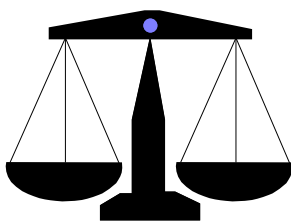


DHARMA KANTA

Shandies or weekly markets form an integral part of tribal life. The tribals come down to the weekly shandies trekking long distances on foot. They come to shandies to sell their paltry crop yields and whatever forest produce they have gathered and to buy their daily requirement needs. Apart from these business transactions the shandies are places for social transactions also. They meet their relatives here. Its during these business trips that they visit the local PHCs, if doctors are available or call on their "family quacks" for injections and pills. Thus shandies are very closely associated with the culture and life of a tribal.

However, this is also the place where the tribal comes face to face with the unscrupulous elements of the "Civilised Area". The traders who come to the market, cheat the tribals not only by offering them abnormally low rates for their produce and selling to them inferior quality material at exorbitantly high rate but also by using inaccurate balances and weights. All leading brands of essential consumer goods in *almost* identical packages and prices but vastly different in quality are sold here. The tribals are thus cheated in both quality and quantity. The traders use faulty balances and unapproved weights. When the traders buy goods from the tribals, they use heavier weight-stones and when they sell to tribals they use lighter weight-stones. For weighing, in some places, they even use stones, literally.

To prevent the tribals from getting cheated by these crafty salesmen, Mr. G.Asok Kumar has embarked upon a special programme from January 1998. As a part of this, Dharma Kantas are installed in all the tribal shandies of Bhadrachalam division. On an experimental basis on 20.2.1997, the first Dharma Kanta was opened at Chinanallaballi village of Dummagudem Mandal. The VTDA (Village Tribal Development Association) Chinanallaballi was entrusted the task of maintaining the first Dharma Kanta. This was a good success. With the enforcement of Act 40 empowering the tribal Gram Sabhas to monitor the trade activities in tribal areas and the encouragement received from the Dharma Kanta, on 14.1.1998 another 14 I.T.D.A. The Dharma Kanta at V R Puram successful implementation of the first Dharma Kantas were sanctioned by the Ummadivaram VTDA was inaugurated by Sri S. Ray, IAS Principal Secretary to Government, Social Welfare Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh, on the 23rd January 1998.



The functioning of Dharma Kanta is very simple. One of the actively functioning VTDA in the catchment area of shandy is given a set of balances approved by the Directorate of Weights and Measures by the ITDA. The balances generally given are meant to weigh 50 Kg, 5 Kg and 1Kg and they are also given certified weights of 20 Kg, (2Nos.), 10 Kg, 5 Kg, 2 Kg, 1 Kg, 500 gm, 200 gm, 100 gm, and 50 gm.

The VTDA will work out roster for sending 2 or 3 persons to the shandy on every shandy days with these Dharma Kantas. This rotation of people taking Dharma Kanta is to ensure that no vested interests are developed. The entrusted persons would keep the Dharma Kanta at the entrance of the market or at any prominent place nearby. The tribals, who bring their produce to sell in the market, get them weighed accurately in the Dharma Kanta.. A slip will be given to the farmer indicating the exact weight and amount to be received as per the prevailing market rate. This would ensure that the tribals are not cheated in weightment and also that they get right price from those who buy these from them. Similarly, when the tribals purchase any thing in the market from any trader, they will get them weighed here for correctness of weight. For this service the tribal beneficiary will be charged a token amount fixed by the VTDA managing Dharma Kanta. This varies from 10 paise to Rs. 1.00 per Kg. depending upon the material weighed. The person incharge of Dharma Kanta maintains a register in which he notes down all the weighments done and amount received. The amount collected is deposited in the Village Development Fund (VDF) of VTDA after deducting the VTDA-decided percentage due to the person who worked as "Dharma Kanta in charge".

