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NEGLECT OF AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

Indian governments, both central and state governments are unable to reduce number of suicide cases of farmers and are not able to create lively hood to the rural youths in rural areas. India being a country of agrarian since its history however the policy makers neglected agriculture and environment due to which share of agriculture to the national GDP has reduced to 15 percent in 2016-17 from around 52 percent during 1950s. Around 70 percent of the total farmers wished not to do farming due to unproductive and loss making venture and want some other work and around 5 to 10 percent of the rural youths are migrating each year to urban areas in search of jobs. Increasing population has been putting pressure on agriculture to produce more farm produce by using more chemicals and spoiling the land fertility and polluting the environment and land under forest has been reducing due to use of forest land for farming and for urbanization this again resulting in deterioration of environment. Policies makers and organized sectors should direct their efforts and resources towards development of agriculture and protecting the environment for the welfare of the generations to come.

Key words: Farmers' suicide, agriculture, environment, loan waiver

Introduction:

Farm (agriculture) loan waiver scheme of the government Maharashtra in its state has not stopped framers' suicide in the state during the year 2017-18, a report of times of India revealed. There were 1497 suicide cases of farmers in the state of Maharashtra during six months period, June to November 2017 since the loan waiver scheme was declared by the government on June 24, 2017. The number of suicide cases during same period, June to November during 2016 was 1563 which shows that there is just 4.2% reduction in suicide cases in 2017 even after declaring waiving of around Rs. 40000 crores of agricultural loan by the government in June 2017. It is revealed that waving of agricultural loan is not the only solution to improve agricultural sector and stop farmers' suicide but fair prices for agriculture produce, effective market system, investment in irrigation, increase in cold storage, connecting of rural roads with the markets and crop insurance are some of the important measures to make the agriculture sector really a core sector of Indian economy.

Indian has been agrarian country in the world for a long period in the history till today and employing more than 50 of the total work population of India as per the census 2011. Thus agricultural sector is the biggest job provider to working hands in India and around two third of the national population is dependent on agriculture as source of their lively hood. Also India is the second largest producer of few agriculture produce like rice and wheat in the world after china and also the second largest importer of some agriculture products like edible oil. However, agriculture being the primary sector of Indian economy and was contributing around 52 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to Indian economy during the year 1950-51 has come down its contribution to GDP to around 15 percent during the year 2016-17 A survey report of around 5000 farmers from 18 states across India concluded that around 76 percent of the Indian farmers want to give up farming and want to shift to some work other than farming, (Jyotika Sood 2014). This shows that agricultural sector being neglected by the policy makers and farming in India is not based on choice but by compulsion due to no other option

Review of Literature

- 1497 suicide cases of farmers registered in the state of Maharashtra since loan waiver announced, wrote by Priyanka in an article in daily The Times of India, dated 25th Dec. 2017. The article said the waiving farm loan by the government of Maharashtra could not stop suicide of farmers' during first six months from June to November 2017 after declaration loan waiver scheme in June 2017. The main reason was that the scheme was delayed due to problems and delay in verification process of loan waivers. The solution in reducing suicide lies in increase in investment in agriculture. However a group of farmers believe that the key problem of agriculture is low agriculture prices which the government has not addressed
- Recent results of assembly elections in the state of Gujrat made the central government to think to make forthcoming union budget farmer centric, as per Vishwa in the article in daily The times of

India dated 25th December 2017. The article 'Eye on 2019 budget to be Farmer Centric' based on the study of result of Gujrat assembly elections held in December 2017. Rural voters (farmers) of Gujrat state withdrawn their support from the present ruling government in the state and supported other political party due to which the new government got just simple majority by losing around 16 seats in this election. The farmers of Gujrat believe that the government has neglected towards giving fair prices to their produce during the year 2016-17. The farmers could not receive income from their produce in spite of having produced bumper crop during the year mainly because of low price for farm products. Therefore union government, according to the analysts, will provide focus on farmers and will increase budgetary provisions in coming budgets keeping eye on the upcoming assembly elections in the states of Karnataka, Madhy Pradesh, Chhattisgrah and Rajstan in 2018 and union elections in 2019. The union government may strengthen the measures towards systematic procurement methods, raising of farm credit targets, expanding network of e-NAM (e-National Agriculture Market) from 585 in 2017-18 to 1000 by 2020. The central government is serious about allocating more funds on centrally sponsored schemes and monitoring the time-bond implementation. As per the government officials fund for e-NAM, cold chain, irrigation, infrastructure, crop insurance are expected to be increased. The experts also suggested that input subsidies and Minimum Support Price (MSP) can't solve the problem but there is a need of market system for farm produce. The article indirectly reveals the policy makers, ruling governments neglected for agriculture and whatever support was given to the agricultural sector was based on gaining sympathy from farmers for political benefit

