

# **Farmers' Suicide in India: Agrarian Crisis, Path of Development and Politics in Karnataka**

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### ***Abstract***

*This paper examines the causes of farmers' suicide in Karnataka from different perspectives and analyses how the capitalist path of development through globalisation is the major factor responsible for the sharpening agrarian crisis in India, especially in the southern states of the country. The paper takes the position that beginning of agrarian crisis needs to be located during the decade of 1980s when New Farmers' Movement in different parts of India began to raise large number of issues . Market Oriented Autonomous Farmers(MOAF) selected suicide to retain their identity as distinct social category at a time when agrarian crisis has become too sharp. Meanwhile how the state tried to play different kinds of politics vis-à-vis the suicide. Thus, this paper dwells on the condition of the Indian peasantry in a liberal world of economic development. Gender, age and caste factors are also taken into consideration for the analysis of farmers' suicide.*

For the past couple of years, farmers' suicide has become a major issue in the academic narratives, policy analysis and in the every day discourses. The issue came at a time when the debate on the agrarian economy was shifting from the debate on the mode of production of the 1960s (Gough, 1980: 337-45; Thorner, 1982: 64-70) to the growing crisis of the economy in the 1980s and to the farmers' suicide in recent years. However the beginning of agrarian crisis requires to be located much earlier to the beginning of suicide, which goes back to the 1980s when the terms of trade were going against agriculture (Balagopal, 1988: 19-23; Bose, 1981: 58-62; Rudra, 1982), urban-biased policies (Lipton, 1980) were dominating the state policies, and farming was becoming a losing proposition. Nonetheless, the crisis of agrarian economy during the decade of 1980s was expressed in different forms: one of the major forms was to oppose the state policies through long marches, rallies, fast unto death, *chakka jam*, prohibiting the entry of bureaucrats etc. (Assadi, 1994; Assadi, 1997). It was largely led by the farmers' movements in different parts of India such as *Shetkari Sangathana* in Maharashtra, *Vyavasayigal Sangam* in Tamil Nadu, and *Rajya Raitha Sangh* in Karnataka. Nowhere their protests were translated into a form of suicide, because the organisational form of farmers' struggle or movement provided them a sense of identity and belongingness. It also brought newer areas of discourses to the farmers to deal with. In the process, the opposition was translated into vibrant discourses on major issues such as development paradigm that the Indian state was following, the politics of denial, the third world development, the urban-biased policies, marginalisation of peasantry/farmers etc. However, a shift in the discourse came during the time when Indian state was succumbing to the pressure of global capital. Here too, no farmer's movement advocated suicide as a form of tactics to oppose or confront the global capital. In fact, during the current decade, the farmer's movement was also losing its tempo. Thus, it is in the midst of the failure or the declining tempo of the farmers' movement that one can locate the suicide becoming a fact (Assadi, 2004). Interestingly during the decade of globalisation, no activist from the Indian side committed suicide protesting against globalisation. Lee Kyung-Hae, a South Korean farmer and lawmaker in Cancun who was holding a banner that read, "WTO Kills Farmers", committed the first suicide

against Globalisation. Lee was the former president of the Korean National Future Farmer's and Fisherman's Association, an agricultural lobbying group.

Thus, one could discern that farmers' suicide was the result of deep or sharpening agrarian crisis emanating from the capitalist development in agriculture, although there are five important debates, which attempt to look at the issue of suicide differently.

### **Debates on Suicide**

First debate tries to locate the suicide as part of multiple crises. The crises are ecological, economic, and social, each inter-linked with the other. The ecological crisis is the result of intense use of hybrid seeds, chemical fertilisers and pesticides, causing the erosion of soil fertility and increasing crop-susceptibility to pests and diseases. Heavy indebtedness led to the economic crisis. In the final analysis, this debate attempts to understand suicide through anthropological tools (Vasavi, 1999)

Second debate attempts to locate the crisis or the suicide to the negative growth of agrarian economy in the recent past as argued by Vandana Shiva. She comes closer to the Marxist critique particularly the arguments of Patnaik (2004: Web) wherein the latter locates the reasons in the liberalisation/neocolonialism or imperialist globalisation. Patnaik argues:

In the last five years India has witnessed unprecedented agrarian distress. The per capita production of food grains has witnessed a decline, but more than that rural India has experienced a massive deflation. All India absorption of food grains per capita per annum has fallen by 22 kilograms between the three-year period of 1995-98 and that of 2000-03.

The argument of Vandana Shiva is also to understand the larger linkages emanating from globalisation, which has created a crisis for agriculture and produced a negative economy.

Corollary to this argument, the third debate attempts to locate the reasons for the suicide in adapting the World Bank model of agriculture or what is called McKinsey Model of development that created spaces for industry-driven agriculture which ultimately translated into agri-business development including Information

Technology<sup>1</sup>. This model of development has not only exacerbated the crisis leading to an environmental catastrophe but also destroyed millions of rural livelihoods.

The fourth is the discourse, which attempts to locate the suicide exclusively to one phenomenon, that is, the increasing indebtedness (**Deshpande and Nagesh, 2005: 4663-65**) or the debt trap. As a corollary, one more discourse attempts to locate suicide in the wrong policies pursued by the central as well as the state governments over the past two decades, even while there is hardly any substantial investment in agriculture.

The final discourse, which came from the state, attempts to locate the reasons in multiple issues, such as the incessant floods, manipulation of prices by traders, supply of spurious pesticides and seeds, decline in prices of agricultural produce, increase in the cost of agricultural inputs, successive drought in recent years, and of course, the neglect of farmers by the previous state government (Asia Times, 24 June 2004)

Nonetheless, one can argue that this crisis has to be analysed in the larger context of ambiguous path of capitalist development that the Indian states, including the state of Karnataka, have pursued over the past couple of decades. This is the reason why the crisis is apparent both at the level of the individual as well as of the communities and also at the level of the agrarian economy. Another fact is that in the Indian context, the agrarian capitalism was introduced or juxtaposed on the existing social structure. In the process, it allowed different social structures to coexist along with the capitalism-it allowed the presence of different social structures along with agrarian capitalism. This does not mean that the state intervention was limited: its intervention was conditioned by such other factors as increasing the productivity, interlinking the local with the international market, bringing in large amount of land under capitalist development, remove the social categories who are “drag on the economy”, and finally create new social categories such as rich peasantry who can partake in the capitalist development.. This has been done by using different methods - one of the methods was by introducing Green Revolution, which created surplus food, but allowed global capitalist to enter into the domain of agriculture through the means of seeds, fertilisers, etc. Secondly it was done through the means

of land reforms. However, it was only partially successful, and that too, only in some states including Karnataka. This helped in bringing new social categories into the market, and also created spaces for them to operate at local/regional/national level. Finally, it is done through introducing co-operatives and other financial institutions. However, they tended to cater to the needs of large farmers, especially those who had land and other properties. However, the intervention of the state in the capitalist development of agriculture, including the ambiguous path that it resorted to, ultimately led to larger consequences on agriculture. Here lies the failure of Indian State too.

