



Religion and culture western Andhra Pradesh 900 A.D to 1323 A.D

Dr. K. Venkateswarlu,
Lecturer in History,
S.N.S.R. Degree College, Velgode (M), Kurnool Dist, A.P,

Abstract: The Western Andhra Pradesh developed an age-old experience, with different religions and cultures. Culture has wider meaning than the religion. Culture is more transparent and quantifiable whereas the religion, including the ritual practices, theories and beliefs and traditions are very much shrouded in the mystery and any religion offers obscure and abstract things at one or the other level, in whom the laity are not interested. Religion is generally considered as belief. On the other hand, culture is vivid, wide and varied and any culture is represented through the facts and material culture. Culture is heterogenous quantifiable and remains a materialistic representation of the human vivacities. Thus, both religion and culture represent a reverse and obverse of the same coin. All culture is obverse and visible. All religion is invisible and reverse. At a particular axis, the culture merges with the religion and the axis consists of the qualities of belief, ecstasy and immortality. Each zone, including Western Andhra, is having its own way of style of associating with the nature and carving out its life. In the same way each one had its own way of expressing the belief, ecstasy and identifying the values of immortality.

Keywords: Fertility Cult, Folk Gods And Goddesses, Kakati, Ekavira,

The Western Andhra Pradesh developed an age-old experience, with different religions and cultures. Culture has wider meaning than the religion. Culture is more transparent and quantifiable whereas the religion, including the ritual practices, theories and beliefs and traditions are very much shrouded in the mystery and any religion offers obscure and abstract things at one or the other level, in whom the laity are not interested. Religion is generally considered as belief. On the other hand, culture is vivid, wide and varied and any culture is represented through the facts and material culture. Culture is heterogenous quantifiable and remains a materialistic representation of the human vivacities. Thus, both religion and culture represent a reverse and

obverse of the same coin. All culture is obverse and visible. All religion is invisible and reverse.

The segregation of the human life started at point of distinguishing the same from certain astral bodies like planets, animals like reptiles and ungulates and the trees. They are all having the encircling capacity. The important changes brought about in nature by the changes of planets in the signs of the zodiac remained a basic guide to distinguish the events like transit of sun, eclipse of Sun and Moon, and the transit of Jupiter. The transit of Sun left many changes on the earth. Basically the transit of Sun into the zodiac signs of Aries (Mesha), Cancer (Karkataka), Libra (Tula), Sagittarius



(Dhanus) and Capricorn (Makara) marked distinctive stages. The man, who is after understanding his relations with the seen nature and unseen time, depended on the Sun and Moon to understand the nature and its impact on man and nature. Thus, the belief developed to treat such periods of transit as pious. In the same way, it is believed, though not proved mechanically, that, on every transit of Jupiter into one sign of Zodiac, the first ten days, the impact of Jupiter are found on different rivers. The seven scared rivers – impact of Jupiter are found on different rivers. The seven scared rivers –

“Gange ca Yamune caiva Godavari Sarasvati Narmada Sindhu Kaveri” – attained much significance. The people offered oblations to Jupiter and the ancestors on such occasions for ten days. This occasion is called Pushkara Kala. During this period make charities the people and donations to the temples, brahmanas. Thirdly the Sun and Moon are often subjected to eclipse. Generally the moon is subjected thrice and Sun twice every year. The donations were made in the temples on the eve of the eclipse. The period of eclipse is found named as **Somoparaga** or **Suryoparaga**, where in **uparaga** means a stage of eclipse. Donating on Uparaga times for the merit of the ancestors is mentioned in the inscriptions.

For instance, on the eve of Surya grahana or solar eclipse, Gokarna Maharajulu of the Kanduru Coda family donated to Gavali Bhimana Peggada at Panugallu on 10-3-1122 Friday for the merit of himself and donated the following items such as the Lordship of Addaluru. For instance, on the eve of a Lunar eclipse, Karana Galappa donated to God Somesvaradevara at Jayantipura

on 1111A.D. Vaisakha 15 (full Moon day) for the merit of and donated the following items such as Perpetual lamp. The eve of the Pushkara kala is very important. But it is interesting to note that no record is available that the donations were made on that time. It may be due to its affiliation with the Jaina tradition in the Western parts of Andhra Pradesh. Moreover, it can also be taken that the donors belong to the Sudra families and hence, did not venture to satiate Jupiter, which is generally done by the brahmanas alone.

