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## THE EFFORTS TO ERADICATE THE POVERTY IN INDIA: VARIOUS POLICIES AND LEGISLATIONS SINCE INDEPENDENCE

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### Abstract:

*Poverty reduction has been the main objective of any single government since independence. Many attempts have been made to reduce poverty but no satisfactory result till today. As land reform & external aid remained the two substantial principal means through which the government sought to reduce poverty for the first two decades after independence. However, poverty did not show any substantial decline. But the poverty did start diminishing due to heavy public investment in the agriculture sector in the wake of Green Revolution. High rate of growth in agriculture did trickle-down to the poor, at least to a certain extent. In the early 1980s, a shift in government's approach to poverty reduction showed a radical departure from past. This new strategy towards poverty reduction was marked by three important features. Firstly, the transformation of the poverty line from a statistical benchmark into a real life societal division. Secondly, Anti-poverty programmes were conceived as instruments for challenging public resources downward to the local level. Thirdly, Anti-poverty schemes were enacted not only because they allowed the construction of patronage chain in absence of well organized parties. But also because they made the poor feel that the government was doing something to fulfill its promises to abolish poverty. This paper will highlight process of eradicating poverty through Anti-poverty programmes*

### KEY WORDS:

Employment, Eradication, Poverty, Legislation, Household.

### INTRODUCTION

Indian poverty estimates are based on house hold consumption expenditure. Any person consuming less than 2,400 calories per day in a rural and less than 2,100 calories per day in an urban area is considered to be below the poverty line. Other aspects of poverty include access to medical care and schooling, indebtedness and insecurity but these do not figure in the official definition of poverty. According to the report of Government of India Task Force the poverty line was defined as per capita monthly expenditure of Rs. 49.09 in rural areas and Rs. 56.64 in urban areas at 1973-74 prices corresponding to per capita daily calories requirement in rural and urban area. The definition covers expenditure on food and non-food items such as fuel, clothing, housing, health, education and social services that ensure adequacy of calorie consumption.

### Causes of Poverty In India The major causes for poverty are:

1. The Indian caste system and the discrimination against low caste.

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2. High level of dependence on primitive methods of agriculture.
3. Rural urban divide.
4. 75% of Indian population depends on agriculture whereas the contribution of agriculture to the GDP was 22%.
5. While services and industry have grown at double digit figures, agriculture growth rate has dropped from 4.8% to 2%.
6. High population growth rate.
7. High illiteracy (about 35% of adult population).
8. Unemployment and under-employment.

#### POVERTY RATES AND ITS REDUCTION IN INDIA:

The proportion of India's population below the poverty line has fluctuated widely in the past but the overall trend has been downward. However, according to NSSO survey report poverty rates and its reduction has been roughly given under three periods of trends in India.

##### 1950 to mid-1970s:

Poverty indication shows no discernible trend. In 1951, 47% of India's rural population was below the poverty line. The proportion went up to 64% in 1954-55; it came down to 45% in 1960-61 but in 1977-78, it went up again to 51%.

##### Mid 1970s to 1990:

Poverty declined significantly between the mid-1970s and the end of the 1980s. The decline was more pronounced between 1977-78 and 1986-87, with rural poverty declining from 51% to 39%. It went down further to 34% by 1989-90. Urban poverty went down from 41% in 1977-78 to 34% in 1986-87 and further to 33% in 1989-90.

##### After 1991:

This post-economic reform period evidenced both progress and setbacks. Rural poverty increased from 34% in 1989-90 to 43% in 1992 and then fell to 37% in 1993-94. Urban poverty went up from 33.4% in 1989-90 to 33.7% in 1992 and declined to 31% in 1993-94. Percentage of population in 2004-05 living below poverty line has been reduced to 22.15% in 2004-05. The percentage of persons below the Poverty Line in 2011-12 has been estimated as 25.7% in rural areas, 13.7% in urban areas and 21.9% for the country as a whole.

#### Poverty Eradication under Various Programmes in India:

The Government of India's poverty eradication programmes can be broadly classified under five categories:

**1. Self Employment programmes:** Self-employment programmes were introduced at the national level in the late 1970s. Initially, the programmes were designed to provide skills, subsidized credit and infrastructure support to small farmers and agricultural labourers so that they could find new sources of income. In the 1980s, the focus of the self-employment programmes was extended to cover target groups such as scheduled castes and tribes, women and rural artisans. The coverage also extended to specific areas such as animal husbandry, forestry and fishery. The largest of these programmes was the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP),

**2. Wage employment programmes:** The first major wage-employment programme was introduced in the 1960s to provide employment to the rural unemployed particularly during the lean agricultural season. Subsequently, several wage employment programmes were launched by the central and state governments. The largest of these was the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), which was redesigned in 1999 as the Jawahar Gram Samridhhi Yojana (JGSY). Other notable schemes are such as the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) and the Employment Guarantee Scheme of the Maharashtra Government. In August 2005, the Indian Parliament passed the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), one of independent India's most ambitious interventions to address rural poverty and empower poor people.

