



MUHARRAM FESTIVAL AND ITS SOCIO-RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE

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Introduction

The conquest of Deccani Medieval Hindu kingdoms (Yadava, Hoyasala, Kakatiya) by Tughlaq forces by the year 1323 CE, gave an opportunity to Hindu-Muslim sections to come together. Even though political, religious differences has continued between native subjects and invaders from Delhi, in course of time due to changed conditions, these two cultures came together in certain parts of Deccan. The foundation of Bahmani kingdom in 1347 CE at Gulbarga by Allauddin Hassangang – Bahmani, the long rule of his successors till 1510 CE spread the Islamic culture in Deccan (Karnataka, Maratwada and some parts of present Telangana and Andhra Pradesh).

The dis-integration of Bahmani kingdom after Muhammad Shah III and the rise of five independent Shia kingdoms i.e. Adilshahi (Bijapur), Nizamshahi (Ahmed Nagar), Qutbshahi (Golconda), Bareed Shahi (Berar) and Imadshahis (Bidar) proved a tuning point in the history of Medieval Deccan. The Mughal invasions Deccani Shia kingdoms between (1606-1687) provided a terrible jolt to the cultural unity of this region its people and the rulers.

During the Qutbshahi period a large number of Muslim and Hindu festivals were celebrated in Andhradesa by Hindu-Muslims. The liberal religious policy of tolerance followed by Qutb Shahi Sultans has generated confidence in the local people. They too openly started, extended their all round support to Qutbshahis. Poets, Scholars were patronized. Temples were protected, financed by Qutb Shahis. Similarly along with the local Hindu festivals (*Dassera, Deepavali, Shivaratri, Sankranthi, Vinayaka Chaturthi, Holi*) Muslim festivals such as *Muharram, Milad-ul-Nadi, Idd-Suri, Idd-ul-Fitr, Shabbe-e-Barat,*

Nou-rouz, Basant etc. were celebrated in the spirit of brotherhoodness by all the sections of the society.

The present article highlights the glimpses of 'Muharram' festival (Peerlapanduga) of Qutbshahi period. The contemporary literary works such as *Kuliyat-e-Muhammad-Quli Qutbshah*¹ Gulzar-e-Asafia of Ghulam Hussain Khan, *Hadiqaat-us-Salatin*² of Mirza Nizamuddin-Ahmed (Contemporary of Abdullah Qutbshahi) *Tariq-e-Zaffrah* of Girdharilal-Ashqar³ and Folk songs in Telugu collected by eminent Telugu scholars like Biruduraju Rama Raju⁴, Thumati Donappa⁵, K. Ruknuddin provides a colourful picture of Muharram culture. The true spirit of Muharram, the way in which Hindu-Muslim rural and urban public participated and celebrated this festival.

The history of Muharram festival goes back to the battle of 'Karbala' (now in Iraq) which was fought in the year 680 CE. In this dreadful battle Imam Hussain, grandson of Prophet Muhammad and his followers were brutally killed by the army of Yazid. The Shia Muslims all over the world celebrates this month as the month of lamentation or martyrdom or mourning. So the battle of Karbala gave birth to Muharram festival. Today this festival, specially in the Telangana and Andhra States became the symbol of Hindu-Muslim Unity. The 'Ashurkhanas' built by Qutbshahi Sultans in different parts of Hyderabad city and its surroundings became the centres of Cultural activity. The important Ashurkhanas of Qutbshahi period are:

S.No.	Name of the Ashurkhana	Location/Builder/Year
1.	Koe-e-Moula-Ali	Yakut-Ibrahim-Quli Qutb Shah, 1578 CE
2.	Ashur Khana-e-N'a;-e-Mubarak	Pattargatti (Madina)
3.	Baad-Shah-e-Ashurkhana	1595 CE – Pattargatti Muhammad – Qutb Shah's Period (Kudadad Palace)
4.	Ashur-Khana-e-Hussain-e-Alam	1592 CE – Hussain-e-Alam (Charminar West)
5.	Panja-e-Shah-e-Villayat	Hazrat-Alis hand over stone Abdullah –Qutb Shahi

According to eminent historians Haroon Khan Sherwani, there are different kinds of Telugu songs, connected with the Muharram festival, such as (jungnama), Panchthani pak, and (Marsiyas). These songs are the result of the mutual understanding between the two sections of the population, which reached its apex during the reign of Abdull Qutbshah and his son-in-law and successor, Abul Hasan Qutb Shah. According to eminent Telugu scholar late Thumati Donappa 'there was hardly any city, district, taluq or village where Muharram ceremonies were not performed with devotion and enthusiasm even today.

