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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN TELECOM INDUSTRY: COMPARISON OF INDIAN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR UNDERTAKINGS <i>ADITYA GAUTAM & SAMEEKSHA JAIN</i>	1
2.	SUPREME COURT OF INDIA ON GROUNDS OF SETTING ASIDE ARBITRAL AWARD <i>SUDHIR S. KOTWAL & DR. ASMITA A. VAIDYA</i>	6
3.	PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF THE CYBERAGE SCHEME IN GOA: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE <i>DR. GAJANAN MADIWAL</i>	10
4.	INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN THE LIVELIHOOD PROJECT <i>DR. VIJAY KUMAR & AJAY PUROHIT</i>	13
5.	TESTING WEAK FORM OF EFFICIENT MARKET HYPOTHESIS IN INDIA: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NIFTY MIDCAP 50 INDEX BASED COMPANIES <i>DR. N. N. PANDEY</i>	18
6.	THE RETAIL AVALANCHE: A STUDY ON CUSTOMER PERCEPTION <i>ZOHEB ALI K & DR. RASHMI KODIKAL</i>	22
7.	INVESTORS ATTITUDE TOWARDS SAFETY AS AN IMPORTANT CRITERION FOR MUTUAL FUND INVESTMENT – WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CHENNAI CITY <i>S. PRASANNA KUMAR & DR. T. JOSEPH</i>	27
8.	FDI IN INDIAN RETAIL SECTOR: BOON OR BANE? <i>YASMIN BEGUM R. NADAF & SHAMSHUDDIN M. NADAF</i>	32
9.	UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHICAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR AND ETHICAL CLIMATE IN PRIVATE SECTOR BANKS IN ERNAKULAM DISTRICT <i>ROHINI. S. NAIR & SMITHA RAJAPPAN</i>	36
10.	A STUDY ON LECTURERS' PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS' FEEDBACK ON COURSES AND TEACHING WITH REFERENCE TO PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS IN BANGALORE CITY <i>ASHA RANI.K</i>	39
11.	THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF TALENT ACQUISITION IN RECRUITMENT SERVICE CENTERS: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY <i>NAMITHA.S</i>	45
12.	THE AMALGAMATION OF SBI AND ITS SUBSIDIARIES: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES <i>ANAND DHANANJAY WALSANGKAR</i>	49
13.	ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES AND CAPABILITIES FOR KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY IN HIGH VELOCITY ENVIRONMENTS: THE PERSPECTIVE OF BUSINESS STRATEGY ALIGNMENT <i>K.UMA LAKSHMI & DR. SUMITHA K</i>	53
14.	FINANCIAL DISTRESS AND ITS IMPACT ON STOCK PRICES OF MINING SECTOR FIRMS IN INDONESIA STOCK EXCHANGE <i>FITRI WAHYUNI, LUKYTAWATI ANGGRAENI & TONY IRAWAN</i>	59
15.	DISTRICT WISE SITUATION OF THE CHILD LABOUR (AGE 5-14) IN ANDHRA PRADESH <i>DR. PARUPALLY ANJANEYULU & SRIPARNA BANERJEE</i>	65
16.	INVESTIGATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT REGISTRATION SYSTEM IN ADDIS ABABA: THE CASE OF BOLE, ARADA AND YEKA SUB-CITIES <i>WUBALEM SERAW GEZIE</i>	71
17.	POVERTY: A COLOSSAL PEST IN INDIA <i>KHEM RAJ</i>	77
18.	EXTRADITION AND LAW <i>SHREEMANSHU KUMAR DASH</i>	83
19.	COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FARMERS' SUICIDE IN ODISHA WITH INDIA <i>IPSITA PRIYADARSINI PATTANAIAK</i>	86
20.	NEED FOR CHANGE IN THE HISTORICAL LEGACY OF CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR <i>GUNEEV BRAR</i>	91
	REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK & DISCLAIMER	94

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POVERTY: A COLOSSAL PEST IN INDIA**KHEM RAJ****RESEARCH SCHOLAR****DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE****HIMACHAL PRADESH UNIVERSITY****SHIMLA****ABSTRACT**

