



POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES IN INDIA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

India is a developing country. Even if there is growth in its economy, the nation faces many challenges that act as an impediment in its development process. One such challenge is the existence of widespread poverty in India. Although there is a reduction in the percentage of people residing below the poverty line, the digits aren't favourable after that either. The Poverty Alleviation Programmes in India aim to reduce the prevalence of poverty in the country by providing enough access to food, financial aid, and basic necessities to families and households that fall below the poverty line. There are many facets to poverty, but it is undeniably a lack of wellbeing. Poverty is exemplified by low wages and the inability to obtain the essential goods and services needed for human subsistence. Low levels of education and health, restricted access to sanitary facilities, lack of speech, a lack of finances, inadequate physical security, and opportunities to improve one's status are all made possible by the Indian government's poverty alleviation programmes. The present article will discuss the poverty alleviation programmes implementation with critical analysis to reduce poverty in the country.

Key words: *India, developing country, Poverty alleviation programmes, well-being, opportunities.*

Introduction

India is a developing country. Even if there is growth in its economy, the nation faces many challenges that act as an impediment in its development process. One such challenge is the existence of widespread poverty in India. Although there is a reduction in the percentage of people residing below the poverty line, the digits aren't favourable after that either. As of May 2021, about 84 million people were found dwelling in severe deprivation which makes up about 6% of the total population of the country. However, the Government has been attempting hard to raise aloft these individuals out of the clutches of poverty through various **poverty alleviation programmes**, but that has some contradicting perspectives in India.

Poverty Alleviation Relief, or Reduction, is a set of ways, by which governments' policies can intend to permanently lift people out of the poverty line. As per the **Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2020**, India ranks at 62nd position out of 107 nations with an MPI score of 0.123. Recently a study also revealed that of six multidimensionally poor people, five were from lower tribes or castes, and **according to the Global Hunger Index 2021**, with a score of 27.5, India ranks 101st out of 116 countries, and according to the data, the **level of hunger is serious**.

The Poverty Alleviation Programmes in India aim to reduce the prevalence of poverty in the country by providing enough access to food, financial aid, and basic necessities to families and households that fall below the poverty line. There are many facets to poverty, but it is undeniably a lack of wellbeing. Poverty is exemplified by low wages and the inability to obtain the essential goods and services needed for human subsistence. Low levels of education and health, restricted access to sanitary facilities, lack of speech, a lack of finances, inadequate physical security, and opportunities to improve one's status are all made possible by the Indian government's poverty alleviation programmes.



Pre-reform phase (1947-1990)

After the independence of the country, there was no such concentration on the economic strategies for the alleviation of poverty from the country for straight two decades. The scholars were of the view that industrialization will have a prolonged effect on the economy and will help in alleviating poverty in India. But sadly this did not happen in the economy. However, the evils of low per capita income, high population growth rate and demand-supply mismatch generated more difficulties in the country. The government after all this took some steps and started plenty of programmes like IRDP, NREP, RLEGP and TRYSEM. Failingly, the government languished in classifying poor people.

Post-reform Period (1991 onwards)

During the eighth 5-year plan (after the economic reforms), the creation of employment reliefs and strengthening productivity were the two tasks focused on by the government. But the main issue was its result could only be visible in the medium and long-term phases. The high growth rate during this period generated income for the government which was further used to finance the **poverty alleviation programmes**. Succeeding five-year plans also did a great job in alleviating poverty from India to some extent where they highlighted faster, sustainable and comprehensive growth as their central objective. To, this plethora of **poverty alleviation programmes** are availing basic facilities so that our country could get rid of poverty.

Statistics about Poverty in India: Anti-Poverty Schemes in India

- According to the 2011 National Poverty Line, approximately 21.9 percent of the population lives in poverty.
- In rural areas, the poverty line is 1,059.42 Indian rupees (62 PPP USD) per month, while in urban areas, the poverty line is 1,286 Indian rupees (75 PPP USD) per month.
- The NITI Aayog task force calculates the poverty line based on data collected by the National Sample Survey Office, which is part of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI).
- Consumer expenditure surveys conducted by the National Sample Survey Organization are used to determine poverty. A poor household is defined as one that spends less than a certain amount per month.
- The Alagh Committee (1979) established a poverty line based on an adult's daily calorie requirement of 2400 and 2100 calories, respectively, in rural and urban areas.
- Following that, various committees were formed to estimate poverty: the Lakdawala Committee (1993), the Tendulkar Committee (2009), and the Rangarajan Committee (2012).
- According to the Rangarajan committee report (2014), the poverty line is set at Rs. 1407 per capita in urban areas and Rs. 972 in rural areas.

Causes of Poverty in India

- Under British colonial administration, there was a low level of economic development.
- This resulted in fewer open positions and a low salary growth rate, which was accompanied by a rapid population growth rate.
- The two converged, resulting in a significantly slower rate of per capita pay growth.
- Green Revolution has had limited effects in some parts of India.
- Manufacturing units, both public and private, did not provide enough jobs to accommodate all of the job seekers.



- Due to irregular income, jobless people began to live in slums in deplorable conditions, making poverty an urban phenomenon.
- Huge income disparities, owing to unequal distribution of land and other resources.
- Other socio cultural and economic factors include spending a lot of money to meet social obligations and paying attention to specific functions.
- Little ranchers use their newly acquired cash to purchase rural information sources such as seeds, manure, pesticides, and so on.
- They become survivors of obligation when they are unable to pay their debt due to destitution.
- As a result, both the circumstances and the logical outcomes of neediness are the result of significant levels of obligation.

