

**PROJECT REPORT**  
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**Suicides by Farmers In India –**  
**Psychological Or Economical Reasons...???**

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## SUICIDES BY FARMERS IN INDIA

### Agrarian Crises

*“If farmers are committing suicides in such a large number, it is a sad situation”*

”

Prime Minister, “Manmohan Singh”



## **INTRODUCTION**

*The Indian peasantry, the largest surviving body of small farmers in the world, is currently facing an epidemic of suicide.*

*For thousands of years farmers have depended on the Earth to sustain their families. Now, in the twenty-first century, their livelihood, prosperity, and the well-being of their families for generations to come are being threatened by globalization and the shift in the linkage of agriculture from the Earth to a few profit-driven multinational corporations.*

*Even though both state and central governments initially tried to sweep the crisis under the carpet, soon it blew up into huge proportions forcing most commentators to see it as a repercussion of the neoliberal policies pursued by the successive governments since 1991.*

## **THE PAINFUL STING OF FACTS**

- Agriculture is in a real crisis.
- The **Indian economy** has entered the above **8 per cent growth** trajectory in the past year. Growth implies a higher demand for food which must be met with an increase in food production.
- Though **Prime Minister Manmohan Singh** hoped for a **4 per cent growth of agriculture**, it clocked a growth of only **2.3 per cent last year**. This has serious food security implications for the country.
- While the decline of agriculture as a percentage of GDP is considered a sign of development, it also signifies lopsided development when the number of people employed in agriculture keeps rising. This implies **falling individual income of the farm sector in relative terms**.
- **Since 1997, more than 25,000 farmers have committed suicide**, many drinking the chemical that was supposed to make their crops more, not less, productive.
- **In the state of Andhra Pradesh alone, 4,500 farmers have committed suicide in the past seven years**. This does not include the number of family members of farmers who have also killed themselves.
- **IN MAHARASHTRA, Six out of 35 districts account for 76% suicides.**
- Government's perspective on farmers suicide in India (well articulated by Veeresh Committee report) has been critically analyzed in this study to argue that farmers' suicides cannot be reduced to personal problems but related to the context of agrarian crisis.

- The genetically engineered (GE) cotton seeds that the government encouraged required 15 percent more overall investment than did non-GE seeds, but the yield benefit was just 5 percent more.
- Through the years the Indian government tended to blame the suicides on things like alcoholism or family problems, while economic causes related to farming were rarely addressed. And as far as the 25,000 suicides, **I'd guess that it's somewhat higher. I saw the death certificate of one farmer. It mentioned poisoning, but no indication that it was a self-ingested. So it left me wondering if that suicide would be recorded. (As Quoted By: Chad Heeter).**
- There is also a view that ex-gratia payment to the suicide victims will encourage suicides.

### **WHAT STATISTICS SAYS**

- According to official sources, **between 2001 and 2006 as many as 5,910 farmers committed suicide in Karnataka, 1,835 in Andhra Pradesh, 981 in Maharashtra and 201 in Kerala. Countrywide, between 1995 and 2003, 9.26 lakh farmers are reported to have committed suicide, according to statistics put out by the home ministry.**

*Data indicates that there is no correlation between education levels and suicides.*

### **FARMING IN ANDHRA PRADESH**

There are 11 million farmers in the Andhra Pradesh, 90% of them are small farmers **The state has been suffering from drought since 2001. 70% of the state's 78 million people are dependent on agriculture.**

