CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY

&

CONCLUSION
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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study of the Idiga community is based on the ethnographic documents followed by the cross-sectional study conducted during 2005-2007, when field-work was conducted among the Idigas of eight selected villages in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. In fact, with the help of 'base-line' data comparison has been made between the above cross-section separated by a time gap of more than Fifty five years ending with 2005 which highlighted not only the transitional stage of socio-cultural changes but also the present socio-cultural trend and directions of change. The present study accounted for the fact that the socio-cultural changes occurred among the Idigas in general inhabiting different places, have also taken place among the Idigas before they gave up their nomadic or semi-nomadic life. Basically the social and cultural issues of the Idigas of the eight villages under study, could be considered as parts of one cognate body. Consequent upon sedentarisation and permanent land farming either as primary or secondary occupation, changes among the Idigas of the villages had reached the roots of all levels of organisation and created significant changes in the adaptation to the new environment. The Idigas way of life portrays the picture of a society that has undergone several changes besides the continuity of their traditional culture. It can be regarded as transitional and is closely similar to that observable at all other villages of Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. The Rayalaseema region includes the four revenue districts of Chittoor, Cuddapah, Ananthapur and Kurnool. Not withstanding the
operation of the currents of contact with caste Hindu neighbors, the Idigas have not lost their identity. Despite the phenomenal changes they welcomed in, they demonstrate their identity by continuing many of their socio-cultural traits.

There is no doubt that the chief attraction for the Idigas, when their traditional means of livelihood could no longer provide them the basic necessities due to the rapid development of communication facilities, was the greater and familiar promise of food through new means of livelihood namely, agriculture etc. Further, the implementation of various welfare programmes in order to bring the Idigas into the mainstream of national life also proved effective in bringing about change. The cumulative effects of the various factors and agents have brought about the desired changes, described in the preceding chapters.

Sedentarisation is the basic indispensable factor for any community to further its conditions of life. And all the changes occurred after sedentarisation. This is mainly due to the acquisition of land or cattle or both besides services. By dint of rigorous efforts the peasant Idigas have learnt agriculture. Those who failed to adopt themselves to settled way of life and cultivation have disposed of their land or cattle.

Most families of parental and grand parental generations have been found to depend on supplementary occupations like weaving fire-wood and liquor selling etc., apart from farming, in spite of lack of experience in such activities. Agriculture as the main or secondary occupation besides services in Government or private agencies, has certainly improved the economic life of
the Idiga. The Idiga have also altered their working pattern because of taking up agriculture to suit the changed situation. For example the division of labour they have adopted is quite akin to any agricultural community in the area. Although the old criteria of age and sex still continue to be the basis of assigning tasks, yet some modifications have been made to suit the prevailing occupational structure. Here, the division of labor has to be organised so as to suit agricultural operations and secondary occupations. While men attend mainly to outside works like agricultural operations, toddy-tapping etc., women participate in both domestic and outside operations. Another important change that has occurred is that the economy of the Idigas is integrated with the regional economy, mainly due to the production of commercial crops like sugar cane and groundnut, food crops like paddy and jowar, and vegetables like brinjal, beans, tomatoes etc. Not only for domestic consumption but also for marketing.

No doubt many Idiga families are in debt. The borrowings are spent both for productive and unproductive purposes. The facility of getting easy credit from the fellow Idiga, neighboring caste farmers and regional Grammams Banks etc., indicate the credit worthiness of the Idigas. The economic changes and economic improvement or development among the Idigas has further led to some changes in their, social organisations and a few changes can be attributed to sedentarisation, while others are due to economic change and development, acculturation, and status evaluation.
Various changes have taken place in the institution of marriage which is also an evidence of their socio-cultural potential for adoption. Even though the Idrigas have their own rules and regulations such as caste endogamy, sub-caste endogamy, surname exogamy, payment of bride-price all of which govern the choice of mates, they have developed preference for cross-cousin and post-puberty marriages. In addition, now-a-days, some of the well to do Idrigas have started performing their marriages in a more or less similar way as that of other agricultural communities characterised by sanskritic rituals, tying of marriage badge, ‘tail’ and the presence of a Brahmin priest. Further, the payment of dowry to the educated, employed and rich bride-grooms has become customary as in the agricultural caste of Hindu. They arrange mikes-sets with recorded music as well as pipe music during the celebration of marriage. Owing to social, economic, technological and demographic factors the Idrigas have inclined to adopt neolocality as the most ideal and the multilocality as the actual type of residence. Growth of population, agricultural economy, toddy-tapping, economic status are the decisive factors in the adoption of multilocality. While those families that depend on toddy-tapping, wage labour or fire-wood selling, tailoring, employment as the mainstay have opted, for neolocal pattern of residence, other families with sufficient landed property and cattle, the management of which require much man power, practice and patrilocal residence.

