CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: RURAL INDIA

Maharashtra Government introduced the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) in 1972 and it has been in operation since then. To put it in a simple way this programme is a measure to generate employment among rural poor. However, in reality, it is a multidimensional device. Any such measure is a product of existing socio-economic conditions. Naturally, in reality, it assumes multidimensional character.

There is a relationship between theory and facts. Any theory provides perspective by selecting significant and relevant facts and helps us to generalize by reducing them to intellectually manageable proportion. "... thus theory is a complex way of organising, seeing, explaining and altering the world". The scheme under consideration also has a theoretical perspective. Unless this perspective is understood the scheme cannot be analysed.

Therefore, it may be considered from a number of viewpoints. At the outset it may appear to be just an economic measure to tackle the problem of rural unemployment. It may also be considered a part of the broader scheme for welfare of the people. To some, it may look to be a step towards attainment of goals like equality and social justice, whereas for others, it is a potent political instrument to mobilize masses at the grass-root level. Whatever may be the perception of the scheme, one thing is certain, that, it is a unique scheme for which the State Government is often complimented.
Philosophical Foundation of the EGS:
EGS and Social Justice and Equality

The emphasis of the concept of justice in modern times is on social aspect of human relationships. Therefore, it differs from the traditional concept of justice as well as its traditional meaning. The social aspect of the concept in common understanding is taken to mean, "... some kind of material well being, i.e. equality of men with respect to material possessions and goals". It emerged as a reaction to excessive liberalism and growing individualism in nineteenth century western societies.

There is no unanimity about the exact scope and contents of this concept. The question of need, welfare, and poverty are central in the European context, whereas individual rights constitute its focal point in American context. So far as underdeveloped countries are concerned, social justice demands an equitable distribution of wealth, productive assets and opportunities. India is no exception to this.

The preamble of Indian Constitution embodies the principle of justice, social, economic and political. It gives primacy to justice over equality and liberty and within the concept of justice it gives priority to the social aspect over economic and political aspects. The arrangement is the resultant reaction to the caste ridden and tradition bound
oppressive feudal nature of social structure existing in India over past few centuries.

The EGS is related to that large segment of Indian society which consists of unemployed, unskilled, viz. landless agricultural labour, marginal and small farmers, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, women etc. in the rural set up. The purpose of this scheme is to provide gainful employment to them. Therefore, the EGS can be considered as a device of social justice which comes to the rescue of underprivileged and causes redistributive justice. What is the effect and impact of the scheme, in terms of social justice, is a matter of analytical study.

The concept of equality is closely related to the idea of social justice. There are different aspects of this concept as well. As a political ideal, equality implies equality before law, equal treatment to all citizens in the form of rights and liberties. But this equal treatment is not absolute in nature. It is more de jure than de facto. Added to it is equality of opportunity in politics which aims at providing equal access to political institutions. These aspects of political equality are so fundamental to modern democratic state that they do not need special justification. However, the basic question is how many persons in a state are really competent to avail of this opportunity. It can be said that the legal and constitutional provisions for equality are not
adequate. They must be strengthened by positive and practical measures by the state to create an atmosphere and competence among the masses and create awareness among them. The EGS is one such measure in this direction. Those who are denied employment opportunities in the normal course due to lack of skills and assets on the one hand and non-availability of continuous employment due to backward nature of agriculture on the other are absorbed in the EGS. The scheme by providing manual work helps them to earn their livelihood and overcome starvation in difficult periods like drought. Another significant aspect of the scheme in the spirit of social justice and equality is contribution by gainfully employed section of the population. The Government of Maharashtra levies professional tax to raise funds for the scheme.

This is how the EGS is an instrument of distributing benefits to those who are deprived of them as a matter of course. It is in tune with ideas of social justice and equality. It can be said that the EGS supplements material equality to legal and political equality as provided in the Constitution.

The EGS and the Welfare State:

The term welfare state was introduced by Archbishop William Temple in 1941. The idea envisages the state which makes substantial provision through law and administration for those in need i.e. the sick, poor, elderly, disabled and
indigent. The welfare state, in the real sense, has emerged in the beginning in Europe after the great depression of the thirties. Modern welfare state is a reaction as well as a remedial measure to excessive individualism based on the principle of laissez faire. Various legal measures adopted in England and other European countries in the form of national insurance, factory laws, health services, employment relief acts, provided security and well being to individuals. The New Deal Policy and different programmes under it led USA towards the goal of welfare state. In the post Second World War Europe the scope of welfare measures has widened considerably in both the camps i.e. the capitalist as well as the Communist.

The concept of welfare state is sine qua non for backward societies and underdeveloped countries like India. That is why even in the nineteenth century when Adam Smith's economics of non-interference of state in the economic sphere was the order of the day in Europe, leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji and Justice M.G. Ranade in India forcefully argued for positive actions on the part of the state to improve the socio-economic conditions of people in the country. Subsequently the Constitution of India, in the chapter on the Directive Principles of the State Policy has incorporated a number of provisions to establish a welfare state in India. According to the Planning Commission of India, "the constitution of
India lays down that the goal of the people is welfare state in which the individuals live for the community and the community for the individuals, that India shall move forward in community of nations with a welcome for all and malice for none”.

