

Irrigation Development and Management in Japan and India - A Comparative Analysis in Historical and Contemporary Periods

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There is widespread agreement on the need to improve the management of irrigation systems in developing countries, so as to increase the efficiency of water use and productivity of irrigated agriculture. Since irrigation management, apart from its technical aspect, is being increasingly viewed from its organisational and cultural aspects, it would be of immense importance and relevance to examine the organisational structures which have been successful in effecting positive changes in and improving efficiency of irrigated agriculture in Japan set out in a comparative perspective with Indian systems in historical and contemporary times. Even though irrigation systems in their structure and dimension are widely different in Japan and India, there is one aspect of irrigation development in recent years in India where the approach seems to be similar. The Command Area Development Authorities in India have much in common with the Land Improvement Districts in Japan at least in their basic approach towards the development of command area with a view to efficient utilisation of land and water resources in any irrigation system. However, in order to be able to appreciate the role of these two organisations in the respective countries it is necessary to review historically the phases through which development in respect of irrigation have proceeded in two countries, ultimately leading to these two forms of organisational structure. Keeping this in view the present study is an attempt to set out the main issues relating to irrigation management in Japan and India in a comparative perspective.

Introduction

Irrigation development in Japan has a long history. If we consider irrigation development as consisting of two parts, namely, construction of the irrigation system and operation and maintenance of the system created with a view to efficient distribution of water so harnessed, we find that Japan has a long evolutionary history of irrigation development through various eras. Indeed the present state of irrigation technology and network with its water distribution system in the country can be considered a legacy of the past efforts and achievements in this direction.