

CHANGING TRENDS IN THE LIFESTYLE OF CHENCHU TRIBES– A STUDY IN ATMAKUR MANDAL OF KURNOOL DISTRICT, ANDHRA PRADESH

G.A Swamy*, Shashidharan Enarth**
and
V.E Narsimha Reddy***

ABSTRACT

Persistent poverty in India has remained a serious challenge. The impact of targeted government programmes have seen mixed results. There is wide variation across various population segments of uptake of programmes aimed at enabling impoverished communities to move out of poverty in an enduring manner. It is common perception that the tribal communities in general, and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in particular, are arguably amongst the slowest to transition out of poverty despite concerted efforts by the government. However, a closer examination of Chenchu tribes in the Nallamalla Forests, indicates otherwise.

This study shows that the collective impact of various programmes, combined with other factors influenced by a rapidly changing economy, may be more than what is registered anecdotally. There are as many unintended impacts as intended, and there are some undesirable impacts as there are desirable ones. Whether these interventions are indeed driving a change for the good in the long term may be too early to infer. But the study showed that contrary to common perceptions even amongst development professionals, there are significant changes, even if subtle in nature, in the lifestyles and institutions of the PVTG households. While it may be too early to decide whether or not the changes are net-positive in the long run, it is clear from the study that policymakers will benefit greatly if they too take cognisance of the changes that are happening. This study is commissioned by Institute of Livelihood Research and Training (ILRT) as part of its Action Research supported by the Ford Foundation.

Keywords: Chenchu Tribes; Lifestyle of Chenchus; Socio-economic Conditions of Chenchu Tribes

*Regional Coordinator & Lead Faculty, Institute of Livelihood Research and Training (ILRT), Hyderabad
**Senior Advisor, Faculty Development & Institutional Linkages, (ILRT), Hyderabad
***Project Director, Village Renewal Organisation, Kurnool

Introduction

India is home to a variety of religions, castes and tribes. Tribes constitute 8.6 per cent of the Indian population. Article 342 of the Constitution says a few communities of the country have been notified as Scheduled Tribes (ST) based on five parameters - (i) "primitive" traits, (ii) distinctive culture, (iii) geographical isolation, (iv) shyness in contacting the community at large, and (v) backwardness. The parameters denote how different the tribes are from any other community in India. As per the notification issued by the Government of India in 1993, there are some groups within the Scheduled Tribes who are more marginalised based on three parameters - (i) pre-agricultural level of technology, (ii) very low literacy level; and (iii) declining or stagnant population. These groups have been first notified as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) and later they have been named PVTGs. According to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, there are about 75 tribes notified as PVTGs in the country.

Andhra Pradesh, one of the southern States, has a tribal population of 5.3 per cent and home to 12 PVTGs, which is the second highest in the country after Odisha. Chenchu tribe is one of the PVTGs of Andhra Pradesh with a total population of 47,315. Although they are present in all the districts, more than 80 per cent of them are found to live in three districts i.e Prakasam, Guntur and Kurnool of the Nallamala forest region (GoAP, 2016). Chenchus are an aboriginal tribal group. They are of short and slender stature with very dark skin, wavy or curly hair, broad faces and flat noses (Haimendorf & Christoph, 1982).

Chenchus inhabit in small hamlets and most of them are remotely located at the foothills.

The notification issued by the Government of India on the Nagarjunasagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve in 1978 was a turning point in the lives of Chenchus who had been living in the Nallamala forest ranges for a long time. The notification impacted them so much that many Chenchu hamlets had to move to the peripheries from deep forests. This movement resulted in several changes in the lives of Chenchus. Along with the physical movement to the forest peripheries, various government schemes, rapid technology and infrastructure development also have a significant impact on the lives of Chenchus. This research work is an attempt to analyse the changes in the lives of Chenchus after they were forced to move out of their original habitats in 1983.

Review of Literature

Social change is a universal process. According to Gillin and Gillin, social changes are variations from the accepted modes of life, whether it is due to alteration in geographical conditions, in cultural equipment, composition of the population or ideologies; or whether it is brought about by diffusions or inventions within the group. This definition makes it clear that the accepted rules of life of any group or a community could take a new shape or a new path leading to changes in geography or culture or ideology. Anderson and Parker say, "Social change involves alteration in the structure or functioning of social forms or processes themselves." While the social change process has its own pace of speed, a few

important incidents cause rapid changes in the process of lives of people.

Despite living in remote forest and hilly regions, tribal communities in India are undergoing the change process. The world view of the tribal groups in India is not a static picture of their universe nor is it a closed system; it incorporates the world which, in turn, guides their day-to-day life and culture (Saraswati, 1991). Tribal communities in India are getting exposed to urban lifestyles, new livelihood options, markets and making changes in their lifestyles. The tribal communities of India in the past 100 years have undergone cultural, economic and religious impositions due to external influences (Patel, 2002). Industrialisation, infrastructure development, policy and climate change are some of the major external forces which have significant impact on the lives of the tribes.

