

Research Article**FAIRS AND FESTIVALS OF TELANGANA: A HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL STUDY**

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A vital component of Telangana's historical and cultural legacy are fairs and festivals. They represent the people's collective identity, artistic expressions, religious convictions, social mores, and folk traditions. The ancient kingdoms, medieval dynasties, Kakatiyas, Qutb Shahis, and Asaf Jahi rulers of Hyderabad State have all influenced Telangana's rich cultural legacy. Telangana is situated in the Deccan area of India. Tribal traditions, local customs, agricultural activities, religious beliefs, and historical events interacted to create the region's fairs and festivals. Devotees and tourists go to major fairs like Sammakka-Saralamma Jatara in Medaram, Nagoba Jatara in Adilabad, and Edupayala Jatara in Medak. The state's religious and cultural variety is reflected in holidays including Bathukamma, Bonalu, Ugadi, Dasara, Sankranti, Ramadan, and Christmas. These festivities offer chances for community involvement, folk art preservation, trade, and the generational transfer of traditional knowledge. It also takes into account how these festivities help maintain local identity in the face of modernization and societal change. Secondary data, such as published research, government reports, historical literature, and cultural documentation, form the basis of the study. It makes the case that fairs and festivals are significant institutions of social interaction, cultural continuity, and local legacy in addition to being religious events.

Keywords: Telangana, Fairs, Festivals, Historical Heritage, Bathukamma, Bonalu, Sammakka-Saralamma Jatara, Tribal Culture, Folk Traditions, Regional Identity.

Introduction

Established during its unique cultural customs, linguistic identity, religious diversity, and rich folk legacy, Telangana is a historically significant area of the Deccan plateau. Telangana's creation as a distinct state on June 2, 2014, was a significant political milestone, and its cultural identity is a reflection of centuries-old customs. The region's festivals and fairs offer important insights into its religious practices, social connections, and historical events. The people of Telangana have always placed a high value on fairs and celebrations. They unite farmers, artisans, traders, religious enthusiasts, tribal groupings, and rural and urban communities. Worship, seasonal changes, agricultural operations, folk performances, traditional marketplaces, and community festivities are all connected to these events. Additionally, they offer chances for the transmission of cultural information and the preservation of regional traditions.

The Satavahanas, Kakatiyas, Qutb Shahis, and Asaf Jahi Nizams are just a few of the historical eras that have shaped Telangana's cultural environment. The region's architecture, religious organizations, languages, artistic traditions, and social customs were all influenced by each era. A varied cultural milieu was created by the blending of Telugu folk traditions with tribal practices, Islamic cultural influences, and various religious traditions. Telangana's regional identity is heavily

influenced by two festivals: Bonalu, a religious celebration honoring the Mother Goddess, and Bathukamma, a floral festival primarily connected with women. In a similar vein, the Sammakka-Saralamma Jatara in Medaram symbolizes the significance of communal memory and tribal religious customs. Holidays like Christmas, Ramadan, Sankranti, Dasara, and Ugadi show how various religious and cultural customs can merge.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the historical development and cultural significance of fairs and festivals in Telangana.
2. To analyse the fairs and festivals in preserving folk traditions, strengthening community relationships and promoting regional identity.

Methodology

The present study adopts a historical and descriptive methodology based on secondary data. Information has been collected from published books, research articles, historical studies, government publications, cultural reports and relevant institutional websites. The study examines the historical background of Telangana, major fairs and festivals, religious practices, folk traditions and the social significance of cultural celebrations.

Historical Background of Telangana

Ancient History of Telangana

Telangana's history dates back to ancient times, when the area was a part of significant Deccan political, commercial, and cultural networks. Among the important early dynasties connected to the area were the Satavahanas. Trade, religious organizations, and cross-cultural interactions all flourished under their leadership. The historical significance of the area is demonstrated by archeological remains, inscriptions, Buddhist shrines, and old villages. Sacred sites and community festivals were shaped by ancient religious traditions. Village worship, local deities, seasonal variations, and agricultural cycles all played significant roles in popular religious life. Many traditional celebrations show how long-standing local practices intersect with broader religious traditions, even though the exact origins of individual fairs and festivals are not always identified.

