

**A KEEN OBSERVATION ON HINDU AND MUSLIM FESTIVALS AND FAIRS IN  
MEDIEVAL ANDHRA**

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**Abstract:**

An important feature of the religious life of Hindu and Muslim people during medieval period was the celebration of festivals in different parts of the year. These festivals were the most common means of amusement for the common village people. It is particularly so among the Hindus and Muslims. During the medieval times large number of festivals and fairs were celebrated by both the Hindu and Muslim people. Often these festivals were essentially religious in significance and gained pageantry and show and created much spectacular effect. The numbers of Hindu festivals were comparatively larger than that of the Muslims. Most of the Hindu festivals were depended upon mythological, historical and astronomical considerations, according to Mohammad Ashraf: "They usually synchronise with the seasons of comparative leisure for the peasantry and are as a rule enjoyed with dances and popular tunes. Ruling dynasties have come and gone; calamities and disasters have occurred and have been forgotten, people have suffered and ground, but the local and general festivals have abided and have always been observed with enthusiasm and gaiety. The introduction of new cults and religious faiths has not character of these popular festivals, on the other hand, the new comers have only added to their richness and variety. Though these festivals cater for the religious emotions of a few, the vast majority is supremely indifferent to their religious significance. For them they are popular occasions of universal social enjoyment and intercourse"(Ashraff-1969:248)

**HINDU FESTIVALS**

**Vasantotsavam or the spring Festival:**

Vasantotsavam or the spring festival was the most important during medieval times. In fact, this festival was observed by Hindus from very early centuries of the 2 Christian era. (Somasekhara sarma-1948:353) This was also called Madanamahotsava or Vasantamahotsava by merry making people with dance and music. (Vatsayana) This ancient festival came into very prominence in the Andhra country only during this period. It was a seasonal festival 223 celebrated at the approach of the vernal (Somasekhara sarma-1948 opcit: 354) equinox. The festival devoted to Madana (Love God or God of Kama) and his ally friend Vasanta (Spring God) the presiding deity of the spring.

**Significance of Spring Festival:**

According to the Vratkhand of Hemadri, the significance of the festival is stated as follows: After reaching Gauri, Shiva lost himself in meditation while observing the Pasupatavrata. Gauri's wish of motherhood remained unfulfilled. Brahma and the other gods consulted and sent Madan to disturb Shiva's attention, with the hope that he alone could divert Shiva's attention. Madana, accompanied by Vasanta, went before Shiva, who was at that time in deep contemplation, and, drawing his cane-bow, fired arrows of his flowers at Shiva, which disturbed his deep meditation and caused Madonmada or love of madness. Reasons were made. Shiva got angry and opened the third eye of the fire and burnt Madan to ashes. Madan's wife Rati was very sad to see her husband burning. Then Gauri, with a soft heart from her pitiable condition, said to Shiva, "You have burnt Kama who came here for me. Pray, have mercy on his wife Rati, and Madan, bring her husband back to life". . Shiva replied, "How can Madan, once burnt by me, be alive again? However, I will accept your request. In the spring, on the 13th day of the month of light, he regenerates his body. will start the form". It is said that after granting this boon, Shiva went to Kailas. Therefore, the 13th day of Shukla Paksha was the day of Madan's resurrection. (ibid: 354) Hence this spring carnival is called Madanamahotsav or Vasantotsav.

Telugu works like Simhasanadavatrimika, Bhimeshwarapuram and Kashikhandam also attest to this legend with beautiful details.

Krishna Deva Raya was described as having sacrificed every year to the lord (kama) of the golden festival of spring (Mahalingam-1975: 243). Krishnadeva Raya used to listen to the poets gathered in the court for the spring festival (Iyengar 1924:138). Jambavati Kalyanam, a play written by Krishnadeva Raya, was enacted before people gathered to watch the Chaitra [spring] festival of Srivirupaksha (ibid).

