

THE MYTH OF *AKKAMMADEITIES* – SEVEN SISTERS

K. Latha

Assistant Professor of English
Madanapalle Institute of Technology & Science,
Madanapalle (A. P.)
Chittoor (dist)-517325, Andhra Pradesh
Affiliated to JNTU, Ananthapur

Akkammadeities (local deities) are the seven daughters of Lord Shiva, who are named as ‘Peddakka Pailadi’, ‘Chinnakka Sridevi’, ‘Raddanapu Kuranji’, ‘Kaanthanala Kaamakshi’, ‘Ontiki Sutthani’, ‘Pettu Poojakshi’, ‘Kadaguttu Nagamma’ are represented for seven lokas Devaloka, Gandharva loka, Swarga loka, Swarna loka, Vaikunta loka, Nagaloka and Indra loka respectively and came down to the Earth.

Urumulavaru are one of the numerically smallest scheduled caste people of Andhra Pradesh available in the rural surrounding places of Anantapur district and are the first and foremost set of people who narrate the stories of Akkammadeities as they are created by them. They are sub classified as Urumulavaru based on their material culture (traditional instrument). So, the villagers or devotees believe that myth of the deity has live and reality. When the story of Akkammadeities sung by the Urumulavaru in rural slang with mythical tone creates interest among the listeners.

The term **Myth** derived from Greek ‘Mythos’ is described as “a fictitious or imaginary narrative person or object,” as opposed to ‘logos’ the logic. A layman conceives myth as fictitious, imaginary and fancy or something related to supernatural beings and the extraordinary world. Myths are also conceived as narratives explaining the origin of natural phenomenon, a historical event or development, the social structure, the religious – Gods, demons, heroes, etc., the rites, superstitions and beliefs, etc. Thus we have the famous origin myths spread all over the globe explaining the origin of physical objects, persons, natural changes and unnatural or extraordinary phenomena like eruptions, earthquakes, eclipses etc., natural objects – earth, sky, planets, stars, vegetation, etc. We have myths about the origin of gods, demons, social and culture heroes and the mankind himself, of social institutions and inventions, of the universe and the nations. Definitions of myth by various scholars from different disciplines and different background are as vague and varied as the myths themselves. While some scholars restrict the scope of myth to the description of gods and the natural phenomena, others go to the extent of extending it to everything in the culture – history, rites, rituals, beliefs and games etc.¹

“Myth is a collective term used for one kind of symbolic communication and specifically indicates one basic form of religious symbolism as distinguished from symbolic behavior (cult, ritual) and symbolic places or objects (such as temples and icons). Myths (in the plural) are specific accounts concerning Gods or superhuman beings and extraordinary human experience.”²

In the Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend, myth is described as:

“A story, presented as having actually occurred in a previous age, explaining the cosmological and supernatural traditions of people, their Gods, heroes, cultural traits, religious beliefs etc. The purpose of myth is to explain matters in “the science of a pre-scientific age”. Thus myths tell of the creation of man, of animals, of landmarks; they tell why a certain animal has its characteristics (e.g. why the bat is blind or flies only at night), why or how certain natural phenomena came to be (e.g. Why the rainbow appears or how the constellation Orion got into the sky), how and why rituals and ceremonies began and why they continue.”³

In Hindu Mythology, myth is described as the oldest of all knowledge, treatises and doctrines from which Vedas flowed. Myth is thus defined as having five ‘lakshanams’ or characteristics, giving elaborate accounts of the primary creation of the world and its periodical dissolution followed by secondary creation, recording detailed genealogies of kings and sages, with accounts of their activities, describing the cosmic cycle (i.e., the great periods reigned over by the different Manus or primal ancestors of the human race).⁴

ORIGIN OF AKKAMMADEITIES (MYTH)

