



SUGAR CANE AND SUGAR CANE INDUSTRY: IT'S IMPORTANCE

Sociology

Dr. N. R. Savatkar Associate Professor of Sociology KLE's SVS Bellubbi Arts and Commerce College, Saundatti

KEYWORDS

Sugar Industry in India occupies a distinct position in the social and economic fabric of the society. It plays a pivotal role especially in the upliftment of rural masses. Nearly 70 percent of the country's population is dependent on agriculture and very significant portion of its national income comes from agriculture. Therefore, development of agricultural sector becomes necessary which can develop the rural economy. Hence, it becomes necessary to develop agro-based industries. The processing of agricultural produce particularly sugarcane has a strategic place in rural economy. It makes the commodity acceptable to the consumers and serves as a source of income for the producers and thus plays a vital role in the upliftment of rural economy.

The sugar industry is playing a vital role in the India by contributing a major share to the national income and helping in the development of rural areas by being an agro-based industry. It has also emerged as a major foreign exchange earner. Nearly 70 percent of the country's working population is dependent on the agriculture and very significant portion of its national income comes from agriculture. Agricultural development followed by rural development is therefore, need of the hour to boost the national economy. Sugar industry is such an industry located in rural areas which provide opportunities for the upliftment of rural masses by providing employment for both educated and illiterates. 37 countries in the world produce sugar from sugar beet and 72 countries produce sugar from sugarcane. Out of 109 countries, 12 countries manufacture sugar from sugarcane as well as sugar beet. Sugar industry has emerged as an important agro-processing industry during the Post-Independence era. It has been an instrument in resource mobilization, employment generation and creation of social infrastructure in rural areas and thus facilitated and accelerated the pace of rural industrialization.

Sugar is generally made from sugarcane and beet. In India sugar is produced mainly from sugarcane. Sugar is a sweet crystalline substance, white or colourless when pure, derived from juices of various plants, chiefly the sugarcane and the sugar beet. Its chemical name is, Sucrose. It is an excellent source of energy. A teaspoonful of white sugar, for example, provides 18 calories of energy. It is of ancient origin. Its origin can be traced in the Sanskrit word 'Karkara' which means sand or gravel. Karkara had become 'Sakkare' in Prakrit language, which succeeded Sanskrit.

The sugar factories have a profound influence on the rural people in terms of their resources and economic benefits bestowed upon the cane-growers. Sugar Industry has brought about social and economic changes in rural India, by way of facilitating entrepreneurial activities, such as dairies, poultries, fruits and vegetable processing and providing educational, health and credit facilities to rural masses. India has maintained its position as the second largest sugar producing country in the world next to Brazil, having a share of over 15 percent of the world's sugar production.

India is the largest consumer of sugar in the world. The average per capita consumption of sugar was estimated at 18.3 kg/year in the year 2002-2003 which is estimated to increase to 23-24 kgs by the year 2010. India produces sugar from sugarcane. In India, 65 to 70 percent of the sugarcane output is used for manufacturing sugar and 30 to 35 molasses for percent for making gur and khandasari. Sugar industry is a major supplier of alcohol and ethanol producing units. Bagasse is used for power generation as well as paper production. Ethanol can be used as fuel.

Karnataka has emerged as one of the major industrially developed

states in India. Recently it has outstanding achievement in the field of computer software attracting the national and international firms. Karnataka is one of the prosperous states in terms of agricultural economy and agro-based industrial activities too. Sugar industry is one of the important agro-based industries in Karnataka. Karnataka is the fifth largest producer of sugarcane in India contributing about 10 percent of the entire production. The agro-climatic condition in Karnataka is highly congenial for higher sugarcane yield and recovery, and since long, sugarcane has been cultivated as a major commercial crop in Karnataka. Suitable soil and climatic conditions have been responsible for a large area of agricultural land coming under sugarcane crop and subsequently good number of sugar factories being established in Karnataka.

Today, sugarcane is considered highly remunerative cash crop as compared to other crops. Hence a large number of farmers are going on in favour of sugarcane cultivation in the state. Sugar industry has given employment to the extent of 30-35 lakhs people directly and indirectly in rural areas of Karnataka.

