

# TRANSITION IN TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURE PRACTICE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE INDIGENOUS FOOD HABITS AMONG THE

## CHAKMA TRIBE IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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### Introduction

- The Chakma community historically practiced Jhum cultivation, growing rice, millets, maize, mustard, and collecting forest-based foods.
- Their diet was diverse and locally sourced, deeply connected to their traditional agricultural practices.
- Over the last two decades, farmers have transitioned from subsistence farming to cash crops like Areca nut and tea.
- This shift has led to a decline in traditional food diversity and an increasing reliance on market-based food for daily consumption.
- Reduction in homegrown crops and forest-based foods, leading to higher dependency on purchased staples like market rice, vegetables, and processed foods.
- The transition away from traditional farming has resulted in the disappearance of agricultural rituals such as Alpaloni, Genghuli, and Dhammapada.
- Increased consumption of market-based, processed, and hybrid foods has led to cases of high/low blood pressure and kidney stones.

### Objectives:

- To Analyze the factors influencing changes in traditional agriculture practices leading to changes in traditional food habits.
- To understand how changes in agricultural practices are affecting the community's socio-cultural aspect such as custom, festivals, and traditional knowledge of agriculture.

### Methodology

- Household Survey:** A total of 40 households (20 from each village) were selected using purposive sampling, ensuring that both traditional and cash crop farmers were included. The survey collected quantitative data on farming changes, food habits, market dependence, economic effects and decline of agricultural related rituals.
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Three FGDs were conducted with elders, women, and young farmers to understand their diverse perspectives on farming, food choices, and cultural changes. Through these discussions, qualitative data was collected, providing detailed insights into their experiences, challenges, and the factors influencing their transition from traditional agriculture to cash crop farming, as well as its impact on their diet, health, and cultural practices.
- Observation:** Observation on food habits, rituals and festivals related to agriculture.

### Field Site

Study was conducted in Chakma Basti I & II, Chongkham, Lohit District, Arunachal Pradesh

### Population:

- Chakma Basti I (2,283 population with 283 households).
- Chakma Basti II (1097 population with 179 households).

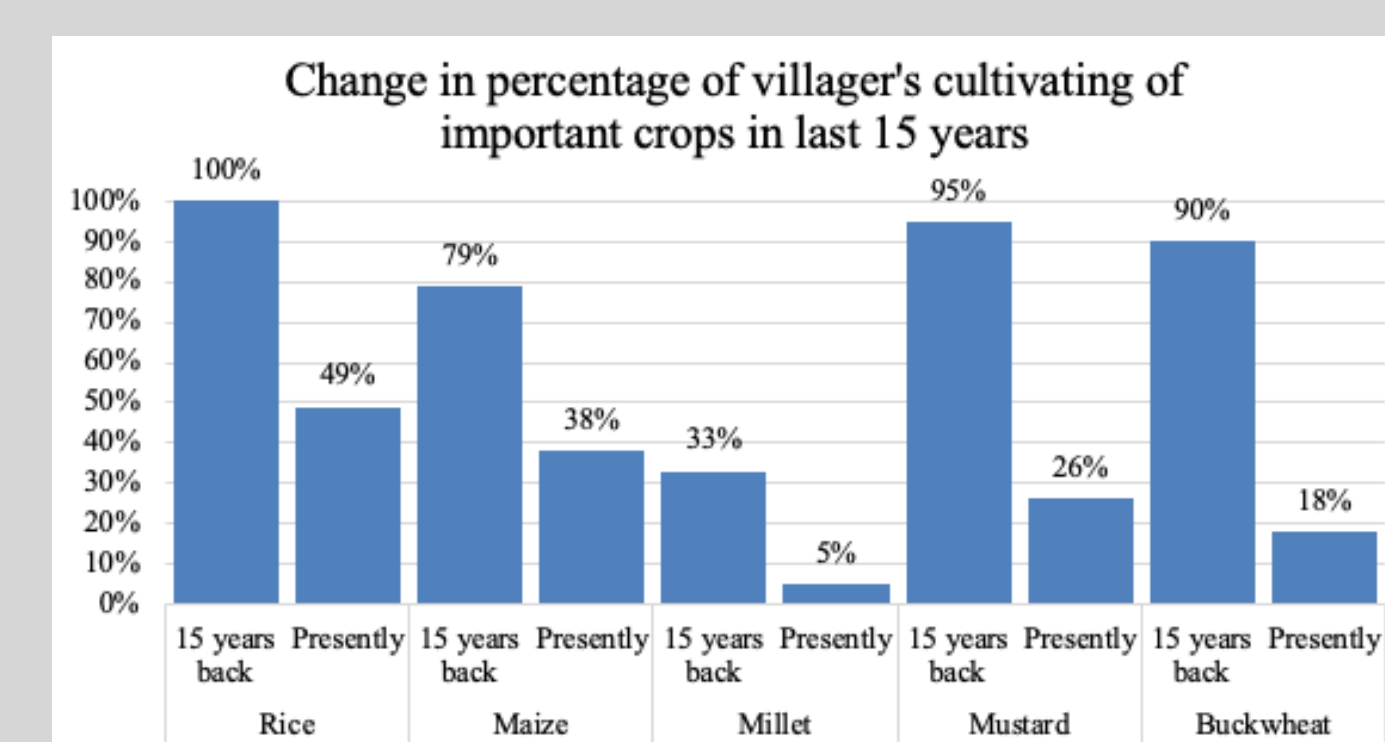
**Occupation:** Their main occupation is agriculture.

