

Resources Must be Shared

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The Supreme Court of India in Narmada and Balco cases made it clear that the courts are not appropriate forums to decide directions-merits of development policies. But, on the other hand, the apex court started pursuing the state for river linking. The President of India is in favour of river linking. The World Bank dropped funding for the construction of Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) but did not take a stand against other big dams. On the other hand, it is pointing out that storage capacity of water is not adequate in India and thereby signalling that it is willing to fund for storage structures.

What should be the size of a storage structure? There is no unanimity among the political parties or civil society on this point. The situation in Andhra Pradesh is no exception. The government of Andhra Pradesh is pursuing irrigation projects which will displace more than five lakh population. Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) opposed Pulichinthala project. Retired chief engineer, T. Hanumantha Rao came with an alternative which does not displace the people. No other political party except TRS supported this idea. The Godavari Aikya Vedika condemned the GLIS as visionless. In 18 days debate in the Legislative Assembly exclusively on this scheme, no party brought the Vedika opinion to the notice of the house.

T. Hanumantha Rao ruled out alternatives to Polavaram dam. He is very keen on navigation facility, which is dropped in the present project design. Late K. Sriramakrishnaiah, retired chief engineer is against Polavaram dam and proposed linking of Krishna Godavari waters through lift irrigation with minimum submergence. But, nobody focused on his perspective. TRS is against this dam and CPM is for lowering the height of the dam according to the plan of one retired chief engineer, M. Dharma Rao. This alternative of Dharma Rao seeks to minimise the displacement. Most of the parties are of the opinion that the projects including Inchampalli in Telangana should be completed first. Inchampalli displaces a large number of tribals. It may be recalled that Baba Amte in 1983 started anti-dam movement against Inchampalli and Rayabhupalapatnam dams.

Most people to be displaced are not willing to get their habitat submerged. Among them are people having resources and resourceless. They belong to various political parties who are supporting or opposing Polavaram dam. While the rest of the social groups are familiar with outside world, the tribals who never moved out of their habitat are more panic stricken. For the last two decades, the ITDA, Bhadrachalam is struggling to settle the Koyas and Konda Reddys of far flung villages in the colonies. While Koyas are amenable to such gestures, the Konda Reddys did not come down from the hills.

The villages in Polavaram catchment area are under the hegemony of Marxist/ Communist/Marxist Leftist groups, New Democracy, Agency Girijana Sangham who are political rivals. The TDP is not opposing the dam. On December 4th 2005, a meeting was held against the Polavaram dam in the presence of Medha Patkar, Illa Rami Reddy, a leader of Agency Girijana Sangham, narrated the ongoing struggles against displacement.

“They are building this Polavaram dam and in doing so they are destroying tribals and non-tribals. The dam has to be stopped, and we cannot allow them to build the dam. What do we do about this? The government is very firm on its intentions to build the dam, and they are also telling us that it will be done without any problems and difficulties.

However, we know that once we are displaced, we will never be benefited. We will become beggars. This has been the experience of displaced people in the past, and it will happen to us too. The government will use violence; they will beat us up; they will put us into jail, and force us through violence to leave our homes, and accept their plans. Even for a small project like in Bhupathipalem reservoir, in Rampachodavaram, the people protested, and then they were told that the government will show a nice rehabilitation plan. People were imprisoned, and forced to accept the agreement. And these people have, of course, not benefited. Here (In case of Polavaram) too they will file false cases on us, and imprison us if we protest.”

There are some tribal groups whose influence is in a few sectors such as students/employees. NGOs, whatever their claims may be, have to toe the line of these parties. In spite of their involvement in rehabilitation, of the displaced tribals under medium irrigation projects around Polavaram, Surampalem, Kovvada, Bhupathipalem, Musurumilli, the record of progression of rehabilitation is bad to worse.

When the ground realities are so confusing, that aspiring towards stalling construction of dam by people's strength is a wishful thinking. Those who are opposing dam are following the methods: litigation, marches, dharnas, rallies, influencing through media. CPM with their two members opposed the dam in the 15 member strong Tribal Advisory Council (TAC). But we should not forget CPM organised a rally with tribals in support of non-tribals farmers during land right agitation active since 1995 in both the Godavari districts and Khammam.

Though tribals are less than 50 per cent in the catchments, their number is more around Papi hills. But all the groups want to fire the guns from the shoulders of the tribals. The important developments in the last few years have accelerated colonisation of non-tribals. The recently constructed bridge across Sabari river has resulted in spurt in tourism and colonisation.

Bhupthipalem reservoir irrigates tribal areas and also submerges tribal villages. The tribals of the submergible villages resolved against the reservoir whereas the villages going to be the benefited resolved in favour of the reservoir. The beneficiaries did not consider alternatives. Similarly, Musurumilli reservoir submerges the tribals and irrigates the tribal lands. The beneficiaries say that the rehabilitation is the responsibility of the state government. The tribals who are known for mutual accommodation also are internalising the self-seeking attitudes, induced by so-called development. The tribals in Polavaram catchment area are gradually receding to the interiors, surrendering the human and natural resources to the advancing non-tribals. Their plight reminds the legendary story of the villagers of Yekachakrapura in Mahabharata. The Bakasura, a demon used to kill as many people as he can for his food. The villagers entered into a truce with the demon to send a man everyday with a cartload of food. Similarly, the tribals prefer to survive than get displaced.

The supporters of tribals should organise them to enter into an agreement for sharing resources in a reasonable way with the resourceful non-tribals and unitedly lead the struggle to protect their traditional habitat. Such strategy is the only hope to check the 'development' through submergence and displacement. Such equitable distribution of water resource among the farmers and landless in South Maharashtra forced the Maharashtra government to change the site of reservoirs in some places and lower the heights in some other places.

