

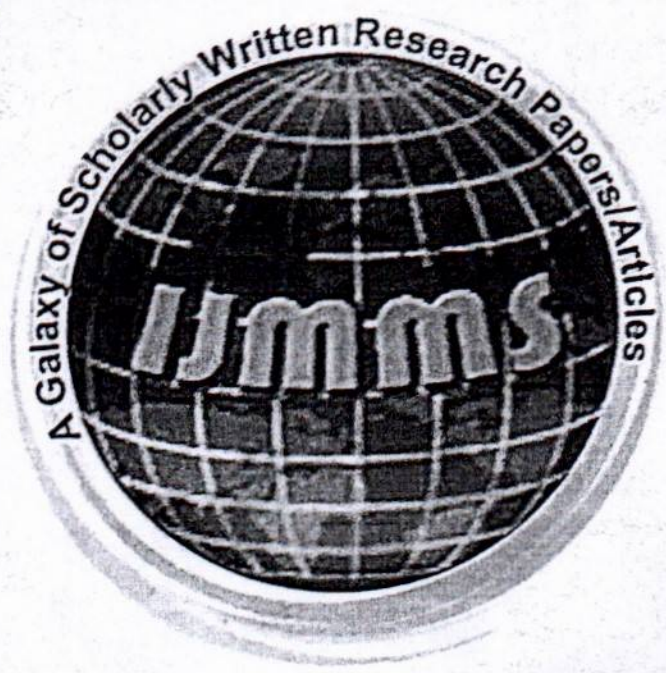
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A study of Contribution in the form of Thoughts and Actions by Shri Sharadchandra Pawar in Developing Modern India with Special Reference to Cooperation and Rural Development

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Abstract:

Hon'ble Shri Sharadchandra Pawar holds various important and highest positions both in the State and National politics. He served as Chief Minister of Maharashtra, cabinet Minister of Defence as well as Minister of Agriculture and Food Processing Industries at the Center. His political prominence continues to exist for more than fifty years. During his political tenure he focused on the development in various fields such as agriculture, industry, Cooperation, Agriculture and Rural Development, Sports, women empowerment, Social Welfare, political, literature etc. Hence, this paper made an attempt to understand the role and decisions taken by Sharadchandra Pawar for the public at large especially Cooperation and Rural Development.

Key Words: Cooperation, Rural Development, Suicides, Agriculture, Farmers

Introduction: Shri Sharadchandra Pawar is one of the prominent, active and powerful political personality in today contemporary India. He holds various important and highest positions both in the State and National politics. Indira Gandhi chose 34-yearold Pawar, then the youngest minister, to take charge of agriculture, to manage the economics of politics. Taking the responsibility, in the next two years Pawar brought different agencies under an umbrella to provide power, credit and seeds and virtually resurrected the agriculture sector. His mantra: Push up per hectare yield. He served as Chief Minister of Maharashtra, cabinet Minister of Defence as well as Minister of Agriculture and Food Processing Industries at the Center. His political prominence continues to exist for more than fifty years. During his political tenure he focused on the development in various fields such as agriculture, industry, Cooperation, Agriculture and Rural Development, Sports, women empowerment. Social Welfare, political, literature etc. Taking note of his socio-political contribution, government of India has conferred the 'Padmvibhushan' award to him.

Objective of the Study

1. To study the overall personality of Shri Sharadchandra Pawar.
2. To study contribution in the form of thoughts and actions taken by Shri Sharadchandra Pawar in the field of Cooperation, Agriculture and overall rural development.

Collection of data: Researcher collected valuable secondary data from various books, journals, newspapers etc. information was also collected from internet. Thus the overall paper is based on secondary data.

Personality of Shri Sharadchandra Pawar: After Yashwantrao Chavan, Sharad Pawar is recognized as the next best known political figure from the State of Maharashtra. Born in a farming community in Baramati taluka at Katewadi, his political journey from here to becoming the Chief Minister of the State and holding several portfolios at the Centre, he is certainly an

inspiration to many. His schooling was in a school run by Maharashtra Education Society. His success in debates / oratory; his initiative in organizing sports / outdoor / activities; his participation in the Goa Liberation Movement were all the early indicators of his formative leadership. He even held the post of General Secretary at Brihan Maharashtra Commerce College (BMCC) and represented the Student leadership at the college and university level. It was here that his association with the Youth Congress began and made an entry into party politics. The architect of modern Maharashtra, Yashwantrao Chavan, was his political mentor. Yashwantrao Chavan had recognized his leadership potential and consequentially Sharad Pawar's journey included being the Head of the Youth Congress and part of the Pradesh Congress committee in the State. During this period, on his extensive tours of the State, he not only established contact with the common man but also with the respected people in the various fields of literature, arts, sports, social work and business. He became a member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) at the young age of 27 in the year 1967. He became a Minister in the year 1974 and the Chief Minister of Maharashtra in 1978. He held this post for varying periods thereafter in 1988, 1990 and 1993. He, later, went on to become the Defence Minister at the Centre. Today, as the founder and President of the Nationalist Congress Party, he holds the Agriculture portfolio at the Centre. Focused efforts, perseverance, in-depth planning, discipline, ability to endure criticism and far-sightedness were some of his qualities that he displayed in his political journey of the past 40-45 years. Able administration, contact with the common man, flair for picking leaders among men, his direct interaction with the work-force are the qualities that characterize his political persona. Increased pension pay for retired defence officers, orchard development scheme, development of co-operatives in the state, development of the sugar industry, the relief work during the Killari earthquake, his stance and decisions on reservations and empowerment for women, his policy and decision on under-privileged social sectors are some of the highlights of his political career. He has always represented his home constituency of Baramati in Pune district in the Lok Sabha.