Nuclear families are more predominant among the families practicing occupation other than agriculture as their source of livelihood. In such families
a young man immediately after marriage can set up his separate residence, whereas in agricultural families division of land, house and assets at the family involves for setting up of new residence. The inter personal relations among the idigas are as usual as in any neighboring agricultural communities with the acquisition of caste characteristics, they started maintaining ‘Jajmani’ relationship with different artisan and service castes living in their and neighboring villages.

Important change have taken place in the realm of political organisation of the idigas community. With the passage of time, the charm of the office of the ‘Kulapedda’ is lost to same extent. However still he performs a number of roles such as social control, which can be divided into social, ritual, is celebrated among the idigas. ‘Kulapedda’ as the caste-chief, presides over the tribunal that includes caste and family heads for the settlements of disputes. The office of the ‘Kulapedda’ is hereditary.

In spite of the interference of leaders from dominant caste in the village in the affairs of the idigas, the traditional political organisation has not completely disappeared. The office of the ‘Kulapedda’ also carries certain privileges respect and dignity. The present ‘Kulapedda’ performs some of his traditional roles such as officiating as sacred specialist during the worship of folk deities, conducting of marriages and other common ceremonies. Now-a-days, the idigas instead of approaching their Kulapedda and other elders, are approaching the influential caste leaders, landlords, the village panchayat president or village officials for settlement of their disputes. The introduction
of panchayat Raj system did not cause much impact on the normal functioning of the traditional political institutions which are still effective in the maintenance of peace and social order within the community. The Idiga people are elected as ward members in their respective villages in the reserved seats allocated to them. The neighboring agricultural caste leaders used to depend on these leaders for their elections to village and Mandal panchayats as presidents, and Assembly and Parliament elections. The most important result of the panchayat elections is that the Idigas of these villages have achieved the end product of integrating themselves with the regional and national politics due to their close contact and interaction with the caste farmers of the neighboring villages, during the panchayat and general elections.