The EGS is a positive step towards the implementation of Article 41 of the Directive principles of the State Policy which provides for right to work. This becomes amply clear in a statement made by the Chief Minister in the State Legislative assembly. He said, "The Government of Maharashtra reiterates its recognition to the right to work having regard to the directive principle in this respect as enshrined in the Constitution of India (Article 41) and accepts the responsibility to provide full employment to those who seek it, as a major and fundamental objective of its fiscal and economic policy".

Thus the EGS can be considered, though in the limited scope, a step towards attainment of the goal of welfare state.

The EGS and the Political Development:

The EGS can also be taken as a device to accelerate the process of political development. The concept of political development is employed in political studies since fifties. There are a number of models and paradigms of political development of which the western model of democracy and the communist model of socialism are two extremes. Naturally,
there is no consensus about the exact meaning of political development. The situation is specially hazy in regard to understanding what constitutes political development of underdeveloped countries. Economic development, social mobilization and political modernization are regarded as the major processes of political development. Industrialization, a rise in the gross national product and per capita income, urbanization, division of labour are some of the indicators of economic development. The revision in the productive relations and fundamental changes in economic structure are the consequences of this process. The major thrust of the exponents of the theory of political development is that more economic development automatically does not lead to greater political development. There are countries which are economically prosperous yet fail to adopt modern institutions and values conductive to political development.

The level of literacy and education, development of a network of mass media, the pattern of social relationships, role differentiation, etc., decide the process of social mobilization which brings about political development.

The process of political modernization started with the evolution of the nation state. It is a natural process of democratization in which the autocratic powers of the monarch are controlled and finally and fully transformed
into the representative institutions.

The main characteristics of the process of political modernization include equality, liberty, stability, legitimacy, secularization, socialization, political recruitment, development of particular political culture etc. The underdeveloped countries, by and large, try to emulate, this western model of political development.

The programme like the BGS is directly but remotely concerned with the process of political development in more than one way. It helps to bring in economic betterment of the rural people by providing them gainful employment. This in turn may lead to their political awakening, increased political participation, political recruitment and political socialization.

The most important question here is whether in modern political systems the decisions, policies and actions of the rulers are related to give practical meaning to the ideas like social justice, equality, welfare state or political development? If the experience of the western countries is a guide, it can be said that they have not adhered to these ideas. The New Deal Policy of the USA though aimed at extending a helping hand to the people harrassed by economic depression in thirties, in reality strengthened American capitalism. The middle class was
the real beneficiary of the welfare measures in the post Second World War England which were actually meant for the lower classes. Indian experience in this field is not different in any way. The socialistic pattern of society i.e. a goal set before it by the ruling Congress Party in India and policies like abolition of Zamindari, ceiling on land holdings though aimed at distributive justice, did not lead to an egalitarian society. On the contrary the gap between the rich and the poor has not been reduced. The weaker sections of the society do not feel a sense of security. Though the political development has evolved democratic institutions and procedures yet adoption of democratic values has remained a distant goal.

It is on this background that the EGS of Maharashtra has to be analysed. The decision to introduce the scheme was a political decision. Every such decision is a result of social process involving the selection of a particular alternative out of number of alternatives available. It is an effort towards problem solving in a given political situation. So far as the EGS is concerned it has emerged during the severe drought condition of 1972.

The policy makers had two alternatives before them, viz. 1) to pacify agitating workers and the opposition parties supporting their agitations by launching a regular employment scheme for the workers. 2) To face the reluctance
and displeasure of landed interests, who contribute the support structure of the policy makers, to introduce any such scheme.

In this situation government arrived at a compromise between the two alternatives. Thus the right to work was provided under the EGS. At the same time every care was taken not to take up the works during the period of farming operations. Care was also taken that the EGS wages did not exceed minimum wages for agricultural workers. Thus, there is need to analyse the complicated situation arising out of the interactions of different sections of rural India and rural Maharashtra in order to understand the EGS. The chapter will discuss the rural Maharashtra on the similar lines.

II

Rural India

Rural India, by and large, forms 76.3 per cent of the total area of the country, covering approximately 579132 villages. Traditional Indian village is the legacy of the past, a legacy of economic self-sufficiency, political stability and a sense of ritual integrity. Therefore, an understanding of a village contributes to an understanding of the Indian culture and society. Many of the Indian villages, even today are tradition bound in the sense that, traditional values and norms of behaviour govern the attitudes and ways of living of large sections of rural
community. The social structure of an Indian village is hierarchical. It is based on the caste system in which higher castes enjoy better economic position and social status. At the bottom of the social structure are the lower castes (SC, ST) and weaker sections, which are economically poor and socially backward. In any study of the country with the predominantly rural character, the rural scene occupies a special position. Therefore, the problems of India mean the problem of Indian villages and development of India is related to the development of this rural part of the country in the real sense of the term.

