



# The Meaning of Poverty



“ Focusing your life solely on making a buck shows a certain poverty of ambition. It asks too little of yourself. Because it's only when you hitch your wagon to something larger than yourself that you realise your true potential. ”

Barack Obama

## Just imagine if you've never been to school...

How would you feel? You are not able to write your name, read simple words, or count money. You have low self-esteem. You are open to being exploited, cheated and abused. You don't understand official documents but have to endorse them anyway. You use a thumb print and feel humiliated ... Moreover, if you're a woman, your opinion is not important. The word of your 8 year old son may carry more weight. You fear the police and public officials, and have little or no understanding of your basic rights, including your rights over your children, your property, your inheritance and your body.

Many of the women that Kamla Foundation works with, fall into the above category. As a result of extreme poverty over 90% of the women in the rural regions we work in, have had little or no education.

Much has been written about the meaning of poverty. What we find through our work and frequent visits to marginalised communities in India is that poverty:

- deprives people of their security and well-being;
- deprives people not only of safe water and adequate food, clothing and shelter, but also education and healthcare;
- takes away people's rights, and their freedom, dignity and peace of mind;
- puts people's lives in danger and robs them of their future.

Of course, poverty is not just about physical deprivation, it is also about lack of opportunity and loss of hope (poverty of spirit).

I would argue that poverty is defined relative to the standards of living in a society at a specific time. People live in poverty when they are denied an income sufficient for their material needs and when these circumstances exclude them from taking part in activities which are an accepted part of daily life in that society.

Bhupendra Mistry

*The existence of poverty in the 21st century is a scar on all our consciences.*

*See reverse of this leaflet for some very thought provoking quotes.*



# Poverty...



*"Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings."*

Nelson Mandela

*"In a country well governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of. In a country badly governed, wealth is something to be ashamed of."*

Confucius

*"Women do two thirds of the world's work. Yet they earn only one tenth of the world's income and own less than one per cent of the world's property. They are among the poorest of the world's poor."*

Barber B. Conable, Jr.

*"Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organised conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe."*

Frederick Douglass

*"Poverty is everyone's problem. It cuts across any line you can name: age, race, social, geographic or religious. Whether you are black or white; rich, middle-class or poor, we are ALL touched by poverty."*

Kathleen Blanco

*"No man can tell whether he is rich or poor by turning to his ledger. It is the heart that makes a man rich. He is rich or poor according to what he is, not according to what he has."*

Henry Ward Beecher

*"It is unacceptable that someone can work full time - and work hard - and not be able to lift themselves out of poverty."*

Sherrod Brown

*"The inevitable consequence of poverty is dependence"*

Samuel Johnson

*"If the misery of the poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin."*

Charles Darwin

*"The real tragedy of the poor is the poverty of their aspirations."*

Adam Smith

*"Poverty often deprives a man of all spirit and virtue; it is hard for an empty bag to stand upright"*

Benjamin Franklin

*"Money won't create success, the freedom to make it will."*

Nelson Mandela



If you are interested in working with us, funding our work or would like further information, please contact: Bhupendra Mistry at Kamla Foundation

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