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AN ANALYTICAL CASE STUDY OF PEASANT UNREST WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KAMPLI IN BALLARIDISTRICT OF KARNATAKA STATE.

Manjunatha K H * **Dr.Veeraprasada. M***
** Research Scholar & Assistant Professor in Political Science, SKNG GFGC Gangavathi, Koppala.*
***Research Guide & Assistant Professor in Political Science, Vijayanagar Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Ballari.*

Abstract
The contemporary agrarian landscape in India is defined by an intensifying dichotomy between macroeconomic growth and microeconomic rural distress. This research article presents a granular investigation into the socio-economic drivers of peasant unrest in Kampli Taluk, situated within the Ballari District of Karnataka. Drawing upon a longitudinal analysis of agricultural conditions from the colonial period to the present, the study evaluates the impact of systemic variables such as land reform failures, irrigation inequities in the Tungabhadra Command Area, and the institutional collapse of cooperative industries most notably the Kampli Cooperative Sugar Factory. Quantitative techniques are utilized to assess cost-of-cultivation paradigms, revealing that despite yields surpassing national averages, the net daily returns for farmers remain significantly lower than the national minimum wage. The research highlights a profound transition in rural agitation, moving from land-tenure struggles to market-oriented protests catalyzed by the forces of globalization. Through an analysis of field data, the paper documents a high prevalence of indebtedness to private lenders at interest rates exceeding 24%, leading to social externalities such as widespread drug addiction and a crisis of masculinity affecting marriage prospects. The study concludes that the resolution of peasant unrest requires a multidimensional policy shift that institutionalizes market transparency, strengthens livestock-based income buffers, and establishes social security frameworks tailored to the realities of small-scale producers.

Keywords: Peasant Unrest, KampliTaluk, Ballari District, Agrarian Crisis, Tungabhadra Command Area, Globalization, Socio-Economic Marginalization, Karnataka Agriculture.

Introduction

The agrarian sector remains the foundational pillar of the Indian economy, providing a livelihood for over seventy percent of the nation's population. Karnataka, specifically the Ballari district, represents a critical intersection of historical agricultural wealth and contemporary industrial development. However, beneath the surface of statistical productivity lies a persistent state of peasant unrest that stems from a confluence of environmental, economic, and institutional failures. The region of Kampli, historically significant as a seat of the Vijayanagara Empire, provides a unique case study into how localized agricultural conditions are shaped by broader national and global shifts. Agriculture in India is frequently characterized as a "gamble in the monsoon," a reality that remains unchanged despite the expansion of irrigation networks. In Kampli, the dependency on the Tungabhadra River, canal systems, and the Naarihalla streams defines the cropping patterns, which are dominated by paddy, sugarcane, sunflower, and cotton. Despite these resources, the agricultural system is plagued by unscientific practices, water scarcity due to reservoir siltation, and a lack of reliable market connectivity. The socio-economic profile of Kampli indicates that 89% of the population remains dependent on agriculture, yet a staggering 62% lack formal education, which severely limits their ability to adopt modern, scientific farming strategies.

The evolution of peasant unrest in this region reflects a historical trajectory from anti-colonial revenue

protests to contemporary struggles against market volatility. During the British period, the focus was primarily on the extraction of land revenue, which neglected the welfare of the peasantry and fostered a climate of exploitation by Zamindars. Post-independence reforms, while successful in some regions, failed to achieve equitable land redistribution in Kampli, as wealthy landlords frequently bypassed land ceiling acts. The contemporary crisis is further complicated by the forces of globalization, which have introduced expensive hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers, and a "technological treadmill" that increases the cost of production while stagnant crop prices diminish net returns.This research identifies that the unrest in Kampli is not merely an economic issue but a sociological crisis. The high rate of drug addiction (60%) among farmers and the emerging social barrier where daughters of the community are unwilling to marry farmers indicate a deep-seated despair. This study employs a mixed-methods approach to analyze these conditions, using quantitative data on costs and demographics to articulate the depth of the agrarian distress and propose systemic solutions for sustainable development.

