



Major livelihood sources among chenchus (PTG): A case study of Mahabubnagar district in Telangana state

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Abstract

The present paper refers to the major livelihood sources among Chenchus (PTGs) in Mahabubnagar district of Telangana state. The main objective of this paper is influencing livelihood source of Chenchu tribe people in the selected tribal area. As Chenchus are at pre-agricultural stage of economy, their settlements are usually found in the forests on which they heavily depend. They have symbiotic relationship with forests and subsist largely on flora and fauna available in the forest. It can be stated that wherever Chenchus ate largely food gatherers, hunters, their settlements are sparse and wherever traditional occupation was diversified and settled agriculture is adopted their settlements are large. The Chenchus are a semi-nomadic tribe of Telangana State, entirely depend on the forest products. Hunting and gathering are the main sources of their livelihood. The Chenchus do not live permanently at one place in the forests. "They have the habit of burning their hut when someone dies in the family." The Chenchus live in nuclear families. The only division of labour in Chenchu society is that between the gender and even this is less marked than among many other primitive races. The collection of the majority of the food stuffs during the various seasons is effected by both men and women, there being no distinction in the method employed certain other activities, however, such as hunting, honey-taking and basket – making are exclusively male, while women prepare most of the food. Hunting as practiced in the 20th century among the Chenchus of the Amrabad Plateau shows evident signs of disintegration. In search of the causes for its relegation to a secondary role in Chenchu economics, the research team has able to discern two factors, which are responsible for this decline.

Keywords: Semi-nomadic, flora and fauna, plateau, *pentas*, *Tendu* leaves, nomadism

Introduction

The Chenchus are a semi-nomadic tribe of Telangana State, entirely depend on the forest products. Hunting and gathering are the main sources of their livelihood. The Chenchus do not live permanently at one place in the forests. "They have the habit of burning their hut when someone dies in the family." The Chenchus live in nuclear families. As agricultural activities require a large number of people they avoid cultivation. Such a way of life is embodied in their culture, hence nomadism rather than settled agriculture ^[1].

Living Conditions of Chenchus

As Chenchus are at pre-agricultural stage of economy, their settlements are usually found in the forests on which they heavily depend. They have symbiotic relationship with forests and subsist largely on flora and fauna available in the forest. It can be stated that wherever Chenchus ate largely food gatherers, hunters, their settlements are sparse and wherever traditional occupation was diversified and settled agriculture is adopted their settlements are large. The settlements at pilgrim tourist centers are also large.

Table 1: Scheduled Tribes literate population and literacy rate, 2011 census

S. No.	District	Total ST Population	No. of Literates			Literacy Rate		
			Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
1	Adilabad	495794	130838	89084	219922	61.44	41.37	51.35
2	Nizamabad	192941	47085	28752	75837	57.97	34.25	45.92
3	Karimnagar	106745	28820	20090	48910	60.85	42.19	51.49
4	Medak	168985	40976	22146	63122	56.92	32.04	44.73
5	Hyderabad	48937	16659	12461	29120	76.09	62.08	69.34
6	Rangareddy	218757	62588	41495	104083	65.73	45.87	56.05
7	Mahabubnagar	364269	83464	45555	129019	53.71	30.44	42.29
8	Nalgonda	394279	104938	59065	164003	59.96	35.56	48.08
9	Warangal	530656	136361	90593	226954	57.81	38.96	48.45
10	Khammam	765565	200493	150974	351467	59.75	43.67	51.59
	Total	3286928	852222	560395	1412617	59.49	39.44	49.51

Source: Directorate of Census Operations, Hyderabad, 2018-19.

Review of Literature

Panda (2018) in his article "Tribal Development: Imperatives and Compulsions" study the economic backwardness of tribals in relation to their occupational practice with special reference to Orissa state. According to him, to check and prevent shifting cultivation is another need for tribal development. Tribals were the original settlers of the Indian soil, hence called primitive or aborigines. For a long period, dependence of the tribal's on the forest for their sustenance was undisputed. Forest is intimately connected with tribal life and economy.

Objectives

- 1) To study the state of livelihood sources among Chenchu tribes.
- 2) To examine the performance of schemes and programmes initiated for improvement of livelihood options and find the gaps in the implementation.
- 3) To find the alternative measures for affective implementation of the existing schemes and to strengthen livelihood sources among Chenchus.

Methodology

The present paper is based on the secondary data as well as primary data. The sample villages were selected by the suggestions of the Forest Officials and after examining the collected data related to forest and MFP at district and mandal level. The sample villages were selected on the basis of the following parameters:

- 1) The village to be a dominant tribal populated;
- 2) The village must have significant productive forest historically and more un-cultivable land or un-irrigated land (means forest based but not agriculture).
- 3) The village must be a non-wild animal sanctuary/park area but neighboring villages can be reserve forest partially or fully either for industrial or other purposes.

