

CULTURAL HERITAGE OF TELANGANA: FESTIVALS THAT DEFINE TRADITION

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Abstract

The cultural heritage of Telangana is deeply rooted in its vibrant festivals, showcasing a blend of tradition, spirituality, and community bonding. Among these, Bathukamma stands out as a celebration of nature and harvest, primarily observed by women. This nine-day festival involves creating intricate flower stacks dedicated to Goddess Parvati, symbolizing gratitude for agricultural bounty. Each day of Bathukamma features unique rituals and offerings, culminating in Saddula Bathukamma, celebrated just before Dussehra. This festival not only underscores Telangana's cultural identity but also highlights environmental consciousness through its eco-friendly practices.

Keywords: *Telangana, Bathukamma, Saddula Bathukamma, Goddess Parvati, Bonalu, Medaram Jatara, Sammakka Saralamma, Moharram, Pothuraju, Cultural heritage, Festivals, Tradition, Community bonding, Environmental consciousness, Tribal fair.*

Introduction

The cultural heritage of Telangana is rich and diverse, encompassing a tapestry of festivals that reflect its vibrant traditions and community spirit. Among these, Bathukamma stands out as a celebration deeply rooted in the region's **agricultural heritage** and reverence for nature. This festival, predominantly celebrated by women, involves the worship of Goddess **Parvati** through the creation of stunning flower stacks over nine days. Each day of Bathukamma is marked by unique rituals and offerings, culminating in the grand finale known as **Saddula Bathukamma**. The festival not only celebrates the bounty of nature but also reinforces the cultural identity and unity among the people of Telangana.

Bathukamma Festivals

Bathukamma is a festival of flowers. Bathukamma is the main festival celebrated by **women** in Telangana state. Bathukamma is worshiped for 9 days by stacking flowers of different colors on top of each other. Every year this festival is celebrated for nine days according to Satavahana calendar starting from **Mahalaya Amavasya** (also known as **Mahalaya Amavasya** or **Pitru Amavasya**) till Durgashtami. Historically, Bathukamma means “**festival of life**” and is celebrated to express gratitude for the blessings of Goddess **Parvati** who helped produce this (current) year's crop.

Bathukamma is the colorful flower festival of Telangana and is celebrated by women with different colored flowers of the region. Over the years, this festival has become a symbol of

Telangana's culture and identity. Bathukamma falls in the latter part of the rainy season before the onset of winter.

The festival begins a week before the '*Saddhula Bathukamma*' (the grand finale of the Bathukamma festival) which falls two days before Dussehra. Small batukammas are made throughout the week and every evening they are played around them and immersed in a nearby water pond. On the last day, the men of the house go to the forest grounds and collect flowers like '*Gunuka*' and '*Thangedu*'. They make *batukammas* by stacking these flowers on top of each other by the whole household¹.

The flowers are carefully arranged in circular rows and row after row on a brass plate (called '*tambalam*') in alternating colours. In the evening, the women wear colorful clothes to suit their attire, adorn themselves with many ornaments and keep Bathukamma in their premises. The surrounding women also reach there and go round and start singing songs. After circumambulating the '*bathukammas*', before dusk, the women carry them on their heads and take them in procession to a large water body near the village or town².

Women celebrate this Bathukamma festival on 9 so each day has its own uniqueness

Day 1: Angili Pula Batukamma

Day 2: Atukula Bathukamma

Day 3: Muddappu Bathukamma

Day 4: Nanabiyyam Bathukamma

Day 5: Atla Bathukamma

Day 6: Alighina Bathukamma (Alaka Bathukamma)

Day 7: Neem Batukamma

Day 8: Batukamma of Butter Lumps

Day 9: Saddula Bathukamma.

Bathukamma getting ready

Various types of flowers and leaves are used in the preparation of Bathukamma. Mainly colorful flowers such as *Tangedu*, *Gunugu*, *Nandivardhanam goranta*, *Banti*, *Chemanti*, *Katla flowers*, *Rudraksha flowers*, *Gumdi* flowers and leaves, Teak shoots are named in Tambalam, during this season blooms in different colors all over the uncultivated and barren plains of this region³.