The Kakatiya Period

Telangana's political and cultural development was significantly influenced by the Kakatiyas, who reigned from Warangal and had a significant impact on the Telugu-speaking region. Telugu literary traditions, agricultural towns, irrigation tanks, and temple architecture all flourished throughout this time. The relationship between rural life and seasonal cycles was reinforced and agricultural communities were supported by the building and upkeep of tanks. Additionally, local religious organizations and temples functioned as hubs for communal engagement and prayer. These historical circumstances supported customs related to communal religious meetings, seasonal celebrations, and village deities. In order to comprehend the historical environment of Warangal and its environs, the Kakatiya period is particularly important. The current forms of many fairs and festivals, however, evolved over long periods of time and cannot always be explicitly traced to a particular dynasty, therefore it is crucial to separate verifiable historical evidence from later traditions.

The Qutb Shahi Period

Hyderabad's regional cultural traditions flourished after the Qutb Shahi dynasty was established in Golconda in the sixteenth century. The monarchs supported urban growth, trade, literature, and architecture. Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah established Hyderabad in 1591, and it grew to be a significant political and cultural hub.

Telugu, Persian, Dakhni, and other linguistic and cultural traditions interacted throughout this time. Urban and regional life included public events, markets, religious observances, and creative endeavors. Through interactions between Muslim, Hindu, and other communities, the Deccan's cultural landscape evolved. The varied cultural identity of Telangana was shaped in part by these historical exchanges. Even if each festival custom has a unique history, they also offer a more comprehensive framework for comprehending the region's current religious celebrations.

Telangana under the Asaf Jahi Nizams

From the eighteenth century until 1948, Hyderabad State was ruled by the Asaf Jahi family. Under the Nizams, Hyderabad grew into a significant administrative, commercial, and cultural hub. Telangana, which speaks Telugu, and areas that speak Marathi and Kannada were included in the region. Religious organizations, village fairs, temple festivals, urs festivities, and traditional markets all remained significant aspects of social life throughout this time. Local cultural practices demonstrated the interplay between rural customs and urban influences, as Hindu and Muslims populations celebrated their separate holidays. Deccani cuisine, clothing, music, architecture, and language customs all developed during the Nizam era. The cultural legacy of Telangana still reflects these influences. Because local Telugu customs and Hyderabad State's broader cosmopolitan milieu both influenced the region's cultural identity, the time period is especially significant.

Telangana after Independence

In 1948, Hyderabad State joined the Indian Union. Later, on June 2, 2014, Telangana became a distinct state after joining Andhra Pradesh in 1956. The organization and public acceptance of local cultural practices were impacted by these political shifts. As emblems of Telangana's cultural identity, Bathukamma and Bonalu became especially well-known. These festivals were made more visible through public celebrations, cultural activities, government-sponsored events, and tourism campaigns. Local communities kept up their customs of worship and celebration at the same time. Therefore, Telangana's modern history shows how fairs and festivals may serve as both manifestations of contemporary regional identity and inherited cultural customs.

Fairs in Telangana

Fairs, sometimes referred to locally as jatara or jathara in many contexts, are significant events connected to trade, folk culture, religious worship, and communal customs. They draw followers from various districts and, occasionally, neighboring states. Many take place at riverbanks, temples, tribal sacred sites, or places connected to regional deities. These events offer chances for group worship, trading of household and agricultural items, selling of traditional goods, and folk art performances. Tribal fairs are particularly important because they maintain religious expression, oral traditions, and customs unique to the community.

