

RESEARCH PAPER VI

DRINKING WATER SUPPLY FOR TRIBALS OF
ANDHRA PRADESH

D. R. PRATAP, M.A.,
DIRECTOR-IN-CHARGE

TRIBAL CULTURAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE
TRIBAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT
HYDERABAD

1971

1/2

DRINKING WATER SUPPLY FOR TRIBALS
OF ANDHRA PRADESH

Water is one of the five vital elements of not only all living beings but also of the nature. Since time immemorial great cultures flourished and vanished on the banks of water sources. In one form or the other water plays multifarious roles in the biological growth, agricultural and industrial production, transport and communication facilities, releasing of atomic energy, ritual purification etc. Pure water has both preventive and curative qualities. Consequently, the health and prosperity of a nation are mainly conditioned by its capability to harness and exploit the available surface and ground water sources to the maximum advantage of its people. Especially, the health of a population mainly depends upon the purity of the water available for drinking.

Realising the role of drinking water in the growth of a healthy nation, Government have been striving to develop extensive drinking water sources for providing protected water to people living in urban, rural and

tribal areas by implementing many urban and rural water supply schemes. The National Rural Water Supply Scheme has been extended to tribal areas also and an amount of Rs.18.70 lakhs was spent by the end of III Five Year Plan. Intensive endeavours were made by various agencies to provide drinking water facilities, yet the problem of drinking water is acute in the tribal villages due to two reasons, viz., geophysical conditions of the tribal areas and scattered settlement pattern of the villages. However, as the programme of sinking wells progressed, certain field reports indicated non-acceptance of these wells by the tribals due to customary antipathy to well water and a combination of other socio-cultural and ritual stereotypes, prevailing in the varied geo-ethnic milieu of the tribal societies, defective construction, improper location etc.

The present paper is a product of this situation. In this paper it is attempted to conduct a sweeping assessment of the progress achieved so far in providing drinking water facilities to the tribals and illustrating their utilitarian role by conducting case study of the programme in Addateegala Tribal Development Block of East Godavari District. However, the role of

Socio-cultural factors either in the success or in the failure of the programme is explained with the help of case studies conducted in various parts of the tribal areas of the state so as to isolate these socio-cultural barriers and carriers that hinder or help the processes of implementing the programme.

THE HILL PEOPLE AND THEIR HABITAT:

The habitations of the present day tribals provide a typical surviving example of the small group habitations of our ancient times invariably located near a water source. The thatched huts, constructed with locally available bamboo and timber, whose size and shape vary from the rectangular huts of Gonds of Adilabad to the long and linear compartmental hutments of the Savaras of Srikakulam district are either constructed near a natural lake or a fast flowing hill stream. Either perched on a hill slope or camouflaged in a jungle clearing or tucked in a valley below, the course of running streams and rivers and rivulets decide the pattern of construction of the habitations of the tribal^{people}%. However, Crude Wells dug with the expertise of a tribal water diviner some times serve both as a supplementary and major source of drinking water for the inhabitants.

Of the 13.24 lakhs of Scheduled Tribes in the State, 5.31 lakhs are found living in 24 Tribal Development Blocks which cover most of the 11,595 sq.miles of Scheduled Areas of forest and hilly tracts of the eight districts of the State. The 4,346 Scheduled Villages which are mostly multi-ethnic, in composition are located in Scheduled Areas. Gonds, Kolams and Pradhans of Adilabad district, Chenchus of Nallamalai hills of Mahboobnagar and Kurnool District, Koyas and Hill Reddis of Warangal, Khammam, West and East Godavari Districts, Bhagathas, Valmikis, Kotias and Konda Doras of Visakhapatnam District and the Savaras and Khonds or Jatapus of Srikakulam District are the major tribal groups mostly living in forest and hilly areas. Sugalis, Yerukulas and Yenadis are the plains living tribes found through out the state. In the undulating terrain of the tribal areas starting from the forest covered hill ranges of Adilabad District to the gig-gag chain of great Eastern Ghats spread in West and East Godavari, Visakhapatnam and Srikakulam District water-table is found at varying depths. The differential depths of underground water and the rocky crusts some times restrict the successful sinking of wells and striking water at reasonable depths.