Preparing Bathukamma is a folk art. Women prepare Bathukamma from noon. Songs are sung and blessings of various deities are sought.

Bathukamma offering

Bathukamma is named after the type of “*naivedyam*” (food offering) that Telangana women celebrate each day. Following are the names of each day and the offering offered on that day.

Day 1: Engili Pula Bathukamma – The first day of the festival is Mahalaya Amavasya, also Known as Petara Amavasya in Telangana region.

Food offering: Sesamum (nuvvulu) biyyapindi (rice flour) or nukulu (coarsely ground wet rice).

2nd Day: Atukula Bathukamma: The second day is called *Atukula Bathukamma*, which falls on the *Padyami* (first day) of Asvayuja month.

Food offering: sappidi pappu (boiled lentils), jaggery, and atukulu (flattened boiled rice).

3rd Day: Muddappu Bathukamma: The third day of Bathukamma falls on the second day of Vidya/Asvayuja month.

Offering: Muddappu (soft boiled dal), milk and jaggery

4th Day: Nanabiyyam Bathukamma: Fourth day Thidiya/Asvayuja month falls on the third day.

Offering: soaked rice (wet rice), milk and jaggery

5th Day: Atla Bathukamma: The fifth day falls on Chaturdi/Fourth day of Ashvayuja month.

Offering: salted flour flakes, or dosa.

6th Day: Aligina Bathukamma: The sixth day falls on the Panchami/fifth day of Asvayuja month.

Food offering: No.

7th Day: Vepakayala Bathukamma: The seventh day falls on the Shashti/sixth day of Asvayuja month.

Offering: Deep fried rice flour in the shape of neem tree fruits.

8th Day: Vennamuddala Bathukamma: The eight days fall on the seventh day of Saptami / Asvayuja month.

Offering: Sesame seeds, butter or ghee (clarified butter), and jiggery.

9th Day: Saddula Bathukamma: The ninth day Bathukamma is celebrated on the eighth day of Ashtami/Asvayuja month and coincides with Durgastami.

Saddula Bathukamma

The festival is celebrated for nine days and ends on *Durgashtami*. The last day of the festival is called *Saddula Bathukamma*. On this last day *Bathukamma Nimajjanam* (Bathukamma discharge) is celebrated with great devotion and enthusiasm throughout Telangana with rhythmic beating of drums. The evening offers a beautiful, calm and peaceful visual feast. The *Gauramma* (a statue of *Gauri* made of *yellow*) is taken back from Bathukamma before the immersion and women believe that as every married woman places it on the *mangal sutra* representing her marriage ceremony, her husband will be protected from all evil and illness.

Flower speciality of Bathukamma

The flowers used in Bathukamma have great quality of purifying water in *ponds* and *tanks* and richly *dipped* flowers are eco-friendly.

At a time when fresh water ponds are gradually receding and depleting, it is indeed a matter of pride for the women of Telangana (mostly with an agricultural background) to know intrinsically how to revive them by celebrating a flower festival.

The festival showcases the beauty of nature, the collective spirit of the people of Telangana, the indomitable spirit of women and the environmental spirit of agriculturists in conserving natural resources as a festival.

Bathukamma is Telangana state festival

After the formation of Telangana, Bathukamma which became famous has now been declared as Telangana state festival by the government. The state government also allocates some funds for Bathukamma festival every year. Similarly, the state government will also distribute Bathukamma sarees to every woman who has the right to vote.

Bonalu

Ashadha Bonala festival means the festival of worshipping the village deity **Amma**. Lunch is *Frakriti*. Bonam deformity. Bonam means *meal*. It is cooked in a *kothakunda* and presented to the village deities with devotional offerings. The drink is poured in little by little. A candle is placed on it and a lamp is lit on the *bonam* and the fair is held as a festival of eyes.

