

**The Role of Philosophy in the Eradication of Poverty:
From the Viewpoint of Peter Singer**

Thesis submitted for M.Phil. Degree

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Researcher's Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the work presented in this thesis is my original work. It has not been taken from any work of others. The references have been duly cited and acknowledged. Excepting University of Dhaka, this thesis has not been submitted in whole or in part for M.Phil., Ph.D., or any other higher degree in any other institute or university.

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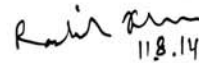
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Certificate of the Research Supervisor

I do hereby certify that the thesis paper entitled "*The Role of Philosophy in the Eradication of Poverty: From the Viewpoint of Peter Singer*" is an original work of research carried out by my student Kazi Shoyebur Rahman in fulfillment of the degree of Master of Philosophy (M. Phil.). I also certify that he has been appropriately enrolled and working under my guidance as a full-time candidate. He is permitted to submit the thesis for M. Phil. Degree.


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Dedication

This thesis paper is dedicated to

my father

Kazi Sultan Ahmed

and my mother

Late Abeda Begum

Acknowledgements

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Preface

The discrimination between the poor and the rich is one of the most crucial questions that continue to unsettle us till today. While the people of the rich countries are leading a very luxurious life, the people of the third world countries are groping in a life of endless wants and miseries. Deprived of basic human needs, the poor are caught in utter helplessness. Because of poverty, people suffer from eternal hunger and various diseases like malnutrition and contagion. Though the Earth produces enough food for its people, the system of food distribution is not proper. For this reason, a large number of people do not get minimum basic needs of their life. Peter Singer, an Australian moral philosopher, portrays a pathetic picture of discrimination between the poor and the rich and shows that a large number of them are constantly hungry due to absolute poverty. After much deliberation he postulated that that the affluent are morally obligated to help the poverty stricken people.

The term 'poverty' has different meanings to different people but almost all of them agreed that poverty means a condition of human life in which basic human needs remain unfulfilled. Peter Singer as well as different experts classified poverty into two types such as a) absolute Poverty and b) relative Poverty. There are many causes of poverty but overpopulation, environmental degradation, distribution of resources, lack of education, unemployment, corruption, high costs of living etc. are considered the main causes. Whatever may be the causes of poverty, for Peter Singer if we inact against poverty the absolute poverty affected people will die a miserable death. The affluent people are allowing the poverty stricken people to die; and Peter Singer says that there is no ethical significance between killing and allowing to die. So Peter Singer says that if we can prevent something bad from happening in front of us without any significant loss of our own, we should do it. American biologist Garrett Hardin argues that the rich should leave the poor to survive, otherwise the

poor will drag the rich down with them. But Peter Singer refutes Hardin's assumption and suggests that the people earning average or above average in affluent societies should give away ten percent of their income for the eradication of poverty. They should give away this minimum amount and if they do not do so it is injustice to the poor. Because if the affluent people do not aid, the number of poverty stricken people will increase geometrically. As a result, pain and death will also increase. On the whole, it can be said that the absence of this doctrine will make the world more discriminatory.

List of Abbreviations

ADB-Asian Development Bank

EAPN- The European Anti- Poverty Network

ESRI- Economic and Social Research Institute

EU- European Union

GAFFSP- Global Agriculture and Food Security Program

GNI- Gross National Income

GNP- Gross National Product

JSF- The Japan Special Fund

LDCs- Least Development Countries

MDG- Millennium Development Goals

ODA- Official Development Assistance

PRF- Poverty Reduction Co-operation Fund

TANF- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families

UN- United Nations

UNICEF- The United Nations Children's Fund

US- United States

WB- World Bank

WHO- World Health Organization

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Chapter-1

Introduction

The scope of philosophy is very wide. Philosophy is called the mother of all sciences since the inception of knowledge. According to the subject matter, philosophy is divided into three classes, namely epistemology, metaphysics, and axiology. Ethics is one of the three classes of axiology; logic and aesthetics being the other two. Ethics is also divided into classes; applied ethics is one of them. Applied ethics justifies the subject matter of practical ethics and is applied in our practical life. Controversial moral issues such as abortion, animal rights, euthanasia, poor rich discrimination, etc. are analysed in applied ethics. Due to the varying nature of such issues, some sub-genres like medical ethics, business ethics, environmental ethics, war ethics, etc. have formed part of applied ethics. However, for an issue to be considered an “applied ethical issue”, there are generally two requirements. Firstly, the issue generates a lot of debate among a significant number of people and turns into a controversial one because of the strength of arguments on each side. For instance, the issue of causing death by shooting is not an applied ethical issue, since it is accepted widely that the act of shooting leading to death, for whatever purpose, is a punishable offence. By contrast, the issue of regulating the use of arms would be an applied ethical issue since there are a huge number of people speaking for and against the various provisions of arms control. Secondly, the issue must be a distinctly moral issue. Not all the controversial issues are moral issues. Day in and day out we come across in newspapers a series of controversial issues as affirmative action policies, gays in the military, involuntary commitment of the mentally impaired, capitalistic versus socialistic business practices, public versus private healthcare systems, and so on. These issues are controversial and have an important impact on our society; but they are not all moral issues. Some are only issues of social policy. Some issues are moral and relevant for practical life and ethical doctrines are applicable to them. So the issues that are moral and controversial will be regarded as an applied ethical issue.

There are various moral doctrines in ethics and when we use these doctrine to asses our day-to-day problem, it is called practical ethics. The expansion of practical ethics is very wide and many moral philosophers defined it from their varying points of view. Peter Singer says, practical ethics is the application of ethics or morality to practical issues like the treatment of ethnic minorities, equality for women, the use of animals for food and research, the preservation of the natural environment, abortion, euthanasia, and the obligation of the wealthy to help the poor.¹ There exists various social problems in our world; poor and rich discrimination is one of them. And the obligation to help the poor arises because of the prevalence of this discrimination.

Poor and rich discrimination is a burning question of the day. In the present world, on the one hand, the people of the third world countries lead a miserable life and on the other hand, the people of the rich countries lead a luxurious life. The affluent have enormous wealth to maintain a luxurious life. After bearing the cost of all their necessities, they still have enough money; whereas the poor people remain deprived of basic human needs. This is a great problem for our world. Stephen Satris expressed this problem in the following way:

“Our world is divided into countries, some of which are quite wealthy, including the United States, Western European industrial nations, and oil rich Arab countries. These countries, although in the minority, control most of the world’s wealth. It is also true that the discrepancy between the rich nations and the poor nations is great, and that the level of existence in many poor nations is abysmally low.”²

Stephen Satris stated that though the wealthy nations are small in number but they control most of the wealth of the world. The poor have no place in this function. The poor are busy to fulfill their basic needs. Actually they lead a miserable life. Peter Singer, a famous Australian moral philosopher, gives a vivid description of the problem. He argues that over population is not the actual cause of poverty. The Earth produces enough food for its inhabitants but the distribution is not proper. For this reason, a large number of people suffer from minimum needs of their life. Peter Singer portrays a pathetic picture of discrimination between the poor and the rich, and

shows that 400 million people lack the calories, protein, vitamins and minerals which are very essential for the survival of their bodies and minds. A large number of them are constantly hungry and others suffer from various contagious diseases. Their children are severely affected and one statistics shows that 14 million children under five die each year due to malnutrition and infection.³ Regarding children, he also says that 30, 000 children die everyday from preventable illness and starvation, while most people in developed nations have plenty of disposable income that they spend on luxuries and items that satisfy mere wants, not basic needs. He also mentions many crucial moments of human life, when mass people suffer from food, shelter, medicine and life security. In his famous philosophical essay “Famine, Affluence and Morality”, Singer stated:

“As I write this, in November 1971, people are dying in East Bengal from lack of food, shelter and medicine care. The suffering and death that are occurring there now are not inevitable, not unavoidable in any fatalistic sense of the term. Constant poverty, a cyclone, and a civil war have turned at least nine million people into destitute refugees; nevertheless, it is not beyond the capacity of the richer nations to give enough assistance to reduce any further suffering to very small proportions. The decisions and actions of human beings can prevent this kind of suffering. Unfortunately, human beings have not made the necessary decisions.”⁴

Here Peter Singer refers to the liberation war of Bangladesh and the sufferings of people of this country because of cyclone and war related problems. He opines that it could be prevented if the richer nations provided assistance. Thus Peter Singer demonstrates that the people of poor countries and the poor living all over the world are leading a deplorable life. During war and other natural calamities, the poor people face terrible experience. For this reason, Stephen Satris says: “The outlook for inhabitants of poor countries is even worse during times of war, drought, political oppression, flood, famine, or epidemic disease.”⁵

So poverty along with its result is a curse for our civilization. Against this backdrop, Peter Singer shows that we have some duty to poverty affected people. If we are able

to remove something bad from happening in front of us we should do it. It is our moral and rational obligation. In response to the argument that the rich are not bound to help the poor, Peter Singer states that if we are imbued with the spirit of morality our duty will be clear. The rich can use their wealth as their wish. So they are not bound to spend money for poverty stricken people. But when we see our neighbors are starving day after day, can we be happy after seeing this? So we should follow ethical principle, which is different from self-centered activities. Self-centered activities also may be ethical but it requires a moral base. Peter Singer says:

“Self –interested acts must be shown to be compatible with more broadly based ethical principles if they are not to be ethically defensible, for the notion of ethics carries with it the idea of something bigger than the individual. If I am to defend my conduct on ethical grounds, I cannot point only to the benefits it brings me. I must address myself to a large audience.”⁶

All our activities need to have an ethical ground. Of course, the rich will use their wealth according to their will but they will also contribute to remove poverty; because they are not affluent by comparison with their neighbors, but they are affluent by any reasonable criteria of human needs. It means that they have more income and can fulfill all the necessities of their life. After buying diet and other necessary items the absolutely affluent are still able to spend money on luxurious purpose.⁷ So the affluent can easily contribute without any great loss of their own. Because the poor are fighting to fulfill their basic needs only. Their needs are different from others, as we know in our society different people have different needs. In this regard we can mention Nigel Warburton. He stated that–

“Some people need more money to live than others. Someone who can only survive if given daily expensive medical care would be very unlikely to live very long in a society in which each individual is restricted to an equal share of the total wealth of that society, unless of course the society was a particularly rich one.”⁸

The poor are suffering from absolute poverty but they need very small amount to manage their fundamental needs. So it is our duty to remove absolute poverty according to our capacity. After much deliberation, Peter Singer says that if we can prevent something bad from happening without any significant loss of our own, we should do it. He tried his best to make a moral base for contribution.

Based on these observations, the main purpose of this research is to make a moral base from Singerian point of view so that the pro-poor activists can draw inspiration and guidance in their fight against poverty. With this end in view, the study is designed to address the following two research questions:

1. How the highly rich people can help the poor without any significant loss of their own and thus contribute to the removal of absolute poverty?
2. Why the rich people are under an obligation to help the poor?

While attempting to find answer to the questions mentioned above, the research consists of the opinions and examples put forward by Peter Singer as well as the views of other experts and different institutions working on eradication of world poverty. The remaining part of the thesis is structured as follows.

Chapter 2 focuses on poverty and its causes. The term ‘poverty’ has different meanings to different people. But according to almost all experts and institutions, it means the inability to fulfil the fundamental needs of human life. So poverty is a severe deprivation of basic human needs such as food, water, healthcare, education etc. There are various types of poverty; but Peter Singer in his book “Practical Ethics” quotes former World Bank’s President Robert McNamara and mentions two types of poverty. Besides, most of the experts also divide poverty into two types, such as a) Absolute Poverty and b) Relative Poverty.⁹ Out of these two types, absolute poverty is prioritized by Peter Singer, experts as well as different institutions. The causes of such poverty are many but overpopulation, distribution of resources, environmental degradation, lack of education, unemployment, corruption, high costs of living etc. are considered the main causes.

Chapter 3 enlarges upon the inaction against poverty. To explain inaction against poverty, Singer states that taking life is of two kinds such as: a) Direct Killing and b) Indirect killing. For Peter Singer, if we inact against poverty, the absolute poverty affected people will die a miserable death and the absolutely affluent will be responsible for allowing them to die. He critically discusses the arguments against allowing to die and comes up with a decision that there is no intrinsic ethical significance between killing and allowing to die.¹⁰ He regards allowing to die as equivalent to indirect killing.

Chapter 4 analyses the obligation to help the poor and refutation of charges against obligatory argument. Regarding the obligation to help, Singer claims that if we can prevent something bad from happening in front of us without any significant loss of our own, we should do it. As absolute poverty is bad and we can prevent some absolute poverty without any significant loss of our own, we ought to remove some absolute poverty. Many arguments have been presented against obligatory argument but Peter Singer proves that they have no ethical base. Even Garrett Hardin uses the allegory of a lifeboat adrift in the sea. In this allegory, rich countries are like the occupants of a crowded lifeboat adrift in a sea full of drowning people. If they try to save those drowning, their boat will be overloaded and they will be all down. By this argument Hardin argues that the rich should leave the poor to survive, otherwise the poor will drag the rich down with them.¹¹ But Singer claims that overpopulation is not the actual cause of poverty. The Earth produces enough food and, according to some estimates, it produces ten times as many. So the allegory is abortive against the obligation to help the poor.

Chapter 5 attempts to determine the amount of assistance. Peter Singer points out that, the United Nation's standard apart, there is no general standard of giving. The United Nations suggested 0.7% of GNI (Gross National Income) for contribution in 24 October 1970. Besides this, there are various organizations of the world such as Asian Development Bank, the European Union, the World Bank which undertake various programmes according to their own policies. But Peter Singer presents his opinion in a different way. He suggests that the people earning average or above average in affluent societies should give away ten percent of their income for the eradication of poverty and if they do not do so, it is injustice to the poor.

The concluding chapter summarises the findings and the key points of the previous chapters. Supporting Peter Singer's postulation for the eradication of poverty, it is considered crucially important to undertake necessary actions for the eradication of poverty in order to free millions of people from absolute poverty.

To prepare this thesis, I followed analytical and descriptive methods. Now I proceed to the next chapters to elaborate on the points mentioned above.

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Chapter-2

Poverty: Its types and causes

A large number of people of the world are living below poverty line. Their lives are full of death and diseases, sorrows and sufferings, and acute crises of daily essentials. Poverty is thought to be the main cause behind these predicaments. That is why, poverty is such a burning question in the contemporary world. On the one hand, we see the people of rich countries leading a luxurious life. On the other hand, we witness the people from third world countries undergoing a miserable life. The people who lead a luxurious life have enormous property to fulfill their needs and desires. But those who are living in a miserable condition cannot even manage food three times a day. They are absolutely poor and their fundamental problem is poverty. Because of poverty, we see discrimination in our society. This discrimination is between the poor and the rich. Discrimination may be defined in various ways. But moral philosophers have defined discrimination as advantageous or disadvantageous treatment of a person or a group of persons and the resultant abandonment of the principle of equality. Because of discrimination, poverty stricken people turn into slum dwellers and the affluent become elite class. So poverty is the root of discrimination. Not only discrimination, in some contexts, the result of poverty is so painful that it belies our imagination. We can present an example published in 'The New York Times' in 2007. A boy died of measles though we know measles is not so fatal that would lead to death. And we all know he could have been cured at the hospital. The main problem in this case was that the parents had no money. As a result, the boy died a slow and painful death. The death was not because of measles but out of poverty.¹This is a simple evidence. According to UNICEF, nearly 10 million children under five years of age die every year from poverty related causes. Peter Singer says, child death because of poverty is happening 27000 times every day. Some of them die because of food, as they don't have enough to eat and some

others die of various types of diseases like measles, malaria, diarrhoea etc.² Against this backdrop, I shall try to define poverty and identify the causes of poverty.

Poverty: Poverty is a fundamental problem in the underdeveloped and poor nations. It hinders all types of development. It involves extreme needs and is responsible for radical inequalities.³ The term poverty has different meaning to different people. Generally, it refers to the inability to fulfill the fundamental needs of human life. So we may say poverty is a severe deprivation of basic human needs including food, water, healthcare and education. Poverty encompasses a multitude of social issues including lack of resources, power, education, and adequate housing. But some thinkers take the term differently. For example, British sociologist Peter Townsend says, individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged and approved in the societies in which they belong.⁴ Thus Townsend defines poverty as lack of resources. Resources may be of different types, such as capital (both income and wealth), human capital (such as education or good health), social capital (such as positive and trustful communities), etc. But lack of adequate financial resources is the decisive characteristic of poverty. Most of the thinkers like Townsend think that lack of economic resources is the main characteristic of poverty. Besides, different thinkers and organizations define poverty according to their varying standpoints. Now I shall discuss their perspectives one by one.

At first we can take a look at various organizations of the world which are working to improve the living standard of marginal people. The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) that is concerned with international public health and is working all over the world to improve health and nutrition level. This institution emphasizes on health but it is playing a great role to improve the living standard of poverty stricken people. This institution defines poverty in this way:

“Poverty is associated with the undermining of a range of key human attributes, including health. The poor are espoused to greater personal and environmental health risks, are less well nourished, have less information and are less able to access

health care; they thus have a higher risk of illness and disability. Conversely illness can reduce household savings, lower learning ability, reduce of productivity, and lead to a diminished quantity of life, thereby perpetuating or even increasing poverty.”⁵

According to WHO, the real consequence of poverty is relative. Because as we see almost all have defined poverty in absolute terms of low income as income is a key factor in measuring poverty. For example, the income of less than US \$2 a day is an indicator of poverty. But in our practical experience, the consequences of poverty exist on a relative scale. The poorest of the poor around the world have the worst health. In many countries, the evidence shows that in general the lower an individual’s social and economic position worse their health. There is a social gradient in health that runs from top to bottom of the socio- economic spectrum. So WHO’s opinion is that this situation is seen in low, middle and high income countries.⁶

The World Bank is arguably working for a world free of poverty. This institution undertakes various programmes for the eradication of poverty. Peter Singer mentioned in his book *The Life You Can Save* that to know the opinions of poor people the World Bank asked its researchers to listen to what the poor were saying. For this reason the researchers were able to document the experiences of 60, 000 women and men in seventy- three countries of the world. Over and over, in different languages and on different continents of the world poor people expressed their opinions,⁷ which are as follows:

“You are short of food for all or part of the year, often eating only one meal per day, sometimes having to choose between stilling your child’s hunger or your own, and sometimes being able to do neither.

You can’t save money. If a family member falls ill and you need money to see a doctor, or if the crop fails and you have nothing to eat, you have to borrow from a local moneylender and he will charge you so much interest as the debt continues to mount and you may never be free of it.

