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**“SUICIDE IS NEVER A LAST OPTION”**

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**Abstract:**

Today, suicide has become a trend. It is a serious topic for today's era. People have started committing suicide instead of finding solutions to their problems. It's an act done due to the storm of emotions and mental instability. India has highest suicide rate in all over the Asian countries. Suicide is different from ordinary death as it creates a disruptive psychosocial disorder and adverse effects on society. It's an overall loss of family, friends and society. It is hard to stop suicides by creating havoc and punishments in society like it was in India before implementation of Mental Health Act 2017, but it is important to spread awareness and to make people understand the importance of life.

Not getting success is okay, but losing yourself and committing suicide due to such failure is always cowardice. It's easy to start again from the beginning, rather than to kill our self for a temporary loss.

This article aims to provide the epidemiological and demographic factors of suicide in India and suggests the strategies for the prevention of suicide.

**PREFATORY**

The word suicide is derived from the Latin word *suicidium* (*sui-caedere*) which means to kill oneself. Suicide is a personal loss or tragedy which is a result of an action taken in hopelessness, isolation, etc. which directly or indirectly affects the connected persons too. The attempt to suicide is defined as a non-fatal self-directed potentially injurious behavior with intent to die.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> KRUG E. Vol. 1. Genève: World Health Organization; 2002. World Report on Violence and Health; p. 185.

## SUICIDE TREND IN INDIA

Suicide is now a trend in India. People get ready to commit suicide instead of finding a way out if they lose something. It is one of the most cowardly acts in one's life. People usually think that there is no reason to survive when all the doors are closed. It is general presumption nowadays that after losing something, suicide is a permanent solution for temporary problem. People do not understand that life is priceless, there is no need to end it because of any loss or failure. With constant efforts, hard work and positive self-confidence, any person can win over any problem.

The problem of suicide in India has always been ignored and today the condition is that India is leading country with most suicide cases in the world. WHO estimates that about 170000 deaths by suicide occur in India every year.<sup>2</sup>

Although suicide is a deeply personal and a individual tragedy, it is decided by many personal and social factors. It is a cowardice to end your invaluable life which not only has an adverse effect on your life, but it also disturbs your family, friends, all the people associated with you. People have 2 types of thoughts in suicide, on one side as Esquirol stated that *"All those who committed suicide are insane"* and on the other side Durkheim wrote that *"suicide was an outcome of social / societal situations."*<sup>3</sup>

## CAUSES AND STATISTICS OF SUICIDES

Suicide is a personal loss for which there are no predefined reasons because it is an outcome of many personal problems. But the root cause according to a study published in the medical journal The Lancet is depression. *"Depression is one of the leading causes of suicide in India, which has become the second leading cause of death among young Indians"*. The genus of some of the reasons is as under-

1. Illness – most often people died due to chronic diseases and illness of their family members.

<sup>2</sup> The LANCET E-Journal- [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(12\)60606-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(12)60606-0/fulltext)

<sup>3</sup> Report of Suicide and its prevention: The urgent need in India: Indian J Psychiatry. 2007 Apr-Jun; 49(2): 81–84.

2. Sexual harassment– as it was held in the matter of Manikandan v/s State represented by inspector of police Thanjavur<sup>4</sup>, where a girl committed suicide due to a boy who follows her for love affair.
3. Unemployment– Youth of India is not getting the job of their wish, the students are studying well and doing hardships but not getting the jobs due to less marks or due to reservation system, etc all this create a depression and mental disorders of students and may often resulted into suicide.
4. Exam failure– we have already seen such kind of steps taken by students very often. In the recent movie *Chichhore*, we have seen that students commit suicide due to failure in entrance exams.
5. Indebtedness– Due to poverty and indebtedness most of the people commit suicide as there is no source of income and they are under pressure of returning money or debt. As it was held in the matter of Rajkumar v/s State of MP where a woman committed suicide as she was unable to pay the loan amount.
6. Dowry and divorce– as it was held in the matter of Packiam & Others Vs. State, Rep. by Inspector of Police, Sivagangai<sup>5</sup>, where a wife committed suicide due to the continuous demand of dowry.
7. Love affairs– Due to the promotion of movies and series such as Tere Naam, people follow it in real life too and after losing love affairs take illicit steps and may also subjected to suicide.
8. Poverty– as it was held in the matter of G Balaraman v/s state<sup>6</sup> where a girl was committed suicide due to poverty and unemployment which leads to matrimonial sorrows.
9. Illegitimate pregnancy– as it was held in the matter of Gurbacchan Singh v/s Satpal Singh<sup>7</sup> and ors where the deceased committed suicide due to depression caused by taunts of illegitimate pregnancy.