FERTILITY CULT:

The fertility cult played a major role. It is clear that almost all the races in Andhra Pradesh and India promoted the fertility cult. The purpose of the fertility cult is that the inhabitants must have a growth in the wealth of the children, live-stock and the crops. The worshipping of the serpents, the respect given to the cows, bulls, to the trees, like the Asvattha, (Picus religiosa), Bilva (locally known as Maredu) and Neem (locally known as Vepa). Aswattha, Bilva etc., were considered to be the representatives respectively of Lord Vishnu, Lord Siva and the Mother Goddess. It is understood that the form of worshipping a nude form named **Lajjagauri** is traced at Alampur in the Krishna basin. It is named by some scholars as of Tantric element; but it is an important point to note that worshipping the nude forms of a woman was considered to be a case of fertility cult. It is giving a way for the predominance of the worship of woman through the methods, generally named folk lore and the goddesses were considered to be the folk goddesses. It is essential to note that not only the goddess but also the Gods had some role



to play in displaying the then religious traditions.

Folk gods and goddesses

The term folk-goddesses is used to represent the forms and names of some goddesses, which were worshipped in the western Andhra Pradesh.

Kakati: The goddesses Kakati occupied a major place. Kakati was considered to be the kshetra palika of Kakati puri and the same Kakatipuri was identified with the township of Anumakonda⁸ (modern Hanumakonda of Warangal Dt.) Kakatamma was considered to be an anthropomorphic representation of the totemic goddess Kushmandini, much found in the Jain literature. The Kakatiyas were said to be a family affiliated to the goddess Kakati. This type of affiliation of a house to a Goddess practically started with the unsettled communities. Such examples are seen in the South-Western Andhra Pradesh in the case of the Kurubas, where in the communities do have a tradition called Gudikattu. By Gudikattu the members of the concerned group used to congregate for all socio-religious activities in the premises of that temple. In the same way the Kakatiyas might have chosen Kushmandini alias Kakatamma to be their goddess. She was a tutelary deity of that family.

Ekavira: The cult of Ekavira is noticed through the evidence provided by Vinukonda Vallabharaya in Kridabhiramamu. He mentions a note to the effect that, **Kakatammaku saisoddu Ekavira.**

Ekavira is considered to be the attending deity on Kakatamma. Actually the identification of the goddess Ekavira remained a hard nut. Some of the scholars identify her with the goddess

Renuka alias Ellamma. Both the names Renuka and Ellamma, as well as their origin and cult are shrouded in mystery. Renuka was said to be the mother of Parasurama, who killed the Kshatriyas for 21 times and destroyed the community; but in his end he met with a defeat in the hands of Rama of Raghu family and took assylum in that part of land donated to him by the Sea. In the context of India, the region of Kerala was having a name as Parasurama kshetra and the entire western Ghats were said to have come out from the sea during the mio-cene period i.e. 35 to 15 million years ago. Comparing all these evidences to a folk goddess may appear at the out set extreme, but they had a say to pursue for re-identification. The historians or the Anthropologists, as on date, are not in a position to accept these basic facts. If we consider them intact the cult of Renuka, goes to such a period, where the scientists are not finding human association. On the other hand, if these things are admitted merely as myth or fables, the only alternative term will be, the origin of Renuka, of her name or cult is shrouded in mystery. Most of the peninsular zone is cognisant of the goddess Renuka. As such it can not be denied of the fact that Renuka or Ellamma or Ekavira are mere concoctions for the reason that these are not found in the sources, draped after in a certain historians model for a historiographic paradigm.

Padmakshi: The temple of Goddess Padmakshi was referred to in Kridabhiramamu and the narrative goes to say that learned ladies like Macaladevi displayed their vital skills of arts and dance in the temple. The iconography of Padmakshi is not known.

