

Patterns of Migration From a Drought-Prone Area in Andhra Pradesh : A Case Study¹

N. Purendra Prasad¹ and P. Venkata Rao²

1. British Council Division, Bombay 400 021, Maharashtra, India

2. Department of Anthropology, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad 500 046, Andhra Pradesh, India

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ABSTRACT This paper tries to analyze the overriding importance of seasonal migration and the role of external influence in adjusting to sharp drought-induced shortfalls in income. The pattern of migration from this drought-prone village brings out the role of social values to the forefront. In this study, it was also revealed how the villagers likelihood of migration is influenced by his place in social hierarchy of which he/she is part. This must be viewed in a wider context than the village: the cultural environment of the region and the *jati* to which the people belong. The existing inequalities in the social hierarchical system get affected with the recurring phenomenon of drought.

Monsoon failures have been a recurring phenomena in many parts of India. Hardly a year passes in which some part or other of the country does not, in some degree, suffer from the calamity of drought. The most disastrous droughts come at irregular intervals. The core areas of drought comprise about 16 per cent of the total geographical area of the country and account for 11 per cent of its population. (Irrigation Committee Report, 1972:157). Starvation, migration and other associated problems have been a part of the lives of people in these regions.

The recurrent phenomenon of droughts perpetuate poverty and underdevelopment of the particular region, and the strategies that the poor adopt include seasonal migration as an important mechanism to cope with the situation. Seasonal migration of rural labour by definition is a movement for employment for a short period, not exceeding one year (Reddy, 1992:154). Seasonal Migration involves neither 'change of place of residence' nor permanent movement away from the place of birth, but only a temporary change

of place for the purpose of work. The period of migration may vary from 15 days to ten months in a year depending upon the nature of work and the need for the income. The basic reason for migration is non-availability of adequate work in one's own place of residence. Seasonal migration process directly and indirectly affects the social fabric at local level. Sometimes the indirect effects of seasonal migration may be very serious either at the place of migration, or original place of residence.

Region-specific studies reveal a variety of migration patterns varying by distances covered, such as circulatory migration within a limited region, long distance movements as from Andhra Pradesh to Maharashtra; sometimes a few household go for a single agricultural operation, others for an entire season. Though seasonal migration clearly helps in mitigating region-specific stresses, it can also depress wages in the areas to which the migrants go and generating considerable hostility from local workers (Bremar, 1985:335-8). Whole families are more likely to migrate among the landless than among the cultivators who tend to retain some members to take care of the farm (Agarwal, 1990:350). Bardhan's (1977:1110-2) review indicates that migration over long distance *i.e.* from villages to towns/cities, features more of individual men than women, and less of entire families.

Much of the literature also indicates an erosion of social relationships between patrons and clients over time, although not their disappearance, attributable to several factors including seasonal migration. There has been

an increase in the possibility of hiring in cheap labour seasonally from outside without involving patron-obligations (Bremar, 1985). On the other side, clients opt out of such a relationship where more secure or profitable alternatives (especially urban jobs) can be obtained (Chen, 1991:164-5).

The importance that migration occupies in the social and cultural life of the people, more particularly in drought prone areas, however, has not been commensurate with the attention it has so far received from Anthropologists, Sociologists, and others. This paper deals with the patterns of seasonal migration from drought-prone areas of rural Rayalaseema. One aspect is to see how migration as an adaptive strategy helps the poor to overcome the crisis situation. On the other hand, how a few households could effectively utilize the opportunity for their socio-economic betterment. The data for this paper have been collected as part of a larger study conducted in Ranapuram² village in Anantapur district of Rayalaseem region in Andhra Pradesh during 1992-94.

METHODOLOGY

This village study has been carried out in the backdrop of the region in which it is located, following anthropological approaches. Alongwith a socio-economic survey, the study is based on anthropological fieldwork conducted over a period of eleven months. In understanding socio-cultural adaptations to drought, historical perspective of the region has been taken into consideration along with the on-going process of drought-adjustment. The village is a multi-jati village and there is a large variation in income, occupations, land ownership, social status, etc., among the households.

The various jati³ and land categories are classified in order to understand the differential impact of drought on each jati and land category. Fifteen jatis in the village have been classified⁴ into four groups viz. cultivator jatis,

agricultural labour jatis, service jatis and scheduled jatis, according to their traditional occupation and social esteem in the local hierarchy and economic status (Table 1).

