

Bathukamma: A Review on The Cultural Significance, Medicinal Values of Flowers, And Traditional Health Wisdom of The Telugu People

Renuka. G¹, Anitha Devi. U², Vijaya Lakshmi. V³, Sampathkumar Reddy. M.⁴, Ugandhar.T^{*5}

¹Associate Prof of Microbiology, Pingle Govt. College for Women (A) Hanumakonda

²Associate Professor Botany, IPDGCW (A) Nampally, Hyderabad,

³Principal Govt. Degree College, Gambhirraopet,

⁴Associate Professor of Telugu Govt. Degree College (A), Siddipet

⁵Associate Prof of Botany, Kakatiya Govt. College (A) Hanumakonda

ABSTRACT: Bathukamma: A Historical and Cultural Festival of Flowers and Health Traditions in Telangana is a vibrant nine-day floral festival that intertwines spirituality, ecological wisdom, cultural heritage, and traditional medicine. Celebrated primarily by women during the Navratri season, it honors Goddess Gauri (Bathukamma), invoking blessings for health, prosperity, and feminine strength. Central to the celebration is the creation of conical floral arrangements, Bathukammas, which incorporate a wide variety of seasonal flowers chosen for both beauty and medicinal value.

Commonly used flowers include Tangedu poolu (*Cassia auriculata*/Senna), placed at the base and valued for its role in controlling diabetes; Gunugu poolu (*Celosia*), with its bold flame-red hues, used for treating blood pressure and stomach ailments; and Marigold (*Tagetes*), employed as a natural pesticide and remedy for skin diseases. *Chrysanthemum* is favored for its vibrant colours, while the Indian lotus symbolises purity and aids in reducing body heat and constipation. Velvet flower/Globe amaranth (Poka banti), linked with Goddess Sita, is used for eye health. Other local flora, such as Luffa flowers, Cucurbita, *Memecylon edule*, *Tridax procumbens*, *Cucumis sativus*, and *Trachyspermum ammi* enrich the arrangements, carrying diverse therapeutic benefits rooted in Ayurveda.

Beyond their medicinal and ecological value, these flowers embody cultural identity and social unity. Women gather daily to design Bathukammas, sing traditional songs, and dance in circles, blending recreation with devotion. The festival culminates in "Saddula Bathukamma," where floral stacks are immersed in water bodies, symbolising gratitude to nature. Thus, Bathukamma represents a unique synthesis of worship, environmental stewardship, health traditions, and community celebration in Telangana.

KEYWORDS: Bathukamma; Telangana; Medicinal flowers; Cultural heritage; Ayurveda; Environmental sustainability; Goddess Gauri; Floral traditions

1. Historical Roots: The Origin and Evolution of the Bathukamma Festival in Telangana

Bathukamma, officially recognised as the state festival of Telangana, is a vibrant celebration that highlights the devotion, culture, and unity of women across the region. The festival is observed during **Bhadrapada Amavasya** (Mahalaya Amavasya) according to the Telugu Hindu calendar, usually in **September–October**, coinciding with **Durga Navratri**. Bathukamma spans **nine days**, beginning on Mahalaya Amavasya and culminating on **Saddula Bathukamma** (also known as Pedda Bathukamma) on **Ashwayuja Ashtami**, two days before Dussehra. It is followed by **Boddemma**, a seven-day festival marking the end of the monsoon season, while Bathukamma signals the arrival of **Sarad/Sharath Ritu (autumn season)**.

1.1 Historical Background

The term "**Bathukamma**" means "Mother Goddess comes alive," reflecting the festival's dedication to **Goddess Parvati (Maha Gauri)**, the symbol of life, fertility, and feminine energy. The festival has roots in several legends:

- 1. Goddess Sati and Parvati:** Bathukamma originated to celebrate the return of Goddess Sati as Parvati, invoking blessings for health, prosperity, and family welfare.
- 2. Victory over Evil:** Another legend narrates Goddess Gauri's triumph over the demon Mahishasura, after which devotees offered flowers to awaken her following her rest.
- 3. Royal Folk Tales:** Historical texts recount that King Dharmangada of the Chola dynasty, after being childless, celebrated divine rituals leading to the birth of a daughter named Bathukamma, inspiring the festival's observance by young girls seeking blessings for a prosperous life.

