

# Addressing Farmer Suicides in India: A Holistic Approach with special reference to Integral Humanism.

## Abstract:

This paper delves into the heartbreaking issue of farmer suicides, which often result from a combination of financial burdens, failed crops, and inadequate government assistance exacerbated by natural disasters. Despite efforts by the government to offer aid through various schemes, many farmers remain unaware of these opportunities, while bureaucratic hurdles often obstruct the distribution of funds. Through the lens of Integral Humanism, this study suggests a holistic approach to addressing the underlying causes of farmer distress and preventing suicides. Integral Humanism advocates for a balanced development model that prioritizes the well-being of all, including farmers, by promoting sustainable agricultural practices, improving access to education and healthcare, and empowering local communities. By embracing this approach, policymakers can craft comprehensive strategies that provide immediate relief to struggling farmers while also building long-term resilience, ultimately reducing the incidence of farmer suicides, and fostering a more equitable and sustainable agricultural sector.

**Keywords:** *Farmer suicides, Integral Humanism, Financial burdens, Government assistance and Bureaucratic hurdles.*

## Introduction

According to the 2011 census of the Government of India, seventy percent of the Indian farmers are small and marginal. Livestock farming gives these farmers a secondary income, apart from agriculture. But even this is insufficient to satisfy their daily necessities. Due to this, farmers are forced to borrow money, not only for agriculture purpose but also for day-to-day consumption. The amount so borrowed, have not been used for the purchase of new technological equipment or for asset building which could have generated incremental income. Moreover, these farmers do not repay the loans on time. Thus, farmers' indebtedness grows.

The first officially recorded farmer suicide in Maharashtra was that of Sahebrao Karpe on March 19, 1986. Even after 32 years, farmers are committing suicides in large numbers in Maharashtra (Jadhav, 2019). Maharashtra is currently the highest farmers' suicide-prone area in India (National Crime Records Bureau, 2015). There was no significant change in the financial aspects of Indian farmers. Manjunath and Ramappa (2017) conducted an all-India survey on farmers' suicides. They found that on the one side traders are cheating the small and the marginal farmers and on the other side financiers have charged excessive loan interest rates due to which farmers were hardly able to repay. Majority of the survey respondents (58%) belonged to the BPL (Below Poverty Line) category. Chandrasekhar and Ghosh (2004) specifically investigated the agricultural crisis in Andhra Pradesh. They found that there was a lack of yield, reduction in bank credit, inadequate marketing facilities, seed supply problems, increased fertilizers cost and the lack of alternative non-agricultural income opportunities. Due to the increased cost of production, small and marginal farmers were committing suicides in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Chandrasekhar and Ghosh (2004) specifically investigated the agricultural crisis in Andhra Pradesh. They found that there was a lack of yield, reduction in bank credit, inadequate marketing facilities, seed supply problems, increased fertilizers cost and the lack of alternative non-agricultural income opportunities. Due to the increased cost of production, small and marginal farmers were committing suicides in the state of Andhra Pradesh. In the agrarian expanse of Narasingapadu village, nestled within the verdant landscapes of Andhra Pradesh, a profound issue persists with the alarming rate of farmer suicide. Despite the idyllic surroundings, the harsh realities confronting those who toil on the land are stark and unforgiving. Economic hardships, agrarian distress, and systemic inefficiencies have woven a complex web, contributing to the haunting spectre of farmer suicides, leaving behind shattered families and fractured communities.

In this rural setting, where the soil tells stories of generations past and present, the toll of farmer suicides is not just a statistic but a poignant narrative of loss and despair. In recent times, I have witnessed the tragic loss of three lives to the scourge of farmer suicides, with two others vanishing from the village without a trace in the last three years. These incidents serve as painful reminders of the urgent need for effective interventions to address the root causes of distress and prevent further tragedies from befalling the community.

In response to this pressing issue, my research endeavors to explore societal malaise through the prism of the Antyodaya approach, a cornerstone of Integral Humanism. Rooted in the teachings of Integral Humanism, as espoused by luminaries such as Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya ji, Antyodaya advocates for the upliftment of the most marginalized and vulnerable sections of society. It posits a holistic worldview centered on human dignity and well-being, thereby fostering balanced and inclusive development.