This is also the reason why the crisis began to emerge within one or two decades of the introduction of Green Revolution, when a series of farmers' movements came to emerge in different parts of India. Their demand mainly centered on the issues of remunerative prices or support prices, writing off loans, declaring agriculture as an industry, increased subsidies to agriculture produce, etc. Thus, the crisis brought the Indian State, including the Indian industrial classes to the focus. While analysing the crisis, loosing the class identity of the farmers' movements also assumed the centrality of debate. Further, the farmers' movements employed newer theoretical discourses. It was best conceptualised by Sharad Joshi in his famous, "India versus *Bharat*" - the former representing the industrialised India, which can be located both in the agrarian economy as well as in the metropolitan/cosmopolitan cities while the latter, "*Bharat*" wholly representing the agrarian India. It is also conceptualised as "*Halli Mattu Pattana*". Furthermore, the whole crisis was analysed in such popular discourses as "We milch the cow, who drinks the milk?" "We rears the chickens but who eats the eggs"? "India is *Bharat*, *Bharat* is India" "we are the owners of India, but who rules us" etc.

However, what added to the crisis of capitalist path of development in recent years is when India became a part of globalisation. Although it created spaces for autonomous categories to enter into the domain of market - local to larger market, it did not check autonomous categories from the "fear of loosing distinct social identity" when market was becoming volatile and the crisis was sharpening. Because of this, In the 1990s, the reasons for the crisis were externalised; capitalism mediating

through the process of globalisation became the immediate reason for the sharpening of the crisis. However, this too did not carry new agenda of overcoming ambiguous path that the Indian State all these years pursued, nor it attempted to create absolutely autonomous categories, which are not dependent on global capital. Rather global capital tried to trap the social categories through the methods of new seed technology such as “Golden Rice or Bt.Cotton” etc, or even through the methods of cultural industries or through signs, symbols etc. It is in this context that loosing the identity becomes most important at a time when the crisis was becoming too sharp. Secondly, the loss of identity emanated from the fact that new autonomous categories who derived their identity through leasing in land or market, began to view the crisis engulfing their own identity .To retain their distinct identity as “Market Oriented Autonomous Farmer” (MOAF), suicide became the last resort; it was but to escape from the intense crisis as well as to retain their social identity as “Market Oriented Autonomous Farmer”. It is here that the attempt to retain the identity; as well as to protest against the growing crisis needs to be located.

### **Growing Crisis and the Suicide**

Growing crisis is not the result of ambiguous path of capitalist development that the Indian state pursued over the past couple of years alone, but also due to the global capitalism pursuing the same path. It is also due to the way the global capitalism brought in or introduced new methodology to link the autonomous farmers or the social categories with the larger market.

The path of development has increased the disparity between the urban and rural areas. It is true that the poverty percentage over the past two decades has declined considerably between the urban and rural areas, while the disparity has increased or widened. NSSO has counted that between 1977-78 and 1999-2000, the percentage of people living below the poverty line has declined from 51.3 per cent to 26.1 per cent, while in absolute number, it has declined from 328.9 million to 260.3 million. This does not mean that urban-rural disparity has declined; rather it has increased. In fact the “rural poverty ratio is still relatively high in Orissa, Bihar and the North Eastern States. In Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the urban poverty ratios were in the range of 30.89 to 42.83per cent in 1999-2000. The

combined rural and urban poor make up 47.15 per cent of Orissa and 42.60 per cent of Bihar. For the states of Madhya Pradesh, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, the combined poverty ratios in 1999-2000 were in the range of 33.47 to 37.43 per cent” (India Budget:2001-02)

Secondly, it has not made the farmers a debt-free category; rather it has trapped the farmers in the vicious circle of debt-trap. There is no farmer who is not indebted to financial institutions, co-operatives etc. In Karnataka, the farmers borrow Rs.18135 on an average that is very close to that of the Andhra Pradesh farmers. The failure of co-operative institutions has further made the large number of farmers to fall back on the moneylender who charges exorbitant interest. This charge varies from 36 per cent to 60 per cent. Interestingly two kinds of moneylenders have emerged in those areas where farmers have committed suicide. One type of moneylenders comes from within the rural side, who are either big farmers or capitalist farmers, and the second type of the moneylenders comes from the urban areas. In both the cases, the moneylenders use different techniques to extract the interest. Unlike earlier decades, the moneylenders in the globalisation context are not interested to appropriate the land in the event the farmers failed to pay the rent. This is because of uncertainty involved in the agrarian economy; secondly, agrarian economy requires the physical presence or physical Labour of the moneylenders, which the latter always sought to avoid it. This is the reason why the moneylender demands the interest rather than attaching the property (Assadi, 1998) Moneylender also uses other techniques like advancing the loan so that the farmers submit their agricultural produce to them. During this process, the prices of agricultural commodities are pegged to the lowest level. Interestingly it is true that indebtedness of rural household has not completely come to an end in recent years. The latest NSSO (59<sup>th</sup> round) has made the following observation that, “an Indian farmer’s household has an average debt of Rs.12,585. The Punjab farmers top the list with Rs.41,575 followed by Kerala with Rs.33,907, Haryana Rs.26,007, Andhra Rs.21965 and Tamil Nadu Rs.21963” (Shiva, and Jalees, 2006: 58). In fact, Andhra Pradesh witnessed highest percentage of farmers under indebtedness (82.0 per cent) followed by Tamil Nadu (74.5 per cent) and Punjab (65.4 per cent). In Karnataka 61.6 percent of farmers are now indebted (*Ibid*, 57). Nonetheless NSSO has made one more observation: more the amount of



land, higher will be the average loan outstanding. However, the NSSO data further clarified that percent of indebted farmers taking loans from money lenders is highest (29 per cent), followed by Banks (27 per cent), co-operative society (26 per cent) and finally from government (3 per cent) (Ibid, 58).

