

## RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF KONDA REDDIS IN KHAMMAM DISTRICT: A STUDY ON NATURE WORSHIP

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### Abstract

*The religious practices of the Konda Reddis in Khammam District, focusing on their nature worship and Shakti Puja traditions. It explores how the Konda Reddis revere Prakriti, Panchabhutas, and Shakti through rituals that involve offerings, prayers, and festivals dedicated to various deities. The study highlights the deep connection of the Konda Reddis to nature and their belief in the protection and guidance of their ancestors. Through their unique traditions and ceremonies, the Konda Reddis showcase a rich cultural and spiritual heritage rooted in their reverence for the natural world.*

**Keywords:** Konda Reddis, Fairs and Festivals, Religious Practices, Nature Worship, Shakti Puja, Prakriti, Panchabhutas, Oral Literature, Traditional Songs, Gangamma, Mutyalamma, Poturaju.

### Introduction

Hill Reddis are nature worshippers. In their religion there is a way of worshipping **Panchabhutas**. Along with these '**Shakti**' Puja is seen. The Kondareddis are of Dravidian descent. So **Prakriti**, **Panchabhutas** and **Shakti** are seen in their worship. They do not have idol worship as in civilized society. Worshiping of trees, mounds, animals and stones is seen. Prakriti is their deity and god. The hills which are the home of their life and the forests are their sacred roots. That is why in their oral literature, the worship of **Kondathalli**, **Adivathillini** and Bhudevi is mostly seen, and this topic is heard in **Dala** songs as stanzas.

"Do you trust the mother of the forest? Do you bow down to the mother of the forest? Do the chickens pluck coconuts with a stick to the mother of the hill?"

**Gatam Sambrani gappuna vela gappuna gappuna**, "If the mother of the forest lay eggs for us, the mother of the forest would be happy for us."

### Shakti Puja:

In India, **Shakti Shiva** is the deity worshiped by the indigenous tribals. Many people are measured as **Shaktidevatas** in their aspect. **Gangamma**, **Mutyalamma**, **Poturaju** are measured in many forms.

### Gangamma

A song sung in the belief that *Gangalamma* will appear in colorful *sarees* if Goddess is invited to the *Gangalamma* festival.

"women, who sing, sing prayers, come out with green headdresses, those who stand with vertical *headdresses*, and those who stand behind with white headdresses - those who stand behind are *Koppula Gangalamma*.<sup>1</sup>

The tradition of cursing deities in *Shakti Puja* is fashionable today.

Even in society there is a tradition of cursing goddesses during fairs. There is a tradition in *Tirupati sangajataru* that those who do not open their mouths are sinners. Realizing the sake that was offered as an offering to protect their group, the women do not do good and stop the sale of the sake and scold the women in anger that the sake is not available to the men. Such a stanza.

"... Did *Thotapalli Chillamadevi* not sell six *dramula saratagi* - was it blocked - *Bootuladi Gangalamma-Pothula pada*

**Mutyalamma:**

Kolupu is the place where *Shakti Puja* is performed to *Mutyalamma*. Inviting the hills, hill deities, *Bhudevi* and *Katanaraja* as the king of the hills to perform puja is seen in their literature. This topic as a stanza in the song...

" *Gogulapudi Mutyalamma*, we are worshiping you, mother hills, hill gods should come mother.

You must come, the king of *Kannama*, the mother of the earth, the hill of *Kovela*."

In another song, *Mutyalamma* is singing the song in a way that she is longing to see *Akhanda Deepa Darshan* and *Chandana Chichar* or not.

"...*Muggumuttelamma* to *Muggumuttelamma* or to the great *Amma* - *Gante Deepamu* to *Ganda Pundalamma* - *Gandapunde* to .....

In another song, the way they are praying to *Mutyalamma* to be satisfied with the offerings, to make them happy, to make the kings and village protectors happy, to be there for us who believe in the wild mother, and to be full.

*Mudupu Kattu Mutyalamma, muchachata Guramma Rajulanna Saralamma Santosh Padaramma* forest mother is waiting for you *Challa Judavamma* we are full *Judavamma Mutyalamma* who is in her area at the time of measuring.

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<sup>1</sup> The Tribes of Andhra Pradesh Published by The Tribal Cultural Research Training institute Hyderabad, A.p. Department of Social Welfare Government of A.P. Hyderabad. 1964., p. 28

It is found in the oral literature of the Kondareddis that they offer prayers inviting not only *Mutyalamma* but also *Mutyalamma* who are found in other places.