### Findings

- Farmers reported that Jhum farming was becoming financially unsustainable, as food crops provided lower income compared to cash crops.
- Traditional Jhum cultivation is physically demanding, requiring significant manual labor for clearing forests, planting, and harvesting.
- Areca nut and tea require less daily effort, making them a preferred choice for farmers who lack resources or labor.
- Areca nut is in high demand and easy to sell, offering farmers a more profitable and economically viable option compared to Jhum farming.

**1. Over the last 15 years, traditional crops like rice, maize, millets, mustard, and buckwheat have significantly declined, as most farmland is now used for cash crops (Areca nut).**

Graph 1



(Subori) Areca nut cultivation

**2. Earlier the families grew or gathered vegetables for food self-sufficiency, but now mostly rely on market purchases as homegrown and forest-sourced produce declines.**

Graph 2

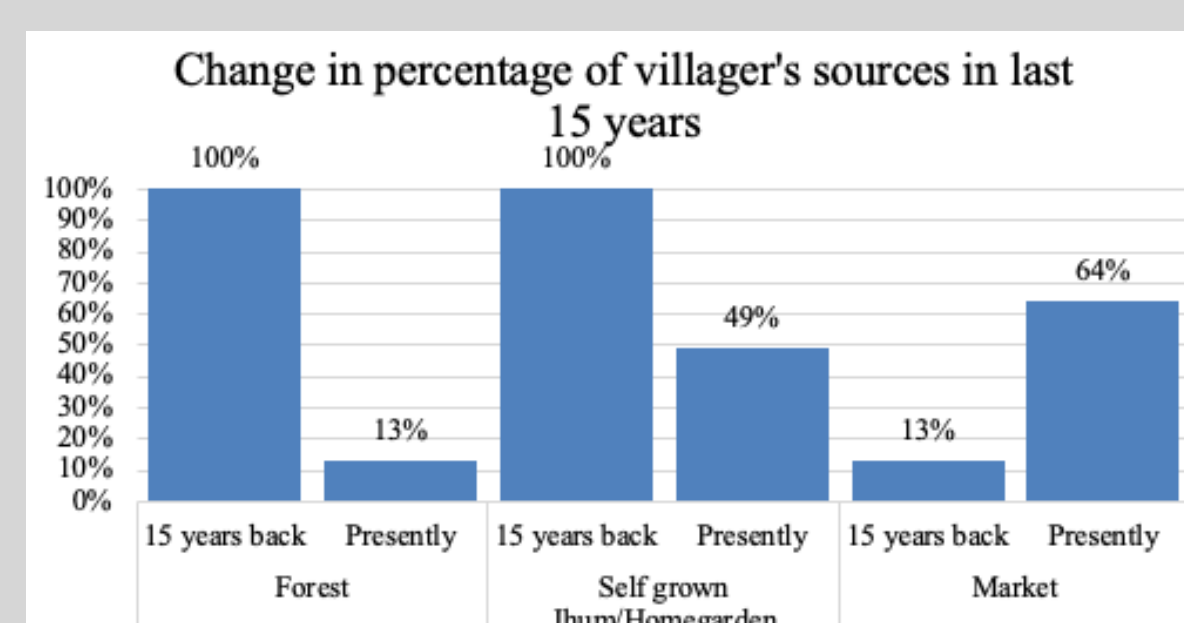
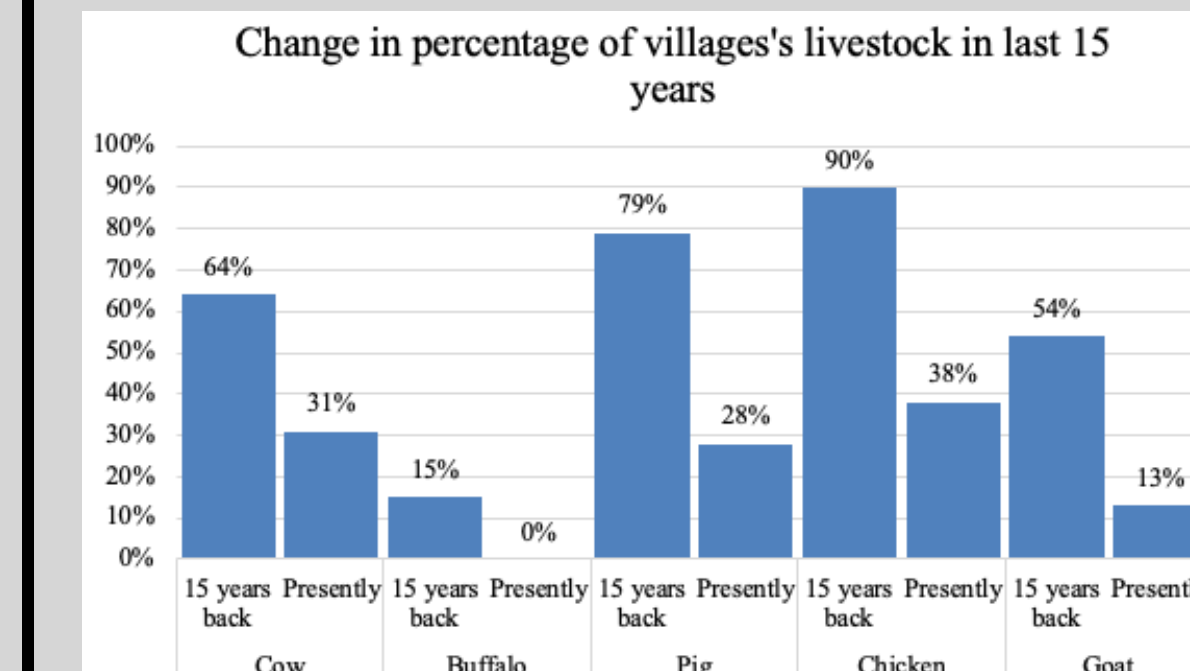


