

**Bonded migrant labour as invisibilised suffering for the sake of others: Case studies in Mumbai and Hyderabad and their village homes**

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**SUPPLEMENTARY CASE STUDIES**

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\* 2006 by Bheem Reddy of the University of Hyderabad.

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**Mahabuubnagar District Case Study**

Case study of Sridhar and his wife Nagamani

Sridhar and his wife Nagamani returned to the village from the city of Nasik (an industrial city in the state of Maharashtra) in the month of March, 2007 to go on a pilgrimage to Srishailam (in the district of Kurnool and very close to the border of their own district, Mahaboobnagar). They named their second son, Mallesh after lord Mallikarjuna of Srishailam. Mallesh was severely ill-suffered from “shaana kakkuda, kalvaku” (severe vomiting and motions)- and admitted in a hospital in the nearby town, some two years ago. As they were informed about this, Sridhar, his wife and his brother came back from Nasik. Seeing Mallesh’s condition, as they were all not sure if he would survive (bathiketi asha lekunde), they offered “Srishailam mallanna” to visit him on a pilgrimage if the child is cured. It has been more than two years since he is cured, but they could not visit Srishailam. Sridhar says “it is not good to delay any ‘mokku’ (promise made to god) for a long time” and therefore, after saving some money working in Nasik, they have come back to fulfill the ‘mokku’.

Sridhar is 27 years old and Nagamani around 23. They have three children- two sons (7 and 5 years old each) and one daughter (3years). Sridhar has a 19 year old brother and an old aunt - his late father’s sister (her husband left her at a very young age as both her children died immediately after taking birth)- in his family.

Sridhar had no formal education, nor his brother and wife. When he was a child his father bought him a slate and sent him to the school in the village. The slate slipped from his hand and was broken on the very first day. “So, my father said that is enough for you and sent me to graze our sheep”, Sridhar puts it humorously. All his childhood Sridhar (henceforth, H) reared sheep. His father also used to rear sheep. They belong to ‘golla’ caste (Other Backward Castes), whose traditional occupation is rearing sheep. Sridhar’s father inherited only a quarter acre of land under tank irrigation, his share among three sons to his father. Rearing sheep, Sridhar’s father bought altogether 5 acres of dry land- 3 acres from ‘Telugollu’ (OBC) of the same village and later, 2 acres from ‘Reddys’ of neighbouring village<sup>1</sup>- and 1/4<sup>th</sup> acre of wet land (under tank irrigation). Sridhar’s father sold all the sheep and dug an open well to shift their occupation mainly to agriculture (kapudanam jeyyaneeke). He took a loan of Rs.5000 in the bank, and Rs 5000 from one ‘sakali’ (washermen caste) person apart from selling all sheep to meet the expenses of digging a well and buying a diesel engine to pump water. Once they produced 40 bags of groundnut. Immediately after, Sridhar’s father fell ill. His illness, Sridhar says, is because “our ‘palollu’ (Sridhar’s father’s brothers’ families) became jealous to see us producing so much and did ‘shatavadi’ (witchcraft) on my father”. The next year their open well collapsed and was filled with mud, as the soil was loose. Sridhar’s father was suffering from breathing problem and cough, and started becoming physically weak day by day. He sold the motor and pump, and repaid the debt of the ‘sakali’ person. Situation at their home became worse. Sridhar says “we did not have enough food to eat at home”. Only Sridhar’s mother and his father’s sister used to go for agricultural wage. Sridhar’s younger sister and younger brother were too young to work. In this situation, Sridhar was employed for ‘gaasamu’ (yearly contract of agricultural wage labour) at V. Reddy with a loan of Rs. 5000 in advance including the yearly wage of Rs. 1000. Sridhar’s father paid this amount, which was pending to the ‘Reddys’ of neighbouring village for the 2 acres of land he had bought. Sridhar was made to work “from cleaning dishes, cow shed to grazing cattle and ploughing”. Sridhar says “it was very tough at V. Reddy that every ‘gaasagadu’ (attached/ yearly labourer) used to run away before finishing” the contract period. “I was very young. I could at the most plough land and was not strong enough to do the kind of work available in

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<sup>1</sup> There has been a net transfer of lands through sales from upper towards lower caste groups. Also, in a recent study conducted in two districts of Telangana including Mahaboobnagar, and one district of Rayalaseema regions of A.P state, Galeb,E and Revathi, S (2006) points out purchase of lands by middle range castes (OBCs) as one among other factors that lead to the change in the structure of land.

'Bombai' (the city of Mumbai)". "But, I knew that only by going to 'Bombai', I will be able to come out this debt and clear other debts". After doing two years of 'gaasamu' only Rs.2000 out of the loan of Rs.5000 was deducted. Sridhar stopped going to V.Reddy's house to work at the end of two years. V.Reddy insisted to quit 'gaasamu' only after repaying the remaining debt of Rs.3000. Sridhar's mother and father argued with V.Reddy and took two months of time to clear the debt. Sridhar and his mother went to 'Bombai', worked for two months and sent Rs.2000 home. Sridhar says, "as I was very young, I was paid only a 'woman's wage' of Rs 35 per day". V.Reddy's debt was cleared by borrowing a thousand rupees in the village along with the money sent from 'Bombai'. After a few days, Sridhar and his mother were called to the village as his father was on death bed. Sridhar says, "we came back from 'Bombai' and days passed but he did not die at all, nor could we go back". Sridhar started doing wage labour in the village itself. He used to get food grains from C. Reddy, where he worked sometimes, and survived. After six months, his father died. His mother started becoming very weak day by day after his father passed away. "One day when she was working in V.Reddy's field during transplantation of paddy, she vomited blood. Doctor in 'Kotakonda' (village) said she has cancer and will not survive". "When she died, we did not have a single rupee to bury her". Sridhar borrowed Rs. 800 from C.Reddy to meet the expenses of the funeral. Sridhar's brother did 'gaasamu' to rear cattle at C.Reddy for two years against the debt of Rs. 800 (for a wage of Rs.400 per year). Sridhar continued to cultivate their lands besides hiring out for wage labour in the village itself. The half acre land under tank was relatively more productive than the 5 acres of dry land. His younger sister and his father's sister also used to engage both in own agriculture and agricultural wage. Sridhar's mother's sister who lives in a nearby village borrowed Rs. 15, 000 and helped both Sridhar and his sister to get married. Sridhar says he was just around 18 years old when he got married.

