

IS CHARITY A SOLUTION TO POVERTY? A CRITIQUE OF PETER SINGER'S PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

Peter Albert David Singer (b.1946) is an illustrious Australian Philosopher whose main area of interest is Ethics. He is very much concerned about rampant and prevalent poverty in the world. He has not revolted against unfair distribution of wealth like Karl Marx (1805-1883). He is not a Communist, nor does he wish to bring a proletariat revolution in the world. He has not criticized Capitalism too. He has suggested a novel way of combating poverty, that is, charity. It seems very strange *prima facie* since charity has never been accepted as poverty alleviation technique by the economists. It is no solution to poverty as the capital punishment is no solution to heinous crimes. However, Singer has seen the matter from another angle and established his case with many case studies and examples that charity and donation are plausible solutions to the problem of poverty and may reduce it to a great extent. In this paper the research question is the same: *Is charity a solution to poverty?* The objectives of the study are to understand the various meanings of poverty and to critically analyze the proposed solution of Peter Singer. The methodology is qualitative and analytic. The research theories employed are i- Case Studies and ii- Role Theory. The authors, however, have not agreed with him, and his method has been found oversimplified and non-feasible. Every concept presented has been supported by sound arguments. It has been concluded that the complex issue of poverty may not be resolved with charity alone.

Keywords: Charity, Poverty, Peter Singer

INTRODUCTION

What is Poverty?

Poverty is a complex issue, of which one, single and unified definition is not possible. In order to overcome this difficulty, World Bank hired the services of a large number of specialists many years ago who had diversified academic background. These experts surveyed 73 states and met with around about 60,000 men and women. The poor people who hailed from different nationalities and ethnicities tried to define poverty in several ways according to their individual experiences. For most of them poverty was actually the shortage of food for sometimes, and, at times for the entire year. It also means that you don't have a second meal or it is so scarce that you may either feed yourself or your child.

Some other descriptions of poverty are as under:

- Lack of saving or enough money was also declared poverty. A person is poor, if he cannot afford the treatment of a sick family member.
- A person is poor if he cannot send his child/children to school since he does not have the enough fees. Moreover, he is poor, if he is unable to continue the education of his off-springs due to some crop failure.
- If one does not have access to the clean water; nor does one possess resources to filter the water to make it potable, one will be declared poor (Singer, 2011). Peter Singer believes in another definition of poverty; according to him poverty does not mean that you do not have material goods, you are poor when do don't possess the authority to defend your

actions and rights. For him powerlessness and lack of defense are more painful types of poverty since they lead towards humiliation and deprivation of self-respect. World Bank defines abject poverty as when one does not even have basic necessities like accommodation, food, water, sanitation, water, clothes, schooling and medicines. South Asia is one such region where people are facing this sort of poverty. Poverty is a relative term, which changes from place to place. In rich and well-off countries, the above definition is not applicable to most of the citizens. In these countries, those people consider themselves poor who may not afford luxuries and are unable to purchase those costly items, they see on the TV screens. In the poor countries, almost 1.4 billion people are living in

LITERATURE REVIEW

Primarily this paper revolves around the critique of Peter Singer's Philosophy of charity and donations, hence major emphasis has been laid on his own books. Universality and Preference Utilitarian Approach (Singer, 2011) may reduce poverty in the world to a great extent if acted upon seriously. Peter Singer believes that poverty may be brought down to a considerable level if these two principles are applied. The general disposition of mankind is major hurdle in this practice (Singer, 2009). Most of us think that our sole and lone efforts would not help a large chunk of population. Moreover, various disciplines arrive at the result why do people keep money dear than human values (Marx, 1848) which leads people towards estrangement and alienation. The most pertinent question here is about the validity of Utilitarianism in 21st century. ? Being an old Philosophy, can it be applied on to the complex modern day world? The answer is yes; it is a philosophy which believes in the increase of human happiness (Rachels, 1999) through economic uplift and must be paid attention. Besides, there are authors who have written influential and quality books on the charity and donation (Ritenbaugh, 2020). However, Ritenbaugh does not believe in the advertising one's charity since it undermines the respect of the recipient. One looks boastful while telling about one's charitable activities. On the contrary some people believe when you give others and tell others it motivates them too (Synowiec, 2018). "Should we sound a trumpet when we give to the poor"? It is an enlightening essay by

the conditions of humiliating poverty, since they lack the most basic amenities of life. For most of the year, they face hunger and dearth and may not even visit a physician if a family member falls ill. Peter Singer elaborates how does poverty kill? First of all it affects the span of life; in developed countries average life expectancy is more than 78 years while in poor countries it is hardly 55 years. Children are affected in the worst way by poverty. The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) is very high in the poor countries as compared to the rich ones. According to a report of UNICEF, 10 million young children die every year of preventable and curable diseases most of which are poverty related (Singer, 2016).

