



PALLE SRUJANA GYAN SHODHA ASSESSMENT REPORT

**IN ASSOCIATION WITH CDR (CENTRE FOR
DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH)**

DATE: 22 FEB TO 24 FEB

**VILLAGES – BODLANKA, BHIMVARAM, GONDIVADA, BANGARU
BANDALU**

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Gyan Shodha Yatra and its Objectives

The term Gyan Shodh was coined by Professor Anil Gupta who is the founder of Honeybee Network, Srishti and National Innovation Foundation. The idea of Gyan Shodh came to him during an interaction with an undergraduate student from BITS, Pilani who requested him to provide an opportunity to learn about the rural environment. The essence of Gyan Shodh is the pursuit of profound wisdom and knowledge existing in the villages. The Objective of Gyan Shodh yatra is for yatris to interact and understand the rural environment, assess villages on social, economic, political, and cultural aspects including their creativity and traditional knowledge, identify problems and suggest approaches and solutions.

Supporting Organizations and our Acknowledgements

Palle Srujana is a voluntary organization works for aiding and promoting creativity at Grassroots level in the States of Andhra Pradesh & Telangana. We Scout across the rural parts (knowledge hubs) of the Telugu states for knowledge and innovations. These innovations are promoted and supported for validation and reengineering. Helps Innovators get their technologies patented and takes them to national and international level for recognition. The rural knowledge is disseminated horizontally, from land to land and village to village through Shodha Yatra, magazines in the local language, participating in various farmers' meet etc.

Palle Srujana being a Voluntary organization, entire activity is accomplished through pure volunteerism. Palle Srujana believes that there is knowledge and creativity at the grassroots level which has the capacity to bring a significant change in the lives of the people. We believe that problem solvers are present in the villages who have the best solutions as they tend to have internalized the pain points and understand the context of the problem best.

Centre for Development and Research (CDR) works towards the development of tribal and other deprived communities. With close to four decades of work, CDR has approached challenges of tribal development by pioneering community-centric development initiatives.

CDR also was instrumental in the preparation of people-centred village development documents that were presented to the government. The government, perhaps for the first time, had the opportunity to participate in a programme designed and implemented by the people. This decentralized people owned village development experience was influential later in the formulation of the community centred Janma Bhoomi programme implemented by the then Government of Andhra Pradesh, during the years 1994 - 2003.

CDR's initiatives include encouraging community participation, women's self-help group movement, village health plans, the introduction of soya bean crop, pre-primary education, teacher training, Sampoorana Graama Aarogyam, people plantation program, natural farming and Center for Excellence.

When the opportunity presented itself for Palle Srujana to organise a **Gyan shodh in collaboration with CDR**, we were very excited and looked forward to a great learning opportunity since CDR has done amazing work towards fostering well being in the tribal hamlets of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana since decades.

We were fascinated by the organization's unique yet empowering approaches like the Balabadis and the concept of Centre for Excellence as a hub for the transfer of knowledge to the tribal communities through training and documentation.

We want to express our deepest gratitude to CDR, especially Manohar Prasad Garu for providing us with the opportunity to interact and understand the tribal environment of the villages the organisation works with and CDR's interventions. We really appreciate the hospitality, care and efforts put by CDR into hosting us and mapping out the villages, planning our visit, making arrangements at the villages. We especially want to thank Shyam garu who has coordinated with us. These efforts were crucial in helping us have a comfortable, safe and carefree visit where we only focussed on our learning.

We are also immensely thankful to Palle Srujana for its constant strife to nurture us, help us grow and learn. This has been yet another transformational experience that has reinforced our belief that villages are a source but not a sink. This experience has been possible solely because Palle Srujana has offered us a new lens to perceive villages.

We are grateful to Brigadier Ganesham for being our mentor and support throughout our learning journey since our association with Palle Srujana. Conversations with him before the yatra helped us have a focused learning experience and helped us on the ground to grab most of the knowledge in the little time that we had spent with the villagers.

How this Gyan Shodh came about-

The thought about conducting this Gyan Shodh was initiated by Brigadier Ganesham when Manohar Prasad garu had visited Palle Srujana and expressed interest to introduce innovations nurtured by Palle Srujana in the villages CDR is working in. It was agreed that it is better if a team visits and stays in the villages and identifies the innovations that will be relevant for the villages. These conversations eventually lead to the initiation of the idea of Gyan Shodh in collaboration with Palle Srujana and CDR. Shyam garu from CDR and Akhila from Palle Srujana played an instrumental role in the idea taking shape and its implementation. We are thankful to them for their voluntary efforts.

Before the yatra, there was a meeting at Palle Srujana office where we all brainstormed about the different aspects on which the village can be studied and assessed over. There was also a discussion about how best we could use our time and Brigadier and other senior Palle Srujana volunteers had given us guidance and important tips on the same.

Konda Reddi Tribe History

Konda Reddi tribe is one of the ancient tribes in India. They belong to the same group of shifting cultivators of Kollams and Konda Doras. There is no evidence about the origin of this tribe. They live on the hilly terrains of Bison hills which spread in East and West Godavari districts, Andhra Pradesh along the banks of the river Godavari. At present, the population is only in hundreds and depends on the forest products like honey, gathering the medicinal plants, leaves, roots for livelihoods. They follow a very ancient way of life. They are untouched by development and urban ways of living and live in harmony with nature. Their tradition teaches them to worship, conserve and protect the forests. Even the forests they clear for agriculture are taken care of so that they regenerate after a few years. They have deep knowledge of how to collect and process forest products.

Citation:

<https://indiathedestiny.com/india-society/tribe/konda-reddi-tribe/>

A group picture of all the volunteers



Assessment Report for Village Bodlanka



Akhila Nookala

Lokesh Mallampati

Haarika Gattu

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Introduction and Basic Details

VILLAGE	BODULANKA
MANDAL	MAREDUMILLI
PEOPLE	KONDA REDDY TRIBE
HOUSEHOLDS	100
DISTRICT	EAST GODAVARI
STATE	ANDHRA PRADESH

Acknowledgement

We are thankful to the headmaster of the Govt Boys Residential School, Bodlanka for accommodating us for 3 days. We also thank the cooking staff for serving us food along with the students. A special mention to the students who have made our stay comfortable by lending their goods and being sweet to us.

Our special and sincere thanks to Bhoopati Reddy Garu, Pandamma Garu for being our source of information in Bodlanka.

Last but not the least thanks to all our fellow-yatris who shared with us the knowledge they had obtained from the respective villages they had lived in the course of the yatra. Their insights really opened up scope for enriching discussions.

Introduction

During the Gyana Shodha Yatra, most of our learning happened over knowledge sharing majorly with two people from Bodlanka. Bhoopathi Reddi garu who is one of the influential individuals in the village and Pandamma who is an inspiring woman farmer. All the information in this document is purely based on our conversations with them and our understanding towards various things from these conversations.

Conversations with Bhoopathi Reddi

Bhoopathi Reddi garu was the first person we had met in the village. He took us to the school and showed us the place we were going to stay at. It was him who gave us maximum information about the village. Every question we had about the culture, traditions, housing, lifestyle, he was open to share.

He has a very calm face and he is indeed a quiet person. He doesn't start conversations but has a lot to share. Therefore, it was upon us how much to learn from him. The more we asked, the more he shared.

Festivals

After talking to Bhoopati Reddi garu we could understand that the Kondireddi tribe like other tribal clans has an interesting culture of celebrations. Their festivals have a great emphasis on nature. What kept us curious was their ritual of offering the first production of every crop to the deities. They respect and consider land, water, hills, trees as divine. Therefore, their agricultural practices also revolve around complementing nature rather than destruction.

They have a peculiar way of celebrating each festival. There is a long list of festivals that talk about how important celebration is in their culture. It is during these times that the entire village comes together, people sing together, dance together, cook together, eat and drink together. It is these festivals that strengthen community relationships.

They celebrate almost every month except for a couple of months which gave us a feeling that they'd want to take a break from celebrations.

Jan : Sankranthi, chikudu kotha, Ragula Kotha, Pappu Pandaga, Pindi Pandaga

April : Mamidi Kotha

May : Gangalama Pandaga

July : Kura Pandaga

Sep : Siri pappu Pandaga

Dec : Polimera Pandaga

Gangamma festival

Festivals give us a chance to celebrate the little and big things in life. They are the carriers of peace and joy in the communities. Conversation with Reddi garu made it evident that Gangamma is one such festival for the Kondareddi tribe. Villagers consider Gangamma as their goddess. They clean their houses and buy new clothes for the festivals. They hire a potter from Maredumilli to make pots as a ritual for celebrations during festival times. We were told that in olden days, potters were available in the nearby villages but because of religious conversions, they are not available anymore in the proximity of the village. Now, they travel to Rampachodavaram or Maredumilli to buy pots for celebrations. They celebrate all day and night with their traditional folk dance, songs, and food while youngsters gather to watch a movie together and dance to their favourite songs. This way the environment allows both

traditional and modern ways of celebrations keeping both the generations happy. Aren't you amazed at their inclusiveness?

Jeelugu Kallu

The English name of Jeelugu is Bastard sago tree or fishtail palm. Men and women of all ages consume fishtail palm toddy. Usually, people start consuming toddy at the age of 7 years. Toddy is one of the major resources in the village economy. We were told that it costs 30 rupees a litre and usually 30 to 40 litres of toddy is brewed from the village trees. Fishtail palm is sweet in taste, but they like it sour, so they add Cinnamon (Dalchina Chekka). Some consume it for intoxication and some others as a medicine. It helps improve digestion. Reddi garu also said that the villagers take help from other tribes (from Orissa) to buy or sharpen the knives which they use for cutting branches. This way they are dependent. There is a unique way to climb the tree. They make a ladder with bamboo which is one of the most available resources in the village. They climb the tree with its help. They said, there were instances of death and fractures to people while climbing.

Agriculture

Bodlanka largely depends on the agriculture sector. Agriculture is not just a means of livelihood but a way of living life for the villagers there. Each household holds at least 2 acres of land. They do not use fertilizers and grow their crops naturally. Recently they have begun using Neema Asthram and other organic methods to save their crop from pests. Their farming is mostly rainfall dependent. Summer is like a crop holiday for them. Farm tools like plough and others are made by the men of the tribe itself. They also grow turmeric, at least 17 varieties of millets, and Konda Chipri (broom). Bamboo is grown for self-consumption only.

They follow a shifting method of cultivation meaning they do not cultivate on the same land for many years. Every 2 years they clear new land and cultivate there. The previous one is left behind to regrow and let the soil nourish. This prevents the land depreciating and helps in regaining its strength.

Jabra plantation: Annatto / lipstick seeds

Lipstick is an important item on the vanity table of every woman. Available in various hues, women take pride in wearing it and making a style statement. But do they ever give a thought to how a lipstick is made? Well, chances are that the coloured cosmetic that they adorn on their lips may have been manufactured from the non-carcinogenic lipstick seed. The seeds have a huge demand across the world as they are natural colour agents and are considered to be non-carcinogenic. Besides lipstick, the plant's seed extract is used as a natural colouring agent in

cheese, food preparations, bakery products and sweets across the world. The seeds command much higher value in the international market. According to sources, about 250 tonnes of Annatto is exported from India every year, and it is mainly grown and marketed in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Karnataka. The seeds reportedly have healing properties and are used in treating digestive disorders, weak bones, headache, neural tube defects, eye ailments and respiratory problems.

