

Chenchu



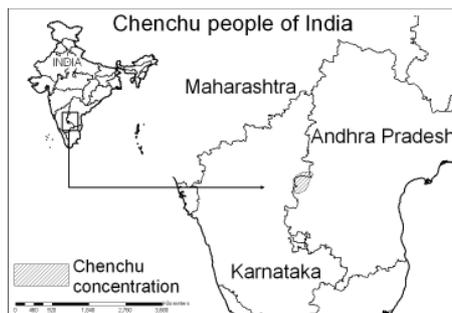
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Population: 61,000

Literacy: 30%

Scripture Status: Language research is needed.

The Chenchu are one of the most primitive tribes in modern India. Just as they have been doing for centuries, many of them still hunt and gather for their daily needs. Their men are known as expert bamboo cutters and honey collectors.



This conservative community has not made many changes in its lifestyle or tried to adapt to modernity.

However, their lives revolve around struggles to survive. Whenever food resources become scarce, they migrate to another place in search of new possibilities. A growing number of them are also forced out of their wandering, food-gathering lives into becoming peasant farmers. The Chenchu are mostly spread out on the high ranges of the Amrabad Plateau, in the state of Andhra Pradesh, which is covered with pure, dense forests. They are also to be found in Karnataka and Orissa.

The Chenchu language belongs to the Dravidian language family. Many of the Chenchu also speak Telugu, the language of wider communication. Traditionally their men and women wear long hair, tied up in a knot. Today, the younger men like to keep their hair

short. The older folk remain scantily dressed, while the younger folk like to wear modern dress. Centuries of living in forests have deprived the Chenchu of the ability to adapt easily to external situations. Some of their children attend government-run schools. However, there are very few educated Chenchu finding their way into mainstream modern society. They struggle to adapt to new patterns of living as the forest resources dwindle with time.

Their folklore says that they are descendents of Lord Mallikarjuna, an incarnation of Lord Shiva, who fell in love and married a young Chenchu maiden by the name of Chenchu Laxmi. Hence the Chenchu have a place in *Puranas* (temple records), and enjoy special privileges at the famous Srisailam temple.

Many Chenchu are addicted to alcohol which allows them to escape temporarily from the realities of their difficult lives. However, they need to find the permanent source of peace. The two mission agencies working among them have had very little success. Language research to determine if Scripture translation is needed will pave the way for ministry among them.

Pray for:

1. More labourers to share the hope, peace and love of Jesus Christ with the Chenchu.
2. Detailed research among the Chenchu to discern their ministry needs.
3. The Chenchu to adapt to the changing times and to develop as a community in all aspects.