Drawing inspiration from the ethos of Antyodaya, my study aims to unravel the intricate factors underpinning farmer suicides in Narasingapadu and propose sustainable interventions for inclusive agricultural development. Extant literature underscores the multifaceted nature of farmer distress, ranging from financial burdens and crop failures to inadequate government support and bureaucratic impediments. Despite the existence of various schemes, many farmers in Narasingapadu remain unaware of available assistance, while others grapple with the complexities of bureaucratic processes.

My approach to addressing this issue hinges on holistic interventions informed by the principles of Antyodaya. Rejecting the notion of one-size-fits-all solutions, I acknowledge the diverse socioeconomic, cultural, and policy dynamics at play in Narasingapadu. My nuanced strategy prioritizes the dignity of farmers, sustainable agricultural practices, education, access to healthcare, and community empowerment. Through my research, I aspire to alleviate the socio-economic pressures driving farmer suicides and cultivate a resilient agricultural sector in Narasingapadu, envisioning a future where farmers not only survive but thrive.

Central to my study is the integration of insights from diverse disciplines and active engagement with local communities. I meticulously review existing government programs, scrutinize barriers to support systems, solicit community perspectives, and formulate a comprehensive plan imbued with the spirit of Antyodaya. At last, I reflect on the potential transformative impact of my interventions and delineate avenues for future research to further advance the cause of sustainable and inclusive agricultural development in Narasingapadu, Andhra Pradesh. The tragedies that have befallen the village underscore the urgency of my efforts and the imperative to forge a path towards resilience and prosperity for all.

## Research Methodology

The study was underpinned by a combination of primary research and a comprehensive literature review spanning from 1970 to 2022. The decision to include literature from as far back as 1970 was motivated by the seminal occurrence of the first recorded farmer suicide as documented by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reports in that year. The primary aim of the investigation was to elucidate the root causes of the agrarian crisis, with a particular focus on the phenomenon of farmers' suicides, while also proposing viable solutions. A sample size of 30 was selected to gain insights into the multifaceted challenges faced by farmers. The findings of this study are intended to contribute to the body of knowledge in this field, potentially informing future research endeavours. Data collection involved a meticulous examination of surveys, scholarly journals, official reports, and newspapers. The article was structured into two distinct sections: the first segment delved into the underlying factors precipitating the agricultural crisis, poverty, and farmers' suicides, whereas the subsequent section proffered strategic interventions aimed at mitigating these pressing issues.

## Analysing Farmer Distress in Narasingapadu

Analysing farmer distress in Narasingapadu involves delving into the multifaceted challenges faced by agricultural communities, ranging from environmental factors like water scarcity to socio-economic issues such as debt traps and inadequate government support.

**Economic Hardships:** Economic hardships denote financial struggles stemming from factors like unemployment and inflation, resulting in decreased access to necessities and widening socio-economic gaps.

- i. **Debt burden:** Farmers in Narasingapadu often face significant debt burdens due to multiple factors. High input costs, coupled with unpredictable crop yields, can lead to a cycle of borrowing to finance farming operations. Inadequate access to formal credit sources forces many farmers to resort to informal moneylenders who charge exorbitant interest rates, exacerbating their financial strain.
- ii. **Fluctuating crop prices:** Farmers are vulnerable to market fluctuations, with prices of agricultural commodities often subject to volatility. This unpredictability in prices can significantly impact farmers' income and financial stability, particularly for those heavily reliant on a single crop.
- iii. **Lack of access to credit:** Limited access to institutional credit is a pervasive challenge faced by farmers in Narasingapadu. Stringent loan requirements, inadequate collateral, and bureaucratic processes often deter farmers from accessing formal credit sources, forcing them to seek alternative, often exploitative, means of financing.

**Agrarian Distress:** Agrarian distress refers to the economic hardship and instability experienced by farmers and agricultural communities due to factors such as crop failures, debt burdens, low prices, and inadequate government support, often leading to rural impoverishment and socio-economic challenges.

