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Dr. D. Suresh



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**DISPARAGED – DEPRIVED AND DESPAIRED
CHENCHU TRIBES – A STUDY**

Dr. Devath Suresh

Researchers, President,
SPWI, Warangal, TS

Abstract: *The Scheduled Tribes occupy a distinct and special place in India. They have all these years remained isolated from the mainstream society since time immemorial and yet continued to maintain a separate identity and present a separate diversity Clearly distinguishing the rustic nature and Culture mosaic of tribes in India. It is observed that the plight of Chenchus inhabiting these areas in a pathetic condition without receiving any scheme/financial assistance either provided by the Central/State Governments or any other Agency, hence there is a need to conduct a case study of ethnographic and prevailing socio-economic conditions of the Chenchu tribes inhabiting in Regonda, Chityal, and Ghanpur (Mulug) Tehsils of Jayashanakar Bhupalpally district and Venkatapur, Chennaraopet Tehsils of Warangal district. This study was undertaken to the scrutiny inhabiting two Tehsils where Chenchus are inhabiting for more than six decades laying the main focus on the subjects, claims regard to their ethnicity with the Chenchus inhabiting the Nallmalla forest region. The chief characteristic of the tribal economy especially in the study area is still a subsistence economy where agriculture plays a pivotal role. The majority of the inhabitants depend on Agriculture Labour as they don't possess any agricultural land, besides having been deprived of economic schemes provided by the Government of Telangana.*

Keywords: *Chenchu, Chenchu inhabitations, Culture, Tradition, Influence Factors, Disparaged, Deprived, Despaired, Telangana*

Introduction

India is a rich country with a diversity of various Cultures, Traditions, Religions (faiths), Languages and linguistic descriptions. Among which the Scheduled Tribes

portray a separate identity constituting approx. 8.6% of the total population of the Country. India stands as the second-largest tribal population in the world.

These depressed tribal communities, since time immemorial habituated to inhabit interior forests, Hill-locks and inaccessible areas throughout the length and breadth of the Country and always prefers to remain in isolation from the mainstream of the population for generations, but yet continued to maintain a separate identity and present a spectacle of striking diversity Clearly distinguishing the rustic nature and cultural mosaic of tribes in India and this isolation has become a herculean task for the administrators, planners and researchers to deliver the minimum essential services and thus become an impediment to reap the fruits of economic growth.

The tribal group is an ethnic entity that spreads over the length and breadth of the country; Tribal Society is mysterious to the world of Culture and Heritage. Tribal heritage is the evidence of the past, such as historical sites, stone-age dwellings and unspoilt natural environment- considered collectively as the inheritance of present-day society. Culture is both tangible as well as intangible and it includes language, hospitality, rules of family or village, beliefs, dressing, food habits, smoking, drinking, hunting, art, decoration by women and men, sexual relations, religious offerings and temple prayers, dances, music, musical instruments, domestication of animals and plants, cultivation, tools usage, medicinal treatment. All these social parameters have been practised for many centuries and this heritage has knowledge, institutions, harmony, balance and consistency, etc. in them. Most of the knowledge is intangible and is disappearing with time due to a lack of recognition and promotion.

705 individual ethnic groups, etc. have been notified as Scheduled Tribes in India. Tribal Communities live, in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions ranging from plains and forests to hills and inaccessible areas. Tribal groups are at different stages of social, economic and educational development. While some tribal communities have adopted a mainstream way of life, at the other end of the spectrum, there are certain Scheduled Tribes, 75 in number known as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India, who are characterised by;

1. Pre-agriculture level of technology;
2. Stagnant or declining population; '
3. Extremely low literacy; and

There are 35 Scheduled Tribe communities in the State of Telangana as per A.P. Reorganization Act, 2014. Out of them eight - Communities are recognized as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups; of them 4 PVTGs viz., (1) Chenchu, (1975-76), (2) Kolam, (1980), (3) Kondareddis (1980) and (4) Thoti (1982-83) tribes are predominantly inhabiting in Telangana State.

Though the Government of India had identified the social backward tribal groups in three different phases, the main purpose was to extend additional Special Central

Assistance not only to implement but also to encourage Special Schemes necessitating bringing the isolated and most neglected PVTGS on par with other advanced groups while paying exclusive attention.

Need for the Study

Chenchu is one of the hunting and food-gathering tribes. Considering the stage of development, the Government of India have declared 'Chenchu' as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PTG). To promote accelerated development of this tribal community, an Integrated Tribal Development Agency exclusively for Chenchus was established way back in the year 1975-76 with Headquarters at Hyderabad, subsequently shifted to Srisailem and after the demerger of State to Mannanur, while leaving the economic development of remaining 3 PVTGs to the respective ITDAs.

The Nallamala Hills spread in the districts of Mahabubnagar and Nalgonda, is the traditional habitat of Chenchus. They have also been found in a few villages in the Rangareddy district. They are a food gathering and hunting tribe.

Virtually, no historical written material is available on the Chenchus; maybe Chenchu is such a small tribe and it did not attract the attention of any historian. However, it did get the attention of a famous British Anthropologist, Prof. Christoph Von Furer Haimendorf during the Nizam period.

Based on the official documents nearly 241 households are residing in Jayashnkar Bhupalpally, Mulug and Warangal districts. The details are given in the following table:

Table 1: District-wise, Tehsil-wise and Village-wise Inhabiting Chenchu Tribes

Sl. No	District	Tehsil	Village	No. of Households
1	Bhupalpally	Ghanpur	Mylaram	15
			Gollapalli	12
			Shanthinagar	15
			Ravinagar	12
			Chelpur	20
		Bhupalpally	Gandraopalli	15
		Regonda	Chenchupally	55
			Maniparthi	10
		Chityal	Bhavasingpalle	24
Laxmipuram Thanda	18			
2	Mulug	Venkatapuram	Ramchandrapuram	15
		Venkatapur	Palampet	15
3	Warangal	Chennaraopet	Papayapet	15
Total		7	13	241

Out of the total 241 Chenchu households, we selected 107 households from Regonda and Chityal Tehsil of Bhupalpally Jayashankar district, of which 55 households from Chenchupally village and 10 households from Kaniparthi village of Regonda district, while 24 households from Bhavsingpalle and 18 households from Laxmipuram Thanda village of Chityal Tehsil. For the, we have visited Regonda and Chityal Tehsils of Jayashnkar Bhupallpally district observed the plight of the Chenchus inhabiting therein and felt that they are living in a vulnerable condition. Therefore, examine decided to the existing conditions of the Chenchus living in these Tehsils and scrutinise the reasons for their deprival of the benefits provided in other areas of habitation in the Nallamala forest region.

Objectives of the Study

The traditional habitat of the Chenchu tribe is the Nallamala forest area and the Krishna River banks. Therefore, it is necessary to, study the cultural traits of the community of Regonda and Chityal Tehsils who were deprived of economic support schemes in examine and establish the genuineness of the claimants as belonging to Chenchu Community alike Nallamala habitants to enable the authorities for taking up socio-economic survey of the community to evolve development plan for their upliftment.

Study Area together with the limitation

1. Chenchupally and Kaniparthi habitations of Regonda Tehsils of Jayashnkar Bhupalpally district.
2. Bhavsinghpally and Laxmipuram Thanda of Chityal Tehsils.
3. Our organization has received many suggestions from different quarters, about how the Chenchus inhabiting these Tehsils are deprived of benefits guaranteed by the Constitution of India though they are belonging to Chenchu Tribe, a PVTG. This made us confine the study to these Tehsils to find out the reasons for the disparity and suggest the remedies to overcome their watertight compartment of administration and enthuse the lost confidence in the moods of despaired Chenchus in these Tehsils of Jayashnkar Bhupalpally district of North Telangana.

Methodology of Study

1. Evolved Ethnographic Schedule to ascertain ethnic traits such as traditions and customs, fairs and festivals' social structure of the claimants.
2. Evolved Household Schedule to collect socio-economic details of the households.
3. Evolved Village Schedule to collect the details of infrastructure available in these villages.

Name, Origin and History

Manusmriti makes a mention of, a people called 'Chunchu' and was assumed that the 'Chunchu' was nothing but a reference to the present-day Chenchus. Another derivation of the name is that these people eat a kind of rat called 'Chunchu' so they are called Chenchus. Chenchus claim that the female deity Bramarambha of Srisailam belongs to this community. Thurston has opined that the Chenchus and Yandis descended from the same stock. As per Guha, the Chenchu have been classified as Proto-Austroloide with medium status, dark colour, a long and narrow head shape, round or rogal facial profile, and a short nose of medium breadth. There is a folk story popular among the Chenchus of Amarabad Plateau narrating their origin and their relationship with Lord Mallikarjuna of Srisailam temple. Once, a man and his wife lived in a small hut at some distance from the temple of Srisailam. They had no children and worshipped Lord Mallikarjuna for children. God granted them the wish with the condition that the girl born to them shall be dedicated to him. After nine months the wife gave birth to a girl child and dedicated her to Lord Mallikarjuna. The girl at the age of three left her parents and began living under a Chettu (tree). Because, she lived under a Chettu, she was called 'Chenchita'. She grew up into a beautiful damsel. One day Lord Mallikarjuna came across this damsel in the forest and both of them fell in love and got married. The children of this couple are called Chenchus. The descendants of the girl who lived under 'Chettu' are called the Chenchus. A few groups with cognate appellations are as hereunder:

1. Deva Chenchus/Dasari Chenchu
2. Voora Chenchu/Telugu Chenchu
3. Krishna Chenchu
4. Bonta Chenchu

The Chenchus of Amarabad Plateau who claim their origin and their relationship with Lord Mallikarjuna of Srisailam temple call themselves Deva Chenchus/Dasari Chenchus and consider themselves superior to other cognate groups.

