



PROBLEM OF DISPLACEMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KOVVADA RESERVOIR OF WEST GODAVARI DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Through the ages, the people of India depend upon agriculture for their survival. The agriculture required irrigation water which should be drawn from the rivers, lakes and ponds. To draw the water from the water resources is not an easy task. Dams should be constructed to preserve the water which is to be supplied for the agricultural lands. For the construction of major reservoirs, the people living in the area should be evacuated where the project has been intended to built. The people would be displaced and they should be provided lands for their settlement. In the case of Kovvada reservoir, the people have been displaced from the project site and provided new settlements and agricultural lands for their survival. The people are not satisfied with the land and other facilities provided to them for their settlement. Major problem for the people is that they cannot intermingle with the people already settled in that area. Several disputes would arise between the new comers and old residents. Employment generation and to provide education is major task for the displaced. All these issues are discussed in this paper in brief.

KEYWORDS: Dams, Kovvada Reservoir, Agriculture, West Godavari District

INTRODUCTION

Construction of reservoirs is a major task for any government. Several conditions have to be fulfilled to construct a reservoir to provide drinking and irrigation water to the thousands of people who are badly in need. The World Bank provides loans on certain conditions which must be accepted by the governments who are seeking loans from it. The displaced people shall be provided with shelter, employment, education and communications. Land should be distributed for their survival. The project officials are under obligation to look after the welfare of the people. The problems of displaced are still a major concern to the government. The people are displaced from Lakshmi Narayana Devi peta where the plan has been implemented to construct Kovvada reservoir. The present research paper contains several issues pertaining to Kovvada reservoir.

Objectives of The Study:

Several objectives have kept in mind to prepare present research paper.

1. To analyze the problems of the displaced people.
2. To discuss the efforts made by several agencies to fight for the payment of compensation to the displaced people of Kovvada reservoir.
3. Efforts of village panchayats and mandal prajaparisads to look after the welfare of the displaced people.
4. To discuss the effects of Kovvada project on the people living in Lakshmi Narayana Devi peta.

On the basis of the following objectives, the present research paper has been prepared.

METHODOLOGY

A detailed study has been conducted on Kovvada project. Several agitations and movements organized by the people of Lakshmi Narayana Devi peta and other villages have been closely watched. Several books have been consulted to understand the problems of the displaced. The elite people have organized several meetings to understand the problems of the displaced with the construction of the Hirakud dam on the River Mahanadi and the displaced of the Nagarjuna Sagar constructed on River Krishna in between Guntur and Nalgonda districts which are attended to have good knowledge. Doctrinaire approach has been made to complete the present research paper.

Hypothesis:

On the basis of the tentative conclusions, the present research paper has been prepared.

1. The displaced people have faced several problems who are evacuated from their original residence for the construction of huge dams such as Hirakud, Nagarjuna Sagar and Periyar dam.
2. The people from Lakshmi Narayana Devi peta have been evacuated to other places for the construction of Kovvada reservoir.
3. The displaced people are not satisfied with the compensation paid by the government and the land allotted to them for their rehabilitation.
4. The money granted for the evacuation of the people and to provide facilities to them is inadequate.
5. Several cases have been filed in the court for the amicable solution of the problems of the displaced.

The present research paper has been prepared on the basis of these tentative conclusions.

Significance:

For the purpose of agro based economy, the government has undertaken to construct huge dams to provide drinking and irrigation water to the people. Kovvada reservoir has been planned to provide drinking and irrigation water to the people of upland areas of West Godavari district. The people have been evacuated from some villages and allotted land for their settlement and rehabilitation. Several programmes have been taken up for the rehabilitation of the displaced. The present research paper tries to bring out the problems being faced by the displaced which has more significance to the present day civilized people to understand the effects of construction of huge dams such as Kovvada and Polavaram.

Theme of the Paper:

Kovvada Reservoir is a major project undertaken in West Godavari. According to the reports of Irrigation and Canal Aycut Development, Dowaleswaram, the Kovvada Lake is a hill stream having its origin in Papikondalu at an altitude of 600mts in Chintapalli reserved forests of the scheduled area of the West Godavari district. It flows southwards from the origin and is also called as Jalataru Vagu in the surroundings areas of Chintapalli, Pedda vagu upto Lankapalli village limits and Kovvada Lake on the downstream. The reservoir site is located at a distance of 28kms from Papikondalu, otherwise known as Bison Hills.