#### **Diwali Festival:**

Niccol di Conti wrote that he was the observing innumerable lamps, the oil of Susimani was lit day and night for nine days and was installed in all higher ways 225 (somasekharasarma.opcit:357). This festival of lights appears to be the festival of Deepawali which occurs on the fifteenth day of the dark half of the month of Ashwin (ibid:360) The significance of the festival was an asura named Narakasura who was destroyed by Lord Krishna on this day and the purpose of the festival was the event. is to be remembered. The word 'Deepawali' means a row of lamps and it probably originated from the practice of lighting up villages on the occasion of this festival. Niccol di Conti says, "On this occasion men and women of all ages bathed in the rivers or the sea, put on new clothes, and spent three whole days in dancing and feasting (Major 1858:28). Describes when everyone] wears new beautiful clothes, "each one has its own color and equipment. It was a new moon day, and Paes, speaking of the year's reckoning, said: "They start the year in this month with the new moon and they always count the months from moon to moon. The lunar day immediately after Diwali is known as Deepavali Amavasya, during which period men and women gradually light fireworks in place of lamps. Hindus lit a large number of lights in their homes as well as in temples and other public buildings. The whole area looked like a flood of lights. The Muslims of Andhradesh also participated in this festival. The festival was celebrated exclusively by Vaishyas or bankers" (Sewell.1970:280-282,144-147). Robert Sewell and B.A. Salatore identified this description with the Diwali celebration.

#### **Karthigai:**

The Karthigai festival was celebrated in honor of the death of Bali at the hands of Vishnu in the form of Vamana. Nicolo di Conti, who observed the festival, describes it as follows: "Within their temple and outside their terraces, they place innumerable lamps of Susimanni oil which are kept day and night (major.opcit:28)

#### **New Year's Day - Ugadi**

New Year's Day was one of the major festivals of Andhra (Somashekharasarma.opcit: 360), but no further information is presented by the inscriptions. The day of the Hindu New Year begins on the first day of the month known as Chaitra (Jagadisa Iyer 1989:65). The occasion was considered auspicious as the Sun then enters the zodiac sign of Aries (ibid: 66). People call this occasion as Chaitra Vishnu Punyakalam (ibid: 65) or holy occasion. 226 People in India calculate the Indian year from the month when the Sun enters Aries – Rama in the signs of the zodiac – was philosophically derived from the science of cosmo-genesis (ibid.:66). The Sanskrit word denoting the name of the animal 'Rama' is 'Aja' which means 'the one who was not born' (ibid: 66). Hence the sign of the zodiac under reference is to the ultimate cause of everything, and consequently the month in which the Sun enters this zodiac was considered the first month of the year (ibid: 66) since ancient times the Hindu concept of one The ideal life has been one of sacrifices and religious rituals (ibid:66). As a result they wish to post with information as to the most appropriate time for the observance of particular rites or ceremonies (ibid:68). This information was published by Hindu astrologers and astronomers in their publication called 'Panchangam' (ibid: 69), the solar year begins with the Sun's entry into Udaya-Rama. The beginning of the solar months was determined by the entry of the Sun into the other signs. Hindus believed that the twelve signs of the zodiac represented the twelve planets in the solar system. These planets are the centers of consciousness in the mighty cosmic deity or intellect known as 'Kaalpurush'. In fact, the planets are called his head, face, breasts, abdomen, navel, abdomen, genitals, teeth, eyes, knees, ankles and feet (ibid:69).

During the medieval period the Andhras celebrated these festivals as 'Yuyadhi' or beginning. The life of an era The religious significance of the Andhras was that Chaitravishnu Day or the opening day of the first fortnight of the waxing moon was chosen by Brahma to bring our visible world into existence. That is why this first day of creation was also given the name 'Yuyadhi'. This New Year's Day was popularly celebrated during the days of Vijayanagara. There was some confusion about the exact date when the New Year was celebrated in Vijayanagara. But Domingo Paes has a specific mention that the Vijayanagara kings started counting the new year of 227 government only when it was the day of Deepawali. The description of Niccol di Conti and Paes largely responds to this festival of Hindus wearing new clothes.

#### **Full Moon Festivals:**

The three main Poornima (full moon days) were considered by the people of Andhra during the medieval period as the days of celebration (somasekharasarm.opcit:360). The first full moon was Davan-Punnama, the full moon day or the fifteenth day of the light of the month of Chaitra (ibid:360). The second nuli was Punnama - (ibid:360) the fifteenth day of the month of Shravan. The third was KartikPurnima, the fifteenth day of the Shukla Paksha of Kalika (ibid:360). It appears that Davan-Purnima (SII.IV.NO.1368) is associated with the festival of Dolotsava. The sparkle festival ended with this Dolotsav. This festival was the custom of Andhra Vaishyas and prostitutes to honor their teachers of the arts on this day. He gives his gratitude (P.C.11:360) in the form of Katnam. The annual festival of Lord Telunga Raya Srikakulam (Krishna district) was celebrated on (KRV: 204), thus Davana Punnama, Kartika Punnama was a holy day for Lord Shiva (also present day). Kama Bhimeshwarapuram expresses that the sage Agastya in Daksharama was written by Kartika (KRV:24) on the full moon day of the month with his wife entered the five arched flame (pylon). It is believed that this darshan washes away all sins.