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**3.Area development programmes:** Drought Prone Area Programmes (DPAP), Desert Development Programmes (DDP), Hilly Area Development Programmes and Tribal Area Development Programmes were introduced in the 1970s to prevent environmental degradation and provide employment to the poor in these regions.

**4.Social security programmes:** Social security programmes were launched, at the national level. in the 1980s with an old age pension scheme. Currently, there are four major national social security schemes:

- a)National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS)
- b)National Family Benefit Scheme
- c)National Maternity Benefit Scheme
- d)Rural Group Insurance Scheme

**5.Other programmes:** The largest of the 'other' programmes is the Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY), which provides houses free of cost to below the poverty line scheduled caste and scheduled tribe families living in rural areas. Several other poverty alleviation programmes have been launched including:

- a)PradhanMantriGramodayaYojana
- b)PradhanMantri Gram SadakVojana
- c)AntyodayaAnnaVojana
- d)The Annapurna Scheme
- e)ValmikiAmbedkarAwasYojana (VAMBAY)

Even these programmes have played a significant role in reduction of poverty in India but even though it's not possible to reduce poverty to zero level. Hence there is always requirement of working towards the reduction of poverty in India.

**Impact of various programs on eradication of poverty in India:**

As mostly policy and programme of government have its great concerns regarding reduction of poverty throughout India but as around 83.5 crore (70%) of India's population lives, in rural areas. The large magnitude of the rural population, their prevailing socio-economic conditions and the quality of life calls for an all-round development in rural infrastructure. The eleventh five year plan (2007-12) also noted a direct and significant causal relationship between infrastructure and the incidence of poverty in states, the Twelfth five year plan (2012-17) laid a renewed emphasis on the creation of physical infrastructure like roads, railways, ports, airports, power and telecommunications. Hence programmes like "Bharat Nirman" play a key role in both economic growth and poverty reduction. Hence its also very important to talk about such programmes in eradication of poverty with other programmes like "MGNREGA".

**Role of Bharat Nirman on rural economic development:**

Rural infrastructure is not only a key component of rural development but also an important ingredient in ensuring any sustainable poverty reduction programme. The proper development of infrastructure in rural areas improves rural economy and quality of life. It promotes better productivity, increased agricultural incomes, adequate employment and so on and so forth.

Hence the "Bharat Nirman" time bound business plan for action in rural infrastructure. It envisages action in following areas:

- Irrigation
- Rural Roads
- Rural Housing
- Rural Water Supply
- Rural Electrification
- Rural Telecommunication Connectivity,etc.

**IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON RURALECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:**

Economic development refers to increase in the standard of living of a nation's population associated with sustained growth from a simple, low income economy to a modern, high income economy.

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Its scope includes the process and policies by which a nation improves the economic, political and social well-being of its people. The MGNREGA since its beginning is playing an important role in rural economy and development, besides generating employment it is also strengthening the natural resources. MGNREGA is bringing a salient revaluation in rural areas and its economy.

### **(i) Employment Generation**

MGNREGA is reducing severe poverty spreading in villages through employment generation and contributing a lot in rural economy. The pioneer programme saw its budget outlay increase to Rs. 30,100 crore in the budget for 2009-10. In the last fiscal, the same stood at Rs.16,000crore MGNREGA provided employment to over 4.47 crore house holds in previous fiscal year. During the first year of implementation (2006-07) in 200 districts more than 2.10 crore household were employed and 90.5 crore person days were generated and in 2007-08, 3.39 crore households were provided employment and 143.59 crore person days were generated in 330 districts. During 2008-09, 4.5 crore households have been provided employment and 215.63 crore person days have been generated across the country. Presently this scheme is giving jobs to around 3 per cent (4.10 crore) of India's population. The above scenario presents that MGNREGA is working as an instrument of employment generation and contributing a lot in rural economy.

### **(ii) Enhancement of Rural Natural Resources**

Indian village are full of natural resources but due to the ignorance they are laying waste and now under MGNREGA such natural resource are being protected and renewed. The scheme is focused on strengthening natural resource management such as afforestation, drought proofing, flood proofing, water conservation, soil erosion etc. The Act has become a significant vehicle for regeneration of India's depleting natural resources base and it seems that in long term this net of natural resource might have a huge impact on our country environment and gross agricultural output. Even the state like Rajasthan is now being afforested under MGNREGA.

