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LITERACY, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY: A REVIEW

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LITERACY, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY: A REVIEW¹

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Abstract

This is a study of the performance of the State in India (Union Territory and the States) with regard to the realisation of Constitutional aspirations in the areas of Literacy, Employment and Social Security.

An integrated view on three sectors is taken. Employment in the organised sector requires education. Lack of education/literacy leads to semi-skilled and skilled, organised sector unemployment and under-employment, specifically in the modern sectors. Unemployment leads to increasing poverty and inequality thereby necessitating the provision of social security. There is a need to recognise this triangular relationship while planning for India's development in the future.

Constitutional Perspective

The Constitution of India, as adopted in 1950, is the basic document to understand the promises made by the free Indian State with regard to rights of the Indian people. These rights are attempted to be honoured as reflected periodically through the quinquennial and annual plans of the Planning Commission, perspective plans of the State Governments, reports of the National Commissions and Committees, legislative enactments of the Union and State Governments, action plans of development departments, High Court and Supreme Court judgements as well as other judicial instruments. Relationships between the State and the Citizens develop in the framework of the rights and duties of the citizens vis-a-vis the performance of the State with regard to the facilitation of the realisation of rights.

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1. This is an abridged version of a concept paper that was written for the Constitutional review Commission headed by Justice M N Venkatachalaiah. I hereby acknowledge the useful discussions I had with Justice M N Venkatachalaiah, Sri K Parasaran, Dr M Govinda Rao, Dr Abdul Aziz, Dr M R Narayana and Dr N. Shivanna. I acknowledge the useful comments received from an anonymous referee to whom this paper had been sent by the Institute. The author accepts full responsibility for the views expressed in this document.
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The Constitution of India provides two types of rights: (a) Civic and Political rights and (b) Social and Economic rights. Right to Education, Employment and Social Security (of which the significant component is Food Security) constitute the most important social and economic rights. Performance of the Indian State with regard to the realisation/provision of these rights in these last 50 years is the framework within which the Constitution is to be reviewed. The Constitution of India provides the normative goals of India's national life. Status of realisation of the rights of the people provides the existential realities. Progress in regard to India's march on the path of normative goals is being reviewed in the light of existential realities. Hence, this paper will have four sections: (a) Normative goals of national life in India with regard to Literacy, Employment and Social Security, as reflected in the Constitution; (b) policies, plans, strategies, programmes, interventions, schemes and investments for the realisation of the national goals in the five decades following the adoption of the Indian Constitution; (c) performance of the Indian State in regard to the march towards (and realisation of) goals of national life, and (d) problems, concerns and issues that centre around inadequate or non-performance of the Indian State with regard to the realisation of national aspirations. The basic question addressed in this paper is: "Has the Constitution failed us or have we failed the Constitution". If there have been structural constraints within the Constitution which inhibited the Indian policy makers and planners to propose and implement strategic interventions for promoting literacy, employment and social security, then one can say that the Constitution has failed us. If in spite of Constitutional provisions, performance is wanting, then we have failed the Constitution. In the latter case -the question that follows is: Was our failure to realise our dreams due to defects in the planning process. If the failure is due to wrong priorities, imbalanced emphasis on sectoral allocations and slackness in implementation, then the failure is by and large a consequence of indiscretion in deliberations and implementation. Alternatively, if the failure is because of the poor capacity of the State relating to physical, financial, human and administrative resources, then it is incidental to the systemic realities. Structural limitations need to be corrected by correctives to the Constitution. Functional limitations have to be addressed otherwise. Functional indiscretion, inefficiency and inadequacies may need to be addressed through structural changes, institutional measures and legislative/judicial controls. Where do the problems rest and what needs to be done will become clear through a national consultation process.

There are certain larger socio-economic and political angles of vision to look into the problems such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, illiteracy, and social insecurity. These visions are rooted in the prevalent structures of property relations and inequality in India as well as macro-level policy choices

for development of Indian economy as against a decentralised approach and policy. The Constitution of India protects the right to property, (land, assets and wealth) even while there is an inegalitarian distribution of property in the country. [Upendra Baxi: 1983]. This is a negation of the appreciation of the proposition that human freedom cannot co-exist with large-scale injustice and inequality as reflected in the phenomena of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and social insecurity. Further, the macro-economic policies for development through nationalisation of resources and capital markets (Insurance, Banking), heavy industries (Public Sector Giants), major irrigation projects have not provided the required foci on rural unemployment and poverty. Village industries, handicrafts, small-scale industries, intermediate technology, local area development, decentralised structures and organisation for employment generation and poverty alleviation have lost out to macro-economic planning. Hence, even though literacy and skill development takes place, the capacity for absorption of skills in the economy is limited. It is not clear whether the Structural Adjustment Policy adopted since June 1991 with a thrust on liberalisation of regulations and controls, privatisation of trade and investments, globalisation of markets and marketisation of the economy will mean a sea-change in the generation of employment for the poor and alleviation of poverty therein, which will also mean an increased capacity for the Indian poor to profit from schooling opportunities, higher levels of literacy and lower dependence on social security measures. Incidentally, it is noted that development planning has been subjected to the dictates of decentralised finance and governance with the adoption of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. This may be construed as a piece-meal approach to address the problems of poverty and inequality and the adjunct problems and issues of literacy, employment and social security. The foregoing visions call for fundamental and foundational changes in the Constitution of the country. Having submitted the foregoing angles of vision, it is clarified herein that this paper does not take up any ideological position. Facts of the case have been presented in an impersonal way. If any ideological position has crept in an implicit way, it cannot be helped, as it must have become integral to the thinking process of the author without any deliberation.