You can't afford to send your children to school, or if they do start school, you have to take them out again if the harvest is poor.

You live in an unstable house, made with mud or thatch that you need to rebuild every two or three years, or after severe weather.

You have no nearby source of safe drinking water. You have to carry your water a long way, and even then, it can make you ill unless you boil it.”⁸

In the above opinions of the poor people, poverty is viewed as lack of food, lack of treatment, lack of education, lack of pure drinking water and lack of sustainable shelter, i.e. the deprivation of the basic needs of human life. After considering various types of opinions, the World Bank defined poverty as the following:

“poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being, and comprises many dimensions. It includes low incomes and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity. Poverty also encompasses low levels of health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice, and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one's life.”⁹

In the definition of the World Bank, poverty means lack of basic human needs. For this reason, it is trying to improve socio- economic conditions of the poverty affected areas.

The United Nations (UN) provides assistance for economic development and humanitarian activities. It also wants to eradicate poverty. For this reason the United Nations has set eradication of extreme poverty and hunger as the first goal of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). According to the UN,¹⁰

“Fundamentally, poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not

having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation.”

The United Nations includes almost all types of fundamental problems of poverty stricken people in the definition of poverty. Poverty does not mean lack of food only though food is the key element in any discussion of poverty.

A World Summit was held for Social Development in Copenhagen, Denmark in 6-12 March 1995. According to Copenhagen Declaration, ¹¹

“... *poverty* is a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to social services.”

In the Copenhagen Declaration poverty is the deprivation of some basic human needs. Actually poverty means inability to fulfill the fundamental needs.

Peter Singer portrays a vivid picture of poverty. He shows the miserable conditions of the poor. Poverty and its result are very pathetic. Peter Singer¹² says-

“... 400 million people lack the calories, protein, vitamins, and minerals needed to sustain their bodies and minds in a healthy state. Millions are constantly hungry; others suffer from deficiency diseases and from infections they would be able to resist on a better diet. Children are worst affected. According to one study, 14 million children under five die every year from the combined effects of malnutrition and infection. In some districts half the children born can be expected to die before their fifth birthday.”

Poverty is responsible for the loss of countless lives. When poverty does not cause death it still causes misery of a kind that is not often seen in the affluent

nations.¹³ Poverty hinders attainment of basic human needs and thereby often leads people to malnutrition. So we can say that, poverty is the state of one who lacks a certain amount of material possessions or money. It refers to the deprivation of basic human needs, which commonly includes food, water, sanitation, clothing, shelter, healthcare and education. Sometimes the term poverty is context-dependent: it means economic inequality in the location or society in which people live. In such cases, the people are not deprived of fundamental needs.

From the above discussion, it appears that poverty is considered from economic point of view. From economic perspective, poverty focuses on material needs, typically including the necessities of daily living, such as food, clothing, shelter, or safe drinking water which are very essential for human life. In this aspect, poverty may be understood as a condition in which a person or community is lacking in the basic needs for a minimum standard of well-being and life, particularly as a result of a persistent lack of income. Sometimes poverty is also considered from social perspective. From social point of view, poverty means lack of access to information, education, healthcare, or political power. Socially, poverty also may be considered as unequal social status and inequitable social relationships, experienced as social exclusion, dependency and diminished capacity to participate or to develop meaningful connections with other people in society. These factors are also important but less intense than economic aspect. The World Bank's "Voices to the poor" based on research over 20, 000 poor people in 23 countries identifies a range of factors which poor people identify as a part of poverty. As human demands are different, types of problems are different, too. Among these, precarious livelihood, physical limitations, lack of security, abuse of power etc. are the main factors.¹⁴ Because of poverty poor people are helpless and unable to fight against adversity. In what follows I shall discuss the types of poverty and the causes of poverty.

Types of Poverty: Regarding poverty we mean absolute or extreme poverty. But as there are different types of definition of poverty, so experts divide poverty into different types, such as a) Absolute poverty, b) Relative poverty, c) Economic poverty, d) Social poverty e) Political poverty, etc. But Peter Singer in his book *Practical Ethics* mentioned two types of poverty. Here he quoted former World Bank's

president Robert McNamara. McNamara suggested the term absolute poverty; and the poverty we are familiar with in industrialized nations is relative poverty.¹⁵ Besides, most of the experts divided poverty into the following types:

a) Absolute poverty and

b) Relative poverty

Although these two types of poverty are discussed but regarding the question of poverty we generally mean absolute poverty. Relative poverty comes contextually. It is also important for the discussion of poverty. We see relative poverty in wealthy nations. But absolute poverty is seen mainly in developing and under developed areas of the world. Now I shall enlarge on absolute poverty and the different views about it.

Absolute Poverty: Absolute poverty is a type of poverty which is regarded as such by any standard. Because of absolute poverty, people suffer from eternal hunger and various diseases caused by malnutrition and contagion. This type of poverty is defined in terms of the minimal requirements necessary to afford minimal standards of food, clothing, healthcare and shelter. For being absolute, the line must be the same in different countries, cultures, and technological levels. Such an absolute measure should look only at the individual's power to consume and it should be independent of any changes in income distribution. The intuition behind an absolute measure is that mere survival takes essentially the same amount of resources across the world and that everybody should be subject to the same standards if meaningful comparisons of policies and progress are to be made. But if everyone's real income in an economy increases, and the income distribution does not change absolute poverty will decline or this situation will not count as an absolute poverty situation. The term *absolute poverty* is also sometimes used as a synonym for extreme poverty. Extreme poverty is the absence of adequate wealth (such as money) to secure fundamental life necessities.¹⁶ So fundamental needs and minimum income are crucial in the definition of absolute or extreme poverty. Actually, the lack of fundamental needs is the key characteristic of absolute poverty.

Different persons and organizations defined absolute poverty in various ways. The United Nations, the apex organization of the world, defines extreme poverty as the

lack of basic human needs. According to a UN declaration that resulted from the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995, absolute poverty is

“a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to services.”¹⁷

In this definition absolute poverty means deprivation of fundamental human needs as well as access to services. Moreover, it is a result of deprivation of social and political power. Some thinkers include lack of basic security with basic needs. In 1996 the founder of “ATD Fourth World” Joseph Wresinski defined absolute poverty as-

“the absence of one or more factors enabling individuals and families to assume basic responsibilities and to enjoy fundamental rights. The situation may become widespread and result in more serious and permanent consequences. The lack of basic security leads to chronic poverty when it simultaneously affects several aspects of people’s lives, when it is prolonged and when it severely compromises people’s chances of regaining their rights and of reassuming their responsibilities in the foreseeable future.”¹⁸

Some organizations define extreme poverty as lack of necessities for survival. It means that people always try to survive in this world but extreme poverty hinders them to survive. The European Union defines absolute poverty from this point of view:

“Absolute or extreme poverty is when people lack the basic necessities for survival. For instance they may be starving, lack clean water, proper housing, sufficient clothing or medicines and be struggling to stay alive. This is most common in developing countries but some people in the European Union (EU), for instance homeless people or the Roma in some settlements, still experience this type of extreme poverty.”¹⁹

The World Bank defines extreme poverty in terms of income level, such as \$1.25 per day. This institution delineates extreme poverty level in the following way:

“Extreme poverty is defined as average daily consumption of \$1.25 or less and means living on the edge of subsistence. The number of people living in extreme poverty has been falling since 1990, slowly at first and more rapidly since the turn of the century. The largest reduction has occurred in East Asia and Pacific, where China has made great improvement. Sub-Saharan Africa, which stagnated through most of the 1990s, has begun to reduce the number of people in extreme poverty.”²⁰

But for Peter Singer, there is a limitation in the World Bank definition of extreme poverty as not having enough income to meet the most basic human needs for adequate food, water, shelter, clothing, sanitation, health care and education; because in some contexts \$1.25 is not adequate for basic needs. Regarding the statistics and history of this case, Peter Singer mentions that many people know 1 billion people are living on less than \$1.00 per day. It was a poverty line of the World Bank till 2008. But the international price increased and the World Bank set the poverty line \$1.25 per day.²¹

David Gordon's paper, "Indicators of Poverty & Hunger" further defines absolute poverty as the absence of basic needs. According to Gordon, absolute poverty is the absence of any two of the following eight basic needs. These eight basic needs are-

1. **Food:** Food will be reasonable to keep the body sound.
2. **Safe drinking water:** Water will be safe and must not come solely from rivers and ponds. It must be available nearby (less than 15 minutes' walk each way).
3. **Sanitation facilities:** Toilets or latrines must be accessible in or near the home. It will be sanitary and safe.
4. **Health:** Treatment must be available for all for serious illnesses, pregnancy and for fatal diseases.
5. **Shelter:** Dwelling house safe and must have fewer than four people living in each room. Floors will be reasonably good and must not be made of dirt, mud, or clay.

6. **Education:** Basic education will be available for all.
7. **Information:** Source of information will be available for all and must have access to newspapers, radios, televisions, computers, or telephones at home.
8. **Access to services:** Though the explanation of access to services is not clear but it means those who are eligible must have the guaranty to access to services.²²

In Gordon's basic needs, some needs are reasonable but some are hyperbole. Because regarding access to information he referred to the availability of televisions, computers and telephones at home. But we may differ from him that it is not essential for absolute poverty stricken people. Because we cannot say, the persons who have no newspaper, radio, television, or telephone of their own are considered severely deprived of information. But his opinion regarding shelter, education, drinking water and sanitation is reasonable. For example, a person who lives in a home with a mud floor is considered severely deprived of shelter or safe resorts and a person who never attended school and cannot read is considered severely deprived of education. Those who fail to meet any two of these conditions — for example, they live in homes with mud floors *and* cannot read — are considered to be living in absolute poverty by Gordon's indicators.²³ This seems to be a weak definition of absolute poverty. Because we know absolute poverty exists where people are deprived of fundamental needs, not just the absence of any two of the eight needs mentioned above. Poverty, especially absolute poverty, is a great concern of the world. Rich nations, different organizations and intellectual individuals are also anxious about absolute poverty.

Peter Singer also emphasizes on absolute poverty. According to him, actually poverty means absolute poverty. Absolute poverty is a type of poverty which is as such by any standard.²⁴ But regarding absolute poverty, Singer quoted Robert McNamara (former World Bank's president). Robert McNamara defines absolute poverty as-

“ Poverty at the absolute level ... is life at the very margin of existence. The absolute poor are severely deprived human beings struggling to survive in a set of squalid and degraded circumstances almost beyond the power of our sophisticated imaginations and privileged circumstances to conceive.”²⁵

From this definition we can imagine how deplorable the condition of the absolute poverty stricken people is. The people who are living in absolute poverty are worse than solvent people. Compared to those who are living in developed countries, individuals in the poorest nations have:

- a) Infant mortality rate eight times higher. In some countries it is more than eight times.
- b) Life expectancy one- third lower and many people die before adulthood.
- c) Adult literacy rate 60% less. Infants are deprived of primary education and most of the people are illiterate.
- d) Their nutritional level is very low. In absolute poverty affected areas, nutrition level for one out of every two in the population is below reasonable standard.
- e) Millions of infants get less protein than is necessary for the development of their brain. As a result they are not highly talented.²⁶

Malnutrition is a severe predicament in the life of poverty stricken people, particularly for their children and the young; because malnutrition hinders both their physical and mental development. As a result, they suffer from the very beginning of their life. Finally, McNamara summed up absolute poverty as-

“a condition of life so characterized by malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, squalid surroundings, high infant mortality and low life expectancy as to be beneath any reasonable definition of human decency.”²⁷

Through this definition, McNamara portrays a vivid picture of absolute poverty; because beneath any reasonable definition of human decency means that the absolute poverty stricken people live in such a situation which is out of our sophisticated imaginations. At last we can say that, absolute poverty is a type of poverty where people are severely deprived of fundamental needs. This type of poverty is responsible for the loss of lives, especially among infants and young children. Absolute poverty is a curse for humankind. Now I shall focus on relative poverty to understand their differences.

Relative Poverty: Relative poverty is a kind of poverty in which some people enjoy less privileges compared to other people in their society. These people are not deprived of fundamental needs. This type of poverty exists relatively. A leading authority on poverty, Professor Townsend said-

"Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and the amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average family that they are in effect excluded from the ordinary living patterns, customs, and activities ."²⁸

What Townsend is saying here is that relative poverty is not as acute as absolute poverty. In this poverty, people think that they are poor but they are able to meet fundamental basic needs. Different organizations also define absolute poverty in the same manner. European Commission in its "Joint Report on Social Inclusion 2004" came up regarding with the following interpretation:

"People are said to be living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live. Because of their poverty they may experience multiple disadvantages through unemployment, low income, poor housing, inadequate health care and barriers to lifelong learning, culture, sport and recreation. They are often excluded and marginalised from participating in activities (economic, social and cultural) that are the norm for other people and their access to fundamental rights may be restricted."²⁹

In this report, relative poverty is a cause that precludes individuals to have a reasonable standard of life. In this kind of poverty, the people are able to meet basic needs of their life. But in certain contexts, because of relative poverty, they are deprived from participating in social and cultural activities. In European continent, there are various types of organizations working for the eradication of poverty. For

‘The European Anti-Poverty Network’, an organization fighting for a social Europe free of poverty:

“Relative poverty is when some people’s way of life and income is so much worse than the general standard of living in the country or region in which they live that they struggle to live a normal life and to participate in ordinary economic, social and cultural activities. What this means will vary from country to country, depending on the standard of living enjoyed by the majority. While not as extreme as absolute poverty, relative poverty is still very serious and harmful.”³⁰

According to ‘The European Anti-Poverty Network’, relative poverty means lower standard of living than the general standard of living of a particular country or region. So it varies from country to country. And this poverty is also harmful. In his book “Practical Ethics”, Peter Singer, a moral philosopher and acting now to end world poverty says that relative poverty exists in industrialized nations. According to him, this type of poverty is comparative. Regarding relative poverty Peter Singer says-

“The poverty we are familiar with in industrialised nations is relative poverty –meaning that some citizens are poor, relative to the wealth enjoyed by their neighbours. People living in relative poverty in Australia might be quite comfortably off by comparison with pensioners in Britain, and British pensioners are not poor in comparison with the poverty that exists in Mali or Ethiopia.”³¹

Singer, in his definition of relative poverty also says that this type of poverty is comparative and it varies from country to country. And we see it in industrial nations. In his book “*The Life You Can Save*”, Singer said-

“In wealthy societies, most poverty is relative. People feel poor because many of the good things they see advertised on television are beyond their budget but they do have a television. In the United States, 97 percent of those classified by the Census Bureau as poor own a color TV. Three quarters of them own a car.”³²

According to Peter Singer, relative poverty stricken people are not deprived of fundamental needs. They are relatively poor and it is different from country to country. The definition and concept of this poverty also varies from thinkers to thinkers. Adam Smith in his book *Wealth of Nations* in 1776 argued that poverty is the inability to afford. It does not mean that only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even of the lowest order, to be without. People may think relatively poor having adequate income for survival. J. K. Galbrath, in 1958 argued that, people may be poverty stricken if their income adequate for survival falls markedly behind that of their community. In 1964 in a joint committee of United States endorsed the concept of relative poverty. This committee says that no objective definition exists, so the definition varies from place to place and time to time. Rose Friedman argued in 1965 for the use of relative poverty claiming that the definition of poverty changes with general living standards. So those labeled as poor in 1995, would have had “a higher standard of living than many labeled not poor” in 1965. It means that the concept of relative poverty varies from time to time. Famous British Sociologist and a leading authority on UK poverty, Peter Townsend in 1979 said that individual can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong. “Economic and Social Research Institute”(ESRI) in Ireland explained in 1993 that relative poverty has to be seen in terms of the standard of living of the society in question.³³ So the concept and expression of this poverty is different from person to person. In a word, it is a relative concept. When absolute poverty is the complete lack of resources to sustain life, then relative poverty refers to inadequate lack of income when compared to the average standards of living. As such, relative poverty implies that the individual has the ability to sustain his or her needs, but may lack the resources to engage in various social activities. Here the relative poverty stricken persons are not deprived of fundamental needs.