India belongs to the category of underdeveloped societies. "Underdeveloped societies are characterised by low production, low income, low investment, poor development of education, undernutrition, high incidence of diseases, high mortality and fertility rates, fatalism and traditional values dominate the outlook of the people". India represents most of the characteristics of underdeveloped societies as mentioned above.

However, the Indian rural scenario is very complicated with numerous problems. Poverty and unemployment are perpetual and are increasing in alarming proportions. Ever increasing population is another serious problem in rural India. Increasing productivity, improvement in agriculture, educating rural folk, abolishing casteism, minimising
inequality and exploitation, bringing innovative and motivated leadership, organizing rural people for their own progress, giving proper orientation to bureaucracy for upliftment of the poor and mobilising the rural masses to participate in the nation building process are some of the major issues of rural development. No list of issues can be exhaustive.

Thus it can be said that the problems of rural India are multifaced. They are mainly of socio-economic and political nature. Therefore, it is imperative to consider in brief the situation of rural economy, rural society and polity to have proper understanding of issues and problems of rural India in particular.

(A) The Economy:

Agricultural Character: By and large Indian economy is an agricultural economy with strong rural base. Agriculture contributes major share of our national income. It accounts for more than two fifths of the gross domestic product (GDP). Even though efforts have been made to industrialize Indian economy, the occupational pattern of rural India has remained largely unchanged. The activities ancillary to farming e.g. forestry, fishery, bee-keeping, poultry, horticulture etc. and complementary rural and cottage industries have been encouraged over a period of last forty years of
centralized planning. However, they have proved to be inadequate to change the face of agricultural economy. The broad features of Indian agriculture can be summarised as follows.

1) Low Level of Land Holdings: The total land in the country, as per 1981 census, is 329 million hectares out of which 158 million hectares is arable. In 1951 per capita land available was 0.48 hectares. This proportion is very low. Over a period of last forty years the per capita availability of land is decreasing and according to one estimate it will come down to 0.14 hectare by 2000 A.D.

11) Dry Farming: The proportion of dry farming in India is considerable. The country is divided into three broad climatic zones (viz. dry zone, medium zone and assured zone) on the basis of average annual rainfall. About 28 per cent area falls under the category of assured zone with average rainfall of 1150 mm. and above, which is quite satisfactory, whereas a large part i.e. 72 per cent of the total area is rainfed and comes under dry farming with an annual rainfall below 1150 mm. The net result is that even today Indian agriculture is exposed to constraints of climate. Obviously dry farming is a general practice giving low uncertain yields.

111) Limited Irrigation: After Independence due attention was given to irrigation activity. According to a study
conducted by the Institute of Management, Trivandrum, the total irrigated area in the country was 22.6 million hectares in 1951. As a result of persistent efforts to increase irrigation facilities, it has reached of 74.29 million hectares currently and is likely to go further upto 150 million hectares by the end of this century. Thus the irrigation in the country has trebled during the last 40 years. Yet only 54 per cent of the irrigable land is covered by the irrigation facilities so far.

iv) **Subsistence Farming:** Bulk of our farming is subsistence farming, having seasonal fluctuation as its hallmark. The employment potential, in the given situation, is very low. Dry agriculture cannot provide work throughout the year. According to one estimate agriculture provides wage employment per agricultural labour in an household for 193 days in 1974-75 for the male and 138 days for the female worker for the same period at all India level.

v) **Low Productivity:** India's performance on the front of agricultural productivity was poor during the British period. The aggregate output of agricultural produce in British India increased at an average rate of 0.11 per cent per year between 1891 to 1947. Between 1951-71 foodgrains production increased from 55 million tonnes to 108.4 million tonnes. It has reached 166.50 million tonnes in 1988-89. However, there are ups and downs in the production of food-
grains. In the sixties shortage of food production led to importing foodgrains on a large scale, the peak being 10 million tonnes in 1966. Whereas after a couple of years, improvement in foodgrain production resulted into building of a buffer stock to the tune of 23 million tonnes.

vi) **Drought and Famine**: The phenomenon of drought and famine is the basic malady that Indian agriculture has been suffering since centuries. It is said that due to insufficient rain, change in global natural cycle, soil erosion, the frequency and the severity of the droughts had increased in recent period. There were 12 droughts in the country during 20 years, ending 1987. In 1983 sixteen states with 4.26 crore hectares land and 26.1 crore people were affected by drought, which indicates the severity of this phenomenon. As agriculture is central to the rural community and precondition for domestic industry as well as the volume of foreign trade, the effects of natural calamities on agriculture are multiple and far-reaching. It affects the employment opportunities of ruralities and results in shortage of food, fodder, and drinking water etc. In addition to this, large scale deforestation, overgrazing by domestic live stock and soil erosion have increased the poverty of tropical soil in India.
(2) **Efforts to Improve Agriculture:**

Taking into consideration the nature of agriculture, efforts have been made by the government since Independence to improve it. The efforts were directed mainly towards increasing agricultural productivity to make the country self-sufficient in foodgrains on the one hand and to secure land reforms on the other.

