

'Discourse on Farmer Studies' : Perception of Researchers and Unfold Issues

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ABSTRACT

New economic reforms in India driven by globalization have brought significant changes in all sectors including agriculture. Indian farming drastically changed due to increasing cost of production, uneven market price, decreasing holding size of land, lack of man power, high investment in farming machinery, development induced displacement, terminator seeds, and market oriented policies and so on. Result of these changes was increase in farmer distress, agitation and farmer suicides. Along with the respective governments various agencies and other stake holders are trying to face the situation. Last three decades issue of agrarian crises and farmer suicides is central theme of various researcher and writing, especially in the stream of social sciences. These days focus of writers and thinkers is flooded with agrarian studies and trend continues. Studies on farmer distress are mainly criticizing loan weaver policies of the respective governments, expenditures of loan amount on various heads instead on farming, problem on repayment and failure of government machineries. After a thorough assessment it seems that output of this particular discourse is very important for agriculture issues however the perception of writers and researcher left some questions unanswered and unfold issues... This paper is attempt to highlight those unfold issues of famer distress, suicides and agricultural crisis missing in discourse on farmer studies. This paper is descriptive in nature and based on the secondary sources.

1. Introduction

Post globalization scenario has created critical situation before Indian agriculture system. Many of the serious questions during last four decades compel administrator, policy maker, and researcher to pip in various problems of Indian agriculture. Continuous downfall in production, fluctuation in agriculture income and unstable weather conditions are broad questions however never before in huge number farmer suicides are biggest concern of agriculture sector. Unfortunately Indian weather conditions are never stable and in favor of farmers. Consistently there is unlike natural situation creating difficulty for farmers to plan anything. Lots of discussion about new hybrid seeds has been done when it has been detected as cause of increasing failure of crop and cost of production. Various reports argue that Indian agriculture was never ready to face the globalization process. In fact post globalization regime pushed farmers in it to havoc for so many reasons. The international market left its impact in many ways at agriculture market and related business. Indian farmers and their economic condition were never in position to cope up with the process of globalization.

New market condition needs more investments in agriculture sector by the government and at the individual level too. But it seems that both fall short to meet the need of hour and as a result the critical situation is arrived. Over the years, agriculture reforms are not been enough to face the challenges. For example minimum support price issue is still unresolved by all stake holders. It is also true that last few decades Indian government is trying to improve situation by making few policy decisions like ensuring waiver of loan, providing financial support and crop insurance etc. however things are becoming worst day by day. In spite of provision for farming sector, percentage of irrigation is not increased; and

farming is not a profitable business in this professional world. The suggestions given by various studies and implemented by respective governments are not enough. The second major thing is farming sector always needs financial assistance in various forms. Farmers regularly need money to invest in farming they are compelled to borrow money. Farmers get money from two main sources i.e. institutional finance and non institutional finance. Despite of the comprehensive policy of government to provide institutional finance to the needy farmers there is always huge demand for non institutional finance too. Both type of agricultural finance give money to the farmers to invest and to satisfy their needs, at the same time the loan has to be repaid in schedule time. But from last two decades due to inconsistent failure of crop farmers are in difficult situation. The farmers are debt ridden and trapped in to the worse situation, in last two decades thousands of farmers had committed suicides. It is very cruel to the humanity that important section of the society is facing financial crunch and committing suicides. Farmer suicides become a delicate issue for the all stake holders. Respective governments are trying to enforce many schemes and policies to prevent farmers from committing suicides. There are many studies are being conducted to analyze this social problems. However there are specific perceptions of the researcher and writers on discourse on farmer studies and some unfold issues discussed hereafter.

