

## Telangana, the Pride of the People

All of us like celebrating festivals as we can wear new clothes, go to places of worship with family and friends, make special food items, sing and dance .... There are lots of things that we enjoy during festivals. There are many kinds of festivals. Some are religious festivals, regional festivals, state festivals and national festivals. Let's see some important festivals of our state Telangana:

**Bonalu:** This is a traditional festival of Telugu people and is celebrated in many parts of the state with fervour especially in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. It is believed that in 1813, a great plague broke out in Hyderabad and many people died. At that time, the soldiers of Hyderabad Battalion were in Ujjain and prayed to Mahankali, to save the city of Hyderabad and also promised to build a temple for Mahankali if the plague was removed. As the plague was curbed, people built the Ujjaini Mahankali Temple at Secunderabad and started celebrating Bonalu Festival in the Ashada masam, as thanks giving to the Deity.

On the first Sunday of Ashadam, the Bonalu kick starts at Golconda region and the following Sunday it is celebrated at Balkampet temple and Ujjaini Mahankali temple at Secunderabad. And it goes on for several weeks throughout the twin cities! Bonalu actually bojanalu means food. To please the Goddess, rice is cooked with milk and jaggery and is carried in earthen pots called "ghatams," that are decorated with haldi (turmeric) and kumkum (vermillion). Ladies dress up traditionally and carry these ghatams to offer to the Goddess along with bangles, saris, haldi and kumkum. Throughout the procession, they sing and dance and some carry small neem branches also.

**Bathukamma:** There are many stories about this festival, the word Bathukamma means, “live forever.” This floral festival is celebrated by Hindu women all over the state. This festival is celebrated in September- October. It starts on Mahalaya Amavasya and continues till Navaratri, for nine days. It is a symbol of Telangana Culture and Tradition. Young girls and married women dress up traditionally in silk saris/ half saris, put on lot of jewellery and decorate their hair with strings of beautiful flowers. They arrange colorful flowers in the shape of mountain Meru and keep Gouramma made of turmeric at the peak. They keep those colorful bathukammas in the centre and sing and dance by clapping to a rhythm around it. Then they carry them to the nearby pond or lake and and once again sing folk songs and dance. Then they immerse bathukamma in the water after taking the turmeric Gouramma. The names of nine bathukammas are as follows:

- a) Engili Poola Bathukamma    b) Atukula Bathukamma
- c) Muddapappu Bathukamma    d) Nane Biyyam Bathukamma
- e) Atla Bathukamma    f) Aligina Bathukamma
- g) Vepakayala Bathukamma    h) Vennamuddala Bathukamma
- i) Saddula Bathukamma

**Muhurrum:** It is the first month of the Muslim Calender and is considered one of the sacred months only next to the Ramadan month. It is a symbol of religious tolerance. They offer special prayers. The tenth Muhurrum known as Ashura, is a day of mourning for Shias. They mourn the martyrdom of Prophet Imam Ali Hussain grandson of Prophet Muhammed. Whereas Sunnis believe it as the day of victory over Egyptian Pharaoh, which was possible because of Prophet Musa (Moses) and some of them observe fasting. They eat sweet rice to break their fasting and distribute to friends and relative also. Peerlu are kept at village points to remember prophet Imam Hussain and later immersed in lakes and ponds.

In Hyderabad, Alam’s are taken in procession on elephant and Hindus show solidarity by joining their Muslim brothers. They believe that

darshan of Alam brings peace and solace.

Many foreign tourists also witness the proceedings of this festival.

**Sammakka and Saralakka jatharas** are held once in two years at Medaram in Warangal district where lakhs of devotees from all over the state gather. It's a very huge gathering in the world.

**Wooden toys of Nirmal** are also very famous and people still keep them in their hearts.

**Oggu Katha** is a popular folklore that narrates the stories of Mallanna, Beerappa and Yellamma by singing praises to them.

**Perini Shiva Thandavam**, a dance form that originated in Telangana. Kakatiya soldiers performed at the invocation and dedicated to Lord Shiva. Later it was revived by Nataraja Ramakrishna.

**Handloom weaving of Gadwal, Narayanpet and Pochampalli saris** are very famous all over the world for their attractive patterns. The Sircilla weavers had once woven a sari that could fit in a match box.

There are many tourist places in Telangana. In Hyderabad one can see Golconda Fort where Baktha Ramadas was imprisoned, Salargunj Museum where many antiques collected by a single person are kept and Charminar famous for bangles and pearls.

Nagarjun Sagar Dam and the museum, which has a collection of antiques are also famous in our state.

Some famous poets of our state like Pothana whose Baghavatham is known for literary fragrance, Kancherla Gopanna known as Baktha Ramadasu who is famous for his Keerthanas, Mallinganti Suri, Kaloji Narayan Rao etc., who are considered jewels of Telangana for their contribution to the Telugu Literature. (you can see the statues of all these poets on (Hussainsagar Road)