CHAPTER 3

FOREST BIODATA AND
GENERAL VEGETATION TYPES
Forests

The total area under forest is 1,74,844 hectares which is about 13.7% of the total geographical area of the district. The bulk of the forest area is confined mainly to the hill ranges of Macherla, Vinukonda and Sattenapalle. The forest is mainly of tropical dry deciduous type. The entire forest of Guntur district is under one forest division with four ranges and 60 beats.

General Vegetation types

The vegetation in the district can broadly be divided into two types - Forest Vegetation and Plain Vegetation.

Forest Vegetation

The forest vegetation ranges from mangroves in the coast to the deciduous type in uplands.

Based on the classification of forest types by Champion and Seth (1968) the forests are broadly classified into two major types basing on physiography (i) Coastal and (ii) Inland.

i. Coastal Forests

These are divided into two types: (1) Mangrove Forests or tidal Swamp Forests, (2) Southern dry evergreen Forests.

1. Mangrove Forests

These are typically a closed and impenetrable evergreen forests of moderate height. These are composed of trees specially adopted
Fig. 1 - Thorny scrub vegetation of Kakirala

Fig. 2 - Scrub jungle vegetation at Nagarjuna Sagar
Fig 3 - Deciduous vegetation - Shirigiripadu

Fig 4 - Dry deciduous vegetation - Anupu
to survive on tidal mud which is permanently wet with salt water and submerged by every tide. Common tree species in this are is *Avicenia officinalis*, *A. marina*, *Exoecaria agallocha*, *Rhizophora mucronata*, *R. apiculata*, *Burguiera cylindrica* etc.

2. **Southern dry evergreen Forest**

The forest spread along the coasts of Repalle range about 9 to 12 Kms from sea and consists of small coriaceous leaved evergreen trees and shrubs with short boles and spreading crowns. The forest consists of tree like *Albizia amara*, *Anarcardium occidentale*, *Borassus flabellifer*, *Diospyros chloroxylon*, *Ixora pavetta*, *Manilkara hexandra*, *Memecylon edule*, *Ficus religiosa*, *Ochna squerrosa*, *Salvadora persica*, *Sapindus emarginatus*, *Syzygium cuminii*, *Strychnous nux-vomica*, *Phoenix sylvestris*, *Thespesia populnea*, *Zizyphus xylopyrus*, *Benkara malabarica* etc.

**ii. Inland Forest Vegetation**

The Inland forests are again divided into 4 types. They are:

1. Southern dry mixed deciduous types
2. *Hardwickia binata* type
3. *Acacia nilotica* type
4. Dry scrub jungles.

1 **Southern dry mixed deciduous type**

These forests occur in Venkatappalem of Sattenapple range, Bothpalle of Vinukonda range and Loyapalle of Macherla range.

The top storey consists of trees with more than 12 m height. They include *Anogeissus latifolia*, *Cassia fistula*, *Chloroxylon swietenia*, *Hardwickia binata*, *Albizia lebbeck*, *Boswellia serrata*, *Soymida febrifuga*,...
Gyrocarpus americanus etc. The middle storey attains a height of 9 meters and is composed of Albizia amara, Acacia horrida, A. chundra, Dichrostachys cinerea, Diospyros melanoxylon, Gardinia latifolia and Zizyphus xylopyrus etc. The lower storey is composed of shrubs like Mundulea suberosa, Dodonaea viscosa, Carrissa spinarum, Erythroxylum monogynum, Helicteres isora and Tarenna asiatica. The ground is almost bare of herbs and grasses on account of excessive grazing.

2. **Hardwickia binata type**

   This type of forest occurs in Macherla, Vinukonda and Sattenkapalle Reserve forests. Hardwickia binata grows almost gregariously with Chloroxylon swietenia, Albizia lebbeck and Anogeissus latifolia as its chief associates which give it a character of its own.

3. **Acacia nilotica type**

   This is found in abandoned tank beds as in Bollapalli section. The localities are characterised by very fine black silt and are submerged under water during rainy seasons. Very few associated species occur mainly, where the Acacia canopy is broken. There is very thin growth of grass and little undergrowth is noticed.

