclusion Social : Una Aproximacion al caso Peruano *Bulletin, Institute fr Etudes Andines*, 31, (1) pp 699 –720 ; GRADE 2003 *Etnicidad, Pobreza u Exclusion Social : la Situacion de la Poblacion Indigena Urbana en el Peru* Lima, GRADE; See CONADIS : <http://www.conadisperu.gob.pe/> for the condition of disabled people in Peru.

¹⁴R. Saith, C Ruggeri-Laderchi and F. Stewart, 2002, >Poverty : alternative realities, an overview= paper to the NCAER Workshop on Alternative Conceptualisations of Poverty, April 2002; R. Saith, 2001, >Social Exclusion= www.qeh.ox.ac.uk; Working Paper Series

expulsion.¹⁵ The moral regulation of inclusion has varying plasticity. It will be specific to ethnicities, castes, religions, genders and places. Being social constructs, moral rules are contested and can be changed.

The departure or death of those whose duty is to support; or their failure to support a dependent as a result of desertion/divorce/bigamy¹⁶ or dispute, physical inability and incapacity are other triggers. Other kinds of abuse or neglect of this duty, such as the relations of dysfunctional, reconstituted, violent families when a parent remarries, or the sexual abuse of children result in minors' or widows' taking to the streets.¹⁷

Change to the body is a third. The latter may in turn take several forms. The neglect of actual or perceived or symbolic cleanliness, (as happens in addiction); the inability to bear a (male) child; deformity or disability in childhood; signs and symptoms of certain kinds of disease, mental illness or psychological state; even outward signs of extreme malnutrition or starvation may precipitate disenfranchisement. A destitute person is one who is unable to choose to be a *sanyasi*. To have cancer was enough for one Indian woman to be thrown out of her household onto the mercy of abusive police. AIDS is still extremely stigmatising in Peru and may be sufficient for social exclusion.¹⁸ Heroin and alcohol-addicted people or those with leprosy will usually be turned away from religious orders and sometimes rejected even as objects of charity from them.

¹⁵ Despite protective law, the expulsion of, and violence against, gay people in Latin America is much more pronounced in rural areas than in urban sites where homosexuality is actually more visible. Roger Raupp Rios *Sexual Rights of Gays, Lesbians and Transgender Persons in Latin America* <http://www.clam.org.br/pdf/rogeringles.pdf>

¹⁶J. Gupta 2002, >Women, second on the land agenda= *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 4th, <http://www.epw.org.in>

¹⁷ Centre of Information and Education for the Prevention of Drug Abuse, Lima, Peru : <http://www.cedro.org.pe/actividades.htm>. S. Speak, 2004, 'Degrees of destitution : A Typology of Homelessness in Developing Countries' *Housing Studies* 19, 3, pp 465-482. There is a large literature on street children, critically reviewed by Roy Gigengack, 2006, *Young, Damned and Banda*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam School of Social Research, chapter 1.

¹⁸ E. Gotuzzo Herencia, 2004, 'La Epidemia del SIDA : Situacion del peru al 2005' *Rev. Med. Hered.* 15, 4, pp 179- 180. <http://www.redsidaperu.org/Organizacion/LasOrganizaciones.htm>

The process of expulsion may involve forcible physical exclusion from the space of a moral unit like a caste or a village. In Andean culture the word for poor is *waqcha* meaning 'orphan' and drawing attention to the absence of social ties and the instrumental value as well as intrinsic worth of the family.¹⁹ The Hindi word for poverty - *daridhratha* - means 'roving' and implies the breakdown of 'community'.²⁰ It may take the form of uncompensated and unpunished violence to persons, at the extreme (as in the waves of fascistic communal violence in India in 2002) seizure of assets or the complete destruction of property. This expulsion is deemed justifiable and legitimate by those practising it.

However it also must not be forgotten that expulsion from moral and political society, and exclusion from work or from social protection derived from work or from the preconditions for the day to day reproduction of the body or from citizenship are some of the many conditions necessary for the accumulation of wealth by others. This is how destitution enters political economy. It is not simply that the technical requirements for labour processes require some kinds of bodies to be denied access (and with labour displacing growth characteristic of the last decade it is entirely to be expected that excluding reformulations of the eligibility of the body for labour markets will appear). It is not simply that revenue for social sector spending is simultaneously squeezed, and thus eligibility for social protection by the state will need to be restricted.²¹ It is also that exclusion from exploitation is based on, and legitimated by, culture. The latter entitles society actively to practice oppression. The state is complicit in this process. This theme is revisited later in this essay.

¹⁹ A Figuero 2003 'Poverty Studies in peru. Towards a more Inclusive Study of Exclusion' *WeD Working Paper 05, ESRC Research Group on Wellbeing in Developing Countries* ESRC.