Literacy in India 1950 to 2000 AD

Constitutional Perspective

The Constitution of India, as adopted in 1950, did not guarantee 'literacy for all'. Therefore, full literacy is not built into the promises made by the Constitution. However, through Article 45 of the Constitution,

Universalisation of Primary Education (UPE) up to the age of 14 years was envisaged. The Constitution did not think of full literacy assuming that UPE would achieve it. The policy makers and planners did not think of alternative strategies for full literacy while the efforts of UPE were far from adequate.

Policy Perspective: The first ever National Policy on Adult Education (NPAE) was adopted by a United Front Government, the Janata Dal, in 1978. The Congress Government which came to power in 1979 overthrowing the UF Government mid-way, continued to patronise the earlier policy with a new nomenclature, National Adult Education Policy (NAEP). This policy on adult education was followed a few years later by the first ever National Policy on Education in India in 1986 along with a Programme of Action in the same year that was reviewed later in 1992. The 1986 National Policy on Education accorded utmost priority to UPE. Widespread criticisms of the National Economic Policy of July 1991 that it is insensitive to the social sectors including basic education and basic health services-led to the creation of a National Renewal Fund (NRF) to attend to the needs of the social sectors including education and employment. A Social Safety Net (SSN) was launched in 1993 under the NRF to replenish the social sector services. Primary education got unprecedented attention under the SSN. This in brief, are the policy level developments that have taken place since 1950 regarding primary and adult education, both of which were intended to promote literacy in India.

Strategic Interventions 1950 to 1985 AD: Though primary education was incorporated as a Constitutional vision by the Indian State, still provision for the same was assigned as a responsibility of the States of the Indian Federation under the Directive Principles of State Policy. There were wide regional disparities in the Indian union on several developmental indicators, including education. The States varied among themselves regarding the attention they paid to primary education. The common strategies and programmes are worthy of discussion.

Nothing significant happened in the area of primary education in the first ten years of adoption of the Indian Constitution. There were several overriding problems. The capacity of the Indian State to solve these problems was quite low as the resources had been depleted under nearly 150 years of colonial rule.

A review of the performance of the State in India in 1961 triggered the effort for UPE. Bowing to pressures from the thinking of one powerful section of the population which conceived of a legal approach to solve the problem of illiteracy and promote UPE many States of India passed/adopted a

Compulsory Primary Education Act. Education legislation was quite elementary in many states of the country. The Kothari Commission observed that "At present the educational legislation in the country presents a motley picture: in most States, it is scattered in a number of laws and the bulk of it is still in the form of executive orders, the only State to have an Education Act being Kerala". [KCR, 1966]

Expansion of schooling facilities began in all earnestness only in the decade following 1960. By 1988, the Indian State could establish one school in every one of the six-lakh villages of India. Incentive schemes to attract children to schools and enriched school facilities were provided in the early sixties.

Strategic Interventions (contd.), 1986 & beyond: It was only after 1986, the year of adoption of a first ever National Policy on Education, that strengthening of schools began in a large way. If the period 1960 to 1988 may be taken as a period of expansion of schooling facilities, the period following 1988 may be considered as the phase of consolidation of gains. A nationwide scheme of improvement of quality of facilities of schools began in 1988, known as the OPERATION BLACKBOARD (OB) scheme. The OB scheme comprised of three components: (i) provision of an additional teacher to every single-teacher school; (ii) provision of an additional instructional room for every single-instructional room school, and (iii) supply of equipment and teaching-learning kits. The scheme began to provide for a third and fourth teacher as it expanded with the passage of time.

The year 1988 is also a significant milestone in the nation's attempts at a direct attack on illiteracy. It was the year in which the National Literacy Mission (NLM) was set up by the Government of India.

Literacy campaigns were launched all over the country after an experimental try-out in Ernakulam district of Kerala State. The District was treated as a unit of administration with the District Collector acting as the chairperson of a people's committee.

Performance of the State in India: Literacy campaigns did not meet with expected success. Voluntarism had its limits. In a large majority of cases, volunteers expected monetary or non-monetary (jobs) incentives. In a review of performance of TLCs in 1994 (peak period of the programme) in India it was discovered that hardly 5 per cent of total illiterates in the country could be covered. (A S Seetharamu, 1997) Even this would not have been a small achievement had the TLC continued with the same tempo. In ten years the

backlog of 50 per cent of illiterates would have been covered, as per simple arithmetic, and India would have been a fully literate society by 2005 AD. But the tempo, the rhythm, the excitement and enthusiasm waned very fast. The tap was leaking (drop-outs from primary schools who would be adult illiterates in a few years) while the floor was being mopped (adult literacy campaigns) in a half-hearted way. The number of illiterates continued to increase.

There were 350 million persons in India in 1950 of whom 55 million persons (16 per cent) were literate. By 2000 AD the number of illiterate persons in the country stood at 350 million while the literacy rate stood at 65 per cent. A large proportion of non-enrolled children and drop-outs from primary schools joined the illiterate battalions every year. 48 per cent of the 1991 population (830 million persons), that is 380 million persons were illiterate. By 2000 AD, the absolute number of illiterate persons is 350 million persons. It is of late, that there is an observed decline in the absolute numbers though the magnitude is still quite formidable. Non-enrolments and drop-out phenomenon in primary education has contributed in a large measure to adult illiteracy.

Adult education/literacy has not been given due importance in public expenditures. It is to be noted that as a proportion of total expenditures on education in India, the expenditures on adult education/literacy programmes, did not cross 1.5 per cent and oscillated between 0.8 to 1.5 per cent. Even during the literacy campaign phase, the expenditures revolved around 2 to 2.5 per cent of the total.