Thirdly, it has not brought down the cost of production; rather it has increased it, without a corresponding increase in the prices of agricultural produce.<sup>2</sup> The increase in the cost of input prices lies in such issues as “withdrawal of subsidy” whether it is given for power or for fertilisers. This is nothing but the reinforcement of the argument that the terms of trade have gone once again against the agriculture. This has created a situation of negative growth in agricultural sector. In the process, the farmers lost heavily.<sup>4</sup> Incidentally, at the all India level, the agricultural growth declined from 3.4 per cent in the 1980s to three per cent in the 1990s.(GOK, 2006,8) During the post-reform period it declined further. Similar trend is discernible in Karnataka. Karnataka is one of the fastest growing states in which the agrarian sector contributes about 25 per cent of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) and employs more than 70 per cent of the rural population. Its real growth rate having been consistently higher than that of the national average in all the three sectors, during the 1990s, however, the first few years of this millennium saw a deceleration, due to the negative growth in agriculture. This is apparent from the following facts: the average real GDP rate in different sectors between the period 1995-96 and 2002-03 was 5.86; however, for agriculture it was 1.87 per cent, industry 5.93 per cent, service sector 8.18 percent. Interestingly, the agriculture sector witnessed negative growth rate in 1995-96 (-0.9), 1997-98 (-2.4), 2001-02 (-0.4) and 2002-03 (-3.1) (Shiva, 2006: 66). Similar trend is discernible in Karnataka too. The average “real GSDP growth in the second half of the nineties was about 5.2 per cent in the primary sector, 8.6 per cent in the secondary sector and 10 per cent in the tertiary sector, while in the first four years of 2000 the average growth has been -3.6, 6 per cent and 8.6 per cent respectively (GOK, 2003). Even in the case of Human Development Index, over the years, Karnataka has slipped from sixth place to seventh place.

Fourthly, negative growth has further accentuated the people living below the poverty line. It has not been able to create any job opportunities in the agrarian

sector, either it is ending up in pushing large number of rural population to urban sector or increasing the pressure on the land. It is further fragmenting the land as well as increasing the people living below the poverty line. During the post reform period or during the decade of 1990s, the number of people living below the poverty line is staggering-193 million in rural and 67 million in urban India- in total 260 million are still poor. This is true even in the case of Karnataka. Despite the growth, Karnataka is still a poorer state, as the poverty level is more than the all India level. For example, the rural poverty in Karnataka has declined from 37.9 per cent in 1993/94 to 30.7 per cent; however, it is still higher than the all India level; during the same period rural poverty at the all India level has declined from 33 per cent to 26 per cent.(World Bank: Website)

Fifthly, this crisis has further fueled by the external linkages, particularly the way the global capitalists resort to the strategy of subsidising the commodities at the cost of Indian farmers. They pursue a policy of duplicity: subsidising their domestic economy on the one hand, forcing the third world to withdraw the subsidies and in the process forcing the farmers to pay the accumulated debt to the regimes concerned.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the US has increased the subsidies to agriculture from 73.5 billion dollars to 180 billion dollars during the period when global capitalism began to dominate the world. These subsidies have benefited the MNCs than the Indian farmers. Secondly, the MNC also adopts other techniques to control the third world including Indian agriculture. One such method is to create monoculture through new technology such as seed technology or patent regimes. Monsanto, for example, introduced Bt.Cotton in 2002, in the process of which, the Indian farmers lost one billion rupees due to crop failure. This is not compensated with, nor provided any alternatives to the loss.

### **Karnataka Agriculture,**

Characteristics of Karnataka agriculture have changed over the past couple of years- it changed from non-capitalist path to agrarian capitalist path. Karnataka agriculture needs to be located within the larger framework of uneven capitalist development. Although some sort of capitalist development was introduced long back during the

colonial period, however, agrarian capitalism received a boost with the introduction of Green Revolution, implementation of land reforms, establishment of institutions such as cooperatives measures during the post-independence period. Interestingly this path of development also allowed large number of new categories to emerge and enter into the larger domain of agrarian capitalism. The agrarian capitalism can be viewed in the increasing use of New Technology-seed or fertilizer, fragmentation of lands, increase in the landlessness or laboring class, linkage of local with the national/international market, depeasantisation of categories etc.

However the beginning of agrarian crisis once again required to be located during the decade of 1980s when issues of terms of trade going against the agriculture was taken up; They are also manifested in such issues as unremunerative prices, urban biased policy, declaring agriculture as an industry, writing off loans, etc. The crisis also manifested in the form of farmers taking out long marches, bundhs, rallies under the banner of farmers' movement. During all these years no farmer committed suicide neither farmers' movement advocated such a tactics. However this crisis continued to transgress the gender, caste, class etc.

Like wise the all India level the beginning of crisis in recent past can be located in the larger politics of the rolling back of the state. There are specific issues that further aggravated the agrarian crisis. One important issue is the way the world bank could able to dictate the terms to the Karnataka government. The World Bank dictated terms have gone against the interest of the farmers. This is apparent when Karnataka government for example, went for World Bank loan, which granted Economic Restructuring loan in 2001. This loan came along with a condition that government should withdraw from the power sector as regulator and distributor of power. This led to the bifurcation of the Electricity Board and the subsequent creation of Corporation on the one hand, partial withdrawal of subsidy given to the farmers or to the agriculture-in the latter case the free power given to the agriculture was withdrawn and also the fact that it increased the power tariff drastically.

This is followed by the failure of the cooperative sector in Karnataka, which could have helped the farmers in overcoming the debts. On one side the Karnataka government could not be able to checkmate the growth of money lenders on the one hand, at the same time it failed to make the cooperative movement a success one. In Karnataka although there are 32382 Cooperative Societies at the village level, almost 40 per cent of them are running under loss, nearly twenty per cent of them are either defunct or liquidated. This failure has helped in trapping the farmers in a vicious circle of exploitation by the moneylenders.

Secondly the agrarian crisis also accentuated with the growing introduction of new technology in agriculture. This is apparent in the politics of "bio-technology" (**Glen Devis Stone:2002**). The Karnataka government is one of the first governments to allow the field trials of Bt.Cotton. In fact the attack on Monsanto by the farmers twice in Karnataka is but the reaction to the growing corporatisation of agriculture on the one hand, the larger consequences of new technology on the other. Its seeds in many places completely ruined the agricultural production- as they became spurious as well as the fact that the claim of surplus production was never realized- in the process the farmers' lost heavily.