The Chenchus who migrated to plain areas for livelihood and settled in plain areas are called Voora Chenchus or Telugu Chenchus.

The Krishna Chenchus are beggars, and collect alms by dancing and singing songs before the Hindus of the plains. They subsist by hunting as well.

The Bonta Chenchus visit the villages of the plains and live-in patch-work tents. They sell bamboo seeds and bamboo flutes, which they bait for grain to the villagers.

The Chenchu who live in symbiosis with the Yanadis tribe call themselves Yanadi Chenchus. Approx 60% of the total population is represented by Deva Chenchus/Dasari who are found in the ITDA Project area and the remaining 40% of the Chenchu

population is distributed among Krishna and Bontha Chenchus, who are spread in mostly plain areas of the State. Chenchus being the food gatherers, collect varieties of roots, wild fruits, edible leaves and non-forest Timber produce (NFTP). The Chenchus of the Nallamala region are adept in the honey collection from honeycombs settled on the mountain clips and caves. Each clan in Chenchu Community gives top priority to Honey Collection, as areas are demarcated for this purpose. They even consider it as traditional and ancestral property. The unique feature in the honey collection is, they never wear any headgear to protect from Honey-bee bites while another important feature is that the Chenchu prefers their brother-in-law for this activity rather than their kin. The most significant fact of the Chenchu area is, it is embellished by important Pilgrims viz., Srisailam, Ahobilam and Mahanandi of the Kurnool district. Earlier it was a customary practice of Chenchus to share temple revenues for their services while they used to earn little by carrying old and infirm pilgrims in "*Dolis*". As the time swift on they slowly turned to beg near the same temples.

Relevance for the Policy Makers

Policymakers have done their responsibilities in having recognized these hapless Chenchus as a Primitive Tribal Group way back 1975-76, based on three parameters viz., a) Pre-agriculture Technology; b) Diminishing Population; and c) Decimal Literacy Rate but unfortunately, due to displacement of their place of origin in search of livelihood, travelled distant places and finally settled in parts of North Telangana. But yet nothing good has happened, they were neglected on all fronts for just cruising their frontier lines. They are at the present at the mercy of local administrators. It's now time for all Government functionaries to open up to the situation and help these poor tribes to come out of the woods. This pathetic situation conflict has raised had the authorities concerned with welfare and upliftment of poorest of poor schedule tribes have acted on time hugely. As these Chenchus have been neglected for decades for want of their social status recognition, on the strength of their historical origin about their social, economic, and educational backwardness, besides based on their genealogy parameters, together with homogeneous characters with the Chenchus habituating in Nallamalla forest division. The concerned authorities shall treat this issue previously and post such officers in those districts with knowledge of some basics in identifying the genuineness of tribal characters either with sociology or related subject specialist or at least shall be well equipped with necessary training inputs in identifying the tribal characters, in consultation with Tribal Research Institute in the State. This way they (Policy Makers) can pave the way to judicially protect the rights and needs of the downtrodden Chenchu people for their upliftment of social, and economic status as guaranteed by the Constitution of India.

Relevance for the Society

Society here is referred to as a tribal society, as they consider society as a stateless society, unlike urban society. In the tribal society, there will be a chief among them who

controls their tribal people, confined to an isolated area away from the mainstream of advanced society. These tribals have a common language, religion, totemic kinship and clans. As such these tribal areas in remote inaccessible areas are still considered as little tribal societies where they have their say, have their customary laws, and still prefer endogamous marriages. Besides, these people were been enjoyed the unimpeachable right of ownership and management over natural resources such as land, forests, wildlife, water, soil etc. But now too many laws, too much interference, by outsiders, especially land grabbers, and the involvement of middlemen in the selection of beneficiaries for various economic support schemes, and other soil development schemes due to the introduction of online registration of schemes in rural and interior tribal areas without focusing on the educational front where a low level of literacy still rules the society, facing these illiterate helpless poor tribal people to depend on ruthless middlemen who grab the benefits ensured to these tribals by the Constitution of India. In this context B.K. Roy Burman opined that contemporary India is still backward as earlier.

Because despite the formulation of various development activities, and economic support schemes by both Central and respective State Governments these tribes are still characterized by low levels of living standards in all economic and social spheres.

Further observed that despite Constitutional Provisions, Policies and Programs adopted by Government in Tribal Welfare Department. The condition of tribal especially Chenchus in the North Telangana part continues to be deplorable and requires deep concentration in understanding the Chenchus cultural heritage. The Department has to be equipped with well-experienced, having a thorough knowledge of identifying genuine tribal with that belonging tribals. This is the need of the hour to improve the plight of Chenchus inhabiting these North Telangana parts.

Culture and Tradition of Chenchu Tribes

The districts of Kurnool, Prakasham, Guntur, Mahbubnagar, and Nalgonda along with Nallamala Hills and Ranga Reddy are the main habitats of Chenchus. They are also sparsely found in the Karimnagar, Jayashnkar Bhupalpally, and Mulug Warangal districts of North Telangana. The Nallmalla hills are generally known as the Amarabad plateau. The principal abode of Chenchus is located between 16^o - 30 northern latitudes and 78^o-30' and 79^o-15' eastern longitude. The whole of the plateau belongs to the erstwhile Mababubnagar district but a few scattered Chenchus habitats are on the other side of the Dindi River in the erstwhile Nalgonda district.

The Amarabad plateau falls naturally into two definite parts. The lower ledge to the north-east eastwards to the Dindi River and the higher ranges to the south-west averaging 2500'. On the lower ledge where there are large cultivated areas lie Amarabad, Mannanur and other villages inhabited by populations resembling some villages of the plain areas with only here and there small hamlets of Chenchus, leaving the higher ranges, surrounded by forest area exclusively for Chechu dwellings.

This Chenchu tribe is divided into various exogamous divisions and fallow Kulam, Gotra from Hindu castes people. Kulam and regulate marital relations with other Kulams. They are associated with objects, animals, trees, food and violates, traditionally Chenchu is adopted in the honey collection from honeycombs on the mountain cliffs and cases. In the process of this honey collection, they take with them the brothers-in-law.

The traditional sources of income were mainly from forest produce, viz., Honey, Tamarind, Roots and Taber's. But the present-day scenario is quite opposite as they now started depending on agriculture, and few work as agricultural labours and other services. The Chenchus who were reporting highway robbery and thefts in the Kurnool district are now being wearied from this anti-social activity by rehabilitating them while providing a housing colony in Panchyat. Most of them were provided by a Pucca house and a Poultry unit to enhance their economic levels. Thus, the Chenchus who were once leading seminomadic life with a very legal level of economy are now gradually being set with agriculture relating in an assured source of income.

Chenchu habitats are more backward than other tribes and their areas of habitation. They usually prefer to settle in inaccessible forest areas. They have a close symbiotic relationship with the forest and subsist largely on flora and fauna. The health and hygienic conditions are very poor as they live in small conical-shaped huts along with their livestock such as goats, sheep etc., forcing them to live unhygienic practices, influencing the majority of persons, especially children who suffer from scabies and other skin diseases, together with malnutrition, vitamin-A, deficiency leading to night blindness, photophobia, blister spots, cornea, xerosis and high prevalence rate of malaria.

Clans: The Chenchu society is divided into several exogamous divisions, which they call 'Kulam'. Nowadays they are also calling their 'Kulam' gotra, an adaptation of Hindu castes. "Kulams" or clans are patrilineal and the major function is exogamy, a woman acquires the 'Kulam' name of her husband after marriage. The members of each Kulam proclaim that they are all related as either brothers or sisters or as sons and daughters of a father. But no reference is explicitly made as to their descent from a common ancestor. The major function of the Kulam is to regulate marital relations with other Kulams. Each Kulam group among the Chenchu might have been a territorial group or a band owning a tract of land and owning to the practice of local exogamy. Some of the 'Kulam' names are; Bhumani, Kanimoni Udatanuri, Udthali, Nalla Potula, Kataraju, Nirmala, India, Chirri, Mandli, Thokala, Mekala, Desari, Marripalli, Aleni, Chigurla, Arthi, Kukkala (Vicarabad side Chenchus). These Kulams are associated with objects, animals, trees, food, villages etc.

Physical features: Usually, 155 cm to 165 cm in height, dark in complex, medium stature. The hair usually is black, strongly coarse and wavy.

Language: The Chenchus do not have a dialect of their own but speak the indigenous form of Telugu.

Dress: The dress of the Chenchu man consists of a waist-string (*Molatadu*) made of twisted fibre and a small piece of cotton cloth (*Gochi Batta*). When it is cold, the Chenchu wraps himself in a cotton cloth and this he uses alternatively twisted round the head as a turban, but some men possess two cloths, a body cloth (*Pei Batta*) and a turban (*Rumal Batta*).

