

Farmers' Suicide In Vidarbha Region Of Maharashtra State: A Geo-Political View

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Abstract:

The present research carried out with an exploratory design of social research on farmer's suicide of Vidarbha region in Maharashtra. These districts were Nagpur, Amravati, Yavatmal, Washim, Buldana, Wardha, and Akola. It reveals the economic consequences of suicides are fatal for the family of the incumbent and includes loss of income, asset depletion and deterioration of human capital among others due to not support of rainfall, lack of irrigation facilities, lack of capital, government policies, bank load and debt load, dowry system, electricity, crop market value people took wrong decision so. Suicidal behaviour is a major problem across the Vidarbha region. In Vidarbha (basically a low rainfall area), the major crop is cotton, jowar (Barley), and pulses and people rely more on dry farming. Irrigated farming is insignificant and seen only in very few pockets where major rivers are Wainganga, Wardha, Kanhan, Pravara provide water for the whole year. More than 12,000 farmers have been committed suicide in Maharashtra between 2015 and 2018. Out of the total 12,021 farmer suicides during the three-year period, 6,888 cases were found to be eligible for government aid after scrutiny by district-level committees. 610 farmers have committed suicide out of which 192 cases are eligible for financial assistance.

Keyword: Vidarbha Region, Geo-Political View

Introduction:

Vidarbha is the north-eastern region of the Indian state of Maharashtra, comprising Nagpur Division and Amravati Division. Amravati divisions. Occupies 31.6% of the total area and holds 21.3% of the total population of Maharashtra (Kudnar, N. S., 2015a,b,c, National Crime Records Bureau, 1999). It is situated on the border of Madhya Pradesh, between Chhattisgarh & Maharashtra and Khandesh region. (Behere Prakash, 2008, Desai P. T. 2006). The largest city in Vidarbha is Nagpur followed by Amravati. A majority of Vidarbhis speak Varhadi and Zadi dialects of Marathi. In Vidarbha basically a low rainfall area the major crop is cotton, jowar (Barley), and pulses and people rely more on dry farming. Irrigated farming is insignificant and seen only in very few pockets where major rivers provide water for the whole year. With the cumulative effect of these reasons coupled with environmental antagonism and exploitation of the farmers in all sectors made them pessimistic toward life resulting into development of suicidal tendency in them (Srinagesh Mannekote Thippaiah et al, 2019).

Objectives:

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To look into the trends and patterns of the recent suicide scenario in Maharashtra.

- To study the Geo-political situation of Vidarbha Region.
- To identify and examine other socio-economic factors leading to suicidal death by the deceased farmers.
- To suggest policy measures.

Geographic Situation of Vidarbha:

Vidarbha lies on the northern part of the Deccan Plateau. Unlike the Western Ghats, there are no major hilly areas. The Satpura Range lies to the north of Vidarbha region in Madhya Pradesh. The Melghat area of Amravati district is on the southern offshoot of the Satpura Range. Large basaltic rock formations exist throughout Vidarbha, (Kudnar, N.S. & Rajasekhar, M, 2019) part of the 66-million-year-old volcanic Deccan Traps. Bhandara and Gondia district are entirely occupied by metamorphic rock and alluvium, making their geology unique in Maharashtra. Buldhana has the Lonar crater created by impact of a meteorite or comet. The eastern districts of Gondia, Bhandara, Gadchiroli and Nagpur. Wainganga River, Kanhar River, Sur River, Pench River, Nag River (Kudnar, N. S., 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019) is the river in Vidarbha; along with its major tributaries, the Wardha, Kanhan, and Painganga, its waters flow south into the Godavari River. In the north, small rivers Khapra, Sipna, Gadga, Dolar and Purna, Ambi, Bhagh, Gadhavi, Khobragadi, Sur, Chulbandh, are tributaries flowing in this region (Bisen D.K and Kudnar N.S., 2013a, b, c).

Agriculture

The main cash crops of the region are cotton, oranges and soya beans. Nagpur is the largest orange-growing district. Traditional crops are sorghum (Jowar), pearl millet (Bajra) and rice. Yavatmal is the largest cotton-growing district. Gondiya is the largest rice-growing district. Gondiya is known as rice city in Vidarbha. Vidarbha has recently become infamous for a large number of farmer suicides.