Bonam

By tying a *neem* band around the neck of the *vetapothu* and sprinkling water mixed with turmeric and neem to increase immunity, devotees move in procession to the temples of the village deities and offer bonas. It is believed by the devotees that the offering of Bonala will appease the deities and protect them from infectious diseases. After the formation of Telangana as a separate state, these bonams are held as a state festival. Women carry cooked rice along with *milk, curd, jaggery* and sometimes onions in clay, brass or copper pots on their heads and go to the temple of *Raga Devi* accompanied by players with drums. These bonala pots carried by women are decorated with small neem shoots, turmeric, saffron and rice flour mixture and a lamp is kept on it. *Maisamma, Pochamma, Ellamma, Peddamma, Dokkalamma, Ankalamma, Poleramma, Maremma* are the names of the goddesses of this village⁴.

Rituals

On the occasion of Bonala.. Pothuraju disguised. It is believed that during the month of 'Ashadha', the Goddess goes to her birthplace, hence the devotees visit the Goddess during this festival and offer bonas as food offerings with devotional attention as well as love, with the feeling that their own daughter has come to their home. This thread is called *Uradi*. In different regions it is known by the names like big festival and culinary festival. Over time, it became Bonala. On the occasion of *Bonala*, Goddesses are paraded on a chariot of rams. In the past, a bullock was sacrificed in the temple premises on this festival to ward off evil spirits. Today it has become customary to sacrifice chickens instead of ploughshares⁶.

Procession

Women wear silk sarees and jewelry on this festival. Some of the women wearing *Poonakam* carry a pot (*bonam*) on their heads and dance to the rhythmic beat of the drum in remembrance of the Goddess. It is believed that women carrying bonas are possessed by Goddess Amma. As Mahankali represents Raudra, other devotees pour water on the feet of these women as they approach the temple to appease her. It is customary for each devotee to offer a thotte (a small colored device made of paper and sticks) as a token of their devotion. Bonala Festival *Sandoham* starts at Golconda Ellamma Temple in Golconda Fort and reaches the Old City area via *Ujjain Mahankali* Temple in Secunderabad, *Ellamma* Temples in Balkampet known as *Lashkar Bonala*⁷.

Pothuraj

Another custom is that the festival group is led by a man who represents Poturaja, the brother of *Devi Ammavari*. A person who plays the role of **Pothuraja** is majestically strong. He wears a small red dhoti with turmeric on his head, saffron on his forehead, gajjes on his feet and plays to the tune of a drum. *Pothuraja* dances at the food cart in front of a crowd of devotees. He is regarded as the initiator of puja programs and the protector of the devotee community. Beating

him with a whip and wrapping the vepaks around his waist, he takes the devotee in *Ammavari Punakam* to the presence of the Goddess in the temple. As the festival of *Bindu Samaralam* Bonalu is a festival of offerings to the Goddess, the family members receive the Prasad along with the guests. After the presentation, the non-vegetarian dinner begins. Streets decorated with candles are seen in the festival areas. The festive atmosphere is palpable in the *mikusetla* chorus filled with *Ammavari kirtans* in folk style.

Rangam festival

The second day of the Rangam festival takes place in the morning. Punakam will be given to the person dressed as potaraju in this sector program. The devotees there offer a horned goat to reduce the angry anger. Potaraju bites the *goat's* body with his teeth, separates the head and torso and throws it up. This program is followed by the fair procession. *Ghatam Utsavam* takes place after *Rangam*. *Akkanna Madanna* Temple in Haribouli with their ghatam on an elephant *ambari*, *Akkanna* and *Madanna* procession between horses starts and ends in the evening with the immersion of *ghatams* at *Nayapul* as an eye festival. This festival is worshiped by the middle class and working people with devotion and spend two days happily with their friends and relatives.

Telangana Sadar Festival:

The *Yadav* community of Hyderabad celebrates the Sadar festival in Telangana with great enthusiasm. It is celebrated on the second day of *Diwali* and is also known as the festival of ploughmen. *Buffalo* owners celebrate this festival with enthusiasm. First, the sturdiest buffalo is paraded and then a prize is awarded, which is chosen by the head of the Yadav family. Subsequently, all the buffaloes are decorated and taken in a procession through the streets of Hyderabad chanting *Wah Yadav*.