Review of Literature

The academic discourse on peasant movements in India categorizes them into distinct historical and ideological phases. The early colonial period witnessed radical uprisings against feudal and British oppression, such as the Indigo Revolt and the Santhal Insurrection, which were primarily concerned with the restoration of traditional rights over land and forest. In Karnataka, the genesis of peasant mobilization can be traced to the late 1930s and the post-war period (1947-50), where politically sponsored activities among middle and poor peasants took the form of "tenant agitations". A landmark event in this history was the Kagodu Satyagraha (1950-51) in Shimoga, which focused on the rights of tenants against the arbitrary ejections and high rents imposed by landlords.The transition to what scholars terms the "New Farmers' Movement" occurred in the 1970s and 1980s. This phase was distinct because it was spearheaded by middle and rich farmers rather than landless laborers. The primary demands shifted from land redistribution to remunerative prices for agricultural produce, subsidized inputs, and the writing off of loans. In Karnataka, this movement was institutionalized through the Karnataka RajyaRaithaSangha (KRRS), established in 1980 under the leadership of Prof. M. D. Nanjundaswamy. Nanjundaswamy's ideology was deeply rooted in Gandhian principles of "Swadeshi" and self-reliance, arguing that the colonisation of the third world was continuing through the mechanisms of modern global trade.

Scholars like Ananda S (2021) highlight that the KRRS excelled in "populist philosophizing," positioning the farmer as a "nation-builder" while simultaneously resisting the "mad rush to elitism". The movement's opposition to the Dunkel Draft and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) brought local agrarian issues into the global spotlight.Literature also emphasizes the impact of globalization on seed sovereignty; the KRRS was one of the first organizations to mobilize massive demonstrations against the patenting of seeds by multinational corporations, which they termed "Western biopiracy".In the context of the Ballari district, literature explores the structural barriers to development, such as the failure of the cooperative sugar industry. The Kampli Cooperative Sugar Factory, founded in 1955, was once a model of community-based industrialization, but its subsequent administrative decay and privatization in 1999 led to a crisis for local cane growers. Research on the Tungabhadra Command Area reveals a systemic "head-reach" versus "tail-end" inequality, where irrigation water shortages significantly reduce the income and employment of farmers at the end of the canal network. Furthermore, the socio-economic status of farmers in Ballari is marked by a wide disparity between rural and urban growth, with agricultural workers earning daily wages that barely meet the cost of living.

Research Methodology and Methods

This study utilizes a descriptive and analytical research design, integrating both primary field data from the KampliTaluk and secondary statistical resources to provide a comprehensive analysis of the agrarian situation.

Quantitative Framework

To evaluate the economic stress on farmers, the research employs the "Cost A2, A2+FL, and C2" framework utilized by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) in India:

1. **Cost A2:** Includes all actual paid-out expenses such as seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, hired labor, fuel, and irrigation charges.
2. **Cost A2+FL:** Adds the imputed value of family labor to Cost A2.
3. **Cost C2:** A comprehensive cost measure that includes A2+FL plus the imputed rent on owned land and the interest on fixed capital.

The study specifically analyzes the cost-benefit ratio of paddy cultivation, the primary crop in Kampli, using primary data from a documented case study.

Data Sources and Sampling

1. **Primary Case Study Data:** Detailed agricultural expense profiles and socio-economic indicators from the KampliTaluk area.
2. **Demographic Data:** Population, literacy, and work profile data from the Census of India 2011 for Kampli Town Municipal Council and Emmiganuru village.
3. **Economic Indicators:** GSDP, sectoral contributions, and agricultural growth rates from the Economic Survey of Karnataka 2023-24.
4. **Technological Context:** Annual reports from the ICAR-KrishiVigyan Kendra (KVK) Ballari regarding soil health, pest incidence, and crop productivity.

Analyzing Methods

The research employs several quantitative techniques to interpret the data:

1. **Comparative Analysis:** Contrasting daily farm incomes with national minimum wages to determine the “Relative Deprivation Index.”
2. **Sectoral Contribution Analysis:** Evaluating the percentage share of agriculture in the District Gross Domestic Product (GDDP) and the Net District Domestic Product (NDDP).
3. **Irrigation Impact Ratios:** Using the “Head-Mid-Tail” reach model to quantify the reduction in yield and income due to water scarcity.
4. **Regression of Input Costs:**Analyzing the correlation between the adoption of mechanized farming and the subsequent rise in variable costs and rural unemployment.