²⁰G.M. Gopal, 2001, 'The Challenge of ending Poverty in India: Towards a new Approach' draft paper to the National Commission for the Review of the Working of the Constitution (NCAER, New Delhi)

²¹ M. Russell and R Malhotra, 2001, 'Capitalism and Disability' pp 211-228 in (eds) L. Panitch and C. Leys > *A World of Contradictions*=*Socialist Register 2002*. London, Merlin

The state: criminalised poverty and law-induced destitution

Within the territorial boundaries of a state not all people are citizens with the political and economic rights that are slowly being constructed on the basis of citizenship. Lack of citizenship does not only apply to international migrants and refugees. In Peru, despite decades of UN funded projects of incorporation, the formal recognition of native ethnic groups is far from complete : towards the end of the 20th century 1516 peasant communities and 320 native communities were known not to be titled. This meant that about 27% of these populations lacked any official recognition or rights.²² But destitution is not simply a serious condition of deprivation of citizenship, illegitimacy and/or invisibility before the state. Under certain conditions (for example those under which the state seizure of land, state-planned, development- induced displacement or state-backed, corporate displacement fail to compensate or >rehabilitate= evicted people) the law and institutions of development may actively cause destitution - both in its letter and in its practice.²³ Abuse at school may also force children into destructive street environments.²⁴ The laws which regulate destitution also exacerbate it. Destitution is also a hard matter of criminalising law.

²² Valera, 1998, in GRADE, 2003, op cit. Figueroa and Barron 2003, op cit.

²³ Figueroa and Barron, 2003, op cit.; Barclay, 1998; Aroca, 1996 in GRADE, 2003 op cit; R. Sharma, 2002, >*Aftershocks: The Rough Guide to Democracy*= VHS PAL 66 min actindia@vsnl.com; V. Dhagamwar, S. De and N. Verma, 2003, *Industrial Development and Displacement : the People of Korba* New Delhi, Sage

²⁴ Gigengack, 2006, pp29-30

Vagrancy is a crime. In India, beggary must be >prevented= under the Act with that name.

The state varies greatly in its complicity with beggary. It appears to be most complicit in rural areas and small towns and most intolerant in metropolitan cities. The occupations of destitute people are criminalised - not simply sex-work, or the couriering or peddling of drugs but even mobile trading and squatter trading. An unregistered trading site and the erection of shelter are prosecutable under planning laws, pedestrians= rights and in terms of public nuisance and trespass. ²⁵ Certain kinds of addiction and self-predation are illegal. Children in need of care and protection, and children in conflict with the law and child labour fall under the jurisdiction of the judiciary and police.

The enforcement of these laws involves the removal and incarceration of such people. In Peru, many *serranos*, migrants from the Andes, were incarcerated without trial under suspicion of association with *Sendero Luminoso*, the rebel movement, a process which left them destitute on final release. ²⁶ In India, targets of preventive detention set for the police require the regular rounding up of homeless and destitute people. Lack of assets, access to law and/or literacy means many fail to secure bail or redress through the courts. Upon release, those not destitute beforehand are destitute after indeterminate periods of detention. The threat of eviction or detention for long periods creates incentives for collusive relations of avoidance involving pay-offs. Institutionalised relations of extortion increase the costs of destitution. These transactions are accompanied by violence. Beating is allowed in law upon apprehension of criminality, and sexual violence on the part of the police is far from being unknown.

²⁵The pincer of urban land rents and planning laws mean that poor people are prevented from renting or investing in shelter.

²⁶ Rocas and Rey, 2002, op. cit. GRADE 2003, *Etnicidad, Poberza y Exclusion Social : la Situacion de la Poblacion Indigena Urbana en el Peru*. Lima. GRADE

In India, recent changes to these laws increase the formal powers of police with respect to destitute people. The Juvenile Justice Act for example covers children in need of care and protection and children in conflict with the law. The first category includes street children, child labourers (waiters, garage hands etc.) orphans and the children of beggars and sex workers. The latter category consists of criminal offenders or children framed for criminal offences. The Act was altered in 2000 after consultation with activists (which ensures that the current act will be very difficult to amend in future). The upper age of >children= covered has been increased from 16 to 18, the role of the police enhanced and the destination of preference is segregated institutions. In practice, the older teenagers are harassing younger children; police have institutionalised relations of extortion with juveniles on the streets and part of their operating budgets varies directly with the number of juvenile offences recorded, giving them incentives to harass children. States like Chhattisgarh, already under pressure to reduce and offload social sector spending, are withdrawing from the provision of social security and are eager to have their institutions privately run.