Agrarian crisis was further accentuated with the severe drought in different parts of the state. In 2002 alone 143 talukas (**Prajavani: August 2 2002**), which went up to 159 in the subsequent year, out of 176 taluks in the state, were declared as drought areas. Earlier 67 taluks in Karnataka faced "acute" drought, and 60 "moderate" drought". In total 29,193 villages faced drought. Out of which 4499 villages come under the category of "acute drought" and 2712 under "moderate drought." (**Prajavani: July 23 2001**). In some districts the drought was the reaction or the consequence of political inactivity, or the apathy. This is apparent in the canal areas, where the tail Enders would be the one highly affected. For example in the case of Mandya district, the absence of judicious distribution of water for the tail ender ultimately ended up in a situation of drought and, consequently couple of farmers' committed suicide due to "man made drought". Nonetheless severity of drought reflected and

manifested in different forms: peasants went on for a long marches (**Prajavani: July 27 2001**) demanding relief (**Prajavani July 27 2001**), large scale migration of peasants from Karnataka to other neighboring states (**Prajavani July 26 2001**) and distress sale of domestic animals, including the fact that many of the farmers' chopped off or cut down the plantations grown on their land – such as the case of areca trees (case of Suresh in Baragur village Channarayapatna who cut down 500 yielding arecanut trees ). Drought brought down land under sowing – for example during 2003 out of 69 lakh hectares coming under sowing during Khariff only 16.84 lakh hectares were sown. The tapping of large-scale underground water further aggravated this drought. Even though the then regime came out with series of concessions or relief's such as exemption of interest on the loans (amounting to Rs.127 crores in 2002) exemption of 66 drought affected taluks from land revenue, food for work programme, supply of fodder, the drought issue remain prominent<sup>i</sup>.

Despite the agrarian crisis one should not over look the fact that it provided the spaces for new social categories intervene in the larger market. These categories came from different social background: they come from the section of Other Backward Classes, partly Dalits, and Dominant caste as well. In fact land reforms, which coincided with the introduction of green revolution, translated the hitherto retrenched social categories into owner cultivators. However these social categories cannot be treated nor reduced to “gentleman farmers’ as once described by Daniel Thorner. Rather they are new entrepreneurial category that would not only like to partake in the larger market operation but also in the capitalist development. They are not averse to taking risk as well as trying to enlist themselves as capitalist farmers- their involvement in the agricultural production is also complete. For them the land becomes most important one: as the latter provide not only a new identity as farmers’ but also it provided them a framework to enter into the larger domain of capitalism – both local as well as international. What changed the character of the categories in recent years is the entry of global capitalism into the agrarian domain on a large scale, particularly through the means of seeds, fertilizers etc. Its entry not only created new identities but also created conditions for volatile economy- it is

here the larger threat of loosing "identity" is not only perceived but slowly becoming a fact. Suicide is an attempt to retain their identity as distinct social categories particularly as rural farmers' as well as "Market Oriented Autonomous Farmers"(MOAF). Agrarian Capitalism which once brought new identities and euphoria now translated agriculture into a sphere of suicide. It is here lies the paradox of path of development and the agrarian capitalism.

### **Agrarian Crisis and Suicides in Karnataka**

There is no exact number of farmers committing suicide.. 'In fact, suicide even led to the National Human Right Commission to intervene. This happened in the case of Kerala wherein the NHRC asked the state government to prepare a dossier of the suicide number. Suicide has been viewed differently. Farmers' movement particularly of Maharashtra for example would argue that it is" a gangrene due to wounds inflicted by the government over the years" (**Financial Express May 19 2006**) The suicide has slowly spread to those states where capitalist development in agriculture has come to stay. In Punjab<sup>ii</sup>, an agriculturally advanced state, including the fact that agrarian capitalism has deep roots, the estimate about the farmers' committing suicide has varied. A recent "suicide census" conducted by the Movement Against State Repression has estimated that 40,000 have committed suicide between 1997 and 2005. It is stated "Andana and Lehra blocks of Moonak subdivision in Sangrur alone have reported 1,360 farmer suicides between 1998 and 2005. If all of Punjab's 138 blocks show roughly the same level of suicides, the number would exceed 40,000 for the given period"(**M.Kailash: 2006**) This number might be slightly exaggerated. However the government estimated that in total 2,116 farmers' committed suicide between 1998 and 2005. However the recent report say that, "close to 150,000 Indian farmers committed suicide in nine years from 1997 to 2005" While farm suicides have occurred in many States, nearly two thirds of these deaths are concentrated in five States- Maharastra, Karnataka, AP, Madhya Pradesh and Kerala- where just a third of the country's population lives."(The Hindu November 12 2007). National

Social Watch Coalition (NCWC), says that at least 11,387 farmers have committed suicide between 2001 and 2006. The number of farmers' committing suicide was much higher during 1995- 2002, In Andhra Pradesh it was estimated that more than 3,000 farmers' committed suicide- in fact, in Andhra Pradesh the beginning of suicide started during the late 1980s than in 1990s. The Christian Aid estimated that in 2004 2,115 farmers killed themselves, which comes to around 4,378 since 1998. There are others who estimated that between 1997 and January 2006, over 9,000 peasants took their lives due to the failure of cotton crops. In one case it is estimated that within one-year (May 2004-September 2005) 2157 farmers' committed suicide. In Maharashtra, the Vidharbha has become the centre of agrarian crisis- wherein the number of farmers committing suicide is much more. It is estimated that between June 2005 and May 2006 at least 500 farmers' committed suicide in which majority of them are cotton growers. In fact, the Indira Gandhi Institute for Development Research in Mumbai, which was commissioned to investigate into the rural crisis in Maharashtra in its report, "suicides of farmers in Maharashtra " pinpointed that the Suicide Mortality Rate (SMR) for the male farmers had increased by three folds from 17 per 1,00,000 in 1995 to 53 in 2004. This is four times more than the national average. The suicide is now reported from Rajasthan, Haryana, M.P, Gujarat and Kerala too. Indian State now acknowledges the fact that between 1993 and 2003, 1,00,248 farmers committed suicide in India (**Financial Express May 19 2006**). "The most important factor is debt.. Suicide is not confined to Karnataka alone. It has been reported among the sugarcane growers of the UP, Cotton growers of Andhra Pradesh. It has been reported from Orissa and West Bengal as well. (Shiva and Jalees: 2006) Incidentally, suicide is more acute in Andhra Pradesh than in Karnataka (Reddy and Galab, 2006: 1838-41).

