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Myth Ritual of Akkammadeities by Urumulavaru

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Abstract:

Urumulavaru are one of the numerically smallest scheduled caste people of Andhra Pradesh available in the rural surrounding places of Anantapur district. They belong to Schedule caste. They are sub classified as *Urumulavaru* based on their material culture (traditional instrument). Like *Haridasulu*, *Harikathakulu* etc., *Urumulavaru* are also the performers with distinct characteristics having different life styles and social structure with mother tongue as Telugu. They are the performers or narrators of myth of *Akkammavarlu* (local deities). There are nearly 200 families of *Urumulavaru* in the district. To find out how *Urumulavaru* society constructs, develops and maintains its performance tradition. Urumu in colloquial usage means a 'thunder', the beats of Urumu instrument is symbolically compared with the sounds of roaring clouds while raining (thunder). The sound of Urumu is used to pacify the *Akkammavarlu* (local deities) and to gain attention of the public is the significant feature, by playing this instrument they are called or known as '*Urumulavaru*'.

Keywords: Urumulavaru, Akkammavarlu, Myth, Ritual

Origin of Urumulavaru:

According to mythology majority of the people worship Lord Shiva as a divine mercy god and his wife Parvathi as Adi Parasakthi who are known as Universal parents. *Akkammavarlu* (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.

The *Akkammavarlu* (local deities) while searching a suitable place for their existence a Veda Brahmin who hails from Palakonda³ (name of a hill) came across and guided them to settle there. *Akkammavarlu* created two idols from their two drops of sweat and gave *pranam* (life) to them and named as '*Kadireti Samulu*' and the other as '*Sivanna Singiri*' (illiterates). *Akkammavarlu* wrote '*Beejaksharas*' on their tongue to narrate the myths. Lord Shiva blessed them with an instrument (urumu), to play while narrating the myth of *Akkammavarlu*, goddess Saraswathi gave a boon to remember

and narrate the myth throughout their lifetime and Lord Brahma blessed to take myth narration as their livelihood.

An important psychological process takes place in every *Urumulavaru* performance. It has got three phases namely, pre performance, performance, post performance. People who come with an individual mind-set (consciousness), by participating in the performance, a change takes place in them and they become part of the community mind-set (consciousness). They go out of the performance stage as new persons with a different world view that is communitarian in nature. This is observed from individual consciousness to community consciousness.

Relevance of the Myth-Ritual:

It provides a multi dimensional social structure, the rituals, events, festivals etc., conducted as a part of *Akkammavarlu* forms a beautiful stage for many complex folk activities and functions. It also provides opportunities for developing social harmony, as different castes and class people gather and mingle on a single platform and demonstrate a great sense of oneness at various levels performed as a part of it, in the name of serving the god & goddess. The myths narrated are mainly descriptive about the super natural powers of *Akkammavarlu* and ritual reenactment of myth, which gives more scope for the peripheral activities like that of many tea stalls, snack shops, local cool drinks, oil foods, pan shops, flower vendors, bangle and fancy shops etc., around it. These shops do brisk business through out the night and they have now become an integral part of the total atmosphere around the myth ritual process and also provide the economic activity as a part of the environment. The locals who listened to the story or myth become the devotees. Thus the tradition began to emerge as a sacred one. In course of time, it added many more folds to it and there by a separate culture came to be established.

The *Akkammavarlu* is an important parsa of Mudigubba area in Anantapur district. *Urumulavaru* are the active bearers of this tradition, they are unique in their life style. This tradition has both oral and ritual performance. The myths, legends, epics, folk songs and folk stories describe the super natural powers of *Akkammavarlu*. The ritual re-enactment during the fair is a special feature of the tradition. The influence of folk and classical literature is mutual and each is influenced by the other. Though the myth of *Akkammavarlu* is explained in the classical framework, its folk-roots can be seen in its ritual practices. *Akkammavarlu* parsa establishes the core elements of a tradition. The micro study of the tradition clearly explains the origin, the development of a tradition and also its conflicts with neighbouring and similar traditions. Though mass participation is a feature of this festival, such of those individuals, who play crucial roles, hope to gain favours.

Strictly speaking, a parsa reflects only its religious and cultural aspects. It could disappear long ago from the minds of the people but on the contrary it still flourishes because of its socio-cultural importance even in the present society. It is a good market for exchange of goods and it revives the culture and confirms the identity

which keeps the tradition alive. Different cultural folks mingle by colluding with each other on such special occasions. Entertainment, business, social reformation activities, politics and many other things keep the parsa more relevant even to the present society. *Akkammavarlu* is a symbol of such vibrancy. A micro study of any tradition should try to understand the voice it expresses in its silence or through its myths. For a myth oral tradition to survive, it must express the inner feelings of the folk and that should be a vital part of their life, and not just for entertainment.

Myth Ritual Analysis:

In my observations and findings, I come across the importance of the number “7” in all the rituals performed and myths collected, which represents that the *Akkammavarlu* who are in ‘7’ in number, the ritual process done for ‘7’ days, the fair is conducted once in ‘7’ years, ‘7’ pre-puberity girls are represented as *Akkammavarlu*, the seven sisters in the ritual process. In the myth, the *Akkammavarlu* were placed in a wooden box and thrown into ‘Sapta samudralu’, ‘7’ rivers and landed on the ‘7’ headed serpent Nagendra or Adi Seshu. Later they were disguised in the form of ‘7’ insects and entered into the Lotus flower.