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4. **Daksha Yagna Legend:** Women honor Goddess Gauri, who sacrificed herself after being insulted at Daksha Yagna, by offering flowers and turmeric idols, singing, and performing ritual dances to revive her. Bathukamma represents **Telangana's cultural identity**, blending devotion, community bonding, and ecological awareness. The festival emphasizes **traditional medicinal values**, as most flowers used have health benefits recognized in Ayurveda.

1.2 Floral Preparation and Folk Art

Bathukamma arrangements are **stacked in seven concentric layers**, resembling a temple gopuram, often topped with a **lotus or pumpkin flower** and **Gouramma** (turmeric idol of Goddess Gauri). (Fig-1)Flowers and leaves collected from wild plains include:



Fig -1 Traditional Bathukamma Decoration with Seasonal Flowers”

Tangedu (Cassia/Senna), Gunugu (Celosia), Marigold (Tagetes), *Chrysanthemum*, Indian Lotus, Poka Banti (Globe Amaranth), Luffa and Cucurbita flowers and leaves, *Cucumis Sativus* leaves and flowers, *Memecylon edule*, *Tridax procumbens*, *Trachyspermum ammi*

Women prepare Bathukamma daily, stacking flowers on **Thambalam** (broad leaves) and decorating them with vibrant petals and stems. The arrangements are sometimes floated in water and preserved until immersion (Fig-2).



Fig. 2 Men Performing Bathukamma Visarjan in Water Bodies”

1.3 Rituals and Celebrations

Each evening, women and girls gather to sing **folk songs**, clap, and dance in circles around Bathukamma. The songs, invoking blessings from various goddesses, often end with tributes to **Uyyaala, Chandamama, or Gouramma**.

O Lord Rama, O auspicious Rama, O Hari, O Lord, O Brahma Dev, May the Lord protect those who seek refuge, May the devotees be safe from calamities, may there be no death to the faithful.

O Black Mother Goddess, O Black Amma, your devotees' hearts are with you, O Nalla Amma (the Black Goddess), the sacred shrines, O Lord Narasimha, the temples shine. O White Mother Goddess, O White Amma, your blessings fill hearts with purity, O Parvatha Amma (Mountain Goddess), the temples shine.

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O Bhupati Raju (the King), those without offspring, May children be born to all, Even if one has five wives, May the King be blessed with heirs, May peace, prosperity, and sustenance fill the kingdom.

May the elephants and horses be strong, May the soldiers and palaces be safe, May rivers, granaries, and fields flourish, May the people prosper and never suffer famine, May all obstacles be removed.

O King, may you travel safely, May all bridges and rivers be crossed with ease, May crops, grains, and nourishment be abundant, May rituals and festivals be celebrated joyfully.

O Latchi, O royal maidservant, Follow the King's instructions, Deliver the offerings, prepare the food, Serve the King and the Queen respectfully, Ensure all customs and ceremonies are properly observed.

May the twelve months bring prosperity, may children grow healthy, may the King's lineage be long, May gold, jewels, and prosperity rain like pearls, may the kingdom be blessed with joy, wealth, and abundance.

During the **Bathukamma Festival** in Telangana, women gather in the evening with their **Bathukamma flower stacks**. They sing traditional folk songs while dancing in a circle, clapping their hands rhythmically. These songs invoke blessings from the goddess, wishing for health, prosperity, and happiness for their families.

After the nine-day celebration, on the final day called **Saddula Bathukamma**, the women carry the Bathukammas in a procession and immerse them in water bodies, symbolizing the goddess returning to her divine abode. The folk songs continue during this procession, creating a vibrant, devotional, and visually captivating atmosphere.