Synowiec on the topic which promotes the idea of bringing the instances of abject poverty into the notice of the people, community and governments and if possible to the world. Blowing the trumpet is the duty of every conscientious person. Charity does not require some special efforts always, if we give that food to the needy what we simply waste, it may fill the empty stomachs of the thousands if not millions of people (Schiller, 2010). It is horrible to note that only one country in the world, the United States wastes the fresh and edible food of worth 240 billion dollars (Galvin, 2020). If it is distributed justly and fairly as charity perhaps half of the humanity will not sleep hungry at night. Why don't people donate? One of the reasons is selfishness and fear of future needs (Unger, 1996). Peter Singer wishes to rise above the myopic self-centeredness and advises to give more importance to human life than to the material goods. At the same time large amounts of money are not required for human welfare as per popular belief. Small sums may contribute a lot to save human lives (Singer, 2016). Charity does not benefit only the recipient but also the donor in a positive way (Bliss, 2005). *Charity the Gifts of Giving: Discover the hidden benefits of kindness and generosity* is a worth-reading book on the topic by Bliss. It counts the benefits the donor him/herself has while doing charity. It is a great source of happiness and relieving of anxiety. The author has also guided whom to choose for giving and how? Generosity gives you a positive energy, a good feel and peace of mind. Resource mobilization and fund raising is not an easy task. *The Science of Giving: Experimental Approaches to the Study of*

Charity (Oppenheimer and Olivola, 2011) is a choice book for researchers and charitable organizations. It gives valuable suggestions how the resource-mobilization for the needy may be made effective and efficient. It also studies the emotional, social, cultural, economic, psychological and behavioral factors involved in the charity and donation. Many economists do not agree with the concepts of charity and donations at all. They stress that poverty is an intricate issue which may not be resolved with alms giving; it must be resolved with tough economic measures. Population growth is one such factor which is singularly responsible for poverty (Malthus, 1997). His *Theory of Population* is one of the earliest books on modern economy which connects food production and poverty directly with the population growth. According to Malthus, population grows more rapidly but food production does not follow the same pattern, hence the extra population dies in pestilences, famines and wars to keep the natural system balanced. Malthus too has been critically analyzed (Avery 1997). The major classical economists including Malthus committed many fallacies regarding population, food production and poverty. Malthus was essentially a pessimist and did not believe in human capabilities. Today with the help of modern research and technology, we are capable of producing food for over eight billion population. "Is population growth a deterrent to development in the South Pacific?" (Ahlberg, 1988) is a very significant essay relevant to the research, since it has highlighted the factors responsible for stunted growth in the entire world; especially in South Asia.

RESEARCH QUESTION:

- ❖ Is Charity a Solution to poverty?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- To analyze and understand poverty and its causes;
- To examine deeply the proposed solution of poverty by Peter Singer with the charity and donation.

METHODOLOGY:

This research is primarily based on the critique of the major theme of a contemporary philosopher, Peter Singer, who wishes to eradicate world poverty

with the help of charity and donation. For this purpose his major works have been studied and analyzed critically. The methodology is, therefore, qualitative, descriptive and analytic. The theories used in it are Case Study and Role Theory. The researchers have tried to be as impartial and dispassionate as possible; every point has been supported with empirical data and recognized sources instead of personal ideas or popular beliefs.

a- Case Study:

A Case study is a thorough investigation of groups, communities or individuals. It is one of the best methodologies used in qualitative researches. It is mostly utilized to confirm an identified problem with the help of specific persons or groups. Peter Singer has used various case studies in his research to prove his research hypothesis that poverty may be overcome by donation and charity. In this research Peter Singer has used the case studies of two characters, Bob, and Chris and of Bill Gates from the real persons. Peter Singer's own books and those of Peter Unger are major sources of description and analysis under this theory. In the research paper these case studies have been analyzed thoroughly with the cogent and sound arguments.

b- Role Theory:

Role Theory was propounded in Sociology by well-known Sociologists George Herbert Mead and Ralph Wilton. It is used in Social Psychology too and explains how the people in a society interact with each other, what are their expectations from each other, and, how do the acts and behaviour of one person influence the other. It also explains the intricate cultural patterns of a society and how do these cultural structures determine the role and attitudes of people in a society. Role Theory is a very wide theory having complex meaning and consists of various roles of people; however, in our essay we shall analyze the role of a donor, philanthropist and charitable people and also the roles of various recipients. Prestigious books, authentic reports, high quality journals/ articles and reliable data from valid sources have been carefully consulted and analyzed for this study.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS:

a. Prosperity and the Problem of Poverty:

According to Peter Singer, there are two types of phenomena in our contemporary society. On the one hand there are the poor people who are still living at the level of destitution; and on the other hand is the middle class, which has made remarkable progress in the fields of education and jobs and has improved its life-style considerably. Hence if 1.4 billion people are living below the poverty line, billions of people are wealthy and enjoying affluent lives. In our age the average level of wealth may be compared with those of the Kings of the mediaeval era. King Louis XIV of France had wealth beyond imagination still he did not have any technique to cool his palace in the summer. Whereas in industrialized societies a person of average income has an excellent system of air conditioning which keeps his home cool and warm in summer and winter respectively. These days we avail those facilities which could not be even thought of by our ancestors. Mortality rate has dropped markedly specially the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) and Mothers' Mortality Rate (MMR) has come down incredibly. Longevity of life is another positive feature of our age. Today some people are so rich that they own their personal and lavish private aero planes. Then what is the reason of poverty and how can the gap between the rich and the poor may be bridged? One of the solutions is overcoming the wastage and spends the wasted resources on those who are in need. From here starts Peter Singer's elaborate idea of charity. Peter Singer is very unhappy on the most careless wastage of food in the developed countries; their wasted food may fill many empty stomachs the world over. Peter Singer quotes the research of Dr. Timothy Jones, an archaeologist, who surveyed the wasted items in North America. He was shocked by the survey results since there were 14 percent food items in the average household trash of the US (Schiller, 2010). It was not the expired or rotten food; the food thrown in the garbage was actually fresh and in good packing which could be used for the next few days. The story is more tragic and painful; a research report which was quoted in US news in 2020 revealed that the sole super power of the world wastes food of worth \$ 240 billion annually (Galvin, 2020). Renowned fashion designer, Deborah Lindquist told that an average US woman spends \$ 600 on dresses per year which

she rarely puts on. These facts and figures indicate that in US alone people spend so much money on those articles which they do not really need or use. Here a very pertinent question arises: If these people have slightest care for humanity why don't they think about those millions of children who are malnourished, die of hunger, cold and diseases? Instead of wasting their money so casually on useless things why don't they opt for charity? Is it right for some to waste money and food without the slightest pang of conscience and is it the fate for some to live hungry, illiterate and impoverished due to lack of resources? Can we give up our unnecessary spending and utilize it for public welfare? If yes, then we must think about what are our responsibility to eradicate poverty and what are our duties towards the poor and what are the boundaries in which we may operate?

b. Is it wrong not to help?

As discussed above, if the haves help the haves-not, problem of poverty may be addressed successfully. Even if there is no reduction in poverty, then definitely, there is something wrong with our beliefs. We must ponder upon the question: Is it wrong to help? Peter Singer makes his view clear with the help of some hypothetical characters and some stories which he has actually borrowed from his contemporary American Professor, Peter Unger. There is man whose name is Bob, who is approaching his retirement and possesses an expensive car Bugatti (Singer, 2016). He is in love with his car, which is an economic asset for him too. One day he goes for shopping and parks his car near a railways track. However, he soon sees a speedy train approaching on a track on which a small child is playing. The child does not listen to his desperate calls and his life is in severe danger. He is now left with two choices, either to pull the lever and change the track of the train or let the child die. He however, opts for the second and lets the child being crushed under the heavy wheels of the train. He did not change the track of the train because on the second track his lovely car was parked. He preferred his car to the life of the child. When people came to know about the incident, they condemned Bob's action severely. Peter Singer applies the apathy of Bob to those people who are responsible for the death and disease of countless people by wasting food and destroying money recklessly on useless items. If these people show

little sympathy they may reduce hunger and poverty of millions of helpless and poor people.

c. The Basic Argument in its Logical Form:

The example of Bob and our extreme sorrow on the death of innocent child indicates our intuitive belief that we wish to help those in need. This becomes especially very crucial when there is only one choice. However, where choices are more than one, our beliefs and intuitions also change. In this case whose opinion is more valid? ; Of the giver or the recipient? Definitely the one who is on the receiving end will give more rigorous opinion regarding help, charity and donation. The people in need will insist that help must be extended as a duty, not merely based on opinion, personal beliefs or intuition. Following is a logical method that will prove that our criterion for help must be based on the logical syllogism.

