

Distress of Mother India

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ARTICLE INFO

Published Online:
31 March 2019

ABSTRACT

Agriculture is a war between Man and Nature.

- George Debey

Being the back bone of the Indian Economy, agriculture provides livelihood to a majority of the people in the country. Today, agriculture provides more than half of employment opportunities in our economy. It is the main a source income of more than 70% of the population in rural areas. At the same time, there are many issues that challenge the policy makers. It has a number of unanswered questions when compared to other areas of development while talking about the development of agriculture and related sectors. At any time, the Indian agriculture sector is entirely dependent on the monsoon. What effect will be there upon those who depend on agriculture for livelihood? what about farmers' suicides? Low yields in agriculture, malnutrition, plan deficits and productivity decreases are the primary reasons for losing farmers income.

The farm sectors income is gradually decreasing in our GDP. As a result, There is an agrarian crisis which drives the farmers to suicides. But, this is not only disadvantage of other agriculture crisis, but also other losses. Agricultural suicides are more common in the country. Before searching for the answers of all questions, suddenly this year, the farmers should come to know about the agenda of political parties. Now, many states have given priority to agriculture in their annual budgets. In fact, the primary sector is now in a big crisis. Poverty was the main concept to politics in the past. Poverty is synonymous with undernourishment. More 27% of the world's undernourished people live in India. Actually, there is an inseparable connection to poverty and agriculture. Agricultural based economies have emerged as industrial based economies. But India is still called agrarian economy. The Central and State Governments have been introducing several programs, but it is in vain. This is our agriculture and poverty story. The Experts who know the crisis of primary sector don't even talk about the actual tragedy.

This is the story of our Mother India

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KEYWORDS: Thrives, loan waiver, outstretched, tantalizing, cattle breeding, Entities, trading portal.

Introduction

Agriculture Sector in our Country has a number of unanswered questions when compared to other areas of development while talking about the development of agriculture and related sectors. At the same time, there are many issues that challenge the policy makers, such as the lack of basic facilities, backwardness, health, education, migration to cities, giving Minimum Support Price(MSP) to the produce, exploitation of the middle men, etc. There is no doubt that agriculture is an important sector which plays a vital role in terms providing livelihood to the millions of people and supplying food to the millions of people in the country. Today, agriculture provides employment to more than half of the population in our economy directly or

indirectly. Agriculture being the back bone of the Indian economy, according to the 2011 census, it provides main livelihood to more than 70% of the population particularly in the rural areas. However, the share of farm sector's income is gradually decreasing in our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) because of uneven resources distribution and failure of monsoon sometimes in some regions of the country. The future picture of the agriculture in the country looks very bleak unless some remedial measures are initiated.

Primarily, the agriculture sector faces problems on several fronts. On the supply side, the cultivation of variety of crops has not increased significantly and in some other cases the crop yield is not stable. The conditions governing

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rural Indian agriculture of 1957 has not changed significantly even after major initiatives undertaken by the Governments in our country .The agriculture sector continues to be plagued by farm thrives, rural debt, lack of MSP, etc. Even though, all the major political parties are aware of these problems, they do not have a concrete plan to solve them.

Severe crisis

In the last budgets of the Central and the State Governments, the farm sector received top priority. It is started with Telangana. Now, many states have given priority to agriculture in their annual budgets. Now, all political parties are declaring farmers’ loan waiver and investment support. What does this mean? In rural areas, exploitation of the farmers and arising problems have not changed.

In fact, the agricultural sector is now in a big crisis. Situation is so grave that in some conditions, it is leading to former suicides. The farm suicides has , unfortunately , become a new norm in different parts of the country. The farmers are now resorting to agitations and strikes for their demands. In order to avoid electoral reverses, the Ruling dispensations have made the agrarian crisis as the agenda. It became a vote bank politics. Now all the political parties’ focus is on agriculture farmers. Will this be another new vote bank politically? These two things can have two types of vote banks. Infect, there is an inseparable connection to poverty and agriculture.

