



TRIBAL FAIR OF SAMMAKKA-SARALAMMA IN WARANGAL DISTRICT: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND TOURISM POTENTIAL

Dr. A. Renuka Devi

Assistant Director, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad, Telangana.

ABSTRACT :

From the tourism and historical point of view, Warangal has occupied an advantageous position, among tourist spots of Telangana State, and on account of its location. Due to this reason, evidently, and also because of its climate, it must have been selected for building a fort in the ancient days. Great lakes, historical monuments, temples and forts make Warangal an interesting destination to many tourists all over the world.¹ The district is recognized as the cultural and heritage tourism zone by the state Telangana and central Government. Tribal tourism is one of the most important forms of tourism which is going to shape in the district due to its cultural and anthropological commodities.² The tribal fair celebrated at Medaram is attracting crores of tribal, non-tribal, domestic and international tourists for its fest to every alternate year.³



KEY WORDS : *tourism and historical point of view , Lambadis, Billus, Rafstar Gondus of Telangana.*

INTRODUCTION :

The Medaramu Sammakka-Saralamma fair is celebrated every alternative year as per custom of Koya Tribe since times immemorial. This is the biggest tribal fair in India visited by Koyas, Chenchus, Vaddes, Gondus, Lambadis, Billus, Rafstar Gondus of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Maharashtra, Chathisgadh and Madhya Pradesh, who worship Sammakka and Saralamma as goddesses. Even though the traditions of various tribes vary, they follow single principle regarding these goddesses.

Medaram is situated in a dense forest, which is 118 km away from Warangal city on the road leading to Eturnagaram.⁴

There are two popular legends which go to say that the goddess of nature and Vanadurga has taken birth as Sammakka and Saralamma (mother and daughter) in "Koya Tribe"⁵ and were worshipped as the incarnation of goddess for their bravery and heroic death in the battle held in Medaram in AD 12th century. In the war waged between Kakatiya king Rudradeva and Pagadidda Raju a hero of koya families and the husband of Sammakka, they are said to have ferociously fought

in the battle along with Pagididda Raju for the liberation and freedom of Koya tribes from the autocratic clutches of local rulers.⁷

The second story goes to say that one Meda Raju was the king Karimnagaram today it is known as Karimnagar District in Telangana. His son-in-law was Pagadidda Raju who married Sammakka and was blessed with a daughter known as Saralamma. As Medaraju had no sons, his only son-in-law Pagididda Raju was looking after the kingdom but they were sub-ordinates to Kakatiya Rulers. Due to severe drought at that time (1150-1197 AD)⁸. Pagadidda raju could not pay the Kappam to Kakatiya rulers. Angered by this action, the Kakatiya ruler Rudradeva declared war against Koya Samantha Raju viz., Pagididda Raju, there was bloodshed in the war at Sampengha Vagu and all the Koya tribal youth have fought teeth and nail with the enemies. In the battle Pagadidda Raju and their two daughters Nagulamma and Saralamma and son Jampanna too last their lives with many other patriots.

In war Jampanna fought heroically but died falling into water stream called Sampenga vagu. Later on it was called as Jampanna Vagu, the same in Khammam district is called as 'Shabari vagu' Despite the sorrow of her son and daughters' death, Sammakka fought fiercely and decimated the Kakatiya armies. Sensing defeat, a Kakatiya soldier⁵ stabbed Sammakka from back side. Bleeding profusely she went towards a hill called "Chilukala Gutta" and vanished. Other Koyas tried to trace her, but failed. But near Naga vriksha (tree) with serpent home, they saw kunkuma Barani (a platter with Kunkuma). They believed the Kunkuma Barani to be Sammkka. In a dream to a Koya leader, Sammakka revealed that ladies should do pujas, where the kunkuma Barani was found, on every Maghashudda Pournami (on the Full moon day of month of Magha). This progressed to become Jatara of the current form.

This is a festival of three days, it being with the arrival of Saralamma to the pedestal on the first day. From that time onwards, the Koya tribes began to worship Sammakka and Saralamma as incarnations of goddess once in 2 years i.e on the Wednesday falling before magha pournima⁹ (magha full moon day).

Regarding the legendary stories mentioned above, common people believe naturally on the mystic stories and the elite are curious to know of its linkage to historical facts. The historicity of the facts mentioned in the oral tradition has not yet been established. Anyway this legendary information continued to be a source of interest to all sections of people. Ever since the Endowment department came into existence, the biannual fair of Sri Sammakka, Saralamma was celebrated for the first time in 1968. Since then it has been celebrated in every alternative year.

This biannual fair has been conducted quite successfully and it attracts crores of people. For this pilgrim, the Government is keen on providing services and the other organizations are also involved in providing stalls for the visitors. In terms of revenue, the Government gets the proceeds of the fair.¹⁰

The biggest source of income for the Government is through its transport services the Telangana state Road Transport Corporation operated nearly 2700 buses only from the Warangal region. And other regions in Telangana also operated number of buses. Starting from the 29th January 2018 to 2nd February 2018 this authority successfully operated, 2200 trips.¹¹

The next best revenue source is through the taxes on the different types of stalls. As it is the tribal festival the arrangements and type of the stalls are different i.e. Liquor shops, meat and chicken stalls were set up. There is a custom of offering jaggery to the goddess. So there is a major scope for such stalls which sell jaggery¹², coconut, saffron, etc. According to the agreement made

between the tribal families of Medaram and the government, 10% of the stalls should be sanctioned without any taxes for the tribal's who are there from many generations.¹³ Previously the authority of tax collection was vested with the Mandal Revenue Office, but from the year 1994, it was transferred from Mandal Revenue Office to integrated tribal development authority.¹³

To increase the facilities for the visitors, the tourism department has recognized Sammakka Saralamma jatara as "State Festival"¹⁴. As the importance of jathara has been growing year by year, the district collector of Warangal plays an important role in co-ordinating the services of various departments, i.e. police, medical, health, Telangana Electrical Board Irrigation, Animal Husbandry, Public Health, Exercise, Department of Roads and Buildings and all other departments, the project officer I.T.D.A. Eturunaagaaram is expected to be mainly responsible for this function.

In the recent years the non-pilgrim traffic has enormously increased. That's why it is becoming a problem for the pilgrims in respect of their accommodation, maintenance etc. In view of this, the jatara committee is trying to introduce the entry fee for the pilgrims. The big rush of people on this occasion causes environment problems also.¹⁶

During the every Jatara time a number of foreigners visit the jatara. Present Chief Minister of Chattisgadhd had visited 2018 fair and expressed his utmost satisfaction¹⁵. He told that he never saw such a great congregation of people in his state. In spite of having such a great potential, till now the Government has not yet prepared any course of action. At present generally pilgrims go there and return to their homes. Because this Jatara takes place once in two years and there are no permanent amenities. If the government plans for the construction of the cottages, they have to remain idle for the next two years. If the zones, nature camps, wild life safaries, paying guests' accommodation in the tribal and others houses, the routine tourists can use this accommodation all round the year.

The foregoing observations make it clear that tribal festivals also have great tourism potential along with the cultural heritage centres. Especially, the Sammakka and Saralamma Tribal fair have gained the highest rate of tourism attraction, which is to be efficiently marketed by the government.

During the fair, the transport department extend their services by arranging package tours connecting the nearby places like Ramappa, Ghanapoor temples, Laknavaram and Pakhal lakes. This shows a great gulf in direct and indirect income. But at the same time, government must insist on certain things like using of gas stove, maintenance of environmental hygiene, etc. to minimize the hazardous effects on the environment.

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