The duty of the state to provide shelter (and other economic and social rights) is observed in the breach. ²⁷ In Lima, there appear to be no state-run night shelters for the stream of migrants from the rural *sierra*. A mere Rs 1 crore (,150,000/ \$250,000) ²⁸ has been allocated to cater for the needs of homeless people throughout India. In New Delhi in 2002, there were 14 night shelters providing floors or sleeping benches for an estimated 5.6% of the homeless. ²⁹ In one such, up to 400 men bed down in lines on mats for Rs 6 a night. There is little provision possible for storing belongings. There appeared to be one tap; showers and latrines were in a foul state of maintenance and blankets infested with lice. Lights are kept blazing to prevent conditions conducive to sexual abuse. >Butterflies= is a grim room for some 50

²⁷ The number of shelters has been reduced from 19 to 14 in two years. I.P, Singh 2001 >Government Policy is Silent on Pavement Workers= *Labour File* 7,6-7, pp34-36

²⁸ Less than 0.000,000.1% of GDP

²⁹S. Menon 2001 >Workers who shelter on the Pavement= *Labour File* 7, 6-7 pp 5-13

children, also sleeping in the same conditions of surveillance. Some children are able to store personal belongings in metal trunks. A second shelter, erected after some agitation by workers, is a flimsy temporary tent of polythene and bamboo with no lighting. The Corporation acts as if it needs actively to repel this workforce and between 1998 and 2002, one third of its shelters had been being closed³⁰

³⁰ The number of shelters has been reduced from 19 to 14 in two years. I.P, Singh 2001 >Government Policy is Silent on Pavement Workers= *Labour File* 7,6-7, pp34-36; AAA, 2002, *Basere ki Kahani : the Problems in the Night Shelters of Delhi , using participatory research*. AAA Delhi (www.indev.nic.in/delhihomeless).

Social responses to destitution are contradictory. On the one hand society follows and develops the assumptions in the law as it is practised. The selective violation of rights is sanctioned by society. It initiates social expulsion, practises notions of justice involving >stigma= which permit harsh oppressive treatment outside the law. It condones unpunished illegal extortion, mob justice and the reinforcement of exclusion. It gives a customary licence to harass (including sexually), to abuse, to steal from, to be violent towards, to push into impure space and not to come to the aid of destitute people. The suspected abuse of entry barriers to accepted and institutionalised kinds of dependence such as (religious/yogic) begging, public suspicion of deliberate injury or faked disability, and of the deliberate organisation of child beggars by beggar-magnates are comparatively benign devices commonly used to withhold nurture from destitute people.³¹ The justification for such behaviour also involves the fear of criminality - particularly of theft and of the consequences of addiction. It involves views on >idleness= and its lack of worth, the stigmatisation of occupations as physically dirty, anti-social and illegal (drugs); and notions of ugliness and of destitution as a challenge to modernity.

On the other hand norms of pity, belief in >divine credit=, ³² charity and kindness motivate selective transfers to destitute people (for example by rice millers, petty traders, owners of meals-hotels and ticket collectors). The deserving destitute are the old, widows, the sick and disabled; the undeserving destitute are glue-sniffing children, working-age addicts and drug peddlars, sex-workers and the masses of unskilled migrant casual wage labour necessary to the working of every urban economy. The economy of charity fluctuates seasonally due to changes to norms of generosity at the major festivals of each religion. In this pitting of contradictory social forces, the rare but radical assertions of justice for destitute groups must

³¹S.K. Jha >The Beggars of Kathmandu= *The Kathmandu Post* (25th February, 2002)

³²Kamat, op cit.

not be overlooked.³³ In both Peru and India, movements exist for social restitution and empowerment and for the re-inclusion of disempowered people into the pool of claimants from the state.

It is evident that the exclusivity of the law assuages deep fears of flows of migrant destitute people, protects the economic interests manifest in such fear and prevents the state from providing support to the destitute. In so doing, the state ensures that some categories of people are expendable and expended. The process of destitution is the most extreme manifestation of the process of primary/primitive accumulation in which (while preconditions for productive capital are established) labour has to be stripped of its rights to property. But in destitution the stripping of rights exceeds those to property, for labour is stripped of all other rights as well.

Having almost nothing, not functioning and being expelled - some distinctions

Having characterised economic, social and political aspects of destitution,, it becomes possible to map it onto the paradigms of poverty explored elsewhere in this book.³⁴ Income and capability poverty and social exclusion overlap with destitution in complex ways in which time, place, ascribed social status and language appear to play differentiating roles.

³³ See <http://www.geocities.com/righttofood/> ; Figueroa and Rabbon, 2003, op cit.

³⁴ Laderchi C.R., Saith, R and Stewart, F. , 2003, Does it matter that we don't agree on the definition of poverty? A comparison of four approaches *Working Paper 107*, Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford.
<http://www2.qeh.ox.ac.uk/research/qehwp-list2.html>

Income poverty: Since long term destitution is a contradiction in terms, many destitute people will die. Not all destitute people who survive however are without income and of those without income not all are unoccupied. The most common occupation reported is ‘alms seeking’ or beggary. Even though not all beggars are destitute, many destitute people beg. Begging is often the only option for destitute elderly and disabled people, orphaned and abused children, dependents of interned people, those who are mentally ill, people whose sexuality is deemed unacceptable by society, those affected by having had leprosy or having AIDS and addicts. Begging is a negotiated exchange somewhere between a gift proper and a market transaction involving a transient relationship of obligation of giver to receiver in which the beggar has power derived from >coercive subordination=. ³⁵ Transfers are often in kind rather than cash.