The men in the interior forest area are nearly in a state of nudity, having only a piece of cloth around their loins. The women dress more decently than men, in the style of the neighbouring Telugu people of the plains. At present, the Chenchu men do wear shirts stitched by the tailors in the neighbouring plain villages and a 'dhoti' and their women wear sari and blouse while the girls wear frocks. One can still come across here and there that elderly Chenchu man still using the Join cloth.

Women part their hair in the centre and twist it into a knot on the nape of the neck, and even those with strongly curled locks succeed in screwing it into a small knot though they find it hard to make it appear straight and tidy. A piece of string or a strand of creeper is used to bind women's hair before the knot is made, but Ornaments were never worn on the hair.

Ornaments: Most women have their ears pierced and wear small rings or studs of various metals in the lobes, and some have the nostrils perforated and wear nose studs of aluminium, brass or silver.

Traditional ornaments among Chenchus are very few. While the men use rings made of brass on their fingers; the women use a few chains made of coloured beads around their necks. Today, Chenchus do not mind using gold and silver ornaments being used by the caste neighbours such as bangles, toe rings and marriage locketts, finger rings etc.

Life Cycle Ceremonies

Birth: The Chenchus welcome both boys and girls and the birth of a child they believe is a blessing from God. For them, nausea and stoppage of menstruation are indications of pregnancy. There is no hard and fast rule, regarding where the delivery shall take place, at the husband's house or the wife's parent's place; it all goes according to the convenience of the families. A Chenchu midwife attends to the delivery. The mother is given decoction made with '*Vepa Chekka*', garlic '*Neelavemu*' and pepper. This decoction is given in the morning for about 8 days. Chenchus do not observe pollution. Nowadays a few Chenchu families do avail the services of hospitals located in their respective areas.

Naming Ceremony: A child is given a name at the age of 5 years; till then the girl is called '*Mugemma*' and the boy is called '*Mugenna*'. No ceremony was observed for naming the child. Nowadays a few Chenchu families do name the child on the 4th or 5th day following the tradition of non-tribal people.

Tonsure Ceremony: When the child attains the age of 4 or 5 years is taken to the shrine of one of their deities like *Lingamaiah, Guruvaiah, Bayyanna* etc., and the maternal uncle of the child performs the tonsure. For boys, all the hair is removed on the head while it is only a few blocks for the girls. The maternal uncle is presented with new clothes by the parents of the child; in turn, he presents a sari to his sister.

Puberty: A girl during her first menarche is made to sit in a corner, cleared and smeared with cow dung. An arrow with a lime stuck on the arrowhead is given to the girl and the arrow is smeared with turmeric. Though no pollution is observed, the girl cannot go out because the girl under menstruation is vulnerable to being attacked by evil spirits. On the same evening itself she is given a bath and made to wear a new sari.

Marriage: Marriage among the Chenchus is mostly monogamous and arranged by parents or relatives. Two types of acquiring mates are practised among Chenchus, one is called '*Pelli*' (Marriage) and the other is called '*Raji*'. *Pelli* is marriage by negotiation while '*Raji*' is marriage by mutual love and elopement. The rule of exogamy of '*Kulam*' is followed in both types of marriages. Sororate and levirate marriages are socially accepted. Even in marriage by negotiation boys' and girls' opinion is taken into consideration. The negotiations start from the side of the boy. The father of the boy accompanied by his friends and relatives visits the girl's parents. If the negotiations are successful, the boy's father offers liquor to all the people present. The Chenchus say that invariably it is the boy who selects the girl and requests his parents to negotiate. During the negotiations, the bride price is fixed and the date and day of the marriage are discussed and fixed. Proper ceremonies are performed only in those cases where both families welcome the marriage. On the wedding day the bridegroom, his relatives and the '*Peddamanishi*' of his village set out with the presents for the bride and her mother. The bridegroom hands over a sari and a '*choli*' (blouse) for the bride and a choli for her mother. The bride dressed in her new sari is made to sit on a mat beside the bridegroom. The '*Peddamanishi*' then obtain the consent of the bride and bridegroom. Finally, the end of the bride's sari is tied to the '*Goshi Batta*' (*Dhoti*) of the bridegroom. All bless the couple and shower them with rice. Liquor is served, eating and drinking continue until late at night, and when all are slightly intoxicated, they begin to dance.

'*Raji*' (mutual love and elopement) is resorted to by those boys who think that they cannot afford to incur the expenditure on formal marriage. The boy and the girl elope to the forest and stay in the forest. When the parents of the boy and the girl come to know about this they go to the forest and bring back the couple to the boy's house. Elders of both the '*Kulam*' assemble and fix a nominal bride price to be paid to the parents of the girl by the parents of the boy and with the drinking of liquor provided by the father, of the boy, the boy and the girl are declared as married.

Divorce: Divorce is permitted and both men and women can initiate divorce. Usually, the causes of divorce are adultery and maladjustment between husband and wife. If the fault lies with the woman, she or her parents or if she marries again her new

husband has to repay the bride price to her old husband. The council deciding the cases of divorce consists of the elders belonging to both parties. When divorce occurs, small children go with their mother but they have to return to their father when they attain the age of 12 or 13 years.

Fairs and Festivals:Chenchus of Nallamala have been Claiming their close relationship with *Srisailam* Temple dedicated to *Lord Mallikarjuna* and *Ahobilam* Temple dedicated to Lord Narasimha. Strictly speaking, Chenchus have no festival of their own except numerous worships of minor and major deities. But they do enjoy preparing special food and drinking arrack during the Hindu festivals like *Sreeramanavami*, *NagulaChavithi* and *Dasara*, etc. Invariably their special food during these festivals consists of rice cooked with jaggery and coconut or Bengal gram, jaggery and grated coconut. The Chenchus worship *Garelamaishamma* and Hindu deities like *Lingamaya*, *Pochamma*, *Potraju*, *Ellamma* and *Hanuman*.

Religion: Innumerable deities, and spirits both benevolent and malevolent play an important role in the lives of Chenchus. Though the Chenchus have acquired Hindu religious elements, still for centuries Chenchus of Nallamala have been claiming their close relationship with *Srisailam* Temple dedicated to *Lord Mallikarjuna* and *Ahobilam* Temple dedicated to Lord Narasimha. The Chenchus also claim that Chenchita or Chenchu Lakshmi who became the consort of Narasimha belonged to their tribe. For the Chenchu, *Bhagavatar* is the Supreme God, who is responsible for birth and death. '*Bhagavathar*' is the one who puts '*Jeev*' (Soul) into the child in the womb and when a person dies the '*Jeev*' again goes back to the '*Bhagavathar*'. '*Bhagavathar*' has no physical shape and he is found everywhere.

Death: There are no ceremonies or rites to accompany Chenchu's last rite. The dead body is given a bath by the agnostic kin. The feet are smeared with saffron and the legs with ashes, and the hair is loosened and washed and then anointed with ghee. Finally, the corpse is wrapped in the deceased's clothing. All ornaments are removed and while glass bangles and other trinkets of small value are buried with the body, the most precious ornaments of a woman are kept by her heirs. Nowadays Chenchus practice both burial and cremation. The practice of cremation is acquired from the caste Hindu communities.

At the burial ground, each '*Kulam*' has a separate area where the dead are buried or cremated. Before the corpse is taken to the burial all the assembled consume liquor provided by the family of the deceased. After reaching the burial ground, the deceased's '*Kulam*' people either dig the grave or prepare the funeral pyre as per the decision of the family of the deceased. After the burial or cremation is over all the people return to the settlement and only those who carried the corpse take bath while others wash their feet and all the people once again drink liquor. Pollution lasts for 3 days or fifteen days, some Chenchus do observe obsequies on both occasions, on the third day, it is called '*Chinna Dinam*' and the 15th day i.e., called "*Pedda Dinam*". On both days, some rice is

cooked, taken to the graveyard and left on the grave/place of cremation. On '*Pedda Dinam*' day, the family prepares non-vegetarian food and serves it to the people along with liquor.

Succession: In the case of inheritance of property and succession, only male Children are inheriting the property. There is no share to daughters in the property as they believe that after their marriage, they become permanent members of other's family; so not entitled to any share in the fathers' property.

Traditional Council

Chenchus community has a Kula Panchayat at the village level headed by an elderly man called *Peddamanishi* who generally settles their disputes. The "*Peddamanishi*" arbitrates the disputes, advises the people and even acts as a liaison between the Chenchus and Government officials and even non-tribals. Apart from settling the disputes, the '*Peddamanishi*' can associate himself at the request of the concerned persons in such issues as mate selection, marriage celebrations, other life cycle rituals and other rituals of worship. The Office of *Peddamanishi* is succeeded by his eldest son, but this rule is by no means always followed, and any sensible man may become *Peddamanishi*, even in case the deceased holder of the office has a son.

Musical Instrument of Chenchu Tribes

While appeasing spirits, Kula Devatas, deities, present different stories, render songs and perform certain mythological playlets. In these activities, they use certain primitive and unique musical instruments such as *Tappeta*, Twelve Steps Kinnera and *Jaganta*.