Table 1 : Categorization of jatis

S.No.	Category	Jati	No. of Household
1.	Cultivator Jati	Kamma	22 (11.5)
2.	Agricultural labour Jatis	1. Boya 2. Kuruva 3. Nese 4. Vadde 5. Ediga 6. Baliija 7. Dudekula	121 (63.0)
3.	Service Jatis	1. Chakali 2. Mangali 3. Kummara 4. Bommalata 5. Bhatrajulu	10 (5.2)
4.	Scheduled Jatis	1. Madigas 2. Christian Madigas	39 (20.3)
Total			192 (100.0)

THE STUDY VILLAGE

Ranapuram is predominantly an agricultural village, inhabited by 1,135 persons. The land use pattern in the study village (Table 2) indicated that large area of land (95%) is under rainfed agriculture.

Groundnut is the mostly cultivated crop and other crops are Jowar, Ragi, Pulses like Greengram, Redgram, Stringbeans, Coriander and Sunflower; Vegetables and Paddy are also cultivated in small patches of irrigated land. Only one household owns 12 acres of Lemon orchards in the village.

Table 2 : Land use pattern in the study village

Total Area of the village	Total patta land	Cultivable land		Uncultivable land	
		Irrigated	Unirrigated	Total	
2903	1554.5	66	1285.5	1351.5	203
acres or	acres	acres	acres	acres	acres
1175.20					
hectares					

LAND OWNERSHIP

Land holding pattern reflected the agrarian/social hierarchy in the village. Cultivator *jati* members, who occupy the top position in social hierarchy hold 51% of the total land. Further, 67% of the irrigated land is under the control of this *jati*. On an average, Cultivator *jati* persons own 31 acres per household whereas all the other *jati* persons together own 3.5 acres per household. Though economic disparities are explicit from the above, there are inherent social distinctions also involved in it. For instance, even if an agricultural labour *jati* person owns an equal amount of land on par with a cultivator *jati* person, his social status is less, and this is still worse in case of scheduled *jati* and service *jati* persons. Hence, these distinctions vary from one *jati* to the other according to the local hierarchy.

Most of the households (68%) have less than ten acres of land and also significant proportion (18%) are landless category, which indicated that majority of the people in the village are placed lower to the level of small farmers category. According to *jati* composition, majority of the cultivator *jati* people (77%) are big and medium farmers, whereas most of the other *jatis* i.e. agricultural labour *jati* (75%), scheduled *jati* (80%) and service *jati* (60%) people are small and medium farmers.

Before discussing migration patterns, it will be relevant to go into the situation that prevailed in the village before the seasonal migration started around the year 1965. This has been reconstructed on the basis of respondents memory recall.

THE BEGINNINGS OF MIGRATION PROCESS

The crops grown earlier were mainly ragi, korra (Italian millet), and Jowar, which are all dependent on monsoon. Land was consid-

ered a productive asset only by a few upper *jati* households. Though other *jati* households also possessed lands, agricultural yield and income were very low. This is because marginal and small farmers possessed relatively infertile lands, lacked investment ability and infrastructure facilities. There was 'total dependence' on landlords for agricultural as well as domestic needs. Besides, they were always late in their seasonal agricultural work because priority was to be given to Upper *Jati* households farm work. Further, among other than cultivator *jatis*, there was lack of interest in agriculture as they were not getting any substantial income from their lands.

Due to the above mentioned factors, agricultural income for marginal, small and even medium farmers was very less. With little gradation in incomes, all these categories of farmers and landless people were depending on agricultural wage labour as main source of income. Another source of income existing was *Sarai batti* (Arrack distillation) and *sarai* (arrack) was sold within and outside the village. The liquor thus sold, often called *Dongasarai* (illegal liquor), was generating income for quite a large number of households as it was sold on a large scale in the region. So, quite often people of Ranapuram were vulnerable to police raids, arrests, and loss of income. Since local made liquor was available in the village, many were also addicts and most of the income from wage labour was spent on *arrack*. In all such households, women had to manage their households with their earnings.