Tribal communities have been exposed to both progressive and adverse effects from these external forces. Government policies such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and the Forest Rights Act have been of some help to these tribes in terms of assured wage employment and land ownership. On the other hand, as earlier research works highlighted, industrialisation and mining projects in the tribal areas continue to cause displacement, loss of livelihood, leading to large-scale migration. Hence it is important to study the changing lifestyles and their reasons in order to advocate betterment in their lives.

Socio-economic and Political Ecosystem Around Chenchus: Chenchus

have been living in an ecosystem in which the State government and its departments, non-tribal neighbours, middle men who purchase their forest, agriculture produces, deep penetrating communication and technology are the key players. The Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) headquartered at Srisailem is the nodal agency for the overall development of Chenchus. Since its inception in 1976, the ITDA has been implementing various welfare and development schemes to improve the living standards of Chenchus and contributed for several changes in the lifestyle of Chenchus.

The Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, based on the preponderance of tribal population has declared some areas in the country as the Fifth Schedule Areas to safeguard the distinct culture and interest of the tribes. Chenchus are one of the few tribal groups who live in non-scheduled areas in Andhra Pradesh. The Chenchu hamlets are a part of the larger panchayat where the non-tribal population is dominant. However, the panchayats being a responsible institution have been working to provide access to basic necessities like drinking water and rural connectivity. The services provided by the panchayat have some influence on their lives.

Non-tribal community is one of the important players in the socio-economic-political ecosystem of Chenchus, who, being part of the non-scheduled areas, have been forced to transact with other tribal (predominantly Lambada tribes) and non-tribal groups in their day-to-day life. These non-tribal communities are largely farmers. Chenchus get wage

employment from them during different phases of agriculture activity every year. Apart from this, a few Chenchus access credit services from them for different purposes, including agriculture, health and even purchase of grocery. Long association with non-tribal communities has resulted in Chenchus getting exposed to different cultures and livelihood practices. This also has an impact on the lifestyle of Chenchus.

More recently, technology and communication systems have succeeded in penetrating even Chenchu villages in remote areas and become an important factor in the ecosystem. These systems have started influencing the tribes to get into new avenues of recreation and enhanced interaction with market players. Although there are many other factors such as climate change and alcoholism to influence the lives of Chenchus, the current study makes an attempt to understand the influence of government/ITDA, PRIs, non-tribal communities, technology and communication system on the lifestyle of Chenchus.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the changes in the lives of Chenchus with specific reference to their economic and livelihood conditions.
- To study the access of Chenchus to basic amenities such as housing, drinking water and food security.
- To study the influence of non-tribal communities on Chenchus.
- To assess the influence of technology and communication on the lives of Chenchus.

Methodology

Exploratory research design is adopted for the current study. The study is carried out in eight villages of Atmakur mandal, Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh. Kurnool district constitutes 11.71 percentage of Chenchu population, which is the highest Chenchu tribal concentrated district in the State. Among 38 mandals of Kurnool district, Atmakur has the highest Chenchu population, hence the selection of Atmakur mandal for the study. There are eight Chenchu hamlets in the mandal with 533 households. Of them, 107 households were identified and used as a simple random sampling method for data collection which is 20 per cent of total households. As the households were homogeneous in terms of housing, livelihoods, income and access to forest resources across the villages, the study team believed that a 20 per cent sample would be representative of the whole community.

A combination of different methods, including household surveys, observations, focus group discussions and informal discussions with non-tribals and government officials has been applied to gather the required data. The collection of primary quantitative data has been done through a household survey using the field tested interview schedule.

A focus group discussion in every hamlet was organised with men and women to collect quantitative data with specific reference to basic amenities at the household level such as food security, livelihoods and access to forest. Informal discussion is one of the methods used for collecting data from the non-tribals who normally

provide agriculture inputs and credit support; the local traders who purchase the agriculture and forest produce from Chenchus; and the officials from the government departments, including the forest and the revenue.

Results and Discussion

1. General Characteristics of the Sample Households

1.1. Sex, age and education status of the respondents: Female respondents have a greater share (61 per cent) in the study than that of male respondents (38 per cent). In a Chenchu family, husband and wife are partners with equal rights (Haimendorf & Christoph, 1982) and the decision-making is collectively done at the household level. As female members are equally capable of giving accurate household information, the researchers have not faced any problem in collecting data either from the male members or from the female members. The mean age of the respondents is 35.7 years with a standard deviation of 11.97. The minimum age of the respondents is 20 years with the maximum age being 67 years.

