



Farmers' Suicides in Telangana

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ABSTRACT

Telangana is an agrarian economy more than sixty percent of this region depending directly or indirectly upon agriculture and agriculture is often attributed as gambling with monsoons because of its almost exclusive dependency on precipitation from monsoons. The failure of monsoons can lead to a serious of droughts, lack of remunerative prices, and exploitation of the farmers by middle men, all of which have led to a series of suicides committed by farmers across Telangana districts. Agriculture in Telangana Region is in advanced stage of crisis, while the causes of this crises are complex and manifold, they are dominantly related to public policy. The economic policy of the past two decades at both Central Government and State Government levels has systematically reduced the protection afford to farmers and exposed them to market volatility and private profiteered without adequate regulation, reduced critical forms of public expenditure, destroyed important public institutes and did not adequately generate other non-agricultural economic activities. This research paper to be discussed Farmer Suicides in Telangana Region.

1. Introduction

“Suicide is a serious thing. And if you know anyone who is suicidal, you need to get them help. No One should be in pain.”

Geravd Way

Telangana is an agrarian economy more than sixty percent of this region depending directly or indirectly upon agriculture and agriculture is often attributed as gambling with monsoons because of its almost exclusive dependency on precipitation from monsoons. The failure of monsoons can lead to a serious of droughts, lack of remunerative prices, and exploitation of the farmers by middle men, all of which have led to a series of suicides committed by farmers across Telangana districts. Agriculture in Telangana Region is in advanced stage of crisis, while the causes of this crises are complex and manifold, they are dominantly related to public policy. The economic policy of the past two decades at both Central Government and State Government levels has systematically reduced the protection afford to farmers and exposed them to market volatility and private profiteered without adequate regulation, reduced critical forms of public expenditure, destroyed important public institutes and did not adequately generate other non-agricultural economic activities. While this is a generalized rural crisis, the burden has fallen disproportionately on small and marginal farmers, tenant farmers and rural labourers, particularly those in dryer tracts. The most extreme manifold station of the crisis is in the suicides by farmers.

2. Review of Literature

The phenomenon of suicides of farmers is not new to the state of Andhra Pradesh. The first phase of suicides in the state can be traced to the mid nineties (1986-87) in Prakasham district by cotton farmers. The second phase started in mid nineties (1997-98) beginning with Warangal district but spread to some other districts of north Telangana by cotton farmers and also too few districts in Rayalaseema especially the groundnut farmers of Ananthapur.

Thus the pattern of suicides occurred in mid-eighties the present ongoing suicides spanning the whole of the state and all commercial crops linked to global markets. Suicides are pre-dominantly prevalent in almost all the districts in Telangana and Rayalaseema. The cause of farmer's suicides is both economic and social. It is pertaining to note that the incidence of suicides is concentrated in the dry land areas despite the prevalence of uniform policy changes across all the regions of the state. Moreover, the incidence of suicides is more in post-reform period compared to the pre-reformed period. Charactersation of suicides starts with the changing structure of land holding, the

number and the area, cropping pattern, and the next important to land factor, the irrigation. It is with the help of these factors that we try to explain the pattern and incidence of suicides at the district level.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To study the socio-economic conditions of farmers in the sample mandal
2. To examine the pattern of suicides in the mandal area and explain the causative factors.

4. Methodology

The present study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data is collected of six villages were selected in Shayampet mandal of Warangal District. The variables chosen to explain the reasons for suicides in the mandal i) number of land holdings under the small and marginal categories ii) area irrigated with ground water sources iii) area under non-food crops. The secondary data which is collected from Journals, magazines, reports, news papers and other related sources.

5. Profile of Shayampet Mandal in Warangal District:

It is 25 km away from the Warangal district head-quarters. Number of household in the mandal was 11080 Population of the mandal. Majority of the population of this mandal depends on Agricultural sector. Stress in the agriculture sector some of the farmers have to forced committed suicides for indebtedness. the research identified that the farmers could not getting the expecting profit returns from the agriculture Sector and the agricultural credits are threatening to the suicidal farmers families.

6. Causes of Farmer Suicides

As of 2011, India had a large and diverse agricultural sector, accounting, on average, for about 16 per cent of GDP and 10 per cent of export earnings. India's arable land area of 159.7 million hectares (394.6 million acres) is the second largest in the world, after the United States. Its gross irrigated crop area of 82.6 million hectares (215.6 million acres) is the largest in the world. India is among the top three global producers of many crops, including wheat, rice, pulses, cotton, peanuts, fruits and vegetables.

India has shown a steady average nationwide annual increase in the kilograms produced per hectare for various agricultural items, over the last 70 years. These gains have come mainly from India's green revolution, improving road and power generation infrastructure, knowledge of gains and reforms. Despite these recent accomplishments, agriculture in India has the potential for major productivity and total output gains, because crop yields in India are still just 30 per cent to 60 per cent of the best sustainable crop yields achievable in the farms of developed as well as other developing countries.