### 'State' of farmer suicides

States	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Average
Andhra Pradesh	1767	2262	1290	1922	1901	1540	1434	1621	1578	1702
Arunachal Pradesh	0.00	0.00	1714	0.00	8.11	789	15.32	2368	1358	953
Assam	724	305	739	567	323	449	6.31	10.80	720	6.15
Bihar	12.09	9.15	700	708	708	6.46	10.12	11.11	768	8.64
Chhattisgarh							36.07	31.34	2720	31.54
Goa	6.50	4.74	3.21	1.95	1.95	5.51	7.03	3.56	6.00	4.50
Gujarat	13.21	13.06	14.28	14.41	10.03	13.06	12.40	12.27	12.72	12.83
Haryana	9.27	7.37	2.81	11.53	8.92	10.66	7.22	8.64	9.30	8.41
Himachal Pradesh	6.17	14.22	726	10.66	11.96	9.80	7.17	7.49	8.81	9.28
Jammu & Kashmir	0.00	0.00	3.06	1.87	3.06	26.95	9.80	8.70	5.80	6.58
Jharkhand							10.80	7.72	7.72	8.75
Karnataka	22.08	22.80	1792	1722	19.05	21.25	21.08	19.07	21.66	20.24
Kerala	16.21	12.68	13.44	16.27	14.63	13.92	10.81	15.63	16.77	14.48
Madhya Pradesh	18.11	26.72	31.69	24.16	27.36	24.47	20.00	19.42	21.37	23.70
Maharashtra	9.13	17.66	15.17	17.64	17.82	21.58	24.19	25.43	25.99	19.40
Manipur	4.17	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.70	0.00	7.69	15.38	3.44
Meghalaya	15.79	18.06	1.37	8.33	8.93	4.08	4.60	11.94	9.76	9.21
Mizoram	0.00	0.00	16.67	0.00	0.00	5.88	0.00	4.55	0.00	3.01
Nagaland	18.18	14.71	14.29	0.00	6.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.98
Orissa	11.89	8.91	7.80	12.00	7.26	5.06	6.32	7.86	8.26	8.37
Punjab	16.05	23.05	18.29	13.35	8.82	8.80	6.94	7.89	4.12	11.92
Rajasthan	0.00	17.30	20.68	21.42	19.34	22.42	15.81	18.07	17.37	16.93
Sikkim	0.00	10.81	35.48	17.24	15.74	11.90	19.15	10.26	29.52	16.68
Tamil Nadu	NA	8.87	10.13	9.92	7.02	8.04	8.72	12.94	8.86	8.28
Tripura	40.17	42.52	2.60	35.65	10.34	1.50	4.80	5.26	0.47	15.92
Uttar Pradesh	9.59	14.45	13.03	14.63	15.43	15.52	19.57	12.35	10.57	13.90
Uttaranchal							6.75	9.42	10.49	7.99
West Bengal	10.11	12.34	10.93	10.22	8.93	9.94	9.10	11.67	7.80	10.12
<b>Total (States)</b>	<b>12.24</b>	<b>15.80</b>	<b>14.38</b>	<b>15.37</b>	<b>14.64</b>	<b>15.29</b>	<b>15.29</b>	<b>16.42</b>	<b>15.72</b>	<b>15.02</b>
A & N Islands	0.00	5.37	8.70	8.15	6.82	12.50	2.33	4.86	0.88	5.51
Chandigarh	3.92	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.94	0.65
D & N Haveli	20.00	46.15	54.90	50.00	25.00	38.89	38.00	42.00	44.23	39.91
Daman & Diu	8.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.33	0.00	11.76	0.00	3.16
Delhi (UT)	1.39	2.82	1.00	3.77	1.84	1.65	1.45	3.13	0.69	1.97
Lakshadweep									0.00	0.00
Pondicherry	0.00	0.00	8.71	24.15	20.98	40.42	17.20	15.52	3.95	14.55
<b>Total (UTs)</b>	<b>1.20</b>	<b>3.11</b>	<b>5.41</b>	<b>10.83</b>	<b>8.85</b>	<b>15.27</b>	<b>6.45</b>	<b>7.87</b>	<b>2.81</b>	<b>6.87</b>
<b>Total (All India)</b>	<b>12.02</b>	<b>15.56</b>	<b>14.21</b>	<b>15.29</b>	<b>14.54</b>	<b>15.29</b>	<b>15.13</b>	<b>16.28</b>	<b>15.48</b>	<b>14.87</b>

Note: State/Union Territory wise percentage of farmers' suicides to the total number of suicides.

- ACCORDING TO THE **REPORT** MADE BY (*Tata Institute of Social science (TISS), Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR), Yashawantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration (YASHADA)* , *Recommendations of Dr M. S. Swaminathan*) on Vidarbh .

