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## Ballad cycle of Katama Raju in Telugu

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### Abstract

Every country has heroes and every literature has ballads. Denmark, Faeroes Islands, Portugal, Spain, Scotland and Sicily are rich in balladry. In India, Rajasthan stands first in the wealth of ballads followed by Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra and Punjab. This paper shall elaborate on meaning of Ballads. With special focus on Ballad-cycle of Katama Raju, along with depicting different versions of Katama Raju's battle. And trace some common characteristic types found in the ballad-cycle of Katama Raju.

**Keywords:** Ballad cycle, folk-literature, oral tradition, epic narratives, communities, village deities

### Introductions

The English word ballad is derived from the late Latin *ballare* which means 'to dance'. So, the word ballad was meant 'a dance song' at the beginning. Afterwards this meaning become out of use and ballad now means 'a story told in song' or 'a song with narration.' it is 'short epic in lyrical form' or 'a long lyric with epic narration'.

A Traditional ballad is a folksong which tells a story. Ballad is a comparatively long, impersonal narrative song, which depicts a single incident or incidents through the content, style and designation of the folk, It is easily understood by almost all the members of a folk-group and is learnt and transmitted through oral tradition from singer to singer, and often from generation to generation. (see 'Ballad', Encyclopedia Britannica, Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1965, vol.3, p.20)

There are two kinds of literature in Telugu as is the case with so many other Indian languages: Maarga (classical) and Desi (popular). Ballads belong to the second variety. The ballad can be called Jaanapadageeyakatha or viiragaatha in Telugu. The origin of epics like Mahabharata is in balladry only.

Ballads are of two types: the narrative songs written by scholarly poets and the narrative songs composed orally by illiterate folk. The former is called literary ballads and the latter traditional ballads or popular ballads or folk ballads. But in general usage, a ballad belongs to the latter form.

The Telugu folk-literature is rich in traditional ballads. Bobbili katha, Baala Naagamma katha, Kaambhooja Raju katha, Mugguru Maraathiila katha, Lakshamma katha, Kaamma katha, Sarvaayi Paapadu katha, Cinnapareddi katha, Bangaaru Timmaraaju katha and Sadaasivareddy katha are the most popular ballads in Andhra Pradesh. There are number of balladlings (short ballads) too. Most of the Telugu ballads are historical in nature. The specialty of Telugu folklore is to have long historical ballad-cycles. If we get a number of ballads about the members in the family of a main hero in a chronological order, they constitute one ballad-cycle. Among them, the Ballad-cycle of the heroes of Palnadu and the Ballad-cycle of Katama Raju are very popular.

The ballad-cycle of Katama Raju is one of the oldest, longest and best historical ballad-cycle in Telugu to be mentioned after the ballad-cycle of Palnadu. In fact, it is longer than the latter one. But no research of comprehensive nature has been done on the cycle unlike in the case of ballad-cycle of Palnadu. Hence most of the ballads in this cycle are left unknown to the literary world. There is no other ballad-cycle in Telugu as big as this ballad-cycle of Katama Raju. According to Prof. T.V. Subba Rao there are as many as thirty two long ballads in this cycle arranged in an epic manner, each extending to more than two thousand lines. But he collected only about twenty ballads in his fieldwork during the years 1963-68. They are as follows:

1. The Ballad of Avula Valu Raju
2. The Ballad of Pampadri

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3. The Ballad of Peddi Raju
4. The Ballad of Simhadri Raju (not available)
5. The Ballad of Yeranuka Raju
6. The Ballad of Nalanuka Raju (not available)
7. The Ballad of Polu Raju: This is a long ballad containing six sub-plots:
  - a. Chandraguptuni Caatuva
  - b. Mallikadevi Caatuva
  - c. Mukkanti Caatuva or Brahmana Caatuva
  - d. Zangala Caatuva
  - e. Kapota Caatuva
  - f. Gayudu Caatuva
8. The Battle of Ballikuruva
9. The Ballad of the Coronation of Katama Raju
10. The Ballad of Kariyavulu Raju
11. The Ballad of Papanuka
12. The Ballad of Katama Raju grazing his cattle on the Northern side
13. The Ballad of Paleru or the argument between Ganga and Katama Raju
14. The Ballad of grass tax (not available)
15. The Ballad of Katama Raju grazing his cattle on the Southern side or the Ballad of Zannivada or the Ballad of Chess
16. The Embassy of Bhattu or the Embassy of the Battle
17. The Ballad of bringing the Palm-tree of Kotapadu
18. The Ballads of the Tops
19. The Battle of Yerragaddapadu. This is very long ballad containing seven Kandas or chapters:
  - a. The Battle of Challavaru or the Ballad of Erlamanu (Sameevriksha) or the Ballad of the Minister Tikkana
  - b. The Battle of Bollavu 'the white cow'
  - c. The Battle of Beerneedu
  - d. The Battle of Kariyavula Raju
  - e. The Battle of Balarajulu
  - f. The Battle of cows and oxen or the Battle of Yerrayya
  - g. The Battle of Katama Raju
20. The Ballad of Agumanchi
21. The Ballad of Papanuka Valapota
22. The Ballad of Bhaktiranna