Thappeta: *Thappeta*, is also a kind of Drum. This is mainly used in conveying some important information, usually in Chenchu Gudem/Pentas/Habitations during the feast, festivals, *Jataras*, *Death* and connected rituals to enable the residents of the Gudems/ Pentas in large numbers for making *Tom-Tom* while playing different songs of hole depending on the type information to be conveyed.

The artists themselves will make the instrument. This is made out of three different kinds of wood viz., *Ulenda* (a lightweight), Tamarind wood and *Chede Karra*. They make a frame and fix it around this instrument, then they join different woods while using fibre (*Naara*) and then use either Goat's skin or a large black-faced monkey's (*Kondamuchu*) skin and fold it into the required shape to beat this instrument. They prefer a small piece of taking a wood stick, a long and very thin stick made out of Tamarind wood to beat this instrument. Before the use of *Thappeta*, the first heat the top of *Thappeta* on charcoal fire, while maintaining sufficient distance from the reddish charcoal to get stiffness till they get *Khan Khan* (a re-sound) Sound.

Twelve Steps Kinnera: With this instrument, Chenchus, sing songs as part of their culture. These songs contain tunes mostly on *Valalo*, *Khol*, *Rama Sandamama* etc.

The instrument Kinnera used by Chenchus resembles Kinnera used by Thotis tribes of Adilabad and *Dakkali* a non-tribe *Twelve Steps Kinnera*. The style of beating Kinnera is alive. The Chenchus use bitter bottle gourd shells for making their instrument.

Jay Ganta (Gong Bell): *Chenchitha* or *Chenchu Lakshmi* is a popular playlet among Chenchu tribes. Mostly in all auspicious functions, festivals, feasts or at times at a large gathering when a group of experienced people are present some famous parts of *Chenchu Lakshmi* plays are recited. During these plays, the Chenchus from Srisaillam who have migrated to the Mahabubabad area and traditionally got transited the *Gong Bell (Jay Ganta)* play rather use this instrument on this occasion. They have separate attire (costumes) on these occasions and wore peacock feathers as headgear. Moreover, there also, while holding this instrument in one hand, hold on the other hand flute decorated with the skin of a squirrel, wild cats, rats *Iguana* or *Guana (Udumu/Skunk)*. Besides, they also hold a stick tied with a toy called Muthhavva a woman who obstructs either giving alms to Chenchus or vice-versa and swing the toy along with the stick and sing-song while playing this instrument in tune with the song. They also wear a small bell around their neck which will sound while walking. All songs they sing, maintain a beautiful beating time (Laya) and harmony (*Sharaavyamu*) to the ears of the audience.

The Influence Factors on Chenchu Tribes

General principles of socio and economic factors which influence the growth in the scheduled area, more particularly in Chenchu areas are discussed hereunder:

Influence Factors

The Social Factors: The caste system divided the Hindu Community into four *Varnas* (classes) viz., The *Brahmins* (intellectuals); the *Kshatriya* (worriers), the *Vaisyas* (Merchants) and the *Shudras* (farmers and labourers). This division is mainly responsible for the immobility of labour from one profession to another, and the functions were hereditary. This instinct (basic thought) killed the main spirit of present-day enterprises and initiative among the people and thus has become a thorn in the Economic Progress of the tribal society. The second social factor that has come in the way of rapid economic change was the Joint Family System, where every member of the family was assured of food clothing and shelter whether they work or not. The responsibility of taking care of the entire family rested on only the elder members of the family. This has hampered the incentive to work, and finally paved the way for slow economic growth. The third factor was the family members being orthodox and superstitious by nature, who just believed in fate and give credit for their present sufferings due to their past birth which resulted in obstructing the spirit of work culture. The fourth and important factor is that the family members very particularly the members of the subject in discussion (Chenchu) spend huge amounts wastefully on unproductive items such as marriages, festivals, rituals etc., which are truly hampering the economic development of the scheduled tribe in general and the Chenchu in particular.

The Economic factors: Poverty is “a socio-economic phenomenon due to which the persons affected by it may not be able to provide for even the basic needs of their life” i.e., food- clothing and shelter, low per capita income, low or no savings, lack of transport and communications, inadequate power resources leading to low technology and finally, population growth at a faster rate is hampering the scope for capital accumulation and capital formation leading to absolute poverty.

Habitat: Chenchus are egocentric groups which are roughly known as *Gumpus*. Each is represented by a cluster of huts comprising a Set of kinder both of male and female lines. Each settlement has 3 to 4 *Gumpus*. The members of the *Gumpus* help each other in day-to-day - activities sharing goods and services. The settlements are called Chenchu Pentas or Chenchu Gudems. They erect a Conical and circular-shaped hut, generally pitched on an elevated area measuring approximately 10 feet in diameter, supported by a single central pole. It is most common that the bamboo wattles are fixed along the surface of the circular area of the hut. They share the ‘hut along with their pet sheep and goats as they fear thieves and wild animals. This particular habit led them to lead an un-hygienic life with mal-nutritional standards.

Family: Family is the basic and most important socio-economic unit among the Chenchus. Nuclear families are predominant with husband, wife and their unmarried children. Joint families are almost nil among Chenchus. Immediately after marriage, a Chenchu man establishes a separate family.

Food Habits: Traditionally the Chenchus depended on seasonally available forest food for sustenance. A variety of animals were hunted by men for day-to-day subsistence. Their meal is fairly simple and usually consists of gruel made from Jowar or Maize, and boiled or cooked jungle tubers. They mix tamarind fruit with tamarind ash and eat. This is especially good for pregnant women. Forest dwellers depend on forest produce as their staple food. They take the boiled form of different roots, tubers and leaves. The flesh of hunted animals is taken in roasted form. The Interspersed Chenchus, however, take boiled rice along with gruel. Vegetables and meat are a rarity. They relish the liquor made from Mohua flowers Collected from the forest; however, nowadays many Chenchu men are drinking country liquor sold by people from the plain.

Traditional Occupation: The Chenchus subsist by hunting and on forest produce and roots. Their weapons are a bamboo bow and a red arrow tipped with iron. They collect honey, tamarind, wood apples, Mohua flowers and herbs, which they barter for grain and cloth. Those who are settled on the outskirts of villages earn a livelihood by guarding the crops and cattle of the village farmers. A few only have taken to cultivation.

Reason for Backwardness

Chenchu habitats are more backwards they usually prefer to settle in inaccessible forest areas. They have a close symbiotic relationship with the forest and subsist largely on flora and fauna. The health and hygienic condition are very poor as they live

in small conical-shaped huts along with their livestock such as goats, sheep etc., forcing them to live unhygienic practices, influencing the majority of persons, especially children who suffer from scabies and other skin diseases, together with malnutrition, vitamin A, deficiency leading to night blindness, photophobia, blister spots, cornea, xerasia and high prevalence rate of malaria.

Disparaged-Deprived and Despaired Chenchu Tribes of North Telangana – A Close Scrutiny

In this section, I have covered the Chenchus who inhabited two tehsils namely Regonda and Chityal of Jayashankar Bhupalpally district of northern Telangana state.

Demographic Profile of the Study Area

Table 1: Demography in the Study Area

Sl. No	Name of the Tehsil	Name of the Habitation	No. of Households	Population			Literacy Rate
				Male	Female	Total	
1	Regonda	Chenchupally	55	95	89	184	32.06
2	Regonda	Kaniparthly	10	11	17	28	0.00
3	Chityal	Bhavsingpalle	24	40	42	82	32.93
4	Chityal	Laxmipuram Thanda	18	28	31	59	37.29
Total			107	174	179	353	30.59

Source: *Field Study*

Table 2: Educational Status

Sl. No	Name of the Tehsil	Name of the Habitation	No. of School-age Children	Children Enrolled in Schools			Children out of Schools		
				Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1	Regonda	Chenchupally	55	28	24	52	2	1	3
2	Regonda	Kaniparthly	8	4	3	7	1	0	1
3	Chityal	Bhavsingpalle	25	17	6	23	1	1	2
4	Chityal	Laxmipuram Thanda	23	9	12	21	1	1	2
Total			111	58	45	103	5	3	8

Source: *Field Study*

Table 3: Economic Conditions and Economic Pursuits

Sl. No	Name of the Tehsil	Name of the Habitation	Total No. of Households	No. of Households Owned Houses	No. of Households Owned Agricultural Land	No. of Indebted Families
1	Regonda	Chenchupally	55	43 (78.18%)	2 (0.5 Acre) (3.63%)	14 (25.45%)
2	Regonda	Kaniparthu	10	10 (100.00)	0 (100.00)	1 (10%)
3	Chityal	Bhavsingpalle	24	24 (100.00)	0 (100.00)	12 (50.00)
4	Chityal	Laxmipuram Thanda	18	10 (55.55%)	1 (2 Acres) (5.55%)	3 (16.66%)
Total			107	87 (81.30%)	3 (2.80%)	30 (28.03%)

Source: *Field Study*

Chenchupally

Chenchupally is about 03 Kms distance from Tehsil Headquarters and 28 Kms from District headquarters (Bhupalpally).

No. of households	:	55
Total population	:	184
Male	:	95
Female	:	89
Literacy rate	:	32

Origin: Sri Indla Veeramallu (85) informed that they belong to Chenchu community and their community does not have any other names or Synonyms/Sub-groups. They don't have any community history and his father Sri Indla Sammaiah migrated to Chenchupally from Kaniparthu some 60 years ago. He is the first person to settle there and then in due course of time, his family members and relatives settled in Chenchupally.