In the myth while *Akkammavarlu* searching a place for their existence, we come across ‘7’ brothers who finds the idol box of *Akkammavarlu*, ‘7’ years old son and ‘7’ months pregnant wife of one the ‘7’ brothers by name ‘Cheemala Chinna Maadanna’. ‘7’ heaps placed by the priest before *Akkammavarlu* in one of the myth, ‘7’ years continuous Drought, ‘7’ bullock carts used to carry the pooja material for *Akkammavarlu*. ‘7’ clay pots for the goddesses. ‘7’ storied building of the rich merchants ‘Tallu Chetty’ and ‘Tikka Naidu’ in other myths. All the incidents that occurred in the myths represent the number ‘7’.

By all the above incidents *Akkammavarlu*, the ‘7’ sisters wants to prove their existency gave importance to number ‘7’ as they are ‘7’ in number. We treat ‘7’ as an important number in our daily life. For example, ‘7’ days in a week, ‘7’ hills where Lord Venkateswara resides, ‘7’ days jewellery etc.

Another number which appears in the myth and ritual process is number “3”. *Akkammavarlu* wrote ‘3’ Beejaksharas on the tongue of *Urumulavarlu*, *Akkammavarlu* themselves danced with tri-coloured sarees in the disguise of pre-puberity girls. Number ‘3’ stands for tri-moorthy i.e. Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswara, ‘3’ Mukkoti devatas (three crores gods and goddesses).

Some of the artifacts observed in the ritual process and myths of *Akkammavarlu*.

OBJECT	NATURE	ANALYSIS
1. Bamboo Box	Flexibility	<p>1.Urumulavaru - The performers of <i>Akkammavarlu</i> Parsa are so flexible to narrate the myths at any time, any place, situation, condition etc.</p> <p>2. Devotees of different castes unite on a single platform to worship <i>Akkammavarlu</i>.</p> <p>3. General: In Philosophical point of view one should be flexible at the time of joy or happiness and pain or sorrow in their life.</p>
2 Lotus Flower (Birth Place for the divine <i>Akkammavarlu</i>)	Sacred Place	<p>1.Urumulavaru maintains purity at the time of narration of myth and in ritual process.</p> <p>2. Devotees purity and sacredness at the time of ritual</p> <p>3. General: One should always maintain purity and sacredness in their life.</p>
3. Hill (Place where <i>Akkammavarlu</i> settled)	Strong ness	<p>1.Urumulavaru are psychologically very strong to narrate the myths and performing ritual process</p> <p>2. Devotees strongly believe that worshipping <i>Akkammavarlu</i> Parsa makes their wishes & deeds come true.</p> <p>3. General: One should be always psychologically strong in any consequence.</p>
4. Bangaru Bavi (Water used for <i>Akkammavarlu</i> Pooja Process and naivedyam)	Fulfill the need (water is cool in summer, hot in winter)	<p>1.Urumulavaru The main purpose to narrate the myths of <i>Akkammavarlu</i> Patam ritual process to promote & preserve the tradition.</p> <p>2. Devotees by participating in Parsa believe that they can promote & preserve the tradition which continuous in future generation also.</p> <p>3. General: One should fulfill the purpose of life by helping each other.</p>
5. Jasmine Flower (used to Worship <i>Akkammavarlu</i> Parsa)	Purity, fragrance	<p>1.Urumulavaru create a pleasant and aesthetic to the audience with their narrative techniques.</p> <p>2. Devotees Fulfill their deeds & wishes.</p> <p>3. General: One should possess the pleasant mind.</p>
6. Urumu (Divine Instrument.)	Produces thunder rounds	<p>1.Urumulavaru grab the attention of the public by playing the instrument – urumu</p> <p>2. Devotees believe that they will be get rid off evil possessions, with crafts / blackmagics by listening to the beats of 'Urumu'.</p> <p>3. General: One should leave all his bad habits.</p>

7. Rajanalu (Pounded rice offered to <i>Akkammavarlu</i> Parsa)	Sacred Powdered rice	<p>1. <i>Urumulavaru</i> makes the 7 girls to make Rajanalu as one of the event of Parsa to make the tradition alive (which was followed from the beginning of <i>Akkammavarlu</i> Parsa existence).</p> <p>2. Devotees believe that keeping Rajanalu at their houses brings them prosperity.</p> <p>3. General: It is the responsibility of every one to promote, preserve the customs & traditions to the future generations.</p>
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Role of Performers in Myth Ritual Relations

Urumulavaru plays a vital role narrating the myth of *Akkammavarlu* and performing ritual process, so without them there is no ritual process. While the ritual is going on *Urumulavaru* narrates the myth, beating the 'Urumu' (a percussion instrument), which creates or produces thunder sounds. The performer follows the priest, local heads, the donors and the persons involved in the ritual process to various places by accompanying the instrument. The interviews with the active bearers and performers reveal their worldview and their commitment to the duties that they feel is very important. The interviews with their family members reveals the importance of the myth as an integral part of *Urumulavaru* life because, they will ensure a better future.

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