CHAPTER - II
DROUGHTS IN ANANTAPUR DISTRICT AND STUDY VILLAGE

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Rayalaseema is one of the three major geographical regions of Andhra Pradesh. The other two regions are Coastal Andhra and Telangana. The Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh comprises of four southern districts of Kurnool, Anantapur, Cuddapah and Chittoor. It has an area of about 73,495 sq.kms. and forms 24.46 percent of total area of Andhra Pradesh. The population of Rayalaseema region is 116.86 lakhs according to 1991 census. It accounts for 17.6 percent of total population of Andhra Pradesh (census of India, 1991:85). The region lies in between the north latitudes $12^0 30^1$ and $16^0 20^1$ and east longitudes $76^0 30^1$ and $86^0$.

Drought-Prone Nature:

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 percent of the total geographical area of the country and account for 11 percent of its population (Ministry of Irrigation and Power, 1972:157). Starvation, migration and such problems have been a part of the lives of people in these regions.

The criteria for declaring ‘drought’ have been variously debated. However, two criteria adopted by Government of India - rainfall deficit and available irrigation facility seem to be reasonable. It is observed that,
"Areas where the frequency or probability of failure of annual rainfall by more than 25 percent from the normal was found to be 20 percent or more for the observed years, were considered as drought-prone. Areas where the frequency exceeded 40 percent were considered as chronically drought-prone" (cit. in Nadkarni, 1985:24).

However, the emphasis on total rainfall may not be correct. The even distribution of rainfall and the number of rainy days are important. Even if the total rainfall received is normal, lack of its proper distribution vis-a-vis plant requirements will lead to failure of crops. In regions like Gujarat, Rajasthan or Andhra Pradesh, where rainfall is highly deviant from year to year, 'drought' can be shown in any district in any year. In fact, in acutely drought affected regions like Rayalaseema, studies (on the basis of rainfall data since 1945) have indicated that no meteorological drought had occurred (Olsen, 1987:441-43).

The Rayalaseema region is historically known as "stocking ground of famines". Anantapur district located in Rayalaseema is the driest among all the districts of Andhra Pradesh and is drought-prone. The Irrigation committee (1972) has identified the entire district as drought-prone. It is estimated that drought visits Anantapur district every alternate year. A single dry crop is raised in most parts of the district under rainfed conditions. Anantapur district is one of the 6 districts in India known for their low average rainfall, frequency and severity of droughts and low proportion of the irrigated land to total cultivated land. Consequently, the region is rated low for its level of socio-economic development. The World Bank has also bestowed its attention in this region because of its drought-prone nature and its severity.
To have a better **insight** about drought proneness of Anantapur district, a few details about the district and also other Drought Prone Districts (DPD's) and Non-Drought Prone Districts of Andhra Pradesh are presented here.

Anantapur District:

Anantapur district is neither a geographical, historical nor an ethnic entity but is the creation for **administrative** convenience. In 1882, it was separated from Bellary district (now in Karnataka state). Anantapur was under direct British rule before Independence and formed part of the Madras Province before states reorganization.

**Physiography:**

Anantapur district lies in the western most part of Andhra Pradesh, between 13° - 41' and 15° - 14' N and 76°-47', and 78°-26' E. It is bounded on the north by Kurnool district, on the east by Cuddapah and on the South and West by Karnataka state (see Map 2.1). The landscape of the district has two peculiar characteristics, viz., steep slope from south to north and undulations with rocky and barren lands.

Climate and Rainfall:

Located in the interior Deccan plateau, the district has warm and dry climate, with a very low annual rainfall of 544 mm against 891 mm in the state. The variation in normal rainfall across talukas is not very wide, ranging from 499 mm in Kalyanadurg to 617 mm in Kadiri. The district has the lowest rainfall in Andhra Pradesh and even at all-India level it is second lowest. A comparison of average annual rainfall in Anantapur, other
MAP 2.1: ANANTAPUR DISTRICT

LEGEND
- NATIONAL HIGHWAY
- MAJOR ROADS
- RAILWAY LINE
- RIVERS
- DISTRICT HQ.
- IMPORTANT TOWN
- OTHER TOWNS, VILLAGES

MAP OF INDIA SHOWING ANDHRA PARDESH

MAP OF ANDHRA PARDESH SHOWING ANANTAPUR DISTRICT

SCALE
3 CM = 28 KM

KARNATAKA STATE

ANANTAPUR

DURGA

KURNOOL DISTRICT

GUNTAKAM

UKAVAHONDA

PAMIDI

SURBHANALLA

MUTUDEVA

THADPATHI

SIBIDIRL

GADDALU

KADIRI

TALLPALLU

KOKKANTI

KADIRI

HALLA PHERUGU

191 x 29

191 x 29

50 (a)
Drought Prone Districts and Non-Drought Prone Districts of Andhra Pradesh between 1965-87 is presented in the table 2.1 (see also Map 2.2).

