

Agnipath: A New Horizon

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Abstract - Publicly, Indian military officers are not tired of praising the Agnipath scheme. They are calling this is beneficial for the youths for getting employment Armed Forces to have a young blood infusion and the society to have discipline citizens, but some media have also looked at many more aspects of this scheme. It has been cast and some new things have also come out in it, broadly the main objective of Agnipath scheme is to attract youth in the army so that they can reduce the average age of the armed force, at present this age is 32 years. Which defence forces want to bring down to the level of 26 years in a span of 5-6 years? The second main thing is that today's youth is technology savvy. So they will not have any problem in adopting new technology. The tour of duty has been kept only for 4 years. After 4 years the society should get a patriotic disciplined citizen. Has the Agnipath scheme really been brought with these objectives or are there some other hidden reasons in this which the government does not want to make public? This paper will examine the youth prospective, defence prospective and youth prospective.

Key words: Agnipath, Agniveer, tour of duty

INTRODUCTION

For a long time, there has been a big responsibility on the government regarding the modernization of the army, pension allowances, all these. Apart from the modernization of the army, there is also a big revenue expenditure of the government on salary and pension. Apart from this, the issues related to employment also take the government to such a corner where questions are raised in front of the government. Keeping these issues in mind, Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh has given information by tweeting that the Cabinet Committee of the Central Government, which is headed by the Prime Minister himself, has decided to start a scheme related to the Ministry of Defence. This main objective of scheme is to bring new defence recruitment reforms and recruitment of soldiers in the three-armed forces. The name of this scheme is Agnipath scheme. Under the Agnipath scheme, one of the objectives of the government is that about 45 to 50 thousand soldiers should be recruited annually. This is

a very huge number under which a large number of people can join employment. The aim of the government is also to generate employment. It will also fulfill one of the objectives of the government to provide employment to the youth.

As you know, at this time there are demonstrations in our country against the government's Agnipath scheme, trains were set on fire in many places, the paths of many trains have also been changed, and the government has taken into account the sensitivity of this movement. There have also been indications of making some amendments in this plan, such as reservation will be given to the retiring Agniveers in the Paramilitary Forces. A direct question is whether these announcements will have any effect on the agitators. The government is of the view that this scheme is in the interest of the armed forces, youths and the society. Those who are opposing it are victims of some conspiracy or are trying to destabilize the government.

In the past years, there have been many such occasions when the government has taken big steps or claims to have taken big steps for the welfare of the society but they have also been strongly opposed. The various schemes like demonetization, implementation of GST, farmer laws and decisions to imposition of lockdown were either taken in haste or without evaluating the repercussion of the decision. Now the government has brought the Agnipath scheme on the same line. The Ministry of Defence officials are praising this scheme will attract young talent with contemporary technological skills to the armed forces and return back the highly disciplined, motivated and patriotic citizen to the society after four years. On the contrary media persons have revealed the dark size of the Agnipath scheme. Ministry of Defence wants to reduced its service expenditure by bringing Agnipath scheme.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. The recent military reforms undertaken by the government may present a challenge to military

cohesion along with promoting modernity in the armed forces.

- To examine the statement with reference to Agnipath scheme.

DETAILS ABOUT THE SCHEME

What is Agnipath scheme? Why will a youth join this scheme?

The detail discussion on the scheme regarding recruitment process pays and allowances and other benefits are as under:-

The Cabinet Committee has approved the recruitment process in armed forces. This recruitment scheme is

called Agnipath Scheme. The candidates selected through this scheme will be called Agniveer. The Agniveer will serve the armed forces only for 4 years. After 4 years every Agniveer has to face the selection board to find permanent job in armed forces. Only 25% of the total annual recruitment will be given permanent job for 15 years. Agnipath recruitment will be only for personnel below the rank of officer. Recruitment will be done twice a year through rallies, online centralized system through “All India” “All Classes”. The recruits will be given 6 months of training and the remaining period of 3 years and 6 months, will be spend in deployment.

