

## Hunger and Voice: Marginalization and Impoverishment towards a Chaotic Social Ecology

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### Abstract

After 72 years of independence India is still suffering from the malicious problem of hunger and poverty. In the recent report produced by International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) India ranked 100TH in terms of hungry children and women, in count and status, whereas, 21.7 percent of it's people are below the poverty line. According to National Crime Record Bureau, in the year 2015 the total numbers of farmers who have committed suicide is 5670. A survey of FAO reveals that nearly 75 percent of food insecure and vulnerable people are directly or indirectly related to agriculture. Another report of FAO has revealed that about 78 percent of the farmers are ready to quit agriculture. This is really alarming as well as distressing while we have made a call for complete digitization to create ICT driven modern India. Even in chronic hunger India's position is worse than African countries and also some neighbouring countries like Bangladesh. Hunger is associated with poverty that refrain poor people to accept ample of food, in quantity and quality. If hunger is the consequence, poverty is certainly the cause and if both poverty and hunger are the consequences, the silence is the cause that is invasive, intrinsic and invisible by nature (sometimes may be). Hunger is a status which makes us physiologically stressed and weak, mentally insulated and psychologically depressed. Poverty can be measured in terms of income. In other way the other forms of poverty are educational starvation, cultural deprivation and social depletion. Silence can be perceived in terms of inability of a person to raise voices against discrimination, both social and economic atrocities as well as a decision to go silent whenever it needs to utter voices. On this preamble the present study was conducted in Beraberri GP under Nadia district of WB. 150 respondents were selected purposively and they were interviewed thoroughly with a structured interview schedule. The results of the study reveals that the cobweb of hunger are poverty are creating a chaotic situation as far as the social and economic issues are concerned. Miscommunication or no communication has been triggered as the root cause of this disillusionment.

**Keywords:** Chaos; Communication; Chronic Hunger; Hunger; Poverty; Social Ecology.

### Introduction

Even with the swashbuckling claim on growth and prosperity on the present civilization, the other

side of this prosperity is so bleak and disastrous that have no match for the past centuries even. Out of around 7 billion population of the world, 1.5 billion are hungry. They don't have adequate access to food, if it is there, the quality doesn't stand



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any where near to fulfil their calorie requirement. In India 350 million people are living below the poverty line and of them, 200 million people have become victim to moderate to extreme hunger indexes. 42 percent of the new born babies are under weight. 60 percent of the children are suffering from moderate to high level of anaemia experiencing stunted growth.

Beyond the curtain of hunger, there is another problem that is chronic hunger. Based on hunger index we the nation is occupying 100<sup>th</sup> position in the world (IFPRI Report, 2017). The scenario of chronic hunger is even worse and astoundingly it is worse than African nations as well.

#### *What is Hunger*

Everyone feels hungry on a daily basis. Most people are able to satisfy this craving and need. Even if not immediately, they can count on having a meal or snack within hours. This is not the type of hunger that Bread is concerned with.

People who suffer chronic hunger don't have the option of eating when they are hungry. They do not get enough calories, essential nutrients, or both. People who are hungry have an ongoing problem with getting food to eat. They have a primary need – how to feed themselves and their children today and tomorrow. They have little energy for anything else.

In politics, humanitarian aid, and social science, **hunger** is a condition in which a person, for a sustained period, is unable to eat sufficient food to meet basic nutritional needs.

Throughout history, portions of the world's population have often experienced sustained periods of hunger. In many cases, this resulted from food supply disruptions caused by war, plagues, or adverse weather. For the first few decades after World War II, technological progress and enhanced political cooperation suggested it might be possible to substantially reduce the number of people suffering from hunger. While progress was uneven, by 2000 the threat of extreme hunger subsided for many of the world's people. According to the WFP some statistics are that, "Some 795 million people in the world do not have enough food to lead a healthy active life. That's about one in nine people on earth. The vast majority of the world's hungry people live in developing countries, where 12.9 percent of the population is undernourished."

Until 2006, the average international price of food had been largely stable for several decades. In the closing months of 2006, however, prices began to rise rapidly. By 2008, rice had tripled in

price in some regions, and this severely affected developing countries. Food prices fell in early 2009, but rose to another record high in 2011, and have since decreased slightly. The 2008 worldwide financial crisis further increased the number of people suffering from hunger, including dramatic increases even in advanced economies such as Great Britain, the Eurozone and the United States.

