



**PROF. TAMONAS
CHAUDHURI**
Hony. Editor
MBBS, MS, FAIS, FMAS,
FACS, FACRSI (Hony)

Editorial

Something beyond...

On a chilly winter night, a camel requested his master to allow him to poke its nose inside the tent to keep itself warm. The generous master allowed it. On repeated requests and approvals, the camel began entering the tent slowly but surely. Finally, the camel managed to enter the tent totally and drove the master out. Well, you may ask me why I am narrating a fable to my august readers. My request to my readers is not to concentrate on the story alone but note the subtle and sly yet completely planned movement of the camel to enter the tent to oust its owner. We will find a similarity in action between the camel and our topic of discussion. Dear readers this circumlocution is because I want to discuss in this editorial a topic that apparently may seem farfetched from medicine and health but on second thought it would be clear that these two topics are mutually closely related. I will be speaking on Farm Bills in this editorial and how they can affect the general health of the denizen of India.

The Indian agriculture acts of 2020, often referred to as the Farm Bills, are three acts initiated by the Parliament of India in September 2020. The Lok Sabha approved the bills on 17 September 2020 and the Rajya Sabha on 20 September 2020. The President of India gave his assent on 27 September 2020. They inspired the protests against the new acts, which gained momentum in September 2020. Let us understand the Act in detail.

According to The Gazette Of India THE FARMERS' PRODUCE TRADE AND COMMERCE (PROMOTION AND FACILITATION) ACT, 2020 (1) is an Act to provide for the creation of an ecosystem where the farmers and traders enjoy the freedom of choice relating to sale and purchase of farmers' produce which facilitates remunerative prices through competitive alternative trading channels; to promote efficient, transparent and barrier-free inter-State and intra-State trade and commerce of farmers' produce outside the physical premises of markets or deemed markets notified under various State agricultural produce market legislations; to provide a facilitative framework for electronic trading and for matters connected therewith or

incidental thereto. This act seems quite philanthropic at the first glance until you get through the skin of it. Three ordinances farmers are protesting against are:

1. **Farmer's produce trade and commerce ordinance 2020¹**

2. **The farmers' agreement on price assurance and farm services ordinance 2020².**

3. **Essential commodities ordinance 2020³.**

Now let me place before you the Government stance and the farmers' stance for and against the bill.

Government stance:

1. The farmers can market and sell their produce outside their notified agricultural produce and market community (APMC mandis)

2. The state government cannot collect the cess outside these APMC mandis

3. Greatest fear – the government will reduce the minimum support price for all their crops.

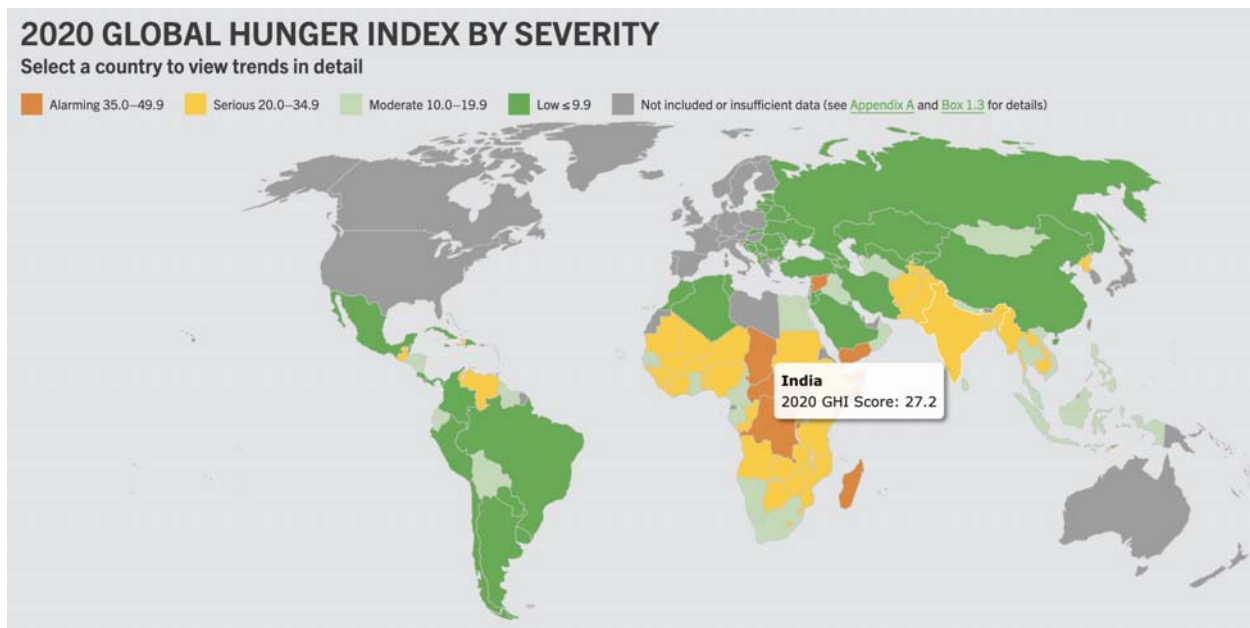
4. Farmers believe that the middlemen or agents do have credibility as their financial credibility is thoroughly checked during their license approval process.

