

Retrospective Analysis of Farmers Suicides in Telangana State

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Abstract—The Indian farmers are in distress as the farmers did not get the remunerative prices for their agricultural produce. Majority of the farmers are in debt trap. As many as 6,351 farmers committed suicide in 2016 across India, or per cent 17 every day, according to the latest Home Ministry data. Suicides declined 21 per cent from 8,007, or 22 every day, in 2015, data show. Suicides in the farming sector declined 10 per cent from 12,602 in 2015 to 11,370 in 2016., data based on provisional data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), a division of the Home Ministry did not reveal the causes for suicides in 2016. "As per NCRB report of 2015, bankruptcy or indebtedness and farming-related issues are reported as major causes of suicides among farmers/cultivators, "Family problems followed by Illness are reported as major causes of suicides among agricultural labourers." Suicides of agricultural labourers increased 9 per cent to 5,019 in 2016 (14 every day) from 4,595 in 2015 (13 every day). Telangana stands in the second position in the number of farmers' suicides in the country. The highest and the more than the one-third of the farmers' suicides in the state appear in Warangal district in the study period followed by the districts of Nalgonda with 12% and Karimnagar with 10%. The lowest is reported in Nizamabad (3.67%) and Adilabad (3.99%) districts. The declared drought mandal/blocks were 11, 12 and 19 in the districts of Warangal, Nalgonda and Karimnagar, respectively, in Kharif 2015. It could be ascribed the higher level of incidence of farmer suicides to the cotton crop cultivation and the effect of continuous drought for the three preceding years of the present study year 2015-16.

Index Terms—Farmers, pesticide poisoning, Telangana, suicide

I. INTRODUCTION

Globally, farming as an industry is considered a high-risk occupation for suicides. It is estimated that 84% of the suicides occur in Middle and Low-income countries of which India and China alone contribute to half the suicide. As per the National Crime Record

Bureau (NCRB), total of 1,31,008 suicides were reported in the country during 2016. The rate at which farmers are killing themselves in these states is far higher than suicide rates among non-farmers. The farmers are at a higher risk of suicide than the general population due to various factors such as crop failure, interpersonal problems, financial difficulties and relatively easy access to pesticides as a means of attempting suicides. Studies from South India have shown that poisoning from pesticides (mainly organophosphorus compounds) used in agriculture was the leading cause of suicide in both men and women with hanging being the second most common cause in the most economically productive age group (15-44 years) and the second leading cause of death in the 15-19 years age group. Though there have been several studies on suicides regarding causes, risk factors and even on the issue of farmer suicides, a systematic and comprehensive study capturing the data on ground and linking it with the existing policy framework is yet to be done. Although farmers' suicide has received a lot of media attention in India, there is scanty research on the topic of suicidal among farmers, and with this study, our aims and objectives were to explore the characteristics of people committed suicide, especially the gender differences, modes used, and the reason for causes among the farmer community in Karimnagar District, Telangana State, South India.

Farmers' suicides have become a socio-economic problem in India, and it is in the increasing trend. Maharashtra and Telangana have stood in first and second places in the country. If the farmer is in doldrums, the agricultural sector and rural economy will be adversely affected. Consequently, the food security becomes a problem to the nation. The Government of India (GOI) and the state governments are struggling to eliminate this malaise from the economy. There are several schemes to bring out the

farmer from this hardship. Therefore, the Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, GOI has assigned this study to our centre to find the ground level reality of the farmers' suicides and its causes in Telangana.

All the marginal and small farmer groups, having with an average of cultivated area of 2.24 acres, are facing this problem in the selected districts of Medak and Warangal in Telangana. All the sample households (50) were drawn into this grave catastrophe due to indebtedness (88%), poverty (86%), and the failure of borewells (100%), and the recurrent droughts (100%) in the area. These causes are very much colossal over the victims' families, as they express the brunt of the burden of these causes, as referred in the parentheses. The post-suicide picture of these families reveals the very pathetic and deprived conditions like the absence of security and subsistence to the family, stopping of cultivation and education of the children. They solemnly seek for the support in the lines of timely institutional credit, ground water finding and arranging the borewell through the financial and technical assistance of the government, loans to tenants along with the marginal and small farmers from the institutional sources at lower interest rates. The generation of employment is sought in the allied agricultural and the non-farm activities.

II. CONTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURE TO GDP

Agriculture is synonymous with the word farming in India. Agriculture being an important sector of Indian economy supports more than fifty percent of the population. A cursory look at the timeline reveals that the contribution of agriculture after independence for initial two decades was 48 per cent and 60 per cent of GDP. It declined to 26 per cent in 2001-2002. In India majority of villagers are engaged in agriculture. Agriculture along with other allied activities like animal husbandry, forestry and fisheries is a dynamic and an important component of our economy that provides livelihood for more than 60 percent of the population. The contribution of agriculture to Indian economy in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is declining steadily, year by year due to the process of industrialization and the economic growth gathered momentum in different five-year plans with the manufacturing and service sectors growing rapidly

and agriculture limping along, the percentage share of agriculture in GDP reached a level of 17.8 per cent in 2007-08 (Ruddar and Sundaram, 2010). According to the Ministry of Agriculture (GOI) the GDP from agriculture, forestry and fishing for the year 2008-09 was 16 percent (Anon, 2010). The share of agriculture and allied sectors in GDP for year 2009-10 was 14.6 per cent and for the year 2010-11 it was 14.2 per cent (Ruddar and Sundaram, 2010). The share of agriculture and allied sectors in GDP for the year 2011-12 was 14.4 per cent and for the year 2013-14 it was 13.9 per cent. Despite a steady decline of its share in GDP, agriculture is still the largest economic sector and plays a significant role in the overall socio-economic development of our country. According to data provided by Department of Economics and Statistics (DES) the food grain production for the year 2017-2018 is 272 million tonnes which is a good symptom for Indian economy, but the picture is not very rosy for farmers on the other side whose livelihood is agriculture.

III. FARMER SUICIDES IN INDIA

Historical records relating to frustration, revolts and high mortality rates among farmers in India, particularly cash crop farmers, date back to the 19th century but the cases of farmers suicide was rare. Ganapathi and Venkoba Rao analyzed suicides in parts of Tamil Nadu in 1966. They recommended that the distribution of agricultural organo-phosphorus compounds be restricted. Similarly, Nandi et al., in 1979 noted the role of freely available agricultural insecticides in suicides in rural West Bengal and suggested that their availability be regulated. Hegde studied rural suicides in villages of northern Karnataka over 1962 to 1970, and stated the suicide incidence rate to be 5.7 per 100,000 population. Reddy, in 1993, reviewed high rates of farmer suicides in Andhra Pradesh and its relationship to farm size and productivity (Wikipedia). According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, more than 2,16,000 farmers suicides, 275516 farmers have committed suicide in India during the last one and half decade. The States which come either under dry zone or areas under rainfed agriculture have reported the highest number of suicides. The major states are Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh follow closely, with two

thirds (68.4 percent) of farmer suicides being reported from these states. However, the NCRB figures across 18 years for which data exists show that at least 2,84,694 Indian farmers have taken their lives since 1995 (i.e., accepting the non-figures of Chhattisgarh and West Bengal). The average annual farmers suicides is 15,369 over a period of 18 years. During the period 1997-2002, farmer suicides in the big five states accounted for roughly one out of every twelve of all suicides in the country. In 2003-08, it accounted for nearly one out of every ten. India saw 1,38,321 farm suicides between 1995 and 2003 at an annual average of 15,369. During the period 2004-12, the number is 14,66,373 at much higher annual average of 16,264. The annual average farmers suicides during 1995-2002 is the highest at 2,508 in Maharashtra followed by Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh (2,304), Karnataka (2,259).

IV. AN ANALYSIS OF TELANGANA

Telangana is the 28th and the youngest state of the Indian Republic. It was formed after bifurcation of

erstwhile Teluguspeaking Andhra Pradesh in 2014. The state has a sex ratio of 988 (higher than the national average of 943 in 2011). The government conducted an Intensive Household Survey (Samagra Kutumba Survey) on 19.08.2014 throughout the state. The total population was 363.03 lakh. With 66.46% of literacy rate, the state has a lower rate than the national average of 72.99. Earlier, there was a spate of suicides among farmers and later farmers in the state. As the new state suicide data did not find a place in Indian psychiatric literature, an effort was made to analyze suicides from the area for the years 2014 to 2016 calendar years.

