

Introduction: Each village had a patron god or goddess in S. India - grama devata.  
① Female deities derived from agriculture - fertility concept. Elmore derives them from the quarrelsome, vindictive nature of Dravidian women and feeling that it was necessary to propitiate female spirits.

### I. Main Features:

1. Village shrines to grama devatas differ from and are often smaller than Brahmanical temples in the village. Yet all turn to it in village calamities eg. famine, pestilence, cattle disease etc. It is a more present help in trouble but not as dignified as Siva or Vishnu.
2. Probably pre-Aryan, modified by Brahmanical influences.
3. Contrasts to popular Hindu deities:
  - a) Siva and Vishnu represent a system of religion with a cosmic outlook. These symbolize only the facts of village life and its troubles.
  - b) Siva and Vishnu etc. are male, these are female. They have male consorts, who are subordinate. Exception is Tamil Iyenar - night watchman of the village who has horses on the compound. Telugu Potu-Razu a brother, or at times husband of a female deity but not worshipped independently.
  - c) These village goddesses are worshipped with animal sacrifices of blood. Buffalo, sheep, goats, pigs, fowls.
  - d) Pujaris are not Brahmin but from other castes - a few exceptions for sake of money. Brahmins never officiate at the blood sacrifice. They however will bring offerings to the worship service.
4. Besides village deity are other goddesses and spirits. Often people dying untimely death or having great power are worshipped after death.
5. At times the image of a goddess who is plaguing a territory is paraded and then thrown into the territory of an adjacent village to transfer to it the angry spirit. p. 21.
6. Spirit of boundary stone, of hills, rivers, forest, trees, of particular castes and crafts, and serpents (to obtain children)
7. Spread throughout Mysore, Tamilnad and Telugu area.

### II. Names:

1. At times given Brahmanical names. eg. Gangamma ~~is~~ Mahalakshmi, wife of Vishnu. Or Gangamma is called Chanamma who is also Kali, Siva's wife.
2. Some Tamil and Telugu goddesses:
  - a) Poleramma - boundary goddess
  - b) Peddamma, Chinnamma, - village goddesses
  - c) Mariamma, Gangamma, ~~Ankamma~~ goddesses of small pox.
  - d) Ankamma - cholera
  - e) Potu Razu - has seven sisters: Peddamma, Isondamma, Mariamma, Ankamma, Nukamma, Vasukota, Ellamma and Arikamma.
  - f) Iyenar - tamil god.
3. Character: not evil spirits nor unmixed benefactors. Temperamental, often have a temper. Cholera goddess popularly believed to be the mother of the washerman.

### III. The Cult:

1. Express fear not adoration and love. Aim is to propitiate and avert their wrath.
2. Symbols - often ideol made for the occasion, some permanent. Use a rock, an image, a brass or earthen decorated pot (using Margosa leaves like Hindu classics, containing water) or a stick or ~~stone~~ spear. Potu Razu often by a stone or wooden stake 4-5 ft. high - sulam.
3. Often the goddesses are accompanied to boundary of a village and put in the next village territory which then transferrs it to the next etc until it is a safe distance away.
4. "arate" - lighted lamp offered to gods or goddesses in most areas by women but in a few by men.
5. Ministrants - from lower castes indiscriminately, though in one village the