Post Liberalisation Phase: Post Liberalisation India (after July 1991) witnessed considerable investments in primary education, specifically after 1993. The District Primary Education Programme was launched all over the country. Districts with low levels of female literacy were selected for quality improvement of primary education. This phase can be considered as the third phase of educational development in India, following the expansion and consolidation phases. These three phases constitute the evolution of education even in all the advanced/developed countries of the world.

There have been various efforts which are supplementary to UPE. Non-formal education programme for non-enrolled and drop-out children, a school-readiness and girl-child support programme for children in 3 to 6 years known as Integrated Child Development Services, ICDS, wherein health, nutrition and pre-school education are integrated in a single package, are worth mentioning.

There have been other efforts also in the country in the field of primary education and promotion of literacy. They are not discussed in detail for want of space and brevity. There was an attempt to set national standards in attainments at the primary level of education in 1993. This assessment known as Base-line Attainment Survey, because it was the first ever such survey in the country, revealed that in most parts of the country, including Kerala, (the pride of India with regard to literacy), a child who had completed IV standard could perform up to only II standard competencies.

Issues in performance: Going by performance of primary education and literacy efforts in India, it is observed that while problems of access to primary schooling and enrolment have by and large become marginal, those of retention and attainments have remained substantive. Problems are still persisting in backward States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. It is also among Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, slum-dwellers, street children and especially girls. Efforts for adult literacy are continuing while organisation of post-literacy programmes have become formidable. Arresting the loss of the gains of literacy among neo-literates has become a significant challenge.

India has a long way to go in UPE and realisation of full literacy even within the confines of conception of the common person. The main challenge has been to create a demand for literacy and primary education among the masses of the Indian people. 150 years of colonial rule has blurred the distinction between 'Education for a living' and 'Education for life'. People who have been managing their life's needs without education for generations and centuries believe that education is required only for establishment jobs. They fail to imagine the meaning and purpose that education lends to life. Integration of education with life, attempted by Gandhiji through his scheme of Basic Education, was maltreated and buried in this country. Educational efforts by the State concentrated in a slow and steady way on the supply side. The 'conscience' of the civil society in India has not been stirred to demand literacy and primary education as a basic HUMAN RIGHT.

Employment in India 1950 to 2000 AD

Constitutional Perspective

The Constitution of India has not promised employment to its citizens. But the provisions made under 'social justice' imply that employment will be provided to those who seek employment. Provision of 'Social & Economic Rights' also presuppose that employment and food security are to be provided

by the State. However, there is no explicit promise in the Constitution as adopted in 1950 for providing employment to the people of the country. Obligation to provide employment was transferred to the Indian States.

Articles 36 to 51 of the Constitution of India constitute the Directive Principles of State Policy. By and large, they address the issues of social and economic rights as well as social justice. They symbolise the conscience of the nation. Article 38 of the Constitution implores the States of the Union to: 'try to promote welfare of the people by securing and protecting, as effectively as it may, a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of national life' (emphasis is mine). Even Article 39 entreats the State* to ensure adequate means of livelihood.

In regard to the provision of employment and social security, the most significant section of the Constitution of India is Article 41. Article 41 states: "The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement and in other cases of undeserved want". It is significant in two ways: The Article entreats the States for their obligations regarding adequate means of livelihood to its people and bring about a social and economic order as envisaged under Articles 38 and 39. At the same time, Article 41 provides an escape route to the States, a pretext for non-performance through its usage of "limits of its economic capacity and development". Indiscretion can creep into the definition of limits.

'Right to Work' caught the imagination of the national government only in 1988 when it proposed to make 'right to work' a fundamental right. A national debate on 'Right to Work' was set and consummated at the meeting of the National Development Council (NDC) at New Delhi on 11 October 1990, which was attended by all the Chief Ministers (and Governors) of the country. The NDC rejected the proposal. There was no unanimity on the proposal among the States. States adopted to implement the scheme as per their convenience. Financial stringency was forwarded as one of the reasons for rejection.

Employment in India 1950 to 1969AD: (The Policy Perspective):

The fact that employment was not made a fundamental right of a citizen got

* Note : A difference between State and States needs to be noted. State in India refers to the Parliamentary form of Government within the Constitutional framework and with an elected head of Legislature, Executive and the Judiciary; 'States' refer to the various States of India.

reflected in the degree of concern it could obtain in the policy and planning process.

It is not the first five-year plan which alone paid lip-service to the Constitution regarding provision for employment in the planning model. This was true of the second and third five-year plans also. In fact, there was no sophistication to measure unemployment in the country till the late sixties of the 20th century. A definition of 'full employment' in terms of standard person years of employment was adopted by the Census of India for the first time in 1971. A person who had work for 8 hours a day for a lower limit of 180 days in a year is considered to be fully employed (NSSO assumes 270 days) and others in the work force are underemployed. 270 days of employment at 8 hours a day is known as Standard Person Year (SPY) (NSSO). Unemployment is the difference between labour force and work force, at a point of time.

Serious efforts to understand the nature, magnitude and dimension of unemployment did not figure in policy and planning in the first two decades after independence. Employment was assumed to be integral to the growth process, a by-product of infrastructure development and provision of services, which did not merit any special attention. Hence, no strategies were contrived for generating employment till the onset of the fourth five-year plan.