Surface water is available throughout the year in some of the perennial rivers and their tributaries. The Godavari with its tributaries like Penganga and Kaddam in Adilabad District and Kinnersani and Sabari flowing in East and West Godavari Districts and Warangal District, Machkund and Gosthani rivers in Visakhapatnam District, and Nagavali and Vamsadhara, Mahendra Tanaya and Swarnamukhi in Srikakulam District are the major perennial rivers flowing from the undulating slopes and the broad valleys below. constituting sources of drinking water for tribals living on their banks. Besides these perennial rivers innumerable seasonal rivexlets and hill streams also flow through ^{these} ~~this~~ tribal areas providing drinking water to tribals during rainy season and early winter. Though there is abudⁿance of water resources yet there is generally scarcity of drinking water. This is probably due to extreme seasonal variations in tribal areas. ~~These~~ rivers and hill streams either have dirty flood waters during rainy season or mostly dryup or retain stagnant pools of water in the hot months of summer. Further, the leaf fall from the nearby forest trees and the soil eroded from hill slopes contaminate the waters of these streams and rivers and make them unhygienic for drinking purposes.

As the tribals of all the areas are mostly accustomed to drink water from these fast flowing rivers and streams they fell easy victims to many water borne communicable diseases like Diarrhoea, Dysentery, Typhoid, Cholera etc. It is therefore essential that protected water is arranged for the tribals on an exclusive and intensive way in order to save them from these devastating diseases.

Drinking Water Wells are provided in Tribal areas under different schemes by different agencies. Prior to the introduction of Community Development Programme drinking water facilities were provided by the Revenue Department and District Boards. At present funds are provided by different agencies viz., Panchayat Raj, Social Welfare and Tribal Welfare Departments for construction of drinking water wells in tribal areas.

During the previous three plans, funds were provided for drinking water supply to Scheduled Tribes along with the other development programmes. The expenditure incurred under drinking water supply for the welfare of scheduled tribes during the previous plans is given below:

	Expenditure incurred under R.W.S.S. for Scheduled Tribes (Rupees in lakhs).
First Plan	3.08
Second Plan	8.70
Third Plan	6.92

The expenditure on Rural Water supply was more in ~~II~~ Plan period when compared to other two plans. The expenditure under this head during the ~~II~~ plan period was reduced due to national emergency.

The Physical targets and achievements under R.W.S.Schemes for the Welfare of Scheduled Tribes during II and III Plan Periods are furnished below:

	Physical targets.	Physical achievements.
SECOND PLAN:		
Andhra Region	150	116
Telangana Region	110	109
THIRD PLAN:		
Andhra Region	725	725
Telangana Region	396	396

During II Plan period apart from the 109 newly constructed drinking water wells, 276 old wells were repaired as against the target of 101 wells in Telangana region. During the III Plan period the achievements were cent percent in both the regions.

By the end of III Plan 24 Tribal Development Blocks were functioning in the Scheduled Areas of the State covering an area (of 11,595 Sq.miles) with a Scheduled Tribe population of 5.31 lakhs. These blocks are provided with additional funds for the intensive around development of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Areas. The programme of drinking water supply has been taken up intensively since the inception of these blocks along with the other development programmes by way of sinking of wells, construction of cisterns on hill streams etc.

DRINKING WATER SUPPLY IN ADDATEEGALA T.D.BLOCK

In order to study the various aspects of drinking water supply, Addateegala T.D. Block of East Godavari District was selected for conducting case study as this Block has been the recipient of many drinking water programmes implemented by various agencies viz., Ex-Agency District Board, Revenue Department, Social

Welfare Department, Rural Water Supply Scheme, Community Development and Tribal Development Blocks.

Drinking water may be supplied mainly through:

1. Digging of drinking water wells.
2. Installation of hand pumpsets.
3. Construction of overhead tanks and channelising the water through pipes.

Water from a nearby passing streams or river or tank may be pumped and stored in a over head tank to channelise the same through pipes, But it is an enormous economic task. Installation of a single pumpset, though less costlier when compared to digging of a well, may not meet the required quantum of water to all villagers at a time. Hence the only easy way out of the problem is digging of a drinking water well in every village. In general the various sources of drinking water in Addateegala T.D.Block have been broadly classified into traditional and new sources of drinking water and their relative popularity among the tribals is assessed along with the reasons for the acceptance of a particular source and rejection of another even though both the sources have the same function.