Data Analysis

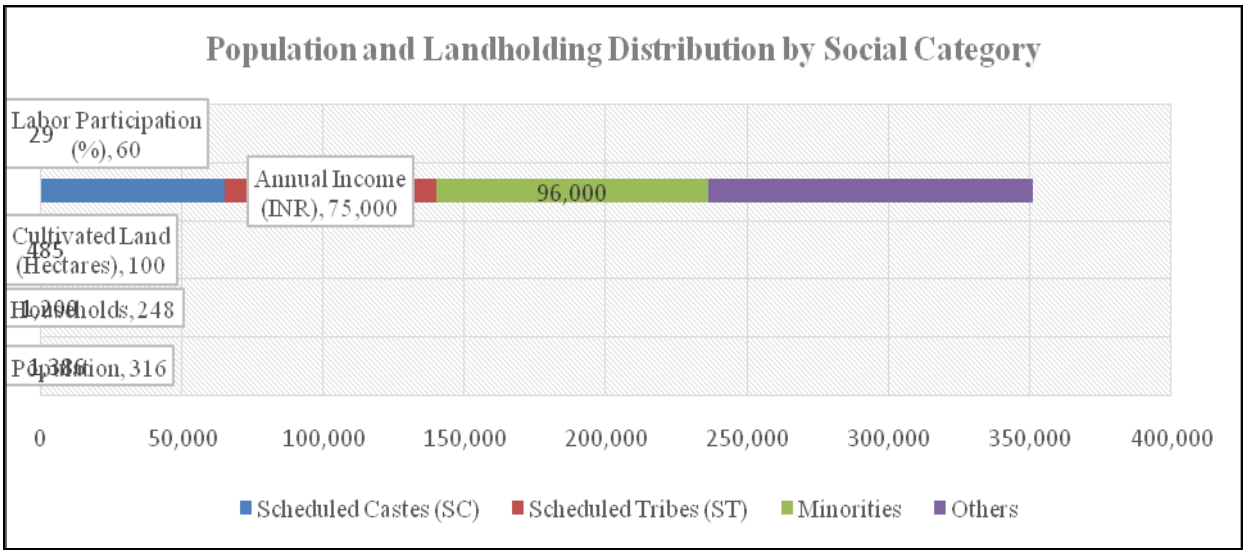
Demographic and Social Profile of Kampli

The 2011 Census indicates that Kampli's demographic structure is heavily weighted toward agricultural dependency. While the sex ratio is favorable (1,018 females per 1,000 males), the educational attainment remains a critical bottleneck. The literacy rate of Kampli Town (72.4%) is higher than the district average of 67.4% but lower than the state average of 75.36%.

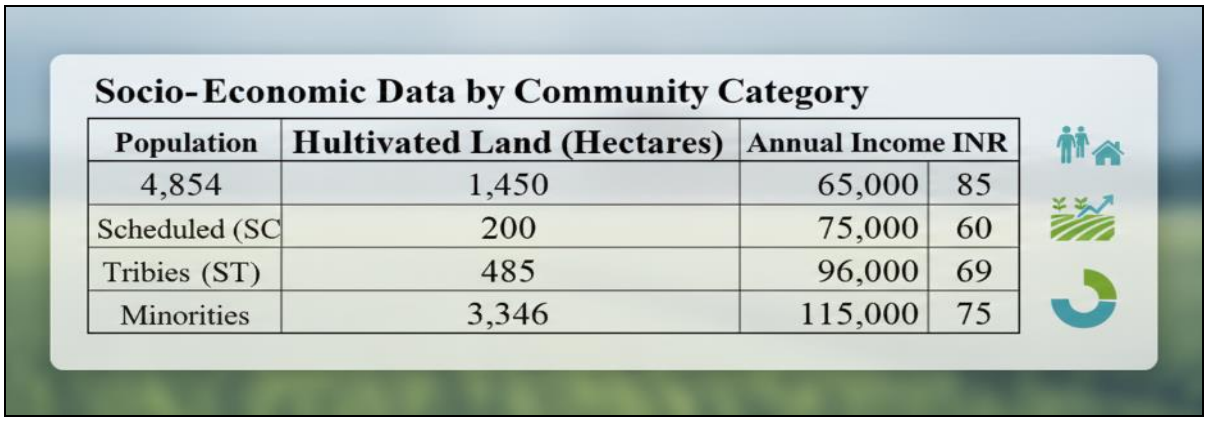
Table 1: Population and Landholding Distribution by Social Category (Kampli)

