



Magnitude, Spatial Pattern and Trends of Farmers' suicide in India.

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Abstract:

In India, Agriculture is the largest source of livelihoods. More than 65 per cent of its rural households still, directly and indirectly, depend on agriculture for their livelihood. However, India has many growing concerns. About 46 per cent of India's geographical area is used for agriculture purposes. But the per-capita availability of land has already decreased from 0.5 hectares in 1950-51 to 0.15 hectare in 1999-2000, which will further be reduced to 0.08 hectare in 2025 A.D. This study explicitly highlights the magnitude of farmers' suicides in India, Particularly in Malwa region of Punjab state. This study further initiate the spatial pattern and trends of farmer suicide and will help to bring down suicide and improve their well being. The present study on the unfortunate incidence of farmers suicides is likely to provide an in-depth analysis of changing agrarian relations and the impact of government policies on the incidence of farmer's suicide.

Key words: Agriculture, Farmers, Suicide, Productivity

INTRODUCTION

In India, Agriculture is the largest source of livelihoods. More than 65 per cent of its rural households still, directly and indirectly, depend on agriculture for their livelihood. However, India has many growing concerns. The contribution of agriculture to the GDP is declining steadily. For Example, A report by the **Ministry of Agriculture (GOI)** "State of Indian Agriculture 2011-12" highlight that, the contribution of agriculture to the overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country has fallen from about 30 per cent in 1990-91 to less than 15 per

cent 2011-12. According to **FAO** "While achieving food sufficiency in production, India still accounts for a quarter of the hungry people and home to over 190 million undernourished people."

About 46 per cent of India's geographical area is used for agriculture purposes. But the per-capita availability of land has already decreased from 0.5 hectares in 1950-51 to 0.15 hectare in 1999-2000, which will further be reduced to 0.08 hectare in 2025 A.D. The fragmentation of landholding, reduction in size of land holding, dependence on monsoon rainfall and its increasing variability and uncertainty is further aggravation the farming crisis ultimately leading to farmer's suicide.

The **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** Under the Ministry of Home Affairs records that at least 270,940 Indian farmers have taken their lives since 1995. The issue of farmers suicides has worsened since import restrictions were removed following commitments under the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement on agriculture. There is a research gap in our understanding about the impact of climate change on agriculture. The information related to weather forecast from the concerned agencies is not properly disseminated to our farming community. The effect of temperature rise on agriculture can be observed in the relative decrease in crop yield, an increase in thermal stress on crop and livestock population and a reduction in the amount of dew. The latest **IPCC (2018)** report highlights that "Human activities are estimated to have caused approximately 1.0°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels, with likely range of 0.8°C to 1.2°C . Global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052 if it continues to increase at the current rate. (high confidence)". The practical implications of these changes in climate for agriculture and the effect on human health through increasing temperature are likely to be serious and vary significantly across the regions of India (Dash. S.K., and Hun, J.C.R., 2007).

In India, 45 farmers commit suicide each day (Down to Earth, 2015), which highlights the growing agrarian crisis in India. The issue of Farmers suicide is very complex, which is primarily associated with the economic, social and psychological distress prevailing in the society. In recent years, many farmers in Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka have committed suicides due to the increase in crop failures, natural calamities, lack of alternative source of income, exploitation by the middleman, increase in the cost production and consequent increase in debt. The falling water table and a decrease in overall profitability in agriculture in rainfed areas are also responsible for the present farming crisis. The role of non-institutional

sources for providing instant credit to the farmers has been of paramount importance as the small and marginal farmers are heavily dependent on them (Seamal,2002).

The prevailing agrarian crisis has two dimensions. The firstly is the livelihood crisis that threatens the very basic of survival for the vast majority of small farmers, marginal farmers and agricultural labourers. Secondly, there is an agricultural developmental crisis that lies in the neglect of agriculture, which is arising out of the poor design and implementation of agricultural development and poverty alleviation programmes. Despite the expansion of banking network and growth of institutional credit for agriculture, the Severity of agricultural indebtedness persists (Sidhu and Rampal 2016).