<sup>4</sup> Manikandan v/s State represented by inspector of police Thanjavur (2014 (3) MLJ (Crl) 18)

<sup>5</sup> Packiam & Others Vs. State, Rep. by Inspector of Police, Sivagangai 2018 (3) CRIMES 132 (MAD)

<sup>6</sup> G Balaraman v/s state 1999 (2) CTC 703, II (2000) DMC 751

<sup>7</sup> Gurbachan Singh V. Satpal Singh & Ors [1989] Insc 289

10. Degradation of social reputation– as it was held in the matter of S.S. Chheena Vs. Vijay Kumar Mahajan<sup>8</sup> a law student committed suicide due to false allegations of theft.
11. Mental abuse– as it was held in the matter of Indera v/s State of Haryana<sup>9</sup> where a man died due to torture of in-laws.
12. Death of near or dear ones– it is also a grave concern in these days where people are emotionally weak enough to take illogical actions due to sudden loss of any near or dear ones.
13. Court cases – Implication of false charges and registration of false FIRs create mental disorders and create problem such as depression which may leads to suicide.
14. Family disputes and problems– as it was held in the matter of P.Mani v/s State of Tamil Nadu<sup>10</sup>, where wife had committed suicide with use of kerosene and fire in order to implicate her husband to make his life miserable.
15. Unknown reasons

The prevalence of suicides has been increasing over the years. Currently, suicide is an important issue in the Indian context. In India, the number of people who attempt suicide is increasing very fast every year. The number of people who commit suicide is 25 times the number of people who die by suicide. According to the W.H.O. report,<sup>11</sup> 800,000 people die due to suicide every year worldwide, i.e. one person dies by suicide in every 40 seconds. Suicide is the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death among top 13 causes. According to study of L. Vijaykumar in the article “Suicide and its prevention: the urgent need in India” - *In the past 20 years the suicide rate has rapidly increased from 7.9% to 10.3% per100,000 mostly in southern regions*<sup>12</sup>.

Since, attempting suicide in India was a crime under section 309 IPC, due to which the data and statistics we get is highly likely to be under-reported. The reports of LANCET in article “Suicide mortality in India: a nationally representative survey” are as follows-<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> S.S. Chheena Vs. Vijay Kumar Mahajan (2010) 12 SCC 190

<sup>9</sup> Indera v/s State of Haryana (2015) 11 SCC 31

<sup>10</sup> P mani v/s State of Tamil Nadu 2006 (3) SCC 161

<sup>11</sup> Suicide prevention Report, [https://www.who.int/mental\\_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/en/](https://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/en/)

<sup>12</sup> Indian J Psychiatry, 49 (2007), pp. 81-84

<sup>13</sup> LANCET VOLUME 379, ISSUE 9834, P2343-2351, JUNE 23, 2012 Suicide mortality in India: a nationally representative survey.



- 40% suicide in men and 56% suicide in women happened at age group 15–29 years.
- A 15-year-old in India had a cumulative risk of about 1.3% of dying before the age of 80 years by suicide.

According to a 2018 *National Crime Records Bureau report*, an unemployed person dies by suicide every hour. A total of 1,34,516 suicides occurred in the country, in which 92,114 males and 42,391 females were died from suicide. 12,936 unemployed committed suicide in 2018 which is 9.6 percent of the total suicides. Most number of suicides committed by house-wives were reported in Madhya Pradesh, India (2,876 out of 22,937 suicides).<sup>14</sup>

In 2017, a survey report was released by Lokniti-CSDS which states that – “12% or about one in every eight 15-34-year-olds reported feeling depressed very often. 8% said they very often felt lonely, 5% admitted to feeling worthless very often and about 3% reported getting suicidal thoughts very often and another 6% said get such thoughts sometimes and one out of every fourth youth moderately suffered from depression, loneliness, worthlessness, and suicidal thoughts. It also states that four out of every 10 people are going through depression”.<sup>15</sup>

