



CONTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURE IN INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT

Gyan Prakash^{1*}, K K Mourya¹ and Richa Tripathi²

¹Department of Agricultural Statistics, Acharya Narendra Deva University of Agriculture and Technology, Kumarganj, Ayodhya, (Uttar Pradesh)

²Department of Agricultural Engineering, Bhagwant University, Ajmer, (Rajasthan)

*Corresponding Author Mail ID: gyanprakash0200917@gmail.com

Abstract

Agriculture remains the backbone of India's economy, supporting nearly half the population and ensuring food security, industrial growth and rural development. Despite historical progress through the Green, White, Yellow, Brown and Blue Revolutions, the sector faces challenges such as fragmented land, climate change and low profitability. Technological innovations, policy reforms and sustainable practices are essential for building a self-reliant and future-ready agricultural system.

Introduction

India is an agricultural country where the livelihood of the majority of the population depends on agriculture. Agriculture has been the fundamental foundation of Indian civilization whether economically, socially, or culturally. At the time of independence, India's economy was entirely based on agriculture and even today, it remains the backbone of the country's economic development. Agriculture not only provides food and nutrition to the country, but also serves as a major source of raw materials, employment opportunities and foreign exchange earnings for the industrial sector. Nearly 50% of India's population is directly or indirectly involved in agriculture and related activities. The Green Revolution, the White Revolution and technological innovations have made Indian agriculture self-sufficient. Today, India is one of the world's leading food grain productions.

Nevertheless, challenges such as climate change, land fragmentation and price instability remain. Thus, agriculture is not only a key pillar of India's economic development, but also the foundation of the country's social stability, environmental balance and self-reliance. The vision of India's overall development is incomplete without the empowerment of agriculture.

Historical Perspective of Agriculture in India

The history of agriculture in India begins with the Indus Valley Civilization. At that time, people cultivated crops such as wheat, barley and millet. In the Vedic period, agriculture was given the title of "food provider." During British rule, agriculture suffered due to colonial policies, trapping farmers in poverty and debt. After independence, the Indian government prioritized agricultural reforms. Land reforms, irrigation projects, the Green Revolution, the White Revolution, the Yellow Revolution, the Brown Revolution and the Blue Revolution, among other schemes, made Indian agriculture self-reliant. The country, which was once dependent on foreign food grains, has now become a grain exporter.

The Role of Agriculture in The Indian Economy

1. Contribution to National Income

At the time of independence, agriculture contributed over 50 percent to India's national income. Although this percentage has declined over time due to the growth of industry and the service sector, the agricultural sector still contributes approximately 15 to 18% to GDP. This

proportion may have declined, but without it, the economic structure would become unbalanced.

2. Major Employment Sector

Approximately 45 to 50% of India's population is engaged in agriculture and related activities. The majority of the rural population is engaged in farming, animal husbandry, fisheries, horticulture, etc. This is the largest source of employment generation, especially in areas where industrialization is limited.

3. Contribution to Food Security

Agriculture meets the country's food needs. Given India's growing population, increasing food production is essential. The Green Revolution significantly increased wheat and rice production. Today, India is not only self-sufficient in food grains but also exports. This has ensured the country's food security.

4. Contribution to Industrial Development

Agriculture provides raw materials for many industries, such as the cotton industry, sugarcane industry, food processing, textile industry, tobacco industry, forest-based industries, etc. For example, sugar mills, oil mills and textile mills are directly dependent on agriculture. Therefore, agriculture is the foundation of industrial development.

5. Contribution to Exports

Agricultural products play a significant role in India's total exports. Tea, coffee, spices, rice, cotton, tobacco, sugarcane and seafood are the hallmarks of Indian agriculture in the global market. Agricultural exports generate foreign exchange for the country, which strengthens the economy.

6. Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation

Most of India's rural areas are dependent on agriculture. When agriculture prospers, rural incomes increase, which improves education, health, housing and consumption. Development

in the rural economy reduces poverty and strengthens social equality.

Agricultural Reform and Development Plans in India

1. Land Reform Programs - After independence, reforms such as the abolition of zamindari, land ceilings, land distribution and sharecropping laws were implemented. Their aim was to give land ownership to farmers and increase production.

2. Green Revolution - In the 1960s, the Green Revolution gave a new direction to Indian agriculture. The use of high-yielding seeds, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation and modern equipment significantly increased wheat and rice production. Due to the impact of this revolution in Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, India became self-sufficient in food grains.

3. White Revolution - Operation Flood was launched to achieve self-sufficiency in milk production. This made India the world's largest milk producer. This increased rural incomes and improved nutritional levels.

4. Blue Revolution - This program was implemented to increase fish production. This increased fishermen's incomes and boosted marine exports.

5. National Agriculture Policy and Mission- The Government of India has launched National Agriculture Policy and schemes like Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, Soil Health Card Scheme, e-NAM (National Agriculture Market) which provide technical and financial assistance to the farmers.

Technological Advancements and Innovations in Agriculture

Today, agriculture in India is no longer merely a traditional activity; it has become a convergence of science and technology. Drones, satellite imaging, sensor-based irrigation, organic

farming, gene-modified seeds and Agri-tech startups have made agriculture more efficient and profitable.

Under the Digital India campaign, farmers are being provided with information and marketing facilities through mobile apps, e-governance and online markets.

Challenges Facing Agriculture

Although agriculture's contribution is immense, the sector faces several challenges:

- 1. Fragmentation of land holdings** – Small land holdings limit the use of modern technology.
- 2. Lack of irrigation** – Dependence on monsoon remains high.
- 3. Declining soil fertility** – Excessive use of chemical fertilizers is degrading land quality.
- 4. Inequality in farmers' incomes** – Due to rising production costs and price control policies, farmers are unable to earn fair profits.
- 5. Climate change** – Abnormal rainfall, drought, floods, and increased temperatures are affecting crops.
- 6. Storage and transportation problems** – A large amount of crops are lost due to lack of adequate cold storage and transportation facilities.

Social and Environmental Dimensions of Agriculture in India's Development

Agriculture is not only an economic sector, but also socially and environmentally important. It is linked to rural culture, traditions, celebrations and folk life. Festivals like Baisakhi, Pongal and Onam are all linked to agriculture. From an environmental perspective, agriculture impacts forests, water sources and biodiversity. Organic farming, mixed farming and sustainable agricultural practices help maintain environmental balance.

Efforts Towards an Agriculture-Based Self-Reliant India

The Government of India is giving agriculture a central place under the "Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan." The goal is to make agriculture profitable, sustainable and technologically sound. Under this initiative, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), agricultural export policy, and rural agro-industries are being encouraged. Agriculture is being transformed from a mere livelihood to an entrepreneurial venture, providing rural youth with new employment opportunities.

Future Prospects and Directions

In the coming years, Indian agriculture can rapidly progress in the following areas:

- Organic and natural farming
- Production of high-value crops (fruits, vegetables, flowers, spices)
- Expansion of agriculture-based industries
- Digital agriculture and smart farming
- Water management and energy conservation in agriculture

These reforms will make agriculture more sustainable and profitable.

CONCLUSION

Agriculture plays an essential role in India's economic, social and cultural life. It is not only the basis of food, clothing and livelihoods, but also a symbol of the nation's self-reliance and stability. Unless Indian agriculture is strong and prosperous, India's all-round development is impossible. Therefore, it is essential to prioritize technological innovation, policy reforms, market access and environmental balance in the agricultural sector so that India can emerge as a self-reliant, prosperous and sustainable agricultural economy.

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