The sugar industry is predominated by the co-operative sector, which is acting as the crucial strength power for socio-economic revolution in rural areas. They have organized development programmes and created a great deal of influence on the life of the rural people and their income. In the total industrial production, the contribution of sugar industry is considerable and out of it, the contribution of co-operative sugar industry has been immense in the industrial economy and social development of the villages.

At present, there are nearly 553 registered sugar factories having capital investment of Rs.50,000 crores and annual production capacity of average 180 lakhs Metric Tonnes. The average annual turnover of the industry is to the tune of Rs. 25,000 crores. The Central and State Governments receive annually more than Rs. 2500 crores as excise duty, purchase tax and cess from the sugar industry.

Sugarcane is one of the important cash crops grown in India, providing employment to a large number of people and contributing to the growth of vital rural economy. As an essential commodity, its consumption has increased lot. Although sugarcane occupies less than 8 per cent of the cultivated area of the country, it has been significant in transforming the subsistence mode of agriculture to commercial farming. It is the third largest crop in the country in terms of value, next to rice and wheat. Sugarcane cultivation helps to bring about several changes in the economy More than 4.5 crore farmers are engaged in sugarcane cultivation, harvesting and ancillary activities and about 5 lakh rural people get direct employment in the industry. Thus, the setting up of sugar industry gives us an idea about the importance of it, which is shown as below:-

- To grind [crush] the entire sugarcane grown by millions of sugarcane growers and convert it into a value added product [sugar] useful to all.
- To improve the economic status of millions of sugarcane growers by purchasing their sugarcane at a reasonable price and also by providing employment to rural masses.
- To produce sugar for meeting the demand for sugar within the country as well for exporting it to earn sufficient foreign exchange.
- To produce by-products like, bagasse, molasses, press-mud etc, which are used as raw materials for other industries like, pulp, paper-board industries from bagasse, alcohol, yeast, glutamate and citric acid etc from molasses, biogas and manure from press mud etc.,

- To bring out an overall socio-economic development of the rural people throughout the country.
- It provides raw material to sugar, gur and khandsari industries which in turn exert influence on rural economy in many ways.
- Sugarcane being a cash crop, has raised the income level of cultivators who are now in a position to allocate more funds to the development of agriculture leading to increase in productivity. The additional income increases the purchasing power of farmers which in turn helps in the improvement of living standard and status.
- Sugarcane cultivation and resultant setting up of sugar factories, has to some extent reduced the rural unemployment and consequent migration of people to cities. The sugarcane based industries help absorb some of the unemployed population in the region.
- The sugar industry has enhanced agricultural productivity by providing various inputs like fertilizers, improved implements, technical knowhow, financial assistance etc. The allied industries producing alcohol, spirit, chemicals, cattle feeds, fertilizers, paper etc., have also strengthened the economy of the region.
- Besides, many sugar factories have introduced educational, cultural and other social activities in their command areas thereby adding to overall development of the region.

Sugar industries are located within the sugarcane growing areas which need infrastructural facilities like transportation, communication, electrification, irrigation, agro-service centres, banks etc. Besides, sugar factories provide assured markets to sugarcane growers for sugarcane. As such, the cultivators tend to devote their irrigated lands to sugarcane cultivation.

The processing of agricultural produce, particularly sugarcane has a strategic place in rural economy. It makes the commodity acceptable to the consumers and serves as a source of income for the producers. This processing, however, involves an expert knowledge of heavy financing and full time attention. It is not possible for individual farmers to take up sugar processing individually. They must pool their knowledge and resources and take up the job on a co-operative basis. In this venture, the cane-growers will develop a new confidence hitherto unknown to illiterate or semi-literate men of small means in their ability to organize and run large capital intensive projects.

The sugarcane cultivation, however, suffers from inadequate water supply and low productivity, although the area under sugarcane has increased, it is subject to fluctuations during the last thirty years. Regional disparity in sugarcane cultivation is also there, which is largely influenced by physical, socio-economic and organizational factors. The productivity of sugarcane is also influenced by the combined effect of these factors which cause inadequate supply of sugarcane to the industry.

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