All the above ballads are in the form of palm-leaf manuscripts available in the houses of minstrels of Yadava and Adi-Andhra communities. The names of five more ballads belonging to this huge cycle are also known. They are Lament of Papanuka, the Lament of Agumanchi, the Birth of Pallikonda, the Birth of Ganga and the Battle of Bhairava Kuruva.

Katama Raju was a Kshatriya belonging to the lunar race. According to the genealogy given in some ballads, he was the seventy fourth descendant from Lord Vishnu and twenty third descendant from Sri Krishna. In this long ballad-cycle there are thirty-two ballads pertaining to the adventures and heroic deeds of three generations starting from Avula Valu Raju, to his grandson Katama Raju. These ballads have undergone epic process with a continuous theme.

Kavulavula Ganga Raju, who was ruling Elamanchi (a town in present Vizag District), had four sons, namely Valuraju, Haripaludu, Nanda Gopaludu, and Govardhanudu, through his wife Gangamma. All these four fought with Kalabhuta Gangu Raju, the ruler of Khandemondemula Kota, and perished in that war. The wife of Avula Valu Raju was Vallamma. This couple had five sons namely Simhadri Raju, Peddi Raju, Yeranuka Raju, Balanuka Raju and Polu

Raju, and a daughter Komaramma or Komarakka. According to the advice of the astrologers Peddi Raju ascended the throne after Valu Raju. He ruled Yelamanchi for ten years. Afterwards he changed his capital to Pampadri and ruled from there for seven years along with his brothers. All the brothers except Peddi Raju be got children, Peddi Raju and his wife Peddamma went to the town Kalyananagara and worshipped Lord Someswara for the sake of children. There Peddi Raju got one son by name Katama Raju and one daughter by name Papanuka. The daughter Papanuka was born in a dushtanakshtra' bad star'. So Peddi Raju fought with Valikethuva Raju in Arlapenta battle-field and died. Then Katama Raju, who was only seven years boy at that time, attacked Valikethuva Raju and killed him. Thus, he took revenge on behalf of his father. Peddamma performed Sati along with the body of her husband brought by Katama Raju.

Just at the time of Peddi Raju's death, all four brothers died in different places fighting battles in order to protect the people who sought their rescue. King Simhadri invaded Sri Kurma, fought with the king Sindhu Ballani and died. King Yeranuka went to the hill Yenuganathuni Konda, fought with Yerrabhupathi and died. King Nalanuka went to Nunna Bezawada, and was killed in the war against Nandikesavaraja. Polu Raju was fatally attacked by Mukkanti, who was sent by Chodani of Srirangapattana, near Cherukuru.

King Simhadri's wife was Simhadri Sita. This couple had a son Kariyavula Raju and a daughter Chittinuka. This Kariyavula Raju conquered Bethala, the Commander-in-chief of Pratapa Rudra of Orugallu, in a duel fight. The wife of Kariyavula Raju was Nagamambika or Kariyavula Naga. The husband of Chittinuka was Kallandula Polinedu. This Polinedu died in the battle of Bhairava Kuruva. Chittinuka performed Sati with the body of her husband. This couple had a son Pochayya.

The wife of king Yeranuka was Yeranuka Sita. They had a son Bhattavula Raju, and a daughter Bala Nagamma. Battavularaju killed the brother of Bethala in a duel fight in Orugallu. The wife of Battavula Raju was Suramma or Suramambika.

Nalanuka Sita was the wife of king Nalanuka. Their son was peyyala Yerrayya or Peyyavula Yerrayya. He argued with the Goddess Ganga near the river Paleru. He was assisting Katama Raju in grazing the cattle herds. Bhayyamambika was the wife of Peyyala Yerrayya.

The wife of Polu Raju was Sridevi. This couple had three sons: Bhaktiranna, Aithama Raju and Mummayya and a daughter Agumanchi or Akkana. Pallikonda was the minister of Pola Raju. When Polu raju was dead at Cherukuru, pallikonda took care of the princes and the harem and was going to Pampadri along with the rest of the armies and cattle herds. The grandson of Mukkanti attacked these princes on the way near Ballikuruva. Then Pallikonda praryed Bollavu, the white cow with a single horn. Bollavu, which was supposed to be the incarnation of Lord Vishnu, appeared before him and defeated the enemies.