1st Premise: Deaths due to the shortage of medicines, food and lodging are wicked.

2nd premise: If you have the capacity to prevent something wicked, it is immoral to not to do that.

3rd premise: By contributing to the aid agencies, you can diminish the rate of mortality occurring because of shortage of medicines, food and lodging.

Conclusion: Consequently, if you do not contribute to the aid agencies, essentially you are committing something wicked (Singer, 2009).

Peter Singer's Solution to Alleviate Poverty

Regarding the eradication of poverty, Peter Singer says that it is the moral duty and obligation of every affluent individual in the society and the government to play their role in poverty alleviation. Since Peter Singer has been a follower of utilitarian ethics, he emphasizes effective altruism, which means that every affluent individual should use his resources in such a way so as to help as many people as possible and to make them happy. He has proposed some charity based solutions to eradicate poverty which are as under:

a) Creating a Culture of Giving

Chris (another character) was attending a party where people were discussing either they do some philanthropic work or not. A few people raised their hands in which Chris too was included. Lo and

behold in no time many more people showed willingness to do charity work; immediately three of those people, decided to give half of their income to those who are in need. Therefore, a 50% League came into being, and till 2008, more than one hundred people joined this League. Some of this people were quite well-off and some had the modest means. Peter Singer concludes about this case study, that the results achieved by the 50% League were astonishing and it changed the lives of so many people that the participants could not believe that they could do so much (Singer, 2010). Through this case study, Peter Singer wishes to establish that the culture of assisting is grounded on ethical and social grounds including those good-natured people, who genuinely and profoundly wish to bring others out of misery. Not only poverty may be alleviated but an environment may also be created in which people believe more in charity and philanthropy than greed, lust and hoarding. This may increase the standard of living of many destitute people, who have been languishing in poverty.

b) Must Donate Openly

Peter Singer believes in helping the others openly contrary to the popular belief that charity should be done secretly. He is of the view when people donate openly; it stimulates others to help too. In an instance quoted by him when donors started revealing their names and the amount donated by them, 90% raise was witnessed in the amount donated. This test was conducted by two Psychologists Jen Shang and Rachel Croson. However, religion does not like this show off. All the religions insist that charity should be kept hidden. Jesus Christ (*Peace be upon him*) said that, "Not to let our left hand know what our right hand is doing" ((Ritenbaugh , 2020). However, Peter Singer has another point of view; he says that charity may be revealed since it is being spent on welfare purposes. Peter Singer has objected to the Christian believers in the words of another like-minded thinker: By sounding a trumpet when they give, they encourage others to give, and that's better still (Synowiec, 2018).

c) Finding Good Charities

If we wish to donate, at times we don't know the needy people and nature of their needs. How to find a genuine needy person too is very important since there are many cheaters who may abuse your

kindness. Good charity organizations solve these problems. Credible charities work throughout the world. However, to enquire about any welfare or charity organization is equally necessary. There are some people with criminal orientations who exploit the sympathies of others in the name of the poor and embezzle the funds raised for the sake of donation. Peter Singer advises that before giving to any Charity Organization, one should thoroughly investigate the trustworthiness, reliability and integrity of that organization. It must be known who the beneficiaries of these organizations are, since “many marketing products look very beautiful in the pictures, the lamb looks happy, children looking smiling, but it is limited to the pictures and not in reality (Singer, 2010). Thus the moral standing of a Charity Organization is the most important factor.

d) Real Cost of Saving a Life

Peter Singer discusses the costs circulated by the WHO which estimate the money required to save the people suffering from preventable and curable diseases. It is surprising that such people who die in large numbers due to less serious diseases every year; may be saved by spending very small amount of money, which is far less than the amount spent on weapons and arms. When people die pre-mature deaths due to preventable diseases; the vicious circle of poverty becomes even stronger.