Sammakka Saralamma Jatara

Medaram Fair It is famous as the biggest tribal fair in the world. Devotees come from all over to visit the forest deities here. After the formation of Telangana state in 2014, Medaram Jatara was recognized as a state festival by the government.

If we analyze the reasons for measuring *Medaram* and *Sammakka Saralamma* as nymphs... a story is popular. Once upon a time when the *Koydars* went to the forest for hunting, they found a baby in the midst of a *guard* of big tigers. The shepherds took the baby to the tent and hid it. Ever since the baby came to *Guden*, everything was going well and it was believed that the goddess of the hill was in that form. On the full moon day of *Magashuddha*, the baby was named *Sammakka*. *Sammakka* was brought up by *Medaraju* the Koya, emperor of that region⁸.

During the period from 1260 to 1320 CE, during the reign of the Kakatiyas, *Polavasa* in the area of present-day *Jagittala* district was ruled by the tribal noble *Medaraju*. He gave her in marriage to his nephew, *Pagiddaraju*, the ruler of Medaram. Sammakka-Pagiddaraju couple had three children Saralamma, Nagulamma and Jampanna.

Prataparudra's invasion

Pagiddaraja ruling *Medara* was a vassal of the Kakatiyas. In those days, due to the droughts, people did not do sistu for several years. *Prataparudu*, the leader of the Kakatiya empire, filed a complaint against *Pagiddaraja* for his lack of discipline while being a vassal of the Kakatiyas, for providing shelter to his uncle *Medaraju*, and for instilling revolutionary sentiments in the Koya tribes and defying the royal authority. Observing this, the tribals are ready to turn against the government.

Kakatiya forces invaded Medaram on Magha Shuddha Poornami day. In this sequence, a battle took place between the tribals and the Kakatiya forces at Lake *Lucnavaram* in Mulugu district. In this sequence *Pagidda Raju*, *Saralamma*, *Nagulamma*, *Jampanna*, *Govinda Raju* (son-in-law of Sammakka-Pagiddaraja) fought heroically with traditional weapons. But, unable to withstand the force of the Kakatiya forces, *Medaraju*, *Pagiddaraju*, *Saralamma*, *Nagulamma* and *Govinda* died in the battle. On hearing the news of their death, Jampanna could not bear the shame and committed suicide by jumping into the Sampenga river there. Historians say that since then Sampengavagu is called Jampanna Vagu⁹.

On hearing the news of the death of her family, Sammakka came to the battlefield and attacked the Kakatiya soldiers. Fights heroically. Pratapa Rudra is amazed by her heroism. But, a Kakatiya soldier sneakily stabs Sammakka in the back with a spear. It is said that she went to *Chilakalagutta*, northeast of Medaram village and disappeared with that injury. After that, a saffron was seen near a mound under the tree. After that Prataparudra realizes his mistake and becomes a devotee of Sammakka.

This is why the worship of saffron goddesses

After some time, Prataparudra canceled the *kappa* that Koyaraja had to tie and offered gifts as a devotee of Sammakka. He issued orders to hold a fair every two years. The story of how this Sammakka Saralamma Jatara started is widely spread. Since then, the Sammakka-Saralamma fair is celebrated with devotion once every two years on the full moon day of *Magha Shuddha*, considering the saffron as Bharinela.

Finally entering the forest

Medaram village is located in a remote forest area of *Tadwai* mandal at a distance of 44 km from Mulugu center in the united Warangal district. Among these dense forests and hills, the Sammakka Saralammas are found. As part of the four-day fair, the deities who have been stripped of their necks finally enter the forest. This ends the great fair.

Pirla Festival

Moharam is important among the main *Muhammadan* feast days. Pirla Festival Moharam is a program celebrated with *mournful* hearts to commemorate the Muslim heroes Hasan and Hussain.