Among the sons of Polu Raju, Aithama Raju became the ruler of Donakonda (the present Ganga Donakonda in Prakasam district). The elder son Bhaktiranna (Battinanna in folk pronunciation) while proceeding for Kasi, saw Katama Raju and Papanuka in Kalyanappattana, brought them to Donakonda and placed them under the care of his mother Sridevi. Katama Raju, the incarnation of Lord Vishnu, was

crowned as a sovereign for all the cattle herds of Yadavas. Hence he attained the name Pasuvulanna. He was grazing his cattle in the forests of Srisailam. Peyyala Yerrayya, the son of king Nalannuka, and padma Raghava, a Velama Chieftain, were along with him. As papanuka was born in dushtanakshatra 'bad star', she was confined by Sridevi in a single-pillar-palace in the outskirts of Donakonda. Katama Raju married Marlavaari Ganga or Viira Ganga but he never lived with her and maintained perfect Brahmacharya 'celibacy' throughout his life.

The wife of Bhaktiranna was Nallameda or Nallamamba. This Bhaktiranna went on a pilgrimage to Kasi and made Pindapradana 'religious offerings of rice balls to the dead' in Gaya for the kings like Valu Raju, Peddi Raju, etc., and their queens as well as to their respective ministers and their wives. When he was in Kasi, he heard the news of the death of katama Raju and his brothers in the battle of Yerragaddapadu. He at once came to Donakonda in a cloud-chariot, released Papanuka from the confinement, ordered Sati to all the Yadava ladies, went to Yerragaddapadu and Performed Pindapradana to all his deceased brothers and relatives in the river Paleru.

Aithama Raju was the ruler of Donakonda. His queen was Nethivari Pothu. This royal couple had a son Allu Dadenna and a daughter Sirigiramma. During the time of the battle of Yerragaddapadu, Yadavas, in order to protect their clan, sent this Allu Dadenna to Katakam with some army. Aithama Raju gave his daughter Sirigiramma in marriage to Pochayya, the son of Chittinuka. Mummyaya, the third son of Polu Raju, had a wife by name Chinnamallu. This handsome Mummyaya and Pochayya were playing tops in Donakonda when the battle of Yerragaddapadu was about to be started.

Agumanchi, the daughter of Polu Raju, was an extraordinarily beautiful princess. She was the wife of Puttama Raju who was the son of her paternal aunt Komaramma. This Puttama Raju was the hero who rode and subdued the fearful wild horse of Pratapa Rudra in Orugallu. Pochayya was the adopted son of Agumanchi and Puttama Raju. When Pochayya was infant, his mother Chittinuka performed Sati along with the body of her husband Polinedu. So Agumanchi brought up Pochayya.

Pandumula Papi Nayudu was the husband of Komarakka or Komaramma, the younger sister of Peddi Raju and his brothers. He was the minister of Polu Raju. Pallikonda was the adopted son of Komarakka. Puttama Raju and Nachakulla Nayudu were her own sons. The names of two more sons, Chattuvari Yerrayya and Pullavula Kesavayya are known from the ballads. Pallikonda was the divine son among the progeny of Komarakka. He served as a minister, first in the court of Valluraju, next in the court of Polu Raju and later in the court of Aithama Raju. Chattuvari Yerrayya was the hero who brought the palm tree from Kotapadu to Yerragaddapadu in order to write letters to Aithama Raju. Nachakulla Nayudu was expected to marry Panpanuka but the marriage did not take place as she was born in a bad period. Pullavula Kesavayya was the minister of Kariyavula Raju.

Katama Raju who was grazing his cattle near Srisailam left that place as there was a terrible drought. He was going to the southern parts of the country along with his herds. The Goddess Ganga, near the river Paleru, in Kanigiri region obstructed him. She demanded that Katama Raju and his followers should worship her. There was wordy duel

between Katama Raju and Ganga. At last, Katama Raju saluted Ganga and worshiped her. Then Ganga blessed Katama Raju and allowed him to cross the river Paleru on his way to the southern part. Katama Raju Came to Nellore region, entered into an agreement with king Nallasiddhi, and was grazing his cattle in the forest of Nallamala.