Karnataka has no history of farmers committing suicide even during the situation of acute agrarian crisis. Even the unorganised farmers would resort to other tactics such as throwing the agricultural commodities on the roads, burning their crops, etc. Andhra became the harbinger for such a trend in Karnataka. However, suicide was an attempt to retain the identity as distinct social category within the larger economy. This is the reason why suicide in Karnataka was first

reported in the northern parts of Karnataka or close to the border areas of Andhra Pradesh.

The beginning of the suicides can be traced back to the year 1998, when two farmers in Bidar, who were involved in cultivating Tur Dal, a market-oriented agricultural crop committed suicide. In the initial two years, farmer suicides were largely concentrated in the drought-prone districts in north Karnataka, or confined to economically backward, drought-prone regions such as Gulbarga and Bidar. However, after 2000, the phenomenon shifted to relatively advanced agricultural regions, particularly Mandya, Hassan, Shimoga, Davanagere, Koppal and even Chickmagalur<sup>5</sup> Kodagu and it also covered ground water region, (Belgaum) assured rain fall region (Haveri), Sugar Cane and Cauvery Irrigation Belt (Mandya). However, in the coastal belt, the number of suicides reported was less. This is because of the fact that by and large, in these districts, the people depend more on the non-agricultural activities, with wider linkages which extend to the metropolitan cities like Bombay, and even to the Middle East. Moreover, in these regions, the primacy of agrarian sector is slowly being replaced by the industrial sector, notwithstanding the fact that certain pockets of coastal belt saw the commercial farming of the arecanut and coco, grown for the past one or two decade. This has linked the farmers to larger market, in the process, making them a vulnerable category. In fact, the land reforms of the 1970s had created autonomous categories in this region. The autonomy was effectively used to enter into the domain of larger market

In fact, there is no precise number of suicides, as the number of suicides accounted by the state had been different from that of the civil society groups. This contention came about as the state refused to admit the reason of suicide as the result of capitalist development. Rather it tries to link the suicide to the personal matters, including the fact that it would dismiss the suicide on flimsy grounds. During 1999-2001, it was estimated that 110 farmers committed suicide in Karnataka. According to one estimate, 3,000 farmers committed suicide in Karnataka between 1998 and



2006. ( Muzaffar Assadi: 1998 &2005). Nonetheless, if we take the report prepared by the Crime Branch of Karnataka, the number of suicide under the heading “farming and agricultural activity” comes to 15804 between 1998 and 2002 Year 2000 saw the maximum number of suicide (2630) followed by year 2001 – these are the years when agriculture saw the negative growth. Interestingly, as per the crime branch report, between 1996 and 2002 12 889 male farmers committed suicide followed by female - 2841. However this estimate has some problem. One of the problems is the fact that the Crime Branch report also include suicide committed in cosmopolitan city such as Bangalore or Mysore under “farming and agricultural activity”. Secondly in the districts such as Dakshina Kannada the suicide is the reflection of another form of capitalism- it is the reflection of the crisis of metropolitan/cosmopolitan or Middle Eastern capitalism than the agrarian one. Clubbing such issues would make the counting or numbering the farmers’ suicide a difficult one.

It is in this context report of agricultural department is important, although its report does not give complete picture. . According to it between 2003 and 2007 (uptil January 1<sup>st</sup> ) totally 1193 farmers committed suicide (see fig). On the contrary the central government claimed that between 2000-01 and 2005-06, around 8,600 farmers committed suicide – which is highest one when compared to any other state – in fact Maharastra relegated to third position in the suicide rate. However if we calculate the statistics provided by the Veeresh committee report, including other press coverage one can estimate the suicide more than five thousand.

### **Suicide Cases reported under Farming and Agricultural Activity, 1996-2002(Police Report)**

Year	Men	Women	No of suicide
1996	1548	531	2079
1997	1509	323	1832
1998	1564	475	2039
1999	2002	377	2379

2000	2105	525	2630
2001	2153	352	2505
2002	2008	258	2340
Total	12889	2841	15804

Source: From the files of Police Department.

Region wise highest suicide rate was reported from the Old Mysore areas, followed by Old Bombay Presidency areas and Old Hyderabad region. Old Madras Presidency area as well as Coorg also reported the suicide- however their number is less. In fact, Old Mysore and Old Bombay Presidency areas are better known for canal irrigation. Here the suicide reflects the failure of the state to distribute the water judiciously. Most of them who committed suicide live in the tail end of the canal..

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#### **Farmers' Suicide between 1 April 2003 and 1 January 2007 in Karnataka**

District	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Total (4 yrs)
					(as on Jan. 2007)
Bagalkote	24	6	3	4	37
Bangalore Rural		30	6	5	142
Bangalore Urban		2	0	0	-2
Bidar	32	7	6	11	56
Hassan	69	37	13	7	126
Chamraj Nagar	10	2	0	-	12
Haveri	38	9	2	4	53
Uttara Kannada	7	0	6	4	17
Dharwad	31	9	0	-	40
Koppal	20	15	10	14	59
Mandya	46	11	0	-	57
Chickmagalur	24	10	3	18	55
Raichur	5	3	1	4-	13
Tumkur	41	11	6	16	74
Shimoga	50	12	4	11	77

Kolar	18	10	3	2	33
Mysore	18	1	0	–	19
Udupi	3	1	0	-	4
Kodagu	12	12	12	10	44
Belgaum	41	33	10	22	116
Davanagere	39	12	5	11	67
Bellary	31	11	5	2	47
Chitradurga	55	19	8	17	99
Gulbarga	18	6	7	3	34
Bijapur	22	9	9	13	53
D.K	9	5	4	3	21
Gadag	13	2	1	10	26
Total	708	171	124	187	1193

Source: Statistics from the Department of Agriculture

In fact acuteness of agrarian crisis is apparent in the year 2003, as it was a year when Karnataka experienced sever drought in more than thirteen districts. In fact, the state could have easily checkmated the drought . The above table reflects the acute agrarian crisis during 2003-04, when 708 farmers committed suicide. Hassan district reported highest number of farmers committing suicide followed by Chitradurga (55), This was followed by Shimoga( 50) Mandya( 46), and Belgaum (41). Bangalore Urban, Uttara Kannada and Dakshina Kannada districts reported least number of suicides. The year 2004-05 saw the dwindling number of suicides. Hassan, however, continued to report the highest number (37) followed by Belgaum (33). The number once again dwindled in the year 2005-06. It came down to 124.