- 'Indian Economic inequality widened since 1980, as per the report compiled by 'world wealth and data base' published in The Times of India, dated 15th Dec. 2017. Inequality in India has increased substantially since 1980 after accepting and implementing deregulation policy and opening up reforms in India. As per the report, share of national income held by India's richest 1 percent in 1982 was 6 percent; means during the year 1982 around 1 percent of the total population were rich and were holding 6 percent of the national income which increased to 22 percent in 2014. Means 1 percent of India's people have become more than 3 times rich during 20 years period. While share of the top 10 percent of the earners was around 56 percent of the national income in 2014. Thus 90 percent of the earners were sharing just 44 percent of the national income and bottom 50 percent of the earners were having around just 15 percent of the total income. Such economic inequality and concentration of economic resources was mainly due to government policies favored to service and industrial sectors during post liberalization period and neglect to agriculture.
- An article, titled, 'time to look beyond loan waivers' in The Economic Times dated 20th December 2017 says that waiving farm loan is not only the solution to improve socio-economic condition of farmers. Even the Minimum Support Price (MSP) declared by the government also helped very little during 2016-17 as farmers were forced to sell their products below minimum support price in private market due to lack of organizational and administrative support from the policy makers. The article also says that the farm insurance and Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana also failed to provide the right support to the farmers for loss of their produce. Experts suggest that, farmers must get fair price for their produce and restrictions on agro-product exports be withdrawn by the government and be made market based solution.
- According to Devendra Sharma, only agriculture has the potential to generate employment, more than make in India, and union finance minister need to focus on farm in India. Agriculture has been neglected since many years and the central government should make more provision in 2016 budget. Agriculture has the potential to create more jobs and build economy hence the only pathway to develop economy passes through agriculture. Growing number of protests from various states from rural India for reservation quota in government jobs is the sign that rural people are unhappy with present agricultural income. Reducing agricultural income turned farming as loss making enterprise and rural workforce is being forced to move from farming in search of jobs in other sector like government sector and in urban area.
- Nurture agriculture to make India 'Make in India' a reality said Rakesh Rao in daily newspaper Business Standard on 4th April 2016. Rural youth must be engaged in fruitful employment in agriculture is the only way to keep the wheels of economic moving and achieving the goals of 'Make in India'. More than 50 percent of the total workforce is engaged in agriculture but contributes only around 14 percent towards GDP. This is due to negligence of policy makers and investment in agriculture has been diverted towards subsidies and minimum support price and

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farm produce failed to generate sufficient income to meet minimum requirements of the farmers. Thus farming has become an unproductive activity in India

- History reveals that industrial revolution in developed countries happened only when the basic need of food is fulfilled by the agriculture, wrote Dirk Bezemer & Drek Headey. The basic of economic development is development of farming and farm products which satisfy the basic human needs of any nation. Green revolution occurred either before or with industrial revolution but not industrial revolution happened first. The authors Adelman & Morisin in 1988 presented the evidences that strong agricultural performance in 19th century helped for subsequent rapid development in western countries.
- Injustice on the farmers who repaid their farm loan on regular basis, reacted by the farmers. As per the various news articles published in daily newspapers, like The Times of India, The Hindu and The Indian Express, on announcement of Rs. 34,022 crores farm loan waiver in Maharashtra by the statement government on 24th June 2017, the farmers who paid their farm loan on regular reacted it is injustice on us we lost our hard earn money by paying back loan amount to banks. The farmers who could have repaid their loan did not repay hoping government will waive the crop loan. Small percentage of honest farmers repaid the loan believe the government has made injustice with their honesty

Objectives of the Study:

Main objectives of the present study are as under:

- To analyze to what extent the government has neglected to agriculture and environment
- To know the consequences of such negligence

Methodology:

The present study, neglect of agriculture and environment is based mainly on the secondary source of information. Advancement and development in information and communication technology (ICT) has opened the gate for lot of fresh, adequate and authentic information and data on agriculture and environment for any type of research study. Articles by experts on agriculture published in national and regional level newspapers were used source for recent information, government websites on various schemes on agriculture were also used to know the government schemes to promote agriculture. Some reports on agricultural statistics were referred for statistical data. The research articles by the researchers published on various websites were also used during the course of writing this article.