4. **Dry Scrub jungles**

   This type of forest mainly occurs in Macherla, Veluderthy and Durgi areas. Xerophytic species like Acacia chundra and A. horrida are the dominant species while Anogeissus latifolia, Grewia bracteata and Dichrostachys cinerea occur to a lesser extent. The lower storey composed of thorny shrubs like Acacia caesia, Zizyphus oenoplia, Maytenus emarginata, Toddalia asiatica, Carissa spinarum, Catunaregum spinosa etc. The floor
bears climbers like *Cissus quadrangularis*, *Tinospora cordifolia*, *Cocculus hirsutus*, *Rhynchosia minima*, *Abrus precatorius*, *Pergularia daemia* and *Wattakaka volubilis*.

**Aquatic Vegetation**

Guntur district is having many lakes, ponds, tanks, canals and streams. Rich and varied aquatic flora is met within these habitats. Some of the aquatic species of this forest are *Nelumbo nucifera*, *Nymphaea pubescens*, *Eichhornia carassipes*, *Nymphaea nouchali* etc.
Ethnology of the Tribal people

A Tribe is a social group with territorial affiliation endogamous, with no specialization of functions, ruled by tribal officers, hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect, recognizing social distance with other tribes or castes, without any social obloquy attaching to them, as it does in the caste structure, following tribal traditions beliefs and customs, illiberal of naturalization of ideas from alien sources, above all conscious of homogeniety of ethnic and territorial integration. The tribes sometimes called aboriginals because of the earliest inhabitants of this country, not only belong to different stages of culture, but they vary from area to area in regard to size of the population, language, racial types, socioeconomic organisation etc. The tribal inhabitation in India can be situated in three tribal zones. North-Eastern. Central and Southern. The central zone consists of the plateaus and mountains between the Indo-Gangetic Basin to the north and Krishna river in the South. The southern zone consists of the Peninsular India, south of the Krishna river. Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu are included in this zone.

In India the Scheduled tribe population is 8,06,60,000 constituting about 9.55% of country's total population of 84,43,20,000 (Ministry of Welfare, Government of India, 1992). Predominant tribal area cover about 15% of the total geographical area of the country.

Andhra Pradesh State is the traditional home of 33 recognised tribal groups (Table 1) who are at different stages of socioeconomic development. The tribal population of Andhra Pradesh, according to 1991 Census, is 41.99 lakhs, constituting about 6.3% of the total population of the State. The scheduled area extended over 31,485,34 Sq. Kms. The total population of the district is 1.82 lakhs which form 4.4% of the total population of the district.
## TABLE 1

List of Scheduled Tribes of Andhra Pradesh

| 1   | Andh            |
| 2   | Bagata          |
| 3   | Bhil            |
| 4   | Chenchu, Chenchu-war |
| 5   | Gadabas         |
| 6   | Gond, Naikpod, Rajgond |
| 7   | Goudu           |
| 8   | Hill Reddis     |
| 9   | Jatapus         |
| 10  | Kamara          |
| 11  | Kattunajakan    |
| 12  | Kolam, Mannervarhu |
| 13  | Konda Dhoras    |
| 14  | Konda Kagus     |
| 15  | Konda Reddis    |
| 16  | Kondha, Kodi, Kodhu, desaya, Kondus, Dongria, Kondhus, Kuttiya Kondhs, Tikkiria Kondhs, Yenity Kondhs. |
| 17  | Kotia Benthoo Oriya, Bartika, Dhuulia, Dulia, Holva, Paiko, Dutiya, Sanrona, Sidnopaiako. |
| 18  | Koyo, Goud, Rajah, Rashakoya, Lingadhan Koya, Kottukoya, Bhine Koya, Raj oya. |
| 19  | Kulia           |
| 20  | Malis           |
| 21  | Manne Dhora     |
| 22  | Mukha Dhora, Nooka Dhora |
| 23  | Nayaks          |
| 24  | Pardhan         |
| 25  | Porja, Parangi Perja |
| 26  | Reddi Dhora     |
| 27  | Rona Rena       |
| 28  | Savaras, Kagu Savaras, Maliya Savara, Khutta Savaras |
| 29  | Sugalis, Lambadies |
| 30  | Tholia          |
| 31  | Valimike (in the Agency Tracts) |
| 32  | Yanadis         |
| 33  | Yerukalas       |
The main tribes of Guntur district area are the Chenchus, Yerukalas, Yanadis and Sugalis. These tribes are the source of information on the ethnobotany in general and the medico-botany in particular. These tribals living in isolated pockets have their own social customs, traditional beliefs, religious rites, taboos, totems, food habits, medicinal practices and agricultural practice. A brief ethnographic profile of each tribe is given below.