One day, people from Bank in which Sridhar's father took a loan had come to the village and threatened to lock their house and sell his father's land to recover Rs.10, 000, the loan amount with the interest for about five years. Sridhar argued with them not to lock their house or sell their land and told them "I am born to my father, I will repay the loan". When he was thinking about how to repay the loan, his father's friend's son, P.Chennaiah (S.C) who had returned from Nasik suggested him to go along with him to Nasik and work. Sridhar sent his brother, who finished his 2 year term at C. Reddy, along with Moulana (Musim), a wage labourer, to 'Bombai'. Moulana put him to work in Gym owned by his 'setu' (contractor). Chennaih took Sridhar for the first time to Nasik. Sridhar went alone as his wife was too young (around 14 when she got married) to work at such places. In the mean time his sister's husband got him a debt to clear the Bank loan. Sridhar worked for two years in Nasik. He used to come to sow seeds in the rainy season and go back to Nasik, while his father's sister and his wife used to take care of the crops till harvest. After two years, during the summer, he went to work in 'Bombai', so that he can see his brother as he was alone there. In 'Bombai' he stayed along with his maternal uncle at a construction site. In the mean time, Sridhar had his first son. The next year, S. Reddy, another migrant labourer from the village, took both Sridhar and his wife to Ulasnagar in 'Bombai'. S. Reddy helped them in getting a 'jopda' on rent, where S.Reddy and some others from the same village stayed. This time Sridhar and his wife worked for six months and returned to the village. By this time, with the money they got from 'Bombai', they cleared all their debt (both debts, taken for marriage and to clear Bank loan).

### **A New Venture**

Sridhar dug a bore-well in partnership with B. Balappa (Telugollu, OBC) whose lands are adjacent to each other, in 2003. Sridhar says, "we also wanted do 'kapudanamu'

(agriculture/cultivation) like Reddys". They both spent Rs.11, 000 for drilling, Rs. 26,000 for getting the electric line and Rs. 16, 000 for the motor and pump set. Sridhar also had bought two bullocks. Sridhar had taken a debt of Rs.13, 000 from K.Reddy, his mother's sister helped him getting another debt of Rs. 14,000 from a Reddy of Mahaboobnagar town and his sister's husband got him a debt Rs. 10, 000 from Narayanpet. Tank<sup>2</sup> in the village dried up (by the year 2006-07, it's been seven years since the tank is not filled enough during rainy season to enable any cultivation under its irrigation) which in the previous years had already, with low water level, made only one crop possible unlike in the earlier years. This is also the case with open-wells. Since about last 15 to 10 years, villagers, especially Reddys who owned medium to large holdings of land, have started digging bore-wells in an attempt to overcome the uncertainties of rainfall and rain fed crops and also to shift towards more productive crops under irrigation. This has resulted (both as a cause and effect) in drying up of both open-wells and tanks. It seems, the continuous drawing of water from the under ground water table through the deeply sunk bore-wells do not let to retain any water in the tank or regain water in open-wells. The small and marginal land holding cultivator- labour households also started digging bore-wells, either individually or in partnership with their neighbour land owners. Like rainfall in this region, even the success of bore-wells is very uncertain. In recent years, not only the very attempt of drilling fails very often because of unavailability of water table, but more and deeper sinking of bore-wells has left others, which were sunk less deep in the previous years, without any water. Sridhar and his partner had run the same risk. After cultivation of two crops, their bore-well has failed. Sridhar says, with "poor fertility of the soil, the crop harvested was very low". "What ever we produced did not suffice to repay even the interest of the debt...*mitti minchuka minchukocche* (the interest was shooting up)". One day, Sridhar discussed with his brother about the entire debt, and decided that Sridhar and his wife will leave immediately to Nasik and his brother will join them after selling the bullocks. While they started repaying the debt, Sridhar's second son (mentioned in the beginning) fell ill. "We got Rs.10, 000 from Nasik and not a single rupee was left with us" after paying hospital fees along with other expenses. After he got cured, Sridhar says, me, my brother and my wife worked continuously in Nasik all through the year and saved a lot of money. While my wife's money (wage) used to go into the expenses of food, I and my brother used to save Rs. 15, 000 a week. They repaid Rs. 19, 000 including interest to the person from whom his brother-in-law borrowed. They repaid Rs. 35, 000 to K Reddy in the village for an original amount of Rs. 10, 000. Still, K.Reddy showed a balance of Rs.2, 000 plus. K.Reddy not only charges an interest rate of Rs. 3 per 100 per month (interest rate of 36 per cent) like others, but also adds the amount of interest to the principal for every six months and calculates interest for the total there after. Thus, for about three years, Sridhar had to pay a huge amount.