In the beginning of Treta Yuga the Rakshasas (demons) are very strong in number and power, which are frequently harassing and attacking the devatas. The number of Rakshasas is increasing as they have Amrutha Bhandam (nectar bowl) with them. devatas and other loka palakas want to have immortality approached Trimurthi-s (Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara) to protect them. After listening the requests of devatas and other loka palakas, Shrusti Kartha (creator)- Brahma changed Vishnu in to a Mohini (beautiful lady) to steal Amrutha Bhandam from the rakshasas (demons). The Maha Vishnu in the disguise of a lady went to rakshasa loka and started dancing, all rakshasas were impressed by her dance and beauty, Maha Vishnu with his maya created a duplicate bhandam, which contains poison and served it to rakshasas. He disappeared with the original Amrutha Bhandam (nectar bowl) and reached to deva loka. Lord Shiva distributed amrutham to all devatas, they were happy and enjoying the feature of immortality. Two rakshasas by name Rahu and Ketu got a doubt followed the lady and observed the happening in deva loka. They wanted to consume amrutham in the disguise of devatas, which was noticed by Brahma with his foresight and advised Maha Vishnu to kill them with his Chakra (Vishnu Chakram). Maha Vishnu had thrown his Vishnu Chakram on Rahu and Ketu, both Rakshasas has observed it and ran away from there to Chandra Loka (moon land) to hide behind the moon. Rahu and Ketu prayed to moon to save them, but moon hasn't shown any interest to save their life, as it is an order of Brahma to kill them. Rahu, Kethu before dieing cursed Moon god that we give a bad shade to your glory on the same day every year, which is occurring every year for one day as lunar eclipse. Later the devatas who had amrutha got feature of immortality that has no death.

All the divinity existed with their names and powers till beginning of Kaliyuga. They had their names to pronounce, shapes to praise, power to worship by the devotees. They have their own myth to know their origin and existence. After the purpose of their avatara (incarnation) succeeded i.e. killing rakshasas, they decided to become sila (sculpture). Before becoming into sila they requested Brahma to create a Shakthi (power of spirit) in Kaliyuga to look after the people, which do not have any form. So, Brahma created seven girls at deva loka who possess Shakthi (power), by seeing their glory and beauty all devatas felt happy and placed them in a box and thrown into sapta samudralu (seven rivers). They entered into the stem of Tamara pushpam (lotus flower) in the form of insects, passed through the hallow part and

reached the surface of water. The description of their entry as seven girls to bhooloka from devaloka through the stem of lotus is as follows—

Mudu vanne chiralu madugulesukoni
Kudavanne chiralu kunchelu posukoni
Vannela ungaralu, vistiri kadiyalu
Madisinni billalu, billa bapidi botlu, bandla saralu
Dalasari mettelu, vellaku dharinchukoni
Billala vaddanalu, biguva sangitla dharinchukoni

Tri coloured sarees and blouses, vajrala ungaralu (diamond rings), vaddanam (waist belt), kadiyalu (anklets), bangaru duddulu (golden stead's) etc., while the seven girls were walking in bhooloka with their self illuminated power in the form of fire, the devatas, who were in the form of silas afraid to see their power and ran to Lord Narayana. The Lord Narayana turned into Eko Narayana⁵ (without any form) and came across the seven girls, asked them who are they? seven girls answered they are the seven sisters came from devaloka to this hill to have a bath. Eko Narayana understood that these seven girls possess Shakthi and should be stopped going to devaloka. So, he created a silver box with seven doors and the seven sisters were placed in the box created by Eko Narayana and he closed all the seven doors of the box. All the devatas praised the Shakthi of seven sisters, Eko Narayana felt jealous and thrown the box again into the sapta samudras. The box traveled miles together and reached naga loka at last, the 'Nagendra'-king of nagaloka, who was holding nooru kotla Bhoomandalam⁶ on one of his seven padaga (head). The box had fallen on his head, which is unable to hold, and came to know there is some super natural power in the box. He opened the box and the sisters came out of the box and asked Nagendra to allow them to stay there until they find a suitable place in bhooloka.

