

Rajukulas and Rellis of Visakhapatnam: A Study of Their Potable Water

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ABSTRACT Water is one of the important natural resources which is essential for human life. Due to enormous population growth, industrialization and urbanization leads to the highest demand for water especially in the cities. In turn, water pricing system evolved to minimize the water consumption in the cities. The government is also unable to supply the required quantity of water to all the residents in the urban areas including Visakhapatnam, the city of destiny. The present paper highlights the water problem in the Visakhapatnam city and the resident views on the water supply and its quality and the role of Greater Visakha Municipal Corporation in meeting the water requirements of city citizens.

INTRODUCTION

Water is one of the natural resources which is essential in all aspects of life. Life is tied with water as it is tied to air and food. All life is completely dependent upon water, which includes drinking water for human beings and beast soil water for vegetation and surface water for water habitat of all types of aquatic life (Garland 1950). It is most important to human life and such natural resources should be properly conserved and utilized. Availability and access to clean water is among the most important determinants of the health and well being of any individual human being. With increasing population and improved living standards domestic demand for water has grown significantly. The large portion of our population is still deprived of the facility of clean drinking water.

Women play a crucial role both in rural and urban areas to collect and manage water for drinking and other household requirements. Increased demand for fresh water, resulted in water pricing system in most of the urban towns and cities. Forest environment degradation leads to insufficient rainfall. The result is seen in the form of falling water levels, water scarcity, degradation of quality and prevalence of water borne and water related diseases in several parts of our country including Visakhapatnam city. Due to enormous population growth and migration into the city leads to water scarcity, especially in the over crowded areas of slums and advent of increased apartment culture as well as industrialization. In this paper, an attempt is made to explain the women's perception, knowledge on

the quality and supply of water in Greater Visakha Municipal Corporation (GVMC). The paper also presents the various problems associated with the usage and supply of water.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

A random sample of 120 households was selected to collect required data. The paper was prepared on the basis of empirical data collected from these 120 households in two urban slums. They are Rajukula street, Rellis street and a Residential colony i.e., Peethala Street of Chinna Waltair in GVMC. Data were collected from women respondent from Rajukula, Rellis castes, through observation, interview, schedule methods.

THE PEOPLE

Rajukulas (Chakali)

The Chakali is a community of washermen dispersed throughout Andhra Pradesh (AP) and are known by different names i.e. chakali, chakla, Rajukalas, Dhobi and madavali. Thruston (1909) mentioned that Chakalis derived their name from the word of "chaku" (to wash). Their concentration is in urban areas than in the rural areas, their houses being located near small tanks or streams known as geddas locally, which are main sources of water for washing the clothes. The chakali are a backward classe community numbering 10,75,989 persons. The chakalis speak telugu language, those living in the areas adjacent to the other states, can speak Tamil, Oriya, and Marathi. The

chakalis are non -vegetarians, who avoid beef. Their staple food is rice. The endogamous social divisions among the chakalis are the Kapu chakali, Telaga chakali and Gooni chakali. Telaga chakalis are consider to be superior. In the varna order, they consider themselves as sudra, they do not traditionally be admitted inside the houses of the higher casts. Chakalis have a number of rules and regulations governing marriages. Incest is prohibited, monogamy is the norm, dowry is being paid nowadays, divorce is permitted with the approval of a kula panchayat. The nuclear family is popular among the chakalis. The statues of the chakali women are subordinate to men. The chakalis are a landless community. The chakalis are benefited very little by education facilities. Subsidy loans are being given to them for setting up laundries, house sites and loans for construction of houses are also provided.

Rellis

Relli also known as sachaharis and called sapiris among themselves, are a caste who speak Oriya. Relli refers to a kind of grass in Telugu. Earlier, the chief means of their livelihood, was the cutting and setting the rallu grass. As per the 1981 census, the total population was 76,329. They are distributed in ten out of the 13 Andhra Districts. Rellis are non-vegetarians, who eat pork and beef. Occasionally they take alcohol during the festive occasions. The Rellis are considered as one of the schedule castes. Marriages between members of the same surnames are prohibited. Monogomy is the norm. Polygyny is permitted. Giving oli (bride price) is prevalent in some areas. Nowadays it has been replaced by dowry in kind only. The nuclear family predominates among the rellis. The Relli women enjoy only a secondary status. Some Rellis have converted into Christianity. The Rellis still suffer from a low social status in the rural areas. Formal education is unfavourable to the Relli children because of their poverty and backwardness. The higher rate of dropouts is due to socio-economic reasons. Though they favour modern medicare, they do not fully make use of it. A few have them have accepted the family planning programme. Some of them avail modern civic amenties.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Socio-economic and demographic charac-

teristics such as religion, caste, age, level of education, source of income, monthly income, family size and type of house of the 120 women interviewed are presented in table 1. Majority (30.83 per cent) of the respondents are in the age group of 36-40 years while 25.83 per cent are in the age group of 41-45 years and 16.67 per cent are in the group of 26-30 years. Another 10.83 per cent are in the age group of 31-45 years. The remaining 15.83 per cent are in the age group of 46-50 years.