Destitution resulting from the loss of rights to dependent status often leads to self predatory work. Formerly dependent destitute women are commonly thought to be forced into sex work. This brings with it a new dependence upon exploitative pimps who >rescue= them from homelessness.

Mentally ill vagrants have lost dependent status, as have street children and elderly beggars.³⁶ Although there are norms regulating access to the disposal and recycling of solid waste and a socially regulated labour force may defend its access to recycling, ³⁷ many of those who have

³⁵ The phrase is James Staples, 2002, op.cit..That societies have strict rules about the acceptability of begging can be deduced from the behaviour of non-government organisations, increasingly corporatised and competitive, which rely on a form of institutionalised and intermediated beggary known as >fund raising=.

³⁶ One investigation into homeless women found that almost all were mentally ill. Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan, 2001, *The Capital= Homeless*, New Delhi, AAA, p33

³⁷ J. Beall, 1999 'The Role of Households and Livelihood Systems in the Management of Solid Waste in South Asia.' *Waterlines* 17, no. 3.

K. Gill 2004 “Waste as Work: Measuring and Comparing Poverty and Job-Related Well Being” paper to the British Association of South Asian Studies Annual Conference, Univ of East Anglia.

been deprived of dependence have no alternative but to be occupied in scavenging.

<http://www.staff.brad.ac.uk/akundu/basas/basasc04programme.htm>

Capability deprivation : not being able to be supported, sheltered, nourished or educated : I have found evidence to relate destitution to two aspects of capability deprivation. The first is not being able to be dependent. Lack of support will result from the absence of support as well as the loss of rights to it. Deprivation in the space of >being supported= shows up in individuated or collapsed households. These are unusual forms of household in India. NCAER/UNDP data for 33,000 rural households in 1993-4 show that just 1.4% of households are individuated - in which a single person lives without immediate physical and social support.³⁸ Collapsed households are far from all being destitute in terms of assets and income. The All India data show that only 17 % of such households are income poor - below the poverty line - compared with 35% nationwide. By contrast, in a rural hamlet of Scheduled Caste people living with leprosy in Chhattisgarh state in 2002, one third of households were single member and all lived with malnutrition in extreme income poverty.³⁹ Capability dimensions other than being housed are hardly ever considered in relation to the condition of destitution. The All-India data for single member households reveals that they are surprisingly deprived in the capability dimensions of education and health.⁴⁰ While 58% of all rural households are capability poor, 86% of those in single member households fall into this category.

³⁸These statistics were calculated directly from the NCAER data base. In fact it is not known if destitute people were included in this sample survey.

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⁴⁰ This analysis is Ruhi Saith=s. Capability poverty is defined by poverty in either the education space or the health space. Education poverty in individuated households where the minimum age is 18 is defined as *illiteracy*. Health poverty is in terms of reported *chronic illness*.

The second dimension of capability deprivation is not being sheltered. Not all homeless are destitute but many destitute people are homeless. The evidence for Peru reveals not so much collapsed, individuated households as destitute households, and remnants of households in collapsed houses. *Tugurios* are abandoned, old homes. Together with dilapidated buildings abandoned after earthquakes, they are invaded by homeless migrants. Although there is a state funded programme of finance for the rebuilding of homes destroyed by earthquakes there is no state support for the shelter of migrant labour.⁴¹

Homeless people are another category of those most severely deprived in other capability dimensions. In New Delhi for instance 56% of homeless people are also deprived in education, and illiterate. Sick people have been discovered to have been made destitute by a migration in order to seek health care. A high proportion of homeless people suffer serious respiratory illnesses, acute infections, skin disease and diarrhoea. Those without shelter also have a high incidence of severe mental illness and psycho-sexual disorders.⁴² Many homeless people have migrated to urban areas where the moral economy is thought to operate according to less restrictive rules than in villages, but just as this signifies freedom, it also means the loss of support. It is in urban areas that destitute people become visible to elites. What does the condition of not having shelter disable people from being and doing? Not having shelter means having no address. Not having an address disentitles people from identity (or food ration) cards which in turn deprives them from eligibility to elementary food security and social protection, and from establishing savings accounts in banks. In turn, this capability deprivation threatens the physical security of their savings. Not having an address disentitles people from eligibility for inclusion in any development projects at a homeless migrant's destination - and, because the migrant is usually a male household member - it may disentitle his dependents from access to developmental >rights= in his place of origin.