Source: The Hindu

Water

Bodlanka is gifted with the lake Pamuleru which, as told by the villagers, has water for all the 365 days of the year. This amazed us as we have not heard anything like that before. We thought, how natural resources when preserved, serve us all.

We were also told that there is a drinking water tap for every 4 or 5 houses while some houses do not have the tap connection.

Kitchen

Reddi garu told us that the villagers do not use the LPG gas because of logistical issues. They collect dried branches, and wood for cooking. and refrain themselves from cutting down the trees from the forest. This speaks about their life in harmony with nature.

Family

There is an average of 5 people in the house. Each household gets 200 units of power subsidy. We also told that 35 kg rice per household is provided by the government.

Petrol

There is no fuel station near the village. Grocery shops sell petrol for double the rates. This made us think on how dependent their transportation is.

Marriage

When talking about marriage, Bhoopathi reddy garu told us that it is the bridegroom's family who reaches out to the bride's family first and asks for marriage. After both the families agree, they fix upon a date and announce the same to all the villagers. They said that they do not accept love marriages and there is no dowry system in their tradition. It is beautiful how there is a strong sense of collaboration between the villagers. Every event is celebrated inclusive of everybody within the village. Marriage being a big event, every household contributes 100 rupees and 5kgs of rice to the family. This has reflected as one of the many reasons for why

village communities hold stronger relationships than the others. We were told that a big fat wedding that happened in the village cost the family 3 lacs.

The tradition of last rituals (Pedda Karma)

Villagers do not perform last rituals on the 11th day specifically. According to their tradition, they can perform pedda karma any time before Sankranthi. Not just for the event of celebrations, they all come together on occasions like death too and contribute 50 rupees per household and 3kg of rice to the family. This marks an emphasis on togetherness.

Politics

If there is any issue in the village, they internally work on it and resolve the conflict except murder cases. They warn the culprit the first time and ask him to sign a note in which it is written that he will not repeat the mistake again and that if he does he is willing to take any punishment decided by elders in the village.

Reddi garu also told us that the villagers never accept money during elections for voting. This is very admirable about them.

Post office

It takes at least 15 to 20 days to reach a post to the village. Many people missed interviews because of that late post.

Housing

Mud houses are constructed by villagers themselves. A few people in the village have learnt to build concrete houses. There are no proper bathrooms in the villages. The contractor who started the work of building the bathrooms left the work in between and most of them are left unfinished

Games

When we were at the school, we saw students playing one common game all the time. All of us were excited to watch them play because that is a game we had never seen anywhere before. There were 2 teams, about 6 in each one. All of them held sticks and targeted a small rubber like thing which was the size of a cricket ball. Both the teams stood in parallel lines and one of them hit the rubber, it went rolling and the other person hit it again. They continued doing this until the rubber stopped rolling. The team that missed to hit the rubber lost a point. It was interesting and joyous. We missed a chance to play along but all of us have added it to our 'to-

do list' for the next visit. When we asked one of the kids about what is the game called, "tyre aata" he said.

Conversations with Pandamma

Pandamma is a short looking woman with pleasant features. She had a nose pin on one side of her nose and 3 pairs of earrings pinned to each of her ears. She was not hesitant to start conversations and welcomed people for open-heart conversations. She is an amazing storyteller for those who lend their ears. Any story she narrates is layered by social values. You can make her happy by asking her more questions about the village that she grew up in. When she is happy, like all of us, she smiles and the smile that she wears makes her look beautiful.

On our first encounter with her, she was working on processing Jabra by breaking their outer shell then sieving the seeds from the nut peels. Under the hot sun she sat with a scarf tied to her head to probably save herself from the direct heat of the sun. We keenly looked at her tanned hands, forehead and burnt cheeks. She looked at us, smiled and offered us a place to sit on the widespread mud ground on the slope hill. We made ourselves comfortable under the burning sun and curiously asked her, 'Jabra?' Her smile broadened further while she said 'yes.' All four of us offered her our enthusiasm and interest to listen to her. She went on and on and told us so many things not just about Jabra but about her village, their traditions and her own family. All of us laughed in between the conversations when she repeated a couple of words now and then. We picked up those words from her and began to say along with her whenever she uttered those, and she'd laugh along with us.

Pandamma's mother passed away when she and her siblings were very young. Her father raised all the 9 children with his hard work to meet the ends. She respected him so much because he didn't choose to get married to another woman after his wife's death. She got all her siblings married and raised someone's girl child because they couldn't afford feeding her. She holds great values and looks at life with so much inspiration. She took the surname Pallala after her marriage with a widower in her early 30s and does not bear children of her own. She is taking care of her stepson after getting her step-daughter married.

Marriage tradition

If a man likes a girl, the groom's parents go to the bride's home to make a proposal for marriage. If they say yes, they proceed further after ensuring the bride and the groom both like each other. Rituals begin when the groom's relatives and parents hire a vehicle and go to the bride's place to present her a saree, flowers, and a ring. This celebration is essentially a formal declaration that she is going to be the daughter-in-law of the house. After this until they get married, they are free to meet whenever and stay over at each other's house as long as they wish - weeks or months.

Remarriage and acceptance

When asked about the tradition of remarriage she said, “Young or old, a man can be a groom. He can remarry as he wishes but a woman should be married only once.” She immediately asked us if we had the same tradition to which we said, “Yes, men usually remarry after wife’s death. Sometimes women do too”

She also said, “In our area it is acceptable for men to get married even thrice but women have to have only one husband. It’s a shame and loss of respect to the family and parents if a girl gets remarried.”

Delivery and childbirth

Pandamma said that only over the past 4-5 years did they start going to the hospitals for delivery. Earlier when asha workers and doctors were not there in their village, women would deliver the children at home. Nobody can see the child and the mother after she has given birth. There is a ritual that is practiced after 12 or 21 days of the child’s birth where the caste heads would light a diva and make small rice balls. This according to Pandamma is to remove the sight of an evil eye on the mother and the child. It is after this that others can see the baby and the mother. We couldn’t believe what she said, and we emphasised on our questions “Nobody is allowed to go in for 21 days? Nobody is beside the woman when she delivers a baby? Not even the child’s father is allowed to see the baby soon after the birth? Just the baby and the mother are left alone for 21 days?” To all these her answer was a yes.

There were no lights back then so deliveries would happen in the dark with a small diva or a lamp that’d dimly light up the room. Describing the change that she has seen as a child and now, she said, “Now, days and nights feel the same. There’s always light and darkness is not felt” she continued “Everything can be done even during the late hours of the day now but back then we would all call it a day by 6pm in the evening. Darkness would take over by then and we’d all eat and go to sleep.” Our ears were glued to her narration “Because we had a different lifestyle, we could give birth to 10-12 children.” She pointed at us and said, “My mother gave birth to 9 children when my father was your age.”

She also said, “Earlier in our village we had some people who could recite prayers near the pregnant women and the child would be born healthy and fine.”

“What if they become old and die? Who would recite the prayers?” We guessed what she’d say. “They teach their children and they to their next generation.”

Gangamma - Celebrations and beliefs

She enjoys festivals and celebrations. Gangamma jatara is her favourite of all because they sing, dance, eat and celebrate together. She sang for us one of the songs that she likes the most. Through the lyrics they request the goddess for good time, good crop produce, and happiness. They tell the goddess that they will all sing and dance for her.

During the festival, those who are ill or suffering any ailments pray to the goddess and sacrifice a hen or a goat as an offering. They believe that diseases and ailments can be cured with the grace of Gangamma.

How exposure changed celebrations

When one of us asked if she goes to meet her siblings often, she said, "I enjoy spending time with my siblings and their children back at my village. I like celebrating festivals with them. Here in Bodlanka celebrations are not as grand as they are at my village. There we celebrate with all our heart and it is very joyous. We have men playing dhol all night under the moonlight. We light up the fire and enjoy the dhol but there is no dhol here in Bodlanka. There were celebrations here earlier, but the elders have all passed away. This generation is educated so they do not know much of this."

Education and her will

A new conversation began when Pandamma asked us where we had come from. "Hyderabad", we said. Then she went on to say that one of her nephew's studies in Rajahmundry. In this context she said, "Only our next generation started going to schools and getting educated. All of us - my siblings and I who were born to our parents, never went to a school. We did not even have teachers in our childhood."

One of us asked her, "Have you ever wanted to visit Hyderabad?" To this she very beautifully replied saying, "No, son. I want to do farming and grow food. If I am a farmer, I can feed a lot of people but if I study, I will only be able to feed my family."

Tattoo and the god

"Can you tell us about your tattoo? When did you get it done?"

"I got it done when I was this much." she put her hand to a height above our head from the ground.

"Was it painful? Why do you get it done?"

"It's very painful and becomes like a wound after freshly getting it done. It seems, after our death when we go to God's world, he asks us, 'What have you brought with yourself?' That's

when we must show him the tattoo and say this is what we got. That will make him feel happy and he will give us food.”

“My village and my family”

“You seem to like your village a lot. You always talk about it.”

“Yes, I do. If parents die, I have my siblings. If they die, I will have my sons-in-law. Aren’t they all our people? They invite us with love to celebrate festivals with them. When they show so much love, shouldn’t we go? That is why I enjoy going to my village and being with my family.”

Father and food

“My father worked very hard and grew enough food for all of us to eat. We didn’t buy vegetables from the market, son. We ate 3 different kinds of tubers and greens. He’d dig the ground, get out the tubers, wash and cook for all of us.

He took care of all of us without falling for another woman and remarrying. He has seen hardships and struggles to run a big family. Therefore, I had chosen to get married only after his death. I wanted to be by his side and take care of him, so he need not struggle further.”

Time and the sun

“How will you know the time? How will you know when to go home?” asked one of us
“Do you see the Sun there? He raises from there and sets on the other side. We decide to go home when the Sun goes away too. If the Sun’s above our head and our shadows are right beneath our feet, we understand that it’s 12 in the noon, so we have our food.”

Women, kallu and the goddess

“Do women drink Kallu in your family?”

“We don’t usually drink but we do only when the goddess asks us to do so”

“How will you know when to drink?” we were curious

“This happens between April-May”

Farm, hut, and wild boars

Pandamma told us that they sleep in the huts built in their farms because wild boars and other animals cause damage to the crops by eating them and trampling them during the nights. So they stay back at the farms to shoo them away. She also added “staying at home and wishing for the crop is a difficult thing.”

No to sharing bathrooms

Most of the bathrooms in the village were only partially constructed and left unfinished. Contractor had left after receiving the money according to the villagers. Very few houses could get finished bathrooms. Pandamma's house was one such. We asked her "you have a fully built bathroom. Do you share it with your neighbours?" to which she replied "No, we do not generally do that because diseases could spread due to sharing. Therefore, except for the households, we don't let others use our bathrooms in the village" we were all surprised at her response. We thought, it's such a scientifically valid point!