Causes of Poverty: Poverty is a major global issue today. For this reason, the United Nations sets eradication of “extreme poverty and hunger” as the first goal of

'Millennium Development Goals'. Different organizations of the world are working for poverty stricken people. As we have seen before, poverty means the inability of a person to get his basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, safe drinking water, health and education, so they are trying to provide them with those. But what are the causes of poverty or why people are deprived of fundamental needs? Experts opine that poverty is not the result of a single cause. Poverty has many causes. Even it varies from country to country. Generally people consider overpopulation as the cause of poverty. According to this view, since production cannot keep pace with the increasing population, people remain hungry. But we cannot say that the earth cannot provide food and habitation for its entire people. Truly speaking, in the rich countries much of the food is spent for non-human creatures. So the problem is not so much with production as with distribution. It does not mean that overpopulation is not a cause of poverty. It only means that overpopulation is not the only one cause. Poverty is the result of various causes. Such as overpopulation, unequal distribution, lack of education, consciousness, land reformation, unemployment, environmental degradation, individual responsibility and welfare dependency, disease and epidemic, ignorance, apathy, etc. Besides these, war, inequality, fraud, various types of natural calamities, world politics are also responsible for poverty. Experts analyze the causes of poverty from their points of view. For example, Peter Singer emphasizes on proper distribution than production. He also thinks that abuse of food for meaningless purposes is also responsible for poverty. He says that-

“The problem is not that the world cannot produce enough to feed and shelter its people. People in the poor countries consume, on average, 180 kilos of grain a year, while North Americans average around 900 kilos. The difference is caused by the fact that in the rich countries we feed most of our grain to animals, converting it into meat, milk, and eggs. Because this is a highly inefficient process, people in rich countries are responsible for the consumption of far more food than those in poor countries who eat few animal products. If we stopped feeding animals on grains and soybeans, the amount of food saved would – if distributed to those who need it- be more than enough to end hunger throughout the world.”³⁴

Peter Singer shows that the world produces enough food for its people. But the distribution is not proper. For example, he says, the people of poverty affected areas consume five times less than rich countries. Moreover in rich countries, much of the food is spent for animals. So distribution is the main problem. For this reason, Singer says-

“... the problem is essentially one of distribution rather than production. The world does produce enough food. Moreover, the poorer nations themselves could produce far more if they made more use of improved agricultural techniques.”³⁵

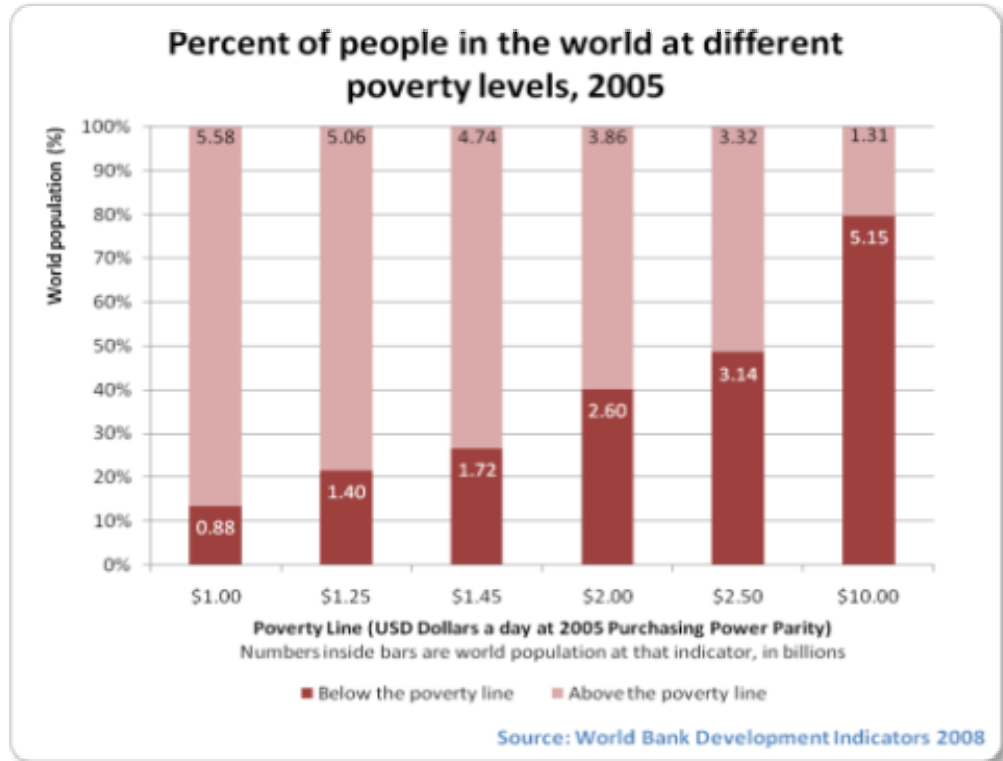
But Singer says we cannot solve food problem by cutting down on animals. He only says the problem is not so much with production as with distribution. But the mode of proper distribution is not clear to him. There are, in fact, many causes responsible for poverty such as unemployment, war, environmental degradation, and so on. So we can see that poverty result from various causes. But among these causes, some are more important and some are less important. Moreover, it is hard to separate the causes of poverty from the effects. Because poverty is associated with various economic and social ills.³⁶ So a set of causes are responsible for poverty. Now I shall explain these factors one by one.

1. Overpopulation: The population of the world is increasing day by day. In some underdeveloped areas, its growth rate is very high. So the world is becoming overpopulated day by day. This overpopulation is a cause of poverty. We can mark it as one of the fundamental causes of poverty. Overpopulation hampers development and when a country is unable to make a balance between production and consumption, then the problems occurs. Overpopulation of a country is defined as the situation of having large number of people with too few resources and too little space. So there lies an imbalance between capacity and population of a state. Overpopulation can result from either a high population density or from low amounts of resources, or from both. Whatever may be the cause, in every stage high population density puts pressure on the available resources in the country, when the resources can only support a certain number of people.³⁷ In a particular place where resources are limited and high technologies are absent, then only a certain number of people can be supported on a given area of land, and that number depends on how

much food and other resources the land can provide. In many developing countries of the world, where people are only able to live by means of simple farming, gardening, herding, hunting and gathering, even large areas of land can support only small numbers of people. This process is traditional and the production is insufficient for them. Because those countries can produce only small amount of food by using their ability. But it is different in developed countries. Because in developed countries such as the United States, Japan, and the countries of Western Europe and in oil rich Arab countries overpopulation generally is not considered a major cause of poverty as they produce more than their needs by using their technology. These countries produce large quantities of food through mechanized farming, which depends on commercial fertilizers, large scale irrigation, and agricultural machinery. Such type of production provides enough food to support the high densities of people in metropolitan areas of the country.³⁸ In oil rich Arab countries, they can manage food and necessary goods by selling their oil. They can also afford to import according to their demands; because they are rich enough to meet their fundamental needs.

Density of population is also liable for poverty. A country's level of poverty can depend greatly on its mix of population density and agricultural productivity; because people of such type of countries depend on agriculture or agricultural production. For example, we can mention Bangladesh. Bangladesh has one of the world highest population densities, with 1078 persons per sq km. A large number of people of Bangladesh engage in low productivity, manual farming, which contributes to the country's extremely high level of poverty. They are unable to make a balance between production and consumption. Some smaller countries in Western Europe, such as the Netherlands and Belgium, have high population densities but these countries practice mechanized farming and are involved in high-tech industries. As a result, however, they have high standard of living. They are not impoverished like Bangladesh. In African continent, many countries in sub-Saharan Africa have population densities of less than 30 persons per sq km. A large number of people in these countries practice manual subsistence farming; these countries also have barren land and they lack the economic resources and technology to enhance productivity. As a consequence, these nations are very poor.³⁹ They are unable to produce enough to fulfill their fundamental needs. As their production cannot keep pace with production, their people remain hungry. So poverty is their ever companion.

High birth rate is a key factor for overpopulation. High birth rates contribute to overpopulation in many developing countries. In these countries children are considered assets to many poor families because they provide labor, usually for farming. Cultural norms in pastoral areas commonly sanction the value of large families. In many developing countries, the governments often provide a little or no support, financial or political, for family planning program. Even people who wish to keep their families small have difficulty doing so. For all these reasons, developing countries tend to have high rates of population growth.⁴⁰ As a result population of these countries is increasing geometrically day by day. Similarly, poverty level of these countries is also increasing. It is a simple mathematics. If there are more mouths to feed and very less income, definitely many will remain deprived. Thus on an individual level as well as societal level, overpopulation is one of the main causes behind the menace of poverty. People more or less all over the world are living in different types of poverty. In 2008, the World Bank published a data of different poverty levels in terms of income. The World Bank's report⁴¹ (graphical) is as follows:



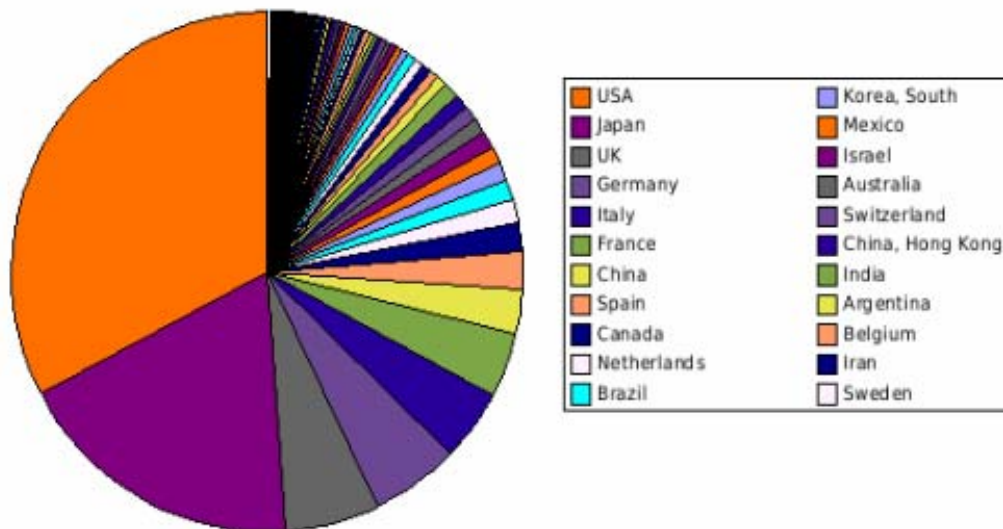
Poverty exists more or less all over the world; but it is acute in developing and underdeveloped countries as the developing countries lack the resources to fulfill the basic needs of their population. The poorest people also have less access to health, education and other services. Problems of hunger, malnutrition and disease afflict the poorest in society. The poorest are also typically marginalized from society and have little representation or voice in public and political debates, making it even harder to escape poverty.

By contrast, the wealthier you are, the more likely you are to benefit from economic or political policies. The amount the world spends on military, financial bailouts and other areas that benefit the wealthy compared to the amount spent to address the daily crisis of poverty and related problems is often staggering.

2. Distribution of resources: Resources and its distribution are very important for the whole world; because capacity of a state depends upon its resources. If there lies discrimination in global distribution of resources it causes poverty. There seems to be many causes behind this discrimination. Many experts agree that the legacy of colonialism accounts for much of the unequal distribution of resources in the world economy. Most of the developing and underdeveloped countries suffer from this discrimination. In many developing countries, the problems of poverty are massive and pervasive. But in recent decades most of them have tried to develop their economics with industry and technology with varying levels of success. Some nations have become fairly wealthy and their developments are remarkable. Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, and Thailand are among these countries. Many developing countries, however, lack essential raw materials and the knowledge and skills gained through formal education and training. They also often lack the infrastructure provided by, for example, transportation systems and power-generating facilities. Because these things are necessary for the development of industry, developing countries generally must rely on trade with developed countries for manufactured goods, but they cannot afford much. Hence they are unable to develop their situation. Because people in developed nations may have more wealth and resources than those in developing countries, their standard of living is also generally

higher. Thus, people who have what would be considered adequate wealth and resources in developing countries may be considered poor in developed countries. Psychologically citizens of rich countries are high-ambitious and high-spirited. In contrast, people in developing countries may consider themselves to be doing well if they have productive gardens, some livestock, and a house of thatch or mud-brick. In rural areas, people may be accustomed to not having plumbing, electricity, or formal health care. By the standards of developed countries, such living conditions are considered hallmarks of poverty. So this is the difference between developed and developing countries because of resources. Developed countries of the world use high branded money, and their exchange rate is also high. So they possess most of the wealth of the world. For example we can mention wealth distribution of the wealth in the year 2000. The graph of the distribution of this year is as follows⁴²:

World Distribution of Wealth by Country in the Year 2000 (exchange rates)



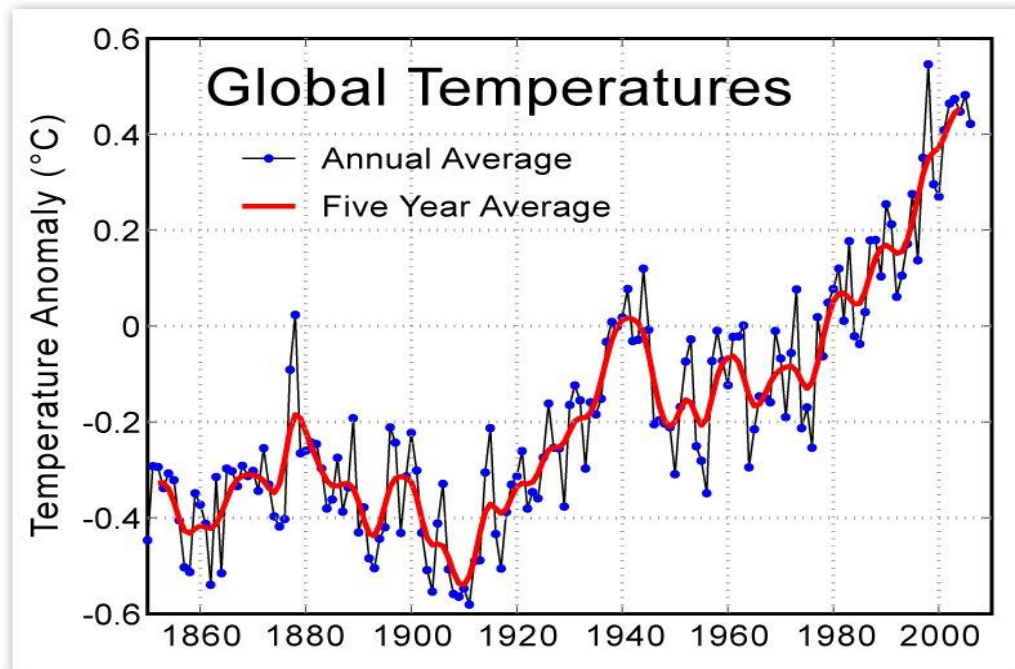
In the graph, we see that most powerful and economically developed countries of the world possess most of the wealth of the world. But developing countries are not as

rich as them. So the citizens of these countries are poor and luxurious life of the citizens of developed countries is out of their imagination. According to reports, people's incomes are not enough to cover the cost of their basic necessities and provide them with such basic services as water, electricity, transportation and communication. Recent surveys confirm that 80 percent of citizen's expenses go for food, most notably among vulnerable groups that are deprived of basic services and luxury means. So distribution and possession of wealth has a great impact on individual and also on national life.

On the other hand, some social scientists argue that wealthier developed countries continue to practice a form of colonialism. Now-a-days it is known as *neocolonialism*. The affluence of these countries is based to a large extent on favorable trade with the developing world. Developed countries have been able to get inexpensive natural resources from poorer countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, including oil for power, ores and minerals for manufacturing durable goods, and manufactured goods made by low-wage workers in factories operated by multinational corporations. This practice contributes to the dependency of poorer countries while not raising their standards of living.⁴³ As a result people of developing and underdeveloped countries are suffering from poverty.

3. Environmental Degradation: Our world is warming day by day. In many parts of the world, environmental degradation — the deterioration of the natural environment, including the atmosphere, bodies of water, soil, and forests — is an important cause of poverty. Environmental problems have led to shortages of food, pure drinking water, materials for shelter, and other essential resources. As forests, land, air, and water are degraded, people who live directly off these natural resources suffer most from the effects. People in developed countries, on the other hand, have technologies and conveniences such as air and water filters, refined fuels, and industrially produced and stored foods to buffer themselves from the effects of environmental degradation. But in developing countries it is completely opposite. World temperature is increasing day by day and the trashy capacity of the developing countries is also diminishing day by day. Not only that world temperature is increasing very rapidly

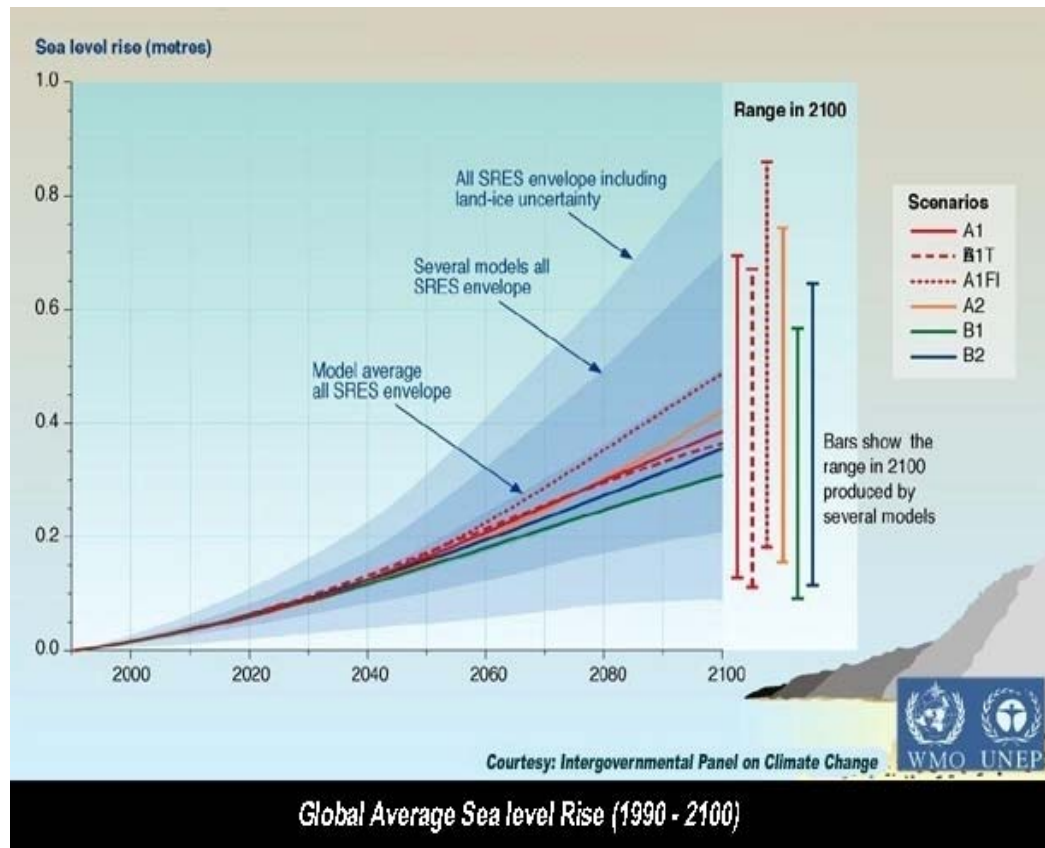
and it is a great threat to the poor countries. The graph of augmentation of world temperature is given below⁴⁴:



As the graph shows, the growth of world temperature is a severe threat to the whole world. It is even more acute to developing and underdeveloped countries. On the other hand, global environmental degradation may result from a variety of factors, including overpopulation and the resulting overuse of land and other resources. Intensive farming, for instance, depletes soil fertility, thus decreasing crop yields. Environmental degradation also results from pollution. Polluting industries include mining, power generation, and chemical production. Other major sources of pollution include automobiles and agricultural fertilizers.

In developing countries, deforestation has had particularly devastating environmental effects. Many rural people, particularly in tropical regions, depend on forests as a source of food and other resources, and deforestation damages or eliminates these supplies. As a result, poverty is increasing day by day. Forests also absorb many pollutants and water from extended rains; without forests, pollution increases and massive flooding further decreases the usability of the deforested areas.⁴⁵ Moreover water level of the sea is also increasing day by day. The growth of water level is a

great concern for the whole world. The growth of water level and its future assumption is as follows⁴⁶:



As the graph demonstrates, the rise of water level is ominous. It is a great concern for all but it will be more dangerous for third world countries.