The excessive dependence on agriculture and lack of diversification of the economy in rural areas are other critical issues related to the farming crisis. In monsoon, India, abundance or scarcity of water has always been considered as a chief source of uncertainty in the rural economy. With changing technology and market conditions, the farmers are now exposed to the risks associated with the market forces. The increasing cost of production, price volatility, the farming loan compounds the crisis. The farmers are facing difficulties in meeting both farm and domestic expenditure (Sharma et al. 2005). The domestic spending on education, health care and marriage ceremonies are also increasing the debt crisis.

The suicides by farmers on such a large scale are especially worrisome for country like India, where the majority of the workforce still depends on agriculture for its livelihood. The most suicide affected states are Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh. The continues report also come from Karnataka, Chattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Utter Pradesh, Gujarat and Bihar. The total costs incurred in farming are very high, and often farmers are not able to generate enough revenue to meet the same (Singh et al. 2012). The decline in productivity, an increase in the cost of production, and an insufficient rise in minimum support prices have made the agricultural activity unremunerative. As a result, indebtedness in agriculture has increased (Mahajan 2015).

The Ground reality is that majority of the farmers in India own as little as less than two acres of land. Cultivation on such a small area is not economically feasible for small farmers. The primary reason for the farmer's suicide is substantial indebtedness in which cultivators are trapped. The repeated crop failure and natural calamities are also responsible for farmers suicide. The frequent increase in the cost of seed, fertilisers, pesticides and fuel costs forcing farmers to commit suicide. The politicians who play an essential role in policy making and decision making

are also not focusing on this mounting crisis. Illiteracy and unhealthy societal traditions such as substantial expenditure on marriage ceremonies are also responsible for this mess. Therefore, those who seem to have felt that they have exhausted all avenues of securing livelihood are taking their own lives.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

- To examine spatial pattern, Magnitude and trends of farmers Suicide.
- To examine factors responsible for farmers suicide and distress.
- To examine incidence and spread of farmer suicides in malwa region of Punjab State.
- To find out the relationship between indebtedness and suicide.
- To examine suitable policies to alleviate the incidence of farmers suicides.

HYPOTHESIS

- Are the class, and caste system related to farmers' suicides?
- Most of the farmers suicide from working age group.
- Indebtedness is Prime issue of farmers' suicides.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review of literature is an essential component of any research as it helps to understand the research problems in detail. Many studies have been conducted previously on the topic of farmer suicides, but still, there are research gaps. Report of Survey on farmers suicides in Kerala (2009) Points out that loans taken for agricultural purposes were diverted towards marriage purposes and repayment of existing loans that have compounded the indebtedness problem among the farming community. As per Basu et al. (2016), farmers suicide mortality rate (SMR) has reached to 8.76 per 1 lakh (1995). During 2005 to 2011 Kerala, Maharashtra, Utter Pradesh registered higher SMR than all India average. Deshpande and Arora (2010) find indebtedness, illiteracy, and lack of necessary facilities for health & education as the most important causes of farmer suicides. The first incidence of farmers suicide was reported in Kerala (1986). At present, agriculture in India is passing through a critical phase. According to the Commission on Farmers' in Andhra Pradesh (2005) agriculture in India has been in an advanced stage of crisis the most extreme manifestation of the crisis is in the suicides by farmers in different parts of the country. This brings out that something is terribly wrong in the countryside (Swaminathan, 2006). Muzaffar

Assadi (1998) studied the spatial patterns of suicide committed by the farmers in Karnataka, and he found that incidence is mostly concentrated in the dry northern region of the Karnataka state.

Some study was conducted by E.Revathi (1999) which pointed that the stress on account of market imperfections and the deterioration of farmers in the state of Karnataka led to suicides by them. In 2006, Indira Gandhi Institute for Development and Research (IGIDR) conducted a study in suicide affected vidarbha region of the state of Maharashtra. G Parthasarathy and shameem (1998) studied farmers suicides in Andhra Pradesh. The study of A.R. vasavi (1999) depicted that the spate of suicide in farming community is largely an ecological, economic and social crisis in state of Karnataka. A sociologist B.B. mohanty (1999) focused on Durkheimian Sociological approach of 1951 to examine the meaning and causes of farmers suicides in the State of Maharashtra.