Menses and associated traditions

Girls usually get their first menstrual cycle at the age of 9-12 based on their biological changes, says Pandamma. In their tradition, a separate hut is built for the menstruating girl in the backyard to keep the sight of the evil eye away. The girl is considered to be a goddess. She is supposed to live in the hut for 9 days. Her diet essentially has bland food. Nobody except her mother is allowed to go close to her and touch her. Others are forbidden until the 9th day. On the ninth day, the hut is burnt completely, and the ash is buried in a pit dug in the backyard. All their relatives and neighbours are invited for a feast and celebrations.

During the monthly menses period, they stay away from lighting the stove, cooking, and other daily chores. They rest while other women in the house or somebody from the neighbourhood cook for them.

She said, "These days, girls are not made to live in a separate hut because they might be frightened. They are all educated now, they do not follow these traditions"

She also said that women of her age use cloth and find it comfortable but the young girls in the village use sanitary napkins available in the shops. For disposal they either bury the pads or throw them near the water stream but cloth is generally washed and reused.

Team Reflections

Sai Manoj Varma's Impression



“The value of experience is not in seeing much, but in seeing wisely” - William Osler.

My first Gyan Yatra has given me a similar impression. The trip was short, the journey was long, and the lessons were deep. The village I have been too had the bare minimums but the people there were content. My first few interactions with the natives there made me feel so unwelcomed, for obvious reasons that I am a stranger asking all the weird questions, but once we were comfortable, their perspectives changed. They were quite open to share their life stories and enlighten us with their wisdom. The hostel we were accommodated lacked the luxuries, but the discipline of the students was a counterbalance.

My understanding from these experiences is that the school kids need to have an exposure to the world of occupation. It could be through career talks or mentoring by the school faculty or talks held by education specialists. A lot of them have big goals. I found the students quite ambitious, few wanted to become doctors, few engineers, but they have no clue about what path to choose, what to study after 10th to achieve their goals. So, this early exposure to the world of occupation is most important to ensure that the kids make informed decisions about the future career pathways.

It is also necessary for the village to have frequent campaigns on health awareness. It is evident that they tend to dodge the allopathic medicines, but the importance of the English medicines for trivial ailments should be told. Otherwise, campaigns on best ayurvedic recipes for such ailments would also do good as they believe only in naatu vaidyam. Having said this, some insights for women about the healthy pregnancy practices would be helpful.

All in all, my first and a 2-day Shodh Yatra has left me with invaluable experiences and cherished moments. The moments that are very dear, that helped me realize the power I had (the power/luxury of education, health) and how I can put that to use for helping and understanding the needs of other individuals, together with bettering my life and adding meaning to it.

Would love to be a part of many more such trips. Here's to many more Gyan Yatra experiences and learnings.

Lokesh's Impression



Thanks to PalleSrujana and CDR for giving us an opportunity to visit the tribal villages. I have been to villages in Telugu states earlier, but this was my first experience to visit a tribal village in my life. I also got a chance to see farms on the hills which is another new experience for me. I have been thinking that the mobile has been one of the modern and important organs to the human body, but these people are still living without this modern organ. Our experiences would have been much better if we had stayed in villages rather than the boys' hostel. One of the outstanding experiences for me was stargazing. Manoj, Akhila, Haarika and I discussed stars and spotted planets. Manoj showed us how Arundanthi Nakahatram looks like in the sky. I also like to thank my co-volunteers for coordinating with CDR, planning the travel and also helping each other for yatra.

Akhila's Impression



My traveling experience across rural parts of the country has taught me that there's life beyond our periphery and it's more beautiful than we can imagine, there are people with aspirations that don't match ours and they have got stories to narrate and lessons to teach.

I've been wanting to revisit villages since I joined work at Inqui-lab foundation. I've been waiting for an opportunity to learn and connect with yet another village. 6th Gyana Shodha was that opportunity and I welcomed it with great excitement.

I liked that our groups had no communication with each other. Everybody as an individual and as a group had different takeaways, different learnings, and different levels of contribution. I really appreciate how we worked as a group to learn together and help each other. I thank my fellow-yatris for supporting me throughout and making it a memorable experience.

Our group had the privilege of interacting with Manohar Prasad garu. It's really inspiring how he has been working day in and day out for the welfare of the people there. Interventions of CDR have made a difference to the lives of those villagers. My sincere appreciation and respect to Manohar Prasad garu and team.

Children there surely deserve an exposure to widen their lens to the opportunities around. With what they know and what they can do, their confidence should be high, but they are put in an environment where their strengths are not acknowledged and marks are prioritized. Not striking of its importance but an environment to nurture their strengths and provide an openness to question and learn must be created. They deserve it as much as any student in the cities does. Each of them appeared like an athlete - fiercely playing a game with all their might. I sincerely wish them courage and happiness in their lives ahead.

Pandamma will remain close to my heart for the values she holds. I will remember her when I need to tell myself that doing what I like and what makes me happy is more important than doing what is perceived to be essential by the world. I am grateful to her for the knowledge she shared and kindness she had offered us. She wants to be a happy farmer and that's a considerable wish anybody could have. May happiness find a way to her.

This yatra stood out as a very peculiar experience for me as this was the only time, I had spent 2 days in a village but couldn't connect well with the villagers. I always believed that maximum learning happens not just through having conversations to gather information but through observation and experience too. We as a group missed that channel of learning. I wish we will get an opportunity to stay with the villagers and be a part of them during our next visit.

Haarika's impression



This was my first Gyan Sodha Yatra. I am thankful to Pallesrujana and CDR for this wonderful Yatra. I was really blessed. For the first time I visited the tribal area.

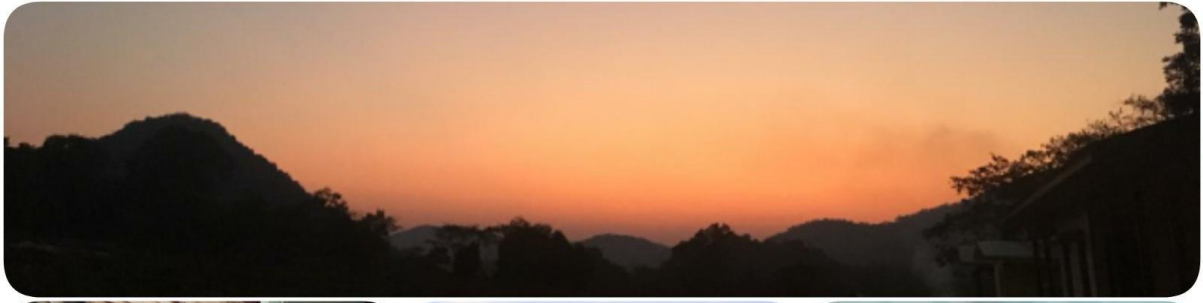
We went in an auto for 33kms to reach Boddilanka. I observed some auto's which are under repair, which people use to travel. While people travel from Maredumilli to Boddilanka or Boddilanka to Marriedmilli, roads were not good because of that sometime engine fails or auto get punctured. From where the auto get repair people will walk kilometres to reach their places. I have a suggestion to put a mechanic shop between the roads, so that few people get work, who are interested. And medical clinic too for emergency accidents. For festivals people buy their clothes at married milli or weekly santhas. They give dresses for stitching at Maredumilli, because they have no tailors that village, we can train a girl for stitching. And then she will teach her friends and neighbours too. And I am thankful to my co yatries, Villagers and Our Pandu amma!

Photos









Ideal lifestyle on earth - Bhimavaram



Omkarnath

Jyothirmayi

Pavan Kumar Vamiseti

Shashank Gangireddy

Humans have long forgotten that they are part of nature too and think that they are a separate entity. We live in this fast-moving world that is leading us to something that none of us know.

We stayed in this village that had no mobile connectivity, untouched by so-called development. The village is surrounded by forest rich with flora and fauna. The people living in harmony with nature and as part of nature, living an uncomplicated lifestyle with rich culture and traditions needed enough to live as a community and simple enough to make others feel inclusive.



The village gave us a feeling of what we can define as an Ideal lifestyle on earth. The basic needs of humans or any living being on the planet essentially are food, water, fresh air, and shelter but these are for the physical wellbeing and sustenance of oneself. We don't consider the environment to be essential, but it is one of the major requirements of mental wellbeing. Anything other than this is a luxury that has side effects too. When we acquire these, it is necessary that the ecosystem remains balanced and that's when sustainability can be obtained.



Bhimvaram village in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh satisfies all the above criteria. The people live an ideal lifestyle. Life is slow and no one is in a hurry unlike us. Their day begins with walking into the forest, attending nature's call, brushing teeth with the stem of various options of plants available, and then climbing the jeedi chettu a tree to get kallu - a drink that the whole village consumes in the morning. They say it gives them enough energy to work till the afternoon when they eat the first meal of the day.



We ate delicious meals that included millets, dal, and vegetable curries all grown locally in the forest. They rely on shifting cultivation where each house has a certain area that they own. They clear the land by hand tools and help each other in cultivation irrespective of the size and effort required in a particular area. No heavy machinery or inputs are given to the land. They grow whatever the land can produce and do not tamper it by adding any kind of fertilizer to increase productivity.



The cultivation requires zero investment(monetarily) as the labour cost is zero(they help each other in farming in exchange for that day's meal) and they save a percentage of seeds for the next crop. They are self-sufficient for 6 months in a year and for the next 6 months, they depend on the outside market for vegetables. The major income comes from selling *jiluga kallu* which is barely sufficient for buying essentials such as vegetables, salt, and oil. They also depend on *dumpalu* (edible roots that grow in the forest) and hunting wild animals. When they hunt a big animal, they share it with the rest of the village unlike us who store things for days and months to consume.



Children in the village were found plucking vegetables to be consumed by everyone for the day. The men worked in the field during the day and evening. Women smiled and invited us to their house and there was no hesitation in talking to us unlike in other villages where women feel shy talking to other stranger men.



Each meal of the day was cooked in a different house, everyone treated us with love and affection. They even made breakfast for us though it was not a part of their routine. The men even went to the forest to get wild meat for us to eat. We ate the most delicious food with simple recipes cooked with fresh vegetables or wild meat on firewood. They even gave us tea made with milk and we found that none of them drank milk or tea in the village. We realized that they do not have the concept of getting milk from their cows. The cows are used only for ploughing.

In the evening we walked into the forest with a couple of youth and each one could identify the plants in the forest with local names and could tell their uses. We walked further to find another group boiling jeeluga kallu on firewood. We all sat together and gulped at least 3 to 4 garita(a fruit turned into a container to drink kallu) full of kallu that approximately would be 250ml of kallu with somethings to eat such as wild meat, roasted red chilli with salt and omelette cooked on the firewood in a cup made by leaves in the forest. They even taught us how to use the bow and arrow that they use for hunting animals.



The same night all the people in the village gathered in one place and we introduced ourselves and explained to them the purpose of our visit. We asked them if they could share any day to day issues that they face. We could hardly gather any problems or issues except for a few such as the difficulty in removing roots and weed that grows on their land for cultivation.

We learned about their culture of marriages where the whole village considers it as a festival and all the physical work is done by the youth of the village and the family of the bride and bridegroom spend some money for the wedding and rest is shared by the people in the village either in the form of money, grains or vegetables for food.

