

9th Story of Village Palampur



The story of village Palampur is narrative based on a research study by Gilbert Etienna of a village in Bulandshahr district in Western Uttar Pradesh. The purpose of the story is to introduce some basic concepts relating to production.

Overview: Farming is the main production activity in a hypothetical village named Palampur. Other production activities like dairy farming, manufacturing, transportation and shopkeeping are practised on a limited scale. These production activities need various types of resources like natural resources, man-made items, human effort, money, etc.

Palampur is having an all weather road connecting it to a bigger village Raiganj and the nearest small town called Shahpur. All kinds of vehicles move on this road. Out of the 450 families living in Palampur, about 80 upper caste families own the majority of land and have large and well-constructed permanent houses. The SCs (dalits) in the village comprise about one-third of the population and are landless labourers. They live in one corner of the village in smaller houses, some of which are poorly constructed with mud and straw.

Almost houses in Palampur have electric connections. Electricity powers all the tubewells used for irrigating crops, besides providing power for running small-scale manufacturing and other business activities in Palampur. It has two primary schools and one high school. It also has a government primary health centre and a private dispensary.

The description above shows that Palampur has fairly well-developed systems of roads, transport, electricity, irrigation, schools and health facilities. Similarly, all the Indian villages have farming as their main production activity and similar non-farm activities.

Production activity: The creation of value or wealth by producing goods and services.

Resources Commodities or services used to produce goods and services.

Organisation of production: Production is an activity which gives the required goods and services. This requires four elements, which are called factors of production. The factors are

1. Land and other natural resources like water, minerals, forests etc.
2. Labour for carrying out the production activity. Some activities may be done by manual workers while others may require highly skilled or educated persons.
3. Physical capital includes two sub-components
 - (i) Fixed capital Assets or capital investments that are needed to start production of goods or services. It includes buildings, machines, tools, ranging from plough to generators, turbines, computers, etc. These can be used in production over many years, thus are fixed in nature.
 - (ii) Working capital Raw materials and money in hand are used at the time of production activities i.e., to purchase raw materials and services required and to sell finished goods.
4. Human capital is the knowledge and enterprise. It is required to put together all the above inputs to produce the output. Now, this output can either be sold in the market or used by the person producing the output.

Kharif Crops: The autumn crop sown at the beginning of summer rains.

Rabi Crops: The spring crop sown in winter.

Farming in Palampur



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Land is Fixed: 75% of the working people in Palampur are dependent farming for their livelihood; either they are farmers or labourers. Their well-being is related to production on the farms. The farm production can be raised by increasing land area under cultivation, but no additional land has been brought under cultivation in Palampur after 1960 except wasteland.

The situation of Palampur may be compared to that of India. Cultivated area in India has just increased from 120 million hectares in 1950 to 140 million hectares in 2010-11 to sustain its growing population.

Now, there is no further scope to bring new land under cultivation to increase farm production.

Ways to Grow More from the Same Land: Some of the ways through which farmers grow more from the same land are

Multiple Cropping: All land is cultivated in Palampur; no land is left idle. To increase production from the same piece of land, farmers multiple cropping, i.e., they grow more than one crop piece of land during the year. Multiple cropping is the most common way of increasing production.

During the rainy season (Kharif), farmers grow jowar bajra, which are used as cattle feed. Kharif cultivation is followed by potato cultivation in the months of October to December as the third crop. During the winter season (Rabi) farmers sow wheat. From the produced wheat, farmers keep enough wheat for their family's consumption and sell the rest of the wheat in the market at Raiganj.

A part of the land is also devoted to sugarcane production which is harvested once every year. Sugarcane, in its raw form or as jaggery, is sold to traders in Shahpur.

Reason Behind Successful Multiple Cropping: The village of Palampur has a well-developed system of irrigation. Availability of electricity is the main behind the developed system of irrigation. Persian wheels that irrigated small fields through wells are replaced by tubewells. In the beginning, a few tubewells were installed by government; after that, farmers started setting up tubewells. Due to this, by mid-1970s, the entire cultivated - area of 200 hectares in the village was brought irrigation.

Irrigation Pattern: The irrigation pattern of Palampur may be compared with rest of India. All the villages in India do not have a high level of irrigation as in Palampur. Apart from the riverine plains, coastal regions are well-irrigated. In contrast, Plateau regions such as the Deccan Plateau have low levels of irrigation. Of the total cultivated area in the country, a little 40% is irrigated. In the remaining areas, farming is largely dependent on rainfall.

Traditional and Modern Farming Methods: production can also be increased using modern farming for higher yield. Till the mid-1960s, farmers used traditional seeds, which needed less irrigation, but gave poor yields. They also used cow dung and other manure as fertilisers. All these were readily available farmers.

Use of HYV Seeds: The Green Revolution in the late 1960s introduced the Indian farmers to the cultivation of wheat and rice using High Yielding Varieties (HYVs) of seeds. HYV seeds produced much greater amounts of grain on a single plant as compared to a traditional seed plant. Higher yields were only with the combination of HYV seeds, irrigation (plenty of water), chemical fertilisers, pesticides, etc.

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In India farmers of Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar were the first to try out modern methods of farming. Some farmers also bought farm machinery like tractors and threshers.

This made ploughing and harvesting faster. In Palampur, with the HYV seeds, the yield of wheat went up to 3200 kg tare as compared to 1300 kg per hectare with the traditional seeds. Farmers now had greater amounts of surplus wheat to sell in the markets.