Each day of the festival has a special **naivedyam (offering)**:

1. **Engili Pula Bathukamma**: Sesame seeds and coarsely ground rice.
2. **Atkula Bathukamma**: Flattened rice, boiled lentils, and jaggery.
3. **Muddapappu Bathukamma**: Softened lentils with milk and jaggery.
4. **Nanabiyyam Bathukamma**: Wet rice, milk, and jaggery.
5. **Atla Bathukamma**: Wheat-based pancakes or dosa.
6. **Aligina Bathukamma**: No food offering.
7. **Vepakayala Bathukamma**: Deep-fried rice flour shaped like neem fruits.
8. **Venamuddala Bathukamma**: Sesame, butter/ghee, and jaggery.
9. **Saddula Bathukamma**: Five varieties of rice dishes: curd rice, tamarind rice, lemon rice, coconut rice, and sesame rice.

The festival culminates in **Saddula Bathukamma**, where floral arrangements are immersed in water bodies amid music, dance, and community celebrations. **Guramma**, the symbolic idol of Goddess Gauri, is removed before immersion, and married women apply it to their **Mangala Sutra**, signifying protection for their husbands and household welfare.

Bathukamma Festival: Floral and Medicinal Significance

Bathukamma, the vibrant floral festival of Telangana, is celebrated for nine days during the Navaratri season. Women prepare unique floral arrangements using seasonal flowers and offer **Naivedyam (sacred food offerings)** each day, culminating in **Saddula Bathukamma** with grand celebrations, music, and immersion of the flower stacks in water bodies. The festival is not only a symbol of devotion to **Goddess Gauri** but also reflects deep ecological, cultural, and medicinal wisdom.

1.4 Common Flowers Used in Bathukamma

1. **Tangedu Poolu** (*Cassia auriculata* / *Senna auriculata*) – Bright yellow flowers placed at the base of Bathukamma. They are traditionally used in Ayurveda for skin disorders, diabetes, and urinary infections.
2. **Gunugu Poolu** (*Celosia argentea*) – Flame-red or pink inflorescences. Medicinally valued as a coolant, eye tonic, and in treating ulcers.
3. **Banathi / Marigold** (*Tagetes erecta*) – Yellow/orange flowers symbolize auspiciousness. They have antimicrobial, antifungal, and wound-healing properties.
4. **Chamanthi / Chrysanthemum** (*Chrysanthemum indicum*) – Used for decoration; in Ayurveda, it is known for anti-inflammatory, analgesic, and antioxidant properties.
5. **Kaluva / Indian Lotus** (*Nelumbo nucifera*) – Sacred flower offered to deities, with seeds, roots, and flowers used in Ayurveda for diarrhea, bleeding disorders, and reproductive health.
6. **Puvvulu / Velvet Flower / Globe Amaranth** (*Gomphrena globosa*) – Symbolic of Goddess Sita; used in folk medicine for cough, asthma, and reproductive health.
7. **Beerakaya Poolu / Luffa Flowers** (*Luffa cylindrica*) – Used in the arrangement; their fruits and flowers act as natural blood purifiers and help in skin care.
8. **Dosakaya / Cucumis Flowers & Leaves** (*Cucumis sativus*) – Leaves and flowers are used; cucumber is cooling, hydrating, and beneficial for skin and digestion.
9. **Dekka Poolu / Memecylon Flowers** (*Memecylon edule*) – Small wild blue flowers, significant in Bathukamma. Traditionally used in treating wounds and skin ailments.

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10. **Tridax** (*Tridax procumbens*) – A common wild flower; widely known for wound-healing, anti-inflammatory, and antimicrobial properties.
11. **Ajwain Plant Flowers** (*Trachyspermum ammi*) – Collected for the festival; seeds and flowers are carminative, antimicrobial, and useful in digestive disorders.

1.4 Medicinal & Cultural Importance

- **Medicinal Value:** Many of these flowers have traditional uses in Ayurveda and folk medicine, ranging from wound healing, skin care, and digestive health to treatment of infections and reproductive well-being. Their seasonal blooming ensures the availability of fresh medicinal resources.

