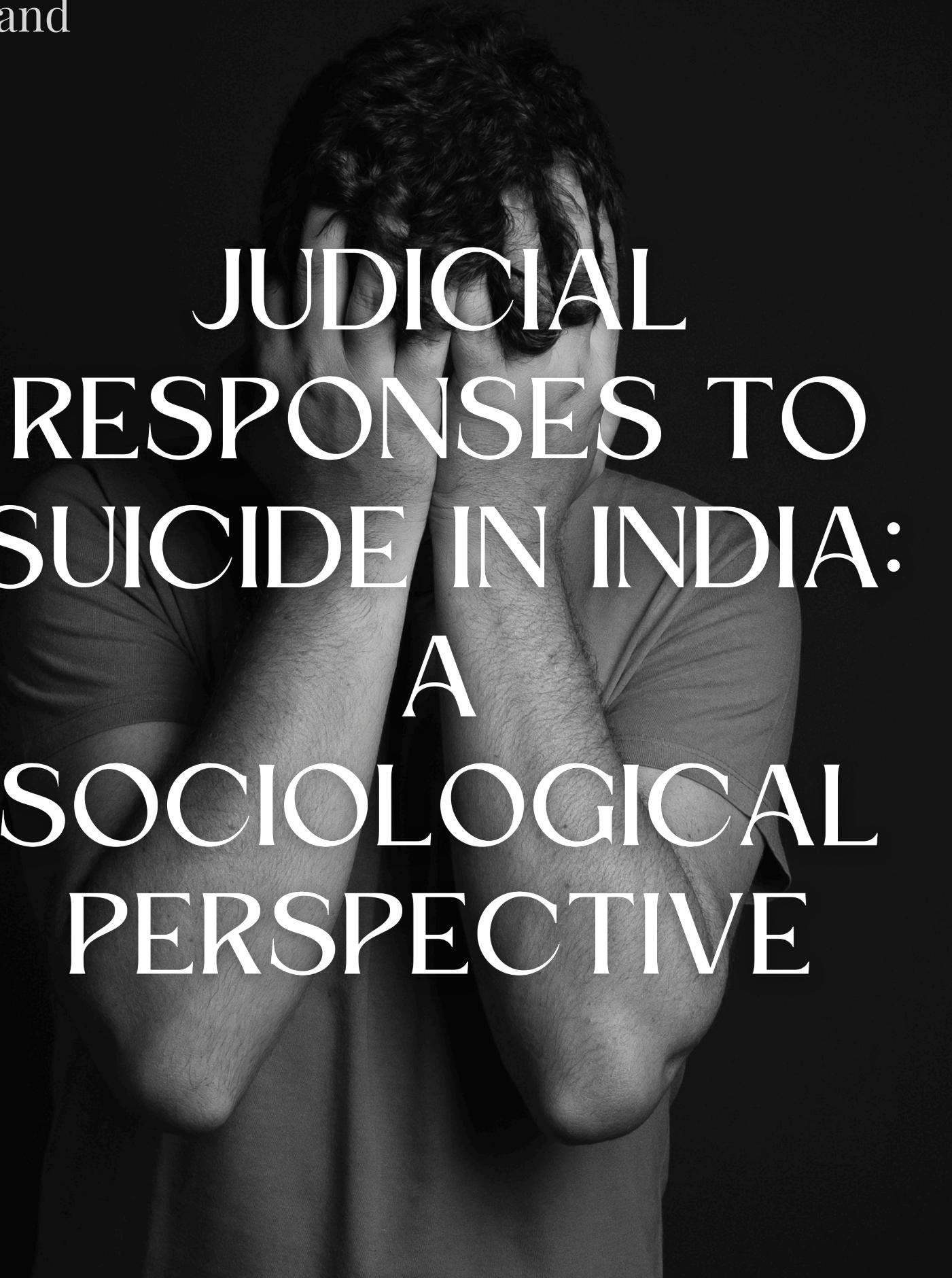
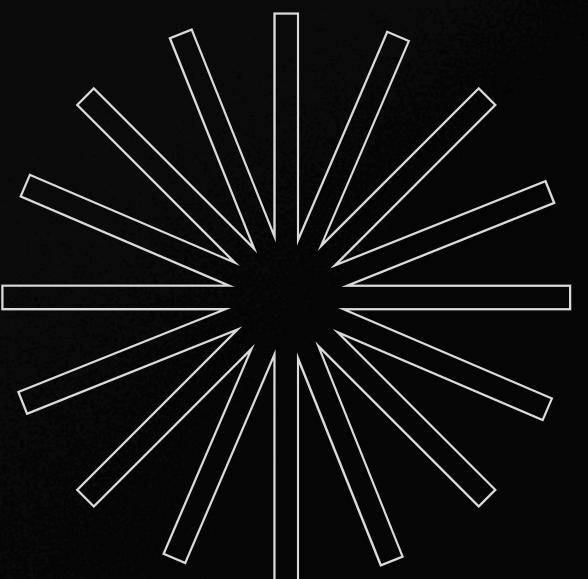