#### COMMON MEANS ADOPTED FOR SUICIDE IN INDIA

1. Firearms- most often people use the firearms as it cause one shot death. *Suicidal gunshot injuries are located on approachable areas of body like over centre of forehead, temple (about 60%), behind the chin, root of mouth, and pericardium.*<sup>16</sup>
2. Self-immolation- Suicide by immolation in Indian domestic is much more common in female category. *In such suicidal burn usually some inflammable fuel like petrol, kerosene is used.*<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Chapter 2 suicides in India- <https://ncrb.gov.in/sites/default/files/chapter-2-suicides-2018.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Key highlights from the CSDS- KAS Report ‘Attitudes, anxieties and aspirations of India’s youth: changing patterns’ pg 10

<sup>16</sup> K.S. NARAYAN REDDY; Regional Injuries, Mechanical Asphyxia, Toxicology general consideration, Asphyxiants, in: *The Essentials of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology*; 27th Edition; K Suguna Devi, Hyderabad; 2008; 180, 208-256, 301-332, 440,555

<sup>17</sup> MOHANTY MK, ARUN M, GRANCIS MONTEIRO NP, PALIMAR V; Self Inflicted burn fatalities in Manipal, India; *Med Sci Law*; 2005; 45(1) 27-30

3. Consuming overdose of pills which reacts with body and may leads to death of a person.
4. Hanging- Hanging is a common method where death occurs due to the blocking of air pipe and the weight of the body by the tightening of neck with the help of rope or any tightening ligature. Although hanging is a common means for suicide in India, but in most of the cases, hanging does not result in death. *A study conducted at Manipal, India, 12 cases of hanging were studied between 1985-90, wherein 11 cases were suicide and among them 10 recovered.*<sup>18</sup>
5. Drowning in water bodies such as rivers, bowllly, wells and tanks which leads to filing of water inside the lungs and the person would die due to resistance of oxygen supply.
6. Poison- use of cyanide capsules, injections and inhalation of poisonous substances are used as a poison. *This could be from self-administration of an over dosage of a medicinal drug, pesticides or a cleaning solution used at homes.*<sup>19</sup>
7. Jumping from height.
8. Coming under running vehicles.

### INDIAN GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVE

Attempt to suicide was a punishable offence in India u/s 309 of Indian Penal Code 1860. The person who attempt to commit suicide was punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year or with a fine or with both. The Mental Healthcare Act 2017 was passed and decriminalized the section 309 IPC. According to Section 115 of the Act— ***Notwithstanding anything contained in Section 309 of the IPC, any person who attempts to commit suicide shall be presumed to have severe stress and shall not be tried and punished under this Code and the government is duty bound to provide care, treatment and rehabilitation to such a person in order to reduce the risk of recurrence of attempt to commit suicide.***

So in present context the attempt to suicide is not a crime anymore but abetting someone to do so is obviously a crime under section 306 IPC. The Honble Bombay High court in matter of Maruti Shripati Dubal v. State of Maharashtra opined that —“*We have already enumerated the*

<sup>18</sup> A. NANDY; Thermal Injuries, Drowning, in; Principle Of Forensic Medicine Including Toxicology; New Central Book Agency(P) Ltd.; 3rd Edition; 2010; 440-441; 540-549.

<sup>19</sup> JP HENDERSON, C MELLIN, F PATEL; Suicide-A statical analysis by age, sex and method; Journal of Clinical forensic medicine 2005; 12;305-9.

*different sets of circumstances in which a person may attempt to commit suicide. If the purpose of the prescribed punishment is to prevent people from committing suicides by deterrence, it is very difficult to understand how the someone can achieve this by punishing the people who already want to die and have made attempts to suicide.*"<sup>20</sup>

The Apex Court upheld the constitutional validity of Section 309 IPC in matter of Rathinam v/s Union of India, Where the Honble Supreme Court opined that- *We, therefore, hold that Section 309 violates Article 21, and so, it is void. The view taken by the apex court would advance the cause of humanisation, which is a need of the day, and also advance the cause of globalisation, as by deleting Section 309, the apex court would be attuning this part of our criminal law to the global wavelength*<sup>21</sup>.