Sammakka-Saralamma Jatara, Medaram

One of Telangana's most important tribal religious events is the Sammakka-Saralamma Jatara, which takes place at Medaram in the Mulugu district. In the tribal customs of the area, it is connected to the worship of Sammakka and Saralamma. Devotees from all across Telangana and the surrounding areas attend the event, which is particularly significant to several Adivasi communities, notably the Koya people. Rituals, offerings, pilgrimages, and widespread community participation are all elements of the Jatara, which is typically held every two years. Its customs are linked to tales of bravery, defiance, and commitment that have been passed down orally. The gathering offers a crucial environment for the passing down of communal memory and tribal beliefs. Medaram Jatara is significant both economically and socially. During the event, temporary marketplaces appear to support small companies, food sellers, traders, and transportation providers. In addition, the expanding size of the event raises issues with trash management, public safety, sanitation, and environmental preservation. The Jatara serves as an example of how Telangana's cultural identity is still shaped by tribal customs. Because it offers a public forum for the acknowledgment and preservation of indigenous cultural heritage, its significance goes beyond religious devotion.

Nagoba Jatara, Keslapur

A significant tribal celebration, Nagoba Jatara takes place in Keslapur, Adilabad. It has a strong connection to the Gond community and the worship of the serpent god Nagoba. Members of tribal communities get together for ritual observances, family get-togethers, and the revitalization of social bonds throughout the festival. The Gond people's religious beliefs and customary institutions are reflected in the celebrations' traditional rites and communal customs. Interactions between various tribal groups and the passing down of cultural knowledge between generations are also facilitated by the gathering. In indigenous Telangana, Nagoba Jatara is important for comprehending the connection between religion, kinship, and group identity. Its ongoing observance shows how

crucial it is to preserve indigenous rituals while making sure that governmental procedures and cultural tourism honor regional traditions.

Edupayala Jatara, Medak

The Vana Durga Bhavani temple in the Medak district is connected to Edupayala Jatara. The temple's location close to the confluence of seven streams adds to the site's religious and geographical significance. The temple is frequented by worshipers, especially during the yearly Jatara. Religious rites, offerings, makeshift booths, and pilgrimage meetings are all part of the fair. It illustrates the significance of Telangana's sacred landscapes, where local religious customs frequently incorporate rivers, streams, hills, and woods. Through trade and services associated to pilgrimages, the Jatara also supports the local economy. The relationship between religious belief, the environment, and community involvement is what gives it cultural significance.

Other Important Fairs in Telangana

There are many other religious and local festivals in Telangana that are connected to temples, shrines, and other hallowed locations. Lord Hanuman is worshiped at the Kondagattu Jatara in the Jagtial district, which draws a sizable number of devotees. The Jogulamba temple and the long-standing religious tradition of the area are linked to the Alampur religious meetings. In contrast, the Sammakka-Saralamma and Nagoba customs highlight the unique significance of tribal religious meetings. The origins, customs, and social structure of these fairs vary. While some are mostly connected to temple worship, others uphold local customs and indigenous beliefs. When taken as a whole, they demonstrate the variety of Telangana's religious landscape as well as the ongoing importance of pilgrimage and group celebration.

Festivals in Telangana

Telangana's cultural life revolves around festivals. They are connected to family ties, religious convictions, agriculture, seasonal shifts, and communal identity. While some festivals are widely observed throughout India and among other religious communities, others are unique manifestations of Telangana's regional culture.

Bathukamma Festival

During the Navaratri season, women celebrate Bathukamma, one of Telangana's most unique festivities. Flowers, seasonal rebirth, community involvement, and the adoration of the feminine deity are all connected to the celebration. The name is often understood as an incantation that means "May the mother live" or "Mother, live." Bathukamma displays are made by women arranging seasonal flowers in circular, tiered arrangements. In public areas, groups congregate, walk in rhythmic patterns around the floral displays, and sing traditional tunes. In accordance with local customs, the arrangements are transported to bodies of water for immersion on the final day. The intimate bond between the people of Telangana and their natural surroundings is shown in Bathukamma. Regional cultural identity is expressed by the use of seasonal flowers, group singing, and traditional attire. Additionally, the festival offers a significant venue for women to engage in public cultural life as well as for the dissemination of traditional knowledge and folk melodies. Bathukamma has emerged as a significant regional identity symbol in modern-day Telangana. It is becoming more visible outside of village communities because to public events, cultural performances, and official celebrations. However, the involvement of local communities and families remains crucial.