Majority (57 per cent) of the study respondents are illiterate. The literacy rate among male respondents is 51.2 whereas it is 37.8 among female respondents. As per the 2011 census, the literacy rate among tribal male and female are 56.9 and 40.9, respectively. However, the tribal literacy rate is much lower than the State literacy rate, i.e., 67.4. The reason for low literacy among the PVTGs is due to improper education facilities and lack of trained, dedicated teachers (Sahani, K, & Nandy, 2013). The socio-

cultural practices has a direct impact on education of tribal children (Brahmanandam & Babu, 2016) A Chenchu child is socially and culturally distinct from a non-tribal child, a teacher who understands these distinct characteristics can make the education interesting. As per the observation in the field, the motivation and awareness of the parents on child education are also found low, the Chenchu parents hardly make follow-up to send their children to school.

1.2. Size of the household: Chenchus live in nuclear families and a family consists of a man, his wife, and their children (Haimendorf & Christoph, 1982). The study reveals that the mean size of the family is 3.74 members, which is slightly less than the average household size of the State i.e., 4.03 members. The minimum size of the household is one member and the maximum is 10 members. The study shows that about 8.4 per cent of the households are single-member households and majority of them are women-headed. Death of one of the spouses due to ill - health, and abandonment by one of them are the major reasons behind the single member households. The single member households of the State are five per cent. In fact, there has been a perceptible increase in single member households in the southern States compared to other areas (Nayak & Behera, 2014) in the country.

2. Access to Amenities

2.1. Housing: Traditionally, Chenchus live in small huts which are erected using the locally available bamboo and grass. They have a habit of changing their living location from one place to

another within the same areas, especially when there is some conflict with other Chenchu households. As erecting a new hut is not difficult, Chenchus easily change their living location and live independently. However the emerging changes in housing structures could prevent such easy movement from one location to another.

The noticeable change is that Chenchus are in the process of shifting from bamboo huts to stable concrete slab houses. The study shows while 84 per cent (90 HHs) of the households have own houses, 16 per cent (27 HHs) do not have any and they live with their close relatives.

Table 1: Support Provided for Construction of Houses by State and NGOs for the Own Householders

Type of house	Supporters for construction of house			Total	Percentage
	Self	Government	NGOs		
Hut	40	0	0	40	44.5
Tiled house	2	0	0	2	2.2
Slab house	4	35	9	48	53.3
Total	46	35	9	90	100

Among the own house-holding families, 53.4 per cent live in the slab houses and 44.4 per cent live in huts. About 75 per cent of the families living in the slab houses are supported by the government, ITDA-sponsored housing scheme and NGOs. To access the housing scheme from either the government or NGOs, five per cent of project cost should be contributed by the households. Chenchus have come forward with such contribution to have a slab house and this shows Chenchus' interest towards having a slab house to live.

The housing scheme across the villages included in this study has been implemented in different years. Indireswaram Gudem was the first village to receive the housing scheme in 1981. By the end of 2004, except Amalapuram and Peda Cheruvu villages, a few households in each village benefited from the housing scheme.

But the scheme covered only half of the households across the villages. In Amalapuram village, the house sites were issued to Chenchus in 2015. As Peda Cheruvu village is still in the tiger reserve area, housing schemes would not be applicable to the village. Rural Development Trust (RDT), an NGO is aggressively working on the project of constructing slab houses for Chenchus. As a whole it is a good sign that Chenchus are gradually moving towards having a stable and safer housing system which protects them from extreme weather conditions, including rains.

A transition from temporary and transient housing system to a permanent one may appear to take away the freedom to pursue subsistence activities at multiple locations. However, that may no longer be viewed adversely given that many households have moved from nomadic

forest-based activities to a sedentary farming activity as a result of land allocation from the State.

2.2. Toilet facility: While the housing schemes demonstrate their commitment towards creating a safe shelter for Chenchus, both the government and the NGOs have failed to consider toilet facilities as an integral part of the housing projects. It just means there is no slab house in the villages under the study which has a toilet. The study shows that 95.3 per cent of the households, including huts, slab houses do not have toilet

facilities, and open defecation continues to be the common practice in the hamlets.

2.3. Electricity: Irrespective of the types of houses, 82.2 per cent households have electricity connection. The electricity consumption at the household level is mainly to light the lamps at night and to watch television. Chenchus do not install ceiling fans in their houses. As per the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) held with Chenchus, the electricity supply is not regular as they face power cuts most of the time. In fact, power cuts are high in summer, more than eight hours a day.

Table 2: Distribution of Types of House-wise Electricity Connections

Type of house	Electricity Connection		Total	Percentage
	Yes	No		
Hut	27	17	44	41.1
Tiled house	5	0	5	4.6
Slab house	56	2	58	54.2
Total	88	19	107	100
Percentage	82.2	17.7	100	

2.4. Use of electronic goods: Despite living in remote areas, technology has invaded the huts

of Chenchus in terms of television sets and cell phones.

