

Problems of Polavaram Sub-Merged Mandals in Khammam District Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract:

‘The problems faced by scheduled tribes during the colonial period in the form of the loss of control over land and other resources due to alienation of land to non-tribes and the state-sponsored displacement projects has continued unabated in the post-independence period. In Andhra Pradesh the account of creation of the state of Telangana, Semandhra got Polavaram project package as a gift. Consequently 90 percent of primitive STs Groups of Khammam district have to face the problem of displacement. The nature of the present paper is exploratory, to discuss the main problems of the tribals who will be affected by the project in the district of Khammam in Andhra Pradesh’.

Introduction

The term ‘Adivasis’ (original inhabitants) refers to the Indigenous People of India who possess district identities and cultures often linked to certain territories. The term is derived from the Hindi word ‘adi’ which means ‘of earliest times’ or ‘from the beginning’ and ‘vasi’ means inhabitant or resident, and it was coined in the 1930s. Officially they are termed as ‘Scheduled Tribes’ (STs) which is a legal and constitutional term specifying the tribal groups with distinctive cultures, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large, traditional beliefs and practices, such as indigenous arts of dance and music, unique way of life and nature worshipping, living in unreachable areas. ST also refers to the groups living in unreachable areas with social and economical backwardness and highly depending on forests resources.

Khammam District– A Brief Profile

Khammam is one of the districts of Andhra Pradesh having a large tribal population. The term ‘Khammam’ refers to the name of the district head quarters, and is derived from the term Khammamett which means a hill popularly known as the Stambhadri that was located in the heart of the town. Khammam district was formed on 1st Oct. 1953. It is one of the ten districts of the ten districts of Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh. The District lies between 16– 45 and 18 –35 of Northern latitude and 79 –47 and 81 –47 of eastern longitude. The district is bounded on the North by Madhya Pradesh and Orissa States, on the East by East Godavari and West Godavari Districts, on the South by Krishna District And on the west by Nalgonda and Warangal Districts. The district total geographical area is 16,029 Sq.Km. and the total population is 25.65 lakhs according to 2001 census.

Khammam district is likely to give up the claims to the villages situated in the submergence zone of Polavaram project in Bhadrachalam Agency in the aftermath of the bifurcation of the State; it is set to

achieve the distinction of sharing borders with three States – Chhattisgarh, Odisha and the residual Andhra Pradesh.

The Central government's reported decision to transfer the "submergence villages" situated in Bhadrachalam and Palvancha divisions to the residual State of Andhra Pradesh is poised to bring about major changes in the geographical boundaries as well as demographic profile of the district. The Koyas are the major traditional groups, distributed over a large part of the Khammam District. Their habitat extends from the Sileru river in the north to the Sabari river in the west According to the reports of Tribal Cultural Research and Development (TCRT), a government agency, the Koyas of Bhadrachalam are generally, sturdily and medium in stature, with short flat nose, with spreading nostrils, thick and projecting lower lips and the complexion varies from light copper brown to dark chocolate colour. Their hair is usually wavy but almost straight. The Koyas speak very ancient type of speech, which is very close to Gondi and Telugu as well. The district has more than 200 km border stretching across several tribal sub-plan mandals in Bhadrachalam division with Chhattisgarh State. It also has a little over 35 km border with Odisha State. Of the total 16,029 sq. km area of the district, the tribal sub-plan area (TSP) accounts for 12,175 sq. km spread in as many as 29 TSP mandals of the total 46 mandals in the district.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the status of submergence mandals in Khammam district
2. To discuss the major threat to Adivasis to construct Polavaram project
3. To analyse the livelihood situation of primitive tribal group (PTG) in the study area

Research Methodology

The nature of research is exploratory. The study is based on secondary data, which were collected from the Integrated Tribal Development Agency ITDA, Bhadrachalam (2011) Planning Commission of India (various issues), Census of India & Andhra Pradesh (various issues), Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2000 & 2005), and A.P Tribal Welfare. The collected data have been transcribed into long sheets form, tables have been formulated and analysed using a wide range of appropriate information.

