



Festivals of Telangana state—A cultural study

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Abstract

Telangana has a culture that is quite distinct and is a separate state from the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh. The festivals of Telangana are marked with well-defined rituals, legends, veritable customs, and characterized by colours. Consequently, the calendar in Telangana has a multi-hued tapestry of celebrations with innumerable festivals and fairs. Festivals are celebrated with much fervor and people used to go to temples on these days to offer special prayers. Some of the Festivals are Bathukamma, Dasara, Bonalu, Eid ul fitr, Bakrid, Ugadi, Makara Sankranti, Guru Purnima, Sri Rama Navami, Hanuman Jayanti, Holi, Peerla Panduga, Rakhi Pournami, Vinayaka Chaviti, Nagula Panchami, Krishnashtami, Deepavali, Mukkoti Ekadasi, Karthika Purnima and Ratha Saptami.

Keywords: festivals, culture, Telangana

Introduction

Telangana, the north western region of the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh and a separate state now, has a culture that is quite distinct from the other Telugu-speaking regions. The festivals celebrated in this state are marked by color, veritable customs and legends and have well-defined rituals, steeped in myth and symbolism. There are two things that are very striking about Telangana's festivals. One, the exceptional veneration of female deities and participation of women, and two, the universality and secularity of the festivities, which encompass people of all castes and faiths with equal and uniform fervor.

Apart from the major festivals such as Makara Sankranti, Dasara, Deepavali and Ugadi, the Telugu new year, there are innumerable festivals and fairs that make the calendar in Telangana a multi-hued tapestry of celebration. Also noteworthy is the way the major festivals are customized in the region, adding lore and legend to it, making the occasions as much a local celebration as a festival to most regions of India.

Bathukamma festival

The State Government has declared Bathukamma as a state festival, recognizing the uniqueness of the way the female deity, Durga, is worshipped as an embodiment of feminine valour and benevolence.

The festival is celebrated in the Bhadrpada month of the Telugu calendar, which falls between September and October. Concurrent with the Durga Navratri, Bathukamma has floral worship as its centerpiece and has women defining the many rituals that constitute the observance of the festival. Beginning on Mahalaya Amavasya, the festival culminates on the eighth day of Navratri with a ceremony called Saddula Bathukamma. The festival marks the beginning of Sharath Ritu and typically has floral worship by women with different flowers arranged on a plate in seven tiers. The arrangement is called the Bathukamma and signifies the holy *gopuram* of Hindu temples.

The stack, symbolizing the Goddess Durga in the form of Gauri or Bathukamma – a live goddess – is placed in the centre and women, dressed up in their best, move around in

circles singing traditional *batukamma* songs, seeking blessings and prosperity for their families and their villages. While its historicity is unknown, legend has it that a Chola king took away a large Shivalinga to Tanjore from the erstwhile Vemulavada kingdom in Telangana and Bruhadamma, as Parvati was called here, was left in Telangana. Bathukamma, a derivative of Bruhadamma, is worshipped and consoled for being alone, away from her husband Shiva. The Bathukamma arrangement has a small symbol of Gauri made in turmeric. There is another story that speaks of Bathukamma as a symbol of Sati, whom the women of Telangana, beseech to come back alive. And she does that as Parvathi by the end of the festivities.

Bonalu

Another major festival is Bonalu. Interestingly, Bonalu is as much an occasion of devotion as it is an expression of affection for the almighty, especially the Mother Goddess. Durga is worshipped in the form of Mahakali at this time, all over Telangana and especially in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

The festival falls in the Ashada month, coinciding with the months of July/ August, and is celebrated in a month that is traditionally considered an inauspicious time for happy occasions, when women spend the month away from their husbands. It is a thanksgiving to the deity and has the offering of bonam, a rough dialect term for bhojanam, meaning a meal. During this festival, women cook rice with milk and jaggery in a new vessel, decorate it with neem leaves and turmeric and vermilion and carry it on their heads to the Mahakali temple. The food, along with kumkum and turmeric, a saree and bangles, are offered to the deity.

Ganesh Chaturdhi

The twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad have long played host to Ganapati Bappa, dedicating a whole 13 days to the elephant-headed god, in a celebration that is fashioned along the lines of the Ganpati festival in Mumbai. Virtually every street corner has a Ganesh pandal in the city, with strings of tiny lights, illuminating every nook and corner.