Table 1: Flowers Used in Bathukamma with Cultural and Medicinal Importance

Common Name	Botanical Name	Cultural Role in Bathukamma	Medicinal Importance
Tangedu Poolu (Senna/Tanner's Cassia)	<i>Senna auriculata</i> (<i>Cassia auriculata</i>)	Used at the base of Bathukamma; symbolizes strength and stability.	Treats diabetes, urinary problems, skin diseases, and improves digestion.
Gunugu Poolu (Cock's Comb)	<i>Celosia argentea</i>	Adds vibrant red/pink shades; placed in middle layers of Bathukamma.	Used as a cooling agent, for eye ailments, ulcers, and bleeding disorders.
Banthi / Marigold	<i>Tagetes erecta</i>	Bright yellow/orange flowers; common in rituals and decorations.	Possesses antimicrobial, antifungal, anti-inflammatory, and wound-healing properties.
Chamanthi / Chrysanthemum	<i>Chrysanthemum indicum</i>	Decorative layers; offered to Goddess for auspiciousness.	Anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, relieves headaches, and supports skin health.
Kaluva / Indian Lotus	<i>Nelumbo nucifera</i>	Sacred offering to Goddess; symbolizes purity and prosperity.	Used for diarrhea, bleeding disorders, reproductive health, and as a natural coolant.
Poka Banti / Globe amaranth	<i>Gomphrena globosa</i>	Associated with Goddess Sita; symbolizes endurance and devotion.	Used in cough, asthma, reproductive disorders, and as a general tonic.
Beerakaya Poolu / Luffa Flowers	<i>Luffa cylindrica</i>	Seasonal flower used in decoration; connects farming to festivities.	Blood purifier, skin cleanser, helps in jaundice, and detoxification.
Dosakaya Poolu / Cucumber Flowers	<i>Cucumis sativus</i>	Leaves/flowers used; highlights agrarian connection of Bathukamma.	Cooling effect, hydrates the body, improves digestion, and skin health.
Dekka Poolu / Blue Flower	<i>Memecylon edule</i>	Wild flower used for Bathukamma, especially in rural Telangana.	Used for wounds, ulcers, skin diseases, and as an antimicrobial herb.
Tridax / Coat Buttons	<i>Tridax procumbens</i>	Gathered from the wild; symbolizes simplicity and natural abundance.	Wound healing, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and anti-oxidative properties.
Vamu Poolu / Ajwain Flowers	<i>Trachyspermum ammi</i>	Seasonal addition; connects medicinal plants with divine offering.	Relieves indigestion, colds, respiratory disorders, antimicrobial, and carminative.

- **Cultural Significance:** Bathukamma symbolises the harmonious bond between **nature, women, and divinity**. Women pray for prosperity, family welfare, and marital bliss, while also reinforcing ecological sustainability by using only **seasonal, locally available flowers**.
- **Spiritual Symbolism:** Guramma (clay idol of Goddess Gauri) is worshipped, and before immersion, the turmeric is applied by married women to their **Mangala Sutra**, symbolising protection of the household and longevity of husbands.

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Thus, Bathukamma is a unique blend of devotion, ecology, and ethnomedicine, celebrating both feminine power and biodiversity conservation.

1.5 Cultural and Health Significance

Bathukamma, the vibrant floral festival of Telangana, has evolved over centuries as a unique cultural expression of feminine energy, ecological awareness, and agricultural gratitude. Historically, Bathukamma was celebrated as a rural festival, primarily by women, to worship Goddess Gauri and to offer thanks for the monsoon season, good harvests, and fertility of the land. The ritual of arranging seasonal flowers in a conical pattern, singing folk songs, and immersing Bathukamma in local water bodies symbolized harmony with nature and community bonding. However, Bathukamma was not uniformly popular across all districts of the Telangana region during earlier times. Its recognition began to grow as a regional cultural identity marker, particularly during the Telangana movement for statehood, where it came to symbolise the unique traditions and heritage of the people. After the formation of Telangana state in 2014, the Government of Telangana officially declared Bathukamma as the **state festival**, giving it prominence in the state's cultural calendar. This declaration marked a revival of Telangana's indigenous traditions, enhancing regional pride and projecting Bathukamma as an emblem of unity, heritage, and women's central role in society.

