



## FINANCIAL OWES AND STRESS DRIVEN FARMER SUICIDES IN INDIA

## Management

J. Gladston

M.E.,M.B.A., M.Phil.Part Time Research Scholar in Management Studies,Manonmaniam Sundaranar University,Post Graduate and Research Centre,Department of Economics,S.T. Hindu College, Nagercoil

## ABSTRACT

Stress is an ubiquitous problem. It breaks out when the demands made on an individual's time, energy, resources, skill, and ability exceed tolerable limits. Farmers in India are embroiled in financial problems. They borrow money from various sources to meet their mounting agricultural expenses. The soaring prices of all agricultural inputs, repeated crop failures and crumbling prices for agricultural products adversely affect the seasonal incomes of farmers. This brings about an awe-inspiring gap between their highly volatile income and fast growing financial responsibilities. They are, in fact driven to their wits-end. Unable to with stand the stress problems arising out of them their financial owes they choose to end their lives with out trying to find out any other viable, acceptable and tolerable means of escaping from their life threatening stress problems.

## KEYWORDS

India is one of the most populous countries in the world. It is basically an agricultural country. The size of its agricultural population has been estimated at 61.5% of the total population according to 2011 census. As they are yoked to the soil, they are found concentrated mostly in villages. No wonder, it is very often said that "India lives in its villages". Though agriculture is the most ancient of industries in India, the question very often asked is whether or not Indian agriculture is in prosperity, registering phenomenal growth rates over the years. The answer for this simple question is a big 'no'. The farmers who are excessively dependent on the monsoon for their agricultural operations find agriculture very often a disgusting gamble. Further, to make matters worse, in recent years they have been irretrievably entangled in financial owes. We need not be surprised at it for this has been the plight of our farmers since very early times. It is precisely for this reason, it is very often said that "Indian farmers are born in debts, live in debts and die in debts".

As it is well known the Indian farmers are hard pressed for money. Their holdings are becoming smaller and smaller as the age old institution of inheritance, has resulted in the problem of subdivision and fragmentation. Thus, most of the agricultural holdings in India have become uneconomic and do not facilitate scientific farming. Consequently, farmers have become fated to wrestle with the problem increasing costs or decreasing returns in all their agricultural operations. Thus, agriculture has become an unprofitable proposition. Farmers have been saddled with the responsibility of meeting the ever growing needs of their families which include the education of their children, their health care, food and clothing expenses, wedding expenses and the like. Their innate burgeoning tendency keeps the farmers always in tender hooks. While this being the pecuniary crisis in which farmers are embroiled, the cropping season starts, signaling the need for very huge expenses, on ploughing, manuring, planting and watering. They can neither be postponed nor avoided. They are so urgent and inescapable that the farmers look to the banks and the local moneylenders for financial help. It is quite easy to get loans by pledging ones properties or jewels. But it cannot be denied that money is a highly dangerous commodity which evaporates and disappears into thin air, if it is not handled with utmost care and caution. In the case of farmers the need for money is so devastating that it disappears in no time leaving the farmer in very great difficulties.

The money lent by uxorious moneylenders is highly dangerous for it can swell in to an unimaginable proportions as time asses by, due to the exorbitant rates of interest charged. It is like a python which takes any poor victim quite unawares by coiling around it and tightening its strangle hold until finally it could be swallowed with effortless ease. It is the case with the money borrowed from established monetary institutions. In these days when the personal details of the borrowers are registered in computers, the interest due, is calculated keeping pace with the movement of time. The principal amount borrowed grows multiple times when it is subjected to compound interest.