✓ **Common features in majority of suicides**

- 91-94 % of suicides are by family heads.
- 91-97 % of those who committed suicide are males.
- 84 to 89 percent are married.
- Suicides are neutral to literacy levels.
- Most of them grew single crop in a year.
- 98 percent had no access to irrigation.
- More or less spread among all caste groups.
- Spread in all per capita holding size.

✓ **Study Findings- Reasons for Agrarian Distress and Suicides In MAHARSHTRA**

- Indebtedness –93 %
- Economic downfall – 74 %
- Conflict in Family – 55 %
- Crop failure – 41%
- Dent in Social Status- 36%
- Daughter's/Sister's marriage – 34 %
- Addiction- 28%
- Health problems – 21 %
- Most of the suicides were because of combination of more than one factor.

## **IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION, WTO TRADE POLICIES**

### ***"This is the other side of globalization"***

- Government policies like removal of QRs under WTO regime have created havoc and exposed the farmers to the volatility of international market and prices.

- This situation has helped in strengthening the merchant capital and the traders cum moneylenders have their fortunes in the absence of supportive institutional mechanisms.
- Linking of the national market with international markets has also increased the price uncertainty particularly in crops like cotton.
- Policies directed by World Bank and the IMF have significant influence on the individual farmer. Their agriculture model promotes high-tech, mechanized, chemical-dependent farming. It works on the assumption that one size fits all, but in reality, that "size" only favors large and medium farmers. Few peasant farmers have the funds to make the significant investment required by the model, so they go for loans or buy on credit, with annual interest rates reported as high as 80 percent.

#### ➤ **WORLD BANK MODEL**

- Blindly aping the World Bank model of agriculture (as suggested by McKinsey India Ltd.), Karnataka and Andhra had pumped in huge finances to push in an industry-driven agriculture that has not only exacerbated the crisis leading to an environmental catastrophe but also destroyed millions of rural livelihoods.
- Both the States had turned into a national capital of shame for farmers' distress, visible more through the increasing rate of suicides in the rural areas.

#### ➤ **BT COTTON**

- Bt cotton, the genetically modified variety sold by Monsanto.
- Seeds are thrice as expensive as ordinary cotton.
- But some farmers shell out the extra money because they expect to spend next to nothing on '*aushad*', or pesticides. Bt cotton, after all, is widely believed to be pest-resistant. Now it is resistant to bollworms, but it's not clear it is resistant to other pests..
- These cotton seeds are now better known as “**SEEDS OF SUICIDE**”.

#### ➤ **INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC POLICIES IMPACT ON COTTON PRICES IN INDIA**

- Excess international supply at a lower price is also because of direct and indirect subsidies leading to dumping by the United States of America (USA). During the period 1998 to 2003 Cotton export prices from USA were lower than their cost of

production by more than 50 per cent on average and had reached a maximum of 65 per cent in 2002.

### What the farmer feels:

***"I'm not angry with anyone because the moneylender has the right to ask for repayment,"*** one of the farmers says.

#### ➤ Last Resorts

- In Andhra Pradesh, 26 farmers sold their kidneys in 2000.
- Farmers have been taking their lives in Andhra Pradesh and neighbouring Karnataka state after failing to repay high-interest loans from private money lenders.
- **Suicide by pesticide:** It's an epidemic in India, where farmers try to keep up with the latest pest-resistant seeds only to find themselves trapped in a vicious cycle of pesticides that don't work drought and debt.

***No one is taking responsibility -- not the government, whose policies encouraged cash crops like cotton; not the developers of genetically modified crops; and not the dealers, who insist that farmers don't follow instructions for their seed.***

### GOVERNMENT FAILURE IN ADDRESSING ROOT CAUSE

#### ➤ Domestic Negligence

- All its efforts are directed towards convincing the markets that **sensex** will not be allowed to slip any further.
- Government officials have seemed to overlook is that self-reliance is an ideal that cannot be achieved under the **Karnataka Land Reforms Act** that **limits farmers' rights to landholding and leasing**. Instead of addressing the root of the problem, the government attributes the cause of farmers suicides to peripheral problems such as **adultery and alcoholism**.
- Government has set new heights of negligence. Its policies are more in favour of hi-tech industries thus rendering all the resources of the state to these companies, taking huge loans from international institutions and quenching the farmers' share for their cause.