4. Lack of Education: Education is one of the essential requirements for the development of any nation. The light of education provides us with knowledge about the world. It paves the way for a good career. It helps to build our character. It leads to enlightenment. It lays the foundation of a stronger nation. Education makes a man complete. For this reason, it is called education is the backbone of a nation. There is a direct link between poverty and poor education. In the developed countries mass people are educated and dynamic. But illiteracy and lack of education are common in poor countries. Governments of developing countries often cannot afford to provide for good public schools, especially in rural areas. As a result, proper education is rare to a large number of people. But all children in industrialized countries have access to education. On the other hand, only about 60 percent of children in sub-Saharan Africa

even attend elementary school. Poor people also often forego schooling in order to concentrate on making a minimal living. In addition, developing countries tend to have few employment opportunities, especially for women. As a result, people may see little reason to go to school.

Most of the people of poor countries earn very little per day. There are reports that 41 percent of Yemen's rural population lives on less than two dollars per day. This amount is very poor and the conditions of the people of rural areas are more miserable, where 85 percent of Yemen's poor population lives in rural areas. Forty seven percent of Yemen's population are illiterate, which is another reason for poverty and unemployment.⁴⁷ Universal primary education is one of the goals of "Millennium Development Goals" (MDGs). But, in spite of the progress in education worldwide, there is still a long way to go in order to reach basic universal quality education by 2015, according to the Dakar Commitments (Senegal), seven years ago. As we have pointed out, there are almost 80 million children who, as of today, do not go to school, out of which 55% are girls. Some 23 countries run the risk of not achieving universal primary education by 2015 since their net school enrolment numbers are decreasing. On the other hand, 89 countries still charge enrolment fees that are an important obstacle for poor families.

The light of education helps one remove his/her ignorance and make him/her perfect. It allows us to know the world and change it so that we may all live with dignity, use our rights and participate actively in the building of a more equal and solidarity society. Because we cannot allow so many people to live in the darkness of illiteracy and because we believe that education is the most efficient tool to fight against poverty. We also believe that education is the most important weapon to remove poverty.

Most of the people of developing and under developed countries are very poor. Moreover they are not so educated that will help them earn more from foreign countries. As a result poverty is common almost to all of them. So illiteracy or low literacy is a passport to poverty.

5. Unemployment: Unemployment is an important factor behind poverty. In fact, unemployment and poverty are the two major challenges that are facing the world

economy at present. Unemployment leads to financial crisis and reduces the overall purchasing capacity of a nation. This in turn results in poverty followed by increasing burden of debt. Now, poverty can be described in several ways. As per the World Bank definition, poverty implies a financial condition where people are unable to maintain the minimum standard of living. Like the definition of poverty, poverty can be classified into different classes. Whatever be the type of poverty, the basic reason has always been lack of adequate income. Here comes the role of unemployment behind poverty. Lack of employment opportunities and the consequential income disparity bring about mass poverty in most of the developing and underdeveloped countries of the world. Generally, we see that most of the people of the world are not rich. So working facility is insufficient for eligible workers. Hence lack of effective aggregate demand of labor is one of the principal reasons for unemployment. In the less developed economies a substantial portion of the total workforce works as surplus labor. This problem is particularly prevalent in the agricultural sector. Due to excess labor, the marginal productivity of the workforce may be zero or even negative. This excess pool of labor is the first to become unemployed during the period of economic or social crisis. According to economic system, it is true that unemployment and poverty are mostly common in the less developed economies. However, due to the global economic recessions, the developed economies are also facing these challenges in the recent times. The US subprime crisis and its wide spread impacts have played a major role in worsening the situation. In our Indian subcontinent, the problems of unemployment and poverty have always been major obstacles to economic development. Underemployment and unemployment have crippled the economy of this area from time to time. Even during the period of good harvest, the farmers are not employed for the entire year. Excessive population is another major problem for unemployment;⁴⁸ because employment facility cannot keep pace with the number of workable people. So many people of these countries are unemployed all over the year.

In today's world, even in developed countries, unemployment rates are often too high, though they are known to us as rich nations. Everywhere when people do not have work, they do not make any money and this situation makes high unemployment. This high unemployment leads to high levels of poverty. Availability

of employment also tends to fluctuate, creating periods of high joblessness. Countries such as Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Switzerland, and Luxembourg have managed at times to keep unemployment as low as 2 percent. On the other hand, unemployment figures during the 1990s in the United States and most of Europe ranged from about 5 percent to more than 20 percent. In countries with high populations, unemployment levels of only a few percentage points mean that millions of working-age people cannot find work and earn an inadequate income. Because unemployment figures indicate only the number of people eligible to work who have no job but are seeking employment, such figures are not necessarily an accurate indicator of the number of people living in poverty. Other people may not be able to find enough work or may earn wages too low to support themselves.⁴⁹In this way poverty comes. As a result, they face poverty year after year.

6. Corruption: Corruption is a serious concern for the entire world. It is also an important factor for poverty. There are different types of corruption. Now I shall consider corruption economically. From economic aspects, corruption often accompanies centralization of power, when leaders are not accountable to those they serve. More directly, corruption inhibits development when leaders help themselves to money that would otherwise be used for development projects. Corruption, both in government and business, places heavy cost on society. Businesses should enact, publicize and follow codes of conduct banning corruption on the part of their staff and directors. Citizens must demand greater transparency on the part of both government and the corporate sector and create reform movements where needed. In this regard, mass people want to remove corruption. Corruption occurs at all levels of society, from local and national governments, civil society, judiciary functions, large and small businesses, military and other services and so on. Corruption affects the poorest the most, whether in rich or poor nations.

Corruption is just like a virus; because the issue of corruption is very much inter-related with other issues. At a global level, the economic system that has shaped the current form of globalization in the past decades requires further scrutiny for it has also created conditions whereby corruption can flourish and exacerbate the conditions of people around the world who already have little say about their own destiny. A difficult thing to measure or compare, however, is the impact of corruption on

poverty against the effects of inequalities that are structured into law, such as unequal trade agreements, structural adjustment policies, 'free' trade agreements and so on.

If we consider it politically, corruption is a rampant problem in the world today, especially in third-world countries. It undermines democracy and good governance by flouting formal processes. Corruption increases the cost of business through the price of illicit payments themselves, the management cost of negotiating with officials, and the risk of breached agreements or detection. Also, it generates economic distortions in the public sector by diverting public investment into capital projects where bribes and kickbacks are in plenty. In Nigeria for example, more than 400 Billion dollars was stolen from the National Treasury by Nigeria's leaders from 1960 to 1999. Forms of such corruption include embezzlement, bribery, cronyism, nepotism, graft etc. Hence, this leads to poverty as leaders should have used the money they usurped to help the poor, which results in a lack of funds.⁵⁰ So any type of corruption is very harmful for every nation.

The relation between corruption and poverty are very much close. The links between corruption and poverty affect both individuals and businesses, and they run in both directions: poverty invites corruption, while corruption deepens poverty. Corruption both causes and thrives upon weaknesses in key economic, political and social institutions. It is a form of self-serving influence akin to a heavily regressive tax, benefiting the haves at the expense of the have-nots. Trust—essential to financial markets and effective governments everywhere—is difficult to build in poor and corrupt societies. Every country has corruption, even affluent democracies. Thus, no one has all types of knowledge regarding corruption, and affluent nations have much to learn from their poorer neighbors. Ultimately, lasting reform is a matter of enabling citizens, local businesses and their international partners to insist on basic rights, depend upon the rule of law and hold accountable those who govern.

7. Historical Cause: Many countries of the world have an unproductive geographical situation. Naturally their location is not suitable for proper production. There is a lack of uniform, basic infrastructure, such as roads and means of communication and hence, development can hardly occur in these poor countries. Some scholars have asserted that colonial history is an important factor and reason to the current situation of these countries; because most poor countries had at one time in history been

colonized. During the years of colonization the ruling countries did everything to exploit their colonies. It only served purposes of the ruler. We know from world history, in most countries with a history of colonization, colonialists used the colonies to provide raw materials and other resources for their own economic growth and development. For this reason, M. E. Chamberlain once said that the "Industrial revolution depended on raw materials like iron and coal. Africa was likely to be more significant as a supplier than as a market." Moreover, David Thompson also asserted that "the special attractions of Africa and Asia were, indeed, that they offered many of the raw materials needed by the multiplying factories of Europe: including cotton, silk, rubber, vegetable oils, and the rarer minerals." This is significant as the colonialists colonized these countries due to the fact that the colonies would provide natural resources and markets for economic and industrial growth for their own countries, thus solving their economic woes. So they are rich nations today but their history is ridden with stories of exploitation.

Regarding colonialism, H.R. Cowie has also pointed out that "New systems of agricultural production imposed upon colonial communities transformed land owners into wage earners susceptible to the threat of unemployment." This is evident in Senegal and Nigeria in which the groundnut-oil mill was restricted. It was also known that the state agricultural export monopolies in Burma and in East and West Africa have withheld from the producers a very large production of the sales proceeds. This is significant as colonialism brought along poverty indirectly as they prevented the colonies from developing. This is again propounded by J.A Hobson, H.N Braliford, Leonard Woolf and Lenin, who said that colonialism brought about exploitation of economies and resource primarily through conquest of markets for capital and commodities. More recently Professor Gunnar Myrdal also said that colonialism brought about the retardation of economy by depriving the colonies of the economic benefits of a sovereign state. He elaborated that the inability of locals to pursue active economic development policies, especially in undertaking comprehensive central planning via state control, leading to the retardation of the economy. Hence, countries that were ex-colonies face poverty.⁵¹ So many countries are poor for historical and geographical causes.

8. Economic and Demographic Trends: Economic and demographic trends cause poverty but in a different way; because we have seen poverty in many developed countries that can be linked to economic trends. In the 1950s and 1960s, for example, most people in the United States experienced strong income growth. As a result, taking inflation into account, average family income was almost double during this period. However, between the early 1970s and the early 1990s typical incomes, adjusted for inflation, grew little while the cost of living increased. So these periods of economic recession tended to particularly affect young and less-educated people, who could have difficulty finding jobs that pay enough to support themselves. It was because their education was not sufficient enough to get a job.

In many times, changes in labor markets in developed countries have also contributed to increase poverty levels. For instance, the number of relatively high-paying manufacturing jobs has declined, while the demand for workers in service- and technology-related industries has increased. Historically, people have learned the skills required for jobs that involve manual labor, such as those in manufacturing, either on the job or through easily accessible school vocational programs. As these jobs are replaced by service- and technology-related jobs— jobs that usually require skills taught at the college level— people who cannot afford a college education find it increasingly difficult to obtain well-paying work. We have seen in many developed nations the number of people living in poverty has increased due to rising disparities in the distribution of resources within these countries. Since the 1970s, for instance, the poorest 20 percent of all U.S. households have earned an increasingly smaller percentage of the total national income (generally less than 5 percent) while the wealthiest 5 percent of households have earned an increasingly greater percentage (about 45 percent of the total). During most of this period, those in the middle and the bottom of the income distribution have become progressively worse off as the cost of living has risen.

In many research works, some researchers also cite demographic shifts (changes in the makeup of populations) as contributing to increases in overall poverty. In particular, demographic shifts have led to increases in poverty among children. In the United States, for instance, typical family structures have changed significantly, leading to an increase in single-parent families, which tend to be poorer. Single-

parent families with children have a much more difficult time escaping poverty than do two-parent families, in which adults can divide and share childcare and work duties. In 1970, about 87 percent of children lived with both of their parents, but by the turn of the century this figure had dropped to 69 percent. The divorce rate in the United States more than doubled between 1960 and 1980, although it stabilized in the 1980s and fell somewhat in the 1990s. More importantly, perhaps, the proportion of children born to unmarried parents grew from about 5 percent in the early 1960s to more than 33 percent by 2000.⁵² Hence we can see that economic and demographic matters have an impact on poverty though this type of poverty or crisis is different from absolute poverty.

9. High costs of living: The people of developed countries have enough property than developing and underdeveloped countries. As the people in developed nations may have more wealth and resources than those in developing countries, their standard of living is also generally higher. Thus, people who have what would be considered adequate wealth and resources in developing countries may be considered poor in developed countries. In developed countries these people are relatively poor. People in the United States, for example, may expect to make, on average, about \$30,000 each year. They also probably expect to rent an apartment or own a house with electricity and running water, to be able to afford to eat and dress well, and to receive quality health care. It is their normal expectation. In addition, many people aspire to afford *discretionary expenses*— that is, purchases unessential to survival, such as cars, higher-priced foods, and entertainment. They make travel from country to country for their recreation.

But in developing countries the picture is different. The people in developing countries may consider themselves to be doing well if they have productive gardens, some livestock, and a house of thatch or mud-brick. In rural areas, people may be accustomed to not having plumbing, electricity, or formal health care. By the standards of developed countries, such living conditions are considered hallmarks of poverty. We know developed countries also tend to have a high cost of living. Even the most basic lifestyle in these countries, with few or no luxuries, can be relatively expensive. If we take a look we will see that most of the people in the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, western European nations, and other developed countries

cannot obtain adequate food, clothing, and shelter without ample amounts of money. In some areas, even people with jobs that pay the legal minimum wage may not be able to cover their basic expenses. People who cannot find or maintain well-paying jobs often have no spare income for discretionary or emergency expenses, and many rely on government welfare payments to survive.⁵³ So though they have enough property, they are poor because of their living cost. This type of poverty is not as intense as absolute poverty.

10. Individual Responsibility and Welfare Dependency: Individual responsibility and welfare dependency also cause poverty. Welfare dependency is the state in which a person or household is reliant on government welfare benefits for their income for a prolonged period of time, and without which they would not be able to meet the expenses of daily living. But there are differing beliefs about individual responsibility for poverty. Some people believe that poverty is a symptom of societal structure and that some proportion of any society inevitably will be poor. On the other hand, others feel that poverty results from a failure of social institutions, such as the labor market, schools, etc. These people feel that poverty is beyond the control of those who experience it, but might be remedied if appropriate policies were enacted. Other people feel that the poor intentionally behave in ways that cause or perpetuate their poverty. For instance, if people voluntarily choose to use drugs and this leads them to poverty, it can be argued that they are to blame for their miserable situation. This situation is the result of their own behavior. However, such an argument cannot completely explain cases in which poverty leads to drug dependence though it is exceptional or rare but not impossible.

If we take a look at developed countries, we will see many people in developed countries blame cycles of poverty, or the tendency for the poor to remain poor, on overly generous welfare programs. Supporters of this position, including some politicians, argue against government spending and initiatives to help the poor. They believe that these programs provide incentives for people to stay poor in order to continue receiving payments and other support. The followers of this opinion say that, this argument also suggests that welfare discourages work and marriage. For example, in the United States and other developed countries, getting a job results in reduced welfare support; the same is true when a single parent gets married.

However, cash welfare benefits for the typical poor U.S. family with children fell in value by half between the early 1970s and the mid-1990s, taking inflation into account. Such benefits may have been too meager to motivate people to stay on welfare or to avoid work or marriage. In the United States, the belief that cash welfare assistance actually encouraged personal decisions leading to poverty dominated policy discussions of the 1990s. In response, in 1996 the U.S. Congress created a new welfare program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). This program ended the guarantee of cash benefits for poor families with children, shifted more control to the states, and established stricter work requirements for recipients. The numbers of poor families with children receiving cash welfare fell dramatically, from 4.6 million in 1996 to 2.1 million at the end of 2001. The poverty rate for children also fell during the 1990s, from more than 20 percent in the early part of the decade to about 16 percent by the end of the decade. Experts disagree, however, on what drove the reductions in both welfare caseloads and poverty: changes in welfare policy or the dynamic economy that prevailed during most of this period.⁵⁴ This type of poverty is not as intense as absolute poverty which we see in developing and underdeveloped countries.

These are the main causes of poverty. Besides, there are various causes such as war, fathers leaving the family, disease, minority status, physical and mental disability, etc. Natural calamities are also responsible for poverty. Whatever may be the causes of poverty, it is a curse for our world. In the next chapter I shall explore the probable consequences of non-action against poverty.

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Chapter-3

Inaction against poverty: a Singerian interpretation

Poverty, particularly absolute poverty, is extremely damaging for the developing and underdeveloped parts of the world. We have seen in the previous chapter that because of absolute poverty people suffer from tremendous hunger and various diseases that finally lead to death. The result of absolute poverty is obvious and no civilized people can feel themselves to be satisfied with a state of affairs in which their fellow humans exist in conditions of such absolute human misery.¹ So absolute poverty and its result is very pathetic. It is a great problem for all; because this problem is the root of various types of moral problems, too. But what is the solution of this problem? The solution of this problem requires proper action. Hence we have some duty to save poverty stricken people. If we keep silent and take no action against poverty, it will bring about disastrous consequences. According to Peter Singer, if we do not act against poverty that results in death, we are responsible for the death. He compared it with killing; because he thinks that there is no significant difference between killing and creating or allowing the environment for killing. Now the question arises why we are responsible for the death? For this question, we need to mention some facts. More than 500 million people do not get minimum protein, vitamin and minerals which they need. In a word, they lack calories to keep immunity from deficiency diseases and infections. To maintain immunity, they need reasonable diet and shelter. As they do not get minimum diet and shelter, they suffer from various diseases and finally succumb to death. Singer states that 14 million children under five die from the combined effects of malnutrition and infection every year all over the world. Even in some countries half of the children of total born die before their fifth birthday.² We know some underdeveloped countries which are extremely poverty affected such as Mali, Ethiopia, Somalia, Bangladesh etc. In these countries malnutrition, various types of diseases, illiteracy, low life expectancy, high mortality rate etc. are common to their daily life. For this reason, a large number of children and young die every year. And the majority of those alive suffer from malnutrition and contagion.

Malnutrition hinders their physical and mental development; and contagion destroys their creativity.³ So in spite of having life they are like inanimate objects and they die within a short period. Moreover, during the natural calamities such as cyclones, earthquakes, floods, droughts and over rainfall, etc. a large number of people die without proper feeding and treatment. Generally people say, as they are poor, they have to die by this way, because they have no ability to fulfill their needs or they are unable to protect themselves. Many will agree that it is usual. But can we really say it is usual? No, it is not usual. It is either failure on the part of their governors or indifference of the voluntary organizations of the world. The main commitment of a ruler is to protect life and wealth of his or her citizens. If he or she is unable to protect them, different organizations of the world have a moral responsibility to come forward. Furthermore, there are different rich nations and their affluent citizens. So if we agree that it is usual that the absolute poverty stricken people will die a miserable death will be an irresponsible and immoral decision. All of us are under obligation from moral point of view to do something according to one's ability. All people of the world are not absolute poverty stricken people; many of them are absolutely affluent, too.

