



IMPACT OF FAMINES IN ANANTAPUR DISTRICT- A REVIEW (1970-1990)

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Introduction

Anantapur is the southern-most district of the *Rayalaseema* region of Andhra Pradesh. While agriculture remains the most important economic activity of the district, it is characterized by high levels of instability and uncertainty. Being located in the rain shadow region of Andhra Pradesh, in the district is drought-prone. By now, it is well established that while a generalized rural crisis is prevalent across the country, a disproportionate burden has fallen on its drier tracts. Anantapur is the largest district in Andhra Pradesh. Its area measures 19130 Sq kms, this is almost equivalent to the district of East and West Godavari district area of Andhra Pradesh both these district is mere 32 lakhs. This is an indicator of its development. Where there is no opportunity of development the population is naturally thin. Agriculture land of Anantapur could not attract anyone to migrate over here. On the other hand the district has history of migrations. In the last 40 to 50 years landless Dalit and poor have left and settled in other places. Here 90% of the cultivable land is depending on the rain fed, even this rain is erratic and it does not guaranty any crop.

It is only agriculture, which is main source of employment in the district even to this day. Lack of rainfall has forced the farmers to go in search of ground water and this has forced the farmers to depend on power. A modern cultivation method, wide spread usage of chemical fertilizers and pesticides has made agriculture for more cost oriented. This has transformed from completely labor oriented agriculture in to market oriented and power dependent agriculture. The fluctuations in the market have played havoc with the lives of the farmers. So, not in a position to cope up with the agriculture returns, every year former is forced to go for more and more debts. It has reached a state that the farmer is forced to go for cultivation even in the face of recurring losses. So, in these conditions of scanty rainfall and marketability of Groundnut invariably the only crop turned out to be the Groundnut, which could satisfy the farmer's demands and also government policies. **Keeping this in view, the present paper** tries to probe into the details of the study and analysis of various facets of famine and drought in Anantapur district 1970-1990.

Discussion

Economic conditions of Anantapur district have a close bearing on famines. (History of famine in India reveals the fact that during the colonial rule in India there has been an increase in the frequency of famines due to the deteriorated economic condition of the masses on account of making India too activities). The frequent recurrence and severity of famines in the district during the 20th century is due to economic conditions.

The following are some of the causes of famine in Anantapur District

- Lack of irrigational facilities.
- Under developed transport. Communication and power.
- Cumulative nature of famines.
- Excessive dependency on Agriculture
- Small scale farming and defective land utilization and
- Workless ness in rural area (due to Population explosion.)

Lack of Irrigational facilities: Although Andhra Pradesh is a "River State" famous for its water resources, Anantapur district a component of Andhra Pradesh is not endowed with similar water potential because river waters are not brought to the district for irrigational purposes. There are only two rivers – Pennar and Chitravathi in the entire district (entire Rayalaseema). The river themselves do not have water round the year. Only in rainy season the rivers flow with water and sometimes excessively to inundate the borders of the regions in which the river flow.

The other areas of the district to a great extent depend upon canals, tanks and wells. This network depends purely on rainfall. Which is not regular and sufficient in the district, hence the nearness of the district to drought calamities leading to famine. The nature of the major fraction of land is such that it cannot preserve moisture. This adds fuel to the fire. In the event of a shortage of rainfall, the poor network of irrigational facilities. Fail to store water to contain the disastrous effects of famine. The water resources of this district are less as compared to the other districts of coastal Andhra and Telangana, due to the lack of perennial rivers and also due to the erratic precipitation of the district.



The ground water is the only source of assured irrigation in drought prone backward areas with affordable investments and quick turn around time without longer gestation period unlike major irrigation Projects, the major source of recharge to ground water is rainfall which constitutes about 8 to 15 percent. The rapid increase in ground water exploitation has resulted in fall in water table level and drying up of shallow dug wells / bore wells rendering themselves useless and leading to untold miseries to the farmers. Hence, there is an urgent need for the augmented main water harvesting to increase the recharge from 10 to 15 percent to at least to 30 percent of the water resource available in Anantapur has been calculated basing on the rainfall and run-off characteristics. The model is as follows.

