

Impact of Media on the Agricultural Sector in NE India

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Abstract- *Media is something that mobilizes the human civilization and at the same time heightens the pace of development. Among the fastest developing countries, India and China stand at top and the major factor of this reason must imply to agriculture and its allied sectors. The North Eastern regions of India is claimed to be the biodiversity hotspot and varieties of species are available there. Some of the species over there cannot be found in other part of the world entire. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people and the other allied sectors like Sericulture, Fishery, Piggery and vegetable farms are the main income source of them. Since the region is connect with bottle-neck roads for transportation of goods, people out there face lots of inconvenience mostly in rainy season. There are plenty of flagship programmes, framed by the central and state government, which remains un-exercise completely due to lack of awareness to the target people. So, the ultimate savior of such consequences falls on the media. Media means the fourth estate of our democracy, and hence the ever emerging government's plans must expose to people through the right media. The responsibilities of mass media are the future of Northeast India.*

Key Words: Agricultural Sector, Media's impact, North East.

Introduction

Religion was not for empty stomach as Swami Vivekananda was a clarion statement which he made always. India is such a country with rich cultures and traditions. Agriculture is the richest culture of all the cultures and being a traditionally agrarian society, the poor and negate farmers work on marginal basis to feed the rich and fortunate people, and, the irony here is that majority of the population are land less marginal farmers. It is very mush true that India lives in village. Agriculture is the back bone of economy, the innovation and advance education in this platform definitely will provide a room to improve nation's socio economic conditions. There is no doubt that agriculture is back on the development agenda. But despite the promises and the rhetoric from governments worldwide, investment in agriculture and rural development is still lagging. Unemployment is a big issue that

hurdles the development of a nation and it also leads to commit different unwanted crimes.

There must be several ways to make improve the agriculture in India like establishment of Agriculture Universities, implementation of sponsored programmes, loan waving initiatives, educations to farmers, minor irrigation as direct process and supplementing to it, the role of media conserve a wide space as an indirect but one of the most useful ways. Being a developing country, India has uncountable numbers of flagship programmes and many are focused on agriculture. The successful implementation of such agro-based programmes necessarily depends on nature, accessibility and extent of use of mass media. Lacking of such innovations led to extreme actions taken up by the farmers, for instance, suicide due to unable loan repay in the states of northern and central India since decades ago and still prevails. Indian agriculture depends

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on monsoon so far, and, poor irrigation systems area handicapped our shifting cultivation and India is in need of second green revolution for food security.

Why media and agriculture?

The role of media is broadening day by day in agricultural sector. India is a country where the literacy level is low and such a country relies mostly on radio and television which are significant in spreading information to the larger illiterate population of Indian farmers. The scientific knowledge and modern technology of agriculture are easily delivered through media, and for literate farmers print media is the best among all. The message content remains forever which make them suitable for future use and research, more over it is cost effective media comparing to others. Another help line in agricultural development is the introduction of Agricultural Journals, this specific journalism came into existence just 5 decades ago and now its importance still exist. With rise in the literacy level, print media has obtained a greater position in disseminating agricultural based information to the farming community and to the general people too.

Every state of India has a farm or agriculture based magazine in their native languages. The agricultural department also supports the publication of such magazines to stronghold the development in agriculture and its allied practices. The publication under the farmers' association is more encouraging in terms of reliability and reality. Either the publication or main stream media now-a-days carries information regularly with regard to animal husbandry, fishery, horticulture, agricultural marketing, agricultural engineering and cooperatives in addition to information on agriculture.

Radio programmes based on farms and agricultures were introduced in 1966 with agricultural trust to improve the knowledge of Indian farmers regarding the application of various technologies, soil treatment and so on to pump up agricultural developments. There are nearly 50 such radio units through the country.

History of Indian Agriculture

The art of agriculture had been practiced since long ago. The revolution of this art since the Neolithic period ultimately set a platform for the birth of Indian urbanization and its subcontinent. It serves as the best revolution in human civilization. Though agriculture was very underdeveloped during the Neolithic revolution (8000 to 5000 BCE), it has survived and the techniques involved in it, have been passing from generation to generation. And in due course of time, the techniques were often innovating to support human civilization.