⁴¹ S. Speak, 2004, op cit.

⁴² AAA, 2001, p27; N. G. Desai et al, 2003 *Health Care beyond Zero : Ensuring a basic Right for the Homeless* AAA, Delhi, p12.

Not having shelter does not prevent people from working. Homeless migrant male workers live from casual, de-skilled (sometimes physically very punishing) labour at unregulated wages in order to remit money.⁴³ They are forced into homelessness in order to protect their access to employment - by the absence of cheap lodging close to the site of their work or the need to sleep by their equipment to prevent its theft. The loss of access to public goods and services means that the capability sets of destitute people do not include being clean, having clean clothes (or a change of clothes), or being able to wash privately. It means denial of access to defecate in the public spaces customarily given over to such purposes.⁴⁴ In Peru and India, public lavatories are extremely thin on the ground, poorly maintained and not affordable. It may even be difficult to find drinking water. Of course this does not mean that destitute people do not desire personal cleanliness, water and privacy to defecate as 'functionings'.

Not a state of not functioning : social expulsion, exclusion and survival: More than one philosopher of poverty has argued that extreme deprivation robs people of 'dignity', of 'a free human life', 'truly human functioning', 'full humanity' or 'human agency'.⁴⁵ Destitute people have been socially expelled, they have had economic assets and livelihoods, social status and support and political entitlements shorn from them. But, while beggars, scavengers and street children conduct themselves in public space in a way that may appear undignified to others, without wishing to romanticise, in private most are not without personal dignity, a

⁴³ According to AAA, 90% of homeless men in New Delhi do such work, 70% of whom are paid under the Minimum Wage (AAA, op.cit. , p29).

⁴⁴H. Mander, 2002, *Forgotten Lives: Public Policy and Poor People in India* New Delhi, ActionAid

⁴⁵ See M. Nussbaum 2000 'Women and Work: the Capabilities Approach' *The Little Magazine* volume 1 no 1 : <http://www.littlemag.com/2000/martha2.htm>
see O. O'Neill, 1994, pp231-2 in 'Hunger, Needs and Rights', in (ed) B. Harriss-White and R Hoffenberg *Food: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, Oxford, Blackwells

sense of self and stores of courage and kindness. ⁴⁶Just as there is a lag of some two months between complete starvation and death, so destitute people survive variable lengths of time before death in conditions of social exclusion. In surviving, people exert a fully human and worthy initiative and agency. They may also construct new social relations.

⁴⁶ See also Gigengack, 2006, op cit. pp173-5.

Destitute people search for new kinds common property resources and open access sites to which they may gain access in order to sleep. These places may bring them into contact with charity which may help to >capacitate= them. In urban areas in India, temples, mosques, churches, railway and bus stations provide such space, though the terms of access may be unreliable and arbitrary - and expulsion often practised against them. Destitute people will occupy physically and socially hazardous spaces, for example land adjacent to polluted water bodies and garbage dumps. Here too they may be evicted. Or, as in the case of people living with the disabilities of having had leprosy, the state and society allows them to make socially and physically isolated settlements - >leper colonies=. It is not only those who >rove=, who have no sites to store possessions and no security for what they possess save that provided by their person, those living in marginal places also lack such elementary security.

Survival requires income or transfers of food, clothing and medicine. Destitute people get these resources from begging, from types of labour which are rejected by the casual wage labour force (very heavy, defiling and dirty work) from access to new common property resources (waste from meals hotels), theft and work in the illegal distribution of legal and illegal goods, notably hard drugs. In both rural and urban areas destitute people are commonly addicted to alcohol, solvents, narcotics or hard drugs.⁴⁷ Addictions are physically and psychologically destructive therapies for intolerable conditions and costly items of expenditure for people already in severest poverty. While addiction may compromise health irreversibly, both the violence and the theft that figure in public opinion are limited by the physical weakness of socially expelled addicts.

⁴⁷ ; N. G. Desai et al, 2003 *Health Care beyond Zero : Ensuring a basic Right for the Homeless* AAA, Delhi

Destitute people have lost the social relations by means of which potential capability is converted to actual functioning (relations which have been neglected in applied research on capabilities and functioning). Yet dependence and solidarity, being and doing, can be reconstituted. The gender division of labour may be changed, most notably when men find water and cook. Although homeless people are rarely female, quasi-families may be created, as when elderly women beggars attempt to care for street children. Street children develop strong bonds with one another.⁴⁸ Homeless migrant workers form work-gangs; beggars work in groups which will then develop regulative rules. Groups may refuse to share individual takings, at the same time as they pay a member not to beg but to protect possessions (such as cooking vessels and stoves). Beggars in rural Chhattisgarh have organised routes and territories, particular attire⁴⁹ and ways of presenting themselves. In the case of a settlement of leprosy-affected beggars, all disintegrated in their villages of origin, although the general pooling of resources from begging was avoided, very small scale caste-specific credit and insurance institutions had been created. Housing (hovels) was in rationed supply but a combination of the insultingly inadequate state pension and proceeds of begging enabled households with healthier members to accumulate the possessions of abject poverty.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ An estimated 4% of homeless people in New Delhi are women - see AAA, 2001, p ix, p25.