Analysis and Findings:

Food is the third basic and fundamental need after air and water to remain alive and to leave a welfare life of human beings. Agricultural sector and the farmers have the capacity and ability to feed the hunger of human beings whereas the environment can give air and water for life provided policy makers take proper care of both, agriculture and environment. Without agricultural development and availability of good or conducive environment no change and no development can take place in the economy. History reveals that industrial revolution in developed countries was possible when basic need of food was satisfied from the agricultural sector. Even today, it is true industrial development is possible only when agricultural development happens. Indian economy also has become as the second fastest growing economy in the world after china mainly because it has become self-sufficient in production basic farm produce like rice and wheat. This self-reliance in rice and wheat was possible because of government policies like green revolution, white revolution etc during 1970s and 1980s. Thus government, policy makers have to take initiatives to make policies for development of agriculture causing with minimum harm to the environment for sustainability. However the policy makers are neglecting (unwillingly) agriculture and environment due to which farmers' suicides in India are not reducing, growth of agriculture is minimal, majority farmers are unwilling to do farming and import of products like pulses (dals) and oil are not reducing. The following are some findings and conclusions:

- **'Farm loan waiver' political decision:** Few state governments declared a scheme of waiving of farm loan, this is really a political or scheme imposed by the rival political parties. The government of Maharashtra on 24th June 2017 announced a scheme to waive around Rs. 34,022 crores of farm loan to benefit around 90 lakh farmers of Maharashtra. This decision was taken by the ruling party in the state mainly because of political issue raised by the rival political party. There is competition among the political parties in the state of Maharashtra to take credit of the scheme and get sympathy from the farmers to exploit votes in future elections.
- **Loan waiver is a wrong practice:** Farm loan waiving schemes of the governments have proved as bad practices in the past for the welfare of the state and nation. This scheme in the state

Maharashtra has not reduced the number of suicides of farmers during six months period from June to November 2017. There were around 1497 suicide cases in Maharashtra during these six months, whereas 1560 suicide cases registered during the same period of last year 2016. Thus the scheme could reduce just around 4 percent suicides over last year. Such schemes have been converting more number of farmers as defaulters making the farmers to depend on government schemes. And majority farmers support in election to those political parties who extend more such schemes. They use public money (loan) but wait till the government announces such schemes

- **Unorganized Sector:** Indian farmers are mostly unorganized and uneducated. There exist some small organizations at regional level in few states and those organizations are led by the leaders with political self-interest. Such leaders act as middlemen between the government and the farmers and they always favour the government for self-interest. Due to lack of proper education of farmers, they do not find out the ways and means of survival and growth on their own
- **Increasing Input Costs:** Farming has been becoming costly year by year due to various reasons. Farmers during last few years depend on costly seeds sold by the agencies in the market instead of producing own seeds. Sometime such costly seeds do not germinate after sowing in the season due to low quality of seeds and there will be double cost to the farmers. There is no direct control on such malpractices followed by the seed agencies. In order to increase farm yield farmers have been using costly chemical fertilizers, costly pesticides to protect the crop from insects, still there is no guarantee of protecting the crop. Due to shortage of farm labour increased labour cost, loss of crop during harvesting and post harvesting has been the result of increased input cost.
- **Failure in Implementation:** The governments, both central and state governments, declare many schemes for agriculture but there is operational level problem due to which the needy farmers do not get the benefits of the scheme but wrong people get the benefits. Public (government) money is spent but not used for the purpose for which it was meant for. The Maharashtra government declared minimum support price of Rs. 5500 per quintal to Tur (Arhar) during the year 2016-17 due bumper crop. It opened centres to procure the farm produce (tur) but they were very few in numbers as compared with the number of farmers. There were examples that farmers took their produce to the centres, but there was shortage of storage facility, tur was lying in the open space at the risk of farmers. Farmers had to wait day and night for their turn to sell their produce, some time there was one month waiting period for the turn. During this huge waiting period farmers lost their working days since they had to take care of their produce stocked at centres and there was waste of their produce due to improper storage. Due to these problems many farmers withdrawn from this scheme by taking back their produce from the centres at their own transport cost. However, the government was about to purchase only around 50 percent of the tur and remaining was sold by compulsion in open market at a price of less than Rs. 3900 per quintal
- **Decreasing Contribution to GDP:** Indian agricultural sector at the beginning of first five year plan was contributing around 52 percent to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which has down to around 15 percent contribution to GDP during the year 2016.

