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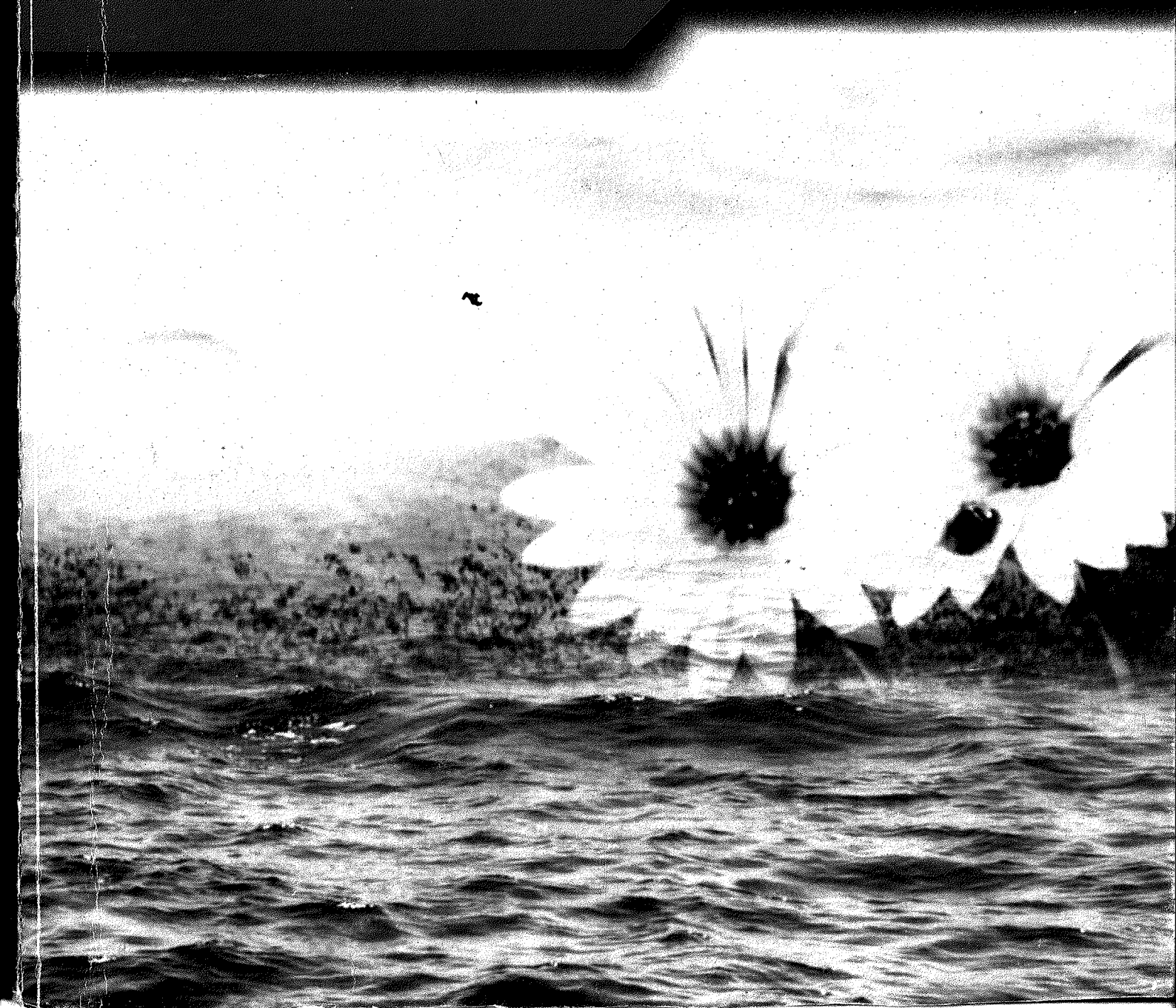
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# SHODH ABHINANDAN

## शोध अभिनन्दन

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समाज विज्ञान, मानविकी, विज्ञान, वाणिज्य एवं शिक्षा की शोध पत्रिका



