



Socio-Political Problems in India with Special Reference to Farmers' Suicide

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Abstract

Farmers' suicide in India due to their pathetic conditions is a reality. In our country we need transformation induced by public policy, investments and technological change on the farmers' access to resources and income as well as the well-being of the farm households at the end of five decades of planned economic development. Shockingly, the net income is negative in AP, Haryana, Rajasthan and TamilNadu, i.e., the annual expenditure on cultivation is higher than the annual income from cultivation. It is clear from the states that the farmers are in severe distress and the income that they get from all sources is not even enough to meet the consumption expenditure of the households. This study analyses the socio-political problems in India with special reference to farmers' suicide.

Keywords: Socio-Political problems, Farmers' suicide, Farming, Low Net income

1. Introduction

Farming is a way of life. Pierre Noel Giraud, a professor at Ecole des Mines in Paris has come out with a brilliant thesis, trying to catch the last three decades in a historical sweep arguing that the 21st century will see a major process of adjustment between "settlers" (farmers) and nomads (say globally mobile software experts). Looking around, we find a great deal of confusion in present-day India, especially in the Hindi press, as regard as "peasant". Quite often it is used interchangeably with "farmers". Technically these are different concepts. While 'peasant' has been in existence ever since agriculture began, 'farmers' has come into being only with the advent of capitalism when profit became the main motive in agriculture work. In India Peasant for ages has been getting the services of Barber, Washer man, carpenter, Blacksmith, Potter, Priest etc.... On the basis of 'jajmani' that is giving a share in the produced fixed by traditional and custom.

2. The Conditions of Farmers in India

The government of India decided to conduct a mega study of the state of the Indian farmers. The study seeks to record the transformation induced by public policy, investments and technological change on the farmers' access to resources and income as well as the well-being of the farm households at the end of five decades of planned economic development. It also aims at the commencement of the third millennium. The millennium study on the farmers did not have a magic paper on changes in the work force in agriculture, but the issue is in some of the studies. The farmer is a worker and he begins with that. The Indian farmer has been one of the most enduring forms of economic organization. The word has known as Rajas, Sultans, Traders and colonialists came and went away. They know that as long as they did their work and did not bother the peasant they existed. Farmers had produced such crops that could not be wholly and partly chem. And had ready markets. They began growing poppy, indigo, cotton etc..... The quantum of demand and the prices for them came to depend on the international market. Thus up and down on them had for reaching impact on their life. Both poppy and indigo cultivation vanished because of the development of the international market.

3. Farmers' Suicide

Farmers have been committing suicide or eating rat meat. This is what we have been hearing from different parts of the country over the last five years. Why do farmers take this extreme step? Is income from cultivation is not enough to meet consumption and other expenditure? Are farmers heavily indebted due to lower income from cultivation and increased cost of cultivation? Or any farmers not able to cope with the new competitive environment after economic reforms? Answers to the above questions have finally come from the survey conducted by the Union Ministry of agriculture, which is known as the Situation Assessment Survey (SAS). For long time the economic and special

status of farmers' household was not studied using comprehensive survey covering different parts of the country. There for the economic status of the farmer household was not clearly known to many of us. For the first time as the part of the millennium study, the Ministry of Agriculture initiated a comprehensive social economic survey of the farmers covering educational status, levels of living, farming practices, possession of productive assets, awareness and access to modern technology resources availability, indebtedness and other relevant issues. The National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) carried out the SAS from farmers during 2003 (January –December) and they reported it in five different volumes namely •Indebtedness of farmers households •Access to modern technology for farming •Some aspects of farming •Consumption expenditure farmer households and •Income expenditure and productive assets of farmer households. The results of these surveys show the dreadful conditions of the farmer households, be it in income, expenditure or indebtedness of farming households. Though it brought out various aspects of the farmer household across the state of India. The NSSO published the report under the title "Income Expenditure and Productive Assets of Farmer Households Published In 2005". Let us discuss about the income of the farmer households. At all India level the average annual income of the farmer household was Rs. 25,380 which includes cultivation wages, farming of animals and non-farm business income. But the fact is that the annual income from cultivation comes to only about Rs. 11,628 per farmer households after excluding the other sources.