Let us consider some statistics to find out the relationship between agriculture and poverty. In the 1950s the share of agriculture in our GDP was 53%, which means we had more than half of our GDP in agriculture, which is down to 15% now. The Industrial Sector and Service Sector annual growth rate has been more than 6%over the past 7 centuries compared to agriculture. The primary sector annual growth rate is reduced to less than 3%. The share of agriculture in the GDP has been declining, but the number of people dependent on agriculture has not decreased. It means the high percentages of the people are still dependent on low income. This is one of the main reasons why the poverty has not reduced. According to 2017-2018 Economic Survey, there is no change in agricultural family annual income in the past 4 ½ years. The average monthly income of farm families stopped at Rs.8,931/- . Agriculture is the source of livelihood for 60% of population in the country. For decades, our farmers are being cheated by our rulers with mesmerizing schemes to reduce the poverty level but with no positive outcome.

World Scenario:

Let’s consider the factors for economic development the world wide. How is poverty reduced? Agriculture based economies have emerged as industry based economies. A large number of people have moved to other sectors from the agriculture sector. The number of farmers in agriculture

sector has decreased. Still, the per capita earnings grew substantially. People’s living standards have increased. Poverty has reduced. Such a scenario is witnessed in America and other European countries. On the contrary, India is a country with the highest labor force in agriculture in the world but with no substantial change in the living conditions of the farmers . Indonesia and Ethiopia are next place of India.

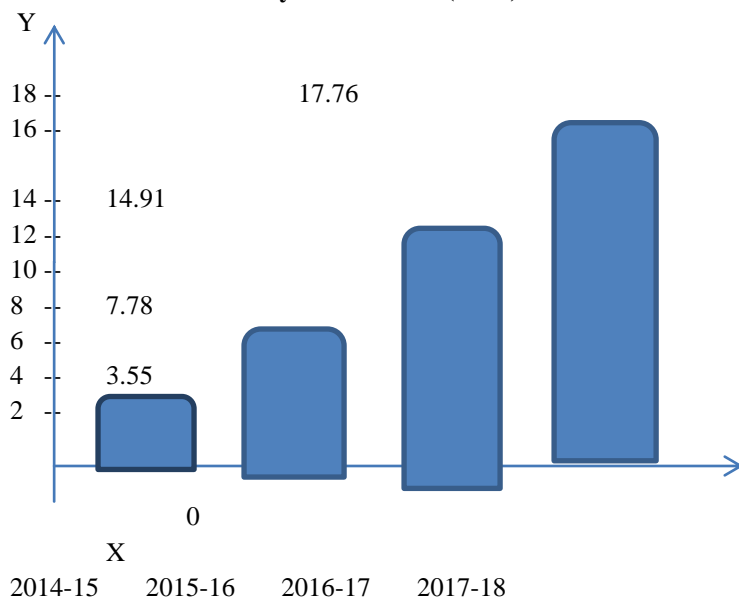
Agricultural Labor Force in total Population (in%)

Country	Labor Force
USA	2%
France	3%
UK	1%
Taiwan	5%
Japan	3.5%
South Korea	5%
China	17.51%
India	45%

The above table shows almost half of our country’s work force is dependent on agriculture compared to other developed countries . If we consider the per capita income of these developed countries, we are not even with them. It means that our agriculture sector is not a viable source of income for many families. That is why poverty is rampant here. We need to consider another dimension to know the relationship between agriculture and poverty.

Over the past seven decades, our governments have spent a lot of money on agriculture in terms of farm subsidies. At present, the government spends over two lakhs and twenty thousand crore rupees on agriculture. It includes the expenditure of irrigation facilities. Fertilizers, electricity, crop insurance, seeds and subsidies on farm loans . Apart from this, the government collects huge quantity of food grains more than market procurement price from farmers. Still , why is the primary sector in debt trap? The government spends huge quantity of money on this sector, why do the farmers commit suicides? Some people say that we do not introduce reforms in the marketing system. The Farmers’ earning will grow if they are implemented. Economists say that agriculture productivity should be increased. The Indian agriculture is at the cross roads while demand for commodities is increasing, input prices have increased steeply and there is need to increase productivity. In another argument, famers should be able to increase their earnings by not only farming but also in the ancillary sector. The farmers get additional income through poultry farming, dairying and cattle breeding and also earn through to cultivate fruits and vegetables. Also agro-based industries should be encouraged.