The focus of India's planning since independence was on the improvement of condition of rural areas by creating infrastructure and employment opportunities for rural population and poverty alleviation has been the main concern of our planners since First Five Year Plan (1951). In the early phase of planning era, the main thrust was laid on the implementation of policies and projects which were expected to achieve higher growth. This approach at that time was based upon the assumption that the benefits of higher growth will automatically trickle down to the masses and alleviate their poverty. Poverty and prosperity, deprived and affluent, landlords and serfs, have not and have, have always existed, are existed and will exist in all societies to cruelty of inequality and disparity cannot be avoided but its magnitude can be minimized, its widening gap can be bridged, rigours can be reduced. Social economic and political thinkers, professionals and statesmen have been concerned with the rising trends of poverty. They have evolved various methods strategies, theories and policies to eradicate poverty. In their treatise and planning they develop one or more biases and principles for either perceiving or measuring poverty the academicians and professionals bring out various facts of poor man's deprivation.

KEYWORDS

rural poverty, strive hunger, eradication of poverty.

INTRODUCTION

The word rural Development consists of two words Rural +Development. Rural means a fix number of people living in a community and development means a positive change in living standard of such people. Rural development connotes a complete process of change in rural areas which lead to improvement in rural income, employment opportunities, income distribution, rural welfare and other aspects of rural life. Thus, we can say that, rural development is a quantitative and qualitative change in the living of rural people by develop of agriculture and allied activities and it included not only agriculture development all round rural development by economic, social, political, cultural, environmental progress of rural areas. In recent year, the call for the policy which enables the reduction of mass poverty in India has increased not only from scientific point of view, but also from political and practical standpoint. Mass poverty is a problem crucial not only for the people concerned, but also for the future of humanity as a whole, and one that cries out for rapid solution. Indians still have not succeeded in permanently improving the living conditions of big parts of their population measures in terms of economic growth expected by Indians over the past fifty years, the preliminary growth oriented development strategies pursued hitherto have not been unsuccessful. Many poor population groups continue to be from the economic growth. The "Trickledown effect" has failed and still fails to reach them.¹

NATURE OF POVERTY

Poverty becomes a problem when it is considered undesirable either by the persons concerned as by others. As Amartya Sen puts it "much about poverty is obvious enough". One does not need elaborate criteria, cunning measurement or probing analysis, to recognize row poverty and to understand its antecedents. It would be natural to be impatient with long winded academic studies on poor naked wretched with houseless heads and unfed sides and "looped: and windowed raggedness" to use king lears graphic description. And furthermore, it may also be the case as earlier fold the blind Gloucester, that a man may see how this world goes with no eyes". There is indeed much that is transparent about poverty and misery. Poverty thus, indicates deprivation of some sort or other but beyond that there is no uniformity as to what constitutes poverty. On conceptual level, poverty is distinguished between absolute and relative.

ABSOLUTE POVERTY

In the absolute standard, minimum physical quantities of cereals, pulses, milk, butter is determined for a subsistence level and then the price is being determined at the market rate. Aggregating all the quantities included and figure expressing per capita consumer expenditure. As per Dr. Kamta Prasad, absolute poverty is that concept of poverty which implies non-fulfillment of the objectively determined minimum standard of physiological need considered essential for human beings. The measurement of absolute poverty involves stipulation of a minimum level of per capita consumer expenditure which is adequate for purchasing the goods and services needed for the purpose. People who have income less than this figure are considered as poor. However, difficulties arise when what is to be included under essential needs and what is to be excluded has to be specified.

As per Robert S.M.C. Namara, Poverty "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. While there is still a disassuagement about what should be the exact measurement of poverty it has to be simple as possible so that it can be applied by the field functionaries at the local level for identifying the poor and taking the required measures for the upliftment for the rural poor.²

RELATIVE POVERTY

The problem of poverty has continued to remain the central challenge of development at the global level. As per this concept of poverty, the whole population of the country is stratified on the basis of the income and then the living standard of the highest and lowest income groups are compared. Persons having standard of livings below a certain cut-off point fixed in the light of the income distribution of the population are viewed as poor. For example, the level may be fixed at half the median point of the distribution or it may be measured in terms of full dispersion between the highest and lowest standards.³

GENERATION OF POVERTY

Poverty is not static. It has a replicating effect. As per Dr. S.P. Gupta, an eminent sociologist "Low Occupation, in sanitary shelter, bad health, low education, large family and powerlessness all combine to generate poverty.⁴

UNDESIRABILITY OF POVERTY

Poverty is undesirable not only from an individual's but also from society's view point. People must not be allowed to become so poor that they offend or are hurtful to society. It is not so much the misery and plight of the poor but the discomfort and cost to the community which is crucial. We have a problem of poverty to the extent that low incomes create problems for those who are not poor.⁵ Rural Poverty in India has its origin in the semi-feudal relation of production in agriculture. Post-Independence land reform measures did not make any impact on the agrarian relation.