5. The commission agents are also protesting because they think that the new law will render them jobless.

6. The state government is also protesting since their revenues will dry up that comes from these mandis.

7. The farmers believe that this bill will give monopolistic power to the private entities giving them a free hand to exploit farmers.

If we spare a little thought on the purpose of introduction of Farm Bill we can easily identify that it



3. Remove the interstate barrier by introducing electronic trading.

Farmers' stance

1. These reforms will entirely make them dependent on traders.

2. The farmers of Punjab believe that the Food Corporation of India and other central agencies might shut down annual rice and wheat purchases from the state which will eventually make them dependent on traders leading to harassment.

has been made especially keeping in mind the few companies. The prime motive of these industries is to capture the whole 1.1 trillion dollar retail industry in India. They can skyrocket their turnover to a stupendous amount if they can capture the huge potential retail market in India which is growing at a staggering rate of 35% per annum. But where is the end-user or the ultimate consumer in this whole process? They are the ultimate sufferers as they will have the least say under the towering giant companies

controlling the retail market. It has been a time-tested process that the commission agents buy the products directly from the farmers from the mandis and retail their purchases to their respective channels. On any dispute the Block Officer intervenes to settle the discord. Now instead of the mandis which were physical spaces where the farmers and the agents could bargain on the prices of their produces the government intends to introduce online trading platform. Like a God sent command the trading price of the product would be displayed and the poor farmer with his feeble strength could do nothing but agree to that price even if it means disaster to them.

These big tycoons will enter into contracts with the farmers per se for a period of five years against a lump sum and these poor souls would have no other options but to succumb to the malicious oppressions. As if that is not enough, these giants would have the right to stock unlimited agro products with The state having no power to control them. An ideal field would be set for hoarding and black marketing and prices of products for the average man could skyrocket beyond means due to artificial scarcity. Are we paving the way to another artificial famine?

The million dollar question however still remains unanswered. Why are we discussing these in a medical journal?

Now let us have a look upon the Global Hunger Index (GHI). In the 2020 Global Hunger Index, India ranks 94th out of the 107 countries India's score is 27.2, which means it is in a very serious state⁴.

While India is trying to prioritize health for all in the future how can this be achieved if consecutive manipulations lead to massive inflation and successive abysmal fall in the real income of the common man? Can we, the medical workers, prefer to remain aloof by saying this is not our field to poke into. The Indian poverty lines are based exclusively on estimates of the normative nutritional requirement of the average person in the rural and urban sectors. The national norms are 2400 kilocalories per day for the rural and 2100 kilocalories for the urban respectively. And how could an average Indian plan his intake of minimum calories when he is robbed of his very means to provide himself with the minimum support of energy to carry on his struggle for existence? What can we, as doctors, do to make India more healthy and wealthy uniformly? Should we raise our voice or should we stay out of it?

Dear readers I have posted a series of questions before you but believe me, they are more of my soliloquies than questions aimed at you. I would like to invite herewith feedbacks from you regarding what we all can do to make life more utopian for the average Indian.

REFERENCES

- 1 <https://egazette.nic.in/WriteReadData/2020/222039.pdf>
- 2 <https://egazette.nic.in/WriteReadData/2020/222040.pdf>
- 3 <https://egazette.nic.in/WriteReadData/2020/219748.pdf>
- 4 <https://www.globalhungerindex.org/india.html>