The festival is a massive affair with virtually every community getting involved and contributing prasadam to the pandal in their own street. Loudspeakers blare devotional songs, often interesting parodies of super hit film songs, and while the pooja is a solemn occasion for adults, it is a time of fun and frolic for children. Thousands of idols are immersed in the famed Hussain Sagar Lake on the 13th day of the festival and in water bodies across the state.

Ramzan

The end of the holy month of Ramadan is marked by the festival of Eid-ul-Fitar, one of the most important festivals in Telangana, especially the city of Hyderabad. The state's many mosques are filled to capacity on the occasion with men offering special prayers. The diligent fasting observed by Muslims is followed by hearty feasting. It is also a month for perseverance, control, charity and goodwill amongst Muslims and is also shared with people of other communities with equal fervor.

Hyderabad is well known for its haleem, the special preparation at the time of Ramzan, that Muslims break their fast with at the time of Iftar. Made with meat, lentils, ghee and wheat rawa or pounded wheat made into a thick paste, haleem is a high-calorie dish that compensates for the long day of fasting, especially when Ramzan falls in summer. Hyderabadis have added their own special ingredients to the dish, making it a signature dish of the Old City. Thousands of haleem stalls spring up across the city and are chock-a-block in summer.

Ugadi

Ugadi or Yugadi, also known as Samvatsarādi (lit. 'Beginning of the Year'), is New Year's Day according to the Hindu calendar and is celebrated in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Karnataka in India. It is festively observed in these regions on the first day of the Hindu lunisolar calendar month of Chaitra. This typically falls in April month of the Gregorian calendar. It also falls during the Tamil month of either Panguni or Chithrai, sometimes on the day after Amavasya with 27th Nakshatra Revati. Ugadi day is pivoted on the first New Moon after March Equinox.

The day is observed by drawing colourful patterns on the floor called Muggulu, mango leaf decorations on doors called torana, buying and giving gifts such as new clothes, giving charity to the poor, oil massages followed by special baths, preparing and sharing a special food called pachadi, and visiting Hindu temples. The pachadi is a notable festive food that combines all flavors – sweet, sour, salty, bitter, astringent and piquant. In Telugu and Kannada Hindu traditions, it is a symbolic reminder that one must expect all flavors of experiences in the coming new year and make the most of them. Followers of the Souramana calendar system observe Ugadi in Karnataka, when the sun transits into the Aries Constellation, which is also the festival of Baisakhi, and is locally known as Souramana Ugadi or Meshā Sankranti.

Ugadi has been an important and historic festival of the Hindus, with medieval texts and inscriptions recording major charitable donations to Hindu temples and community centers on this day. The same day is observed as a New Year by Hindus in many other parts of India, such as Gudi Padwa in Maharashtra and is a national public holiday in Mauritius.

Holi

Holi is called as Kamuni Punnami/Kama Purnima or Jajiri in Telugu. Hindus celebrate Holi as it relates to the legend of Kamadeva. Holi is also known by different names: Kamavilas, Kamuni Panduga and Kama-Dahanam.

It is a 10-day festival in Telangana, of which last two days are of great importance. As in other parts of India, in rural Telangana, the 9 days preceding Holi, children celebrate kamuda by playing Kolata sticks along with singing folk songs called jajiri and collect money, rice, corn and wood. For this reason Holi is well known for "Jajiri Paatalu Kamudi aatalu", which means festival of "Jajiri songs and Kamudi games" and on 9th night i.e. Holy eve, all the wood is put together and set on fire representing Kama Dahanam.

Diwali

Indian festivals are the reflection of Indian culture. Among them, the Diwali of Diwali is a festival celebrated with joy and unity, ignoring the differences of caste, religion and class. The splendor of the lights of consciousness that awakens the world. Puranas say that people celebrate Diwali the day after killing the demon Narakasura in the joy of leaving his torment. Also, Ramayana says that when Lord Rama returned to Ayodhya after killing Ravana in Lanka, people celebrated Diwali amid the festivities. saying Diwali festival is celebrated as a festival of light and a symbol of victory. Homes that shine with the splendor of lamps, Aaba Gopala bursting with joy, fluttering of new clothes, clattering of cookers, crackling of firecrackers, these divine Diwali Soyagas. This festival falls on Ashvayuja Amavasya day every year. The day before the festival of lights is Ashvayuja Bala Chaturthasi. It is celebrated as Naraka Chaturthasi.

