

**WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH MAHATMA GANDHI
NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME (MGNREGS)
IN INDIA: A CASE STUDY OF VISAKHAPATNAM DISTRICT,
ANDHRA PRADESH**

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CHAPTER-VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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The legacy which we have inherited from the British Raj immediately after Independence is illiteracy, ill health, unemployment, under development, backwardness and poverty and that is the reason the Government of India led by Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru, the Chief Architect of modern India has laid the policy of ‘Socialistic Pattern of Society’, by which the Government of India has initiated a massive infra structural development, rural employment, and distribution of surplus lands to the landless poor.

The Constitution of India has guaranteed gender equality. It also guaranteed that all men and women should get equal pay for equal work as enshrined in the Article 39 Clause (d) of the Directive Principles of State Policy. The Governments both at the Centre and the States has articulated a number of rural employment programmes with the hope of driving out poverty. The successive governments has not achieved expected results as the social structure of the rural India is under the influence of the dominance of the Caste headmen, Patel and Patwari and the lack of awareness among the rural poor to utilise the government services to eradicate poverty and to empower the rural poor.

The ever growing population has become one of the root causes mostly in the rural areas for encouraging socio-economic inequalities. Migration of rural poor to urban areas including women and children in search of employment has resulted in the surge of urban slums and caused social unrest. The women are the primary victim. Inclusion of women in the economic development has become an important task of the planners and

law makers. As discussed in the “Theoretical Considerations” a voluminous rural employment programmes were launched by successive governments to provide employment to women and to eradicate rural poverty.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi's government in the seventies of the last Century i.e., aftermath of the liberation of Bangla Desh in 1971 under the slogan Garibi Hatao (removal of poverty) has launched massive Rural Employment Programmes such as National Rural Employment Programme (1975), the 20 Point Economic Programme (1975), and Food for Work Programme (1977) has not also helped rural women to get adequate employment as the apathy of the bureaucracy and the financial crunch due to the War.

Rajiv Gandhi government has appointed three Committees under G. V. K. Rao (1986), L. M. Singhvi (1987) and P. K. Thungan (1988) respectively to study the working of the Panchayat Raj Institutions to strengthen democratic decentralisation. On the recommendations of these Committees Rajiv Gandhi Government has introduced the 64th and 65th Constitutional Amendments but did not get through as his government lack 2/3rd majority in the Rajya Sabha. It was P.V. Narasimha Rao government in 1992 has successfully introduced the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts and ratified by the Parliament. The Acts guarantees 33 per cent women reservation. It is the earnest effort which strengthened the cause of 33 per cent women reservation to achieve socio-economic and political empowerment.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act fosters conditions for inclusive growth ranging from basic wage security and recharging rural

India to a transformative empowerment process of democracy. It worked as a growth engine for sustainable development of an agricultural economy and empowered women as part of Inclusive Growth strategy. MGNREG Scheme has provided employment on works that address causes of chronic poverty such as drought, deforestation, and soil erosion, the Act seeks to strengthen the natural resource base of rural livelihood and create durable assets in rural areas.

The works proposed under the MGNREG Scheme are related to labour intensive earth work, Water Conservation, field Channels, staggered trenches, water obsession trenches, drought proofing (including plantation and afforestation) and flood protection etc. which do not require the use of machines. The marginalised poor women saw a boon in the scheme and detested from migrating to urban centres in search of employment in the nine Mandals of the Visakhapatnam district chosen for the study.

The findings of the study of the implementation of the MGNREG Scheme in the nine Mandals in Visakhapatnam district give an opportunity to analyse the job holder's interest and the official's commitment in every Mandal to implement the flagship programme to ground the economic empowerment to women.

The Dumbriguda Mandal in the tribal belt of Visakhapatnam District according to the Table-I establishes that a sizable marginalised women in 18 Panchayats a total number of person days generated in the Financial Year 2017-18 are 634316. The women participation is 16080.

The Hukumpeta Mandal in the tribal belt of Visakhapatnam District according to the Table-III establishes that sizable marginalised women in 33 Panchayats a total

number of person days generated in the Financial Year 2017-18 are 624465. The women participation is 18647.

The Paderu Mandal in the tribal area of Visakhapatnam District according to the Table-V establishes that sizable marginalised women in 26 Panchayats a total number of person days generated in the Financial Year 2017-18 are 551435. The women participation is 15214.

The Dumbriguda Mandal though small population it has generated person days more than the other two Mandals Hukumpeta and Paderu which has large populations and more Gram Panchayats. Comparatively to Hukumpeta and Paderu, Dumbriguda, has created more employment to the women though small in area. Sizable women got the employment which has helped their sustenance in their economic empowerment.

