The Problem of Indian Agriculture with Special Reference to Farmer Suicide Case:

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“India lives in its village I would say that if the village perishes India will perish too. India will be no more India.” quote by Mahatma Gandhi still has its value in today’s world of privatization & globalization. Agriculture played important role in saving India’s rich heritage and culture since the early Vedic time. The Concept of Yagya was deeply related to the monsoon and agriculture. Jai Jawan Jai Kisan (Hail the Soldier, Hail the Farmer) was a slogan given Lal Bahadur Shastri in 1965 at a public gathering at Ramlila Maidan to enthuse the soldiers to defend India and simultaneously cheering farmers to do their best in the field of agriculture. Today, India ranks second worldwide in farm output. Agriculture and allied sectors like forestry and fisheries accounted for 13.7% of the GDP in 2013, about 50% of the total workforce. Agriculture is demographically the broadest economic sector and plays a significant role in the overall socio-economic fabric of India.

India exported $39 billion worth of agricultural products in 2013, making it the seventh largest agricultural exporter worldwide, and the sixth largest net exporter. Most of its agriculture exports serve the developing and least developed nations of the world.

Problems of Indian Agriculture:

Golait, in a Reserve Bank of India paper, acknowledged the positive role of crop diversification initiative announced in government's response to reports of farmer suicides. Golait added, "Indian agriculture still suffers from:

1. Poor productivity
2. Falling water levels
3. Expensive credit
4. A distorted market
5. Many middlemen and intermediaries who increase cost but do not add much value
6. Laws that stifle private investment
7. Controlled prices
8. Poor infrastructure and
9. Inappropriate research.

Thus the approach with mere emphasis on credit in isolation from the above factors will not help agriculture”.

The farming techniques we currently use such as use of tractor and other machines are foreign country oriented where people have larger land where as in India, more than 80% of Farmers have land less the 5 Acre which makes farming unaffordable. The use of harmful Pesticide and Insecticides also make farming an unhealthy profession. The Cancer train which travel from Punjab to Rajasthan is the symptomatic proof of it. The Inflation is one of the serious issues in the country, to curb the rate of food products someone in the food production chain (Farmer, distributor, retailer etc) has to face the blow, which is directly or indirectly faced by our farmer.

Government policies so far are centralized policies that mean a single policy for all the farmers in the nation. Each and every farmer has his own independent infrastructural problem which is needed to be solved individually. Government’s main focus on irrigation is appreciable but the lack of drainage system leads to over flow of water during Monsoon season. The minimum support prices (MSPs), announced by various State governments, have traditionally been the instrument used to fight declining prices; they have scarcely been effective at the farm level. Moreover the impact of climate change is the major cause for crop failure.

**Farmer Suicide cases in India:**

National Crime Records Bureau has been collecting and publishing suicide statistics for the country since the 1950s, as Annual Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India reports. It started separately collecting and publishing farmer’s suicide statistics from 1995.

Out of 135,445 people committed suicide in India in 2012, 13,754 were farmers (11.2%). Of these, 5 out of 29 states accounted for 10,486 farmer’s suicides (76%) – Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Kerala. The state of Maharashtra, with 3,786 farmers' suicides, accounted for about a quarter of the all India's farmer suicides total (13,754). Farmer suicides rates in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh – two large states of India by size and population –
have been about 10 times lower than Maharashtra, Kerala and Pondicherry. In 2012, there were 745 farmer suicides in Uttar Pradesh, a state with an estimated population of 205.43 million.

With 2,568 farmers’ suicides during 2014, Maharashtra recorded the highest number in the country again, though activists pointed out that the number was far higher. Recently 443 farmers committed suicide in Chhattisgarh during 2014, making it the State with the fourth highest number after Maharashtra, Telangana and Madhya Pradesh.

The Government of Maharashtra, concerned about the highest total number of farmer suicides among its rural population, commissioned its own study into reasons. At its behest, Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research in Mumbai did field research and found the top causes of farmer’s suicides to be: debt, low income and crop failure, family issues such as illness and inability to pay celebration expenses for daughter's marriage, lack of secondary income occupations and lack of value-added opportunities.