".....*Mulakapalli Na Nilaminu O Muttalamma Kotaru Gommuna O Muttelamma Ippurana O Muttelamma Standing Pochara O Muttelamma Tummileru O Muttelamma* Standing in the sneeze *O Muttelamma* Through these actions the *Shakti Devatam* named *Muttalamma* appears to be standing in all places. Treating our youth as "cows". The traditional way of worshipping *Mutyalamma* by young women together is called *Thelpujanapada Geyam*.

Let's make a noise to *Mutyalamma*, come, cowherds, call *Gubbats*, O cowherds, fetch the doll, oujas, O cowherds, let's fly with the *Gubbats*, O cowherds..."

#### **Devaramokku:**

On the festival days when Puja *Punaskaras* are held in the hills, Orem (offering) is planted to the gods. Mom, since you have been with us since the time of our grandparents, today we say, "A new mango is planted, touch the ground, you too, cover the ground for a long time, Kasko, even if I have lost the crooked orujas of the forest, even if the leaves of the ground have disappeared, you too are the mother of this conversation... ." they say.

#### **Pothuraj:**

Kondareddis are measured not only by Gods but also by Gods. Pothuraja is the favorite god of Kondaredds. Poturajuna is being treated like a king.

..Look at Muttelamma, look at that poturaju, the hills are like kissable gods.

#### **Pethars:**

Those who died in the ancestral family are called Pethars. The word pedalu may be petaru, kondareddis dead tama

Not only that, they believe that the ancestors will protect them and their children by being their guardians, and they also believe that the ancestors who do not worship their ancestors and make offerings during festivals will get angry and remind them of their children by causing harm to their crops and livestock. They have a unique way of paying money to their fathers. Inside the house, one side wall is washed with water and saffron drops are painted. New clothes are put there as an offering and coconuts are beaten. Chickens, goats and pigs are slaughtered. Gods will fall. Addressing all the elders as '*Mahatalli*', they sit on their knees and pray to protect their descendants from dangers and diseases. The Kondaredds believe that the dead are reborn in their clan, saying, "Peter but not Peter's child, we offer the offering to you, the children of the souls. Accept it and look at us."

#### **Offering:**

During the festival they make noise by making orem (offering) to *Mutyalamma*. With this item  
Keep the elephants in installments, keep coconuts and chickens

Let's pray to *Mutyalamma*

Let's make a noise for *Mutyalamma*, come cowherds... come cowherds...

During the festival, offerings are made to the Goddess. They pray to the deity to accept those  
gifts and be happy and protect their group in every way.

The festival is full of noise and the offerings are cooled, happy and satisfied, and the hill deities  
*Mutyalamma, Saralamma, Rajulanna, Adivathilli* are prayed to be safe, to see the cows cool, to  
see the children cool, and to stand by. With this item.<sup>2</sup>

"You are with the mother of the forest. *Chilla Judavamma*, you are full of us

*Challa Judavamma* to all the cows that cried for the game...."

#### **Bali:**

Hill deities like *Mutyalamma, Bhudevi, Gangalamma, Saralamma, Ganthamma* are the gods  
of Kondareddis, if any of the Kondareddis fall ill, they believe that it is due to demons and spells.  
Sometimes they get cured, sometimes they get sick and die. When the harvest comes, they have a  
strong belief that if they do not perform prayers and offer offerings to the deities they believe in,  
the deities will get angry and bring diseases like this. In case of such difficulties, sacrifices are  
offered to appease the gods. Also, if the crops are good, the mothers themselves will happily  
offer sacrifices. Even on the days of festivals, sacrifices are made for the well-being of the  
village. It is a secret truth that human beings are among the sacrificial creatures. Recently the  
human sacrifice has decreased. Sacrifice of bulls, pigs, goats, sheep and chickens is still  
practiced today. All these elements are reflected in the oral literature of the Kondareddis.

#### **Goats:**

Goats from the herd are sacrificed for *Amma's* worship.

.... Don't you pay goats to *Maori Amma* or many goats to *Mawuri Amma*"

#### **Cows:**

White stanzas where *goats, sheep, chickens* and pigs are sacrificed to *Mutyalamma*.

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<sup>2</sup> The Tribes of Andhra Pradesh Published by The Tribal Cultural Research Training institute Hyderabad,  
A.p. Department of Social Welfare Government of A.P. Hyderabad. 1964. P. 28

"Goats, lambs, pigs, hens, and their mothers

#### **Plows:**

They want to sacrifice the ploughmen to the evil goddess.

"Wouldn't the plows befall the wicked mother?"

#### **Chickens and Pigs:**

Stanzas where pigs and chickens are sacrificed to the Mother Goddess.

"Pigs and chickens are given to their mothers.

Sacrifice is a common thing in the tribal way of life even now despite the ban.