Moharram is the first date of the year in *Arabia* according to the Muslim almanac. Moharam festival is also known as Peer festival. "*Peer*" means *Mahatmas*, preceptors.

Handcrafted effigies of heroes who lost their lives in the *crusades* are made, decorated, paraded and worshiped called 'Peers'.

Mohammedans, sectarian strife:

Muhammad's eldest son '*Hasan*' was the caliph as one of the four caliphs after his death was assassinated due to sectarian strife and had to abdicate quickly due to a poison experiment. After that, the second son, *Hussain*, wanted to be the caliph, but *Yazid*, the son of the chief "*Mu Ani Ya*", declared himself as the caliph.

The people of *Kufa* city sent fake news saying that they all wanted to strengthen Hussain to protect him from *Yazid's* tyranny. When Hussain came to *Kufa*, there was no one to support him. Hussain who noticed the deception was encamped on the plain of Karbala on the banks of the *Eushites* River, but Yazid's army fell on him. Hussain, who was disappointed because the enemy's strength was more than four thousand and his strength was only two horsemen and forty footmen, asked his followers to go and save their lives and not be sacrificed for him.

Martyr Hussain:

In that religious war, Husain's followers were at the forefront, and he and his son were destitute and stood on the battlefield. In the end, the son also died in the fire of one of the villains. Hussain begged God to remove his son's corpse from the ground and grant him the strength to bear the tragedy, bent forward to drink water and an arrow pierced his mouth and sacrificed his life. *Mohar* is a designated Muslim holiday to commemorate the death of *Hussain Daruna* in that battle and declare mourning.

Quranic definition:

The "*Qur'an*" has defined that "Sahadat" should be observed on the tenth day of the month of Muharram. On that day, the handicrafts called "*Peers*" are paraded and cleaned near the wells of Uriandugala and near the rivers.

From the casket, it is kept at the *Mujawar* till the next "*Moharam month*". Muslims in Telangana celebrate this festival with great devotion in all regions. Immortal heroes are remembered with great passion. It is in this context that *Moharam* songs are sung.

Mohammedans do not worship idols. But there is a tribe of Muslims who enshrine these names and worship them with incense offerings.

Hindu Muslim Unity:

In some areas, *Peerla* festival is considered as a big festival for people of other religions especially Hindus. The reason for this is Hindu-Mohammedan harmony. That means we can understand how much importance Anade gave to national unity.

Feer means *Mahatma, Dharma Desiku*, Dr. T. Donappa garu also cited in his book Janapada Kala Sampada Granth.

Among the Muslims, especially the *Dudeks*, after the Hindu deities like *Atalamma, Maremma* etc., they name their children Erreppa, Ellamma, Thimmappa, Narasimhu, Balanna, and also among the Hindus, the Muslim names *Kullayamma, Dastagiri Reddy, Nabigoudu Fakkirappa, Mastan Rao, Lalemma, Sekanna, Saidalli, Hussain Dasu*. Putting on clothes and participating in Urus and Parasalas related to Muslims, going to dargas, mosques and measuring pirs are common things.

Peer's Claw:

On the fifth day of the clear moon in the month of Moharam, the *panja kapitara*, a box of idols, is brought in a procession from the house of a priest named *Mujawiru* to the Pirla Masjid. Those *idols* are worshiped for *ten* days. Pirs are measured in the handiwork of heroes, in the form of idols. As the hand is in the form of a claw, the place where they are placed is called Pirla Pancha. Some of these piers have five legs; some have four legs, three, two, and one statue. These hands are placed on the ends of long sticks. They are decorated with colorful eggs and garlands of different colored paper are decorated vertically¹⁰.

Every day the paws of those Pirs are worshiped with *Sambrani* incense. Children and adults come to visit the piers. On that day Hindus and Muslims worship in harmony without any differences.