Category	Population	Households	Cultivated Land (Hectares)	Annual Income (INR)	Labor Participation (%)
Scheduled Castes (SC)	4,854	2,450	1,041	65,000	85
Scheduled Tribes (ST)	316	248	100	75,000	60
Minorities	1,386	1,200	485	96,000	29
Others	7,312	8,346	3,365	115,000	75

Source: Primary Data and Census 2011 data.



The data reveals that 75% of the farmers in Kampli possess less than 1 hectare of land, classifying them as marginal farmers. The high labor participation among the SC category (85%) combined with relatively low annual income (INR 65,000) highlights a significant degree of economic precariousness.



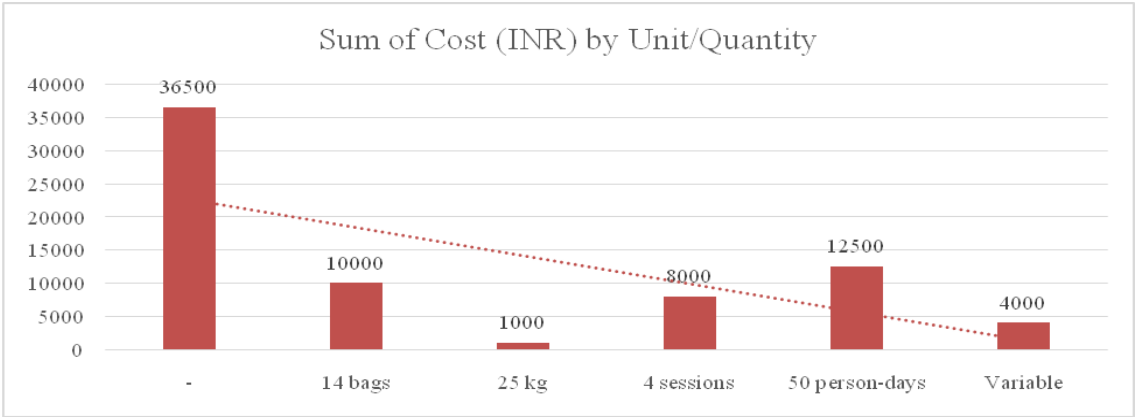
Cost-Benefit Analysis of Paddy Production

Paddy cultivation in Kampli is a high-input, high-risk endeavor. Despite yielding approximately 2,940 kg per acrewhich is competitive by national standardsthe net returns are marginal.

Table 2: Quantitative breakdown of Paddy Cultivation Costs (per Acre)

Cost Component	Unit/Quantity	Cost (INR)	% of Total Cost
Tractor Ploughing & Soil Prep	4 sessions	8,000	22.20%
Human Labor (Hired)	50 person-days	12,500	34.70%
Seeds	25 kg	1,000	2.80%
Chemical Fertilizers (Urea/NPK)	14 bags	10,000	27.80%
Pesticides & Fungicides	Variable	4,000	11.10%
Miscellaneous (Harvesting/Rent)	-	500	1.40%
Total Variable Cost	-	36,000	100.00%

Source: Primary Data and Author's calculation.



Quantitative Economic Assessment

1. **Total Output:** 2,940 kg.
2. **Market Price:** INR 22.5/kg.
3. **Gross Revenue:** 66,150 INR.
4. **Net Profit:** $66,150 - 36,000 = 30,150$ INR per crop cycle.
5. **Daily Income (150-day cycle):** $30,150/150 = 201$ INR.