2. Modernization and Change

Most of the studies related to farmer distress and farmer suicides have stated some common responsible factors like crop failure, over expense, rain shortage, and debt. A study conducted in Karnataka reveals cause of farmer distress is due to the insufficient rain and continuous failure of crop. Surprisingly another reason is introduction of new technology

without any support is not helping them and increases the cost of production. However if the production increases non availability of market is the problem. The studies also show that suicides are happened in small and marginal farmers. Most of the studies focused upon how the farmers and farm laborers are trapped in non institutional units like private money lenders, etc. most of all farmers cannot meet the income and expenditure at all eventually they trapped in indebtedness. Various studies focused on the injudicious use of agricultural loan, it shows that an expense incurred by farmers on various heads instead of agriculture is the reason for indebtedness. Few other studies show that Indian agriculture sector was never ready for the competition in the globalized market. The process of privatization and liberalization was far away from the ground reality. Indian agriculture sector needs basic investment to increase its capability in comparison with global market. Some of the studies pointed out the absence of knowledge of farmers in relation with taking crop, changing crop pattern and using better techniques for better production.

3. Post Globalization era

Maharashtra states faced larger set back in agriculture sector in last three decades and also have large numbers of farmer suicides. Even today the most of the farmer suicides happening in Maharashtra state only. According to studies conducted in Maharashtra large number of farmers committed suicides in Vidharbha region. Many researchers argued that the reason behind these suicides is Cotton production. The fact is Post 1990, number of farmer suicides increased and that too in the belt of cotton farmers. The logic behind this assumption is the policies adopted by Indian government in post globalization era. Trade strategy adopted by the government was negative for cotton farmers and world cotton market price fallen in the same period. Cotton farming as cash crop fascinated farmers to have it regularly but as it was open to the world market farmers are facing new challenges and as a result large number of cotton farmer have committed suicides. In another study similar results were drawn. The study carried out in Kerala state of India shows that farmers taking cash and commercial crop are found in difficulties. The farmers committed in this region due to the failure of cash crop and fluctuating market price. The gap between cost of production and income is also a biggest obstacle and reason of distress among farmer. Most of the studies pointed out that farmers who are in distress or committing suicide are small and marginal farmers. The farmers are having land of one to three acre. These farmers have borrowed loan from banks and most of the time form the money lenders. There are three types of sources of non institutional finance i.e. Private money lender, shop keepers and traders. Average loan amount taken by these farmers is around 40000 to 70000 Rs only, and studies also shows that these amounts are wasted on other immediate needs instead of farming and allied sector.

4. Politicization of Issue

According to the studies carried out on farmers issue says that the issue of farmer suicides always politicize by the various political parties. Almost over sixty percent population lives in rural India and directly or indirectly connected with the farming. It is very essential for any political party to take

farmer issues in to account for their political agenda. In fact the farmers are deciding factor for any election in India. Politicians use agriculture crisis as weapon to create issue against ruling party to destabilize the respective governments. The opposition parties (not any particular party) always take advantage to make pressure on ruling government and try to damage the image of government. The issue of farmer suicide is used to show how the respective government is not implementing any specific policy for farmers. If there are different political parties government is in rule in centre and state then the conflict over implementation of various farmer welfare schemes starts. Ultimately the victims are famers. There is lot of debate over loan waiver. Some are in the favour of loan waiver and some are in the favour of empowerment of farmers. Between this debate and conflict, farmers issue of indebtedness remains unresolved. Farmers need immediate relief for their problems but Political parties fighting for their political agenda and some time fight to come in power overlook the immediate attention to the agriculture issues. .

5. Sociological Approach

Sociological approach of the farmers studies claim that changing social structure is also one of the reason for farmers distress. Rural economy has changed and near about demolished by the urban economy and its influence. Mainly the changing nature of joint family has made huge impact on the working culture of rural economy. The man power reduced as joint family turns into nuclear family. Moreover it was not the question of financial contribution of the member of joint family. The bond, unity and support were always important for the joint family. Any individual facing stressful situation was feeling comfort and support in joint family. It was best mechanism of tension management. But over the years nuclear family abandoned individuals into the distress and lonely situation. This situation is suicide prone for any stressful individual. An earlier round of National Sample Survey shows that numbers of joint family is decreasing. There are many studies which disclose that isolation of farmer as a individual increases his loneliness and stress. Some researchers pointed out the issue of migrated male head whose wife has to survive individually are also an issue of isolation and distress.

