PREFACE

Rural development and provision of better quality of life to the rural people have been a major objective of planning in India. Though rural development was initially regarded as concomitant to agricultural development, the range of activities brought under the ambit of rural development programmes has been expanding and by the early 1980's alleviation of poverty became the prime objective of India's rural development strategy. Target group oriented programmes for resource mobilisation and income generation, special area development programmes for drought prone area and wage employment schemes for rural workers constitute the core of this strategy. In the 1990s primary focus had been given to the various programmes and strategies adopted in the successive plans to provide the basic necessities to the rural poor. The strategy was to develop the entire area, which would take care of improved productivity, increased employment, high income for the target groups as well as the minimum acceptable levels of food, shelter, education and healthy surroundings. These are conducive to the development of rural people with a high value system and character.

During the first two decades of economic planning, emphasis was laid on the need to maximise the rate of growth of the Gross National Product and the strategy being followed in this period seemed more to be production oriented than welfare oriented. In this period, it was believed that the high rate of economic growth would alleviate poverty automatically. After the elapse of four Five Year Plans in the country, it was realised that the various development programmes undertaken in the economy had not improved the socio-economic conditions of a large majority of the rural people and that public investment in the rural sector could not mitigate the incidence of poverty and unemployment. Thus, the realities of the rural situation dictated the adoption of different strategies at different periods. In order to realise the goals of increased production, alleviation of poverty and employment generation, several self and wage employment programmes or public works programmes have been launched from time to time like National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY), Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) etc. intended to improve the earlier employment programmes by first providing
employment on a sustained basis and secondly by linking up employment works closely with the various development programmes.

Alleviation of poverty and generation of employment are closely related. Agriculture is the key sector in providing employment to the rural people. Along with agricultural or farm sector, the non-farm sector is also a significant aspect in generating employment in rural areas.

There have been a lot of empirical studies of the various concepts to measure poverty, alleviation of poverty and generation of employment in general. The measurement of poverty is beset with various conceptual, methodological and empirical problems. Conceptually, it is difficult to define poverty in operational terms that are universally acceptable. Methodologically, there is no consensus among scholars about the measurement of poverty. And empirically, given the choice of a particular measure of poverty, it is very difficult to collect reliable data necessary for computing the value of the indicator or the measure chosen. Inspite of having such numerous problems in connection with the measurement of poverty, policy makers, planners and scholars have attempted to measure poverty and used the same to monitor changes in the level or incidence of poverty for other purpose.

We have undertaken the following problem for our research investigation "An Evaluative study of Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) in Kamrup District (Rural) of Assam." As the creation of employment opportunities is instrumental for generating income in rural areas and since a general study relating to a country or a state cannot properly reflect the implications of a programme in a particular district as such, the proposed study is thought to be a study of great significance, especially in the state of Assam.

We have studied the impact of Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) on income and employment generation to the rural people in Kamrup district (rural) after making a comprehensive field survey in the select five blocks. For this purpose, we have selected 457 SHGs from these five blocks by the principle of proportionate allocation under stratified random sampling technique. We have analysed the different aspects of
the collected data, keeping in view the quantitative objectives of the study. Relevant statistical techniques like t-test for significant difference of means and Paired t-test have been applied, besides using interval estimation and some elementary statistical techniques like average, variation, etc.

There are numerous problems and difficulties in the implementation of the SGSY programme faced by different quarters involved in it. We have highlighted these problems and difficulties faced by different sections involved in this process and tried to evolve remedial measures to overcome these problems.

We have incorporated in the thesis the objective-wise findings and some other findings of the study, the conclusions and a set of suggestions for effective implementation of the employment programmes in Assam and in the Kamrup district. We hope these findings and suggestions made by us would enlighten the policy makers, researchers, academicians and scholars in the field of rural development of our country.

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