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19. Need of Rational Intervention for Solution of Agrarian Distress

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Abstract


Today, increasing rate of farmers suicide in India is challenging our civilization and culture also. In the present article author focused on causal factors for agrarian distress in overall context and presented some solutions and policy level intervention points for discussion and further research. Author focused on the need of minimum guarantee price, improving infrastructure, improving the efficiency of delivery of government services, and need of social and psychological counseling.

India is an agrarian country with around 70% of its people depending directly or indirectly upon agriculture. The hard working farmer demonstrated that given the right conditions he could provide enough food to meet the growing needs of the country. Today from various studies and surveys it is seen that the farmer emerges as an isolated and neglected individual, from institutional level, society level and even on occasion his family may not support him to pursue farming as profession. In India it is identified that farming as a high stress profession that is associated with a higher suicide rate than the general population. This is particularly true among small scale farmers and after periods of economic distress. The farmers suicide problem should understand in this overall context. There is no quick analysis and quick solution for this problem. Only rural indebtedness would not be the root of farmer suicide. There are financial, psychological, social, religious and policy level aspect which are the causal factors for the farmer distresses.

It is needed that to study the profile of suicide victims, regarding their age, education, landholding profile, cast-wise land holding profile, marital status, literacy, attitude of farming, awareness about bio-fertilizers and crop insurance and increasing cost of cultivation all these are critical issues regarding farmers suicide cases.

Meeta and Rajivlochan (2006) conducted a field study in 'Yewatmal' District of Maharashtra state and stated two important components in the cause of farmer suicide in their book "Farmer Suicide- Facts and Possible Policy Interventions", these are financial distress and social distress. Financial distress includes crop failure case, double sowing of cotton due to




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germination failure, expenditure on hospital, expenditure on marriage. Social distress includes domestic quarrels which created high level of unpleasantness, expenditure on daughters' dowry, chronic illness in the family members constitutes serious drain on family resources, poor medical facilities and lack of counselling, social humiliation (for example when unable to do the marriage of daughter), mental aberration, son doing job without pay, feeling of isolated, cases of impulsive aggressive personality disorder, harassment by moneylender and by bank authority for repayment of loan, social pressure for repayment of loans taken from relatives.

The epidemiological explanation of suicide implies a psychological trait and it is referred to as imitation effect. This describes as the coping behaviour of the suicide victims. More than 23,000 farmers have committed suicide in the state of Maharashtra between 2009 and 2016. As of 2017, farmer suicides have occurred in large numbers in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Jharkhand. In 2014, the National Crime Records Bureau of India reported 5,650 farmer suicides. The highest number of farmer suicides was recorded in 2004 when 18,241 farmers committed suicide. The farmers' suicide rate in India has ranged between 1.4 and 1.8 per 100,000 total population, over a 10-year period through 2005. A new methodology to collect data on suicides has brought down farmer suicides by over 50% the year 2014. Data released by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) shows that only 5,650 farmers committed suicide across the country in 2014 as compared to over 11,700 in 2013. The new method records only those suicides that have farm distress or related reasons as the cause. Earlier any suicide by a farmer for any reason was recorded as a farmer suicide. Maharashtra continued to be the leader with over 2,500 farmer suicides followed by Telangana with 898 farmer suicides and Madhya Pradesh with 826 suicides. The three states was accounted for 45.5%, 15.9% and 14.6% suicides respectively.

From the point of time it is seen that the debt is not only one cause behind farmers suicide so only writing off debt is not permanent solution for this problem. From review of some empirical based studies and authors own observations following are some important issues on which we have to work seriously for reducing present agrarian distress:

- There is no alternative for minimum guarantee price for each and every crop. Percentage of farmers profit should be fixed while deciding this minimum guarantee price. His actual income should be considered by subtracting cost of cultivation and other related expenditures from sale price.
- There should be provision of income tax on farmers' actual income, providing this actual income will arise after careful calculation and consideration of his cost of cultivation, rent




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of land and all other related expenditures. Farmer will happily pay the income tax if really they earn the actual income from farming profession. It will helpful to increase their honour.

- As there is illness in family members is the major cause of farmer distress, facilities in the government hospitals should be improved as far as people should believe on their effectiveness.
- Marriages are also main head of expenditure, so there is need of increasing social awareness regarding to decrease the expenditure incurred on marriages and dowry.
- Social humiliation may be results in to depressive thoughts, so the concept of self-help group of farmers (financially as well as social support also) require to get popularization.
- Farmers are goes in to depression because they encounter with nothingness in life and suffers with existential vacuum, so to minimize their existential vacuum direct contact between Government and farmers needs to be increased, they should at least feel that government is responsible and government authority is always there for listening their problems.
- There should be a procedure which can actively monitor signs of social, financial and psychological distress and if possible provide social, psychological or spiritual counseling.
- At least "No income group" senior citizens belonging from farming profession should be entitle for some amount of pension from government.
- The role of agricultural universities should not be limited to teaching-learning aspect the should take responsibility regarding spreading knowledge about improved ways of cultivation.
- Government services regarding farming profession such as subsidies, crop insurance, supply of electricity, water, declaration of minimum price etc. should be delivered on time.
- Provide direct cash subsidy to actual cultivator, it will also ensure a minimum assured income for the actual cultivator.
- For long term change it is important to improve the condition of school education and provide vocational guidance.

As a responsible society and government we should always keep in mind that the sorrow caused by a single death, for the family and the neighbourhood is not any more reduced whether it is part of a larger figure of 100 or 500 suicides in the district. As a responsible society and government we should pay attention to each individual case of distress and try to find




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constructive interventions. It is important to take even a single suicide as one too many and try to create an environment where even this one does not happen. As a responsible and caring society and government, it is imperative that we help the farmers, take cognizance of their problems and ameliorate their distress as far as possible. We should not forget the spectre of food crisis, ration lines and dying of hunger. If we wish to ensure that our present self-sufficiency continues into the future and that we have enough food to feed rising population, then it is essential that we as a society take active interest in the welfare of the farmer. Surely it is possible to intervene in a more constructive manner in the present epidemic of suicide among farmers.

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