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Globalization and Farmer Suicide: A Survey of Recent Literature

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ABSTRACT

The recent spate of farm suicide in India clearly indicating a state of crisis in its agriculture sector. The paradox is still this sector is main livelihood source for majority of rural population. The present study tries to look at various causes of agrarian crisis and farm suicide by a detailed survey of literature. The unique feature of this present study is it looks at the contemporary data relating farm suicide as well as focusing on more recent study on this subject. The present study is basically dealt with data from various sources such as journals, reports, thesis, working papers, newspapers and various website which is basically secondary in nature. The present study identified multi-faceted nature of agrarian crisis and farmer suicide that ranging from social-Psychological to economic and hereditary. The study concludes that if we need to save our farmer and agriculture sector then we need to a farmer friendly policy at all levels otherwise our future food security would be in danger.

Key words: Globalization, Agriculture, Farmer, Suicide, Crises

“If agriculture goes wrong, nothing else will have a choice to go right” [1]. India is primarily an agricultural-dependent nation with nearly three fourth of its population residing in villages. Agriculture continues to be the main livelihood sources for majority of its population. Therefore, agriculture occupies a prominent position in Indian policy-making. Indian agriculture had gone through a painful phase in last few decades. The most distressing period was the period of economic reform which had a negative impact on the Indian economy. The agriculture sector was affected to a great extent which can be seen in its bad output along with the suicide of many thousands of farmers. During the period from mid-1990s to mid-2000s the growth rate of agriculture sector was less than 2% per annum. But the irony was for the first time in Indian history the suicide of farmer was unstoppable. In every thirty minutes one farmer commits suicide” [2]. Various survey also highlights precarious condition of farmers in India such as the Situation Assessment Survey by NSSO in the year 2003 which states forty-three per cent of farmers in India did not like farming and they want to give up it provided by getting another option. The present study has revolved around two objectives

- To look into the trends and patterns of the recent suicide

scenario in India

- To analyze and enquire various reasons of agrarian distress and farmer suicide in India

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The researcher done a very intensive search from various database to find out the reason of farmer suicide in India. The database includes Google, Pubmed, Google Scholar, JSTOR, Web of Science and ScienceDirect. The important criteria for including studies in this project was its significance to the above topic. The search term that is used for this project was “[{Globalization and Farmer Suicide in India} and {Agrarian Crisis and Farmer Suicide in India}]. The official data of suicide is collected from National Crime Records Bureaus from the year 1995 to the latest one i.e., of 2019.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The available literature broadly can be clubbed under five headings (i) Historical factor that makes agriculture vulnerable (ii) The background that created an atmosphere of vulnerability (iii) Contributing factors responsible for farmers suicide (iv) Impact of farmer suicide on farming household (v) Suggestive measure to alleviate this phenomenon.

(i) *Historical factor that makes agriculture vulnerable*

In order understand the present we must introspect the past. Even after seven decades of independence, the

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Govt of India failed miserably to solve the problem of its farming community.

Here the focus is to look at agricultural development from British period since before it was an inclusive village activity and state didn't interfere in agricultural activity.

a) Indian agricultural economy during British rule

The British policy was doing not help the farming community. During their period a class of landed gentry was created under the titles: Rai Bahadurs, Rao Sahebs and Zamindars. Their main aim was to collect tax. They also initiated the cultivation of those crop that will help to generate more revenue. So, the farmer become a State dependent entity from individual decision maker. Their intention was collection of tax not in the welfare of the farmer [3]. During the British rule the 'self-sufficient village economy of India got destroyed as their focus was on capitalist development and commercial market economy. They introduced large scale land ownership which was only to collect tax and exploit our self-sufficient village [4].

b) Indian state after independence

Even after Independence the very nature of our state remain unchanged since it was formed under the shadow of a strong colonial state. Therefore, Karl Marx called the Indian state foundation as 'oriental despotism' albeit with democracy was superimposed on it. There was no proper vision for real farmer welfare in India. It is basically a state dominated era where state decide everything without understanding the real problem. This lead to dependence of farmer on the market intermediaries India had not proper land reform so it didn't help much to the farming community. The agri policy was highly colonial in nature. This excess presence of the state is actually welfare deteriorating. Most of the policy is basically understood often as a set of problem-solving steps taken in the context of severity of the issue [3].

Trend and pattern of farmer suicide in India

There is a high degree of variation in terms of the number, as well as rate, of farm suicides across different States in the country.