A year ago, Sridhar's brother fell down from the third floor while he was working and both his ankles were broken. The employer paid him only Rs. 5, 000. His wife and his friend (from Sridhar's neighboring village) brought Sridhar's brother from Nasik and took him to the town of Mahaboobnagar. Sridhar did not like the suggestion of doctors that both his brother's legs should be tied with 'cement' (plaster of paris) bandage for a long time. Following the advice of people in the village Sridhar took his brother to a traditional bone setter in a far off village in the same district. This time, Sridhar took a debt of Rs. 5, 000 from J.C. Reddy in the village. Sridhar spent more than a month with his brother taking him to the bone healer for massaging and tying a cloth bandage every week. After his brother recovered slightly, Sridhar and his wife went back to Nasik again. They both worked for about a year and came back to the village to repay the debt and go on pilgrimage. Sridhar sent and repaid J.C. Reddy's money before 6 months before the interest is added to the principal. Still, the debt of Rs.14, 000 his mother's sister got him from a Reddy in Mahaboobnagar was long pending and it amounted to Rs. 25, 000, along with the

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<sup>2</sup> The tank in the village is a 'Notified tank'. According to the Revenue Department, a notified tank is one which irrigates to more than 100 acres of land.

remaining debt of K.Reddy. later Sridhar and his wife saved around 10, 000 and Sridhar took 10, 000 from the "chitti" (a group of men (also, women but separately) come together and save on a weekly or fortnightly or monthly basis a certain amount of money and one of them who is in need/ in turns takes the whole money on the day of saving. This way, they feel, it not only helps the one in urgent need but also without any interest) he was depositing every fortnightly Rs. 500 in a group of 20 men in Nasik. Although Sridhar often abuses behind the back of K. Reddy, after clearing the remaining debt of K.Reddy of around Rs.3, 000, Sridhar took afresh a debt of Rs. 10, 000 to clear the pending debt of Rs. 25, 000. Whereas, Sridhar was in praise of the Reddy in Mahaboobnagar as he not only did not add the interest to the principal every six months, but he offered Rs. 1, 000 to Sridhar and asked him to buy cloths for his family members.

Sridhar and his wife bought cloths for all his family members and visited Srishailam. Sridhar, his brother and his two sons offered their hair to lord Mallikarjuna (not the female members) and all the family members stayed over a night in Srishailam and returned to the village. Sridhar and his wife stayed back in the village till Ugadi festival, as Sridhar's father's sister insisted so.

### **Adaptation and the strategies of Sridhar and his household**

Sridhar has left for Nasik alone to search a 'jopda' (a small single room dwelling covered with tin sheets on all sides and roof) to stay, only after which his wife can join him. Within two days he found one for a monthly rent of Rs. 500 and paid an advance rent ('deposit') of Rs. 2, 000. He borrowed money from B. Chennappa ( S.C.), his friend from childhood, who hails from the same village, and paid the rent. Sridhar and his wife had vacated their earlier 'jopda' before leaving to the village. Sridhar says it was very small and the roof was too low that he could not stand straight to wear his pants. Also, they could save a month's rent as they were away. The present one is slightly better (see the photograph). Nagamani, Sridhar's wife started to Nasik with a luggage consisting rice and jowar (they are more costly in the city) , the next week along with other women from the village and other people from nearby villages (along with whom I went to Nasik in a private vehicle). Every Tuesday, two private vehicles (jeeps) take people from the villages (about 7 villages in the nearby vicinity) to the 'jopadpatti' in Nasik and return on Thursday. In each vehicle which was meant for 9 people, there were around 25 including children. The drivers say that they even carry around 30 people in the peak seasons of out migration and return migration. The duration of travel is around 17 hours. It is not legal to transport people in private vehicles unlike Taxis. At several check posts, including the state borders when the police stopped, the driver said "we are going to attend a marriage" when we were entering the border of Karnataka, "we are going to 'Shiridi'" a place of pilgrimage, while entering the border of Maharashtra and simultaneously handing over a bribe of Rs.20 at these check posts. The driver says, "they know that we go to and come from Nasik every week, but they just ask us if we are going to Nasik...we have to say no and hand over some money to them". The fare for the travel is Rs. 450 for an adult and half of it for a child. It is around three times more than the travel fare by train in General Compartment. The workers prefer this mode of travel because they can pay the fare after some days as they leave the village without any money with them and when they return from Nasik it is considered a safe mode as they carry money they saved.

### **Adapting to the non-local milieu**

The next morning Sridhar is seen wearing pants when he was leaving for work. He feels shy as I notice his pants. He wears 'lungi' or 'doti' in the village. He says when he first went to 'Bombai' he used to wear 'doti'. He later shifted to pants as anyone wearing 'doti' is considered in cities as an unsophisticated or an unwise person. They call us "doti wala", "lungi wala", consider us as "ghav wala" (rural fellow) and bully us. Sridhar manages to speak both in Marathi and Hindi

with the employers and non Telugus in Nasik. "When I first came to Maharashtra, I felt like I am left in a jungle, listening to everyone talking in Marathi and Hindi". "I thought I can not learn Hindi till I die, but gradually I got the practice". "People here do not 'care' (regard) if one does not know Marathi or Hindi". "Every where Hindi or Marathi is used, so, I decided to learn". Sridhar had to depend on other Telugus initially to negotiate wages with the employers/ labour contractors. Both Sridhar and his wife speak a mix of Marathi and Hindi with the employers and other non Telugu labourers. While negotiating wages with the non Telugu 'tekedhars' (labour contractors) before taking up any work, Telugus speak Marathi or Hindi with the 'tekedhars' and Telugu among themselves to decide upon how much to demand or agree for. They consciously use Telugu when they ridicule 'tekedhars'. Sridhar claims to "differentiate and understand Bihari Hindi". "Once Bihari 'mestris' were abusing our (Telugu) women saying they are good...they should be fucked, while working, thinking that I can not follow their language. I questioned them in Hindi whom were they saying those words...raising a 'baata' (a long cane used while plastering cement) to beat them". "The Beharis are very cunning, though they have come like us from their place". "But, there is no one as good or as bad as Marathis. They are very 'kanthri' (dangerous). That is why I don't say any thing to them. Even if someone says fuck your mother, I know he is not going to do that. ...we can beat them, but this is not our place. We have come to survive here. They can't talk with out using the words 'kya re', 'mathar chod' (mother fucker), 'bhain chod' (sister fucker). ...that is why, once our people beat them. The police arrived to 'jopdapatti'. They were also beaten up, after which there was a 'lathi charge' and our people fled away. But, since then, Marathis are also wary of us". The second generation children and youth brought up in Maharashtra speak very fluent Marathi and Hindi with Marathi accent. Some of the children are educated in Marathi medium schools. Sridhar also learned English numbers. He can read the time in his electronic watch. Sridhar can calculate (orally) the total wage for a week days and for four weeks (month). His wife can calculate more accurately her wages and SRIDHAR's wages for a week days and also for four weeks and very quickly.