When series of raids were made by police on '*Donga Sarai*' preparation in the village, a few people took to robbery. These people resorted to two types of robbery. First was stealing grains at the time of harvest. During nights, a group of people used to raid the harvested grains in the fields and take them. A few used to harvest themselves and get cart loads of grains to the village. The second

one was robbery of travellers on high-ways. According to the aged respondents, Ranapuram village was very notorious in the region. In those days none of the villagers in the neighbouring region trusted people of Ranapuram and branded them as *Dongavallu* (thieves). During harvest season, it was very difficult to protect grain in the fields, within and outside the village, from thefts. A few members belonging to Boya, Madiga, Vadde and Kuruva *jatis* were involved in these robberies.

It was in the 1960s, a few people started migrating to the neighbouring villages. Majority of the people were forced to migrate in 1965 (severe drought year) when crops completely failed. During that time, Konepally dam construction work was going on and it provided employment for a few years. The contractor, who got acquainted with the Ranapuram villagers, took them to Bombay, after completion of work at Konepally dam. Some people of the neighbouring villages who were also working at the Dam already visited Bombay once or twice, and so the villagers of Ranapuram also went to Bombay. From then on, during every drought year a section of people started migrating seasonally to Bombay. It was again in 1976 (severe drought year) large-scale migration took place from the village. This time majority people belonging to Ranapuram migrated to different regions in several groups. With successive migrations, they were willing to venture into new areas. Since Droughts were a regular phenomenon, they started exploring new places year after year in search of work.

Seasonal Migration As An Adaptation

In the study village, significant number of households, 133 out of 192 households i.e. nearly 70% of the total households, have been migrating seasonally to different places over a period of 20 to 25 years. Of these, landless (60%), marginal farmers (78%), small farmers (85%), medium farmers (47%),

and small proportion of big farmers (8%), constitute those who have been seasonally migrating as shown in table 3. Significantly, there are more number of seasonal migrants among marginal farmers (78%) and small farmers (85%) than among landless (60%). This is because landless persons are relatively more dependent on landlords and consequently get tied up either as *Jeetha* or as attached agricultural labourers.

When compared to other categories, majority of the agricultural labour *jati* and scheduled *jati* households are seasonal migrants, which implies to say that these two *jati* groups are more compelled in resorting to seasonal migration than others. On the other hand cultivator *jati* and service *jati* households are least migrating categories and the reasons for it are quite different from each other.

Cultivator *jati* members did not migrate as compared to others, because they are a relatively rich land-owning group and as such are capable of withstanding droughts, though their income falls during these times. Most of them possess small patches of irrigated lands. Another important reason for non-migration is their social status. Cultivator *jati* is considered as a socially superior *jati* in the village and they consider it below their prestige to move out and work under others at distant places. It is not that all cultivator *jati* households are big farmers and drought conditions do not affect them. In fact, out of 22 Kamma households, while 50% of them are big farmers, the other 50% are below medium farmers category (see Table 3).

Cultivator *jati* members prefer selling some of their assets or mortgage gold ornaments to that of migration. Despite these strong convictions among cultivator *jati* households, nine per cent of them migrated seasonally.

On the other hand, 70% of the service *jati* households did not migrate seasonally for work because majority of them follow their

Table 3: Number of seasonal migrant and non-migrant households according to land and jati categorization

S.No.	Land Category	Number of households			
		Culti- vator jati	Ag. labour jati	Service jati	Scheduled jati
1.	Landless				
	S.M.	-	14 (40)	-	7 (20)
	N.M.	2 (5.7)	7 (20)	4 (11.4)	1 (2.9)
2.	Marginal farmers				
	S.M.	1 (1.1)	53 (58.9)	1 (1.1)	15 (16.7)
	N.M.	1 (1.1)	7 (7.8)	2 (2.2)	10 (11.1)
3.	Small farmers				
	S.M.	1 (2.5)	27 (67.5)	1 (2.5)	4 (10)
	N.M.	-	3 (7.5)	1 (2.5)	2 (5)
4.	Medium farmers				
	S.M.	-	7 (46.7)	-	-
	N.M.	6 (40)	2 (13.3)	-	-
5.	Big farmers				
	S.M.	-	1 (8.3)	-	-
	N.M.	11 (91.7)	-	-	-
Total S.M.		2	102	3	26
Total N.M.		20	19	7	13
Grand Total		22	121	10	39

S.M. = Seasonal Migrants N.M. = Non-migrants

traditional occupations. Patrons provide remuneration, though less when compared to normal years, which sustains them in the village. Service Jati People also do not want to break their long standing bonds with patrons. Seasonal migration is not merely confined to the landless, marginal and small farmers but extends even to the medium farmer households (see Table 3).