The Kovvada lake frequently destroys the Pattiseema area as the fury of the floods cause devastation in this area. Thousands of people are forced to evacuate their houses for their survival. Thousands of acres of land would be inundated with the flood water of Kovvada Lake. These incidents have repeated again and again which made the government to form a plan to prevent the floods in Kovvada lake. Hence this lake has been treated as "Sorrow of Pattiseema area". A reservoir has been constructed across the Kovvada lake between 2001 to 2005 with an estimated cost of Rs. 61.11 crore, funded by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). The project has been constructed nearby Lakshmi Narayana Devi peta with a view to provide drinking and irrigation water to the people of upland and the lands lying between Lakshmi Narayana Devi peta and Nidadavole. The purpose of this project is to provide water to the industries which are situated in the upland areas of West Godavari district. The earth dam was formed with the maximum length and height of 1,599mts and 22.04mts respectively across the Kovvada lake. A spill way of 36mts length with three spans, having radial gates of size 10mts x 6mts to regulate the maximum flood discharge of 630.30cumecs or 22,239 cusecs is proposed at 1,430mtrs on Poleti vagu. The catchment area of Kovvada Lake reservoir is 11,137 sq. km. The reservoir will have a live storage of 11.58mts cum in between the full reservoir level of 90.50mts and minimum draw down level of 81mts.

The purpose of the Kovvada reservoir is to improve the agriculture in upland area of West Godavari district. This reservoir is to provide drinking water to 35,000 people. This project intends to create employment generation to both tribals and non-tribals living in the vicinity of Kovvada Reservoir.

This project provides irrigation water to about 17000 acres in kharif season falling from June to October. The ayacut of the reservoir lies in 15 villages of both Polavaram and Gopalapuram mandals, out of which three villages such as Lakshmi Narayana Devi pet, Reddinagampalem and Pragadapalli belong to tribals, and the rest of the villages i.e., Pattiseema, Venkatapuram, Gutala, Dondapudi, Karagapadu, Sagipadu, Kovvurupadu, Guddigudem, Gopalapuram, Nandigudem, Bhimolu and gangolu are of non-tribals. Two main canals on left and right sides of the dam cover 5.02km and 9.86km respectively.

The primary duty of the government is to conduct public hearing on several issues. The first issue is to get permission from Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board. The people should express their opinion on the construction of project particularly on the problem of pollution if arises. The government has proposed to conduct public hearing 17/08/2001. Due to the Panchayat elections, the government failed to conduct the public hearing. Hence the date of the public hearing has been postponed to 27/08/2001. But the government did not conduct public hearing in the submerged villages and the meeting place was shifted to non-affected area which was objected by the people. But the government has completed the formalities by completing the public hearing to take stock of the situation. The Andhra Pradesh Government has decided to conduct meetings in the project affected villages to get the consent of the people. The Honorable High Court of Andhra Pradesh has ordered the government to conduct the meetings of Grama Sabhas and pass the resolutions with the approval of majority members of Gram Sabha regarding the construction of Kovvada Project. After the approval of Gram Sabha, the resolution passed by it shall be approved by Mandal Parishad Territorial Council (MPTC) and Zilla Parishad Territorial Council (ZPTC). After getting approval of the local government, the state government shall get the approval from pollution control board and Central water commission for the construction of the project. This procedure is also applicable to Kovvada project which is proposed to be constructed in 2001. It is the primeval duty of the government to approve resettlement and rehabilitation programme on the basis of the reports submitted by social science research organization which has conducted study on socio-economic conditions prevailed in the project affected villages. On the basis of the reports, R&R package could be announced by the government. This R&R Package also should be approved by Gram Sabhas and Zilla Parishads. Consent of the people is essential on R&R Package. None of these norms have been followed and no Grama Sabha was organized for the displaced people of Kovvada Reservoir.