The Millennium Development Goals included a commitment to a further 50% reduction in the proportion of the world's population who suffer from extreme hunger by 2015. As of 2012, this target appeared difficult to achieve, due in part to persistent inflation in food prices. However, in late 2012 the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) stated it is still possible to hit the target with sufficient effort. In 2013, the FAO estimated that 842 million people are undernourished (12% of the global population). Malnutrition is a cause of death for more than 3.1 million children under 5 every year. UNICEF estimates 300 million children go to bed hungry each night; and that 8000 children under the age of 5 are estimated to die of malnutrition every day.

#### *Hunger and India*

India continues to have serious levels of widespread hunger forcing it to be ranked a lowly 100 among 118 developing countries for which the Global Hunger Index (GHI) was calculated in the year 2017 (IFPRI Report). Countries worse than India include extremely poor African countries such as Niger, Chad, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone besides two of India's neighbours: Afghanistan and Pakistan. Other neighbours Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and China are all ranked above India. The GHI is calculated by taking into account four key parameters: shares of undernourished population, wasted and stunted children aged under 5, and infant mortality rate of the same age group. Of the 131 countries studied, data was available for 118 countries. This year, for the first time, two measures of child hunger -wasting and stunting -have been used to give a more complete picture. Wasting refers to low weight in relation to a child's height, reflecting acute under nutrition. Stunting refers to the deficiency in height in relation to age, reflecting chronic under nutrition. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) makes the annual calculations of GHI. Basing its readings on the most recent data, the 2016 GHI for India was derived from the fact that an estimated 15% population is undernourished -lacking in adequate food intake, both in quantity

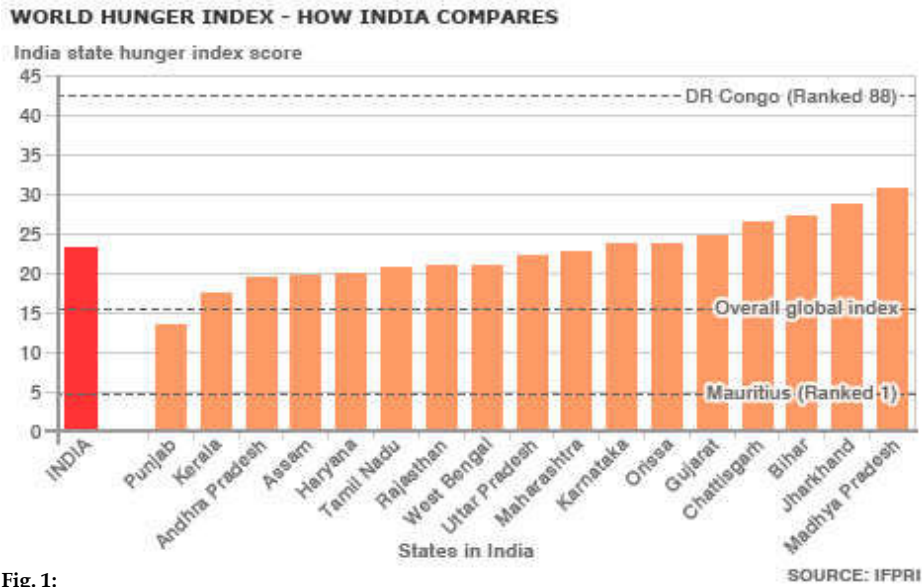


Fig. 1:

and quality. The share of under-5 children who are 'wasted' is about 15% while the share of children who are 'stunted' is a staggering 39%. This reflects widespread and chronic lack of balanced food. The under-5 mortality rate is 4.8% in India, partially reflecting the fatal synergy of inadequate nutrition and unhealthy environments.

*Silence: The Cause of Hunger*

In the modern civilized era there are two sides of the world: haves and have nots. One side is happy and prosperous with all the modern amenities and comforts of life, at the same time the other side is living in the dark and dearth of extreme poverty and hunger. But why is the discrimination? Is it because of the uneven distribution of resources? Inaccessibility of information? Lack of awareness about their rights? Or because simply of their silence?

We can cite many of the examples where the deprived section of the society when broke their silence, they just burst like a volcano and turn the society into ashes. For example we can say about the Cuba Movement Fidel Castro, Vietnam movement, Naxal movement of India etc.

So, we can say that if hunger is to eliminated we have to reduce poverty and if we have to eradicate both hunger and poverty, silence is to be broken and empowerment is to be put in place.