The migrants from the households of an agricultural labourer, a small farmer or a marginal farmer from a drought prone area may have to work as casual labourers in irrigation projects, at construction sites, as head-load workers in citrus orchards or even as agricultural workers in other areas. This is a situation where the rural labourers have to undergo year after year. Based on the distance travelled by the migrants, seasonal migration in Ranapuram are categorized into three forms: Intra-District Migration, Inter-District Migration, and Inter-State Migration.

Intra-District Migration

There are certain pockets where irrigation facilities are available under Tungabhadra High Level Canal in Anantapur district which provide certain amount of work within the District. In addition, Rural Public Works, Dam works provide certain amount of employment for migrants. Seasonal migrants have visited as many as 21 places within the district, ranging from 3 kms to 90 kms. The work available at these places can be categorized into three types according to the nature of work viz., (i) *kaluva pani* (canal work) (ii) *kaluva kinda bhoomula pani* (work on land under canal) (iii) *cooly pani* (labour).

(i) *Kaluva Pani* : Penna Abobilam and Korrakolla Dam are the two balancing reservoirs of Tungabhadra High Level Canal and Penakacherla (Mid Pennar reservoir) that provide work to the people of the study village. The work involves canal digging, construc-

tion and repair works.

(ii) *Kaluva Kinda Bhoomula Pani* : Irrigated areas within the district provide work to the seasonal migrants. The nature of work lasts few days during sowing and harvesting seasons, since paddy is the main crop in irrigated areas. Seasonal migrants form into small groups according to kin and neighbourhood relations and enter into an agreement during harvesting season.

(iii) *Cooly Pani* : Migrants from Ranapuram are involved in '*jonna suggi*' (work in jowar fields) in the nearby dry villages for daily wage labour. At several other places, seasonal migrants carry on with different kinds of work, which were unfamiliar to them. For instance, they are involved in carrying head loads in the railways, breaking stones, construction work, watchman in citrus orchards and shepherd boys.

Inter-District Migration

Seasonal migration from the study village to the other districts of Andhra Pradesh are notably to Cuddapah, Kurnool, Chittoor, and Nellore. This is resorted to when there is not much work available within the district. In these districts, the nature of work includes: work in paddy fields, baryte factories, constructions.

There is a marked difference between the nature of work in intra-district and inter-district migration. Within the District, 72% of them are directly involved in agricultural operations where as in the inter district migration, majority of them are involved in non-agricultural activities.

Inter-State Migration

Seasonal migration from the study village to the other states in India are notably to Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamilnadu.

Of the 192 households, 116 have seasonally migrated to places outside the state and outside Rayalaseema region. Among them nearly one-fourth went to Bombay city alone,

half of them to Bombay and Karnataka region, another one-fourth to Karnataka region. In all, 60% have been seasonally migrating to different parts of the country. The nature of work and different places that have been visited by seasonal migrants outside the state have been discussed below.

Anantapur is a border district to Karnataka state and also the study region is situated on the immediate boundaries of Bellary district of Karnataka. There are good social contacts and kin networks existing between people of Karnataka border areas and the study region, from age old times. Anantapur district was part of Bellary district till 1882 and also cultural and geographical similarities exist between the two regions. Several places that have been visited by seasonal migrants are chosen because of the contacts they had earlier and also limited distance⁷.

The nature of work include - Sugarcane fields and sugar factory works, cotton, paddy fields, canal work, manganese, and granite stone work.

Working in sugarcane fields and sugarcane factories results in good earning. sugarcane handling require large number of workers seasonally and so this provides an opportunity for going to sugar factories from rural areas during the cane crushing season. In sugarcane cultivation, though the crop takes ten months to grow completely, the peak season in a village lasts for a month or two. There will be a lot of demand for labour during this period which is met by migrant labour.

People of Ranapuram usually migrated to several sugarcane growing areas of Karnataka and worked. Initially, it was just to make a living as they were working only as wage labourers. In the later years, they realized that more money could be earned provided they bring bullocks and bullock carts. Members of a single household or a few households started forming into units. These units work on contract basis, working for ten hours a day from 6 A.M in the morning and cutting

about one tonne per person. Then the sugar cane is loaded into carts and transported to factory. In 1992 the rate was about Rs.28 to 30 per tonne of sugar cane cutting, loading and transporting. The work lasts for 30 to 40 days. Migrant households involved in this type of work saved even Rs.2,500/- or more per season. A few households invested this money in sheep-rearing and subsequently benefited to a large extent by buying land from time to time. Earning could be more if the size of family is large and the number of male members is more.