They celebrate every harvest as a festival and gather around a place in the village that they consider as a sacred place for worship. All the festivals have very similar names that have a common suffix “kotta” to the crop name that they harvest which means new harvest. One example of a festival name is mamidi kotta in which mamidi means mango. So mamidi kotta would mean the new mango harvest. They consume them only after celebrating.

The men and women have equal regard for each other and have an equal right to choose their partner. They treat children equally irrespective of gender and send them to schools as they value education. The women were found to be more qualified, educated, and in some cases earned more compared to men, and yet there was harmony in relationships. We did not find diseased people in the village which showed they had a healthy lifestyle.

The village to us seemed like it required least or no intervention, on the other hand, we found that some commercial organizations have started to introduce new types of crops such as Rubber and Jabra which seem to increase an individual’s financial state in short term but in turn, making them dependent and driving them towards non-sustainable lifestyle in the long run.

According to us, the village needs to be protected from outsiders so that the rich culture and lifestyle are conserved.





Sharing our Knowledge On Village Gondivada

Muddam Harish

B Lakshmi Reddy

Ajay Chary

Praneeth Beereddy

INTRODUCTION AND BASIC DETAILS

VILLAGE	GONDIWADA
MANDAL	MAREDUMILLI
DISTRICT	EAST GODAVARI
STATE	ANDRA PRADESH
PEOPLE	KONDA REDDY TRIBE
HOUSEHOLDS	55
POPULATION	300
LANGUAGE	TELUGU

OUR FIRST IMPRESSION AS WE ENTERED THE VILLAGE:

We, a group of four members, entered the village on an auto of the villager. At first glance, the villagers were watching us strangely; on a lighter note, especially the kids stood like human statues and were just staring at us as if we belonged to a different species. But once the auto driver opened up with a smile and introduced us to the villagers, they started moving freely with us.



EVOLUTION OF THE VILLAGE GONDIWADA

Gondiwada is pure & an abundant world which we do not see in our normal life.

The village has no proper electricity, no proper transportation, no amenities that urban people have, but love, ethics, values, rich biodiversity, harmony in the way of living.

Ramireddy, who is the head of the village says, their forefathers first came to this place many decades back and started farming and other livelihoods for survival. In the initial days they had to overcome many difficulties just to survive, they ate leaves and whatever they found from the trees. As years passed by their relatives also joined them resulting in the village's expansion. Later their children got married and slowly the tribe increased. In Gondiwada one elderly person got married seven times, had seven wives and thirty-two children which were the biggest family in the village. Those thirty-two people too got married having children resulting in further expansion of the village and the family. This is a good example of a good joint family.



Two individuals named Baburao and Ramireddy take care of the village issues and they act as the heads of the village. Ramireddy is the leader of this village. These villagers speak their language which all kondareddy tribes speak. They also speak Telugu but in a peculiar way.



GEOGRAPHY OF THE VILLAGE:

We travelled by auto going through deep forests, crossed many lush green hills with huge trees around. The way of transportation and journey gave us both adventurous and scary feeling at once because the roads were not good and they were very narrow with ghat roads, and we felt the commuting was very dangerous, but, the auto driver was experienced to drive us safely. Because of the bad roads, it took us three hours to travel a mere distance from Maredumilli to this village and we reached at 4:30 PM. Gondiwada is a small village with 55 households and it occupies very large area of land. There are three streets in the village with a kilometer distance between each street.



Gondiwada is 13km away from the nearby headquarters of Maredumilli towards Rajahmundry. The village is situated in the middle of hills, with greenery surrounding the village, and for the lush greenery it has we could clearly hear the birds chirping which was a great experience.

LIFE STYLE AND APPROACH TO LIFE IN THE VILLAGE:

Ramireddy is the leader of Gondiwada village. The village has a population of 300 villagers and educated villagers lead and empower the village. There is a good community collaboration among the villagers, they share, involve, and contribute to each other's work.

POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT AND INFLUENCE

During the elections, they demand the politicians what they actually need for their community and village development, they make them sign on a paper as an agreement and then they do vote to the politicians who actually agree for all their demands.





VILLAGE INTERACTION:

RAMIREDDY SPEAKS ABOUT VILLAGE

Villagers give birth to five to eight children to grow their families and their village, and in case one or two kids die unexpectedly, remaining children can act as support to each other.

They name the new-born children according to the weekdays they are born in. Eg: Adivaram – Adireddy, Somavaram – Somireddy, etc.



Once there are enough rains during the farming season, they plough the land and do cultivation. Men and women participate equally in all kinds of works. Villager's main intention is never to encourage labor from outside villages, they also don't pay money as charges to people who work in their fields, and its mutual cooperation. If one family has work in their land another family helps them which could be farming related works or any other personal works. They all come together, share the work and help each other.

Ramireddy says they are always occupied with some kind of work in the village, nobody remains idle. They cultivate on the hills by cutting the trees which they call as kondapodu way of farming. Entire village comes together, gives podu and cultivates. If any family in the village does not have any field to cultivate, the village leader comes forward chooses a barren land that isn't cultivated by anyone, then makes the podu and gives it to that family.

The villagers have their own cultures and traditions like folk songs, festivals etc. All the villagers participate in the celebrations, functions, and marriages of all the families. They share the work equally among themselves. During the festivals, they invite their tribes from other villages too with the intending to keep in touch. Unfortunately, if any dispute or an issue occurs between them, they settle everything among themselves without involving outsiders. This tradition of helping and sharing each other's work among all the families has been there for generations.



Ramireddy says, if any family faces a financial issue, the remaining villagers come together and help that family by contributing equally and they do not go outside for finances. The villagers conduct marriages well, if a girl and boy like each other and wish to get married, everyone in their families agrees to it, the village head performs the marriage. They follow their traditions such as devotion and worshipping the mother forest which they call as KULA DEVATHA,

ECONOMICS OF THE VILLAGE:

AGRICULTURE:

The villagers do shift cultivation called Podu. Kondapodu is ancient practice cultivation in the hilly regions. They are mainly into Jabra crop cultivation.



Ploughing is not seen anywhere around the village. They use cattle for agriculture purposes only. They store Saamalu, Korralu, and Raagulu for their own consumption like using for making food items or for next season's cropping purpose.

PATTERNS OF INCOME GENERATION THROUGH THE YEAR ACCORDING TO THE SEASON

During the rainy season from June to October they are into production of Agricultural products like – Corn, Korralu, Saamalu, Raagulu, Paddy, Millets, Soya beans and Minumulu.

Other than Agriculture income, the next source of income is making and selling of broomsticks as well as selling wild curry leave. The plant through which broomsticks are made is found from March to May, they cut the plant in May.

They also get Papaya, Oranges, Mangoes, Lemons & Jack Fruits, and by selling them they make some extra income.

LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES & INCOME SOURCE:

Villagers are trained in making of Handicrafts from the natural resources available around them like Bamboos etc. Through this Handicrafts training, they are trained in making different beautiful arts, and this handicraft is being explored as a livelihood to generate more income for the villagers.

Villagers also sell vistaraakulu - plate made with leaves, they collect the mothuku leaves available around them, join all the leaves together by using small sticks to make vistaraakulu. It is also one of the main sources of income for them; they sell these at the Saturday mandi market at Maredumilli Santa (Angadi).



Villagers sometimes go for Govt scheme-based work for their daily earning like going to Upadhihami scheme that is run by NREGA.

LIVELIHOODS:

Major livelihood activities here in this village range from Agriculture, Fishing, Toddy Tapping, Cheepiri Cultivation and a collection of forest products.

JABRA:

The Jabra cultivation starts from a season of November and December. They cultivate Jabra during this season and this crop is harvested in February. Its processing employs for January and February. Jabra is a major crop here. It has become a major income source for them since the year of 2006. Income ranges from 5000 to 20,000 per year depending on their productivity.



APPLICATIONS:

The seeds are used to dye the color “red”.

This color is mainly used in cosmetics like lipstick and face makeup items.

The color is used in food items.

After the color is extracted, the seeds are then used for oil extraction.

BROOM STICKS MAKING PROCESS:

Other than Agricultural Income the next source of income is making broomsticks and selling them, the plant through which Broom Sticks are made is found from March to May, they cut the plant in May.





The Broom Sticks making process are:

Collect the branches,
Dry them in the sun,
Roll them against the ground so the leaves fall off,
Tie them together to make it into a broomstick.

TODDY TAPPING

The villager's source of their wealth mainly from the forest. Toddy is one of the primary products from the forest with an abundant number of trees available in the forest, after Jabra it is the main source of income for them. They extract this juice from the trees like thaati tree and eetha tree. Before this juice is made available to drink it is boiled. It is good for health if people consume it under control. It is available for three months in a year. No individual holds any rights in some areas or some part of the forest. Everything is shared among all the villagers.

HAND TOOLS AND OTHER SKILLS:

The villagers make their own hand tools to use them in the process of house construction and they also use them during farming in the process of cultivation and to protect their farms from wild animals. As the villagers do not have other skills as their exposure is very limited, they are being trained in some activities that could make an impact in making the village more sustainable. In this process 100 days of employment under NREGA scheme is being implemented in the tribal village, the scheme provides work for two weeks in a month and gets paid Rs.250/-day.





TRADITIONS:

FOOD HABITS:





Their early morning breakfast starts with drinking Jeeluga kallu. No one in the village drinks tea or coffee. They eat cooked rice with curries for lunch and supper. They eat different types of vegetables like Beans, Brinjal, Okra, Potato, Colocasia, Saama (it is preferred in breakfast), different grams & beans, Tomato, Tamarind juice etc. During their free time, they go to the forest and dig the ground and get Colocasia(chamagadda), sweet potatoes which they boil and eat it later.

FESTIVALS:

Nearly every activity in the lives of the villagers starts with ceremonial worship. The cropping is always mixed, so that different crops cultivated at different times ensures food security and income. Before they eat, they celebrate the festival named after the harvest with a suffix “kotha”. For example, Mamidi kotha is celebrated at the end of March, it is celebrated before the mangoes are cut from the tree, Pindi pandaga is celebrated at the end of May. And many such occasions are celebrated according to the time of the crops being harvested such as Dasara kotha etc.