The historical evidences of ploughing, fallowing, irrigation, cultivation of staple food and fruits are said to be found in Rigveda hymns. Rice, wheat, cotton, sugarcane, pulses and fruits were cultivated time to time accordingly. Even the classification system of land pattern (12 categories) was suggested in Ancient Indian Sanskrit text, 2500 years old, according to Historians. The proper irrigation channels contribute a new platform in Indian crops, affecting the economies of the country and other regions under Islamic patronage.

Indian farmers began cultivating spices and sugarcane some 2500 years back and it is believed that this honey producing reed has been spread from India to Persia and Greece. The colonialist thus started the novice idea of trading system since 5th Century BC. India could make immense progress towards food security only after her 50 years of independence. Even though there was an extreme rise in population, its productivity of food grain was quadrupled hence substantial increase in per capita. But approximately 30% of the annual food grains produced was a loss due to the poor roads, limited market infrastructure, unorganized retail, lack of cold storage capacity and so India had to experience some of the highest food loses in the world. The big leap of Green revolution technology, which was first led by Punjab and followed by Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, was ushered by severe drought in 1965 and 1966. The Green revolution technology was applied to wheat at first and then to rice which could yield 4 to 6 tons of staple foods per hectare. This technology spread to the states of Eastern India in later part of 20th Century.

In India broadcasting of programmes on farm and agriculture was first introduced in 1966 to enlighten farmers and marginal farmers in

handling and use of various new technologies to boost agricultural development. Print media too devote a lot regarding the aforesaid scenario, farm magazine and other publications like Kurukshetra and Yojna for instance are explicating the information regarding agriculture and rural development among the literate farmers. Every Indian state has a farm magazine publishing in local languages. As print medium is a permanent medium, it makes the reader updated for reference and research. Agriculture journalism, in spite of being a new trend, is now gaining importance particularly after the establishment of Agriculture Universities in various states in India. At present there are about 50 farm and home broadcasting radio units all over the country. The farmers are made cozy and easily made in understand the know-how about operations, technology and instruction through television. The subjects are either discussed or informed in throughout the country on various media with regard to agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, agricultural marketing, agricultural engineering and co-operatives.

Agriculture in NE India

The agriculture system in NE India still holds good the traditional system in spite of its ups and downs at large when the mainland India has well equipped with the modern technologies. Enormous reasons may be queued behind the inability of implementation of sophisticated weapons and technologies. Small land holdings by the famers can never be excluded from those reasons. There is also less plain agricultural land with diminishing productivity, however being tropical vegetation the states have a variety of flora and fauna. Manipur is having only 10.48% of its total geographical land under cultivable land and 90% of it lies under jhuming cultivation. Farmers of NE India are motivated toward high crops/enterprises including bamboo, medicinal and aromatic plants, floriculture, ornamental fisheries, small tea garden etc., apart from cereal crops.

In 11th FYP (Five Year Plan), Arunachal Pradesh decided to achieve a growth rate of 4%, Assam 2% and Manipur 7.97% in the agricultural sector as a whole. The states also decided to provide

information on market, price, demand and technologies etc. to the farmers. The SAP (State Agricultural Plan) projects its services into two categories viz. income generation (IG) activities and agricultural and allied sectors, infrastructure and support services of which the physical targets emanating from various planning units of different levels like Gram panchayat, Block and District. The SAP is the outcome of compilation, integration and consolidation of the plans prepared at the district level.

Favourable conditions often challenge limited infrastructure

Arunachal Pradesh has a favourable agro-climatic conditions and suitable low land with a moderate slope and perennial water resources in streams which are plenty for irrigation and agricultural development. Castor plants for Eri, Som and Shaulu for Muga and wide varieties of green fodder for live stock, and even various sub-tropical temperate fishes are favoured due to climatic conditions of the state. The emerging agri-based activity is rubber cultivation, as the state could meet 25% of the state government's target for generating one lakh jobs in five year. Even though, due to lack of connectivity, infrastructure and support facilities rendering the transportation of goods, services and people, the opportunity of being rapid growth is stabilized. The favourable crops which the state produces in huge amount are Potato, Banana, Cardamom, Tomato, Sugarcane, Tea and Orange. Piggery farming, Poultry farming and Dairy farming are at large in live stock category of state's production. The inadequate numeric strength, low literacy, extreme hindered, lack of exposure of peoples to new development and opportunities, lack of use of advanced agricultural technologies in use are the reasons of slow progress in development.

