Twitter Thread by Vandana ■■✍■



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'Farmers Protests'.
the bitter truth, probably -
(COPIED from a friend's wall)
I am still not clear about the issues involved in the Farmer's agitation. So, I asked a friend of mine, who besides engineering is a farmer from Abohar - Fazilka region of Punjab.

Now, after retirement, he is a full-time farmer.
This is what he told me.
"I have been actively farming for almost two decades now and I have witnessed many things happen at APMC's.
I have seen classifications of C grade grain miraculously change into B grade grain.

Similarly, I've also witnessed the weighbridge weigh in the empty truck at 39 tons & the full truck at 55 tons and later found that the unloaded truck weighed 43 tons at another weighbridge.
Yes I know, you know what I know. Yet let me tell you more abt what you may already know.

There are over 30,000 registered adtiyas in Punjab.
These 30,000 employ another 300,000 sub-agents or sidekicks or people who wouldn't have made it into doing anything anyplace were it not for the patronage network of these 30,000. There are only 1500 farming villages in Punjab.

330,000 / 1500 is about 220 people on average per village doing the work of middlemen.
Why is this the case?
It's a long story but someone needs to begin talking about this at some time.
We had a food shortage and a ship to mouth existence until the 1970s.

Norman Borlaug pioneered a variety of wheat which gave 10 X the yield but needed 3X the fertiliser.
Punjab was chosen as the battleground against hunger. Enterprising Sikh farmers worked hard to create what we know as the green revolution.
Since there were huge shortages.

Laws were made which didn't allow for stockholding or selling at farm gates.
Essential Commodities Act
APMC Act (farmers were compelled to sell only at APMC's to licensed traders - remember license permit quota Raj?)
As an assurance to the farmer for his hard work.

Minimum Support Prices were guaranteed. No matter what the quantum. Sarkar would pick it up and provide farmers with a minimum amount as compensation per quintal or ton as the case may be.
Getting money out of the Sarkari treasury is a muck filled process.

Thus was born the breed of middlemen who walked the corridors of bureaucracy, government and worked corrupt Sarkari babus.
political patronage networks flourished.
220: 1 is the ratio of middlemen to a single village in Punjab today.
This business got integrated backwards.

Corruption was professionalised.
For instance, I have in my circle of influence or immediate family, folks who own very large tracts of land. (100 acres plus holding).
The thekedar comes and takes the theka of growing on the land. For those unfamiliar with the word,...

Theka it's also referred to as a contract. I know there are grumblings abt corporates contracting with farmers directly now. I also know why. You should too.
Anyways; to cut a long story short.
Plenty Farmers do, not much except rcv their due at the end of each cropping season.

What is grown?
What grade or quality?
For how much is it sold?
Would it have fetched a similar price in the open market?
Where is it sold?
How is it sold?
Who's the end beneficiary?
Does anybody consume it or does it go to waste?
Was there a better way to do what's being done?

All the above is none of my business or yours.
As long as you receive your cheque.
Why do you care?
The Jamkhedkar committee meanwhile reports that over 40% of the grain acquired under MSP by FCI is either unfit for consumption or is simply wasted.

All Told, 1 out of every 2 kilos acquired is wasted. Yrs of perfidy have today given birth to this.
MSP has ensured that there's no necessity to seek profitable enterprise.
It's also given birth to the patronage networks which survive off the Sarkari teat & refuse to break away.

It’s given rise to a political class which thrives and survives of being Specialist Corrupt Thugs.
There was no sunset clause on this. Nobody foresaw a time of surplus production on food grains.
Result; all other states such as Haryana, UP, Bihar, Rajasthan & MP all produce...

surfeits of Grain. They also have their own MSP mechanisms which have proliferated and created similar political patronage networks.
Since more is acquired at Mandis in Punjab. Remember the central Govt promise. The grain from UP and or Bihar also finds its ways into the mandi..

system of Punjab. The trucks being underweight and overpaid for and the grades changing are commonplace practise, you can go for a few days to the mandi and figure out how to make a killing by doing this. I don’t advise it, this is what the system is the current day.

I advise, Try doing truthful clean work. It’s more fulfilling.
Soon enough, you’ll also be one of those “know it all’s” in the mandi who doesn’t talk to others. After all, information is power.
All this is paid for by you dear taxpayer.

The annual bill for this is approximately 8 lakh crores. Why don’t the farmers grow something else?
Something more profitable.
If I’m being paid for doing precisely nothing.
Why bother competing.
Where is the incentive to compete?

I would rather go and picket the roads leading into Delhi to ensure that the existing system isn’t threatened."
Quite a racket! What a shame.