Highlighted thoughts and actions taken by Shri Sharadchandra Pawar in the field of Cooperation, Agriculture and overall rural development.

1. When Sharadchandra Pawar was minister of Agriculture and Food Processing Industries, he urged the State Governments to amend their Cooperative Acts to ensure compliance with the 97th Constitution (Amendment) Act. During that period, Central Cooperative Acts has already changed compliance with 97th Constitution (Amendment) Act which ensures democratic, autonomous and profession functioning of the cooperatives in the country. He was of the opinion that unless the cooperatives develop their internal strengths in the form of professional management, enlightened and active membership, inspiring leadership and innovative vision, it will be difficult for the cooperatives to protect and maintain their identity, particularly in the present economic scenario. He was also of the opinion that there is a need to restore the confidence of the people in the cooperative sector. For this purpose there is a need of good governance. During the time he also suggested that there is an urgent need to revamp the cooperative governance structure through necessary legal and policy reforms as cooperative faces various challenges. He has also found and experienced that there are serious inadequacies in governance preventing the cooperatives to function in

democratic manner, inadequate resources for modernisation and latest technology, inability to achieve higher level of professionalization required to survive in the competitive environment and dependence on the government.

2. He was of the opinion that cooperatives, by and large, suffer from dependency syndrome that has adversely affected their independence and autonomy. Most of the time this syndrome is due to restricted provisions in the cooperative laws hindering mobilisation of resources from non-governmental sources.
3. He has also pressured upon the State Governments to take action to expedite the implementation of package for revamping the short-term cooperative credit structure as he was of the opinion that credit cooperatives have an important role to implement the policies of the government to ensure flow of credit to financially excluded farmers. Unless the farmers are extended necessary credit support from the banks as well as the credit cooperatives, such efforts will not bear fruit. This needs to be closely monitored in view of the share of cooperatives in total farm credit flow being still less than 20%.”
4. During his minister ship he pointed out that the cooperatives have significantly contributed in achieving the record food grain production. Therefore, cooperative system should be one of the strongest pillars on which India's agriculture and allied sector is flourishing.
5. He was of the opinion that there is a need to take necessary measures for effective dissemination of information for improving credit flow to the farmers and ensure that all the eligible farmers shall be able to access institutional credit in hassle free manner.
6. Shri Sharadchandra Pawar also expressed his views that every State should formulate schemes for rehabilitation and reconstruction of potentially viable sick cooperatives through appropriate institutional mechanism in their States.
7. At the time of Demonetization of notes, Shri Pawar raised the voice about the demonetization issue of District co-operative banks and highlighted problems of Co-op Banks. He expressed that Maharashtra is burdened with demonetised notes worth Rs 3,000 crore which they are not able to get replaced. Around Rs8,000 crore in junked Rs500 and Rs1,000 notes is piled up with 371 district central cooperative banks after Reserve Bank of India (RBI) barred currency chest from accepting them. This may affect payment of crop loans to farmers during the kharif season. He also raised the issue in a zero hour submission in the Rajya Sabha, Pawar made a passionate plea to the government for allowing the old currency lying with district central cooperative banks (DCCBs) to be deposited with currency chests. The presence of such huge quantity of demonetised currency is restricting the ability of DCCBs to lend, impacting agricultural credit in the rabi season. The target of the rabi season in Maharashtra was Rs4,400 crore, but the achievement is Rs1,000 crore, which is just about 22%. “That means farmers are not getting crop loans. That is the overall situation. So, money is lying in the banks; other banks are not accepting; Reserve Bank is not accepting; they have to pay interest; they have to pay insurance, and money is not available for agricultural operation. It is a serious thing. Thus, he was of the opinion that demonetization impacts on the small sectors and cooperative banks. There will be job cuts in the manufacturing as well as small sectors and transactions at the co-