**Ethnographic Profiles of the Tribes**

**THE CHENCHUS**

The Chenchus represent that segment of tribal population of India whose economy does not seem to have changed in any significant manner for the last few thousand years. Concentrated in a small pocket situated in the heart of Andhra Pradesh, the Chenchus live on either side of the famous river Krishna with the Nallamalai forest on the southern side and the rugged and densely wooded plateau on the northern side. The traditional habitat of Chenchus is the Nallamalai hills sprawling over an area of 3568 Sq. Kms in Prakasam, Guntur, Kurnool, Mahaboobnagar, Nalgonda and Ranga reddy districts.

Total Chenchu population of all the districts (6) is 29,100 according to 1991 census.

The Chenchus are medium statured and their complexion varies from whitish to light brown. The eyes are generally brown and sometimes almost black. The Chenchus are medium saturated black in colour with long hair. Their dress is a scanty loin cloth. Dress of the Chenchu man consists of a waist string (molathadu) made of twisted fibre and a small piece of cotton cloth (Gochibatta), 4-5 inches wide. The youngsters wear shirts and knickers. Women have adopted the bodies (ravika) in imitation of the female costumes of the plains.
TABLE 2
Chenchu population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of Mandals</th>
<th>No. of Chenchu gudems</th>
<th>Estimated populations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Guntur</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nalgonda</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Prakasam</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>7007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kurnool</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mahaboob Nagar</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ranga Reddy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>29100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Settlement pattern and Housing

Till recently the Chenchus had been leading a wholly nomadic life. They still carry the fond memories of those bygone days and this is reflected in their folklore. The Chenchus live in small communities called “Penta” or “Gudem” with 5-25 huts. These tribals use bamboo and other timber species, such as *Bambusa arundinacea*, *Tectona grandis*, *Terminalia arjuna*, *Chloroxylon swietenia*, *Phoenix sylvestris* and *Cymbopogon coloratus* for building their huts. The huts are usually very small and are of circular type. Apart from construction of beautiful huts some tribes also grow various species as hedge plants surrounding these huts. These hedges are mainly to serve as boundary of the houses, prevention of other animals to keep away snakes and other poisonous animals from getting into these huts and finally to keep away any evil spirits from the huts and villages. They have almost given up wandering from place to place. They depend upon nature products like wild roots, tubers, fruits, honey and small game.
Family and Marriages

In a family, husband and wife enjoy equal rights in the routine affairs of life. Like most of the other tribes, child marriage is not popular among the Chenchus. In most of the cases the spouse is sought from the outside one's own class but among same selected ones. Life partner is usually selected from mother’s clan and preference is given to mother’s brother’s daughter. Gifts are also allowed to express their views freely on matrimonial affairs.

The remarriage of widows is permitted and the second husband is said to be in most cases a brother of the deceased one. A divorced woman is not allowed to remarry, but may live with any person without a formal marriage. Though the Chenchus are permitted to be polygamous yet the popular mode of matrimony is still monogamy. In case the wife breaks the wedlock the husband may demand the amount of money back which he incurred on marriage.

The Chenchus have also evolved the institution of elder man. Every settlement has a traditional leader known as Peddamanishi or Pedda. He represents his village before the outsiders, settles minor disputes with the help of other elderly people, acts as Priest and blesses the couple at the time of marriage.