Hence, almost all agricultural labour households and a large proportion of small and marginal farmers and landless non-agricultural rural labour households are poor. People who are poor in terms of income also tend to be deprived of other privileges in the society. According to the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) definition, approved by the Ministry of Rural Development, as revised in May 1991, a rural household with an annual income of less than ₹ 11,000 described as a poor household. Region wise, rural poverty is lower in regions where the level of a agriculture output per head in higher, and vice-versa. Similarly, over a period of time, the regions experiencing a high rate of agriculture growth have shown a steeper reduction in rural poverty than the regions experiencing slower growth. State wise poverty status has been shown in table 1.1

TABLE 1.1: NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION BELOW POVERTY LINE (BPL) BY STATES- 2011-2012

Sr. No.	States	Rural		Urban		Total	
		%age of Persons	No. of Persons	%age of Persons	No. of Persons	%age of Persons	No. of Persons
1.	Andhra Pradesh	11.0	61.8	5.8	17.0	9.2	78.8
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	38.9	4.2	20.3	0.7	34.7	4.9
3.	Assam	33.9	92.1	20.5	9.2	32.0	101.3
4.	Bihar	34.1	320.4	31.2	37.8	33.7	358.2
5.	Chhattisgarh	44.6	88.9	24.8	15.2	39.9	104.1
6.	Delhi	12.9	0.5	9.8	16.5	9.9	17.0
7.	Goa	6.8	0.4	4.1	0.4	5.1	0.8
8.	Gujarat	21.5	75.4	10.1	26.9	16.6	102.2
9.	Haryana	11.6	19.4	10.3	9.4	11.2	28.8
10.	Himachal Pradesh	8.5	5.3	4.3	0.3	8.1	5.6
11.	Jammu & Kashmir	11.5	10.7	7.2	2.5	10.3	13.3
12.	Jharkhand	40.8	104.1	24.8	20.2	37.0	124.3
13.	Karnataka	24.5	92.8	15.3	37.0	20.9	129.8
14.	Kerala	9.1	15.5	5.0	8.5	7.1	23.9
15.	Madhya Pradesh	35.7	191.0	21.0	43.1	31.6	234.1
16.	Maharashtra	24.2	150.6	9.1	47.4	17.4	197.9
17.	Manipur	38.8	7.4	32.6	2.8	36.9	10.2
18.	Meghalaya	12.5	3.0	9.3	0.6	11.9	3.6
19.	Mizoram	35.4	1.9	6.4	0.4	20.4	2.3
20.	Nagaland	19.9	2.8	16.5	1.0	18.9	3.8
21.	Orissa	35.7	126.1	17.3	12.4	32.6	138.5
22.	Punjab	7.7	13.4	9.2	9.8	8.3	23.2
23.	Rajasthan	16.1	84.2	10.7	18.7	14.7	102.9
24.	Sikkim	9.9	0.4	3.7	0.1	8.2	0.5
25.	Tamil Nadu	15.8	59.2	6.5	23.4	11.3	82.6
26.	Tripura	16.5	4.5	7.4	0.8	14.0	5.2
27.	Uttar Pradesh	30.4	479.4	26.1	118.8	29.4	598.2
28.	Uttarakhand	11.6	8.2	10.5	3.4	11.3	11.6
29.	West Bengal	22.5	141.1	14.7	43.8	20.0	185.0
30.	Punducerry	17.1	0.7	6.3	0.6	9.7	1.2
31.	A & N Islands	1.6	0.04	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.04
32.	Chandigarh	1.6	0004	22.3	2.3	21.8	2.3
33.	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	62.6	1.2	15.4	0.3	39.3	1.4
34.	Daman & Diu	0.0	0.0	12.6	0.3	9.9	0.3
35.	Lakshadweep	0.0	0.0	3.4	0.02	2.8	0.02
	All India	25.7	2166.6	13.7	531.2	21.9	2697.8