Employers in Nasik also pay daily transit charges of Rs 10 if the work destination is near to the 'jopadpatti' (settlement) and Rs. 20 if it is far. Like other men Sridhar also bought a cycle two years ago to travel to and fro everyday. "Every day I can save Rs.20 'baade' (cost of transport) they (employers) pay".

### **Sridhar's strategies with employers**

H was working with Gorak (Marathi), native 'tekedhar' of Nasik, along with two 'telugu mestris' hailing from the nearby villages of H, and other Marathi migrant men and women from Maratwada region (backward region of the state of Maharashtra). Sridhar is specialised since last two years in fixing 'parancha' (temporary structure with long wooden poles to enable building work- laying brick walls and cement). When I went along with to his worksite, it's been his second week at that site. Sridhar doesn't like Gorak and wanted to quit from Gorak. "Gorak doesn't know how to deliver/organize work. He asks me to use the hammer which has become very blunt. My shoulder is paining. He tells me that Narsanna doesn't complain and works with the same hammer. I told him that you should have got your work done by Narsanna, I have plenty of work available elsewhere in Nasik". Not satisfied with reasons for quitting work with Gorak, I kept probing more. Sridhar adds "I also heard that he doesn't pay the wage every week. I don't even have his address if he doesn't pay and disappear. I knew the address of the 'tekedhar', Shambu whom I worked for two months before visiting the village. Last week he did not pay me full wage. He withheld one day's wage so that I'll go to work even the next week in order not to lose the pending wage". More importantly, he adds, "I do not like to work when there are Telugu 'mestris'. They call me in between my work to hand over some thing or remove some thing...if non Telugus ask me to do any thing in between my work, I tell them that I am

busy or do it your self. If we say the same thing to our people, we end up in misunderstandings and quarrels". Sridhar does work and likes to work along with other Telugus, from his village and other villages, but in the same work hierarchy and not with those Telugus who are above in the hierarchy like 'mestris' or 'tekedhars'. This, I found, among others, is the more important reason for Sridhar to decide to quit from Gorak's work. At the work sites, a mix of labourers migrated from different regions are seen. While this is a strategy of the employers not to depend only on workers from one particular region, and to ensure the workers are strongly united, it is also a strategy of the workers to avoid any conflict with the people from their own region if they are positioned higher in the work hierarchy. Telugu 'tekedhars' invoke the sentiment of the region to Telugu labourers to employ them, but the labourers consciously avoid them. One 'tekedhar' tells me that our people do not have any sense, they go and work with non Telugus. Some young, smart and slightly better off men, in their attempt towards socio-economic mobility, banking on their own region's workers, persuade to work with them but they do not succeed for long. Telugu 'tekhedhars' approach migrant Marathi labourers. The first generation Telugu 'tekedhars' (who are also migrants) made money extracting labour from their own region at the place of migration like Nasik. They benefited and shifted/ venturing new fields because "today the labourers are not the same". Two such 'tekedhars' (both from OBC) bought two jeeps and employed drivers to ferry labourers from villages to Nasik and back. Narsanna (an OBC around 50 years of age), who claims himself to be a 'labour contractor' (around 25 years in this field) differentiating himself from the smaller and younger 'tekedhars', says "I bought lands, constructed house, started a wood cutting machine in the village, educated my children only on this 'dhandha' (business), but now it is no more productive and this is why I am planning to go back to the village and not let any of my sons to continue this job". The Telugu employers use their identity of neighbourhood, caste and kinship to hire migrant workers, but the workers' conscious strategy is to avoid them as they can not bargain more wages, cannot escape hard work by resorting to 'foot-dragging', etc. and most importantly, it's their self respect which is at stake if they are bossed over by the people from their own caste and neighbourhood. At the end of second week (Wednesday- every Wednesday is the payment day) Sridhar decides not to continue with 'Gorak' for the next week. On Wednesday, Sridhar and others working with Gorak took off from work. Sridhar calls up Gorak for his wage. Usually Wednesday's wage is withheld by the employers as the same day wage is paid. Now that Sridhar did not work on Wednesday, Sridhar thought that there is less chance of a day's wage being withheld and he can change his employer the very next day. Therefore, he insists on payment for all days. But, sensing that Sridhar might not go to work with him, Gorak once again withheld a day's wage. He, however, took a decision to change the 'tekedhar'. He was confident that his one day wage will not go anywhere. "I will ask Gorak to send my wage through the 'mestris' (from the same settlement), but if he doesn't I will catch hold of him when he comes to the 'naaka' (labour market point) and extract my wage or else I will threaten him by saying that I will inform other labourers that you do not pay wages properly". He has already talked to others about the availability of work. Venkataiah and Sridhar's friend Chennappa (both from Sridhar's village) were working together with a Rajastani employer. As Venkataiah was leaving to the village, and asked Sridhar to replace him, Sridhar went to work along with his friend Chennappa. Sridhar also had an option of going to earlier 'tekedhar', Shambu with whom Sridhar worked before going to the village. Shambu gave his mobile number and asked Sridhar to call him once he returns to Nasik and join for work. Although Sridhar likes to work with Shambu, he does not call him. "If I call him to join for work, he might pay me only a wage of Rs. 180 and not Rs. 200 per day. Wages have increased from Rs.180 to 200 by the time I came back from village. Only if he comes to the 'naaka' to hire labour, I can demand Rs. 200 per day". On the same Wednesday, Sridhar's wife Nagamani, also changed her employer. The previous employer has come in a van to take women labourers. Seeing him, Nagamani tries to avoid him and escape from the 'naaka', but the 'tekhedar' appears in front of her. Nagamani convincingly fools him saying that I will call and bring other women and slips away from the site. After watching this, when asked why she doesn't like to go to work with this

'tekhedar', she replies "he talks nicely here at the 'naaka' but always behind us insisting us to work and shouts if we sit for some time...so all of us have decided not to go to him". After some time, the 'tekedhar' goes around in search of those women and traces once again Nagamani. This time she tells him that other women are going somewhere else and along with them she has also given her word to that 'tekedhar', and she will come back to work with him the next week. The 'tekedhar' has left with his van empty with no women agreeing to go to work with him.