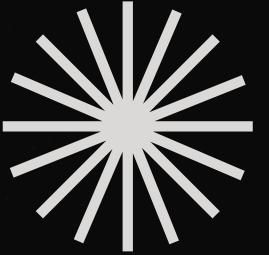
The person who completes suicide, dies once. Those left behind die a thousand deaths, wondering why
-Clark et al

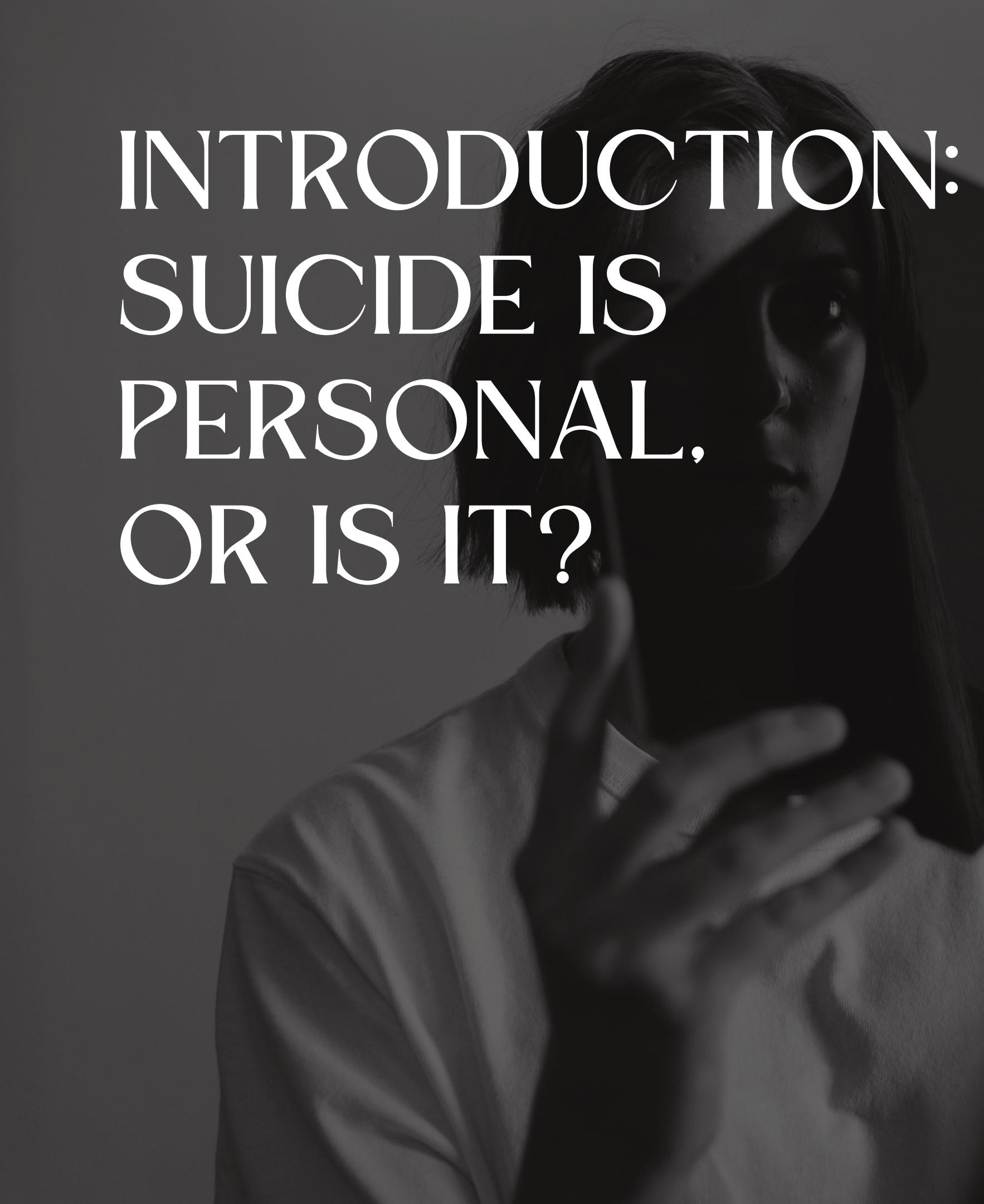


JUDICIAL RESPONSES TO SUICIDE IN INDIA: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE



Shravani K
2023115009





INTRODUCTION: SUICIDE IS PERSONAL, OR IS IT?

- Suicide as a social phenomenon, not just a personal act.
- Sociological questions:
 - How do societal values shape legal responses to suicide?
 - How has the transition from criminalization to decriminalization reflected evolving social norms?
- Key sociological theories:
 - Durkheim: Suicide and social cohesion.
 - Marx: Alienation in capitalist societies.
 - Weber: Rationality and the law's role in society.

- Statistical trends:
 - Rising suicide rates in India from 1980s to 2014.
 - Disproportionate impact on farmers and students
 - Social stressors:
 - Economic liberalization, academic pressures, lack of social support.
- Sociological insights:
 - Durkheim's types of suicide:
 - Egoistic (disconnection)
 - Altruistic (Excessive integration)
 - Anomic (social upheaval)
 - Fatalistic (oppression)

