

Farmers' Suicide in India

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ABSTRACT

The position of farmers in India is becoming questionable as the time is passing by. India is developing in all the aspects but there is no significant decline in the suicides committed by the farmers in the country. The 'real heroes' of our nation that are 'farmers and soldiers' are now been forgotten and the 'fake heroes' of the bollywood are now been worshipped. If the prices of agricultural commodities increase, everyone starts complaining but no one bothers about spending so much on branded clothes and watching movies in the theatres. The paper focuses on the reasons behind the farmers of India are committing suicide and some of the steps that should be taken by the government in order to minimize the cases of farmer suicide. The government has made it a political issue rather than an issue worth considering. It also focuses on advantages of agriculture in a developing nation like India and its contribution to the economic growth of our country.

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INTRODUCTION

In a country where the slogan of 'Jai Jawaan, Jai Kisaan' was narrated is the country which shows one of the highest cases of farmers' suicide. The then Prime Minister of India Lal Bahadur Shastri gave this slogan in 1965 at a public gathering at Ramlila Maidaan. It was when India was suffering through mass starvation and more soldiers were needed at the border to save the country. It means 'hail the soldier, hail the farmers'. But now the slogan has lost its importance as neither the farmers, nor the soldiers are actually hailed. Even after introducing so many schemes in order to protect the interest of the workers, the situation is not yet improved. There are so many different reasons which force innocent farmers to commit suicide. Some of the reasons are exploitation by market intermediaries, zamindars and landlords, inappropriate climatic conditions, lack of irrigation facilities, property disputes and lack of technological knowledge etc. All the reasons are discussed below in detail.

HISTORY:

The history of farmers' suicide dates back in 19th century especially the farmers who were growing cash crops. Exploitation of farmers by British government led to frustration, revolt and mortality rate.

MEANING:

Farmers' suicide refers to those tragic situations which forces the farmer to commit suicide. Though, it is to be noted that only those people who have the land title are considered to be the farmers. If someone kills himself or herself working on fathers plot it is not considered to be farmers' suicide. But the ones working on anyone else land on rental basis are considered to be farmers. The average rate of growth of food

grains are always fluctuating which is a major reason behind farmers committing suicide.

PRESENT STATUS OF FARMERS' SUICIDE IN INDIA:

Over three lack people have committed suicide since 1995. Farmers' suicide amounts to 11.2% approximately of the total suicides in India. There are many cases of suicide which are not actually registered thus are not present in official records. During first three months in 2016, India witnessed 116 suicide cases of farmers, shared with parliament grim statistics highlighting how conditions of farmers remain unchanged. Farmers' suicide went up to 40% between 2014 and 2015. In 2014, there were 5650 cases of farmer suicide and in 2015; there were more than 8000 suicides in the country.

IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE IN INDIA:

- **Contributes towards National Income:** In 2014-2015, agriculture contributed 16.2% towards the National Income whereas in America and England, the contribution is only 1%.
- **Employment generation:** In year 2011-12, 48.9% of population was dependent upon agriculture for employment reasons
- **Involvement in foreign trade:** In 2013-14, 13.7% of the total exports constituted of agriculture products.
- **Income source for the government:** There are many taxes like irrigation tax, agricultural income tax, land revenue etc which is paid to the state government. Central government also earns income in form of excise duty and export duty etc.
- **Industrial inputs:** Agriculture provides raw material to the industries like cotton, jute, sugar, wheat flour, cereals etc.

- International significance: India ranks first in the production of spices, milk, jute, tobacco and second in production of sugar, rice, wheat, fruits, vegetables, tobacco etc. and sixth in production of potatoes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Source of data collection: Secondary

Statistical method applied: Descriptive

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY:

- To study the various reasons behind farmer's suicide in India
- Steps that should be taken in order to minimise the case of suicide.

ANALYSIS OF STUDY:

Agriculture in India is of immense importance especially in a developing country like India. But the ones engaged in agriculture are dying painful deaths due to numerous reasons.

➤ REASONS BEHIND FARMERS COMMITTING SUICIDE:

1. **Monsoon failure:** The weather in India is very uncertain and rainfall doesn't happen on the right time. Only 45.3% of fields have permanent agriculture facilities. Severe cases of famines are reported during past years. Some parts of country are drought prone whereas the other witnesses flood like conditions. Groundwater level has dropped by 40-50 cm in Punjab due to which farmers are shifting towards less thirsty crops.
2. **High debt burdens:** Indian farmers in order to fulfil their needs, have to take loans from various sources. National Sample Survey Report 2013 revealed that only 56% of total cultivators take loan from formal sources and 44% from informal sources. A study conducted by Punjabi University, Patiala has put an outstanding debt of Rs 69355 crore on Punjab farmers.
3. **Lack knowledge among farmers:** There is no proper knowledge among the farmers about the quality of seeds and fertilisers which should use and how to operate new technology.
4. **Cropping pattern:** generally the farmers grow the same crop during all the time which decreases the fertility of the soil. They should engage in multiple cropping patterns rather than single one.
5. **Government policy:** After the economic reforms in 1991, the main focus shifted from agriculture sector to secondary and territory sector.
6. **Import of foreign agriculture goods:** With the introduction in globalisation, other countries also started to import products in our country which reduced the consumption of domestic produce which further lead to decrease in demand as well as prices of the produce.
7. **Alcohol addiction:** Shockingly, alcohol and drug addiction in various states like Punjab, Haryana also contributes to the increase in suicidal tendencies among farmers.
8. **Inadequate Institutional credit facilities:** Institutional lenders are not yet able to reach small and marginal farmers and cater their credit demands.