Religious and Traditional Systems in Chenchus

Like their simple economic life they have evolved a simple system of religious beliefs and practices. Although due to growing cultural contacts with the neighbouring Hindus of the plains, their religion too, is undergoing changes, yet some of its features may still be distinguished. "Bhairov" is their most popular local deity to whom a small part of the hunted
animal is offered but goddess Garelamaisama still reigns supreme among that segment of Chenchus which still totally depends upon hunting and gathering for subsistence. She gives them strength and skill for success in hunting expeditions.

They believe the god Narasimha of Ahobiloum, whom they called Obulesudu. Among other minor deities, the Chenchus are said to worship Ankalamma, Potharaju, Sunkulamma, Maremma, Mallamma, Pindhera, Edemma and Gurrappadu.

Traditionally the Chencus bury their dead but due to growing Hindu influence those who reside amidst plains' Hindu have started cremating their departed one.

**Ecosystem and Economy**

The Chenchus depend mostly on what nature provides them. Their economic system is essentially that of a tribe of hunters and food gatherers. The changing seasons witness quick changes in a Chenchu's life. In one part of the year they go on digging out edible roots, in another collection of edible fruits is resorted in while in yet another all the emphasis is laid on hunting and their life all the year round rotates round gathering and hunting.

The Chenchus are economically in the lowest strata. And their economic system is essentially that of a tribe of hunter and food gatherers. Collection of minor forest produce items like gums, fruits, seeds, roots, bark, flowers etc. is also another source of livelihood for a few families.

Honey constitutes an important item of their diet. They are very deft in handling honey combs hanging from trees and cliffs. When they get a honey comb they eat it entirely including the wax and nascent bees.
They have attained such an expertise in procuring honey that they do not have to search for the combs; they know where, when and how to find it.

**Yerukalas**

The Yerukalas comprise the tribe that speaks 'Yerula' but which has no script of their own to date. Yerukalas are black in colour with small hair and brown eyes. For Telugu people throughout the country the Yerukala women are known only as Soothsayers. The women of this tribe are noted for their Soothsaying (Jayaraj *et al.*, 1980). Ethnologically the word "Yerukala" is derived from the Telugu word "Yeruka" which means foresight or disclosing the facts about the future, present and past of one's life.

The dress of the Yerukalas is very simple and scanty. The dress of the men particularly of the older generations, living at present, continues to be a scanty as it is used to be. The middle aged men wear a shirt (Angi) and dhothi (Pancha) around the waist covering knees of the legs. Young women wear a saree and a simple blouse (Ravika) is worn to cover the upper part of the body.

The Yerukala speak their own dialect called Yerukala basha. Ekalavya is believed to be their ancestor. The settlement of the Yerukalas is known as Yerukalageri (Yerukala street) located outside the village. All the houses are constructed with stones and bricks with a roof covered by palm leaves or grass. "Kulapanchayat" solves Yerukalas problems. The members are usually elders who are called as "Pedda Manisi". They worship "village deities" (Grama devatas), Peddamma and Yerukala Nancharamma.

The heterogeneity of their occupation reveals their occupational mobility. The different groups are -
1. Dabba Yerukala - Bamboo basketry
2. Ithapullala Yerukala - Wild-date (basketry)
3. Kunchapuri Yerukala - Making of weaver brushes
4. Uppu Yerukala - Trading in salt
5. Yaddu Yerukala - Carriers of Merchandise on bullocks
6. Karivepaku Yerukala - Sellers of curry leaf (Murraya koenigii)
7. Kavali Yerukala - Watchmen
8. Voora Yerukala - Pig-rearing and agricultural labour
9. Parikamukkala Yerukala - Story telling
10. Nara Yerukala - Rope making
11. Kothula Yerukala - Displaying money and begging
12. Koot Yerukala - Tattooing
13. Bhajantri Yerukala - Acrobats

Economy

The Yerukalas economy is backward. They are segregated geographically. They have little contacts with outsiders. They get their livelihood by making baskets, brooms, mats, rope and twines from forest fibre. All men, women and children participate in making baskets. Pig rearing is the secondary occupation among the Yerukalas. Some of their women are engaged in Gadde or Sodi or eruka i.e., Fortune telling.
YANADIS

The Yanadis are believed to have been derived from the Chenchus of Nallamalai forest of Andhra Pradesh (Raghavaiah, 1962). They are mostly concentrated in Prakasam, Guntur, Krishna, Nellore, Chittoor and Cuddapah districts. Yanadis are the second largest tribal population in Andhra Pradesh (Gurumurthy, 1990).