H has come a long way in terms of employment conditions. When he first went to 'Bombai' together with his mother, they both stayed along with their kin members from the same village, at the work site itself. Because the employer provided them space to stay at the construction site, they were paid very less. They also had to work with the same employer and only the days when the construction was carried out that they used to get work. That was then Sridhar was very young and was paid a wage Rs. 35 per day which was then equivalent to women's wage. The next time he went to work in 'Bombai' he stayed along with his maternal uncle at another construction site. Then he was paid Rs.70 per day. The third time he stayed along with his wife in a rented 'jopda', he stated going to the 'naaka' along with other migrant workers to hire out on a daily basis, where one can bargain and change the employer. He was paid around Rs. 120 per day. Sridhar used to do 'begar kaam/pani' (lowest kind of work in the work hierarchy)- carrying head loads of cement, sand, brick and mixing cement, sand with water and handing it to the 'mestris'. Since about last two years, he has shifted to fixing 'parancha'. Presently he is paid Rs. 180 plus transport charges of Rs.20 per day, more than what is paid to a 'bagari' of Rs. 130 per day.

H and his family decided to cultivate their land by themselves in the coming monsoon. After the failure of bore-well, they left their land uncultivated for a year. Once they started working in Nasik and started repaying the debt, they gave their land for sharecropping for two years. Sridhar says that they did not get any benefit out of sharecropping. Last year the land was left uncultivated as Sridhar's brother had not yet recovered from the injury to his legs, Sridhar was not in a position to invest any in cultivation nor could he afford to stay in the village for cultivation. This year, as they cleared the pending debts, Sridhar and his wife are in a position to send money from Nasik to invest in cultivation and Sridhar's brother can take care of ploughing and sowing, they decided to cultivate some part of their land. Sridhar says they cannot afford to cultivate all 5 acres of their land as they do not have bullocks and it also needs more investment. Therefore, when Sridhar was in the village during the month of March, he made an arrangement with C.Reddy who has two pairs of bullocks. C.Reddy owns around 20 acres of land. He needs men to plough his land but not any labourer is working on the basis of yearly wage. It is difficult to hire daily wage labour during sowing of seed as every one will be busy in their own cultivation work. It is his strategy to first lend his bullocks and in turn get men to plough and sow his own land. Sridhar convinced his brother for this arrangement, but told him to work only for a week with C.Reddy in return for his two pairs of bullocks and one man. But, C.Reddy made Sridhar's brother work for more than two weeks. By then Sridhar has left for Nasik. Sridhar's wife (along with whom, and others, I went to Nasik) informs about this to H. Sridhar makes a phone call to his brother asking him to pressure C.Reddy to pay him wage or else say "I will quit and hire tractor for ploughing our land". It was the same C.Reddy with whom Sridhar's brother did 'gaasamu' for two years for an amount of Rs. 800. But, today Sridhar and his brother bargain with C. Reddy. Sridhar himself did 'gaasamu' for two years. He had to continue for three more years against the remaining debt of Rs. 3, 000. But, Sridhar quit 'gaasamu' and repaid the debt by migrating to 'Bombai'. 'Gaasamu or jeethamu' in this region has had the same features of what is termed in Indian agrarian employment relations as 'attached labour', considered not only an exploitative but also an 'unfree relation'. Sridhar challenged his employer V. Reddy and quit his 'gaasamu' and furthermore, he and his brother still challenge and bargain with C. Reddy. Although, Sridhar and his brother's actions are individual actions with individual employers,



they draw their strength from the experience and struggle of such class of workers, over a period of time. It is evident in this region, by learning from the experience of migrant workers over a period of about 30 years, more and more labourers employed in 'gasamu' either quit or ran away to cities like 'Bombai' and repaid their debts to the employers. As a result, there are hardly any labourers employed in 'gasamu'. A conscious strategy made by these workers is not to take advance/debt from the employers. Even the labour contractors at the place of migration are not unwilling to offer advance or debt. It is an often stated opinion among these workers that one should not take debt from the employer because one has to bow down. Like Sridhar every one is still indebted, but the act of taking and repaying a debt is developed into a commercial relation. They need not bow down as much as they used to earlier, as they often invoke "(don't) we pay interest".

With the entire struggle, working both in the village and away from the village and away from the children and family, the family survived. At the same time they planned for long term strategies. Sridhar says, for what he achieved, "we did not throw away our children, but kept them alive and raised them". "We want to educate at least one of them. We can not afford to educate all. My eldest son is sharp in studies. The second one is dull. So I want to educate the eldest one, as he is also physically weak and may not be able to do hard work like us. Educating only till 10<sup>th</sup> class is of no use these days. So, I would make him continue education as long as he can, at least like Husenappa's son (doing undergraduate in course in Biological Sciences). We will send my second son and my daughter till 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> class in the village itself". Sridhar has been paying 'IIC' (insurance) of Rs. 1,400 per year since last three years. "B.Reddy (insurance agent) told me that even if I withdraw this amount after paying for six years, I will get double the amount I payed. This amount is meant for my daughter. We don't know what will be the situation after some years. So, this will be helpful for her marriage. In case if I die, my family gets money. Recently when the sakali fellow died his family got money". This year, Sridhar also started paying an insurance amount of Rs. 1,200 per year on his brother's name. Sridhar is also part of a 'chitti' group in Nasik.

