

TRIBAL TOURISM

Telangana is the only state in entire south India to have 9.34% of its population from tribal stock (census 2011). About 24 tribal communities are living in Adilabad, Warangal, Khammam, Mahabubnagar and Nalgonda District forests along the Krishna and Godavari river belts. Basically, tribes are symbiotic in nature. Their religious practices, social life and cultural values are unique and typical. Surprisingly, they are not just unique from non-tribal but also within themselves between one tribe to another tribe. Tribal dances, fairs, festivals etc. are very popular in Telangana and attract lakhs of visitors from tribal stock and Non-Tribal's too.

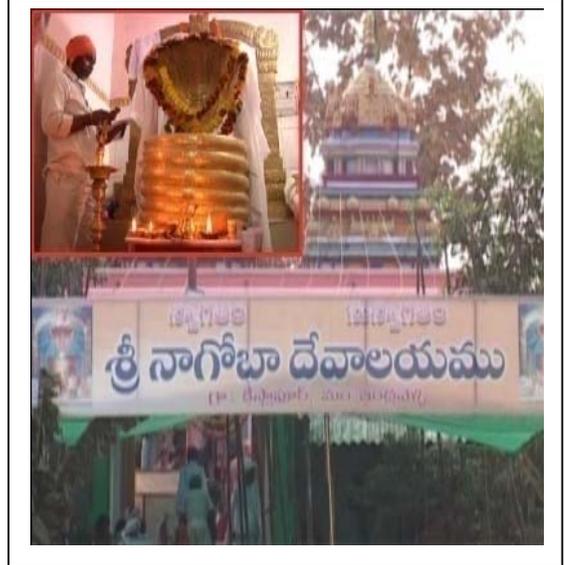
These tribal fairs and festivals have their own importance in Telangana Tourism. Following are the few famous tribal festivals of importance to tourism

1. Sammakka – Saralamma Jathara
2. Nagoba Jathara
3. Teej Festival
4. Salesvaram - Loddi fairs etc.

Apart from this, Telangana tourism has planned a tribal tourism circuit covering Laknavaram, Mulugu, Tadvai etc. areas in Warangal district. This is aimed at attracting tourists interested in experiencing the original flavours of tribal tourism. This is popular with foreign tourists who often travel to know more about local cultures. This circuit has been planned to develop under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme of Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

Nagoba Jathara in Adilabad District

The Nagoba Jathara is an important tribal religious cum cultural festival. It is the second biggest tribal jathara celebrated by Mesaram clan of Gond tribes. It is conducted every year during December – January months at Nagoba temple in Keslapur village of Adilabad district. This village is situated at a distance of about 20 Km from Utnoor which is the headquarters for ITDA. The jathara is usually a big draw among the Gond tribes locally as well as other tribes from Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Maharashtra, Chattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh. However, due to the media publicity, the non-tribal devotees visiting the Nagoba temple during Jatharaas increased significantly in the last 15 years.



Nagoba Temple

Since tribals are nature lovers it has been decided to conduct a plastic carrier bag free jathara for the first time. A decision has been taken to this effect by the Project Officer of ITDA, Utnoor by imposing a ban on using plastic in and around the temple premises during the Jathara.

As tribes have been educated on environmental issues on biodegradability of plastic and causing environmental pollution and health problems teak leaves are used as plates during their community feasts to avoid environmental pollution. This development is showing an indication of the tribal love and responsibility towards protection of nature and mother earth.

It was also observed that the tribes undertake the pilgrimages in groups, on bullock carts or on foot though the journey takes a week's time or month depending upon the distance. The tribes are also very astute in estimating the fodder quantum required for bullocks, food requirements for themselves for the duration of travel. Since centuries, they have been tracing the same routes through forests and habitations with good sources of water for halts minimizing the environmental impact. It is a source of considerable pride that even with meagre availability of facilities the jathara is organized successfully as an environmental friendly event.

Medaram (Sammakka – Saralamma) Jathara in Warangal District

The Medaram jathara is a synthesis of divinity and history. This is the biggest tribal festival in the country where nearly one crore people congregate from all over the country. This Jathara also called as Sammakka – Saralamma jathara is celebrated once in two years during January – February months in a small tribal village called Medaram in Warangal district. In view of its great religious significance the Government declared this festival as a state festival in the year 1996.



***Sammakka –Saralamma
Temple***

Medaram is a remote place in the Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary, a part of Dandakaranya, the largest surviving forest belt in the Deccan. It is believed that after Kumbha Mela, the Medaram jathara attracts the largest number of devotees in the country. Until 1998, the only way to reach Medaram was by a bullock cart. In 1998 the state government laid a motorable road. Now, the jathara is provided with many facilities and infrastructure. TSRTC provides bus facilities during the jathara period along with private vehicles for transportation of visiting public.

In addition to local tribals and non-tribals devotees many tribals from different states such as Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Maharashtra, Karnataka and parts of Jharkhand visit Medaram to celebrate the Jathara. However it is unfortunate that environmental conservation and community development have never been taken as the prerequisites for the betterment of tourism industry in this place especially through initiatives such as Plastic free Jathara, Forest protection, Water protection and Conservation, Public transport, Public sanitation etc.

Pollution from air, water, soil, noise and light is causing damage to environment in Medaram during jathara with huge environmental implications including severe and irreparable damage to flora and fauna. Noise pollution from cars, buses and trucks, vehicle horns and loudspeakers etc. are damaging the serene environment of Medaram at an alarming rate and are extremely harmful for the environment.

One of the leading priorities of government should be to manage and control the solid waste as well as prevention of the pollution of water, air and soil at Medaram during and after the jathara because of its growing popularity as a regular pilgrimage destination.