In 2004, in response to a request from the All India Biodynamic and Organic Farming Association, the Mumbai High Court requested the Tata Institute to produce a report on farmer suicides in Maharashtra, and the institute submitted its report in March 2005. The survey cited "government apathy, the absence of a safety net for farmers, and lack of access to information related to agriculture as the chief causes for the desperate condition of farmers in the state."

Reasons behind the suicides:

Activists and scholars have offered a number of conflicting reasons for farmer suicides, such as monsoon failure, high debt burdens, genetically modified crops, government policies, public mental health, personal issues and family problems.

Out of total number or percentage, Habits like drinking, gambling, etc. constituted 20.35% & Failure of crops constituted 16.81%, followed by other reasons like chit fund constituted 15.04%, Family problems with spouse others constituted 13.27%, Chronic illness has 9.73 %, Marriage of daughters has 5.31%, Political affiliation has 4.42%, Property disputes has 2.65, Debt burden has 2.65%, Price crash has 2.65%, Borrowing too much (e.g. for house construction) has 2.65%, Losses in non-farm activities constituted 1.77% and Failure of bore well constituted 0.88%.
As much as 80% of India's farmland relies on flooding during monsoon season, so inadequate rainfall can cause droughts, making crop failure more common. In regions that have experienced droughts, crop yields have declined, and food for cattle has become scarcer. Agricultural regions that have been affected by droughts have subsequently seen their suicide rates increase.

A study conducted in 2014 found that there are three specific characteristics associated with high risk farmers:

- Those that grow cash crops such as coffee and cotton.
- Those with ‘marginal’ farms of less than one hectare and
- Those with debts of 300 Rupees or more.

The study also found that the Indian states in which these three characteristics are most common had the highest suicide rates and also accounted for "almost 75% of the variability in state-level suicides."

According to National Sample Survey Office’s new survey the average farm household makes Rs 6,426 per month income from mixed jobs. Farmers often talk about the high – and rising – costs of inputs, including water, seeds and pesticides. Input costs work out to nearly 30 per cent of the total output an average farm household gets from a crop. Among inputs, fertilizers are the most expensive, followed by labor. Unsurprisingly, what this translates into is debt. Over half of all agricultural households are indebted.

**Government Initiative:**

KrishakAyog (National Farmer Commission) visited all suicide prone farming regions of India, then in 2006 published three reports with its recommendations. Subsequently Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Vidarbha in 2006 and promised a package of ₹11,000 Crore. The families of farmers who had committed suicide were also offered an ex gratia grant of ₹1,00,000 by the government, though this amount was changed several times.

In 2006, the Government of India identified 31 districts in the four states of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Kerala with high relative incidence of farmer’s suicides. A special rehabilitation package was launched to mitigate the distress of these farmers. The package
provided debt relief to farmers, improved supply of institutional credit, improved irrigation facilities, employed experts and social service personnel to provide farming support services, and introduced subsidiary income opportunities through horticulture, livestock, dairying and fisheries. The Government of India also announced ex-gratia cash assistance from Prime Ministers National Relief Fund to the farmers. Additionally, among other things, the Government of India announced.

- In the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, all farmer families in six affected districts of Maharashtra were given a cash sum of ₹50 lakhs each, to help pay off the debt principal.
- ₹7.12 billion (US$110 million) in interest owed, as of 30 June 2006, was waived.
- Special teams comprising NABARD and banks were deputed to ensure fresh credit starts flowing to all farmers.
- An allocation of ₹2177 crore was made to improve the irrigation infrastructure.

The Government of India next implemented the Agricultural debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme in 2008 to benefit over 36 million farmers at a cost of ₹65300 crore. This spending was aimed at writing of part of loan principal as well as the interest owed by the farmers. Direct agricultural loan by stressed farmers under so-called Kisan Credit Card were also to be covered under this Scheme.

