

# FORMATION AND NATURAL GEOGRAPHY OF RAYALASEEMA

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## **Abstract:**

This study discusses about the formation of Rayalaseema which consists of Cuddapah, Kurnool, Anantapur and Chittoor districts. Cuddapah district was formed in 1807. Kurnool district was formed in 1858 as a result of certain political developments following the conclusion of subsidiary alliance. Anantapur district was formed for administration convenience in 1882. Chittoor district was formed in 1911. This study also explains about the natural geography, physiography, rainfall, rivers nature of the lands and land utilization crop pattern, soils in Rayalaseema.

**Keywords:** Rayalaseema, natural geography, physiography, rainfall, rivers, nature of the lands and land utilization, crop pattern, soils.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The present day Rayalaseema consists of Cuddapah, Kurnool, Anantapur and Chittoor, located between 12° 3' to 16° 15' Northern latitudes and 76° 55' to 79° 55' Eastern longitudes with territorial extent of 67, 299 sq. km<sup>1</sup>. The region lies at an altitude of 300-700 metres from the sea level. This area is considered as one of the backward regions of the country because of below normal rainfall and known as 'the Stalking ground of famines'<sup>2</sup>.

These four districts form the southern and South-western parts of Andhra Pradesh. This region was surrounded by the Princely State of Mysore on the west, the Nizam's territories on the north, the districts of Guntur, Nellore and North Arcot of the then Madras Presidency on the north-east, east and south respectively. At present, the region is bordered by the state of Karnataka on the west, Mahaboobnagar, Prakasam and Nellore districts of Andhra Pradesh on the north, north-east and east, and Tamilnadu on the south<sup>3</sup>.

## **2. FORMATION OF THE DISTRICTS**

As part of the Subsidiary Alliance system, concluded between the Nizam of Hyderabad and the English East India Company on 24 October 1800, the Nizam ceded to the Company the area corresponding to the modern districts of Bellary, Cuddapah and Anantapur and parts of Kurnool and Chittoor districts. The British East India Company named this area the "Ceded Districts" and constituted it an administrative unit of the Madras Presidency in 1800 with Colonel (later Sir) Thomas Munro as the Principal Collector to discharge both military and civil duties. Thomas Munro was successful in restoring the law and order after subduing the revolting local Palegars

(Poligars) with a heavy hand. He conducted the survey of land and introduced ryotwari system in the region which helped the company to earn extra revenue to the British. He carried on the administration of the Districts with headquarters at Anantapur with the assistance of Sub-Collectors stationed at Adoni, Harpanahalli, Cuddapah and Cumbum. In 1807, the Ceded Districts were divided into two Collectorates with headquarters at Bellary and Cuddapah. The area consisting of Adoni, Yemmiganuru and Aluru of the present Kurnool district and all the taluks, mandals of the present Bellary and Anantapur districts, except Kadiri, formed Bellary district and rest of the area was carved into Cuddapah district<sup>4</sup>.

Kurnool district was formed in 1858 as a result of certain political developments following the conclusion of the Subsidiary Alliance. Part of the district consisting of the mandals of Kumool, Pattikonda, Dhone, Nandikotkur and Nandyal was a Jagir ruled by the Nawabs of Kumool under the suzerainty of the Nizam of Hyderabad<sup>5</sup>. When the Nizam ceded the region to the Company, the Nawab, Aluf Khan, agreed to pay a voluntary peishcush of Rupees one lakh to the Company Government. In 1823 Ghulam Rasul Khan, became the Nawab. He resorted to harsh measures to collect maximum revenue from the ryoths. He resumed several inams and reimposed certain taxes which had been abolished during his predecessor's rule and started collecting large quantities of military stores and cannons the reasons for which are not known. As a result of the stockpiling weapons by the Nawab, the Company Government suspected that he may revolt against the company. So, a commission was appointed to enquire into the matter. A body of troops was deployed from Bellary with the twin objects of rendering assistance to the Commission when needed and overawe the Nawab. The Commission charged the Nawab with harbouring designs against the Company Government which were, however, not proved even subsequently. On this pretext, the Nawab was captured and sent to Tiruchinapally as prisoner in 1839. The jagir was annexed to the Company's territories and was placed under the charge of a Commissioner. The area thus taken over was formed into a new district in 1858, with headquarters at Kurnool, with the addition of the taluks of Koilkuntla, Cumbum and Dupadu taken from Cuddapah district.

Anantapur district was formed for administrative convenience in 1882. The taluks of Anantapur, Dharmavaram, Penugonda, Madakasira, Hindupur, Gooty and Tadpatri were separated from Bellary district and carved into a new district with headquarters at Anantapur. Kadiri taluk was added to the new district by transferring it from Cuddapah district in 1910. The taluk of Rayadurg was transferred from Bellary to Anantapur in 1953.