Table 1 Farmer suicide in India over the years (1995-2019)

Year	All India figure				Odisha		
	Male	Female	Transgender	Total	Male	Female	Total
1995	8295	2425		10720	309	56	365
1996	10897	2832		13729	246	18	264
1997	11229	2393		13622	222	29	251
1998	12986	3029		16015	353	65	418
1999	13278	2804		16082	259	6	265
2000	13501	3102		16603	180	19	199
2001	13829	2586		16415	207	49	256
2002	15308	2663		17971	309	36	345
2003	14701	2463		17164	324	41	365
2004	15929	2312		18241	299	80	379
2005	14973	2158		17131	204	50	254
2006	14664	2396		17060	241	42	283
2007	14509	2123		16632	170	70	240
2008	14145	2051		16196	245	15	260
2009	14951	2417		17368	143	11	154
2010	13592	2372		15964	145	17	162
2011	12071	1956		14027	138	6	144
2012	11951	1803		13754	121	25	146
2013	10489	1283		11772	143	7	150
2014	10889	1471	0	12360	98	4	102
2015	11584	1018	0	12602	43	7	50
2016	10471	908	0	11379	82	39	121
2017	9852	802	1	10655	0	0	0
2018	9528	821	0	10349	0	0	0
2019	9312	969	0	10281	0	0	0
Total	312934	51157	1	364092	4481	692	5173

Note: There is no farmers’ suicides data for Tamil Nadu in 1995 and West Bengal in 2012 because profession-wise data was not provided. There is no suicides data for Jharkhand in 2003, as the published data are a repeat of 2002

Source: National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) (Various Years)

Between 1995 and 2019, the NCRB reported 364092 farmers’ suicides. Every seventh suicide in India is a farm suicide. The trend of farmer suicide if we will look at from 1995 to 2006 it almost an upward trend with little bit variation in some year. But after that we will variation of suicide when we move year after year. During this twenty-four-year time period more than three lakh fifty thousand farm suicide reported by NCRB. On an average every year

more than fifteen thousand farmer are committing suicide. If we look at the Odisha state data during this period more than five thousand farm suicide reported by NCRB. Out of total farm suicide in Odisha eighty seven percent of the suicide is

committed by male farmer/ agricultural labourer and female farmer suicide is around thirteen percent. If we will look at percentage of the male farmer suicide in Odisha, we will find that it is more than the national average.

Able 2 Top five state in relation to farm suicide (From 1995 to 2019)

Year	Top five state					Total suicide	Percent of top five to the overall
1995	Karnataka	KL	West Bengal	Madhya Pradesh	Andhra Pradesh	10720	70
1996	Karnataka	Maharashtra	Madhya Pradesh	West Bengal	Andhra Pradesh	13729	67
1997	Madhya Pradesh	Maharashtra	Karnataka	West Bengal	Kerala	13622	65
1998	Maharashtra	Madhya Pradesh	Karnataka	Andhra Pradesh	Kerala	16015	62
1999	Madhya Pradesh	Maharashtra	Karnataka	Andhra Pradesh	Kerala	16082	68
2000	Maharashtra	Madhya Pradesh	Karnataka	Andhra Pradesh	West Bengal	16603	68
2001	Maharashtra	Karnataka	Andhra Pradesh	Chhattisgarh	Madhya Pradesh	16415	63
2002	Maharashtra	Karnataka	Andhra Pradesh	Kerala	West Bengal	17971	61
2003	Maharashtra	Karnataka	Andhra Pradesh	Kerala	Madhya Pradesh	17164	66
2004	Maharashtra	Andhra Pradesh	Karnataka	Madhya Pradesh	Tamil Nadu	18241	66
2005	Maharashtra	Andhra Pradesh	Karnataka	Chhattisgarh	Tamil Nadu	17131	64
2006	Maharashtra	Andhra Pradesh	Karnataka	Chhattisgarh	Madhya Pradesh	17060	68
2007	Maharashtra	Karnataka	Andhra Pradesh	Chhattisgarh	Madhya Pradesh	16632	66
2008	Maharashtra	Andhra Pradesh	Chhattisgarh	Karnataka	Madhya Pradesh	16196	67
2009	Maharashtra	Andhra Pradesh	Karnataka	Chhattisgarh	Madhya Pradesh	17368	62
2010	Maharashtra	Karnataka	Andhra Pradesh	Madhya Pradesh	Chhattisgarh	15964	66
2011	Maharashtra	Andhra Pradesh	Karnataka	Madhya Pradesh	Kerala	14027	70
2012	Maharashtra	Andhra Pradesh	Karnataka	Madhya Pradesh	Kerala	13754	76
2013	Maharashtra	Andhra Pradesh	Karnataka	Madhya Pradesh	Kerala	11772	73
2014	Maharashtra	Telangana	Madhya Pradesh	Tamil Nadu	Kerala	12360	67
2015	Maharashtra	Karnataka	Telangana	Madhya Pradesh	Chhattisgarh	12602	75
2016	Maharashtra	Karnataka	Madhya Pradesh	Andhra Pradesh	Chhattisgarh	11379	75
2017	Maharashtra	Karnataka	Madhya Pradesh	Telangana	Andhra Pradesh	10655	80
2018	Maharashtra	Karnataka	Telangana	Andhra Pradesh	Madhya Pradesh	10349	79
2019	Maharashtra	Karnataka	Andhra Pradesh	Madhya Pradesh	Chhattisgarh	10281	84
Total						364092	