The major reason for in-effective post production is lack of adequate stowage, cold storage and bad weathered roads as mentioned earlier that huge amount of crops are loss in transportation. SAP also brings to light the fact that soil erosion in the state is quite high, ranging from 50 to 150 tons/ha/year. Particularly 20 million tons of soil is eroded and lost annually in average in the state.

To overcome all the odds the productivity, inter and intra departmental programmes like MGNREGS and NABARD are converge along with the available funds. State Agriculture Department also identifies the importance for development of agriculture & allied sectors in the state.

The Assam state pertains a little advanced technology than the remaining states of NE India. The state focuses on the areas such as artificial insemination and feed & fodder development. Jute, Sugarcane, Pulses, Oil seeds and horticulture crops are major agricultural products where as Poultry farming and Dairy are live stock products. RKVY projects provide numerous Dairy Cooperative Societies/SHG to achieve additional 20,000 lit. of milk per day to 1227 million lit. out of all 27 districts. The state follows decentralized planning structure in the light of government of India guide lines so as to involve Panchayat Raj Institutions as well as local bodies at the district/block/panchayat level. Technological support network from AAU and ICAR are the additional provisions delivered to the state agriculture activities and its allied sectors.

In spite of the available technological as well as educational support the state always bear a weakness in its productivity. One of the major reasons is low per capita holding (1.15 hectare), which restrict investment capacity and compelled inadequate quality input. Lack of irrigation facilities, lack of post harvesting land utility, limited processing and marketing facilities, recurring flood, age old infrastructure and technologies and shortage of veterinarians always diminish the productivity in agricultural and its allied sectors. As per the statement on review of implementation of RKVY, the state's fund for the year 2007-08 was not released due to ineligibility for assistance under RKVY. However by the next annual calendar, the state was allotted for the proposed 38 projects. The governance system sometimes brings miscreation to the productivity potential.

Manipur, a state in the extreme east of India, which is called the Switzerland of the East or

“The Jewel of India”, is the land of nine hills and one valley. It is one of the seven sisters states of North East bordering the state of Nagaland in the North, Assam in the West, Mizoram in the South and Myanmar in the East. The heart of the land Imphal Valley is surrounded by nine hill ranges. The valley is nourished by the Nambul and Imphal rivers, which ran across the heart of Imphal city. The land is adorned with the Loktak Lake, the glittering jewel in the neck of a beautiful damsel. The land is rich with Fauna and Flora. It is a state where people from different caste, creed, tribes, and religions live together as one. The state is marked by its rich culture, tradition and heritage.

Coming to Manipur it will be incomplete if few lines are not mentioned on the State. Manipur is a state as mentioned above, is of high potential in the field of agriculture and in its allied sector as well as in live stock farming. The state targeted overall annual growth rate of 8% (apprx.) comprising agriculture, horticulture, fisheries and animal husbandry, apart from other sub-sectors like forestry, cooperation, minor irrigation and common area development. But the unconditional reasons like low area under cultivation (10.45%) and low irrigation area (13.24% of cultivation land) make a big encumbrance to the state's productivity. Other reasons like skill gap in various production technologies, inadequate knowledge, and infrastructure of processing horticulture crops are stringent in the growth rate. Horticulture is a newly fast growing sector in agri-allied sectors in the state too but the most challenging condition in horticulture is the labour intensive nature and remunerative than cereals. As the state is lacking in minor irrigation systems, most of it depends on monsoon at large. During dry seasons vast of cultivable lands lay idle due to drought, as far as my knowledge is concern there is no such extreme action of farmer suicide in the state so far due to either flood or drought.

