

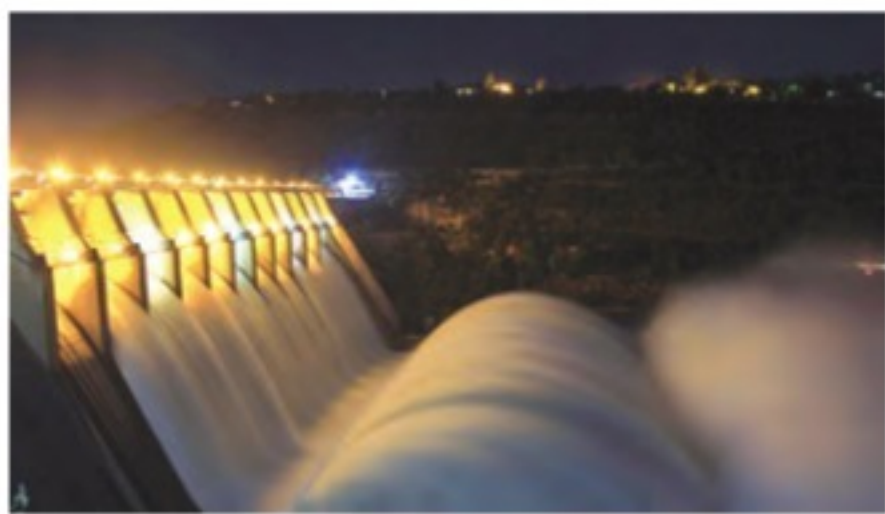
# AP AHEAD



**GAUTAM PINGLE**, FORMER DEAN, ASCI, RECALLS THE INSPIRATIONAL COMRADES OF THE DISTRICTS AND HOLDS IT UP AS A MIRROR TO RAYALASEEMA, WHICH FINDS ITSELF FACING TWO TWIN CHALLENGES THAT THE PARCHED REGION FACES, SRISAILAM AND POLAVARAM. HIS SOLUTION TO REVIVE THE GLORY OF THE ONCE-RATANALASEEMA

## 2 PROJECTS, 2 CHALLENGES

**R**ayalaseema's fortunes hinge on how its leaders meet two challenges — both irrigation-related. In the halcyon days before bifurcation, a bit of derring-do carried the day but something more is called for now.



### CHALLENGE 1: SRISAILAM

The Srisaillam project falls in a gorge in the hills that divide Rayalaseema and Telangana and through which the Krishna flows. The gorge lies much lower than the land to the south, that is, Rayalaseema; land to the Telangana side is not so high. In view of this, the project was conceived as a purely hydro-electric project as no irrigation was thought possible. It was anyway meant to be a balancing reservoir for Nagarjunasagar project.

Now, with Telangana poised to use the Srisaillam water for power generation and its own irrigation, will the reservoir level be maintained high enough to push water into the canals of Rayalaseema? Where will the power to heft the water come from?

**Legal entitlement:** In 1973, the Bachawat award allowed AP to use the 'flood surplus' waters of the Krishna until 2000, when they would be allocated among Maharashtra, Karnataka and AP. Bachawat indicated AP would get 25% of the estimated flood surplus of 330 tmc ft. Thus AP could hope to get 83 tmc ft. Between 1973 and 2010, AP legally used 247 tmc ft of the flood surplus.

**Telugu Ganga gambit:** To use some of the flood surplus, AP proposed the Srisaillam Right Bank Canal, and the Planning Commission cleared it in 1981, allowing use of 19 tmc ft to irrigate 190,000 acres in Kurnool and Kadapa. Then, in 1977, AP, Maharashtra and Karnataka agreed to give 5 tmc ft each to Tamil Nadu for water supply to Chennai. In preliminary discussions, a 350 km pipeline was proposed for pumping water to Chennai but AP wanted canal supply as that would allow it to use the Srisaillam flood surplus waters to irrigate Rayalaseema. (Everyone forgot the 100-year-old Buckingham Canal



takes off from the Krishna delta to Chennai and could cheaply do the same job.) In 1983 it was agreed that Tamil Nadu would fund the Telugu Ganga project because in the words of N Bhaskar Rao, the then finance minister of AP, "we did not have a dime". To date, Tamil Nadu has given AP ₹530 crore and gets only about 4 tmc ft. In the meantime, Telugu Ganga irrigated 396,000 acres in Rayalaseema and Nellore, using 60 tmc ft, making it probably the first time that the Tamils have been taken for a ride by the Andhras!

**Then, 3 more projects:** In 2004, three more mega projects — Handri Neeva (40 tmc ft), Galeru Nagari (38 tmc ft) and Veligonda (53 tmc ft) — were taken up to utilize 131 tmc ft of the aforesaid flood surplus. This was done knowing full well that AP's permission to use the flood surplus would expire. In 2013



the Brajesh Mishra Award gave AP only 190 tmc ft of the 330 tmc ft of flood surplus. If these three projects come up now, it will take the total utilization of the flood surplus in

The dam nearly breached! Had the dam yielded that night, it would have meant the destruction of Nagarjunasagar, Vijayawada, Guntur and the Krishna delta — while also sounding the death knell for irrigation in Rayalaseema. The lesson has been learnt and in future, the reservoir will be kept at low enough levels to absorb a flood. The implication for Rayalaseema? Other solutions.

### CHALLENGE 2: POLAVARAM

Polavaram has been touted as a solution for both the Krishna delta and Rayalaseema. This is nowhere near the truth. As Brajesh Mishra stated: "It may be noted that as regards the proposed diversion of 80 tmc of Godavari waters from the Polavaram project, there is already an agreement amongst the states that 45 tmc shall go to AP, 21 tmc to



Karnataka and 14 tmc to Maharashtra." With the creation of Telangana, the major portion of AP's share of 45 tmc ft will accrue to it. What's more, Karnataka's increased share of 21 tmc ft will be taken from Tungabhadra.

This means the Polavaram diversion scheme will affect Rayalaseema's share from Srisaillam and Tungabhadra; in fact, it will go down by about 65 tmc ft due to the Polavaram readjustment. As it is, there are going to be problems in the Tungabhadra basin as Karnataka proposes to new projects.

**Problems, solutions:** Many Rayalaseema projects are not only inter-state now but also inter-basin as they involve transfer of the Krishna water to the Pennar basin. This inter-basin transfer will mean more water will have to be allocated to Telangana. One partial solution has been offered by YS Jagan. He suggested Telangana allow Rayalaseema to tap Srisaillam water by not generating power; as compensation, it should be supplied power from 'other sources'. But that's a temporary solution. Rayalaseema must attend to heavy silting in canals and plug leakages. It may also switch from paddy to orchards or even bamboo. But importantly, leaders of Rayalaseema and Telangana should sit and talk it out.