Water Harvesting in Anantapur District

a)	Geographical	:	1913492 Ha
b)	Average rainfall	:	520 mm
c)	Total precipitation over geographical area	:	9950 MCM
d)	Ground Water recharge (Village-wise estimate 11% of rainfall)	:	1101 MCM
e)	Evapotranspiration	:	5970 MCM
f)	Run-off	:	2985 MCM
g)	Surface Water Storage	:	839.57 MCM
h)	Balance Run-off (f-g)	:	2145 MCM
i)	Potential rainwater harvesting (50% of h)	:	1072 MCM
j)	Proposed harvesting through		
	(1) Percolation tank	:	177.41 MCM
	(2) Farm Ponds (0.003(x)2(x)289000)	:	173.40 MCM
	(3) Check dams (0.014(x)4(x)0.6(x)1692)	:	56.85 MCM
	Total		
	(37 per cent over present ground water recharge)	:	407.66 MCM

Source : Government of Andhra Pradesh perspective plan for Rayalaseema region (A.P.) Plan Programs volume2. 1972. P.142 and Statistical Data collected from C.P. Office, Anantapur.

Under- developed transport, communication and power generation: Lack of transport, communication and power in the region is also an important cause of famine. Agriculture, mining, quarrying, trading and industries depend on transport system, efficient communication and power for their progress. Most of the rural areas in the region are not connected with towns or city. With no proper transport system market facilities are also very poor in the district? Deccan Riot's commission has rightly pointed out that "the country was without roads, and hill ranges rendered the transport of commodities by pack animals difficult and costly, the agricultural community suffered in year of drought by the famine prices of articles of consumption, and in year of plenty by the low prices of tire produce in the overstocked local markets" (Report of Deccan Riot's Commission , Para 32), This is quite true in Anantapur District. Lack of transport severely restricted the movement of food grains so that while in one part of the county people died of lack of food, in another, only a few miles away there was abundance of cheap food. Food grains of the rich coastal areas could not be utilized for home consumption in Anantapur district and they are consequently exported to the other parts. Lack of communication facilities, lack of scientific technology and also lack of knowledge about the latest development in agriculture are responsible for the division of villages into many independent economic units.

The following table indicates the number of villages connected with the main roads by different types of roads and to those not connected with any road.

Transport System in Anantapur District

Sl.No.	Year	Total inhabited villages No.of	Number of villages			
			On main road.	Connected by Pucca Road	Connected by Kachcha Road	Not Connected by any Road
1	1970	948	289	106	398	155
2.	1980	1202	299	182	290	200
3.	1990	1316	408	302	350	150

Source : Government of Andhra Pradesh perspective plan for Rayalaseema region (A.P.) Plan Programs volume2. 1972. P.142 and Statistical Data collected from C.P. Office, Anantapur.



Electrification: Rural electrification is necessary in the district in order to uplift the under developed and primitive villages. But in Anantapur district no proper development is made in the electricity sector. This can be seen through the study of electricity consumption in the district. The following table shows the consumption of electricity in the district.

Consumption of Electricity in Anantapur District

Sl.No.	Year	Total Consumption (Lakh KWH)	Per capita consumption in 1970-1990 (KWH)		Total
			Industrial	Agricultural	
1.	1970	1,891.0	21.5	20.2	41.7
2.	1980	2,882.0	30.2	32.1	62.3
3.	1990	3,992.5	31.0	33.5	64.5

Source :Data collected from C.P. Office, Anantapur.

We understand as to why the district of Anantapur is more backward in respect of communication facilities; transport, power and the lack of these required facilities constitute the causes of famine in the district.

Cumulative Nature of Famines: With frequent occurrence of famines the farmer's wealth is damaged by short rations and made them incompetent physically to cultivate the usual acreage for the next crop. Next crop becomes again smaller than the usual and things go from bad to worse. Although modern developments have made the incidence and the severity of the crop season less serious, the problem is still an alarming one in the district. Other ways in which famine tends to breed famine are seen when seed stocks or drought animals are consumed for foods thus making the securing of the next seasons harvest a still more difficult task. For examples in Anantapur district in the present century there were famines in 1921-23,1924,1926,1931,1934,1937,1942,1945,1950,1951,1952. Giving only a time interval of two three years in most cases between the visitation of one catastrophe and the other. The incidence of famine helps the creation of near-famine conditions. This is brought about by means of rural indebtedness. Indebtedness impoverished the agriculturists in two ways. Annually it deprived him of a considerable part of his income and very often even obliged him to sell the whole produce to creditor at below the market rate; in the long run, it forced him to part with his land and reduce himself to the position of a tenant. This is the present portrait of a farmer.

Excessive Dependence on Agriculture: Agriculture is the only activity which directly depends on rainfall and irrigation facilities. It has been shown that the percentage and level of rainfall in Anantapur district is below the state average and is insufficient to meet the requirements in agriculture. Rainfall is a random phenomenon, which may also be untimely. This erratic nature of rain hampers food production and agricultural growth.