THE BLOCK: Addateegala block is situated in East Godavari District. It is bounded by parts of Chintapalli and Rajavommangi T.D.Blocks in^{the} East; Rampachodavaram, Maredumilli (T.D.Blocks) and Korukonda (C.D.Block) on the West; Sankavaram and Pedapuram (C.D.Blocks) on^{the} South and Bhadrachalam (T.D.Block) and river Sileru (Orissa State) on^{the} North. The Block is a long and narrow stretch of land consisting of hills and forests of the Eastern ghats. The communication facilities in the block are inadequate.

This block consists of 383 villages of which 154 are uninhabited and having 52 Panchayats covering an area of 560 Sq.miles serving 40,436 population. This block was started on 1st April, 1962 and Samithi was formed on 1st September, 1962.

The tribal population of this block is 30,057 and the predominant tribes are Konda Reddis, Koyas, Kammaras, Valmikis and Konda Doras. The non-tribal people dwelling in Addateegala block are Kapus, Brahmins, Kammas, Vaisiyas, Muslims, Harijans and Patnaiks.

SOURCES OF DRINKING WATER: The sources of drinking water in Addateegala block may be categorised into two- traditional and ~~two~~ modern. Hill streams and indigenous wells come under the first category. Samithi wells, Revenue wells (R.W.S), Wells maintained by Ex-Agency District Boards, Pipes (Protected Water Supply) and Hand pumps fall under the second category. Traditional sources of drinking water are still found in existence along with modern sources. Number of sources and number of villages served by each source is given below:

S1. No.	Source	Number	No.of villages served
1.	Hill Streams	30	150
2.	Indigenous wells	48	48
3.	Samithi Wells	39	38
4.	Revenue Wells	39	39
5.	Ex-Agency Dist. Board Wells.	11	8
6.	Pipes(Protected water supply)	1	1
7.	Hand Pumps	2	1
Total:		170	285

It is evident that the traditional sources viz., hill streams and indigenous wells are serving a majority of the villages (198) in the block whereas the modern sources are serving only 87 villages eventhough they are greater in number. The analysis further indicates that the traditional sources though less in number are serving more villages i.e., at the rate of more than 2 villages per source whereas the modern sources though more in number are serving less number of villages i.e., at the rate of one village per source. However, traditional sources suffer from a serious draw back when compared to the modern sources in the quality of the water they provided. Traditional sources provide only unprotected water whereas modern sources provide protected water and consequently have less coverage. Therefore it is necessary to bring more number of villages ^{under} ~~and~~/modern sources of drinking water supply. Further, out of 89 wells in existence, 50 wells (39 Revenue wells plus 11 wells under Ex-Agency Board) were constructed prior to C.D. and the rest (39 Samithi wells) were constructed after the introduction of C.D. Programme. Prior to the introduction of Community Development Programmes, the drinking water wells were dug by the Revenue Department

and Ex-Agency District Board in the following villages.

DRINKING WATER WELLS CONSTRUCTED BY REVENUE
DEPARTMENT AND EX AGENCY DISTRICT BOARD IN
ADDATEEGALA BLOCK.

Sl. No.	Village	No. of Drinking Water Wells.	Out of use	Department	Funds source	Year of construction.
-1-	-2-	-3-	-4-	-5-	-6-	-7-
1.	Thimmapuram	2	..	Revenue-I	10 year well Scheme	1953, 1954
				Ex-Agency Dist. Board-I	N.A.	1920, 1951
2.	Uppalapadu	1	1	Revenue	10 year well Scheme or Agency RWS	1953, 1954
3.	Matlapadu	1	1	,,	,,	1958
4.	Gondolu	1	1	,,	,,	1949
5.	Bodlanka	1	..	,,	,,	1949
6.	Venkatanagaram	1	..	,,	,,	1960
7.	Pannampet	1	..	,,	,,	1906
8.	Bheemudupalem	1	..	,,	,,	1931
9.	Addateegala	3	1	,,	,,	1905(1) 1930(2)
10.	Arigeru	1	..	,,	,,	1947
11.	Bheemavaram	1	1	,,	,,	1948
12.	Uligogula	1	..	,,	,,	1961
13.	Anukulapalem	1	..	,,	,,	1961
14.	Turgamadugule	1	1	,,	,,	1959
15.	Duppalapalem	1	..	,,	,,	1918
16.	Panasalapalem	1	..	,,	,,	1946-47