About 58 per cent of the women are illiterate. About four per cent of the women completed primary level of education and 12.5 per cent reported education of high school level while those reporting education of college level 16.67 per cent is Degree level and 8.33 per cent is Intermediate level. The main source of income reported are private employment (34.17 per cent), permanent employment (28.33 per cent), traditional occupation fishing (25 per cent) and pension people account for 12.5 per cent.

A majority of the respondents (33.33 per cent) reported the monthly income between Rs.5001-

Table 1: Profile of the respondents

S. No.	Particulars	Number	Per cent
a)	<i>Present Age (in years) (N=120)</i>		
	26-30	20	16.67
	31-35	13	10.83
	36-40	37	30.83
	41-45	31	25.83
	46-50	19	15.83
b)	<i>Level of Education (N=120)</i>		
	Illiterate	70	58.33
	Primary	5	4.17
	Secondary	15	12.50
	Intermediate	10	8.33
	Degree	20	16.67
c)	<i>Source of Income (N=120)</i>		
	Pension	15	12.50
	Fishing	30	25.00
	Permanent employed	34	28.33
	Private employed	41	34.17
d)	<i>Monthly Income (in Rupees) (N=120)</i>		
	<5000	30	25.00
	5001-10,000	40	33.33
	10,001-15,000	37	30.83
	1,5,000+	13	10.83
e)	<i>Family Size (in person) (N=120)</i>		
	4	68	56.67
	5	38	31.67
	6	10	8.33
	7	4	3.33
f)	<i>Type of Houses (N=120)</i>		
	Thatched	16	13.33
	Pucca	104	95.00

10,000. Nearly 31 per cent reported the monthly income between Rs. 10,000-15000, less than Rs. 5000 reported 25 percent and the remaining 10.83 per cent is above Rs. 15000 income group people.

It is noticed that nearly 57 per cent of the household are having four members as family size, 31.67 per cent are having members, about eight per cent are having six members, the family size of 3.33 percent is 7. Ninety-five per cent of households are having pucca buildings and the remaining are living in thatched houses (13.33 per cent).

Table 2 explains the supply and quality of water, sixty-five percent of the women reported that they are fetching the drinking water from shared own tap and the remaining 35 percent are collecting from public taps. The shared taps belongs to house owners, which are shared by the owners and rented households. The whole control on these taps rests with the owners of the house. This kind of situation can be seen in the residential areas.

Nearly 61 percent of the respondents reported that they are getting four pots / bindas (vessels) of drinking water from the taps, 39.17 per cent of the respondents reported that they are collecting five pots / bindas of drinking water from the shared own tap.

Nearly 27 per cent of the respondents are not satisfied with the supply of drinking water by Municipal Corporation and only the remaining 65 per cent are not satisfied with supply of drinking water.

All the 78 respondents reported the water supply does not follow as per time schedule. Nearly 95 per cent of the women reported that the first five buckets of tap water is muddy / dust which is thrown in the drainage. 15.38 percent reported that the duration of supply of water is not sufficient, 79.49 per cent of the respondents reported that the flow of water is very slow, it is noticed that due to this reason water is not sufficient for drinking purpose.

A majority (41.03 per cent) of the respondents reported that they adjust with previous day's storage water when the water supply is day-to-day system. Nearly 54 per cent of women adjust with availability of water in their house. Taking the water from bore well water is 53.85 per cent.

All the respondents reported that no specific time is maintained by the Municipal corporation for the supply of drinking water. During the summer season, drinking water is supplied on the base of alternate days is (52.5 per cent) supply.