Being a part of the chicken neck land, the state bears a huge burden in the transportation system and no adequate storage units and cold storage spoil the horticulture products. Frequent bandhs and blockades clutch the development activities,

bad road condition drop-offs the crops during transportation and it is a negative issue in political scenario too. The state water bodies provide a good environment to fisheries and aquatic production, but illegal land encroachment to the lake area, silt deposition and infestation with thick biomass has a slow pace day by day. In hilly areas, jhuming cultivation has erosion and land degradation which shallows the plane area water bodies like rivers and lakes. The people out there in hills are ignorant of pest and diseases and the more aggrieved thing is that the state plan is imbalanced in allocation of projects and funds in the districts of the state. As a part of development in agriculture and fisheries, recently the minister of this concern department acknowledged the people of the state that the incentives or guidance of the government will be released through the Panchayats. And people are encouraged to give more attention and involvement in Panchayat system of the state.

Mizoram is very slow in agriculture and allied sector, the National Development Council (NDC) resolved to launch RKVY followed by recommendation of formation of action plans like SAP and C-DAPs. The major areas in focus are paddy, coarse cereals, minor millets, pulses and oilseeds; Agriculture mechanization; strengthening marketing infrastructures; enhancement of horticultural production and micro irrigation system; Sericulture development; and Animal husbandry & fisheries development. This landlocked area has an international border of 722 km, which is almost 3 times longer than its border with the mainland. The state is hilly and sub-soil is porous so the state faces the unique paradoxical problem of water scarcity. The state agriculture still remains under-developed and primitive method of jhum predominates. The product and productivity are low, of the total area, only 21% is put on the seasonal crops

State Agriculture Plan

1. Analysis on the existing farming practices.
2. Collection and analysis of secondary data on agriculture and allied sector.
3. Identification of production constraints and technological gap.

4. Documentation of existing marketing pattern.
5. Formulation of strategies and action plan for different agricultural production system to increase productivity.

The agriculture and its allied sector in Tripura is still under developed. The state government has formulated a 10-year (2000-2010) Perspective Plan for achieving self-sufficiency in food-grains and improving the socio-economic conditions of the farming community. The strategies comprise enhancing crop intensity, seed replacement, incorporating bio-fertilizers, integrated pest management, increasing irrigation potential, research support, and ensuring people's participation.

Apart from these the State Agriculture Research Station of Agriculture Department is looking after the Research and Development work in agricultural field. The state is having an elevation of 12.6 m with sandy loam soil. State Soil Testing Laboratory and State Seed Testing laboratory is providing different Agro Advisory Services to the farmers of Tripura. Besides this the station disseminates the modern technology among the farming community of Tripura by carrying out research works. The Research Units of this establishment, namely Agronomy, Plant Breeding and Pest Management conducts basic adaptive research on different aspects of Crop Management, Crop Improvement and Crop Protection.

Discussion

As India largely depend on monsoon of which she need to develop the irrigation infrastructure, flood control system and electricity at large. The upliftment in Cold storage to free from food spoilage, all season rural and urban highways for transportation are in extremely necessary. That is why media always scoops out the negligence and un-attention projects regarding roads, irrigation, electricity and so on. We have uncountable numbers of educated unemployment and if we implement them as Human Resource then our GDP will be able to compete easily with that of US, China and Australia. The most disadvantage, in this regard or may be the main factor is our governance system. It moves with slow pace due

to Red tappism, corruption and being largest democratic form of government.

The weakness of maintaining our productivity is due to various factors, for instance manually harvesting in Southern and NE India, limited market option, lack of Cold storage, inefficient transportation system, lack of packing and middleman traders etc. Traditional use of cattle in ploughing are still prevailing in some parts of India resulting lower per capita productivity and farmer income. If we are adopting technologies and improving the infrastructures, India could eradicate hunger and malnutrition and be a major source of food for the world according to several studies so far. India is among the best production of rice, wheat, and other horticulture, aquaculture and fruit plantation but our productivity is very low when we calculate per capita because most farmer are small land holders or disguised farmers. Illiterate farmers frequently encountered inconsistent government policies, they could not get the right subsidies and unaware about loan waving policies etc. and as such small factors contribute to a larger problem in India's productivity.

In spite of all the pros and cons of agriculture sector India marches on ahead on the global map. As mentioned earlier the different sections and various lawless acts in the North-East segments seems to drawback the progress in this sector. As a matter of fact the government of India provides the agricultural facilities like loans, seeds, subsidies, technological equipments and training to both the literate and illiterate farmers so as to enable them to help both the production and economic development of the nation, as India is basically agricultural country.

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