TRENDS AND SOCIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

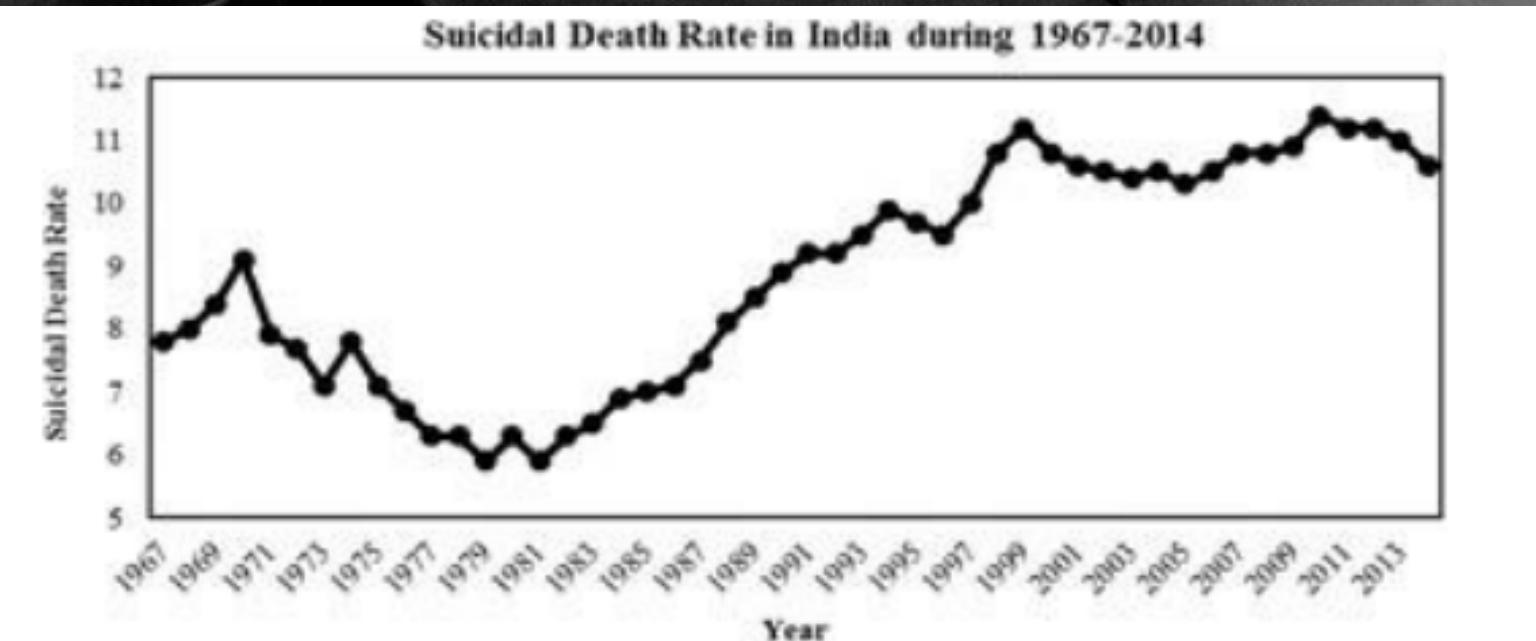
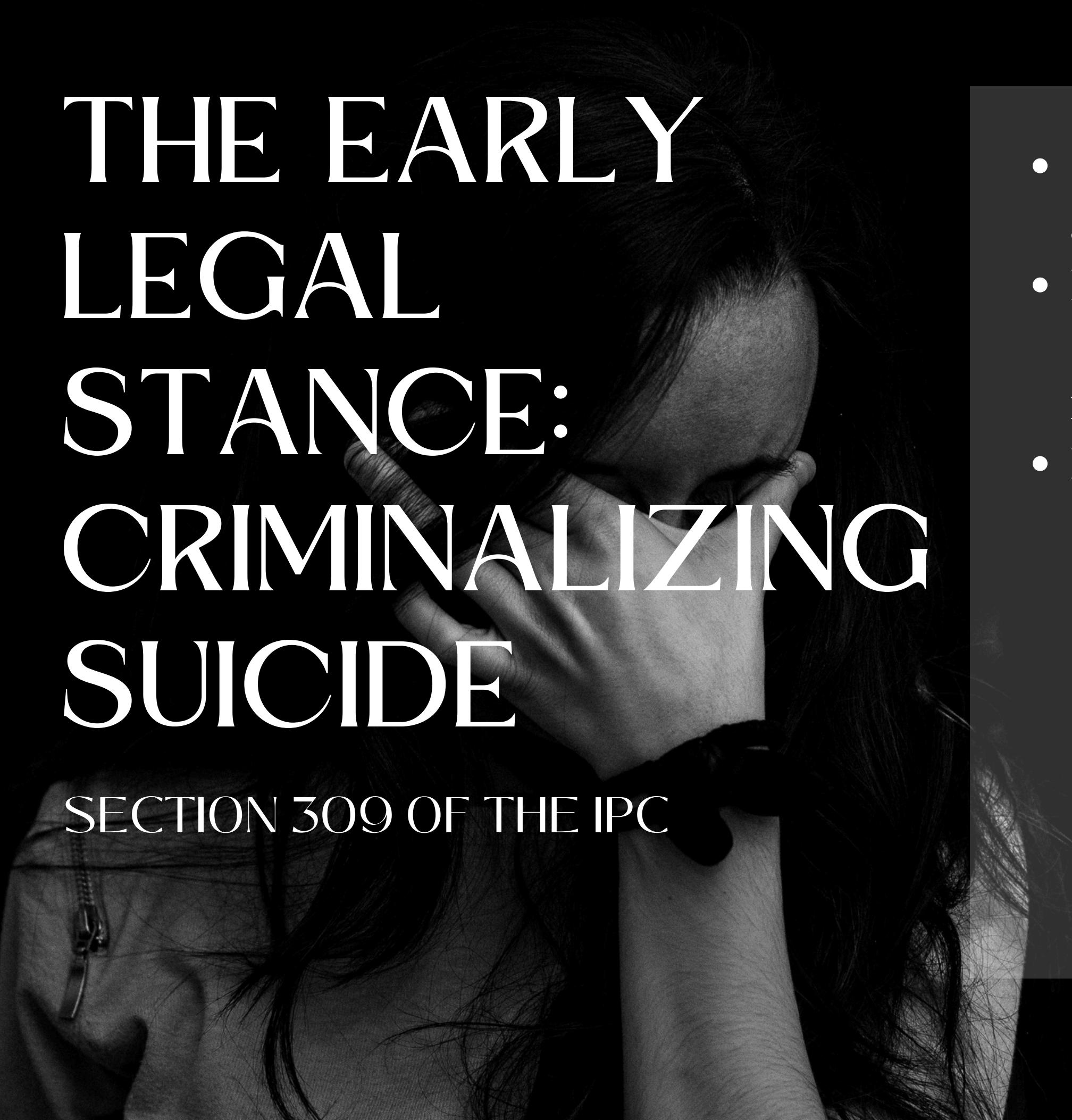