Polavaram Project – a major threat to existence livelihood of the Adivasis

Tribals are most adversely affected ethnic group due to developmental project like dams, factories and mines. Even though they constitute more than eight percent of the national population, 40 percent of displaced persons due to developmental project are tribal. (Planning Commission: 2002-07)

The Polavaram Project is a multipurpose one conferring Irrigation benefits in the upland areas of Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, West Godavari, and Krishna Districts. It also envisages drinking water supply to Visakhapatnam Township and other towns and villages' enroute and Industrial water supply to the Visakhapatnam coast based steel plant and other industries in the vicinity, generation of hydal power, affording Navigation facilities, development of pisciculture and providing recreation and other benefits,

besides urbanisation. The Project also provides diversion of 2, 27 T.M.Cum (80 TMC ft.) of Godavari Waters to Krishna Basin. the Project is located in Andhra Pradesh near Polavaram villages about 34 Kms. (21 Miles) upstream of kovvur- Rajahmundry Road and 42 KM. (26 miles) upstream of sir Arthur Cotton Barrage, at Longitude 81- 46E and Latitude 17- 13 N.

Court cases

Government of Orissa has filed original Suit No. 4 of 2007 and various Interlocutory Applications (IAs) in the Hon'ble Supreme Court against clearances granted by various Central Agencies including MoWR and against proceeding with the construction of Polavaram project by Andhra Pradesh Government and making defendant no. 1 to Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, defendant no. 2 to Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR), Government of India, defendant No. 3 to Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) and defendant No.4 to Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA). No verdict or stay-order against the construction of Polavaram project or against declaring it National Project has been delivered by Hon'ble Supreme Court so far.

To creation of Telangana state Polavaram project making to rice to controversy between semandhra and Telangana. Telangana as the 29th state in India, the town Bhadrachalam within the geographical area of Telangana region to split into two parts because of Polavaram Project, the AP Reorganisation Bill 2014 which was passed by the Parliament recently to facilitate smooth and full resettlement and rehabilitation as part of the Polavaram multi- purpose project. Under the amendment, Bhadrachalam and Palvancha revenue divisions Split into two parts, mandals of Kukunoor, Velairpad, whole of Burgampadu minus seven Villages of Pinapaka, Morampalli, Nagineniprolu, Krishnasagar, Tekkula, Sarapaka, Motepattinagar, uppusaka, Nakilpata and to Chintoor, Kunavaram, VR Puram and Bhadrachalam except revenue division of Bhadrachalam would be transferred to the successor state of Andhra Pradesh. However, Bhadrachalam town and the Rama temple would be part of Telangana state.

Profile of the submerge mandals

Table-1

Mandal	No. of G.P.S	No. of Revenue villages	No. of Households	Population 2011		
				ST	% of ST	ST+SC+ Others
Bhadrachalam	22	71	17714	25292	28.40	89048
Bergampahad	13	18	17324	14902	23.07	64580
Chintur	15	89	8720	31239	76.70	40725
Kukunoor	11	20	6150	9171	32.30	28392
Kunavaram	16	56	6059	15886	60.52	26245
VR Puram	11	62	5741	16112	62.94	25597
Velairpad	9	21	5221	14240	62.23	22882
Total	97	337	66929	126842	42.64	297469

Source: Hand Book of Statistics Khammam District 2011.

The district have first place in the highly tribal population concentrated area in Telangana, and also highly forest concentrated district in Andhra Pradesh. Majority of them live below the poverty line, Agriculture continues to remain the main occupation of 90% tribal's as it is direct source of income and employment for tribal people. This is the major issue in the Khammam District, 97 Gram Panchayats, 337 revenue villages, and 66929 households, 126842 tribal populations, affected due to Polavaram project. Chintur is the highly tribal population concentrated mandal in the district 76.70, and VR Puram 62.94, Velairpad 62.23 percent displaced persons are Adivasis, and totally 42.64 percent tribals are displaced. Some tribal family engaged in podu (shifting/slash-and-burn) Cultivation the forming sectors absorbs labour both as owner cultivators and daily labourer. Those working as owner cultivators get the direct and indirect benefits of agriculture as a reliable source of livelihood.