Source: www.rural.nic.in

Note:

1. Population as on 1st March has been used for estimating number of persons below poverty line. (2011) Census Population extrapolated)
2. Poverty line of Tamil Nadu is used for Andaman and Nicobar Island
3. Urban Poverty Line of Punjab is used for both rural and urban areas of Chandigarh.
4. Poverty Line of Maharashtra is used for Dadra & Nagar Haveli
5. Poverty Line of Goa is used for Daman & Diu.
6. Poverty Line of Kerala is for Lakshadweep

TABLE 1.2: DISTRICT WISE NUMBER OF BPL FAMILIES AND THEIR PERCENTAGE FOR THE 10TH FIVE YEAR PLAN IN RESPECT OF RURAL AREAS OF HIMACHAL PRADESH (2002 TO 2007)

Sr. No.	Name of District	Total No. of Rural Households	No. of BPL Families	%age of BPL families out of Rural Household
1.	Bilaspur	75051	17337	23.10%
2.	Chamba	85676	46393	54.15%
3.	Hamirpur	95795	19514	20.37%
4.	Kangra	289185	63250	21.87%
5.	Kinnaur	13255	2824	21.31%
6.	Kullu	69388	11267	16.24%
7.	Lahaul-Spiti	5517	2400	43.50%
8.	Mandi	206096	41339	20.06%
9.	Shimla	108999	31682	20.07%
10.	Sirmour	70439	13695	19.44%
11.	Solan	73733	17478	23.70%
12.	Una	89792	15191	16.92%
	Grand Total	1182926	282370	23.87%

Source: Rural Development Department, Government of Himachal Pradesh

Table 1.2 shows the district wise number of BPL families and their percentage for the 10th Five Year Plan in respect of rural areas of Himachal Pradesh (2002 to 2007). It is evident from the above table that, there were 11,82,926 rural households according to the tenth five year plan whereas, 2,82,370 were living below the poverty line. Out of total rural household, 23.87 per cent were from the BPL families. Table 1.2 illustrates that, Kangra district was the largest one having maximum population of rural households and district Lahul-Spiti was the smallest one having minimum population of rural households. On the other hand, District Chamba was the largest one having maximum percentage of BPL families out of total rural households and District Kullu was the smallest one having minimum population of BPL families out of total rural households.

CAUSES OF RURAL POVERTY

The causes of poverty in rural areas may be enumerated as:

- ❖ Improper implementation of poverty alleviation programmes.
- ❖ Erratic rainfall and lack of irrigation facilities.
- ❖ Too much dependence on non-agriculture. Low percentage of population dependent on non-agricultural pursuits.
- ❖ Education level is very low in rural areas especially among female folk.
- ❖ Low quality of livestock
- ❖ Traditional methods of cultivation and inadequate knowledge of modern skills results in low level of agricultural productivity.
- ❖ Lack of infrastructural facilities (link roads, communication facilities and markets) for development.
- ❖ Non-involvement of women in development activities and planned programmes.
- ❖ Absence of dynamic community leadership.

The pro-poor plan, which is recommended by the Planning Commission requires moving unambiguously on two fronts, to equally strong strategic fronts-one, the modernization/industrialization front and the other, the poverty eradication front -and this marks a fundamental departure from the hitherto adopted conventional ineffective development patterns. This requires an unswerving commitment of the Heads of State or Government to a total mobilization approach to poverty eradication in developing countries within an accepted time frame. Given the need for sustained political commitment, new institution-building, massive resource allocations, attitudinal changes and the considerable social transformation that has to be initiated by this "holistic approach" to development in which growth, human development and equity cannot be trade-offs, the State has to play an all-encompassing lead role.

The massive resource allocation required to this "holistic approach" to poverty alleviation also requires the State to play this all-encompassing lead role. The State cannot undertake poverty alleviation development activities as in the past. These tasks should be carried out mainly in cooperation with the organizations of the poor, community organizations, support organizations, non-government organizations, the new style banking systems and the private sector, who would be partners in the process in areas such as provision of labour-intensive industries and marketing.⁶

EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES DURING VARIOUS FIVE YEAR PLANS

FIRST FIVE YEAR PLAN (1951-52 TO 1955-56)

Employment Objectives of the Plan: one of the objectives of the First Five Year Plan was to increase employment opportunities and to raise the standard of living of the masses. Among the measures intended to be taken to tackle the problem of unemployment, foremost consideration was given to the rural sector an account of the magnitude and seriousness of the problem there. Moreover, offer of better employment opportunities in the rural sector were considered to have a salutary effect on the unemployment situation in the urban sector. The extent of unemployment in rural areas was, however, difficult to estimate.