After some years passed, The Maha Vishnu with Maha Lakshmi residing in paala samudram holding a tamara pushpam (lotus flower), suddenly the flower fallen into paalasamudram which travel deep into nagaloka where seven sisters are staying. The seven sisters turned into small insects and entered the hallow space of the stem. They pass through the stem and finally reach the surface of paalasamudram. At the same time Lord Shiva was doing tapassu (standing on one leg) with his hairs tightened. The Maha Vishnu advises seven sisters who are in the form of insects to go and settle in the hairs of Lord Shiva. After tapassu Lord Shiva returns to his kuteeram (place for residing) where Parvathi, Lakshmi, Saraswathi were present. He is unable to hold the tightened hair as it became heavy to carry, Maha Parvathi advises him to loosen the hairs; the seven sisters who were in the form of insects in the hair fell on the ground and changed as seven girls. As these seven sisters were born from the hairs of Lord Shiva, Parvathi impressed by their beauty and adopted them as 'Siva Putrikas' (daughters of Lord Shiva) which was accepted by Lakshmidivi and Saraswathi and named as *Akkammadeities* - seven sisters, the names of the Shakthi deities are as follows-

Chinnakka Sridevi
Peddakka Piladi
Raddanapu Ranji
Kanthanala Kamakshi
Distineni Nallakka
PettiPooja Gayyali
Kadaguttu Nagamma.

Lord Shiva decides that these seven sisters who are Shakthi swaroopas are my daughters and I am responsible to show them a suitable place to stay and created a town called

‘Sivanandana Kota’ by Lord Shiva in Kailasam (heaven). *Akkammadeities* stayed in Sivanandana Kota for a long time and wants to save the lives of devotees with their super natural powers, so decided to come to ‘Silanidhi Puram’ in Bhoolakam (Earth).

In ‘Silanidhi Puram’ there lived a veda brahmin, he forecast the future by seeing Veda books, panchangas etc., *Akkammadeities* who wanted to select a suitable place for their settlement decides to take the help of veda brahmin. Last sister ‘Kadaguttu Nagamma asks Brahmin to show a suitable place for their settlement. veda brahmin referred to veda books and at last found a place, the description is as follows–

“Vandanalu Vandanalu Ammalara Panchanga Brahmanudi vandanalu
Adiputanuvedalu chevulara vinarandi
Padivela Kandamulunna veda pustakamunundi cheputanu
Mooduvela parvamulunna veda pustakamunundi cheputanu
Vediki vediki meeku vedika ekkadundo cheputanu
Jagrattaga aalakinchi akkada koluvu teerandi
Nenu cheputunnadi meeku saraina samaacharam
Andunundi meeru enchukoni nerugavelli koluvuteerandi
Ammalara vandanalu panditunni vandanalu
Padamati Dikkuna padi milla dooraana
Jaldi Kona Parvatana
Anduna velasina bangaru paadala baavi prakkana
Sannajaaji mallela vanamu daggara
Golusula deepalu veluguchunnachota
Edukondalu daatimeeru akkadiki cherukoni
Akkadiki cherina taruvata
Ulakapoyani paalu Punakapaina posukoni
Mukkoti devathalanu prakshanam Chesukondi.”

Namaskaras to you divine the seven goddesses, I will tell you the suitable place for settlement by referring 10,000 volumes, 3,000 parvas from Veda book. 10 miles to north from here there is a mountain called “Jaldi Konda”(Jaldi hill), there is a “Bangaru Baavi”(a well with golden steps) jasmine flowers which blossoms through out the year, serial sets of lamps lightening through out the night, cross all the seven hills and reach there after reaching with out dropping milk on ground pour them on your head and pray to Mukkoti devathalu (Three crore gods).

Akkammadeities started from Palakonda dakshina (south) region to padamati (west) strongest hill Balli Konda. They were tired of walking and two drops of sweat has fallen on the ground, two men by name ‘Kadireti Samulu’ and ‘Sivanna Singiri’ were born. The Brahmin advised *Akkammadeities* to use them as narrators or performers of their myths. They are illiterates, so *Akkammadeities* wrote Beejaksharas on their tongue and gave the instrument called ‘*Urumu*’ (percussion instrument). The seven sisters settled at Mudinayani Palli at Balli Konda in Kalyanadurg area of Anantapur district.

