CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION
Rayalaseema is one of the driest regions of the country ranking next to Rajasthan. It is a rainshadow region. Out of the seven drought-prone districts of Andhra Pradesh, four of them are located in Rayalaseema accounting to two-thirds of the drought-prone area of Andhra Pradesh.

The term Rayalaseema is said to have been derived after the Rayas of Vijayanagar who ruled over this region for a period of about three centuries ever since its foundation in 1336 AD. This name is found for the first time in a Telugu poem of the work known as Abhisikta Raghavantu. It was written in praise of Ananta Raju of the Matli dynasty, who ruled over this region during the 16th-17th century. However, the term ‘Rayalaseema’ gained currency since 1928. The annual session of the Andhra Mahasabha was held in Nandyala during 17-18 November 1928. As part of the session on 18th November 1928, the first conference of the Ceded Districts was presided over by Kadapa Kotireddy. In this meeting Chilukuri Narayana Rao coined the term Rayalaseema and accordingly a resolution was proposed by Pappuri Ramacharyulu. Thus the name suggested by Chilukuri Narayana Rao was approved by the general body. From then onwards leaders in the thick of Indian freedom movement, resorted to the nationalist term Rayalaseema instead of Ceded Districts. Gadicherla Harisarvathama Rao popularized the term Rayalaseema.

LOCATION

Rayalaseema includes the present districts of Anantapur, Cuddapah, Chittoor and Kurnool. It is located within 12°37'-16°18' Northern Latitude and 76°47'-79°55' Eastern Longitude. The region spreads over 67,400 sq.k.m in the south western part of Andhra Pradesh. In 2001 it recorded a population at 13,517,644. It is bordered by the state of Karnataka on the south-west and west; Mahaboobnagar on the north,
Prakasam and Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh on the east; and Tamilnadu on the south.

**PHYSICAL FEATURES**

Rayalaseema in physical terms, consists of hill ranges of the Eastern Ghats, the Seshachalam ranges, the Nallamalas, the Erramalas and the Sandur hills. There are other groups of hills which are either extensions of these ranges or isolated formations. The Gandikota hills and Lankamalas in Cuddapah district, and the Muchokota hills in Anantapur district, are all of this category.

Rayalaseema is essentially a plateau traversed by hill ranges and drained by some medium and small rivers and their tributaries which are highly seasonal in character except the major rivers of Tungabhadra and Krishna rivers which flow along or near its northern border. These rivers contain water only for a short period and remain dry for most part of the year. The relief features of Rayalaseema influence the distribution pattern of its rainfall.

The Tungabhadra and the Penna are major rivers in the region. The Tungabhadra which rises in the western ghats, flows along the western and north-western borders of Bellary district and along the northern border of Kurnool district. The Penna takes its flows through Bellary, Anantapur, Kurnool and Cuddapah districts before entering Nellore district. Several tributaries join this river at various points in Cuddapah district.

**SOIL**

Rayalaseema region comprises of Zonal, Intrazonal and Azonal soils. In all, six types of soils are envisaged. These are Red sandy, Red loamy soil of Zonal group; deep black soil and mixed red and black soil of intrazonal group and coastal alluvium and skeletal soils of Azonal group.

By far, the largest extent of soils are formed by the red and black soil.
Red sandy soil covers practically the entire Chittoor district and greater part of Cuddapah and Anantapur districts besides the central taluks of Kurnool district. These soils have limited moisture holding capacity and consequently without irrigation the soil have limited to arable use. However, these soils respond well to manuring and irrigation and, therefore agriculturally significant.

Red loamy soil is chiefly found in the erstwhile taluks of Madanapally, Hindupur and the southern parts of Kadiri and Penukonda taluks. Compared to the red sandy soil, this soil has limited occurrence in Rayalaseema. It is relatively more fertile and with assured irrigation. It can support better agriculture.