Of the various measures proposed to be taken in the First Plan to reduce the incidence of rural unemployment, major and minor irrigation works occupied the prime place. These were expected to irrigate over 19 million acres. There were large-scale land reclamation schemes which were expected to help relieve the pressure on the existing land resources. The large-scale unemployment and under-employment in rural areas could be tackled only by providing the village community with other avenues of employment in addition to agriculture. The revival and development of rural industries had therefore found a central place in the rural development programmes. These industries had been considered both economically and socially desirable because the requirements of capital and skill were low. For the same amount of capital investment, these industries provided more employment than large-scale industries.

Equally important was the revival of old handicrafts, the principal feature of which was skilled craftsmanship. The Plan made various suggestions for the rehabilitation of these handicrafts. The financial provision for village industries and handicrafts for the period of the Plan was ` 15 crore. The cess proposed to be levied on large-scale industries to provide finance for the development of small-scale industries was expected to encourage the stuffing of more small-scale industries and thus provide additional employment.

Two other steps to reduce the pressure on employment in rural areas were: (a) extension of mixed fanning and (b) undertaking of public work programmes in slack agricultural seasons.

SECOND FIVE YEAR PLAN (1956-57 TO 1960-61)

The task to be faced during the Second Plan in the field of creation of employment opportunities was two-fold. Firstly, there were the existing unemployed in the urban and rural areas to be provided for. Secondly, it was necessary to provide for the natural increase in the labour force, which was estimated at about 2 million persons a year over the next five years.

Considering the magnitude of existing unemployment and additions to labour force, it was incorrect to hold out the hope that full employment could be secured by the end of the Second Plan. The goal had to be achieved by a series of planned efforts lasting over beyond the Second Plan. To hasten the process, however, particular attention had to be paid to maximizing the employment potential of projects included in the Plan consistent with long term needs.⁷

THIRD FIVE YEAR PLAN (1961-62 TO 1965-66)

Expansion of employment opportunities commensurate with the increase in the labour force over the Plan period was conceived as one of the principal aims of the Third Plan. In view of the numbers involved, provision of adequate employment opportunities was among the most difficult tasks to be accomplished during the Plan period.

Work programmes envisaged for rural areas comprised five categories of works:

1. Work projects included in the plans of States and local bodies which involved the use of unskilled and semi-skilled labour.
2. Works undertaken by the community or by the beneficiaries in accordance with the obligations laid down by law.
3. Development works towards which local people contributed labour while some measure of assistance was given by Government.
4. Schemes to enable village communities to build up remunerative assets.
5. Supplementary work programmes to be organized in areas in which there was high incidence of unemployment.

A Standing Advisory Committee was set up to promote measures for bringing down the incidence of accidents in factories. State Governments were asked to strengthen the inspectorates provided for the administration of factory laws. Both in factories and in mines, a great deal of scope remained for reducing hazards by education of the workers in safety-consciousness and the setting up of safety committees. Steps were taken in pursuance of the recommendations of the Mines Safety Conference and its various committees, end intensive studies were made concerning various aspects of the problem of safety in all mines.

FOURTH FIVE YEAR PLAN (1969-70 TO 1973-74)

In December 1966, the Government of India set up a National Commission on Labour to study and make recommendations on various aspects of labour including wages, working conditions, welfare, trade union development and labour-management relations. The Commission submitted its report in August 1969.

There was a steady increase in the number of employment exchanges including University Employment Information and Guidance Bureau from 312 at the end of March 1961 to 458 at the end of October 1969. The employment service was proposed to be expanded by strengthening the employment exchange machinery, employment information and guidance bureaux, vocational guidance and counseling centres, and employment market information programme for collection of employment data.