Fig 1.1 Suicide Death Rate in India during 1967-2014



THE EARLY LEGAL STANCE: CRIMINALIZING SUICIDE

SECTION 309 OF THE IPC

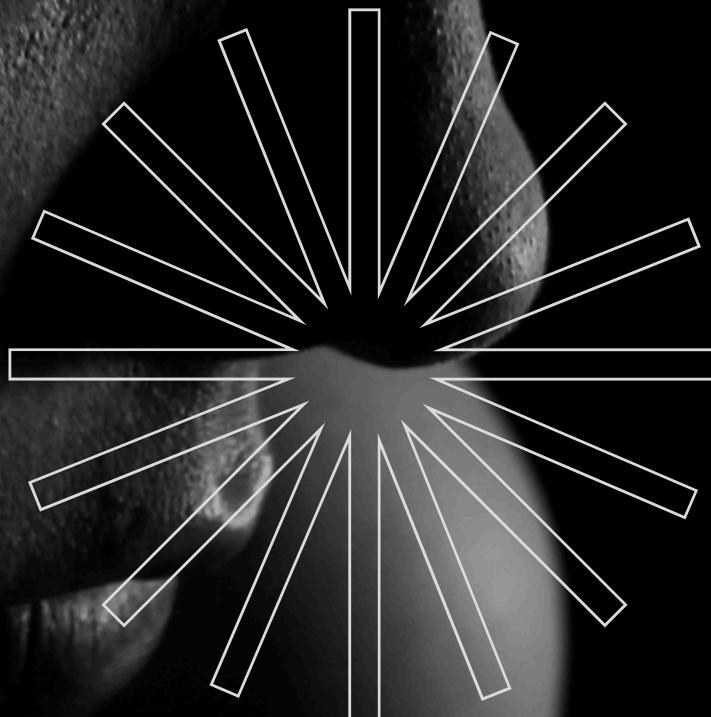
- Colonial origins: Suicide as a crime against God and society.
- Durkheim's collective conscience: Criminalization aimed at maintaining moral order.
- Impact:
 - Stigmatization of mental health struggles.
 - Symbolic interactionism: Labeling suicide as “criminal” deepened isolation.

EVOLVING JUDICIAL RESPONSES: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