The above table highlights the total number of suicides in all over India and the top five state where farmer suicides is highest in every single year. We can find total 364092 suicide from the period 1995 to 2019. It can be observed from it that this top five state account for more sixty to near about eighty percent of suicide in every single year. The most affected state are Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal. The northeast region of India is the least affected by farmer suicide and followed by northern states like Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh. It can be observed in all the states that the rate male farmer suicide is higher than the rate of female farmer suicide.

(iii) Contributing factors responsible for farmer’s suicide

Suicide is a multifaceted phenomenon. Various factor is responsible for this phenomenon. Suicide is a complex problem for which there is no single cause, no single reason.

It results from a complex interaction of biological, genetic, psychological, social, financial, and environmental factors. The Veeresh committee has concluded that suicide is not the result of one single factor and it is always caused by events, stressors and triggers. There some areas in state where suicide is higher be it Marathwada and Vidarbha in Maharashtra or western part of Odisha.

Indebttness

Indebttness is not an overnight phenomenon that has occurred suddenly, but it is the result of faulty credit policy followed over the years by the Government of India. Severe indebttness as a result of production related vulnerabilities certainly remains the most proximate antecedent for farmers suicide in India. Studies undertaken in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Punjab also emphasize these same linkages [5-10].

Crop failure

Crop failure instead of a good expected harvest often amounts to immense trauma to the farmers. Studies undertaken in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha and Punjab also emphasize these same linkages [11-15].

Shift in the agricultural practice model

The change in agricultural practice is also another contributing factor for farmer's suicide. The small and medium cultivators who are seeking to gain entry into the green revolution of agriculture that exposes them to risks and made them vulnerable. As person and groups, they are largely without knowledge, skills or network support enjoyed by other cultivating caste group. As a result, in subscribing to the green revolution agricultural model, they expose themselves to additional risks that are by the lack of support from the state [16-19]. Other author argues that globalization spreads capitalism and the increase in farming for profit rather than for subsistence [20].

Rising cost of cultivation and declining return from agriculture

This found to be one of the important reasons for farmer suicide. Studies undertaken in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha and Punjab also emphasize the linkage between rising cost of cultivation and farmer suicide. The declining return trigger the phenomenon more [21-24].

Adverse climatic condition and low yield

Parthasarathy and Shameen [25] in their study of farmer suicide in Andhra Pradesh found that this is one of the triggering factors of farmer suicide.

Farmer suicide as the result of larger agrarian crisis at national level

The current bone of contention is the claim that farmers' suicide is symptomatic of a larger crisis in the agricultural sector in India. Vagaries of nature, pest infestation, spurious quality of inputs and associated factors influencing returns from cultivation, and lack of protection of farmers from acute calamities. Poor availability of credit [26] cut in subsidies and privatization of agricultural input [27] decreasing price of agricultural output [28] decline in public investment in agriculture rural development and infrastructure [29]. There is direct linkage between the Indian policy of privatization and the increase of suicides [30]. New liberal economic policies of subsidy cut, non-availabilities of institutional finance affecting socio-economic and psychological status of marginal farmers has added to the incidence of farmers' suicide.