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
17.	Rayapalli	1	..	Revenue	10 year well scheme	1929
18.	Devaramadugula	1	1	,,	,,	1957
19.	Rajavaram	1	..	,,	,,	1957
20.	Lakkonda	1	..	,,	,,	1957-57
21.	Goragammi	1	..	,,	,,	1957
22.	Nellipudi	2	..	,,	,,	1951(1) 1918(1)
23.	Loddipalem	1	..	,,	,,	1957
24.	Chinnampalem	1	..	,,	,,	1959-60
25.	Bayanapalli	1	..	,,	,,	1959-60
26.	Paridrapadu	1	1	,,	,,	1952-53
27.	Vemulova	1	..	,,	,,	1955
28.	Ozubada	1	..	,,	,,	1958-59
29.	Jaderu	1	..	,,	,,	1958
30.	Pedagarshapadu	1	..	,,	,,	1955
31.	Jizzapalem	1	..	,,	,,	1958
32.	Pandrapotipalem	1	..	,,	,,	1957
33.	Amudalabanda	1	..	,,	,,	1955
34.	Surampalem	1	1	,,	,,	1957
35.	Mulleru	2	..	,,	,,	1928 1948
36.	Gangavaram	1	..	,,	,,	1951-52
37.	Nimmalapalem	2	1	,,	,,	1960(1) 1909(1)
38.	Jaggampalem	1	..	,,	,,	1918
39.	Rajupetaloddi	1	..	,,	,,	1928
40.	Kothadu	1	..	,,	,,	1951-52
41.	Pidatamamidi	1	..	,,	,,	1947
42.	Yetipalli	1	..	,,	,,	1965
43.	Lingavaram	1	..	,,	,,	1958
44.	Barrimamidi	1	..	,,	,,	1956
45.	Marripalem	1	..	,,	,,	1950

Of the 51 wells constructed about one fifth of the wells fell into disuse due to varied reasons. For example, in villages situated by the side of Yeleru and Kanneru hill streams the stream water is preferred to well water for various reasons mentioned ⁱⁿ the concluding pages of the paper. Similarly in Addateegala one well was not utilised by the villagers as its water is brackish in taste.

The following 35 villages are having Drinking Water Wells after the introduction of the Block.

<u>Village</u>	<u>Number</u>
1. Dokkapalem	1
2. D.Ramavorra	1
3. Chinna Addateegala	1
4. Veṭamamidi	1
5. Metlapalem	1
6. Utlapalem	1
7. Yedullakonda	1
8. Rajampalem	1
9. Rachapalem	1
10. Cheedipalem	1
11. Yenapalli	1
12. Atchiahpet	1
13. P.Erragonda	1
14. Badagam	1
15. Somannapalem	1

16. D.Krishnavaram	1
17. Domyaupalem	1
18. Ravulapalem	1
19. Dakodu	1
20. Bandamamidi	1
21. Chinavadisikarra	1
22. Addateegala	2
23. Ramuladevapuram	1
24. Peda Yerrapadu	1
25. Pedamuna Kanagedda	1
26. Veeravaram	1
27. Rajavaram	1
28. Nellipudi	1
29. Anukulapalem	1
30. Chodavaram	1
31. Yerramreddipalem	1
32. Mulasalapalem	1
33. Burugupalem	1
34. Yendapalli Ramaram	1
35. Kusumarai	1

Total:	36

All these wells were constructed by Samithi and the funds met out from R.W.S.

The year-wise progress of drinking water wells in this block is given below:

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NO. OF WELLS</u>
1963	4
1964	10
1965	4
1966	3
1967	2
1968	13
Total:	36

It is found that during the years 1964 and 1968 the programme of drinking water wells received appreciable impetus and in the rest of the years sufficient attention was not paid to drinking water supply.

There are 64 villages which are in direct need of drinking water wells. Out of 64 villages 18 villages are included in Drought Relief Master Plan which envisages construction of 17 wells. As this block is having good potentiality for developing drinking water sources a systematic plan may have to be drawn out for providing drinking water wells to the remaining villages.

F U N D S: Expenditure for drinking water supply is met from L.D., C.D., S.W., and equalisation grants.