Semi-structured questionnaire was used for the data collection. It was divided into three parts. Part one help to

get individual information, part two helps to get information from group/group discussions of the people and village organizations and part three helps to get information and data from Government Official and other Institutions.

Sampling

The household was selected by Stratified Random Sampling method from four Chenchu hamlets/villages. Two villages viz., Kudichintalabailu and Sarlapalli from Amrabad Mandal (Mannanur forest range) and two Chenchu villages viz., Errapenta and Padmannapalli from Lingal Mandal (Achempet forest range). Four villages were selected from the 'Core area' of the wild animal sanctuary. 50 per cent of the households to the total households were selected from the selected villages respectively. These four villages are fulfilling the above parameters.

Livelihood Pattern of the Chenchus

Occupation level of the sample is presented in Table-2. The Table gives the occupation of the respondents. A good number of respondents i.e. 87 per cent are agricultural labourers/daily wage workers, a small group of respondents i.e., 8 per cent are agricultural farmers, while very less percentage of respondent occupation is self employee/private job and driving. Hence, the mean value is 3.23 and SD value is 1.288 and significance value is 0.000 level.

Cultivation

Most of the Chenchus have been practicing a crude type of cultivation called shifting cultivation known by respective vernacular names. It requires little labour, care and vital inputs. Under this scheme of cultivation trees and shrubs are felled with axe before the start of the monsoon. Now the desired seed is thrown and the nature is left to take care of the yield. To supplement their dietary requirement they collect all kinds of roots and fruits and hunt their favourable animals.

Table 2: Occupational level of the respondents

S. No.	Occupation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Agricultural Labour/daily wage worker	87	82.86
2	Agriculture farmers	8	7.62
3	Self employee/drivers	8	7.62
3	Private job	2	1.90
Total		105	100.00

Source: compiled from the primary data.

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Occupation of the Respondent	105	3.23	1.288	.126

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Occupation of the Respondent	25.687	104	.000	3.229	2.98	3.48

In marked contrast to the Chenchu's aptitude for breeding cattle is his attitude towards cultivation. Attempts to introduce plough-cultivation on the upper plateau have failed almost completely, and even the village Chenchus near Amrabad, who started to cultivate with the Government

help in the beginning of 20th century, have given up now largely and fallen back on coolie work for their sustenance. Hence, the mean value is 2.70 and SD value is 1.407 and significance value is 0.000 level.

Table 3: Primary sources

S. No.	Primary sources	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Shifting cultivation	17	16.19
2	Shifting-cum-settled cultivation	57	54.29
3	Settled cultivation only	6	5.71
4	Logging and other forest based vocation	14	13.33
5	Livestock rearing	11	10.48
Total		105	100.00

Source: compiled from the primary data.

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Primary Source	105	2.70	1.407	.137

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Primary Source	19.700	104	.000	2.705	2.43	2.98

Secondary Sources of Chenchus

a) Collection of food stuffs

The only division of labour in Chenchu society is that between the gender and even this is less marked than among many other primitive races. The collection of the majority of the food stuffs during the various seasons is effected by both men and women, there being no distinction in the method employed certain other activities, however, such as hunting, honey-taking and basket – making are exclusively male, while women prepare most of the food.

b) Hunting

Hunting as practiced in the 20th century among the Chenchus of the Amrabad Plateau shows evident signs of disintegration. In search of the causes for its relegation to a secondary role in Chenchu economics, the research team has able to discern two factors, which are responsible for this decline.

c) Making of baskets

Many Chenchus manufacture baskets for sale. In villages, such as Sarlapalli, Kudichintalabailu, Errapenta and Padmannapalli, where the Chenchus are frequently in touch with plainsmen and have, therefore, greater opportunities of selling their produce, a considerable amount of grain is consumed, while the remoter settlements near the Krishna River millet is still a delicacy. Unfortunately, the season which brings the ripening of the majority of fruits and is thus the time when the Chenchu has most to barter, is also the time when he needs least to supplement his jungle diet. But there is, of course, no consideration of storing the grain which he then acquires against times of scarcity. Hence, the mean value is 3.38 and SD value is 1.296 and significance value is 0.000 level.

Table 4: Secondary sources

S. No.	Secondary sources	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Cultivation	5	4.76
2	Fishing/Hunting/Gathering	56	53.33
3	Wage earning	17	16.19
4	Government/private job	8	7.62
5	Trade/business/contract	19	18.10
Total		105	100.00

Source: compiled from the primary data.