As per a report of WHO, around three million people fall sick yearly due to diarrhea, however using some sagacious strategy this disease can be easily prevented and costly lives may be saved (WHO, 2017). According to the UNICEF appraisal, thousands of children lose their lives every year because of measles in less developed countries. The main reason is non-availability of vaccination, on which only one \$ per dose is spent (UNICEF, n.d). Here Peter Singer references another organization called “Nothing but Nets”. It was founded by a philanthropist whose name is Rich Reilly. This organization provides anti-mosquito beds in mosquito-hit and malaria-affected areas. One mosquito net costs only \$10 and may save a precious human life. “If you donate 100 dollars to “Nothing but Nets”, it means that you have saved the lives of ten innocent people including children” (Singer, 2010, P.86).

e) Standard for Rich and Celebrities

Peter Singer has quoted Bill Gates who is a well-known philanthropist besides being one of the richest persons in the world. He has written on the website of Gates and Melinda’s Foundation, “All human lives, no matter where they belong, have equal worth” (Gates, 2008). Bill Gates opted for philanthropy when he came to know that almost 5, 00,000 children lose their lives annually of rotavirus. Then he was told that “millions of children in the developing countries die of many preventable diseases” (Gates, 2008). The lack of vaccination traumatized him even more. It motivated Bill Gates to start his Foundation which gave \$29 billion to the needy so that they may protect themselves against these diseases. He spent his entire time in strengthening his Foundation till 2008. But Peter Singer is still not satisfied because in spite of his substantial charity, hunger and poverty still prevail and people are still dying of drinking contaminated water. In this regard, Singer raises a question, what will become of those people who are still living in poverty in remote areas? It means that Bill Gates’ charity is still not up to the mark and he is not yet living up to his maxim that says all people have equal value. “Forbes List”, declares that Bill Gates is the most affluent person on the earth. Forbes is an American business magazine that publishes well-researched articles on investment, trade, industry and many other important topics related to business. In 1982, it launched a popular list of 400 richest Americans. Now Singer compares Gates with Paul Allen who is known as “Accidental Zillionaire”. A person is said to be an “Accidental Zillionaire” who has so much money that it cannot be counted. As per Forbes’ list Allen too is one of the richest people in the world. Allen has declared on his website that he has donated 900 million dollars for charity; this amount is 1/30 as compared to Bill Gates. It is just like the drop of water in comparison with the donations of the super-rich. Thus Peter Singer includes Paul Allen in the list of immoral people who are living only the life of self-indulgence. Peter Singer expresses strong disliking for the people who are leading prosperous lives and spending money heavily on their lavish life styles while a large chunk of humanity is groaning in the jaws of poverty and millions of people die daily of those diseases which are both preventable and curable (Singer, 2010).

CRITICISM ON PETER SINGER'S PROPOSED SOLUTION

Singer's solution, if it may be called solution in the proper sense of the word, is based on his respectable emotions for suffering humanity. He has used the method of another Philosopher Peter Unger (b.1942) who is his contemporary and an American Professor. Unger has used an interesting method of imaginary character whose examples compel us to use our money for the hungry, malnourished and diseased people who may be cured if supplied with enough money. His character (Bob) himself fails ethically, but the reader learns from his immoral actions to give priority to human life over money (Unger, 1996). It is to be recalled he is the same person who sacrificed the life of a child on the railways track to protect his costly car. Though Singer's intention is very sincere, but is not feasible in a very complex world with a population of over eight billion people. Poverty is an intricate issue for which the solution proposed by Singer is oversimplified. Charity or donations may not reduce the burden of poverty in the societies and Governments may not overcome it only with the help of philanthropists. The best examples here are of the Muslim World generally and of Pakistan particularly. Islam, like other religions of the world has laid excessive emphasis on charity, so much so that *Zakat* (2.5 % mandatory donation on annual savings and on the amount of gold one possesses) is one of the five foundational pillars of Islam. However, the Muslim World is generally impoverished and the collective GDP of all the Muslim countries in the world is less than the GDP of the United States alone. Economy is a complicated and thorny matter the issues of which may not be resolved at the macro level with the help of donation alone. Famous Dam Fund of a former Chief Justice a few years ago is a glaring example in Pakistan. Huge amount of *Zakat* distributed regularly every year, has not brought the slightest change in the income and lives of the people. Pakistan started Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) in 2008 in the name of first woman Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto. The heavy amount which is earmarked for this Programme annually in the Federal Budget is an undue burden on an already enfeebled national exchequer. During the past 16 years it has miserably failed to reduce poverty in the country, rather has increased the number of dependent people who have