Clans: They have social divisions having different Clans/Surnames like *Bandi, Sheelam, Jella, Indla, Mekala, Komagini, Chellam, Manik* etc. These divisions are to regulate marriage alliances indicating social status and indicate social control.

Language: They do not have a dialect of their own but speak Telugu only.

Family: Nuclear families are predominant with husband, wife and their unmarried children. Joint families are almost nil in the habitation.

Food Habits: They take the boiled form of different roots, tubers like *Dumpagadda*, *Sannagadda* and *Aligadda* and *Chunchu Gadda*. They eat the flesh of all the animals but abstain from consuming beef. They also eat boiled rice along with gruel.

Occupation: They eke out their livelihood through agricultural labour and all most all the households have enrolled under MGNREGS.

Life Cycle

Birth: Smt. Sheelam Rama (38) informed that pre-delivery rituals are observed but are not peculiar; they are just like other Telugu people. They organize a ceremony called "Srimantham" in the mother's house in the 5th month for 1st conceiving only. During pre-delivery, the pregnant woman is not supposed to see the face of a widow for up to 6 months. They believe that, if she sees the face of a widow some unfortunate may occur at the time of delivery and the pregnant woman is not supposed to touch any items in the house as she is considered impure up to delivery. There are no restrictions after the delivery.

Naming Ceremony: They observe naming ceremonies for both males and females generally between 2 to 3 years of age of the child. No first feeding of cereals ceremony is observed, the baby is fed with rice which is made soft.

Tonsuring Ceremony: Tonsuring ceremony is observed for both males and females generally between 2 to 3 years of age of the child.

Puberty: Puberty rites for females are observed for 11 days and on the last day they celebrate a ceremony called "Vadi Nimpadam".

Marriage: There is a change in the marriage age for both boys and girls. Before 10-15 years back the marriageable age for boys was 17-18 years and for girls, it was 14-15 years. Now due to their improved contacts with neighbouring caste Hindu people and awareness through electronic media, marriages are being performed at the age of 21 years for boys and 18 years for girls.

The community accepts only endogamous marriages (clan level) and consanguinity is also prevalent like marrying the maternal uncle's daughter, paternal aunt's daughter and mother's younger brother.

The modes of acquiring mates are marriage by negotiation, marriage by mutual love and elopement and marriage by exchange. Monogamy is generally observed and polygamy is also accepted. Levirate and sororate marriages are socially accepted. Widow re-marriage is socially accepted.

The marriage symbols used in the marriages are vermilion, glass bangles, tali, bindi, finger ring, toe ring, earring and nose ring. The quantity of the ornaments depends

upon the economic position of either party. Dowry in both cash and kind are accepted depending upon their financial position.

The marriage rituals are performed at the bride's residence. The amount spent on marriage is shared by both the parties equally and after the marriage, the nuptial ceremony is performed at the bridegroom's residence.

Divorce: In case of dissolution of marriage, the separation or divorce can be taken by both parties with the approval of Kula Panchayath, the reasons for taking divorces are mostly due to impotency, chronic ailment, cruelty/harassment, insanity and in rare cases the practice of witchcraft/sorcery. Either the party can take divorce. In case of divorce, the children can be taken by either of them or a choice is given to children with whom they are interested to stay, but in most cases, they are preferred to stay with their mother.

Fairs and Festivals: The festivals performed by them reveal their social and religious significance. They go to Medaram to propitiate Sammakka and Saralamma thalli by tying a silver ring to their right leg called "Devuni Bandhi". They believe that if they tie this ring, the goddess will protect them from the evil spirits and gives good health to them. During festivals, both men and women will dance. But they do not have any peculiar folk songs, dance forms and musical instruments.

Religion: The religious pantheon of the inhabitants of Chenchupally is Sammakka thalli, Banthi Pochamma, Kondagattu Hanumanthu, Rajeswarudu and Narasimhaswamy. They visit Medaram for appeasing Sammakka and Saralamma, Vemulawada for Rajeswarudu and Kotancha for Narasimhaswamy before the festival of Ugadi.

The sacred specialists are from the same community usually performed by *Pedda Manishi*. Now-a-day they are also approaching Brahmins for performing marriages only. All other rites from birth to death are performed by *Pedda Manishi* only.

Death: Death pollution is observed for 11 days. They bury the dead person. The dead are not cremated as they believe that if the dead person is cremated his/her soul will become separate from the body and roam in the village itself as an evil spirit. To get rid of this Spredation, they bury the dead person so that the soul couldn't be liberated from the body. No ancestral worship is in vogue.

Succession: In the case of inheritance of property and succession, only male children are inherited. There is no share to daughters in the property as they believe that after their marriage, they become permanent members of other's family; so not entitled to any share in the property.

Traditional Council: All the disputes in the hamlet are settled by *Kula Panchayath* consisting of elder members from the community called "*Pedda Manushulu*". There is no

hierarchy and designation for the members of *Kula Panchayath*. The decisions are taken by Kula Panchayath and the Panchayath will decide the penalties, if any, to be paid to the aggrieved party and the Panchayath posing on his/her economic status. The amount paid to the Panchayath will be spent on community feasting where all the community people were served food and drinks. They organize the community feasting to get rid of rivalry between the parties, promoting a sense of brotherhood and a feeling of oneness among the members of the community.

Socio-Economic Scenario

Out of 55 families, only two families possess land @ half-acre dryland each and another family is having 12-acre dry land on lease. 44 families have been enrolled under MGNREGS. All the families depend on agriculture labour and MGNREGS works. Only one family is having savings of Rs.10000/- and 14 families are having debts ranging from Rs.3000/- to Rs.60,000/-.

There are 28 School-age boys in the age group of 3 years to 16 years, of whom 2 are out of school. Similarly, there are 24 school-age girls, of whom one is out of school. The assets and jewellery possessed by the families are of negligible value. However, all most all families are having TV sets. As of now, no economic support schemes/ Government assistance is extended to the inhabitants of Chenchupally.

Role of Women: Women have an active role in agriculture, collecting fuel, rearing livestock, fetching drinking water, and organizing social functions and rituals. Women have equal status in all spheres and she has the power of making decisions in the family. She contributes to the family income and also controls the family expenditure.

Health: In the event of illness, they usually approach RMP residing nearby Chennapur. In case of major ailments, they go to the Government hospital at Parkal. None of the habitants is suffering from chronic disease. ASHA worker visits the hamlet every Tuesday.

Housing: Nearly 43 houses were constructed under Indira Awas Yojana some 30 years back in the Chenchupally but they are not completely built. There are mixed types of huts with rectangular, square and circular shapes depending upon the size of the hut.

Migration: Seasonal migration is Prevalent in the hamlet. In the winter season, they go to work in Mirchi fields for 2-3 months near the Mulug area and again they will come back to the hamlet.

Kaniparthu

Kaniparthu village is about a 07 Kms distance from Tehsil Headquarters and 32 Kms from District headquarters (Bhupalpally).

No. of households	:	10
Total population	:	28
Male	:	11
Female	:	17
Literacy rate	:	0

Community Details: Sri Bandi Mankaiah (65) told that they belong to the Chenchu community and their community does not have any other names or Synonyms/Sub-groups. He does not know the history of his community. Sri India Mahender (45) informed that his grandfather India Peddulu came to Kaniparthu village from an unknown place some 100 years ago and settled.

Clans: They have social divisions with different Clans/surnames like Bandi, India, Mekala, Jella, Namboori, Potrolu, Mothaku, Ekula and Yekasiri, etc. The *Gotram* of India Clan is "*Palakai*" as informed to them by a priest in Parkal. They made these divisions to regulate marriage alliances, to indicate social status and for social control.

Language: They do not have a dialect of their own and all speak Telugu only.

Dress: The dressing pattern of men and women of the hamlet is almost all as of neighbouring Telugu people.

Ornaments: Women wear ornaments like Pusthela Thadu, earrings and nose studs. The Kalubedi made of buggendi (Aluminium).

Food: Tubers like Dumpagadda, Sannagadda and Aligadda are consumed. A specific tuber namely Chunchu Gadda is said to be consumed.

Life Cycle

Birth: Smt. Bandi Narsamma (57) informed that pre-delivery rituals are observed just like other neighbouring Telugu people. They organize a ceremony called "*Srimantham*" in the mother's house within 5 months of pregnancy. During pre-delivery, pregnant women are not supposed to come out of the house on the day of the solar eclipse. The woman is not supposed to touch any items in the house as she is considered impure up to 21 days after the delivery.

Naming and Tonsure Ceremony: They observe naming ceremonies and Tonsure ceremonies for both males and females generally between 2-3 years of age of the child. No first feeding of cereals ceremony is observed, the baby is fed with Upma for the first time.

Puberty: Puberty rites for females are observed for 11 days and on the last day, they celebrate a ceremony called "*Vadinimpadam*".

Marriage: There is a change in the marriage age for both boys and girls. Earlier the marriageable age for boy was 15-17 years and for girls were 13-15 years. Now due to

their improved contact with outsiders and awareness through TVs and other electronic media the marriageable age for boys and girls is being observed as 20 and 17 years respectively.