In order to monitor the functioning of Dharma Kanta, ITDA has provided post cards to all the VTDA. Through this post cards they inform the ITDA about the quantity weighed and amount received from the farmers in each Shandy day.

This Dharma Kantas have become very successful venture so far. In many of the shandies almost all trade is now done through the Dharma Kantas. Due to the unexpected success of Dharma Kantas in many of the shandies, the

ITDA is forced to give more Dharma Kantas in shandies. In Chinthuru, ITDA is proposing to give one electronic weighing machine to speed up the weighing.

The effect of Dharma Kanta had been dramatic so far within 4 weeks, many traders have changed their old balances. A few illustrative cases mentioned here:

- In Latchigudem village of Dummagudem Mandal, the GCC salesman was fined Rs. 5,000 by the villagers for under weighment.
- In Cherla, one trader had sold 100 Kgs. Rice to a tribal farmer, but on weighment it is found 65 Kgs. only. The villagers took necessary action against the trader.

According to the post cards received from the various Dharma Kantas, in Chinthuru shandy on 18.2.1998, quantity of material weighed was 1,600 Kgs. and Rs. 160.00 was collected. This amount is the total amount collected @ 10 paise to Kg. and the number of weighments made in Dharma Kantas can be imagined.

The introduction of Dharma Kanta is now weighing heavily in the minds of unscrupulous traders who were cheating tribals and they have now realised that the Dharma Kantas of VTDA's can not be taken lightly. THEY SEEM TO HAVE LOST THEIR BALANCE!!

GEOGRAPHICAL MONITORING INFORMATION SYSTEM

I.T.D.A., Bhadrachalam is planning to introduce Geographical Monitoring Information System (GMIS). This is attempted with the assistance of Prof. Luc de Golbery and Dr. (Ms.) Anne Chappuis, Consultants, Tribal Welfare Department, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh.

The Commissioner of Tribal Welfare has vide Lr.No.II/4911/97, Dt.23.2.1998 permitted to take up the GMIS in Bhadrachalam. On a pilot basis it is being started here as necessary hardware and data is available in I.T.D.A., Bhadrachalam.

The idea of GMIS is to utilise most modern technological aides for effective planning, implementation and monitoring of all the developmental schemes. Many times it is seen that the schemes are sanctioned without having overall perspective or seem to cluster around a few centres of growth. The spatial distribution of developmental activities are often lopsided and uneven due to various reasons and it always gets concentrated vociferous, on areas where the people are politically active, and more aware than the people living in interior areas. Lack of relevant and appropriate database in proper form could also be a reason. The GMIS is intended to over come this short coming and achieve better planning by analysing the data subjectively on scientific lines.

In GMIS programme, the map of the district would be digitised in a computer in a scale of 1 : 50,000 or less. All villages, roads and streams will be marked. In the 2nd level, demographic data like total population, population gender-wise, SC, ST, BC, OC-wise, details of literacy etc., would be stored.

In the next level, the distribution of schools under various managements would be brought out. From this, the areas which require schools can be found out by giving importance to schoolless habitations and where the literacy level is very low.

In the next level, the location of PHCs and Sub-Centres will be brought out. It is seen that some of the medical institutions which are clustered together and medical facilities are nearby. The spatial analysis would help us to effectively distribute services of Doctors in TSP area.

In the next level, all minor irrigation tanks and irrigation sources in TSP area sanctioned by ITDA and other agencies and details of all repair works done would be entered. This would ensure proper distribution of irrigation tanks and prevent wasteful expenditure in maintenance and identification of water resources and prevent misuse of funds by repeated repairs of tanks and irrigation sources.

Then all drinking water schemes, bore wells given would be plotted. The borewells which are working, which require repairs would be separately shown. This would help us to water down the borewells problem in the district by taking proper steps.

In the next level, road net work of the district would be taken up. The villages which are not covered properly can be identified and sanctions can be taken up according to the availability of funds.

The GMIS package would be a boon in the hands of an Administrator for planning, developing works on a scientific basis.