The major problem for the tribes living in Kovvada lake area has faced threat due to the forcible evacuation by the government. The government has offered compensation and resettlement at the other lands. The Konda Reddis are offended with the displacement policy taken up by the government. The Konda Reddis would organize a jathara in every March and celebrate Kovvadamma jathara. This is a joyful event for them. They cannot escape from these happiest movements. The Government cannot pacify the tribes who are adjusted with local customs and culture which they are transmitted by their forefathers. The

identity, culture and ethos and the source of livelihood of these forest dwelling communities have come under a serious risk, as their two villages are to be submerged due to the foreshore (back waters) of the Kovvada lake reservoir. According to the report of the Irrigation and Canal Aycut Development, an extent of 707 acres, comprising 14 acres of patta land, 96 acres of forest land and 96 acres of barren land (government land) is submerged in the foreshore of the reservoir (List of lands held by tribals and non-tribals in the two affected villages i.e., Reddigudem and Lakshmipuram villages due to Kovvada reservoir as per the settlement register of Polavaram taluk of the erstwhile East Godavari district). The Government has made a plan to pay the compensation of Rs. 80,000/- for an acre and Rs. 60,000/- in semi fertile land for an acre. The Government also made a plan to pay the compensation to the money lenders from whom the inhabitants like tribes and non-tribal people have taken to fulfill their needs. But these compensations are very low and the beneficiaries cannot survive from the compensation paid to them. Agitations have been launched for the purpose of getting more compensation and facilities for their children. The Government officials have openly declared that the Reddigudem village on the bank of Kovvada Lake would be submerged after the completion of the project. Similarly another village called Lakshmipuram situated on the bank of Poleti vagu and Kovvada lake would be affected by the project by which the inhabitants of the village would be displaced and provide land for their settlement in other area. It may be technically true that the Lakshmipuram is not submerged by the flood waters as revealed by the authorities, the habitation located in between the two streams i.e., Kovvada lake and Poleti vagu, upon which the dam is built, is set to become an island. It leads to cut off from the outside world as well as the forest resources, which raise serious livelihood threats to these forests dependent tribals of Lakshmipuram. But the officials did not reveal anything about the available comprehensive economic R&R package for the project affected persons of Reddigudem and Lakshmipuram, instead they were herded into half built houses.

Clear cut violations could be seen in the construction of Kovvada Lake project. Gram Sabhas have not been convened to get the approval of Village Panchayats. People are not informed about the construction of the project. The Rajanagaram Panchayat was not provided material like gravel and boulders in the construction of reservoirs. The people are not given information about the submerged villages after the construction of the project is over. Generally the gram sabhas should be convened according to the Panchayatraj Extension Act to Schedule areas, 1996. Government has not made any plan to conduct Gram Sabhas to convince the people about their benefits to the people after the construction of the project is completed. Illegal activities could be observed at the time of construction of project. The revenue officials have accepted Rs. 15,000 per acre for which the tribals would get compensation. For non patta land, the tribals would be paid compensation for which the revenue officials have demanded Rs. 8,000 from the tribes. These illegal activities created problems to the tribals. If they failed to pay the money demanded by the revenue officials, payment of compensation would be delayed. Sometimes compensation has not been paid for unascertained reasons.

Houses were constructed at Reddigudem rehabilitation colony without foundations and any other developmental works. The Andhra Pradesh government has violated the Acts such as land acquisition under Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Land Transfer Regulation, Forest Act, 1894, in implementing the Supreme Court order according to SAMATA vs. Government of Andhra Pradesh case, violations of Potu Raju Dora vs. Collector, East Godavari district. The Rajanagaram Panchayat Grama Sabha has passed a resolution according to the Panchayat Raj Extension Act to Schedule Areas of 1996. According to these resolutions; the displaced tribals would be informed about the full reservoir level and height of the project by which the villages submerged under the Kovvada lake project. The tribal should be informed about the quantum of compensation to be paid to them by the government. Rehabilitation and Resettlement package would be informed to the tribals who are displaced due to the construction of Kovvada lake project. Resettlement areas would be informed to the tribals and they should be convinced to move newly allotted settlement areas.

The Kovvada Reservoir Victims Committee was formed by the project affected persons belonged to Reddigudem and Lakshmipuram in 2004. The tribals have submitted several representations to the various government agencies regarding the problems being faced by them with the construction of Kovvada lake project. The victims committee has visited Surampalem village of East Godavari district where the tribal people are facing problems with the construction of the project. The Victims committee has filed a petition on behalf of the Surampalem village people in Andhra Pradesh Honorable High Court for the speedy implementation of the resolution of the Gram Sabha and provisions of various Acts pertaining to the displaced people passed by the Andhra Pradesh State Legislature from time to time. A copy of the Government's counter affidavit was filed along with the earlier judgement passed by the Andhra Pradesh Honorable High court for the implementation of the provisions of various Acts to mitigate the problems of project affected people. The Kovvada Reservoir project affected persons organized projects for almost six months in 2004 at the bund site of the Kovvada reservoir for rehabilitation and resettlement package with the support of Kovvada Reservoir Victims Committee. The displacement issue was also widely published and highlighted in daily newspaper i.e., The Hindu, New Indian Express, Eenadu, Vaartha, Andhra Jyothi and Andhra Bhumi to the notice of public and the government officials.