Table 2.1: Average Annual Rainfall in Anantapur District, Drought-Prone and Non-Drought prone Districts of Andhra Pradesh.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Rainfall (in mms)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1965-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anantapur</td>
<td>368.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drought Prone Districts</td>
<td>475.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Drought Prone Dist.</td>
<td>766.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

source: Census reports of respective years, Govt. of India.

As it can be seen from the table 2.1 that, 1976-77 being a non-drought year in general, Anantapur received only 460mm of rainfall as against 759 mm in Drought Prone Districts and 1172 in Non-Drought Prone Districts, in both the latter cases it was above the normal rainfall. This indicates the precarious rainfall situation that is prevalent in Anantapur district.

Soils:

The district is covered mostly (80%) by red soil. However, three distinct natural divisions can be identified in the district. The northern part of the district extending from Uravakonda to Tadipatri has predominantly black cotton soils. Though the soil is fertile, its sloppy nature makes it difficult to manage.

Drought-prone Districts in Andhra Pradesh are: Anantapur, Chittoor, Cuddapah, Kurnool, Prakasam, Ranga Reddy, Mahaboobnagar and Nalgonda.
MAP 2.2: DROUGHT-PRONE AND NON-DROUGHT PRONE DISTRICTS OF ANDHRA PRADESH
nature leads to soil erosion and low water retention. The central part has infertile red soil with an admixture of black soils in parts. The southern part of the district has superior red soil. This part is less sloppy and hence has more cultivation and vegetation.

Land use pattern:

Due to the persistent drought, the area under current fallows in drought prone districts is always higher than that of Non drought prone districts and this is all the more true in respect of Anantapur district, which is hard hit by the droughts. The share of cultivable waste and other fallows also show a similar trend during 1965-66 to 1986-87 (see table 2.2).

Forests:

The percentage share of the forests in the total geographical area is one of the indicators of any district. Forest coverage in Anantapur is lowest of all the districts of Andhra Pradesh. Area under forest cover is only around 10 percent in Anantapur district, whereas in other Drought Prone Districts it is 17 to 20 percent. The forest cover is higher (24 to 29 percent) in Non-Drought Prone Districts (Table 2.2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crops</th>
<th>Anantapur</th>
<th>Drought Prone Districts</th>
<th>Non-Drought Prone Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Forest</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10.09)</td>
<td>(10.13)</td>
<td>(10.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Current</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>falls</td>
<td>(12.77)</td>
<td>(18.51)</td>
<td>(17.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Other</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>falls</td>
<td>(05.83)</td>
<td>(06.59)</td>
<td>(07.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Cultivable</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waste</td>
<td>(07.94)</td>
<td>(05.95)</td>
<td>(04.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Net area</td>
<td>8.73</td>
<td>7.35</td>
<td>7.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sown</td>
<td>(45.61)</td>
<td>(38.43)</td>
<td>(40.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Notes: Figures in brackets are in percentages.
History of Droughts in Anantapur District:

A brief study of Anantapur's history will reveal that the district has been subjected to severe droughts and famines right from 14th century. The whole district lies within the famine zone, with very scanty rainfall, poor soils and precarious irrigation sources exposing the district to famines. Periodically, they ravaged the population, leaving marks in its size and composition and also the agricultural activities. Some of its famines have become almost legendary. An inscription in the Narasimhaswamy Temple at Kadiri refers to a famine which occurred in 1390-91 A.D.

"Innumerable skulls were rolling about, and paddy could not be purchased even at the cost of 10 'NALI' per one 'PANAM' (Andhra Pradesh District Gazetteers, Anantapur, 1970:251).