Growth rate of Ancillary sector in A.P(in %)



Source: AP Economy

Agricultural products should be processed and exported. It will increase farmer’s savings. Infact, these have certain limits. All of these do not give good results after a stage. By these methods, there is no guarantee that poverty will be reduced. But the reality is different.

Chinese Paradigm

To understand the relationship between agriculture and poverty, our neighboring country, Chinese model may be considered. China introduced the economic reforms 1979. India has implemented economic reforms since 1991. What has happened during this period in these two countries? In 1980, China was an agricultural based economy. According to 1985 data, 63% of Chinese population lived in villages. In total work force, 63% of population depended on agriculture. According 1981 World Bank report, 81% of

China’s population lived below poverty line. By 2017, agriculture dependent population in China came down 17.5% and mere 3% of the population is poor. Poverty will totally be eradicated in next two years and in our country whereas in India 45% of population is still totally dependent on agriculture. Asper U.N.O report 28% of population lives in poverty. Forty years ago China’s per capita income was \$ 194.80 and India’s per capita income was \$ 263.84 then. Now the situation has changed. Last year, our per capita income was \$2,134 and Chinese per capita was \$10,200. How was it possible to increase income in china? The dependent population on the agricultural sector has declined and poverty also has decreased. But in India, Infrastructure facilities and industries are not growing in the field of services sector. The Governments should endeavor to encourage self-employment schemes so that the dependent population decreases in agriculture sector.

These several causes have combined to bring about progressive sub division and fragmentation of holdings in India. Small holdings lead to waste of human energy and material resources. It obstructs improvements in agriculture. Agricultural operations cannot be carried on efficiently, in spite of the sincere efforts made by the governments from time to time. Agrarian crisis could not be come out successfully. Poverty does not decrease. It means, there is a solution to the agrarian crisis in the country, there should be overall development on agriculture sector.

Fasal Insurance Where Assurance?

The Pradhan Mantri Fasal BimaYozana (PMFBY) is unsuccessful scheme for peasants. There are several conditions in this scheme are not favorable to the agrarians. The PMFBY, which came into force in 2016, has failed in practice. The main reason for its failure is the scheme not implemented in many states and lack of understanding among the farmers.

Details of premium collected and claims settled under PMFBY during 2016-18

State	No. of Farmers Enrollment (Rs.in crores)	Farmers Share in premium (Rs.in Crores)	Claim Paid by Insurance Companies (Rs. In Crores)
Maharashtra	2.21	9,142	5,100
Madhya Pradesh	1.41	8,738	7,190
Rajasthan	1.52	4,574	3,220
Uttar Pradesh	1.211	2,484	512
West Bengal	0.80	1,423	554
Andhra Pradesh	0.36	2,180	1,353
Telangana	0.20	931	306

Source: Ministry of agriculture, Central Government

The scheme has been accused as being a source of income for Private Insurance Companies. The farmers are exploited and their funds are diverted to Private Insurance Companies under this scheme. The Centre has provided a share of 18 insurance companies across the country. There are 13 private and 5 public companies entities under this scheme.

Un-successful e-NAM

The National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) was launched by the Central Government on April 14, 2016 as a Pan – India electronic trading Portal for agricultural products which creates a unified national market for agricultural goods. It is already announced that 585 markets have been linked in

online trading. But it is only on paper. In fact, traders are not interested in e-NAM as they don't want to give peasants a chance to involve in price discovery mechanism.

Conclusion

It is impossible to get a price in such marketing systems. This is our agriculture & poverty story. The experts who know all these things do not even talk about the actual tragedy. We break-up the back bone of the farmers. How should they survive in this digital economy of the world?

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