The activities of the Employees State Insurance Corporation were expanded in order to provide hospitalization to families of all insured workers, to cover; shops and commercial establishments in selected centres also non-power factories employing 10 or more persons, running staff of road transport Undertakings, and to cover all centres having an industrial concentration of 500 or more insurable workers. Programmes for welfare centres, holiday homes and recreational centres were included in State Plans. The workers education programme was reorganized in the light of the experience gained.

The Industrial Safety, Health and Hygiene Divisions of the Central and Regional Labour Institutes were strengthened. The activities of the National Safety Council were intensified. The Directorate General of Mines Safety was expected to concentrate on more effective administration of mine safety legislation. Greater emphasis was placed on promoting safety practices, and on the development of indigenous mine safety equipment.

FIFTH FIVE YEAR PLAN (1974-75 TO 1978-79)

The labour supply projections contained in the Fifth Plan implied an increase in the labour force for the agricultural sector of 16.2 million in the Fifth Plan period and 18.9 million in the Sixth Plan period. The rates of labour force participation thrown up by the 27th round of National Sample Survey were higher because of inclusion of children in the age group 5-14 years and also because of difference in the concepts used in the survey. However, the increase in the labour force estimated according to NSS concepts was about 18.26 to 18.96 million in the Fifth Plan period and 19.57 to 20.39 million in the Sixth Plan period. There was an area of uncertainty in the labour supply projections in an economy of the Indian type.

The Fifth Plan provided for substantially higher outlays for projected programmes in the cottage industry sector, particularly in areas such as handloom, coir, carpet weaving and training and for production planning programmes in other sectors. It was expected that the constraints on the use of agro-based supplies for the household sector would be less severe. Appropriate use of fiscal, credit and production support policies in this sector was essential for reinforcing capabilities for further generation of employment. Labour-intensive technological improvements also needed to be developed and diffused. According to the profile contained in the Fifth Plan, the increase in the labour force in the non-agricultural sector was estimated at 8.5 million in the Fifth Plan period and 9.1 million in the Sixth Plan period. Achievement of production targets as postulated in perspective was extremely important in relation to creation of employment opportunities in the non-agricultural sector.

For the two year period 1977-78 and 1978-79 a provision of ` 10.17 crore was made for craftsman training and labour welfare. This covered the following:

1. Requirements of the major on-going training institutions such as the Central Staff Training and Research Institute, the Foreman Training Institute, and the Central Training Institutes for instructors.
2. Strengthening extension of the advanced training institute.
3. Expansion of the apprenticeship training programme.
4. Vocational training in women's occupations.
5. Schemes relating to research, surveys and studies to be undertaken various institutes.

For the two year period 1977-78 and 1978-79, an outlay of ` 20.27 crore was suggested keeping in view the requirements of the following:

1. Industrial training institutes.
2. Expansion of the apprenticeship training programmes establishments.
3. Strengthening of the employment service organizations
4. Setting up of labour welfare centres, and promoting safety measures.
5. Employees' State Insurance Scheme.⁸

SIXTH FIVE YEAR PLAN (1980-81 TO 1984-85)

According to the Plan Document, employment opportunities had not been adequate in the past either for the educated manpower or for the overall population. Even in terms of long-term unemployment as indicated by the usual status estimates, the position was not satisfactory. Therefore, the employment policy during the Sixth Plan was to meet the two major goals of reducing under-employment for the majority of labour force and cutting down on the long-term unemployment. Though a lasting solution to these problems could be found only within the framework of a rapid and employment-oriented economic growth, suitable measures had also to be evolved in the short-term in a coordinated way, particularly for the benefit of the weaker sections.

In the context of a growing labour force and the mixed economy, the policy measures had necessarily to cover not only the direct employment generation in the public sector but also the entire gamut of economic activity in the public, co-operative and private sectors. Since the public sector employment accounted for only a small fraction of the total employment and since there was no likelihood of its rising appreciably, the policy measures sought to influence the private demand and utilization of manpower in all sectors of activity. Therefore, emphasis was placed on self-employment ventures both in agriculture, village and small industries and allied activities and in non-farm occupations.

In the Sixth Plan, it was proposed that wherever clear alternatives for production of goods or services were available, labour-intensive technologies and processes must be preferred provided the productivity was not unduly affected. Also there was scope for ancillary units linked to large and medium units so as to secure for the small units advantages in quality control, marketing and standardization. The employment impact of various programmes was carefully considered and other things being equal, programmes/projects with higher employment potential were given preference. All-India Coordinated Research project on technologies for landless labour families was organized.