Table 3: Type of House-wise Holding of Televisions and Cell Phones

Type of house	Having a television			Percentage	Having a cell phone			Percentage
	Yes	No	Total		Yes	No	Total	
Hut	14	30	44	41.1	23	21	44	41.1
Tiled house	3	2	5	4.6	3	2	5	4.6
Slab house	28	30	58	54.2	26	32	58	54.2
Total	45	62	107	100	52	55	107	100

The study shows only 42 per cent of the households under the study have television sets in their houses. Among the television owning households, while 42 per cent live in slab houses, 31 and 7 per cent live in huts and tiled houses, respectively. About 93 per cent of the television owning families have installed dish antenna connections, thereby enjoying access to more television channels. As the hamlets are away from the main villages, no cable network operators are willing to extend cable services. This is the reason for installing dish antennas to access a variety of television channels.

It has been observed that women spend more time than men in watching the television. The most watched programmes include movies, movie songs and daily serials. Although there are different channels available to provide more knowledge about agriculture, politics and news updates, Chenchus do not pay much attention on them as many of them do not see the relevance. Television has also become an important source of day-to-day recreation for Chenchus. This also marks a transition in their recreation practices - from folk and traditional form of entertainment to modern entertainment like watching the television (Raju, Sudhakar, & Umamohan, 2009). Though television occupies

some time of recreation, Chenchus continue to attend their traditional folk entertainment events and festivals.

Cell phone is another form of technology found in the households, especially among the Chenchu youth. The study shows 48.6 per cent of the households have cell phones. The monthly expenditure incurred on cell phones ranges from ₹ 30 to ₹ 500. The mean monthly expenditure on cell phone recharge is ₹ 92.25 with a standard deviation of ₹ 124.5. Although cell phone has added a new head in the household expenditure, Chenchus recognise the value of cell phone in communicating with relatives, children (who study in government schools away from the hamlets), traders, farmers in the main villages and staff members of government departments. Using the cell phone, Chenchus are able to communicate with the PRI members on issues related to drinking water, roads, etc.

2.5. Drinking water: Streams, ponds, tanks and common wells were the traditional sources for drinking water for Chenchus. The local panchayat along with ITDA have constructed common bore wells and taps in the villages and these have turned out to be the major sources of drinking water in the hamlets.

Table 4: Source of Drinking Water

Source of drinking water	No. of Households	Percentage
Common bore well	65	60.7
Common tap	27	25.2
Water storage tank	3	2.8
Common well	12	11.3
Total	107	100

The study found that Chenchus get the drinking water through four main sources - common bore wells (60.7 per cent), common taps (25.2), common wells (11.3 per cent) and common water storage tanks (2.8 per cent). Soon after the villages got relocated from the tiger reserve area, Chenchus from all the villages used to go to the nearest main village to fetch drinking water. Although there was some resistance from the local non-tribal communities, the local government authorities deftly handled the situation. Indireswaram Gudem was the first village among the villages under the study where a bore well was built by the government in 1985. By the end of 1999, bore wells were installed in all the villages except Amalapuram. Chenchus in this village continued to draw drinking water from the main village till 2013 when they got a bore well installed. Access to a new source of water has helped them to get rid of the burden of fetching drinking water from far away locations. The study also points out the displeasure shown by the tribes towards the local PRIs and ITDA for their failure to carry out necessary repairs whenever the bore wells and the common taps go dysfunctional.

3. Food and Health

3.1. Changes in food habits: Traditionally, Chenchus are dependent on the forest for their food needs. Staple food used to be gathered through hunting and collection of edible roots and tubers (Haimendorf & Christoph, 1982). This practice continued for many generations. The present study observed that the diet habits of

Chenchus have been influenced by two important factors - decline in the availability of traditional staple food from the forest and the introduction of Public Distribution System (PDS). The PDS is a State-sponsored scheme, which provides white card holding families access to grocery on subsidised prices. The subsidised prices of PDS systems include rice (₹ 1/kg), dal (₹ 120/kg), sugar (₹ 15/kg), palm oil (₹ 60/kg) and kerosene (₹ 15/litre).

The study shows that about 91.6 per cent of the sample households have ration cards. The PDS issues 35 kg of rice every month to each household (Reddappa, 2015). Chenchu households use the rice prudently, thereby making sure that food is available for 20 to 22 days a month. For the rest of the month, they purchase low quality rice at the rate of ₹ 12 per kg from the local markets. The respondents say access to forest produce, and the use of roots and tubers for their diet have decreased drastically. Hunting has also become a rare activity among Chenchus due to the sharp decline in the animal population in the forest and also due to the restrictions placed by the forest department.