The women in the Dumbriguda Mandal achieved empowerment under the MGNREG Scheme have succeeded in influencing their spouse to detest from the alcoholic habits and also use of opium and other drugs. Another important achievement that a majority tribal women has encouraging school education to their children. Educational facilities which help in the course of time create general awareness among the tribal families to face the economic challenges. The implementation of the MGNREG Scheme has benefitted some of the tribal women to achieve political empowerment also, for instance Vantala Jamuna has been elected as the Dumbriguda Mandal Praja Parishad President and Majjavyagaru. Kujamma elected as the member of the Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency (ZPTC).

The women in the Hukumpeta Mandal achieved empowerment under the MGNREG Scheme have succeeded in parting their wages to help their men cultivate commercial crops such as ginger, turmeric, pepper, Rajma Dal and medicinal plants which is considered as sizable income to meet their social needs.

Another important achievement is that a majority tribal woman has encouraging school education to their children. Educational facilities which help in the course of time create general awareness among the tribal families to face the economic challenges. The implementation of the MGNREG Scheme has benefitted some of the tribal women to achieve political empowerment also, for instance Tamarbha Satya Madhavi has been elected as the Hukumpeta Mandal Praja Parishad President and Sagara Vasantha Kumari as the member of the Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency (ZPTC).

The women in the Paderu Mandal achieved empowerment under the MGNREG Scheme have succeeded in social and political empowerment. For instance majority women in Paderu Mandal are educated as the Mandal head quarters has a Government Degree College, a Poly-Technical College, Government Junior Colleges and Government High Schools, which facilitated educational needs to many tribal women. This helped the young and educated tribal women to get employment in government sector as the middle aged women utilizing the MGNREG Scheme. In the same spirit many young tribal women also participating in the democratic political process. The present Paderu MLA Giddi Eswari is elected on the nomination of the YSR Congress Party to the Legislative Assembly of Andhra Pradesh.

In the present residual Andhra Pradesh nine Integrated Tribal Development Authorities were established to promote tribal welfare. Vartana Mutyalamma has been elected as the Paderu Mandal Praja Parishad President (MPP). One among these ITDAs is located in Paderu which is encouraging many marginalised tribal women to participate in the MGNREG Scheme to achieve empowerment. To a large extent the implementation of the MGNREG Scheme in these three tribal Mandals in particular and in the entire district has changed the many rural tribal women utilise the opportunity to get employment resulted in their socio, economic and political development.

Ravikamatham Mandal is in the rural plain area of Visakhapatnam District, according to the Table-VII establishes that sizable destitute, disadvantaged and marginalised women in 24 Panchayats a total number of person days generated in the Financial Year 2017-18 are 477882. The women participation is 17090.

Rolugunta Mandal in the rural plain area of Visakhapatnam District with intensive agricultural activity according to the Table-IX establishes that sizable destitute, disadvantaged and marginalised women in 21 Panchayats a total number of person days generated in the Financial Year 2017-18 are 472029. The women participation is 13882.

Kotauratla Mandal is in the agricultural dominated area of Visakhapatnam District according to the Table-XI establishes that sizable destitute, disadvantaged and marginalised women in 24 Panchayats a total number of person days generated in the Financial Year 2017-18 are 453212. The women participation is 12736.

The above tables VII, IX and XI establish that the Ravikamatham Mandal has more women participation under the MGNREG Scheme when compared to Rolugunta

and Kotauratla. Rolugunta though small in area it has generated more person days than the Ravikamatham and Kotauratla in the Financial Year 2017-18.

Ravikamatham Mandal, Rolugunta Mandal and Kotauratla Mandal are located in the plain areas of the Visakhapatnam district and their habitant's main occupation is agriculture. Ravikamatam Mandal has achieved economic empowerment due to active involvement of the women and the official's encouragement also made the women of the area getting more opportunities in the scheme. The government also distributing grass seeds to the women to cultivate fodder to feed the livestock under MGNREG Scheme which is also protecting the economic interest of the rural women. It is alleged that many men and to some extent women in Rolugunta Mandal are not showing interest in the MGNREG Scheme as they are secretly involved in rising the Ganjai to prepare narcotic drugs.

Kotauratla Mandal also witnessed that many women has not shown much interest to get employment under MGNREG Scheme as they are more interested in day to day agricultural work which also includes selling vegetables and also flowers during the festivals seasons as it gives them lucrative income. So the efforts of the Government of India to encourage women in the plain rural areas of Visakhapatnam district are not yielding good results as most of the women are involved in small businesses. They also own three to four acres of agricultural land and live stock. Many women diversified their economic activities in the three rural plain Mandals of the Visakhapatnam district by selling milk to Visakha Dairy, poultry products like country hen (Natu Kollu) and eggs in nearby urban centres and goats and lambs to the nearby slaughtering houses which gives

them an independent economic status that is a significant transformation of economic conditions towards the realisation of women economic empowerment.