On the other hand, all states of the world are not developing or underdeveloped. We know there are some rich countries known as developed countries such as the USA, Japan, Sweden, UK, Germany, Western European countries, North American countries and Oil rich countries etc. are affluent by any reasonable standard.⁴ And most of the citizens of these countries are affluent. They have enormous property to maintain their life. This type of people are not relatively rich, they are affluent by any logical definition of income and wealth. It means that they are so affluent that they have more wealth after their regular consumption. Not only that they eat different types of food not to satisfy their hunger, but to change their palate; they buy new clothes not to keep them warm, but to change their fashion. They change their dwelling place for better environment and neighbors. They move abroad to see historical and charming places of the world, they buy various luxurious items to make their life comfortable. In spite of all types of expenditure, they have still enough money. Hence Singer says that these countries and individuals can assist the poverty stricken without any significant loss of their own. Now one may say, why will they

donate to the poor? Are we bound to help them? In our society, most of the people think that they should care for their children and family. But morally we have obligations to citizens of other countries. Even if we extend our moral support to non-human animals and to the environment then we are also obligated to them.⁵ Now one may say at first we should help human being, then animal and environment. Of course, we should help human being first but here main point is, we have a moral duty to citizens of other countries, particularly those who are absolute poverty stricken. So it is our moral duty. We are under obligation from moral point of view to help them. It is the matter of moral sense and moral obligation. Singer also considers it from moral point of view. After much deliberation Singer shows that, we are under obligation from moral point of view to help absolute poverty stricken people. For this reason, he said, we have affluence and can use it to reduce absolute poverty but how much we will contribute will depend on how much we will think ourselves obliged to give up.⁶ In our present world, a large number of people have been suffering from extreme poverty. They are deprived of fundamental needs. These people are hungry, they are not getting proper treatment and healthcare and they are dying from various types of diseases every year. Here children suffer from their birth. To express the conditions of these children Amartya Sen said-

“... maternal malnutrition and childhood undernourishment can make children prone to illnesses and handicaps of health. Blindness can result from diseases linked to infection and lack of clean water. Other disabilities can originate through the effects of polio, measles or AIDS, as well as road accidents and injuries at work.”⁷

So the children of this class are maimed and disabled from the very beginning of their life. As a human being we are responsible for their sufferings, if we are able to help them and if we do not help. Peter Singer shows in the discussion of euthanasia that there is no intrinsic significant difference between killing and making the environment for killing. He also presented various evidence where people die indirectly (for their miserable conditions). He said-

“Many people die because of insufficient food, or poor medical facilities. If we could assist some of them, but do not do so, we are letting them die. ... For instance, omitting to give antibiotics to a child with pneumonia may have consequences no less fatal than giving the child a lethal injection. ... What we need to do is imagine two parallel situations differing only in that in one a person performs an act resulting in the death of another human being, while in the other she omits to do something, with the same result.”⁸

So Singer wants to say, if anyone does not help another in a situation that results in death, the person is responsible for the death. Finally, Singer arrives at the conclusion that killing and allowing to die are not morally different. He says that “Reflecting on these cases leads us to the conclusion that there is no intrinsic moral difference between killing and allowing to die.”⁹

Here Singer states that killing is murder and allowing to die is equivalent to killing. He also provides an interpretation of this conclusion. He thinks that allowing to die is equivalent to murder or killing from moral point of view. So regarding the question of taking life, Singer explains two types as part of the consequences of an act and the omission of an act . They are-

1. **Direct killing**(the consequences of an act that results in death) **and**
2. **Make the environment for killing**(the consequences of omission an act that results death).

The first one or direct killing is generally known as murder which is near about exclusively related to criminology. And second one is different in type. Our main discussion is based on second one or indirect killing but the first one will be discussed, too for the relevancy or for the sake of regularity of our discussion. Now I shall attempt to distinguish between direct killing and making the environment for killing.

1. **Direct killing:** When a person kills an individual unlawfully then it is called killing. So generally killing means unlawful death of an individual by a killer .We can also say killing is the intentional cessation of all biological functions

that sustain a living organism of a person. In our society usually we call it murder. A person who is responsible for murder is called a murderer. Peter Singer shows that direct killing is intentional and unlawful such as caused by those who deliberately shoot others to kill; they presumably want their victims death.¹⁰ So according to Peter Singer, this type of death is unlawful and there lies a motive behind the killing.

Killing or murder is deeply related to law. According to law, killing is the consequence of an unlawful intentional action that causes death. In the penal code, it is called culpable homicide that occurs from offences affecting the human body, specially of offences affecting human life. According to section 299 of the Penal Code, 1860, culpable homicide is as follows:

“Whoever causes death by doing an act with the intention of causing death, or with the intention of causing such bodily injury as is likely to cause death, or with the knowledge that he is likely by such act to cause death, commits the offence of culpable homicide.”¹¹

Morally murder is different in type. Though murder is both a legal and a moral term but they are no coincident. Because it may be legal to kill, but still murder in the moral sense. Opponents of the [death penalty](#) argue that it is simply murder by the state.¹² Murder is scolded by all. Nobody wants to be a murderer at all; as the loss of a human being inflicts enormous grief upon the individuals close to the victim, and the commission of a murder is highly harmful to the good order within society. Many societies of our world both present and in the past have considered it a most serious crime worthy of the harshest of punishment. In most countries of the world, a person who is accused of murder is generally given a long prison sentence, likely life sentence where permitted. In some countries of the world, the capital punishment may be imposed for such an act but this practice is becoming less common day by day.¹³ The punishment of a murderer may be more or less but all over the world he or she is an abject person.

We are very familiar with the concept of direct killing or murder but indirect killing or making the environment for killing is different in type. In most cases it is very difficult to identify indirect killing. Now I shall focus on the nature of indirect killing.

2. Indirect killing or make the environment for killing: Indirect killing is a type of killing where the death seems normal but there are significant artificial causes behind the death. It means that the causes constitute a situation where the death is the most likely consequence. When these causes do not cause death these still cause misery of a kind which is tantamount to death. Sometimes this type of death appears to us logically. Then we think that it is unavoidable for them or it is their fate. But we often do not take a look at those who are allowing them to die. For example, millions of people are dying early for adulterated food, fake medicine, maltreatment and different types of diseases. These types of diseases are curable but the patient is unable to take medicine. Many people are dying by consuming adulterated food and many are also dying without food. Due to some fundamental reasons, death and disease apart, there remains a miserable condition of life. These reasons are inadequate food, shelter, clothing, sanitation, health services and natural calamities. This ambience we see more or less all over the world specially in developing and underdeveloped areas.

Many people of our society are affluent, powerful and educated enough to protect them from different types of adverse situation. They can also help the abject without any significant loss of their own if they want. But affluent people rarely do so. Most of them are busy making themselves happier. A large number of them want to make money by any means. For this reason they use the abject according to their purpose. So the abject are helpless. Moreover there are various types of natural calamities. In all types of adverse situation, the poor are in a miserable condition. Many of them are dying early. Some are about to die and some are suffering from various types of diseases. Peter Singer says, the affluent who have enough ability to help these type of poor people but do not help are responsible for this type of death and miserable conditions. For example, a person is severely injured by a road accident and he needs proper treatment immediately. Now if the doctors don't pay proper treatment to him,

he will die very soon. The doctor doesn't serve him though he has sufficient medicine and other necessary support. As a result, the patient dies without treatment. Here the doctor doesn't kill the patient directly, he only avoids to serve him. According to Singer, the doctor is allowing the patient to die. For this reason, he thinks that there is no significant difference between killing and allowing to die. He has also given an interpretation of his opinion. For him, allowing to die is equivalent to murder from moral point of view. Now I shall critically discuss this conclusion put forward by Peter Singer.

Allowing to die and killing: Singerian view

Peter Singer has given an interpretation about killing and allowing to die. He thinks that, to some context, the commission of an act and the omission of an act are same. Let us think about the patient mentioned above. If the doctor would kill him, he would die and if the doctor wouldn't serve him, he would die, too. Here, not to serve and deliberate killing are same; because if the doctor doesn't serve him, he is allowing him to die. So after much deliberation, Singer concludes that there is no ethical difference between killing and allowing to die. That Killing or murder is scolded is known to all of us. Murder is meted out capital punishment all over the world if it is proved. But allowing to die is still a controversial issue; because allowing to die has various types of interpretation. Against the case mentioned above, one may present that the doctor was serving another critical patient then. So he had no other way at that time. Even it also may be true that the doctor was not informed about the condition of the patient mentioned above. Similarly, as Singer concluded that allowing to die is equivalent to murder is also a controversial one. Against Peter Singer, one may say regarding allowing to die: have we enough evidence in a certain case to condemn one that he only allowed the person to die. If one explanation condemns one that he is allowing to die, the opposite explanation may accuse another one. Even one may say, what is the base to accuse anyone that he is allowing to die and why one (those who are allowing to die) will be regarded as a killer? Peter Singer concluded the decision from moral point of view. In favor of his decision Peter Singer has given an ethical as well as logical explanation.

Peter Singer points out that a large number of people are suffering from food and habitation all over the world. According to Peter Singer, 600 million people are living in extreme poverty in South Asia, 380 million in sub-Saharan Africa and 200 million in China. Besides many people in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Pacific and North Africa are living in extreme poverty.¹⁴ But the problem is not that the earth cannot manage food and habitation for its entire people. So why are people hungry day after day and passing days without shelter? On the other hand, we see affluent are spending wealth not to fulfill their demand, but to fulfill their desires and to keep their status high. These people are not affluent in comparison with their neighbors; they are affluent by any reasonable definition of affluence. So the problem is not so much with production as with distribution. So, how can we solve this problem? To present a solution regarding the problem, Peter Singer has given an explanation about discrimination and finally he has presented an explanation regarding allowing to die. He stated that, those who are affluent, they can contribute a minimum part of their income if they don't have many dependents of their own. But who are this type of affluent? Peter Singer says-“Its defining characteristic is a significant amount of income above the level necessary to provide for the basic human needs of oneself and one's dependents.”¹⁵ The affluent people have more income than their needs. According to Peter Singer, those who are solvent after all types of expenditure will be regarded affluent. This standard will count Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Oil rich Middle Eastern states etc. as affluent. A large number of citizens of those states are absolutely affluent.¹⁶ This type of citizen can easily donate to the poor without any significant loss of their basic needs. Similarly government can also help. But they are making little contribution. So the poverty stricken are suffering. Peter Singer says, affluent people are allowing the poverty stricken with malnutrition, ill health, contagion, paralysis and death; because they have the ability to remove these by transferring a large amount. The affluent people can donate their wealth to voluntary organizations like Oxfam, Care, War on Want, Freedom from Hunger and same type of organizations all over the world. But they are not doing so. As a result, the poor are suffering from various types of diseases and finally they are facing death. Hence Peter Singer says, as we (the affluent) are not helping and finally they (the poor) are dying, and we are allowing them to die. So we are all killers [as Peter

Singer said before there is no intrinsic difference between killing and allowing to die].¹⁷Without help, the poor are suffering and finally they are dying. One may agree with this decision. But one may ask, are these types of death and murder same? Those who are not helping may be accused as killer? They may, however, present different types of arguments to refute Peter Singer. Their arguments could be as follows:

1. They may argue against Peter Singer that this conclusion (above mentioned) is based on his personal opinion. One may not help; he may spend his wealth and income for his status and drugs. Because of this (without help), the abject may suffer from acute diseases and finally they may die. This type of death is pathetic and painful. Those who are not helping, we may scold them but we may not accuse them for the death or punish them for this. Undoubtedly we may call it immoral but can we call them killer? This conclusion seems too hard. Of course, we may not accuse or punish them. So there is a significantly intrinsic difference between not helping and killing.
2. A person may be affluent and he may become more affluent day by day. He can spend his money according to his will without violating the law. He may gather his income by paying income tax. He may be self-centered and selfish. On the other hand, he may be imbued with the spirit of morality and may donate his income to the poor. Charity is a noble virtue and self-centered activities are narrowly counted. Now one may be a charitable person or a self-centered one. Those who are charitable, we may appreciate them. And those who are self-centered, we may avoid them, scold them and even suggest them to contribute by possible way. We may show them the sordid picture of malnutrition, fatal diseases, contagion and death of poverty stricken people; such as the data released by UNICEF that nearly 10 million children under five years old die each year from causes related to poverty.¹⁸But do we have any right to condemn them as a murderer? This will be illegal. This type of definition of murder may instigate someone to violence.
3. We may present significant difference between spending money on luxuries and using it to save lives. Similarly spending money on luxuries and deliberately shooting people are also totally different. Those who are killer and who want to kill someone they deliberately shoot others, because they

presumably want their victims dead. The killer or shooter wants to do it to serve his or her purpose. If anyone dies from as a result of such criminal intention, we may call it murder and we may accuse the shooter as a murderer. We may demand for the killer capital punishment according to law. On the other hand, a person who buys a new stereo system presumably wants to enhance his or her enjoyment of music. We may say the person is indifferent about his or her moral duty; because spending money on luxuries instead of giving it away indicates selfishness and indifference to the sufferers. This characteristic may be undesirable but definitely not comparable with actual murder or similar motives.¹⁹ Buying new television set and murder are totally different. So the person may be indifferent but not killer.

4. The term murder is a sensitive term to all; because it means taking life, specially human life. Law against murder all over the world is very hard which imposes capital punishment in almost all proved cases. In some countries, it refers to death sentence and in some countries life imprisonment. Whether the punishment is more or less, it is not difficult for us to act in accordance with the law against killing of human beings. Even if we are not imbued with the spirit of morality, we are easily able to act according to law against killing. But it is very difficult for us to act accordingly to the principle of morality that commands us to save all the lives we can. We need not kill anyone to maintain a comfortable life. But to save someone instead of allowing them to die is a complicated and significant duty. Our duty is to give away our wealth to sufferers. By this way we can perform our duty to save. Now one may say, the duty to avoid killing is much easier to discharge than the duty to save. To save every life could mean cutting our standard of living down to the bare essentials needed to keep us alive only. Finally to discharge this duty completely would require a degree of moral heroism utterly different from that required by mere avoidance of murder.²⁰ So this type of moral duty and rule against killing is absolutely different.
5. Moral duty is not a common republic law but rule against crime or criminal law is a common law. Similarly violation of moral law and violation of state or civil law are also different. If it is, then giving aid or not giving aid and

shooting or not shooting are not comparable by the same standard. The difference will be clear when the greater certainty of the outcome of shooting will be compared with not giving assistance. When a person shoots, he or she is sure about its result but the person who spends is not sure about its result. When a person points a loaded gun at someone at close range and pulls the trigger, it is virtually certain that the person will be killed or the person will be severely injured. On the other hand, when a person spends a large amount on a project that turns out to be unsuccessful or helps no one,²¹ the consequence is not so clear to him or her. That is why, if anyone dies without treatment and habitation, the affluent are not held responsible for the death.

6. To a certain extent, the impact of giving or not giving aid is vague and uncertain than a murder. When a person is murdered by someone, we can identify the murderer and punish him by law. But when anyone buys a new car without spending money for the poor people, then we cannot surely say that his money would have saved those persons in a time of famine. For this reason Peter Singer says-

“When I buy my stereo system, I cannot know who my money would have saved if I had given it away. In a time of famine I may see dead bodies and grieving families on television reports, and I might not doubt that my money would have saved some of them; even then it is impossible to point to a body and say that had I not bought the stereo, that person would have survived.”²²

So we can help through international voluntary organizations but we cannot say these persons will be able to sustain themselves with our aid. On the other hand, in case of murder we can punish the murderer and help out the family of the deceased.

7. One may say that he or she is not responsible for famine and miserable conditions; because the world is an open place for all. Everybody consumes what he or she earns. One may become affluent by one’s own earning or by inheritance. If the person would not exist, yet the poverty and miserable conditions would exist. So he or she is not responsible for the situation and

hence is not bound to contribute. But if he or she murders anyone we can accuse him for the murder; because if he had not killed him, the victim would not have faced death.

8. Some people may assume that from the very beginning of human civilization there was lack of proper food, habitation and other essentials. Since then the situation is present till now. This will continue in future. So it is like a natural law and a part of civilization. To remove these from our society will be an abortive effort for us. So whether we contribute or not, we will not be able to remove poverty from our society.

As a member of the society, everyone has some duty to other individuals of the society. There are bonds among social individuals. It may be social, voluntary and any other types. Because the nature of bond may originate from duties, obligations, rights or any other types of social affairs.²³ Because of these bonds, people help one another. Many people may also help voluntarily and many may not help. But if someone does not help, we cannot accuse him or her as a murderer. So we can say that killing and not giving aid are different in origin. One may die without food and habitation but we cannot accuse anyone for the death. Similarly we cannot accuse anyone as a murderer.

Refutation of these arguments: One may present a series of arguments against the proposition that ‘allowing to die is equivalent to killing’. But these arguments are not vital; these are only arguments for argument’s sake. Initially it is argued that to help poverty stricken people are our moral duty. Those who have no ability are not required to help others; but those who are affluent, who have enough ability to help, they are expected to help the poverty stricken people. If anyone wants to avoid it, he or she may come up with a lot of arguments to refute moral duty. But if they are imbued with the spirit of morality and imagine some cases their duty will be clear. The cases are the following:

1. They can imagine that the affluent have medicine and poverty stricken people are suffering from fatal diseases. If they give medicine to the poor people they will return to usual life, otherwise they will die. Now if any person dies without medicine, then they (the affluent) are responsible for their death. We

may also call them murderer because they are allowing them to die. If so, the affluent are responsible for the death of those who are fighting against life without food, shelter, medicine etc. and finally dying a miserable death. Because the affluent are allowing them to die, they are responsible for their death or they are killers.

2. They may imagine some cases in which someone allows another to die for malicious or sadistic reasons. And the reasons are equivalent to not giving aid. It means that the previous reasons and not giving aid are same. If so, then death from malicious or sadistic reasons and death from miserable situations are same. Both of them are killers.
3. The affluent can imagine a world having few poor people who need assistance. It is easy to assist and save them. Hence their duty to not allow people to die is as easily discharged as their duty not to kill.²⁴
4. When a person shoots anyone at close range, the person will surely die. Here the gunner is the killer of the victim. Now we may imagine a situation in which the outcome of not helping is as sure as shooting. If so, then the shooter and the person not helping others are both killers.
5. It has been mentioned against giving aid that we are not able to find someone during famine that person would have survived if we helped him. Now we can say against this argument that we can imagine cases in which we can identify the person we are allowing to die.
6. Regarding our existence we may imagine a case of allowing to die in which, if I had not existed, the person would have died. We also may imagine a case in which if I had not been in a position to help, someone else would have been in my position and would have helped.²⁵ So we should help for our existence.
7. One may say, a killer is accused in case of deliberate killing. But not giving aid and killing are not same. We may not accuse someone for miserable conditions. In answer to this questions, we may say, deliberate killing is scolded by all and we consider the killer as notorious. But it does not justify allowing to die and not giving aid are different. To some context it is as harmful as killing. Peter Singer says-

“...by giving money I could save a life does reduce the wrongness of not giving, by comparison with deliberate killing; but it is insufficient to show that not giving is acceptable conduct. The motorist who speeds through pedestrian crossings, heedless of anyone who might be on them, is not a murderer. She may never actually hit a pedestrian; yet what she does is very wrong indeed.”²⁶

She may murder someone anytime. Similarly the affluent who are not giving are not killing anyone deliberately but allowing others to die, that is indirect killing.