Chittoor district was formed in 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1911 by bringing together Madanapalle, Vayalpadu and Pileru taluks of Cuddapah district, and Chittoor, Chandragiri, Nagari, Puttur and Palamaneru taluks of North Arcot district. Kuppam taluk, which had been a part of the Mysore State, was added to this district in 1928. The erstwhile zamindari areas of Punganur, Karvetnagar and Kalahasti, which had been under the supervision of the Collectors of Cuddapah and North Arcot districts earlier, were brought under the supervision of the Chittoor Collectorate after its

formation. They were added to the district on the abolition of zamindari system after India attained independence<sup>6</sup>.

### **3. ADOPTION OF THE NAME RAYALASEEMA**

Historically, the names such as Maharajaranadu or Maharajanadu, Marjavadinadu and Renadu were in vogue for the region. In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, “Rayalavariseema” and “Rayalaseema” were used to refer to the parts of it. These territorial designations did not, however, signify all the area which Rayalaseema in this study purports to denote. For reasons not clear, this name went out of use, and the term ‘Ceded Districts given by the British rulers in AD 1800 continued to be applied to the region till 1928. As the nationalist spirit was growing in the country, this term began to be disliked by the enlightened Andhra leaders. At one of the Andhra Conferences held at Nandyal in 1928 Pappuri Ramacharyulu proposed at the instance of Chilukuri Narayana Rao the revival of the earlier name Rayalaseema for the region in the memory of the famous Rayas of Vijayanagar who ruled it as a part of their empire for well over three centuries, from mid-fourteenth century to mid-seventeenth century. The proposal was unanimously carried, and the name became popular and got entered in the official records<sup>7</sup>.

### **4. NATURAL GEOGRAPHY**

Natural geography is the life-blood of every nation’s history. It determines decisively the historical and cultural evolution of the people of an area. The internal policies and the external relations of a region or a country are governed largely by their geographical factors. It is said to be “an analysis of the whole natural equipment of a region of some element of it, in terms of its resources and potentialities for human use<sup>8</sup>”.

A study of natural geography in terms of society, religion, economy, and polity is now gaining momentum in the world. Such a study naturally provides a solid foundation for assessing precisely the importance of human geography. The physiognomy of the land’s surface river, hillocks, mountains and particular places on the earth’s surface help us to a great extent in this connection.

There are physical and chemical processes developing the forms of the lands surface, the shapes of the ocean basin and differing characteristics of water and climate. There are processes by which plants and animals are spread over the earth in complex and real relation to the physical features and to each other. And there are economic, social and political processes by which mankind occupies the world’s lands. As a result of all these processes the face of the earth is marked off into distinctive areas. Geography seeks to interpret the significance of the likeness and differences among places in terms of causes and consequences<sup>9</sup>.

Geography not only deals with the physical features of the earth, land and sea but also atmosphere, geology, oceanography, climatology and meteorology are the other facets of physical geography. Hence special significance is attached to the study of geography. The social,

economic, religious and political history of this part, i.e., Rayalaseema Districts of Andhra Pradesh is in large measure shaped and influenced by its geography.

## **5. PHYSIOGRAPHY**

In physical terms, Rayalaseema is knitted together by the hill ranges of the Eastern Ghats, the Seshachalam ranges, the Nallamalas, the Erramalas and the Sandur hills. There are other groups of hills which are either extensions of these ranges or isolated formations. The Bakarapeta and Nagari hills in Chittoor district, the Gandikota hills and Lankamalas in Cuddapah district, and the Muchukota hills in Anantapur district are of this category. Vegetation on most of these hills is either tropical deciduous forest or tropical thorn forest, while some areas are devoid of any vegetation.

The Eastern Ghats, known as Velikondalu in local usage, run all along the eastern borders of Kurnool and Cuddapah districts. From Balapalle on the south-eastern border of Cuddapah district with Chittoor district, the ghats take south-westerly direction and spread into Kuppam taluk of Chittoor district, traversing Chandragiri, Palamaneru and Punganur taluks of the district. Spurs of these ghats spread over Cumbum (Giddalur) mandal of the present Prakasam district, Porumamilla, Badvel and Chitvel mandals of Cuddapah district, and Kalahasti and Puttur mandals of Chittoor district. The highest elevation of these ghats is 1,105 metres (3,626 ft.) above the mean sea level (MSL) and the lowest 610 metres (2,000 ft.).