Dasara and Bathukamma Celebrations

In Telangana, Dasara, sometimes called Vijayadashami, is a popular holiday. It is linked to religious customs related with the Goddess and the triumph of good over evil. Devotees take part in processions, community events, and temple worship in numerous locations. Dasara takes place in Telangana throughout the Bathukamma era, resulting in a wider cultural celebration season. Although the two holidays have different customs and meanings, the region's joyous spirit is enhanced by their overlapping calendars. Because it unites religious attendance, family get-togethers, and public cultural programs, Dasara also has historical and social significance. Its celebration shows how local customs and globally accepted Hindu traditions interact.

Bonalu Festival

In Hyderabad, Secunderabad, and the neighboring districts, Bonalu is a significant religious celebration honoring Goddess Mahankali. The monsoon months of Ashada are often when the celebration is held. Offerings of cooked rice, milk, and jaggery are prepared by devotees and brought to temples in adorned pots. Bonalu is linked to prayers for prosperity, health, and safety. Processions, traditional music, drumming, ritual performances, and meetings at Goddess-focused temples are all part of the festivities. A key component of its popular cultural expression is Pothuraju, a well-known figure in festival processions. The event has a close relationship with the local institutions and neighborhoods of Hyderabad. By planning processions and offerings, families and neighborhood organizations foster a sense of community and dedication. The significance of regional goddess customs in Telangana's religious life is also reflected in Bonalu. As a representation of Telangana's history, Bonalu has grown in popularity over time. Its ongoing observance serves as an example of how religious customs may become significant manifestations of regional identity while retaining their unique local character.

Sankranti Festival

In January, Telangana celebrates Sankranti, a significant harvest celebration. It is directly linked to agricultural life and signifies the seasonal shift linked to the Sun's entry into Makara. The celebration offers a chance to honor the crop, show thanks, and improve ties within the family. Rangoli adorning homes, cooking celebratory meals, visiting family, and taking part in local festivities are examples of traditional activities. The historical significance of livestock in agriculture is reflected in many rural communities' practices pertaining to cattle. Sankranti serves as an example of how festivals and the agricultural economy are related. Its customs mirror the importance of the harvest, the seasonal cycles of agriculture, and the function of family and community in rural society.

Ugadi Festival

Telangana celebrates Ugadi, the start of the traditional New Year, with religious ceremonies, family get-togethers, and traditional food preparations. The celebration is linked to fresh starts, rejuvenation, and aspirations for success in the upcoming year. The production of Ugadi pachadi, a concoction of components that reflect many tastes, is a unique trait. It is frequently seen as a reminder that life is full of conflicting experiences, such as joy, grief, surprise, wrath, and fear. People are encouraged to accept life's shifting circumstances by the symbolism. Families make traditional meals, visit temples, and clean and decorate their homes. In many communities, Ugadi also signifies the start of a new calendar cycle and is a time to listen to the Panchangam, or traditional almanac. The celebration serves as an example of the relationship between family traditions, religious calendars, and cultural continuity. While maintaining the unique eating habits and regional traditions of each community, its observance in Telangana reflects more general Telugu traditions.

Ramzan and Eid Celebrations

For Muslim populations in Telangana, Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting, is very important. Devotees fast from sunrise to sunset, pray, and take part in philanthropic endeavors during this month. Eid-ul-Fitr, which is observed with communal prayers, family visits, and joyful dinners, marks the end of Ramadan. The prominence of Islamic cultural traditions in the region can be attributed to Hyderabad's historical ties to the Deccan Sultanates and the Nizams. The social milieu during Ramadan includes meetings at mosques, special cuisines, bazaars, and traditional attire. Additionally, the festival offers chances for community interaction. People from various religious backgrounds greet each other and engage in shared social activities in numerous places. These customs add to the heterogeneous nature of Telangana.