⁴⁹ About the presentation of self, Kamat writes: 'People who beg (>honourably=) in the name of religion have to grow a beard, wear saffron clothes and ash. The fortune teller wears peacock feathers and make up.. The transvestites ... have altogether different yet distinct style. .. The beggars who use animals for fund raising have to decorate their pets too.= K.L.

Kamat, 1979/updated 1999 > *The Begging Profession* = <http://www.kamat.com/kalranga/bhiksha/begging.htm>

⁵⁰ Deeparapara is a settlement with a well and a water pump. It Scheduled Caste residents are reckoned by caste lepers in the main village of Premnagar to be nicely segregated there. People live in tiny houses - upwards of unventilated and unlit cells, all of 6ft by 7ft, in which there is a mud stove, earthenware or plastic water pots, a bed, one or two shelves for utensils and for bottles and tins of oil, lentils and salt, lines strung out for a spare set of clothes, bandages, shawls and blankets, and bundles of firewood looped up to the rafters which support the tiled roof. These glorified cupboards become ovens in summer. They have been slowly and painfully constructed and repaired with remittances, and with the returns from begging and occasional wage work. The street is clean and magnificently paved, courtesy of the state. Many of the adults of Deeparapara are severely malnourished.

Institutionalised indignity does not necessarily denote lack of self esteem. Beggars may have pride in their resourcefulness, physical stamina and capacity to fend for dependents - if they have any.⁵¹ Others have stories explaining their origin, the cause of their condition and their worth. Begging has entry barriers. Further, caste rules of commensality and proscriptions of intermarriage survive the loss of assets and income disentanglement. Beggars and homeless people may organise protection in order to sleep, particularly in the larger towns and cities where savings and possessions are at risk of theft. In Delhi public spaces (pavements and parks) are privatised at night by *thiyawalahs* or >bedlords= who erect protective barriers, lay out beds which they rent out - along with bedding - and pay off the police.

In Peru, between 1,500 and 2,000 children - *piranhitas* - live rough on the streets in gangs which, zealously guarding their territories, parody the private property rights that pervade urban Peruvian society. About 1,000 to 1,200 are reckoned to live in Lima. Concentrated in public space on the outskirts of the city - *cones* - destitute children occupy rat-infested dumps, wrecked and abandoned vehicles, slaughter house peripheries, garbage deposits from which food can be scrounged, the edges of shopping malls and hazardous spaces adjacent to motorways.⁵² The occasional doss in a cheap hotel is vital for washing, sex and sleep. The fact that the lives of some are reproducible and a minority of street children have formed real or fictive families and are rearing a second generation has attracted the attention of scholar-activists. For the most part their lives are distinguished by trade in , and addictions to, the solvent *terokal* or to marihuana or cocaine. Glue sniffing gives destitute street children a specific olfactory marker.⁵³ Roy Gigengack's painstaking ethnographic work has revealed the highly differentiated livelihoods of Latin American street children, stratified by age, gender and place. Over and above drugs, they include other stigmatised extra-legal activity (begging, thieving and prostitution), petty services (bootblacks, squeegees, car minders and

⁵¹ H. Mander ,2001, *Unheard Voices: Stories of Forgotten Lives* New Delhi, Penguin

⁵² G Agurto, 1998, 'Mundo Pirana' *Caretas* no 1527

⁵³ Centre of Information and Education for the prevention of Drug Abuse – CEDRO:
<http://www.CEDRO.org.pe/actividades.htm> ; Gigengack, 2006, chapter 2, pp 173-5 and p 242 et seq

protection) and petty trade and production (packing, packaging and chewing gum peddling). Yet, while many may be able to survive, some die of the complications of drug abuse and malnutrition. Of this, Gigengack comments that for a child to perish 'is not that simple. Slowly wasting away is a complicated process. It entails at least the state, the non-governmental bureaucracies and the social production of indifference'(2006, p203). Other children commit suicide and/or kill – mainly over drugs – in what he concludes are tragic processes of destruction, self-destruction and self- and social mockery, the internalised projection of the destruction visited by society and of children's failed attempts to find order.

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To sum up, destitution is an extreme condition of income poverty; destitute people have been socially expelled; most destitute people are extremely deprived in capability dimensions of poverty too. So there is also a high probability that those deprived in all dimensions will be destitute. The state plays an active role in the process of destitution. The process is therefore very hard to reverse. A small minority manages to retreat from destitution to poverty.

Responses outside political economy?