Table 1: Vegetables

Collect from Forest	Collect from Jhum & Homegarden
1. Bedagi	2. Tedi begol
2. Tara	2. Sugri gulo (Pumkin)
3. Uls (Elephant apple)	3. Cucumis sativus (Poro)
4. UL (Wild Mushroom)	4. Dolichos lablab (Del sumi)
5. Dekhi Shak (Diplazim)	5. Amula (Hibiscus)
6. Holatru (Banana flower)	6. Hangam gulo (Momordica cochinchinensis)
7. (Bassuri) Bamboo shoot	7. Mu Aalt (Dioscorea hispida)
8. Pele Gulo (Garcinia cowa)	8. Huju (Taro)
9. Ujon Saak (Ageratum conyzoides)	9. Muris (Chillies)
10. Borona shak (Zanthoxylum oxyphyllum)	10. Manara (Cucumber)

### 3. Decline in Livestock Rearing

Graph 3



"Aama hajdot aami nanan doronor tonpat larser gottong agow dinot jokke Jhum het elow, er sokke bazarot jaa nopore tonpat otte, aat diley bek pai goro udonot jumot"

Source: Map of India

### 4. Change in food habits

Earlier, the community had a diverse diet, consuming multiple vegetables grown in home gardens, cultivated through Jhum, or collected from forests, including rice, millet, mustard, bamboo shoots, and wild greens.

Currently, they rely more on market-based foods like rice, potatoes, tomatoes, fish, meat etc., which are hybrids food product and with some households even incorporating wheat-based roti, which was not traditionally part of their diet.

Name of Cuisine	Uses preparation	Is it in use now a days 1- Normal, 2-Rarely, 3- High
Pajon	Mixed vegetables	Use in occasion only
Hebung	W rap vegetables with particular leaf (Pitte pada)	Rarely
Sumo ton	Vegetables prepared with bamboo	Rarely
Godeye		Rarely
Payedh		Rarely
Tengha	Fammented	Rarely
Bassuri Medokke	Fammented bamboo shoot	"No pai R" currently we don't get easily
Gabi		Rarely
Hoga padey	Prepared with sticky rice	Rarely
Beni Pidey	Prepared with sticky rice	Rarely
Sanney padey	Prepared with sticky rice	Rarely

### 5. Traditional Rituals related to agriculture

Table 3

Name of the Rituals	Month	When it is performed in farming calendar	Is it in practice
Bizu	April	After harvesting	Yes
Alpaloni	May	During harvesting	No
Genghuli/Dammapada/nadok	October	Before and after harveting	No
Maleye	October and December	After harvesting	Rarely
Nuo Baat	June and July	After harvesting	Rarely

### Conclusion

- Despite traditional and cultural values attached to traditional agriculture practice, people are opting for cash crop cultivation for economic upliftment.
- While cash crops provide financial stability, but they reduce dietary diversity and food self-sufficiency.
- Agriculture-related rituals, festivals, and traditional knowledge are disappearing.
- Traditional food habits have declined, with fewer homegrown vegetables, livestock, and forest-based foods, leading to a diet dominated by market rice, lentils, packaged foods.
- Mechanism to meet the aspiration of new generation through traditional agriculture practices need to be develop.