In 2013, the Government of India launched a Special Livestock Sector and Fisheries Package for farmers suicide-prone regions of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala. The package was aimed to diversify income sources of farmers. The total welfare package consisted of ₹912 million (US$14 million)

The State government of Maharashtra, one of the most farmer suicide affected states, passed the Money Lending (Regulation) Act, 2008 to regulate all private money lending to farmers. The bill set maximum legally allowed interest rates on any loans to farmers, setting it to be slightly above the money lending rate by Reserve Bank of India, and it also covered pending loans.

The State Government of Maharashtra made it illegal, in 2010, for non-licensed moneylenders from seeking loan repayment. The State Government also announced that it will from Village Farmer Self Help Groups, that will disburse government financed loans,a low rate Crop Insurance program whose premium will be paid 50% by farmer and 50% by government, launch
of alternate income opportunities such as poultry, dairy and sericulture for farmers in high suicide prone districts.

The government further announced that it will finance a marriage fund under its SamudaikLagna with ₹1 crore per year per district, for community marriage celebrations, a cause of suicides among farmers as identified by its own study.

Prospective:

1. Gujarat government introduced the Farm Income Insurance Scheme (FIIS) to reform agricultural insurance and prevent farm-level distress. It is an area-based approach that covers a wide variety of food, oilseed and horticulture crops. The scheme’s main thrust is that it tries to ensure guaranteed income by insuring the difference between the farmer’s predicted income and the actual income. It calculates the predicted income by using the product of unit area yields and prices at the district level. Any decrease in the predicted income due to yield fluctuations or market fluctuations is insured under the scheme. By only considering yield losses from natural perils, it also ensures that farmers are incentivized to produce more, and that inefficiency in farming is not rewarded. However, low literacy, the absence of infrastructure to measure data accurately at the farm level, and the limited penetration of formal financial credit have made the scheme inefficient, leading to reduced trust among farmers. The concerns over reliable yield and price data in the earlier attempts can be largely eradicated using present technologies. The maturing of satellite-based yield monitoring systems, integrating agricultural markets in India, and ensuring the efficiency of commodity exchanges will remove most of the concerns that arise over the large amounts of data needed for such a revolutionary scheme.

2. Making decentralized policy to deal with each and every problem of individual farmer.

3. There should be a collaboration with Civil Society and Non-profit organization who are working in the field of Agriculture

4. Promote Agricultural Courses and agricultural institute which will eventually make Farming a prestigious, effortless, and profitable profession.
5. The Farmer is the only man in the country who buys everything in retail and sells everything in wholesale. High Subsidies has to be given to the farmer on seeds water and other essential farming tools.

6. The Farmers have to combine their land to make it in huge scale which will bring down the Input cost further. This concept of Farming has to be promoted.

7. There shouldn’t be a mediator between the farmer and the buyer, to eradicate the middle man the Concept of KisanMandi has to be promoted.

8. Weather is one of the major concerns for the farmer. Every village and taluka should be connected with internet to ensure weather forecast in better and innovative way.

9. Focus should be on making model villages initially, which should have basic need like education, infrastructure, electricity and hospital. With 356 million 10-24 year-olds, India has the world's largest youth population. Using this powerful mind in making model villages will project India is Food Producer country.

**Conclusion:**

The government's response and relief packages have generally been ineffective, misdirected and flawed. It has focused on credit and loan, rather than income, productivity and farmer prosperity. Assistance in paying off outstanding principal and interest helps the money lenders, but has failed to create reliable and good sources of income for the farmer going forward. The usurious moneylenders continue to offer loans at interest rates between 24 to 50 percent, while income generating potential of the land the farmer works on has remained low and subject to weather conditions. The government has failed to understand that debt relief just postpones the problem and a more lasting answer to farmer distress can only come from reliable income sources, higher crop yields per hectare, irrigation and other infrastructure security.

Benjamin Franklin once said, "There seem to be but three ways for a nation to acquire wealth. The first is by war, as the Romans did, in plundering their conquered neighbours. This is robbery. The second by commerce, which is generally cheating. The third by agriculture, the only honest way, wherein man receives a real increase of the seed thrown into the ground, in a
kind of continual miracle, wrought by the hand of God in his favour, as a reward for his innocent
life and his virtuous industry.

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