Representation in Lok Sabha

Vidarbha is represented at national level by ten Lok Sabha seats. Nagpur district which has the highest population density is split into two Lok Sabha seats, Nagpur and Ramtek, while districts with lower population density like Chimur and Gadchiroli are clubbed together. Ramtek and Amravati seats are reserved for Scheduled Caste candidates only while Gadchiroli-Chimur is reserved for Scheduled Tribes.

Representation in Vidhan Sabha

Vidarbha is represented at state level by 62 Vidhan Sabha seats. Nagpur boasts the densest concentration of assembly seats with the city divided into six areas. Certain seats are reserved for Scheduled Tribe candidates only, while others are open to all. As part of the Nagpur Pact the winter session of Maharashtra assembly is held at Nagpur Vidhan Bhavan.

Farmers' suicides in Maharashtra

Maharashtra is a developed state of India, although it could not avoid tendency of citizens towards suicide. It is indeed, Maharashtra is also most distressed state of India. The

number of farmers" committed suicide during 1995-2014 periods had 51837, which contributes 22.5 percent of general suicide of Maharashtra. The number of farmers" suicide has increased rapidly than any other states in Maharashtra. Considering base year 1995, farm suicides have net increased by 284 percent during first decade (1995-2004) and 270 percent during second decade (2005-2014). Therefore, we can conclude that indices of farmers suicide has declined merely during second decade compared to first decade in Maharashtra. It is found that growth rate of farmer"s suicide is not same in all states of India. Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra have been found relatively large number of farmers" suicide (see table I, II,III). These five states accounts average almost 65 percent farmers" suicides of India during 1995-2014, but it contributes only 30 percent population share of nation. More than 12,000 farmers have committed suicide in Maharashtra between 2015 and 2018, the Legislative Assembly was informed on Friday. Out of the total 12,021 farmer suicides during the three-year period, 6,888 cases were found to be eligible for government aid after scrutiny by district-level committees, Relief and Rehabilitation Minister SubhashDeshmukh told the House in a written reply. So far, family members of 6,845 farmers have been given financial assistance of Rs 1 lakh each, he said. Between January and March 2019, 610 farmers have committed suicide out of which 192 cases were eligible for financial assistance, the minister said. Over 15,000 farmers have committed suicide in Maharashtra between 2013 and 2018, an RTI data has revealed. Out of the total 15,356 farmer suicides during the six-year period, 396 cases were reported between 1 January 2019 to 28 February 2019. So far, the government has provided ex-gratia to 102 families out of 396 suicide cases, according to RTI activist Shakeel Ahmed (National Crime Records Bureau,1999).

Table I: Absolute number and relative share of farmers' suicide in major states of India

Year	Andhra Pradesh	Karnataka	Kerala	Madhya Pradesh	Maharashtra	% of five States	All India
1995	1196 (11.15)	2490 (23.2)	1299 (12.1)	1239 (11.6)	1083 (10.1)	68.2	10720
2000	1525 (9.3)	2630 (16.1)	1295 (7.9)	2660 (16.3)	3022 (18.5)	68.2	16603
2005	2490 (14.5)	1883 (11.0)	1118 (6.5)	1248 (7.3)	3926 (22.9)	62.25	17131
2010	2525 (15.8)	2585 (16.2)	895(5.6)	1237 (7.7)	3141 (19.7)	65.00	15964
2014	632 (5.1)	768 (6.2)	807 (6.5)	1198 (9.7)	4004 (32.4)	59.9	12360
Total	36838 (12.5)	39148 (13.3)	21572 (7.3)	29699 (10.06)	62773 (21.3)	64.4	294966