Bombay is the most frequently visited place and also which has been sustaining the people of Ranapuram during every drought in the past 20 years. Majority (60%) of the villagers have so far visited Bombay from time to time as seasonal migrants, and continue to visit even to this day. They are involved in drainage work and construction activity as wage labourers. A few families have gone to Pune for one or two years for construction work. As villagers have been migrating for several years, they have good information sources regarding the availability of work at Bombay. Moreover, a few people belonging to the village and neighbouring region have settled permanently at Bombay, and they provide the information regarding availability of work quickly. Now, considerable number of the workers, go to Bombay every year even in good crop years, because they get more remuneration at the place of work. A few Vaddera households visited Tamilnadu for doing stone work on daily wages.

Pattern of Migration

Seasonal migration is more in the intra-district and inter-state than inter district. This is quite understandable because Rayalaseema region which is itself a drought hit area can not provide work to the migrants during droughts. Intra-district migration was possible previously because of rural public works taken up in Anantapur District. In addition, a

few irrigated pockets within the district provided some source of work seasonally.

CONCLUSION

The role of seasonal migratory process in facilitating human welfare in times of crisis has been clearly established. For over three decades, members of various *jatis* have resorted to seasonal migration as an adaptive mechanism in coping with drought. Depending upon the intensity and duration of drought, people moved from place to place, within the district, outside the district and even outside the state. A few families were able to improve their living conditions through seasonal migration which is evident from the migration pattern to sugarcane region of Karnataka and also certain potential places like Bombay. The circulatory migration approach (Bremner, 1985) emphasizes risk minimisation rather than 'profit maximisation' in explaining migration behaviour. In the 'structural perspective' (c.f. Goyal, 1990) migration can be interpreted as a household survival strategy. As employment opportunities decline and survival becomes difficult, vulnerable groups tend to migrate-out. At the same time, in the long-run, as researchers of 'circulatory migration approach' point out, migration is often a way of diversifying the economic options.

A closer observation into the inner dynamics reveals that the advantaged and disadvantaged groups of society had differential impact in the short term and long term. In the short-term, disadvantaged groups are pushed out in search of employment. Though the disadvantaged do not have any special migration-prone cultural values, economic compulsions help to generate a tradition of migration in them. Over a period of time, these disadvantaged groups get adjusted to the system and a few of them even venture into non-farm activities and prosper. On the other hand, the advantaged group become the

losers in the long term as value system becomes a social barrier in adapting to the crisis situations. The pattern of migration from this drought-prone village brings out the role of 'social values' to the forefront. The tradition acts as an obstacle for upper castes, while vulnerable groups get prepared to take risk as they have nothing to lose in the existing social system. There is a kind of gradation in the option-making process among the different *jatis*. Thus, drought acts as a stimuli and induces socio-structural change over a period of time in the social setting.

Despite several strategies followed by rural families in overcoming the crisis situation, only a few of them were able to cross the poverty line and improve their living conditions, while others continue to struggle to make a living. On the whole people suffer and encounter lot of problems in the process of seasonal migration in drought-prone areas. However, it also makes them to be more active and enterprising since they are on the look out for new opportunities, to overcome the effects of drought.

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1. The authors are grateful to Ranjan Gupta for his helpful comments.
 2. Ranapuram is a pseudonym given for the study village.
 3. Following Mandelbaum (1970:14-30), the native term *jati* is used throughout the study instead of the term 'caste'.
 4. A functional classification is designed based on both economic class and social hierarchy. It is to be made clear that 'cultivator *jati* category' does not prescribe all the households in it to be landholding group and similarly 'agricultural labour *jati* category' neither prescribes only landless households. Further, the service *jatis* do not necessarily follow their traditional service *jati* occupations only.
 5. The dam is at a distance of seven kilometers to the study village.
 6. A kind of tie-up between a cultivator family and a labour family existing for a few generations.
 7. The distance from the study village to the places of migration in Karnataka state range from 25 kms to 100 kms.