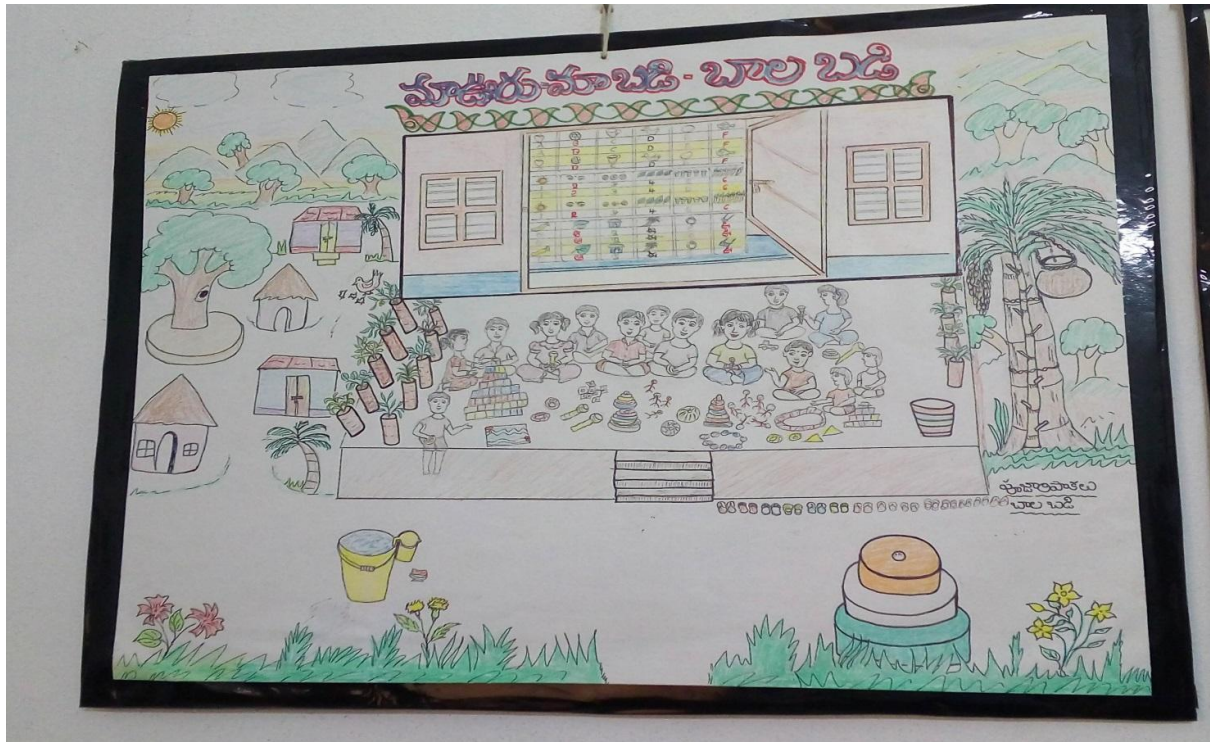
The tribe eats chicken only on festival days and goats on wedding days. They mostly eat wild animals.



Herbal healing (Prakruthi Vaidyam) is not much heard in the main street of the village. But there are another colony two kilometre uphill from the main street. There were few old women having knowledge of Herbal healing. But they believe that telling the procedure of healing to any random person would lead to losing their powers. There are few old women who are practising it within their households though.

EDUCATION:

Anganwadi schools are available for children up to third class. Food that is needed for the growth of the children is provided at the anganwadi school. Qualification of the anganwadi teacher is 12th class. Schooling for children is available only till third class in the village and for higher education children go to a nearby village.



DEVOTIONAL ASPECTS:

They do not have any temples. To pray they go to the top of a hill and pray to a particular stone. Their kula devatha is nagari. The devatha they believe does not have any particular form or face. They create the image of this of in their minds to feel the energy of calm and positivity. They believe in the prayer abbreviations given by their head.

CHURCH:

Most people in the village follow Christianity. They go to the church every week on Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday. They usually pray and sing songs.



YOUTH INTERACTION:

Since the last 15 years, the village has good unity, because their youth complimented well enough with each other for the empowerment of the village. The youth are educated, they involve in development activities discussions and suggest their village leader accordingly in terms of what is good and what is not. The youth takes part in developing their community. There is a youngster named Sathya in the village who is presently getting trained in Agriculture and rural empowerment studies at Rajahmundry that is sponsored by the government, he has great ideas on how to develop his village community. Most of the youngsters in the village are not interested to work outside. They are interested in their own village, and their main focus & goal is developing their community.



COMMUNITY INTERACTION:

They have a community meeting every Sunday at 5 AM in the early morning at a particular place. All the villagers gather at the place to have the meeting, village head organizes the meeting. During the meeting, villagers talk about the problems they face in the village. Everyone discusses it to come up with the right solutions for that, the village leader tries to come up with his own ideas to address the issue. They involve youngsters to share their inputs and after brainstorming they come up with a solution to address those issues.

As mentioned, in the process of coming up with the right solutions, the village leader and the youngsters are playing an important role for the community development. And one thing that we could notice and admire is the unity and discipline of the village structure and its systems.





CHILDREN ENGAGEMENT:

When the parents of the children go to their usual livelihood works leaving their children behind at home, the children who are big enough among them takes care of the little children.

Even children have alot of understanding and unity among themselves, they have so much positivity and purity within them. During the initial stages of interaction with them, they were bit reluctant to mingle with us, later they got comfortable with us. We even had the opportunity to spend some nice time and play with them.



OUR INTERACTION WITH A PERSON NAMED REDDY:



We interacted with Reddy who is into farming. He mainly cultivates Jabra, Beans etc. We noticed him putting a pot of water under the sun in the open. When we asked him the reason for doing so, he explained that the water they drink comes from a forest uta, which has chances of water being unfit to drink. But once the water is exposed to the sun, heat kills the bacteria, once it is done, they again filter it to use it for drinking.

ABOUT BABU RAO GARU & HIS FAMILY – THE FAMILY WHO HOSTED US

Babu Rao garu is the first person of Gondiwada who we met. He is an auto driver and he is the backbone of Gondiwada. He also has a small general store; it is the only shop in the entire village which fulfils the needs of the villagers.

Babu Rao garu always carries a smile which makes everyone comfortable.

Babu Rao garu and his wife were our caretakers, and within a very short period, the couple became our best friends.

The couple always used to give the best food. Akka (Babu Rao's wife) used to cook delicious food.

From the day we arrived at the moment we left the place, Babu Rao garu was with us. Even till this day, he calls all of us just to talk to us and to know how we are doing.

The couple who melts everyone's heart with their affection, Babu rao garu and his wife are the best example for a great couple.



TRANSPORTATION TO THE VILLAGE:

They don't have any transportation facilities. If villagers want to commute from Gondiwada to Maredumilli only two autos are available to them. Villagers walk for at least six to seven km every day for their livelihood. Every Saturday in a week they go to market in Maredumilli which is twenty km long just to purchase vegetables and other needed products that they need for the entire week.

In this journey, each person spends Rs.100/- as just travelling expenses for a mere distance as they do not have any other option. Few villagers go to the market once in a month to purchase vegetables. They eat only with Tamarind extracts and red chilli powder for the remaining days.



They don't have proper roads, and they are forced to commute on this kind since many years, and because of the kind of the roads they have, their vehicle's tyre gets damaged and they are forced to purchase new tyres every month.

As the result of villager's request and persistence in getting new road for their village from the government, laying of a new road has been granted to them and the work in this regard will start from this June 2020.

HEALTHCARE & HEALTH ISSUES IN THE VILLAGE:

Gondiwada village does not have hospital, if the villagers are in need of any medical emergency; they go to the hospital in the nearby village of Chatlawada or to Maredumilli. The nurse visits this village every second Saturday to check about the health conditions of the villagers.

Ancient natural medicine is available here, and there are few people into this. Pregnant women and their families prefer natural and normal deliveries.

Within three months until January 2020, five young people died because of TB, the actual root cause for TB is – these people migrated to Charlapally in Hyderabad to work in a chemical factory, but the hazardous chemicals they deal with in their work led to the lung infection, which then led to TB. The sad part is, all this happened as they were looking for an income of Rs.6000/-per month.

WATER FACILITIES IN THE VILLAGE:

The water comes from the hill, there is uta that has full of water. In rainy and winter seasons water is available in abundance, but during the summer season the water gets contaminated and drinking it causes typhoid fever.

But few people put their water bowls outside in the sun to kill the bacteria in it.

HOUSE STRUCTURES IN THE VILLAGE:

Most of their housing practices are completely environment friendly. The traditional houses are built with bamboo, thin grass, and other sticks and are plastered with mud. Few others started building tile houses and since past couple of years, concrete houses are being built as well by taking the advantage of governments schemes.







PROBLEMS & SCOPE TO ADDRESS THE ISSUES TO HAVE GREATER POSITIVE IMPACT IN THE VILLAGE:

Employment - Out of 300 villagers, there is 40 youth, these youth need employments.

Weeding problem in the crops - Weeder can be provided, a small tractor can be provided to cultivate the land.

Pole climber for electricians can be provided.

Solar lamps and solar mobile charger can be provided as they have electricity issues.

Vegetable storage can be provided so that their vegetables last longer.

Agriculture-related Palle Srujana innovations like Ashok Gorre's weeder can be given to them.

The process of Broom making and Jabra processing can be mechanized. Innovators could work on them to make machines for more efficiency.

With the establishment of "FPO-Farmers Producers Organization", in this village along with surrounding villages, there is very good scope for more marketing activities with more income generation in the near future with no middlemen involved.

Handicrafts – As the villagers are being trained in Handicrafts and once these handicrafts of various kinds come into production and output, there is a great opportunity for marketing them, creating a new wave of livelihoods for better income and thus having a real impact on the tribal villages.



CHATLAWADA VILLAGE (FRUIT PROCESSING UNIT)

We had the opportunity to visit the neighbouring village called Chatlawada, which is more developed compared to Gondiwada.

More variety of different fruits were available over here from the forest. For the weather, it has this village even had coffee plantations. Earlier the fruit processing unit was started, villagers used to throw the excessive fruits as they did not know what to do with them.

Seeing the opportunity, CDR then trained a few villagers for a week on how to make the mango jelly, papaya jelly and much more. Then a Fruit processing unit (Thandra) was started to produce candies and jellies from the fruits in an organic way. It is a livelihood income for these villagers. As the weather over here is cool there is no need for refrigerators on most days.

In the process, liquid jelly is put into a tray then that tray is kept in the solar drier, once this liquid form of jelly gets dried, this jelly is then packed by checking the weight accordingly. The society is planning to market these products to cities and in the process generating more income and better livelihood to the villagers.







FINAL INDIVIDUAL IMPRESSIONS:

M.HARISH



I am Harish studying B.Tech final year in Mechanical Engineering. I have been a volunteer of Pallesrujana for two years now. In these two years of the journey I learned so many things from the villagers during the yatras, on how to respect the elders, and most of us do not know but villagers are very cared to take as well. In Gondiwada, from the smile and purity of the villagers, I learned about how to talk with people. They mingled with me instantly, I also started talking in their own language. They showed so much love, affection, and kindness and during our complete stay, they were always talking with a smile on their face.

Every day before going to the bed and after waking up, I analyse and speak with myself in front of the mirror, imagining surrounding myself with positive situations and positive people, this changes everything for me from negative to positive. The situation which I had imagined really happened during this yatra. In this village I saw the people were connected to my mindset. Every one of them were very care taking saw me like as their own family member. After meeting these people, I completely got changed and started talking in their own language, and I felt as if I am their own relation.

I liked a *bamma* in the village, she was my favourite person. I liked her *mukkupudaka*. She is 55 years old, but she is so energetic and “*vinayam, elanti kalmasham leni bamma*”. She showed me so much love like her grandson; she said to my team members that, Harish is my grandson.

My thanks to Palle Srujana and CDR for giving me this wonderful opportunity, and my group members and remaining group members.

I say special thanks to Akhila *akka* and my friends, for taking care of me from starting of the journey to till we reached back to Hyderabad.



LAKSHMI



I wholeheartedly thank Palle Srujana & Manohar Prasad garu, for giving me such great opportunity which gave me invaluable experiences. I had been waiting for Gyan Shodh from past 3 years. The wait has ended, making a great Learning. By the end of Gyan Shodh, I had remarkable experiences which were worth the wait.