Sridhar's has planned for the next five years. He wants to first marry his brother in the next two years. Both the couples should work hard in Nasik and construct a house in the village in the next five years. He also plans to take a loan to rear sheep. This, he says, is because the interest rate is low in a Bank. He also has a plan to dig a bore well after some years, and do agriculture and stay in the village itself.

## Anantapur District Case Studies

Sl.no.	Name	Community	Categories	Pseudonym (Date)
11		ST (Erukala)	Landless - Migrant	Peddaraj and Chinamma
13		OC (Kamma)	Marginal Farmer - Non-Migrant  Woman-Headed	Sridevamma

			Household	
30		BC (Boya)	Marginal Farmer - migrant	Boya Rajendra and Jayamma

Note – the text for the real names is there, but is in ‘hidden’ font. In the Adobe PDF, this will not be recoverable. However it is kept in Word version for internal use to ensure that we maintain contact between the pseudonyms and the real names.

### Case Study - 11

#### **Peddaraj and Chinnamma**

(Landless Migrant)

Peddaraj is 31 years old man from SC (\*subcaste\*) [dalit] community. He spent his childhood by making baskets with parents. They are originally from Bellary, in Karnataka. Peddaraj married Chinnamma in 1989 and after marriage they stayed in Bellary for two years. There he used to make baskets and partitions with bamboos. Raw material was costly and sometimes they were not able to buy the bamboo raw material. Thinking about the situation, they shifted to Sivarampet to his in-laws place to work along with them; they built a thatched hut next to their hut adjacent to main road. Peddaraj has not registered his housing place as it is located next to the main road. He does not have any cultivable land on his name. Peddaraj has two sons and two daughters, R. (12 years), Sa. (9 years), Sb. (7 years) and A. (3 years). Peddaraj is illiterate and never went to school as his parents did not know the importance of education so they never sent their children to school. Even Peddaraj also did not send his elder son Rajappa to school. Regarding this, he tells that both wife and husband go to collect the raw material for basket making or they go to work as daily wage labourers, so at that time elder son used to take care of his younger brother and sisters. When Rajanna was about 8 years old, Peddaraj tried to send his son to school but Rajanna did not go to school and had not shown any interest in education. So he became a drop out. Now Sa and Sb are going to school and studying 4<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> standard.

Peddaraj’s main occupation is basket making. Peddaraj and his wife use to go to agricultural works in peak season, rest of the time they make baskets and sell around villages of Sivarampet. In the year of 1995, Peddaraj worked as construction labourer. For 8 to 10 months with his wife in Secunderabad. He went there with the help of his cousin who lives in Hyderabad In Secunderabad they worked in the construction of a playground, after completion of this worked they returned to Sivarampet, and continued their occupation. In Secunderabad the couple earned Rs.80 per a day.

Then they worked as daily wage labour and got Rs. 50 to 60 per a day. In peak season only they got to agricultural works at the time they get Rs 40. per head. In drought condition they meet have to depend on basket making. For the row material (leaves of palm tree) they should have to go for 4 to 5 Kms. Early in the morning Peddaraj with his wife Chinnamma and elder son Rajanna go to collect the leaves of palm tree. At 2 o ‘clock of the evening they return to the home, they have to make the leaves to dry. In a day, both of the couple can make two to three baskets and Rajanna can make two partitions. They use to sell these baskets in the end of a week in surrounding villages. For one basket they can get Rs.8 and for one partition can get Rs.8. But in drought conditions farmers cannot buy thes, so these people have to get it difficult to run their

livelihood. Summer season only they can baskets because in other seasons they cannot make the raw material dried, so they must have to go to agricultural labourer works.

Three years back the family felt much difficult to run their livelihood. At that time, nearly 30 couples of the village had been moved to Mumbai, so Peddaraj and his wife also wanted to go to Mumbai and met labour contractor Venkatesulu from Sirpi of Kalyandurg mandal, who used to make arrangements for migrant workers at Mumbai. He gave Rs.300 to the couple and told to reach Guntakal railway station. Peddaraj with his wife and children moved along with the villagers to Guntakal, from there by train they reached Mumbai. Labour contractor Venkatesulu had always been with these migrants. From Mumbai, all these went to working place, which was around 120 kms away from Mumbai. Then all labourers will be given material (like gunny bags, plastic sheets, etc.) to make a hut for every family. No single person (unmarried/without women holder) will be taken to this work, because single person (male) cannot make food/other needs, so they have to face difficult, so they are not preferred. Then they give some money as advance for provisions. Contractor Venkatesulu will be with them from starting to returning to the native place. All the migrants work in laying the telephone cables. For one meter of length with two feet depth, they can get Rs.10/-, one couple easily can dig 12 to 15 meters, if the land will be hard they can get only 80-100 by digging 8-10 meters only.

In Mumbai they start their work at 6 am and work till 7 pm. Women have to wake up early in the morning at 5 am and prepare food and carry the food to the work place. There they have to shift one place to another as the work was going on. In the home, elder children take care of smaller children. Mostly all these families stay in one place and they themselves arrange a person like old people and made them to take care of siblings. Rarely some of them keep the elder children at home. And most of the people use to keep the elder children in works. In this way children's education gets spoiled. Peddaraj also keeps elder son Rajanna in works. Rajanna helps his parents in cable laying. Before going to Mumbai, Peddaraj's daughters Sa and Sb used to go to school, in Mumbai they stayed at working place.

Migrants used to get weekly payments, but they would not take all the amount and used to keep some amount with the supervisor and take only for the needs like to buy provisions and for other food items. In the end only they settle the accounts and take the balance amount. One couple used to save Rs.3000 to 10000 while returning.

First time, when Peddaraj went to Mumbai brought Rs.3000 and repaid a loan which was taken for basket making from Anantha Grameen Bank at Jallipally. After coming to Sivarampet, he continued their traditional occupation, i.e., making baskets, etc.