Employment in India: the Fourth five-year plan & beyond: The fourth five-year plan (1969-1974) is a breakthrough in regard to generation of employment in the country. For the first time, the emphasis was shifted from 'growth' to 'growth with justice'. The fourth five-year plan identified 9 programmes (a tenth one was added later) as 'Minimum Needs Programme' (MNP). Rural industries, housing, sanitation, health services, primary education, electrification, roads were identified as part of those 9 minimum needs. MNP is labour-intensive in character. Employment was also to be generated through Area Development Programmes. Pilot Intensive Employment Guarantee Scheme, Integrated Area Development Scheme, Intensive Dry Land Area Development Programmes (IDLAD), Desert Development Programme (DDP) were some of the schemes under the policy of rural labour-intensive infrastructure and area development programmes.

'Poverty' was recognised as an important parameter in the planning process. It was recognised that 20 years of planning did not alleviate poverty. Every alternate Indian survived below the poverty line (BPL). Growth will not take care of poverty. A direct attack on poverty was required. Indira Gandhi's slogan of 'GARIBI HATAO' became quite popular. The fourth five-year plan started a programme called 'Food for work' programme. This was the foundational strategy for various employment programmes that came later.

Poverty, Inequality and Unemployment were treated as the vertices of an unholy triangle. The fifth five-year plan (1974-1979) gave top priority for the removal of poverty in India. Employment generation and asset creation were adopted as two strategies for the same.

The sixth five-year plan (1980-1985) came up with a new approach known as Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). As of now, the IRDP is in force everywhere. Later they were integrated into a single package known as the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) in rural areas and Nehru Rozgar Yojana (NRY) in urban areas. Further, the 'FOR ALL' programmes of the Union Government also came in handy for generation of employment. These 'for all' programmes are: 'Health for all', 'Education for all', 'Housing for all', 'Sanitation/Environment for all', etc. As such, the tempo for employment generation picked up.

Employment got the pride of place in development planning in the seventh five-year plan (1985-1990) when there was an escalation of poverty in the country. Recognition of regional disparities and their redressal assumed importance. 1988 was the year in which the Government of India announced that it intended to declare 'Right to Work' as a fundamental right. During the 1980s a significant headway was made in poverty reduction. This trend was halted in the early 1990s. However, the NSSO large sample survey update reveals that poverty levels have come down (23 per cent are below poverty line) by 2000 AD.

The ninth five-year plan was delayed by two years. The plan set for the period 1997 to 2002 and released to the public in April 1999 has accorded importance to the clearance of backlog of unemployment, quality of employment and balanced attention to regions in employment.

In sum, employment policy in India has passed through four stages: (a) employment as a by-product of growth (wherein the policy is invisible 1950 to 1969), (b) employment as a tool in removal of poverty and inequality (1969 to 1988), (c) employment as a candidate for fundamental rights ('right to work' 1988 to 1993) and (d) finally, upgradation of the quality of employment (1997 and beyond). With these policy perspectives, a brief review of strategies adopted over the years is presented.

Strategic Interventions for Employment (1950-2000): There was no separate strategy for employment generation in India till the fourth five-year plan. Growth process was expected to create employment opportunities. Investments in major irrigation projects during and after the first five-year plan generated employment in agriculture and allied rural sectors. Investment on

heavy industries, public sector undertakings generated jobs in urban areas. Skilled and unskilled labour in construction as well as employment for the educated were the spill-over benefits of the growth process.

There was no organised attempt to create employment for the teeming illiterate labour force in the country who were working in the unorganised sector that provided 90 per cent of the employment in the country. Infrastructure development was supposed to take care of the illiterate labour force. Seventy-five per cent of agriculture in the country had no assured source of irrigation. The proverbial traditional Indian farmer staring at the ever-blue skies, bemoaning one's own fate for the failure of the monsoon did not attract the attention of the planners. Employment was required for drought-prone areas of the country. It was not forthcoming. Alternatively, investments on major irrigation projects increased the land under assured irrigation. Wet-land agriculture facilitated scientific farming and mechanisation of agriculture. Labour requirement per unit of land declined just as wages for the employed labour went up.

A direct strategy for generation of employment began with the Food for work (FWP) programmes during the fourth five-year plan (1969-74). Employment became the chief tool for poverty alleviation.

Multiplicity of schemes for rural development and employment therein reflects the complexity and diversity of the challenges of poverty and inequality. It was at this time that the 'right to work' was contemplated as a fundamental right. Considerable progress in provision of employment had been made by the late 80s as compared to the situation in the early 50s. The capacity of the State as envisaged in Article 41 of the Constitution had gone up. The proposal to make the right to work as a fundamental right was placed before the NDC in October 1990. While rejecting the proposal, the NDC recommended a new scheme of employment known as the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS).

A modified form of EGS was launched by the Union Government in October 1993, known as the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS). It is also integrated with the Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) which was started in January 1992. The difference between EGS and EAS is that if the State fails to provide employment in the EGS scheme, it has to provide unemployment dole. This is not the case with EAS.

In 1950 the strategy of the Indian State was employment through growth. But the strategy was almost transformed by 2000 AD as growth through employment. This is in brief, the record of strategic interventions in employment generation in India. With this understanding, a brief review of

performance of the Indian State with regard to provision of employment will follow.

Performance of the Indian State, 1950 to 2000 AD: Employment

Volume

There were 361 million persons in India in 1951, of whom 143.2 million were estimated as workers. Workers in the population in 1951 were around 40 per cent. By 2000 AD, there are 1000 million persons of whom 400 million are estimated to be employed.

This is true of the structure of Employment also. The employment provided by agriculture has come down from 74.0 per cent in 1972-73 to 60.2 per cent by 1997. Still the significance of agriculture in India's employment trends has not changed. Further, the ranking of the various sub-sectors to provide employment has also not changed at all. Variations observed are marginal.

