

## Women Marching Towards Social Transformation through NREGA : A Case Study of Kalvakonda Panchayat

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**Abstract :** All the nations those are developing and developed are always highlights the empowerment of women and gender equality since from centuries. But it was mostly on words not in practical. In practical most of the world we have the situation of gender discrimination from any of the corner. In recent trends situation start changing gradually, there are enough women getting empowered. In Indian scenario also there was change from five decades. Many of the policies and acts framed for women to empower which leads to social transformation in India but most are not that much successful but NREGA scheme which came into existence in the year 2005 is laying path in maintaining gender equality and empowering rural women. NREGA actually framed for rural development and rural poor. This programme succeed in providing employment to rural poor and in implementation this programme was intensely maintaining equality in both men and women. NREGA helping rural poor and exclusively women in financial inclusion with this creating a hope for social transformation in India.

**Introduction :** All the nations those are developing and developed are always highlights the empowerment of women and gender equality since from centuries. But it was mostly on words not in practical. In practical most of the world we have the situation of gender discrimination from any of the corner of the world.

In recent trends situation start changing gradually, there are enough women getting empowered. In Indian scenario also there was change from five decades. Many of the policies and acts framed for women to empower in India but most are not that much successful. But NREGA scheme which came into existence in the year 2005 is laying path in maintaining gender equality and empowering rural women. The triumph of the scheme is utterly reliant on the participation of the community in general and women in particular since the segment of later in employment is almost 50% because women are found to be better change representatives of socio-economic transformation, efforts are needed to reinforce their participation for household livelihood security as well as better quality management.

**Importance of NREGA :** National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 is an Indian labour law and social security extent that targets to assurance the 'right to work'. The NREGA was instigated with the objective of enhancing livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year, to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. NREGA is not only providing economic security and generating rural assets but also helping in protecting environment, empowering rural women, plummeting rural-urban migration and cherishing social equity among others.

This scheme has numerous gender complex features that are attractive for women workers. The Act has a stringent instructions that priority shall be given to women. In terms of execution, it directives that a minimum of one-third of the beneficiaries are to be women who have registered and have asked for work. The government is gratified to ensure certain worksite facilities to enrich women workers involvement. The Act also specifies payment of equal wages for both male and female workers. It was the first time so far ever happened in the world nation's labour history. Wages of workers are to be paid straight to the person through bank or post office savings account. One of the positive point in this scheme is, it mandates that a third of all workers under the Programme should be women and also mandates equal wages for both genders. Many of policies, schemes and programmes witnesses women discrimination in various ways and exploitation of women in the world and Indian scenario too but NREGA is the only scheme which doesn't have such situations.

**Women Empowerment towards Social Transformation through NREGA :** Women's empowerment is a process by which women advance grander control over substantial and intellectual resources. Empowerment is a vigorous but slow process, it will take long time



to bring modifications in women and particularly women from poorer households. In the course of the last two decades, a number of progressive intrusions such as social mobilisation, construction of networking and capacity building of women self-help groups have been put in place to empower women through this NREGA scheme. However, dynamic participation of women in any programme is a criterion for the empowerment.

In NREGA scheme there will be defence of women against migration in search of work which leads to an enhancement in the quality of their life through anticipation of costs and risks connected with migration and providing opportunity to women those who are to look after their children suffering from severe ills. Furthermore, women are much endowing through NREGA works and also knowing that they can avoid severe working circumstances and precarious works at private work place so that there was large number of women are ardent to get into NREGA scheme.

Execution methods are essential to expand the quality of involvement and also empowerment of marginalised poor and women in the p scheme. Gender thoughtfulness of the distribution system has a major role in encouraging the women wage seekers in this scheme. Nevertheless, NREGA has the prospective to improve women's economic independence through cash incomes. Such earnings will bring gender equity as women also can earn the same wage as men in this scheme. The monetary accomplishments of women have become openly visible in the Act. However, there is considerable choice to do in attaining gender impartiality and sensitivity in this scheme.