Year-wise expenditure on drinking water wells since inception of Samithi is as follows:

Year	L.D.	Equalisa- tion.	C.D.	Social Welfare
1962-63	2500	..	1954	..
1963-64	14850	18111	16046	..
1964-65	11967	18644	8000	..
1965-66	17427	469	2000	..
1966-67	16344	10614	..	2000
1967-68	..	34907
1968-69 (30.11.68)	..	30613
Total:	63088	113357	28000	2000

It is evident from the table that the funds are not provided neither uniformly nor sufficiently to take this very important basic need of the tribals of the block. The inadequacy of the allotment is clear from the fact that only 36 wells were constructed over a period of 6 years. Consequently, about 200 tribal villages are still depending upon the unreliable and unhygienic drinking water available in the traditional

sources of drinking water like hill streams and crude indigenous wells. The meagre allocation is all the more significant in the context of the top priority in the formulation of five year plan programmes which resulted in the defeat of the extension slogan - one well, one cooperative and one school for each village.

Now, with this brief description of the physical targets achieved and finances involved in the provision of drinking water wells in the tribal areas of the State in general and Adateegala Tribal Development Block in particular, let us illustrate the socio-cultural barriers and carriers that are to be taken into consideration in the process of launching the construction programme of drinking water wells in the tribal areas with the help of illustrative case studies conducted in various T.D.Blocks. This helps to throw light on certain crucial human situations which are to be gauged properly for the fruitful implementation of one of the most important amenity schemes of development and give clues to the factors that are to be taken into consideration both at the time of planning and at the time of executing the scheme.

Water is one of the basic biological needs of the human beings whatever may be their habitat. It not only satiates the thirst but also fulfils the ritual role because similar to the plains people, the tribals also use water for ritual purposes. As it is one of the basic constituents of the body possessing purificatory and health-giving qualities, its source and use are conditioned by certain taboos which are in turn the products of prevailing social norms and ritual practices of the society. It is in this context that the receptivity of drinking water wells by the tribals was studied.

In general the tribals prefer to construct their habitations near a perennial stream so that water is within their easy reach for drinking, cooking, washing, purification, and irrigation purposes. The tribals are traditionally accustomed to draw water from the hill streams, especially those living in the coastal districts of the State. In the interior districts where hill streams are less in number underground water is tapped by digging a well. Even in these areas water from hill streams is preferred to well water for drinking, cooking and ritual purposes.

Until the introduction of development programmes no organised effort was made to construct pucca wells for providing protected water to the tribals, except in some areas where the Social Service Department and Revenue Department had constructed a few drinking water wells here and there. But many wells that are dug during the Plan periods are not utilised by the tribals contrary to the expectations as both planners and executives generally failed to take cognizance of prevailing drinking water habits and the socio-cultural milieu besides inherent constructional defects.

The social stratification, characteristic of the plains society, also penetrated the tribal society along with the associated restriction of drawing water from the same source commensurate with the social status enjoyed by various groups, taboo on acceptance of cooked food from low status group by higher status group etc. However, the ritual sanctity associated with this custom of the plains people seems to be absent from the tribal concept of status and associated norms of behaviour and practices in the exchange of cooked foods and drawing water from the same source. Further a plains caste group which has traditional stigma attached to it remains to enjoy the

same status even when the group migrates to tribal areas also and the tribals refuse to give them equal status as is evident from an incident in Rajavaram village of Addateegala Block in which people belonging to a traditionally stigmatised plains caste were not allowed to draw water from the well from which the Koyas of the village were also drawing water indicating that the social distinctions of plains origin are creeping into the tribal society also. Similar cases of observing social distinctions based on stigma attached to a particular caste people are reported from Patamata Narsapuram of Khammam District in which the Nayakpods abstained from drawing water from a pucca well constructed by Social Welfare Department for the common use of Nayakpod tribals and Harijans. Such cases of ethno-centric behaviour on the part of the tribals requires a careful handling of the situation as this behaviour stems from social status considerations rather than from a myth of ritual purity. As it takes some more time for the ignorant tribals to realise the full implications of observing group superiority, the programmes like digging of drinking water wells should be skillfully planned by taking the social group as the unit instead of the village or the area as has been the practice so

as to avoid unnecessary friction, and tension among the various ethnic groups of the village.

Another major factor that is to be taken into consideration is the drinking water habits of the tribals, especially those living near perennial streams, springs, rivers, rivulets etc., as ^{tribals} living on riverside ~~tribals~~ are traditionally habituated to drinking water from running waters. In such villages provision of drinking water well is bound to be a failure as it is not a felt need of the beneficiaries. For example, the tribals in Kothavalasa village in Araku Tribal Development Block refused to use water from the drinking water well dug by the Block as they believe that the water in the well is stagnant and unsuitable for drinking and cooking purposes in contrast to the spring water available near the village. Though the villagers did not utilise the drinking water well, they fully accepted the drinking water cistern constructed on the spring as the spring water is not stagnant. Further, the repeated drawing of water from a well is very difficult for washing clothes and the tribals are accustomed to wash their clothes when they go for fetching drinking water from stream without ~~the~~ any need for pulling water.