In some places, we traditionally see small children tying small pieces of cloth to gogunara bundles and lighting them up, saying that Diwali Diwali is coming again. Diwali means light. In the evening Pradosha, lamps are lit and children first stand facing south and light the lamp is called Ulkadaman. Shastras say that this lamp shows the way to the patriarchs. After lighting that lamp, they wash their feet and come inside the house and eat sweets. After that, in the pujagriham, lamps are lit with sesame oil, bow to Deepalakshmi, Goddess Lakshmi is invoked on the kalash and worshiped as per the procedure. After the pooja everyone was excited with fire-works. Get ready to shoot. Chichubuds, Vishnuchakras, Bhuchakras, Matabuls, Kakara candles, eyes dazzle and on the other hand, the entire surroundings resound with the thunderous sounds of grasshoppers. In this way, there is a purpose for burning firecrackers in the Puranas, in the light and sound waves, the sorrows of poverty are driven away and Lakshmikataksha is prepared, and the insects born due to the humidity created in the rainy season are killed by the smoke of firecrackers.

On Diwali festival, which is celebrated on the day of Amavasya to mark the destruction of Asura and the establishment of Dharma, worshiping Deepalakshmi, which is a symbol of Goddess Lakshmi, brings all the auspiciousness.

There are many stories surrounding Diwali. There is a story that people celebrate Diwali the next day with joy as Lord Krishna killed Narakasurini with the help of Satyabhama. There is another story. It is said that the people celebrated this festival with joy when Rama returned to Ayodhya with

Sita after slaying Ravana in Lanka. Northerners especially traders observe Diwali as New Year. On that day Goddess Lakshmi is worshiped and new account books are opened. Festivals like Diwali exist in all societies of the world .

Sri Rama Navami

Sri Rama Navami festivals is one of the most important festival at the Bhadrachalam Sri Rama Temple is dedicated to Bhagavan Sri Ram. Bhadrachalam Sri Rama Navami 2023 date is March 30. The temple is located at Bhadrachalam in Khammam District in Telangana. Sri Rama Navami is celebrated on every the Chaitra Shukla Navami, ninth day during the waxing phase of moon in Chaitra month as per Telugu Calendar. The day coincides with 'Punarvasu' – the Janma Nakshatra (birth star) of Lord Sri Rama. The Kalyana Mahotsavam of Sri Rama with his consort Sita is celebrated on the holy occasion. This divine festival is celebrated in a resplendent manner amid chanting of hymns by priests in Kalyana Mandapam of the temple. Thousands of devotees congregate to witness the festival. The kalyana mahotsavam is celebrated on the holy occasion between 10 am and 12.30 pm and the sacred Talambrolu showered on the deities exactly at 12 noon.

Dussehra

Vijayadashami also known as Dussehra or Navaratri is an important Hindu festival celebrated in Telangana. Vijayadashami, a festival that symbolizes the victory of good over evil, is celebrated with traditional fervor, devotion and gaiety across Telangana. The name Vijayadashami is derived from the Sanskrit terms “Vijaya-dashami” which means victory on the day of Dashami. Dashami is tenth lunar day of a Hindu calendar month.

According to puranas, demons, or Asuras, who were very powerful were always trying to defeat the Gods, and take control of Heaven. One Asura, called Mahishasura, in the form of a buffalo, was growing powerful and with this, he started creating havoc on the earth. The Asuras defeated the Gods under his leadership while the whole world was suffering under Mahishasura's evil acts. The Gods then combined all their energies into Shakti to destroy Mahishasura. A powerful band of lightning, which then emerged from the mouths of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva formed into a young and beautiful female with ten hands, which had all the special weapons given to her by Gods. This Shakti then took the form of goddess Durga and after riding on a lion, Durga fought bitterly Mahishasura for nine days and nights. Finally, during the tenth day of Ashvini shukla paksha, the demon Mahishasura was eventually defeated and killed by Durga.

The Durga temple in Warangal near Bhadrakali Lake, Basara Temple, Alampur Jogulamba Temple, one of the Astadasa Shaktipeethas, out of the 18 prominent Temples dedicated to Goddess Shakti, reverberate with manthras and are thronged by thousands of people. Sharan Navaratri is a popular festival at Alampur Jogulamba Temple, where as part of the concluding event, a Theppotsavam (boat festival) is organized, an eye-catching event held on Vijaya Dasami at the confluence of Krishna – Tungabhadra, also called Sangamam. Young women play Bathukamma around a clay pot decorated with flowers and they dance around it.