The community accepts only endogamous marriages at the clan level. Consanguinity is also prevalent like marrying the maternal uncle's daughter, paternal aunt's daughter and mother's younger brother.

The modes of acquiring mates in the hamlet are; marriage by service, marriage by negotiation, marriage by exchange and marriage by love and elopement. Monogamy marriages are prevalent and polygamy is also socially accepted. Levirate and sorority are socially permitted. Widow re-marriage is also socially accepted.

The marriage symbols used are Vermillion, glass bangles, tali, bindi, finger ring, toe ring, earring and nose ring. The quantity of the ornaments depends upon the economic position of either party. Dowry in both cash and kind are accepted depending upon their financial position.

The marriage rituals are performed at the bride's residence. The amount spent on marriage is borne by the parents of the bride. It was informed that some 40 years back, the marriage rituals were being performed at the bridegroom's residence and all the marriage expenses were borne by the groom's parents. This system has been changed due to the influence of neighbouring Telugu people. After the marriage, the nuptial ceremony is performed at the bridegroom's residence.

Divorce: In the case of dissolution of marriage, the separation or divorce can be taken by both parties with the approval of Kula Panchayath. The reasons for taking divorces are mostly due to impotency, chronic ailment, cruelty/harassment, insanity and in rare cases the practice of witchcraft/sorcery. Either the party can take divorce. In case of divorce, the children can be taken by either of them or a choice is given to children with whom they are interested to stay but, in most cases, they have preferred to stay with their mother.

Succession: In the case of inheritance of property, only sons have the right over the property. There is no share to daughters in the property as they believe that after the marriage they become permanent members of others' families, so not entitled to any share in the property. In case of succession to traditional council/Kulapanchayat anyone can be chosen within the community who is accepted by the majority of community people.

Religion: The religious pantheon of the inhabitants of Kaniparthi is Chenchulaxmi, Nalla Pochamma, Sammakka-Saralamma thalli, Banthi Pochamma, Rajeswarudu/Rajanna, Maisavva, Peddamma Talli and Narasimhaswamy. They visit Medaram for appeasing Sammakka and Saralamma, Vemulawada for Rajeswarudu and Kotancha for Narasimhaswamy before the festival of Ugadi. They do a special pooja to their

community deity "Nallapochamma" two days before the festival of Ugadi by sacrificing a pig to her. Then after two days, they go to Kotancha Narasimha Swamy Jatara. The festivals performed by them reveal their social and religious significance. They go to Medaram to propitiate Sammakka and Saralamma thalli by tying a silver ring/bronze ring to their right leg and right hand called "*Devuni Bandi*". They believe that if they tie this ring the goddess will protect them from the evil spirits and gives good health to them. During festivals, both men and women will dance. But they don't have any specific folk songs, dance forms and musical instruments. The sacred specialists are from the same community usually performed by Peddamanishi named Indla Mankali. Nowadays they are also approaching Brahmins for performing marriages and all other rites from birth to death are performed by Peddamanishi only.

Death: They observe death pollution for 11 days. They bury the dead person. The dead are not cremated as they believe that if the dead person is cremated his/her soul will become separate and roam in the village itself as an evil spirit. Therefore, they bury the dead person so that the soul couldn't be liberated from the body. They don't have any ancestral worship.

Traditional Council: All the disputes in the hamlet are settled by kula Panchayath consisting of elder members from the community called "*Pedda Manishulu*". There is no hierarchy and designation for the members of *Kula Panchayath*. In rare cases, they are also approaching the village Sarpanch and Police stations but in most cases, the decisions are taken by the Kula panchayath and the Panchayath will decide the penalties, if any, to be paid to the aggrieved party and the Panchayath based on his/her economic status. The amount paid to the Panchayath will be Spent on community feasting where all the community people are served food and drinks. The community feasting is organized to get rid of rivalry between both parties, thus promoting a sense of brotherhood and a feeling of oneness among the members of the community.

Socio-Economic Scenario: All 10 households in the hamlet are landless and none of them has been enrolled under MGNREGS. All the families depend on agricultural labour and none of them is having any savings. Two families are having debts of Rs.7000/- and 1000/-. There are 5 School-age boys in the age group of 7 years to 11 years, of whom 1 is out of school. Similarly, there are 3 school-age girls and all of them are enrolled in the school. The assets and jewellery possessed by the families are of negligible value. However, 3 families are having TV sets. No economic support schemes/ Govt. assistance is extended to the inhabitants of Kaniparthi habitation.

Role of Women: Women have an active role in agriculture, collecting fuel, rearing livestock, fetching drinking water, and organizing social functions and rituals. Women have equal status in all spheres and she has the power of making decisions in the family. She contributes to the family income and also controls Family expenditure.

Health: In the event of illness, they usually approach RMP Doctor Who resides at Kaniparthi village. In case of emergency, they go to the Government hospital at Parkal. ASHA worker resides in Kaniparthi and visits the hamlet once a week.

Housing: Most of the houses in the hamlet are constructed under Indira Awas Yojana some 30 years back, but they are not completely built. So, they covered the roofs with tarpaulin sheets.

Migration: Seasonal migration is prevalent in the hamlet. Four families went to Jangaon in search of employment a year ago.

Bhavsingh Palli

Bandi Venkataiah (old) and others Bhavsinghpalle village is about 08 Kms distance from Tehsil Headquarters and 22 Kms from District headquarters (Bhupalpally).

No. of households	:	24
Total population	:	82
Male	:	40
Female	:	42
Literacy rate	:	32.93

Community Details: Sri Bandi Venkataiah (70) informed that they belong to the Yanadi Chenchu community who earlier used to live in a nearby forest called Gattu and their community don't have any other names or Synonyms/Subgroups. They don't have any community history. Sri Bandi Mankali (60) told that they are Deva Chenchus as they eat Deva Alligadda, a local tuber that is usually found in forests. Some of the members like Bandi Venkataiah know about tapping honey.

Occupation: Men folk usually go for hunting small creatures like Rats, Crabs, Rabbits, Udumulu, Cranes, Foxes, Wild boars, Wild cats, and Fish and Female folk spend time in the collection of firewood.

Language: They don't have a separate dialect of their own and speak Telugu only.

Clans: They have social divisions having different Clans/surnames like Bandi, Indla, Mekala, Chedala, Mamidi, Jella and Yapachettollu, etc. They made these divisions to regulate marriage alliances, to indicate social status and for social control.

Life Cycle

Birth: Smt. Mekala Pochakka (50) informed that pre-delivery rituals are observed just like other Telugu people. They organize a ceremony called "Srimantham" in the mother's house in the 5th month. The delivered woman is not supposed to come out of the house up to 21 days after the delivery.

Food Habits: Tubers like Chunchu Gadda, Dumpagadda, Sannagadda and Aligadda are consumed.

Naming & Tonsuring Ceremony: They observe naming ceremonies and Tonsure ceremonies for both males and females generally between 2-3 years of age of the child. No first feeding of cereals ceremony is observed, the baby is fed with rice which is made soft for the first time.

Puberty: Puberty rites for females are observed for 11 days and on the last day they celebrate a ceremony called "Vadinimpadam".

Marriage: There is a change in the marriage age for both boys and girls. Before 10-15 years back the marriageable age for boys was 15-16 years and for girls, it was 12-14 years. Now due to their improved Contact with caste Hindus and awareness through TV and other media, the marriageable age for boys is 20 and for girls, it is 16 years.

The community accepts only endogamous Marriages at the clan level and consanguinity is also prevalent like marrying the maternal uncle's daughter, paternal aunt's daughter and mother's younger brother.

The modes of acquitting mates are; marriage by service, marriage by negotiation, marriage by exchange and marriage by love and elopement. In general, monogamy is observed, and polygamy is also socially accepted. Sorority and widow re-marriage are socially accepted.

The marriage symbols are; Vermillion, glass bangles, tali, bindi, finger ring, toe ring, earring and nose ring. The quantity of the ornaments depends upon the economic position of either party. Dowry in both cash and kind is accepted depending upon their financial position.

The marriage rituals are performed at the bride's residence. The amount spent on marriage is shared by both parties. If both parties are not in a position to spend money, the community will bear the expenditure. After the marriage, the nuptial ceremony is performed at the bridegroom's residence.

Divorce: In the case of dissolution of marriage, divorce can be taken by either party with the approval of Kula Panchayath. The reasons for taking divorces are mostly due to impotency, chronic ailment, cruelty/ harassment and insanity. In case of divorce, the children can be taken by either of them or a choice is given to children with whom they are arrested to stay but, in most cases, they are preferred to stay with their mother.

Inheritance: Only sons have right over the property, there is no spare for daughters in the property as they believe that after the marriage she becomes a Permanent member of another's family, so not entitled to any share in the property.

Role of Women: Women have an active role in agriculture, collecting fuel, rearing livestock, fetching drinking water, and organizing social functions and rituals. Women

have equal status in all Spheres and they have the power of making decisions in the family. She contributes to the family income and also controls family expenditure.

Religion: The religious pantheons of the inhabitants of Bhavsinghpalli are Rajeswarudu, Yerramma, Banthi Pochamma, Pochamma 'Thalli, Odela, Gattu Maisamma. They are also having forest deities namely Velpula Devudu and Muneswarudu who are propitiated at nearby hills called Gattu.