This daily wage of INR 201 is 48% lower than the reported national average agricultural wage of INR 392 per day in 2025. This discrepancy is the fundamental quantitative driver of rural unrest.

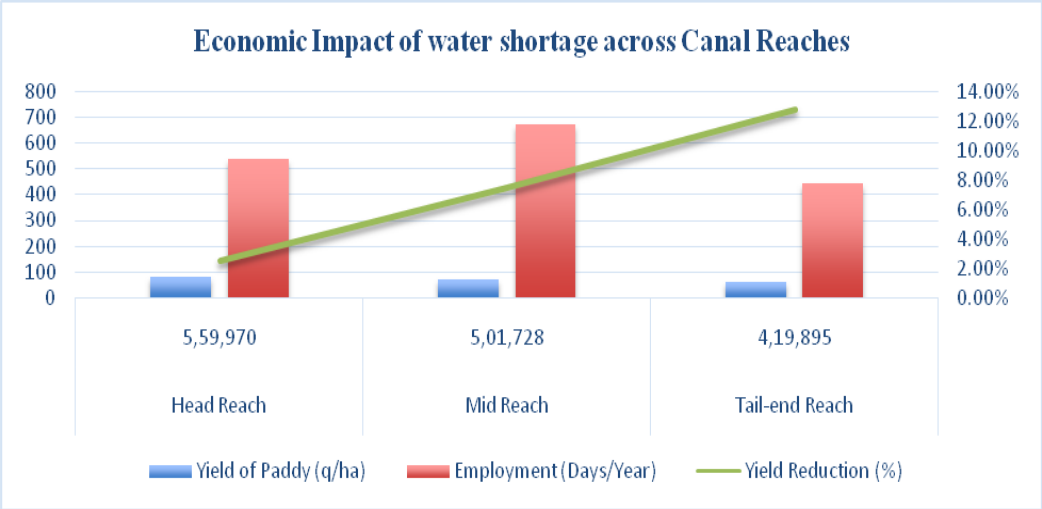
Impact of Irrigation water scarcity

The Tungabhadra Command Area has seen a reduction in storage capacity by 31.61 TMC over 55 years due to siltation.[5]The impact of this water scarcity is not uniform across the canal network.

Table 3: Economic Impact of water shortage across Canal Reaches

Metric	Head Reach	Mid Reach	Tail-end Reach
Annual Gross Income (INR)	5,59,970	5,01,728	4,19,895
Yield of Paddy (q/ha)	80.1	70.58	60.3
Employment (Days/Year)	538	675	442
Yield Reduction (%)	2.50%	7.44%	12.79%

Source: Primary Data and Author's calculation.



Tail-end farmers in the Kampli region suffer a 25.85% decrease in income compared to head-reach farmers, primarily because they are often limited to a single crop per year.

Result and Discussions

The Crisis of the Cooperative Model

The history of the Kampli Cooperative Sugar Factory serves as a microcosm of the failure of institutional support for farmers. Established in 1955-58 as the state's first cooperative sugar unit, it represented the aspirations of the local peasantry for industrial participation. However, the institutional decay began in 1977 with the transition to government-nominated administration, which led to financial unaccountability and corruption. The factory's closure in 2000 and its subsequent privatization to Sundari Sugars resulted in the displacement of workers and the loss of a guaranteed market for cane growers.

The discussion suggests that the failure was not of the cooperative concept but of its management. In neigh boring states like Maharashtra, sugar cooperatives have transformed rural economies by providing access to credit, irrigation, and guaranteed markets. In Kampli, the lack of a functional mill has forced farmers to shift to paddy, which is more vulnerable to the irrigation inequities documented in Table 3. The recurring "sugar cycle"where surpluses lead to price crashes and payment delays continues to discourage farmers from returning to cane production.

Globalization and Market Vulnerability

The impact of globalization on Kampli has been twofold. On one hand, mechanization has increased yields and reduced the drudgery of certain tasks; on the other, it has increased dependency on external inputs and reduced rural employment. Farmers now spend approximately 30% of their income on fertilizers and pesticides, which have also contributed to the depletion of soil fertility and water pollution.