Table II: Number of farmers' suicides in Maharashtra 1995-2014

Year	All Maharashtra			
	Male Farmers Suicide	Female Farmers Suicide	Total Farmers Suicide	Male Female Farmers Suicide
1995	978 (100)	105 (100)	1083 (100)	90.3
1996	NA	NA	NA	
1997	1600 (163.6)	317 (301.9)	1917 (177)	83.5
1998	1938 (198.1)	471 (448.6)	2409 (222)	80.4
1999	2050 (209.6)	373 (355.2)	2423 (224)	84.6
2000	2492 (254.8)	530 (504.8)	3022 (279)	82.5
2001	2945 (301.1)	591 (562.8)	3536 (326)	83.3
2002	3155 (322.6)	540 (514.3)	3695 (341)	85.4
2003	3381 (345.7)	455 (433.3)	3836 (354)	88.1
2004	3799 (388.4)	348 (331.4)	4147 (384)	91.6
2005	3638 (372)	288 (274.3)	3926 (362)	92.7
2006	4111 (420.3)	342 (325.7)	4453 (411)	92.3
2007	3968 (405.7)	270 (257.1)	4238 (391)	93.6
2008	3573 (365.3)	229 (218.1)	3802 (351)	94.0
2009	2692 (275.3)	180 (171.4)	2872 (265)	93.7
2010	2947 (301.3)	194 (184.8)	3141 (290)	93.8
2011	3093 (316.3)	244 (232.4)	3337 (308)	92.7
2012	3483 (356.1)	303 (288.6)	3786 (349)	92.0
2013	3020 (308.8)	126 (120)	3146 (290)	96.0
2014	3726 (381)	278 (264.8)	4004 (370)	93.0
Total	56589	6184	62773	89.1

Table III: Number of farmers' suicides and liable for government grants in Maharashtra

Year	Number of Farmers Suicide	Indices of farmers suicide	Number of liable for govern. Grant	Percent of liable
2001	59	100	29	49.15
2002	123	208	78	63.4
2003	175	296	102	58.30
2004	632	1071	343	54.3
2005	595	1008	364	61.2
2006	2377	4028	1035	43.5
2007	2069	3506	834	40.3

2009	1608	2725	585	36.4
2010	1739	2947	580	33.4
2011	1262	2138	366	29.0
Total	12591	-	5075	40.30

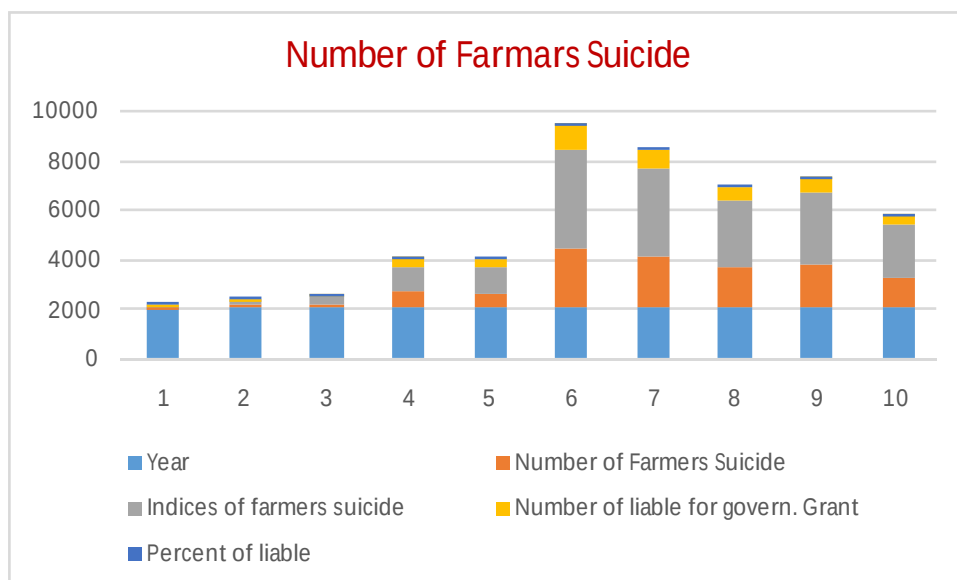


Fig. No I. Number of farmers' suicides and liable for government grants in Maharashtra

The number of farmers" who committed suicide in various districts is not same in Maharashtra. Despite of Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudarg districts of Konkan region, all other districts of Maharashtra are facing issue of farmers" suicide. A number of farmers" had committed suicides in Yawatmal district contributing 18.2 percent of total farmers, committed suicide overall Maharashtra, followed by Amravati district 14.3 percent, Buldhana 9.6 percent and Akola district 8.6 in Maharashtra show in Fig I (BeherePrakash, 2008).