As the availability and access to the traditional food items such as roots and tubers have been affected, Chenchus are left with no option but to make use of the PDS. As a result, rice has become the staple food among Chenchus. Moreover, the PDS has been able to meet the challenge of hunger among Chenchus. While the carbohydrate intake has increased through the intake of rice, the protein and other nutrition requirements have not been properly

taken care of through the grocery supplied by the PDS. Despite lower protein intake, overall food security has improved among Chenchus by the PDS.

The ITDA-sponsored poultry scheme has two objectives – first the household gets access to nutrition and second they are able to get some income from sale of chicken. The scheme offers 10 chicks to each Chenchu household. They rear the chicks and use them mostly for household consumption. Although the households do not earn any income, it has been able to ensure nutrition security to a certain extent. The study noticed that cent per cent of the households accessed the scheme in different years.

3.2. Nutrition support for children: Anganwadi centres, started in 1975 under the Integrated Child Development Scheme of the Government of India, exist in all eight study villages and they have been providing one meal to the children who are below six years. The centre works six days a week and supplies food as per the prescribed menu. Rice, dal and egg are the important items in the menu. Nutritious food support from anganwadi centres is an established service for Chenchu children and it has become possible through the intervention of the government. Chenchus acknowledge the fact that the anganwadi centres continue to play an important role in ensuring food for their children.

Crop Harvest Residue

After the notification of the Nagarjunasagar Srisaillam Tiger Reserve in 1978, the area came under the protection of the forest department in 1983. Once the area came under the protection of the government, Chenchus moved out from the deep forest areas and settled in new locations as per the directions of the government. The new locations were at a distance of six to 18 km from the agriculture fields of non-tribal communities. The movement from the deep forest areas to the peripheries had a significant impact on their access to food. In the new locations, due to limited availability of forest-based foods, Chenchus started collecting residues of crops harvested from the fields of non-tribals. This practice is even now adopted by a few (about 10 per cent) Chenchu households. They collect residues of maize, rice and chillies. Although the collection is in very limited (8 to 15 kg maximum) quantities, it is one of the sources of food, especially in the post-harvest season.

3.3. Access to health services: The government has set up health centres at Bailuty, Atmakur and health sub-centres at the panchayat headquarters. Apart from this, the auxiliary nurse midwife (ANM) makes periodical visits to provide health services within the hamlets.

Table 5: Sources of healthcare services

Type of hospital	No. of Households	Percentage
Government hospital	27	25
Private hospital	80	75
Total	107	100

Despite the availability of this institutional service delivery mechanism, the study has found that 74.8 per cent of the households prefer to go to private hospitals available in Atmakur and panchayat headquarters and only 24 per cent of them are interested in getting healthcare services from government hospitals. Apart from the lack of proper attention from the doctors and the staff, the belief that the same medicine is prescribed for all ailments is the major reason for their disinterest about government hospitals. Interestingly the same Chenchus give preference to government PHCs for pre and post-natal services, the reason being the PHC staff provides good pre and post-natal services.

Despite all the established health care systems in the vicinity of Chenchu hamlets, the study shows the general health status of PVTGs is not satisfactory. Chenchus generally suffer from deficiency of vitamin A & B, and iron (Sahani & Nandy, 2013). However, during the FGDs, Chenchus highlighted that compared to past, access to healthcare services is increased.

4. Livelihoods and Income

The traditional livelihood option of hunting and gathering was not just to collect food (roots and tubers) for the family, but also to create opportunities for themselves to remain fully engaged. But what is seen today is a rapid decline in their hunting and gathering. In fact, the livelihood pattern of Chenchus has taken a new shape with most of their new livelihood options turning out to be only sources for earning income but not food, unlike their traditional livelihood

choices. The changed patterns of livelihoods of Chenchus are discussed below.

4.1. Wage employment as major livelihood:

Before the introduction of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in 2005, Chenchus used to work in the fields of non-tribal communities for a few months every year. Yet hunting and gathering was an important engagement, especially in the non-agriculture seasons. After the introduction of MGNREGS, unskilled wage employment has become a major source of engagement as well as income. The study says 88 per cent of the households have job cards. However, the offer of wage employment under the scheme is not uniform across the villages. Peda Cheruvu, Indireswaram, Bairluty and Nagaluty Kottala Cheruvu are the villages where the wage employment is offered at the rate of 15 days a month for six to eight months a year.

In villages like Vengalreddy Nagar and Nalla Kaluva, the MGNREGS work is done for fewer than six months a year. According to the statistics available, one member gets a wage of ₹ 2700 for 15 days of work at the rate of ₹ 180 per day in the villages where the work is offered. The reluctance of the authorities concerned to offer work is said to be the main reason for non-availability of wage work in Indireswaram Gudem village. On the contrary, the refusal of Chenchus to take up the work offered is also a reason for the non-availability of wage work. This happens mainly because the Chenchus are busy either with their festivals or with NTFP collection in certain months.

