



EVOLUTION OF FARMING SYSTEM IN INDIA AND RELEVANCE OF AMBEDKAR'S VIEWS

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ABSTRACT

Indian agriculture was traditional and stagnant at the time of independence. The main characteristics were feudal land relations, low productivity and primitive technology used. After independence the first task of Indian Government was to initiate growth strategy in agriculture. Abolition of intermediaries in agriculture like Zamindars and Jagirdars was accomplished after Independence. The Zamindari system was abolished legally but it still continues to exist in a different garb. Land reforms laws have proved ineffective. The landlords still rule the roost in rural areas. The land tenancy system is continued to exist. They lease out their land to tenants and charge higher rents. The various tenancy malpractices hardly provide any incentive to tenant farmers to improve land and productivity.

KEYWORDS : Farming System, Ambedkar's Views.

INTRODUCTION :

There is also tremendous pressure of population increment on agriculture. This has led to overcrowding, subdivision and fragmentation of land holdings. The small and fragmented farms, farmers required to maintain a minimum quality of agricultural implements and capital. Due to small size of land, they are under-utilized. Similar is the situation in case of labour. Due to surplus labour, disguised unemployment is more in Indian agriculture. Due to fragmented land holdings surplus labour cannot be effectively utilized for production. They are different scattered unorganized farmers. It has been facing various problems and constraints in the establishments and functioning the production organization. The continued growth and small farmers development required innovative model of farming organization in India. Several farming system have been adopted for the development of agriculture.

The 20th century brought significant changes in the global agriculture. In developed countries like United States, the face of agriculture was the small family farming. At present, the agricultural landscape in developed and developing countries is dominated by large farming operations. Many of these operations are still family-owned management. The production methods remain diverse. The farming is large and more mechanized and specialized than ever before (Chavas, 2001).

India is also not exceptional from other countries of the world. The private sector as well as government is at cross-roads in the choice of the best models for farming organization development since Independence, what kind of institutional and organizational arrangements/model are appropriate for overcoming problems of agriculture, current constraints, and maximizing production and productivity and rural development in India. The paper is to study the evolution of farming systems in India to solve the problems of Indian Agriculture and to examine the relevance of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's views on farming system and organization of agriculture. It is a conceptual analysis.

Ambedkar views on Farming System

Dr. Ambedkar had made a deep study of Indian Agriculture. He wrote many research articles in order to solve the problems of agriculture and farmers in India. He also led various farmers movement for equity and justice to the farmers. His thoughts on agriculture are found in his articles namely, "Small Holdings in Indian and their remedies (1917)" and also in "Status and minorities (1947)". He Described that holdings of lands by few people is an acute problem of Indian agriculture which has various disadvantages, like difficulties in cultivation and utilization and resources, low productivity, increasing cost, inadequate income and low standard of living and poverty & exploitation. Ambedkar's main concern was the nature of land holdings, especially their fragmentation and division into unproductive and economically unviable structure. He criticized the existing definition of economic holding which was defined from the point of view of consumption rather than that of production. He remarked, "any definition, therefore, that leans on consumption mistakes the nature of an economic holding which is essentially an enterprise in production. What is more important for the purpose of production is the process of combining the factors of production." The basic problem of Indian agriculture was that it was unable to generate surplus which ultimately led to scarcity of capital. This resulted in the inefficient use of resources, surplus labour and superfluous employment which by raising the cost of production culminated in low agricultural productivity. Thus the process of overall economic growth gets adversely affected. Ambedkar was of opinion that the process of consolidation of holding could eradicate the ill effect of uneconomic holding and usher in the progress of the cultivators. Therefore, Ambedkar suggested the collective farming for consolidation of holdings. He also stresses the need for industrialization so as to move surplus labour from agriculture to other productive occupations, accompanied by large capital investments in agriculture to raise yields. He also emphasis on extremely important role for the state in transformation of agriculture and advocates the nationalization of land and the leasing out of land to groups of cultivators, who are to be encouraged to form co-operatives in order to promote agriculture.

In the era of Globalization agricultural growth rate is not only stagnant but also indicates continuous declining trends. It is commented that the government has concentrated only on the technical problems and ignored institutional problems. Even today, the sub-division and fragmentation is the main obstacle in the development of agriculture. It led to small and uneconomic holdings, which resulted in fall in agricultural productivity. Hence, Dr. Ambedkar views on consolidation of land holdings through farming system organisation could increase the agriculture production and will be the best solution in the present time. So, government of India needs to make appropriate changes in its agricultural production system with the help of changing in the mode of farming system.