1) **Self-sufficiency: Myth or Reality:** Immediately after Independence the government of India launched "Grow More Food Campaign" to tackle the problem of shortage of foodgrains. Over a period/time, efforts were made to attain self-sufficiency on the agricultural front through various subsequent programmes. However, the question "is India self-sufficient in foodgrains" has always remained a matter of hot debate among the economists. There are different opinions on this issue among the scholars. According to a section of scholars including Dantwala, there has not been 'grave neglect' of agriculture as has been criticised. Agricultural growth, to him, is adequate to feed the rising population. Again there are certain western observers like Gilbert Entinne who agrees that India is free from devastating famine for the first time in its history and no longer at the mercy of agrarian imports. As against this a host of the leftist economists either deny that India is self-sufficient in foodgrains
or criticise it on the basis of resultant maldistribution. They attribute so-called 23 million tonnes buffer stock of foodgrains as testimony of distributive failures and hold that the rural poor cannot simply afford to buy 21 grains of their rich producers.

P.C. Joshi described agricultural development as large farmer dominated and concluded that the process of marginalization is a result of capitalist agriculture.

Reviewing India's capitalist agricultural growth of the last two decades, according to some observers, this growth is an example of what can be done when modern agricultural technology is combined with market incentives of capitalist agriculture. But Weiner does not agree with them and states that "India's experience demonstrates the defects of agrarian capitalism. It increases inequality in the countryside, decreases the well-being of the rural poor and is unable to provide for continuous agricultural growth. Thus the controversy goes on.

It can be argued in this regard that the overall agricultural performance is not unsatisfactory. However, due to the pressure of rising population on the one hand and uneven distribution of agricultural produce and benefits as a result of policy lapses and socio-economic and political pressure on the other, the basic issues related to agriculture have remained unsolved.
The situation of imbalance in the demand and supply of foodgrains in the country has its policy repercussions. Over a period of last half century agricultural policy has oscillated between controlled and decontrolled supply of the foodgrains. Nicolson observed the lack of national consensus on food policy. He also observed the lack of co-ordination between the Department of Food representing urban interests and Department of Agriculture representing rural interests.

ii) The Green Revolution and Its Impact: The green revolution comprising elements of irrigation, use of fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides, high yielding varieties of seeds and new cropping patterns, was the most significant development in the country during the sixties and the seventies. It was certainly a step forward on the background of inefficient and backward modes of agricultural production. Like many other countries India also adopted the green revolution techniques. According to Dr Norman Borlaugh there was good response to the green revolution in the country. According to Mellor the production of foodgrains increased by 19.1 million tonnes, indicating a compound annual growth rate of 3.3 per cent after the green revolution. However, the green revolution has been criticized on a number of counts. The main objections to the green revolution are- 1) It is confined to some regions only. 2) Secondly,
the increased productivity is evident mainly in two kinds of foodgrains viz. wheat and rice. 3) Thirdly, it is concentrated in the irrigated regions and therefore, had hardly any impact on dry farming areas. 4) The major attack on the green revolution is that, it has led to greater economic inequality. Therefore, it was feared that it might turn into a red revolution if the gap between the poor and the rich farmers continues. In her study of Haryana, Shakuntala Mehera observed that the adoption of the green revolution techniques have resulted into less use of human labour. Utsa Patnaik observes that, "the adoption of Green revolution technology is found to be much more concentrated with the labour hiring classes than conventional analysis has suggested so far; correspondingly income gains are also concentrated and the problem of rural poverty has become more acute than usually acknowledged". Despite the controversy about the merits of the green revolution, it is certain that it has proved useful in increasing foodgrain production and has led the country towards self-sufficiency in foodgrains to some extent.

iii) Land Reforms: One of the main reasons for the low productivity of agriculture in India is unequal land distribution and tenancy system including system of intermediaries and absentee landlordism. According to 1970-71 Agriculture Census more than half of the rural families either do not hold any land or hold less than an acre per
family, which accounts for hardly two per cent of the total cultivable land in the country.

Taking into account this nature of land distribution a process of institutional changes was started in these areas immediately after the independence, to bring equality in ownership and to raise agricultural production. Restructuring of land holding was the major move in that direction. This included abolition of zamindari, tenancy reforms, viz. regulation of rent, security of tenure and ownership rights to tenants, ceilings on land holding, consolidation of holdings and compilation and updating of land records etc.