Clearing of bushes, building of bunds, digging of trenches, de-silting of ponds and construction of internal roads are the major works which provide them wage employment. The study shows wage employment under the MGNREGS is the primary source of income for 74.8 per cent of the study respondent households.

4.2. Collection of Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) as a subsidiary livelihood option:

Displacement from the reserved forest area has deprived Chenchus of having access to forest produce. Out of eight study hamlets, two hamlets, namely Vengalreddy Colony and Amalapuram, have completely lost their access to forest and NTFP collection. The study says, fewer than half (46.7 per cent) of the households have access to forest lands and they are involved in the collection of NTFPs, including gum, sharbat roots (locally known as *paala gaddalu*) and honey. Issues such as poor remunerative prices for NTFPs, even from the Girijan Cooperative Corporation (GCC), sanctions by the forest

department against collection of NTFPs and high level exploitation at the hands of middlemen, coupled with decrease in the availability of NTFPs from close locations have resulted in NTFP getting ticked off from the primary source as a subsidiary livelihood option. The contribution of NTFPs to the household income is now limited to just 15 per cent (Rao, Kumar, Krishna, & Bhaskar, 2015). As per the community, before moving to peripheries, the contribution of NTFPs to the household income was more than 60 per cent. As NTFP contribution declines, MGNREGS became an important source of income to Chenchus.

4.3. Getting into agriculture: Being forced to move towards the fringe areas of the forest, coupled with increased interactions with non-tribal farming communities has resulted in getting the attention of Chenchus drawn towards agriculture. The Government scheme of providing agriculture land to Chenchus has also created some interest in them towards agriculture activities.

Table 6: Land ownership among sample households

Extend of land	No of households	Percentage
No land	61	57.0
Less than 1 acre	9	8.4
1 to 2.46 acres	10	9.3
2.46 to 4.93 acres	19	17.8
4.93 to 9.87 acres	8	7.5
Total	107	
100		

The study shows, while 43 per cent of the households own agriculture lands, 57 per cent of them are landless. The study noticed that especially through FGDs, Chenchus being forest dwellers never owned any land on the records. Once the tiger reserve notification was issued, first time Chenchus were formally provided with agriculture lands as part of strengthening their livelihoods. With no background of cultivation, majority of Chenchus never visited the allotted lands for almost two decades. Later, on decline of NTFP collection and traditional hunting, Chenchus had to look at their agriculture lands. Meanwhile, the allotted lands were occupied by non-tribals. With the intervention of ITDA, tahsildar and local NGOs, lands were restored for some families and Chenchus started getting into agriculture. However, due to certain practical problems Chenchus faced in agriculture activities, agriculture has failed to become an attractive livelihood option. In fact, among the landholding households, only 30 per cent cultivate their lands whereas 65 per cent households lease out their lands to the other non-tribal communities and 11.6 per cent leave the land fallow. Poor investment capacity, poor irrigation facility, lack of agriculture infrastructure like ploughing tools and sprayers, limited understanding about assessing climate risks and limited ability to engage with the market players have made Chenchus step back even after owning agriculture lands. The study says that about four per cent of the study respondent households have agriculture as a primary source of income.

Table 7: Primary Source of Household Income of Chenchus

Livelihood activity	No. of Households	Percentage
MGNREGS wage work	80	74.8
Agriculture	4	3.7
NTFP	3	2.8
Private job	5	4.7
Government job	7	6.5
Agriculture wage labour	2	1.9
Goat and sheep rearing	1	.9
Milch animals	3	2.8
Others	2	1.9
Total	107	100

While there are a few motivating factors from the government to drive Chenchus towards agriculture, many unfriendly factors as said above have pulled them back.

4.4. Animal husbandry: The current research study has made an attempt to capture the role of animal husbandry in the livelihood portfolio of Chenchus. Chenchus have some traditional experience in goat rearing and backyard poultry farming. Along with these two activities, dairy farming has also found some space in the livelihood portfolio of Chenchus. The study shows that 14, 15 per cent and 24 per cent of the study households have been practising dairy farming, goat rearing and poultry activities, respectively. Dairy activity is found only in three hamlets, i.e., Bailuty, Nagaluty and Kottalacheruvu, as these hamlets have better transport access to reach Atmakur town. The goat rearing is found to be an important source of subsidiary income.

Low capital requirement, availability of fodder and limited market constraints (buyers visit the hamlets and offer reasonable prices) are the motivating factors for the goat rearing activity. ITDA schemes, coupled with low investment have encouraged Chenchus to start poultry activities in their backyards. Often chicken is used for household consumption and in some cases Chenchus also earn some income out of it. Most of the study respondent households are interested in getting into goat rearing activity or expanding scope of the activity. Two congenial factors - encouragement from the government through various schemes and reasonable market scope-have helped Chenchus pursue animal husbandry.