Of the two famines that ravaged the entire Deccan during the 15th century, the second was described by Ferishta as excessively severe as

"for two years no grain could be seen and in the third when the Almighty showered his mercy upon the earth, scarcely any farmers were left to cultivate the lands" (Francis, 1905:79).

Prior to British occupation, famines were not the only menace which the district had to face. The "ravages of large bodies of horsemen and pindaris during the Mysore war, the commotions of rebellious poligars, the effects of famine in 1792 and 1793" and the oppressions and abuses exercised under the Nizam's Government considerably impoverished the district (Andhra Pradesh District Gazetteers, Anantapur, 1970:252). The earliest famine on record is that of 1792-93. There was water scarcity amounting to famines in 1803, 1805, 1807, 1824, 1833, 1854, 1896,

NALI is approximately half a kilogram measure and PANAM is a coin under circulation during those days.
1897, 1900, 1918, 1920-22, 1934-35, 1937-38, 1942-43 and 1945-46 prior to Independence. These famines were varying in their intensity sometimes affecting the entire district and occasionally only a few taluks.

Although there are no elaborate records available regarding earlier famines before formation of a separate district in 1882, the review written in 1886 by Mr. Nicholson, the acting collector of Bellary serves to show how frequent and unfortunate the distresses were between 1803 and 1805.

"In 1803 there was scarcity, in 1823 famine was anticipated and relief works started, in 1832 both monsoons have failed and the year was the worst on record upto that time; 1838 was almost a famine year; in 1865 there was anticipations of distress, which culminated in famine in the following year; besides these years of distress the season is described as unfavourable in no less than 24 years out of the series of seventy.........only eight years have elapsed since the last famine (1876-78) and even during this short period there have been four bad seasons. Last year both monsoons failed, the earlier harvest being very scanty and the later crops a complete failure. This record is sufficient to show how seriously the resources of the ryots have been affected by a constant succession of adverse years" (Board of Revenue proceedings, 1877:4).

The measures taken by the officers of the East India Company to deal with such situations related at best to the disbursement of cash doles to the poor to "enable the dealers to introduce suppliers of grain", grant of 'takkavi' loans and remission of assessment of land revenue "according to the ability of the farmer" (Board of Revenue Proceedings, 1804:100).

Similarly some other famines which occurred during this period and afterwards shook Anantapur district badly. The Guntur famine of 1833 led to the grain riots in Gooty, the famine of 1853-54 decimated 13.5 lakhs of cattle population and the famine of 1866 forced the poorer sections to Anantapur was a part of Bellary district during those days (till 1882)

The years 1876-78 witnessed the worst famine ever in the whole of Madras presidency, which is called by different names: Pedda Karuvu, Dhatu Karuvu, Dolkala Karuvu, mushti Karuvu, Valasa Karuvu and Dooba Karuvu. It is called as Dhatu Karuvu for it started in the Hindu year `Dhatu’. It lasted for about 22 months and was described as the "most grievous calamity of its kind experienced in British India since the beginning of the century (Report of the Indian Famine commission, 1881:16). This famine devastated several parts of the Madras Presidency. The cultivated area declined by 22 percent, 3.5 to 4 million people had perished and in as many as 1,136 villages, more than 40 percent of the population was missing (Ibid:359).

The prices of all food grains except horsegram recorded phenomenal increase. The visible distress in May 1876 in Penukonda taluk slowly spread to Anantapur by August and in less than a month the entire district found itself in the grip of a great famine, "distress increasing daily nearly in every taluk" (Review of the Madras Famine, 1876-78:171). Prices rose to 'famine rates' Jonna selling at 9 and rice at 7 seers a rupee, as against the normal rates of 23 and 20 seers. The situation was so agonizing that people began to consume prickly pear fruit and a number of other wild plants and roots including the 'pith of the flowering stalks of the American aloe' and the leaves of devadaru (Sethia Indica). The observation of Sri Richard Temple, the agent of Government of India in 1877

Aloe is a plant with thick, sharp-pointed leaves. Juice from this plant is also used in medicine.
that "the country was almost entirely bare of all crop stubble and there was no sign of fodder or grass", represented the actual conditions in the Gooty-Bellary tract (Digby, 1878: 56).