However, it can be said that the socio-economic transformation leading to an egalitarian rural social structure, free from centuries of exploitation, could not be achieved through these institutional changes in land ownership.

3. Poverty and Unemployment: Considering the overall scenario of rural situation in India and complicated phenomenon of rural economy in general and agriculture in particular two broad features of rural economy in India evident. They are: poverty and unemployment.

(a) Poverty: Poverty has assumed world dimension recently. Most of the underdeveloped countries of Asia,
Africa, Latin America are characterised by the indicators of poverty. No doubt there are certain pockets even in the developed countries, which are under poverty trap. The main difference is; whereas the poverty in these developed countries is relative, the poverty in under-developed countries is absolute. Poverty is a chronic problem of India in general and rural India in particular since time immemorial.

The phenomena of poverty has attracted the attention of rulers, academicians - especially economists and voluntary agencies in recent times. In India eradication of poverty has always gained priority in the nation building process in/post Independence period. It was the major objective of economic planning in India.

Since/seventies efforts have been made to elaborate the concept of poverty by defining it or by identifying its base. Attempts have also been made by the scholars to introduce the concept of "poverty line" to understand the intensity of poverty in the country by identifying families below this poverty line.

Causes of Poverty: There are many causes of poverty. Should phenomenon of poverty be attributed to single factor or multiple factors, individual or social is a matter of debate.
In Indian context the main causes of poverty can be stated as - i) unequal distribution of land and other resources in the country, ii) large scale unemployment and underemployment, iii) low wages, iv) low level of illiteracy etc. Furthermore the poor people do not have access to power, even though in the democratic set up they have a right to vote. Obviously they are deprived of the benefits of power which are generally enjoyed by the power holders. The standard of living of poor people is naturally low and in its severest form, poverty, leads them to living at subhuman level.

(b) Unemployment: Poverty and Unemployment are interrelated. Because there is unemployment, people are poor and because they are poor, they do not possess a skill for employment.

Till the seventies, unemployment was considered as a symptom of underdevelopment and regarded by some economists that it could disappear with proper economic development of the country. But the experience shows that this is not so. On the contrary, even the countries having a rapid economic growth face the problem of unemployment. Experience in different parts of the world has shown that unemployment and poverty can continue to rise inspite of economic growth.

In the Indian context, the problem of rural unemploy-
-ment also had its roots in British period. During this period agriculture was neglected, village and cottage industries suffered a set back, which resulted in the rampant unemployment throughout the country. In the post independence period the traditional 'Jajmani system' had been almost uprooted without developing alternate system of rural employment. The net result of these developments was heavy dependence of rising population on agriculture only. Almost all members of a family work on farms owned and operated by the family without any addition to productivity per person. Therefore, rural unemployment in India assumes the form of the disguised unemployment.

Rural unemployment is also underemployment in its acutest form. All those persons who are able and desire to have full time work could not be absorbed in agriculture. According to N.S.S. estimates a "person with less than 28 hours work per week is severely underemployment and person with 29 to 42 hours work per week is moderately under-
employment.

Rural unemployment is seasonal in nature. Broadly Indian cultivator has little work for 4 to 6 months in a year. Virendra Agrawal says, "It is estimated that as much as 22.19 per cent rural work force has work to do less than full week in a month". The Dantwala committee estimated in 1984-85 that 36.2 million persons were unemployed in rural India, which included 17.9 million underemployed".

According to the Fourth Plan Mid-term Appraisal Report, "the incidence of seasonal underemployment remains as heavy as before, It is perhaps heavier than before except in some parts of the country where the green revolution has achieved significant success.

The sex composition of the rural unemployment is also significant. According to N.S.S. data, the proportion of unemployed females has been constantly higher than that of the male especially in rural areas. The incidence of severe underemployment or moderate underemployment was also high among rural women. Their ability to avail of employment opportunities, elsewhere, is limited due to the lack of mobility.

The unemployment is manifested even in the low rate of wages, decline in the real wages, unfavourable conditions of work, lengthy hours of work schedule and other disadvantages. It is interesting to note that the seasonal nature of agricultural employment leads to contradictions. The landlords exploit landless workers who are engaged only at the time of farming operations and sometimes workers also take advantage of heavy demand for them during farming season by the landlords and refuse to join work, without higher wages.

The prevailing rural scene witnesses strained rela-
-tionships between the rural workers and the land owners. It takes sometimes the form of communal or caste violence in the countryside. Frequent droughts in recent times, make the situation from bad to worse. The small and medium farmers also go in search of work during the drought period. The vast army of unemployed in rural India migrate to different urban centres in search of jobs. Previously, this kind of migration on small scale and seasonal nature. However, it is almost becoming a regular feature of the Indian rural life in recent times.

Society:
The Nature of Rural Society-

The Indian rural society in general is backward as compared to its urban counterpart. The rural-urban dichotomy is a remarkable feature of India. It is often said that the rural urban relations are of dependency nature, that is, rural sectors largely depend upon the urban even though the foodgrains and the industrial raw materials are largely supplied by the rural sector to the urban sector.

