



**Title: Studies on Social Dynamics of Cotton Production in Distress Areas**

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**Introduction**

The literature explains that most of the farmers suicides reported were from cotton growing areas. Earlier reports also quoted that cotton growers were not able to get remunerative prices and have to sell the produce at very low prices and are not able to repay their debts due to droughts and continued crop failures. This leads those towards frustration and humiliation. Several other reports on farmers suicides prepared by Dr. M. S. Swaminathan, Planning Commission, Tata Institute of Social Research, Mumbai and Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Studies also blame the failure of cotton crop, failure of rains, bad marketing and indebtedness as the causes for farmer's suicides. An attempt was made in this study to look at the phenomenon of cotton grower's suicides through social - psychological perspective, which treat suicides as deviant behaviour. Crop failure and indebtedness can explain some of the variance but there are other important antecedents of suicide like perceived financial condition, expenditure pattern, contingencies, Government policies, family problems, social isolation and social support.. These may lead to alienation from land, which leads to depression and suicides.

**Objectives**

1. To quantify the cotton growers alienation from land
2. To study social dynamics of cotton production in high suicide prone areas
3. To Study issues of indebtedness among farmers
4. To explore the antecedents of alienation from land

**Activities**

Two districts each from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab and four districts from vidarbha region of Maharashtra were

selected based on number of farmer's suicides, for the present study. From the each selected District, four tahsils and from each tehsil five villages having comparatively larger area under cotton cultivation were selected purposively. Cotton growers in the villages were grouped into two strata on the basis of land holding viz. land holding up to 2.00 hectare and 2.01 to 4.00 hectare and 50 cotton growers from each stratum were selected. Thus, in totality, 200 cotton growers were studied by each center making the total sample size to 10000 cotton growers. Exploratory design of social research was used for the study. Data were collected from the respondents through personal interview with the help of structured interview schedule. In addition, the secondary sources were utilized to obtain some other relevant data.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Majority of cotton growers from Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Vidarbha had medium level of alienation whereas majority of cotton growers of Karnataka had high alienation. Majority of the cotton growers had medium level of powerlessness except in case of cotton growers from Western Vidarbha . Most of the cotton growers in Karnataka Punjab and Vidarbha had high meaninglessness towards cotton cultivation. Similarly majority of cotton growers from Punjab and Vidarbha had medium level of isolation.

The average land holding was in the range of 1.63 hectare to 2.44 hectare. Inadequacy of good quality seed in Punjab, fertilizers in Western Vidarbha, pesticides in Karnataka and weedicides in Vidarbha and Karnataka was felt by the cotton growers. Farm implements, irrigation, labour, credit and information facilities were inadequate in many states.

The economic viability of cotton farming was comparatively higher with the cotton growers having land between 2.01 to 4

hectare in Karnataka, Punjab and Vidarbha while it was comparatively higher with cotton growers having land less than 2 hectare in Andhra Pradesh. However it was found that majority of cotton growers under study were indebted.

Agriculture was the major contributor of the annual income as well as major area of expenditure of majority of cotton growers. All cotton growers of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka were benefited by Government policies, but the cotton growers of



Punjab and Vidarbha benefited. by cotton growers of Karnataka and Punjab encountered family problems. Cotton growers from Karnataka and Punjab showed considerable alcoholism. Cotton growers of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab had high social support while the cotton growers of Vidarbha had moderate social support.

## Salient Findings

### 1. Alienation

#### 1.1 Powerlessness

Majority of the cotton growers from both the groups (cotton growers having land less than 2 hectare and cotton growers having land between 2.01 to 4 hectares) in all the centers had medium level of powerlessness except in Western Vidarbha (Akola and Buldana Districts). The averages of the powerlessness indices shows that the cotton growers having small land holding had higher powerlessness as compared to the cotton growers having medium land holding, the only exception was Karnataka the mean powerlessness index was comparatively higher in case of cotton growers having land between 2.01 to 4 hectare.

#### 1.2 Meaninglessness

Majority of cotton growers in Punjab and Vidarbha having land less than 2 hectare had high meaninglessness as compared to cotton growers having land between 2.01 to 4 hectare. Majority of cotton growers from both the group in Andhra Pradesh had

medium level of meaninglessness while majority of cotton growers from both the group in Karnataka had high level of meaninglessness.

#### 1.3 Isolation

Majority of cotton growers in Punjab and Vidarbha irrespective to their land holding had medium level of isolation whereas majority of cotton growers in Karnataka had high level of isolation. In case of Andhra Pradesh, majority of cotton



growers having land less than 2 hectare had medium level of isolation while the cotton growers having land between 2.01 to 4 hectare were equally distributed among medium and high level of isolation.

#### 1.4 Self-estrangement

Majority of cotton growers in both categories in Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Western Vidarbha had medium level of self-estrangement while majority of cotton growers in both the groups in Karnataka and Central Vidarbha had high level of self-estrangement.