8. We are able to act easily because of the law against killing. So it is not a heroic action. But if we are able to save all the poverty stricken people, that will be a great one. During famine and calamities some people are helpless and in miserable conditions. Moreover, some people are in danger all over the world all the time. Hence, if we are able to save them, it will make a great difference between act according to law against killing and saving the people in dire state. If so, then giving aid and saving poverty stricken people are hundred times better than act according to law against killing. So, as we know, giving aid is better, heroic and noble, and we will do so.

Thus arguments against giving aid are proved abortive. One may present various types of arguments but they have no ethical value. So one, who does not contribute to save and allow to die, they are responsible for the death as we said before there is no intrinsic ethical significance between killing and allowing to die. And their arguments are also abortive. For this reason Peter Singer says-

“These differences need not shake our previous conclusion that there is no intrinsic difference between killing and allowing to die. They are extrinsic differences, that is differences normally but not necessarily associated with the distinction between killing and allowing to die.”²⁷

So Singer wants to say that, many objections may be presented against his conclusion but those are not intrinsic, they are extrinsic only. Morally we have to do what we can without sacrificing the fundamental needs of our own. And we have an obligation to aid others when their fundamental needs represent weightier moral claims than our own.²⁸ But Peter Singer says, those who are affluent will contribute without any significant loss of their own. And if they do not do so and allow poverty stricken people to die, then they are responsible for the death. At last he proved that killing and allowing to die are not morally different. Killing means murder and allowing to die is also killing which we may call 'indirect killing'. Now I shall deliberate on the obligation to help the poor.

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Chapter-4

The obligation to help the poor and refutation of charges against obligatory argument

In the previous chapter we have seen that there is no ethical significance between killing and allowing to die. And those who are responsible for allowing to die are killer from ethical point of view. As a human being we should stop this type of death because of our moral obligation. Peter Singer says, if we are able to prevent something bad from happening because of food, shelter and medical care, we should do it without sacrificing anything nearly as important.¹ So if it is possible for us to save this type of people, we should do it. Moreover, death resulting from famine, diseases, food, habitation etc. are curse for our civilization. So we should stop this according to our capacity. On the other hand, without death there remains a miserable condition of life because of food, habitation, education, healthcare and various causes like these. These are also not our civil expectation for our society, all will agree with this view. For this reason Peter Singer says, "... suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad. I think most people will agree about this, although one may reach the same view by different routes."² Now what is our duty or what should we do to stop this? We should stop or remove the causes for which people are suffering from various types of adversity and finally facing death. Now one may ask: Is it possible for us to stop or remove these causes? How is it possible for us? In answer to this question we can say that the causes (mentioned above) will automatically disappear if we cordially finish our duty. This statement suggests a new approach. The approach is that everyone will contribute according to his or her capacity. It does not mean only financial help. The approach will be moral. Everyone will remove something very bad if it is possible for him or her without any significant loss of his or her own. Here significant loss means comparative importance. For example, Mr. X is going to attend a party. On his way X finds a person severely injured by a car accident. Hence if X wants to save the injured then he will not be

able to attend the party. Now morally X should refrain himself from joining the party and should save the injured. This is comparative significance of loss. Everyone will agree that to save an injured person is better than joining a party. Peter Singer cites an example regarding significant loss. He says-

“The path from the library at my university to the humanities lecture theatre passes a shallow ornamental pond. Suppose that on my way to give a lecture I notice that a small child has fallen in and is in danger of drowning. Would anyone deny that I ought to wade in and pull the child out? This will mean getting my clothes muddy and either cancelling my lecture or delaying it until I can find something dry to change into; but compared with the avoidable death of a child this is insignificant.”³

Singer claims that the example he presented above will be supported by everyone; because cancelling or delaying lecture is not as important as a life. So by this argument we can say if we are able to stop something very bad from happening without sacrificing anything of comparable moral significance, we should prevent it. This duty is a thing of reason, not of unreason. This type of reason dwells in our heart. It comes naturally when we want to keep us rational and live rationally.⁴ I also agree with Peter Singer personally that if we can save a life by sacrificing a simple loss of our own we should do it; because cancelling a class or to avoid a party is less important than a life. So to save anyone without any significant loss is an uncontroversial principle; because the principle will be approved by consequentialists and the non- consequentialists. Consequentialists will receive it because of its noble result and non-consequentialists will approve it because the principle does not lead us to any kind of immoral action such as serious violations of individual rights, injustice, broken promises and so on.⁵ On the other hand, rationalist will also approve it as it is rational also. So if we are able to remove something bad without any significant loss is not a principle that is approved by a few special moralists; it is rather approved by any reasonable moral doctrine and it has turned into an ethical principle. If so, then we are under obligation to act according to this principle where people are suffering from tremendous hunger and various types of diseases.

In our present world, we see affluent people who are capable of leading a luxurious life. For this reason, Peter Singer says, we have superrich people who spend their money on palatial homes, ridiculously large and luxurious boats and private planes. And there were 1100 billionaires before 2008 in the world.⁶ A portion of them are so affluent that they can play a vital role for the development of poverty affected country if they want. This type of people are absolutely affluent. They choose their diet for the pleasures of the palate, not to satisfy their hunger, they buy new clothes and various types of luxurious items not to keep them warm, but to present their high status. They spend money to take revenge and to prove their ability against their enemies. Similarly powerful states declare war against each other to prove their supremacy. They spend enormous wealth for this purpose; because war is an act of force to compel one's will. This is the condition of spending wealth among both states and individuals. So they can easily help and can remove poverty by cutting this type of devastating actions. Moreover, the poor also have a right to the property of rich nation and rich people; because every rich becomes wealthy with the support of the poor. No poor does refuse any rich during his production. But the poor are dying without food, shelter and treatment. So the rich should help them. On the other hand, if there was no third world, the developed countries would not be able to produce everything that it does. They produce and sell their items among third world countries. Even they only order to produce and the labor of third world countries produce by their hard labor. Most of the skilled labor works in highly reputed industry owned by developed nation's citizen. Now as these labors are in miserable conditions, so they should help them if they don't have many dependents of their own and without any significant loss of their own.

Now we will proceed by a principle and the principle is, if we are able to prevent something very disastrous from occurring without any significant loss of our own, we will prevent them.⁷ If we take the principle cordially and work according to this principle, then we will be able to make a radical change of life style and socio-economic conditions of our present world specially developing and underdeveloped areas. This principle is not applicable only to save a children from being drowned. It is applicable also to save those who are living in absolute poverty. If a teacher can save a child from being drowned in a pond by cancelling his class in time, it is

possible for him to prevent something very bad from happening without any significant loss of his own. Similarly everyone will agree that absolute poverty and its related conditions such as hunger and malnutrition, lack of shelter, illiteracy, disease, high infant mortality rate, low life expectancy, etc. are very bad and these are happening everyday in our world. By our principle affluent can prevent these from happening without any significant loss of their own. If so, then they should do it. It is tantamount to saving a child from a pond. If the person had not saved the child, it would die. Similarly without food, shelter, medicine and so on, the absolute poverty stricken are dying. In other words, the affluent are allowing them to die. As we said before, there is no intrinsic difference between killing and allowing to die, so if they don't help others they can be treated as murderer. So they should help according to their capacity. Peter Singer presented this principle formally. The formal argument is as follows:

“First premise: If we can prevent something bad without sacrificing anything of comparable significance, we ought to do it.

Second premise: Absolute poverty is bad.

Third premise: There is some absolute poverty we can prevent without sacrificing anything of comparable moral significance.

Conclusion: We ought to prevent some absolute poverty.”⁸

In this argument, the first premise is the foundation of all premises and this premise reflects the above mentioned principle. The rest of the premises are also important for framing the conclusion. But regarding this argument, particularly regarding his conclusion, one may differ from Peter Singer. Peter Singer's stance in favour of partial eradication of poverty seems weak. He concluded that ‘we ought to remove some absolute poverty’. This conclusion elicits the following objections:

1. ‘We ought to remove some absolute poverty’ is not a strong obligation for contribution; because the affluent people may think that they are not strongly obligated to remove absolute poverty. They may think that they have little duty regarding poverty. As a result, it can lead to a situation in which there are many

people living in absolute poverty while the affluent people are obligated to remove some absolute poverty.

2. The conclusion may instigate affluent to be indifferent towards contribution. If they think that they should remove some poverty, they will get an excuse to postpone fulfillment of the duty.
3. If we say, we should remove some poverty then it means that we should sustain some absolute poverty. Because a large number of people are living in absolute poverty and if we are obligated to remove some absolute poverty, a part of poverty stricken people will continue to live in absolute poverty.
4. The conclusion may instigate affluent people to contribute less. They will think that they should remove some poverty; so small amount will be sufficient for this purpose. Actually, this small amount will not be sufficient for the eradication of poverty.
5. The conclusion may be morally controversial one; because a large number of people are living in absolute poverty and our purpose is to eliminate absolute poverty from this world. Now if we say, we will remove some absolute poverty, then a moral question arises: for whom shall we contribute? If we think morally then everyone who are poverty stricken are eligible for our help; because morality does not make a difference between religion and races. So the conclusion may be morally controversial.

But Peter Singer has given an explanation of his conclusion and premises of the argument. He stated that first premise is the base of the argument and it is accepted to all who believe in any moral doctrine. Second premise is also acceptable to all; because everyone will agree that absolute poverty is bad. And third premise is our principle. In the conclusion, Singer said that we ought to remove some absolute poverty. Many questions may arise regarding conclusion because it speaks for partial solution. According to Singer, the conclusion is not partial, because he did not say we should not try to remove all absolute poverty. He wanted to present here that any personal contribution will make some noticeable impression on world poverty as a whole and it will, to say the least, prevent some absolute poverty; and this is all the argument he needs to sustain the conclusion. It can mean even providing just one

family with the means to raise itself out of absolute poverty without sacrificing anything of comparable moral significance. In other words, the conclusion of the argument means that we should try our best to remove absolute poverty.⁹ If possible we will remove total but at least some. Peter Singer says:

“...we have income we can dispose of without giving up the basic necessities of life, and we can use this income to reduce absolute poverty. Just how much we will think ourselves obliged to give up will depend on what we consider to be of comparable moral significance to the poverty we could prevent...”¹⁰

We consume various types of food and use various types of things to maintain our life. All these items are not unavoidable. Some of them are less important. We can help to remove absolute poverty by cutting these. Such as, we can donate for poor disabled people and if we can save one disabled people we should do it, as we know many disabilities are preventable. Amartya sen says, “It is extremely important to understand that many disabilities are preventable, and much can be done not only to diminish the *plenty* of disability but also to reduce its *incidence*.”¹¹ So we will try to remove absolute poverty cordially and we will sacrifice less important items from our consumption. It means that some of the things of our life are of far less moral significance than the absolute poverty that could be prevented by the money they cost. So we will contribute to remove absolute poverty through possible means. But some people may disagree with the notion of contribution. They may raise various objections about aid. At this stage we will see the nature of objections and we will try to prove them abortive.

Charges against obligatory argument and its refutation

Peter Singer presented his view by formal argument. But some people may differ about the formal argument and its subject-matter. It also may be true that they do not want to help or they want more development of their own. Even they may think that they are not bound to take the principle as an obligation. Many of them may argue that compassion or aid to poor people is an expression of benevolence that they are morally obliged to help; but this is actually a matter of personal choice, not a

universal moral law.¹² But Peter Singer didn't say that to help the poor is a universal moral law. He only says that those who are affluent can help the absolute poverty stricken people without any significant loss of their own. But those who don't want to help raise various objections against Peter Singer. Their objections are as follows:

1. **The affluent are not bound to help:** Everyone earns his wealth by hard labor, high risk, using talent. So an affluent earned his wealth by his capacity. He is not bound to spend his money to reduce poverty. Those who are poverty stricken are also free to change their situation by using their ability. If anyone helps them, it may cause dependency. They will be indifferent to change their situation. As a result, the number of dependents will increase day by day. And if the number of dependents increase day by day, it will be very detrimental for the whole world.

Refutation of the argument: To spend money to remove absolute poverty is a moral question. In our principle, we have decided that those who are affluent will help without any significant loss of their own. Contribution to remove absolute poverty is a moral duty. Absolute poverty stricken are dying without having basic needs of their life. Hence, the affluent can be treated as allowing them (poverty stricken) to die. And as Peter Singer has shown that there is no significant difference between killing and allowing to die, so they are killers. To avoid this, the affluent will help according to their ability without any significant loss of their own. So the matter of contribution is a moral obligation.

2. **Taking care of our own¹³:**The supporters of this objection may argue that one who is working to enhance foreign aid may think that he should remember his family, neighbors and natives. It means that he should think about those who are around him and near him rather than in distant places. If possible, we will help them first who are very close to us. We have strong obligation to our kinship, than citizenship. For this reason, parents prefer their children first, then they think about other citizens.¹⁴ So we should give priority to our near and dear ones rather than those in distant places. The supporters of this view opine that that their obligations to foreigners are not as strong as to their fellow citizens,

though they have obligations to prevent harm.¹⁵ They recognize that they should care their fellow citizens first.

Refutation of this objection: Undoubtedly we should prefer our natives and family members first. Then we will think about others who are absolute poverty affected. It does not mean that we should not help others. Secondly, we will not contribute for those in distant places keeping our family members in absolute poverty. Normally we will remove poverty of our family members and the natives, then we will contribute for others. The importance of this view lies in Singer's principle. For this reason, Peter Singer says about the principle-“It applies only when some are in absolute poverty, and others can help without sacrificing anything of comparable moral significance. To allow one's own kin to sink into absolute poverty would be to sacrifice something of comparable significance...”¹⁶ So one should care one's natives first is not different from Singer's view. Even to allow one's native to live in absolute poverty is in contradiction with Singer's view. According to Singer, it is comparable to significant sacrifice.

So it is clear that the eligible will contribute without any significant loss of their own. But in some cases, we will contribute generally. When we see a baby is drowning in the pond, it may not be my native or family member but we will not be able to stand by and watch its drowning. In Africa, thousands of people are dying from famine and diseases. Can we ignore it? Though they are not our relatives or natives but they are suffering from acute absolute poverty and finally dying. Hence we will help them; because every affluent nation has some relatively poor citizens according to their standard but absolute poverty is limited largely to the poor nations. Those who are living in Afghanistan, Mali, South Sudan and similar type of countries are experiencing poverty unknown in the western countries of the world. Under these circumstances it would be wrong to decide that only those who are citizens of our own community are lucky and we will provide them with sufficient amount. Hence we will follow equal consideration of interests. For this reason Peter Singer says, “people's need for food has nothing to do with their race, and if Africans need food more than Europeans, it would be a violation of the principle of equal consideration to give preference to Europeans.”¹⁷

So Singer said that we will prefer those who are very close to us but in some cases we will act according to the principle of equal consideration of interests. As a result, both formal argument and the principle of equal consideration of interests will be performed.

3. Personal property rights¹⁸:Everybody consumes what he earns. He can use his property according to his will. It means that everybody has a control over his property, which we call property rights. Property rights are theoretical constructs in economics for determining how a resource is used and owned. Property can be owned by individuals, associations or governments. But we will discuss about individual property. This type of property rights usually refers to ownership and control over resources or goods.¹⁹ In a word, personally owned property is private property and its control depends upon the owner. Now one may say: Have the poor any right on personal property? Do the property owners are under an obligation to give some of their wealth away to those living in absolute poverty? Only property owner has the right to use, change and transfer property. The property owners are not under any obligation to help those in absolute poverty. According to some theories of rights one may earn more and more property without use of unjust means like force and fraud but one has no compulsion to help the poor. So the property owners are not under any obligation to give away their property.

Refutation of the objection: Of course everyone will use his property according to his will. Our principle or formal argument does not provide any restriction for individual property rights. It only expresses that if anyone (who is affluent) can prevent something bad without any significant loss of his own, he should do it. It does not hamper on individual property rights. On the other hand, according to Christian spirit, property exists in this world for the satisfaction of human needs. So if a man has a large amount of property, he will spend for poor because of natural rights. Similarly, politicians specially socialists will say that state control of property is better to maintain a balance standard. It means that state will ensure fundamental needs of every individuals. Utilitarians also agree that we should sacrifice our property to prevent great evils.²⁰ So we need not abolish personal property rights to remove something bad specially eradicating absolute poverty. It means that great

evils are curse for our society and if possible we should remove it. For this reason, we need a moral spirit; we will be imbued with the spirit of morality and cordially try to remove absolute poverty. Peter Singer also takes it liberally. He says:

“...those whose forefathers happened to inhabit some sandy wastes around the Persian Gulf are now fabulously wealthy, because oil lay under those sands; while those whose forefathers settled on better land south of the Sahara live in absolute poverty, because of drought and bad harvests. Can this distribution be acceptable from an impartial point of view? If we imagine ourselves about to begin life as a citizen of either Bahrain or Chad- but we do not know which- would we accept the principle that citizens of Bahrain are under no obligation to assist the people living in Chad?”²¹

So we need not abolish personal property rights to remove something bad, specially eradicating absolute poverty. One who will contribute for the eradication poverty will be willing user of property. The principle of contribution does not contradict property rights, it enhances or provides more freedom to use personal property.

4. Population and the ethics of triage²²: The term population and the ethics of triage constitute a serious objection against the principle of assistance. This objection came from medical policies adopted in wartime. The centre point of this objection is that over population is the main cause of absolute poverty. Famous biologist Garret Hardin argues that wealthy nations ought not to help poor nations; since birthrates in poorer nations are high and the earth can provide only finite resources; future generations of all nations will be hurt if assistance is given.²³ From this point of view, the supporters of this objection says, if we help this will increase more and more people in future to live in absolute poverty. To avoid this they suggest adoption of a policy of triage to remove poverty in future. According to triage policy, in wartime the wounded are divided into three classes. They are the following:

- i. Those who would probably survive without medical assistance.
This type is high risk free.