Sustenance of Land: In raising production, a great deal of pressure has been put and other natural resources. Due to overuse of land of chemical fertilisers, soil fertility has been reduced. The fertilisers have killed the bacteria and microbes in the soil, reducing its natural fertility.

Due to large amounts of water required in modern farming methods, the water table below the ground has reduced, impacting further the fertility of the soil.

Degradation in Soil Health and Rising Cost of Cultivation Due to Chemical Fertilisers: Chemical fertilisers provide minerals which dissolve in water and are immediately available to plants. But these minerals may not be retained in the soil for long. They may escape from the soil and pollute groundwater, rivers and lakes. Continuous use of chemical fertilisers has led to degradation of soil health. Now farmers of Punjab are forced to use more and more fertilisers and other inputs to achieve the same production level, i.e., the cost of cultivation is rising very fast.

Land Distribution: In Palampur, all the people engaged in agriculture did not have sufficient land for cultivation. Out of 450 families in Palampur, 150 families are landless and most of them are dalits. 240 families out of those which own land, cultivate small plots of land less than 2 hectares, which does not bring adequate income to the farmer family.

So, they have to look for additional work during part of the year. Remaining 60 families of medium and large farmers cultivate more than 2 hectares of land. A few of them have land extending over 10 hectares or more.

Farm Labour: Many of the small farmers do additional work as farm labourers as they have to feed themselves and their families. Medium farmers and large farmers hire farm labourers to work on their fields.

Farm labourers come either from landless families or families cultivating small plots of land. Unlike farmers, farm labourers do not have a right over the crops grown on the land. These labourers can be paid in cash or in objects like crops; sometimes they get meals also. But this varies widely from place to place, from crop to crop and from one farm to another farm.

There is also a wide variation in the duration of employment. The labourers may not be hired for the full year. They may be hired on a daily basis or for particular activities like sowing and harvesting. Labour is the most important factor for agricultural production.

There is heavy competition for work among the farm labourers in Palampur, and so they agree to work for lower wages. The Indian government has set 115 per day as the minimum wage (April 2011), but farmers in Palampur pay only 75-80 per day. Consequently, farm labourers are the poorest among the villagers. The labour, looking for opportunities, thus migrates to neighbouring villages, towns and cities for better employment. Some labour has also entered in the non-farm sector in the village, and some live on the mercy of moneylenders.

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Yield: The amount of crop produced in a given piece of land during a single season is known as yield.

Capital Needed in Farming: As modern farming methods require a great deal of capital, the farmer needs more money than before. Small farmers have to borrow money to arrange the capital. They borrow from large farmers, village moneylenders, or traders who supply various inputs for cultivation. The rate of interest on such loans is very high. They are put to great distress to repay the loan. Large and medium farmers have their own savings from farming. They are thus able to arrange for the capital needed.

Sale of Surplus Farm Products: The large and medium farmers of Palampur retain a part of the produced grain for their own use and sell the surplus in the market. Traders in the market buy these grains for selling them to the shopkeepers in cities and towns. These farmers earn a good amount of money through this sale and keep this in their bank account.

Later, they use this money to purchase inputs for the next farming season, purchase capital equipment or even give loans to small farmers. Some farmers also use this money to start activities in the non-farm sector. Thus, this surplus money increases their working capital as well as fixed capital.

Non-farm activities in Palampur: At present, non-farm sector in the village is not large. Only about 25% of the working population in Palampur has acquired non-agricultural occupations, which is almost similar to the percentage of non-farm working force in rural areas of the country, though there is a variety of non-agricultural activities in the village (e.g., dairy farming, jaggery production, transportation, shopkeeping, computer education, etc), the number of people employed in each activity is quite small.

Dairy: The Other Common Activity

After farming, dairy is the most common activity in Palampur. People feed their buffaloes on various kinds of grass, jowar and bajra grown in the rainy season. The milk produced is sold in the nearby large village, Raiganj. It has collection-cum-chilling centres run by two traders from Shahpur town to transport the milk to far away towns and cities.

Small-Scale Manufacturing: Currently, very few people e.g., less than fifty people are engaged in the manufacturing sector in the village of Palampur. Manufacturing in Palampur involves very simple methods done on a small-scale, in contrast to manufacturing that takes place in big factories towns and cities.

This manufacturing is carried out most at home or in the fields with the help of family labour. Labourers are rarely hired.

Traders: There are very few people in Palampur who are involved in trading (exchange of goods). The traders of Palampur are shopkeepers who buy various goods from wholesale markets in cities and sell them in the village.

A few of the families whose houses are close to the bus stand have used a part of their space to open small shops. They sell eatables.

Transport: A Fast-Developing Sector

A number of vehicles run on the road that connects Palampur to Raiganj. Many people in the transport services i.e., rickshawallahs, tongawallahs, jeep, tractor, truck drivers and people driving the traditional bogey and bulb cart. They take



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people and goods from one place to another and in return get paid for it. The number of people involved in transport has grown over the last several years.

Surplus: It is an excess of production or supply.

Exercise:

1. Give some ideas about the kind of crops grown in Palampur.
2. What are the four requirements of production?
3. What is green revolution?
4. How modern methods have over used the natural resources and violated the resources?
5. How much per cent of the working population is engaged in non-agricultural occupation in Palampur?
6. How is land distributed between the farmers of Palampur and Indian villages