Table 2. Supply and quality of water

S. No.	Particulars	Number	Per cent
1.	<i>Source of Drinking Water (N=120)</i>		
	Public tap	42	35.0
	Shared own tap	78	65.0
2.	<i>Water Required per day for Drinking Purpose (N=120)</i>		
	4 Pots / vessels	73	60.83
	5 Pots / vessels and above	47	39.17
3.	<i>Satisfaction on Supply of Water (N=120)</i>		
	Satisfied	32	26.67
	Not satisfied	78	65.0
4.	<i>Reasons for not Satisfaction (N=78*)</i>		
	Duts is seen in the water	74	94.87
	Supply times is not sufficient	12	15.38
	Slow flow of water from tap	62	79.49
	Supply schedule is not followed	78	100.0
5.	<i>Alternative for Drinking Water (N=78*)</i>		
	Previous day water is used	32	41.03
	Adjust with availability of water	42	53.85
	Bore -well water is used	42	53.85
6.	<i>Timings of Water Supply (N=120*)</i>		
	No specific time	120	100.00
	In summer alternate day supply	63	52.5
7.	<i>Problem Facing in Collection of Water (N=120)</i>		
	Yes	42	35.0
	No	78	65.0
8.	<i>Problems (N=42*)</i>		
	Some times dispute araised	22	52.38
	Fighting situation	8	19.05
	Slow flow of water	19	45.24
9.	<i>Knowledge about Purity of Water (N=120*)</i>		
	Use cloth for filtering	71	59.17
	Boil the water	41	34.17
	Boil and Filter the water	49	40.83
	Use Aqua guard / water filters	31	25.83
	Proper chlorination in tanks	51	34.17
10.	<i>Reasons for Drinking Water Contamination (N=120*)</i>		
	Overhead tanks are not properly cleaned	16	13.33
	Water pipes leakage and damage	52	43.33
	Bad draining system and damage	28	34.17
	Due to road repairs	21	17.5
	Can't say	24	20.0
11.	<i>Suggestion to Improve the Quality of Water (N=120*)</i>		
	Cleaning and chlorination of over head tanks / water tanks	65	54.17
	Proper water filterization at reservoir level	35	34.17
	Proper check-up on purity	31	25.83
	Can't say	24	20.0
12.	<i>Suggestion to Improve the Supply of Water (N=120)</i>		
	Minimize the wastage of water	24	20.0
	Supply of water with speed flow	73	60.83
	Regular water supply	80	66.67
	Can't say	11	9.17

*Percentages do not add up to 100 due to multiple responses.

Out of 120 women, 42 women (35 per cent) reported the problems in collection of water and the remaining 65 per cent reported no problems. Sometimes water disputes arise (52.38 per cent)

leading to a fighting situation among the women is 19.05 per cent. The remaining 45.24 per cent stated that the water flow from the taps is slow. If the taps water flow is increased then only the problem of water can be solved.

About 34 per cent of the respondents stated that the water is purified with proper chlorination in GVMC water tanks, nearly 41 per cent stated the water should be boiled and filtered, 34.17 per cent reported that they boiled that water for purification, 59.17 per cent reported that the water is filtered by using of cloth, nearly 26 per cent reported that the can be purified by using water filter or Acqua guards.

Majority (43.33 per cent) of the respondents reported that the contamination of drinking water is due to water pipes leakage and damage. About 48 per cent of the women reported the water is not chlorinated as per schedule, bad drainage system and insanitation is 34.7 per cent, 13.33 per cent reported that the overhead tanks are not properly cleaned. 17.5 per cent stated that due to road repairs the water gets polluted. 20 per cent of the respondents did not say reason for pollution of drinking water.

Good number of respondents (54.17 per cent) suggested that the water tanks are to be cleaned and chlorinated as per schedule. About 34 per cent reported that the proper water filterization should be done at reservoir level. Proper check-up, for purity of water is reported by 25.83 per cent and 20 percent of the respondents are silent on this issue.

With regard to improve the water supply, nearly 67 per cent the respondents reported that the water is to be supplied regularly without fail. 60.83 per cent stated that the supply of water must be speed flow minimize the wastage of water reported 20 per cent. Amount nine per cent of respondents said can't say in this regard.

CONCLUSION

The data reveals that there is acute water shortage in these areas, particularly in summer season. Traditionally only women bear the

responsibility of collection and preservation of water. Some of the observations were made that the women controls the family members in utilizing the water as per requirements. The importance of water quality for health is clear. Most of the women are aware of purifying water but they are not practicing the purification of water. A minimum of 35 households are collecting the water from a public tap, and they have to adjust with the little quantity of water. The water is polluted due to pipes leakages and lack of proper chlorination, lack of supervision of quality and supply of water. Periodically, the overhead tanks and reservoirs should be cleaned and chlorinated.

Adequate fresh water supply is the most important prerequisite for human life and subsequent sustained development. Therefore, providing safe drinking water to slum areas is of paramount importance in developing countries. More efforts and funding need to be injected to sustain the reservoir, water tanks clean-up programme. Women should be educated through inter-personal communication, training, formal and non-formal education which could contribute to the water management. Women should also get the necessary technical training needed to plan and manage the water supply and facilities by themselves. Water resource management should be based on a participatory approach to achieve equity. The role of women in water management needs to be strengthened. Programs related to water and sanitation need to be reviewed for gender sensitively. Women role should be promoted in water management and they are increasingly trained in water maintenance and perform leadership roles in Drinking water User's Association.

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