This is the time when most of the people living in Hyderabad and urban regions of the state head for their

ancestral homes in rural areas and hinterlands. The villages in Telangana come alive with vibrant celebratory hues. Dussehra is also the occasion in Telangana when the newlyweds are invited by the bride's family and are offered gifts and accorded special care.

Students usually keep their books and workers clean their tools for the purpose of puja on the ninth day of Navaratri, called Ayudha Puja which are then taken back, after puja on the tenth day i.e. Vijayadashami. Women and children organize 'bommala koluvu', which is a special arrangement of dolls and toys, aesthetically accompanied by flowers as well as lamps. Saraswathi Puja is also performed by many Telangana families for initiating their children into education since Vijayadashami is considered highly auspicious for this purpose. In Hyderabad city, devotees also immerse large idols of the goddess in the famous Hussain Sagar Lake, after worshipping her with devotion during the nine-day long festival.

Maha Shivaratri

In Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Special pujas are held at Pancharamas - Amararamam of Amaravati, Somaramam of Bhimavaram, Draksharamam, Kumararama of Samarlakota and Ksheerarama of Palakollu. The days immediately after Shivaratri are celebrated as Brahmotsavaalu at Srisailam, one of 12 Jyotirlinga sites. Mahashivaratri utsavalu are held at the Rudreshwara Swamy's 1000 pillar temple in Warangal. Devotees throng for the special poojas at Srikalahasti, Mahanandi, Yaganti, Antarvedi, Kattamanchi, Pattiseema, Bhairavakona, Hanamkonda, Keesaragutta, Vemulawada, Panagal, Kolanupaka amongst others. Shivaratri yatras are held at Mallayya gutta near Kambhalapalle, Gundlakamma Kona near Railway Koduru, Penchalakona, Bhairavakona, Uma Maheswaram amongst others.

Bakrid

Eid al-Az Ha is Eid al-Az Ha or Eid Juha or Bakr Eid or Bakrid. Muslims around the world celebrate this festival commemorating the tradition of Prophet Ibrahim taking his successor Ishmael as a sacrifice as per the order of Allah. Quran is the standard for this festival. (In Iran it is celebrated as the 3rd most important festival by Muslims.) As in Eid al-Fitr (Ramadan), the prayers on Eid al-Fitr are Khutba. (charitable speech) begins with

This festival is celebrated on the 10th day of Dhul Hajjah, the 12th month of the Islamic calendar. This festival is celebrated for 3 days. Hajj pilgrimage is also performed in this month. For this pilgrimage, one goes to the city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia and performs seven circumambulations around the Kaaba in Masjid-al-Haram. This festival is celebrated 70 days after the festival of Ramzan.

Bakrid is a festival that commemorates the sacrifice of Hazrat Ibrahim, one of the Prophets sent by Allah. It is customary to celebrate this festival on the 11th day of the month of Bakrid in the Islamic calendar. The Holy Qur'an says that Allah sent 80,000 prophets to the earth to warn the people from the evils that are accumulating in the society and lead them on the right path. One of them was Prophet Hazrat Ibrahim. Allah used many tests to understand the faith of the Prophets who were teaching mankind to lead a righteous life with faith in Allah. In this sequence, the Holy

Quran states that Prophet Ibrahim proved his faith in many trials. It was in this order that Allah blessed Hazrat Ibrahim and his wife Hazira in their old age. At the time when the old couple was raising their newborn son Ismail, one night Ibrahim felt that his son Ismail was being sacrificed in the name of Allah. As a result, Ibrahim realized that Allah wanted his son to be a martyr, so he prepared to sacrifice his son Ishmael (Qurbani). The son Ishmael, who observed his father's heart, also prepared to become strong in the way of Allah. If filial affection interferes with the sacrifice. If his father refuses to sacrifice him, he is advised to sacrifice him blindfolded rather than being a disbeliever with Allah. To that extent, in the name of Allah, at the moment when he stabbed his son on the throat to sacrifice, Allah praised the sacrifice and at the last moment, Allah spared Ishmael and raised a Dumba (ram) in the same place.