Mekala Pochakka (50) informed that some of the families have family deities namely "Pochamma Thalli" usually propitiated during Sravana Masam by sacrificing a hen in front of her and during Ugadi by sacrificing a goat. The sacrificial meat is served to all the members of the community. They make a bed-like Structure with mud and on this bed, they keep two small pots having a thousand holes on them called "Veyyigandla Buddi". This bed and pots are decorated with turmeric and vermillion once a week or sometimes once a month by breaking a coconut and putting in incense sticks. The deity is propitiated to give good health

The sacred specialists are from the same community usually performed by Peddamanishi. Nowadays they are also approaching Brahmins for performing marriages only. All other rites from birth to death are performed by Peddamanishi only.

Fairs and Festivals: The festivals performed by them reveal their social and religious significance. They also go to Medaram to propitiate Sammakka and Saralamma thalli. During festivals, both men and women will dance. But they don't have any specific folk songs, dance forms and musical instruments.

Death: They observe death pollution for 11 days. They bury the dead person. The dead are not cremated as they believe that if the dead person is cremated his/her soul will become separate and roam in the village itself as an evil spirit. They don't have any ancestral worship.

Traditional Council: All the disputes are settled by Kula Panchayath consisting of elder members from the community called "Peddamanushulu". The eldest person is called "Pedda Babu" and the lowest is called "Chinna Babu". There is no hierarchy and designation for the members of Kula Panchayath. The Kula Panchayath will decide the penalties, if any, to be paid to the aggrieved party and the Panchayath based on his/her economic status. The amount paid to the Panchayath will be spent on community feasting by serving food and drinks to all the community people. They organize the community feasting to get rid of rivalry between both the Parties, thus Promoting a sense of brotherhood and a feeling of oneness among the members of the community.

Health: In the event of illness, they usually approach RMP Doctor who resides at Bhavsinghpalli Village. In case of emergency, they go to the Government hospital at Jadalpet. ASHA worker resides in Bhavsinghpalli and visits the hamlet once a week.

Migration: There is seasonal migration in search of work in lean seasons.

Housing: Most of the houses in the hamlet are constructed under Indira Awas Yojana some 30 years back but they are not completely built. Some houses have covered the roofs with tarpaulin sheets and others with Thatched leaves.

Laxmipuram Thanda

Nambhoori Subbaiah and his wife Nambhoori Sampath and his wife. Laxmipuram Thanda is about a 12 Kms distance from Tehsil Headquarters and 25 Kms from District headquarters (Bhupalpally).

No. of households	:	18
Total population	:	59
Male	:	28
Female	:	31
Literacy rate	:	37.29

Community Details: The community lives in symbiosis with Lambadis in the hamlet. Sri Nambhoori Subbaiah (52) informed that they belong to the Chenchu community and their community doesn't have any other names or Synonyms / Subgroups. They don't have any community history. The inhabitants do not know their original place of migration.

Clans: They have social divisions having different Clans/Surnames like Nambhoori, Bandi, Indla, Mekala, Jella, Tupakula, Eekula, Eega and Nallu, etc. The clan system is followed to regulate marriage alliances, to indicate social status and for social control.

Dialect: They don't have a separate dialect of their own and speak the Telugu language only.

Life Cycle

Birth: Bandi Madhuna (35) informed that pre-delivery rituals are observed just like other Telugu people. They organize a ceremony called "Srimantham" in the mother's house in the 5th month of pregnancy.

Naming & Tonsuring Ceremony: They observe naming ceremonies and Tonsure ceremonies for both males and females generally between 2-3 years of age of the child. No first feeding of cereals ceremony is observed, the baby is fed with *Upma* for the first time.

Puberty: Puberty rites for females are observed for 11 days and on the last day, they celebrate a ceremony called "Vadinimpadam".

Marriage: There is a change in the marriage age for both boys and girls. 10 years back the marriageable age for boys was 17-18 years and for girls, it was 14-15 years. Now due to improved contacts with neighbouring caste people and awareness through TV and other media the marriageable age for boys is 22 and for girls, it is 18 years.

The community accepts only endogamous marriages at the clan level and consanguinity is also prevalent like marrying the maternal uncle's daughter, paternal aunt's daughter and mother's younger brother.

The modes of acquiring mates are; marriage by service, marriage by negotiation, marriage by exchange and marriage by love and elopement. Monogamy is generally in vogue and polygamy is also socially permitted. Sorority and widow remarriage is socially accepted.

The marriage symbols are; Vermillion, glass bangles, tali, bindi, finger ring, toe ring, earring, and a nose ring. The quantity of the ornaments depends upon the economic position of either party. Dowry in both cash and kind is accepted depending upon their financial position.

The marriage rituals are performed at the bride's residence. The expenditure on marriage is shared by both parties. If both parties are not in a position to meet the expenditure, the community will bear the expenditure. The nuptial ceremony is performed at the bridegroom's residence.

Divorce: In the case of dissolution of marriage, divorce can be taken by either party with the approval of Kula Panchayath. The reasons for taking divorces are mostly due to impotency, chronic ailment, cruelty/ harassment, and insanity. In case of divorce, the children can be taken by either of them or a choice is given to children with whom they are interested to stay; in most cases, they are preferred to stay with their mother.

In the case of inheritance of property, only sons have the right over the property. There is no share to daughters in the property as they believe that after the marriage she becomes a permanent member of another's family, so not entitled to any share in the property.

Role of Women: Women have an active role in agriculture, collecting fuel, rearing livestock, fetching drinking water, and organizing social functions and rituals. Women have equal status in all spheres and they have the power of making decisions in the family. Women contribute to family income and also control family expenditure.

Religion: The religious pantheons of the inhabitants of Laxmipuram Thanda are Pedda Devara, Rajeswarudu, Sammakka and Saralamma Thalli, Banthi Pochamma, Nalla Pochamma, Mahankalamma and Narasimha Swamy.

Nambhoori Subbaiah (52) informed that some families have family deities namely "Pedda Devara" usually propitiated every three years at the time of Ugadi by sacrificing

a goat. The sacrificial meat is served to all the members of the community. They make some figures with mud on an erected Platform and decorate them with different colours as bindi and put bangles on each figure. They put some flowers on the figures and above it, they make some hangings with toddy leaves called "Gadde" which is tied to a big pole attached to the roof of the house on the *Gadde* they make a platform with sticks and ropes (*Utti*) and on it they keep a pot in with they put some rice and a small replica of *Pedda Devara* usually made of Bronze in erected form. Every three years, they open it and clean the deity with milk and the rice is cleaned with water and cooked. Then they sacrifice an animal in front of it. After that food is served to all and they also call their relatives from other villages they propitiate *Pedda Devara* to give good health and to protect them from bad evils.

The sacred specialists are from the same community usually performed by Peddamanishi. Nowadays they are also approaching Brahmins for performing marriages only. All other rites from birth to death are performed by Peddamanishi only.

The festivals performed by them reveal their social and religious significance. They also go to Medaram to propitiate Sammakka and Saralamma thalli. During festivals, both men and women will dance. But they don't have any specific folk songs, dance forms and musical instruments.

Death: They observe death pollution for 11 days. They bury the dead person. The dead are not cremated as they believe that if the dead person is cremated his/her soul will be separated from his/her body and roam in the village itself as an evil spirit. They don't have any ancestral worship.

Traditional Council: All the disputes in the hamlet are settled. by Kula Panchayath consisting of elder members from the community called "*Peddamanushulu*". The decisions are taken by Kula Panchayath. and the panchayath will decide the quantum of penalties, if any, to be paid to the aggrieved party and the Panchayath based on his/her economic status. The amount paid to the Panchayath will be spent on community feasting where all the community people are served food and drinks. They organize the community feasting to get rid of rivalry between the parties, promoting a sense of brotherhood and a feeling of oneness among the members of the community.

Health: In the event of illness, they usually call RMP Doctor who resides in nearby Vodithala village. In case of emergency, they go to the Government hospital at Vodithala ASHA and ANM workers reside at Vodithala village and they visit the hamlet every Wednesday.

Housing: Most of the houses in the hamlet are constructed under Indira Awas Yojana some 39 years back but they are not completely built. Some houses have covered the roofs with tarpaulin sheets and others with thatched leaves.

Telangana Government Initiative for Welfare of Chenchus

After the formation of Telangana State, the State government initiated various welfare initiatives for Chenchus inhabiting Jayashnkr Bhupalpally, Warangal and Mulug districts.

Construction of Houses: The government of Telangana in the year 2019 initiated to provide Pucca Houses to the Chenchus, internal CC roads, Drinking Water Facility, drainage, electricity facility, Bathroom and Lavetrin facilities, special overhead tank with the collaboration of Rural Development Trust, Ananthapur, Andhra Pradesh. Further, the government also provided the LPG connection to every family. The government also issued the White Ration Cards, Aadhar Cards, MGNREGA Job Card, Bank accounts for SHG groups, and Aasara Pension holders. The government also initiated Anganwadi Centres in Chenchu colony for the welfare of the women and children of Chenchus.

Conclusion, Findings and Suggestions

The meagre land holdings are also drylands (*Chelka*) and are not viable for cultivation.