Tiger disguises:

After erecting the piers, the ferocious Muslim brothers dress up as tigers and dance to the beat of drums, the big tiger dances, imitates the tiger's antics, hums and scares the children, roams the streets in a frenzy, walks soberly on the big tiger, flips and goes to every house and reads. Everyone watches this show with great interest. They want to be rewarded. The money thus earned will be spent on happiness on the last day.

Bonfire:

The pirs are taken out of the *masjid* and the entire town goes out in procession with mournful voices and Sannai melam. Everyone will come without discrimination. Everyone offers arati with Sambrani incense, gives rewards and thus offers *Johar* to *Hasan* and *Hussain*. After the procession, they come to the bonfire in the middle of the town at night.

Along with the names of *Hasan* and *Hussain*, they held the pyres of the heroes who had laid down their lives along with them, shouting ``*Hasan, Hussain — Haisai, Juloi*'' and clapping the pyres with their hands and beating the *Sannai* and *drums*.

In the middle of the run, they run furiously and walk away from the middle of the fire. People also shout and support those who jump into the fire. In this way, dead heroes like Hasan, Hussain Lakoo and other immortal heroes are also celebrated. Walking through the fire like this is glorified as the greatness of peers. This is how the Peer festival ends.

Everyone wears new clothes on that day. They eat meat like Palau. In order to share in the joy, the Hindus who are devoted are also invited to the feast. Thus for Hindu Muslim harmony Contribute. This is how the Peer festival ends.

Nagoba Jatara

The Nagoba Jatara, which takes place in *Keslapur* village in the Telangana district of Adilabad, is a singular occasion. The *Meseram* clan of the Gond tribe celebrates this *six-day* event every year. Festival takes place in *December/January* is the *Pushyas* Month. It is an auspicious month when Gond tribal people from all across the nation gather in Keslapur to offer prayers and celebrate Nagoba.

Background of the fair

AD 740. In Keslapur, Adilabad, there was a *Nagabhakta* named *Padiyeru Seshasai*. Once he went to *Nagaloka* to visit *Nagadevata*. The gatekeepers of *Nagaloka* stopped *Seshasai* and said that he could not see her. Dejected and returning, he accidentally touches the gates of Nagaloka. Nagaraja gets furious when he learns that a common man has touched his gates! Knowing this, *Seshasai* fearing for his life takes a priest he knows (*Padhan Padamar*) and finds out a way to pacify *Nagaraja*. He presented seven kinds of offerings including *curd*, *ghee*,

honey, jaggery, pesarapapu, etc. along with seven cups of cow's milk, traveled through 125 villages, brought holy Godavari water and anointed Nagaraja. Appreciated by his piety, Nagaraj settled permanently in Keslapur. That place became known as **Nagoba**. From that day, every year the tribals have been worshipping the statue of Nagaraju! In the fair, couples who do not have children perform special pooja and name their first child **Nagorao** and **Nagubai**. That is why these names are found in the tribes here.

Special pots for Ganga water

The people of **Mesram** bring **Ganga** water from **Godavari** in specially made pots to conduct the Nagoba fair. Only the **Guggilla** clans of **Sirikonda**, **Ichoda** Mandal make pottery for Nagoba. This is also part of the ritual! Guggilla Vamsiyas continue to have relations between Mesram Vamsiyas for generations! After the appearance of the crescent moon in the month of Pushya, the people of Mesram come to **Sirikonda** in **Edlabands**. A potter belonging to the Guggilla clan there reaches the house of Guggilla Pedda Rajanna and asks him to make pots. Two big pots for cooking, (*kagulu*), *pot (pans)* to cover them, lamps and water pots are ordered for the manufacture of more than 130 pots. The people of Mesram not only bring Ganga water in these pots, but also cook and serve food to the devotees at the fair.

On the full moon of the month of **Pushya**, the people of Mesram, accompanied by 20 tribesmen, go out with new pots to bring the Godavari water flowing in the surrounding areas of Godisiryala in Kadem mandal. This is how the fair started. To bring that water, they walk 80 kilometers from Keslapur to Godavari. Arriving at Keslapur, the tribals in the fairgrounds place them under a sacred banyan tree and anoint Nagoba with water brought from the Godavari in new pots on the night of Amavasya. Later, the milk is anointed and worship is performed according to the tribal customs. It is customary to change the priest every 3 years.