#### **Sree Jayanti:**

Sri Jayanti was a popular festival during the medieval period and is still mentioned in the records (E.C.No.312:1932) at Madala in Guntur district. Lakshmi or Mahalakshmi was worshiped by the people in this festival. It was also considered as the festival of autumn which was considered as a counterpart of the spring festival. This Shree Jayanti falls in the fourth of the six seasons of the lunar-solar year and lasts for nine days like the spring festival. On the occasion of this festival, kings and nobles in Andhra country rewarded poets, spiritual leaders, musicians and dancers (SMD.11, VII, V, 93

#### **Pushkaram Festival:**

The people of Andhra adopted two types of Pushkaram festivals known as Krishna and Godavari respectively. Both Krishna and Godavari Pushkaram festivals occur once every twelve years, when Jupiter (Jupiter) enters the two signs of the 228 zodiac, Leo (Leo) and Kanya (Virgo). Epigraphical evidence stayed away from these festivals. Gautami Pushkaram (Godavari Pushkaram; is mentioned in an inscription (SII.VOL-Vano-114) at Palivela (East Godavari District) in 1345 AD. PanditaraDhyankarita also mentions this festival. Apart from the festival Krishna Pushkaram was also attested in a record (ECno.290of1934-35) in Ketavaram (Guntur district). The people of Andhradesh regarded these festivals as holy days and traveled from distant places of Andhra country to their nearest pilgrimage or holy place. But they used to gather on the banks of the river, to take a bath in the holy water to attain virtue.

#### **Navratri or Mahanavami:**

The Navratri festival was also known as Vijayadashami, Dussehra, Durgashtami and Mahanavami during the Vijayanagara period. Basically it is a festival for the peace of Goddess Durga, who symbolizes every possible kind of energy in the universe, to attain eternal happiness and prosperity. (Jagadisa Iyer.1989:135) Navratri or the holy nine nights was a time of celebration observed by the blind, beginning in the bright fortnight of the month of Purattasi after sunset in the temples, celebrated every month in the English months of September and October goes. Year (ibid:135.) This festival acquired great political and social importance in the Vijayanagara Empire. The significance of the

festival (Mahalingam.1975:238) (ibid:238) was in two aspects, one being the worship of Durga and the other the worship of weapons. The first aspect is the celebration in honor of Parvati (Durga), who fought for nine days against the buffalo demon Bhandasura, and emerged victorious by killing her on the tenth day, the day of victory (the day of Vijayadashmi). During the battle she killed two other demons, Chanda and Munda, who were lieutenants of Bhandasura, due to which she was called Kaimunde.

### **Shri Ram Navami:**

Sri Rama Navami was the anniversary of the birth of Sri Rama celebrated by Hindu devotees in the month of Chaitra (March–April), the ninth day of the bright fortnight, when the asterisk (punarvasu;) was ascending. The significance of the festival is that Lord Mahavishnu, one of the Hindu trinity, represents the patron aspect of the universe, as in his previous incarnations (Jagadisa Iyer.1920:125–132) (incarnation), incarnated into the world of men . Kill the ten-headed demon named Ravana who was a symbol of the ten egos (ahamkaras) of men. When one is under the control of the ego, the power to discriminate between right and wrong ends in him and consequently the light of God has to fall on him to destroy the desires; i.e., the ahamkara, (ibid:49)

### **Maha Shivratri:**

Maha Shivaratri was the festival of Lord Shiva that falls on the fourteenth day of the dark half of the Magha month according to the English month of February/March celebrated by Hindus. Archival evidence (ECV-4) confirms this festival in Andhradesa in the medieval period. Shiva, one of the Hindu trinity, represents the destructive aspect in the universe. Although generally, the night time was considered sacred and appropriate for the worship of the feminine aspect of the deity, and the day time for the masculine; Yet Shiva was worshiped during the night on this special occasion, and in fact, it was especially celebrated then. It was believed that observing the fast frees the devotee from the effects of sins committed unknowingly or unknowingly. The night was divided into 232 four quarters, each quarter leading to a jamu (Jama and Yama) also known as Yama and the pious people being awake during each one during the worship of the god.