Socio-economic causes of farmer suicides are, growing expenditure especially on inputs, low productivity, difficulties in markets and marketing hazards, natural hazards caused by drought, absence of proper crop planning, un satisfactory agricultural credit and accumulated burden of debt and also some of social causes are the drinking habit which atrophies the productivity of the former, extravagant expenditure on marriages and bad health and illness and inability to meet the necessary expenditure on medical and health services. It is observed that suicides are occurred in gross irrigated area underground water sources. Policy option could be how to improve the water sources for these villages. Majority of the weaker section people have committed suicides and Non-food crop growing farmers have committed suicides. The primary data was collected in the Shayampet mandal and it was a scientifically analyses the cause for farmer suicides in this area.

7. Farmers'indebtedness

Indebtedness of farmers is one of the most cruel and agonizing phenomena of the agrarian crisis in the country. According to National Sample Survey Organization Report (2011),49 percent of farmers are debt-trapped. The accumulation of farmers' debts is on account of substantial increase in the cost of production of agricultural commodities, without matching the price-rise at the same rate. It is estimated that every farmer incurs an expenditure of Rs 12,000 an acre annually on an average in crop production, while he gets an average annual income of only Rs 9,000 an acre from all the crops put together. Thus, he is incurring a loss of Rs 3,000 an acre in crop production. Further, the family expenditure of farmer on an annual average is Rs. 28,600/- His income from all sources is only Rs 19,600. It means that the expenditure is higher than the income by Rs 9,000 for every farm family on an annual average basis. This is why and how farmers have been trapped into debts perennially.

7.1 Agrarian Relations - Farmer's Suicides

Farmers' suicide is a serious issue in India. Farmers' suicide was first reported in 1987-88 from Prakasam and Guntur districts of Andhra Pradesh. About 100 cotton farmers committed suicide during that period due to crop loss on account of widespread attack of white. The deaths, however, remained unnoticed for long time and came to the fore only in 1995, when Warangal district of Telangana hit the headlines. Later the calamity of farmers' suicide spreads not only to other districts in Telangana but also to other States. Farmers' suicides are reported from across the country and the worst affected states are Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala and Punjab followed by Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh. In fact, farmers' suicides were reported from all the States and Union Territories for the period 1995-2012.

It is seen from Table that the total numbers of farmers' suicides were 2, 70,904 and the highest number of farmers suicides were reported from Maharashtra with 53,818, followed by Karnataka and Telangana with 28,891 and 33,326 respectively. Among the 2, 70,904 suicides reported, 42,082 are women farmers. They constituted one-fifth of the total farmers' suicides respectively.

Table 1 – Farmers' suicides in India 1995 to 2012

S.No	States	Farmers suicides in India
1	Maharashtra	53,818
2	Karnataka	33,326
3	Kerala	18,907
4	Punjab	1,363
5	Chattisgarh	15,340
6	Telangana	28,891
7	Andhra Pradesh	10,007

Source: National Crimes Record Bureau (NCRB) GOI, 2012

Although women work in the field are distressed by crop loss and debt burden, the suicide committed by a woman farmer is not considered as a farmers' suicide. Further, there was an increase in the number of farm labour committing suicide in Punjab and Madhya Pradesh. It was found that the number of tenant farmers committing suicide also increased. They received no legal protection and support from the State.

7.2 Farmers' Suicides in Telangana

The entire country was shocked and stunned in 1995, when the farmers' suicides were reported for the first time from Warangal district of Telangana. Although farmers growing different crops committed suicides, cotton farmers were more among them. It was also reported that a great majority of suicides occurred in small and marginal farm families. Suicides were more in the farm families belonging to backward classes of the society. Farmers' Organisations, civil society organisations, rights Organisations and intellectuals termed farmers' suicides as murders by the Government and demanded immediate action to help the victim families of the deceased and also to prevent farmers' suicides.

Telangana occupies the second position in farmers' suicides in the country next only to Maharashtra. According to NCRB report, farmers numbering 28, 891 committed suicides. This is from 1995 to 2012. The district wise details were also provided in the table from 1995 to 2012. It is noted from table that farmers' suicides are highest in Karimnagar district which is 4433 followed by Warangal, Nizamabad districts. The lowest numbers of suicides of farmers are reported from Ranga Reddy district. It may be noted, in the urban of areas of Warangal there were no suicides till 2009. The maximum number of suicides occurred in 2012 with an average of 2572. It is also noted that the spurt of suicides has been steadily increasing over the years.

Although the number of farmer's suicides is 28891, the Government recognised only 5686 as genuine suicide deaths in the State. This clearly shows that the government is bent upon denying the families of the farmers' suicides ex-gratia and other benefits. A continuous movement and struggle was being waged by farmers' organisations, civil societies, intellectuals and others.

