

**IMPACT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ON SELF-RELIANT INDIA
MISSION-FUTURE PERSPECTIVE OF INDIAN ECONOMY**

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1.1 Introduction

Self-reliance is based on community development approach, which supports the involvement of communities in decision-making and planning process for increasing levels of economic activities as well as social and economic links with local communities (UNHCR, 2005:1). Gandhian model of self-reliance emphasized on integrated rural development. According to this model, agro-industrial economy based on the principles of decentralised democracy and social justice can be fruitful for Indian self-reliance.

The village as the nucleus of economic growth, has been always given the prominent importance in Gandhian economics (Gosalia, 1979: 81). Indian policy planning adopted virtually closed economy following an inward-looking development strategy since independence which was based on achieving self-reliance in all possible dimensions of economic activities of the nation. In 1970's, an active promotion of indigenous technology creation and adoption boosted the concept of self-reliance. Similarly, an effort towards attaining self-reliance in food grain production via green revolution was an evidence of self-reliance deepening dimension (Ray, 2016: 32 &34). Present day self-reliance India mission (Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan) is based on quantum jump in economy, infrastructure development, technology driven system, vibrant energy demography and demand & supply chain management (Airan, 2020: 2). The current Indian economic scenario is oriented towards the industrial growth and development. Raw material and human resources are the two basic necessities for smooth functioning of all kind of industries. Both of these essentialities are being fulfilled by the agricultural sector of rural India. Due to unemployment, people from such places move towards employment-rich places, which is also called migration. We saw this

issue recently when during the pandemic, so many poor people, walking bare-foot, with so many problems, still migrating back to their homes. To avoid facing such situations, the Indian government and the citizens must unite and will have to make an abstract and constructive decisions as well as far-reaching policies to fulfil the dream of self-reliance. The first efforts to be made require a radical change in the agricultural system as this is the only field that faced the pandemic COVID-19 without affecting the economy. In these tough times during lockdown, when we saw a huge decline in Indian economy, we were dependent on the agricultural activities/sector with all our hopes. Even the RBI governor also believes that our economy has seen a great contribution from agricultural sector, and asks for policies that will improve the income of this sector. Determination of Indian farmers is clearly visible from the fact that when every other industry was closed, he was working hard in his fields to provide food to the country. The reality so far is that this sector is being ignored from the past times.

All political parties are seen as making false promises to gain vote from these farmers and then side kicking these promises and policies once the election is over. In order to bring about substantial reforms in the agricultural system, leaving the tendency of centralization in the policy making process, the core of the agriculture i.e., the farmers of the rural India will have to be a part of this process of policy making in which Gram Panchayat can play an important role.

The Local problems must be resolved at local levels, as at village level, each one knows of other's potential and knowledge. May be less educated, but a farmer's knowledge is enough basic to solve such issues which is economical and far-reaching. Such practical knowledge can be used as a weapon to reach the goal of self-reliance. Gram panchayat can take this as an advantage by encouraging such people, by giving away honour, prizes or awards so that he can increase his knowledge and help in resolving such petty issues. Rural India is associated with a storehouse of art and culture, Panchayati Raj Institutions can play a positive role for this recognition of culture, providing them a new direction. And these talents will act as flag bearer of self-reliant India and India's development.

We must bring on changes in agricultural sector. The department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, has said in a report that our agriculture will play a big role in the revival of economy affected by the pandemic. There is a need to link agricultural products with commercial content, to increase sale of produced goods. For this, Panchayati Raj Institutions

along with non-Governmental organizations can arrange mandis, markets etc. at local levels for the selling of products. The FPOs can be linked with Panchayati raj institutions. Farmers should use natural manure. By working on the field, farmer can prevent migration due to unemployment and this will enforce a boost in the concept of self-reliance.

1.2 Agriculture Policy Formulation

India is an agriculture sector dominated country blessed with favourable climate and fertile landmass. Still agriculture sector is struggling due to deliberate ignorance of subsequent governments since independence which garnered votes on the false promises of farmers' welfare. If any political party truly intends to reform agriculture sector, then best approach will be to explore the grassroots realities and collect appropriate data followed by right analysis for designing a workable policy. Whenever we talk about grassroot level analysis for policy making, the discussion of Panchayati Raj Institutions provisioned by our constitution automatically follows up. Due to huge diversity in climatic conditions, crop cultivation, irrigational channels and difference in productivity levels, a single national level agriculture policy is not an ideal approach to move forward. Agriculture and PRIs being state subjects under Seventh Schedule of Indian Constitution, both of these can be amalgamated so that former can play a proactive role in agriculture planning and policy formulation. Under 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, agriculture and its extension are the first subject for PRIs provided in Article 243G and Eleventh schedule. This responsibility given to panchayats itself shows the importance of local participation in agriculture policy and planning. To achieve the objectives of policy management, it is pre-requisite to explore the ground realities and basic facts on which policy instrument will be devised. Every state government has its own working mechanism and limitations for fulfilling the local needs. So, formulation of agriculture policy can best be designed by adopting a decentralised approach initiating from policy data collected at base. In this section, the following policy mechanisms are discussed where Panchayati Raj Institutions can play an important role.