Among the more important of the works executed during 1876-78 famine are the roads from Aluru to Guntakal, Kurnool to Tadipatri, Guntakal to Uravakonda, Rayadurg, Kuderu, Yadiki to Bhogasamudram to generate employment to the people. Several famine centers were opened up in the district. A sample census taken at Gooty in 1878 revealed a decline of nearly 16 percent in population.

The devastating famine of 1876-78 was so grave that British Government was forced to constitute a famine commission in 1880. Along with 1876-78, Anantapur district witnessed widespread famines in the years 1891-92, 1896-97, and 1900. Report of the Irrigation Committee, Government of India (1901-1903:224) reveals that "there was no protection from famines in the districts of Kurnool, Bellary, Anantapur and Cuddapah. This region could not recover because of successive famines even after 1876-78 and consequently much of the cultivable land has been turned into fallow land.

1891-92

The south-west monsoon was deficient and cultivation was seriously retarded. Out of 12 lakh acres, only 8 lakh acres were sown. Even the yield of crops harvested was estimated to be less than half the average. Severe scarcity situation existed in Dharmavaram and Rayadurg taluks. Nearly one-third of the cattle in Anantapur district died. The review of the collector made soon after the famine showed its gravity

"the famine from which the district has just emerged was one of sorer trial to beasts than to man. It is impossible to say the mortality, but it must have been very great amongst the Jungle cattle....... The famine year 'Nandana' may be considered to have passed without the terrors predicted of it" (Board of Revenue Proceedings, 1892:288).
There was water scarcity in Bukkapatnam, Dharmavaram, Anantapur, and Parigi tanks. Consequently, there was acute shortage of drinking water in the entire district. Almost one-fourth of the crop had failed. The prices of jowar and ragi shot up. The situation was not conducive for getting daily wage labour. Even the medium farmers were reduced to the position of wage labourers in their own farms and elsewhere. The areas worst affected were Tadipatri, Dharmavaram and the tract round Uravakonda (Ibid:286).

The famine condition was so critical that British government had arranged food grain from Mysore. There were two special trains from Hindupur to Guntakal for getting the food grains, which clearly indicate the gravity of the situation. Grain doles were also distributed in all the affected taluks. Scarcity of fodder need no special mention during this period. Forests also got dried up. The stalks of the faded crops and the roots called 'Sonti Verlu', scraped with much labour, supported the cattle for some time. Boda grass, normally used for thatching sheds, was in such great demand as fodder that even the hills were denuded of it. In Bordali firka of Hindupur taluk and in parts of Uravakonda and many other places, cattle were fed with prickly pear and with the leaves of neredu, yepi, palmyra and margosa. Fodder depots were established in Gooty, Guntakal, Anantapur, Dharmavaram and Chakralapalle with the help of the Famine Fund, Madras. According to one estimate, 9,200 cattle died. The then collector admitted that death of cattle could have been much more than what is revealed (Ibid:301).
During this period of famine, private charity did its best to help the destitute population. The Indian Charitable Famine Relief Fund also spent in the district about a couple of lakhs of rupees towards relief. The intermittent showers that started towards the end of August slowly succeeded in wiping off the famine. The relief works were also closed by the end of October and "the last coolies to go, casting a longing lingering look behind, were the Yadiki and Uravakonda women and children". The more important famine works that executed were the Tadipatri-Yellanur road, Putlur-Tadipatri road, and repairs to Rayalacheruvu-Bhogasamudram road, Anantapur-Tadipatri road, Guntakal-Uravakonda near Uravakonda and the Demajipalle-Nayanipalle road (Ibid:287).

Anantapur, Kalyanadurgam, Gooty, Tadipatri taluks were worst affected due to this famine. Dry crops over large stretches either failed entirely or yielded far below the average. The prices of food grains had tremendously gone up during this year. Though 'tank repair works' were announced as part of relief measures by British Government, ultimately works did not get materialized. During 1901 famine period, Gooty and Tadipatri taluks were worst affected. Thousands of people were thrown out of employment in this particular year. Again in 1920-21 famine, due to failure of south-west monsoon, Gooty taluk became worst affected. Two test works and seven kitchens were opened in January 1921 in Gooty. The Indian People's Famine Trust made a grant from which clothes were supplied to destitutes (Andhra Pradesh District Gazetteers, Anantapur, 1970:259).