The present retrospective research-based study was done by collecting data from the government hospitals of Karimnagar, Telangana during April 2023- June 2024. A total of 50 cases identified as those died with suicide were included in the present study, the socio-demographic characteristics such as name, age, gender, residence, date of admission to hospital, date of death and cause of death were collected. This study was approved by institute's ethical committee.

Table 1.1: Age wise Distribution of the Respondents

Sl No	Age	Respondents	Percentage
1	21-30	8	16
2	31-40	18	36
3	41-50	14	28
4	51-60	10	20
	Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

Age wise distribution of the cases showed that maximum number (36%) of cases are found in the age group of 31-40 years, while 28%, were in the age group 41-50 years.

Table 1.2: Marital status of the Respondents

Sl No	Marital Status	Respondents	Percentage
1	Married	45	90
2	Unmarried	5	10
	Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

From the table it can be noted that majority of the respondents are married which constitute 90%, while 10% were unmarried.

Table 1.3: Place of Death

Sl No	Place of Death	Respondents	Percentage
1	At Home	10	20
2	Open Fields	25	50

3	Wells and Ponds	15	30
	Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

The place of death was also observed in the present study, which shows 50% of cases death was in open fields and 30% cases deaths happened at home and small percentage of deaths were observed in wells and ponds.

Table 1.4: Distribution of cases according to Mode of death

SI No	Mode of Death	Respondents	Percentage
1	Hanging	20	40
2	Poisoning	16	32
3	Burns	8	16
4	Drowning	4	8
5	Electrical Shock	2	4
	Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

In the present study, the modes of death in individuals were as follows. Out of 50 cases 20 individuals (40%) had committed suicide by hanging and 32% of individuals had consumed organophosphorus compounds. 16% were died by burns and drowning and 4% were died due to electric shock. None of committers in the present study sample had resorted to violent means such as stabbing of body parts, jumping in front of railway, or oncoming vehicles or using firearms.

Suicide as the leading cause of death in framers is due to by not giving adequately high priority to agriculture and that is responsible for most of the problems to farmers. The present study was aimed to explore the characteristics of people committed suicide, especially the socio demographical, modes used, and the reason for causes among the farmer population community in Karimnagar District, Telangana State, South India. We found a majority of the committed to be male and in the age group of 31–40 years and were married, The families of the victims have reported money borrowed by the victims from various source of Credits like banks and Moneylenders. In our study, economic status and Indebtedness of farmers is found as the main reason for suicidal committed. The major problem of our agriculture is inefficiency. Before liberalisation, our agriculture policies have not tried to make this sector competitive, Actually the driving factor is a 'sense of loss': repeated sense of hopelessness, loss of crops, loss of land, loss of income, loss of community, loss of family farm, loss of a way of life. The place of death of such depressed farmers was also observed in the present study, which shows maximum number of cases death was in open fields and followed by home

and small percentage of deaths were observed in wells and ponds.

V. CONCLUSION

The Indian farmers have not been getting back the investment amount on cropping, purchase of seeds and fertilizers. The reasons for farmers suicide is corruption, spurious pests, seeds etc. The state Governments have implemented agricultural debt waiving scheme to prevent the farmers suicides. The small and marginal farmers could not able to benefit from those schemes. The Government should implement the recommendations of Swaminathan Committee Report on farmers, then only, the lives of the farmers can be saved. The subsidies and farmer welfare schemes of the Government should be directly moved to the farmers. Then only agriculture sector will become remunerative profession for the cultivator. The reason for farmers to commit suicide is corruption and the middlemen who earn more profit than farmers. The farmers not even get back the money which they used for purchase as seeds, and fertilizers and expenditure on agricultural operations.

The farming related causes of suicides reflect heavily on the failure of crops and the lack of access to irrigation with the influence of 80% over the suicides in the present study area. The 'natural calamities', and the 'failure of rainfall/drought' are viewed 100% contributory ones, and the failure of finding a borewell on the farm has been leading to heavy indebtedness to the marginal and small farmers. The 'Higher output' and the 'Higher prices' report 88% of the influence on the incidence of suicides.

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