Almost all studies and research related to farmer distress are focused on the issue of injudicious use of agricultural loan. Specially the expenditure incurred on the Marriages and festivals. In rural area expenditure on marriages is very high and a farmer marrying his daughter has to give some amount of money as tradition called dowry. This tradition is come along form long time and even after government has made a law to stop, it prevails. The dowry system is still ongoing, in fact it is increased in practice and the amount of money exchanged is very high now. Farmer who doesn't have capacity to spend on daughter's marriage is compelled to make it for the sake of status and tradition. In spite of this the expenditure done on religious rituals and festival is also high in term of annual income. Moreover few studies claimed that few cases of suicides of farmers happened under the impression of alcohol. When person losses state of mind under alcohol consumption this kind of act may happened. There are few findings which show that suicides committed because of personal reasons are shown farmer suicides for financial packages.

6. Conclusion

After analysing various research and studies on farmers specially related to farmers suicides, it is found that findings of these studies are very important for all stake holder including government. The discourse on farmer suicides is essential to understand and analyze the reasons behind agriculture crises and distress. Studies are carried out through out Indian mostly conducted in state of Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Hariyana and Maharashtra. However there are many studies conducted in Karnataka, Telangana and Kerala also. There is ample research and study on farmers issue analysing agriculture crisis and farmer distress. In general, these studies speak about production, market, finance, water crisis, and indebtedness and farmers failure on different fronts. Important suggestions are also given by respective researchers in this regard. Moreover few unfold issues must be drawn to attention as follows.

- Farmer suicide is a social problem and it must be looked on the basis of Humanity. Unfortunately it is always analyzed on numbers, few titles of the write-up is 'Decline in Farmers suicides' can create confusion in society. Suicides are failure of any institution; it must be counted as human loss not in form of numbers. Moreover it is found that, officially there is no seriousness in keeping the record of suicides committed by farmers. National Crime Record Bureau is the only authentic agency keeping all numbers of suicides. Surprisingly last four years there is no data updated by NCRB related to farmer suicides. Last updated data is published in NCRB reports is in the year 2015. The studies and research are unable to explain facts and current situation without any official record and statistics.
- The studies conducted to explain how farmers are stressful and feeling lonely but very few studies has talked about their aspirations and desires. It is very unfair to portray farmers as a food provider instead of a part of society and as individuals also, who needs every other thing as all wants. The expenditure incurred on the various heads rather than agricultures is focused in many studies. But as a family unit, farmers have to spend money on every social traditions, rituals, and festivals. It is their social desire to satisfy and perform like other social communities and groups.
- Lot of talked about farmers distress and their psychological conditions. But there are no concrete

suggestions from study for the Psycho-Socio stability of farmers. There is much need to create dialogue between society and farmers. The dialogue between rulers and farmers has been end. All sections of the society do not feel and realize the gravity of the situation. There are no common efforts to heal the distress among farmers and to prevent them from suicide and the same is lacking in studies and research.

- Discourse on farmers are very much fascinated by the change occurred by globalization, liberalization and modernization. Few studies describe agriculture distress as a result of LPG process. It is overlooked that as like all sections of the society farmers also wants to involve and merge in the process of modernization are not able to cope up with it. The temptation of modernization for farmers is as equal as all other sections of population. Modernization brings vast changes in lifestyle and day to day life. These changes tempted to farmers to be part of it. A parallel study shows that family member of farmers are spending two hundred rupees per month on internet using. All these facts must be taken into the consideration for research on farmer.
- Women have been never considered as centre part of discussion in agricultural studies. In exceptional cases widows of farmers has been discussed. However the role of women for reducing the farmers distress is undervalued.
- India is huge country having various province and different weather conditions. The problem of farmers is very different as per respective parts. For example in Punjab farmers have issues of surplus wheat at the same time in Rajasthan farmers may facing water shortage. There are no comprehensive studies or research carried out by central agencies to differ and analyse the farmers issues as per the respective parts of the country.
- There are very few research studies about the evaluation of policies and their implementation about respective government. For example the impacts of loan waiver, food security bill, implementation of new technology and seeds, etc are less discussed topics among the researcher.

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