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Recurring Droughts Disasters: Their Impacts and Counter Measures in the Indian Desert Region

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The recurring drought is the very old phenomenon perhaps as old as the world desert regions themselves. In the present research paper an attempt has been made to analyze the recurring droughts disasters phenomena of last hundred years or so (1900-2003) and to highlight their impact on various anthropogenic activities. An attempt has also been made to know the people's perception regarding such types of naturals calamities. The Indian desert region is facing the prospects of a fifth consecutive yea of drought (2003) and the region has experienced 39 droughts in the past 46 years (1947 to 2003) including the 1987-88 dreadiest drought of the last century in the Indian history. In 32 districts of Rajasthan including the 12 arid districts of the study area, are facing scarcity of food, fodder and water. A total of 41,000 villages are affected and the number of direct victims of this catastrophe is estimated 40 million people and over 50 million cattle. Precisely such extreme natural events result in heavy economic losses, apart from the loss of livestock, food and livelihood security and hardships inflicted on the desert dwellers. These natural calamities certainly pose an adverse and multiple impacts not only on the agriculture but on its allied activities as well. Apart from them, it has also a similar type of impact on natural vegetation and spatial water bodies on the basis of personal survey, on an average the major chunk of the respondents (26%) opinion was that the main sufferer during droughts were the livestock especially cows, goat and sheep. The other victims of droughts are fodder resources (18.6%) and agricultural crops (18.25%) including forest resources (7.87%). In totality, it was stated by the respondents that this natural calamity had a great impact of almost all walks of life. The poor strata of the desert society are quite vulnerable to the impact of droughts, which has a direct bearing on agricultural production. The main causes of these hazards are non-occurrence of rainfall for a prolong period, intensive and unscientific agricultural practices, high rate of evapo-transpiration over and uneconomic exploitation of water and land resources accelerating human and livestock population, dwindling forest cover, increased soil erosion and poor drought disasters management etc. The frequent recurring drought disasters phenomenon various key counter measures and relevant strategies have been discussed in detail including traditional methods and watershed management programmes which offer best solution for tackling such type of critical disasters in the arid and the tracts of the Indian desert region.