The Yanadis are characterised by dark skin colour, short stature, platyrrine nose, long head, prominent chin and scanty hair both on head and body (Thurston, 1975). The language of the Yanadis is in Telugu, but some words are compounds of Telugu and Tamil.

The Yanadis are divided into three groups. Adavi Yanadis (living in forest fringes depending on forest produce), Manchi Yandis (agricultural labourers) and Challa Yanadis (mostly Scavengers and drainage workers) based on their ecological and professional adaptations. The Yanadi men and women are scanty dressed. The Yanadis live in low conical huts, rudely built of bamboo and palmyra leaves. The Headman, called as Kulapedda or Pedda Yanadi, exercises general social control over a group, known as Gudem, ordinarily of about 20 huts.

The hunting instruments of Yanadis are long sticks of bamboo and sickle with the help of which they make their way deep into the forest. They collect honey, minor forest products from the forests and sell to Girijan Cooperative Corporation.

The Yanadi people chiefly live on non-vegetarian food materials and they also take many varieties of leafy vegetables and several kinds of fruits, tuberous roots which they collect from the forests. They possess a good knowledge of medicinal plants. Many of them collect and store medicinal
herbs to use them as indigenous medicine and also sell them to the people living in the neighbouring village.

**SUGALIS**

The Sugalis originally belonged to the arid tracts of Rajasthan and Gujarat and migrated to south along with invading Moghul armies to carry provisions to them on their pack bullocks. The Sugalis are also called as Lambadi, Lambani, Banjari or Brinjari and Biopari. Sugali is derived from the word Suga-wala means a good ‘cowherd’ and who produces breedbulls. The Sugali language is Lambadi. The language has no script of its own.

The Sugalis are most colourful of all the tribal groups of India. They are white in colour, oval face, black or brown eyes, and long silky hair. Most people (man) wear brown colour cloths. Women wear red and green colour cotton cloth with small glass (mirrors) on that cloth. A mass of brass collars cover the neck. Both hands are covered with bracelets up to the elbow. On legs also they wear brass rings (Kadems).

Their vegetable kitchen garden provide them the raw vegetables. Their staple food is a coarse cake of wheat or maize. So far as their food habits are concerned rice, ragi and millet are the most prominent grains. The Sugalis eat all kinds of meat including fowls and pork. Arrack is their favourite beverage. The Sugalis are traditionally cattle breeders.

Each Thanda has a chief known as Nayak (Headman). The Nayak, who is head of the settlement and whose word is law in the Thanda is also considered as ‘Thanda Priest’. He is in-charge of all the major sacrifices and religious responsibilities of the Thanda. Marriage rituals are very lengthy. The marriage is celebrated in the Rajasthani style. The two
parties meet on the village boundary where the bridge price (Voli) ranging from Rs.35/- to Rs.500/- and 4 bullocks is fixed.

At the time of betrothal the parties go to a liquor shop, distribute betal leaves (*Piper betel*) and a large handful of sugar to every body. Polygamy is accepted since a wife in the home is an asset as she also earns. If one can afford, one can take a second wife.
Fig. 5 - Chenchu huts at Vulasalapenta

Fig. 6 - A typical Chenchu family at Vulasalapenta
Fig. 7 - Chenchu in a hunting mood

Fig. 8 - Chenchu's children spend their childhood in forest without education
Fig. 9 - A sacred place of Chenchu's at Davupalli

Fig. 10 - A traditional Yanadi couple
Fig. 11 - Author collecting information from aged Yanadi herbalist

Fig. 12 - Yanadi family
Fig. 13 - A middle aged sugali herbalist at Vajrala Thanda village