#### 1.5 Levels of Alienation

Majority of cotton growers from Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Vidarbha had medium level of alienation whereas majority of cotton growers of Karnataka had high alienation. The mean indices shows that the alienation was comparatively higher in case of cotton growers having land less than 2 hectare in Punjab and Vidarbha as compared to cotton growers having land between 2.01 to 4 hectare, while alienation was higher in cotton growers having land between 2.01 to 4 hectare in Andhra Pradesh as compared to cotton growers having land less than 2 hectare. The mean level of alienation was equal in Karnataka.

## 2. Social Dynamics

The average land holding was in the range of 1.63 hectare to 2.44 hectare. Comparatively higher land was possessed by the cotton growers of Karnataka (2.44 hectare) followed by Andhra



Pradesh (2.28 hectare), Western Vidarbha (2.26 hectare) and Punjab (2.24 hectare) while comparatively smaller land was possessed by the cotton growers of Central Vidarbha (1.63 hectare). Bt cotton occupies majority of the land under cultivation. The per cent area under Bt cotton in Andhra Pradesh was higher (78.73 %) followed by Western Vidarbha (55.97 %), Karnataka (53.69 %), Punjab (52.34 %) and the least was recorded at Central Vidarbha.

Majority of cotton growers from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Central Vidarbha had adequate availability of good quality seeds while cotton growers from Punjab expressed inadequacy of good quality seeds. Cotton growers from all the centers except Western Vidarbha recorded adequacy of fertilizers. Adequacy of insecticides was recorded by majority of cotton growers under study except the cotton growers of Karnataka. The cotton growers from Andhra Pradesh and Punjab recorded adequacy of weedicides while the cotton growers from Karnataka and Western Vidarbha recorded inadequacy of weedicides. Inadequacy of labour was common in Karnataka.

The cotton growers from Karnataka, Punjab and Central Vidarbha recorded inadequacy of farm implements. Unavailability or inadequacy of farm machinery was common with majority of cotton growers under study. Punjab was the only state where adequate irrigation was recorded while cotton growers from all other centers recorded that facility of irrigation was inadequate or at all not available with them.

The results pertaining to credit infrastructure shows that cotton growers from Andhra Pradesh had adequate availability of co-operatives, nationalized banks and money lenders while cotton growers from Western Vidarbha expressed inadequacy of all the three credit sources. The cotton growers from Central Vidarbha expressed inadequacy of nationalized banks and moneylenders. Majority of cotton growers expressed adequacy of information infrastructure like radio and television. All the centers except Punjab recorded adequacy of transport infrastructure.

Andhra Pradesh was the only State where adequacy in the availability of family labour and hired labour was observed. All the cotton growers under study reported that labour cost was too high. Majority of cotton growers from all the centers agreed that there is equal treatment to male and female, and there is no partiality toward boys or girls in education and brought up.

Majority of the cotton growers under study involves family members in most of the decision-making processes. It was important that considerable proportion of the cotton growers under study does not involve others in making the decisions

about inputs for crop cultivation. This clearly indicated the tendency of unnecessary secrecy in the application of farming process. Majority of cotton growers from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab had high level of strategic behaviour whereas majority of cotton growers from Western Vidarbha had medium level of strategic behaviour irrespective to their land holding.

### 3. Indebtedness Issues

The cotton farming was economically viable at cotton growers level as expressed by the B:C ratio. The economic viability of cotton farming was comparatively higher with the cotton growers having land between 2.01 to 4 hectare than the cotton growers having land less than 2 hectare in Karnataka, Punjab and Vidarbha. It was interesting to note that the economic viability of cotton farming was higher at cotton growers having land less than 2 hectare as compared to cotton growers having land between 2.01 to 4 hectare in Andhra Pradesh. Majority of cotton growers under study were indebted. Most of the indebted farmers had not repaid the loans due to one or other causes.

### 4. Antecedents of Alienation

Earning pattern of the cotton growers under study indicated that agriculture (farming) was the major contributor of the annual income as well as major area of expenditure. Another interesting note concerns to Vidarbha, where average annual expenditure was higher than average annual income. Majority of cotton growers under study had not received any contingencies. Majority of cotton growers had moderate quality of life and the quality of life was comparatively poor in the cotton growers having land less than 2 hectare as compared to cotton growers having land between 2.01 to 4 hectare. All cotton growers from both the groups from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka were benefited by Government policies. This was not the case for Punjab and Vidarbha wherein majority of cotton growers responded that they were not benefited by Government policies.

Family problems were mostly encountered by cotton growers from Karnataka and Punjab. The cotton growers from Andhra Pradesh and Vidarbha had not recorded any major family problems among them. Alcoholism was not frequent among the cotton growers of Andhra Pradesh and Vidarbha but the cotton growers from Karnataka and Punjab shows considerable alcoholism. Majority of cotton growers from both the groups from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab had high social support while the cotton growers from both the groups from Western Vidarbha and Central Vidarbha had moderate social support.