Table IV: Absolute and relative number of farmers' suicides in various divisions of Maharashtra.

Division	Number of Farmers Suicide	Percent to Total Number	Liable for grant	Percent of liable for grant to total suicides
Konkan	12	0.1	12	100
Pune Division	585	4.6	321	54.9
Nasik	1040	8.3	598	57.5
Aurangabad	1713	13.6	866	50.55
Nagpur	1967	15.6	796	40.5
Amravati	7274	57.8	2469	33.9
Maharashtra	12591	100	5062	40.2

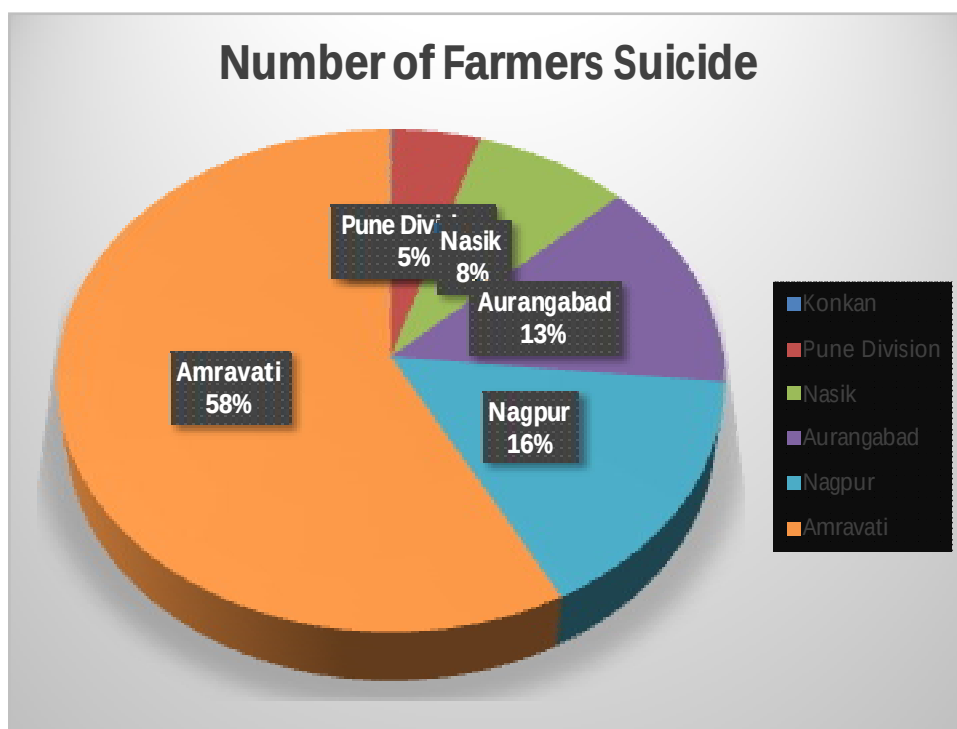


Fig. No. II: Absolute and relative number of farmers' suicides in various divisions of Maharashtra.

It is found that the percentage of eligible suicide victim for immediate relief scheme of state government had in Konkan region (9100 percent), followed by Nasik division 57.5 percent, Pune 55 percent, Aurangabad 50.5 percent, Nagpur 40 percent and lowest 34 percent in Amravati division (Fig. I, II, III). (BeherePrakash, 2008).

Table V: Absolute and relative number of farmers' suicides in districts of Vidarabha.

District	Farmers suicide	
	Number	Percentage
Nagpur	403	3.2
Wardha	789	6.3
Chandrapur	323	2.6
Gadchiroli	59	0.5
Bhandara	280	2.2
Gondia	113	0.9
Amravati	1798	14.3
Akola	1079	8.6
Buldhana	1212	9.6
Yawatmal	2289	18.2
Washim	896	7.1
Vidarabha	9241	840.099



Fig No. III: Absolute and relative number of farmers' suicides in districts of Vidarbha.