- ii. Those who might survive if they received assistance. Otherwise they will die probably within a short time; and
- iii. Those who would not survive even if they take medical treatment. This type is out of normal expectation.²⁴

In this situation only the middle category are eligible for medical assistance according to the policy to use limited medical resources as effectively as possible. Because first category is out of danger and third category is out of positive expectation. Only second category is badly in need of medical assistance and they are given medical treatment. From this point of view, the supporters of this doctrine want to classify poor countries. The classifications are as follows:

- i. We would not aid countries that even without our help will soon be able to feed their populations. In a word, those who will be self-dependent very soon they will not be helped.
- ii. We would not aid countries that even with our help will not be able to limit their population to a level they can feed. It means that those who will not be able to change themselves by aid they will not be helped.
- iii. We would aid those countries where our assistance might make the difference between success and failure in bringing food and population into balance. These types of countries are eligible to make themselves sustainable from the curse of poverty.²⁵

Thus the advocates of triage policy disagree with the principle of assistance. To support them, Garret Hardin presents an allegory.

Garret Hardin's allegory²⁶: Garret Hardin a famous biologist, argues that rich nations are very cautious about themselves. For example, the birth rate of United States is 0.8 percent per year (as of 1973); but in some states like Pakistan, the Philippines the population is increasing at a rate of 3.3 percent per year. If the population increases at this rate, the population of United States will be doubled after eighty-seven years whereas that of the other countries will be doubled after twenty-one years.²⁷ Thus Hardin argues against helping the poor people. According to his allegory, rich countries are like the occupants of a crowded lifeboat adrift in a sea full

of drowning people. If they try to save all those drowning, their boat will be overloaded and they will be all down. And as they think that to help some people survive is better than none, so they should leave others to drown. From this point of view, it is argued that lifeboat ethics apply. The rich should leave the poor to survive on their own; otherwise the poor will drag the rich down with them.²⁸ Because of this, the rich want to avoid the poor. And as they don't want to give aid, they disagree with the principle of assistance.

Refutation of the objection: At first the poor are not like the soldiers fighting against their enemies in wartime. In wartime the soldiers want to kill their enemies and their enemies also want to kill them. And wartime wounded categories depend upon war policy. So we have to keep it in mind that giving aid to poor countries is not a war policy, it is a moral duty. Secondly, overpopulation is not the actual cause of poverty. Truly speaking, the world produces much food to feed its entire people but much of the food is spent for non-human creatures. So the problem is not so much with production as with distribution. Peter Singer says:

“The world produces ample food to feed its populations, and could, according to some estimates, feed ten times as many. People are hungry not because there are too many but because of inequitable land distribution, the manipulation of third world economies by the developed nations, wastage of food in the West, and so on.”²⁹

So population is not the actual cause of poverty. For this reason, aid to poor will lead more of them to live in poverty is not correct. Similarly, policy of 'triage' is also abortive. It may be applicable in wartime but not in case of poverty. On the other hand, Garret Hardin's allegory is not correct, too. Hardin seems to have forgotten that his lifeboat adrift and our present world are totally different. In his description the sea is full of drowning people and he does not agree to save them. These drowning people may attack his adrift boat in the sea without permission of its authority and may kill them. But it is not possible in our present world. Moreover, Hardin's allegory seems to be a hidden expression of vindication and self-interest. The principle of contribution is a moral obligation where the eligible will contribute

without any significant loss of their own if they don't have many dependents of their own also. So the affluent will contribute for moral obligation, not for wartime policy and allegory of the life boat in the sea.

5. The duty of contribution depends upon government³⁰:In our present world, on the one hand, we see rich nations; and on the other hand, we see poor nations. Correspondingly, there are two major groups in the world the called G-7 and G-77 respectively. Developed nations of the world are in the G-7 group and developing countries of the world are in the G-77 group.³¹As the world is divided by poor and rich nations, so the critics say the matter of aid depends upon states, especially upon government. For this reason, it is said foreign aid should be a government duty, not be left to privately run charities. And if it is given to private charities, it allows the government to escape its duty.³²So the government must be eligible and sufficient to help. It will collect aid from its citizen if it requires.

Refutation of the objection: Government aid (we may also call national aid or public aid), especially the aid given by the developed nations seems unavoidable in eradicating poverty. If some developed countries known as donors stop aid, then not only underdeveloped countries, many developing countries will also fall into devastation. Countries like the United States, Germany, UK, France, Oil rich Arab countries, etc. are donating more or less every year. If they stop aid, the recipient countries will be severely affected. For this reason, government aid is unavoidable. We will inspire them to enhance public aid. Peter Singer said, "Since increasing government aid is the surest way of making a significant increase to the total amount of affluent nations should give much more genuine, no strings- attached, aid than they give now."³³Many rich nations are contributing more or less every year. But it is not sufficient. Most of them are not contributing in proportion with the UN target. For example, the United States contribute less than one- sixth of one percent of their GNP. Rest of them are also contributing a certain amount. But this aid does not present any argument against private help. Public aid does not forbid us to help privately by voluntary organizations. Even if no one gives voluntarily the government will assume that its citizens are not in favor of overseas aid, and will cut its program accordingly as the government's duty is to satisfy its citizens' demand. Moreover, in

many states, there are many rich individuals who can help as much as a government. Though we strongly emphasize on private help, it does not mean that only private aid is enough. Of course, we should campaign to enhance both private and government aids. Besides, we should also campaign for fairer trading arrangements between poor and rich countries.³⁴ They tend to be more active politically and pay less effort to the interests of the poor. So we should try to encourage and enhance both private and public aids.

6. The principle of contribution is very a high standard³⁵: It is said against the principle of contribution that it is so high a standard. Not only that, generally we are unable to follow it. Only a saint or a person of similar type can comply with this principle. They contribute with significant loss of their own. So the principle of contribution instigates to lead a very austere life. It is absurd and the majority will reject it.³⁶ But if we could form a reasonable standard, the majority would receive it and the program of contribution would be more effective.

Refutation of the objection: At first we can say, we should form such a principle which will be acceptable rationally. But in our formal argument we analyzed its premises one by one and proved these are rational and unchallenged. The acceptability of the premises to consequentialists, non-consequentialists, rationalists and utilitarianists are also proved. So the formal argument is absurd is not a reasonable objection. Secondly, the standard is too high also presents a mis-interpretation. The subject-matter of the principle is, if we are able to prevent something bad happening in front of us without any significant loss of our own, we should do it. It does not mean that we should help with great loss of our own. So the principle is too high is not correct. At last, only the saint and the same type can help according to this principle and it instigates to lead a very austere life is also absurd. The principle only says, if we are able to prevent something bad without any significant loss of our own, we should do it. It does not mean that only the saints are eligible for the principle and we should lead a very austere life. So the principle of contribution is rational by any reasonable standard and it is effective for the eradication of absolute poverty.

The obligation to help the poor is very rational and effective. Peter Singer argues that we have a moral duty to help those who are living in absolute poverty, we will

sacrifice for them and our sacrifice would not be as a cause of sufferings to ourselves.³⁷ Many charges have been presented against the obligatory argument but they proved abortive. If anyone wants to present objection against any doctrine, it is possible but the rationality of the charge must be checked. The objections have been presented against obligatory argument, we proved that they have no rational value and are finally ethically empty. Now as the objections are abortive, so we should contribute and inspire to contribute according to obligatory principle. In the next chapter I shall try to determine the amount of assistance.

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Chapter -5

To determine the amount of assistance

After much deliberation Peter Singer postulates that there is no intrinsic significant difference between killing and allowing to die. He also suggests that we should try our best to remove the causes responsible for miserable death. We should try it publicly and privately. But who will help and who are those? In answer to this question, we need some discussion. At first, some states in our world known as the developed states have enormous property to maintain their citizens. These states are not relatively rich, they are rich by any reasonable definition. According to this view, the United States, Japan, Germany, Australia, Western Europe and oil-rich Middle Eastern States and France are highly rich country of the present world. Similarly a large part of their citizens are also highly rich. This type of citizens are not relatively rich, they are rich by any reasonable criterion of personal ownership. For example Peter Singer says, "Today Americans spend, on average, only 6 percent of their income on buying food. If they work a forty-hour week, it takes them barely two hours to earn enough to feed themselves for the week. That leaves far more to spend on consumer goods, entertainment, and vacations."¹ This is a single evidence of the affluence of the developed nation's citizens. The highly rich states known as developed states maintain this world more or less according to their will. They challenge their opponents and declare war which is curse for our civilization. They produce various types of arms and sell these to civil war affected areas where soldiers and citizens are fighting to change their government or they want separation. Sometimes they willingly provide arms to them by using their national wealth which is used only for taking life and political ups and downs. These states produce warships and they spend billions of dollars for these purpose. These ships are also used to defeat their enemies and to help other countries to serve their political purpose. Not only these, they produce atom bombs and nuclear bombs to show their technology and to send message to their opponents. They meaninglessly burst these bombs to show their power. They spend enormous wealth for these purposes.

Besides, they spend much of their food for non-human creatures. They feed these to animals; but very few of this process is suitable for human consumption. This is a misuse of our food. For this reason, Peter Singer says, "If we stopped feeding animals on grains and soybeans, the amount of food saved would—if distributed to those who need it—be more than enough to end hunger throughout the world."² Rich nations produce more food and they have enormous surplus food. Even it is said that they dump their food to sea for keeping poverty. Whatever their activities, they are rich and they are able to contribute to the poverty stricken or able to remove absolute poverty. To remove poverty we need cordial and practical effort. Actually, our world produces enough for its people, yet many people are starving in this world. So the problem is not so much with production as with distribution. And this distribution is controlled by the rich nations.

Similarly, in rich states some citizens are so affluent that they can consume and use according to their will. This type of people are not affluent by comparison with their neighbors, they are affluent by any reasonable standard of personal property. They can spend money on luxuries after buying their all necessary items. They are absolutely affluent. They erect building and decorate it not to dwell into it, but to satisfy their pleasures. They buy new car to change its model and to keep them up to date. They eat different types of food for the pleasures of their palate. Absolutely affluent buy different types of costly clothes one after another to show their status. Their living house is decorated with costly items such as air conditioner, color television, washing machine, etc. To operate these items properly, they need high voltage electricity every day. Not only that, they move from country to country all over the world to see historical places and to keep them fresh. They play various costly games because of their status. To prove their power, the absolutely affluent sometimes spend their wealth for meaningless and devastating purposes. They also spend for charitable purpose; but that is very rare.

Compared to the rich countries and the absolutely affluent citizens, the living style of the poor are beyond description. Various types of fatal diseases, illiteracy, malnutrition, squalid surroundings, high infant mortality rate, low life expectancy, famine, epidemic, etc. are common to them. They move from door to door for their daily work. These families depend on one or two earning members. They pass most

part of a year without earning. For this reason, they starve day after day. A large number of the absolute poor are homeless. They move to different places to seek their food and pass their days. They do not get medicine and treatment. Malnutrition and contagion hinder the development of their children's brain. Besides these, there are natural calamities. The absolutely poor are seriously affected during droughts, floods, earthquakes, cyclones, tsunami, winter, etc. So the life of the absolute poor are in a miserable condition and their living standard is far below sophisticated human life.

This is the difference between the absolutely affluent and the absolutely poor. Those who are absolutely poor suffer from absolute poverty which is a curse for our civilization. Hence the developed nations and their absolutely affluent citizens can help them to eradicate absolute poverty; because they have a moral duty to help the absolutely poverty stricken people. Many affluent people genuinely do want to help the poor. Indeed, there are exceptional people both at home and in distant countries of the world who want to sacrifice their lives for the sake of others.³ Many of them are contributing, yet it is quite a poor amount to remove poverty. Now I shall describe the current situation of contribution and attempt to determine what may be considered the reasonable amount of assistance.

Present contribution of the affluent for eradication of poverty: Various types of activities and a good deal of money are needed to remove absolute poverty. But the amount of aid available now is not sufficient for the eradication of absolute poverty. Many nations contribute a small amount and many do not contribute. So there lies a great disharmony regarding contribution. Both of the countries who are contributing very small amount and those who are making no contribution are spending a handsome amount for tobacco and alcohol. But they are very miser to the poor. On the other hand, some countries are contributing reasonably. But they are small in number. Peter Singer delineates a clear picture of contribution:

“At present, very little is being transferred. Only Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway, and some of the oil-exporting Arab states have reached the modest target set by the United Nations, of 0.7 percent of Gross National Product (GNP). Britain gives 0.31 per cent of its GNP in official development assistance and a small additional amount in unofficial aid from voluntary organizations.

The total comes to about £2 per month per person, and compares with 5.5 per cent of GNP spent on alcohol, and 3 per cent on tobacco. Other, even wealthier nations, give little more: Germany gives 0.41 per cent and Japan 0.32 per cent. The United States gives a mere 0.15 per cent of its GNP.”⁴

The status of contribution Singer mentioned above is not enough for eradicating poverty. But poverty is a curse for our present world. For this reason, the first goal of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is “to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger” declared by United Nations. According to United Nations declaration, 189 UN member states and at least 23 international organizations are committed to help achieve Millennium Development Goals by 2015.⁵ So not only rich states, different organizations of the world are also committed to eradicate poverty. Already the World Bank (WB) has adopted various strategies according to their declaration for eradicating poverty and hunger. Some of their strategies are the following:

1. They are financing development by zero interest.
2. They are providing technical as well as other supporting services to reduce poverty.
3. They have enhanced assistance for agriculture and food security.
4. They are using safety nets for food and financial crises.
5. They are spending on agriculture some \$8-10 billion a year between 2013-2015, up from \$4 billion in 2008.
6. For food, fuel and financial crises, WB created the Global Food Crises Response Program. Benefits of this program are available to 66 million vulnerable people in 49 countries.
7. For the eradication of poverty, WB acted as trustee for the multi-donor Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP). Through this program, WB is helping countries for developing food security strategies.⁶

The World Bank is working for the eradication of poverty through the above mentioned strategies. They have achieved remarkable developments with regard to some of the targets. The World Bank suggested some instructions for eradicating poverty and hunger, which are as follows:

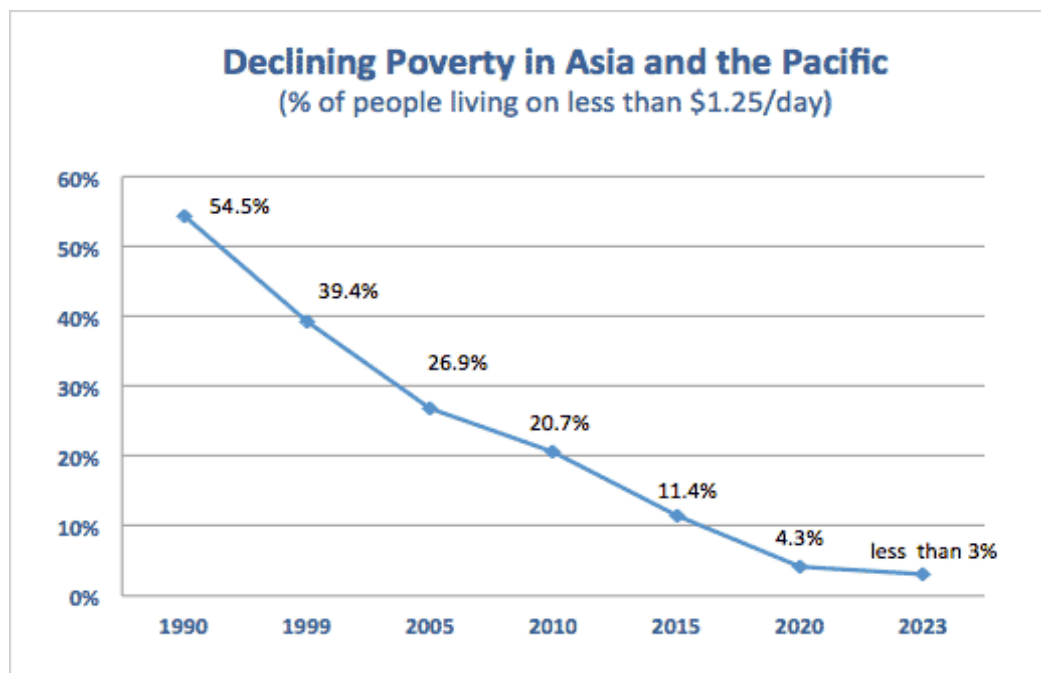
1. Proper investment in agriculture.
2. Enhance job opportunity.

3. Expansion of social safety nets.
4. Proper nutrition program for children under 2 years of age.
5. Universalization of education.
6. Ensuring gender equality.
7. Sustainable protection for vulnerable countries during crises.⁷

Thus the World Bank is working in multiple ways to make a hunger and poverty free world. Their target is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. If they run according to present speed that will be quite impossible for them to build a poverty free world by 2015. Their target is undoubtedly noble but it requires more effective efforts than present.

The European Union, one of the renowned organizations of the world, is also working for the eradication of poverty. According to EU statistics, about 800 million people all over the world are suffering from malnutrition and hunger. To remove malnutrition and hunger, EU suggests that more aid should be given as quickly as possible for the development of food and nutrition level. Regarding aid, EU claims that its aid to developing countries reached nearly €26 billion in 2001. Recently the EU pledged to increase that funding still further between now and 2006. Regarding official and humanitarian assistance, EU claims it is the largest provider of official development assistance and of humanitarian assistance all over the world. For eradication of poverty, recently EU took some important steps, such as in The International Conference for Financing Development in Monterrey, the EU committed itself to a substantial increase in its Official Development assistance known as ODA effort. To achieve internationally agreed target of 0.7 percent of Gross National Income (GNI), EU members enhanced their assistance from 0.33 to 0.39 percent of their GNI. Some EU member states are contributing as per UN suggested target (0.7 percent of GNI). They are Denmark, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Sweden. They are contributing for the eradication of poverty. The ODA program of EU has a significant role in eradicating poverty.⁸ Though EU is a regional organization, it is working to eradicate world poverty. They are helping the developing and Least Developed countries (LDCs) systematically. But it is not sufficient for the eradication of poverty. All over the world, a large number of marginal people are starving and dying without any assistance.