Urban bias leads to underinvestment in rural areas and is regarded as one of the factors responsible for rural poverty. Agriculture constitutes the major sector of rural socio-economic set-up. It is debatable whether the urban bias exists in all fields of rural areas or
confines itself to non-agriculture areas. M.L. Dantwala observes that no urban bias is evident as far as agriculture is concerned. However, he agrees with the view that, "such a bias does exist in several fields of Indian polity particularly in health, education and organised labour". Contrary to this observation Michal Lipton charged Indian planning as urban interest oriented. As a result, agricultural development has been stagnant. V.M. Dandekar also blames urban inclination of planning eventhough inter sectoral growth is not unfavourable to agriculture. Dandekar's attack is on organised sector of urbanites.

The rural people depend on the urban people mainly for modern amenities, goods, services required for comforts. The rising interaction between urban and rural people owing to the availability of communication network has resulted in intensifying dependency of the rural sector on the urban sector. However, the widening gap between rural and urban sectors is evident in the disparity in the standards of living as well as level of development.

Compared to the urban sector, the rural sector is more insecure in so far as protective legal measures are concerned. The enactment such as Minimum Wages Act, Bonded Labour Abolition Act etc. cover rural workers also. However, the implementation of these laws is not effective
in respect of the rural workers if compared to their urban counterparts. There is no effective machinery
to implement them for rural workers. According to R.N. Tiwari the labour laws are premature and do not
safeguard the interest of rural workers. These laws are urban based. The Government policy favours organised
labour force in security, protection of employment, etc. and rural workers, by and large are unorganised.

The Rural Classes:

There has been a hot debate in the country about categorization and classification of the rural classes for analytical purpose as well as for the purpose of policy formulation. Is peasantry a class or a notion? Is it a homogeneous group? These are some of the questions raised in this regard. Broadly speaking, even today, the landlords and the landless labourers are two main antagonistic classes existing in rural India. The former enjoys the surplus return without engaging itself into the production process whereas the latter is closely associated with the production but without ownership of the means of production. In between them are various layers of peasantry. Little thought was given to categorise them till recently. However, after attempts towards abolition of Zamindari and subsequent changes in the agricultural sector, the composition of rural classes has
undergone considerable change. Subsequently, serious thought was given to analyse the phenomenon of peasant movements, peasant politics and the problems faced by these agrarian classes.

The protagonists of peasant movements argue that the interest of all cultivators vis-a-vis urban dwellers are the same. The pattern of agriculture in India does not lead to sharp differentiation in the peasantry. They regard peasantry as one class. However, the critics of the farmers' movement question this position and consider division in farming community as a reality. They differentiate between the subsistance farmers, the small and marginal farmers, farmers from the dry farming and drought prone areas, etc. and they consider peasants movement as a revolt of rich and middle peasants who mainly belong to upper castes in the social hierarchy. According to Utsa Patnaik, "Empirical reality is always different from the theoretical Marxist framework of concepts of productive relations, forces of production, mode of production etc. Therefore, she rejects categorisation of agricultural classes and regards the rural household, instead of the farm size as an important indicator of class and status in rural India. She groups them into three categories, viz. 1) labour hiring, 2) self-employed and 3) exploited by others."
Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susan Rudolph have coined a new term to describe the influential medium farmers as "bullock capitalist" in the rural Indian situation. According to them in Indian agriculture it is neither the large farmers nor agricultural labourers, but the bullock capitalists who are independent cultivators using their own and household labour who dominate the scene.

Arvind Das gives five fold classification of peasantry as socio-economic phenomenon: (See table No.1)

Table No.1
Classification of Peasantry as Socio-Economic Phenomenon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Basis of class formation</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Feudal Lords, owners, users, living on rent and interest.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Rich capitalists and Kulaks.</td>
<td>Income derived through the exploitation of labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The middle peasants, owner cultivator, consumers.</td>
<td>Working on their own land mainly with family labour.</td>
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Source: 'Seminar' 352 (Farmer Power)
and concludes that the first two of these classes are concerned with commodity market, the last two with labour market and the middle peasantry is leaning towards commercialised agriculture.

One of the impacts of this class configuration is on the launching of the various rural development programmes for the poor on the one hand and agricultural policy measurers for the well-to-do farmers on the other. Whereas the former is used by the elites for vote catching of the underprivileged, the latter is used to consolidate the power base of the rulers. Myron Weiner comments, "No significant political group in India today, openly advocates liquidating the 'kulaks' or rich farmers or collectivising the land but the question of whether one should encourage the growth of capitalist agriculture has been and continues to be the significant issue".