- operative banks have been stopped as old notes, deposited in these co-operative banks after demonetization are still not being exchanged.
8. Since the birth, he understood the cause and effect scenario. As land holdings are split and incomes shrink farmers look for ways to sustain their families. Fear of starvation drives them to adopt cash crops which require bank credit. He observed that two-thirds of farmers are outside the credit system and borrow at rates up to 120 per cent from moneylenders. The money is invested in seeds of dubious quality which require high quantities of fertilisers and pesticides. Farmers also have to survive the vagaries of the monsoon and unreliable, even if free, power supply. Finally, after harvesting, they have to sell to the Agriculture Produce Marketing Cooperatives (APMC) because they can't sell elsewhere. Therefore he was of the opinion that India's largest private sector especially agriculture is the most controlled and under-nourished. Gross investment in the economy during that period was about 26 per cent but the government's investment in agriculture is a mere 1.3 per cent which is very negligible.
 9. During his tenure of minister ship, he met many time to Union Chemicals and Fertiliser Minister Ram Vilas Paswan for fertiliser subsidies. He also says in his speech that every party understands that they need to focus on agriculture and create sufficient jobs in the rural economy.
 10. He has given his views and opinion on various issues relating to problems of farmers, agriculture and the rural economy. He is of the opinion that there cannot be economics without politics or politics without economics. Seventy per cent Indians depend on the rural economy. Unless government improve the purchasing power of farmers, it cannot lift the economy to the trajectory of 8 per cent growth as farmer is the fulcrum of the local economy. He is the producer, purchaser of goods, employer and subscriber of services.
 11. He was of the opinion that the primary problem suicide by farmers is finance. Therefore, there is a need to improve the credit delivery system. As of now nearly 60 per cent of the farmers are outside the ambit of credit because they have been declared defaulters. There is a need to change the attitude towards rural indebtedness. He was also of the opinion that like in industry, we need packages for farmers too. He always expresses his opinion that investment in agriculture has been the lowest. Irrigation projects have been lying unfinished since the 1960s. There has been no investment in storage, processing or marketing of agricultural produce. Shri Sharadchandra Pawar is also of the opinion that most of the farmers are totally dependent upon rain but due to the vagaries of nature and division of farmland farmers are in a panic-stricken mode and as a result, they are committing suicides in the country. For this purpose, stressing the need of reducing the dependence on farming, there is a need to provide education on developing new sources and means of revenue generation.
 12. Considering the issue of subsidy on power, water, fertilizers etc. He was of the opinion that farmers have been needlessly maligned. They did not ask for subsidies. But governments used subsidies as the easy option to overcome their inability to improve investment in the sector. Having said that, compared with the US or the EU, India has the lowest agricultural subsidies. There may be a case for better management of subsidies but there is no case for slashing them.

13. He was of the opinion that there is need to introduce adequate changes in law so that produce is stored and processed and not wasted, ensuring value addition and income for the farmers. This would require administrative measures like improvement of credit delivery, investment in irrigation, introduction of technology like biotech, encouragement of horticulture and, most importantly, making dry land farming viable.
14. He is of the opinion that India has a huge domestic market, scientific talent, manpower and the best agro climate that affords flexibility and variety. Mindset of has to change from one of shortfall to global competitiveness. Government has to ensure that the Indian farmer can be a global player.
15. In 2013 Onion Price hiked. Pawar refused to take the blame saying a price hike is good for Indian farmers. He accused the state government of failing to keep the price rise in check. Every state government has to take strict action against rise in onion prices; this is just a temporary phase. Government doesn't control or sell onions, it is the market which decides the price.
16. Comment on waiving off farmer's loan worth Rs 70,000 crores: When Sharadchandra Pawar was the Union Minister for Agriculture in Manmohan Singh government; he took the courageous step of waiving off farmers' loan worth Rs 70,000 crores. According to him, 'the farmers are the backbone of the country and they play a major role in the development of the country. They want to lead a respectful life in society. The outcome of the decision was that the investment in agriculture sector, which had been stopped, got revived and the production of agriculture produce increased. It resulted in to transfer from net importer to become a major exporter.
17. He was also of the opinion that due to the urbanization and development of the highways and industrialization, the farm land is shrinking and those who are dependent on the farming are getting affected. For this purpose, he suggested that to avoid this crisis, there is a need to go into the new sectors and to empower the new generation of those who are affected so that they can venture into other sectors. For this, he opined about to bring in new policies to boost other sectors such as service, agro-processing or tertiary.

Conclusion: To conclude, Hon'ble Shri Sharadchandra Pawar during his political tenure focused on the development in various fields such as agriculture, industry, Cooperation, Agriculture and Rural Development, Sports, women empowerment, Social Welfare, political, literature etc. Taking note of his socio-political contribution, government of India has conferred the 'Padmvibhushan' award to him. He was of the opinion that there is a need to restore the confidence of the people in the cooperative sector. For this purpose there is a need of good governance. Cooperatives should function in democratic manner, inadequate resources for modernisation and latest technology, inability to achieve higher level of professionalization required to survive in the competitive environment and dependence on the government. He expressed many times that unless the farmers are extended necessary credit support from the banks as well as the credit cooperatives, such efforts will not bear fruit. He also taken the side of distressed farmers many times as he was of the opinion that farmers are totally dependent upon rain but due to the vagaries of nature and division of farmland farmers are in a panic-stricken mode

and as a result, they are committing suicides in the country. For this purpose, stressing the need of reducing the dependence on farming, there is a need to provide education on developing new sources and means of revenue generation.

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