Many developed countries as well as various organizations all over the world are providing aid for the eradication of poverty; such as Asian Development Bank is fighting against poverty in Asia and the Pacific, contributing aid for poverty eradication. They think that the children dying of starvation should be given as much as we can. Even then they think that they are not sure that the aid will be properly used or whether it would be adequate.⁹ To eradicate poverty, the PRF(Poverty Reduction Co-operation Fund) was established in 2002 for reducing poverty of its developing member countries. Though ADB was founded in 1966, it started fighting against poverty after a few years from its inception. To provide PRF among its members, ADB classified poverty affected countries as A, B1 or B2 category. The PRF receiving main countries are Afghanistan, Cambodia, Samoa, Tonga, Bangladesh, etc.¹⁰ Asian Development Bank, in fact, plays a vital role in Asia Pacific region for the eradication of poverty. It has set a target of eradicating absolute poverty by 2030. In this region, poverty level is gradually declining. Poverty declining graph of Asia Pacific region is as follows¹¹:



The ADB is collecting fund from all over the world and providing aid to its member countries to eradicate poverty. But its aid is not sufficient for the eradication of poverty. Developed nations of the world such as Japan, the USA, UK, Norway,

Sweden etc. are also contributing aid for the eradication of poverty. Japan is one of the rich nations of the world. Japan established various types of funds for the eradication of poverty. In 1988 Japan established 'The Japan Special Fund (JSF) to finance all IDB borrowing member countries. This fund provides finance for health, education, nutrition, water and sanitation, social development, environment, natural disaster prevention and civil society. Another poverty reduction program of Japan is 'Japan special fund for Poverty Reduction program(JPO)'. The IDB-JPO has a proven track record in implementing community-based development projects in a number of sectors, in numerous countries of the world. It has a significant role for the development of a number of sectors. It has funded over 138 projects for approximately \$45 million since 2001.¹²

In 2000 Japan established 'Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR)' to provide grants for projects supporting poverty reduction and related social development activities in ADB developing member countries. Japan also provides assistance to improve technology. Recently (as of 30 June 2013) the JFPR funds made available totaled about \$615.4 million. For different projects, ADB had approved 158 grant projects (\$422.0 million equivalent) and 124 technical assistance projects (\$128.1 million equivalent).¹³ But Japan provides only 0.17% of their Gross National Income (GNI).¹⁴ Though Japan is a rich and highly influential country of the world, it does not provide according to UN suggested criteria(0.7% of GNI).

The United Kingdom is a highly rich country both in wealth and technology. It also provides fund for the eradication of poverty but not according to UN target, though it is a permanent member of UN Security Council. This country contributes only 0.56% of its GNI.¹⁵ Similarly United States known as super power all over the world is also contributing but not according to UN target. United States is one of the permanent members of UN Security Council. It spends only 0.19% of its GNI though target is 0.7% of GNI.¹⁶ Some member of the United Nations contribute according to UN target. These countries are Luxembourg, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Netherlands. Among them, Luxembourg contributes 1.00%, Sweden 0.99%, Norway 0.93%, Denmark 0.84% and Netherlands 0.71% of their GNI. But most of the countries of UN (rich and developed) do not follow UN target rule. Among these states, Belgium contributes 0.47%, Switzerland 0.45%, Germany 0.38%, Canada

0.32% and New Zealand 0.28% of their GNI.¹⁷ But many developed countries of the world spend a significant amount of their GNI for alcohol and tobacco. Not only that, they also spend their GNI for arms, bombs, and various types of life-threatening weapons. If we could save this money, then it could be used repeatedly for the eradication of poverty all over the world.

Reasonable amount of assistance: Extreme poverty of our world is a matter of anxiety for humanity. Affluent nations have an obligation to feed the starving of the world and the obligation is sufficiently strong that they must be willing to make substantial sacrifices for them.¹⁸ Actually, eradication of extreme poverty is an obligation for all humankind. But how is it possible for us? It is possible if we fight against poverty unitedly. To remove poverty or to manage food and habitation for poverty-stricken people requires wealth and effort. Affluence (both of persons and states) is the main weapon against poverty. If we can use it properly, we will be successful. But have we done it properly? Why are people shouting for food and treatment today? The underlying cause is that we are unable to work in accordance with our obligations. The rich are not providing enough aid for the eradication of poverty. In the Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations considered poverty as the most important factor of the world. For this reason, UN declared eradication of extreme poverty and hunger as the first goal. In fact, poverty is the root of all the eight goals of MDGs. All UN member states and about 25 international organizations are committed to achieve MDGs by 2015. Not only that, UN declared a standard of contribution for the eradication of poverty. United Nations suggested 0.7% of GNI contribution. This suggestion was taken up for contribution for the development in a resolution of United Nations on 24 October 1970.¹⁹ We saw in our previous discussion that only four or five countries contribute according to the UN criteria. Now a question may arise that how much we should care? One answer that can be given is: as much as we can.²⁰ Everyone will help according to his or her capacity and will encourage others to contribute.

Peter Singer, a famous moral philosopher and acting to end world poverty, describes the issues related to contribution. UN standard apart, there is no general standard of giving. So it is very difficult to build a standard for giving. Peter Singer also sensed so and said, "This brings us to the important question of what the public standard for

– giving as opposed to a higher standard we might privately follow- should be. Some groups have already made an effort to set such a standard, and many people have developed standards of their own.’²¹ So the standard of contribution varies to different people and organizations. Singer cites the example of James Hong who becomes a millionaire at thirty two only. Hong was very rational about his wealth and he provided a formula. Singer presented Hong’s formula in the following way:

“ ... Give 10 percent of everything you earn over \$100, 000. To encourage others to do the same, he set up a website called 10 over 100, and on it pledged that he would always give according to the 10 over 100 rule. The website invites others to make the same pledge. Last time I(Singer) checked, 3967 had done so.’²²

This formula is very helpful; but it is applicable to those who earn over \$100, 000. There are, however, many other people who want to help but they earn less than \$100, 000. Israel Shenker, a high official and owner of a real estate firm, also formulated a rule from his own view. Like Hong and Shenker, there are so many people who want to contribute according to their own rule. Many organizations also presented contributing formula; such as, “Fair Share International”, an organization of Australia, is a community of people committed to follow “5.10.5.10” formula.²³ Peter Singer presented the meaning of this formula in the following way:

- “• Giving 5 percent of your time to helping people in your community
- Reducing your environmentally harmful consumption by 10 percent each year until you can do more
- Give 5 percent of your time to helping people in your community
- Taking democratic political action at least 10 times a year, for example, for example, contracting your political representatives”²⁴

Fair Share International presented a mixed formula of donation and political action. It also included ethical actions which are required to keep the environment suitable. So, each of these standards have various appeals. Because 10 over 100 formula demands nothing at all until anyone earn \$100, 000 a year. According to this formula, if a person earn \$120, 000, he will contribute less than 2% of his total income and if he

earns a million, he will contribute 9% of his total income. Many people earning less than \$100,000 also want to contribute cordially and are eligible for contribution but they are out of contribution according to this formula. On the other hand, Shenker's standard also has an appeal but it is a self-imposed consumption tax.²⁵ And Fair Share International provides a set of rules related with financial help, ethical environmental action and democratic political action. But which one is suitable for the eradication of poverty is a big question? Peter Singer does not choose any of these mentioned above for the eradication of poverty. But what is the standard we should follow? At first, the ability of contribution depends upon earning. According to income level, Singer classified the citizens as superrich, rich and merely comfortable.²⁶ Those who are superrich have enough property to contribute. Rich also have the ability but not as like as superrich. Merely comfortable also may contribute. But how much? Peter Singer provided instructions regarding this. He²⁷ says:

“If you and other well-off people in affluent nations were all to give, say, 5 percent of your income for the fight against global poverty, it would probably not reduce your happiness at all. You may have to make some adjustments to your spending, but quite possibly you will find that some of these adjustments make no difference to your well-being.”

Here Peter Singer inspires people to give away five percent of their total income. And he suggests them to make some adjustments in their spending. Peter Singer argues, one may say it will be impossible for all without saints if we suggest 10 percent of total income of any person, though it is not more than a token donation but²⁸ But again there are many families whose income is so high that they can contribute more than 10 percent. For this reason, Peter Singer says, “Some families, of course, will find 10 per cent a considerable strain on their finances. Others may be able to give more without difficulty.”²⁹

So everyone is not able to contribute in the same way. But we need a general standard for contribution. So what will be the standard? As we need a general standard for contribution, Peter Singer formulates a standard, which is as follows:

“No figure should be advocated as a rigid minimum or maximum; but it seems safe to advocate that those earning

average or above average incomes in affluent societies, unless they have an unusually large number of dependants or other special needs, ought to give a tenth of their income to reducing absolute poverty. By any reasonable ethical standards this is the minimum we ought to do, and we do wrong if we do less.”³⁰

Peter Singer suggested the standard from moral point of view. The whole world is concerned about absolute poverty. The United Nations has taken removal of extreme poverty and hunger as the first goal of the Millennium Development Goals. They want to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. It requires enormous wealth. So we ought to care for others as much as we can and with a reasonable concern for the quality of our own lives.³¹ As we follow Peter Singer, those who are earning average or more than average should give away ten percent of their income. If they do not do so, it is injustice to the poor.

Recently Peter Singer puts forward an online based seven point plan to make a solution to world poverty. He mainly builds the plan to achieve United Nations Millennium Development Goal. His³² seven point plan is as follows:

- “1. Visit <http://www.thelifyoucansave.org> and pledge to meet the standard.
2. Check out some of the links on the website, or do your own research, and decide to which organization or organizations you will give.
3. Take your income from your last tax return, and work out how much the standard requires you to give. Decide how you want to give it- in regular monthly installments, quarterly, or just once a year, whatever suits you best. Then do it!
4. Tell others what you have done. Spend the word in any way you can: talk, text, e-mail, blog, use whatever online connections you have. Try to avoid being self-righteous or preachy, because you’re probably no saint, either, but let people know that they, too, can be part of the solution.
5. If you are employed by a corporation or institution, ask it to consider giving its employees a nudge in the right direction by setting up a scheme that will, unless they choose to opt out, donate 1 percent of their pretax earnings to a charity helping the world’s poorest people...
6. Contact your national political representatives and tell them you want your country’s foreign aid to be directed only to the world’s poorest people.

7. Now you've made a difference to some people living in extreme poverty. (Even if you can't see them or know whom you have helped). Plus, you've demonstrated that human beings can be moved by moral argument. Feel good about being part of the solution."

Though the above mentioned suggestion operates in the virtual world, Peter Singer claims it to be an effective effort to achieve MDG. Since our main target is to eradicate extreme poverty, it seems to be a standard convenient for our program. As Peter Singer has set a convenient standard, it can be adopted for the eradication of poverty.

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Chapter-6

Conclusion

We have seen in the previous chapters that poverty is the key factor in almost all cases of inequality and miserable conditions. And the poverty we have referred to is absolute poverty. There is also another type of poverty called relative poverty; but that is not as acute as absolute poverty. In absolute poverty, people are unable to command sufficient resources to satisfy basic needs.¹Because of absolute poverty, people suffer from tremendous hunger and various diseases like goitre and blindness. Goitre and blindness are caused by lack of vitamin, specially lack of vitamin A.²Moral philosophers and various organizations define poverty from various points of view. But almost all have defined poverty in the absolute term of low income as low income is a key factor for poverty. Low income hinders fulfillment of fundamental needs. According to the World Bank, the United Nations and the Copenhagen Declaration, poverty is a severe deprivation of basic human needs and low income is the key factor in measuring poverty. But according to WHO, the real consequence of poverty is relative. Peter Singer defines poverty as the lack of basic human needs. He presents a pathetic picture of poverty. He quotes former World Bank President Robert McNamara and divides poverty into two types such as a) Absolute poverty and b) Relative poverty. He emphasized on absolute poverty and shows that really poverty means absolute poverty.³Because of this poverty, people suffer from eternal hunger and malnutrition. In a word, Peter Singer thinks that absolute poverty is a severe deprivation of basic human needs. Like Peter Singer various persons and organizations also define absolute poverty as the lack of fundamental human needs. But regarding types of poverty, they all emphasize on absolute poverty; because though relative poverty is also a type of poverty, in this poverty people are not deprived of basic human needs. The causes of poverty, however, are many. But overpopulation, distribution of resources, environmental

degradation, lack of education, unemployment, corruption etc. are among the most important causes of poverty.

Absolute poverty and its result are very appalling. Because of absolute poverty, people suffer from eternal hunger and fatal diseases that finally lead to death.⁴Peter Singer shows that some people of our world are affluent. They are not just affluent in comparison with their neighbors; but they are affluent by any reasonable definition of wealth and income. Singer called them absolutely affluent. Similarly some states of the world are affluent, too. The United States, Germany, Japan, Western European countries, Oil rich Arab countries are affluent.⁵The affluent people and affluent states have some responsibility to poverty stricken people. If the affluent people and the rich nations do not contribute for the absolute poverty stricken people and if these people die without basic human needs, then they (affluent people and rich states) are responsible for the miserable death. The affluent people will be responsible for allowing them to die without helping. So Peter Singer says that there is no ethical, intrinsic, significant difference between killing and allowing to die; it is indirect killing.⁶Many arguments have been presented to refute this decision but Peter Singer proves them abortive and shows that those are extrinsic only. So the affluent people are morally obligated to help the absolute poverty stricken people.

Peter Singer says that if we are able to prevent something bad from happening without any significant loss of our own, we should do it. To express significant loss, he narrates an event where a teacher can save a child from drowning in a pond by cancelling his class. Here Singer argues that the teacher will be able to take his class later, but to save the child was very urgent then. So the life of a child is much more important than holding a class in time. From this event, Singer argues that we should sacrifice minimum to save a large number of people. Many charges have been presented against Singer's view and have been tried to prove that the affluent are not bound to help poverty stricken people. Even American biologist Garrett Hardin tried to prove by the concept of 'population and the ethics of triage' that we should allow poor to stay in absolute poverty and wealthy nations ought not help poor nations. He also presented an allegory and says that the rich should leave the poor to survive, otherwise the poor will drag the rich down with them.⁷But Peter Singer shows that overpopulation is not the actual cause for poverty. The world produces much food

and according to some estimates, ten times as many. So the problem is not so much with production as with distribution. So Peter Singer proves them abortive and shows by a formal argument that if we are able to prevent something bad from happening, we should do it. And as affluent people can prevent some absolute poverty without any significant loss of their own, so they should do it. They will contribute to remove absolute poverty.

The affluent people will contribute but it is a big question to determine what the amount of assistance will be. To answer this question, Peter Singer refers to the United Nations' suggested criteria as well as to his own view. The United Nations suggested 0.7% of GNI(Gross National Income) for contribution. This suggestion was taken up in 24 October 1970.⁸ But only Luxembourg, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Netherlands contribute according to UNtarget.⁹ Besides there are various organizations such as World Bank, European Union, Asian Development Bank, etc. which are working to remove absolute poverty. These institutions undertake various programmes for underdeveloped and absolute poverty affected areas. Peter Singer also refer to some people such as James Hong and Israel Shenker who contribute according to their own criteria.¹⁰ But Peter Singer, in his book *Practical Ethics* suggests that the people earning average or above average in affluent societies should give away ten percent of their income for poverty affected people if they don't have many dependents of their own.¹¹ And if they do not do so, it is injustice to the poor.

So the key points arising from this study are as follows:

1. Poverty means the inability to fulfill the basic needs of human life.
2. Peter Singer and most of the experts divide poverty into two types –a) Absolute poverty and b) Relative poverty.
3. Absolute poverty is the severe deprivation of basic human needs.
4. In the relative poverty, people are not deprived of basic human needs.
5. Almost all experts mean absolute poverty regarding poverty.
6. There are various causes of poverty but overpopulation, distribution of resources, environmental degradation, corruption, lack of education, unemployment are the main causes.

7. Taking life is of two kinds a) Direct killing and b) Make the environment for killing.
8. There is no intrinsic significant difference between killing and allowing to die.
9. Affluent people and rich nations are morally obligated to help poverty affected people.
10. If we can prevent something bad from happening without any significant loss of our own, we should do it.
11. The people in the affluent societies earning average or above average should give away ten percent of their income for absolute poverty affected people if they don't have many dependents of their own.

Besides these, low income is the key factor in measuring poverty. Over population is not the actual cause for poverty. The Earth produces enough food for its people. According to some estimates, it produces ten times as many. Many arguments have been presented against aid but finally it is proved that they have no ethical ground. To remove absolute poverty requires both private and public efforts.

Peter Singer tries to present arguments for helping to eradicate absolute poverty. He shows that morally the affluent people are under obligation to help the absolute poverty affected people. Moreover, if we can prevent something bad from happening in front of us, we should do it. As of absolute poverty many painful circumstances are happening everyday and as we can remove some of them, so we should do it. Because absolute poverty and its results are very bad, it is focused by both the consequentialists, non-consequentialists. Finally, Peter Singer tries to create a culture of giving and to set up a standard. He is also acting now to end world poverty. But how much he is successful is a big question. To some extent, he is successful. He successfully presents a formal argument regarding contribution. He refutes arguments against obligatory formal argument. He successfully portrays the pathetic picture of absolute poverty stricken people. He tries his best to inspire morally the affluent people for contribution and some of them are cordially contributing. The theoretical and practical application of Singer's argument bears a great philosophical value. As a

man, he has limitations also. But he tries to express his opinions from moral point of view. We may say his view is very practical regarding the necessity of eradication of extreme poverty. He presented his opinions in his book *Practical Ethics* way back in 1979 while the United Nations declared “to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger” as the first goal of ‘Millennium Development Goals’ in the year 2000.¹² So as a moral philosopher he realized the problem much earlier and tried to solve according to his capacity.

The role of philosophy in the eradication of poverty from Singerian point of view has been elaborated and analysed in this thesis. It is found that Singer ethically tried to set up a formal argument and presented an outline of contribution. He also presented the real picture of absolute poverty affected people. In many places he presented various arguments in favour of his view. He successfully refuted the arguments against his opinion. Finally, Singer suggested that the people earning average or above average in affluent societies should give away ten percent of their income if they don’t have many dependents of their own. I subscribe to Singer’s view because without aid the life of absolute poverty affected people will be more miserable. So to remove pathetic circumstances, we need regular aid. But it can be said that it is not possible for the affluent people to solve this problem overnight. It requires continuous aid and proper implementation of this aid. Besides, the poverty stricken people will have to try cordially to change their life. To achieve this goal, we need to try publicly and privately.

Peter Singer’s theory of contribution is very important for today’s world. Because if the affluent people do not aid, the number of poverty stricken people will increase geometrically. As a result, pain and death will also increase. It can be said that the absence of this doctrine will make the world more discriminatory. More research is required to strengthen the applicability of this doctrine.

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