These people go to Mumbai in November and return in the end of May. After May they cannot stay in Mumbai because of heavy rains and their huts would be destroyed, so they must have to return. In rainy season here in Sivarampet agricultural works start and they get works. After completion of agricultural works, Peddaraj used to go to Bellary and continued his occupation in bamboo works along with his family. So totally, children's education got spoiled. Next year, in November, Peddaraj again went to Mumbai with his family and worked in cable laying. While returning he brought Rs.2500/-, and spent this money for repairing of his thatched house and to buy provisions.

Third time also Peddaraj went to Mumbai with labour contractor Venkatesulu. In November nearly 20 families went to Mumbai for cable laying works. In first two months they got works. From January onwards their contractor did not get works and workers also had been idle. The workers spent their amount on food for another three months, then also there were no works and had to borrow some money from Venkateshulu. So community wise like Boya, Erukala, Kuruva decided to return. But Venkateshulu asked them to wait for some more time, but these cannot get confidence and decided to come back, but they had little amount with them. With the remaining amount they cannot reach their village and also that amount will be sufficient only for food. So without taking any ticket, they boarded a train to reach Guntakal. But in between Ticket Collector caught them and he also felt pity by looking at their condition and let them go. In this way, they reached Guntakal which is 30 kms from Sivarampet. From Guntakal, entire Erukala families came on foot in two days. In this way, different communities reached their villages in different ways.

After coming back here, Peddaraj is continuing his traditional occupation with his family. He admitted Sa and Sb in the local government primary school. Peddaraj tells that in the time of migration he lost many government schemes like ration card, housing plots and housing loans. So now he got some realization and wants to live here only. If any pressure or situation arises to work in another place, he says that, then he goes alone and after completion of that works, he returns.

So impact of drought on Peddaraj is less due to sale of baskets. Another problem is that they have to go to 3-4 kms distance to get raw material, which is involved in strain and consumes lots of time. Still he has a loan of Rs.5000/- which was taken on basket making. Hard working nature and basket making are major skills of his family. In addition to their skills, they do not have any assets like TV, livestock, etc.

### Case Study -13

#### **Sridevamma**

(Woman-Headed Household – Marginal Farmer – Non-Migrant)

Sridevamma is a fifty-five-year-old woman from the village of Sivarampeta. She never attended school as a child and is an illiterate. She is from Kamma community, a forward caste. She was married to Chinna Subbanna when she was 12 years old. Chinna Subbanna made no dowry demand on his wife's family at the time of marriage but in turn given five hundred rupees to wife's family. She also said that this dowry system was introduced from twenty five years back and wife's family is giving dowry to husband's family. This is only because of increase in number of girl child in the family and a boy child is considered as a sign of god luck believing that the dark days of misfortune will go away. But in some families dowry system is not made on wife's family, which is found in the village then and there.

Chinna Subbanna lived in Narsanaiah Kunta (Anantapur district) with parents in his childhood. Subbanna had one eldest brother and eldest sister, who was sister-in-law to Sridevamma. When Subbanna's sister got married, moved to Sivarampeta and started staying in aunt's and uncle's house. After sometime Subbanna's brother-in-law was dead suddenly. At that time there were no children to Subbanna's sister. When brother-in-law passed away, Subbanna with his parents and eldest brother moved to Sivarampeta by sale of two acres of land in Narsaiah Kunta.

Subbanna's sister has a property of fifteen acres of land, which was owned by her husband. This property was divided to Subbanna and his elder brother into two unequal proportions. Subbanna was given five acres of land because he had no children and Subbanna's elder brother was given ten acres of land because he had girl children more in number.

In the mean time Subbanna was married to Sridevamma and lived happily by earning livelihood from five acres of farm land. Few years later Subbanna stopped agriculture and switched on to petty business for eight years. Then Subbanna passed away by stomach ache suddenly though he was hospitalized. No symptoms were found for his ill health.

Sridevamma adopted a son, by name Jayaramulu, when her husband was alive. Jayaramulu is a son of Sridevamma cousin sister. Jayaramulu was brought up by Sridevamma and got married to Saraswathi in 1971. Now Saraswathi is 29 years old and completed her seventh standard. Jayaramulu is 35 years old and also completed seventh standard. Saraswathi and Jayaramulu were blessed with two girl children. Elder daughter Anusha is 9 years old studying fourth class and younger daughter is 4 years old going to Anganwadi School.

Sridevamma when she adopted Jayaramulu he was 18 years old. Jayaramulu after the death of his father started cultivating crops like paddy, groundnut, tomatoes and green chilli in the farm land. Near farmland a canal (Tungabhadra) flows by so through motor water is supplied to crops and there is no water scarcity for any year. This is done at the time of on-season and there is no bore in the farm land.

In five acres of land, groundnut is cultivated in three acres and in remaining three acres paddy, chilly and sunflower are cultivated every year. At present there are no assets like T.V., radio, cycle, gold etc. Two bullocks are there for ploughing and a pucca house with one room. Total five members are living in that house which was constructed by government grant of rupees twelve thousand. Sridevamma is also having other house in the centre of village. Because of cracks and repairs they shifted to new house along with her son's (Jayaramulu) family. Six years back government grant was received by Sridevamma and a house was constructed but they shuffled to new house just two years back.

Till now they never migrated to Bombay, Hyderabad and Anantapur. They are having voting right but not ration card. They get rice from outside. They work in their own farmland and running the family. Last year they had grown watermelon crop for the first time. No other villager in Sivarampeta has gone for horticulture till now.

At present they are in debts (Rs. 35,000/-) because they had taken Rs. 10,000/- loan from Ananta Grameen Bank and remaining Rs. 25,000/- was borrowed from moneylender with two percent interest. They received loan through Udirpikonda Panchayat. Total amount spent for construction of a house is Rs. 19,000/- (Rs. 12,000/- + Rs. 7,000/-)

The house is situated in three cents of land. They started repaying debts by paying Rs. 6,500/- as interest for one year. For son's marriage, Sridevamma raised money from different money-lenders to the tune of Rs. 20,000/- and Rs. 50,000/- for leveling uneven agricultural dry land. From 12 years they are repaying only interest for recycled debts.