The total number of farmers who committed suicide from 1 April 2003 to 1 January 2007 comes to 1193. Once again the highest number comes form Hassan District (126) followed by Belgaum (116), Shimoga(77) and Tumkur (74). Even coastal belt such as D.K, Udupi and Uttara Kannada saw the farmers committing suicide (42). Plantation areas such as Kodagu (44) reported substantial number of suicides.. It is stated that the between January and May 2007 nearly 40 farmers who

are growing sugar cane committed suicide in Bidar alone. The most interesting is the fact that Kodagu, a coffee growing area witnessed a stable number of suicides for three consecutive years - to be precise, twelve, in each year. This obviously shows that the suicide is no more confined to single crop alone, , rather it has engulfed different crops , different regions and different categories too..This obviously proves that the suicide is fairly spread out across the regions. However, farmers' committing suicide has not come to an end- which obviously means that agrarian crisis is not over.

### **Debt and the Farmer's Suicide**

The debt of the farmers who committed suicide was not uniform. It varied between Rs.5000 to Rs.50000. Many of them had borrowed loan on short-term basis. Debt is due to multiple reasons, although in the larger context, it needs to be located in the path of capitalist development that the state initiated. Interestingly, the government would attribute the increasing debts to personal reasons such as marriage, gambling, illicit relations, festivals etc. However, the reasons for the rural indebtedness may be located elsewhere such as the cumulative crop losses, or the inadequate rainfall, drying up of institutional credit for small and marginal farmers, sharp increase in the cost of production, declining prices of agricultural commodities, withdrawal of subsidies to agricultural sector, or the exclusion of large number of farmers from the safety net as well as from public distribution system. Significantly, most of those committed suicide had borrowed money from the moneylenders, who would charge an interest at a rate of anything between 36 per cent and 60 per cent per annum. This shows that the institutionalised credit system has failed to address the issues of rural indebtedness.

### **Suicide in the Unorganised Sector**

Large number of suicides was reported from unorganised sector, although the agrarian crisis equally affected all the sectors irrespective of social categories or class positions. The important sectors belonging to agrarian economy, which remained steadfast at least to some extent when compared to other sectors are tobacco, coffee and areca nut. This is because of the fact that planters are an organised lot, even

though the others too were once organised under farmers' movement; however, the dwindling bases of the farmers' movement over the past decade made the latter to remain non-responsive to the growing number of suicides. Interestingly, the farmers' movement over the past one decade or so has been concerned about the agrarian crisis emanating from globalisation rather than on the issue of suicide. This is where the failure of the farmer's movement is discernible.

Secondly, the interest of the state government to rescue the coffee or plantation economy at the time of crisis is apparent from the number of concessions it declared as well as given to them and also from its seeking of concession from the central government to overcome the crisis - in other words, a close nexus has developed between the regime as well as the different economies, particularly coffee, tobacco. At this time, the state government included two districts particularly Chickmagalur and Kodagu as the regions facing acute agrarian crisis, in the process overlooking other regions wherein the agrarian crisis is acute.

Further, these economies are very well protected by "Boards" whether coffee board or the tobacco board. This is not the case with Tur Dal or other crops- although sugar economy is protected, but, it remained more as a vulnerable category due to the localised operational areas - for sugarcane growers, factory areas are the areas of operation, and that, sugar factories become the primary target for negotiation as well as contestation. In the whole process, the unorganised agrarian sector became more vulnerable - they were not protected from the vagaries of middlemen, the market forces or even from the MNCs including from that of the state. The state also looked down upon these unorganised sectors particularly tomato growers, tur dal growers, ragi growers etc.

### **Gender, Age and the Suicide**

Although the number of women farmer's committed suicide was less when compared to the male, as the male usually owns the property. Nonetheless the suicide has further increased the gender bias, multiplied the oppression - oppression not only by the family but also by the market- this is because of the fact that the crisis has not only enveloped individual but also the whole household. In some cases the agrarian crisis has transformed peasant or farmers' women into agricultural

labourers. In the final analysis women had to bear the multiple burdens: pay the debts of her husband, look after the household, face the market forces etc.

The most striking aspect of the crisis, however, is the fact that large number of farmers' committed suicide largely came from the age group between 25 and 35, even though there are exceptions to it - one or two suicide cases belong to the farmers of the age group 60 - 70 years. These young farmers constitute the "new farmers" who are not only deriving their identity from the market opportunities but also through the land. They would personally involve in the land-related issues - they would decide about the production, crop planting, market opportunities, as well as new linkages with the larger market. Meanwhile, they are the ones who take risk in the market opportunities or linkages. For them, market is the site of new identities, new site of competition, new site of negotiation, new site of rights as well as new site of freedom. These categories try to create their own space or identity by leasing in land as well as borrowing loan from the non-institutions. When the crisis increases, the fear of loosing everything makes them to commit suicide. It is here that they want to retain their identity, as the identity of "New Farmers" is much more visible as well as sharp.

### **Caste and Farmers' Suicide**

In Karnataka, the large number of farmers who committed suicide also came from the OBCs, though there are also cases of farmers committing suicide, hailing from dominant castes such as Lingayats and Vokkaligas. This is true of the other parts of India. In fact, it is the farmers from the OBCs who borrowed a large amount of money from the moneylenders. The growth of OBCs has to be viewed or located in the way the Indian state or the government of Karnataka has created, over the years, spaces for them to emerge or grow as an autonomous social category. Their emergence however also coincided with the implementation of different land reforms act in Karnataka, which date back to the period of 1970s/80s. They emerged as new social category that would believe in linking themselves with the larger market. The market that they operated or mirrored is not limited to locality alone; rather it is linked to the global one. The best case is the suicide of sugarcane growers and others who involve themselves with the larger market.

### **Political Implications and the Paradigm Shift**

The agrarian crisis has also turned into political crisis as well. In the case of Andhra Pradesh, it has helped in the routing of the then ruling party in Karnataka, with a split or fractured verdict. For the first time in the history of Karnataka, a coalition government of Congress and Janata Dal (S) came into being. In fact, the fractured verdict represents two important discourses in Karnataka: one, the discourse of Globalisation/ Metropolitanism and two, the discourse on subalternity (Assadi, 2004: 4221-28). The Congress represented the first discourse and the Janata Dal (S) represented the second discourse. Incidentally the then political regimes also talked about necessity of “paradigm shift from agriculture to agribusiness”.