According to the above learned scholar the Muharram festival was celebrated in number of villages such as Solapur (Raidurg Taluq), Surapalli, Shameerpet (Medak), Hanmakonda, Kazipet, Girmajipet, Fort Warangal, Kaaligundu near Rangasaipeta, Mattewada, Raichur Taluq (Mahboobnagar District), Gudipadu village (12 k.m. east of Jammikunta Railway Station on Kazipet – Delhi Rail route), Kolagutla, Pattaveedu villages (Guntur District), Metlakunta (Medak), Andugula village (Mahboobnagar, Patancheru, Shivanagar (Medak), Sullurupeta (Nellore District) etc. by Hindu and Muslims from Qutbshahi days to present times in a very harmonial manner.

Muharram festival day is very unique to non-muslims of Andhradesa. They cook /prepare variety of dishes both vegetarian and non-vegetarian. 'Malijamuddalu', Atlu (modern dosa), Pulav, Biryani, Zilebi, Murmuralla Laddulu (made with Murmurallu and Bellam pakam). They offer 'Dhattis' to Peerlu. They visits Ashurkhanas or Peerla Pandirulu offers flowers., Agarbattas, Ood etc. They also participates in the procession of Peerlu or Alams. People of all ages dances around the 'Aggigundalu' (Firepits) specially arranged cries of "Yaa – Ali' and 'Dhula'. In some parts of Andhradesa and Maratwada people paints their bodies with different colours in the form of Tiger (Pulivesalu). Some people also play 'Kolatham' sing songs like

'Ase' 'Use' Dargameedha Alenamma Chilakalu,
Chilakamma Chilakalu Mutyala Golusulu.

According to Thumati Donappa the people of the 'Solapur village even abstained from eating meat during the month of Muharram.⁶ On the fifth night, a procession of 'Alams' or 'peerlu' was taken out. It is known as 'Panj-e-ka-pittar', the total villagers

participates in this programme. The babies born during this period in the village were named as 'Fair Appa', Hussain Rao.⁷

In Surapalli village of Raidurg taluq also people of all sections celebrates Muharram festival in a joyful mood. The famous telugu poet 'Ramanna' of this village wrote number of poems describing and eulogizing Muharram. The below give poem, the poet writes;

(Come, the festival of the Great men)

(come, the festival of 'Peerlu').⁸

According to above scholar even the village women sung and wrote songs/poems to pay their homage to the martyrs of *Karbala*. Three women i.e. Imam Akka, Vanoor Bee and Gateema are known for their excellent talent of Muharram songs. Vanoor Bee in one of her Poems gave us the reasons for her devotion. She writes if you speak truth Beebi Fatima will bless you.⁹ There are even Telugu Folk songs written to pay homage to the Martyrs of *Karbala*. The English translation of one of them sung popularly in the Rayalaseema districts is quoted by eminent Telugu scholar B. Rama Raju in his work *Muharram Folk Songs in Tlugu* it runs in the following way;

The tribes such as '*Pardies*', '*gonds*' and '*lambadas*' of Andhradesa also celebrated Muharram festival with great enthusiasm. Eminent scholar Nadeem in his work *Hussain and Tribes*, quoted the two songs of Gonds and Lambadies. The English Translation runs as follows: Our guest has come brothers, our guest has come, cook food and collect fruits from the jungle for him

But he is a nice guest
He does not eat anything
But feeds us back
If he does not come
We shall have no clouds, no rains
Our lands will get dry,
There will be no crop
We will all die

The song of Lambadies runs in the following way:

These arrows were not shot by brave men,

They were Cowards

The brave son of the brave father got injured

He was the son of the bravest man

In whose name we were 'Kantas'

It was not this he was not brave

But he had a little son his arms

Who was shot dead, who were shooting their arrows at him.

He had carried his young son's dead body

His family was thirsty.

He was surrounded by the wolves.

Thus Muharram became a very popular festival of the people of Andhradesa during Qutbshahi Age. It is till enjoying the trust and love of the people of present two Telugu States.

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