

“FARMERS’ SUICIDE IN INDIA: CURRENT SCENARIO”

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Abstract: The purpose of the study is to examine the current scenario of farmers’ suicide in India. Farmer suicides in India refer to the national catastrophe of farmers committing suicide since the 1990s. The farmers’ suicide rate in India had ranged between 1.4 and 1.8 per 100,000 total population, over a 10-year period through 2005, however the figures in 2017 and 2018 showed an average of more than 10 suicides daily. In this way, present study depicts about what NSSO and NCRB data 2018 says about farmers’ distress in India has been discussed.

Keywords: Farmer’s suicide, Agrarian Distress, Sustainable Development, Irrigation, Agrarian crisis

I. BACKGROUND

“Suicides by farmers today are actually a symptom of a much wider crisis in India’s farm and agricultural sector,” P. Sainath.

The Indian farmers, the largest body of surviving small farmers in the world, today faces a crisis of extinction. Two thirds of India makes its living from the land. The earth is the most generous employer in this country of a billion that has farmed this land for more than 5000 years.

In India agriculture is a state subject it means the main responsibility of development of agriculture lies with the state only and the centre can provide resources to states to develop primary sector. under DPSP (Directive Principles of State Policy) Our Constitution also says that it is the duty of the state to develop agriculture, articles 38 and 48 justifies this Article 38(2) says that the state shall, in particular, strive to minimise the inequalities in income, and endeavor to eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and

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opportunities, not only amongst individuals but also amongst groups of people residing in different areas or engaged in different vocations. Another article vividly mentions that the state shall endeavour to organize agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines and shall, in particular, take steps for preserving and improving the breeds. No nation can afford to compromise with its farming and farmers. And much less India, wherein the absolute number of households engaged in agriculture in 2011 (119 million) outpaced those in 1951 (70 million). Then, there are the landless agricultural labour who numbered 144.30 million in 2011 as against 27.30 million in 1951. The welfare of this elephantine size of India's population is predicated upon a robust agricultural growth strategy that is guided by an income enhancement approach.

However, as farming is delinked from the earth, the soil, the biodiversity, the climate and linked to global corporations and global markets, and the generosity of the earth is replaced by the greed of corporations, the viability of small farmers and small farms is destroyed. Farmers suicides are the most tragic and dramatic symptom of the crisis of survival faced by Indian peasants.

1997 witnessed the first emergence of farm suicides in India. Rapid increase in indebtedness was at the root of farmers taking their lives. Debt is a reflection of a negative economy, a losing economy. Two factors have transformed the positive economy of agriculture into a negative economy for peasants – the rising costs of production and the falling prices of farm commodities. Both these factors are rooted in the policies of trade liberalization and corporate globalization.

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Farmer suicides has turned out to be a major socioeconomic concern in India that has resulted in profound implications on the quality life of farmers. According to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), one farmer committed suicide for every 32 minutes

between 1997 and 2005 in India. A total of 3,32,603 farmers (2,84,008 males and 48,595 females) committed suicide between 1995 and 2018.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ambedkar, D. B. (1918): In short, strange as it may seem, industrialization of India is the soundest remedy for the agricultural problems of India. The cumulative effects of industrialization, namely a lessening pressure (of surplus labour) and an increasing amount of capital and capital goods will forcibly create the economic necessity of enlarging the holding. Not only will this, but industrialization, by destroying the premium on land, give rise to few occasions for its sub-division and fragmentation. Industrialization is a natural and powerful remedy, in this paper Ambedkar strongly suggested the ideas of Arthur Lewis theory of Theory of economic development which suggests that in order to develop a

Posani, B. (2009) : Desperate indebtedness was found to be the common thread that ran through most of the reported suicides. Deeper analyses, however, reveal that indebtedness is only a symptom. According to this report the major causes for Agrarian Distress in India are small land holding, less institutional support, declining irrigation facility, relying more on monsoon, price shocks, credit squeeze, trader- money lender Nexus and pervasive indebtedness. Indian agriculture today is 'the economic residue' that accommodates 'non-achievers', and that the principal motivation of the peasant today is to stop being a peasant Not an encouraging prospect, then, for the peasant movements, or the peasant.