Since then, Bathukamma has been celebrated on a large scale with government sponsorship, cultural events, and international showcases. Inspired by global carnivals, the state also envisioned projecting Bathukamma to attract tourism, while also highlighting it as an eco-friendly festival due to its reliance on biodegradable flowers instead of artificial materials. The recognition transformed Bathukamma from a rural custom into a global cultural representation of Telangana's distinct identity.

Importance of Bathukamma under the Nizams

During the Nizam era in Hyderabad, Bathukamma played an important role in cultural and religious life. Despite socio-political challenges, the festival continued to flourish as a symbol of community bonding and reverence for feminine power. Historical accounts suggest that the Nizams respected and promoted the celebration of Bathukamma, acknowledging its importance for social harmony. The **Bhagya Lakshmi temple near Charminar** became one of the prominent sites for Bathukamma festivities during this period, where diverse communities participated in the celebrations.

A well-known story highlights the significance of the festival under the Nizams: during the Musi river floods in Hyderabad, the Nizam reportedly prayed to Goddess Gauri through the Bathukamma ritual, after which the floodwaters subsided. This narrative reinforced the deep spiritual connection between the festival and the collective faith of the people.

Bathukamma under the Nizams thus symbolised Telangana's syncretic traditions, where folk spirituality and community participation coexisted with the political structures of the time. Women in particular safeguarded the cultural continuity of Bathukamma, ensuring that it remained a vital expression of local identity and social cohesion. From its agrarian roots to its recognition as Telangana's official state festival, Bathukamma has undergone a remarkable journey. Under the Nizams, it thrived as a respected cultural practice that nurtured unity and devotion. In modern times, its elevation as the state festival has transformed it into a global symbol of Telangana's cultural pride, feminine energy, ecological balance, and social solidarity.

2: Context and Purpose

Bathukamma is a nine-day floral festival celebrated predominantly by women in Telangana, coinciding with the Navratri season. The festival is deeply rooted in agrarian traditions and community life, where seasonal flowers are arranged in a conical structure and offered to Goddess Gauri.

The primary purpose of Bathukamma is to worship the goddess for health, prosperity, fertility, and the empowerment of feminine energy. Beyond its religious significance, the festival embodies ecological consciousness through the use of locally available, biodegradable flowers and fosters traditional health practices, as many of the flowers hold medicinal value.

The abstract of this study highlights how Bathukamma integrates multiple dimensions of spiritual devotion, ecological awareness, cultural health traditions, and recreational community participation, making it both a religious observance and a socio-cultural celebration.

3: Floral Significance

The flowers chosen for Bathukamma are not only valued for their aesthetic appeal but also for their **symbolic and medicinal properties**, reflecting a deep integration of cultural tradition with Ayurvedic health practices. Each flower carries both a spiritual meaning and therapeutic benefit, making the festival a celebration of ecology, health, and devotion.

- **Tangedu (*Cassia auriculata*):** Traditionally used as the base flower in Bathukamma arrangements, it is known in Ayurveda for its role in **controlling diabetes** and promoting skin health.
- **Gunugu (*Celosia argentea*):** Its vibrant flame-like appearance symbolizes energy and vitality; medicinally, it helps **regulate blood pressure** and supports digestive health.
- **Marigold (*Tagetes erecta*):** A common offering symbolizing auspiciousness, it is valued for **skin protection**, wound healing, and **pest control in crops**, showing its agricultural relevance.

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- **Lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*):** Sacred in Indian tradition, it represents purity and divine energy. Medicinally, lotus flowers and seeds **reduce body heat, alleviate constipation,** and calm the mind.
- **Globe Amaranth (*Gomphrena globosa* / Poka Banti):** Its enduring bright flowers symbolize immortality. In traditional medicine, it is used to **improve eye health** and treat respiratory ailments. Thus, the selection of Bathukamma flowers illustrates the **fusion of Ayurveda with cultural practices**, where devotion to the goddess is intertwined with ecological sustainability and community health awareness.

4: Ritual and Recreation

Floral and Ritual Dimensions of Bathukamma

Bathukamma, the vibrant floral festival of Telangana, is a unique celebration that harmoniously blends devotion, ecology, health, and recreation. Beyond its role as an offering to Goddess Gauri, the festival reflects the **intimate relationship between nature and culture**, where flowers are chosen not only for their beauty but also for their medicinal and symbolic values.

