

Vol II Issue VI Dec 2012

Impact Factor : 0.1870

ISSN No :2231-5063

Monthly Multidisciplinary
Research Journal

Golden Research

Thoughts

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RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2230-7850

Indian Streams Research Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi & Marathi Language. All research papers submitted to the journal will be double - blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial Board readers will include investigator in universities, research institutes government and industry with research interest in the general subjects.

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FARMER'S SUICIDAL POSITION IN KARNATAKA STATE

PURNANAND. N. SANGALAD

Teaching Assistant, Department of Criminology and Forensic Science,
Karnataka University's, Karnataka Science College, Dharwad

Abstract:

The statistical analysis of farmers' suicide in Karnataka from different perspectives and analysis how the capitalist path of development through globalisation is the major factor responsible for the sharpening agrarian crisis in India, especially in the Karnataka states. Agriculture is a largest economic sector and plays a significant role in the overall socio economic development of our country. They depend on loan from private money lenders or from financial institutions for the cultivation of their land. They depend on agricultural income for their family expenses, education and marriage of the children. Karnataka in particular are in distress due to indebtedness, repeated failure of crops, increasing cost of production, poor quality of seeds, impact of globalization, exploitation by money lenders and businessmen and the other factors are the main causes for their distress which lead to suicides. Karnataka is the eight largest state of India having severed agrarian distress since many years.

KEYWORDS:

Farmers, Distress, Economic, Agriculture, Suicides

INTRODUCTION

Karnataka is one of the eighth largest state in India, in area and seventh state in population. Karnataka is predominantly an agricultural state, about 76 percent of the population lives in rural areas and about 56 percent of the workforce is engaged in agriculture and allied activities which generate about 49 percent of the State's income. The state has total land area of 1,90,49,836 hectares; out of which the net sown area is 1,21,08,667 hectares area is accounted as "Agricultural Holdings" and nearly 62,21,000 farm families operate the same. The net irrigated area out of the total sown area is 21.7 percent. The major food crops of the state are Rice, Ragi, Jowar, Bajra, Maize, Millets, Wheat and Pulses. The state has three agricultural seasons – Kharif (April to September), Rabi (October to December) and summer (January to March). The state contributes about 5.59 percent in national food grains production. The major cash crops are Ground nut, Sugar cane, Cotton, Mulberry, Tobacco, Coconut, Areca nut, Coffee, Cashew, Cardamom, Tea, Pepper and Grapes. The state has secured first place in per hectare Coffee production and seventh place in the production of Oil seeds in the country. The horticultural crops are grown in the area of 16,300 km and the annual production is about 9.58 million tons. The income generated from horticulture constitutes over 40 percent of income generated from agriculture and it is about 17 percent of the state's GDP. In floriculture, Karnataka occupies the second position in India in terms of production.

The state has total 32.62 lakh hectares forest area which formed 16.08 percent of the geographical area of the state. The state produces Sandalwood, Teakwood, Rubber, Bamboo, Rosewood, various soft woods, coca and other minor products. The state stands second in the value forest products in the country.

The farmers cultivate food crops where the cost-risk return structure is not favourable to them; under such circumstances they produce almost every type of food grains, vegetables, fruits as well as beverage and fiber crops. There are four categories of agricultural farm holders, the large - scale farm

Title: FARMER'S SUICIDAL POSITION IN KARNATAKA STATE
Source: Golden Research Thoughts [2231-5063] PURNANAND. N. SANGALAD yr:2012 vol:2 iss:6