The highest average annual income was reported in Jammu and Kashmir followed by Punjab and Kerala. The lowest was reported in Orissa preceded by Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh.

Apart from providing the producing the source of income, the survey also provides the average annual expenditure on cultivation per farmer households. The average annual expenditure on cultivation comes to Rs.8791 per household at the all India level. As the highest expenditure on cultivation was reported in agriculturally developed states like Punjab followed by Haryana and AP. Understandably, the lowest expenditure was reported from Orissa.

4. Low Net Income

While deducting the average cultivation income (Rs.11,628) of the farmer households from the expenditure on cultivation (Rs.8791) the annual net income (i.e., farm business income) of a farmer household comes to only Rs.2837 at all India level. Shockingly, the net income is negative in AP, Haryana, Rajasthan and TamilNadu, i.e., the annual expenditure on cultivation is higher than the annual income from cultivation. Except the states like Assam, J&K, and Punjab the annual net income of the farmer households is less than Rs.4000 in all other states. In fact it is less than Rs.1000 per farmer households in Orissa, UP and West Bengal. The highest Annual Consumption Expenditure of the Farmer Household (ACEFH) was reported in Punjab followed by Kerala and Haryana. The lowest was in Orissa. It is shocking that except states like Assam, J&K, Karnataka and Punjab, the ACEFH has exceeded income are Rajasthan, Haryana, UP, MP, AP. It is clear from the states that the farmers are in severe distress and the income that they get from all sources is not even enough to meet the consumption expenditure of the households. Let us see now whether this inadequate income of the farmer households has any relationship with the indebtedness of the same households to across the states—one of the SAS reports is on indebtedness. Though we do not see any one to one correlation between indebtedness and income expenditure of the farmer households, there is fair amount of conflation between the two states across the states in India. The debt per farmer household is very high in all the states except Assam and J&K. Farmers from AP, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, MP, Punjab, Rajasthan, TamilNadu and UP are heavily indebted possibly because the income of the households is not even enough to meet the consumption expenditure.

Clearly note produces adequate answers to the questions as why farmers commit suicide or eat rat meat? One of the SAS reports also indicates that given a choice 40% of the farmers would let quit agriculture and take up some other career. All these clearly suggest that the farmers are in great distress.

The situation can aggravate further, if adequate measures are not taken immediately to improve the income level of the farmer households. Potentially, this can harm the growth of the agriculture and food security of the country as well. The farmers are not getting enough remuneration for their produce. Therefore government needs to regulate both input and output markets in an effective manner so as to raise the income levels of the farmer households. It is reported from various parts of the country that the use of spurious inputs (seeds, fertilisers and pesticides) in cultivation is one of the major reasons for crop failure and low output. Another reason for the low income of the farmer households could be the dominant role played by the middleman in the market. Studies show that farmers were not able to get even 40% of the money that the consumer pays for various agriculture commodities in the market. The role of middleman can be controlled considerably by involving producers in the market activities. The weekly periodic markets under direct control of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) should be upgraded and strengthened.

As underlined in the National Agriculture Policy, 2000, producers market in the lines of "ryatu bazaars" should be encouraged throughout the country so as to cut down the role of middlemen and improve the income of farmers. The SAS report says that still over 42% of rural credit supply comes from the non-institutional source like money lenders, where the rate of interest is not only exorbitant but the terms and conditions of the loans are often exploitative. The policy of doubling credit to the agricultural sector at a reasonable rate of interest should be pursued through programs such as credit widening and credit deepening. So as to reduce the indebtedness of farmer households. It is hoped that at least seeing the results of the situation assessment survey policy-makers will act to swiftly to improve the pathetic condition of India's farmers.

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