S. Rayavaram Mandal in the Coastal area of Visakhapatnam District according to the Table-XIII establishes that sizable marginalised women in 28 Panchayats a total number of person days generated in the Financial Year 2017-18 are 386962. The women participation is 9972.

Nakkapalli Mandal in the Coastal area of Visakhapatnam Disrtict according to the Table-XV establishes that sizable marginalised women in 32 Panchayats a total number of person days generated in the Financial Year 2017-18 are 431051. The women participation is 13621.

Bheemunipatnam Mandal in the Coastal area of Visakhapatnam District according to the Table-XVII establishes that sizable marginalised women in 21 Panchayats a total number of person days generated in the Financial Year 2017-18 are 207584. The women participation is 7061.

Among the three Coastal Mandals selected for the study, from Tables XIII, XV and XVII, Bheemunipatnam Mandal has registered less number of person days when compared to S. Rayavaram and Nakkapalli in the Financial Year 2017-18. However, the Nakkapalli has a large number of households of fishermen participated in the employment offered under the MGNREG Scheme. In the rest of the coastal Mandals like S. Rayavaram and Bheemunipatnam majority men go to fishing and women sell the catch by which they earn small income to fulfill their day to day needs and that is one of

reasons that women though marginalised poor not show much interest in joining the MGNREG Scheme works.

An examination of the implementation and progress of MGNREG Scheme in the Visakhapatnam district reveals that there is wide gap between the works sanctioned and works completed. In the beginning of this Scheme many rural women has hesitated to join the works as the officials has not created awareness among the rural women to utilise flagship employment. It is also observed that in some Mandals job works are not even provided to the marginalised poor who are badly needed the employment. In some Mandals Gram Sabha is not summoned to decide works to the needy. It is alleged that in these nine Mandals dereliction, corrupt practices, red-tapism, and nepotism on the part of the administrative machinery has not helped women to join the works. However, with the introduction of the Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) to issue Job Cards through Biometric System helped to achieve accountability and transparency in the implementation of this Scheme. That is why many women in these nine Mandals are joining the MGNREG Scheme works like “Farm Ponds, Water Conservation, Field Channels, Staggered trenches, Water obsession trenches, Drought Proofing (including plantation and Afforestation) and Flood Protection, Land leveling and Land Development, Hill Terracing, . Soak Pits, Individual Household Latrines, Vermi and Nadep Pits, Revenue Plantation, horticulture and land development on the land of SC/ST/-BPL/IAY and Land reform beneficiaries, 90 Days of NTR Housing, Government Anganwadi Buildings, Coffee Plantation, Gravel Roads, and Internal Roads and-Rural connectivity”.

It is observed after 2011 onwards that there is a rapid progress in the implementation of the MGNREG Scheme in the Visakhapatnam district. Most of the women have been provided the job works and there is a sea change in the lives of the marginalised that are now experiencing the results of the Scheme by empowering themselves. Except in some coastal areas and in rural plain areas women participation in the rural employment works is not negligible. In the entire country implementation of the MGNREG Scheme works has received acclamation and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has declared that the Visakhapatnam district is adjudged as number one place in the country in the implementation of the Scheme consecutively for the years 2011, 2012 and 2013.

In a country like India generation of rural employment is a difficult task. However a determined Prime Minister Dr. Man Mohan Singh has introduced a massive flagship employment programme to eradicate poverty and as a part of Inclusive Growth Strategy has yielded good results. One of the achievements of the MGNREG Scheme which generated employment opportunities in the rural areas enabled the rural marginalised poor to stop migration to urban centres. Today with the introduction of the rural employment schemes many weaker sections are assured social security, food and minimum needs of living conditions which is a successful Inclusive Growth strategy. One of the draw backs is that many marginalised poor are not showing interest to work in the agricultural farms during the sowing and harvest seasons as they are assured minimum employment of 100 days. It should be corrected by allocating the MGNREG Scheme works post Kharif and Rabi seasons to the rural poor.

It is time to see that the goals and vision of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru realised as the country is progressing in all fronts and in particular economically as a fast developing third largest economies in the world. The economic growth and development is feasible only when women in the remotest corner of the society i.e., at the grass root level are empowered. No nation's progress is complete without women. Only when women are empowered to thrive; will our families, our economies and our societies reach their fullest potential and development.