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Secondary Source	105	3.38	1.296	.127

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Secondary Source	26.726	104	.000	3.381	3.13	3.63

Generally, all Chenchus but the small children set off on their daily food-gathering excursions with their digging-sticks and their collecting baskets about three hours after sunrise. Picking their way through the forest, they go in groups of two, three or four to those parts of the forest where they expect to find edible roots or fruits. Husband and

wife, sometimes go root collecting together, but more often, they get separated.

d) Collecting of Honey

Honey is highly valued by the Chenchus, who eat the wax and grubs as well, but it is only collected occasionally and

although in olden times it have played an important part in their economic life, today it is a minor item in the diet of the Chenchus of the Amrabad Plateau.

Economical System of Chenchus

The economic system of the Chenchus is essentially that of a tribe of hunters and food collectors. The Chenchus depends for nine-tenths of food supply on that which nature provides and it only a limited number of families who, by owning a few domestic animals, are emerging from this lowest and primeval stage of human development.

Table 5: Annual income of the respondents

S. No.	Annual Income (in Rs.)	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Between 10,000 and 20,000	7	6.67
2	Between 20,000 and 30,000	35	33.33
3	Between 30,000 and 40,000	11	10.48
4	Between 40,000 and 50,000	31	29.52
5	50,000 and Above	21	20.00
Total		105	100.00

Source: compiled from the primary data.

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Annual Income	105	3.23	1.288	.126

One-Sample Test						
Test Value = 0						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Annual Income	25.687	104	.000	3.229	2.98	3.48

Annual income of the respondents is given in Table-5. The data states that the majority of the respondents i.e. 33.0 per cent of the respondents are reported that their annual income ranges from Rs.20,000 to Rs.30,000, followed by 26.0 per cent of the respondents annual income ranges from Rs.40000-50000, 15.0 per cent of respondents are reported that their annual income is above Rs.50000. While, very less of respondents having annual income ranges from Rs.30000-40000 and Rs.10000-20000. Hence, the mean value is 3.23 and SD value is 1.288 and significance value is 0.000 level.

Observations

- The study found that the main livelihood sources of tribal people are farming/cultivation (cotton redgram, jowar etc). Majority of the tribals are got two acres of land and they took loans from local traders and sells to them only.
- Few of tribals are go to the forest for one week to 10 days for collection of *peddamustiginjalu* (used in preparation of medicines), *gaddalu* (used in preparation of cool drinks) *karakkayalu*, *amudam*(castor oil), honey etc., and sells them in GCC.
- It is also found that most of the Chenchus go for getting *porakalu* (sweeping sticks), collecting Honey and prepare broom sticks for selling and self use, once in six months after rainy season.
- The study also observed that people are practicing OD in forest and fields. There are no IHHLs constructed in the selected pentas/villages. Awareness programmes are being conducted regarding this.
- The study observed that the one of the NGO viz., Rural Development Trust (RDT) actively work and constructed houses for the Chenchus pentas.
- In the Chenchus pentas, there are no individual taps for drinking water but public tank facility is there.
- Unique feature of these villages is, most of the villagers

have *ambu* (arrow made with iron and bow made with bamboo stick) and use whenever there is a fight among them.

Suggestions

- It is suggested that, various small scale as well as cottage industries should be encouraged. The small scale industries are planned on the locally available resources. Training will be also imparted for the required skills. Already some activities like Bamboo processing, honey making, basket weaving, Collection and processing of Tendu leaves etc., are started with the consent of Chenchus.
- The Chenchus are already utilizing the minor forest produce available in the forest. Upgrading their skills in marketing and quality improvement of the forest produce will enhance the sustainability of their livelihoods.
- The Government should be provided basis minimum services viz., food, nutrition, safe drinking water, primary health care, transport, safe environment, proper irrigation facilities, supply of electricity and basic infrastructure facilities et., productive assets at least at the level of survival and sustenance with a special focus on women, children and PTG Chenchus for the better quality of life.
- Finally it is suggested, the role of voluntary organizations is very much for uplifting of chenchu tribes. The areas of activities which propagates chenchu development i.e., literacy, health, self-help group, skill training, income generation.

Conclusion

The present paper is attempted at understanding the effectiveness of livelihood pattern of Chenchu in Mahabubnagar District. The plight and predicament of chenchu tribal families has been examined in the study area.

Firstly, the problem statement has been elaborating highlighting the need for assessing the effectiveness of the tribal development programmes implemented for chinch tribes of Mahabubnagar of Telangana state. While establishing the fact that the plight of tribal populations in our country is deplorable, the fate of Chenchus is much worse. Besides the background and the rationale of the study, the research idea, research questions, objectives have been explained.

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