Crop Failure

An increasing disaster has adversely affected the agriculture sector in India. Uneven and uncertain, Lakh of irrigation facilities, watershed area relief, Wainganga River Catchment, drainage rainfall (Kudnar N. S. M. Rajasekhar, 2019) has been a long history and windfall, ill timed rainfall has increased uncertainty of agriculture sector. Variation in any year his within 10 per cent of normal rainfall, the economy not greatly affected. But when the variation is more than 10 per cent, the normal life of the people was severely affected. It further represents that higher the deficiency in rainfall higher the effect of drought. Moreover, excess rainfall also affects the agriculture sector in kharif crop season. The frequency of deficient rainfall has increased during recent period. The deficiency of rainfall had 7 times during the 20 year period of 1991-2010. The rainfall deficiency from normal had average 12 percent during above 7 years. It means that every 3 years, one year has to face deficient rainfall in India. Maharashtra could not be an exception to the above condition. During 2005, excess rainfall has adversely affected agriculture sector in Maharashtra and number of farmers' committed suicide have been increased from 1008 in 2005 to 2377 in 2006, showing 4 times rise in number of suicides (Kudnar N. S. 2017, BeherePrakash, 2008).

According to experts, farmers commit suicide mainly due to crop failure, damaged crops owing to inclement weather lack of water for irrigation (Kudnar N. S., 2017, 2019), drought issues and poor market prices for their produce. Like previous years, this year too several parts of Maharashtra have been facing severe drought-like conditions. Earlier in June, the Maharashtra government had released a data of farmer suicides which stated that 12,021 allegedly committed suicide between 2015 and 2018.

Government Policies of Farmer Suicides

More than half of these cases, 691 farm suicides, were reported from the Vidarbha region of the state which had recently witnessed the pesticide-related fatalities among the farming community. The total number of farm suicides in the ten-month span between January and October this year marked only a 7% dip than 2016. 2,604 cases had been reported in the initial ten months of 2016, while in the same time period, 2017 witnessed 2,414 cases of farm suicides. However, Maharashtra governments' policies, loan waiver schemes, do not do much for the distressed farmers. The government had introduced a revised loan waiver scheme in June this year as the result of farmers' movements and struggles. Restructuring the previous loan waiver package of 2007-08, the government introduced a loan waiver scheme named as **'Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Krishi Sanman Yojana' (CSMKSY)**. Under the CSMKSY scheme, "farmers who have availed crop loan or term loan after April 1, 2009, and have defaulted on such loans as on June 30, 2016, on certain criteria would be given loan waiver of a maximum of Rs. 1.50 lakhs. If the amount of default is more than Rs. 1.50 lakhs, the said farmer would be required to deposit the entire beneficiary share of such default amount in the bank and only then the farmer will receive Rs. 1.50 lakhs from the Govt." Consider the case of cotton growing Amravati division where 907 farmer suicides were seen between January and September, compared to the 892 in 2016. As per the data, 6,104 farmers from Yuvatmal Panchayat in Yuvatmal district which comes under Amravati division had applied for the loan waiver under the CSMKSY scheme. But only 35 farmers have benefitted from the scheme so far. Yuvatmal district is one of the most vulnerable districts in country's suicide map. "The crash in soybean prices and the slow pace of government procurement is another looming crisis. This Kharif season, 31 lakh tons of soybean has been produced, but the government plans to procure very little of this", he added.

Conclusion:

The reasons for such a pathetic state of farmers include below average rainfall, heavy load-shedding, lack of small irrigation projects, poverty, pressure of private moneylenders and banks, ignorance of ancillary occupations for raising income, employment problem of the farmers' children, decreasing interest of the young generation in farming, rapid urbanization, apathy and lack of political willpower toward welfare and development of the region, etc. Cumulative effect of all these is evident on the psyche of the people of Vidarbha in general and farmers in particular. Farmers are hence prompted to turn to local moneylenders (sahukars) who charged them a much higher rate of interest. In fact moneylenders proved to

be the most common and easy source of loans for the farmer (28.4%) followed by loans procured from relatives (22.93%) while only 3.94% turned to land development banks.

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