However there are times when the state or the regime accepted the fact that the path of capitalist development has not been able to overcome the crisis that the agriculture is facing. This is apparent when the state or the regime argued that, “Karnataka agriculture has seen low level of public investment, not all farmers have been able to access credit, modern technology, irrigation and markets” (GOK, 2003). This is the reason why the state began to argue in favour of a “paradigm shift”.- incidentally this paradigm shift does not mean completely restructuring the agrarian relations rather creating spaces for “agribusiness”.

A beginning of “paradigm shift” could be discerned during the decade of 1990s when the state government introduced an amendment to the land reforms, which earlier had transformed the agrarian relations - it created new autonomous categories in the country side as well as new social categories who on later date became not only the owner cultivators but also Market Oriented Autonomous Farmer” (MOAF) . Nonetheless, a shift towards “Corporate landlordism”(Assadi, 1996: 3340-43) is visible in the amendment act - this act would allow anybody to purchase or buy any amount of land in the name of public “interest”. This has gone against the farmers, who have lost thousands of acres to the big companies, corridor projects including Multinationals.

Secondly, the paradigm shift needs to be seen when government seriously supported the biotechnology through the methods of series of concessions to it. Interestingly it came out with “Millennium Bio-Technology Policy”, the major

objectives of which included: "To spread awareness about the investment opportunities in biotechnology, genomics, bioinformatics, biofuels, contract research, etc., to the entrepreneurial community; to sustain and maintain the present pre-eminent position of Karnataka and Bangalore in the field of biotechnology; to outline a set of incentives and concessions for the biotechnology industry to attract investments to the State; to provide specific infrastructure as well as enhance human resources for the development of biotechnology; to encourage the growth of bioinformatics in Karnataka; to provide an appropriate institutional framework to achieve all these objectives" (GOK, 2003).

Towards this end it declared a series of concessions such as tax exemption for the following three to four years, large exemption from the payment of entry tax on all inputs as well as capital goods including captive generation sets, during the implementation stage, which can be up to 5 years or during the construction period whichever is earlier, etc. Even the mega projects were given the exemption such as 50 per cent concession on stamp duty and registration charges for first sale and first lease. The captive generation was "total exemption from electricity tax for a period of 5 years". If the companies create employment, "of more than 100 in Bangalore and 50 in other areas in the State during the first year, they were made eligible for rebate either on the stamp-duty or rebate on the cost of the land". Most important changes was allowing women to work at night. Towards supporting the private sector, however the Karnataka government was prepared to spend Rs.12, 000 crore on infrastructure development such as power (Rs.3,000 crore), roads (Rs.650 crore), urban infrastructure (Rs.950 crore), etc. Further it was also decided to introduce new projects such as the Bangalore Mass Rapid Transit System, the Bangalore-Mysore Express Highway, the Mangalore-Bangalore Petro Product Pipeline, etc. These policy measures definitely were never able to tide the agrarian crisis; rather they increased it. For example the Mysore-Bangalore Express Highway made thousands of farmers to sell their land at cheaper rates. Interestingly new bio-technology such as "golden rice, or the Bt. Cotton" etc sharpened the growing agrarian crisis in Karnataka.



Nonetheless, Karnataka State is slowly but steadily inviting the global capital to the rural economy. World Bank has already financed three major projects affecting the rural economy. These include the Water Shed Project at an estimated cost of Rs.690 crore, The Tank Management Project at a cost of Rs.670 crore, and Rural Water Supply Project at an estimated cost of Rs.1,350 crore. These projects have remained not only incomplete but also that finances are not fully utilized..

While dealing with agrarian crisis four forms of politics that the Karnataka government resorted to is visible: one, politics of concessions, two, politics of commissions and three, politics of denial and four, politics of selectivity for “package” concession. In the first case, the state government once or twice accepted the fact that agrarian crisis is aggravating due to the multiple factors: negative growth of economy, delivery system etc. Towards this end, it declared a series of concessions. The co-operative credit institutions which were charging the farmers an interest of 12.5 per cent and 13.5 per cent for crop and long term loans respectively brought down the interest to 6 per cent, and waived compound interest and penal interest on crop loans in 2004. Earlier, it waived interest on short term and long term, waived electricity charges, land revenue and water charges seed and input subsidy, it also gave compensation for failed wells. These steps have been treated as “radical step” without knowing the fact that the co-operative lending is related to such factors as land owning, etc Further it also declared Rs 9 billion drought relief package which include interest waivers on cooperative bank loans, input subsidies for seeds and planting material, price support for select crops and the waiver of outstanding power dues on agricultural pump sets. The state government has also issued the Karnataka Prohibition of Charging Exorbitant Interest Ordinance, according to which it is illegal to charge an interest rate above 21 per cent in the case of an unsecured loan and 23 per cent in the case of a secured loan. There are other measures that the state undertook: to stabilise the market prices, the state or the government introduced the Price Stabilisation Fund, Comprehensive Programme for the development of dry land on watershed basis mainly to conserve, develop and sustain soil and water resources including enhancing agricultural productivity. Most important programme that the Karnataka state introduced was the Yashaswini Co-operative Health Care Scheme- this is a unique health care insurance programme

lunched for the first time in the world for the benefit of farmers who are the members of cooperative societies. This programme was lunched in 2003. Its success rate is although high, which is apparent in the following table, however it has not arrested the spate of suicide in Karnataka.

Year	Number of Beneficiaries enrolled	No of OPDs	No of Surgeries
2003-04	16.01 lakhs	35814	9047
2004-05	20.01 lakhs	50174	15120
2005-06	14.73 lakhs	52892	19629
2006-07 (upto 30.6.2006)		141752	44731

Source: Proposal from Govt of Karnataka seeking Financial Assistnce under Special Package, p.15

Secondly, the state government appointed a couple of commissions or committees to study the agrarian issues. One commission was, popularly known as Dwarakanath Committee to study "Testing Bt.Cotton in Karnataka." "Agricultural Bio-Technology", "Role of Hybrid Rice" and finally "enrichment of farm telecast". Interestingly, this commission supported field trials of Bt.Cotton and thereby supported Bi-Technology in Karnataka. It is here that the Commission thinks that, "Indian agriculture is irrevocably integrated with the larger economy"( KAC, 2000:1).

