

OUR VILLAGE OUR TEMPLE OUR DEITY OUR VILLAGE GODDESS

A Gramadevata (Sanskrit: ग्रामदेवता, Gramadevata. (village deity) is the tutelary deity of a given locality in Hinduism .which is primarily worshiped in the villages of India .Of diverse origins, Grama Devatas are regarded to protect the inhabitants of their villages from bandits, epidemics, and natural disasters when propitiated, failing which they are believed to cause these afflictions. A gramadevata is typically Goddess in India. In this region, a village goddess, acting as a fertility figure, is enshrined, and a guardian of the village is situated at the village boundary.The term gramadevata is derived from the Sanskrit words grāma, "village or village settlement" and devatā, "deity".

Grama Devatas are believed to serve as the protectors of fields and the general countryside, preventing plagues, famines, pestilence, war, as well as natural disasters. They are also venerated to honor their task of guarding villagers from evil. These deities, predominantly goddesses, possess both benevolent and malevolent features, to mark their roles as gentle to supplicants, and also fierce to wrongdoers. They are associated with agriculture, harvests, rain, and are regarded to be embodiments of fertility. These deities are often venerated in the open fields, or in the form of shrines. Most of them are not accompanied by a male consort. Their shrines could sometimes be composed of a pile of stones or a flag. While some of these shrines are maintained and served by priests, others merely have a keeper who is not accorded a special status. Grama Devatas often share common suffixes in their names, such as amman or amma, the Dravidian root word for mother. Animal sacrifices and blood are often served as offerings to placate these goddesses by

their devotees, including chickens, goats, fishes and occasionally buffaloes.

The village deity is considered the most powerful among regional deities, residing in the hearts of all with devotion. People from various regions, living in villages, towns, and even in today's rural areas, identify themselves with village deities such as Palleturu, Tanda, and Palle Vasi. This is mentioned in the Markandeya Purana Chapter 7. With the country progressing rapidly, our customs and practices are changing, adapting to the modern lifestyle. Even in this century, modern scientists and researchers who have achieved great heights in science worship the divine. For example, in the Tirupati district, Before the momentous event of rocket launches, the ISRO team engages in special poojas, including those dedicated to Chengalamma and Tirumala Venkateswara. Chengalamma, revered for her protective qualities, is invoked to ensure a safe and secure mission. The team seeks her blessings, believing in the age-old tradition of safeguarding against obstacles. This ritual reflects ISRO's cultural ethos, acknowledging the spiritual dimensions that contribute to the success of their endeavors. and a small ceremony is performed at the Tirupati Seven Hills Swami's feet. How appropriate is this, and how appropriate is the rural practice? In ancient times, women held a significant position in families. The story of Nagarikatha (civilization) among the Aryans tells us that it is the duty of women to safeguard the family, and women are primarily responsible for family protection. Men, on the other hand, are engaged in warfare. Therefore, it is incorrect to say that women are inferior. From the time of Aryan civilization, women have been worshiped as goddesses and have manifested as village deities. In various countries like Greece, Rome, Asia,

Mexico, Egypt, and others, the representation of a Goddess deity is predominant. In Telangana, a region in Telugu-speaking states, there are seven village deities worshiped in different villages: Ellamma, Pochamma, Mysamma, Muthyalamma, Balaamma, Peddamma, and Mahakali. These deities are worshiped with specific names, and each deity is associated with the geographical and cultural context of the respective villages. Along with their cultural traditions, festivals, and rituals, they are revered by the people.

The village deity, often an aspect of Goddess Durga, is referred to as Gramadevata. Worshiped as a form of Adi Shakti, she is known by various names like MahaMaya, Sachidananda Swaroopini, Vishweshwari, Sarveshwari, Jagadambe, Mahashakti, and Parashakti. This Gramadevata, or the Mother of the Universe, is believed to protect the village in its entirety. The reverence for Gramadevata is deeply ingrained in the ancient and profound Hindu culture in India, as reflected in various scriptures, Upanishads, Shastras, and the Devi Bhagavatam.

The village deities, also known as Chaluvu Devatas, are revered by all the communities, bringing unity among various castes.

The term "Shakti" encompasses the five elements - earth, water, fire, air, and sky. These elements form the basis of the entire tangible and intangible creation. They represent the cosmic energy, and their union is the essence of all animate and inanimate existence. In this cosmic dance, "Prakriti," the nature of creation, is synonymous with the soul of the universe, known as "Purusha," embodied by Shiva.

The union of Shiva and Shakti is the catalyst for life's creation. Shiva, when present in the eastern part of a village, is accompanied by Shakti, the village goddess, in the form of divine

energy. Acting as a protector, this energy assumes various forms such as the one wielding a sword, a pot, a drum, and a trident. In this form, the village goddess safeguards the community from malevolent spirits and diseases, ensuring the village's prosperity. The goddess blesses the village with happiness and abundance, and every night she embarks on a divine journey through the village. The worship of Shiva-Shakti emphasizes recognizing the divine energy within and around us, acknowledging the interdependence between humans and nature. It encapsulates a profound understanding of the cosmic forces that govern life and the significance of aligning oneself with these energies for a balanced and prosperous existence.

Om Shri Durgayai Namaha