

TODAY'S PAPER » ANDHRA PRADES THE HINDU

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Moda Kondamma song turns into ballet



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Historic:Malagangu padalu at Pata Paderu in Visakhapatnam district worshipped during the Modamamba festival next month. —Photo: By Arrangement

Modamamba festival is the most important tribal festival celebrated commemorating the centuries-old relations between rulers of plains (Vaddadi) and hills (Nandapuram, presently near Jeypore of Orissa) hills, and the marriage of Moda Kondamma's son Sanjiva Raju, bringing people together.

Moda Kondamma Padalu and temple of her son, Sanjiva Raju, are situated at Minumuluru in the Agency area and the annual festival is celebrated on May 8, 9 and 10 where a large number of tribal people congregate. The padalu of Malagangu at Pata Paderu is also worshipped.

“At the festival, a song narrating the marital relations between Nandapuram and Vaddadi ruling families in 14-15th centuries, the subsequent rejection of a Vaddadi ruler to allow his daughters to marry princes of Nandapuram and their ‘Gandharva vivaham’ is narrated. The Vaddadi ruler humiliates his sons-in-law resulting in their suicide. Moda Kondamma is pregnant by then. Later, her son Sanjiva Raju’s marriage is performed with Malagangu overcoming the caste and other restrictions after the intervention of Nandapuram queen,” says P. Sivaramakrishna, Director of Search for Action and Tribal Initiative (SAKTI).

There is historic evidence that there were relations between the ruling families of Vadadi and Nandapuram, he said. The Nandapuram rulers were one of the first to donate liberally to the Simhachalam temple.

The legend of Moda Kondamma and her son Sanjiva Raju used to be sung at the Modamamba festival until a few decades ago nurturing folk traditions, said Dr. Sivaramakrishna, who did his doctorate on “Tribal knowledge

systems” in 1982. The rendering of the song used to run for five, six hours with women taking their cue from one another and singing it.

But of late, the festival has turned into a big event with the construction of Modamaba temple at Paderu. Dance programmes and cricket tournaments are being organised.

To revive the folk tradition, Dr. Sivaramakrishna and a school principal of Paderu, Varaha Murthy, converted the song into a ballet. It runs for about 40 minutes.

A troupe belonging to Addubandi staging mythological plays and Gnanasagar Junior College of the Brahmakumaris at Hukumpeta have evinced interest in staging the play. The students have even conducted rehearsals.

But owing to paucity of time and the college closed for holidays, it may not be possible to organise the staging this year, Dr. Sivaramakrishna says.