3. The Rural Weaker Sections:

A large number of rural people belonging to the weaker sections is the result of socio-economic backwardness inherited from the past in a stratified Indian society. The weaker sections and the dominant and vocal sections are two separate circles within a big circle of Indian/society.
The profile of these vulnerable sections has not changed much after the Independence, even though India embarked upon the exercise to achieve growth with justice within the framework of democracy. In this context A.S. Nadkarni argues that, "democracy means concern for unorganized and defenceless underprivileged sections", and further observes that "... rights granted in these sections by the political system remain nominal so long as they are underprivileged. Planning Commission has rightly pointed out in the draft of the sixth plan that concentration of the bulk of purchasing power in the hands of a small minority of population has narrowed down the demand base of industrial expansion, threatening to put several restrictions on this expansion."

The rural sections in India, whose purchasing power is very low includes, a) non-cultivator wage earners comprising agricultural labourers and b) wage earners employed in the non-farm activities. These together are usually considered the hard core of the rural proletariat.

The National Sample Survey in their survey of 25th and 32nd round on weaker sections, surveying 14 million households from different parts of states and union territories focused attention on employment conditions,
consumption expenditure and income of weaker sections of population. Commenting on the position of the weaker sections it says, "While by expenditure criterion about 66 to 67 per cent of the population under survey was found to be below the standard minimum level, by measure of available income not much more than 10 to 11 per cent households have sufficient income to provide the minimum necessary consumption for their members. In other words, in terms of available income nearly 90 per cent of the rural labour and marginal farmer house-holds at all India level are below the poverty line".

To sum up the position of the weaker sections in the rural set-up, it can be said that the rural people belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes live at the lowest rung of the caste, class-pyramid, who form the important part of the weaker section of the society.

C) The Polity:

In understanding the rural India, it is also necessary to take into account the power arrangement at the grass root level. Though the issues like rural poverty, unemployment are basically economic in nature, they have an equally important political dimension. Since Independence the Government has entered into the arena of rural development as a result of the commitment to
the overall development of the rural sector. Therefore, those who hold the power, take the decisions, frame the policies, raise the funds and spend money on various programmes and activities for the removal of poverty and generation of employment. They look to the rural development from the point of view of their political interests.

**Continuity and Change in the Rural Political Structure**

The economic decisions are, in a way, political in nature. Therefore, analysis of rural political structure becomes pre-eminent. The post-Independence policies in India is an outcome of a number of forces, viz. widespread inequality, economic backwardness coupled with the poverty and unemployment, national freedom struggle resulting into increasing political awareness, adoption of democratic institutional framework etc. As a result, naturally, the rural politics in India is to be viewed within this broad framework.

In the traditional rural political set-up which was in existence for thousand of years before the Independence, the political power was in the hands of upper castes. They exercised excesses such as forced labour or physical torture on the lower castes. The determinants of power were ritual status, land ownership, monopoly of education, etc. The higher the ritual status and social position in
the caste hierarchy in the pyramidal social structure, the greater was the political power. The lower the caste, the lower was the social position as well as less political influence. The political system in rural India had gradually evolved over a period of thousand years. Therefore, it is marked by continuity with minor changes, despite the political ups and downs at the higher level.

After the Independence, with the introduction of democracy the political system at village level has changed rapidly. Most of the political bases of power lost their grounds. The dominance of upper castes has weakened. There is a shift in political power by and large, from upper castes to middle castes. Instead of the concentration of power there came into being decentralization and dispersal of political power and economic resources. Of course, this change was neither sudden nor evenly spread throughout India. Thus with the abolition of zamindari the economic condition of the upper castes started deteriorating. Some of them had to leave villages. However, feudal elements in the economic and political life in a village still dominate. Even though old equation of caste, class power has not changed much, the individual actors have radically changed. There are many castes, sub-castes, caste clusters which compete for power in the new set-up. Even the lower castes make efforts to form...
their coalitions to grab political power from the higher and middle castes.

After the seventies, especially the middle castes—being numerically powerful—consolidated their strength in the ruling Congress party, replacing the then powerful upper castes. The emergence of Panchayati Raj, though limited in power and functions, provided additional opportunities for political recruitment of the middle castes at various levels. This is how the Panchayat Raj institutions, viz. Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samities and Gram Panchayats form a significant basis of grass root democracy and act as the support structure of state and national political system. They are treated as the training schools of politics and leadership. Taking into account their magnitude in terms of participation in elections and discharging the functions vital to the day-to-day life of the villagers, these institutions have made rural political life dynamic. It is interesting to observe that though there is a high degree of politicization as never before in its history of rural life, there is a lack of political consciousness, to a large extent, on the part of the rural people. This is because rural politics is neither ideological nor issue based. It is still personalized in which the leader is important and leadership is determined by a person's caste and economic status. As a result of the introduction
of Panchayati Raj system one witnesses dispersal of political power and resources. This is one more departure from the traditional nature of politics in rural India. Consequently, it has pervaded many aspects of rural life through different types of co-operative institutions, which have facilitated linkage with higher political institutions. Even though there is wide scope for politics of accommodation, yet the rising expectation of rural people in general and the rank and file in political parties in particular, bring a lot of strains on the system.