Growth rates: Growth rates in employment are a reflection of changes in investments, product choice, technology choice, domestic and international trade and services. It is also a reflection of the capacity of the economy to provide employment when these rates are viewed regarding structure and quality of unemployment.

Growth rates in employment have come down over the years. This is true of both the unorganised sector which provides 90 per cent of employment and the organised sector. The little growth that is taking place is in the modern sectors such as (a) construction (housing, buildings, industrial plants), (b) electricity, gas supply and water supply, (c) mining (granite) and (d) transport and communications.

In spite of heavy investments in irrigation over the plan periods, and of land coming under assured water supply going up from around 16 per cent (20 out of 131 million hectares) in 1951 to around 34 per cent (68 out of 200 million hectares) by 2000 AD, the growth rate in employment is quite poor.

Estimates for providing full employment for the burgeoning labour force indicate that a 4 per cent annual growth rate in employment is required by 2000 AD and beyond that. From where does it come? Modern sectors have limits to absorb rural labour force who are uneducated.

* See tables at the end of the section

Unemployment rates have been increasing over the years (labour force-work force). It used to be 6.09 per cent (daily status) between 1983 to 1988 and projected to be at 7 per cent during 1997-2002 in the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS). A review of this programme in April 2000 (PEO, Planning Commission) has not been promising. Where shall we go from here?

Sub-national profiles in India: Problems of employment are not uniformly experienced in the country. There are inter-state variations.

Issues in Performance: How serious is the State in realising the goal of full employment? Agriculture which provides employment to illiterate millions in the country has reached a plateau. Rural sectors which are allied to agriculture such as horticulture, sericulture, animal husbandry, cottage & village industries, etc; cannot take the increasing load of the labour force. Modern sectors such as Information Technology, Space Applications, Communications, Transport and Tourism and Defence Production etc; and the service sectors flowing from the production sectors herein such as marketing, management, distribution etc; require literacy, skills, technical qualifications and diplomas which the ever-growing rural illiterate population and drop-outs from primary schools (future adult illiterates, unemployed persons) will not be possessing. The State is caught up in a vicious trap of illiteracy and unemployment. Primary education and the expanding skilled labour market are mutually dependent.

Employment needs a multi-pronged attack. Employment outside agriculture is the chief strategy for removal of poverty in the country as productivity of agriculture has been stagnant for quite some time. 'Full employment' is not an end in itself. It is instrumental to the removal of poverty. Balanced employment opportunities facilitate the bridging of regional disparities apart from closing in on the rural class ranks. Hence in a non-egalitarian developing society, full employment is instrumental in the removal of poverty and inequality, provided wage levels are meaningful and wages are ensured. Quality of employment is the central issue. 'Right to work' in isolation from 'Right to decent livelihood' would be meaningless.

In fact, the Indian Constitution should have promised the removal of poverty in this country within a time-frame as it did for UPE. Even if the goal of poverty alleviation would have eluded the planners, as is the case with UPE, still the civil society would have been conscious of the promise and pressurised the State towards the goal.

Indian economy is getting more and more marketised in the post-liberalisation era. Controls on product-choice, technology-choice, market-choice, investment-choice location of firm choice, etc; are subject to market

forces. In this atmosphere of market determination, what will happen to employment which is dependent on the foregoing variables is a million-dollar question.

The Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) that began in 1993 has experienced several functional problems as per a review of the Programme Evaluation Organisation of the Planning Commission in April 2000. It is now (1996-97) being operated in 3165 revenue blocks of the country (nearly 60 per cent coverage). Nature of work under the employment scheme is district-specific. Payment for work is paid in the form of cash (wages) and foodgrains (non-wage component). The ratio of wage: non-wage component is 60:40. The scheme provides 100 days of assured manual employment to persons in 18 to 60 years age group. Family cards are issued and ration is distributed through the revamped public distribution system (RPDS). Funding between Centre and States is in proportion of 80:20. It is discovered that majority of the beneficiaries received only 30 days employment in a year. There was misplaced benefit too. Number of days of employment generated under EAS is aggregated and divided by number of beneficiaries to get an idea of average performance which is misleading.

Employment is a human right, an entitlement which is in tune with the dignity and worth of human personality. It is a matter of national shame that full employment, poverty alleviation and inequality are subjects of intellectual debate and Constitutional Review even after 50 years of enactment of the Constitution.

Table 1: Population and Work Force: 1951 (1) and 2000 AD (2).

(in millions)

	1951 (percentage)	2000 (percentage)
Total Population	361.00	1000
No. of workers	143.20 (39.66)	400 (40)
Adult dependents	81.50 (21.92)	240 (24)
Child dependents	136.30 (38.42)	359.6 (36.00)
Total dependents	217.80 (60.34)	600 (60)

[Source: (1) II Five-Year Plan approach paper and (2) IX 5 Year Plan vol. 1]

Table 2: Structure of Employment (Percentages)

	1972--73	1987-88	1997
Agriculture	74.0	65.9	60.9
Manufacturing	8.9	10.8	11.1
Services (social & personal)	7.4	8.2	9.9
Trade	5.0	6.9	8.9
Construction	1.9	3.8	3.8
Transport & Communications	1.8	2.5	3.1
Services (Business)	0.5	0.8	1.2
Electricity, Gas & Water	0.2	0.3	0.4

[Source: NSSO for 72-73 & 87-88; IX plan Vol. 1. 1997].

Rearranged as per descending order of 1997 figures.