Indian Irrigation Committee was formed in 1902 with Sir Calin C.Soot as president, three British and one Indian as members of it. This committee report declared that "protecting Rayalaseema region from famines is the national duty".
1924-25 famine:

Gooty, Madakasira, Penukonda, Dharmavaram, and Hindupur taluks were worst affected. Crops got dried up. There was no mark of seed germination in any of these regions. Madakasira taluk which was popular as 'Garden Area' had to face severe shortage of fodder. Consequently, all these taluks were declared by British government as famine-affected areas (Ibid:259).

1934-35 famine:

Penukonda, Hindupur, and Tadipatri taluks were worst affected. Tank repairs, road works and other famine relief measures were taken up during this period. To relieve fodder scarcity, depots were opened in Penukonda, Hindupur, Kadiri, Dharmavaram, Anantapur, Tadipatri, Guntakal, Gooty, Kalyanadurg and Madakasira. Among those organizing relief, the Rayalaseema Central Famine Relief Committee, the Indian Red Cross Society, the Indian People's Famine Trust, The Madras Corporation and the Zamindar of Ellamarri were the most prominent.

1937-38 famine:

Gooty, Tadipatri, Hindupur, Rayadurg and part of Penukonda taluks were worst affected. The conditions in Gooty taluk and the Jutur area of Tadipatri taluk were so bad that even women belonging to some 'respectable' families were obliged to seek relief at the famine relief works. The weavers in Uravakonda were in straits and some of them were reported to have migrated to Bombay in search of livelihood. A relief centre had to be opened in the last week of June for providing work to them. Six relief works were also started by Government, two each in Gooty, Uravakonda and Tadipatri taluks and all these attracted a fairly large volume of labour from neighbouring districts. A depot was set up at Bantanahal in Alur.
taluk of Kurnool district to provide fodder for the Uravakonda area. Hill grass was sold at concessional rates and panchayat reserves were also thrown open for free grazing (Ibid: 260).

1941-42 famine:

The complete failure of the north-east monsoon of 1942 retarded agricultural operations and resulted in a failure of crops leading to conditions of scarcity. The entire district excepting the taluks of Kadiri and Hindupur was affected and relief measures covering nearly 28 percent of the district population had to be undertaken by government for almost a year. Clothes were donated from several other places to Anantapur district. Maharaja of Mysore and the Indian People's Famine Trust had sent donations. The Rayalaseema Famine Relief Committee also ran a few cheap grain depots (Ibid:261).

1945-46 famine:

Bhogasamudram tank in Penukonda taluk, the main source of drinking water supply had completely dried up. People went with bowls to drink water at small scoopings made in its bed clearly indicates the water scarcity existing in at that period. 31,000 children were given free food by government. Over 6,300 lorries of hill-grass were imported to tide over the crisis which lasted till August, 1946. Clothes including sarees were also distributed in the district (Ibid : 262).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of villages affected</th>
<th>Cost of relief</th>
<th>Land Revenue remission granted</th>
<th>Taocavi loans advanced</th>
<th>Maximum percentage of population on relief</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1390-91</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Acute famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1424</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Acute famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1792-93</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Severe famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Near famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1806-07</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Scarcity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1823-24</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Near famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1853-54</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876-78</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>7.98</td>
<td>Worst Famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891-92</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>Famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896-97</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>6.88</td>
<td>6.96</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>11.70</td>
<td>Severe famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-01</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>Scarcity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920-22</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>16.12</td>
<td>Famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>Famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934-35</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>9.11</td>
<td>9.05</td>
<td>9.19</td>
<td>21.68</td>
<td>Severe famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>5.34</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>18.10</td>
<td>Famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942-43</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>55.42</td>
<td>7.06</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>27.70</td>
<td>Famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>ft*</td>
<td>14.25</td>
<td>8.79</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>Famine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951-53</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>107.41</td>
<td>11.76</td>
<td>29.41</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>Severe drought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957-58</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>92.30</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Scarcity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958-59</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>86.40</td>
<td>6.82</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Drought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959-60</td>
<td>684</td>
<td>38.50</td>
<td>7.72</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Drought</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>9.36</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>Drought contd.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After Independence, there were two severe droughts, one in 1951-53 and other one in 1965-68.