## SUGGESTIONS

This is need of an hour to think and about reasons of rise in cases of suicide. The adequate measures to provide awareness on mental health are necessary. It is important to provide clinical intervention and professional help to prevent mental health conditions and promote mental wellness. Suicide is generally a decision made out of desperation, hopelessness, isolation, and loneliness. The signs of depression include feeling like there is no way out, staying quiet and feeling like there is no reason to live. There is an urgent need to develop a national plan for suicide prevention in India. Some of the suggestions are as follows-

- **Interdependence** - Everyone needs someone with whom he/she can share anything and everything so it is wrong to quote that "*I don't need help of anyone*". Emotions are the natural which is god gifted and cannot be changed by saying "*I don't care*". Share every thought, sorrows, happiness, anxiety with anyone, and if there is no one then talk to your parents, children or spouse they will always be there to listen to you. And it's okay not to be okay.
- **Care and protection**- In today's era, everyone is so busy in the race to earn every fortune and fame and due to which he/she has no time left for his/her loved ones. Today the relationship between parent-children, husband-wife, has become such that there is no personal time for each other to share and care. Children's mind is so brittle that they need parents care and support up to certain age and they love to share happiness and

<sup>20</sup> Maruti Shripati Dubal v. State of Maharashtra, 1987 CriLJ 743

<sup>21</sup> Rathinam v. Union of India, AIR 1994 SC 1844

sorrow with their parents and when they don't get such care and love they gradually develop feeling of loneliness and depression which more often resulted in suicides. So make some quality time from busy schedules for children and spouse and make them comfortable so that they can share everything whatever they feel. Don't fierce anyone in the guise of discipline, always listen to them and must try to understand and explain.

Alpa Doshi, counselling psychologist said that – *“Overthinking is one of the major reasons that prompt a student to commit suicide. Overthinking is the root cause of Anxiety and depression and generally, people battling with such issues think a lot. People keep on thinking and add negative thoughts to their mind and if they do not seek help from others at the right time, this often leads to suicidal thoughts.”*<sup>22</sup>

- **Restrictions** – There should be restrictions on access to commonly used ways of suicides such as eating/ drinking insecticides, pesticides, drugs. There is a need to develop an effective framework integrating the mental health with social welfare, education and other related sectors.
- **Strict Guidelines against farmer's suicide**- Farmer's suicide is a forced suicide, for which the government is responsible in most cases. This is one of the real problems which is ignored by Indian Government. Farmers are food providers and we are all alive only because of them. But when it comes time to listen to the problems of farmers, such as financial problems or crop failure, or any kind of personal problems and to solve those problems, then the government and officials start making foolish statements and attempt is made to get rid of it. In such a situation, when they have no other means other than farming, they are forced to commit suicide. Governmental agencies are required to take necessary steps and to make help lines against farmer's suicide, so that this new emerging trends are to be stopped in India.
- **Strict ban on hunger strikes**- Hunger strikes should be strictly banned by the government and should be held punishable in order to protect the lives of individual. Although it is fundamental right to speech and expression but sitting on hunger strikes is also a way to suicide.

<sup>22</sup>Report of mirrornownews.com “Student suicide epidemic in India: Over 10,000 dead in 2018; mental health, peer pressure key causes“ <https://www.timesnownews.com/mirror-now/in-focus/article/student-suicide-epidemic-in-india-over-10000-dead-in-2018-mental-health-peer-pressure-key-causes-report/562804>

- **Promoting and Supporting NGOs-** There is need for promoting and supporting financially the NGOs by providing the capacity of primary care workers and specialist mental health services.

## CONCLUSION

Suicide is a personal matter that should be left for the individual to decide and it cannot be prevented by other because its major determinants are social and environmental factors which are affecting the individual such as unemployment, failure, etc. over which an individual has relatively no control. It is indeed a mental illness but in my personal opinion, it is the greatest cowardice of mankind. One thing is to be kept in mind that thoughts of suicide are temporary and there is no need to worry, everything is possible and anything can be restarted from the beginning. The decriminalization of section 309 IPC is expected to have a major role in access to mental health treatment and possible reduction in under-reporting statistics and will provide mental care and protection from suicide and it will reduce the trauma and potential prosecution in the aftermath of a suicidal attempt. Have faith in God, if he has given you the problem; he will indeed give you the solution. This is the time to stand together as volunteers with mental health professionals and to adopt leadership roles in suicide prevention and to save the lives of millions of peoples.

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