Suicide in India: An Analysis of Religion, Social Development and Economic Changes

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Over the past two decades India has been experiencing a steadily increasing suicide rate along with the simultaneous and rapid development of its economy. Analysis of the distribution of suicides in the country shows the rates of each state and union territories vary widely. An examination of the 2001 total, male and female suicide rates in the states and union territories of India is presented. The results of a regression analysis using social and economic development indicators as predictors, in addition to measures of state religious composition, are used to assist in explaining the variations in suicide rates. Findings indicate that significant factors associated with the total, male, and female suicide rates in the Indian states and territories are the literacy rate and employment growth. A higher literacy rate was found to be related to higher rates of suicide and higher employment growth was found to be related to lower rates of suicide. The implications of these findings for the alleviation of the suicide crisis in India are discussed.