It must be our task to transform our understanding into action and aid, and together forge a future that is more just—to people and to nature.

ATTACHMENT-1

Report on Resettlement and Rehabilitation of the Displaced under Polavaram Project Prepared by Centre for Economic and Social Studies (CESS) 1996

There has remained one puzzling uncertainty in regard to the entitlements of the tribal people in land. Many of the affected mandals came under the scheduled areas where it is known that a good extent of land that ought to be legally in the possession of the tribals has actually passed into the hands of non-tribals, necessitating long drawn administrative and judicial procedures aimed at restoration of alienated land to the tribals. At a number of places we have come across evidence of disputed claims regarding certain holdings between tribal and non-tribal households (p.6)

A time of 10 years will certainly produce many changes in the position of the oustees and landholdings. But those changes are more likely to be unfavourable to the oustees unless sufficient lands are identified and secured for purposes of resettlement much ahead of the commencement of the construction of the barrage (pp. 10-11).

Demographic and Ethnic Profile of People Facing Displacement.

The inhabitants of 276 habitations (147 revenue villages and 129 hamlets) spread over 9 mandals in three districts face displacement because of the project (p. 34).

The brunt of the problem is faced by Khammam district wherein 205 habitations (122 revenue villages and 83 hamlets) spread over seven mandals face displacement (p. 34).

Among all the 9 mandals, the greatest extent of displacement occurs in Kukkunur and Kunavaram mandals (p. 34).

The least affected is Burgampadu mandal (p. 35).

75.67 per cent of the affected population (8818 out of 11654) in Chintoor mandal belongs to Scheduled Tribes (p. 37).

Among the affected population of Polavaram mandal, 61.11 per cent belongs to Scheduled Tribes (p. 37).

Name of the Mandal	Percentage of affected Scheduled Tribes	Percentage of affected Scheduled Castes	Percentage of affected Backward Castes	Percentage of affected Forward Castes
Chinthur	75.67	2.78	12.18	9.38
Polavaram	61.11	10.82	13.62	14.45
Velairpadu	54.13	14.24	17.15	14.48
V.R. Puram	53.23	4.14	37.35	5.28
Devipatnam	51.80	8.30	20.83	18.87
Kunavaram	51.33	13.77	22.00	12.91
Bhadrachalam	28.61	22.92	25.91	22.55
Kukkunur	21.46	29.59	25.00	23.96
Burgampadu	13.08	39.08	29.90	17.94
Total	45.60	16.18	22.66	15.54

We find that 202 hamlets (73.1 per cent) of the total of 276, are of smaller dimension and the remaining 74 hamlets are of bigger size (p. 45).

In two-thirds of the habitations (in 184 out of 276), the tribals constitute more than 50 per cent of the population. Only in 33.3 per cent of the settlements (92 out of 276), the non-tribals outnumber the tribals (p. 46).

Among 64 settlements having 100 per cent tribal population, the largest cluster of that category is found in V.R. Puram mandal which has 14 such settlements, followed by Devipatnam with 13 of them (p. 46).

Name of the Mandal	Tribal settlements having 100% tribal population
V.R. Puram	14
Devipatnam	13
Polavaram	10
Velairpadu	10
Kunavaram	09
Chinthur	04
Kukkunur	04
Bhadrachalam	00
Burgampadu	00
Total	64

The distribution of the first group of high tribal density settlements is in the following descending order among the different mandals. V.R. Puram has 26 such settlements, followed by Devipatnam with 22, Kunavaram and Velairpadu with 21 each, Polavaram with 18, Chintoor with 10, Kukkunur with 9, Bhadrachalam with 2 and Burgampadu with 1 (p. 48).

Nearly two-thirds of the affected population is concentrated in four mandals viz., Kukkunur, Kunavaram, Chintoor and Velairpadu (p. 79).

Most of the affected land is concentrated in Kunavaram and Kukkunur mandals which together account for 40 per cent (30,000 acres) of the affected land (p. 79).

Attachment-2

**POLAVARAM MULTI PURPOSE PROJECT:
MANDAL WISE LAND HOLDING DISTRIBUTION OF SUBMURGIBLE AREA
(Area in Acres)**

Sl. No.	Mandal	BELOW 2.51			2.51-5.00			5.01-10.00		
		NO	EXT	AVG	NO	EXT	AVG	NO	EXT	AVG
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	DEVIPATNAM	2476	1669.40	0.67	201	705.70	3.51	63	424.17	6.73
East Godavari District Total		2476	1669.40	0.67	201	705.70	3.51	63	424.17	6.73
2	POLAVARM	2718	2431.93	0.89	455	1612.07	3.54	216	1470.14	6.81
West Godavari District Total		2718	2431.93	0.89	455	1612.07	3.54	216	1470.14	6.81
3	BHADRACHALAM	1252	1157.88	0.92	243	852.06	3.51	130	897.08	6.90
4	KUNAVARAM	3180	3273.36	1.03	843	2962.03	3.51	439	2922.97	6.99
5	CHINTUR	1616	1463.48	0.91	450	1564.90	3.48	351	2443.46	6.96
6	V.R.PURAM	2592	2501.76	0.97	709	2516.62	3.55	378	2618.73	6.93
7	VELAIRPADU	1793	1741.73	0.97	598	2136.26	3.57	308	2171.56	7.05
8	KUKUNOOR	2915	2620.44	0.90	768	2700.63	3.52	293	2022.95	6.90
9	BURGAMPADU	584	499.74	0.86	130	470.78	3.62	75	522.91	6.97
Khammam District Total		13932	13258.39	0.95	3741	13203.28	3.53	1974	13599.66	6.89
GRAND TOTAL		19126	17359.72	0.91	4397	15521.05	3.53	2253	15493.97	6.88