I always used to have a thirst in me, that staying in an unknown place & living with the unknown community. I never thought that I end up my thirst with one such amazing

community and which left me with deep understanding. I am happy for my team & teamwork done by Harish, Praneeth and Ajay.

Babu Rao garu :) whom I always remember for his humble heart & his smile, which makes the things to happen. Gondhiwada gave me wonderful moment's which I could Cherish all the time.

The plane hearts of villagers made me realize how powerful the Unconditional Love is.

Cheers!

PRANEETH:

I am an MBA graduate. I am driven to work in areas which enhances collective welfare of every being. I am passionate being involved in the works that contributes for social good.

I am on my Social entrepreneurial journey of Agriculture supply chains and rural livelihoods enthusiast with keen interest in social development sector.

I believe we have all the resources, ability and knowledge for every human being to have a decent quality of life and more, but at least half of the humanity still lives a sub-human life which is bit sad and unforgivable. While I am in this quest of taking my life in a new path, being of impact and growing myself too, Palle Srujana through shodh yatra offered me an opportunity to get to know more about the villages, the potential, purity and resources those villages have to excel even more in a harmonious way is a life learning experience for me.

In the same way CDR through its initiatives in those tribal villages is doing awe inspiring work for the empowerment and growth of those villages. And this Gyan Shodh provided me a great opportunity to observe these empowering activities at the ground level and we getting the chance to stay with those villagers, interacting with them and spending with them for the pure souls they are is a life cherishing experience for me.

I thank Palle Srujana and CDR for providing us the opportunity of Gyan Shodh.

AJAY

For me, this Gyan Shodh was one of my best understanding which I have never experienced.

I understood the true success of life in this travel...

I have learnt that the villagers have a great weapon to protect themselves that is consensus and happiness in what they have.

GALLERY OF GONDIWADA VILLAGE







Assessment Document

On Village Bangaru Bandalu



Rohit Vidyanand

Prashanti Annamraju

Sai Kumar Kondigari

Carolyn Rose

Introduction and Basic Details

Village:	Bangaru Bandalu
Mandal:	Vairavaram
District & State:	East Godavari dist, AP
People:	Konda Reddy tribe
Households & population:	32
Language:	Telugu

Origin of the village Bangaru Bandalu:

Mangireddy, one of the elders in the village says, his grandfather first came to this place and started some form of cultivation. For weeks and months, they walked through the forest, looking for a place to settle down. Their struggle for survival and their journey of how the tribe started is indeed inspiring. They ate the same leaves for days to survive. After a while, they built a house to live in. Eventually, their relatives also joined them, his children married, and the tribe increased. Mangi Reddy recounts how his grandfather planted saplings that are now huge trees and where they first built a house. The village that exists now has people of a single family.

The Reddys speak their own language which all Kondareddys speak. The Reddys also speak slant **Telugu** with clipped words here. They shared with us that once upon a time people found golden rocks here, that is how the name Bangaru Bandalu went.



Geography of the village:



We travelled deep forests, crossed valleys, and high green hills to reach the village Bangaru Bandalu. The auto which we travelled in, took two and half hours from Maredumilli to reach the village. It is a small village with 32 households and occupies very less area of land. There is only one street in the village which takes us to the doorsteps of all the households. Bangaru

bandalu is 30 KM away from the famous village Maredumilli near Rajahmundry. The village is in the middle of hills and valleys. We also had to cross a few water streams to reach the village.



The Way of life in the village:

The thing that strikes us most about the village is the nature of the people here. They are extremely affectionate and have shown great hospitality- one that we possibly will remember all our life. We were deeply touched by it. As a tribe they are very strongly united, their sense of community is very important for their survival and it has helped them have a great quality of life filled with support and affection.

The village headman Buddumalli Somi Reddy explains about the way of life in the village. Reddys here burn the trees and sow seeds. If there are more rains during the season, they plough the land and do cultivation. Men and women participate equally in all kinds of work.

Somireddy says they always do some kind of work in the village; nobody stays without work. If any family is left without a member to cut the trees and make *kondapodu*, the whole village will combine and give *podu* to that family. *Kondapodu* is something that they all collectively do. The entire village participates in celebrations, functions, and marriages of all the families. They share and do all the work (eg: construction) in the village among themselves and do not encourage labour from outside villages. This practice ensures the money circulation and employment opportunity is passed within themselves and not outsiders. Except for a few youngsters in the village all other men get their haircut done by other villagers and do not go outside.

They do not go to the police with their disputes and settle everything among themselves. The families in the village help each other and share the work among themselves for generations. The Headman of the village says that they all are one, share financial help and do not go out for finances. There was a practice in the olden days called *laagudu pelli* for youngsters to get early marriage. There was no decorated vehicle (*poola bandi*) for the bride and groom. There was a *puundh* which oxen pulls for ploughing. They made the couple sit near that and the wedding happened there. The intention behind was both men and women should work together as both oxen. Their practice of *Laagudu Pelli* which used in *pasupu kommula thali*.

Hunting tradition:



Forest Hunting is part of the Konda Reddy's culture. They will divide themselves into 3 groups first, the first group will be ahead of others and identify a place and be ready with bows and arrows. The second group consists of women and kids and they scatter the animals by throwing stones randomly after the identified place is surrounded. And the 3rd group will be at the back and close the loop, ready with bows and arrows.

They hunt forest animals like hill sheep, rabbits, and

small sheep, etc. Summer season is more conducive for the hunt, they hunt around four hill sheep every summer. Each household in the village has a dog. Dogs not only guard their fields but also go with them for hunting. The Reddys have hunted around 10 forest animals in the last 10 to 12 months, among which hill sheep are maximum. After hunting they cut the animal with an axe and other tools. They share the meat equally among themselves, they also count the family who has not participated in hunting for sharing the meat. They use the *Kulakara* and *Munthabudda* leaves for sharing and packing the meat at a forest area nearest to the village. They use turmeric and other soaps to wash their hands after hunting.



They use hill bamboo for the making of bows and *Nitta Karra*, *Konda badda* for *villu*. They get their bows sharpened by rubbing them on a rock called *Thene*. They always keep arrows and bows with themselves for protection against wild animals.

Police or the forest officers cannot go to interiors every time to stop hunting. At maximum, they go to fields and ask the villagers not to cut forest trees.

Elders in the previous decades had used locally made guns (or *naatu thuppaki*) for hunting. Now the use of *nattu thuppaki* has ended with them. Now there are no experts to make or to use those traditional guns in the area. And the other strong reason for avoiding *Natu thuppaki* is because of fear from the police. *Thuppaki* sound is also another reason for not using it. The people who used to make *naatu thuppakies* vanished or were caught by the police. There are more police informers in the area than before, so there is difficulty in using and making it.

Economics of the village:

Agriculture:

The Reddies here practice slash and burn shifting cultivation called **Podu**. *Kondapodu* is an ancient practice in the hilly regions. In **kondapodu**, they clear the forests to grow *Jabar*

crops. *Kondapodu* ensures the regeneration of forests in few years. Plough cultivation is not seen much anywhere around the village. They use cattle for agricultural purposes only. They grow drought-resistant and rain-fed millets like *Ragi, Jowar, Samalu, Korralu, Solu(Ragulu), Bonthalu and Jonna(Pothulu) and Kandulu, etc.* They grow a variety of millets primarily for year-long self-consumption.

They store *Samalu, Korralu, Bonthalu* for self-consumption. These pulses remain safe, compared to other items.

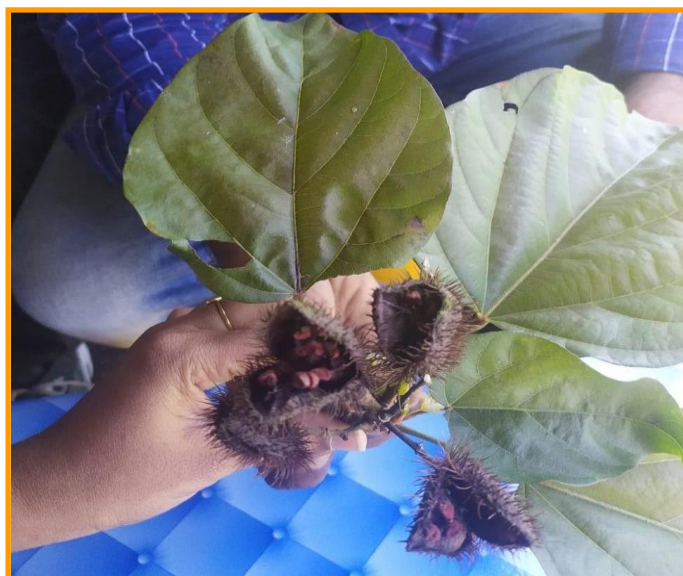
Rubber crops were introduced by **ITDA** here as a commercial crop. It is a black and red soil area. They used to grow and make castor and sesame oil by themselves, but they are now buying oils. This is because the wild goats, pigs are eating them up. They grow their own vegetables. They have been using pesticides only from the last few years (less than a decade). Many of them seemed aware that it has ill effects on the soil.

Livelihoods:

Major livelihood activities here in this village ranges from hunting, agriculture, fishing, toddy tapping, mushroom cultivation and a collection of forest products.

Jabra:

Jabra crop and its processing provides employment for the months of January and February.



They work on Jeedi mamidi in the months of March-April.

Jabra is a major crop here. Its grains are used for dyeing the colour red. The villagers tell us it is mainly used in the cosmetics industry to make lipsticks.



The following are the steps involved in procuring this dye giving grain-

1. collection of grains
2. drying up for 3-4 days
3. hit with a stick so seeds fall off (video attached)
4. Use a *Jallada* to separate the seeds from the dust, do it against the direction of the wind to get the seeds.

(Video on jabra processing - <https://youtu.be/by0UkO0WN2c>)

Broom making – Loss of livelihood due to ecological imbalances

Making brooms was also one of the major livelihoods here. Brooms made in this region are famous across the state. It is extremely sad that they have stopped doing this work because the wild herbivorous animals like wild goats and buffaloes have been eating away their cheepiri plants. On probing further, we got to know that the ecological balance of the forest has been damaged quite a lot. The number of big carnivorous animals like tigers, wild bears has fallen. These animals used to eat the herbivorous animals like wild goats and buffaloes. This has made the population of herbivorous animals go up a lot and they are eating away all the crops. It is very dangerous for the villagers to guard their crops at night as well.

Cheepiri making process:

1. Collect the branches
2. Dry them in the sun
3. Roll them against the ground so the leaves fall off (video attached)
4. Tie them together to become a complete chepiri.

(Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zw6asz5gEo8&feature=youtu.be>)

The women recollect the days when their elders taught them how to make brooms and they were told each broom should be tied very tightly with a lot of branches. The broom used to be made so thick that it cannot be fit in a person's palm. The middlemen would make two or three brooms from each broom they buy from the tribe and make excessive profits.