Virabhadra: Virabhadra is a God of Saivaite pantheon. Virabhadra was said to have evolved from the hair of Lord



Siva, who was angry with Dakshaprajapati on hearing that the daughter of Daksha and his wife Dakshayani committed suicide. Virabhadra became more a folk God and he was very much associated with the rural life. The villagers used to perform car-festival for Virabhadra. This is mentioned by Palkurki Somanatha in his Basavapurana as:

Virabhadruni jatravela ninbandi ye roppa baniceda podiga nipalu Purahara gonuma.. in the story of a female-child devotee by name Godaguci. Virabhadra occupied a place of eminence in the rural life.

Vratas and Parvas: The practice of the vratas and parvas is a practice found for the first time with the Jainas. The inscriptions of Nalgonda and Karimnagar districts were replete with the inscriptions of the Jainas are mentioning about the vratas and parvas. The main idea behind this acceptance is to have a social gathering on different auspicious days and the vratas are mentioned for the individual developments through the maintenance of some prescribed code of conduct. This method had gone deep into the villages and such traditions entered the rural life. Such impact is found in the following examples.

Virabhadruni jaatra: Virabhadra is a kshetra pala and he is considered to protect the village. Every year car festival was conducted. Even the children used to draw the car of Virabhadra. It has been mentioned in the work of Palkurki Somanatha namely Basavapurana, which is stating that, **Virabhadruni Jatra vela ninbandi ye roppabaniceda.** (I will draw the cart on the day of the festival of Virabhadra till I be strained).

In the same way all the followers of Vira Saiva cult had taken the oath to perform the conditions of Sivaratri festival.- **Sivaratri nityambu cellincu basa** and also to treat that all the devotees of Siva are non-other than Siva... **Siva bhaktudellanu Sivudanu basa.**

Sivaratri is a festive occasion of much significance to all the Sivaites. It is so because, Sivaratri marked the day of Siva being identified as in the form of Siva Linga that is Lingobhava murti. That is why all the Saivaites devoted to worship Lord Rudra on the 14th day of the dark fortnight of the Magha month of the Indian calendar was called Mahasivaratri.

In the back of ground of these points, it can be understood that the Western Andhra Pradesh was characterised by two important religions – Jainism and Vira Saiva cult.

JAINISM:

Jainism was an outstanding religion in Western Andhra Pradesh, since the times of the predominance of Rashtrakutas. Their subordinate chiefs the Calukyas of Vemulavada and the successors of the Rashtrakutas, the Calukyas of Kalyani patronised Jainism. Kolanupaka and Vemulavada remained the two famous centres of Jainism. The Jaina cult came into the South India from the time of Mourya Candra Gupta, and the conquests of Kharavela of Kalinga contributed for the spread of Jainism in coastal Andhra. But the impact of Mahayana cult of Buddhism and also the prevalence of Puranic Hinduism after the invasions of Samudra Gupta, particularly since the times of Vishnukundins (C.4 - 7) Puranic Hinduism had a spread in the coastal Andhra.

The evidence of the Vishnukundins is very much found in



Nalgonda district as the Tummalgudem plates of Govindavarman II and Madhavavarman II were issued from Indrapalanagara, whom B.R. Sastri identifies with Indrapuri of Nalgonda district. During the Vishnukundin period Buddhism had some way, but the dominance of Jainism was not found. Only since the invasions of Pulakesin II, whose conquests are recorded in the Aihole Pillar inscription drafted by Ravikirti, and beginning with the extolling of Jaina pontiffs as:

Jayati Bhagawanjinendroja rakshana janmano.. etc. clearly indicates that Jaina element again had a re-introduction since the times of the Calukyas of Badami and Jainism occupied all such places previously occupied by the Buddhism.

Many of the evidences for the understanding of Jainism in the Western parts of Andhra Pradesh are found in the contemporary literature and epigraphs. Yasatilaka campus of Somadeva Suri and Nitivakyamritamu of the same author form the important literary sources. On the other hand the following inscriptions are of significance.