Table 3: Growth rates of employment (In percentages)

	1972-73 to 1977-78	1977-78 to 1983	1983 to 1987-88	1972 to 1987-88
All India	2.82	2.22	1.55	2.21
Organised sector	2.48	2.42	1.36	2.11
Unorganised sector	2.84	2.20	1.55	2.21
Educated persons		7.20	7.80	7.50
Sectors (Ranked)				
Construction	1.59	7.45	13.69	7.23
Electricity Gas & Water	12.23	5.07	4.64	7.06
Mining	4.68	5.85	6.16	5.47
Transport, Communication	4.85	6.35	2.67	4.65
Manufacturing	5.10	3.75	2.10	3.61
Services	3.67	4.69	2.50	3.05
Agriculture	2.32	1.20	0.65	1.37

[Source: NSSO 27th, 32nd, 38th & 43rd rounds].

Note: Growth rate between 1987-88 to 1993--94 is 1.94 per cent.

**Table 4: Unemployment across
Major States of the Union 1987-88**

By volume of unemployment			Unemployment as % of L.F	
Chronically Bad States	Seriously Bad States	Bad States	State	Percentage
Tamil Nadu (14.6%)	Maharashtra	Orissa	Kerala	21%
Andhra Pradesh	Bihar	Madhya Pradesh	Tamil Nadu	10%
Kerala	Rajasthan	Haryana	West Bengal	8.0
West Bengal	Karnataka	Punjab	Haryana	7.5
Uttar Pradesh	Gujarat	Assam	Andhra Pradesh	7.0
Total - 56%	28%	14%	Orissa	6.5

Note : Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh have lowest unemployment rates (as percentage of labour force); adjectives such as chronically bad, seriously bad and bad are usages of the author.

Read as : Of the total volume of unemployment in India (taken as 100), the proportion for Tamilnadu is 14.6 per cent while for the Chronically bad States, it is 56 per cent, for Seriously bad States it is 28 per cent and for Bad States, it is 14 per cent

Social Security in India: 1950 to 2000 AD

Constitutional Perspective

The Constitution of India did not use the term 'social security' anywhere. However, it provided for "public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement and in other cases of undeserving want", under Article 41 of the Constitution. Article 47 provided that the "State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people..... as among its primary duties (emphasis mine).

State and Social Security - A historical overview:

Welfare in India: In spite of the 'welfarist' orientation of the State since the setting up of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in 1876, specific measures to ameliorate the living conditions of the poorest of the poor, helpless, invalid and marginalised populations began in the 1960s.

Social Security vs Welfare: Conceptual Understandings: There are several connotations for welfare. It is distinguished from well-being, relief, social security, rehabilitation, economic freedom and development, etc. There are many theories of welfare from empowerment to entitlement. It is difficult to arrive at a universally acceptable concept of welfare. [Amartya Kumar Sen, 1988] When welfare work of the State in practice is observed, it becomes clear that there are certain sectors of life which are considered to be welfare sectors in State investment planning. Education, health, drinking water supply, public hygiene, nutrition and rural housing are some illustrations of welfare sectors for public expenditures. There are certain sections of the general population which do not benefit in a large measure from these programmes. They have also certain special needs which do not get covered by these sectoral programmes. For instance, the physically handicapped persons, the old and destitute persons, destitute widows, etc. are instances of population who do not benefit from general programmes of welfare. Programmes which are intended to protect them from hunger, starvation, chronic illness and other risks of life are needed. They are not capable of profiting from employment-generation or asset-creation programmes. Hence, programmes intended for these marginalised populations are generally referred to as 'Social Security' measures.

Scope of Social Security: One would do no better than to quote verbatim from a Government document on the concept and programmes of Social Security: "There are certain forms of extreme destitution like old-age, widowhood, physical disablement etc; when the affected people have nobody to support and nothing to fall back to live and carry on their life activities. There are certain other economic disabilities also which render the affected people helpless to carry on their activities and live with self-respect. The various development programmes including poverty-alleviation programmes like IRDP, JRY etc; are not likely to be of any help to them. In the absence of any support from society, their position becomes miserable and in several cases leads to other undesirable forms of disorganisation like beggary, prostitution, delinquency, even mental and physical diseases and unnatural and painful deaths. It is the responsibility of the society to provide all possible assistance, solace and security to these helpless citizens". It may be observed from this definition that social security has a very broad canvas. Of all the concerns under social security, the most significant concern should be treated as Food Security. Apart from Food security, other concerns (for the State) in order of observed importance are care of the physically handicapped, aged and widowed persons. The State in India (includes Union Government and Governments in the States) spends considerable proportion of its annual budget on food subsidies, old age pensions, widow pensions and support for physically

handicapped persons and institutions. There will be no end to a discussion of social security. Therefore, discussion in this paper will be limited to a few concerns such as food security, care of the physically handicapped, the old people and the widows.

State Policy on Social Security in India: The State in India has no explicit policy on social security. The Indian State was severely short of resources in the first few decades of Independence. True or false, the State submitted that it had no wherewithal to attend to the welfare needs of so-called 'normal' people, the needs being nutrition, literacy, primary education, primary health care, water and sanitation. In such a situation, the State felt disabled to attend to the needs of physically handicapped, old persons, widows and destitutes. Prostitutes, delinquents and beggars were thrown up by destitute families. Of all of them, the most cruel and inhuman national experience would be beggary. This has to be solved through access to food at a reasonable price and capacity (employment/income) to buy food. Hence, the policy on Food Security assumes a high level of significance.

Policy on Food Security: Faced by severe food shortages because of decontrols since 1957, the GOI appointed a Food Grains Policy Committee in 1966. This Committee (1966) came up with an 'Integrated Food Policy'. It emphasised the need for National Management of Food and a national plan for supply and distribution of food. It recommended a four-fold strategy: (a) procurement, (b) control on inter-State movements, (c) a system of public distribution and (d) building up of a buffer stock. This Committee (1966) neither favoured complete control nor complete decontrol. The 1966 Committee report defined the food policy of India for the following decades also. With several variations of specificity, this policy is followed even to this day.