As NREGA is a right based scheme, membership of the different communities boosts the essence of the scheme. Through this scheme women endows and identified that they can play a vigorous role in carrying out of employment guarantee schemes through Gram Sabhas, social audits, involved forecasting and other means and they are actively involving in that. It is very significant to make certain that the disadvantaged, low status, minority and poorer groups are not neglect in discussion process and involvement process in this scheme. Without any doubt NREGA is the foremost scheme in its type which is more comprehensive in nature and also annexation of women workers in the scheme, 50% of the workforce are women which clearly showing that the participation of women in NREGA is forwarding ascendant.

The extent of employment and impact of women in household earnings are improving their access and mechanism over economic means. Through NREGA programme most of the women enrich their proximity in decision making in numerous aspects like food depletion, health attention and education of children. The significant development in well-



being of the household would bring a sustainable change in self. The heightened regular cash flow embracesability of improved savings and credit value in the market and in that way simplifies better access to credit. As a result amended wage incomes of women would aid in proper spending for health precaution, nutrition and children schooling which was very much enlightened regarding in women concept in Indian scenario. In NREGA there has a community development programmes like Self Help Groups (SHG) and many more empowering programmes. The association of women in community groups like SHGs, Sakthi Sanghas and DWACRA (Development of women and children in rural areas) programs etc., would accelerate the transformation process. It is domineering that factors like literacy, awareness, contribution in development and social capital play a critical role in quickening the empowerment process through the scheme. In our patriarchal society, the development is predictable to be slow. However, the vitality of the local organisations, development programmes and the understanding of the conveyance mechanism working for the source of women can speed up the course of change of them and enhanced empowerment. The nature of involvement and contribution in right-based programmes like NREGA impacting the proficiency and abilities of women. The amplified self-confidence, social acknowledgment, different roles and headship potentials together transform their own working which leads to in one way to their empowerment in all concerns in the society.

**Empirical study in Kalvakonda Panchayat :** Kalvakonda is one of the major panchayats in Chillakur Mandal as well as in Nellore district, Andhrapradesh consists of both Kalavakonda and Bestapalem villages located 17 kilometres from the head quarter of the mandal. Kalavakonda village has a geographical area of 1924 acres, in that 72 acres is forest area. In whole of 1924 acres of the village 213 acres are unproductive and uncultured land. Both Kalavakonda and Bestapalem villages consists of 329 households having total population of 1007 which contains 499 male and 508 are female population, with in this total population 525 scheduled caste population with 265 male and 260 female population. Scheduled caste (Mala and Madiga), Scheduled Tribe (Yanadi), OBC Golla and Besta (Fishermen) are the major communities residing in this village.

**Socio Conditions :** In this village predominantly there are three communities Scheduled caste, Mala lives in Harijanawada, Madiga lives in Arundathiwada. Scheduled tribes lives in ST colony and remaining are OBC lives in BC Colony or Besta colony. OBCs mainly Yadavas and Bestas (Fishermen). One of the good thing is that all are using common well for their drinking water and for daily use also.



**Economic Conditions :** Only few people holding minimum lands in this village. Majority are seasonal agriculture labourers. Bestas basically goes for fish hunting but here majority of Bestas are guarding the aqua ponds (Prawn Cultivation Ponds). Villagers maximum go for sand work.

**NREGA in Kalvakonda Panchayat :** There is a seasonal migration in search of work, which now been stopped with NREGA came in to exist, the village transformed from having kutcha house to pucca ones, the average economy has grown and they have included to be become part financial inclusion proposed by government, where in village trying to self-sustain, with other co-operative movements like SHG's where women groups are trying for self-sustain like most villages, it has long way to go but with enhanced technology the basic communication has improved, there is an improvement in the child education, as the village /Mandal is having per-primary and primary schools in proximity, the enrolment has gone up and all children below five years are attending anganwadi's and almost cent percent are re-joining the higher classes, with increase in the quality of education, also to extent mid-day meals schemes are working. The number of children going for higher education has gone up considerably, overall development of village/Mandal is far better than pre NREGA days.