Christmas and Other Religious Festivals

Christian communities in Telangana celebrate Christmas, particularly in cities like Hyderabad and Secunderabad. Families get together for meals and festivities, churches have special services, and houses and public areas are decorated. The celebration highlights themes of peace, hope, and kindness while commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ. Telangana's cultural calendar also includes other religious holidays including Mahashivaratri, Sri Rama Navami, Ganesh Chaturthi, and several regional temple celebrations. While various communities uphold their own devotional

and celebratory customs, Muslim communities observe Eid-ul-Adha and Muharram. These celebrations show that Telangana's cultural identity is not predicated on a particular religious tradition. Instead, it has evolved as a result of the historical interaction and coexistence of various cultures, ideologies, and traditions.

Agricultural and Seasonal Festivals

In Telangana, a lot of regional festivities are associated with the harvest, cattle, rains, and agricultural seasons. Due to differences in crops, environmental factors, and social customs, their techniques vary between regions and communities. Seasonal celebrations offer chances to show appreciation for agricultural output and to wish for prosperity in the upcoming season. Additionally, they maintain traditional knowledge about regional cuisine, plants, weather patterns, and rural lifestyles. Seasonal celebrations continue to foster cultural bonds between rural communities and their historical surroundings, despite the fact that modernization and urbanization have altered many agricultural traditions.

Culture in Telangana

Language, literature, folk music, dance, traditional attire, food, handicrafts, religious rituals, and social norms are all included in Telangana culture. It depicts the interaction of rural, tribal, and urban communities as well as the rich historical legacy of the area. Urdu and a number of tribal languages add to the state's linguistic variety, with Telugu serving as the primary language. Local stories, beliefs, and historical recollections are preserved in large part through folk customs like Oggu Katha, Burrakatha, and Dappu performances. Telangana's unique cultural identity and religious customs are expressed via festivals like Bathukamma and Bonalu. The Gonds and Koyas are two examples of tribal societies that uphold distinctive traditions, rites, and festivities. Traditional fabrics, such as Gadwal weaving and Pochampally ikat, showcase the artistic abilities of regional artisans. Telangana cuisine, which consists of rice, millets, pulses, and other traditional foods, is a reflection of local farming techniques. When combined, these cultural components support Telangana's cultural identity among current and future generations, maintain historical continuity, and improve connections to the community.

Conclusion

Fairs and festivals are a crucial component of Telangana's history and culture. Their origins and development are a reflection of the region's changing political circumstances, religious diversity, tribal cultures, medieval kingdoms, and old customs. Cultural festivals have continued to be significant manifestations of collective identity from the Kakatiyas' historical inheritance and the multicultural atmosphere of Hyderabad under the Qutb Shahis and Nizams to the creation of contemporary Telangana. The importance of pilgrimage, tribal customs, and communal worship is exemplified by fairs like Sammakka-Saralamma Jatara, Nagoba Jatara, and Edupayala Jatara. The variety of religious beliefs and social customs is reflected in festivals including Bathukamma, Bonalu, Ugadi, Sankranti, Dasara, Ramadan, and Christmas. These festivities promote local businesses, foster social interaction, maintain traditional knowledge, and offer chances for cultural values to be passed down through the generations.

At the same time, cultural preservation has difficulties due to the shifting social and economic landscape. Careful consideration must be given to commercialization, environmental challenges, and dwindling engagement in some traditional practices. The communities that preserve cultural heritage must have their rights and beliefs respected. Fairs and festivals should be viewed as living institutions of history, culture, and society rather than just as times for religious celebration. Their ongoing observance shows the lasting connection between old customs and modern life and reinforces Telangana's regional identity. For Telangana's cultural diversity to continue to have significance for upcoming generations, it is imperative that these customs be preserved.

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