Sedentarisation brought about some perceptible changes in the religious system of the Idigas too, though they retain several folk elements of traditional religion such as ancestor worship, of their caste deities, belief in spirits, dependence on shamans, magico-religious practices etc. Apart from these, the importance of magico-religious practices including divinition is on the verge of disappearance. The gradual disappearance of these practices may be partly attributed to the faith the Idigas have developed in the efficacy of modern medicines. But one interesting phenomenon is that in times of crises like the spread of epidemics, persistent difficulties, uncommon diseases, frequent death of either cattle or children etc., the Idigas still resort to their traditional magico-religious practices like propitiating the folk deities, and seeking the services of shamans. Thus modernity and tradition are not
contradictory but they co-exist in the life of the Idigas. A number of agencies of social change such as Hinduization, economic development, diffusion etc., have influenced the traditional Idiga religion. The Idigas have borrowed many deities from the little tradition such as Sathyamma, Gengamma, Nagalamma, Akkadevathalu, Maremma, Muneewarudu, Gurappa etc., and several deities of the Hindu great tradition such as Lord Vinayaka, Sri Rama, Lord Venkateswara, Lord Siva, Anjaneya, Saraswathi, Lakshmi, Parvathi and a host of other deities of Hindu pantheon, especially those of surrounding agricultural castes. They also undertake pilgrimage to important pilgrimage centers located in the region, apart from participating in the fairs (jataras). The Idigas observe the rites and observances concerning major crises of life like all Hindu castes. They believe that stoppage of menstruation of a married woman is an indication of pregnancy. Traditional methods are followed regarding delivery and observance of pollution. Even though children are given traditional names as also the names of deities from the little and great tradition, at these villages there is a growing tendency to consult a Brahmin priest in selecting a name for the new-born and to give 'modern' name to their children as the neighboring peasant castes to tonsure and marriage rites also include the adoption of several Sanskrit elements like engaging a pipe music team, raising pandals, serving sumptuous feasts, decorating the houses, and employing a Brahmin priest to officiate at marriage ceremonies. The Idigas practice the burial of the dead rather than cremation as the latter became now-a-days expensive. The Idigas have also started imitating the practice of constructing tombs for the dead.
The Idigas have embedded the habit of celebrating most of the great traditional festival such as Sankranthi, Sivarathri, Ugadi, Sriramanaavami, Deepavali, Nagulachavithi etc., which are celebrated by the agricultural castes as well. It can be stated that in the religious sphere, the Idigas of these villages seem to be integrated to a greater extent with the regional Hinduism through the process of universalising several of their religious practices. By the large, the Idiga community is primarily utilitarian. Their ritual performances are both individual and communal. They have no fixed time for worship. Gods are remembered only at the time of disease and difficulty.

After to bring the Idiga into the main stream of national life, the Government have helped all these villages of the Idiga people in a number of ways such as constructing pucca houses, distributing cross-breed bulls, sheep, milch animals, plough, bullock and bullock-cart, extending financial assistance for digging of irrigation well and for purchasing pump-sets, etc., under different sectors/schemes. Almost all these programmes have been enthusiastically received by the beneficiaries. Other developmental programme implemented at the village level include education, health and sanitation, transport and communications. They have developed a liking for education which is a key factor towards their modernisation. A few government employees also hail from all these villages. They have also become more mobile in trade, business, education, employment, administration and recreation. With the implementation of welfare programmes, the Idigas have come in contact with outside world such as
urban areas, local leaders, Government officials, etc., which in turn enabled them to become more dynamic. They have also exhibited in a large measure, a progressive outlook with an attitude of acquisitiveness and search for new economic opportunities. They are not unduly tradition-bound in the sense that once they are convinced that a particular innovation is both useful and within their reach, they are as prompt as caste peasants to accept it.

Conclusions:

The Idigas of the present study have been connected with the outside world by economic bond with the surrounding caste farmers, marriage, panchayat raj system, educational institutions, urban areas, different welfare agencies, etc. In the economic sphere, they are moving towards diversification of occupations which includes agricultural services, tailoring, business, etc. In recent times, a trend towards associating more and more with agriculture, making investments to develop lands, buying of cultivable lands and growing more quantity of commercial crop for earning cash has developed among these village of the Idigas.

On the cultural side also the direction of change among the Idigas is toward adopting the characteristic features of a caste on the basis of commensality and feeling of pollution. Their participation in the religion caste system is, indeed quite interactions. They have access to the ritual services. A wide range of castes is tied to the Idiga community in terms of ceremonial friendship participation in festivals and markets, and share cropping. They
are also connected with various centres of net works of relationship which include administrative headquarters as well as civilization or pan-Indian centers such as Tirupati, Srikalahasthi, Srisailam, etc.,

In the political sphere, the Idigas have perhaps achieved the end product of integrating themselves with the regional and national politics. In addition these village are producing the young and educated elite and dynamic leaders to participate in the political life of the village in particular and the region in general. The impact of special privileges and benefits have been uneven among the Idigas owing to the variations in the levels of development between the rich and poor.

The Idigas are in the process of modernizing themselves and have started acquiring idigas, indices of modernization such as empathy, mobility, political competition, achievement orientation, rational ends, means of calculations, new attitudes to wealth, work saving and risk taking, and faith in the desirability and possibility of change. In addition, under the influence of several factors of change the Idigas are being brought into the mainstream of national life.