

Agricultural Festivals in Medieval Andhra: A Study

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Abstract: Agriculture, one of the ancient Profession Continued to be very significant and respectable occupation of all classes of People including the intellectual class in medieval Andhradesa. The corporate life of the people had deeply influenced the agricultural practices and created a conducive atmosphere for the total involvement of all the people of different professions. Especially festivals celebrated on certain occasion such as initiation of testing the land on early showers sowing seeds cutting the crop harvesting etc. testify to this kind of complete involvement of the society in agriculture and water management. To celebrate the every occasion in original process was a festival, such as the Janaki Navami, Eruvaka, Hala Sasti, Sita-Kundala and the like. The festivals and ceremonies completely agricultural orientation in society.

The Paper focused the significance of agricultural festival in the society from ancient times of the present day. Several festivals are form the part and parcel of our cultural life. Agriculture is our major part of the Socio-Cultural life of India.

Key words: Religions rites, Ceremonies, Pasupathi Harvesting, agricultural seasons, winnowing auspicious, ablutions, Ayagandru, Systematized remanants, Ploughing.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The celebration of Agricultural festivals can be observed from the very early days. When man started enjoying the fruits of crops, the celebration of feasts and festivals took place as a mark of enjoyment and gratitude. These were very much related to the religious rites and ceremonies. In the relics of Harappa culture we can be identified with Bhudevi, the goddess of Earth without whom crops cannot be possible. The mother goddess was shown among the branches of trees like Pipal amla, neem, Jammi etc. The Bull which was extensively used in agricultural operation such as tilling the land, harvesting and transporting the products to home or market was worshipped as a sacred animal and a faithful follower of Pasupathi or Lord Siva. This tradition continued through the ages and transformed into many systematized festivals.

An attempt is made in this paper to study the three major basic agriculture festivals such as Eruvaka, Janaki Navami, Balarama Sasti or Hala Sasti, Vitti panduga and the like the mode of celebration, the consequent impact on the development of agriculture.

Agriculture, one of the ancient profession continued to be significant and respectable occupation of all classes of people including the intellectual class in medieval Andhradesa. The rulers of the period from the eastern chalukyas, the Kakatiyas to the Vijayanagara kings encourage people to bring new lands under cultivation on and took steps to maintain water management system intact. The works written on polity law and ethics recognized not only the sanctity of tilling the land by all people including Brahmins and vaisyas but also some age old agricultural practices and ceremonies prevalent in the society. The corporate life of the people had influence the agricultural practices and created a conducive atmosphere for the total involvement of all people of different professions. Especially the festivals Celebrated on Certain occasions such as initiation of tilling the land on early showers, sowing seeds, cutting the crop harvesting etc testify to this kind of complete involvement of the society in agriculture and water management.

Keeping in view the agricultural seasons, some festivals were fixed on certain days of the year The whole year was considered as consisting of six rutus, Vasanthas (Chaitra to vaisaká 25th march to 15th may) Greesma (Jayesta to Ashadha 15 may to 15 July) Varsha (Sravana Bhedrapada) 15 July to 15th September) Sarat (Asvayuja - Karthika 15th September to 15th November) Hemantha rutu (Margasira – Pushya 15th November 15th January sisara (magha Phalgun 15th January to 15th march.

Janaki Navam: the agricultural operations actually start in the months of Vaisakha with the tilling of land deeply so that the seeds of weeds be exposed to severe heat of Greesma rutu. The Janaki Novami or sita Navami was observed on the ninth day of the bright half of vaisakha as she was supposed to have spring on this day from a furrow, while king Janaka was ploughing the field, sita literally means a furrow. She was considered as siri or goddess of Prosperity in human form incarnated in the world for bringing about the destruction of

demons. People believed that Sita appeared in the field of Janaka on the eighth day of the dark fortnight of Phalguna, and so they used to celebrated the occasion as a festivals and start on deep-tilling operation on that day so that they too can attain Prosperity with the decay of seeds of Weed and other invisible elements such as bacteria and funge. The women at home observe fast during the day and offer prayers, to mother sita to bestow upon the aspirants eonjugal happiness marital bliss and wordly Prosperity. (**Vishun Puranam pp 2-16.9**)

Eruvaka: This was the most popularly celebrated agricultural festival on the full moon day of the Jyestha month. (**Telugu Vignana Sarvasamu IV**) Some times an auspicious day was selected for the initiate on of tilling the Land, especially after the early showers or tola-kari. As the Process of agricultural practices for the new crops start, the agricultural communities used to celebrate it on a grand scale and it was almost a New years day for them. On that day they used to worship agricultural impliments, especially the Plough share winnowing baskets, sickles etc. usually certain place like tank bund- a hill or a temple, Where Bhudevi, the Goddess of Earths and Poturaju were seated was chosen for this purpose and from there, farmers used to start with Plough shares. The village head-man with his Plough share was followed by others and procession consisted of Purohits dancers, and drummers, The buffaloes or oxes which are tied to the Yoke also were decorated and fed before starting to the fields. After this cereomony, any day could be chosen for tilling the individuals länds without seeking for an auspious movement. The upparapalli inscriptions of Ganapathideva's region dated AD. 1235 mentions a hill named eruvaka-Gubbali the hill where the villages used to perform the Eruvaka worship and proceed to the fields for ploughing (**P.V.P Sastri- The Kakatiyas. pp.209-210**). We have descriptions of Similar south Indian Practices in foreign accounts where. We can identity the fears of presents against pests and their faith in the capacity of some invisible elements who could either destroy or make the crops very Productive, if such elements were pleased by songs and instrumental music. Varthema give us some information regarding such practices in the Calicut-region thus: "The men of Calicut, when they wish to sow some rice observe this practice – First they plough the land with oxen as we do and when they sow the rice in the field, they have all the instruments of the city continually surrounding and making merry. They also have ten or twelve men clothed like devils and there units in making great-rejoicing with the players on the instruments, in order that the devils may make that rice very productive (**Jones Varthama, pp. 166-167**)