Kyrkayala inscription of Jainiavallbha of Karimnagar district; Vemulavada inscription of Baddega II of Vemulavada; Saidapur inscription of Calukya Jayasimha II in Nalgonda district; Kapparo peta record in Peddapalli taluk of Karimnagar district; Kolanupaka inscriptions in Nalgonda district; Govindapuram inscription of Narasampeta taluk of Warangal district, and Bekkallu inscription in Jangagaon taluk of Warangal district, are very important.

It has been mentioned that: "Jainism might have reached Andhra from the north and western parts of India. The period of its advent may have been as early as the 1st century BC or if

not still earlier. At least by the 3rd or 7th century A.D. it was practised in Andhra. Jainism eclipsed in the area in the late medieval times due to inter alia persecution by the 'Saivaites'.

The Jaina Sanghas, like Mula Sangha, and the Gacchas, like Sarvasvati Gaccha, were developed under the guidance of famous teachers like Kundakundacarya. Jainism had more development in the Svetambara tradition. The Jaina religion gradually developed some practices, which had given rise to the items like Jaina basadis. "The Brhatkalpa bhashya that can be dated to the early middle ages illustrates the growing popularity of the practice of Mathavasa i.e., permanent residence of monks. This necessitated a change of the old canonical rules restraining monks from taking a permanent residence".

This injunction was very much accepted by Hemachandra. As a result there was much scope for the construction of Jaina Basadis. In Medak district there were basadis like Namayasetti basadi, Ayyanabasadi, Kalabasadi, Nadikuligeya basadi, were found. The Basadis were also called Jinalayas. Such Jinalayas were mentioned as BaddegaJinalaya, RamesvaraJinalaya Soma Jinalaya, , Kotta Jinalaya, Kirtivalasa Santi Jinalaya, and Vaidaya Ratnakara Jinalaya, , are of much significance. They promoted temples to the Tirthankaras like, Santinatha, Parsvanatha and Mahavira. Jainism had developed as a cult for the element of the promotion of the etiquette of love and peace. It resulted in the promotion of medicine by many Jaina mendicants. Aggalayya was considered to be a famous **Parahita** i.e., the physician, who always loved the people and promoted health by extending medical services. Jainism had



gone to the extent of building hospitals for the health of the man-kind.

Jainism, irrespective of its vital developments had to give way to the Vira Saiva cult.

Vira Saivism:

The rise of Vira Saiva cult is due to the contribution of Vira Basava, who was in the court of Kalcuri Bijjala, who disturbed the rule of the Calukays of Kalyani. It had led for the militant spirit among the Vira Saivas, who challenged the very existence of Jaina thought and carried the spirit of their cult under the banner of Basava. They held Virabhadra, Siva and Nandi (another name for deified form of Siva's mount) in the high esteem. The Vira Saiva cult can be a socio-religious rebellion of the farming groups against the trading groups, who were very much represented by the Jainas. The adoption of trade and commerce by many of the Jaina laity contributed at the lowest strata of society created a rein of social dissatisfaction and that is why all the rural parts of Western Andhra Pradesh became the strong holds of Vira Saiva Cult. According to saiva-siddharta, there are three realities of the Universe the pasu or individual soul, the pasa or the bond and the pati or the lord is identical with siva. He is the supreme reality. This is achieved through salvation, which can be attained through devotion or bhakti to lord siva. Worship of siva in the form of the phallus or linga, practice of religious exercises through song, dance and incantation, observance of rites involving self-mortification torture and death are some of the ways of attaining salvation.

Saivism consists of different sects – pasupatas, kapalikas, kalamukhas, sakteyas, etc. while each recognises sive as the supreme lord of the universe and bhakti as the only way of salvation, they differ from one another in their

emphasis on one or the other of its tenets, in their forms of worship, modes of discipline and practice of rituals.