Most important Commission that tried to view the agrarian crisis differently is Veeresh Committee . This committee report is criticised for simplifying the suicide, agrarian crisis as well as the analysis. It tried to link the suicide to psychological or personal reasons than for the larger issues or reasons. These include alcohol, gambling, spending thrift (20.35 per cent), failure of crop (16.81 per cent), chit funds (15.04 per cent), family problems either with spouse or others (13.27 per cent), chronic illness (9.73per cent), Marriage of daughters (5.31 per cent), political affiliations (4.42 per cent), property disputes (2.65per cent), debt burden (2.65 per

cent), price crash (2.65per cent), borrowing beyond paying capacity (house construction etc- 2.65 per cent), loss in non-agricultural activities (1.77per cent) and finally failure of bore wells (0.88per cent) (GOK, 2002). Although it came out with series of recommendations such as creation of farmers' welfare fund, establishment of nodal department for Welfare of farmers, Social security measures, Facilities for Health Care, Broad Basing of Raitha Sanjeevini Scheme etc, they have not helped overcoming the crisis.

The state government also resorted to the politics of denial: denial of the suicides taking place due to the crisis, denial of issues of suicide, In fact it is in this politics lies the attempt to avoid giving compensation to the family of deceased: Many a time they are denied on flimsy grounds such as the under aged, the death due to other reasons such as electric shock, absence of any "patta land", incident happened before the issuance of government order, natural death such as heart attack, loan was taken for other reasons such as for the purpose of family leasing in land, children's marriage etc. At the same time the condition that the state government imposed to disburse compensation also went against them>This is apparent in the following: that the farmer who commit suicide should have agricultural land in his name; that he should have agricultural loan in his name; that loan should be from recognized credit sponsoring institutions, that the loan borrowed should be for agricultural purpose; that the incidence of suicide should be due to inability to bear the burden of loan borrowed from the recognized credit sponsoring Institutions (Commissionarate of Agriculture: 2006). Many of the conditions have gone against the farmers- for example farmers who lease in land, or take loan from private moneylenders etc benefit little from such policies. This is apparent in the way compensations have been disbursed. For example in 2004-05 out of 271 only 113 cases were upheld by the government, and in 2005-6 out of 124 cases received only 65 cases have received compensation.

Year	No of suicide reported	No of cases rejected by the state government	No of cases cleared and cheque issued

2003-04	708	503	205
2004-05	271	154	113
2005-06	124	37	65

Source: From the files of Agricultural Dept, Government of Karnataka

This is the reason why the state government has not been able to bring to a halt the growing agrarian crisis.

Finally, the state while seeking “package” for the farmers in distress resorted to the politics of “selectivity” on the ground that the incidences of suicides are much more in some districts. In fact while advancing the case before the central government in recent years when central government declared package for Vidhabha region in Maharashtra, it claimed that in six districts the incidents are much higher: Belgaum, Chickmagalur, Chitradurga, Hassan, Kodagu and Shimoga (GOK, n.d). In this list, two districts are known for plantation economy- Chickmagalur and Kodagu. It is here the inbuilt bias - area, crop - of the state is discernible . The state has sought relief measures on following issues: ex-gratia assistance from PMNRF, waiver of loans and interest due from suicide victim’s family, debt relief to providing agricultural loans to the farmers at concessional rate of interest, promotion of organic farming, seed replacement,, micro irrigation, farm mechanisation, establishment of FM stations, promotion of bio-fuel plantations and cultivable waste land, watershed development, etc.

Crisis is now manifested in different ways: non-remunerative prices, volatile economy, absence of a protective market etc. Even agrarian crisis also manifested in the form of burning their sugar cane field, throwing the agricultural produce on the roads etc. It is true that forms of suicide is slowly changing: earlier the suicide was confined to swallowing pesticide/hanging or even jumping into the well however now the shift has taken place wherein farmers’ are now committing suicide by jumping into the burning field. In fact, it is strange that suicide has been a major issue in Andhra, Punjab, Maharashtra, and partly in Kerala. Why such tactics are not being adopted in BIMARU states such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Chattisgarh

etc? Are they not part of larger market? In fact, the BIMARU states are yet to integrate completely with the larger market than those states wherein the suicide rates are much more. This also shows that those states, which have integrated with the larger market, have been the victims of growing crisis. Karnataka is not an exception to it. This is the reason why crisis in Karnataka will continue to remain and manifest either in the form of suicide or in the form of rejuvenated farmers' movement..

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> It is in this suicide that, (Sharma, 2004: Web) saw the failure of Naidu Model of Development.

<sup>2</sup> For example, earlier in 1991 in Karnataka, the factories used to buy sugarcane from the farmers at Rs.1, 700 per 100 Kgs, the same prices came down to Rs.1, 100 in 2004. At the same time the imported sugar also declined the prices of sugarcane too - in 2004 the 100 Kg sugar was available at Rs.850. In other parts of India, coconut prices in 2000 were less than half their prices in 1996.

<sup>3</sup> For example between 1998-99 and 2000-2001 Kerala farmers lost a staggering Rs.17, 000 crore, tea industry lost Rs.86 crore in 2002.

<sup>4</sup> This is apparent when subsidies to the electricity were withdrawn in Karnataka as is evident from the following news item:

“With power no longer subsidized, its cost has added significantly to the cost of cultivation. The small farmer is often presented with an ultimatum from the power distribution company to pay his arrears or have his electricity disconnected. On June 1, Shankare Gowda, a 32-year-old farmer from Arechakanahalli village, Maddur Taluk, who committed suicide on September 9, received a bill from the power distribution company for arrears of Rs. 48,000. With the interest waived, his dues were still Rs. 31,000. Gowda pawned his wife's jewellery to repay his arrears, which added significantly to his debt, pushing him three months later to his final act of desperation” See The Hindu, September 13 2003.

<sup>5</sup> The Hindu, Sept. 14 2003.

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<sup>i</sup> Interestingly it was in 2003 the opposition parties tries to take mileage out of drought by bringing in or introducing amendment to drought motion. This particular motion was moved by the BJP seeking "double the

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budget allocation to horticulture, agriculture, and minor irrigation departments. Further it combined such other issues as waiver of interest on farm loans. Further they demanded Joint House Committee to go into the irregularities in the implementation of drought relief works. See Deccan Herald Assembly *Rejects Amendment to Drought Motion*, July 27 2003

ii In one village alone particularly in Bhullan village of Sangrur district 49 Jat Sikh farmers have committed suicide. See NDTV.Com May 17 2006