Saritha, G. (2015) : Reviewed that the between 1997-2007 21,174 farmer's suicide reported in India, the major reason is indebtedness. In their case study they figured out these following results, the outbreak of suicide in India is appalling and on average one Indian farmer committed suicide every 32 minutes during the past period 1997to2007 and as many as 48 farmers suicide per day in India between 2002-2007. The farmer suicide in India as a clear indication of serve distress in the farming community. The causes for present agrarian distress vary from one to another state. But the genuine causes may be common in all states which include external trade liberalization and neo-liberal policy driven reforms in the economy have played havoc with the farm dependent population in the country. Indian state now acknowledges the fact that between 1993and2003, 1, 00,248 farmers committed suicide in India..The most important factor is debt.

Vasavi, A. (2005) : Focused on the relationship between commercial crops and suicides. Since the key sources of non-institutional creditors have been agri-business agencies (who provide both inputs at deferred credit to

agriculturists and loans), and the new money lenders and creditors¹³, including relatives and friends who draw on their urban salaries, these debts pose a double burden on agriculturists. For one, interest rates are exorbitant (ranging from 24 to 45 percent per annum) and secondly they are linked to their personal and social networks. Inability to pay is often met with ridicule, ostracism or public humiliation. As several reports and case studies highlight, many of those who committed suicide did so after experiencing such humiliation or facing threats of dispossession of their assets.

Based on the above mentioned reviews the research gap has been found on the farmers' suicide. Hence the study has been made as follows.

III. DISCUSSION

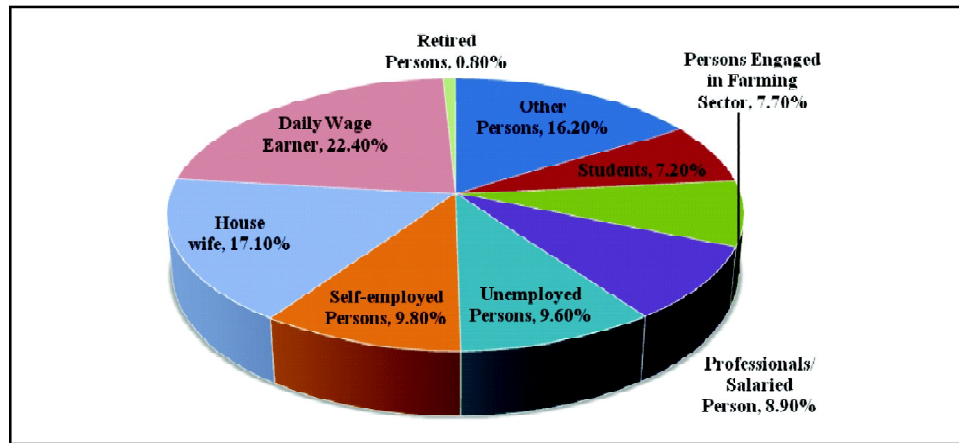


Figure 1.1: Percentage Distribution of Suicide Victims by Profession during 2018 (All India)

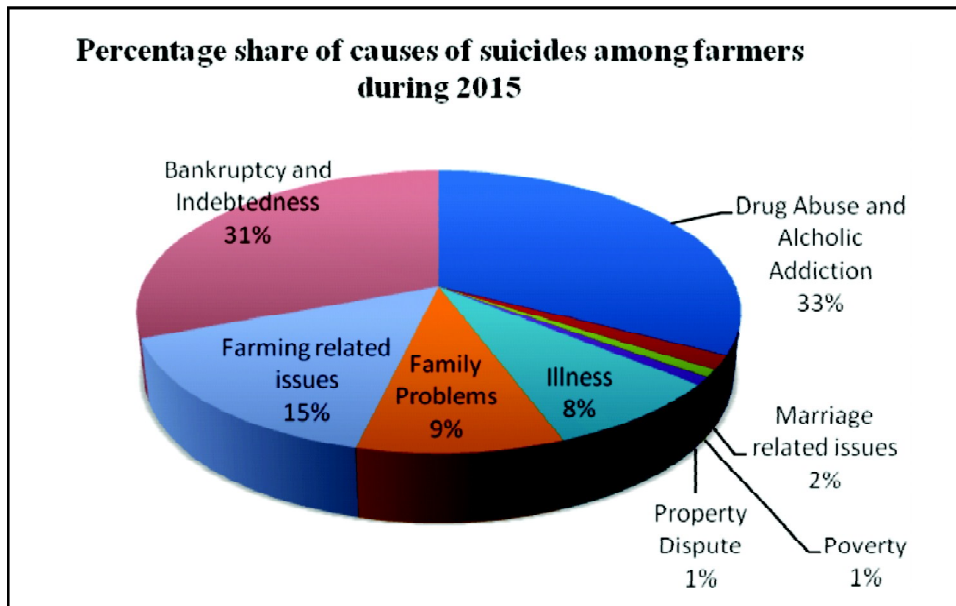
Table 1
Persons Engaged in Farming Sector Suicides during 2018 (All India)