9. **Outdated machinery:** Technology nowadays changes at a very high rate. The farmers are not able to make quick changes in the production process due to financial constrains and also due to lack of knowledge.

10. **Small size of farms:** India's average size of land hoarding is 1.16 hectares whereas in America it is 122 hectares.

11. **Low agricultural productivity per labourer:** there are many factors leading to lower agricultural productivity like small size of farms, old methods of cultivation, old agricultural equipments, inadequate use HYV seeds, issues related to disguised unemployment etc.

12. **Poor marketing:** Farmers from remote villages are not able to get proper market information about the prices of their produce. They are not able to reach urban markets to sell their produce so they have to depend upon mercy of market intermediaries which give them very low price of their production.

13. **Crash in agriculture production:** There are many reasons behind low production like climatic conditions, disease of crops and pests, use of low quality seeds etc.

14. **Over exploitation by zamindars:** Shahukars and zamindars charge exorbitant rate of interest, ranging between 25-50 percent per annum and also keeps a percentage of produce with themselves leaving farmers in losses. Moreover, they don't take any interest in the production of food grains.

15. **Non-productive loans:** A great proportion of loans are taken for unproductive purposes like family functions, court case etc. which take a long time to be repaid.

16. **Ancestral debts:** Rural farmers are strictly burdened with ancestral debt, payment of which is considered duty by the farmers.

17. **Defective marketing:** Due to poor roads, lacks of means of transport farmers are not left with any other option but to sell their produce to market intermediaries which restricts the growth of farmers.

18. **Poor quality of soil:** Soil erosion, water salinity, drought like conditions, flood, and high moisture content in soil leading to infertility.

19. **Negative issues:** Sometimes farmers also commit suicide due to personal issues or family related issues.

20. **No alternate source of income:** Farmers only depend upon agriculture and thus losses in agriculture leads to stress among them. They should create other sources of income to nullify the effect of losses incurred in farming.

➤ STEPS THAT SHOULD BE TAKEN BY IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE THE CASES OF SUICIDE: (RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENT)

1. **Insurance of crops:** Institutional agencies should provide insurance against the loss of crops due to any uncertainty like droughts, floods, disease in crops etc. as it is a main reason due to which farmers commit suicide.
2. **Scientific cultivation:** Farmers should be educated about crop rotation, use of good quality fertilisers, modern techniques etc. So that the agriculture production may increase.
3. **HYV seeds:** HYV seeds should be sold through cooperative societies, village panchayats at concessional rates to the small farmers.

4. **Credit facilities:** Loans taken from mahajans and shahukars should be discouraged and institutional loans should be encouraged. Banks shouldn't hesitate to provide loans to small farmers.
5. **Formation of cooperative societies:** Cooperative societies should be formed by the farmers in order to pool their resources and to protect their interest.
6. **Land reforms:** Land reforms should be introduced. The concept of zamindari system should be abolished and the ones, who are actually producing, should be given the ownership of the land.
7. **Improvement in agricultural marketing:** Agricultural marketing should be improved so that farmers get the right price of their produce.
8. **Awareness amongst the farmers:** Farmers should have up to date information about the market price of their produce, technological improvements etc.
9. **Irrigation facilities:** Farmers shouldn't only depend upon the rainfall for their production but also should have other irrigation facilities like tube wells, canals etc.
10. **Less pressure of population:** Only those people should be employed which are actually working on the land. In other words, there shouldn't exist disguised employment.
11. **Increase in area under cultivation:** There are so many farmers working on a very small piece of land. So government should hoard those small pieces and allot one big piece of land to those farmers collectively.
12. **Price stability:** As the production fluctuates, farmers want to secure a minimum price of their produce. So govt should successfully implement the concept of Minimum Support Price in order to provide security to the farmers.
13. **Lack of grading:** Small farmers are unable grade their produce according to the quality. So they sell all of their production at the same price without any segregation in terms of quality which leaves farmers at a loss.
14. **Warehousing facilities:** Government should provide proper warehouse facilities to the farmers where the farmers can safely store their production so that there is no risk of deterioration.

➤ **INTERPRETATION:**

India is primarily considered to be an agrarian economy with 70% of its population depending upon agriculture. It can be

observed that now days, more stress is put on secondary and territory sector by the government and primary sector is left behind. Undoubtedly, agriculture is developing from many past years but the rate of its development is very low. Besides of growth, farmers face severe financial crisis and extreme poverty which finally leads to frustration in them and ultimately leading to committing suicides. Any failure of any kind like unfavourable climatic conditions, indebtedness, crash of crops, exploitation by market intermediaries etc directly affects the farmers. The schemes launched by government are unable to reach poor and small farmers. So, an effort should be made on the part of the government to reach all the marginal and poor farmers.

➤ **CONCLUSION:**

Thus, it can be concluded that the major reasons for farmers' suicide are failure of monsoon, floods, bankruptcy, and low possession of technological skills, small land hoardings and exploitation by zamindars and shahukars. In order to overcome these problems, the government should protect the interest of the farmers. Some motivational seminars should also be conducted so that they don't feel depressed. Prosperity of the farmers also tells about the prosperity and economic development of the state. It has become an important aspect to keep our nation's farmers happy and satisfied as how can we imagine of prosperity and development in a country where 'annadattas' are dying of hunger!

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