Mixed red and black soil are second only to red sandy soil. It is chiefly found in the Kurnool district and to a smaller extent in the taluks of Urvakonda and Gooty in Anantapur district and northern parts of erstwhile taluks of Jammalamadugu and Proddutur of Cuddapah District. It is moderate both in fertility and moisture holding capacity and responds well to irrigation and manuring.

Deep black soil is found as a narrow patch along the northern border of Kurnool district in the taluks of Nandikotkur and Kurnool. It is a typical black cotton soil transported by rivers to the present location. It is very fertile and has high moisture-retentivity.

While alluvium soil occurs in narrow patches in the Puttur and Satyavedu taluks of Chittoor district, skeletal soil occur on the slopes of Nallamala and Velikonda ranges in the Siddavatam and Budvel regions of Cuddapah district. These are infertile and occur on the eroded hill slopes and at the foot hills and consequently least suitable for agriculture.

TEMPERATURE

The region has generally hot steppe climate with the exception of Chittoor District having tropical rainy climate. The interior part of Rayalaseema, the districts of Anantapur and Kurnool, is noted for its
aridity and drought-prone nature. The district of Bellary also comes under this category of climate.

This area is the dry tract of the Andhra Pradesh and has been generally described as “Stakle ground of famines”. The climate is almost dry throughout the year. The temperature during summer varies from 35°C - 44°C, while the winter temperature falls down to 15°C - 25°C. The region is located at the height about 300 feet to 700 feet above the sea level and contains many rocks and hills with very scant water resources.

RAINFALL

The tropical deciduous forest and barren hills of the Rayalaseema are inhospitable to attract regular monsoons. The western ghats and the eastern ghats block the normal course of the south-west and the north-east monsoons respectively. The region receives a fair amount of rainfall when the intensity of the monsoon is more and cyclonic gales blow heavily.

There is considerable variation in the occurrence of rainfall in the region of Rayalaseema. The western taluks of Anantapur district received less annual rainfall, while the coastal taluks of Andhra Pradesh received more than twice to the above amount. In general, rainfall decreases from east to west. The region receives its rainfall both from southwest monsoon and northeast monsoon. However, the rainfall variability is 40 per cent during the southwest monsoon and 60 per cent during the northeast monsoon period.

Excluding Kadiri taluk, the entire Anantapur district, Pulivendla and Jammalamaradugu taluks of Cuddapah district, and Kolikunta, Dhone, Pattikonda, Alur and Adoni taluks of Kurnool district have less than 60 cm. of annual rainfall. This is a zone which frequently experienced severe and disastrous scarcities, droughts and famines. It is the driest part of the state of Andhra Pradesh and the second driest part, next only to Rajasthan in India. About 40-70 per cent of the annual rainfall in the Rayalaseema occurs during the south-west monsoon period and the rest during the north-east monsoon period. However, the eastern taluks of
Chittoor district receive greater part of their rainfall from north-east monsoon. It is this seasonality and the quantity of rainfall that becomes climatically more important in the selection of different crops that can be grown and determine the extent to which and the manner in which the natural precipitation will have to be supplemented with irrigation.

A tract more specially liable to severe famines is that where the annual rainfall averages between 15-60 inches. Of these, the areas with the average rainfall of less than 30 inches or so, suffer the most because of the greater frequency of drought in them. Failure of rains is less common in the parts which have an annual average of 30-60 inches. But when it occurs, it proves very destructive because, generally speaking, the population in these areas is denser.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

According to the edict of Asoka found at Erragudi in Anantapur district, Rayalaseema region was a part of the Mauryan empire. After the disintegration of the Mauryan empire, this area came under the Satavahanas who ruled over Deccan region from 2nd Century B.C to 2nd Century A.D. Thereafter, this area was ruled by different dynasties like Ikshavakus, the Pallavas, the Chalukyas and the Rashtrakutas from 300 A.D. to 973 A.D. Later Rayalaseema region came under the Cholas followed by the Kakatiyas of Warangal who exercised their power over this region during 1158-1323 A.D. The rule of Kakatiyas over this region was very significant, because of their efforts to clear a number of forests, establish more human settlements and improve the economic conditions of the people.