Table 1: Pay and Benefits of Agniveer during tour of duty

Year	Customised Package (Monthly)	In Hand (70%)	Contribution to Agniveers Seva Nidhi (30%)	Contribution to Corpus fund by GoI
All Figures in Rs. (Monthly Contribution)				
1st Year	30000	21000	9000	9000
2nd Year	33000	23100	9900	9900
3rd Year	36500	25550	10950	10950
4th Year	40000	28000	12000	12000

Source:<https://indianairforce.nic.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Detailed-BRIEF-13-JUN-22.pdf>

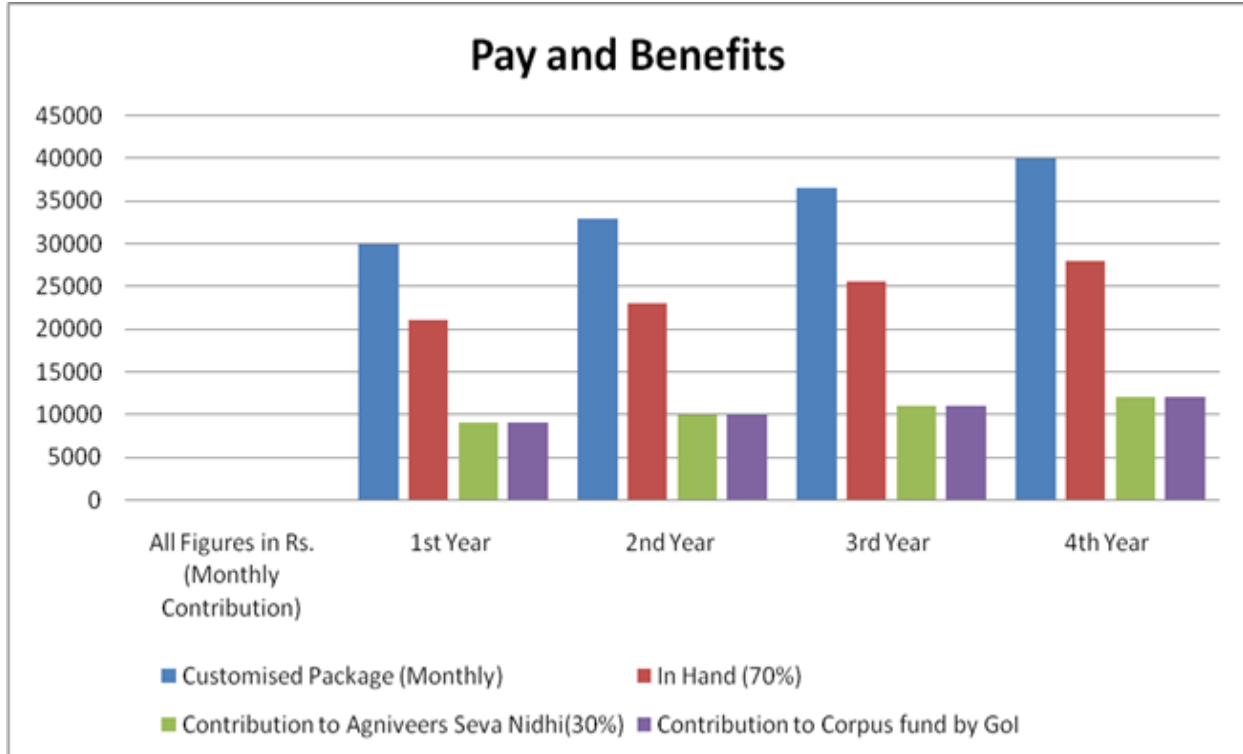


Figure 1: Pay and Benefits of Agniveer during tour of duty

Exit after 4 years the Agniveer will get Rs 11.71 lakh as Seva Nidhi package, which includes 5.02 lakh as Agniveer contribution @ 30% to Agniveer Seva Nidhi and similar contribution of Rs. 5.02 lakh to Corpus Fund by Government of India plus interest accumulated on the above amount as per applicable rates.

ECONOMIC PACKAGES

1. Death Compensation: In case of death of Agniveer the following compensation will be given:
 - a. Rs. 48 Lakh as noncontributory life insurance cover
 - b. Additional ex-gratia of Rs. 44 Lakh on death due to service
 - c. Along with Seva Nidhi amount the Agniveer will also get the full salary for remaining period. The roughly amount will be around Rs. 1crore.
2. Disability Compensation: The disability compensation will be in proportion of the disability occurred. As much as the percentage of disability declared by the medical authorities. The proportionate amount according to disability as 100%, 75% and 50% disability. The ex-gratia compensation is Rs.44 Lakh, 25 Lakh 15 Lakh respectively.