The below table shows that the 75 percent of the population dependents on agriculture. The workers depending on non-agricultural sector are very low in number. This proves that the excessive dependency on agriculture is resulting in famine.

Occupational Distribution of Workers, Anantapur

Sl.No.	Classification of workers	1971	1991
1.	Cultivators	3,26,992	4,62,992
2.	Agricultural Labour	3,46,090	4,89,286
3.	Dependents on agriculture	6,73,082	8,76,089
4.	Mining Quarrying etc.	27,575	42,095
5.	Household industry	45,197	86,179
6.	Trade & Commerce	41,827	2,38,127
7.	Transport, Storage and Communications	16,237	96,932
8.	Other services	52,348	1,59,348

Source : Statistical Abstract of Andhra Pradesh. 1976 pp. 26-27Data Collected from C.P. Office. Anantapur.



Small Scale Farming and Defective Land Utilization: Small scale farming reduces the production and productivity of agriculture. Sufficient mechanization is not introduced in agricultural operations of this district. Defective land utilization in the district is due to factors like lack of water, lack of drainage, deep – rooted grasses and weeds , low fertility of the soil and lack of capital, Irrigational canals involve heavy capital outlay and cannot be build in a day. Land observed by jungle cannot be brought under cultivations without mechanization and capital. In dry cultivation's, no green manure or chemical fertilizers are applied. The farm yard manure available with the cultivators is utilized mostly for wet crops, and only once in a while for dry crops. Chemical fertilizers have not yet become popular due to the limitation set by soil erosion in the district. All these factors are contributing to the low productivity and production of agriculture. The defective land utilization can also be seen in the district. The above- referred figure reveals that the area of forest land is more in this district, compared to the other district of Andhra Pradesh. The net area sown is very low. The pressure of population on the land is very great and the area of cultivable but uncultivated land, which can be brought under cultivation without the application of special effort, is small.

Workless in Rural Areas: With in creasing numbers added to the work force on account of the rise in population, the problem of unemployment, underemployment and disguised unemployment in the region are also causing to increase the intensity of famines. Anantapur district, with practically no industrial base in its economy and the agriculture, subject to chronic drought is a region where the problem of unemployment gets accentuated. While this is so the existing data are inadequate for building up a sufficiently detailed picture of the state of unemployment for the region as a whole. No doubt, it is not easy to measure the extent of unemployment in a backward district like Anantapur, for there is bound to be tendency, especially among the Self-employed, to share work with the available work force.

As more than 75 percent of the population in this district is depending on agriculture the extent of under employment, which is chronic in the agricultural sector, can very well be understood. A more significant feature of the agricultural economy in the Anantapur district is the predominance of dry cultivation where employment opportunities are much less than in wet cultivation. Agricultural laborers constitute the major section of the rural work force. Most of them being land less are depending upon the wage paid employment in agriculture. Their wages are low which do not permit them even to meet the bare needs of the subsistence. In the periods of unemployment they have to suffer from hunger and have to depend on the prosperous farmers and are becoming indebted which leads to the exploitation of these unfortunate sections. Thus, the rural unemployment has become one of the causes of famine in the dry land cultivated are of Anantapur district. B.M.Bhatia rightly pointed out that “it is in this Background of poverty of the agricultural masses, growing distributions among them, rising price of food grains, stationary wages, and the increasing population obtaining little scope for the employment outside agriculture, that a series of famine occurred in the country” This situation is more and also applicable to Anantapur District.

Conclusion

Natural and artificial causes do play their part, through not equally, in the recurrence and perpetuation of famines in Anantapur District. Among the natural causes (1) Drought is the predominate one, (2) Due to peculiar geographical position of Anantapur District. The average annual rainfall is below the state average and is within the range of drought susceptibility. (3) The next important natural cause that leads to famine conditions is the dominance of red soil in the district. This soil by nature is incapable of preserving moisture. Social and political situation in Anantapur District is such that famine is not understood in true perspective and seriously enough to the desire extent. Political leadership has not been bestowing sufficient willingness to take measures to alleviate the severity of famine to benefit the general masses in the district.

Anantapur District has an underdeveloped network of canal system. Since canals are not linked to rivers, and the water source for tanks is ultimately the rainfall, this region lacks irrigation facilities. This is one of the chief causes for low productivity and production of agriculture. The other factors are the general poverty of the masses, lack of diversification in economic activities and lack of alternative occupation. Another important reason is lack of well-developed transport, communication and power- generation system. Social and Political causes do not directly influence famines. When once the famine occurs, economic forces play a role to aggravate the famine situation and to prolong its continuation.

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