Thereafter the region witnessed Muslim invasions and finally came under the direct control of the Rayas of Vijayanagara empire. Even after the decisive Battle of Talikota in 1565 A.D. the Rayas of Vijayanagara continued to rule over the greater part of this region with Penukonda in the Anantapur district as the next capital. Later on, Chandragiri in the Chittoor district and Vellore in Vellore District of Tamilnadu became the
capitals of Vijayanagara rulers. During the rule of the Rayas of Vijayanagara, this region became prosperous and was described as rathnalaseema i.e., the land of diamonds. The Foreign travelers like Abdur Razak, Niccolo Conte, Fernao Nuniz and Domingo Faes visited Vijayanagara and gave a vivid account of the prosperity enjoyed in the region. During the second half of the 17th century and after the decline of the Vijayanagara rule, the entire Andhra with the exception of Kurnool, was brought under the control of Golkonda sultans. Subsequently the region became a part of the Moghul empire under Aurangzeb. After the disintegration of the Moghul empire, the region became a prey for many local chieftains, both Hindu and Muslim, who divided the region among themselves. These chieftains were known as Rajahs and Nawabs. By 1740, they had become the part of the Hyderabad State ruled by Nizam-ul-mulk. However the local chiefs of these region tried to assert their independence from time to time. Till 1790 the region became a bone of contention between the rulers of Mysore (Hyder Ali & Tipusultan) on the one hand and the British, the Nizam and the Marathas on the other. Tipu sultan of Mysore brought this region under his control by 1790. A large part of this region came under the control of Nizam after the conclusion of the third Anglo-Mysore War in 1792, with the treaty of Srirangapatnam. With defeat and death of Tipu Sultan in 1799 in the fourth Anglo-Mysore War, the entire region i.e. the present districts of Cuddapah, Kurnool, Anantapur, Bellary and a part of the Chittoor came under the control of Nizam of Hyderabad. The Nizam as per the provisions of the treaty concluded with the English East India Company (EEIC) in October 1800, ceded this area to the British. After acquiring this region, then known as the Ceded Districts, the EEIC government appointed Captain Thomas Munro as the Principal Collector. Munro, based on tradition, re-structured the Ryotwari system in the region. This region was divided in 1808 into two districts as the District of Bellary and the District of Cuddapadh. In 1858 Kurnool district was formed by amalgamating the four taluks of the erstwhile territory of
the Nawab of Kurnool (Nandyal, Ramallakota, Nandikotkur and Sirvel), with the Pattikondah of Bellary district and Koilakuntla, Cumbum and Markapur of Cuddapah district. In 1882 Bellary was bifurcated into two by forming the district of Anantapur. Thus the Ceded Districts of Bellary (which is now in Karnataka and which included then the present district of Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh), Kurnool and Cuddapah forms the area of study for the present dissertation with its modern appellation of Rayalaseema10.

HISTORY OF FAMINES IN INDIA

Of the famines and scarcities which overtook Indians sub-continent before the advent of the British, there is no exact record. Very little material is available about the early famines that occurred during the ancient and medieval periods. India has suffered from famines since time immemorial. The earliest references to famines in India are found in the Rigveda. In the third book of Rigveda in hymn 8, a prayer was offered “to drive poverty and famine far from us”, while in hymn 53 of the same book, the danger of famine that was dispelled is mentioned. A similar prayer was offered in hymn 55 in the book 8, where Indra was invoked to keep people free from famine. There were also other books in ancient period to which references were made to famine. They are Yaska’s Nirukta (Chapter-II Section-II) which belongs to later Vedic period, Valmiki Ramayana (Chapter-9, Verses 9-10) Jataka stories of Buddhists12 (Jataka XXII) and Kautilya’s Arthasastra13. Kautilya mentions relief measures to be taken during the period of famines and scarcities, i.e., the revision of taxes, the granting of money and grain from state funds, construction of artificial lakes, tanks, wells etc., and the importation of grain from other places. Kalhana in his Rajatarangani mentions that a terrible famine occurred in Kashmir in 917-18 A.D14.