Forest and Geographical area in the submerges Mandals

Table- 2

Sl.No.	Name of the Mandal	Geo. Area (in acres)	Forest Area (in acres)
1	Bhadrachalam	37269	25514
2	Bergampahad	37058	18673
3	Chintur	95529	84380
4	Kukunoor	27134	17989
5	Kunavaram	20382	5435
6	VR Puram	47473	35695
7	Velairpad	41544	29471
	Total	306389	217157

Source: Bhadrachalam ITDA Report 2011.

Primitive Tribe Konda Reddis- Submergence mandals

Bhadrachalam revenue division the area is located between the East 80021' - 81009' longitudes and 17036' - 18038' North latitudes. The total geographic area of the division is 1, 96,800. Konda Reddis live in thick forests on high mountains. They speak an ancient dialect of Telugu. In general, they are reserved in behaviour and often do not trust people from the plains. They are good craftsmen, who use Bamboo to make a variety of items. The Konda Reddis also known as Hill Reddy, are classified as a PTG (Primitive Tribal Group) and are one of the most backward tribal groups in the State inhabiting both banks of the Godavari river in the hilly and forest tracts of Khammam district. They live in the interior forest areas and are largely cut off from the mainstream. They were traditionally shifting cultivators and a few continue to practice this but in recent times they have gradually adopted settled agriculture and horticulture.

Displaced Tribe Kondareddis Population

Table- 3					
SNo	Name of the Mandal	No. of PTG Habitations	House Holds	Population	% of PTG in ST population
1	Kunavaram	16	233	849	5.34
2	Chintur	27	312	1165	3.72
3	VR Puram	20	1031	2628	16.31
4	Velairpad	12	548	1841	12.92
	Total:	75	2124	6483	8.36
<i>Source: Bhadrachalam ITDA Report2011</i>					

There are totally 75 habitations and 2124 households totally 6483 populations of the district 4mandalswithin the tribal community Kunavaram 5.34, Chintoor 3.72, VR Puram highly 16.31, and Velairpad 12.92 to propose to transfer the semandhra region 8.36percent of the Kondareddis people displaced due to the Polavaram Project.

The Konda Reddis who inhabit the fringe areas of the plains have become settled cultivators but those living in the vicinity of the hill areas are still resorting to shifting cultivation. Forest labour, collection of MFP and basket making are subsidiary sources of livelihood. Konda Reddis constitute just 1.7% of the total tribal population of Andhra Pradesh. They live in a very primitive stage of development in the hunter, food gatherer stage of human civilization. They call themselves Pandava Reddis after the five Pandava brothers, the great heroes of Mahabharata, from whom they descent. Telugu is their mother tongue. They speak chaste Telugu with an accent of their own. They are educationally very backward with only 2% of them are literate. They are victims under the construct of Polavaram Project.

Normally, their bodily constitution will be of little stout body, short legs, copper or chocolate colour. This group belongs to very primitive Adivasis; the face will be just like a heart. There will be small beard nose just like arrow and clear nestholes, incomplete lips small mouth curling long hairs. There are no totemic clans like Koyas among KondaReddis. The surnames or 'Intiperlu' only regulate matrimonial relations. The following surnames are commonly found among KondaReddis: Ketchala, Vetla, Aragantala, Gurukuntla, Murla, Katakala, Sokula etc.

In olden days there were no clothes also to wear. They used to cover their bodies with leaves and animal skins in olden days. In recent years i.e. since last 20 years onwards all of them are using clothes, by observing civilized society as well as interacting with civilized society.

Conclusion

Now in Andhra Pradesh bifurcation the central Government move to transfer hundreds of villages under submergence zone of Polavaram project from Bhadrachalam Agency to the Semandhra region (the residual Andhra Pradesh) was part of its strategy to ensure construction of the project without giving any scope for

resistance at the cost of lakhs of Adivasis. It will cause irreparable damage to the distinctive cultural heritage of Adivasis including the members of primitive tribal groups and the rich ecosystem encompassing the famous Papikondalu wildlife sanctuary. The Polavaram project is in violation of The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, which provides for “land for land” in command area for the affected people under irrigation projects and protection to ensure that “all benefits, including the reservation benefits available to the Scheduled Tribes and the Scheduled Castes in the affected area shall continue in the resettlement area”. It is also mandatory for obtaining prior consent of concerned Gram Sabha or the Panchayats in the Scheduled Area under Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act (PESA) 1996.

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