### **Makar Sankranti:**

Another important Hindu festival, known as Makar Sankranti, is celebrated in Andhradesa (ECNO-280 of 1915) during the medieval period. In this festival the first day was considered as "BhogiPanduga" and the second day as "Makar Sankranti". The festival usually called Sankranti lasts till the day the sun moves from the zodiac (rasi) to another zodiac, the day of Dakshinayanam or the period of time south of the sun. The day was also one, which was the day before the 'Makara' (meaning dolphin) solstice (Jagdish Iyer.opcit:9) when the Sun enters Capricorn. The festival was celebrated in the month of January in honor of the god of heaven, Indra on elephant, who was supposed to control the clouds and initiate seasonal rains in the world, bringing abundance and prosperity to the country. In fact, this festival, known as "Sankranti" on the second day and 'Gopuja' on the third day, was similar to the harvest feast in the countries of Europe. (Nizami-1974:297) Terra 'BhogiPandugame' means festival of physical pleasure. The name probably originated from bringing the harvest that was the source of all joy. The ryots, after hard work in the fields, try to relax and grow crops.

### **Muslim festival:**

During festival days, Muslim people are generally allowed to offer prayers in mosques should be gathered. It is obligatory for them to offer prayers in the morning on that day and give thanks to Allah. Each family performed the ceremony at home. Every person should take bath in the morning on that day and wear clean or new clothes and if possible ornaments and special dishes were also prepared for that day. Drinking alcohol was strictly prohibited on this day. Orthodox Islam sanctioned only two festivals, namely the two 'Ids' in which Muslims had the opportunity of entertainment. Muslims of every social status celebrated him. The desire to entertain visitors on the occasion was so common that even sages who were generally proud of their poverty did not like to be completely destitute on the 'days of Eid'. mass distribution of current .

This is, known as 'Eids', are a regular feature of 'Eid celebrations'. (ibid:297) However, there was very limited scope for social festivals under orthodox Islam. Yet under the influence of the Indian environment, even the sad and Austrian celebrations such as the 'Eid' prayer and the 'Hajj' were transformed into celebrations. Also some new festivals were introduced which were mainly social and indigenous. Some of the important festivals of Muslims in Andhradesa are as follows:

**Muharram:**

Some information has been obtained from the book of Kuliya written by Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah of Golconda. We have a variety of festivals related to Muharram such as the Prophet's birthday, the day of revelation, the birthday of 'Ali', the anniversary of the day when the Prophet identified the interest of his son-in-laws. Muharram was a month-long mourning on the death anniversary of Imam Hussain, the son of Ali and the grandson of the Prophet of Islam. He died fighting in Karbala against Yazid, the son of Moawiyah, usurper of the Caliphate of Islam. The first ten days are generally observed as days of lamentation by Muslims and Shias in particular. Tazia procession was seen. The festival of Muharram was celebrated during the Mughal rule in India as well as in Andhra Pradesh.

During the time of Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah and his son Abdullah, close contacts were made between Hindus and Muslims, who spoke Telugu as their mother tongue and those who adopted Dakhni, a spirit of tolerance almost equal to Hindu-Muslim cultural integration. was equal. . Researchers in this period find a cultural synthesis and harmonious coexistence of Hindus and Muslims in Andhra, especially in the region that was under the direct control of the Qutb Shahis. The stories related to Muharram, ( ramaraju.1974:529) the month of martyrdom of the prophets, the grandson, Imam Hussain, became a part of Hindu folklore and were translated into Telugu poetry and adapted to the tastes of the people. . These songs were popular in the city and the tiller in the countryside and the pottery in the village also had an influence and increased the local value of the songs. Types of Telugu songs associated with the Muharram festival, such as Jangnama, Panjtan-e-Pak and Marthias, meaning a story related to the war, the five holy personalities and the dirge, respectively. "Most of these songs were sung by Telugu people not only during Muharram but throughout the years (ramaraju.opcit:4) and vary from region to region. Muharram Telugu songs of Rayalaseema in those days are as follows." Salutations to God, salutations to the Almighty". There is a beautiful fort in the city of the sky; Inside the fort is a palace made of glass with high seats; Bright and beautiful thrones; Who are on the throne? These are Hasan and Hussain, two brothers , the king in the court, the lord on the throne, the emperor ruling over the seven islands" (sherwani.opcit:529).