Factionalism and Rural Polity:

In general, politics in a village revolves around two or three groups. This situation leads to factional politics, and therefore a fractured politic which is unique and regular feature of Indian politics. Clash of personal interests of leaders is the main source of conflict and ideology is sometimes used as a cover. Many a times intensification of factional conflicts leads to unprincipled alliances on personal understanding.

The factionalism leads to vertical and horizontal division of rural polity. The factions are multicastr in nature. Its membership is fluctuating. Sometimes there are factions within a faction. Factionalism lies at the root of socio-political stratification of rural
society and gets reflected in the form of personal rivalries and/or in the garb of casteism. Thus it can be said that the villages are torn by factional conflicts in political arena. It prompts us to ask a question as to what is the impact of factionalism on the over all progress of the village life in India.

It is really difficult to pinpoint the impact of factionalism on the over all progress of village life as well as the rural development programmes. The lack of integrational politics at times has retarded the progress, however, the competition among different factions, also occasionally, leads to accelerate it.

Thus it can be concluded that the elements of rural power structure in India have changed in post Independence period. It has become quite formal in recent times. The power is shared by middle castes and it is no more confined to upper castes only. The villages are no more isolated from the outside world as in the past, hence the village politics is also not an isolated phenomena. External forces have made their inroads in the village setting. Thus the post-Independence rural politics reflects the impact of forces such as democracy, decentralization, developmental consciousness, increasing political awareness and participation on a mass scale, welfarism and an increasing role of central political
authority etc. Along with the elements of change there are elements of continuity in rural politics, which include continuation of caste base, caste and communal strife, neglect of weaker sections, etc.

The Role of the State as an Instrument of Change:

What is the role of the State in the process of rural political economy and rural politics? It is generally agreed that the state is not and cannot be a silent spectator in a situation of underdevelopment on the one hand and poverty, inequality and unemployment on the other. As against nineteenth century concept of police state, the concept of welfare state and as a basis against the principle of neutralism, the principle of interventionism have been accepted worldwide in the Post Second World War period.

In the Indian context the proposition of state intervention in/upliftment of the rural masses has become more important in recent times. Speedy economic development was on the agenda of state action after the Independence. Intervention to change the direction of forces was justified on the ground of social justice. Price control, mixed economy and nationalization are some of the means that India has adopted to fulfill the objectives of interventionism.
Thus the role of the state in Indian polity has been stated by the policy makers, is to achieve an egalitarian social order. It has been reflected in the basic document i.e. the Indian Constitution, and in the policy statements and pronouncements such as "socialistic pattern of society", "land to the tiller", "Garibi Hatao" (removal of poverty), etc.

L.I. Rudolph and Susan Rudolph analysed Indian state as "the third actor" between the two historic adversaries of class politics, i.e. capital and labour. In India, according to them, state is the dominant producer of goods and services and therefore is an agent of socio-economic transformation.

Removal of poverty implies speedy economic development. But efforts to achieve it have produced political disorder. There are two approaches of looking at the inter-relationship between economic development, politics and democracy. According to one, economic development results into widening economic choices and would bring freedom, individual rights and would strengthen democratic institutions. As against this, the other approach gives the expression of political instability, disorder, stress and strain, heavy politicization and also disintegration of socio-cultural forces with the process of economic development.
The Employment Guarantee Scheme of Maharashtra can be approached as a part of this process of state intervention, developmental thinking and state as an instrument of equalizing forces. As a policy it is a deliberate rational choice. However, "policy analysis must be viewed within the paradigm of conflict rather than rational choice. Analysing the interests and the participants may be as important as issues". Therefore, analysis of EGS implies empirically studying the interactions of different elements and their interests involved in the execution of the scheme.
CHAPTER II: NOTES AND REFERENCES:


2. Friedrich Carl J., An Introduction to Political Theory, Jaico Publishing House, Bombay, 1967, p.64. Justice is the starting point of Plato’s theory of Ideal State. Plato believed that everyone should be content to do the task for which he is suited and that justice means balance and harmony.

3. Ibid., p.25.


5. Ibid., Pp. 492,93.


9. Eg. Brahmins, Marathas, Rajputs, etc. are the high castes whereas Mahars, Mangs are treated as low castes which are at the bottom of the social structure.


The share of agriculture: GDP for 1950-51 (at 1980-81 prices) was 56.5 per cent.


In his paper Jeemol Uni has provided a description on the trends in unemployment of Agricultural Labourers in labour households from 1956-57 to 1977-78 at all India basis and for 14 major states of the country.


So far as the response to the Green Revolution is concerned Richard Critchfield observed that as against two Javanese villages two Punjabi villages were more responsive to the Green Revolution, more eager to modernize agriculture and enjoy more market benefits and less reluctant to adopt changes.


43. Ibid., p. 172.