SELECTION OF PRIEST BY AKKAMMADEITIES

Akkammadeities, the seven sisters were happy with their settlement and decided to select a poojari (priest) for their Pooja process. They identified a person by name ‘Jakkili Veera Naganna’ who belongs to Golla or Yadava caste and his occupation was collecting fruits like adavi jaama (guava), neredu (jamoon) from forest and sell them in near by market. The

Akkammadeities told Naganna to be as a priest for them, he replied to the *Akkammadeities* that I am a poor farmer leading a miserable life and not in a position to perform Pooja. Then *Akkammadeities* turned all the fruits into diamonds to show their power and asked Naganna to sell them to lead a happy life with his family. ‘Jakkili Veera Naganna’ accepted to be a priest at Mudinayani Palli in Kalyanadurg area of Anantapur district. His daily activities includes cleaning the temple premises, offering beetle leaves, areca nuts, coconut, jasmine flowers etc. *Akkammadeities* asked the priest to place five clay heaps in front of them once in a week and perform pooja for them, at the end of the pooja you will find a diamond in one of the heaps. Then Naganna (priest) accepted the words of *Akkammadeities* and was leading a happy life with his family, after gaining lot of money he slowly started neglecting the pooja process for *Akkammadeities*, the reason behind that the hill is too high to climb and perform pooja. So *Akkammadeities* came to the middle of the hill by the request of the priest, after some time again he raised the same problem to the goddess, then *Akkammadeities* came to the village boundaries. The priest became lazy by his raising of wealth and totally neglected the pooja process. The *Akkammadeities* went to the peak of the hill and want to teach a lesson to the Priest with their powers, as time passes the Naganna (priest) lost his wealth and realized his ignorance. Then Naganna started performing pooja to the *Akkammadeities* without expecting anything. The final settlement of *Akkammadeities* is in “Jaldi Konda”(Jaldi hill), near “Bangaru Baavi”(a well with golden steps), at Mudinayani Palli of Kalyanadurg area in Anantapur district. The *Akkammadeities* wanted to extend their existency in various parts of ‘Palakonda’ (name of the hill) area they use to appear in the form of parrots in some selected places like Kodavandla Palli, Chennam Palli, Bukkaraya samudram, Sidhampuram, Bodaganidoddi, Rekkamalla etc., The names of *Akkammadeities* are common in all the areas.

INCIDENTS OCCURRED IN CERTAIN AREAS OF PALAKONDA AREA WHILE AKKAMMADEITIES TRAVELING FOR THEIR EXISTENCE

There is a small village by name ‘CheemaloriPalli’ in PalaKonda region where seven brothers were living happily. The elder is Cheemala Pedda Madanna and the younger Chinna Madanna who were cultivating the land near the Penna river, with that canal water they grow commercial crops like chillies, brinjal, and tomato etc., sell them in the nearby market called “Kaamini Konda”(name of the market). As the days passed there occurred a continuous drought for seven years. The brothers worried about their survival, years passed but no rains and crops. They sold their total property, cattle, paddy, gold and everything but drought still continued. Then Cheemala brothers prayed to Mukkoti Devatas (three crore gods and goddess) saying how we survive in this continuous drought. Basically we belong to boya or talari caste with occupation as robbery, but we left our main occupation and started cultivation, leading a happy life for the past years. But now it became difficult for us to lead our family in this continuous drought situation and we decided to go back to our original profession. That night Cheemala brothers planned to rob a house in nearby village, they walked some miles and at last reached a village called “Dhana Konda” waited till mid night and selected a house for robbery. They found a box in the house took the box and started returning to their place. All the brothers carried the box by exchanging, as it is heavy to carry, they reached the bank of a well called “Bavi Gangamma”, prayed to their goddess ‘Arlakonda Maremma’. Six brothers brokened the box, suddenly they lost their eye-sight. The one who is sitting on the other side of a well observed the event. Then the *Akkammadeities*- seven sisters appeared before him and said that if you do what we say, your brothers can get back their eye-sight, Cheemala Chinna Madanna replied that Oh Goddess! What

can I do for you; I am alone without any property how can I take care of my family and my brothers families. The goddesses said your wife is a pregnant of seven months and you have a son of seven years. If you sacrifice your wife to us, your brothers will retain their eye-sight. He thought for a while and decided to do so, he went to his house and informed to his wife that on his way to robbery he prayed to goddess that he gives a bali (animal sacrifice). So you clean the house, prepare naivedyam (food offered to the goddess), I will go and purchase a goat in the market for a bali.