4.5. Micro-enterprises: Srisailam Temple of Lord Shiva is a famous Hindu pilgrimage location. Every year thousands of pilgrims reach the temple on foot through the forest, especially during Maha Shivaratri and Ugadi festivals. Three villages - Bairluty, Nagaluti, Peddacheruvu- are on the way to the temple. About 150 households from the study hamlets have set up temporary petty shops to sell cool drinks, biscuits and coconuts. The petty shops run for 30 to 35 days a year. Chenchus arrange capital from their own savings (earning from wage work), and also get loans from the non-tribal landlords from main villages. Chenchus earn an average income of ₹ 8000 to ₹10000 through these micro-enterprise activities. Though micro-enterprise activity is not traditional livelihood choice of Chenchus, exposure to micro businesses in the local area gave them a confidence to get into it.

Where Chenchus are Placed in the Process of Change

Chenchus have faced several changes in their life in the past three decades after they moved away from their ancient habitats. But it is important to notice that all these changes are mixed in nature - some are progressive and some are bleak. Getting into slab houses and increased access to protected drinking water are some of the changes that have come over Chenchus. As these are basic needs, getting access to these services has resulted in raising the living standards of Chenchus. This is against the fact that these services are still not accessible to all and 16 per cent of study respondents do not have own huts to live.

It is good to know that 82.2 per cent of households have access to electricity and these households can light one lamp at night in their households. Access to electricity leads to owning television sets and music players in the households, and it is a fact that Chenchus have got this idea through their association with non-tribal neighbours. It is also important to notice that owning a television set has a significant impact on the entertainment habits of Chenchus. Previously, they used to sit together for chatting, especially in the evenings. Now that time is used for watching daily and weekly serials. Chenchus are willing to pay for installation of dish antennas to get access to entertainment channels. However, their interest to watch news updates and programmes on agriculture activities on a regular basis is found to be low.

Cell phone has deeply penetrated into the Chenchu hamlets with youngsters and adults

using the device to communicate with relatives, friends and even with government workers to know the schemes details. Chenchus say cell phone is very useful in getting information about the availability of NREGS wage works and wage payment details. Although the use of cell phone leads to increased expenditure at the household level, Chenchus say it is worth spending. It is therefore, clear that the movement towards peripheries of the forest lands has brought Chenchus closer to various government schemes.

The study shows that Chenchus are in the process of transition from subsistence livelihood activities to surplus generating market-based livelihood activities such as agriculture. Traditionally, agriculture is not a part of their livelihood portfolio. Now, the picture is different. Apart from working for non-tribal communities in the agricultural sector for the last 25 years, Chenchus have been motivated to work in agricultural lands, especially in the light of the government coming forward to offer them agricultural lands.

The study shows while 43 per cent Chenchus are land-holders, majority of them are marginal (<2.46 acres of holding) and small (2.47 to 4.93 acres) farmers. In fact, among the land-holders only 30 per cent are involved in agriculture activities, mostly rain-fed agriculture. Lack of assured irrigation facilities and poor access to credit facilities from formal financial institutions are the two main demotivating factors behind the refusal of Chenchus to get into agriculture despite having a piece of land. Yet, it is a matter of surprise that many Chenchus

continue to remain as farmers, while traditional farmers are trying to leave the agriculture sector as they do not see it as a remunerative livelihood option.

Future in Agriculture?

The National Sample Survey Organisation's situation assessment survey of farmers, a part of the 59th round in 2003, reveals that while 27 per cent of farmers do not like farming because it is not profitable, 40 per cent have felt that, given a choice, they would take up some other livelihood in place of agriculture. In these circumstances, the question is - is it really worth for Chenchus to get into agriculture? Chenchus are largely the poorest of the poor considering their economic and asset base compared to the rural farmers, and their risk-taking ability would also be much lower to cope with crop failures due to adverse climatic conditions and pest attacks. On the other hand, when the normal farmers with traditional and long years of experience are not able to fetch minimum returns, with no experience and lack of awareness on various advocated practices, it is doubtful if Chenchus are able to draw better income from agriculture. Currently, there is an impression among formal financial institutions that 'Chenchus are not credit worthy for agriculture' because they do not have experience and expertise. Even when Chenchus access credit from the banks on a few occasions, there is a possibility that Chenchus could become defaulters given the uncertainties in production and their low risk-taking abilities. Similarly, the awareness of Chenchus about market trends and

their ability to deal with traders and middleman is another important question.

In all these changes, Chenchus are just like a recipient instead of creating the changes that they want. Low literacy and self-confidence, poor negotiation abilities either with government or with market players and lack of awareness about their rights and entitlements are considered to be the major reasons behind Chenchus remaining as just recipients of change.