- i. **Impact of environmental factors:** Narasingapadu is susceptible to various environmental hazards, including droughts, floods, and pest infestations, which pose significant threats to crop yields and farmer livelihoods. Prolonged droughts can lead to crop failure and loss of income, while floods can destroy crops and agricultural infrastructure. Additionally, pest infestations, such as locust swarms or crop diseases, can devastate entire harvests, further exacerbating farmer distress.
- ii. **Loss of land productivity:** Continuous cultivation and inadequate soil conservation practices have led to soil degradation and loss of fertility in many agricultural areas of Narasingapadu. This degradation further reduces crop yields, perpetuating the cycle of agrarian distress and economic hardship for farmers.

**Systemic Inefficiencies:** Systemic inefficiencies represent persistent flaws within organizational or societal structures that hinder optimal performance, efficiency, and effectiveness.

- i. **Bureaucratic hurdles:** Complex administrative procedures and bureaucratic red tape often hinder farmers' access to government assistance programs and subsidies. Cumbersome documentation requirements, long waiting periods, and lack of transparency in the application process contribute to delays and inefficiencies in the disbursement of funds.
- ii. **Inefficiencies in program delivery:** Despite the existence of various government schemes aimed at supporting farmers, inadequate planning and coordination often result in inefficient delivery of benefits. Poor targeting of beneficiaries, overlapping schemes, and leakages in the distribution system mean that assistance may not reach those who need it most, further widening the gap between policy intent and actual outcomes.

By addressing these economic, environmental, and systemic challenges comprehensively, policymakers can formulate targeted interventions to alleviate farmer distress and prevent suicides in Narasingapadu. "Prior to 1970, instances of farmer suicides were not commonly recorded. However, since the latter part of the 20th century, these tragic events have become distressingly frequent within the farming community, posing a significant challenge to address. Despite the implementation of various governmental initiatives and reforms aimed at mitigating this issue, there has been little to no noticeable improvement in the situation.

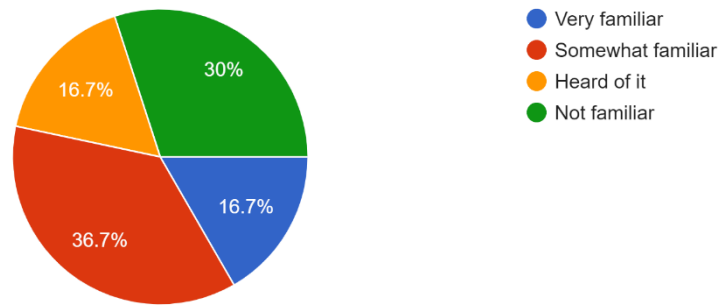
## **Data Analysis: Understanding Perspectives on Government Support and Agricultural Challenge.**

In my data analysis, I delve into the various perspectives surrounding government support and agricultural challenges based on the samples I've collected. Through thorough examination of the data, my goal is to reveal nuanced insights that shed light on the intricate relationship between policy interventions, farming realities, and community aspirations. By putting these findings into context, I aim to inform meaningful

strategies and interventions aimed at addressing the complex dynamics within the agricultural sector of Narasingapadu.

How familiar are you with the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops?

30 responses

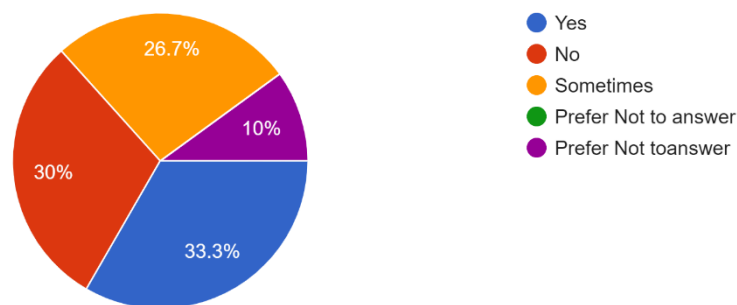


Graph (1)

Graph (1) According to the data, 30% of individuals lack awareness regarding the Minimum Support Price (MSP), while only 1/6 of the population are highly familiar with MSP. Furthermore, half of the residents in the village of Narasingapadu are uninformed about MSP.

Have you faced any financial debt related to farming activities in the past years?

