


## ***Imperative to Safeguard the Poor and Generate Employment***

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After perhaps the most hectic and historic elections ever, for the 16th Lok Sabha; now the picture is crystal clear with the BJP having won absolute majority on its own and having a strong position along with the NDA. The BJP and BJP led NDA, need not look towards other political parties for taking decisions. This is also an undoubted fact that the new government has inherited along with the power, failures of the previous UPA government. NDA now has to give solutions to the present day problems and deliver. In the last three years of UPA rule, GDP growth has come down to nearly 5 percent and inflation has gone up to 2 digits. Huge Current Account Deficit (CAD) had weakened the rupee down to nearly Rs. 69 per dollar at one point before improving to Rs. 60 per dollar later. Credibility of Indian economy in general and the rupee in particular is at its lowest point. Growth rate of manufacturing which was 15 percent in 2007-08, entered the negative zone in 2013-14 at (-)0.2 per cent. Mismanagement of the economy has sent it to drains with hardly any vibrancy and employment generation has practically stalled.

Biggest failure of the UPA was in the employment sector. It is notable that every year nearly one crore 20 lakh persons add to our workforce. So we can say our working population grew by 12 crores in the last 10 years. However, UPA could add only 2 million jobs annually in the last 10 years, implying thereby the creation of 2 crore jobs in the last 10 years. By implication, unemployment increased by 10 crores in the last 10 years.

UPA's model for the economy had merely been a model of promoting interests of foreign capital and paving way for foreign companies to expand their wings. There was hardly any scope for employment generation. Previous Planning Commission's Deputy Chairman Montek Singh and the Prime Minister himself had conceded a number of times that this model of growth was a jobless growth model. Amidst this scenario on the ground, the Congress had kept on promising employment generation and its manifesto during this election was also no exception. It seems their promises were mere gimmicks to garner votes.

Then Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission concedes that though employment creation was less, agricultural growth was better and therefore agricultural workers' wages improved. However, situation on the ground does not support his argument. The fact is that workers, who have been tilling their own land, have actually been deprived of their land and have become landless labourers. Worst sufferers have been the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, women and other deprived sections of the society.

### **Poor Losing Land**

Statistics published by the Census of India reveal some startling facts. According to the census data, in Scheduled Tribe category, 44.7 percent people were farmers working on their own land in 2001; however this number has come down to 34.5 percent. In case of Scheduled Castes this number declined from 20 percent to 14.8 percent during the same period. This data is corroborated by another data from census, according to which number of people who were working not on their own land but on others' land (landless labourers), increased from 36.9 percent in 2001 to 44.4 percent in 2011 for the SC category and during the same period from 45.6 percent to 45.9 percent in case of the ST category.

In just ten years, such a big chunk getting deprived from their land is a matter of grave concern. Erosion in the economic conditions of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes exposes the reality of the claims of improving the standard of living of the poor. Only one data, which may compose a little bit, is increase in the literacy rate in these sections, especially among SC/ST females. It is notable that literacy amongst SCs increased from 54.7 percent to 66.1 percent, whereas in case of STs this increased from 47.1 percent to 59 percent. However, these literacy rates are much lower than the national average of 73 percent.

### **Declining Quality of Employment**

Census data clearly reveal that it is not only erosion in economic condition by losing land titles by these sections, even quality of their employment has also come down. Stability of employment has also been getting eroded all these years. Number of people categorized as main workers (those with continuous employment of 6 months or more), have come down from 73 percent and 69 percent to 70.7 percent and 64.8 percent in SCs and STs Category respectively. This shows that casualisation of labour has

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increased in these sections of the society. Statistics of casual labour in SC/STs also corroborates the same.

#### **Ousted from Household Industries Too**

Not only these Dalits are deprived of their traditional land and forced to work on others' land, these Dalits are leaving their household industries too. According to the data published by Census of India, number of SC workers in household industries declined from 3.9 percent to 3.2 percent in the last 10 years. In case of STs this number declined from 2.1 percent to 1.8 percent.

#### **Declining Women Participation Too**

Not only are the Dalits ousted from their land and are also leaving their traditional occupations, even participation of women of these sections has also declined significantly, which is also a matter of grave concern. It is notable that in 2001, 29.4 percent SC women were working, which declined to 28.3 percent in 2011. In case of ST women, this number declined from 44.8 percent to 43.5. Declining participation of Dalit women not only indicates declining income of Dalits, it is also demonstrative of erosion in women empowerment.

#### **All Poor are at Disadvantage**

The issue is not of Dalits alone, as this problem of deprivation is not caste based. Similarly all deprived sections are at loss. In fact all poor and small farmers are

losing their land, their household industries, small occupations like small shops etc. and are losing their self employment and are joining the army of casual labour. According to a Report of 66th Round of NSSO, between 2004-05 and 2009-10, nearly 250 lakh people lost their self employment and casual labour increased by 220 lakh in these five years. Latest Census data corroborate these statistics. It may be noted that NSSO statistics is based on sample survey, whereas Census data is based on whole population and therefore are more dependable. Census data therefore clearly indicates at worsening of condition of poor and down trodden.

#### **What should the new government do?**

Today it is imperative to have a state policy that ensures sustainable and productive employment opportunities for the poor and unemployed. For this we will have to transform the methods of production. We need to incentivize the farmer by giving remunerative price and end apathy towards agriculture; control imports especially consumer goods and capital goods, of which we have capability to produce ourselves; keep in check the prices and thereby reduce interest rates to encourage growth; and in general we must give a human face to our economic policy. ♦

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