⁵⁴ Gigengack, 2006, op cit. pp200-203; pp 344-353. See also for Lima G. Agutro, 2003 'Saga pirana. Tres 'ninos de la calle' siete anos despues historias de supervivencia en el mar del desamparo' *Cateras* no 1792

>Political economy does not recognise the unoccupied worker.. The beggar, the unemployed, the starving [and] the destitute are figures which exist not for it, but only for the eyes of doctors, judges, gravediggers and beadles. Nebulous.. figures which do not belong within the province of political economy= (Marx)⁵⁵

In this essay we have taken issue with the idea that destitution cannot be incorporated into political economy. Let us now consider Marx=s examples of those for whom destitute people exist - meaning that they are visible and cannot be avoided. Very little is known. In both Peru and India, >doctors= in Government hospitals have been observed to refuse and delay treatment. Treatment for mental illness resulting from stress, alienation and insecurity is completely absent.⁵⁶ Such neglect reinforces the process of expulsion and of denial of rights.⁵⁷ In India, >judges= - magistrates - are reported as generally satisfied that preventive detention is indeed in the interest of public order and, in enforcing the law, they support the private interests of the police. In Peru and India, >beadles= (local police) have a predatory and violent >rent-seeking= relationship with destitute people which may descend to extortion from children. And the >gravediggers= - at least in Delhi - are under allegation of having dumped a body in a drain. Unclaimed bodies are supposed to be reported to the Police and disposed of by local authorities. In New Delhi in 2001, 84% of such bodies were of beggars.⁵⁸ So destitute people are not >nebulous= , as Marx wrote. Instead they are the object of institutionalised state and social hostility.

⁵⁵ Marx, 1862/1990 *Capital, Volume 1* London, Lawrence and Wishart, p603

⁵⁶ Figuero and Barron, op cit; GRADE, op cit.; Gigengack, op cit, p203.; AAA, 2002, op cit, p10; N. G. Desai et al, 2003 *Health Care beyond Zero : Ensuring a basic Right for the Homeless* AAA, Delhi

⁵⁷ AAA, 2001, op.cit. p35

⁵⁸Times of India September 18th, 2001

Responses inside political economy?

On the rare instances when they have been consulted, destitute people report >basic needs= to be dominated by the search for physical security for the body and for possessions, for personal cleanliness and washing facilities, and for access to health (which is a concept including food and drinking water).

A state or political response involves resources, the crucial preconditions for the release of which are twofold. Both are very restrictive. First, destitute people have to have citizenship and voting rights - as they do but rarely in some slums. Second, the >negative externalities= attributed to them (such as physical pollution,⁵⁹ the threat to the security of property and person or fears of such threats) have to threaten the wellbeing of elites.⁶⁰ Responses include eviction on the one hand⁶¹ and infrastructure and rudimentary social transfers on the other. Social interests which profit from the institutionalisation of destitution perpetuate partial and token forms of >inclusion= which, in being inadequate and rationed, accentuate the disadvantages of the rest.

In Peru, for example, even though *piranitas* may threaten elite tourists, the anti-poverty response from the state, targeted food for school age children, excludes those who need it most, since the street children are mostly out of school.⁶² In 1999, a Special Solidarity Tax for Abandoned Children (Impuesta Especial de Solidaridad para la Ninez en Abandono) taxed the issue of passports. While \$60m had been raised between 1999 and 2003, none was known by the Peruvian Congress to have been invested in street children, one gang of whom

⁵⁹Ignoring the fact that physical pollution is a direct function of wealth and income.

⁶⁰This includes the threat to India=s competitive advantage in the markets for FDI and tourism.

⁶¹ In the 1990s in Peru, Fujimore evicted large numbers of people from squatter settlements in and around Lima, turning them from 'surviving homeless' to crisis homeless. S. Speak, 2004, op cit.

⁶² E.Vasquez n.d. *Public Budgets and Social expense: the Urgency of Monitoring and Evaluation* Observatory for Infants and Adolescents

camps a mere 100m from the Government Palace.⁶³ The state will not tackle the regulation of the glue trade or admit street children to school.

For a further example, the Indian system of benefits for those below the poverty line is not accessible to people without an address. In any case, were destitute people to be made eligible, the Old Age Pension for people under the Poverty Line, for which All-India enabling legislation was enacted in 1995, is about Rs 125 per month (2 or \$3),⁶⁴ supplemented in some states by a daily meal and clothing, which are now under pressure. Everywhere it is characterised by harsh eligibility criteria and inadequate coverage. The age threshold, at 60, is quite inappropriate. Very few homeless working labourers, let alone destitute people, will reach this age. The life expectation of manual labourers is lagging one or two generations behind that of professionals or the landed elite. The pension age threshold for poor people is equivalent to age 75 to 80 in OECD countries. In addition, pensions beneficiaries who are disabled face non-negligible extra costs due to disability, for which they are not compensated.⁶⁵

⁶³ G. Agurto, 2003. op cit.