holders, the medium- scale farm holders and the small - scale farm holders. There are twelve crore of small and marginal farmers in our country. Their land holdings are below two hectares, they constitute about 82 percent of the total land holders, and more than 90 percent of them are dependent on rain for their crops. These holders depend on loan facilities from different financial institutions and money lenders for farming activities. They return loan they have taken to the concerned financial institutions or the money lenders if they get profits to their products. If there is failure of their crops they fail to pay back the same. Failure of crops brings helplessness and frustration among farmers. If they get good agricultural yield they may not get profits to their products due to exploitation by dalals. Are over burdened with the debt they have taken from different financial institutions and also money lenders. They depend exclusively on the profits of agriculture to meet out their daily needs, education and also the marriage of the grown up children. This condition may bring misery, frustration, confusion and conflict among the farmers who fail to face such situation may take an extreme step of suicide. The state and the Union Governments have taken various measures to instill confidence in the farming community. In spite of various measures the suicide among farmers is continued.

Karnataka is one of the states having severe agrarian distress since many years. But it had no history of farmers committing suicide when crops or market failed, although there were agitations of farmers in the past (Assadi, M. 1998). As has already been mentioned suicidal death of Bidar farmer considered to be the first incidence of farmers' suicide attracted considerable attention of media and public in 1997 this has been also reported in the Veeresh committee in 2002. The studies on farmer's suicide for the first time in Karnataka were undertaken by Shetty and Vasavi (Shetty 1999 and Vasavi 1999). Out of the last nine years, the state has experienced drought for seven years, this is one of the major reasons for farmers taking extreme step of suicide. The highest number of farmer suicide cases was reported from northern Karnataka, the dry region of the state; in Haveri, Davanagere, Dharwad, Chitradurga, Hassan and Kolar districts. Most of the victims held land between 2 and 10 acres.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is designed to understand the severity of the problem of farmers' suicides in Karnataka state. The data on farmer's suicide was collected from the year 2003- 04 to 2009-10. The present study was based on both primary and secondary data like suicide reports, journals, books and internet surveys etc.

Objectives of the Study

To know and analyse of the present farmers suicides in Karnataka state rapidly increasing against the other states of farmers suicides.

Result and Discussion

The following is the statistics of selected state-wise number of suicide by farmers in India, the period from 2000 -01 to 2009-10.

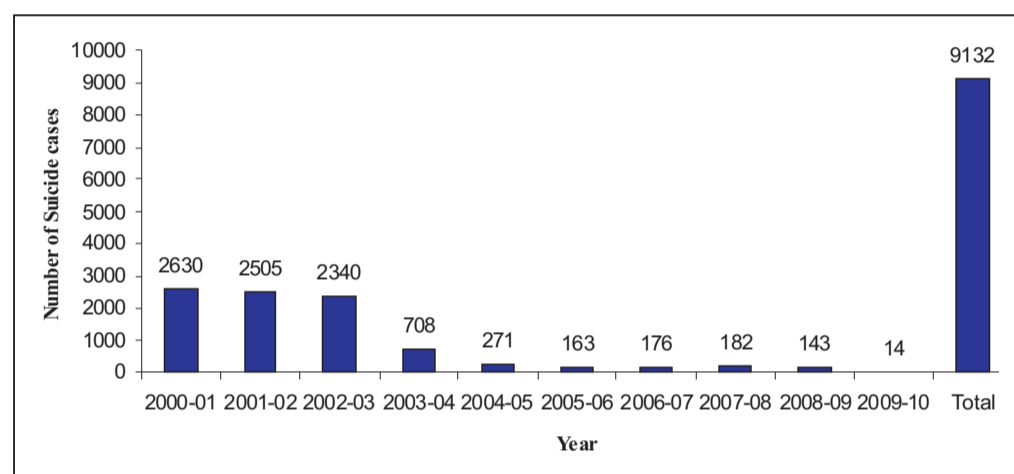
Table 1: Selected State-wise Numbers of Suicides by Farmers in India (2000-2001 to 2009-2010)