Sridevamma was unable to run petty shop after her husband's death because of drought it had no customers to the shop and there was no sale of provisions. So, Sridevamma along with Jayaramulu and Saraswathi started working in farmlands to run the whole family. When there is heavy rainfall, they get 15 to 20 bags of groundnuts per acre.

As per Sridevamma sayings they suffered with drought, when they were newly married. It was very severe drought when compared to today's drought. But still people survived because they became more intelligent and learnt different ways to come out from hardships. In the past, people had no awareness about commercial crops and they use to starve without money. During that period they cultivated plants like jowar, ragi and bajra.

Sridevamma now stopped working in farmland because she is growing older so she is kept at home to look after their grand daughters. She is the head of the household because the money earned by his so is given to mother for maintaining the house. No one in the family has vocational skills, except Jayaramulu. Ten years back, Jayaramulu worked as a lorry driver for six months. Even though there is severe drought he will never migrate because he has work in his hands for running the family. And if all the ways are closed then they are ready to work in other farm lands as daily wage labourers.

When anyone falls ill in the family, they get hospitalized by borrowing money from neighbours. No financial assistance was given by the society where she lives in but Sridevamma's brother helped her by working in farmland.

### Case Study -30

#### **BOYA RAJENDRA - JAYAMMA**

(Marginal Farmer - Migrant)

Jayamma (22) and Rajendra (28) are wife and husband. Lakshmakka (65) is Rajendra's mother. She lives separately. All of them are illiterates. Rajendra's family is living in a small hut. He got one son - Srikanth (5) - and one daughter - Vani (1). Srikanth is going to Anganwadi School. Rajendra is working as agricultural labourer. He owns three acres dry land. Rajendra's father Anjanappa is no more. Rajendra's parents were natives of Amudala village, Uravakonda mandal. Anjanappa from the age of ten years till the time of his marriage (21) worked under a feudal lordess Gurama Narayanamma, w/o Sriramulu. Narayanamma had sixty acres of land in

Sivarampet. Then, here, Anjanappa used to do agricultural work. Narayanamma donated six acres of land to Anjanappa after his marriage and told him to live on cultivation. From then onwards, Anjanappa lived doing agriculture. In similar way, Narayanamma donated lands to eight families in Sivarampet village. Now all of them got the lands registered.

Anjanappa got two sons and one daughter. Rajendra was younger son. Erriswamy was elder one. Four years ago, after giving Rs. 4,000/- Narayanamma both of them got three acres land each registered on their names. Rajendra owns two oxen. This he used for tilling his three acres land and for tilling others lands in the village. He works for others fields with his oxen and agricultural implements and gets Rs. 100/- per day. Rajendra married Jayamma seven years ago. Rajendra reared their goats for ten years during his childhood. Eight years ago he went to Hyderabad along with other villagers for constructing Gymkhana Ground. He stayed there for one month and got Rs. 50/- per day. He incurred Rs. 20,000/- debt for his marriage in the succeeding year. Her sister's marriage was done in the previous year. After marriage he migrated to Mumbai along with other villagers. He worked there for two years. He used to stay there for eight months per annum. Then they used to return once in a year for 'Pennaobulam jatara'. Rajendra had migrated to Mumbai to clear the Rs. 20,000/- debt that he made for his sister's marriage and his marriage. He used to go there along with a labour contractor. There his work was digging pits for telephone cable lines. They used to get Rs. 100/- for digging a pit of thirty-five feet length, three feet deep and one feet width. They used to earn Rs. 200/- per day if soil was smooth. Otherwise they compulsorily get Rs. 100/-

*Maistri* gives them money once in a week only to buy provisions and vegetables sufficient for a week. Since they were not aware of either Marathi or Hindi they used to show the required item to shop owner. Then he gives them that item. Also some times they were cheated, as they do not know the language. Rest of the money he gives while returning home. If labourers ask for money in between *maistri* used to quarrel with them. He used to send back only one couple in a week. Thirty couples went to Mumbai in the year Rajendra migrated. Then they used to go to Mumbai direct from Guntakal railway station. Even now the same is the practice. They used to stay in the tents laid with plastic sheets. They used to keep a lamp or candle in the tent while sleeping. They had left the matter of insects to God. Thus after two years of migration he cleared Rs. 12,000/- debt.

Women and migration: Jayamma had migrated to Mumbai along with her husband soon after marriage. As she was just married, she had no interest in migration. But she had to go. Rajendra used to dig the ground with crowbar and Jayamma used to clear that with spade. Digging one feet width and three feet deep pit was difficult. Sometime even Jayamma used to dig with crowbar. It was very uncomfot to stay in a small tent. They used to walk a lot to get water. As she had migrated in the year of her marriage she was longing for her mother's home. Rajendra and his brother got separated five years ago. Now he has Rs.15,000/- debt. He can clear it easily with good rains and one good harvest. As there were no rains and works now he is surviving on debts. If there were rains he would work under them (from whom he borrowed) or under somebody else and clear the debt. He used to plough the lands of others. Since there were no rains he doesn't have those works now. If the same situation continues, he would not be in a position to buy grass for oxen. Now itself one bundle of grass is Rs. 5/- He had to sell two oxen if there were no rains.

They have voting right. There is ration card on his mother's name and they get only eight kilograms of rice. Lakshmakka doesn't get old age pension. Lakshmakka got drought rice for four months. She is eating when she had otherwise starving. Occasionally she takes food from her two sons. She cooks her own food when she quarreled with her sons or daughters-in-law. She lives on labour work. As there were no rains, even young people don't have work to do. Her situation can be imagined.

Rajendra went for 'Food for Work Programme' for ten days. He got rice from the programme. Also he got Rs. 1,500/- (Rs. 500/- per acre) under drought from government. Rajendra's wife is not a member of SHG and not saving any amount with any group.