⁶⁴ Contrast this with the Minimum Wage: Rs 50 per day (Rs 1400 / ,20 / ,35 per month)

⁶⁵ For leprosy-affected pensioners the costs of dressing wounds amounts on the average to the equivalent of 6 months= disability pension (and bribes take away another month of pension). Disabled workers in S. India spend on average the equivalent of 4 months= earnings from one male agricultural labour on the direct and indirect costs of treatment. (Erb and Harriss-White, 2002, op.cit.)

By and large, organised civil society is complicit in this neglect. There are nothing more than ad hoc links between destitute people and other kinds of oppressed people or those who for other reasons are unable to earn wages covering their daily maintenance and generational reproduction. There is no solidarity on the part of the latter for the former.⁶⁶ In general, aid and development agencies do not see destitution as a development problem they can address. One kind of NGO response is to rehabilitate individual destitute people (particularly street children) or to provide facilities to which they may turn (e.g. shelters for mentally disabled vagrants and sanctuaries for children). Generacion, an NGO with 16 years of experience with street children in Lima, has three such homes, with 105 beds for street children. It also defends them from abuse and has attempted to find livelihoods for some. Instituto Mundo Libre, funded by the US Anti Narcotics Affairs Office and the Pan-American Health Organisation, has separate homes for street boys and girls.⁶⁷

Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan exemplifies an activist, collectivist response. In 2002, having mapped homelessness in the capital and consulted homeless people on their most urgent needs, AAA is supplying health care two nights a week. On another two nights AAA tries to supply affection and encouragement, blankets to the neediest, counselling to addicts,⁶⁸ hospital admission and admission to shelters. The underlying long term objective is to create a cadre of development workers - with skills in health and legal knowledge - from among the street children, beggars and homeless workers themselves. By 2005, it had created street contact points and trained a first generation of para-counsellors, para-lawyers, para de-tox advisors and para-medics from among the population of homeless people. It had mobilised two groups of male homeless workers and one group of women collectively to manage two night shelters in the commercial heart of Delhi and one in the school of an evicted village which had encroached onto the bank of the Yamuna river. It was thinking in terms of a federation of homeless people.⁶⁹ Lawyers were being mobilised to scrap the criminalizing beggary and vagrancy laws. A small number of elite schools had also been persuaded to allow homeless people to sleep in classrooms and the model had spread to other Indian

⁶⁶ A participatory study of the problems of homeless people revealed this graphically; AAA, 2002, p17.

⁶⁷ <http://mundolibre.tsi.com.pe/> <http://casageneracion.com/>

⁶⁸ And attempts to gain access to de-addiction therapy.

⁶⁹ *AAA Update* vol 5 no 18, October 2005 p1.

cities.⁷⁰ A rare example of where this might lead can be found in Kolkata, where a social movement of sex workers is creating new identities and communities. Politically constructed through ideology, using Freirian conscientisation and education, an egalitarian organisation has been developed in which work is legitimated, solidarity extended to those facing similar forms of oppression and an agenda struggled for. Their political goals include decriminalisation, trades union rights and rights as citizens.⁷¹ All these examples are of unusual NGOs and movements.

All societies have destitute people. The differences in the case of India are their large numbers and their invisibility. Their numbers are thought to be relatively as well as absolutely smaller in Peru. But by definition their numbers cannot be known.. The 2001 Indian Census did not attempt to census destitute people and the 2001 count of the capital=s homeless is reported as having been severely compromised.⁷² The 1991 Indian Census estimate of the homeless is 2 million. Those suffering the after effects of leprosy are thought to be about 4.5 million.⁷³ In this essay, the creation and selective survival of destitute people has been shown to be built into the structure of society, economy and state, and, *pace* Marx, is an integral part of political economy. For the poorest people, anti poverty policy is development. For destitute people anti poverty policy is not nearly enough. Financial resources for a political response to destitution are entirely inadequate. But funds by themselves are necessary but insufficient conditions for a developmental response to destitution. Even so, they are likely to be easier to come by than a change in the social and

⁷⁰ A. Mishra, 2004, *Pune's Homeless: Living on the Fringe* Pune4change (cyda@vsnl.com) . In Pune 9,000 people are homeless; 60% have been living on the pavements for more than 6 years..

⁷¹N. Gooptu 2002, 'Sex workers in Calcutta and the Dynamics of Collective Action : Political Activism, Community Identity and Group Behaviour' in (eds) J. Heyer, F. Stewart and R. Thorp *Group Behaviour and Development* Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp 227 -252

⁷² I.P. Singh, 2001, > Census of the Homeless : A Painful Farce and Assault= *The First City*, April, pp 56-59.

⁷³H. Mander , 2002, p40

political institutions of (un)accountability which generate a condition affecting millions of people worldwide.

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