During the medieval period there were famines which caused sufficient misery to the common people. During the period of Sultan Allauddin Khiji, it was told that to meet the scarcities necessary measures
were taken such as keeping the rates of necessities at a low rate. His Counsellors suggested that the necessities of life would never become cheap, until the price of grain was fixed by regulations and tariffs. This was accepted by Alla-ud-din Khilji and several regulations were passed. As per these regulations, the stores of grain were to be sent to the royal granaries at Delhi for storage and use in times of deficiency. This grain stores were opened when there was a scarcity due to deficiency of rain or any other reasons and the increasing of the prices was arrested. “All the wise men of the age were astonished at the evenness of the price of the markets. If the rains had fallen (regularly), and the seasons had been (always) favourable, there would have been nothing so wonderful”. But the extraordinary matter of the reign of Alla-ud-din Khilji, was that there were years in which the rains were deficient, but instead of the usual scarcity ensuing, there was no want of corn in Delhi, there was no rise in the price of either the grain brought out of the royal granaries or in that imported by the dealers20. This was indeed the wonder of the age and no other monarch was able to effect it. During the reign of Jalaluddin Khiji, there occurred a famine in 1291 A.D. which affected parts of Delhi and Siwalik hills. During the regime of Mhammad-bin-Tughlak rains failed in 1326-27 A.D, 1334-35 and 1345 in the parts of Ganga-Yamuna doab causing distress to the people31. Iban Batuta writing about the famine of 1345, said that “distress was general, and the position of poor was very grave”. He also said he witnessed scenes like three women cutting in pieces and eating the skin of a horse which had been dead for some months. Skins were cooked and sold in the markets. Crowds were rushing forward and catch the blood of bullocks when they were slaughtered. Sultan ordered provisions for six months to be distributed to all the population at Delhi. The Judges, Secretaries, and officers inspected all the streets and markets to enquire and supply every person provisions for half a year. These relief measures were also mentioned by Barani, a native chronicler22.
In 1396 South India, particularly Deccan region (Maharashtra), suffered a severe famine which caused a heavy human loss. Famine was known as Durga Devi and was said to have last for twelve years. As a result, whole districts were entirely depopulated and a very scanty revenue was obtained from the territory between the Godavary and the Krishna far upwards upto 30 years afterwards\(^{23}\). North India witnessed famine in 1399 A.D. Feristha mentions two famines in the 15\(^{th}\) century which are said to have spread throughout the Deccan but gives no exact particulars\(^{21}\). Maharashtra and Mysore suffered due to famines in 1471 A.D. and 1509 A.D. respectively\(^{25}\). In spite of vigorous measures adopted by the emperors, the famines took a heavy toll of life. The native historians of those days concerned themselves more with courts and kings than with calamities among the common people. Hence the lack of sufficient sources of the famines.

It was said that the kings of Vijayanagara gave importance to the development of agriculture by constructing tanks and developing underground water resources. Hence the severity of the famine could not have a devastating effect in the region. For example, Bukkaraya I, the first king of Vijayanagara, constructed a tank known as Anantasagara in Cuddapah district in 1365. The stone inscription installed on the tank bund indicates the safety measures to be followed while constructing the tanks. Bukkaraya II constructed a dam across the river Tungabhadra and brought water to the city of Vijayanagara. Another dam was also constructed in 1521 across the river Tungabhadra by Srikrishna Devaraya\(^{26}\).

During the time of Akbar severe famines occurred in 1556-57 in the neighbourhood of Agra, in 1573-74 in Gujarat and in 1594-98 in the whole empire\(^{27}\). The famine of 1594-98 was due to the scarcity of the grain throughout the whole of Hindustan, and it raged continuously for three or four years. The king ordered alms to be distributed to all the cities. A kind of plague also added to the horrors of the period and caused several deaths. Badauni gave a vivid account of these famines and said that
emperor appointed Shaik-Farid Bokhari as the incharge of relief operations. He opened charity houses, separate kitchens of Hindus, Muslims and Jogins, where a large number of people fed. Abdul Hamid Lahori described severity of the 1630-32 famine during the Shahjahan period in Deccan and Gujarat²⁸. This famine took a heavy toll of life. He mentioned about the people who lived on flesh of their dear ones, who died out of starvation. The emperor ordered the distribution of provisions to be made in the cities and towns.