Evolution of Farming System in India

Since independence India has been adopted various types of Farming Systems to improve the agricultural production. But, the agriculture productivity stills a major concerning issue in the agriculture development. At the time of independence the prevailing land tenure system was complex. It was believed that land tenure system was unsuitable for both from the viewpoint of production and social and economic justice. Hence, reforms of land holding system took place. Land reforms agenda included the abolition of intermediaries between the state and the cultivator, tenancy reforms, reducing concentration of land ownership and the consolidation of fragmented land holdings. Land reforms could not make much progress and failed to attain its objectives due to lack of political will, legal hurdles, improper implementation, and deficiency of reliable records of land.

After the failure of land reforms the government appointed a committee on agrarian reforms chaired by J.C. Kumarappa. He submitted his report in 1950 and concluded that collective farming to be suitable essentially for the development of reclaimed waste land. The Committee also suggested three other alternatives of farming's, namely capitalist farming, state farming and individual peasant farming. The peasant farming system is a system of farming in which an

individual practices as a sole proprietor who possesses permanent, inheritable and transferable rights on land. This system of farming has also not improved the production situation in India. Failure of this system is due to scattered and uneconomic land holdings. The small size of land itself becomes a bottleneck to full utilization of other indivisible resources. It means serious diseconomies of small scale operations of land and results in high average costs of production and low yields per acre per man. It also leads to farmers into vicious circle of poverty.

The system of large scale capitalist farming would then seem to provide an alternative to peasant farming. This mode of organization would include substantial areas, large units of cultivation, capital, and mechanization of farm operations, productivity and markets. But this system of farming also fails on the grounds of employment, social desirability and feasibility of agriculture farming.

There are two other modes of farming systems namely, collective farming and state farming. In India these two farming systems involve mechanization of agriculture. Moreover they are facing same problems of capitalist farming. In state farming, the economic efficiency is highly doubtful. It includes the bureaucratic management, administrative delays and low incentives to agriculture. It seems make capitalist farming unsuited for emulation.

Then, the idea of co-operative farming surfaced in the form of “co-operative village management” in the First Five Year plan (1952) with the village as the unit of land management with individual families or groups of families cultivating blocks of land allotted by the village management body. However, right of ownership of the village land would be recognized and compensated through an ownership dividend at the end of each harvest. Dandekar (1974) comments that “This was a rather naive concept based on a utopian notion of a village and plain ignorance, or unwillingness to see the truth about village community functioning.” The Second Plan (1956) placed an even larger emphasis on co-operative farming and stated that targets of co-operative farming should be linked with those of agricultural production with the help of the National Extension Service and 'the Community Development Programme (CDP). In the Third Plan (1961) also, the possible contribution of co-operative farming to rural progress was mentioned. It was expected to develop as a mass movement at the village level. For the Third Plan a programme for the organization of several pilot projects was accepted by the Government of India. During the period of the Third Plan however, official emphasis on co-operative farming started declining. In the Fourth Plan document (1969) they shift in the emphasis from co-operative farming towards service co-operatives connected with Agricultural credit, marketing and consumer needs. Since the beginning of the Fifth Plan (1974) co-operative farming has ceased to be mentioned any more. The main causes of failure of co-operative farming are farmers' attachment with land, lack of co-operative spirit, illiteracy, lack of capital, dishonesty of the societies and repayment of debt.

In the 1960s, the Green Revolution allowed India to overcome chronic food deficits. The food grain production has increased significantly from 82 million tons in 1960-61 to 129 million tons in 1980-81 and 213 million tons in 2003-04, to meet out food security and attain self-sufficiency especially in the production of our staple food rice and wheat. Basically the main objective of Green Revolution was producing more food and other agricultural product. Modernization was one of the main concepts of the Green Revolution. This modernization of the agriculture sector was possible by adopting high-yielding varieties of seeds, modifying farm equipment, and substantially increasing chemical fertilizers. As result agriculture has some development in productivity. At the beginning of the Green Revolution, there was a large growth in Indian agriculture. But, instability has emerged in growth of agriculture. The Green Revolution was on a rapid decline.

Economic reforms of 1991 also brought changes in the development of Indian agriculture sector. Economic reforms process involved deregulation, reduced government participation in economic activities, and liberalization. Although there is no any direct impact of 1991 policy on agriculture but it was affected indirectly by devaluation of exchange rate, liberalization of external trade and dis-protection to industry. During this period opening up of domestic market due to new international trade accord and World Trade Organization was another change that affected

agriculture. This raised new challenges among policymakers. Hence, a New Agricultural Policy was launched by Indian Government in July 2000 to the development of agriculture.

