

# SKC'S SLEIGHT OF HAND

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The Srikrishna Committee while speaking about the poorest of the poorer - the landless agricultural laborers - in Telangana - said the following:

“On the other hand, the Telangana region is **experiencing a considerable erosion of relative income amongst the relatively poorer sections**, although the richest seem to have gained during the reference period”. (p.107)

“This analysis provides credence to the fact that **the most of the deprived communities in Telangana are facing hardship**”. (p.108)

“Such deepening inequity in Telangana can not only sustain the separatist agitation but it can also carry it further and increase its intensity”. (p.119)

“But, what is revealing is the fact that **considerably larger proportions have reported themselves as agricultural labourers in Telangana which has increased from 38% to 47%**, and in Rayalaseema this share has increased from 24% to 39%. In coastal Andhra region, the share of agricultural labour has increased only by about one percent.” (p.101)

“While the farmers in all regions have shown stable income or income which has hardly changed; **the real income of the agricultural wage labour has declined considerably in Telangana**, whereas it has increased considerably in coastal Andhra region (See Figure 2.39)”. (p.108)

However, while it refers one to charts etc, it does not deal in the text with the real figures – instead it hides them in the Appendix Volume. Here they are:

In Volume 2, Appendix Table 2-1 on page 121 , SKC the rural population in Telangana is 18.2 lakhs, in Rayalaseema 9 .0 lakhs and in Coastal Andhra 21.4 lakhs. Actually the figures are wrong- SKC missed decimal place! They are 182 lakhs for Telangana, 90 lakhs for Rayalaseema and 214 lakhs for Coastal Andhra- small mistake!!! Thus 47% of the rural population being agricultural laborers in Telangana means that nearly 85.5 lakhs are in this category. SKC admits that the “**real income of the agricultural wage labour has declined considerably in Telangana**” and refers us to another chart.

This Chart when closely examined indicates that in the decade between 1993-94 and 2004-05 this group of Telangana people (nearly 90 lakhs persons) **has seen a DECLINE of 35.9% in their income!!**

Over the same period, the 42.7 lakhs of the Rayalaseema group have suffered a real income decline of ONLY 6.7%. Wonder of wonders is that the same group in the Coastal Andhra over the same period – no figures are given by SKC for their numbers – but SKC says has ONLY increased by ONE percent and the real income of the whole group has INCREASED by a phenomenal 42.2%!!!

So while real income (i.e., purchasing power) of Telengana's worst placed economic group amounting to nearly ten million persons fell by 36% that of the same group over the same time in Coastal Andhra ROSE by 42%. Even trying to discount the deprivation in Telangana by comparing it with Rayalaseema (the SKC's standard method) does not work as the decline in Rayalaseema is one-fifth of that in Telangana

How does SKC explain it? They avoid it altogether and tell us stories of Telengana region GDP being great (Appendix 2.4 shows increases between 1993-94 and 2000-01 of 38%!), that the region is not backward (despite Government of India identifying 9 of the 10 Telangana districts for relief through the Backward Region Grants), irrigation increase is "whooping" (despite the fact that government irrigation acreage fell by 11 lakh acres) and crop productivity is as high or higher than in Andhra or Rayalaseema. Go tell all this to the ten million agricultural laborers whose real income fell by a third while their Andhra cousins saw an increase of 42%. No wonder their children are in revolt and their parents are solidly behind them and the cause for a Telangana state.

Who did SKC talk to when they wandered around Telangana? Not, apparently to landless agricultural laborers. And which political party cares about their plight?

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