Famines occurred in 1641 in Kashmir, in 1646 in the Punjab. The years 1658-60 (Aurangazeb) witnessed scarcity in Sindh, Surat and Gujarat²⁹. Mentioning about the famine James Mill wrote that Aurangazab took several relief measures that included the remission of rents and taxes, opening of treasury without a limit, transport of grain to the famine affected areas and the distribution of it to the people reduced the prices. He also observed that these measures were possible of Aurangazeb “who allowed no expenses of the luxury and ostentation of a court and who managed with skill and vigilance the disbursements of the state, afforded a resource for the wants of the people”³⁰. Again the years 1687, 1702-04 and 1747 witnessed scarcities of food, fodder and of drinking water. It was said that in 1687 even rich men were reduced to beggary on account of the shortage food and fodder. Scarcity of water in 1747 was so great that men could not get water even to wash their faces; men and cattle perished in large number. In spite of this, people at large did not feel the distress since the emperors made provisions for distribution and gave concessions for transporting the food grains. Grain was purchased from surplus provinces and sold at cheap rates³¹.

The above relief measures were felt sufficient to meet the requirements of the famine affected region. Sir Thomas Munro, the Principal Collector of the Ceded Districts (1800-07) said that “it would be a waste to construct tanks further in this region as there were enough numbers of tanks already constructed by the early rulers”. He suggested
only to undertake the repairs of the tanks during the famine period, to provide relief to the common people affected by the famines\textsuperscript{32}.

This was due to the non-exploitation nature of the earlier governments. Before the advent of the British, the rulers followed a policy of simple and non-exploitation economy. People were content to depend on local resources\textsuperscript{33}. The people could achieve security from such calamities as famines by creating and maintaining food stocks out of the surpluses during the past years. In those days, there was no market economy in the rural sector and the surplus was enough to cover the deficit of one or two lean seasons.

For a connected and complete account of all the famines that occurred in the pre-British, Indian history is lacking. The available scattered evidence shows that in the earlier times, a major famine occurred once in every 50 years. By observing the cycle of the Indian famines, Love day observed that “famines tend to recur in cycles of 5 years and the greater once in cycles of 50 years”. He also observed that most disastrous calamities have failed upon India roughly towards the middle and end of the each century\textsuperscript{34}.

The economic deterioration began during the 18\textsuperscript{th} century and reached its climax under the rule of English East India Company (EEIC). The commercial policy of EEIC destroyed the basic structure of Indian economy causing the decline of agriculture, domestic industries and trade and commerce\textsuperscript{35}. During the middle of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, India was on the whole, a very poor country and the masses carried only on a bare subsistence level. Naturally, people suffered a lot during the famine.

The political and socio-economic scenario underwent a great change soon after EEIC appeared on the Indian scene. Besides, under its rule India experienced not only political subjugation, but also experienced economic exploitation as a result of the forces released by the industrial revolution. The British period therefore experienced famines more in frequency and severity than before\textsuperscript{36}.
However, famine ceased to connote its earlier meaning in the new conditions. It did not mean absolute food shortage and hunger deaths but rather the inability of large sections of the population to buy food, while it was available in the market. Famine was now characterized by loss of purchasing power or shortage of money. The speculative forces of trade made more acute the shortage of food caused by natural calamity. Instead of making food stuffs available to the people during scarcity, the stocks disappeared from the market. Consequently there was sharp rise in prices with corresponding decrease in the income of the people which placed food beyond the reach of the common man.