Profession	Male	Female	Transgender	Total	Percentage Share
1. Farmers/Cultivators	5457	306	0	5763	4.3
a) who cultivate their own land with or without assistance of agricultural labourers	4848	240	0	5088	3.8
b) who cultivate on leased land/work on lease/on other's land (known by different nomenclature) with or without assistance of agricultural labourers	609	66	0	675	0.5
2. Agricultural Labourers	4071	515	0	4586	3.4
Total	9528	821	0	10349	7.7

A total of 10,349 persons involved in farming sector (consisting of 5,763 farmers/cultivators and 4,586 agricultural labourers) have committed suicides during 2018, accounting for 7.7 per cent of total suicides in the country. Also it is found that out of 5,763 farmer/cultivator suicides, a total of 5,457 were male and 306 were female during 2018. Out of 4,586 suicides committed by agricultural labourers during 2018, 4,071 were male and 515 were female.

Reasons for farmer suicides in India (NCRB, 2015)

The decision to commit suicide by the victim cannot be attributed to a single reason. It was spur-of-the-moment triggered action with respect to 70 to 80 per cent of victims. The final action of committing suicide was a combination of several cumulative causes which can be grouped into social, farming and debt-related.



Various reasons have been offered to explain why farmers commit suicide in India. Farmers feel a repeated sense of hopelessness due to the loss of crops, income and land. Another factor that increases suicides is the social isolation due to the loss of communities as well as geographical remoteness. The prominent causes recognized for farmer suicides were bankruptcy or indebtedness, family problems, farming related issues, illness and drug abuse/alcohol addiction.

Farmers Suicides during 2018 (State & UT - wise)

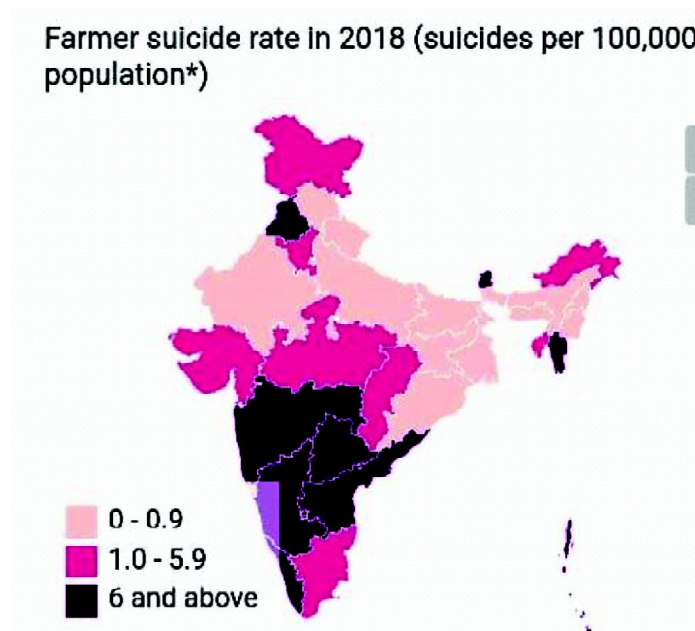
STATES	Male	Female	Trasns-gender	Total
1 ANDHRA PRADESH	593	71	0	664
2 ARUNACHAL PRADESH	4	0	0	4
3 ASSAM	52	3	0	55
4 BIHAR	0	0	0	0
5 CHHATTISGARH	440	27	0	467
6 GOA	0	0	0	0
7 GUJARAT	117	15	0	132
8 HARYANA	91	13	0	104
9 HIMACHAL PRADESH	17	0	0	17
10 JAMMU & KASHMIR	24	2	0	26
11 JHARKHAND	43	15	0	58
12 KARNATAKA	2232	173	0	2405
13 KERALA	197	14	0	211
14 MADHYA PRADESH	643	12	0	655
15 MAHARASHTRA	3360	234	0	3594
16 MANIPUR	2	0	0	2
17 MEGHALAYA	0	0	0	0
18 MIZORAM	14	3	0	17
19 NAGALAND	2	0	0	2
20 ODISHA	0	0	0	0
21 PUNJAB	317	6	0	323
22 RAJASTHAN	20	0	0	20
23 SIKKIM	8	1	0	9
24 TAMIL NADU	303	98	0	401
25 TELANGANA	801	107	0	908
26 TRIPURA	7	3	0	10
27 UTTAR PRADESH	230	24	0	254
28 UTTARAKHAND	0	0	0	0
29 WEST BENGAL	0	0	0	0
TOTAL (STATES)	9517	821	0	10338
UNION TERRITORIES				
30 A & N ISLANDS	4	0	0	4
31 CHANDIGARH	0	0	0	0
32 D & N HAVELI	7	0	0	7
33 DAMAN & DIU	0	0	0	0
34 DELHI (UT)	0	0	0	0
35 LAKSHADWEEP	0	0	0	0
36 PUDUCHERRY	0	0	0	0
TOTAL (UTs)	11	0	0	11
TOTAL (ALL INDIA)	9528	821	0	10349