Some of the demands have been made by Kovvada Reservoir Victims Committee. Their primeval demand is to submit the copy of R&R to the affected people and allot the land for their immediate settlement. Immediate steps should be taken for the payment of compensation and help them to settle their financial problems like repayment of loans which they have obtained from the money lenders or the banks for their daily living activities. The left canal of the Kovvada reservoir must be extended from Reddinagampalem to Tanalakunta cheruv so as to supply water to 10,000 acres of tribal lands in Polavaram mandal, rather than developing the non-tribal areas and the fishing rights should be given to the two affected tribal villagers. Lakshmipuram which

is affected by the construction of project should be included in R&R package. A joint survey must be conducted to locate the exact submerge area of the reservoir in association with Kovvada Reservoir Victims Committee, irrigation and revenue departments. The task of execution of R&R package should be entrusted to the Village Development Committee formed by the project affected persons. The District administration has responded to the demands made by the Victims Committee. Negotiations have been held to sort out the problems. The Revenue Divisional Officer and the Executive Engineer has handed over the copy of R&R to both the project affected people and the victims committee as per their request. The Integrated Tribal Development Authority has granted fishing rights to the tribal people of Lakshmipuram and Reddigudem. Rs. 5 Lakhs each was granted for the construction of a community hall, internal roads and water tank. 2 acres of land was granted to each person who was affected by the Kovvada project. 75 persons were allotted lands as per the scheme formulated by the District Authorities of West Godavari and East Godavari. Necessary repairs were made by the Integrated Tribal Development Authority to all the houses constructed by the housing department. Latrines and bathrooms were constructed to all the 66 households in Reddigudem costing at the rate of Rs. 4,700 each i.e., Rs. 2,700 + Rs. 2,000. A survey was conducted by the irrigation and revenue department along with Kovvada Reservoir Victims Committee. The survey committee has also felt that the people of Lakshmipuram should be rehabilitated in other areas and facilities should be provided for their peaceful and happy livelihood. All the 63 project affected persons of Lakshmipuram were also given at the rate of 5 cents of housing site each and covered under Indira Awaas Yojana scheme at the rate of Rs. 25,000 each and money towards economic rehabilitation and asset building expenses to all the project affected persons was given at the rate of Rs. 25,000 each. Another major problem is that the names of the youth, aged persons and widows have not been included in the R&R package and left out of the benefits to be provided to the victims of the project construction. The Kovvada Reservoir Victims Committee has criticized the ST and SC commission of both Central and State Committee for not taking any action to wipe out the problems confronted to the victims of Kovvada project.

The Kovvada project has been constructed on Kovvada lake by which Lakshmipuram and Reddigudem would be affected as mentioned earlier. The tribes of Lakshmipuram have expressed their doubts on the destruction of their village after the Kovvada project is completed. The Government officials have strongly argued that nothing would happen to the people of upland area including Lakshmipuram and Reddigudem people. All the precautionary measures would be taken to safeguard the people of displaced. The people of Reddigudem are fortunate as they are allotted newly constructed houses in the adjoining areas by the Integrated Tribal Development Authority and Village Development Committee. But the people of Lakshmipuram have been evacuated to other places where facilities are not provided to the people. Adequate compensation has not been paid to tribals. Still the people are fighting for their rights against the government. The Government has allotted funds in

the budget every year. But these funds are not adequate to fulfill the demands of the people of Lakshmipuram, Reddigudem and Surampalem of East Godavari district. The newly constructed colonies did not have facilities for the people to carry on their lives. This sad plight could be observed in case of other projects which are constructed to provide drinking water and irrigation water to the agricultural fields.

CONCLUSION

Present research paper have thrown light on the various issues relating to the people who are displaced from the villages belonged to upland where the Kovvada reservoir has been planned to construct to provide drinking and irrigation water. Less compensation has been paid to the displaced as stated by some of the organizations who filed cases in Andhra Pradesh High Court for the amicable solutions. No proper land has been provided to the displaced for their settlement. These issues have been discussed in this research paper

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