**Eid-ul-Fitr or Ramadan:**

Eid-ul-Fitr or Eid-ul-Saghir was a two-day festival that started on the day of Shawwal. The day of joy comes after the long-standing fast of Ramadan. The month of Ramadan is considered the holiest of all the months (nizami.opcit:297) and, therefore, was characterized by brisk religious activity. Change in daily routine of life was not available during this month. An elaborate and meticulous program of religious devotion usually fell through from the early morning hours to late night. The atmosphere of the court also did not remain unaffected by this. If a Sultan neglects to fast during this month, he himself becomes a victim of criticism. (j.a.s.b.V111.1969) A person was expected to devote his fasting hours to honest work or religious devotion. Tarawi (nizami.opcit:297) Prayers were regularly offered in mosques. In some places the Imam used to read up to three paragraphs of the Quran every night. (nizami.opcit:324) People broke their fast on seeing the new moon. Usually after the sighting of the moon, cannons were fired and trumpets were played. The next morning, Muslims dressed up in their best clothes, met their relatives and friends and exchanged sweets and greetings. It was customary to call elders and superiors and congratulate them. In the afternoon, Muslims went to Idgah to offer Namaz.

**Id-i-Milad:**

Id-i-Milad or the feast of the prophet's nativity was celebrated on the 11th of Rabi-ul-Awwal with great solemnity. It was an important month of the Muslim Calendar. The actual date of this festival was controversial. The first 12 days of Rabi and especially the 12th day provided the occasion for

holding milad-un Nabi and it is celebrated that as prophet's birthday. On this occasion poor and indigent were fed (rashid.1969:121-2).

#### **Shab-i-Barat or Laliat-ul-Barat (Night of forgiveness of sins):**

It is an important festival of this period. The night of the 14th Shaban was called Shab-i-Barat. (ibid) It appears that in India these prayers were sometimes offered in congregation also. (nizami.opcit:297) The orthodox circle of Muslims made prayers throughout the night. It was believed as night in which one's fortune for the coming year has been fixed by God. Muslims are supposed to pass this night in prayers and vigilantly. The whole of the 15th Shaban was passed without a wink of sleep in prayers and meditation, people all the time expecting a response from God (JOBRS.vol.XLV11,1962). Some scholars have expressed the view that the festival of Shab-i-Barat was copied from the Hindu festivals of Sivaratri. (rayachoudhary.1981:73) This impression exists because some of the religious enthusiasts spent the whole night of Shab-i-Barat in offering special prayers and reading Holy Quran. (Nizami.opcit:298) There was a popular custom to send candle lamps, to the mosques. Everybody spent a few wick lamps to illuminate the local mosque (rashid.opcit:122). Muhammad quli wrote ten poems in his book Kulliyat on the shab-i-barat, and while describing the celebrations he gives us the names of the fireworks and crackers. It is interesting to note that they continued fired even today. (moreland.1931:52-64) The use of fireworks and crackers to celebrate the shab-i-barat, by the people was probably copied from Hindus (nizami.opcit:298). But the sultan of Golkonda not only satisfied with crackers and fireworks but also for the amorous in him appear in some of the verses on the shab-i-barat as 238 well. (moreland.1920:70) There was display of fireworks light and torches were kindled. The fireworks lasted for three days. (rashid.opcit:122 )

#### **Nau-roz**

Nauroz was the national festival of spring which was celebrated on the New Year's Day. (ibid:124) According to the Persian calendar, it was one of the most celebrated festivals of the Persians. (nizami.opcit:298) The Indian Turks also celebrated it by giving feasts. (rashid.opcit:124) This festival lasted for nineteen days. It was usually celebrated in large gardens and parks. (ijaz-ikhuravi.iv) During the festival various sports, games, dances and music concerts were arranged (rayachoudhary.opcit:73). Pavilion was erected and poets also participated. (rashid.opcit:124) Brocade curtains were hung in the arches of royal palaces. The walls were draped with costly clothes. (ibid).

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