DEFENCE BUDGET

It is necessary to discuss the defence budget, only then we will be able to know the relevance of this scheme. The expenditure and income of the defence budget will clear the picture. Defence budget is Rs 5.25 lakh crore for the year 2022-23 and Rs 4.78 lakh crore for last year. It means this year the allocation of defence budget has been increased.

Total Revenue Component allocated for this Year Rs 3.65 Lakh Crore.

Pension amount allocation for the year 2022-23 is Rs 119 696 Crore. The Revised Estimates of Pension in 2021-22 is Rs. 1.17 Lakh Crore. Actual Pension Bill in 2020-21 is Rs. 1.28 lakh crore. Therefore, the allocation for the pension fund is also increased by 2.5% as compared to the previous fiscal revised estimates.

Over 88800 crore has been spent on salaries and allowances in 2020-21. Revised Estimates of Defence salaries and allowances for 2021-22 Rs. 99800 crore.

For Army salaries and allowance is Rs.1.07 lakh crore. For Navy salaries and allowances Rs 9133 crore and for Air Force salaries and allowances is 18340 crore. It is evident here that Army is the major consumer of the budget allocation.

The total salary and allowances for all the three services have been allocated around Rs 1.35 lakh crore. The amount of pension is Rs. 1.2 Lakh crore. Total allocation for salary and pension is Rs. 2.55 lakh crore

An allocation of Rs 2.33 lakh crore has been made for capital expenditure, keep in mind that capital expenditure is useful in the modernization of the army, if we see, Rs 2.55 lakh crore is spent in salary and pension, which Ministry of Defence wants to reduce.

BENEFITS OF THE SCHEME

What are the benefits that can be obtained from this scheme.

1. This scheme has been called *All India All Class Recruitment* i.e. recruitment will be done from all classes from all over the country.
2. *Youth Profile of Armed Forces:* The population of our country is very young, so even under the army, the soldiers of the army should also be young, as you know that only people between the age of 17.5 to 21 can be recruited in this, the average of our army Age is 32 years, which will be reduced to 26 years in the coming 6 to 7 years.
3. *A future ready soldier:* Future ready soldier is capable of adopting new technologies.
4. *Educational Opportunity during tour of duty:* This certificate and bridge course strike a fine balance between these young and experienced personnel. They will be provided certificates of skilled development.
5. *Benefits to Ministry of Defence:* There will be a reduction in salary and pension expenditure and will promote modernization of armed forces. MoD wants to reduce the revenue expenditure and increase the capital expenditure.
6. *Social benefits:* Skilled, disciplined and motivated manpower will be available in the society.
7. *Benefit of small military service:* Patriotic spirit Teamwork Physical fitness Loyalty to the country Availability of trained personnel to promote national security in times of external threats, internal threats and natural calamities skills and

experience in service achievement of employment in various sectors.

See, two things can be involved here, the things that have been written before this thing are absolutely right, it may happen whenever a scheme is brought, the primary objective of the government is that maximum people get its benefit. We have seen another social benefit for the army from the government's side, but one more thing has gone into this is that the age group in this is from 17.5 to 21 years, the people who will be involved, this is the age group, this is a lot. Younger age group is there to advance oneself or to learn something new or to move ahead in the society so you can imagine such youths who come from rural background or who do not have much resources if they joining this process, he will spend his 4 years only in learning something better, when he comes out of service, he will also have a fund with which he can do some work in the coming time but in this there is an opponent. It is also being argued that this age group could have learned something new in a period of 4 years, so when he has joined the Agnipath scheme, then no. so that

CRITICISM OF THE SCHEME

After 4 years a person will become unemployed. What will he do if he becomes unemployed?

- (a) He can be radicalized, which is a kind of extremist thinking.
- (b) He can be influenced because he will be trained personnel then his skills can also be misused.
- (c) They will not have many employment opportunities. He will be compelled to join small jobs like security guards.
- (d) Soldiers go through a long process and gradually get used to it, it is believed that after 3 to 5 years of training to learn things properly and then how will 6 months of training prove to work?