The system of provision of subsidised food through the Public Distribution System (PDS) has undergone several changes over the years and across the States of India. It has also met with several problems. Quality of food grains, problems of storage and supply of food grains, ensuring access (within walking distance) to beneficiaries, misidentification of beneficiaries (elimination of bogus beneficiaries), timely and regular supply of food grains, artificial scarcity and black marketing are all identified in several evaluations of the PDS system.

Policy on Physically Handicapped, the Elderly and the Widows: There was no explicit policy of the State in India in regard to these concerns. They were treated as part of social work and not 'government' work. Social work in India was considerable but dispersed and urban-centred at the time

of Independence. Assymetry in spread of organisations, ethnic diversities in the country, urban orientation of organisations, issues of accountability, transparency, participation, scale of service and centripetal loyalties are some of the issues regarding reliance on non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Even to this day, the State in India has no policy towards the NGOs. Efficient bureaucrats use NGOs with a good track record to advance their departmental goals. Corrupt NGOs use friendly bureaucrats for their advantage. Benefits or losses to civil society in this atmosphere depend upon chance factors.

NGOs have financial constraints in serving the handicapped, the elderly and the destitutes. Their service can be marginal. Hence, public assistance is needed for these sections.

In this paper, the civil rights aspects of social security are not being addressed. Only the public assistance programmes viz. Food Security, Old Age Pensions, Widow Pensions and Physically Handicapped Pensions are being addressed. This is because, the State in India spends considerable sums of its resources on these intervention programmes.

Strategic Interventions for Social Security: The interventions will be discussed for the four components addressed herein separately.

Strategies for Food Security: Meaningful strategies for food security began with the establishment of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) which is monitored by the Union Ministry of Food and Civil Supplies. A corresponding Ministry is also formed in the States. However, during the sixth Five-Year Plan, 1980-85, the PDS was launched under the Essential Supplies Programme. In 1993, the PDS was revamped to relate it to Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS). EAS provides for payment of wages through both cash and kind.

Food security is not limited only to PDS. Mid-day meals provided to school children, nutrition provided to Anganwadi children (0 to 6 years) and nursing mothers attending Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) should also be construed as a sort of food security.

Strategies for the Marginalised Poor: Giving a monthly mensem has been the chief strategy for the security of Physically Handicapped, the elderly and the widows. This strategy has an All-India coverage. Among all of them, pension to the elderly has been the oldest. The following list of public assistance programmes helps in understanding the chronology of strategic interventions for the marginalised population in different regions of the country.

Earliest Programmes of Public Assistance in a Few Indian States:

The year in which the programme began is given in bracket

Old Age Pension Scheme: Uttar Pradesh (1957), Kerala (1960), Andhra Pradesh (1961), Delhi (1964), West Bengal (1962).

Old Age Pension and Disabled Pension Scheme: Madras (1962), Punjab (1964).

Physically Disabled and Handicapped Pension Scheme: Kerala (1963).

Widows Pension Scheme: Kerala (1963).

Assistance for Destitute, Aged, Physically Handicapped and Dependent Women and Children: Central Government Scheme (1963)

- The States of the Union differ on the various modalities of the schemes. Lower age limit for eligibility, income limit fixation, dependence status and volume of assistance, etc; are variables on which the States differ. These variables are significant from the perspective of the magnitude of financial and administrative responsibilities for the States.

Performance of the Indian State 1950-2000 AD

There was not much or any performance in the first decade after independence. Developments thereon can be recounted.

Food Security

Complete and reliable data on food security with regard to coverage of the poor under the food grains distribution scheme is not available for all periods of time. Data on number of FPS are available which is a crude (very crude) indicator of efforts.

Table 5: Growth of FPS in India (Numbers)

1961	1966	1971	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996
50523	142815	122038	240210	283560	325081	374799	435375

Source : Ministry of Civil Supplies, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution, Annual Report.

It is to be noted that there was a slow growth of FPS till 1971, the period of the fourth Five-Year Plan. Since then, there has been a steady growth. It reached a figure of 435375 by 1996. How adequate was this growth in coverage of India's villages (not to refer to urban slums)? There are nearly 6,00,000 villages with habitations in India. One FPS may serve more than 1 village. Still, even by 1996 there is no full coverage.

Table 6: Coverage of Population under PDS (millions)

Population below poverty line is given in the second row in percentage terms.

1975	1976	1977	1978	1993
469.47	565.99	589.09	614.28	248.00
-	-	53	-	37

Note : : In 1978, there was PDS in the country. By 1993, there was Targetted or Revamped PDS. 37 per cent of population in 1991 would be 312 million who may be considered as BPL. Hence the coverage of BPL would be 80 per cent.

Source : 1975 to 1978 Bulletin on Food Statistics, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Dept. of Agriculture, GOI, Reports for 1977 to 1979. 1993 data is from Evaluation Report on RPDS, Planning Commission, 1995. Poverty ratio data is from Economic Survey, GOI, 1993.

Expansion of PDS is associated with reduction of poverty in the country. The attempt is not to prove that PDS will by itself bring down poverty levels in the country. Other more important strategies such as employment generation and asset creation are needed. However, it is to be observed that a significant proportion of India's population depend only on PDS. Data from NSSO for 1986-87 are quite insightful.

Dependence of India's population on PDS.

