

# SHEEP REARING- A PROFITABLE AGRO- ASSOCIATED ACTIVITY IN INDIA: ISSUES AND FACTS

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## ABSTRACT

Indian agriculture has given shelter to more than 58 percent people. Since ancient days Indian agriculture is going with allied activities such as sheep, goat, cow rearing, poultry farming, etc. Livestock are important sources of income and employment in rural sector. Livestock contributes manure and draught power to the agriculture while crop residues form the major source of feed to the livestock and this system of interdependence has sustained for centuries. Sheep and goat have an inseparable identity with the farmers in India from time immemorial. They constitute an important component of agriculture and economy of the farming community in India especially those of the weaker sections among agriculturists. In addition they form substantially useful fraction if their total farm income particularly, when crops fail due to drought and other adverse conditions. They may be considered as man's first helpmates providing him with wool, meat, milk and pelt. Economy in sheep rearing like other livestock farming is subservient to genetic cum production potential and judicious management so as to reduce feeding cost without lowering nutritional level, sheep meat or mutton is the main revenue earning source for the shepherd. This paper focussed on Origin of Sheep Rearing, Sheep Rearing in India, Advantages of sheep rearing, Problems in Sheep Rearing, etc.

**Keywords:** Sheep Rearing, Animal husbandry, Agricultural Development.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Indian agriculture has given shelter to more than 58 percent people. Since ancient days Indian agriculture is going with allied activities such as sheep, goat, cow rearing, poultry farming, etc. Livestock are significant sources of income and employment in rural India. Livestock supply manure and power to agriculture while crop residues form the major source of feed to the livestock and this system of interdependence has continued for centuries.

In rural sector, livestock are important sources of income and employment. Livestock help to small and marginal farmers and landless labourers by bringing additional income. India has made amazing progress in the area of livestock population in the world. Animal husbandry has been an indivisible part of human civilization and culture from the ancient period. It is also emphasized in Vedas and Puranas that, possessing livestock is a

symbol of prosperity. Agriculture and livestock are inter-dependent in our economy and livestock has been recognized as an important approach for sustained livelihood. Sheep and goat have an inseparable identity with the farmers in India from time immemorial. They constitute an important component of agriculture and economy of the farming community in India especially those of the weaker sections among agriculturists. In addition they form substantially useful fraction if their total farm income particularly, when crops failure due to drought and other adverse conditions.

In India sheep is a important domestic animal. In the agrarian economy the contribution of sheep is more in the arid or semi-arid and hilly areas and in the areas where cropping is costly. Sheep and goat are so popular domestic animals of landless labourers, marginal and small farmers. It is a supplier of raw material like wool and skin to rural industries and its manure is highly nutritional for maintaining soil fertility. In India, for fulfilling family nutrition demand and business purpose some people in some regions are raising sheep as domestic animal from the early time. Sheep is such an animal which is small in size, calm and grows rapidly. The system of raising sheep is so simple and requires small amount of investment and brings revenue in short period. It is a good source of good income for landless agricultural labours, marginal farmers and small farmers. In India some people raise sheep professionally and taken up the opportunity and made sheep rearing as commercial business. Wool, Skin, Meat, Manure and Milk are the important products which can be produced while sheep rearing.

## II. ORIGIN OF SHEEP REARING

In India though the sheep have been in close association ship since almost pre historic times, the development and management of sheep even up to the recent past has almost remained primitive. The domestic sheep is said to have originated from two wild ancestors (Miffilin and Urial) the hundreds of completely dissimilar breeds with diverse production potentiality under different bioclimatic condition provide us an enormous store of genetic variability.

## III. ADVANTAGES OF SHEEP REARING

No doubt sheep rearing is a profitable business which can be taken up domestically or commercially. This business is Advantages of sheep rearing are given below.

- Sheep adjust with the environment; and will not damage plants like goat while eating grass. Hence sheep rearing can be taken up at any time anywhere.
- It can be done with small amount of investment (capital).
- Need less care.
- Prices of sheep products have positive trend.
- Variety of products can be produced throughout the year.
- In small area sheep rearing can be taken up.
- By eating grass, weeds, plants, spinach, etc. and survives.
- Sheep dung is good manure.
- Unemployed people can earn their bread by rearing sheep.

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#### **IV. SHEEP REARING IN INDIA**

In India sheep are maintained on natural vegetation on widespread grazing lands, waste lands, etc. In rare cases they are fed with grains, cultivated fodder. Mainly for wool and meat sheep are reared.

Skins and manure of sheep bring good earning. In Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan and Gujarat sheep are reared for milk but sheep milk is of less importance and the Indian sheep are not considered as dairy sheep. Indian sheep are of less productive due to insufficient grazing resources, diseases, high death, and morbidity

Around the world there are about 200 sheep breeds. Based on the production sheep breeds are classified into three types. They are-

- a. Meat Productive Sheep Breeds: Dorset, Suffolk and Cheviot are meat productive sheep breeds.
- b. Hair Productive Sheep Breeds: Merino and Rambouillet are meat productive sheep breeds.
- c. Hair and Meat Productive Sheep Breeds: Cordially, Montadale, Kooka, etc. are hair and meat productive sheep breeds.

