

[Article ID : 01/XII/01/1221]

UNSCRIPTED INDIAN GREEN REVOLUTION

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Keywords : Green revolution, seed conservation, soil health, pesticides, weeds

Abstract

India is a predominantly agricultural nation and agriculture remains the largest sector of our economy. The founding fathers of our nation were well aware of this. They kept agriculture as the main focus of the very first five-year plan formulated after the independence. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation, even warned us that, "to forget how to dig the earth and tend the soil is to forget ourselves". Gandhiji's warning makes us aware of how significant is to engage in agricultural practices. Apart from that, it should also be emphasized that the agricultural sector plays a significant role in social security by providing food, nutrition as well as countless employment opportunities especially for the rural population of India. Having said that, the other side of the picture should also be explored. The increasing number of farmers suicides put an alarming sign on the policies we adopt in the name of the well being of the farmers' community. This paper will try to delve deeper into the question of where we failed our farmers and the ways to redress it by detailing the solutions to the problems I could identify during my studies.

Most of the problems the Indian farmers face today has a direct correlation with the Green Revolution. A huge increase in crop production has been brought in developing countries including India by the use of artificial fertilizers, pesticides, and high-yield crop varieties. The acclaimed Indian geneticist, Dr M S Swaminathan was the main proponent of this movement in India. He urged the Indian farmers to cultivate their lands adopting the newly invented techniques. Even though they could produce substantial quantities of rice and wheat, their unwanted side effects have caused the destruction of our agricultural sector. New studies have been published on this for the last few decades. The ill effects of the Green Revolution were once again brought into discussion with the new action plan Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) emphasizing the significance of soil conservation to regain the health of people. The decision opened a new realm of possibilities in eco-friendly agriculture practices worldwide.

It is a proven fact that anything grows beyond the limit, the mother nature tries to suppress it by some methods like a disease. It can be understood by simply observing the growth of plants in the forests. Scientists had not paid attention to this basic fact while trying to boost production. The Indian farmers had a variety of indigenous farming techniques adopted keeping in mind the natural diversity of the various places they lived. They also used to preserve high yielding nutritious seeds of millets and pulses. The Green Revolution forced the farmers to abandon all of these age-old practices. It should also be noted that Punjab, the place chosen to adopt the new practices was very fertile due to the alluvium deposits of its celebrated five rivers. Anything planted there used to grow rapidly and give high returns. The poverty India experienced at that time was not a result of low grain production but a lack of proper marketing strategies.

It was hoped that trend of raising the output of food grains would continue for a long time after importing high yielding dwarf varieties in the 1960s. However, in the following years, large

fluctuations in food grain output were noted, creating insecurity among producers as well as consumers. The productions of millets and oilseeds decreased drastically throughout the years in the country which was known for its richness. Nobody reported this loss while everyone hailing for the success of the green revolution. The Green Revolution promoted exports. The farmers lost their independence through this. The feudal in Punjab, i.e, the big landowners, received their share in profit but the quality of soil deteriorated due to the continuous use of pesticides and artificial fertilizers, which too were imported to prevent the shutdown of chemical factories after World War II. Their profit motives were paid off heavily. In a few years, the unique farming methods adopted by our forefathers were totally abandoned.

Seeds conservation was one of the major areas which lost recognition during the times of the Green Revolution. When we discuss the seed conservation practices followed by the traditional farmers of our nation, it is very interesting that they entrusted women the responsibilities of seed banks. Women were the protectors of two of the most important things in the world, the children and the seeds. Our women cared for both in the same way. But the proponents of the Green Revolution neglected these efforts and ignored local high yielding seeds to protect the corporate interests. They wanted to replace them with hybrid seeds purchasable in the market. When Cyclone Aila caused destructions in the Eastern Region and thousands of fields were submerged in flood, it was the seeds conserved by Dr. Dabel Dev, India's Seed Warrior, came to the rescue. He did not hesitate to help farmers with the large collection of seed banks he preserved. The tribal population also were there in the forefront of seed preservation.

The seeds not suitable for certain soil invite diseases. It happened during the Green Revolution paving way for the pesticide market. Various types of pesticides and fertilizers were distributed in the name of good agricultural practices. People were fooled by the construction of compost tanks using big budgets whereas earthworms were killed due to excessive use of pesticides. When nutrients not needed for plants were used widely, weeds started to grow all over. In reality, it is the art of nature to balance soil by plants and weeds are a big part of it. But the so-called experts urged the farmers to use weedicides. It is true the traditional farmers also had their own practices to curb the unnecessary growth of weeds but it was not on a mass scale like the weedicides. Their methods were also nature friendly.

Conclusion

The agricultural sector in India should become free from the all of problems discussed above. The industrial and service sectors needed to be developed along the scale of agricultural production. The farmers' life needs to be secured like any other profession. They should be given complete freedom over production and distribution. The traditional practice of seed saving is worthy of continuing as it has been a practice in our country for thousands of years until it was discouraged recently. There is a need of educating the farmers regarding the market trends so that they face competition independently in the markets. It will also help in growing new farming entrepreneurship practices. Education, as well as Policy-making, also has a major role to play in this as it is the root of development. I hope if the agricultural education curriculum can incorporate all these things in the syllabus, it will help to drastically change the present system.