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## MGNREGA and its Implementation in India

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National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 later renamed as the "Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act", MGNREGA), is an Indian labour law and social security measure that aims to guarantee the 'right to work'. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is considered as a "Silver Bullet" for eradicating rural poverty and unemployment, by way of generating demand for productive labour force in villages. Rural poverty and unemployment in India have grown in an unprecedented manner during the last few decades. There is a growing incidence of illiteracy, blind faith, hungry people, mal-nourished children, anaemic pregnant women, farmer suicides, starvation deaths, migration resulting from inadequate employment, poverty, and the failure of subsistence production during droughts.

The act was first proposed in 1991 by P.V. Narasimha Rao. In 2006, it was finally accepted in the parliament and commenced implementation in 625 districts of India. Based on this pilot experience, NREGA was scoped up to covered all the districts of India from 1 April 2008. The statute is hailed by the government as "the largest and most ambitious social security and public works programme in the world". In its World Development Report 2014, the World Bank termed it a "stellar example of rural development". The MGNREGA was initiated with the objective of "enhancing livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year, to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work". Another aim of MGNREGA is to create durable assets such as roads, canals, ponds and wells. Employment is to be provided within 5 km of an applicant's residence, and minimum wages are to be paid. If work is not provided within 15 days of applying, applicants are entitled to an unemployment allowance. Thus, employment under MGNREGA is a legal entitlement.<sup>1</sup>

MGNREGA is to be implemented mainly by gram panchayats. The involvement of contractors is banned. Labour intensive tasks like creating infrastructure for water harvesting, drought relief and flood control are preferred. MGNREGA has benefited the Indian rural population, but it has some implementation deficits that limit the program's potential. I describe the program's benefits, followed by its main problems, in the next paragraphs.

Most importantly, MGNREGA ensures that millions do not starve. By guaranteeing a minimal income for able bodies when no other work can be found, the program helps citizens afford food for their families. There is also tentative evidence that the scheme has led to an increase in cultivated land, improved dietary habits, and reduced forced migration. Nevertheless, payment is sometimes delayed for months, which means that MGNREGA cannot be relied upon as an emergency fund to meet current needs.

In the November 2014 cabinet expansion, Birender Singh replaced Nitin Gadkari as rural development minister. Among the first statements made by the new minister was an assurance that NREGA would continue in all districts. Around the same time, however, NREGA budget saw a sharp cut and in the name of 'focusing' on a few blocks the programme has been limited to those blocks. Finance Minister Arun

Jaitley announced Rs. 48,000 crore to be allocated to the MGNREGA as a part of 2017 Union budget of India.

India's labour force is growing by 2.5% every year, but employment is growing only at 2.3% a year. Official unemployment exceeds 9%. Regulation and other obstacles have discouraged the emergence of formal businesses and jobs. Almost 30% of workers are casual workers who work only when they are able to get jobs and remain unpaid for the rest of the time. Only 10% of the workforce is in regular employment. India's labour regulations are heavy even by developing country standards and analysts have urged the government to abolish them.<sup>2</sup>

Union Ministry for Labour and Employment claimed national unemployment hovers around 3.7 percent in 2015-16. However, the data is based on usual principal subsidiary status (UPSS) approach that requires only 30 days of work in a year to call the person employed. 77 percent of the families reportedly have no regular wage earner and more than 67 percent have income less than 11,000 per month. Around 58 percent of unemployed graduates and 62 percent of unemployed post graduates cited non-availability of jobs matching with education/skill and experience as the main reason for unemployment. As per the National Skill Development Mission Document, as much as 97 percent of the workforce in India has not undergone formal skill training. About 76 percent of the households did not benefit from employment generating schemes like MGNREGA, PMEGP, SGSY, SJSRY, etc.<sup>3</sup>

A significant change in inequality in income and wealth is possible only in a longer term prospective. Employment structure of an economy is the normal instrument that can cause a change in inequality either way i.e. an increase or a decrease in inequality. Since the government functions within the administrative and fiscal constraints, the target group programmes normally have a marginal impact on income redistribution. Income of labour enables flow of resources across income classes of people and across the social and ethnic groups. Flows of income across locations are influenced both by assets available and modes of creating employment opportunities. However, income generated by employment of migrant labour, facilitates flow of resources across regions of a given regional distribution of capital assets. Employment and equity of income across classes of people and across regions are therefore, closely related to each other in the long term.

