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Farmers Suicides in Kolhapur District of Maharashtra State

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Abstract:

Suicides in general, including farmers' suicides, are a sad and complex phenomenon. Suicides are the most dramatic and terrible expression of the nervousness among the cultivating community, these should not distract from the other manifestations of what has become a deep rural depression. Hence we are studied the farmers suicides at national, state and district level. Suicides among the farmers are regularly reported in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab and Tamil Nadu.

Key words: farmer, indebtedness, suicides,

Introduction:

The large number of suicides by farmers in various regions of the country is perhaps the most distressing incident observed in India over the last two decades. These suicides, which reached almost epidemic proportions in certain regions of the country, were first picked up and reported by an alert press around the late 1990s. The public concern that these reports led to forced some of the state governments like Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka to set up enquiry commissions to go into this phenomenon in the respective states¹.

In Indian planning, agriculture sector ignored except few five years plan. Indian planning has not been given appropriate priority to agricultural sector. There are lots of limitations for protection to agriculture in new economic policy. In globalization era grant in aid of agriculture were drawn and in other hand importance of agricultural products allowed without restrictions at large amount. In the processes of industrialization there are drastic changes in climate, due to this agriculture productivity suffered. Banking sector is not ready to provide loan to agriculture for avoiding risk. Hence, Farmers were trapped by private debt. Maharashtra government took some decision to tackle this problem. But unfortunately decisions taken by Maharashtra government are not effective because after the legal provision taken by government there is no development in farmers' life. According to some economist and socialist agriculture sector is a bone of Indian economy therefore farmers must have some protection but lack of protection and favorable policies to agriculture, lead to suicides of farmers at large.

Indebtedness is not new to Indian agriculture but suicides due to indebtedness are new phenomena. A combination of economic factors such as economic hardships of the pauperized farmer households, crop failures, unemployment and indebtedness has forced them to commit suicides. This has happened due to decline of community support mechanism as a result the emergence of new production relations². The current wave of suicides of poor farmers in India indicates that they are in great distress³. Phenomena of suicides of poor farmers has been observed in various states of India especially where agriculture is highly commercialized. The suicides among farmers are regularly reported in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka. This is harmful to the country's agricultural prospects which

further determine the food security of the country. The SAS by the NSSO 2003 clearly brought out that the states where the incidence of suicides were high were the states where the proportion of indebted farmers was also high, for instance, as in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) figures across 20 years for which data exist shows that at least 3,08,798. Indian farmers have taken their lives since 1995, If dividing these eighteen years India saw 1,38,321 farms suicides between 1995 and 2003 at a annual average rate of 15,369 and for 2004-2012 the number of 1,46,373 at a much higher annual average of 16,264. The big five states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh account for just about a third of the country's population but two thirds of farmers suicides. These states can be called as suicide SEZ or Special Elimination Zone for farmers. TISS report identified that the untenable cost of agricultural production and indebtedness as the main reason for suicides. The repeated crop failures, instability to meet the increasing cost of cultivation and indebtedness appears to create a condition that forces farmers to commit suicide.

In 1990s, India woke-up to spate of suicide among farmers community. The first state where suicides were reported was Maharashtra with particular reference to Vidharbha region. A look at the figures given out by State Crime Records Bureau makes it evident that farmer as a professional category is suffering from this problem of high suicide rates. Near about 3.4 million cotton farmers occupy the Vidharbha region (mainly Amravati, Yavatmal, Wardha, Washim, Buldhana and Akola Districts). Incidence of farmers ending their lives in this region had hit epidemic like proportions recently.

In Maharashtra State, Suicide Mortality Rate (SMR-suicide deaths for 1 lakh persons) for male farmers in Amravati division in 2004 at 140 is nearly seven times higher than the age-adjusted SMR for males in Maharashtra⁴.

The total number of farmers who have taken their own lives in Maharashtra since 1995 is 64,754 at an annual average of 3238. Following table no.1 shows the farmers suicides in India and Maharashtra during 1995 to 2014.

Table No. 1
Farmers Suicides in India and Maharashtra during 1995 to 2014

Sr. No.	Year	Farmers Suicides	
		India	Maharashtra
1	1995	10720	1083 (10.1)
2	1996	13729	1981 (14.43)
3	1997	13622	1917 (14.1)
4	1998	16015	2409 (15.04)
5	1999	16082	2423 (15.6)
6	2000	16603	3022 (18.5)
7	2001	16415	3536 (21.55)
8	2002	17971	3695 (20.5)
9	2003	17164	3836 (22.3)
10	2004	18241	4147 (22.7)
11	2005	17131	3926 (22.9)
12	2006	17060	4453 (26.1)
13	2007	16632	4238 (25.5)

14	2008	16196	3802 (23.5)
15	2009	17368	2872 (16.5)
16	2010	15964	3141 (19.7)
17	2011	14027	3337 (23.8)
18	2012	13754	3786 (27.5)
19	2013	11744	3146 (26.7)
20	2014	12360	4004(32.4)
	Total	3,08,798	64,754 (21.0)

Source: National Crime Records Bureau 1995 to 2015.