Mallikharjuna Pandita, one of the three teachers of virasaivism in Andhra, condemned *Samkara's* theory of mayavad. He interpreted the advaita tenets in terms of dualism and quoted the *vedas* to support his own tenets. According to *Annamayya*, another authority on virasaivism, it is futile to try to find out siva's form, because he is a mixture of opposites; the vedas are only interpretations of the great *panchaksharimantra* (om Namah Sivaya), siva, according to him, is "a mother in rearing man, a doctor in curing diseases, a father in protecting, his children and a benevolent bestower of wealth" he wrote the *sarveswarasatakam*, in which he described the qualities of a bhakta thus.

During the *sivaratri* festivities at srisaivam caste, creed and sex do not prohibit any devotee from pouring the water of patalaganga over Mallikharjuna, placing flowers on him or singing his glory. The Chenchus of the Nallamalai forest have a free access into the holy of the holies; they drag the temple car and render all the minor services within the precincts of the temple. The god Mallikharjuna is called chenchumallayya on days of religious festivities they worship the god independently of the *Jangam priest* by directly entering the soretum sanitorium. The fact that Visvesvara –siva, the royal preceptor of Ganapatideva, made arrangements for feeding all people, from the brahmana down to the chandala. All the sections of agricultural allied and marginal professions embraced Vira Saiva cult. The building of many temples of Lord Siva had become an order of the day.

Construction of the Temples of Siva:

The Vira Saiva cult not only had



the matha tradition, adopted after the Jaina precedence, but also they had the tradition of donating and building Siva temples. Rajarajesvara temple of Vemulavada is one of the best examples. Other recorded in the inscriptions can be found in the Gods like Prolesvan Betesvara, Rudresvara and Ganapevara they were named after the kings Prola, Beta, Rudra I and Ganapatideva, the patrons of Saivism. It is an important thing to be noted that no temple is of Siva was built in the name of their family such as **Kakatisvara**. Only one temple of **Svayambhudeva** was found in the case of Hanumakonda. But it is found in the examples like Nolambesvara, a God being named after the name of a family. Such examples are not found in the Western parts of Andhra Pradesh.

Mailara: The Mailara is another variant of Vira Saiva tradition. The practice of worshipping the god Mailara deva is adopted after Virabhadra. The unit called Mailara Virabhatulu was very much prominent. Kridabhramamu of Vinukonda Vallabharaya records about the God Mailaradeva and Mailara Virabhatulu.

CULTURE

The period from 900 to 1323 A.D., which was dominated by the families of Rashtrakutas, Calukyas of Vemulavada, Codas of Kanduru, Calukyas of Mudigonda, Chiefs of Viriyala, Calukyas of Kalyani and the Kakatias, resulted in the Western parts of Andhra Pradesh certain cultural traits visible in arts and artefacts.

literature: - This area developed a rich literary tradition. As it was very much inter-woven with the political traits of Karnataka, the language of Kannada was patronised. Many of the inscriptions in Karminagar and Nalongda districts were written in Kannada language. The famous Calukya kings of Vemulavada

like Arikesari I, Baddegadu II, patronised Kannada literature. Pampa, who was the author of Vikramarjuna Vijaya i.e, Mahabharata translated into Kannada was under the patronage of the Calukyas of Vemulavada.

Sanskrit literature also found in an uplift with the impact of Jainism. Yasatilaka Campu, as a discussion with king Yasodhara and Nitivakyamrita by Somadevasuri had the patronage of Arikesari of Calukya family of Vemulavada. In the same way, Agastya Vidyanatha, the author of a text on rhetorics by name 'Prataparudra Yaso bhushana' and Ekamranatha, who had written Pratapacaritra are found to have contributed to Sanskrit literature.

With the emergence of Virasaivism, both Sanskrit and Kannada had lost their hold in the western parts of Andhra Pradesh. The author of Basavapuramamu and Mallikarjuna Panditaradhya Caritramu, Palkuriki Somanatha is almost the founder of an age with the new literary trends. He introduced Janu Tenugu and adopted desi metrics in Telugu. His other contributions like Vrishadhipa Sataka, Basava Ragada, Basavadhya Ragada are few other examples to say that Palkurki Somanatha remained a mouth-piece of Basava for promoting the theories and practice of Vira Saiva cult in the Telugu speaking areas, particularly the Western parts of Andhra Pradesh.