According to India Skills Report launched in the 3rd CII National Conference on Skill Development, 96 percent were found unemployable out of 100,000 candidates. The Report not only captured the skill levels of talent pool but also brought out the hiring estimates across major Industry sectors in the country. The report also brings out a general trend amongst the employers to look for skills rather than qualifications in candidates. According to NSS (66th Round) Report from Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India published on 2013.

India's GDP growth during January–March period of 2015 was at 7.5% compared to China's 7%, making it the fastest growing economy. During 2014–15, India's GDP growth recovered marginally to 7.3% from 6.9% in the previous fiscal year. During 2014–15, India's services sector grew by 10.1%, manufacturing sector by 7.1% & agriculture by 0.2%. The Indian economy grew by 7.6% and 7.1% in FY 2015-16 and FY 2016-17 respectively as major reforms such as demonetisation and implementation of GST were undertaken. Economic growth slowed during FY 2016-17, with only a 6.7% increase in GDP forecast for 2017-18, but growth is expected to rebound to 7.4% in 2018-19.

Development is a dynamic process by which the overall personality enhanced and the basic values underlying are human dignity, equality and social justice. These three concepts are not separate and distinct but interrelated and dependent on each other. Since the commencement of the five year plans, a number of

rural employment programmes were implemented in the country so as to uplift rural poor from below poverty line. Among them, our selected rural employment programmes MGNREGA, SGSY and PMEGP were also implemented successfully in the country. All these programmes have achieved the targets significantly in the beginning. But, later the declining trend of these programmes in generating employment indicates the disappointment in the country.<sup>4</sup>

The achievement of these above-mentioned rural employment programmes revealed that the results were achieved significantly in spite of certain socio-economic and political limitations. This study has shown that these employment programmes have positive socio-economic effects but somewhere they can lack in their future scenarios.

Once their consumption level increases due to the wages, they become helpless after the completion of the maximum guaranteed days of work fixed by the Government in the programme and again back to past situation. These people may also become habitual that they can wait for these kinds of programmes. These programmes generate a virtuous redistributive effect, since the programme benefits enlarging to poor people are not limited to the wages directly paid by jobs created by the programme. Through the changes in the programme generated in the economy, the implementation of the programmes results in further creating employment in the rural areas jobs that are likely to be taken by the poor people supporting the benefits to poor people in rural areas and extending them to those in urban areas too. The increase in labour income generated by the new employment opportunities created by the programmes is small, but the small size of the induced changes is largely due to the still comparatively small size of the programme. As the economy expands and poor people improve their lot, the price of the commodities they consume is likely to be increased. This increase in poor household's cost of living is small and should not be a matter of concern, as the programme's benefits more than compensate for the increase in prices. However, for poor rural residents who do not get benefitted from the programme's jobs, even this small rise in the cost of living would be important.<sup>5</sup>

Lastly, MGNREGA is expected to affect migration, with mixed results. Program employment is usually provided within five kilometers of the village where the worker resides at the time of the application. If rural-urban migration is decreasing because rural workers are able to sustain good lives, then the scheme works well in improving rural livelihood and decreasing population pressure in the urban areas. Local insurance allows them to stay in the villages. Nevertheless, migration is often necessary for workers to join more productive sectors of the economy. Mobility is important for efficiency, development and economic growth. MGNREGA's effect on migration, and its conflicting consequences, must not be overlooked. In the section I analyze migration census data, as well as other MGNREGA statistics.

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