From the beginning of the 11th century to the end of the 17th century there were only 14 famines, almost all of which were confined to small local areas. But the frequency of famine showed a conceptive increase in the 19th century. In the period of about 90 years from 1765-1858 when the EEIC ruled over India, the country experienced 12 famines and 4 severe scarcities. The frequency of famine shown is still further increased during the first 50 years of the direct rule of India by the British. Between 1860-1908 famine or scarcity prevailed in one part of the country or the other in 20 out of the total 49 years. Thus it is evident that the intensity of the famine severity increased only after the EEIC took over political control of India with an aim to exploit the rich economic resources of the country.

Till 1800 severe famines occurred in India. The first dread full famine began 1769-70, which caused the death of 1/3 of total population. No relief works were undertaken by the state. Rather the Company officials made large profits by buying of rice and retailing it at high price. Prices rose 4-10 times the ordinary rates. Even children were offered for sale but there were no purchasers. “The country was so depopulated and deserted that once fertile and populous parts were described by a traveler as pathless forest.”

Again the 1781-82 were years of the severity in Madras, and in 1783-84 a severe famine affected the whole of the north-India. In 1792 a
serious famine occurred in Madras and Deccan and the state opened inadequate relief works for the famine affected people. One of the Munro’s reports shows that this famine was so severe in the northern circars and which is memorable occasion on which Indian Government opened relief works for the first time. Its intensity was enhanced by the rapacity of the native administration.

Had the officers of government lowered the assessment, or even let it remain as before the effects of the famine would probably only have been felt while it lasted but as they raised it nearly 50% wherever there was a crop, this addition to the high price necessarily occasioned by the scarcity rendered grain so dear that very little could be purchased by the lower classes of the inhabitants, and great numbers of them perished in consequences.

During the nineteenth century major famines occurred in 1802-04 in the north-western provinces, and it was severe till autumn of 1804. The cause of the famine was said to be the short-sighted policy of the British Government in fixing the heavier rates of revenue, which the people were unable to bear. Though this famine was severe, it was limited in area. In 1806-07, and 1812-1813, famine prevailed in and around Agra. The failure of crops in the years and the late rains were the cause of this calamity. Famine again attacked the north-western provinces and Bundelkhand in the year 1819. Famine also occurred in 1825-27 and in 1832, chiefly in the north-western province and the adjacent countries. In 1832-34, 1837-38 and 1854 the country witnessed famines and all are local in character. The most severe of these was of 1837-38. It affected the whole of territory between Allahabad and Delhi and the adjoining states of Rajputana as far west as Jaipur comprising in the area about 1,13,000 sq. miles. The famine was a result of total failure of rain fall in 1837 and a series of bad seasons. Misery was beyond imagination. Poorer classes resorted to jungles; children were sold for few seers of grain; villages were deserted; and the famine continued till the rainy season of 1838. The government provided relief work at low wages due to lack of funds. Immediately after rain, work was stopped and thousands of workers were without work. Gratuitous relief works were
completely left to private charity. Throughout this famine remissions and suspensions of land revenue were granted. Migration was active and prices moved so sharply, even the government intervention could not bring down the prices. The limitation relief left the majority population to its fate. In 1860-61 famine occurred in north-west provinces including Azmeer, Merwara and the adjoining divisions of the Punjab partly due to local disturbances in 1857. Villages were plundered and burnt resulting in the destruction of local source of grain, and the famine partly due to unseasonable rain in 1860. About an area of 48,000 sq. miles was affected and 19 million people experienced this famine. In 1862 the Deccan districts of Bombay province witnessed scarcity that was local and mild in character.

The famine of 1865-66 covered such a vast area that the history of famines in India has ever recorded in the past. Orissa, Bengal, Bihar and Madras were affected. In Orissa and Madras, famine continued even during the year 1867. Loss of life was heavy and migration was "reported on a very extensive scale."  

Next in the sequence was the 'great famine' of 1876-78 which is the basis for this thesis. It was the first all India famine spread over six provinces. Besides the Madras Presidency, the famine was intense in Bombay, Hyderabad, the Punjab, North Western provinces and oudh. This famine in the south was popularly known as the "Madras Famine" or "South Indian Famine" or the Dhatu Famine as it spread over a larger portion of Madras Presidency. It affected 14 of the 21 districts in the Presidency and claimed more than 3.5 million lives. The distress was very severe in the districts of Rayalaseema – Bellary, Cuddapah and Kurnool.