As regards women workers, the Sixth Plan called attention to the following:

1. Provision of basic amenities in working and living conditions, such as housing, water supply, hospital and medical services, sanitation.
2. Provision of maternity leave benefits, family planning incentives.
3. Provision of care and education for all the children of the family.
4. Provision of opportunities for education, skill training and upgrading and advancement in order to widen areas and avenues for their employment.
5. Provision of alternative employment schemes for off-season and unemployment periods.

This required the development of suitable infrastructure and joint action by the Ministries of Labour, Rural Reconstruction and Social Welfare, besides the State Governments, local authorities and voluntary agencies.⁹

SEVENTH FIVE YEAR PLAN (1985-86 TO 1989-90)

The central element in the development strategy of the Seventh Plan was the generation of productive employment. This was achieved through (a) increase in cropping intensity made possible by increased availability of irrigation facilities, extension of new agricultural technologies to low productivity regions and to small farmers, (b) measures to make the rural development programmes more effective in the creation of productive assets, (c) expansion of labour-intensive construction activities for providing housing, urban amenities, roads and rural infrastructure, (d) expansion of primary education and basic health facilities and (e) changes in the pattern of industrial growth.

Given the twin emphasis on employment and productivity in the Seventh Plan, the objective was to expand employment opportunities consistent with increases in productivity. The potential of direct employment generation in large scale industries and in much of the infrastructure sectors was not high because these industries were fairly capital-intensive. However, expansion of industries created a large volume of downstream employment forward linkages. In particular, the expansion of small-scale and medium industries added significantly to the growth of productive employment opportunities. Promotional measures designed to improve the access of this sector to modern technology, supply of inputs, credit and risk capital helped to enhance its productivity and competitiveness. Taking all these factors into account, the Seventh Plan provided for a faster industrial growth than during the Sixth Plan.¹⁰

EIGHTH FIVE YEAR PLAN (1992-93 TO 1996-97)

The Eighth Plan aimed at bringing employment into a sharper focus in a medium-term perspective with the goal of reducing unemployment to negligible level within the next 10 years. Such an approach was considered necessary because it was realized that larger and efficient use of available human resources was the most effective way of poverty alleviation, reduction in inequalities and sustenance of a reasonably high pace of economic growth.

The Eighth Plan aimed at reducing unemployment to negligible level within the next ten years. To quote, "It is considered necessary and reasonable to set the goal of employment for all for achievement in a time span of the next ten years". Assessment of the present backlog of unemployment and likely additions to the

labour force suggest that this goal will require generation of additional ten million employment opportunities per year on an average, or about a three per cent average annual growth of employment. The main elements of the strategy towards expansion of employment opportunities during the Eighth Plan included the following:

1. A faster and geographically diversified growth of agriculture.
2. Development of infrastructure and marketing arrangements for agro-based activities.
3. Greater attention to the needs of the small manufacturing sector as a major source of industrial growth.
4. Revamping of training systems to introduce greater flexibility to labour market trends. Unfortunately, the goal set by the Eighth Plan was not achieved.¹¹

NINTH FIVE YEAR PLAN (1997-98 TO 2001-02)

Taking note of the fact that labour laws enforcement machinery in the States was under a severe strain and the number of cases pending before the courts was too large to be handled, the plan apprehended that a miscarriage of justice was difficult to avoid in such a situation. Ninth Plan favoured a drastic reduction in the number of labour laws from the then existing 150 or so, and devising a single labour code for the whole country. This task was enormous.

During the Ninth Plan period, action was taken to:

- Identify laws which were no longer needed and could be repealed.
- Identify the laws which were in harmony with the climate of economic liberalization and hence needed no change.
- Amend the laws which required changes and
- Revise the rules, regulations, orders and notifications etc.

Presenting an optimistic scenario of employment situation during the first decade of the new century, the Ninth Plan observed, "Every effort would need to be made in attaining full employment in the post-Plan period. Since, labour force growth is expected to be at its peak in the Ninth Plan period, attainment of near full employment by the year 2007 may not be an unreasonable target provided that the conditions are created for further acceleration in the growth rate and the intensity of labour absorption is not substantially reduced both sectorally and in terms of the sectoral structure of growth."¹²

TENTH FIVE YEAR PLAN (2002-03 TO 2006-07)

The objective of Tenth Plan was to increase the coverage of the labour market institutions. The essential condition for this was the provision of gainful employment to the entire labour force.