The indebtedness varies from Rs.3000/- to Rs.60000/-. Men folk usually go hunting with nets (Ucchulu) for small game like Elukalu (rats), Endrakayalu (crabs), Udumulu, Kundellu (Rabbits), Kongalu (cranes), Nakkalu (Foxes), Adavipandulu (wild boars), Jangabillulu (wild cats) and Chapalu (Fishes). Seasonally Usnillu (Light insects) are also trapped, fried and consumed women folk go for a collection of Pariga Erukkokovatam in the fields after harvesting, collecting tubers like Dumpagadda, Yellerugadda in nearby forests and Alligada in Ponds/Kuntalu and for collection of firewood. Tene Duluputa (honey Collection) from tree bee hives is another subsidiary source of livelihood.

Felt Needs

No families are having any agricultural lands in all select areas. No families are having proper housing in Laxmipuram Thanda. Their immediate requirement is agricultural lands and housing needs like the completion of incomplete houses which were provided under IAY/RDT in Bhavsingpalle and other Chenchu inhabiting areas. It is also felt the need to provide self-employment opportunities, skill development for youth, motivation to the SHG movement, settlements of debts, provide awareness of welfare programmes of ITDA and Tribal Welfare Department, protection to Chenchus from conversion groups, and awareness of health and hygiene.

Summary of Findings

Table 4: Comparison with Traditional Traits of Chenchus living in the Nallamala Forest Region

Sl. No	Trait	Traditional Chenchus	Study Area
1	Divisions	Deva Chenchu, Uru Chenchu/Yanadi Chenchu, Krishna Chenchu	Yanadi Chenchu and Uru Chenchu
2	Clan	Bhumani, Kanimoni Udatanuri, Udthali, Nalla Potula, Kataraju, Nimmala, Indla, Chirri, Mandli, Thokala, Mekala, Desari, Marripalli, Aleni, Chigurla, Arthi, Kukkala (Vicarabad)	Bandi, Sheelam, Jella, Indla, Mekala, Nambhoori, Manik, Komagiri, Chellam, Tupakula etc.
3	Dwellings	Exclusive Pentas outside main villages	Exclusive habitations for from main villages
4	Dietary Habits	Jawar Gatka, and Boiled Rice, Tubers like Chenchugadda, Dumpagadda etc.	They eat boiled rice along with gruel. They take the boiled form of different roots, tubers like Dumpagadda, Sannagadda, Alligadda and Chunchu Gadda
		Non-vegetarians but abstain from consuming beef	They eat the flesh of all the animals but abstain from consuming beef
5	Dress	Male dress with lion cloth/Gochi	Males in Baniyans and Shirts with Dhoti/Lungi
		Females with Sari and Blouse	Females with Sari and Blouse
6	Language	There is no dialect of their own but speak Telugu	There is no dialect of their own but speak Telugu
7	Gods and Goddesses	Garelamaisamma, Lingamaya, Pochamma, Potraju, Ellamma, Sunkamma, Peddamma, Muthyalamma, Miasamma, Hanumathudu	Sammakka, Saralamma, Peddammatalli, Pochamma, Maisamma, Hanumantudu
8	Occupation	Collection of minor forest produce, hunting and gathering tubers, honey, agriculture and agricultural labour	Agricultural labour, hunting small game and gathering tubers
9	Marriage	Levirate and Sororate marriages are socially accepted. Widow remarriage is also accepted	Levirate and sororate marriages are socially accepted. Widow remarriage is also accepted
10	Divorce	Both the parties can divorce	Both the parties can divorce
11	Death	Dead are buried/cremated nowadays	Dead are buried
12	Traditional Council	Kula Panchayat Headed by a Pedda Manishi	Kula Panchayat Headed by a Pedda Manishi

1. The clan names like Indla, Mekala are found in Chenchus of the Nallamala area and the claimants of the study area.
2. Exclusive pentas and habitations
3. Dietary habits are found common in the consumption of tubers.
4. The Chenchus of the Nallamala area do not have a dialect of their own, but they speak Telugu only, similarly, the claimants of the study area do not have a dialect of their own but speak Telugu.
5. The traditional occupation of collecting tubers, roots and hunting game, the honey collection is found among Chenchus of the Nallamala area. Similarly, the claimants of the study area have the same traditional, occupation except for the art of Honey Collection.
6. Levirate and sororate types of marriages are found among Chenchus of the Nallamala area and claimants of the study area.
7. The practice of divorce is similar among Chenchus of the Nallamala area and claimants of the study area.
8. The Chenchu elders of the Mannanur area were Informed that the dead are buried, but nowadays due to the influence of neighbour caste Hindus, they practice both burial and cremation. The claimants of the study area only bury the dead.
9. Death pollution lasts for 3 days or fifteen days among Chenchus of the Nallamala area and it lasts 11 days among the claimants of the study area.
10. The Gods and Goddesses like Peddamma, Pochamma, Maisamma, and Hanumantudu are found common among Chenchus of the Nallamala area and claimants of the study area.
11. The dispute resolution forum of Pedda Manushulu and Pedda Manishi is found among Chenchus of the Nallamala area and claimants of the study area.
12. The comparative scenario of traditions and customs of Chenchus inhabiting the Nallamala area vis-a-vis claimants inhabiting Regonda and Chityal Tehsils of Jayashankar Bhupalpally district is mostly found to be similar.

Outcome

The members of a tribal group share a common ethnicity. Ethnicity, too, has its historiography. It is like a cultural stream that passes from generation to generation. If the ethnic traits are lost in the process of transformation, the group may lose its identity. The problem, therefore, with the tribal groups is to retain their ethnic identity on one hand and on the other to integrate themselves into the wider National society by accepting technological, secular, democratic and socialistic social order. Ethnicity thus

is related to State and Political ideology. The tribal ethnicity has a close linkage with the State and its various developmental Packages. In other words, the tribe or its ethnicity has its identification with the Government policy for development, and the partly ideology elicit or socialistic - determines to a great extent the continuity or rejection of tribal ethnicity.

The ITDA for Chenchus was spread over 6 districts viz., Mahboobnagar, Nalgonda, Rangareddy, Guntur, Kurnool and Prakasham in the combined State of Andhra Pradesh, but now confined to 3 districts Only viz., Mahabubnagar, Nalgonda and Rangareddy districts of Telangana state.

The elders Of Mannanur Sri Kanimoni Masaiah, Kanimoni Lingaiah and the Sarpanch of Mannanur Sri Nimmala Srinivasulu were contacted to elicit the ethnographic details and their relationship with the Chenchus living in non-tribal Villages and who are called 'Vura Chenchus' (village Chenchus), Yanadi Chenchus, Krishna Chenchus and Bonta Chenchus. They confirmed that certain sections claim themselves as 'Vura Chenchus'(village Chenchus), Yanadi Chenchus, Krishna Chenchus and Bonta Chenchus who are living in non-tribal villages but there is no relationship between the Deva Chenchus of Mannanur/Nallamala area with them. They also claimed that Deva Chenchus are superior in all aspects. Further, the elders have informed the study team that there are no marriage alliances between them as are different from Deva Chenchus and informed that they have no relationship with other Chenchu groups, where so ever they live.

Katraju Linga Swamy, SGT, Kondanagula and elderly person from Chenchu community of Karkalpahad of Amanagal Tehsil have informed that nobody has ever known when the Vura Chenchus/Yanadi Chenchus/Krishna Chenchus/Bontha Chenchus have migrated and settled down in non-tribal villages. However, they think that the claimant Chenchus who have been inhabiting in symbiosis with Yanadis are called Yanadi Chenchus while others living in non-tribal villages are called Vura Chenchus.

The Yanadi Chenchus having been migrated from the Guntur district way back 60 years, yet they are not sure from where their elders have migrated. In any case, they confirm that in course of time they have been influenced by the neighbouring Telugu population and adopted their customs, traditions and beliefs which are the backbone of their cultural life.

The Andhra Pradesh District Gazetteers, 1961 reveals that there were 521 Chenchus in the Warangal district.

The year 1961

Chenchus	Total	Male	Female
Mahabubnagar	4611	2333	2278

Warangal	521	286	235
Karimnagar	50	26	24

Source: *Andhra Pradesh District Gazetteers*, 1961.

As per the Government of India Census report 1961, there are 521 Chenchus (i.e., male 286 and female 235) living in the erstwhile Warangal District, secondly, the Chenchu children admitted to schools are being issued Community Certificates by the competent authority (Tahsildar/MRO) as belonging to Chenchu Community in their respective jurisdictions (evidence enclosed). Thirdly the Chenchus who possess agricultural land are also shown as Chenchu in Land Records (evidence enclosed). Fourthly as of now no tribal group Individual, Association or Social Activist has made any written complaint to any authorities that a certain group of individuals have declared themselves as Chenchus and claiming benefits guaranteed by the Constitution at the cost of genuine Chenchus. Fifthly the claimant Chenchus are living in the subject Tehsils for the last six decades even despite hardships.

Further, no such complaints concerning bogus caste claims by the Chenchus inhabiting the sample villages of the subject Tehsils have come to the notice of the study team.

In light of the facts discussed supra; the similarities of traditions, customs beliefs, livelihood options, food habits, lifestyle, language and physique are the same as that of Chenchus of the Nallamala region and further on the strength of evidence produced before the study team it can be put forth that they are of Chenchu race.

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