

Impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) on Socio-economic conditions of Scheduled Tribes in Karnataka

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ABSTRACT

India has the largest concentration of tribals in the world except in Africa, constitute 8.6 per cent of the total population. Karnataka constitute 7.6 per cent of the total state population characterized by absolute poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, illiteracy, land degradation etc., In spite of several attempt have been made towards development of ST's, but still they have been excluded from mainstream of the society since many centuries. The foremost problem the tribal communities are facing in contemporary society is, poor livelihood opportunities. Due to few structural and system constraints, available options have failed to fulfill subsequent livelihood opportunities of the tribals. Hence, the government sponsored poverty alleviation and employment generation programmes have been playing pivotal role in fulfilling the livelihood demand of the tribals. In this regard, the government of India's flagship employment generation programme *i.e.*, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA) has been assuming paramount importance. One of the objective of the scheme is to ensure livelihood security for the rural masses, especially marginalized social groups like Scheduled caste (SC), Scheduled tribes (ST), women, Differently abled etc., by providing unskilled employment opportunities. This paper is an attempt to study the role of MGNREG Scheme on livelihood security among Scheduled Tribes in Karnataka. And it is also through a light on how the scheme has reduced the migration of tribal communities and protected from exploitation. Additionally, it is also attempted to identify the blockages which act as a preventing factors towards effective participation of the ST's. Finally, study has attempted to suggest definite measures required to be incorporated in the act to make programme much tribal friendly.

Key Words : MGNREGS, Livelihood security, Tribes, Malnutrition

INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest challenge that the government of India has facing since independence is the proper provision of social justice to the scheduled tribes by ameliorating their socio-economic conditions. The tribal population of India continues to suffer from discrimination, marginalization, extreme poverty and conflict. They are being deprived of adequate access in the basic needs of life such as health, employment, justice and equity. Issues of sustainable livelihood, social and political participation

of tribal exists as a major problem in India (Anupam Hazra, 2010). Their presence is disproportionately high in groups such as agriculture labor households, small and marginal farmers as well as unorganized workers. Poverty and vulnerability is also high among Scheduled Tribes (ST's) compare to other social groups (Reddy and Upendranath, 2010). In this backdrop, MGNREGA appeared to be a critical source of employment for the rural poor especially backward social groups like ST's.

MGNREGA has been conceived as right based wage employment programme which aims at enhancing

livelihood security by providing not less than 100 days of guaranteed unskilled manual work. The scheme has implemented in 200 most backward districts in with effects from 2nd February 2006. And by April 2008 it has been extended to all 659 districts across the country. It is an inclusive approach by including all categories of poor irrespective of their caste, gender, culture, religion and language (Marchang Reimengam, 2016). The empirical studies shows that, in the programme implanted period 2005 to 2011-12 the scheme has instrumental in reducing poverty overall by 32 per cent and was responsible for preventing 14 million people from falling into poverty (Annual Report, 2015). It indicates the scheme act as pro-poor and anti-poverty programme for Indian rural mass.

Standing committee on Rural Development highlighted the achievements of MGNREGA since inception. Among all, committee highlighted large scale participation of SC/ST's and other traditional marginalized section is a major achievement which serve its basic purpose *i.e.*, empowering downtrodden of the society. (Joyita Ghose, 2013). Though the statistics of the government shows that, ST's are participating more compare to other categories, in Karnataka ST's are meagerly participate in the scheme due to various structural and functional reasons. Hence, the paper try to assess the role of the scheme in providing sufficient livelihood security for the ST community and also attempted to study the extent of participation of tribes and identify the blockages which hinder participation of tribals in MGNREGA and at last, attempt have been made to suggest necessary measures to achieve effective participation.

METHODOLOGY

Tribal Communities in Karnataka:

Karnataka state is 8th largest state in India and 9th largest state in terms of population according to 2011 census. As far as tribal population is concerned, there are 50 different Scheduled Tribes Among these, there are 14 tribes are exclusively found in Karnataka or inhabitants of state. Two ST communities namely, Jenu Kuruba and Koraga communities have been considered as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTG's). The ST population in the state has increased from 34.69 lakh in 2001 census to 42,49 lakh in 2011. Registering a decennial growth rate of 22.66. The portion of ST population to total population of the state is 6.9 percentages (Census of India,

2011).

Most of the tribal areas of Karnataka state characterized by deprived of basic needs, infrastructure facilities, sustainable livelihood opportunities and developmental resources. As far as human development induces, the tribal communities have seated in a last position in the state (Guru *et al.*, 2015). A majority of the tribes practically constitutes the workforce and remain at the receiving end from development point of view. The occupational distribution shows that, the majority of the tribal people are small and marginal farmers and agricultural labor falls on acute poverty.