The role of market intermediaries (brokers) remains a significant barrier to prosperity. 80% of farmers in Kampli sell their crops through brokers because they lack storage facilities and are under pressure from private lenders. These brokers exploit the farmers' lack of market information, charging commissions and manipulating weights. The absence of an effective Minimum Support Price (MSP) mechanism at the local level means that during bumper harvests, prices crash, leading to “distress sales”.

The Socio-Psychological Cost of Agrarian Distress

The quantitative data on low returns and high debt (Table 2) correlates with profound social issues. 60% of the farmers in the study area are reported to be drug addicts, a phenomenon the research links to the stress of agricultural failure and debt. Furthermore, the "feminization of distress" is evident, as 70% of the women in these households work as agricultural laborers to supplement the meager farm income.

A particularly poignant finding is the crisis of social reproduction. The refusal of local women to marry farmers' children due to the perceived lack of security and social status has led to deep despair among the rural youth. This "mad rush to elitism," as Prof. Nanjundaswamy described it, creates a psychological divide between the urban ideal and the rural reality, further fueling the sprit of unrest.

Findings and Suggestions

Key Findings

1. **Negative Real Returns:** The daily income of a Kampli paddy farmer (INR 201) is insufficient to cover basic living costs, especially when compared to non-farm sector wages.
2. **Debt Trap:** Only 38% of small farmers access institutional loans, while the majority are indebted to private lenders at interest rates of 24% or more.
3. **Irrigation Inequity:** Tail-end farmers in Kampli face a 25% income gap compared to head-reach farmers due to systemic water distribution failures in the Tungabhadra Command Area.
4. **Institutional Vacuum:** The closure of the cooperative sugar mill and the lack of government storage facilities (only 40 warehouses for the entire region) have left farmers at the mercy of brokers.
5. **Social Externalities:** Agricultural distress has led to high rates of addiction and a breakdown in social structures, including marriage barriers for farming youth.

Suggestions for Intervention

1. **Financial Inclusion:** Expand the "MUDRA" yojana model to provide interest-free agricultural loans up to INR 75,000 per acre through cooperative societies.
2. **Infrastructure Development:** The government should construct state-managed storage warehouses at the Panchayat level to allow farmers to store grain during price slumps.
3. **Market Reform:** Eliminate the role of unregulated brokers by appointing government buyers at the local level and enforcing strict laws against commissions.
4. **Income Diversification:** Promote livestock rearing and dairy farming as a buffer against crop failure. This requires the conversion of government lands into protected pastures.
5. **Social Security:** Implement a pension scheme for small and marginal farmers and provide marriage incentives (suggested INR 5 lakh) for brides marrying into farming families to stabilize rural social structures.
6. **Educational Support:** Establish "Farmer Schools" to provide vocational training and scientific agricultural education to the children of landless laborers.
7. **Irrigation Management:** Urgent desilting of the Tungabhadra reservoir and the modernization of canal gates are required to restore water flow to tail-end reaches.

Conclusion

The peasant unrest in Kampli Taluk is a multifaceted crisis that transcends simple economic metrics. It is the result of a historical transition where the traditional safeguards of the rural economy cooperative industries, communal resources, and traditional seeds have been dismantled by the combined forces of

institutional neglect and globalization. The quantitative evidence suggests that while productivity remains high, the cost-of-cultivation has outpaced market returns, leaving the small-scale farmer in a state of chronic vulnerability.

The resolution of this unrest requires more than periodic loan waivers; it demands a fundamental restructuring of the rural-urban relationship. The findings of this study emphasize that restoring the cooperative sector, expanding institutional credit, and addressing the irrigation inequities are essential steps toward stability. Furthermore, addressing the social and psychological impacts of agrarian distress is vital for the survival of the farming community. Prof. Nanjundaswamy's vision of the "village republic" remains relevant: the empowerment of the local community through swadeshi principles and direct democratic control over agricultural resources is the only sustainable path forward.

Ultimately, the farmer of Kampli remains a "nation-builder" facing unparalleled stress. By institutionalizing market transparency and providing a robust social security framework, the state can transform this climate of unrest into a foundation for equitable and sustainable rural prosperity.

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