This new agricultural policy has assigned a key role to private sector. Private sector participation through promotion of Contract Farming and Land-Leasing Arrangements (Corporate Farming), to accelerate the technology transfer process, bring more cash inflows and to create assured market and high value added to the farm produce. Basic purpose of adoption of such a policy is to provide a proper linkage between “farm and market” by giving farmer an assured price and procuring the farm produce on the one hand and insuring timely and adequate input supply to the agro-based and food industry on the other. Need for such a policy has its genesis in the demand and supply disequilibrium that agriculture faces. The farmers have to dump these produce for the want of buyers on the one hand and agro-based industries face difficulties in procuring quality inputs on the other (Dhillon and Singh, 2006).

The model of contract farming is also not working properly. The small and marginal farmers are not getting benefits of this farming system. Contract firms are biased in case of small farmers. Another reason of failure of contract farming is illegal contract between firm and farmer. The price of produce is low in the market. The firm rejected the produce on the basis of quality of produce and therefore farmers get loss. Firms also not take any risk in the production process. All the risk due to calamities is borne by the farmers. The contract farming is not all beneficial to the small and marginal farmers. However, it helps to land consolidations for large scale operations of agriculture utilizing modern equipment and technology in the cultivation. It may help to manage the production and productivity. But it will leads to exploitation of small and marginal farmers in the village. Further it requires permanent legal framework in the interest of small and marginal farmers.

Corporate Farming describes the business of agriculture, as the practices of mega corporations in food production on large scale. It is a modern food industry, and encompasses not only the farm itself but also the entire chain of agriculture related business including seed supply, agrichemicals, food processing, machinery, storage, transport and distribution, marketing, advertising and retail sales. The ultimate goal of corporate farming is to vertically integrate the entire process of food production to the point of the distribution and sale of food to consumers. Corporate Farming refers to direct ownership or leasing in of farmland by business organizations in order to produce for their captive processing requirements or for the open market. If it is done for captive purposes it is known as captive farming.

Corporate farming is not legal at present in India. The agribusiness firms are increasingly choosing leasing in land option to resort to corporate farming or contract farming as a way out of this situation. In contract farming, firms work with independent growers or their groups under contracts for production and procurement of required quality raw materials at pre-agreed price and volume or acreage. Some of the corporate agencies in the state are asking for longer term lease (20-30 years) of farmers land for corporate farming. The agriculture is a state subject. Many state governments in India have attempted liberalization of land laws, especially land ceiling laws to allow the corporations in agriculture.

The states of Maharashtra and Gujarat have also enacted laws to allow corporate farming on government wastelands by providing large tracts of these lands (up to 2000 acres each) to agribusiness companies on a long term (20 year) lease. The Chhattisgarh State Government is also making available about 20 lakh hectares of land for Jatropha (bio-fuel) cultivation. Under the scheme, an individual can lease up to 200 hectares of land at a price of Rs 100 per hectare, per year for the first five years. For subsequent years, these rates could be increased. The state government has already formulated an action plan including the setting up of the Chhattisgarh Bio-Fuel Development Authority, identifying Government-owned waste or fallow land as well as consulting task force in various districts (The Hindu Business Line, Sept. 2, 2005). Earlier, the government of Andhra Pradesh had attempted corporate farming under a project in Kuppam in Chittoor district during 1997-2002 where the purpose was to test the feasibility of large scale farming through contract farming on lands leased by agribusiness company (BHC Agro India Private Limited- an Israeli consultancy firm). The focus was on precision farming, drip irrigation and quality standard.

Now corporate farming also has been started in the States of Punjab, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh etc. It is nothing but the transformation of agriculture as industry. It also helps for consolidation of fragmented land holdings in India. The agricultural sector is being converted into industrial sector as multinational corporations are interested in direct participation in farming and cultivation. The same thing was said by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The agriculture is to be treated as state industry.

CONCLUSION

Ambedkar was of opinion that the process of consolidation of small land holdings could eradicate the ill effect of uneconomic holding and usher in the progress of the cultivators. Further, he suggested the collective farming for consolidation of holdings. He also stresses the need for industrialization so as to move surplus labour from agriculture to other productive occupations, accompanied by large capital investments in agriculture. He has also emphasised on the important role of the state in transformation of agriculture. The contract farming is not at all beneficial to the small and marginal farmers. However, it helps for land consolidation for large scale operations of agriculture by utilizing modern equipment and technology in the cultivation. It may also help to manage the production and productivity. But it leads to exploitation of small and marginal farmers in the village. Further, it requires permanent legal framework in the interest of small and marginal farmers. It is nothing but the transforming of agriculture into industry. But the ownership of agriculture is in the hands of multinational corporations. The role of state is minimal. The agricultural sector is being treated as agro industrial sector as multinational corporations are interested in direct participation in farming and cultivation. The same thing was said by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in 1920. The agriculture is to be treated as state industry. The capital and technology is increasing in Indian agriculture. The vision of Ambedkar on agricultural development is very comprehensive and relevant even today.

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