Floral Significance

The flowers used in Bathukamma are deeply tied to Ayurvedic traditions and embody both cultural symbolism and therapeutic benefits. For example, Tangedu (*Cassia auriculata*) is traditionally placed at the base of the arrangement; it is believed to aid in controlling diabetes and supporting skin health. Gunugu (*Celosia argentea*), with its flame-red color, symbolizes vitality and is known to help regulate blood pressure and digestion. Marigold (*Tagetes erecta*) signifies auspiciousness while also providing skin protection and pest control in agriculture. The Lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*), a sacred symbol of purity, helps reduce body heat, alleviate constipation, and calm the mind. Similarly, Globe Amaranth (*Gomphrena globosa*, locally called Poka Banti) symbolizes immortality and is traditionally used to improve eye health and treat respiratory conditions.

By selecting such flowers, Bathukamma demonstrates a fusion of Ayurveda with cultural practice, where offerings to the goddess also reflect awareness of community health and environmental sustainability.

Ritual and Recreation

Equally important is the festival's role in fostering social cohesion and cultural continuity. Women gather daily to craft Bathukammas, arranging the flowers in conical layers, and then come together in circles to sing folk songs that carry oral traditions, historical memory, and social values. Their rhythmic clapping, dancing, and singing transform devotion into joyous recreation, creating a sense of collective identity and harmony.

This participatory ritual emphasizes community bonding, as women of all ages join in, transcending barriers of caste, class, and locality. Through these practices, Bathukamma becomes not only a spiritual celebration but also a social festival of life, where ecological awareness, women's empowerment, and cultural pride converge.

5: Culmination and Ecological Wisdom

The festival of Bathukamma concludes with **Saddula Bathukamma**, the grand immersion of floral arrangements in local water bodies. This ritual carries profound ecological and cultural meanings. First, it is an act of **gratitude to nature**, where people honour the seasonal bounty provided by the monsoon. Second, it reflects **respect for the natural cycle**, as the flowers gathered from the wild or cultivated are returned to rivers, lakes, and ponds, symbolising renewal and continuity of life.

The use of **biodegradable materials such as seasonal flowers and leaves** ensures that the offerings decompose naturally, enriching aquatic ecosystems rather than polluting them. This practice stands in contrast to synthetic festival materials and highlights an indigenous form of **environmental sustainability**. By embedding ecological wisdom within ritual, Bathukamma teaches communities to live in harmony with nature while celebrating cultural identity. Thus, the immersion is not merely a religious conclusion but also a **lesson in ecological stewardship**, reminding participants that cultural traditions can play a vital role in protecting biodiversity and maintaining environmental balance.

6: Overall Significance

Bathukamma is more than a seasonal celebration; it is a holistic cultural tradition that integrates spirituality, health, identity, and ecology into a single festival. Spiritually, it honors Goddess Gauri, symbolising feminine energy, prosperity, and the continuity of life. From a health perspective, the flowers used in Bathukamma, such as *Cassia auriculata*, *Celosia*, *Tagetes*, and *Lotus*, possess medicinal and Ayurvedic properties, supporting practices like diabetes management, blood pressure regulation, skin healing, and overall wellness (Abhibus, 2024; Club Mahindra, 2023).

Culturally, Bathukamma preserves Telangana's identity through traditional folk songs, dances, and women-led rituals that strengthen social cohesion and transmit oral heritage across generations (Telangana Tourism, 2023). The festival is also an assertion of regional pride, especially since its recognition as the state festival of Telangana in 2014.

Ecologically, Bathukamma demonstrates environmental wisdom by using seasonal, biodegradable flowers and immersing them in water bodies, thereby reinforcing harmony with nature and sustainable living. This practice distinguishes the festival as a model for blending celebration with ecological responsibility.

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In essence, Bathukamma is not merely a floral festival but a **comprehensive way of life** that integrates devotion, traditional medicine, ecological consciousness, and cultural expression, making it one of the most significant celebrations in Telangana.

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