Although there are thousands of Mesram **Vamsiyas** who come to the fair, they cook with only 22 ovens. These stoves cannot be placed anywhere. There are special *shelves (dugudu)* for lighting lamps around the wall, inside the guard wall which is specially arranged in the temple premises. In the light of those lamps, the members of the **Mesram** family cook in 22 ovens. Other species can cook anywhere.

Praja Darbaru

The fair ends with a public darbar held on the last day of the Nagoba fair. But this Praja Darbar has a special history.

64 years ago there were no facilities in the remote villages. Adivasis used to run away from civilized people. No officials used to go to the tribals. It was then that **Komuram Bheem** died in an armed struggle for liberation. Infuriated by this incident, Nizam Prabhu sent Professor

Heimendorff, a famous human evolutionist, to Adilabad district to study the conditions of the tribal areas and the condition of the tribals¹¹.

His attention fell on the fair. He thought of setting up a durbar in the fair to find out and solve the problems of the tribals coming from across the hills and hills. It was first conducted by Professor Haimendorff in 1946. After independence, it continues under the district collector. Tribal chiefs, tribal leaders, public representatives and officials attend this darbar on the last day of the fair.

Softening the ant

After the Nagoba pujas, the mound in the Nagoba temple premises is covered with mud and a large pit is laid for the *Allulas* of the Mesram family. If the boys trample the soil with their feet and make it soft, the daughters use that soil to pound the *soil (aliki)* to prepare the *mokkul*. It is customary to give a special Nazarana to the Alluls for treading the soil. Devotees from *Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa* and *Chhattisgarh* also attend this fair and pay their respects¹².

Method of Nagoba Puja

Nagoba idol is cleaned with water brought from Godavari River. The entire temple is purified. Pooja programs are performed in the temple premises with *Baja Bhajantris*. Sprouted grains are brought during special puja. Milk is taken in a copper cup. New grains, sprouts, milk are all covered with a new cloth and placed on the mound. If the *Puttaviudi* handkerchief is seen to be 'raised' then the pooja starts. They still believe that *Nagadev* drinks milk from a copper cup. *Patlal, Gaikwadi, Havaladar* etc. participate in the puja¹³.

Introducing the new bride

Newlyweds who marry into the Mesram clan must be taken to the Nagoba deity in Keslapur. By her, the god is worshiped and the bride is introduced. This is called '*Bheting Kiywal*'. As long as the bride of the Mesram tribe does not participate in this introductory stage, it is forbidden for them to see and worship the Nagoba God¹⁴.

The brides leave the house on foot carrying the puja material in a bamboo basket behind an *edlabandi*. Reach Nagoba Temple in Keslapur. The brides to be introduced are known as '*Bheti Koriad*'. The brides are formed in pairs of two and their faces are veiled in white cloth. Before the puja, they are introduced to Nagoba God. From there, after the fair in Shyampur (*Bodundev*), they go to someone's house.

Conclusion

The festivals of Telangana, particularly *Bathukamma*, *Bonalu*, *Medaram Jatara* (*Samakka and Saralamma*), and *Moharram*(*Pirla Pandga*), reflect the region's rich cultural tapestry and deep-rooted traditions. These celebrations not only commemorate historical events and deities but also foster community cohesion and spiritual devotion among its people. Bathukamma, with its vibrant floral tributes to Goddess Parvati, stands out as a symbol of environmental consciousness and agricultural prosperity, reinforcing Telangana's cultural identity. Bonalu and Medaram Jatara underscore the state's reverence for local deities and tribal heritage, showcasing a blend of spirituality and communal festivities. Moharram, commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, illustrates the region's religious diversity and harmony. Together, these festivals exemplify Telangana's enduring cultural heritage and its significance in India's cultural mosaic.

Foot Notes

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