Poverty alleviation programmes in India

Poverty alleviation is described as the set of ways framed by the government to deal with the issue of poverty. The main intention is to hoist people out of the grasps of poverty. Various schemes have been undertaken by the government to eliminate this evil of poverty from our country. Moreover, due to the lack of infrastructure and other basic facilities in the rural areas, the extent of poverty in rural households is more than the metropolitan ones. Some of the **poverty alleviation programmes** launched by the Indian government are:

1. Integrated Rural Development Programme(IRDP)

IRDP is one of the driving schemes of **poverty alleviation programmes** that has bestowed a lot in ridding the evil of deprivation to some extent. Introduced in 1978-79, the major objective of the scheme stands as providing self-employment to the target audience that exists below the poverty line. This target group includes agricultural labourers, small and marginal farmers and rural artisans. In addition, inclusions are compelled where 50% is allotted to the scheduled castes and tribes.

2. Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana

The above scheme is the reformation of the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana. Currently, this programme is known by the name of Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana. Under this, the matter-of-fact is generating demand-driven communities in the rural areas with the rationale of employing the people. Employment is provided to those living below the poverty line defined by the government. Furthermore, 3% has been allocated to providing barrier-free infrastructure to those people who are disabled.

3. Pradhan Mantri Grameen Awaas Yojana

Launched in the year 2015, the above programme is one of the most flourishing schemes under the **poverty alleviation programmes** initiated by the government. The main aim is to provide free houses for the people living in the rural areas that are considered BPL. Here, the advancement is made through the subsidy process, involvement of the private sector and reasonable housing to the people at subsidized rates.

4. National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)

The programme was launched in the year 1995, with its main objective of giving social security to the neglected categories of the society i.e., widows, disabled persons, aged persons belonging to the BPL section of the society. There are three schemes under this particular programme:



National Old Age Pension Scheme

This provides pensions to the people who are contemplated as destitute. The main purpose of this scheme is to bestow social security to the eligible beneficiaries. In this, the beneficiaries don't have to contribute at the first phase to receive this pension under the National Old Age Pension Scheme.

National Maternity Benefit Scheme

The government provides funds under this scheme to the women for their prenatal and postnatal sustenance. This financial grant is given to those women belonging to families that aren't well financially. The person gets cash-based aid directly from the government.

National Family Benefit Scheme

The funds are provided to those families whose main wage earner dies due to any reason. Under this, a sum of 10,000 is provided to the household.

5. Annapurna

The scheme had its initial enactment in 1999-2000 where its main aim has always been to provide a nutritional diet to the senior citizens who are unable to do that for themselves. This scheme under the **poverty alleviation programme** provides 10 kg of free nutritional diet every month for the aged citizens of the above classification.

6. Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana (PMRY)

Under this scheme, the educated unemployed people from rural and urban areas who are from low income families were given financial help by the government. With the given financial help, these people can set up any kind of enterprise that generates employment. During the Eight Five Year Plan (1992-97), by setting up 7 lakh micro-enterprises, the Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana made an attempt to generate employment. With the help of this scheme, 3 million people got employment by the year 2003-04.

The government merged the above two schemes; i.e., REGP and PMRY and introduced a new programme known as **Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)**. This scheme came into effect from 1st April 2008. The two main objectives of this scheme are:

- Generating employment opportunities in the rural and urban areas by setting up new self-employment ventures.
- Bringing unemployed youth and the dispersed traditional artisans together and give them self-employment opportunities at their place.

7. Swarna Jayanti Shahri Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY):

The primary objective of SJSRY is to create employment opportunities for both self-employment and wage employment in urban areas. By encouraging people to set up self-employment ventures or through provision of wage employment, the Swarna Jayanti Shahri Rozgar Yojana seeks to provide gainful employment. This scheme is centrally sponsored and is funded between the Centre and the States on 75:25 basis.

8. Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)

Earlier families and individuals used to get financial assistance through self-employment programmes. However, since the 1990s the government started to provide assistance through SGSY. The basic aim of Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana is to promote micro enterprises and bring



the assisted poor families, also known as **Swarozgaris** above the poverty line. The scheme tries to bring the Swarozgaris above the poverty line by organising them into Self-Help Groups (SHGs). Through SHGs, people forming them are encouraged to save money lend the same among themselves as a loan. Later on, with the help of banks, the government provides partial financial assistance to these groups. These groups after getting assistance decides who will get the loan for the self-employment activities.

9. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA):

This act was passed in the parliament, in August 2005. The basic aim of MGNREGA is to enhance the livelihood security of people living in rural areas by guaranteeing them 100 days of wage employment in one financial year. The wage employment is given to the rural household whose adult members volunteer to do the unskilled manual work.

Therefore, every individual (poor) who is willing to work at a minimum wage can report for work in those areas where MGNREGA is implemented. In the year 2019-20, 57.4 million people had sought work under MGNREGA.

Critical evaluation of poverty alleviation programmes

There are conflicting views about the success and failure of the **poverty alleviation programme in India**. Some think that it succeeded in alleviating poverty to some extent, and some think that this didn't help. Here is a **critical evaluation of poverty alleviation programmes** in India during the pre-reform and post-reform periods.

Conclusion

In India, poverty has certainly been reduced, but the result is not that widespread or to that aimed level with the **poverty alleviation programmes**. The increasing gaps between the rural and urban parts create complicated challenges for the government as well as the society as a whole. However, the government cannot only work in this aspect. We should also do our parts at the individual levels to focus on education, empowerment of the weaker sections of the society, helping weaker sections financially, etc. The country has to go an extended way for the complete alleviation of poverty from India. It is true that poverty has been reduced but not up to the intended level. As a citizen or as a government, still we have to focus on the food chain, clothing, population control, free education at the basic level, empowerment of women and fiscally weaker sections of society, medical facilities, etc. for better results.

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