Tenth Plan listed the following industries which were not covered by effective labour safety measures commensurate with the degree of exposure to risk:

1. Agricultural works
2. Small mines
3. Truck/buses operators
4. Hotels
5. Eating places
6. Machinery repair establishments
7. Beedi and Cigar making
8. Tiny/small units
9. Building Construction
10. Brick Kilns
11. Carpet Manufacturing
12. Fire works
13. Power looms
14. Home-based workers

One of the important objective of the Tenth Plan was to provide gainful high quality employment to the labour force. The main approach in the Tenth Plan was to bring about a qualitative change in the structure and pattern of employment in terms of promoting growth of good quality work opportunities. The future prospects of employment were brought out by the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07) when it observed, "The first unique feature of the Plan is its explicit recognition that the Indian economy is in a phase where the growth process alone will not be able to provide adequate work opportunities for the emerging work force, let alone reduce the back-log of unemployment. Even at an average annual growth rate of 8 per cent, the economy is likely to generate 30 million work opportunities during the Tenth Plan period as compared to the estimated 35 million people who will be added to the work force. It, therefore, becomes necessary to devise suitable strategies which can accelerate the pace of work creation by modulating the growth process itself."¹³

ELEVENTH FIVE YEAR PLAN (2007-08 TO 2011-12)

In the area of labour welfare and social security, the Eleventh Plan has the following programmes:

1. A protective social security mechanism, taking care of the adversity aspects of ill-health, accidents death and old age would be established at the core.
2. The other vulnerability aspects due to in-built deficiencies as they exist now-such as lack of access for the poor to credit/finance (especially for the self-employed), loans for upgrading skills loans for housing. Children's education etc. shall be tailored to meet the social security concerns of workers in the unorganized/informal sector, subject to the availability of resources.
3. National Old Age Pension (NOAP) scheme presently covers persons who are destitute and old aged. The scheme would be made more comprehensive by covering Below Poverty Line (BPL) old aged persons.
4. Considering the achievements made by the ESIC and the EPFO in providing institutionalized social security cover to a majority of the workers in the organized sector, attempt would be made to widen their coverage and strengthen them. To cover more number of beneficiaries, measures would be taken to enhance the capability of these institutions to cope with the workload. To reduce harassment and corruption in these institutions, the Government will strive to streamline the delivery system in these institutions.
5. A national policy for fixing minimum wages would be crystallized and made effective. Discrimination in wages based on gender and age would be abolished/penalised. An information network will also be built to promote awareness, to educate employers and to prevent malpractices with the help of the media, NGOs and PRIs.
6. National Social Security Numbers schemes shall be extended to all citizens in the Country, so that the most vulnerable people who need it the most including migrant labour and nomads could use it.¹⁴

PRESENT STATUS OF ANTI POVERTY SCHEMES

To have a more focused approach to tackle seasonal rural unemployment and also to utilize over flowing food grains stock to provide food security to the rural poor, a mega scheme termed Sampoorna Gramin Rozagar Yojana (SGRY) was launched by merging JGSY and EAS on 25th September, 2001. Under the scheme, it is proposed to provide food grains as part of wages @ (at the rate of) 5 Kg per person per manday. It is envisaged that every year, 100 crore mandays of employment will be generated. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have been ensured to execute the SGRY, M.Ps, local development scheme also come under wage employment.

CONCLUSION

One single programme which is now redesignated Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) was launched in April, 1999 by merging IRDP, GKY, TRYSEM, DWCRA, SITRA and MWS. This new programme is conceived as a holistic programme of micro-enterprises covering all aspects of self-employment namely, organizing rural poor into self-help groups, capacity building, planning and identification of activities cluster, infra-structure development, technology, credit and marketing. Funds are shared between centre and state on 75:25 basis SGRY and SGRY are now more focused. Since SGRY are now being fully implemented by the PRIs, chances of corruption are reduced considerably. Under SGSY, viable and feasible projects would be selected in rural area and Swarajgaris would be provided with

adequate funds to take-up viable projects. Group approach would be able to help the self-help group to take up economically viable and bigger projects, which can provide them sustainable assets.¹⁵

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