Table 2 – Farmers’ suicides in Telangana 1995 to 2012

S. No	District	Total
1	Hyderabad City	55
2	Cyberabad	536
3	Ranga Reddy	1977
4	Mahaboobnagar	3922
5	Nalgond	1887
6	Nizamabad	2786
7	Medak	4474
8	Warangal	5483
9	Warangal (U)	223
10	Khammam	1181
11	Karimnagar	4433
12	Adilabad	1601
13	R.P. Secunderabad	321

Source: National Crimes Record Bureau (NCRB) GOI, 2012

7.3 Threatening Unemployment

Unemployment among farm families was rampant and its growth was phenomenal during the decade from 1993-94 to 2004. The unemployment rates among rural men increased from 5.6 percent to 9 percent, while the same for rural women was from 5.6 percent to 9.3 percent. These figures concealed the seriousness of unemployment problem. The problem was much deeper. In addition to unemployment, under employment and disguised unemployment were also prevalent in agriculture. These types of unemployment were causing distress to the farm families. Despite the stagnation of output, the work force in agriculture continues to grow. So the growth of value added per worker in agriculture had been reduced to near-half (0.29 percent per year during the decade from 1993-94 to 2003-04). Value added per worker in 2004-05 was lower than that of the value in 1999-2000.

7.4 Low Level of Farmers’ Income

Farmers’ income in real terms is on the lowest side. About 60 percent of the people dependent on agriculture are having a share of about 14 percent in the national income. And the 40 percent of the people engaged in manufacturing, service and other sectors have a share of 86 percent in national income. The National Commission on workers in unorganized sector estimated that about 77 percent of the workforce is living with less than Rs 20 per day per capita. Due to lack of unemploy in the villages, farmers, especially small and marginal, agricultural labourers are migrating to towns nearby and far-off places in search of work. Reports coming from different parts of the country and also from some of the foreign countries, such as the Gulf countries, reveal that migrant people are being paid low wages. They are also subjected to harassment and slavery. They are living in worst conditions in places they migrated. Back at home, old people and children are left at their homes back in villages and they are the worst sufferers, as no one takes care of them. Children are engaged in tending cattle and hence no schooling for them. Since agriculture has turned-out to be a losing proposition, 40 per cent of farmers expressed their desire to quit agriculture forth with if they could find some good alternative source of livelihood. This is a finding of the National Sample Survey Organization, Govt. of India. According to Dr Vandana Shiva (Internationally reputed environmentalist and social activist), “There is a genuine crisis in Indian agriculture. Subsidies and selective promotion of some sectors have benefited only a few rich farmers. Free trade or globalization is a two-way trend, while exports in India the years of liberalisation have made no great strides, in fact only declined, and the entry of multinationals in the seeds, chemical fertilisers and pesticide sectors has hit Indian farmers hard”. The foregone discussion brings out clearly the picture of agrarian crisis in India, which threatens the livelihoods of millions of farmers and people dependent on agriculture. Farmers’ suicide is a manifestation of deepening agrarian crisis in the country.

8. What need to be done?

It is need to intensification of agriculture through adoption of double and multiple cropping practices and food crops should be increased. There is a need to make available cheap credit to needy agricultural farmers particularly small and marginal farmers. Conscious efforts are needed for training of agricultural farmers and workers. Development of small scale and cottage industries and handicrafts should be developed this will creates alternative employment

opportunities, and these are needed to be developed on the right lines in rural areas. Farmers should be educated so that we can control suicides. There is need to bring about some attitudinal and instituting changes to prevent suicides. In addition to above some alternative employment programmes and opportunities should be provided to agricultural forms so that their income level may improve and suicides may control.

India has shown commitment to stay on the bandwagon of globalization. Having realized that globalization is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for high growth production, India has undertaken economic reforms, both internal and external. However, it must be ensured that these reforms are synchronized so that the pace of both reforms is set right in order to work hand in hand to promote agricultural productivity growth. Thus, training the farmers and educating them appropriately to change their mindset and reorienting them to take up new activities or adopt foreign technology is of utmost importance. In this context, it is necessary to involve non-governmental organizations in training and mobilizing the rural poor to face the challenge of liberalization. The study rightly comes to the conclusion that unless all these causes are simultaneously dealt with the situation can not improve. It requires large public investment in irrigation and rural infrastructure, rejuvenation of the co-operative credit, marketing processing system, strengthening of the agricultural extension service etc.

9. Conclusion

The development of agriculture and farmers is extremely important for the overall development of the nation. A agrarian crisis and farmers' suicides are crippling the nation's economy and also breaking the spine of the farmers. The unabatedly continuing spate of farmers' suicides should be stopped forthwith. The family members of the deceased should be taken care of. Agriculture should be protected and farmers saved in the interest of the people of the country as a whole. The suggestions based on this specific study will go a long way in providing solutions to the agrarian crisis and farmers' suicides, provided the Government implement them sincerely and faithfully.

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