### **(iii) Infrastructural Development**

The scheme is contributing a lot in infrastructural development and capital formation in rural areas. It is creating durable assets like rural roads, water bodies, minor irrigation tanks, market sheds for unemployed people, water harvesting structure, community wells, flood control plantation and so on Road construction is important for village development because in rural areas roads washed away with every monsoon and they become disconnected with other area.

A particular significance of MGNREGA is that many of the assets created under the programme can directly benefit the poor. The Act specifies the individual work but for the welfare of the whole village or community.

### **(iv) Strengthening Democracy and Decentralization**

MGNREGA is such a scheme which ensures the involvement of local people in every decision. The rural people working under scheme can select work and work-site, bargain for minimum wages, give suggestions for better work and make complaints, involve in implementation of projects and their social auditing. It strengthens the democratic decentralization process at the grass root level by incorporating gram-panchayats and gram sabha in the entire planning and decision-making process. If the local people will participate in decision-making, the actual meaning of democracy will reflect.

### **(v) Rural-Urban Migration**

The MGNREGA, by guaranteeing employment, will alleviate the problem of rural-urban migration. The MGNREGA will have significant positive impact on seasonal rural-urban migrations by providing rural workers with employment during the lean season.

### **(vi) Development of Human Capital**

The public works that will be undertaken under the ambit of the MGNREGA have the potential to develop human capital by promoting skills in rural India. This may be through 'learning-by-doing' kind of processes or through formal training of the workers by experienced/trained personnel.

**(vii) Health Improvement**

In India more than 70 per cent people live in villages and such a big fraction of population have found ill health due to lack of health facilities. Through MGNREGA government is also trying to improve the health status of people providing clean drinking water, proper drainage system, construction of toilets, ensures health facilities at work-sites opening the child care centers and supply nutritious food for them. Poverty is a big enemy of health because the people having the inadequate financial resources cannot invest a lot for health improvement. Healthy people are a valuable asset of the society and MGNREGA is enhancing the financial resources the rural people. Under this scheme, sometimes the campaign is taken to the villages and also this scheme is helping the 'National Health Mission' by building hospitals to updated health facilities. It is also increasing the educational status of people and working as an instrument of women empowerment.

**(viii) E-governance**

MGNREGA has taken e-revolution in rural areas. It has provided an opportunity of e-governance at the village level in panchayats to connect them with computers and having internet facilities. MGNREGA is a very vast programme and for its effective implementation and proper functioning e-governance is required. It also ensures the transparency and accountability and lessens the corruption. Many states like; Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, UP, Orissa, Kerala are using smart cards and hand held devices to capture details of workers, work and wages (WWW) including the muster-rolls, job cards, registration of work, demand for work and so on. Such smart cards are biometric which has finger prints authentication and are easy to use for illiterate people.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

The MGNREGA should be linked with other developmental programmes like Drought Prone Area Programme, National Horticulture Mission etc.  
To ensure greater dissemination of information and participation of rural people at every stage of MGNREGA, form planning and execution, the role of civil society should be emphasized.  
Role of NGOs, Voluntary organizations, civil society and Self Helping Groups (SHGs) should be strengthened in every walk of life in India.  
Technical education and skill development programmes should be liked with agricultural and industrial sector.  
Rural infrastructure should be strengthened properly.  
Second green revolution is the need of hours in agriculture sector.  
Population control or family planning programmes should be implemented properly.  
Literacy programmes should be liked with massive programmes like MGNREGA and Bharat Nirman, etc to achieve cent percent literacy in India.  
Cottage industries and small scale industries should be established in rural areas for employment generation in India.  
Poly, organic farming should be encouraged.  
Value addition programmes should be emphasized for food processing and agricultural production in rural areas.

**CONCLUSION:**

Poverty eradication is one of the major objectives of planned development in India. There has been a sharp decline in poverty in India over last two decades in with the percent of total population Below Poverty Line (BPL) declined to 21.92% in 2011-12 from 35.97% in 1993-94. However eradicate the poverty at all from India is a distant dream for the government of India since independence. The govt. of India is making continuous efforts to eradicate poverty in India through various policies and legislations. Though the govt. of India have always thought that poverty can be eradicated through economic development. Instead of this govt. of India should be given more importance to development of social sectors such as population control, family welfare and universal primary education, etc so that poverty can be eradicate in India in proper way. All the other actor of governance such as civil society, NGOs and general masses in itself should also be helpful with the govt. of India in this effort. Because only making policies and programmes are not sufficient to overcome this problem.

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