Table 7: Distribution of persons purchasing selected items from different sources; All India (Percentages)

	Only from PDS	PDS+other sources	Only from other sources	Total PDS
Rice	14.17	25.57	60.26	39.74
Wheat	26.49	4.80	68.71	31.29
Edible Oil	4.58	12.10	83.32	16.68
Sugar	36.00	31.86	32.06	67.94
Kerosene	44.08	6.94	48.98	51.02

Source: 42nd round Survey of NSSO, July 86 to June 87.

It may be observed from table that over 30 per cent of persons depended on PDS out of whom significant proportion depended solely on PDS for wheat and kerosene. Dependence on sugar may not be reliable as the well-to-do may purchase it on behalf of the poor for a consideration.

Round up on Food Security: In spite of the excitement created by the PDS, access to food and quality of services are below expectations. The PDS requires a better deal as a poverty alleviation and employment provision (EAS) strategy, though it has to be conceded that the position today is far better than what it was in 1961 and 1981.

Performance Regarding Pensions for the Marginalised

- **Physically Handicapped:** Systematic information on the physically handicapped was not available till 1970. The 24th and 28th rounds of NSSO categorised the handicapped and came out with the following results.

Table 8: Physically handicapped in India by nature of disability (per 1000 population), All India.

	NSSO 24 th round 1970	NSSO 28 th round 1974
Blind	1.38	1.26
Deaf	0.72	0.83
Dumb	0.55	0.61
Lame	0.87	0.96
Crippled	0.84	1.10
Total	4.11	4.43

Data on the physically handicapped and the elderly give an idea of the degree of concern and magnitude of the problem. Information on what is being done at the all-India level is not available. State Governments are operating the scheme and there is no Central monitoring. Hence, systematic information from the Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Karnataka State, will be provided here. It will be useful to know the efforts in a middle ranking State. This analysis had been done by the present author in March 1996 in a study on Social Security for the NIRD.

Social Security Schemes in an Indian State, Case of Karnataka

Table 9: Performance on Social Security Schemes

	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Ration card Holders (millions)	3.07	3.11	3.11	3.70	4.92
FPS (Numbers)	16698	16980	17557	18805	18892
OAP (Lakhs)	5.29	4.99	4.95	4.69	4.63
Widow Pensions (W P in lakhs)	4.21	4.24	4.38	4.45	4.49
PHP (in lakhs)	2.35	2.43	2.51	2.58	2.65
Population BPL %	-	-	-	-	33.16
Population Karnataka (millions)	-	-	44.97	-	-
Population BPL (millions)	-	-	15.00	-	-
Coverage under OAP, WP and PHP schemes (lakhs)	-	-	11.84	-	-

[Source : Data collected from Bureau of Economics & Statistics, GOK].

Note : As per 1991 Census, there were 45 million persons in Karnataka State. Of them, 15 million were BPL (Source: Karnataka Human Development Report, 1999) persons, that is 33.3 per cent. 1.184 million out of these 15.00 million are covered under OAP, WP and PHP schemes. Percentage coverage under OAP, WP, PHP is not clear as information on total eligible old aged persons and widows is not available.

Issues of Social Security: Social security for the disabled, disadvantaged and the poor is the most significant human duty of a State. Today, in a large number of cases 'the common man is earning his daily bread by his daily struggle and sweat'. The State and the Constitution have no meaning for him/her. Rather s/he is affected by machinations of the State and the market in the name of liberalisation, privatisation, globalisation and other mesmerisms which affect consumer prices. The expanding State since 1950s also killed several pre-independence philanthropist initiatives and voluntary efforts. Hence, it is essential that the State atones for all its 'Leviathan' growth through food security and other forms of social security.

Along with a number of (negative) Acts which try to prevent crime, beggary, prostitution etc. it may be worthwhile to have (positive) Acts for supply of quality food grains at affordable prices in an equitable way to all persons and across all regions of the country. Likewise, the provision of living-support to marginalised populations in a systematic way may be made mandatory. The State has to accept increasing responsibility for Social Security. Marketising economy will not bother. Constitution need not be amended for a 'Social Security Act'. Existing provisions are adequate to create this judicial instrument for the purpose. Let this also be made a fundamental right.

Concluding Observations

This section will not draw any conclusions. Certain concluding observations are made here.

Food security is a basic human right and also an instrument of alleviation of poverty and inequality in the country. Even with food security, the purchasing power of the people has to be increased. Asset creation and employment generation are two significant strategies for raising the purchasing power of the people. Employment potential in the traditional sector, agriculture, has reached a plateau. The intra-sectoral growth of employment has revealed that employment generation is quite fast and accelerating in the modern sectors of the economy. Modern sector jobs require literacy, skills and primary education (in fact secondary education) which the majority of the Indian population do not have. Rather, 330 million persons are illiterate. Modern sector jobs fetch adequate wages and raise the purchasing capacity of the people. Primary education has not been universalised, not to refer to secondary education. Nutrition programmes for children, the poor attending primary schools is not universalised. Because of malnutrition, a large number of children become partially blind at a young age and get declared as physically handicapped at later stages. There is no health insurance and adequate primary health care. Affected persons become a liability in old age. Like this, Indian society is

entangled in a vicious circle of poverty and unemployment which are intertwined in a subtle way with illiteracy, food insecurity, ill-health and handicaps. There is a need to recognise the intricate relationships among literacy, employment and social security in poverty alleviation, and redressal of inequalities as well as benign tensions among the Indian populace.

Articles 36 to 51 have to be looked at in a holistic and integrated way. Policies, plans, strategies, programmes and departmental actions have to be integrated at the point of delivery so as to reflect the holistic vision of the Directive Principles of State Policy. Otherwise the Constitution will develop constitutional (body-related problem treating India as a human being) problems.

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