2. Boddu rayee: navel stone set in founding a new village. Choose an auspicious time and site, large hole dug in which are placed different kinds of grain, small pieces of five metals (gold, silver, copper, iron and lead) and a large stone about 3 feet above ground. At same time an entrance to village in center of main street where most cattle pass a pig is buried alive. (possibly to insure fertility as a substitute for human sacrifice. see Thurston Ethn. Notes on S. India p. 507) Human sacrifice is still felt necessary at beginning of any large new building eg. dam etc.
3. In Canarese country rites at an epidemic were practiced and if any man took any of the blood from the pit where the buffalo was slain and took it to another village, the whole value of the sacrifice would be transferred to the other village. Formerly if one was caught doing this he was chased and killed.75
  - Hanging by kooks from pole was practiced formerly in S. India
  - Canarese country; Pujamma is goddess of Madigas and has buffalo sacrifice
  - Canarese country: some places practice fire walking rites. (near Bangalor ) (also Mysore City)
  - Mythos of an outcaste man going to Benares and learning scriptures and then passing off as a Brahmin to marry a rishi's fair daughter. Caught when one of the children noticed him stitch some shoes before going out to bath. p. 84. She put curse on him - led to Mari festival. She became a Mari and he the buffalo to be sacrificed to her and the children sheep and chickens to be offered to her.
  - Vaisyas also offer animal sacrifice.
4. Tamil Country: rituals more elaborate and probably more influence by Brahmanical ideas. Male deities more prominent and washing of images more elaborate. Blood sacrifices to male attendants, not goddesses, often with a curtain put between her and the sacrifice lest she be shocked at the sight of shedding of blood.
  - Abishegam - anointing and washing of images twice a day morning and evening with water, oil, milk, coconut milk, turmeric solution, rosewater, sandalwood solution, honey, sugar, limes and bark of certain tree -solutions.
  - Offerings of boiled rice, fruit, flowers, cakes sugar etc. incense and camphor burned, coconuts broken.
  - Sucking blood by a pujari impersonating deity practiced near Trichy. Also the pujari at places kills the sacrifice by biting it.
  - Prohibition of Ellai Karuppu or boundary stone.

#### IV. Folklore:

1. Mariamma was the mother of Parasurama, incarnation of Vishnu, and wife of Jamadagni, famous Rishi (Vedic seer). She was so chaste she could carry water without a vessel and her wet cloth would fly up into the air and remain until it was dry. One day, as she was coming home from bathing, some of the Gandharvas, or heavenly singers flew over her and she saw their reflection in the ball of water in her hand. She could not help admiring their beauty; and, through this slight lapse she lost her power, the water flowed down and the cloth fell. She arrived home with no water and a wet cloth. The Rishi questioned her and she confessed her fault. Her stern husband ordered her son Parasurama to take her to the wilderness and cut off her head. When they came to the place, Mariamma met a Pariah woman and in her longing for sympathy, embraced her in her arms. So Parasurama cut off both their heads together and went back in great sorrow. His father promised him any reward he chose in return for his obedience; so Parasurama asked that his mother might be restored to life. The father granted this and gave him some water in a vessel and a cane, telling him to put his mother's head on her body, sprinkle the water on her, and tap her with the cane. In his eager haste he put his mother's head on the body of the Pariah and vice versa, restoring them both to life. The woman with the Brahman head and Pariah body was afterwards worshipped as Mariamma; while the woman with the Pariah head and Brahman body was worshipped as the goddess Yellamma. To Yellamma buffaloes are sacrificed, but to Mariamma goats, cocks but not buffaloes.

- the pujaris of a particular goddess nearly always belong to one particular caste - In Telugu country potters and washers often officiate. Mala and Madiga are often important in the buffalo sacrifice. Madiga kills the buffalo and sprinkles the blood. Mala (Asadis branch) chant, assist with rites etc. Often Vadla, Gundlu and even Karnmam assist. In Tamil areas there is a more regularized puja. In Bellari Asadi girls are given as prostitutes to the goddess and the men take Madiga girls in marriage.
6. Festivals: Usually not regulated by calendar. Worship at permanent shrines often daily or weekly. Usually worship in times of trouble and accompanied by vows.
  7. These goddesses ward off the evil spirits which inflict disease and misfortune and luck everywhere; in palmyra tree tops, caves, rocks, and ravines. Prevent diseases, cattle diseases, crop failures, childlessness, fires etc.