Kundamadevi was the queen of Nallasiddhi the ruler of Nellore (Another version says that she was the concubine of Nallasiddhi). She had a tamed parrot. Once the parrot left the palace, flew to the forest where the cattle of yadavas were grazing and disturbed the cows with its singing. Padama Rghava shot the parrot with an arrow. It flew back to the palace and died before the queen. Kundamadevi grew angry with this and sent some hunters to kill the cows of the yadavas. Enraged at this wild act, Katama Raju killed those hunters, refused to pay grazing tax to king Nallasiddhi, went back to his Kanigiri region, collected his armies and settled at Yerragaddapadu. Nallasiddhi sent an embassy but in vain. Then he ordered his Commander-in-Chief Khadga Tikkana, a Brahmin warrior, to collect the grazing tax that was due to him from Yadavas. Tikkana attacked the Yadava armies near Somasila, chased them to the banks of river Penna, fought bravely, killed several heroes and succumbed in the battlefield. Then Nallasiddhi invaded Yerragaddapadu with a huge army and there was a terrible fight for one long week. Even the cows and oxen of Yadavas, besides the single horned Bollavu, participated in the war. Yadava heroes like Kariyavula Raju, Bhattavula Raju, Aithama Raju Mummyaya, Nachakulla Nayudu and Pochayya took the challenge and fought bravely on the side of Katama Raju who himself fought with Nallasiddhi and won the battle. Thus, Katama Raju took revenge on Nallasiddhi.

According to another version, the root cause for the battle differs slightly. Katama Raju took permission from Nallasiddhi to graze his cattle in the pastures of Nellore kingdom and entered into an agreement with him for paying tax. He agreed to give all the male calves born to his cows during his stay in Nellore region. But he broke the terms of the agreement and grazed his cattle not only in the pastures but also in the cornfields around the city of Nellore. Enraged at this, the queen Kundamadevi destroyed the cattle through some hunters. Nallasiddhi was not aware of this. Katama Raju thought that this slaughter was done at the instigation or knowledge of Nallasiddhi and refused to pay the agreed tax as a revenge. His contention was that the tax due to Nallasiddhi was equal to the loss inflicted upon his cattle. This was the main reason for the battle of Yerragaddapadu.

King Nallasiddhi and Khadga Tikkana are the two historical persons in this ballad-cycle of Katama Raju. This battle of Yerragaddapadu might have taken place in the fourth quarter of 13th century A.D. According to inscription and ballads, this battle was fought during the last days of Kakatiya queen Rudramadevi when Pratapa Rudra was heir-apparent. That means, the battle between Katama Raju and Nallasiddhi took place during the years 1280-1297 A.D. Some historians are mistaken that Nallasiddhi and Manumasiddhi are identical. In fact, Nallasiddhi was the son of Manumasiddhi. He was a Telugu Choda king who ruled Nellore towards the end of 13th century. His time coincides with the time of Pratapa Rudra's heir-apparent period. (i.e., 1280-1296 A.D.). This Nallasiddhi was the foe of Katama Raju, the hero of the ballad-cycle.

These ballads of Katama Raju are usually sung by Madigas called Kommula-varu. They live by begging alms from

Yadavas. Some minstrels belonging to the sub-clans of Yadavas are also singing these ballads. They are called Suddula Gollalu. In Visakhapatnam and Srikakulam districts, Podapothulavaru are singing these ballads. Folk instruments like Kommu 'horn', 'titti' 'leather wind pipe', Pamba Zodu 'two small trumpets' and talam 'small bronze plates' are used in singing these ballads. The minstrels sing this ballad-cycle continuously for three months.

Goddess Ganga is the family deity of Yadavas. She is one of the popular village deities of Andhra and Telangana. Jubilant folk festivals are being conducted to this deity in several villages in the name of Ganga Zataras. It is customary to sing the ballads of Katama Raju in such Ganga Zataras.

### **Some common characteristic types found in the ballad-cycle of Katama Raju**

1. The hero comes to the rescue of the weaker sections and sacrifices his life in protecting them.
2. The wife or the sister of the hero knows the death of the hero through nightmares and bad omens.
3. The wife of the hero performs Sati. Wife throws herself on husband's funeral pyre.
4. The cow as the supernatural helper, and participates in the battle like a hero.
5. Blind belief in astrology perturbs life.
6. The shepherd king loves his cattle as his kith and kin.
7. The hero thinks below his dignity to salute a woman even if she is a Goddess.
8. Violation of agreement results in war.
9. The ambassadors argue cleverly on behalf of their kings.
10. Every act of the hero proves to be adventure.
11. The hero and his wife worship their family deity.
12. The hero and his wife worships monks for the welfare of the hero in the battle.
13. The religious rites please the dead hero.

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