The motor habits of the tribal people are not conducive for the introduction of rope and bucket because the tribals living in the vicinity of streams are accustomed to either directly fill the container from the stream or pick water in small quantities with the help of gourd ladle from small pond in a hill stream. They do not have any idea of manufacturing indigenous bucket either of palm leaf or metal unlike the plains people who have their own palm leaf buckets or metal buckets. In Kothavalasa village of Araku Block, Visakhapatnam and Ponjada in Seethampeta Block, Erikakulam District, the wells are not used as tribal villagers are not accustomed to draw water from deep wells with the help of bucket and rope. But they used to collect water from drinking water cisterns as it does not require a bucket and a rope and has the added advantage that the water is directly fed by a hill stream or spring. Thus it neither requires change in motor habits nor any expenditure on bucket and rope and gives the satisfaction that the water is fresh from the running water stream.

Even in villages which are not situated on any hill stream or perennial source of water and where the villagers are accustomed to draw water from

indigenous wells than pucca wells constructed by development functionaries fell into disuse as the wells were not cleared of the debris like cement, lime, brick-bats, sand, mud etc., which fell into the well during construction work. In Chompi village of Araku Block, a well was constructed long time back, but it has not been utilised for drinking purposes as the contractor did not clear the constructional debris from the bed of the well. The villagers could not clear the well as they were not accustomed to deep water diving and as such afraid of diving in recently introduced wells.

Superstitious beliefs sometimes prevent tribals from utilising the benefits of a well intentioned well. But if the village is blessed with a progressive leader the superstitious beliefs can be dispelled and the well can be brought under use. In Korai Village in Araku block, a well was dug by a contractor during the M.P.Ps period. Before digging the well the contractor promised to sacrifice a goat to Gangamma, Goddess of water, if he strikes water. But when the contractor could actually strike water, he did not fulfil his vow. Consequently the tribals fearing the wrath of Gangamma, did not utilise the water from the well for three years. But the

Sarpanch of the village, inspite of his being a tribal, mobilised the people in order to avoid the wastage of the well water by allaying the fears of the villagers by drinking the well water first after baling out the ~~stream~~ water. Having been convinced, the villagers followed the example of their leader and are now using the water of the well. Such enlightened leaders should be spotted even before the introduction of an innovation for facilitating the smooth introduction.

Further, the river banks or stream banks are the meeting places for the women folk of the village for exchange of views and news of the village and surrounding areas. The tribals are also accustomed to defecate behind the bush in the neighbourhood and clean their utensils and wash their clothes in a group near the stream before carrying water to their respective homes. But this sort of group habit cannot be simultaneously performed by the villagers in view of the limited area of girth of the well and its plinth area. Fetching of water from the streams gives an opportunity to take a leisurely stroll either in the evening or in morning along with other age-mates indulging in free exchanges of jokes and pranks which is only possible in the idyllic outskirts

of the village in contrast to the drinking water wells which are generally dug very near the habitation or in the heart of the villages, thus providing no opportunity to escape even for a few minutes from the monotonous village surroundings. But even the wells that are dug near hill streams, away from the village fell into disuse as the call of the fast flowing hill streams is too alluring to resist the temptation to have quick dip without going through the drudgery of pulling water from the well. Moreover, with one dip the whole body can be happily submerged in a stream, whereas this pleasant feeling will be missing if water is poured in small quantities by drawing from a well. These factors jointly and severally are responsible for the disuse of drinking water wells in Pitta Mamidivalasa and Pani Rangani, Pottangi and Catharagula, Rangini Singi, Gunta Gannela, Gamrela etc., of the Araku Block as the wells in these blocks are situated near perennial streams or springs. But some of the springs and streams are not perennial. As soon as they dry up the tribals turn to wells and by that time because of nonuse for a long period the wells become stinky ultimately becoming breeding pools of mosquitoes.

Thus the wells which are intended to protect the tribals from water-born diseases become the actual sources of the same diseases.