**Social Transformation of Women through NREGA :** In this Panchayat majority of the NREGA workers are women from different communities and different religions which was one way of social inclusion. There was a positive response in assessment of the social capital of respondents with their participation, collective action and mutually supportive relations which must appreciable. Women are very much active participation in SHG meetings, Gram Sabha, VDC meetings, participation in village developmental activities, membership in CBOs (education committees, watershed associations/ groups, VSS etc.), confronting social issues (alcoholism, dowry etc.), taking up group income generating activities, and helping other members of the SHGs and Shrama Sakthi Sanghas.

In Panchayat women are identifying the work in village and taking that to higher officials of NREGA and working for that and earning as well thus they are moving forward to empower themselves. This is one way for creating assets in village which are very useful to village as well as the community.

**Achievements of Women for Transforming Socially through NREGA in Kalvakonda Panchayat :**

Part of NREGA there are 26 Shrama Shakti Sanghas are in Kalvakonda panchayat among them 24 groups are led by women. In every group there will be 15 to 30 members consist of both men and women. Here clearly witnessing that majority of the representatives in Kalvakonda panchayat are women where they are representing village needs as village problems and sanctioning works from concerned officials. This is the ultimate empowerment of women because of our Indian patriarchal society women are always as second gender, but here women coming out of houses, raising voices and solving the problems.

Grama Sabha (governing body of village) and Social audit are playing crucial role in NREGA implementation. IN Grama Sabha women demanding work and in social audit questioning about the progress of work. In both Grama Sabha and social audit women are playing important role in questioning and implementation of the scheme which will be the successful progress of the programme.

Villagers from all communities particularly women are very much progressive that they constructed road to ST (Scheduled Tribe) colony which is clearly indicating fraternity and equality in the village and expecting same in the society as our society is class and caste based society.

Women played an active role in asset creation through NREGA for the village and for themselves as well. Constructed Burial ground in the village, two cattle ponds, one Community hall, compound wall for elementary school in the village. Most appreciable thing is that constructing common well for drinking water facility which indicates social inclusion of marginalized communities and empowerment of women and deprived women too.

In Indian scenario all communities working or being together is not possible, but in NREGA scheme there are different communities working together and also collectively taking decisions about village issues and problems. Majority of the communities are Scheduled Caste, Scheduled tribes and other backward castes respectively, which clearly signifying clear transformation of society in villages. This situation is only possible in this NREGA scheme so far in India.



**Recommendations and Findings :** NREGA implementation should be reinforced by operative provisioning of what is already available in the scheme like worksite facilities, e.g. Shade and safe drinking water and particularly child safety and security facilities so that women workers are guaranteed of the safety of children in work site.

Women working under NREGA scheme clearing bank loans with the money getting in scheme. Previously every women in the village was in part and parcel of DWACRA, for clearing debts they need to work some other place or to lend money from lenders with high price interest, to clear that lending money again from someone but now situation has changed they are quite good and happy with the money getting from scheme.

In Kalvakonda panchayat under land acquisition act they got lands in 1970s but as the lands are Doon lands in that village those are useless the then. But after NREGA they made that lands plain and make it use for plantation. Now majority of the villagers had Eucalyptus plantation in those lands and earning additional income and maintaining savings for future generations.

**Conclusion :** NREGA has quite a lot of gender complex features that are beneficial for women and also inclusive too which has both social and financial inclusion. Implementation processes are very much crucial to improve the quality of participation and involvement of women in every step of the work. Activities in the direction of women's needs, admittances to resources and prospects, regulator over profits and consequences are essential. But, this scheme has the prospective to boost women's economic independence through cash earnings and social position through contribution and active involvement. The appreciable prominent thing in this panchayat regarding NREGA scheme is giving training in stitching and providing machines, setting provision shop for the groups those who worked five years consecutively in this scheme so with this they are settled financially which leads to financial inclusion of all the sections in the village.

Government and many of the leaders will speak about women empowerment and also make the acts very easily but in practical they won't implement in perfect way. But without the women vote bank there is no space for these people representatives. Whatever acts and policies made by government should break parliament boundaries and has to reach the grass root level common people then only there will be social and financial inclusion, inclusive growth and women empowerment which every government and nation talks about.

*Finally as Ambedkar said "I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved".*

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