Balangiri in eastern region, Gaddi in northern region, Magra north western region and Deccani in south peninsular region are the popular sheep breeds in India. Bannur, Bellary, Cheviot, Deccani, Hassn, Merino, Rambouillet and South Down are the different sheep breeds that are reared commercially.

#### **V. IMPORTANCE OF SHEEP MILK**

Sheep milk is of more use. In world milk production sheep produce 10,122,522 tonnes out of total production 753,925,418 tonnes (FAO of United Nations, 2012) *i.e* 1.3 percent of the total production. Sheep milk is highly nutritious contains more vitamin A, B and E, Calcium, Phosphorus, Potassium and Magnesium than that of cow's milk. It contains high amount of short and medium chain fatty acids. Sheep milk contains more Conjugated Linoleic Acid (CLA) than milk of other animals which is cancer-fighting and fat-reducing fat. It yields 18 – 25 percent cheese whereas the yield from cow and goat is only 9 -10 percent.

#### **VI. PROBLEMS IN SHEEP REARING**

- a. Major production problems of the present study are inadequate grazing facilities, lack of quality feed and fodder, lack of knowledge about maintenance practices.
- b. Exploitation by middlemen and the lack of market intelligence as their one of the major marketing problem.
- c. Non-availability of quality breeds, lack of technical knowledge and disease outbreak are some of the technical problem.
- d. The lack of financial facility for purchase of quality breeds, lack of credit facility.
- e. Inadequate veterinary facilities may be reason for outbreak of diseases.
- f. Thefts and preying by wild animals wolf another menace.

#### **VII. REGION WISE SHEEP POPULATION AND PRODUCTION IN INDIA**

The following table provides detailed information about sheep rearing in India

Region wise Sheep Population and Production in India

Sl. No.	Particulars	Northern temperate	North-western arid & semi-arid	Southern Peninsular	Eastern
1	States	J&K, Himachal Pradesh and hilly regions of UP	P&H, plains of UP, Rajasthan, Gujarat and MP	Maharashtra, AP, Karnataka, TN & Kerala	Bihar, W.B., Orissa, Assam and other eastern states
2	Population (millions)	3.99	15.42	19.64	4.87
3	Population (%)	9.64	40.25	40.2	9.96
4	Wool prodn (million kg)	4.52	28.12	8.6	1.76
5	Wool prodn (%)	12.33	64	28	3.67
6	Meat prodn (million kg)	12.72	49.15	62.59	15.54
7	Skin prodn (million kg)	2.82	10.88	13.86	3.44
8	Remarks	Sizeable proportion of sheep in this region, esp. J&K, consists of crosses between indigenous breeds and exotic fine wool breeds  Kashmir Merino has evolved from higher crosses of indigenous and exotic fine wool breeds	Hissardale evolved at Govt. Livestock Farm, Hissar through interbreeding Merino x Bikaneri (3/4) crossbreds  Mostly coarse carpet quality wool except Chokla & Patanwadi (which produce fine quality carpet/medium quality apparel wool)	Deccani/Bellary, Mandya & Coimbatore produce extremely coarse and hairy fleeces  Nilgiris (produced by crossing indigenous hairy breeds with exotic breeds like Cape Merino, Southdown, Cheviot etc) produce fine wool  Other breeds do not produce any wool and are primarily used for meat production	Wool is extremely coarse and hairy, except in Arunachal Pradesh where a small number of better wool quality sheep are available
9	Staple length (cm)	5.33-10.27	3.80-8.66	6.11-6.95	4.60-4.70
10	Fibre	25.14-33.11	28.00-52.00	26.88-55.00	66.40-66.66

	diameter ( $\mu$ )				
11	Medullation (%)	5.47-17.59	18.31-85.14	11.37-64.10	88.00-99.00
12	Wool quality (counts)	36-58/80	36-54	34.5-36	<36

Under DPAP, MFAL and SFDA programmes sheep development activities have been started. In the sheep rearing districts Intensive Sheep Development Projects (ISDPs) were introduced. Initiatives have made for setting up of Wool Board in wool producing states. These boards have set up in Jammu & Kashmir and Karnataka states and some of the states have set up Wool Development Corporations/ Federations. For sheep rearing financial assistance is being given from banks and NABARD.

### VIII. MAJOR FINDINGS

- a. Animal husbandry is an important subsidiary activity; it provides reasonable income to farmers.
- b. Sheep rearing activities- which provide nutritious and tasty palatable meat and milk apart from providing manures, wool and skin.
- c. Sheep rearing is suitable for wide ranges of climate conditions of the world and they are one of the oldest livestock enterprises.
- d. Small farmers are now eager to have some sheep and putting their best efforts to appraise the utility of sheep as small flocks with them, as they think it will be a profitable enterprise for milk, meat, wool for clothing.
- e. State includes research work to improvise the technique of sheep husbandry and wool utilization for better production in quantity and quality.

### XI. CONCLUSION

In spite of all these studies research is concerned on rearing and marketing of sheep. Agriculture is primary sector and sheep rearing comes under the animal husbandry and it is an allied subject, the landless and marginal farmers can easily adopt sheep rearing with low capital, so poverty eradication is possible, this research study will be on sheep rearing whether is profitable venture, economically viable one and income generating source of national income.

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