Ritually the water from flowing rivers and streams is alone used for ritual baths, ceremonial cleaning and immersion during the rites de-passage and village festivals. This sacred role of water further attracts the tribals to flowing streams instead of well water if the former source is within their reach. Its taste also has a definite bearing upon the preference for a particular source. Some times well water is slightly saline and brackish whereas the stream water is invariably devoid of these distasteful qualities.

Well water is not conducive for quick and easy cooking especially of pulses. There is also a complaint that rice cooked with water from certain wells is becoming reddish suggesting 'spirit possession' of the well. The well in Sagara village of Araku T.D. Block was abandoned due to this reason only. Added to this, a woman committed suicide in the well which further confirmed the belief of the villagers and once again forced the villagers to depend upon spring water flowing

near the village. Similarly at Yetupalpi village in. Adateegala T.D. Block the drinking water well was not utilised for drinking purposes as lime stone was struck in the well bed and the water was not potable. The well is not completely abandoned as it is used for washing purposes. The depth at which the water table is found has a bearing upon the frequency of its use. Deeper the well fewer the users. If a hill stream is running near such a well no tribal would like to take the trouble of drawing water from these deep wells.

Another hurdle in the constant use of drinking water wells is the lack of timely repairs and cleaning especially during rainy season when heavy down pour results in collapse of parapet wall and internal stone revetment. In Kiloguda the parapet wall and platform of the well were washed away as the water in the well is almost to the surface level. People are washing their clothes by digging a pit of two feet deep in the platform so that well water may enter the pit and facilitate the easy washing of the clothes and in the process making the well water useless for drinking and cooking purposes.

Though huge sums have gone down the drain, water could not be struck in some places especially in tribal villages of Uthoor T.D. Block. Each well is dug at cost ranging from Rs. 20,000/- to 60,000/- and even more. The few wells in which water is struck, are drying up in summer season. The situation is all the more revealing in the context of prediction of the indigenous water diviners especially of Gond tribe who said that the spot selected by officials on the expert advice of geologist is unsuitable for sinking well as there is no water table underneath. The big gaping holes found in Busimetta and Mah-goan (near Gunjala) and the scanty water found in the well of P.H.C. at Jainoor are examples of technical miscalculation of the concerned executive causing irreparable damage to the reputation of the engineers and geologists entrusted with the execution of these wells. Further, the open holes are posing peril to the lives of cattle and children who unwittingly fall 'into these death traps'.

SUGGESTIONS:

However strong may be attachment of the tribal to the fast flowing waters of perennial streams, there is need for diverting him from the stream water as they are main sources of many water borne diseases viz.,

Typhoid, Cholera, Malaria, Jaundice, Dysentery, Diarrhoea, Scabies etc., and provide them protected water supply in order to save them from the deadly diseases. Instead of suddenly descending upon a village with a plan to dig a well, it is necessary to make it a felt need by educating the people by audio-visual aids about advantages of the protected water from the wells in contrast to the streams, and dirty ponds. After convincing them ^{i.e.,} after doing sufficient spade work for the introduction of drinking water well it is essential to study the social system of the people especially traditional inter-group relationships existing in the multi-ethnic villages and avoid social tensions and inter-group frictions by providing wells on the basis of the group relations prevailing in the village. Where village society is socially stratified into high and low groups, it is advisable to provide separate wells for each community or group of communities depending upon inter-tribal water taboos.

In places where cisterns are preferred to wells, it is necessary to perfect the construction of these cisterns as it satisfies the psychological feeling of the tribal and at the same time provides him pure drinking water. Whenever these cisterns fell into disrepairs, they

should be immediately attended to. In case of wells which have been abandoned after some time due to the death of an individual or animal, it is essential to bale out the water and disinfect the water with suitable chemical disinfectants and convince the tribals that the water is free from evil effects. In such cases it is essential to locate the progressive leaders who by first drinking the water of the deserted well can dispell the fears from the minds of the villagers. If the villagers persist with the attached stigma, it is imperative to provide them an alternative well instead of leaving them to their fate.

Enough funds must be provided for clearing, disinfecting and other follow up works. Immediately after completing the construction work, the well be first cleaned of constructional debris and unless this is done the final settlement of the contractor's bill should be deferred.

The Panchayat should be made responsible for the provision of bucket and rope and up-keep of the wells situated under its jurisdiction.

Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute
Tribal Welfare Department
Door No. 3-6-69/4/3, "Divine House"
Basheer Bagh, Hyderabad-29
Phone: 32591