Contribution to GDP

Table -I

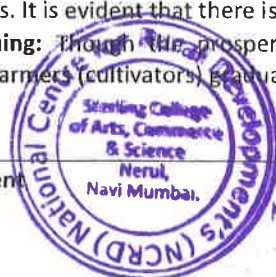
year	Sectorial Contribution to Gross Domestic Product in %		
	Agricultural Sector	Manufacturing Sector	Service Sector
1950-51	52	12	29
1970-71	45	22	32
1990-91	32	25	40
2010-11	15	23	55
2015-16	15	25	52

Source: Ministry of Statistics and Program implementation PRS

The above table shows decreasing percentage of contribution of agricultural sector to the National Gross Domestic Product whereas there has been increasing percentage of contribution to GDP from manufacturing and service sectors. It is evident that there is neglect to agriculture in India.

- **Withdrawal from Farming:** Though the prosperity of Indian economy depends more on prosperity of agriculture, Indian farmers (cultivators) gradually withdrawing from farming and migrating

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to urban/semi-urban belt for their livelihood. Around 72 percent of the rural people were cultivating agricultural land in 1951 which has come to just 45 percent in 2011.

Population & agricultural workers

Table -II

Year	Total population (million)	Rural population (million)	% of rural population to total population	Total workers (million)	Total workers in agriculture	% of agricultural workers to total workers	Total Cultivators	% of cultivators in total agricultural workers
1951	361.1	298.6	82.7	139.5	97.2	70.00	70.00	72.00
1971	548.2	439.00	80	180.4	125	69.7	78.2	62.2
1991	846.4	630.6	74.5	314.1	185.3	59.00	110.7	59.7
2011	1210.8	833.7	68.9	481.4	263.1	54.6	118.8	45.1

Source: Agricultural statistics at a glance 2016

The table no II very clearly reveals that rural population has reduced from 82.7 percent of the total population in 1951 to 68.9 percent in 2011 and 72 percentage of cultivators in total agricultural workers in 1951 were cultivators which has reduced to 45.1 percent in the year 2011, this shows there is neglect of farmers by the policy makers

- **Preference on expenditure not on Investment:** Government and few organizations have been spending money for agricultural subsidies and farm loan waiving. Large part of the budgetary provision, is being diverted toward subsidies whereas agriculture requires more finance for investment in irrigation, cold storage, better infrastructure like road construction, storage of farm produce, cost saving measures, efficient agricultural markets and so on

Conclusions:

From the above analysis it is concluded that policy makers and the organized sector has neglected the agricultural sector and the environment in the past. However, certain developments have taken place in manufacturing and service sectors at the cost of agriculture and environment. Central government policy of 'Make in India' launched particularly for industrial sector to generate employment has to be extended to agricultural sector also to achieve the basic object of make India. Indian agriculture sector too has potential to generate employment for the youths like industrial sector and it has a capacity to retain rural population in rural area itself which has dual benefits to the nation, one development of rural area and control on not creating new urban slums and no addition new problems to urban area by stopping rural migrants to urban areas. The governments and the political parties during post-independence period have been looking at rural people as uneducated and innocent vote banks. They are, farmers being black mailed emotionally by the politicians by extending some subsidies and providing some temporary financial benefits during various types of elections. There is need of strong and transparent administrative and organizational set up to implement the government schemes and policies more effectively to reach the benefits to the needy farmers. The governments have to shift from temporary incentives like subsidies and loan waiver to investment schemes increase productivity, land fertility, access to market for agricultural produce by reducing middlemen, However, the results of assembly elections in the state of Gujrath analyzed and revealed that rural Gujrath has made some impact by reducing the number of elected candidates of the elected government. And it is predicted by the experts, the central government has realized reduction in their assembly seats and decided to make some policies for agricultural development. It is also equally important to implement the schemes most

effectively so that needy farmers will get right help at right time with minimum harassment by the regulatory authority

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