1951-53 drought:

This drought is popularly called as ‘Ganji Karuvu’. During this period, agricultural labourers wandered in search of work. Purchasing power of farmers went down. The people of Kadiri, Anantapur and Penukonda taluks, started ‘Karuvu yatralu’ (drought rallies). In the process of subsistence, people of these taluks had to sell away cattle, ornaments and also kitchenware (Ibid: 262-263).

According to the Commissioner of famines, in 1952 people of Kadiri, Penukonda, Kalyanadurgam, Dharmavaram, and Rayadurg taluks moved in batches in search of employment. He points out that, had there been no floods in 1952, drinking water problem in Anantapur district would have been far beyond imagination. In Kadiri taluk, people survived by consuming a leafy vegetable known as ‘Ghatheraku’. Realizing the gravity of the situation in the district, government involved military also in deepening the wells. Moreover, in the region of Guntakal, Pernuthu Upper Canal Project work was quickened. According to the records, there were 2.04 lakhs of people per day survived with 448 ‘Ganji Kendralu’ (gruel centres). Four ‘Ganji Kendralu’ were started exclusively for weavers in 1953. Due to heavy crowds at relief centres, cholera was intensely prevailing in the district (Ibid:264).

During this period, 650 tonnes of rice, 1300 tonnes of wheat were imported from the then Soviet Union. Similarly, 2,436 bags of Rioe and 292 tins of milk powder were supplied by UNICEF. The Madras State Famine Relief Fund allotted 1.62 lakhs for the distribution of cloth, shark liver oil, medical aid and cash grants to pregnant women.
Much more severe drought conditions prevailed during 1965-68. This was a period of recurring droughts, affecting 156 districts in the country. In 1968, monsoon failed to provide sufficient protection to the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. The year 1966-67 proved to be a turning point in the history of drought in India, affecting a large part of India. Two successive droughts, unprecedented in their spread and intensity, produced conditions of severe scarcity in 1966 and a famine like conditions in 1967 - first since Independence. In Andhra Pradesh, drought affected about 130 lakh people spread over 17,340 villages in 130 taluks; Among 65 taluks, drought continued for 3-4 years. Conditions were particularly dismal in Anantapur, Cuddapah and Kurnool in Rayalaseeroa, Nalgonda and Mahaboobnagar in Telangana and Srikakulam and the uplands of Guntur in the circcar region (Singh,T 1978:16-18).

From the above accounts, it is clear that Anantapur is one of the chronically affected drought-prone region for ages. During the last 108 years, Anantapur district was affected by droughts as many as 52 times. That is, almost every alternate year had been a drought year affecting social, economic and other aspects of life. Moreover, it is not only a particular part of the district but entire district was under famine/drought conditions for a very long period of time.

Drought Years in Kadamalakunta - villagers perception:

The years mentioned by the respondents as drought years are- 1965, 71, 74, 75, 76, 78, 80, 81, 83, 85, 87, 91-92. Among these, according to the villagers, three are roost severe drought years and one was not so severe. Durmikhi (1965), Nala (1976) and Roudri (1980) years (Hindu calendar) were considered as most severe and some identify even 1991-92 as severe drought year. Out of 192 respondents, three-fourths of them could
not specify the drought years as they felt that they are always under drought conditions. Among the remaining one-fourth respondents, significant proportion (10%) consider *Nala* Samvatsaram as most severe drought year, a few of them (4% each) consider *Roudri nama* Samvatsaram and *Durmikhi nama* Samvatsaram as severe drought years and the rest (7%) of the people mentioned the year 1991 as severe drought year. Interestingly, all of them who considered 1991 as the severe drought year were younger respondents and admitted that since they have not experienced the earlier droughts, and hence this year was felt by them as a severe drought year.

Most of the people opined that lack of adequate rain during sowing season is most crucial in determining drought conditions. This is because rainfall during this period determines what crop to be grown in kharif season. Since this is the only reliable agricultural season, the economic position of the villagers is totally dependent on it. If there is delay or inadequacy of rainfall, instead of groundnut crop some other short-term and economically less advantageous crops like coriander, bengalgram, sunflower etc., are to be chosen by people, which reduces their income.

Thus, historical perspective of the region enable us to understand the present situation in the study village. On the other hand as rightly pointed out in a west African study, a shallow historical depth in the knowledge of drought and famine form an impediment to a deeper understanding of contemporary events (*Mortimore*, 1989:192).