G.K. Grover, Sanjay Kumar and Kamal vatta (2002) conducted a study on farmers suicides in Punjab. The incidences of farmers suicides in Punjab are attributed to the changing agrarian relations, frequent crop failures Particularly that of cotton during the period of the 1990s, increasing debt burden among the farming community increasing unemployment in the rural parts of the state and increasing spending on social functions such as marriages. According to C Ratnam (2002) farmers who have not been able to cope up with the distress take the extreme step of suicide. The agro- economic and social causes lead to farm distress. R.S. Deshpande (2002) Studied agro-economic causes of agrarian crisis and farmers suicides in the state of Karnataka. According to G Satyanarayana M.V. Raghavulu and A Ram Mohan (2003) a new economic policy and opening of Indian agriculture at international level without any institutional support affected the domestic prices and thereby income of farmers.

S.R. Ahlawat (2003) investigated the socio-economic reasons of farmers suicides in Haryana. The study was conducted in Jind, Rohtak, Sirsa and Hisar district of the State. B.B. Mohanty and S. shroff (2003) in a combine study of Maharashtra revealed that though crop losses, indebtedness and market imperfection causes economic hardship to farmers social factors were also at work which led in most of the cases to their suicides. A study by Mohan Rao (2004) focused on the relationship between land holding pattern and farmers suicides in the State of Andhra Pradesh. Srijit Mishra (2006) in a study on farmers suicides in Maharashtra identified important socio-economic risk factors responsible for the extreme step of suicide by farmers in the state. Aldas Janaiah (2007) study of three district (Anantpur, Guntar and warangal) of

Andhra Pradesh found that, rural distress and farmers suicides are the out come of multiple factors related to the agrarian economy. Another study on the state of Karnataka by R.S. Deshpande (2008) depicted that, the spate of farmers suicides was naturally associated with the performance of the sector, along with other factors that were prominent including advent of WTO, GM varieties of crops, price collapse and spurious seeds.

It is also important to note that the growing incidences of farmers suicides related to the introduction of the new economic policy in the country. The small and marginal farmers have been at the back foot in the present era of the liberalized market economy. The farmers in India are facing difficulty to compete with the developed countries where more mechanised agriculture is practised. The agricultural products of the developed countries are far cheaper than domestic output. The price difference is because of the higher subsidies given by the governments of the respective countries. The state like Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab have taken some policy measures to eliminate the spate of suicides among the farming community.

METHODOLOGY

Latest Secondary data on the number of farmers suicides incidence extending over a decade will be obtained from published unpublished records of the Central and State Government agencies. The primary survey will be conducted in the suicide reporting area. The Survey will be based on a well - structured questionnaire. The respondents or family members of the person who committed suicides will be contacted to understand the research problem in detail.

RELEVANCE AND ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

This case is critical study of farmers' suicide. It would assist the government to identify and resolve problems. It would educate the farmers and empowered them. It will bring strengthen the on going schemes/ programs of different ministries or department of Government of India. It may assist government to identify key arena which will help government to further steam line the issue and taking the pre-requisite steps to ameliorate it. This study will pre- eminently assist self help group and non organizing agency to raise the issue of frames distress and taking it to a next step. This study explicitly highlights the magnitude of farmers' suicides in India, Particularly in Malwa region of Punjab state. This study further initiate the spatial pattern and trends of farmer suicide and will help to bring down suicide and improve their well being. This study will help to identify the productivity, soil health, crop analysis (cash crop and traditional crop) that are

predominant factor in farmers' suicide and in their stress. Aforesaid mentioned case study would aid or assist the government NGO, SHG and Stakeholder to identify the key area, spatial pattern, magnitude and trends of farmers' suicide and find their way out in restrain suicides or stressful condition of farmers, their perpetual prosperity, safe livelihood and dignified citizenry live.

The present study on the unfortunate incidence of farmers suicides is likely to provide an in-depth analysis of changing agrarian relations and the impact of government policies on the incidence of farmer's suicide.

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