### ➤ Policies Failure

- As per the Tenth Plan outlay of the Planning Commission, Andhra Pradesh gets only 6 per cent of the total assistance to agriculture. This despite the fact that it has around 9 per cent of the cultivable area of the country.
- Maharashtra has around 12 per cent of the total cultivable area of the country and gets only around 8 per cent of the loans disbursed by the banks.
- Analysts say the spate of suicides points to the complete collapse of cheap and affordable government credit to farmers.
- Analysts say the spate of suicides is rooted in the endemic neglect of the farming sector in the state.
- Economist V Hanumantha Rao says that lack of irrigation facilities and institutional loans to farmers and their overdependence on money lenders has led to the sorry state of affairs.

### ➤ Subsidies

- The main proportion of the government's outlay on agriculture goes towards subsidies which contribute very little to growth today. They benefit the rich farmers the most, while the marginal ones are living on the fringe.
- A recent study done by the Govt. of Andhra Pradesh reported that more than 55 percent of the farmers are not getting the Minimum Support Price (MSP).

### ➤ Ex-Gratia Payments

Government has refused paying ex-gratia payments to the families of the victims several times in states like Karnataka as some reports suggests that **providing ex-gratia payments encourages farmers to commit suicide.**

- The erstwhile government had started paying an ex-gratia grant of Rs 1 lakh to the affected families after suicides were initially reported in 1997-98. After giving the assistance to some 250 farmer families, the payments were stopped on the plea that such an ex-gratia would prompt more farmers to take their lives.

### ➤ Inefficient Procurement And Pricing System

The government keeps food prices artificially low by imports, administrative means and subsidy, never allowing the farmer his rightful income.

While a kilogram of wheat retails for Rs 13 in India, the same does for Rs 30 in the US, Rs 19 in Egypt, Rs 20 in Malaysia and Rs 34 in Thailand.

***“We are paying more for electricity, fertilizer and loans. But the prices of our produce have been rising slowly, leading to losses”.***

### ➤ **Rising Costs Of Cultivation**

- Many of the farmers who felt they had no choice but to shift to the intensive attractively marketed GM seeds now face debts caused by unaffordable, spurious inputs such as futile seeds, pesticides, and fertilizers, and dry bore wells.
- Plummeting prices of farm commodities.
- In **ANDHRA PRADESH**: Production costs of paddy, groundnut, and cotton in the state are much higher than those of other states, making its farmers uncompetitive in the national market.

### ➤ **Crop Failure And Yield Losses**

ACCORDING TO THE REPORT MADE BY

***(Tata Institute of Social science (TISS), Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR), Yashwantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration (YASHADA), Recommendations of Dr M. S. Swaminathan) on Vidarbha .***

- Disruption in regular rainfall cycle since 2001. Long dry spells, deficient monsoon.
- Single crop a year.
- Cotton the dominant crop.
- 93 percent of land rain fed. 98 percent of the farmers who committed suicide had no irrigation.
- Yield limited by rain, but regular rise in cost of input lowered margin of profit.
- Volatility in market price further lowered return.
- Commitment to money lender did not leave anything with him.

- The tragedy unfolds from crop failure. Drought, pests, and spurious pesticides are expensive problems that small farmers don't have the means to rectify.
- In the last seven years, bad seeds, costly pesticide and drought have triggered debt, then suicide for 4,500 farmers in Andhra Pradesh alone.
- The crop pattern is tilting in favour of commercialization and hence the risk of crop loss increased due to higher proportion of purchased inputs and technology.

#### ➤ **Indebtedness And The Lack Of Credit Availability**

- Farmers are facing a decrease in income share in their regions. **In Andhra Pradesh where 18 per cent of bank loans were to go to farmers, their actual share of loans has never exceeded 11 percent.**
- **In Vidarbh: Only 4.48 lakh farmers (25%) could avail loan** from formal financial institutions in 2005-06.
- **Though overall interest rates have dropped in India, banks are hesitant to offer cheap credit** to farmers, fearing defaults.
- **Poor financial state of cooperative banks.**
- Apathy of nationalised banks to disbursement of crop credit.
- **High interest rates of cooperative credit Institutions.**

***While banks complain about bad loans that had been given to farmers, they have yet to recover Rs 1 lakh crore from the corporate sector. Conversely, farmers only owe about Rs 15,000 crore.***

#### ➤ **Money Lenders**

- High prevalence of credit from private money lenders at exorbitant interest rates.
- The dearth of credit forces farmers to take loans from rural lenders who charge interest at exorbitant rates (anywhere between 36 and 50%) that would cause the demise of even the largest of corporations.