Toddy Tapping:

The Reddies source their wealth mainly from the forest. Toddy is one primary product



from the forest, annually they generate nearly 20,000 rupees of income by selling toddy. They have an abundant number of trees in the forest which gives this milk, mainly *thaati* tree and *eetha* tree. Income from the Jabra crop ranges from 5000 to 30,000 per year depending on the productivity. No Individual holds rights on some trees or some part of the forest, In case of sharing productivity it is equal to all the households. We have seen the wealth generation from the forest and lives of the Reddies are co-existent.

Hand tools and other skills:

Traditionally Reddies have not made any hand tools here. They always have been buying from the markets. Reddies have their own specific skills, they buy the rest of the other things. Reddies marry within the tribe only, so there is no way for the other skills to come in. Training them in some of these could make an impact in making villages more sustainable here. The art of making bamboo products and selling is not known to the villagers, but they use bamboo made things for themselves. 100 days employment under NREGA Scheme is being implemented in the tribal village.

Money inflows and outflows:

According to the villagers, weekly one earns 2000 rupees of income from all the livelihood activities they do in seasonal times. They say expenses are 500, but we feel maybe they omitted some expenses. This is a conclusion we came to after various observations we made about their ability to spend money, they do not seem to be saving a huge sum of money every week. NREGA employment helps them earn 100 to 150 rupees per day which is 100-day work. After the Jabra harvest, they sell 50 to 100 kg per family, making 120 rupees per kg. They sell *Chintapandu* at 50 rupees per kg. They spend very less on household expenses. They buy kitchen needs like Jeera, Salt, Onions all year round and chillies, tomatoes only in summer.

All other Economic Activities:

The traditional market called *Santha* is the main marketplace for the Reddies here. Two main traditional markets in the area are the Maredumilli Santha which takes place every Saturday and Rampachodavaram Santha on every Sunday.

Villagers take borrowings from the merchants (*shaavukars*) who come from Gokavaram. 50,000 rupees is the maximum amount that the Shaavukars will give as an informal loan. In return villagers must pay *pikkalu* (*jabras*) in case of no money. Usually, they take informal loans and repay in kind after harvest.

Andhra Bank is the only bank in Maredumilli. They only use this bank to deposit their money and do not trust it beyond that to avail other services like loans, insurance etc. Some people use a private mini bank in Maredumilli to save money, and for loans too (at a significantly higher rate of interest because they are available any time, work during weekends unlike the Andhra Bank).

Cultural and Social Life:

Food Habits:

They complete their breakfast with the tree milk in the morning, Very few people in the village drink tea. They eat cooked rice with curries in their dinner. Rice is the staple food here. Reddys eat different types of vegetables such as *Chikkudu*, *Anapakaya*, *Vankaya*, *Bendi*, *Alu*, *Shama*

kura and pappulu etc. In leisure times they go to the forest and dig for *dumpalu* which they boil and eat later. They drink toddy from the forest.

Earlier they used to grow crops like *Samalu, korralu, bonthalu, sollu and mokka, jonnalu* for year-long consumption. There was no

household purchase from

outside. But now they have

started buying half of the items

from outside. They consume rice primarily with *dumpalu*,

jaava for three meals in a day. Earlier they hardly bought

anything, not even rice or oil. It was more self-sufficient

before. They used to drink different kinds of *ambalies* like

tanka ambali, soda ambali, chinta ambali, and jeerika

ambali etc. They used to follow the barter (exchange of

goods) system in the markets for household things mostly.

They do kondapodu regularly. After the harvest of Jabra,

they go and dig for *dumpalu*, cut trees, traditional

livelihood fishing, *peethala veta* and *kokkula veta* also.

Men and women do have equal participation in these *vetas*.



Festivals:



Nearly every activity in the lives of Reddies starts with ceremonial worship. The cropping is always mixed, so that the different crops come to harvest at different times ensuring food security and income. Before they eat new produce, they perform a ceremony called *kotha*. Names like mamidi kotha (February) ,Korra kotha, chikkudukaya pandaga, Pappu pandaga(comes after Sankranthi) etc says how their festivals are named after crop produce. And secondly, their festivals are worshipping natural deities like Gangalamma pandaga(May), kora gantha pandaga (celebrated in the rainy season), Sankranthi, Avula pandaga(comes after winter) and Dasara kotha, etc.

The tribe eats chicken only on festival days and goats on wedding days. They eat meat mostly of hunted animals and not raised ones.

Marriage customs

Konda Reddies in Bangaru Bandalu practice a three-day wedding. The groom's family meets the bride's family three times before they decide the marriage. Once both families confirm, ladies from the groom's family tie a *Nallapusalu thread* to the bride. This counts as an engagement before marriage. The first two days are just like regular marriage. They call priests from other villages as they do not have a priest in their community. The third day they do not need a

priest. The bride and groom give a bath to all the guests with turmeric, especially the elderly ones. This is a fun tradition that everyone enjoys. The tribe does not practice the dowry system. Marriages and Festivals generally take place during the months of April-May.

Herbal Healing:

Herbal healing (*Prakruthi vaidyam*) is not much heard in the village because they say, unwillingness from the old practitioners to teach younger people other than their family members. In other words, fear of losing their powers. One of the strong beliefs is that the mantra that they use for curing a disease does not work if shared with other people. There are quite a few elders practising it within their households though.

Customs and beliefs:

Community customs:

There is no gender discrimination in the village, we have seen equality between sexes in all the works, except which men specifically do. We have seen the sense of equality in the community not only in work but also in social engagement when we had arranged a village meeting on a night.

The Reddies here do not take milk from the cows. Leave milk for the calves. Which is a unique



custom, we cannot see in the outside world.

Pregnancy customs:

Pregnant women in the tribe work all 9 months until they deliver the baby. Delivery is done by her mother or mother in law or sometimes the midwife.



The baby and the mother are isolated for the first two years. They are made to sleep on the forest floor for the first few days and then in a separate hut. This practice is not continued by some women though. They stay in isolation only for a few months as they do not have anyone to take care of the house while they are in isolation.

Menstruation customs:

When a girl menstruates for the first time, she must stay in the forest far away from the house for 7 days. From the second time onwards, she lives in a hut isolated from the house. They use cloth. They sterilize this cloth in boiling water and sundry it before reusing it. All the women, young girls who are studying are also practising the same thing and using the cloth. They strongly believe that if isolation customs are not followed something very bad will happen to the family or someone will die.



Other customs and beliefs:

They use animals only for agricultural works. They tie them up only during that time and release them into the forest after the harvest. They do not drink milk; they do not take milk from cattle.

Women in the village wear traditional jewelry. Jewelry includes gold ornaments with red and white stones. Widows wear white bangles. They buy jewelry from santha as well, as they do not have that skill within their tribe.

The tribe follows two ways of general cremations that are burial /burning for the dead.

Institutions:

Education



There are very few people (16) in the village who studied SSC and Intermediate education. Most of these people are not interested in pursuing education further. The reasons being no availability of schools and colleges around and awareness. Sanyas Reddy studied ITI and does not want to go out of the village and do other work. The school-aged children in the village stay in residential hostels to study, far away from the village. Katthula Sanyasamma's is a joint family with 4 children, all of them study in a hostel.

Sathula Ratnabai w/o Venkat Reddy is the balabadi teacher here in the village, and she holds Intermediate qualification. The GPS school in the village closed 3 years ago.

Currently elementary school only being run by Rathnabai. Material logistics mostly provided by the CDR to the school and also training to teach in residential camps once in three months.



Ratnabai has been running Balabadi for the last 3 years. Villagers send kids to school with trust in Ratnabai. There are 14 regular kids out of 15 to the school.

Balabadi curriculum is very innovative and child friendly. Kids from 4 to 5 years old made innovative mud prototypes. They present these prototypes to their families every Saturday. Old ladies in the village teach traditional poems to the kids on Wednesdays and Fridays. Children grow plants from seeds and label their names on a small flag inserted in the mud. The school celebrates Badi Pandaga at the end of every month.

The classroom for the children is so well arranged for the kids with all the posters on 4 side walls.

The GPS school closed down 3 years ago because of the non-availability of regular teachers, there were only two teachers who had come once in two weeks.

Ratnabai has recognition at CDR. According to her, Manohar Prasad Garu has visited the school and village once.

Salary given to Ratnabai is 3000 rupees only per month, which she also must use for buying charts, sketches and other stationery material for teaching. Ratnabai solely takes care of the

apart from teaching, cleaning, and washing also with little help from the kids. Ratnabai is trying hard to increase the school up to 2nd grade.

According to the youngsters in the village, ITDA provides education up to Intermediate. They need to go to Rajamundry for Graduation. Pursuing graduation is a costly affair for the tribals here.



Village Structural:

The village Bangaru Bandalu belongs to Vairavaram Mandal, East Godavari dist. The Reddies here in the village range to just 32 families and 172 population. There is one Asha

worker in the village, her name is Chandramma. Buddumalli Somi Reddy is a ward member for village Bangaru Bandalu, who is not only a political head but also a community head in the village.

There are 12 two-wheeler vehicles, 7 television sets present in the village. According to youngsters in the village, they watch Tv9 and Sakshi news channels more. There is a Community



Hall in the village, built in 2016 by ITDA.

Their aspirations:

We were very curious to know the aspirations of the villagers – What they think about their life in the tribe, what they think of life outside, what kind of life they aspire their kids to have, what they want in life and what they value most..

Some things seem universal as they want to be peaceful, happy, comfortable. They all value nature a lot and enjoy it and worship it. Many people and mostly the older people in the village are happy with what they have in the village. They do not want any other way of life. Younger people have mixed feelings. They want their kids to not have to work hard like them but work in an office. But at the same time, they have this deep attachment to their way of life within the tribe.

Electricity:

Bangaru bandalu village has got electricity from 2007 onwards only. The power junction to supply electricity is at Maredumilli. The tribes here do not pay any electric bills. According to villagers, they face rare power cuts. Only in winter they face frequent power cuts. All the electric poles in the village are iron poles. The village has only one electrician called Linga Reddy, who handles all the issues related to electricity in the village. They use gas stoves only in winter or if in a hurry, most of the times they burn firewood to cook.

Connectivity to the village:

According to the villagers, the first biggest problem for them is Road and transport. Since faster transport is important to take their produce to nearest towns and it is also important in cases of



pregnancy pains and other health emergencies etc. They must use private vehicles, which have the limited capacity that too on bad roads. We have also experienced the slowness of transport, it took our auto 2.5 hours to travel 30 kilometres from Maredumilli. According to them, there is only a one-time bus that goes to Maredumilli every Saturday. Bangaru Bandalu village is in a complete non-network zone. We have used our smartphones only to click photographs.

Health in the village:

They say a health practitioner (RMP) every week comes to the village and checks the health issues if any with the villagers. The villagers seem very healthy because they live so close to nature and are very physically active. We saw women carry close to 20 to 30 kg weight on their head and walk kilometres worth of distance. The most common reason for their death is fever and old age.

Water facility:

They previously used to get water from a *nuthi* (shown in the picture) which is a structure that is built to block and collect water flowing downstream. They used to carry this water, boil it before drinking it.

Recently they have got piped water for two years that comes to them from a big canal called Yelugova, one of the tributaries of River Godavari. This water reaches them through their



village overhead water tank.



Housing:

The traditional houses are usually square, the walls are built with bamboo, thin grass, other sticks and plastered with mud. They raise their house from the ground. They started building *penku* houses from the time of NTR's housing scheme. Both males and females participate in house building work.