Suicides are the result of the deep-rooted agrarian and rural distress rather than a temporary phenomenon associated with institutional credit or rainfall. Various factors leading to agrarian crisis that are pushing the farmers into distress and ultimately leading to suicides. For the sake of simplicity these factors are categorized under four groups, namely, technological, ecological, socio-cultural and policy related [31]. The land reform also did not bring many positive results. The skewed pattern of land ownership where there are more than eighty percent of small and marginal holding leads to the marginalization of the farmer. This leads to share cropping, renting additional land, insecurity in lease, inadequate return, increasing cost and difficult in accessing credit [32].

Tenancy

In their study of farmers suicide in Andhra Pradesh [25] found that the other problem which aggravates the adverse condition of cultivators is tenancy. A common custom which had developed in recent years is leasing-in land by small farmers for cotton cultivation. When the crop fails the tenant suffers, particularly when the landowner does not permit him limited liability. Then they go for this extreme step.

Unremunerative price for crops

This is found to be one of the important issues of farm suicide. The main problem is that the income from crop cultivation is not enough to even cover consumption expenditure and farmers therefore, need remunerative prices for crops like cotton and others. In his analysis of the Vidarbha relief package announced by the then PM Dr. Manmohan Singh found that this package going to fail because this is not addressing the core issues being faced by the farmers [26]. Decreasing price and greater price volatility of agricultural output due to integration with the global market [27].

Poor agricultural credit and dependency upon informal source of credit

This is cited as one of the important reasons which pushes farmer to indebtedness and finally the distress leads to suicide [28-29].

Absence of safety net / insurance

The withdrawal of the state, which is part and parcel of the process of liberalization, brought a dearth of counselling services, erosion of social support mechanisms and deceleration of rural investment [30] (Deshpande, 2002). It is evident that about one-third of farmers did not really like farming; because it is not a profitable activity and 40 per cent of farmers are even ready to give up farming provided, they could secure some other job [26]. In sum, almost 70 per cent of the farmers are frustrated with their profession. Farmers feel unprotected in an uncertain environment and it is quite revealing that only 2 per cent of the farmer are members of any registered farmers' organization while 71 per cent do not know what the Minimum Support Price (MPS) scheme is all about. The scheme of crop insurance is not popular with the farmers and almost 57 per cent do not know that such schemes exist [31].

Suicide as a social problem

Social problems such as disputes with neighbours or other villagers, conflict with family members, illness of own family member, depressed due to the death of other family member, dent in social status have been cited as reasons. The cost associated with marrying one's daughter can add to a farmer's indebtedness, and worsen the economic situation of the family [32-35].

Suicide as a neurobiological mental health and personal problem

Suicide itself is a public health issue. Factors leading up to committing suicide include many neurobiological factors, as well as personal issues. Many of the suicide victims in India had been found to have suffered from some of the following issues: depression alcoholism, anti-social behavior, impulsiveness, aggression, frequent mood

changes, social inactivity, absconding before committing suicide, and criminal acts. It is frequently suggested that more strategies of suicide prevention be implemented (therefore looking at farmer suicide as a health issue) since it was found that the higher suicide rate in the rural areas as compared to the urban areas was in part due to the lack of mental health facilities [36-39].

Suicide as a hereditary factor

In Kerala tries to point out hereditary factor which is one of the important factors of farmer suicide. He pointed out that not that every case of suicide needs to have a hereditary hangover. It is also not that everyone who commits suicide does so because the immediate parents or ancestors have committed suicide [40-41]. He stated that the possibilities of heredity as a factor of suicide need not be overlooked but needs to be weighed in the search for the factors responsible for the suicidal act. Thus, a true researcher should take note of every possible factor to arrive at a conclusion. To justify this the argument: medical sciences suggest that some sicknesses such as diabetics and cancer can be hereditary. Even if a particular generation did not have the sickness, there is the possibility that the succeeding generations may have the sicknesses inherited

from ancestors. There are researches that identify suicide as a mental illness. If suicide is a mental illness, just like physical illness there is the possibility of it being carried into successive generations.

CONCLUSION

The present agrarian crisis is a serious one. This crisis has its connection with multiple factors starting from anti-farming policy by successive governments of India to external factors such as liberalization agricultural trade which pushing farmer into a precarious situation. That ultimately leading to farmer suicide. Therefore, we need to analyses the roots of the crisis which will help us to frame more farmer friendly policy at all levels of govt. But unfortunately, the solutions being offered are not only inadequate to prevent the recurrence of such crises, but may in the long run actually aggravate the problems. Therefore, in recent years it can be observed in the declining farming population in many states of India as well as there is negative perception about agriculture among most of the youth population. This situation demands an urgent attention towards its solution otherwise our food security would be in danger.

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