#### ➤ **Other Reasons For Suicides**

- For many young people there are **no adequate employment opportunities outside agriculture**. This compels them to remain in the village and somehow improve their income.
- **Traditional subsistence farming not being more income yielding**, there is a tendency among young people to shift for commercial farming and hence, many of them are caught into the quagmire of mono crop.
- **Lack of income from subsidiary occupations.**
- Comparatively weak cooperative movement.
- Financial inability to marry adult daughters/sisters.
- Depression due to loss of social and economic status. In India, where society and family values are given the highest ranks, the mentality is much more pride and respect oriented. Thus, inability to serve the family properly and paying the loans brings in a feeling of guilt and shame which pushes the farmer into the deathly clutches.
- Illness of self or somebody else in the family.
- Globalization has resulted in migration which has disrupted the basic social structure and thus resulted in tensed, **maladjusted** and constrained living.
- The old notion of joint families has disappeared which was vital when it comes to a cooperative occupation like farming. Thus, where in the joint families, the economic, household and social responsibilities psychological burdens were shared but now in single families, the burdens and responsibilities lie much on the head of the family.
- Family disputes, Addictions etc.

*The tragedy is that while the farmers have delivered their verdict, the economists and policy makers are not willing to accept it. The nation is not only clueless but does not even want to know how to resurrect agriculture and farming.*

*This is where the politico-economy equations have gone wrong; this is where the Indian democracy has reached superficial heights.*

**Do These Suicides Have Economical Reasons Or Psychological??**

***The risk factors are a combination of two aspects: neurobiological and socio-economic.***

SUICIDES have come to be indicators of economic distress.

***Everyone seems to have forgotten the psychological truism that suicide is more a consequence of genetic traits than the environment.***

***According to The National Mental Health Association (USA), "No matter the race or age of the person, how rich or poor they are, it is true that most people who commit suicide have a mental or emotional disorder".***

- The **suicidal tendency** in a person is **dictated by the DNA**, and **only triggered by the economic condition** in those already predisposed to suicide.
- This is well supported by the **data** released by the **World Health Organisation in 2004**:

While the **suicide rate in India**, a pre-dominantly agrarian economy, was **10.7 per 100,000**; those of **industrialized, rich countries** were generally higher —

**Finland: 22.5**

**USA : 10.7**

**UK : 7.5**

**Germany: 13.5, Australia :12.5.**

- **In 2001**, of those who ended their lives, **farmers accounted for 15.13 per cent** while those in the secure service industry (including the government and PSUs) formed 12.67 per cent of the cases!
- Suicide rates indicate that the **poorer states** such as **Bihar have a suicide rate of 0.7 and Uttar Pradesh 2.2**. These are much **lesser than the richer states of Tamil Nadu (19.1), West Bengal (16.6 ) and Gujarat (9.0)**.

***Suicide is not a matter of economics, but of how people respond to a social or economic adversity. Our politicians, however, tend to play on the emotional quotient of the situation.***

### **What Psychologists Say**

***"It's not true that suicides are taking place only in Vidarbha. They began in Andhra and spread to other parts of the country. But why did farmer suicides begin after 1994? The answer is we liberalised the economy and devalued our rupee. As a result, the cost of energy went up, the cost of agriculture rose and***

*living costs soared. The 5th Pay Commission was a vindication of this. But the farmers remained in a low-cost economy. The promise that exports in a free market would bring profits to farmers was never kept. We imported 110 lakh bales from 1998 to 2004."*

— Vijay Jawandhia Wardha farmers' leader, social commentator.