The practice of sacrifice continues. Even today there are many of them who believe that sacrifice is necessary to appease the wrathful deities.

#### **vejju:**

In the Kondareddis tribe, the clan head, the priest and the *Vejju* are the most important people who organize *panchayats* and decide the *dharma dharma* under the control of these three. The Kondareddis respect the control orders of these three.

*Vejju* is a person who heals *hillocks* with *mantra* and *herbs*. He is a worshiper of *Shakti*. By worshipping the deities, it is believed that some supernatural powers are possessed. In matters of deity worship and family ceremonies *Vejju's* role is given priority in Kondareddis, where there is no priest, *Vejju* also plays the role of priest. He is given as much priority as the head of the caste. Beating the patient with mantra wand and neem mandal is the first treatment in *Vejju* medicine. *Vejju* has a scepter, an ax, a axe, and muyyanapada.<sup>3</sup>

Do not cast spells with it. Due to that, they have tremendous faith in the healing of Mantra Tantra Vidya.

#### **Festivals:**

Kondareddis celebrate many festivals like *Dussehra* festival, *Chikurukoi* festival, *Kondaraju* festival, *Jeelugukallu* festival, *Sorghum* festival, *Mango* festival, *Bhudevi* festival, *Samakotta* festival and *Pacha* festival. There will be some economic pressure in Kondareddis, which means that there will be a festive atmosphere around. It is common among them to entertain themselves by eating, drinking, playing games and having dinners together.

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<sup>3</sup> Furer-Haimendorf (1945): The Reddis of the Bison Hills., p.179

**Dussehra Festival:**

Festivals are a time of excitement for young men and women. The eagerness of the young women who are going to leave the house and go to the outside world to visit the wonderful world, the enthusiasm of the young people who are going to steal the hearts of the children who are coming across the door is seen in the whole festival atmosphere. There is a lot of rest in the oral literature of the Kondareddis to reflect this theme

A song with stanzas quoting the *Dussehra* festival of *Payanistamanthu* during festival times rather than seasons.

"We are, we are, we are not born, we are not, we are not, we are, we are, we are, we are, we are, we are, we are, we are, we are, we are, we are, we are, we are, we are, we are, we are going, we are going, we are going, we are going, we are going, we are going, we are going, we are going to meet this eye, we are going to dance for Dussehra...."

**Mango Harvest Festival:**

The Kondareddis celebrate the *mango cutting* festival with great *enthusiasm* and this festival is very important to them, this festival is worshiped by different deities on the occasion of the mango festival. *Pujara* surnamed *Mutyalamma's* mother, *Nimmakayas' Pothuraja*, *Viddelas' Puttamma's* mother, *Vallala's Devatamma's* mother. Kondareddis used to celebrate mango fruit cutting festival, *Bhudevipanduga* and *Rajulapaduga Tenkapaduga* on separate days. But now all these festivals are celebrated for three consecutive days. In the past, those who used to celebrate the festival of tiger claws for the hill gods, on this festival day, some people used to offer themselves to the hill gods. That is Heimendorff in his book *Reddys of the Bison Hills* titled *Human Sacrifice* on page 202 that they used to jump down from the top of the hill and offer themselves to the hill deity during sacrifices. But Kondareddle informed that today that policy has changed.

Usually, when the mango trees are covered with pods, one day all the villagers gather and decide to have a festival near *Ratchabanda*. Mango harvest festival is celebrated on Monday, *Devarla* festival on Tuesday and *Chudevi* festival on Wednesday. *Devarlapandugane* is also known as the festival of *Paramarajus*. On these festival days, each day a different kind of life is sacrificed. Chickens, goats and pigs are sacrificed and covered. On the day of the *mango festival*, *pearls*, *turmeric*, *saffron and saffron*. *Varannam*, *Gongura*, *Simakura*, *Totakura*, *Maize*, *Kodikura* etc. are planted as offerings. On the second day before, they would turn the whole street as a procession of the plow to *Devatamma*. But now goats are being sacrificed instead of ploughshares. On the third day, a pig is sacrificed on the *Bhudevi* festival. Among the festivals

of Kondareddis, the most important festival is the Mango Festival, earlier this festival was celebrated during the *Putta* period, but now it is known as the *Mango Harvest* Festival.<sup>4</sup>

Changed the main purpose of this change is to get the harvest in hand which is the basis for the festival. There are many references to this topic in stories and songs in the oral literature of the Kondareddis. e.g.

"*Le... .. lu le...le... lanna o le... lelu lella.. le... le... lelu lellamma le... le... lu lella ...* Mangoes are decorated with flowers, wreaths are made with hard string, and there are songs like "*Avijam Kottu Arajanna Dolukottu Bheemanna*" on mango festival days.