become addicted to receiving alms without any work. Moreover, Third World countries' problems may not be resolved by the aids or donations of the developed ones, since they are over-populated and large countries with innumerable socio-political issues. Without resolution of the antecedent causes the economic issues may not be addressed (The Singer Solution, 2023). It is saddening that Peter Singer has stressed upon charity throughout, he has not just mentioned once about the deep-rooted causes of poverty, nor has suggested any system/method of the fair distribution of resources. He has not mentioned anything about exploitation of Capitalism and Neo-Liberal Economy and Globalization, which are the main sources of the abject poverty we see around us. These factors are increasing the gulf between the rich and the poor. The rich are becoming richer and the poor are becoming poorer. The solution presented by Singer is not novel, it is called trickle-down effect in Economics. It says that when people earn more wealth, its effect passes on to the poor and the lower income groups. It was introduced by the US President Herbert Hoover during the Great Depression of 1930s. However, it could not work and Hoover lost election to Franklin D. Roosevelt, who brought the US out of the crisis through New Deal and tax reforms (Will, 2024). It is also known as "Ripple Effect". In the parlance of Economics the ripple effect corresponds to multiplication. It means that my action will trigger the action of another person. If my income increases, deficiently I shall spend more. My spending will increase the income of other stakeholders such as restaurants, shopping malls, tailors and so on. Hence my prosperity as a ripple will move further towards the better economic conditions of the other people. It must be kept in mind that Peter Singer is not an economist; he is a moralist and ethicist. He has never named these economic theories; however, his ideas do resemble these economic outlooks. There is another question worthy of attention. Is it possible for anyone to give his/her half (50%) income in charity? We are living in an era of severe economic crisis and (in Pakistan) tariffs on electricity, gas, petrol and other utilities have risen beyond the limits of middle class. Prices of grocery and edibles are sky-rocketing; in this situation it is so difficult to make both ends meet that the noblest of the humans may not spare such a huge amount for charity. If someone pays the fee of his children and affords the

medicine of his elderly parents, it is not less than a crusade. A very pertinent point is worth-mentioning here; are the poor not responsible for their poverty? The direct relation between poverty and over-population has remained unresolved till date. Why do poor people produce so many children whom they may not raise properly? They are deprived of proper housing facilities, live in slums, lack sewerage system, may not feed their children, and cannot send them to schools; even then they go on giving birth to children on annual basis.

According to the United Nations' World Population Prospects-2022: Poverty –reduction in the face of a very fast growing population is a gigantic task which is not easy to address. Many a times as a result of hard and tough efforts large populations are brought out of the spell of poverty, but more population replaces them. Thus overall number of people living below the poverty line almost remains the same. First, the quick and speedy population growth rate decreases per capita income which results in increased poverty. Second, in heavily populated areas increased population leads towards more division of land; hence landlessness and joblessness increase. In the end all these factors affect negatively the education and health of the children and give rise to more poverty in future. (Ahlberg, 1988). Renowned English economist Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834) for the first time explained that: “The population growth follows a geometric way. The population is going to double itself in twenty five years; whereas, the food sources rise in arithmetic order. The rate of growth of food is far less than population growth. Therefore in some years food becomes less than the eating –mouths (Kagan, 2023). Though Malthus theory looks pessimistic and outdated in the modern technological age; it is still valid somehow and modern economist still quote it: “Malthus is of the view that population and resources should remain in balance. However, life does not obey this order and continues to grow if the conditions are suitable. So nature has to intervene to control the overgrowth; and the extra population is eliminated by famines, diseases and wars. These are the self-governed external checks. This position seems not only extreme but outdated too. But it was still confirmed by many economists and they acknowledged that population does have an adverse effect on prosperity and economy. Therefore many methods were adopted for slowing down population growth

such as postponing marriage, never-marrying, infanticide, and abstinence (Kenneth, Gupta and Goulder et al., 2004). A Policy Research Working Paper on the same by the World Bank reveals:

Two Consultants of the World Bank, Acemoglu and Johnson studied the question in 2007, whether the excessive growth in population reduces per capita income or not? They analyzed the data of 47 developing countries. Their study spanned over six decades, that is, from 1940-2000. They concluded that an increase in life-expectancy also reduces per-capita income, since longevity also increases the population (Gupta, John and John, 2011). Though there are many proved methods of poverty reduction, but the most important is population control which is very detrimental for environment, burden on resources and one of the major factors of global warming. So an easy and feasible recipe of poverty reduction is increased use of contraceptives, women's empowerment, small family, low fertility and strict ban on child labour so that humbler classes may not use more kids as a source of income generation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

After a thorough, if not exhaustive discussion we have come to the conclusion that the solution suggested by Peter Singer to overcome poverty in the world is not workable. Poverty is such a large issue that it cannot be approached only from a solo angle, nor a unified singular solution may be suggested for it. The space at our disposal in one paper does not let us to have a comprehensive review of all the causes and possible solutions of poverty. However, we may have a cursory look on the key factors involved in poverty especially in underdeveloped and Third World countries. Most of these poverty-stricken countries have one common problem, which is political instability and lack of continuation of policies. Besides, rampant corruption, mismanagement of resources, heavy external debts, low literacy, internal strives, civil-wars, poor economic strategies, tax default and excessive imports add to their poverty. Large family size makes the issue graver. In such conditions where the most competent economists fail, the innocent solution of Peter Singer of reducing this monster through charity alone may not work.

However there are countries around the world that have brought out their masses out of extreme poverty in near past and have made remarkable

progress in economic sector. Some very manifest examples are those of India, China, Singapore, Vietnam and Bangladesh. India and China, population-wise the largest countries of the world have become the second and third strongest economies of the world in recent years. Their economic reforms and models must be followed by those countries which are still struggling against poverty. However, Bangladesh's example must be followed by all poor nations which is the most densely populated country of the World with 3441 persons residing per square mile and a total population of 172,954,319 souls. Its population forms 2.15% of the total population of the world according to the figures of July 2023. Once considered the poorest nation of South Asia, today Bangladesh's economic indicators are higher than both India and Pakistan. The strategy followed by Bangladesh over the decades despite political upheavals consists of following integrated actions:

- ❖ Micro Finance/Short loans
- ❖ Aggressive Family Planning Campaign;
- ❖ High CPR (Contraceptive Prevalence Rate);
- ❖ Women's Empowerment.

It is pertinent to note that in 1971, when East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) separated from the Federation of Pakistan, its population was larger than West Pakistan (current Pakistan). But now Pakistan's population has surpassed Bangladeshi population. Bangladesh has made marvelous and incredible progress in garments industry and textile exports. It is heartening to know that the entire work force of these garments factories consists of women. This empowerment has brought the fertility of women to a remarkably lower level. According to the latest report of UNFPA, the Contraceptive Prevalence Rate in Bangladesh is 62% which is second highest in the Muslim World after Iran (81.5%). Reduction in population growth has played a mammoth role in the poverty alleviation of Bangladesh. The name of Noble Laureate of 2006, Dr. Muhammad Yunus (b.1940) may not be forgotten here, who is the former Managing Director of The Grameen Bank. He is an economist, entrepreneur, rights activist and reformer. He established *Grameen Bank* (Village-based Bank) in 1983 and introduced the micro credit and micro finance in South Asia. Men drew a great benefit from these loans, but loans were given to women who were much disempowered at that time in the country. His venture revolutionized the lives of the

millions of the down trodden and the underdog. Micro finance increased the rate of education in the children of the poorest people and considerably reduced the menaces of beggary and child labour in the land. Those people who were compelled to have very disgraceful professions became able to lead respectable lives. To propose the comprehensive and extensive solutions to reduce poverty in the world is beyond the scope of this paper. We had to critically analyze the method suggested by Peter Singer; which will not be rejected by any humane person but will not be accepted by any sane person.

In the end it would suffice to say that charity is not a "Sustainable" model to reduce poverty, since when we give to a poor person some cash or kind as alms, the immediate need of the poor is definitely satisfied, but s/he comes to the same level of destitution as soon as our aid is spent say on the treatment of the sick, fee of the child, utility bill or house rent etcetera. Next time when the need will arise, s/he would again see towards a philanthropist to help. Hence in the shortest possible words we may say, only this that charity may not provide a permanent, replicable and demonstrable solution to the problem of poverty. So here we answer our research question: *Is Charity a Solution to Poverty?* The answer is NO. And have met our both research objectives regarding nature and causes of poverty to a certain extent within the allowed space of the paper and its proposed solution by Peter Singer.

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