Music and Dance: The history of the Kakatias was not only resplendent with the assaulting spirit of Vira Saiva cult but also it echoed the indigenous elements in Music and Dance. Jayapa the author of Nritta Ratnavali and brother-in-law of Kakati Ganapati was considered to be '**Sakala Natya Vaidika gramanih**' (a person who controls the fields of all types of the knowledge of dance). His another work on music by



name 'Gita Ratnavali' is very much known in name only.

Jayapa was considered to be a successor of Mantanga, the author of 'Brihaddesi' in music and Sarangadeva, the author of Sangita Ratnakara. Jayapa specifically distinguished the marga and desi styles in dance. This aspect of dance was actually promoted and directed by the sages or Maharshis and followed as a path by the truth seekers is called Marga.

Natya Veda pravrittattvat margitattvat maharshibhih.

Sadbhih sancaritattvacca Marga mahu ridam budhah

Jayapa Senani specified that such practices, which are adopted to rectify the lacunae both in dancing and action by the will and wish of the local people is called desi style.

Natye hya vbhinaye chidra pracchaadana phalam hi tat

Etattdesiti vikhyatam tattattdesa janechchayaa -

It is interesting to note that Jayapa identified Lord Siva to be the prophet of Desi nritya' because Lord Siva told that he had the memory of Nritta while performing the Sandhya nritya.

Asyaa Caryo Mridaanisah yatah 'Sandhyaasu nrityataa

Mayaapiidam smritam Nrittam ityuktam Candramaulina—

It is understood that this tradition is more after Bharata style only. The dances in general were classified into three categories. One variety was called as the Aradhana nrityaa and performed in the temple. The second variety was the dances performed in the court of King. The third variety of dance includes miscellanea. It can be guessed that as Jayapa gave congenity to the promotion of the local styles as per the wish and will of the sub-regions. The dance tradition might have

lost its supra-regional and regional values. Siddhendra yogi was responsible to brought out the dance of Kucipudi in the form of Bhama Kalaapa. Thus the dance tradition of the Kakatiyas had more a say for the development of local styles in Andhra.

According to Kridabhiramamu one Macaladevi was referred as a distinguished scholar and dancer of her age. Nacana Somanatha's Uttara Harivamsamu speaks about different dance styles like Kolatamu, Gondili, Perani. Previously that is prior to Nacana Somana, Palakurki Somana also referred these styles in Basavapuramamu.

Most of the archaeologists try to understand the dancing **Madanikas** in the temples found at Hanumakonda, Palampeta, Pakala and like as the examples for following the traits suggested by Jayapa in his Nritta Ratnavali.

The music is basically associated with the temples. Conch (Sankha), Drum, Kahala, Bheri, Bhankara, Dhakka, Mridanga, Vina, Venu were considered to be the instruments used in the temples. Cebrolu inscription of Jayapa clearly mentions that the temple staff, who were associated with different musical instruments.

It can be understood that the religion, literature, dance and music were very much interwoven and the literature, dance and music remained the Tamah, Rajah and Satva implications of the religion on the society. Even though those societies were not theocratic, the religions had played a vital role in nourishing the thoughts of the then elite. As the Kakatiya period remained a phase of transition, with a weak network of politico-social relations, but the religion put the minds of the elite and laity together.



The Kakatiyas, who were originally had the Jaina affiliations with an obscure origin were converted to Vira Saiva thought and practices in course of time. As converts they made Saiva and the Saiva only as a target of their religious life and they successfully created a state of the farmers, by the farmers and for the farmers. The land, the bull, and Lord Siva remained the trio of the Kakatiya society and all its cultural ideology rallied on to attain the three as a single unit.

The culture of the Kakatiya period accepted all the tenets of life proposed by Vira Basava and propagated by Palkuriki Somanatha and his successors and associates. Even though the Kakatiyas started their life as the subordinates of the Rashtrakutas and the Calukyas of Kalyani, they remained loyal to their cultural affiliations and tried to create a socio-cultural unity in that part of politico-territorial society of Western Andhra Pradesh.

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