*Objectives*

1. To delineate the present status of hunger, poverty and voice as prevalent amongst the target research group.

2. To isolate the variables, dependent and independent in order to study their interactive relationship.
3. To elucidate the contributory factors characterizing both voice and hunger and the perceived interdependence.
4. To generate a microlevel policies for making appropriate interventions.

*Research Locale*

The present study was conducted in the Beraberi gram panchayat under Habra block in the district of Nadia, West Bengal.

**Materials and Methods**

The village was selected purposively according to the convenience of the researcher. Then from this village 140 respondents (all women) were selected randomly and they were interviewed through a structured interview schedule. The statistical tool used in this study is step down regression.

*List of Variables*

*Causal variables*

Variables	Notation
Age	X <sub>1</sub>
Education	X <sub>2</sub>
Family size	X <sub>3</sub>
Economic motivation	X <sub>4</sub>

Risk orientation	X <sub>5</sub>
Management orientation	X <sub>6</sub>
Stress perception on hunger	X <sub>7</sub>
Stress perception on poverty	X <sub>8</sub>
Stress perception on voice	X <sub>9</sub>
Size of holding	X <sub>10</sub>
Cropping intensity	X <sub>11</sub>
Livestock count	X <sub>12</sub>
Livestock yield	X <sub>13</sub>
Pond and fish	X <sub>14</sub>
Total crop yield	X <sub>15</sub>
Cost of cultivation	X <sub>16</sub>
No. of fragments	X <sub>17</sub>
Communication variables	X <sub>18</sub>
Marketed surplus	X <sub>19</sub>
Energy consumption	X <sub>20</sub>
BMI	X <sub>21</sub>

*Consequent variables*

Variables	Notation
Hunger	Y <sub>1</sub>
Voice	Y <sub>2</sub>

**Results and Discussion**

*Step down regression: Hunger vs. 21 causal variables*

The above model presents the multiple regression

analysis between criterion variable Hunger vs. 21 causal variables. It has been found that the variable cropping intensity (X11), risk orientation (X5), livestock count (X12) and total crop yield (X15) have contributed substantially to the variance embedded with the consequent variable hunger.

The R<sup>2</sup> value being 0.506, it is to infer that 50.6 percent of variance in the consequent variable has been explained by the combination of these 21 causal variables.

The above model also depicts that the 4 causal variables those are cropping intensity (X11), risk orientation (X5), livestock count (X12) and total crop yield (X15) have been retained at the last step.

The R<sup>2</sup> value being 0.303, it is to infer that 30.3% of variants in the consequent variable has been explained by the combination of these 4 causal variables.

*Revelation*

The rural people are mostly affected by hunger because of their poor risk bearing capacity, declining livestock count, overall declination of profit and ultimately low intensity of cropping. Low cropping intensity subsequently leads to low crop yield. Low livestock count leads to low amount of family resources which ultimately leads to higher level of hunger.