The problems with the grass houses are roofs leak during rainy seasons and *chadalu* is also a problem to these mud houses. Cement is not much-used building material here instead; they use mud mostly. Their housing practises are completely environment friendly.



Individual case studies in the village:

Ratnabai:

Ratnabai is the Balbadi teacher in our village. She is the one who took care of us and hosted us while we stayed in the village. We ended up spending a lot of time with her and she is a beautiful human being. It would always reflect in the way she would patiently wait for us, gently nudge us when we did not understand the context of the village. She was very thoughtful about every small thing she did for us. Our interaction with her has taught us so much about



how to be gentle, considerate human beings.

She grew up in a village nearby and moved to Bangaru Bandalu after she married her husband Venkat Reddy. She was Christian by birth and theirs is a love marriage. They were classmates when they were studying Intermediate and that is where they met. Rathnabai's perspective about the tribe, its customs is interesting because she has learnt about all of them after getting married and is not conditioned to believe them right from childhood like the others. She has undergone a lot of difficulty adjusting to the customs of the tribe, the environment, culture and the water. She is now one among the tribe. What we loved most about her story is how

inconsequential her religion was for her and her husband to convince their families for their wedding. If only the rest of the country was as open minded, we would be such a different society!

Ratnabai loves her job. She puts a lot of heart and effort into running the Balabadi. She feels good that this work makes an impact on the children and she is making a difference to the tribe. Her husband feels proud that she is educated and works to help the children in the tribe be educated. He is very supportive and encouraging of her.



They have a daughter called Blessy who is the life of their household. She is a cheerful, active, and naughty child and through her we understood how different a childhood she has from all the other kids who grow up in cities. She lives in the lap of nature and explores different plants and trees, wakes up to beautiful mountains and so much place to play. She is raised by a community of caring adults and not just two busy parents. Funnily enough, she runs faster than all of us and puts all of us to shame! Her play and the healthy food she is lucky to have access to have made her physically very fit unlike kids in cities. She has a twinkle in her eye which probably only comes when you are raised in nature's lap



Linga Reddy, the electrician

Linga Reddy is a 22-year-old who is one of the most active youngsters in the village. He accompanied us a lot and helped us gain perspective about the village. All the young men in the village are close and often go to their designated spot in the forest to relax and have toddy. They seemed to look at us with a sense of admiration because we come from the city but at the same time were very aware of the beauty of the life in their tribe. They seem to value nature and enjoy it. They were also equally curious and attracted to life outside.



Mangi Reddy

Katthula Mangi



Reddy is the head of the village. Everyone loves and respects him, and he is their guiding force as the eldest in the tribe. He was attacked by a bear and wounded badly on his head top; his hand was crushed by that animal while he was hunting about 10 years ago. His scars are the first thing one notices about him but once we started talking to him, we realised that he is testimony to the history of this tribe. He was the one who shared the story of how the tribe started. His experiences and wisdom are profound, and he was generous in sharing them with us.

Devi:

Devi is a 22-year old woman and was about to get married in two months. She did her schooling from Balika Ashrama Patasala. Later she did Intermediate and passed out in 2015. She wanted to become a Nurse in a hospital to serve the needy patients there. She has been thinking about it from her 9th standard onwards. She looked for an opportunity to study further or to do a job

in a hospital. But now she has no interest either to study anything or to do any job. She had gradually lost her interest because of no awareness of higher education in the community and no family support. And now she was made to agree for marriage. Devi is okay with marriage now. Her fiancé studied up to 6th grade and practices farming.

She was talking about her village and politics. According to her Elections and Voting benefit leaders only and not the people.

Pallala Mangi Reddy:

Pallala mangi Reddy s/o Nilam Reddy has studied up to 6th and discontinued due to health and financial issues.

Mangi Reddy has two Acres of land under paddy crop other than this he has Jabra, Jedi mamidi Thotalu, etc. His family raises millets such as Samalu, Bonthalu, Korralu and mettavari for year-long household usage. And Paddy grains also they use for self-consumption.

He says from his experience that one-year tree milk gives 20,000 rupees income. And income from Jabra ranges from 5000 to 30,000 per year depending on the product.

He spent 2 lakhs to build his house last year.



Mallesh Reddy:

Mallesh Reddy stays in the village and works along with the youth in the village. He had to stay in the village because of his family's political background at the panchayat level in the

last few decades. His wife stays in the nearby town to study and is trying for a job. He says that the educated people in the village are helping uneducated in times of emergency and need. He says they follow purely organic farming without any chemicals in cultivation and farming. They use organic wastes from the hill forest and animal waste.

RAVVA GADDA Village:

Ravva Gadda is a hamlet on the hilltop of Bangaru bandalu with only 5-6 households. Earlier Bangaru Bandalu and Ravva Gadda were one single village. They have no problems with the forest animals, there are only bear attacks, that too vary rarely. The number of big carnivorous animals coming down. They lit the fire with the primitive practice of rubbing sticks on festival days. Roni Gadda is the last village in this route, there are hills after which there is no route.

Somi Reddy and his wife Laxmi work on the jabra process. Jabra and Jeedi mamidi are livelihood practices to the family. Somi Reddy built his own house. He lost parents at his very early age. He raised his two sisters, also getting them to study.

They do not know the end uses of jabra. They just grow it and process it, at the end they collect jabra grains and sell at lowest prices. Jabra grains sell at 120 rupees per 1 kg.



Palle Srujana potential interventions:

We tried to look at possibilities of what Palle Srujana can do for the village and for the most part looked at what innovations can these villagers use. And also, any processes where mechanisation is possible. We felt that Palle Srujana can intervene in the following areas-

- Innovations or hand tools can be used to make the Jabra process easier. It is right now all done by hand. We feel innovators must take up this problem and make a machine/tool for this.

- Innovations or hand tools to make broom making easier. Especially the step where they roll the dried branches on the ground. We feel innovators must take up this problem and make a machine/tool for this.
- The following is the list of existing innovations nurtured by Palle Srujana that we feel will be relevant and useful to the village-

S.No.	Innovation	Description
1	Motorcycle Trolley	It is a trolley that can be attached to motor cycles, can be used to carry agricultural produce or any loads.
2	"HRMN-99 "apple type	Apples usually grow only in cold climate. This apple can be grown anywhere in the months of December/January
3	The type of mango that grows three times a year	This is a type of mango that can be introduced, as the name suggests gives yield 3 times a year
4	Small tractor	Small size tractor that is useful for small and marginal farmers
5	Alarm to ward off wild pigs	It is an alarm that makes sounds that keep the wild pigs off the farm
6	An instrument for climbing coconut trees	Anyone can climb coconut trees using this instrument, without needing any skill
7	Puncture proof motorcycle tube	This tube when fitted in the wheels of the motorcycle ensures it does not get punctured for years together
8	Portable pump set	Small size portable pump set that can be used to pump water. Can pump water from 50 feet depth and transport it to 500 feet distance easily
9	360-degree rotating 'jumbo cooler'	Can replace the multiple coolers that are used to cool big rooms, it rotates and cools the air in all directions
10	Footwear to climb electricity poles	Anyone can easily climb electricity poles using this footwear, prevents accidents that happen by falling down

11	A natural solution for storing tomatoes	Herbal solution that can be used as a preservative to store tomatoes at room temperature
12	Sritailam	Multi purpose herbal solution that works for wounds, burns, joint pains, as a mosquito repellent. Especially helpful for diabetes patients
13	Dish washer	Affordable dishwasher that saves time, energy and detergent too.

CDR and Suggestions to CDR:

We made an attempt at understanding possible interventions by CDR by trying to understand issues in the village. We fundamentally feel

- Can something be done about the ecosystem imbalance and the wild animals eating their crops away and major crops like cheepiri and castor etc are not there anymore.
- Training them to make bamboo products- this could be a potential livelihood
- Training them on skills like - how to make hand tools, toys, other small products that women can make and sell in the *Santha* (weekly market)
- Salaries to the Balabadi teachers- our personal opinion is that the Balabadi teachers must be paid more for the efforts they put and the costs they incur
- Daycare facility for Balabadi teachers when they come for training every month, so that they can carry their children to the training if there is no one to look after them at home.
- More visibility for CDR's interventions in the village as we observed that many do not know CDR
- CDR could implement the village level campaigns/programs with all the villagers as members, quarterly to raise awareness on different community-based aspects like Education, Health care and Nature.

Team members and Profiles & Impressions:

Sai Kumar:



I have studied History, Economics and Political Science. And I am proud to be a civil services aspirant now. I want to learn and understand existing things.

Association with Pallesrujana is of a lot of importance to me. This Gyan Shodh has become one of the main experiences now. I went to this remote place and interacted with people. And also experienced nature so closely.

Thanks to all the stakeholders, who made this Gyan Shodh possible.

Carolyn:



- Being a traveller, it is truly a great experience witnessing BangrooBandalu.
 - The amazing natural landscape, aged old historical culture, tribal tunes with drumbeats and ever smiling local Soulful Community.
- Spectacular Valley, their profound Beliefs.

Vibrant Rituals, Innovative Farming and Unique Crafts,
Incredible Freeze Sights...

- Because NO Signal Zone, the place is Quiet, Secluded, Healing and Beautiful...that's synchronised with PURE Nature...
- Everywhere along the way the Weather is Staggering...

And much more.

- Unforgettable rare memories with them...
- I sometimes go back to my thoughts of those Topographic Points...
- Meticulously, It would not be possible to say enough about Bangaroo Bandalu
- One must imbibe and discern, cannot be told by words

Prashanti:



I am an engineer by education, I am passionate about being involved in work that makes an impact, takes the world forward. I have volunteered with multiple organisations since my

college days. Volunteering has always enriched me as a person, helped me meet people from diverse backgrounds. I aspire to work for rural India, enable people and communities to have a great quality of life. My journey with Palle Srujana has helped me understand villages and its strengths. This Gyan shodha yatra at Bangaru Bandalu has given me a lot of learning and an experience to cherish

Photos page:





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Conclusion

This trip was a transformational experience for each of us. We have experientially learnt how to dive into the unknown – an unknown place, unknown people, unknown context and then how to navigate towards our objective by slowly familiarizing ourselves to the context. There has been natural collaboration among everyone, which is why such a meaningful Gyan Shodh could be possible. This natural collaboration has enabled the trip to evolve organically into an experience full of learning for all of us.

We strongly feel that Gyan Shodh as a concept must continue to happen because it has an extremely meaningful impact on society. Rural areas are most misunderstood even by those working in these areas a lot of times. Programs like these help society at large to experience and live in rural India, truly understand rural life for what it is.

Our objective as we got started on this journey was to listen to and understand the lives of the people. The process of living with the people for 3 days and spending time with them has made us meet this objective very successfully. Our association with Palle Srujana has helped us to look at the village with a certain lens and perspective.

Another objective we had was to identify possible areas of intervention for both Palle Srujana and CDR. We have elaborated about the same in our group reports. We are humbled by the intent of both organizations to listen and consider the views of young people like us.

We want to express our deepest gratitude to Palle Srujana and CDR, especially Brigadier Ganesham and Manohar Prasad garu for giving us this opportunity.