1.3 Agriculture Planning

Agriculture planning is a very diverse area in which a number of facets like irrigational planning, Crop Insurance, agriculture research, credit facilities, agriculture marketing, contract farming, agriculture produce processing and storage etc. are included. Each of these planning aspects have inherent connection to rural regions only. Most of these schemes are devised on

the basis of data collected by various research institutions. If there is fault in data collection and its careful interpretation, then possibility of policy failure rises because information will not represent the actual ground scenario persisting in farming sector. The only remedy to avoid such policy failure is to include local level governance bodies in data collection as well as finding solutions at decentralised levels. This approach will also have a financial viability option for the central government.

1.4 Agriculture Irrigation

Irrigation is the central point for agriculture growth and self-reliance mainly in river-fed areas. For long times, irrigation has been an issue for successive governments, be it distribution of canal waters or mega project of connecting rivers to channelise water for drought prone areas. Various policy instruments have been adopted for proper distribution of water between the states but problems still persist. The role of local institutions in water management techniques can prove to be amicable solution for irrigation use. These local level institutions have expertise in traditional techniques of water conservation and rain water harvesting for recharging the groundwater which can be adopted by central government as well to implement in other areas where there is feasibility. There are numerous other areas where PRIs can play a decisive role in policy formulation as well as its effective implementation. During the times of crop failure due adverse climatic conditions or other causes, the agriculture insurance survey can be carried out by panchayats and administer the allocation of claims to the affected farmers. At the local levels, Panchayats can constitute a special committee and sub-committee to look into proper management of agriculture practices. A capable Panchayat can work out for contemporary issues related to agriculture such as agriculture tourism, agriculture education, use of Solar energy, development of agriculture skills, local markets/haats, organic farming, subsidy management, agriculture credit facilities, land conservation, soil health, environment protection and other farmer welfarist activities.

1.5 Irrigational Management

One of the most endorsed schemes of central government i.e., PM- Krishi Sinchayi Yojna (PM-KSY) have the provision for articulating state level irrigation plan by accumulating block and district level irrigation plans but village level plan is not included. Whereas it is clearly understood that block level planning is only possible when planning is also done at its

lower tier too. Panchayats can play a positive role in developing and regulating village level irrigational plans.

In such areas, panchayats can get their groundwater tested through government laboratories and if found unsafe for human consumption then they can demand from higher administrative authorities for better quality of water supply. In the areas where irrigation is mainly carried out by extracting groundwater by tube wells and subsidised electricity or diesel is utilised for operating engine, new scheme of government under which solar pumps are installed in farms can also be promoted by panchayats. These bodies can aware the villagers about government subsidy schemes and ecological benefits of use of non-conventional energy for irrigational water extraction. Simultaneously, excessive use of groundwater for irrigation is not favour of long-term perspective of area, so crop diversification from water intensive crops like paddy and wheat to less water consuming crops should be encouraged. Local panchayats can coordinate with various government agencies to avail tap water through pipelines, sprinkle irrigation, subsidy on rain water harvesting instruments, etc. Modern techniques can revive pond system, build check dams and also treat sewerage water for irrigational purpose. There is regular intervention required by panchayats for cleaning canals, strengthening canal banks and smooth flow of excess water.

1.6 Conclusion

It can be said that Panchayats can play a multifaceted role in agriculture development and irrigational management for self-reliance India. Starting from collection of information for planning in agriculture development and irrigational management to analyse the government policy mechanisms. The implementation of these policies and plans can be made successful by adopting an inclusive approach towards the role of panchayats. The local topographical familiarity and traditional knowledge of rural people can facilitate effective agriculture growth and irrigational management for better farm productivity. Panchayats can play a significant role as linking pin between several government departments and agencies which are working for water resource management and agriculture information at their respective levels. In fact, whole vision of agriculture development to aide in prospects from rural development to national development transits through domain of empowered Panchayati Raj Institutions for achieving the objectives of self-reliance India

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