Seshachalam ranges, also known as Palakondalu in Cuddapah district, start from the Karakambadi-Tirupati range (Chittoor district) of the Eastern Ghats and traverse the parts of Vayalpadu mandal of Chittoor district, and Rajampeta, Rayachoti, Siddhavatam, Cuddapah and Pulivendla mandals of Cuddapah district. The highest elevation of these ranges is 1,152 metres (3,782 ft.) MSL in the Rajampeta, Rayachoti border area and the lowest point is 274 metres (900 ft.) in Pulivendla mandal where the vegetation is of tropical thorn forest type. The Muchukota hills in Tadpatri, Anantapur and Gooty mandals of Anantapur district are considered as an extension of the Seshachalam ranges. These hills make a junction with Erramalas in the eastern parts of Tadipatri mandal. This junction serves as a link between the Seshachalam ranges and the Erramalas, finally constituting a continuous formation of hill ranges spreading over the portions of Chittoor, Cuddapah, Anantapur and Kurnool districts. These are fairly wooded and form the tropical deciduous forest.

The Nallamala ranges rise in Kurnool district, and stretching from the Tungabhadra river in the north to the Pennar river in Cuddapah district in the south, cover the eastern parts of Kurnool district and Proddatur, Cuddapah and Badvel mandals of Cuddapah district. Ranging from thorny forest to deciduous type, they have an average height of 606 metres (1,989 ft.), the highest point being 909 metres (2,984 ft.).

The Erramalas, rising near Kurnool town, spread into Cuddapah and Anantapur districts. Over this stretch, they cover the areas of Ramallakota, Panyam and Peapally in the district. The Gandikota hills, a small town after an erstwhile fort on the hills in Jammalamadugu mandal of Cuddapah district are an extension of the Erramalas. These hills are flat-topped and are convenient for habitation. Kottapally, a village of Jammalamadugu mandal, is on one of the flat-topped hills of these ranges and its elevation is 503 metres (1,650 ft) MSL. Other extensions of the Erramalas into Cuddapah district are Bhanukota and Mallela hills in Jammalamadugu mandal. Westward extensions of these hills make a junction with the Muchukota hills in Anantapur district. Maximum elevation of these ranges is 606 metres (1,989 ft). Vegetation on these ranges is so scanty and the hills are so barren that they look reddish. Hence, the name Erramalas. (Erra = Reddish; Malas = hills)

The Sandur hills run across the Ballary district from north-west to south-east, and spread into the mandals of Adoni and Aluru of Kurnool district and Rayadurg of Anantapur district. The highest point of these ranges is 1,036 metres (3,400 ft). Northwestern portions of these ranges are fairly wooded and form tropical deciduous forest while their south-eastern portions have sparse vegetation, forming only tropical thorn forest. Of the other groups of hills, the Nagari hills in Chittoor district extend over Nagari and Kalahasti mandals. They are better known for their precipitous ridges (the 'Nagari Nose', for example) rather than for their vegetation which is of tropical thorn forest type. The Lankamalas in Cuddapah district cover Siddhavatam, Badvel, Cuddapah and Jammalamadugu mandals and form the border of the district on its north-west with Kurnool and Anantapur districts. These hills have tropical deciduous forest in Siddhavatam and Badvel mandals. But, as they proceed towards northwest, vegetation on them becomes sparse. In Anantapur district, the only hills with tropical deciduous forest are the Madakasira hills. The Muchukota hills, reference to which has already been made, have thorny vegetation. Most of the groups such as the Penugonda and Nagasamudram hills are devoid of any vegetation.

A study of hill ranges in Rayalaseema, as given above, reveals that the central portion of the region is not congenial for the growth of thick forest cover. The thin layer of soil and the lime content with rock formations immediately beneath the surface do not allow the growth of vegetation. The forest cover formed by the hill ranges and groups of hills in the region was 32,89,393 acres in Fasli 1299 (A.D.1889-90), constituting only 19 per cent of the total classified area of 1,73,34,253 acres of the region. This is too low a percentage of the area under forest cover when compared to the required 33 per cent according to the Indian National Forest Policy. This indeed has an indirect effect on the people's economic life in that the thin forest cover could not attract regular monsoons thus leaving agriculture, the mainstay of the people, an uncertain source of livelihood. Failure of rains caused widespread drought and famine which in turn resulted in distress and poverty among people and large scale mortality of cattle.

## 6. RAINFALL

With its hinterland position and sparse forest cover, as noted, Rayalaseema has certain limitations in attracting monsoons. The Western Ghats on the west and the Eastern Ghats on the east block the normal course of the south-west and the north-east monsoons respectively. The tropical deciduous forest, thorny forest and barren hills of the region are inhospitable to attract regular monsoons. Only when the intensity of the monsoons is more and when cyclonic gales blow heavily, the region receives a fair amount of rainfall. The southwest monsoon rains occur only during June-September and the northeast monsoon rains during October-December. Precipitation during the other months of the year is negligible and far too isolated<sup>10</sup>.