Note: figures in brackets shows percentage

The table no. 1 shows that the farmers suicides in India and Maharashtra during the period of 1995 to 2014. In India there were 3,08,798 farmers committed suicides and 64,754 in Maharashtra state. The table also shows that on an average around 15,440 farmers committed suicide in the country and 3238 in Maharashtra during the period of 1995 to 2014. In the year 2004, the number of farmer's suicide was very high (18,241) in India and in Maharashtra State it was 4453 in the year 2006. The rise is occurring even as the rural population is shrinking a fact broadly true across the country and in Maharashtra which has been urbanizing more rapidly. The increasing suicides rate suggests a major intensification of the pressure on the community.

Farmers Suicides in Kolhapur District:

Kolhapur is agriculturally and economically developed district of Maharashtra state. It ranks fifth in the per capita income of the state. It is Rs.1,19,783 in 2013-14. The majority of farmers are cultivating rice and sugarcane crops in the district. These crops need more water but vagaries of monsoon rains are faced by farmers and it affects the production of crops.

Per Capita Income is one of the factors of Economic Development. In 2013-14 per capita income of Maharashtra was Rs.1,17,091 and in 2014-15 it was increased by Rs.1,29,235 So, in the case of Kolhapur district in 2013-14 the per capita income was Rs.1,19,783. In Maharashtra in case of per capita income Kolhapur district shows 5th rank. Although in Kolhapur district the farmers committed suicides because the expenditure of agriculture is increasing, and farmers expenses for modern techniques in agriculture for example modern seeds, fertilizers , irrigation etc. due to this farmers takes more loans but because of unfavorable nature the more production could not get from agriculture and farmers also unable to repay their loans. The burden of bank loans, farmers committed suicides. Following Table No.2 shows the farmers suicides in Kolhapur District.

Table No. 2
Farmers' Suicides in Kolhapur District

Year	No. of Suicides	Eligible for Govt. Assistance	Non-eligible	Reserved / Awaited
2004	02	02	--	--
2005	03	03	--	--
2006	14	10	04	--
2007	16	14	02	--
2008	18	16	02	--
2009	11	07	04	--
2010	07	06	01	--
2011	05	02	03	--
2013	02	00	02	--
2013	02	01	01	--
2015	07	02	02	03
Total	87	63	21	03

Source: Daily Lokmat Newspaper, Kolhapur edition. 13 August 2015, pp.-02.

Table No.2 shows Farmers' Suicides in Kolhapur District during the period of 2004 to 2015. It shows that 87 farmers committed suicide in Kolhapur district from 2004 to 2015. Out of 87 suicides farmers, 63 (72.41%) cases are eligible for government assistance and 21 (24.14%) are not eligible for government assistance because they committed suicides due to other reasons than indebtedness and 03 (3.45%) cases are awaited from the government because their suicide reasons are not identified.

Causes of Farmers Suicides: Following factors contribute to the suicides among farmers

- 1) Indebtedness of small and marginal farmers
- 2) Increasing costs of cultivation
- 3) Relative absence of irrigation facilities
- 4) Uncertainty of agricultural enterprise in India
- 5) Falling prices of farm commodities
- 6) Absence of adequate social support infrastructure at village level.
- 7) Repeated crop failures
- 8) Lack of credit availability for small and marginal farmers
- 9) Improper supply of electricity
- 10) Reduction of agriculture subsidies
- 11) Extravagant expenditure on marriages and ceremonies.
- 12) Central and State government's rehabilitation packages, loan waiver scheme etc. are not implementing in proper way to relief needy farmers.
- 13) Illiteracy and traditional education
- 14) Addiction of alcohol and other habits
- 15) Bad health and illness and inability to meet the essential expenditure on medicine and health services.
- 16) Unfavorable international policies.
- 17) Family dispute

Conclusion:

In short, increasing indebtedness, increasing natural hazards, social customs, addition of alcohol, limited irrigation sources, large number of marginal and small farmers, low income level are major responsible factors for farmers' suicides. Farmers are always worked hard but they could not get appropriate return of efforts. Hence we are suggested that government has to provide all the services which give up to date knowledge of economic changes and to provide infrastructural facilities like irrigation, marketing, credit and processing.

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