#### IV. Telugu Worship:

1. Epidemic - village deity is angry. Collect for expenses or rich patron pays. Propitious day selected (in Telugu area any except Sun or Thurs ?) Potter makes pot, carpenter a cart and buffalo selected. In afternoon of sacrifice day, Mala and Madiga lead decorated buffalo in procession through village, people worship, pouring water on its feet and giving food to Mala and Madiga. By 8 p.m. go out of village to pandal. 10 p.m. procession with band to potter and ram killed, blood sprinkled on pot. Potter carries it out and gives it to washer who takes it to pandal. People flourish sticks and swords to ward off spirits, cut limes and throw them in air to distract spirits. Procession to toddy drawer for cooked rice and toddy in a decorated bottle (turmeric - yellow, kunkuma - red paste made of turmeric mixed with lime) Ram killed at toddy house. Procession to chief official (reddy) for cooked rice and sweet meats and lamb. Lamb is worshipped and sacrificed, ram sacrificed over rice and then the buffalo killed. "Some water is poured over the blood and then the pool of blood and water is covered up carefully with earth, lest any outsider from another village should come and steal it. The idea is that if any man from another village should take away and carry home even a small part of the blood, that village would get the benefit of the sacrifice." p. 50-51. Head of buffalo smeared with fat, right foreleg cut off and placed crosswise in mouth, boiled rice placed on forehead and a lighted lamp on top. By now about 3 a.m. Process with one Mala with lamb entrails around his neck and its liver in his mouth and another carrying basket of bloody rice and entrails. First becomes possessed and is held while all wave swords and sticks to drive off demons. Second man sprinkles bloody rice over houses to protect them and periodically shouts and faints on seeing evil spirits. At these spots coconuts are broken, limes thrown into air and lambs killed. Return by dawn to pandal.

10 a.m. - 3 p.m. 5 small mala boys eat some of the cooked buffalo under a sheet, offerings made by villagers and sacrifices made - killed by washer except buffalo which is killed by madigas. Heads given to goddess. The cart is then gotten in a procession.

7 p.m. lamb sacrifice, pig buried to snout at entrance of village. Procession to pig and cattle of village driven over pig which is killed by this. Bloody rice sprinkled on cows to prevent them from getting sick.

Final procession with buffalo head on Madiga head, first, goddess carried by washer next and cart last. Go about 1 furlong into neighboring village territory. Chants by Asadis, turmeric distribution to all and image undecorated and put on ground. Light put out and all leave, the madiga taking the head of buffalo for a feast. "The object of transporting the goddess to the land of the next village is to transfer to that village the wrath of the deity ..." p. 54.

#### V. Theory of Origins:

1. These sacrifices not understandable fully in terms of gift-to-gods.
2. Probably concept of "communication with gods or participation with them."
 

Totems: explained as an animal clan which is considered as "blood brothers" and so not killed except at a ritual occasion when one is killed and eaten in order to maintain the blood relationship. Parallel to making blood-kin in some African castes where men drink a little of each others blood. The parading and worship of the buffalo does not fit in to a gift theory.

  - Blain stones probably at first probably marked a spot where a totem animal was killed in order to shed the blood and so secure the presence of the totem deity at a particular spot which then became sacred or Taboo. As totemism died out and gave place to anthropomorphic conceptions of deity, the totemistic ideas died and the sacrifice became a gift more and more and the spot became associated with the stone pillar itself which became sacred and represented the deity. (All) boundary stone, now considered to house the deity, but not deity itself.

#### VI. Some terms and names:

- Hara - Destroyer - Siva.
- Narayaga - human sacrifice; Narayaga Ammavaru is the goddess worshipped by human sacrifice.
- Rudraksha berries; the berry of the Elaeocarpus Ganitrus is used to make rosaries for devotees of Siva, who is also associated with ashes.
- gadi - 24 minutes.