30 responses



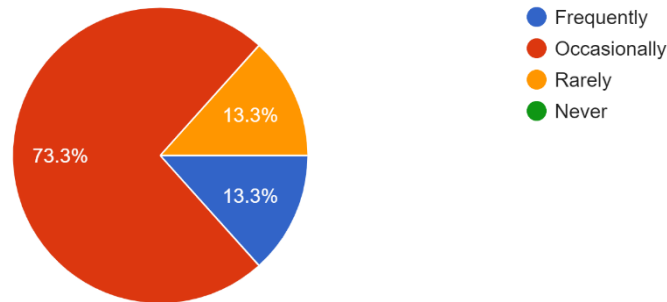
Graph (2)

Graph(2) In this dataset, it is revealed that 60% of individuals encounter financial indebtedness during the cultivation process for their land and crop production. Conversely, 30% of respondents report no financial

indebtedness in this regard. The remaining 10% abstain from providing a response, rendering it indeterminate whether they are burdened by loans or possess financial stability.

How often do natural calamities such as droughts or floods affect your farming operations?

30 responses

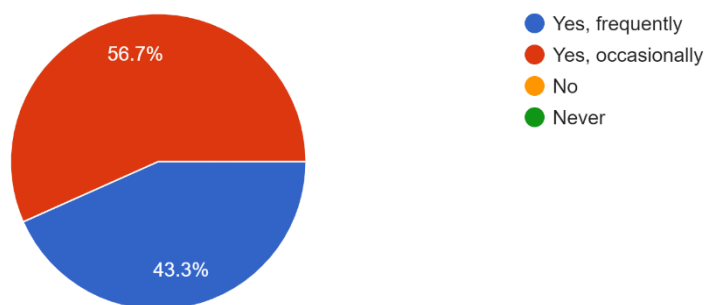


Graph (3)

Graph (3) Here, it is indicated that 73.3% of respondents report experiencing natural calamities intermittently throughout their tenure as farmers. Additionally, 13.3% indicate encountering such events frequently, while another 13.3% claim to face these challenges rarely.

In the past three years, have you experienced crop failure due to adverse weather conditions or other factors?

30 responses



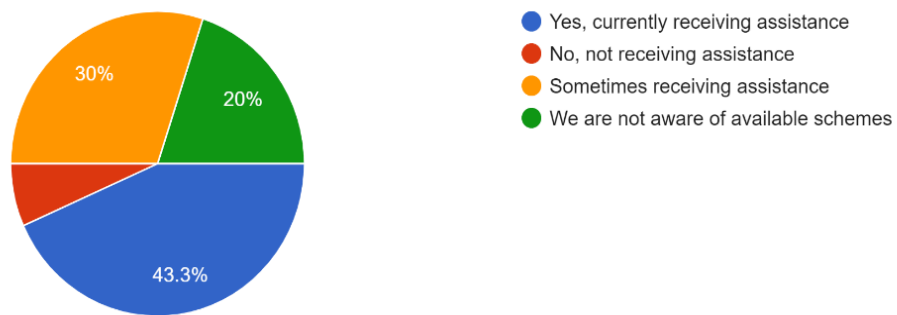
Graph (4)

Graph (4) Remarkably, over the past three years, virtually all farmers in this village have encountered issues of crop failure, attributed to a combination of adverse weather conditions and various other factors. This

period stands out as particularly challenging compared to preceding years, marking a significant downturn in agricultural outcomes for the villagers.

Are you currently receiving any form of support or assistance from the government to mitigate the impacts of natural calamities or crop failure?

30 responses

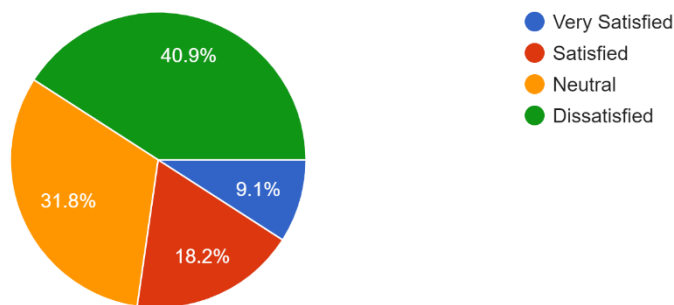


Graph (5)

Graph (5) According to the data, 43.3% of individuals consistently receive benefits from government schemes, while 30% sporadically receive such support. Moreover, 20% of respondents lack awareness regarding government-provided schemes. Notably, 6.7% of individuals report not receiving benefits despite applying for the relevant schemes.