Source: ADSI report, 2018

The rising spate of farmer suicides in different parts of India is not a new phenomenon. According to the recently released Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India (ADSI) report, 10,349 farmers committed suicide in 2018, accounting for 7.7 per cent of the total number of suicides in the country. Many states and union territories have reported nil data on suicides by farmers, cultivators and farm labourers.

Majority of suicides were reported in Maharashtra (3594) followed by Karnataka (2405), Telangana (908), Andhra Pradesh (664) and Madhya Pradesh (655) respectively. In other words Maharashtra accounted for the highest share in farm-related suicides at 34.7%, followed by Karnataka at 23.2%, Telangana 8.8%, Andhra Pradesh 6.4% and Madhya Pradesh at 6.3%, data showed. West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Uttarakhand, Meghalaya, Goa and Union territories, including Delhi, reported zero suicides by farmers/ cultivators and agricultural labourers.

Farmer suicides in India refer to the national catastrophe of farmers committing suicide since the 1990s. The farmers suicide rate in India had ranged between 1.4 and 1.8 per 100,000 total population, over a 10-year period through 2005, however the figures in 2017 and 2018 showed an average of more than 10 suicides daily. There are accusations of states manipulating the data on farmer suicides, hence the real figures could be even higher. Some states seem to barely have a farmer suicide issue, the NCRB data suggests. In 2018, six states, including Bihar, Odisha, and West



Bengal reported zero farmer suicides. However, for states such as Odisha and West Bengal the claim of zero suicides seems implausible. In Odisha, ground reports of farmer suicides, including data presented in the assembly, do not match NCRB data.

According to a report by the National Crime Records Bureau, the states with the highest incidence of farmer suicide in 2015 were Maharashtra (3,030), Telangana (1,358), Karnataka (1,197), Madhya Pradesh (581), Andhra Pradesh (516), and Chhattisgarh (854).

Factors like inadequate irrigation facilities, changing cropping patterns, low return from the farm sector, inadequate agricultural infrastructure, poor agriculture-related marketing policies, and insufficient public investment for agrarian development exacerbated farmer suicides. Additionally, external factors such as excessive economic liberalisation, low import tariffs, widening disparities between agriculture and non-agricultural sectors, dumping of agricultural goods in global markets are also to blame. Apart from these factors, farmer suicides in a particular region are directly linked to the vulnerability of that region to extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods. These extreme climatic events increase the risk of crop failure. States like Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat, that reported relatively higher numbers of farmer suicides, have a higher percentage of drought-prone areas and lesser flood-prone ones.

Tamma Carleton, a researcher at the University of California at Berkeley, compared suicide and climate data, concluding that climate change in India may have “a strong influence” on suicides during the growing season, triggering more than 59,000 suicides in 30 years. More than 23,000 farmers have committed suicide in the state of Maharashtra between 2009 and 2016.

IV. CONCLUSION

India is an agrarian country with around 70% of its people depending directly or indirectly upon agriculture. Farmer suicides are an unfortunate result of the agrarian distress plaguing the rural economy of many states of the country. There are many reasons found on farmers' suicide, apart from internal and external factors, it is also found that climate change causes bad weather and erratic monsoon triggering more suicides in last 30 years. Thus, the problem needs to be tackled by helping agriculturists in suicide-prone areas in a way that would build productive and marketing capabilities. Also Adequate attention on yield, price, credit, as well as weather, health, life, crop and cattle insurance, besides improving water availability, rural electrification and timely intervention of a procurement mechanism needs to arresting the suicide death toll among farmers.

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