

## Tribal Religion Of Badagas

### **No karma, No rebirth**

In Hinduism the karma concept envisages through a system where beneficial effects are derived from past beneficial acts and harmful effects from past harmful actions. Karma is considered as an eternal law and no one can really be free from the law of karma. Neither such thought is found in the religious believes of Badagas nor the concept atman (soul) is prevalent among them. Badagas perform a remarkable funeral right, called 'karuharasuvadu' where all the sins committed by a deceased person are taken back by a living calf which made to stand near the bier. According to this ritual, now the dead one is free from any form of sin and he/she is in sober in all respect. So, there is no such thing as harmful action to effects to his/her next birth or so. According to Hinduism, a soul takes rebirth again and again on earth until it becomes perfect and reunites with its source and also hinduism asserts that everything in the world is impermanent. In the religious belief of Badagas this world is real one and an individual has to live perfectly here itself. And after death he/she has to go and unite with the dead Badaga folks who are in astral bodies and living beyond the area of Malladu, the western part of Nilgiri plateau. The concept of liberation (moksha) and realization are unknown to Badaga religious believes. Hence the concept of renunciation is not mentioned anywhere else in their religious observances.

### **Ancestor worship**

In religious observances of Badagas the ancestral worship is predominant with two historical gods, 'Ayya', a male deity and 'Hethe', a female deity. God 'Ayya', is nothing but the founding father of a clan and he is the supreme deity and Badagas worship him as most revered god in all respect. The very name 'Devva,' given to 'Ayya' deity, a derivative of 'deyvam' (god), implies the supremacy attached to this deity. We can identify ten or more ancestors for their different clans (exogamous septs), but, all these ancient men are called in unison as 'Devva'. 'Devvamane' the ancestral (Devva's) house is temple and the other place which has connection with this deity is 'banagudi' (forest temple) memorial of this deity. In Badaga tradition 'juvikindi' (water jar), 'ele kannadi' (bronze mirror), 'jegande' (victory bell) represent the very deity itself and these articles get pooja once in a year that too on Devva festival. Except this festival days rest throughout the year these articles are kept in a hidden place at forest.

Hethes are goddesses of human origin and they lived in different times and different places. The name 'Hethe', mother goddess, is an inclusive term to denote all the known thirteen 'Hethes' and to point out a particular "hethe", her birth place etc., is to be prefixed. There are numerous rites and ceremonies centring round propitiation of goddess Hethe and these rites are exclusively different from those of the orthodox religion.

### **Tribe**

"Today we find no castes in Badaga society" (Hockings, Paul 2005:4)\*. Badagas use the term 'kola'(clan) for a particular descendants instead of using 'gothra' which is prevalent among Hindus, especially among high Hindu-castes and interestingly Badagas have the totemic names for their clans. For Badagas their tribe is sacred.

## Tradition

Badagas were in the habit of burying their dead, but they burn when the deceased one was unmarried (young) or had any contagious disease. They place stones called 'ammukallu' on buried places and these represent as memorial stones.

The Badaga religious observances are vogue accordingly to their tradition and they based on no scripture that contain revelations etc., And there is no mythical stories prevalent attached to gods.

Badagas claim no divine origin for their religious beliefs. Their customs are mostly pragmatic and relevant to their day to day life. Their marriage customs also do not reveal any supernatural underpinnings. The religious activities of the Badagas are very limited. They themselves perform the rituals. Badagas have remained comparatively free from vedic religious influence.

### Note:

\*Hockings, Paul, 2005, Badaga Kinship rules in their socio-economic context, Anthropos vol-77, HRAF Publication Information, New Haven Conn.

Hockings, Paul is a well known Anthropologist who did extensive study on Badagas.