The repaying potentials of the farmers do not emit signs of growth as the agricultural income is terribly impacted by alarming price falls and

crop loss due to monsoon failure and natural calamities. These problems can neither be fore told nor be avoided. This results in a financial crunch which can not be subdued. Further, the inelastic agricultural income of the farmers while compared to their family needs is so meager, that they are left with no option other than leaving the claims of the banks and the moneylenders unsettled. This leaves the farmers in a financial strait. The pressure of the banks and the moneylenders on them for the repayment of the loans and the interest due, keep mounting day by day. To make matters worse, once again, the cropping season starts and along with it there crops up the need for fresh loans. Thus, the financial commitments of the farmers shoot up adding to the anxiety and bewilderment of farmers. Gradually their pecuniary privations tend to assume alarming dimensions.

When the demand on the time, energy and resources of any one goes far beyond tolerable limits, one becomes a helpless victim of stress. The future looks bleak for the farmer. There is no ray of hope for him from any where. Life becomes a big struggle. Under such a trying situation, farmers are left with two options. Other than, selling the land holdings as a step towards an once for all settlement of all financial obligations. This is in fact a bitter pill for almost all farmers. They very rarely take recourse to this drastic step. Under such a circumstance, they turn a Nelson's eye on their financial problem, harden their hearts and prepare themselves to face any eventuality. This is by far a wonderful method of overcoming stress. These farmers with such a positive mind set, join hands with members of farmers' associations and clamour for a loan waiver.

The second option is very heartrending indeed. The feeble minded farmers at time succumb to the pressure of stress and try to end their lives. In our country during the years from 1998 to 2018 over 300,000 farmers suicides have been reported from various places. As it is well known in India farmers constitute 61.5% of the total population. It is widely acknowledged that farmer suicides account for 11.2% of all suicides in India. However, information from agriculturists in India suggests that the real figures could be ten times higher than the official government figures given above. The National Crime Records Bureau has clearly pointed out that farmer suicide rates have ranged between 1.4 and 1.8 percent during the 10 years from 2005 to 2015. According to the official figures available at the all India level, farmer suicides have occurred in large numbers in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telengana, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Orissa and Jarkand. Tamma Carleton a researcher at the University of California at Berkeley, has compared suicide and climate changes and concluded that "climate change in India may have a strong influence on suicides in the growing season".

As it has been pointed out at the very start of this paper, farmers' income is purely seasonal in nature. Their crop loans coupled with so many other needs arising out of chronic illness, marriage of children, education of children, house construction and the like have resulted in untold, physical and psychological torments and ailments which have rendered their lives a perilous voyage in a tempestuous and tumultuous ocean rife with swirling cross currents of conflicts and stress.

Therefore, it is the bounden duty of the government, service organizations and the religious institutions, to educate the farmers and give them a viable exposure to stress management programmes.

The crying need in India is to give all crisis ridden farmers an exposure to the advantages of cooperative farming. It would help them to enjoy the advantages of large scale farming and shifting the financial responsibilities to the cooperatives to which they belong. Further, the farmers need to be covered by health insurance schemes to save them from diverting their crop loans towards hospital expenses. Besides these the government should come forward to give preference to the children of farmers in giving appointments. Along with FC, BC, and SC quotas and ex-serviceman quota we should necessarily have a marginal farmers quota for giving admissions and appointments. This would usher in an era of strident growth among farmers who have been surrounded by financial owes. These could be treated for all practical purposes as practical and simple methods of stress management which will ultimately end the problem of suicides among farmers.

#### REFERENCES

1. Dilip Kumar Majumdar, Irrigation, Water Management Principles and Practice, Prentice Hall, India 2002, pp.402-407.
2. FAO Documentation prepared for the Centre on Land Problems in Asia and Far East 1955, p.90.
3. The Royal Commission on Agriculture in India 1926 Abridged Report, pp. 49 & 50.
4. Cole S. and Miners (C.T.H.), "Emotional Intelligence Cognitive Intelligence and Job Performance", Administrative Science, Quarterly 5:1(a), 2006, pp. 1.26.
5. Sharma S.P., Recovery of Agricultural Loans, State Bank of India, Monthly Review, Vol. XXXI, No.9, Sep. 1992, p.440.
6. Ruddar Dutt, Indian Economy, S. Chand & Company Ltd., 2001.