Livelihood Issues of Scheduled Tribes:

A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (material and social resources), and activities required for means of living. The ability to pursue different livelihood strategies is dependent on the basic material and social, tangible and intangible resources the tribal have in their possession (Lakra, 1999). Major livelihood issues of the tribals have been discussed below:

Land issue:

Tribals have a traditional affinity with their land like in any ancient society, ownership of land gives them a sense of security. Basically, they are either forest dwellers or Agriculturist. *i.e.*, tillers of the soil. Their distribution in the country reveals that 85 per cent of the tribals situated in Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Behar, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat occupy the huge landowners which is infertile, receives scanty rainfall and comprises relatively high, difference and inaccessible terrain with over's low yield of agriculture produce.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Table 1 depicts the land holdings of different social groups across the country. Compare to all social groups (7.14%), High percentage of ST's (9.41%) are landless. Whereas, 68.83 percentage of ST's falls on Marginal farmers possessing 0.002-1.000 hector of land which is lesser than other social groups (75.42 %), it is appreciated that, good percentage of ST's (5.71%) are semi-medium farmers with having 2.00 to 4.00 hector of land holdings, whereas, just 5.01% of other groups are constituted the category. However, it is discouraging that, ST's who occupy more than 10.00 hectares of land is Just 0.03% which is lesser than all other social groups *i.e.*, 0.24%. It shows that, though density of population is

Table 1 : Percentage of households by size category of land holdings for each household social groups

Category of holding (land size class in ha) (1)	ST (2)	SC (3)	OBC (4)	Others (5)	All (6)
Landless(≤ 0.002)	9.41	7.18	6.98	7.40	7.14
Marginal (0.002-1.000)	68.83	85.70	75.25	70.22	75.42
Small(1.000-2.000)	14.62	4.77	10.43	11.31	10.00
Semi-medium(2.00-4.00)	5.71	1.84	5.12	7.18	5.01
Medium(4.000-10.000)	1.36	0.48	1.99	3.34	1.93
Large(>10.000)	0.03	0.03	0.23	0.55	0.24
All sizes	100	100	100	100	100

(Source: NSS Report No. 571: Household ownership and Operational Holdings in India ha=hectare)

less in tribal areas, they are very rarely possess the ownership of land. In Karnataka state, mod and accumulative process of production have resulted in massive encroachment into their natural habitats. They have lost their traditional forest rights and mislaid their livelihood option. This has in turn resulted in displacement, poverty and heightened levels of exploitation through a system of bonded labour. The term 'double disadvantage' has been used to characterize the socio-economic and spatial marginalization of the tribes in India (Rathinapady, 2013). It reflects the present conditions of tribals as far as tribal land holdings are concerned.

Agriculture practices:

Agriculture is a major source of livelihood for a large number of population in India. Though tribals are situated away from the mainland, they also practice agriculture in a small quantity. Till recent days, they are practicing podu (shifting cultivation). But, due to low productivity, stringent forest rules, requirement of heavy manpower they shifted to settled agriculture. But, The tribals are situated away from the major rivers like Indo-Gangatic, Mahanadi or Godavari and their area does not fall in the catchment of any of the main rivers. In fact, most of the tribal lands are unfit for intensive Agriculture in these areas and it is unscientific and uneconomic (Shukla, 2000). As a result, about 70 per cent of tribal population depending on rain fed agriculture characterized by low productivity, victim of natural calamities, low fertility, degraded natural resources etc., These challenges intensified the problems of poverty, migration, unemployment, food insecurity, and malnutrition of millions of tribal population (Bedabanti Mohanti, 1998). Consequently, the tribal people are constrained to earn their livelihood from other sources like Livestock's, Forests, Labor etc.

Forest as Livelihood:

Traditional ST community values the close relationship to nature and makes optimal use of the natural resource base for their daily sustenance. Forest extends the livelihood options for tribal communities in the form of direct employment, self-employment and secondary employment. Karnataka is a treasure of rich flora and fauna especially, in Western Ghats 'Ever Green Forests'. Since the large number of Adivasis found in Western Ghats, obviously they utilize the forest products extensively as their major livelihood. Since, many centuries they have been collected Minor Forest Products (MFP's) like, honey, wax, Avaram bark, Date leaves, Korai grass, Gallnuts, Tamarind, myrobalan, Antavral, Soapnut, Goss berry, Chilladabeeja, Honge seeds, Mogaliburu, Bolarboox, etc. (Shukla, 2000), which finds hardly. Due to stringent forest laws, unaware of marketing options, they find difficult to depend on forest as their major livelihood.

Tribal Labor:

Over 80 per cent of ST's working in primary sector against 53 per cent of general population, primarily as cultivators. However, the number of ST's who were cultivators declined from over 68 per cent to 45 per cent over a period of time. Whereas, the number of Tribal agriculture laborers increased from about 20 per cent to 37 per cent. Demonstrates increasing landless among tribals. The trend has continued, as can be seen in data from the 2011 census. It is further, estimated that in the last decade, about 3.5 million ST's are leaving Agriculture and farming related activities to enter the informal labor market (Report, HLC, 2014).