Peerla Panduga

Peerla Panduga is a festival celebrated by Hindus and Muslims in the Telangana State, Rayala Seema region of Andhra Pradesh, India. It is celebrated across the Sufi shrines called as Ashurkhana. A procession of the relic, called as Alam is taken out as a part of Muharram. There maybe multiple relics donated by various members of the procession. Some villages in Telangana have relics that have been donated through generation by the members of the same family (Nasarla Palle, Telangana).

Teej festival

Banjara people celebrate the festival of Teej during Shravana (the month of August). In this festival young unmarried Banjara girls pray for a good groom. They sow seeds in bamboo bowls and water it three times a day for nine days and if the sprouts grow "thick and high" it is considered a good omen. During Teej the seedling-baskets are kept in the middle and girls sing and dance around them. Usually the Teej Festival is celebrated by the Lamabada tribes for 9 days. The celebration starts with sowing of wheat or Bengal gram in woven bowls on the first day which will sprout on the ninth days. The sprouts will be taken out in procession around the village in a colourful ceremony and prayers will be offered at the village temple. Many rituals are involved in the Teej festival and women perform these rituals with the help of their men during the nine-days. The last-day, the women immerse the sprout bowls into local lakes or ponds.

There are some similarities in the rituals performed by both the communities in connection with the Teej festival. The Teej festival also has some similarities with that of Bathukamma festival.

Women worship Jagadamba in Teej and seek the Goddess' blessing in getting a good husband and married women pray for the well-being of their husbands. The women play and dance to the tune of traditional songs while circling the Teej or the decorated temple-like structure made of clay.

Christmas Festival

Christmas is celebrated every year on December 25. The festival marks the celebration of the birth anniversary of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is worshipped as the Messiah of God in Christian Mythology. Hence, his birthday is one of the most joyous ceremonies amongst Christians. Although the festival is mainly celebrated by the followers of Christianity, it is one of the most enjoyed festivals all over the globe. Christmas symbolizes merriment and love.

The season of Christmas that begins from Thanksgiving brings festivity and joy to everyone's lives. Thanksgiving is the day when people thank the almighty for blessing them with harvest and also show gratitude towards all the good things and people around. On Christmas, people wish each other Merry Christmas and pray that the day takes away all the negativity and darkness from people's life. Christmas is a festival full of culture and tradition. The festival entails a lot of preparations. Preparations for Christmas start early for most people. Preparations for Christmas involve a lot of things including buying decorations, food items, and gifts for family members and friends. People usually wear white or red coloured outfits on the day of Christmas. The celebration begins with decorating a Christmas tree. Christmas tree decoration and lighting are the most important part of Christmas. The Christmas tree is an artificial or real pine tree that people adorn with lights, artificial stars, toys, bells, flowers, gifts, etc. People also hide gifts for their loved ones. Traditionally, gifts are hidden in socks under the tree. It is an old belief that a saint named Santa Claus comes on the night of Christmas eve and hides presents for well-behaved kids. This imaginary figure brings a smile to everyone's face. Young children are especially excited about Christmas as they receive gifts and great Christmas treats. The treats include chocolates, cakes, cookies, etc. People on this day visit churches with their families and friends and light candles in front of the idol of Jesus Christ. Churches are decorated with fairy lights and candles. People also create fancy Christmas cribs and adorn them with gifts, lights, etc. Children sing Christmas carols and also perform various skits marking the celebration of the auspicious day. One of the famous Christmas carols sung by all is "Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell, Jingle all the way".

Conclusion

The Culture of Telangana in India has a cultural history of about 5,000 years. The region emerged as the foremost centre of culture in Indian subcontinent during the rule of Kakatiyas, the Qutb Shahis and Asaf Jahi dynasties— (also known as the Nizams of Hyderabad). The rulers patronage and interest for culinary, arts and culture transformed Telangana into a multi-cultural region where two different cultures coexist together, thus making Telangana the representative of the Deccan Plateau and its heritage with Warangal and Hyderabad being its epicenter. Hyderabad cuisine and Kakatiya architecture both from Telangana, are on the list of UNESCO creative city of gastronomy and UNESCO World Heritage Site. The regions major cultural events celebrated are "Kakatiya Festival" and Deccan Festival along with religious festivals Bonalu, Bathukamma, Dasara, Ugadi, Sankranthi, Milad un Nabi and Ramadan. The festivals of Telangana create equal and uniform fervor of festivities as it encompasses people of all castes and faiths. The two things that are unique to the state are the exceptional veneration of female deities and the universality of the festivities.

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