(e) In the beginning, it was proposed that this scheme will be initiated as a pilot project in the Army but now it has been extended to all the three forces. These Agniveer will be guest soldiers for the term of 4 years. A nation cannot take the risk of National Security relying on guest soldiers.

(f) Lack of feeling of solidarity can also be seen, some soldiers are going to retire early and some are going to work for a long time. There may be a lack of coordination between the two.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The Agnipath scheme will serve the hidden agenda of ministry of defence where ministry is aiming to reduce their financial burdens by employing short-term Agniveers. The analysis of budgetary allocation and expenditures of ministry of defence reveals that allocation of funds is always short than projected needs. Among all ministries of Central Government, the ministry of defence budget is the highest to the tune of 13% which amount to Rs. 525166 crore for the year 2022-23.

In the last decade 2012-13 to 2022- 23 the budget has grown at the average rate of 8.6% annually as compare to government expenditure which has grown at the rate of 10.8% annually. However, the defence expenditure as has been reduced from 16.4 percent to 13.3 % in the same period. there is always problem of shortfall between rejected amount to the allocated amount there is always a higher amount of shortfall in capital expenditure then the revenue expenditure the reason behind is that it a very less money left after fulfilling the revenue expenditure liabilities it was about 28% start for the period of 2021-22 the projected funds need it was rupees 449508 crore where is allocated funds was rupees 324658 crore

Table 2: Composition of Defence budget

Defence budget allocation (in Rs crore)				
Major Head	Actuals 2020-21	Revised Estimates 2021-22	Budget Estimates 2021-22	% change 2021-22 RE to 2022-23 BE
Salaries	134091	150855	163453	8
Capital Outlay	131803	131050	144304	10
Pensions	128066	116878	119696	2
stores	48437	46968	40561	-14
Other Expenses	42884	56832	57152	1
Total	485681	502884	525166	4

Sources: Expenditure Budget, Union Budget 2022-23

The current defence budget is counterproductive, our revenue expenditure is high, there is very little money left for capital expenditure or modernization of the armed forces. More funds are needed to meet the obligations of pensions and the situation become more grave after the implementation of one rank one pension scheme, the standing committee on defence in 2018 had recommended that ministry of defence should be allocated a fixed budget of about 3% of GDP. during the year 2012-13 to 2022-23 defence pension budget has increased at the average rate of 10.7% annually which is 2% higher than the average growth of budget which is 8.6% annually the pension component of the budget has increased from 19% to 26% during the period 2019-20 which has fallen marginally to 23% in the year 2022-23. The expenditure on the pension is 119696 crores against the revised estimate of Rs 116878 crore. Even if the government does 3% of GDP on defence expenditure, even then rising pension rates will nullify its effect and there will be very little money left for capital expenditure. How the Agniveer is suitable in solving this problem? Agniveer is the solution to this problem because neither will he remain in service for a long time, due to which the obligation of giving pension will also end, secondly, they will remain in service for a short period at a very the salary budget of the government will also be less and the government will be able to do modernization with this money. A new Agniveer will replace the 15-year-old soldier, in this way the army will be able to save in both salary and pension budget and this benefit will be seen after 15 years. If we have to estimate pension savings only, then we can calculate the net present value by multiplying the cash outflow by the bank lending discount rate of RBI. A retiring soldier enjoys pension for almost 30 years as he retires at the age of 40 and the average age is around 70 years. An accurate calculation can't make because the government has not given its data. The net present value of pension outflows is rupees 1 crore per Soldier. Calculated at RBI Bank lending rate. This amount is based on the Thumb Rule model this amount will accrue only after 15 years but today's reforms become tomorrow's savings similarly today's deficits are tomorrow's taxes. Through Agnipath scheme Government of India try to manage the revenue expenditure specially the pension expenditure under control.

WAY FORWARD

The main thing under this scheme is that the aim of the government is for the best. Talk openly on the types of concerns or the problems that the youth are not able to understand, due to which the youth are protesting on the street. Then some amendments should be made in this scheme, explaining this scheme in detail and solving the doubts of the youth. This plan may prove to be a good plan.

REFERENCE

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