On this festival day, the girls and boys of *Vanaprayam* play games and talk with their descendants and those who want to marry. Verses that illustrate this point (Figure 37-45)

"**Come on cows**

If the festival has come, come *Gubbatlalar*

Come call the *balloons*, O cowherds, bring buckets of water, O cowherds, let's fly with the balloons, O cowherds...."

All the family members bathe and wear new clothes during the three days of these festivals. The heads of animals, their blood and the special nerve of their body are offered to the gods. The tender meat is specially cooked and offered to the gods. Similarly, rice and *samannam*. The grains related to the cultivated crops such as *sajjannam*, *pappannam*, etc. are cooked and the whole is offered to the gods in a weighing machine and paid to the gods. The waste parts from the sacrificed carcass are mixed with seeds and sprinkled in the field. This is called '*polakatta challadam*' in the field, chain, on festival days women and men worship their ancestors in their respective houses by offering *turmeric*, *saffron* and *tenkaya*. Then they take the cooked food and meals to the forest and all the villagers of the deities installed there gather together and put a specially cooked offering and plant it.

The dishes brought are shared there and shared meals are served. After the pork is cut and cooked as an offering to the gods, the rest of the pork is shared equally by all the villagers. After the meals, they reach home in the evening and all the young and old start playing. On this occasion, all the young and old spend their time playing games from midnight till dawn, drinking alcohol and beer. On the festival day of Goddess Bhudevi, they make a *Gudem* (doll) and play with it. On the day of *Bhudevi* festival, *Jangamayya* comes and conducts the festival. This topic is in songs

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<sup>4</sup> Furer-Haimendorf (1945): The Reddis of the Bison Hills., p. 180



"Lele layyo lelela lele layyo lelela  
chintakuna teppagatti mamadakuna teppagatti  
tela raoi jangamoda  
guvvaguvvapitta guvvaguvvapitta  
Nelachui guvvapitta  
Lele Layyo Lelela Lele Layyo Lelela  
Marukakuna Tapagatti Marukakkauna Tapagatti  
Tela Ravoi Jangamoda  
Guvvaguvvapitta Guvvaguvvapitta  
Guvvapitta after seeing the moon  
Lele oh lelela lele layyo lelela

A herd of goats, a herd of goats, descended from our time

### **Guram:**

A toy similar to a wild buffalo with real *buffalo* horns is made using two sticks, *bamboo* sticks and black gongs for fun during *Bhudevi* festival.<sup>5</sup> A man squeezes into it and roams around the village like a real buffalo. Some of the villagers shave the dogs and some of the villagers disguise themselves as hunters trying to get *meat*, with chickens strapped to their shoulders like villains. They are called blacksmiths (disguised). When they go round and round the place making jokes like a cock, it comes down on you like a stinger. In this way, *Gudeni* is driven around the village and collects goods and money and *kills Gudeni* with an unreal arrow around 4-5 pm. Later, *Ganesh, Gooramudda (Pindulagachesi)* sings a dance on this occasion.

*Emama Kottadu, E Mamakottadu Chinta Pula Vanne Gurenni Kommabodu O Ma Bava Kottadu for Ravaku.*

Chinta poolavanne goorenni....." they sing the song and have dinner with the recovered money”

### **Green Festival:**

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<sup>5</sup> Furer-Haimendorf (1945): The Reddis of the Bison Hills.,p.191



Pachapandaga is a festival where *bobbers*, *pesars*, *kandus*, leguminous etc. are cut when raw and roasted on fire. Before the festival, if anyone eats them raw in their hands, it is feared that tigers and bears will roam in the village. In the later period, this also became a trust, so they do *Pachapaduga*. This matter did not come in the songs but came as part of the story. It seems that the son-in-law has been called to the festival. On that day, *bobbers*, *pesalus* and *pulses*, which have ripened in the chelas, are cut and burnt in the fire and offered. This is called *Pachapaduga*. Everyone does this collectively. After the offering, there will be games, songs and dinner entertainment.<sup>6</sup>

## Conclusion

The religious practices of the Konda Reddis in Khammam District reflect a deep connection to nature through their worship of Prakriti, Panchabhutas, and Shakti. Their rituals involve offerings, prayers, and festivals dedicated to deities like Gangamma, Mutyalamma, and Poturaju. The Konda Reddis' belief in the protection and guidance of their ancestors is evident in their ceremonies, where they seek blessings for their descendants and community. Through their unique traditions and reverence for the natural world, the Konda Reddis showcase a rich tapestry of cultural and spiritual heritage.

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