The Cheemala Chinna Madanna reached the bank of a well “Bavi Gangamma” with his wife and son. He placed beetel leaves, areca nuts, and coconuts and offered naivedyam (food offered to the goddess) to the *Akkammadeities*. He told his wife to pray, he took sword and cut her head. As soon as the event happened all his brothers got their eye-sight. They were afraid and started thinking that if they stay longer time in that place some other incident may happen to them, so without addressing their younger brother they left that place. The Cheemala Chinna Madanna who lost his wife took his son, box and returned to his house. In the night he started praying to *Akkammadeities* that, Oh Shakthi Maa (Shakthi Goddess) along with my wife you take my son and me, I have lost everything. The last sister of *Akkammadeities* – ‘Kadaguttu Nagamma’ asked him to close his eyes and stretch his palm, she poured Rajanalu (pounded rice)⁷ and told that your wife is sitting near the well go and pour these Rajanalu on her head and take back to your house. Before her disappearance, she says to Chinna Madanna that now onwards you perform the Pooja for us. He went near the well found his wife and poured Rajanalu⁷ on her head and brought her back to the home and lived happily with his wife and children. He started thinking that how to perform Pooja in this poor situation for *Akkammadeities*- who were in the box in the form of idols.

Then in his dream before one month of “Molakala Punnami” (Festival celebrated on full moon day) the Goddess said to perform pooja by offering Naivedyam with the rice brought from Papili (a village) and cook in seven clay pots, decorated with clay lamps and clay bangles for seven days from “Molakala Punnami”. He replied to *Akkammadeities* that I am not in a position to perform all these to you because of my poverty. *Akkammadeities* told him to go by a bullock cart to Pamidi (a small village in PalaKonda hill area) and ask ‘Tallu Chetty’ (a wealthiest merchant) to donate all the Pooja materials.

The Chinna Madanna on the advise of the goddess started along with his brothers to “Pamidi village”. The season is hot summer and raise in temperaure, bullocks are running fast, dust is rising with redness. He invited *Akkammadeities* to come along with him to “Pamidi”, the Goddess accompanied them in the form of parrots. They reached the village in the early morning and enquired about Tallu Chetty’s seven-storied building and knocked the doors of Tallu Chetty and said to donate seven clay pots, Pooja lamps, clay bangles etc., for performing Pooja to *Akkammadeities*. The Tallu Chetty rejected their request and ordered his servants to send them away. The brothers with lot of disappointment and sorrow went to “Sivalayam”(temple of Lord Shiva) to stay that night. No one addressed them in the village as they were afraid of Tallu Chetty. In the midnight they prayed to *Akkammadeities* with lot of grief saying that we came to this village for the sake of your Pooja performance, and the merchant (Tallu Chetty) rejected our request and sent out from his building. In a moment *Akkammadeities* came to the house of the Tallu Chetty in the form of parrots and landed on the seven-storied building. All of sudden the building was set to fire, the villagers and the merchant were surprised to this action. Tallu Chetty recognized his ignorance and ordered his servants to

bring the Cheemala brothers and donated gold ornaments instead of clay materials for *Akkammadeities* Pooja process.

The description while carrying pooja materials is as follows-

Raro Ammalaro Kadali Raro

Edeguru Ammalara Kadali Raro

Chilakalai vachi vali chooda Raro

Kannelai vachi Choodaro Ammalara

Pasibidda papalai vachi choodaro

Cheemala brothers returned to Cheemalori Palli happily with gold pots, inviting *Akkammadeities* to see all the things in the form of parrots, unmarried girls and babies. With all the needful collections from ‘Tallu Chetty’ organized pooja process by cooking “Rajanalu” and offered to *Akkammadeities* for their grace on the poor and needy devotees. The Pooja process is continuing in that village with out any disturbances. The goddess is blessing them with rains and good yielding. Health and Wealth is filled in the lives of the people.