If yes, how satisfied are you with the level of support received from the government?

22 responses



Graph (6)

Graph (6) According to the data, 41% of respondents express dissatisfaction with the benefits they receive, while 31.8% remain neutral in their assessment. Conversely, a mere 9% indicate a high level of satisfaction with the benefits they currently receive.

## Findings

Antyodaya, a concept rooted in the philosophy of upliftment of the weakest and most marginalized sections of society, can offer a framework for addressing the issues highlighted in the survey data. Here are potential solutions for each problem identified:

### 1. Lack of Awareness Regarding Minimum Support Price (MSP)

- i. Conduct regular awareness campaigns in Narasingapadu village to educate residents about MSP, its significance, and how it can benefit them.
- ii. Establish community-led information dissemination programs to ensure that even those who are not highly familiar with MSP can understand its implications.

### 2. Financial Indebtedness During Cultivation

- i. Implement microfinance schemes specifically tailored for farmers in Narasingapadu to provide them with access to credit at reasonable interest rates.
- ii. Facilitate financial literacy programs to help farmers manage their finances effectively and avoid falling into debt traps.

### 3. Frequent Natural Calamities

- i. Develop disaster preparedness plans in collaboration with local authorities and relevant government agencies to mitigate the impact of natural calamities on agriculture.
- ii. Introduce crop insurance schemes to provide financial protection to farmers against crop losses due to natural disasters.

### 4. Crop Failures Over the Past Three Years

- i. Promote sustainable agricultural practices and crop diversification to enhance resilience against adverse weather conditions and other factors contributing to crop failures.
- ii. Provide training and technical assistance to farmers on climate-smart agriculture techniques to adapt to changing environmental conditions.

### 5. Lack of Awareness Regarding Government Schemes

- i. Strengthen communication channels between government agencies and villagers to ensure that information about available schemes reaches every household in Narasingapadu.
- ii. Establish help desks or community resource centres where residents can seek guidance and assistance in accessing government schemes.

### 6. Dissatisfaction with Government Benefits

- i. Conduct regular feedback sessions with farmers to understand their concerns and grievances regarding government schemes.
- ii. Revise existing schemes based on community feedback and ensure that they align with the specific needs and priorities of farmers in Narasingapadu.

## Conclusion

In confronting the sobering reality of farmer suicides in Narasingapadu, our research underscores the imperative for a holistic and multifaceted approach deeply rooted in the principles of Integral Humanism. The narratives of despair and loss woven into the fabric of rural life in Narasingapadu compel us to move beyond mere statistical analysis and bureaucratic remedies, towards a paradigm shift that prioritizes the dignity, well-being, and empowerment of farmers.

Integral Humanism, as articulated by Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya ji, provides a guiding light towards inclusive development that transcends narrow economic metrics and embraces the entirety of human existence. It calls for a balanced synthesis of material progress and spiritual values, wherein the upliftment of the weakest and most marginalized segments of society takes precedence.

My research journey has traversed the intricate contours of farmer distress, from the crushing weight of debt burdens to the relentless onslaught of environmental adversities. Through rigorous analysis and community engagement, we have identified systemic inefficiencies and structural barriers that perpetuate the cycle of agrarian distress and despair.

Yet, amidst the shadows of despair, there gleams a ray of hope - the promise of Antyodaya. Grounded in the ethos of Integral Humanism, Antyodaya offers a roadmap towards transformative change by centering the needs and aspirations of the most vulnerable. It advocates for inclusive development strategies that empower communities, promote sustainable livelihoods, and foster resilience in the face of adversity. My proposed solutions, informed by the principles of Antyodaya, offer a blueprint for action. From enhancing awareness about government schemes to promoting sustainable agricultural practices, each intervention is imbued with the spirit of compassion, equity, and solidarity.

As I chart a course towards a future where farmer suicides are but a distant memory, I heed the call of Integral Humanism and Antyodaya. I strive to build a society where every farmer is valued, every life cherished, and every dream nurtured. In the verdant fields of Narasingapadu, I sow the seeds of hope, resilience, and inclusive prosperity, for generations to come.

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