Migration scenario among ST's in Karnataka:

Tribal population normally migrates to other areas

mainly because of lack of livelihood options within their hamlets. Since, they largely depending on agriculture and do not have sufficient alternative opportunities to meet their livelihood demand migration is an inevitable for them. There are several Push and Pull factors responsible for Rural to Urban Migration among Tribal communities. Among various factors, employment is a major reason for migration. The National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) data indicates that while the rate of migration in Karnataka is pegged at 38, there are vast differences between caste groups. It is 25.7 per cent for the Scheduled Tribes (STs), (SC-41% and OBC-38%). It shows, migration among various social groups, ST's used to migrate larger than other groups. Lack of livelihood opportunities leads to migration of the ST's to other places.

MGNREGA and Tribal Communities:

The major objective of MGNREGA scheme is to provide sufficient employment opportunities for downtrodden of the society, especially SC and ST. Since, large number of ST work force depending on wage employment, moreover, availability of employment is meager among these social groups the government wage employment programme, MGNREGA is quite accepted by the ST community.

One of the goal of MGNREGA is to Empower the socially disadvantaged, especially women, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Schedules Tribes (STs), through the processes of a rights-based legislation. Many empirical papers observes that, compare to other households, ST households are significantly more like to seek and participate in MGNREGA work and significantly less likely to be rationed out of desired MGNREGS employment. As far as participation of ST is concerned,

almost twice that of their non-ST/SC counterparts (Liu and Barrett, 2013). At the national level, the share of ST's in the work provided under MGNREGA has been high and ranged between 40-60 per cent across each of the years of the scheme's implementation (Report, MoRD, 2014). It reflects fewer and less desirable alternative employment opportunities for ST/SC households.

Table 2 indicates, the person days of jobs under MGNREGA scheme are consistently high over the period 2006-07 to 2009-10 at all India level. It is also represent more than their share in the population. Whereas statistics between 2012-13 to 2016-17 shows that, the person days of ST's are gradually decreasing at all India level. Whereas in Karnataka the man days are increasing from 8.97 to 9.07 during 2012-13 to 2016-17. It depicts, tribal communities in Karnataka participated actively since they need employment opportunities. However, their participation should be increased by taking necessary steps by the government.

MGNREGA in Karnataka:

Karnataka state has achieved commendable programmes in all walks of life in the post-independence era (Guru *et al.*, 2015). Anti-poverty programmes, employment generation programmes have implemented in the state since independence and made a tremendous impact on lives of the people. However, the situation of the people is still derisible and majority of the people belongs to BPL families.

A reasons for poor participation of ST's in MGNREGA:

There are many causes for poor implementation of MGNREGA Scheme as far as ST participation is

Table 2 : Per cent of participation of ST's in MGNREGA since inception (Person days)

Year	India		Karnataka	
	% ST population of total population	% ST person days of total person days	% ST population of total population	% ST person days of total person days
2006-07		36.45		6.3
2007-08	8.10	29.33	6.6	6.9
2008-09		25.43		7.3
2012-13		17.79		8.97
2013-14	8.60	17.52	6.9	7.94
2014-15		16.97		8.18
2015-16		17.79		8.99
2016-17		17.45		9.07

Source: 2001, 2011 Census
MoRD data – Glance report

concerned. Among them, few major problems are: lack of awareness among people on provisions available for them, improper co-ordination between the line departments, lesser wages and delay in distribution of payments, No payment of unemployment allowance, shortage of bureaucratic will to execute the scheme, usage of machineries for execution of the programme and corruption contribute weaken the programme.

Recommendations:

On basis of various challenges faced by the MGNREGA, following recommendations have been drawn to make the scheme effective and useful for the social groups.

1. **Awareness generation:** There should be a regular awareness generation campaign should be organized by the panchayats among ST communities. Usage of traditional medias like, street plays, skits etc., shall be used for generating awareness with the help of Tribal women and youth groups.
2. Proposed **convergence plan** of central and state government must be executed effectively. It will yields effective co-ordination among the various department can be achieved and also can avoid duplication of the works.
3. Special attention must be rendered to **create durable assets** in the tribal areas, so that, it will develop the infrastructure of the community in a sustainable manner.
4. MGNREGA machineries should be ensured **participation** of ST communities since planning to evaluation.
5. Offences such as missing entries in the job cards, usage of the machineries, unlawful possession of job cards with local land lords, elected representatives and MGNREGA functionaries should be made a **punishable offence** under the act.
6. **Special works** must be identified which meeting the special needs of the scheduled tribes.
7. The government must consider seriously on **timely payment of the wages**. If any official fails to deliver within stipulated time, it has to be considered as unemployment and special **unemployment allowance** has to pay for the beneficiaries.

The tribal population is steadily exposing into

mainstream of the development by various ways. The government poverty alleviation and employment generation schemes like MGNREGA is paves the way for development by decrease the poverty level among the social groups. It has changed the structure and in intensity over the years across the social groups. The scheme has changed as well as enhanced the livelihood and purchasing power of the rural people in general and ST's in particular. However, the scheme is facing problems in issuing the job cards to needy beneficiaries, timely distribution of wages, insufficient wages, lack of awareness of the beneficiaries are few bottlenecks which needs to be addressed early to ensure effective participation of ST's which leads to sustainable livelihood for Tribal development.

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