The starting of agricultural or north cultural operations with songs, music and dance was a common feature in the whole of South India.

In Eruvaka vittali and Sita kundalu or Janaki's festivals it was a compulsory custom to use instrumental music while trans Planning the crops also women even today, sing songs in chorus, chorus.

Hala Sasti: It is also known as Balarama Shasti and is observed on the six day of the dark half of Bhadra, Balarama the elder of brother of Krishna was born on this day. Our scriptures say that Vishnu took two hairs a white and another black and there became Balaranna and Krishna, the son of Devaki. As soon as Babrama was born he was carried away to Gokula to preserve his life from the tyrant Kamsa and he was brought up there as a child of Rohini. He and Krishna grew together and took active part in many adventures which included the Killing of many demons. He was a preafter both of Bhema and Duryodhana. He had refused to side either with the Pandavas or the Kauravas. Balarama died just before Krishna, as he Sat- under banyan tree in the out skirts of Dwaraka.

Balarama weapon was a plough, So it called (Hala) (Plough) State shashti on the day west is kept by the women to ensure happiness, Prosperity and longevity to their sons and only buffello milk and curd are taken. The Plough is also worshipped on this day. This fast primarily a rural affair, is observed with much enthusiasm in northern India.

After morning ablutions, a small peace of ground is Sanctified and Plastered with cow dung elc and a tony water pool is dug in it and then the branches of ber (JuJube Plum) gular (a kind of tree) And flash (Butea Frondasa) are planted there in and worshipped. Un married girls observed the Chandra Shastri on this day and fast which is terminated with the rising of the moon in the night, whom they offer Water and Worship. They pray the sun and the moon during the worship of plough and water, for blessing their brothers to get good yield in their fields and gardens.

Vitteti Panduga : Similar to the Eruvaka Pandaga, the Vittali festivals also was celebrated with much dedication by the farming communities on the occasion of peasants used to after some grains to Brahmins before sowing them on these two occasions, Bhudevi the Goddess of Earth was worshipped. The Tribals, who depend on Podu cultivation still celebrate the Bhupanduga.

The festival of sita kundalu. The farmers believed that certain invisible elements cause damage to the Crops, especially when the crop was undergoing the Process of Production and its ripest, on such an occasion, the individual farmers with their female members of the family used to perform a ceremony. Some times it was also celebrated along with family and friends, on that day, they used to reach the field with Panchitam the five products of cow i.e eorine, during milk, curd and ghee mixed in certain proportions and Purified the field by sprinkling it other diluting it largely. It was a custom to install a three-Pronged wooden post some-where in field, to which these earthen pots, smeared with lime and decorated with black dots of ash. Where Prong

headed, By doing so, they believed that the Mother goddess, and embodiment of three forms of "The great Goddess" Would Protect the fields from Pests and diseases. After this ceremony, they used to prepare pongal there itself and distribute it to the family members, relatives and friends. People believed that one should not take the remanants of food preparations back to home AS such they used to distribute it to the works or have it there it self. Among the Non- vegetarian families, it was and still is a custom to offer a sheep or goat to the duty and Prepare the curry to enjoy the feast, **Raghunath Reddy, Palle Padalalo "Prajajeevanam (Telugu) 1979 pp 1954-55.**

Harvest-festivals: Next comes the Agrahayana or harvest festivals celebrated in the month Margasira when the new crop of paddy was harvested. Farmers used to perform this ceremony after completing the last phase of agricultural process. The head of Paddy along with winnowing basket were worshipped and a man, especially the agricultural labourer who mainly worked for his master used to go running around the heap with a broom in hand loudly Crying" Pole-Polo-ligo (**Raghunath Reddy (Palle Padalalo Praja Jeevanam PIST)** the meaning of which is not known Perhaps it must be the reminiscent of the Primitive custom of bali. After this the matter of the field used to distribute the share of the out put to the village assistants such as black Smiths, Carpenter, Washermen, barbar, Purohit, physician, to ti, nirukathi etc who were popularly known as **ayagandru** on **meragallu**, which means share holders. As these people who were involved in one way the other in fawlitating the agricultural Process. The remaining paddy after paying the tax in land to the state was brought home and stored carefully. An image of Ganesa made with cow-dung, smeared with ash was kept in the midst of the Paddy heap by the daughters in the family. They too were to be honoured on the occasion by offering gifts in cash or gold or new clothes depending on the feasibility of the farmer.

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