There is another village near by Cheemalori Palli called “Kundili Patnam”. Most of the people in this village belong to “Bestha”(fisherman) community. They catch the fishes in the tanks and rivers, dry them and sell. Once there occurred continuous rains for five days, fisherman felt that fishes get spoiled if not dried properly. So, they decided to take the fishes for drying to Cheemalori Palli. They took all the fishes in the bullock carts and hired a house for rent in that village. After drying all the fishes they had their dinner and ready to sleep, one of the fishermen who are unable to sleep as it is a new place heard the sounds of anklets. He observed the glory of light, sounds of ankle bells, where *Akkammadeities* singing and dancing wearing the Ornaments. The fisherman went to Mogalai Darbar of “Kundili Patnam” informed to “Timma Naidu”(wealthiest person in that village) and his brothers ‘Erra Timma Naidu’, ‘Nalla Timma Naidu’, ‘Matta Timma Naidu’ about the total incident they observed in Cheemalori Palli. The Timma Naidu brothers inspired to this and decided to capture all the wealth took soldiers, elephants, horses attacked Cheemalori Palli broke down the temple gates and took over all the Ornaments of *Akkammadeities* and returned to their place.

The Villagers of Cheemalori Palli felt sad for the incident and prayed to *Akkammadeities*, the Goddess disguised as Erukulasani (women who can forecast the future) with Bamboo baskets on their waists and reached “Kundili Patnam” started searching “Timma Naidu” Palace singing –

Gadde cheputamu memu gadde cheputamu

Erukula vaaram memu gadde cheputamu

Kallu lenivariki kallu teppistamu

Edamadala emi jarigedi cheputamu

Moodamadala muchatlu cheputamu

Mutyaliste moodu matalu cheputamu

Pagadalu iste padi maatalu cheputamu

We are fortune tellers came here to say your fate, who can bring back all your lost things, can say what is happening at 70 kms away, we say three golden words if you offer pearls and ten golden words if you give pagadalu (red corals). At last they entered into the Palace of Naidu brothers called Naidu’s wife saying-

Erukadagandi ammalaro erukada gandi

Erukallamochinaamu gadde cheputamu

Kaanipattu maa puttinillu
Guttikonda maa bangaru seema
Maravakunda memu gadde cheputamu
Vedalu memu eruvaka cheputamu
Deerga lotullonchi nammani nijaalu cheputamu
Gadde cheputamu ammalara gadde cheputamu

Ask your fate as we are experts in it, we forecast your future. Our birthplace is Kaanipattu, family is in Gooty. We forecast without referring to Vedas, without hesitation we tell your inner feelings and desires.

The Naidu's palace was beautiful which was strongly made of copper, steel and iron metals. No one can enter into the palace without permission. The *Akkammadeities* who are in the disguise of Erukulasani (women who can forecast the future) changed into parrots and entered the palace. The total palace collapsed and Naidu brothers realized their ignorance and sought the blessings from *Akkammadeities*. The *Akkammadeities* had taken their property to Cheemalori Palli; the people in the village lived happily with the grace of the goddess by performing pooja process.

But *Akkammadeities*, who felt the attack of Naidu brothers, as a black spot wants to shift their existence to other holistic place, disguised in the form of parrots and landed on "Chinta vanam" (tamarind garden) in Kodavandla Palli and decided to stay there. There after the devotees are offering pooja, Fairs are being organized and are continuing till today. The idols of *Akkammadeities* are placed in a box in the temple constructed at the entrance of the village. The parsa is performed for every 3 years or 5 years placing the box of idols outside the temple for seven days. There is a belief that *Akkammadeities* visit the village in the form of parrots at the time of parsa. This is the myth, which explains how the *Akkammadeities* were existed in Kodavandla Palli of Mudigubba mandal in Anantapur District⁸.

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4. **Matsyapurana. Hindi Vishwa Kosh**, Part 7, Nagari Pracharini Sabha, Varanasi, 1966.
5. **Eko Narayana** - smooth round edged tall stone in the shape and size of a man
6. **Nooru kotla Bhoomandalam** – 100 crore landscape on the globe holding on his head.
7. **Rajanalu-** *Akkammadeities* orders Gijiga (strong bird) to collect the paddy from 7 great tanks and pounder them in to rice.
8. Urumula Narayana, 52 years, Mogilichetla palli, Mudigubba Mandal, Anantapur dist.