#### VII. More folklore:

Ammavaru wanted to be married and went to Vishnu, who sent her to Brahma, who passed her on to Siva. She danced before Siva who promised to grant her wish, if she would give him the three valuable things she possessed - a rug, some betel leaves and a third eye. She gave them all to him who at once opened the third eye and reduced her to ashes. Then, filled with regret at the rash act, which involved the destruction of all womankind, he collected the ashes and made them into the form of three women, who became the wives of Siva, Vishnu and Brahma.

2. Buffalo-Sacrifice (Telugu). Once a blind karnam had a beautiful daughter. A Pariah, well versed in vedas came to the village in the guise of a Brahman. The elders of the village were deceived and induced the karnam to give his daughter to the man in marriage that he might have a successor. They had sons and daughters and there was no suspicion. After a time a pariah from the man's own village came and recognized him, but seeing that he was a man of influence, said nothing but went and told the man's mother. She came and sat by the caste well. The Pariah recognized her, took her home and instructed her to be absolutely dumb, had her head shaved and passed her off as a Brahman widow and brought her home and told his wife it was his widowed mother. One day the wife ordered a dish called Savighai (wheat flour baked with sugar and made into long strings) as a mark of respect to her mother-in-law. During the meal, the mother, forgetting the injunction of silence asked her son what the Savighai was, saying it looked like the entrails of an animal. The wife, overhearing, was suspicious and that she talked and didn't know Savighai, a common Brahman dish, and watched them. Convinced that they were pariahs, she burned the house down around her and reappeared as a divine form, declaring to the terrified villagers the wrong they had done and her curse on them. They appeased her with sacrifice. The husband had been cursed before she died and the villagers fulfilled it by seizing the man, stripping him naked, took him in procession, beheaded him in her presence, and cut off one of his legs and put it in his mouth, and the fat of his stomach put on his head and a lighted lamp placed on top. The children returned but she took favour on them as they were her children and said that without them no worship should be offered to her. The Asadis claim to be descendants of these children and exercise hereditary privilege of abusing the villagers and village officers in their songs. The husband was born again as a buffalo, and for this reason a buffalo is offered in sacrifice to Uramma, village goddess.
3. Kanniah Parameshvari goddess of Komatis. In ancient days there was a bitter hatred between Komatis, who claim to belong to the V isya caste and the Mlecchas or barbarians. When the Komatis were getting worsted in the struggle for supremacy, they requested Parvati, wife of Siva, to come and deliver them. It so happened that about that time Parvati was incarnate as a girl of the Komati caste, who was exceedingly beautiful. The Mlecchas demanded that she should be given in marriage to one of their own people, and the refusal of the Komatis led to severe fighting, in which the Komatis, owing to the presence of the avatars of Siva among them, were completely victorious, and almost exterminated their enemies. After their victory, the Komatis entertained doubts as to the chastity of the girl, and compelled her to purify herself by passing through fire. This she did, and disappeared in the fire, resuming her real shape as Parvati, and taking her place beside Siva in Heaven. Her last words were a command to the Komatis to worship her, if they wished their caste to prosper.
4. Vaddars: In Warangal taluq a king promised some of them a sum of gold for digging a large tank. When they came, he gave them silver instead. They went away very sad and angry, returning a few days later and all cut their throats in his presence so that their spirits might haunt and torment him the rest of his life. Now they are worshipped and a very popular set of gods in the district.
5. Ammavaru was first in existence and laid 3 eggs in the sea of milk, one by one in the three successive ages. The first spoiled, the second filled with air, and only the third hatched. This had three compartments from which came the Trimurti, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. The lower half was transformed into earth, the upper into sky. Vishnu, in the form of an avatars as king was fed on butter; Brahma on turmeric; and Siva on the milk of Ammavaru. She made each of the gods put on his forehead characteristic religious marks, and finally built three towns, one for each, and a fourth for herself. (It is doubtless true that the Brahmans gained the victory over their enemies the Buddhists by borrowing largely from the pre-Aryan religions which had a strong hold over the masses of the people.) Later the gods forgot her and there was a long struggle between her and them with no decisive victory, though she caused much dis ease and trouble in their cities.