*"The point is we need to understand that green revolution has collapsed. Suicides are more alarming in those areas where green revolution was pushed with force. We borrowed a technology that did not fit into our socio-economic milieu. Tractor is today a symbol of suicides. Fertilizers and pesticides have destroyed our natural base. Farmers in Vidarbha and elsewhere are the victims of policies that have siphoned money from the rural economy."*

— Devinder Sharma Former journalist, agriculture expert.

- Psychiatrist Dr P Raghurami Reddy says some farmers could be taking their lives to invite attention to their families' plight.
- Psychologist, Silove draws our attention to the **burden of conflict and displacement worldwide**: it is the **civilians and poor people** who suffer the most and whose mental health is consequently affected.
- According to Mr Sharad Joshi (most articulate spokesman of the new farmers movement), *"The farmers were driven to suicide, first in trickles and then in waves, as suicide became a thinkable proposition"*.

*This in psychological parlance is known as "suicide contagion". This suggestion of a mass mentality further establishes the psychological basis of suicide which need not necessarily be linked with a worsening living condition.*

*"Suicide by one farmer is inspiring others to do the same,"* psychologist says.

## **INTERVENTIONS REQUIRED TO COUNTER**

### ➤ **Irrigation Solution**

- **Need to promote watershed management and massively increase the acreage under irrigation.** Presently only about 40 per cent of total agricultural land is irrigated.
  - ✓ A study by **C. Z. Guilmoto, in the Economic and Political Weekly**, stated that if **10 hectares of land are irrigated, employment on that tract increases from 8 to 24 persons.** Consider the implications this can have — **if we were to irrigate the total cultivable area, we would generate 179 million new jobs or employment for 44.5 per cent of our workforce!**

#### ➤ CHEAP CREDIT FACILITIES

- The true indicators of the economic conditions are objective measures such as the sectoral share in GDP, **availability of cheap credit**, increase in area under irrigation etc.
- Farmers must be provided with substantial institutional credit and given an alternative in order to extinguish their tendency to fall prey to the convenience of private moneylenders.

#### ➤ PROMOTE ORGANIC FARMING

- Methods of organic farming and integrated pest management should be introduced to eliminate dependency on commodities such as chemical fertilisers, pesticides, and GM seeds.
- Less expensive, lower-risk organic farming methods might offer a solution for the cotton-growing crisis in India.

#### ➤ INSURANCE SCHEMES

- The farmer's problem is rooted in his exposure to risk; yield as well as price shocks. Insurance schemes may be devised to mitigate these.
- **Credit insurance** - can look into the credit default.
  - **Crop insurance** - will be linked with yield risk. a Crop Insurance Scheme must be carefully implemented so that farmers who are affected by crop failure will be relieved of the subsequent financial burden.
  - **Income insurance** - will address the poor returns, particularly for marginal and small farmers and also tenants.

➤ **LAND MANAGEMENT**

- Excessive use of fertilizer and pesticides and mono-cropping can affect the fertility of land. Appropriate land management techniques should be devised.
- A very beneficial byproduct of efforts to aid farmers will be the renewal of the land's biodiversity.

➤ **WATER MANAGEMENT**

- In the selected districts where agriculture is largely rainfall dependent, strategies to increase irrigation potential (particularly, through watershed development), should be devised so as to provide scope to increase value addition.

➤ **INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT**

- Another alternative is to encourage a judicious mix of organic and inorganic farming. This will also require help in terms of agricultural extension, quality control and marketing.

➤ **INCREASE IMPORT TARIFF**

- The farmer is exposed to price fluctuations, particularly in cotton, because of global price movements.
- Diversification of cropping pattern.

➤ **REGULATE PRIVATE MONEYLENDERS**

- The Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are already involved in facilitating self-help groups (SHGs). The NGOs and local SHGs should be encouraged to act as pressure groups to regulate private moneylenders.

➤ **INFORMATION BUREAU**

- There is a demand for credit, but the supply side of rural financial market is not responding due to some constraints. Enabling the formation of an information bureau will help formal institutions to judge credit worthiness of an individual.



➤ **IMPROVING SOCIO PSYCHOLOGICAL MINDSET**

- To create a climate of confidence and build up psychological strength farmers are being given courses on art of living.