**FAMINES IN RAYALASEEMA**

Major famines which occurred during 1800-1866 in the different parts of the country had their impact on Rayalaseema also following is the brief review of famines occurred in this region during 1800-1866 and their impact.
FAMINE OF 1802-04

This was the first famine that Rayalaseema witnessed after it was ceded by the Nizam to the EEIC in 1800. This famine began in 1802 and lasted to the 1804. This famine was the result of the failure of South-West and North-East monsoon. This resulted in the cessation of agricultural operations from June 1802 and produced conditions of drought. In the second consecutive year also, the South-west monsoon failed had the drought and deepened into a famine. Due to the scarcity of food grains, there was a steep rise in the prices\(^4\). The Government failed to arrest the increasing prices. In utter disregard of the severe famine conditions in the region, the government had permitted the export of grain to the Raichur in the Nizam territory where the prices of grain was higher. Thomas Munro's suggestion to impose restrictions on the export of grain was ignored by the Madras Government\(^6\).

FAMINE OF 1805-07

In the next year Rayalaseema witnessed famine and it continued until 1807. While the torrential rain in 1804 made the ryots of the region to commence agricultural operations and bring much of the land under food crops, the wide spread failure of rains in Rayalaseema region in 1805-06 and elsewhere in the Madras Presidency created again the conditions of drought and the people felt shortage of grain everywhere. Munro reported, that 10-15% of the cattle employed in agriculture and about 50% not employed in agriculture had perished for want of fodder. Large crowds of people flocked the city of Madras expecting relief from a charitable association. Many ryots were forced to sell their cattle and to pay land revenue and join the ranks of agricultural labourers. Munro's efforts to grant taceaui loans to ryots for the repair of wells and tanks were not approved by the Court of Directors of the Company\(^6\).
FAMINE OF 1812

The irregular monsoon during the years 1810-12 created the conditions of the scarcities the districts of Rayalaseema. The price of the grains rose abnormally causing hardship to the people. The Government relief policy was confined to the exempting grain from customs duties throughout the Madras Presidency and offering employment to the poor. The Government came forward giving advance of money to the merchants who were involved in procuring grain from the surplus to the deficit area. It prohibited the District Collector's from interfering in the grain trade⁴⁷.

FAMINE OF 1823-24

The greater part of the Madras Presidency including the Rayalaseema districts witnessed severe drought in 1823. People experienced the shortage of food and the steep rise in the prices of grain. The Board of Revenue communicated to the Government of India on the alarming situation in many parts of the Madras Presidency including the districts of Rayalaseema. This famine also due to the failure of irregular monsoons. The poor people were not in a position to purchase the grain at the high rates. By the beginning of 1824, there were number of deaths reported due to starvation. It was also said that the poor people were selling their children as slaves to feed their stomachs⁴⁸. The dislocation of agricultural operations had its impact the collection of land revenue. The Government could collect in districts of Rayalaseema only Rs. 36,32,676 when compared to the previous year's collections of Rs. 44,63,928.

Munro's proposal to the reduction of assessment rate during this famine year was partially implemented to relieve the burden of taxation on ryots. This was also the first occasion when as substantial remission of land revenue of Rs. 11,65,173 was made in the districts of Rayalaseema⁴⁹.

THE FAMINE OF 1833

The famine of 1833, well known as Guntur or Nandana famine did not live the districts of Rayalaseema unaffected. It was called Guntur famine because of its severity in the Guntur district where out of the
population of 5 lakhs as many as 1,50,000 persons died out of hunger\textsuperscript{50}. There were reports about the seriousness of the famine condition from Bellary, Cuddapah and Kurnool since November 1832. The famine made many of the ryots to dispose of their properties to escape the crisis. People from these districts, particularly Cuddapah, had migrated to the Madras city seeking relief. The Government asked the Collectors of the famine affected districts to make use of the private charity as far as possible to feed the poor. However, it was stated that in six months nearly 12,000 people died of cholera in the Bellary district alone and that the loss of revenue there was about 3.25 lakhs of rupees\textsuperscript{51}.