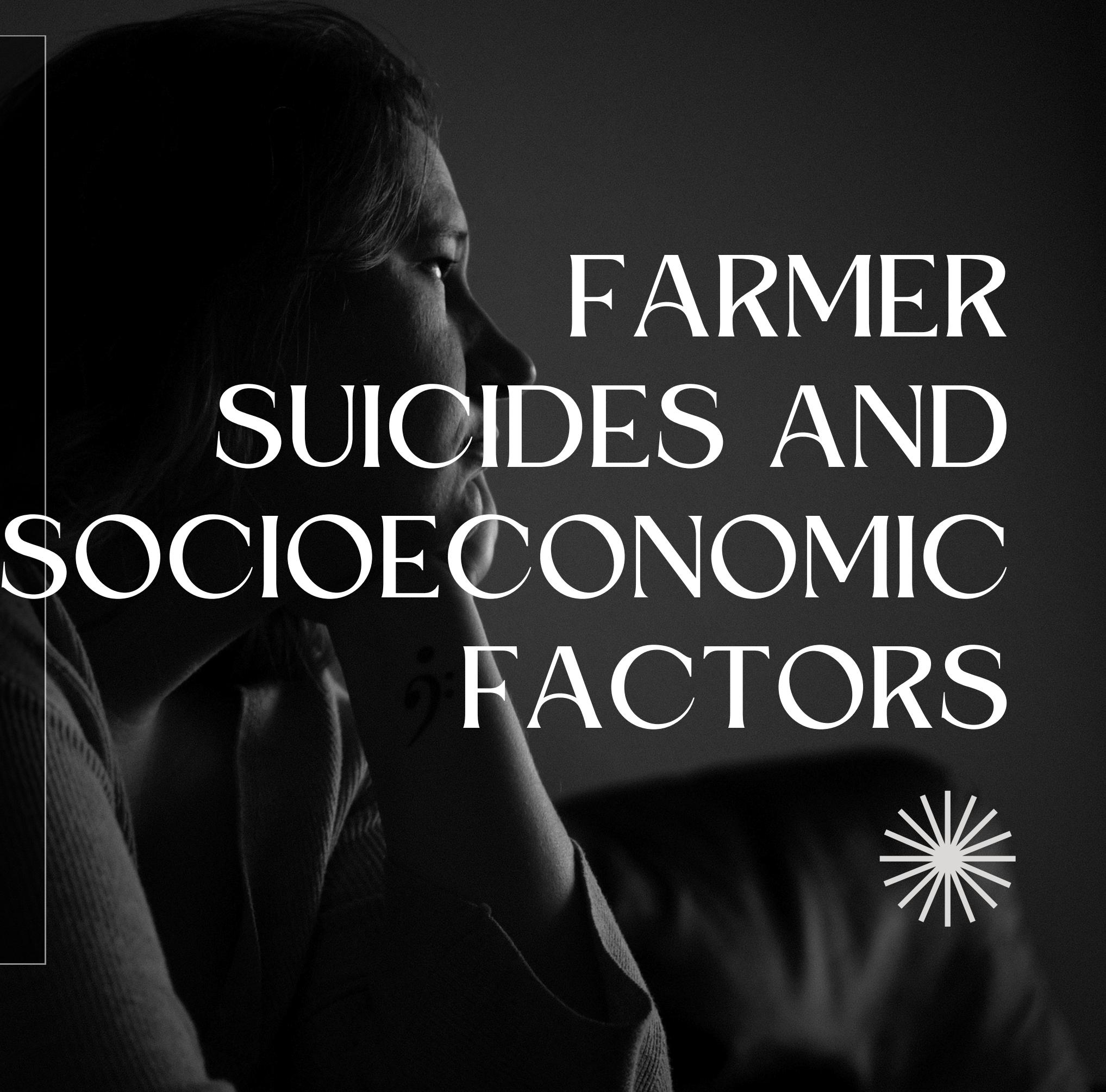
- **1971** - Law Commission Report: Advocated decriminalization, urging compassion over punishment. (Symbolic interactionism)
- **1970s** - Sociological Shift: From punitive approaches to recognizing suicide as a public health issue. (Marx's alienation)
- **1985** - State v. Sanjay Kumar Bhatia: Delhi High Court emphasized empathy for distressed individuals. (Durkheim's anomie duicide)
- **Late 1980s–1990s** - Farmer Suicides: Economic reforms led to debt crises and rural despair. (Durkheim's anomie suicide)
- **1994** - P. Rathinam v. Union of India: Declared Section 309 unconstitutional, supporting autonomy. (Weber's individual autonomy)
- **1996** - Gian Kaur v. State of Punjab: Reinstated Section 309, rejecting the “right to die.” (Weber’s Formal rationality and Fatalistic suicide)

- Decriminalization of attempted suicide.
- Mental health recognized as a public health issue.
- Sociological impact:
 - Weber: Transition from formal rationality (rigid laws) to substantive rationality (value-driven).
 - Goffman: Addressing stigma and enabling reintegration into society.

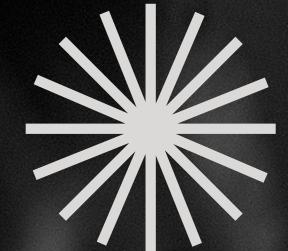
MENTAL HEALTHCARE ACT, 2017: A SOCIETAL TURNING POINT



- Durkheim's anomie suicide:
 - Economic reforms disrupted traditional structures, creating instability.
- Marx's alienation:
 - Farmers disconnected from labor due to debt and market pressures.
- State responses:
 - Compensation schemes (short-term fixes) vs. systemic reforms.

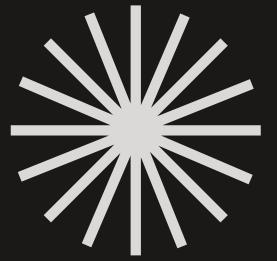


FARMER SUICIDES AND SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS



CONCLUSION

- Evolution of legal and societal attitudes:
 - From criminalization (Section 309 IPC) to compassion (Mental Healthcare Act, 2017).
- Key sociological takeaways:
 - Law as a reflection of societal values (Weber).
 - Importance of addressing root causes of despair:
 - Economic hardships, social isolation, mental health stigma.
 - Building empathetic legal frameworks and strengthening social bonds (Durkheim).
- “The role of society is not to cure, but to care.” – Michel Foucault



THANKYOU

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