**OTHER SUICIDE MITIGATION STRATEGIES**

➤ **PUBLIC HEALTH**

- The primary health centres (PHCs) should have trained staff and be equipped with necessary material to handle cases of poisoning.
- The personnel at the primary health centres should also be trained to identify, intervene (improve their listening skills) and refer patients with suicidal tendency for personalized care. Educate the community to identify depression and alcoholism and initiate treatment.

➤ **VOLUNTEER CRISIS CENTRES**

- Organizations operating in urban areas like The Samaritans may be encouraged and provided with support to open their centres in these regions.

➤ **HELP LINES**

- Introduce helplines and disseminate the numbers in the villages so that individuals in distress can turn to someone.

➤ **COMMUNITY GROUPS**

- Develop a protocol for starting survivor support groups. Form community/farmer groups in rural areas.

➤ **SPREADING AWARENESS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH**

There is much stigma about mental and pshychological health in Indian society. It is considered as shameful and the mentality is to hide it rather than going about curing it thus increasing the suicidal tendencies in the victim in the longer run. So, the organizations should take care that due awareness is spread about the pshychological issues.

✓ **RECOMMENDATIONS OF DR. M. S. SWAMINATHAN**

- Raise import duty on cotton.

- Restore advance bonus on cotton.
- Go for complete loan waiver.
- Establish Price Stabilization fund.
- Promote organic farming.
- Promote low value crops like Jowar.

## CONCLUSION

***“Behaving like an Ostrich is surely not going to eclipse hunger and death from the politico-economic radar screens.”***

- All these lacunae need to be effectively dealt with. The **problems with the system are deep rooted, and need to be resolved accordingly.**
- In stead of short-term sops, the **government needs to resort to long-term measures.**
- It **requires policy makers, agricultural scientists, academicians** and even the **civil society groups to first accept the fundamental flaws that force farmers to the gallows.**
- And then it **needs determination - both political and scientific** -- and there is no reason why farmers distress cannot be turned into a scourge of the past.
- Economic gimmicks like announcing free electricity and enhancing bank credit will otherwise continue to force farmers to take the fatal route by drinking pesticides.

***Most importantly, agriculture must return to a “farmers first” policy rather than its current bias towards corporations. It is only when this ideal is achieved that farmers will regain control of their own lives: financially and mentally.***

## What We Feel

There are **two aspects to suicide.**

1. Tendency to commit suicide.
  2. The ability to carry through with the suicide.
- Easy access to the means to commit suicide. Examples: pesticides.

- **Farmers have relatively poor mental health**, which gives them a slight tendency to commit suicide. But they have **easy access to the means of committing suicide** - hence the **overall suicide rate is high**, even though their mental health is not that poor.
- The causal effects of poor mental health in farmers are hard to pin down but are generally related to isolation, worries about money, lack of control over their lives, stress from bureaucracy etc.

### **PRODUCTIONIST APPROACH**

- One other interesting insight to farmer suicide relates to their ***productionist approach to life***. They are used to breeding animals, and also used to culling animals that are ill. So some researchers think that a farmer may have the attitude ***'I am old and useless so the best thing is to kill my self, just like I would do to an old and useless, sheep or dog.'***
- **Males have been playing the dominating and most productive role in the family.**

### **SOME IMPORTANT CORRELATES OF SUICIDE**

- **Most suicide victims have a diagnosable psychiatric illness/disorder** (Constant exposure to organophosphorous compound (insecticides /pesticides) can also lead to psychiatric illness/disorder).
- From those suffering from psychiatric illness, comparison between suicide attempters and non-attempters points out that the former suffer from a greater degree of depression and hopelessness.
- The specific genetic factors, independent of those identified with psychiatric disorders, is the reduced serotonergic input to the orbital prefrontal cortex, an area of the brain involved in behavior inhibition. Adverse parenting and physical or sexual abuse are identified as non-genetic familial risk factors.

On the last note, we just want to say that the farmers are just the beginning. Who knows the next in the queue are we to fall prey to the selfish desires of the MNCs and the developed countries and SEZ's. The need of the hour is a collective approach and avoiding the total rejection of old skills and values!!!

**\* \* \* Thanking You \* \* \***