**FAMINE OF 1854**

The next famine in the region was in 1854. It was confined almost to Bellary district which includes present Anantapur district. In May 1851, there was a great storm which damaged all most all the irrigation works in this district which did not recover from this damage even by the end of the year. Besides 1852, the beginning of the 1853 witnessed the unreasonable rain by which the standing crops especially *cholam* had been destroyed. On the other hand, the rainfall in June and July 1853 was scanty and the north-east monsoon completely failed. The average rainfall in the district as a whole in the year was only 9½ inches whereas in the preceding year it was 30.35 inches. As a result the harvest failed miserably and the prices began to rise. By September 1854, the famine reached its Zemith.

In this famine, the Government paid considerable attention to organize the relief works. The relief works provided relief to 9000 people in January 1854 and by July the number reached at 97,000. At one time the number on relief works reached as high as 1,00,600 or 8 per cent of the entire population. Altogether Rs. 16 lakhs were spent on the famine\textsuperscript{52}. 

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FAMINE OF 1865-66

The beginning of the famine in the districts of Rayalaseema particularly in Bellary was seen in the years preceding 1866. The outbreak of the American civil war in April 1861 caused shortage of cotton in Lancashire. Hence the demand for Indian cotton was so great that prices rose gradually up to the end of 1864, benefiting the ryots who in turn cultivated cotton in an increasing area. However, in 1865 the American civil war ended and exports from India went down with a step decline in cotton prices. The years also witnessed decrease in the area of cultivation of food grains causing the shortage of food. Besides this, no food crops were cultivated during 1866-67 due to failure of the monsoons. The south-west monsoon in the early part of the year produced the crisis unequalled in its general effect during the 1865-66. The average rain fall during 1866-67 in the Bellary district was 13.44 inches²³.

The severity of the famine could have been reduced if the government had taken the measures to arrest the famine at its beginning stage itself. There were many even among the government official who's visited the district in October 1866 under the orders government and felt that the gravity of the situation was not realized early enough by the government²⁴.

Next to Bellary the most severely affected region in the Rayalaseema was Kurnool district though there was a rainfall of 20.00 inches. It received much less rain in the previous years. The south-west monsoons was unfavourable in 1866-67 and even water for drinking purpose failed. So the agricultural operation did not began in that time. The pasturage was insufficient, the poorer classes suffered much for want of food and loss of cattle was great²⁵.

The Cuddapah district though received an annual rain fall of 21 inches during the year 1866-67, the failure of the rain during the first part of the year from March to June, greatly affected the commencement of the cultivation and injured the Paddy already sown. However the district received normal rains during the later months which encouraged the ryots
of sow both dry and wet crops. However, there was a price rise in the
district during this famine causing a great deal of suffering to the poor
from poverty and distress. This was due to large exports of grain from this
district to the adjoining district of Bellary and Bangalore where the
distress was prevailed\textsuperscript{36}. In general, the famine of 1866-67 was not so
severe in this district when compared to other districts of Bellary and
Kurnool of Rayalaseema.

**Famine of 1876-78**

The famine of 1876-78 was the most widespread of the famines that
occurred in the latter half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century India including the Madras
Presidency as mentioned earlier. The districts of Rayalaseema -- Bellary,
Cuddapah and Kurnool suffered heavily as part of the Presidency.

The presence of famine in Rayalaseema was recognized by the local
authorities by September-October 1876. Detailed reports were sent by
them from time to time about the spread of famine in the districts of
Rayalaseema and urged the Government to immediately sanction grants
to start relief works. They had also sent to the Government a vivid
account of the progress of the relief works and the problems involved in
organizing them. These details are thoroughly discussed in the next three
chapters.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


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