## 7. RIVERS

The major rivers in the Rayalaseema region are the Tungabhadra and the Penna (Penneru or Pennar). The Tungabhadra which rises in the Western Ghats flows along the western and north-western borders of Bellary district and along the northern border of Kurnool district<sup>11</sup>. The Penna rises in Chennakesav hills in Kolar district of Karnataka. It flows through Anantapur, Kurnool and Cuddapah districts before entering into Nellore district. Several important tributaries join these river at various points in the region. The tributaries Papagni and Chitravati after flowing through Chittoor and Anantapur districts join the Penna River. Cheyyeru, another tributary rises in Chittoor district and join the Pennar in Cuddapah district, Kunderu and Sagileru rise in Yerramala and join the Penna in Cuddapah district<sup>12</sup>.

Minor rivers which rise in the hill ranges of the region are Pandameru and Tadakaleru, Hagari or Vedavathi, Chitravati, Kushavati, Papagni in Anantapur district<sup>13</sup>, Arani, Papaghni, Palar, Ponna, Bahuda, Kalyani, Pincha and Swarnamukhi in Chittoor district<sup>14</sup>, and Handri and Gundlakamma in Kurnool district which flow for a few weeks only during the rainy seasons. Handri joins the Tungabhadra near Kurnool town, Pandameru and Tadakaleru feed the Anantapur and Singanamala tanks in Anantapur district. Arani, Pincha and Swarnamukhi of Chittoor district flow into Tamilnadu State, Cuddapah and Nellore districts respectively.

The impact of natural geography on Rayalaseema region is so intense that it shaped and moulded the socio, economic and politic patterns of the regions from earliest centuries to the present day. It is interesting to note that in Rayalaseema where the availability of fertile land is less, where there are scanty irrigational facilities, the pattern of settled present villages was the 'Nucleated type', wherein the houses were clearly marked out from the surrounding cultivated lands. These nucleated villages, cluster around tanks are allied water resources, generally numbering 6 to 7 within the radius of 15 to 20 Kms<sup>15</sup>.

## 8. NATURE OF THE LANDS AND LAND UTILIZATION

Cultivable lands were classified by the Government into three categories, namely, wet, garden and dry lands. The lands irrigated by tanks and channels were classified as wet lands, those irrigated by wells as garden lands and those with no irrigation facilities as dry lands. The extent of dry land was, and still is, more than that of the wet and garden lands in Rayalaseema<sup>16</sup>.

## 9. CROP PATTERN

The relatively poor quality of the cultivable land, the hinterland position of the region with sparse forest cover making for semi-arid climate, scanty rainfall and paucity of water resources influenced the crop pattern in Rayalaseema. A vast extent of land was, and is, occupied by dry or rain-fed crops and only a small extent was brought under wet and garden cultivation. The percentage of land under dry or rain-fed crops to the total cropped area in Rayalaseema had been more than that of the Presidency average. Again, in respect of the wet and garden crops, the percentage in Rayalaseema was less than that of the Presidency average<sup>17</sup>.

## 10. SOILS

The soils of Rayalaseema can be categorised into three kinds, viz. Red, Black and Mixed. The major portion of Rayalaseema is covered with Red soil and mostly in Anantapur and Chittoor Districts. The Red soils lacks inorganic matter and poor in plant nutrients, but rich in phosphoric contents. The Black soil is found in north west portion of the region mostly in Cuddapah and Kurnool districts. It consists of high percentage of potassium lime and magnesium, but Nitrogen content is low as common to Indian soils ranging between 0.012 to 0.05 percent<sup>18</sup>.

## 11. POPULATION AND LITERACY

S. No	District	Total Population (Persons)	Rural Population	Urban Population	Desity of Population (Pr. Sq Km)	% Decadal Growth Rate of Population	Literacy rate
1	Chittoor	4170468	2941581	1228887	275	11.33	72.36
2	Kadapa	2884524	1900788	983736	188	10.87	67.88
3	Anantapur	4083315	2936359	1146956	213	12.16	64.28
4	Kurnool	4046601	2902877	1143724	229	14.65	61.13
	Total	15184908	10681605	4503303	905	49.01	265.65

**Source: Statistical Abstract of Andhra Pradesh, 2011, Hyderabad, 2012.**

The Total population of Rayalaseema is 1,51,84,908 persons as per the 2011 census. The rural population is 1,06,81,605. The urban population is 45, 03,303. The density of population for sq kilometer is 905. Percentage decadal growth rate of population is 49.01. The literacy rate is 66.41<sup>19</sup>.

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