Years States	2000- 01	2001- 02	2002- 03	2003- 04	2004- 05	2005- 06	2006- 07	2007- 08	2008- 09	2009- 10	Total
A, Pradesh	191	267	313	393	1126	657	532	490	390	77	4436
Karnataka	2630	2505	2340	708	271	163	176	182	143	14	9132
Maharashtra	-	50	122	173	632	595	2355	590	627	259	5403
Punjab	-	-	-	13	11	32	19	24	10	18	127
Kerala	-	-	841	50	101	119	112	68	22	2	1315
Orissa	-	2	1	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	8
Gujarat	-	13	6	3	108	125	149	4	1	-	409
Tamil Nadu	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	2
Total	2821	2837	3623	1340	2249	1696	3343	1359	1194	370	20832

Source – Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 553, dated 20.02.2009 and Loka Sabha Starred Question No. 153 dated 14.07. 2009 ([file://G:\data \(1\).htm](file://G:\data (1).htm) 1/16/2010.

A large number of farmers committed suicide during the drought period from 2000-01 to 2003 -04. Union Government sources (during the question hour in the Rajya Sabha) pointed out that there are 9642 suicidal deaths of farmers between 2000-2001 to 2009-2010 have been reported in Karnataka State. Compared with other states (table 1) Karnataka state recorded maximum number 9132 (figure 1) farmer's suicidal deaths in the country. Orissa state recorded minimum (8 cases) suicidal deaths in the country. Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture while giving details in the assembly on January 11, 2011 said that 2597 cases have been reported the period from 2003 - 04 to 2010 - 11. He also told that to prevent farmer's suicides the government has taken measures to supply the seeds, fertilizers and agricultural implements at the subsidized rates (Anonymous 2011).

Figure 1: Numbers of Suicides by Farmers in Karnataka (2000-2001 to 2009-2010)



Source: Based on the figures reported by State Govts.

The Chief Minister of Karnataka for the first time in the country has presented Agricultural Budget for the farmers of Karnataka. Totally Rs 17,857 crore is ear marked for the agricultural sector. It is decided to provide support for small and marginal farmers by providing subsidy in procuring farm equipments, drip irrigation/ sprinklers, crop loan at 1 per cent, which would help in developing the economic status of the weaker section. It is also proposed in the budget to hold an 'Agri-Business Meet' to attract investments in agriculture for strengthen the growth of agriculture and allied industries (Anonymous. 2011).

The union finance ministers while presetting the budget for the financial year 2011-2012 on 28 February 2011 announced reduction in interest rate to 4 percent for farmers who repay loans on time and raised agri - credit target by a whopping Rs 1 lakh crore to boost investment in the sector.

Emphasizing up on the need for affordable credit to farmers, he announced an “additional subvention to 3 percent in 2011-2012” for those farmers who repay in time. “Thus, the effective rate of interest for such farmers have 4 percent per annum”, Mukherjee said. The government decided to continue the existing scheme of providing short-term crop loans to farmers at 7 percent for the next fiscal. To increase investment in the farm sector, the Finance Minister raised the agri-credit lending target for banks to Rs 4,75,000 crore for 2011-2012 from Rs 3,75,000 crore this year, with special focus on small and marginal farmers.

In the present study the direct adverse socio-economic conditions caused due to failure of agriculture on the suicidal tendency of the farmers. The findings of the study are useful to the policy makers in redesigning farmer friendly agricultural procedures in view of globalization, liberalization and privatization, there by restraining the Indian farmers from the menace of suicide and more so the farmers of Karnataka state.

CONCLUSION

The farm sector in India is in crises and it is reflected through the growing number of suicides by farmers in some states. Karnataka State is one of the states hit by the epidemic of suicide among farming community. As a result, agriculture sector is facing new challenges. These challenges are the outcome of globalization and privatization. Indian agriculture to a major extent depends on natural rainfall, which is

often a failure. Drought is a common phenomenon. Karnataka State is often hit by drought conditions. There is depletion of ground water, indebtedness by farmers is growing, and youngsters do not take up to agriculture looking to the present fate of farmers. As a result there is distress in agriculture sector.

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