

# Inequality and india's agrarian crisis

[Countries](#), [India](#)



The documentary deals with India's agrarian crisis and the fact that nearly 200. 000 farmers have committed suicide in India over the last 10 years. Despite India's fast growing and politically free media, the mainstream media hardly reflected the farmers' distress. There are several fashion, sport and movie correspondents, however, not a single correspondent is working full time on poverty. For example, the Lakme fashion week drew a lot of media attention, while at the same time the farmers growing cotton were taking their lives at a rate of 6-8 each day.

Rural Affairs Editor of Hindu newspaper P. Sainath sustainably covered the growing inequality and the crisis with its detrimental effects on farmers. Sainath states that the agrarian crisis is caused by the drive towards corporate farming and the predatory commercialization of the countryside which inevitably lead to the biggest displacement in Indian history. Some controversial facts that are highlighted are the following: whereas the per capita availability of food grain fell and hunger rose in India which is considered as an emerging market, hunger fell in 2 sub-Saharan countries.

In 2002 - 2003 India exported 20 million tons of food grain mainly used for feeding cattle in Europe, while at the same time Indians were starving and have to pay a higher price for the grains. The subsidies of Europe and the US destroyed cotton industry in other countries and Sainath even makes the point that their subsidies are killing Indian people. The entire structure of global trade and the monopoly of western companies over commodities enable the plundering of 3rd world farmers, therefore they should share the responsibility.

As 60% of India's people are still dependent on agriculture, the fertilizers and pesticides are very costly, and the crops yield very little profit, farmers see no other option than to commit suicide. In addition, the unjust high-interest loans which can not be repaid aggravate their situation and some even take pesticides and suffer a painful death when trying to escape their hopeless situation. All this was happening while India ranked 4th on the world happiness index. The writings of Sainath and other journalists compelled many high officials and the prime minister accompanied by the media to visit Vidarbha.

The farm crisis drew some attention, loans were waived, relief packages for farmers were established and the government previously in denial finally took notice and acted. Critique: As it is no longer profitable, farmers should leave agriculture. However, there is no industry which provides jobs for those without education and who are illiterate. Millions of people are leaving the villages searching for jobs that are non-existent. As Sainath states the fastest growing industry in India is apparently not IT but inequality.

This view is supported and therefore first and foremost the government of India should create new jobs and provide equal opportunities to make ends meet for the farmers in hardship. What is astonishing is that when India's stock exchange was troubled, it took two hours for the finance minister to get to the investors and comfort them. Yet, it took 10 years for the Indian government to come up with a rehabilitation package for the problem of farmers' suicides which was indeed documented in government data.

The situation in which the farmers find themselves is hard to explain in words. Suicide serves as a last resort for them as there is no hope that their

situation will improve. Sadly, one can see the intention to commit suicide in the eyes of some of their family members as well. What is more, their overall body language signals how desperate they are. Sainath makes an interesting point by pulling up Nero's guests and his burning of Rome. Nero threw grand party to distract from his real intentions and invited the upper class and the elite of Rome.

However, in order to provide enough illumination criminals and prisoners were burned at stake while the artists, philosophers and aristocrats were feasting. Sainath provokes us to think about who Nero's guests are in today's world? How can better off people around the world sit and watch, and consume more and more while a substantial part of the population is suffering and can't even live a worthy life. It is safe to say that as a starting point we should agree that we won't be Nero's guests and will raise protest unlike the guests in ancient Rome. It is often argued that one person alone can't achieve significant results.

Yet, Sainath and his endeavor is a good example that every individual effort matters when bringing about change. Application: The documentary relates to global inequality in several ways. By drawing on world systems theory it can be said that the farmers are victims of a highly iniquitous and exploitative global system dominated by the west. The question is raised if it is a sin to be born a farmer. A point can be made that the situation of the farmers constitutes a valid justification for the implantation of economic and social rights along with human rights.

Before the provision of assistance the Indian government might be accused of violating human rights by omitting action. Also an argument is put forward

which is linked to trickle-down economics. The ignorant statement is made that by making the rich really rich, the table gets loaded and something eventually has to fall off for the poor, thus the 'trickling down of wealth'. This effect could occur to some extent, still for achieving improvements the problems of the poor need to be addressed directly.

It is also mentioned that people come from renowned universities and work as consultants. Yet, they don't know anything about the farmers' lives and their work. This is somehow similar to the attempted implementation of neoliberal policies by the dominating western institutions. The persons in charge of handling and improving the Indian farmers' situation need to see for themselves how they struggle and under what conditions they try to make ends meet for their families. Otherwise there is a high chance that the developed strategies once again might not achieve the desired results.