Policy Recommendations and Conclusion

The study has shown that over the first two decades, there is indeed a change in the way Chenchus families lead their life. Their traditional relationship with their forests and natural resources has been altered in a serious and perhaps irreversible way. The alienation from their age old institutions has certainly increased their vulnerability. However, their transition to a more sedentary settled way of life seems to be more pronounced than what is generally acknowledged. There are promising trends that have been aided by some government programmes. The effects of a rapidly changing economy and rapid growth of mobile and digital technology too have thrown opportunities and a few challenges. It is important to be cognizant of the positive changes and build on it. At the same time, unintended consequences of the change need to be addressed earlier than later.

Based on the study results, the following policy recommendations are made to positively impact the lives of Chenchus:

- The local Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are primarily responsible for creating drinking water access to Chenchus. As devolution of powers and funds does not happen as per the Constitution, the PRIs are not able to respond to the drinking water needs as well as the repairs to the drinking water sources. The government should act proactively in the devolution of powers and release funds to the local PRIs to act appropriately as per the needs of the people. Therefore, in an effort to strengthen the PRIs, government should pay particular attention to ensure that PRIs in PVTG areas must get priority in resource and functionary allocation.
- The housing schemes introduced by both the government and the NGOs should consider toilet as integral part of the housing design. Moreover, it is an opportunity to the State and development players to motivate Chenchus to follow health and hygiene practices that can prevent diarrhoea and other health problems on account of unhygienic practices. Integrating toilets in the housing design could also contribute to the larger 'Swachh Bharat'.
- Even though poor, Chenchus prefer to spend more and access private health facilities indicating their willingness to pay for quality health services. Government can provide incentive to health workers to provide better services and recover part of the costs through rationalised service fee.
- A few livelihood activities such as goat rearing, poultry farming and petty shops are successfully managed by Chenchus. The study shows that though more families are interested in those activities, they are not able

to start and expand due to capital constraints. Therefore, the ITDA should extend financial support services to Chenchus to set up such units. At the same time, it should see that the financial service is embedded with awareness about effective management practices, risk reduction and veterinary services.

- In spite of the availability of primary schools in all hamlets/main villages, the literacy rate among Chenchus is very low. It reveals that promoting physical school infrastructure and

placing teachers would not be sufficient to increase the literacy rate among Chenchus. The ITDA and the education department need to understand the causative factors behind Chenchus not sending their children to school. Government programmes for education will yield desired results only if other stress mitigating measures are taken. Ultimately, it is education alone which will lead to an improvement in the socio-economic status of Chenchu households.

References

- Battini, N., & Alexey, I. (2011), Religion of Chenchus. *Studies of Tribe and Tribals*, 87 - 101.
- Brahmanandam, T., & Babu, T.B. (2016), Educational Status among the Scheduled Tribes: Issues and Challenges. *The NEHU Journal*, 14(2), 69 - 85.
- GOAP. (2016, January 31), Tribal Welfare Department. Retrieved from Tribal Welfare Department Government of Andhra Pradesh: <http://aptribes.gov.in/statistics.htm>
- Haimendorf, V. F., & Christoph. (1982), *Tribes of India: The Struggle for Survival*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Nayak, D.K., & Behera, R.N. (2014), Changing Household Size in India: An Inter-State Comparison. *Transactions of the Institute of Indian Geographers*, 36(1), 1-18.
- Panagaria, A., & More, V. (2013), *Poverty by Social, Religious & Economic Groups in India and Its Largest States 1993-94 to 2011-12*, New York, Columbia University.
- Patel, M.L. (2002), *Global Perception of Tribal Reserach in India.*, New Delhi, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors.
- Raju, P. S., Sudhakar, C., & Umamohan, C. (2009), Chenchus and Social Transformation: A study of a Primitive Tribe in Kurnool District of Andhra Pradesh, *The Anthropologist*, 167 - 172.
- Rao, K. M., Kumar, R. H., Krishna, K. S., & Bhaskar, a. V. (2015), Diet & nutrition profile of Chenchu population - a vulnerable tribe in Telangana & Andhra Pradesh, India, *Indian Journal of Medical Research*, 688 - 696.
- Rao, M. S., & Rao, B.L. (2010), Factors Influencing Socio-Economic Status of the Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) and Plain Tribes in Andhra Pradesh (A Logistic Regression Analysis), *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 235 - 244.
- Reddappa, L. (2015), State Interventions for Livelihood Improvement: An Empirical study on Chenchu Tribe. *Labour Market and Issues of Adivasis in India* (pp. 1 - 13). Hyderabad, National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR).
- Sahani, R., & Nandy, S. K. (2013), Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in India: *An Overview. Journal of the Anthropological Survey of India*, 851-865.
- Saraswati, B. (1991), *Tribal Thought and Culture: Essays in Honour of Shri Surajit Chandra Sinha*, Delhi, Concept Publishing Company.
- UNDP. (2012), *Identifying Livelihood Promotion Strategies for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups under NRLM*, New Delhi, UNDP.