Step down regression: Hunger vs. 21 causal variables

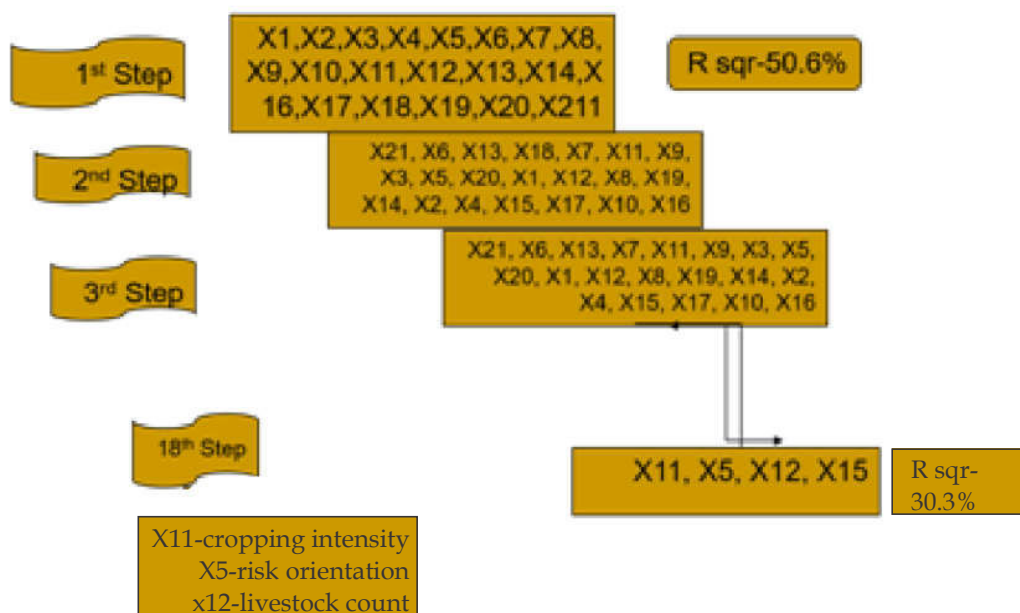


Fig. 2: Step down regression: Hunger vs. 21 causal variables

### Step down regression: Voice vs. 21 causal variables

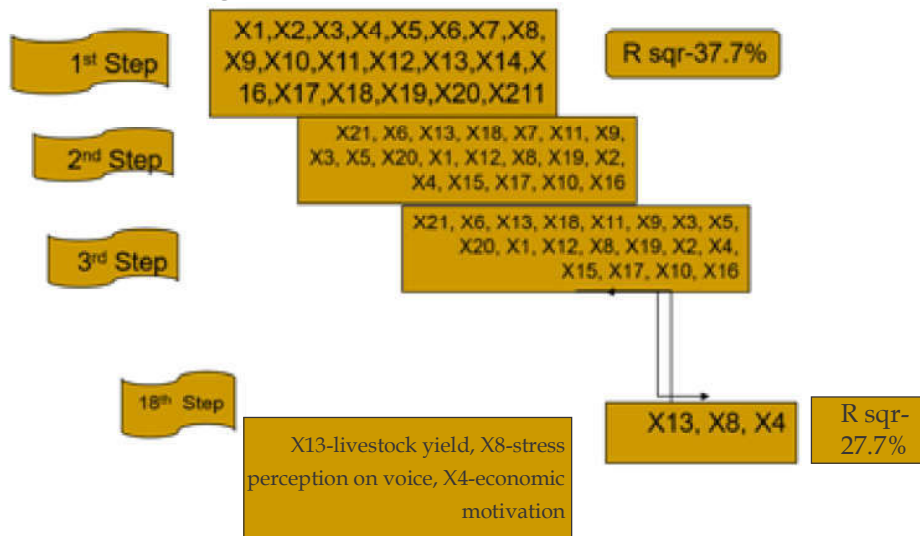


Fig. 3: Step down regression: Voices vs. 21 causal variables

#### Step down regression: Voices vs. 21 causal variables

The above model presents the multiple regression analysis between criterion variable Voices vs. 21 causal variables. It has been found that the variable economic motivation (X4), livestock yield (X13) and stress perception on voice (X8) have contributed substantially to the variance embedded with the consequent variable voice.

The  $R^2$  value being 0.377, it is to infer that 37.7 percent of variance in the consequent variable has been explained by the combination of these 21 causal variables.

The above model also depicts that the 3 causal variables those are economic motivation (X4), livestock yield (X13) and stress perception on voice (X8) have been retained at the last step.

The  $R^2$  value being 0.277, it is to infer that 27.7% of variants in the consequent variable has been explained by the combination of these 3 causal variables.

#### Revelation

Stress has been identified as being responsible for increasing silence and fatigued voices, either to defend themselves from poverty or to inflicting hunger and thereafter it has contributed to poor economic motivation.

#### Conclusion

A survey was done by FAO in 2009. A key objective of the Voices of the Hungry project

(VoH) is to estimate comparable prevalence rates of food insecurity in national populations for more than 140 countries every year. These estimates are based on conditions and behaviors reported by adults through the Food Insecurity Experience Scale survey module (FIES-SM). The data collected in nationally representative surveys of the adult population in each country are used to compute a measure of severity of the food insecurity status for each respondent, focusing on conditions reflecting limited access to food. Individual measures are then calibrated against a common global reference scale of severity, thus allowing classifications and estimates of prevalence rates that are comparable across countries and population groups. So, following a similar trend here in this study also hunger and voice can be found interrelated with each other. They have got a wave of interaction as well. The study suggests that the aspect of making stakeholders shouting for the cause can have enough logic in fighting of poverty, rather than opting for a furtive silence of course within a tent of performing agro ecosystem. The other factors are like yield, cropping intensity, livestock count can come up as decisive factors along with the socio-psychological components like voice and communication.

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