

Amrith Mahal Kaval Horata Samithi

Dodda Ullarthy, Challakere, Chitradurga District, Karnataka

Dodda Ullarthy Gowrammana Jathre

*Come participate in the colourful celebration of the villagers of
Dodda Ullarthy in Challakere, Chitradurga district*

*(Gowramma: deity for Shakti/female power) a fair to celebrate the Goddess of
Power from the 19th to the 21st of November 2013 at Dodda Ullarthy*

Background

The name Dodda Ullarthy comes from the longer Kannada word Urulu-arathi, which refers to an Indian ritual form of physically rolling around one's favoured deity as a means of prayer and sacred fulfillment of devotion. The dry grasslands' landscape contains another village called Chikka Ullarthy, with Dodda and Chikka signifying Big and Small forms of the ritual or significance of the ritual undertaken. Legends of the landscape are tied in with different myths and beliefs, as well as their complicated histories and fascinating memories. The central deity who stands guard of the people of Dhodda Ullarthy is Gowramma Devi (deity of Shakti, female power) and the village has a dedicated Gowarammana Gudi where she is resident.

Locals talk of the inception of Dodda Ullarthy from a mythical experience of one of their ancestors who was blessed by the visit of three Kanya Devatheyar (Virgin deities) emerging from a well and seeking a place for the establishment of virtue and goodness. Hence, Dhodda Ullarthy citizens, who had occupied an old town previously, moved their settlement to its current location several centuries ago. Ever since the villagers believe that they share the sacred space blessed by the Kanya Devatheyar and venerate the feminine fertilising energy by worshipping Shakti or Gowramma, who they believe is staying and breathing the same air they do.



Details of Celebrations: This year's annual celebration of festivities in honour of Gowramma commences on 17th November (Hunnime: full moon day) and reaches its crescendo on the 19th November evening in a cultural event and on the 20th November evening the clay idol of the Goddess Gowramma is immersed in the lake waters of the Amrit Mahal Kaval. Thousands of worshippers from surrounding villages gather at Dodda Ullarthy along with their livestock as a mark of reverence to the benevolence of the Goddess, and join her journey into the sacred waters. The nights reverberate with a diversity of folk songs, dance performances, processions and festivities right into wee hours of the morning. On 21st November, the villagers let their cattle to graze in the sacred Amrit Mahal Kavals and a huge bonfire is made late in the evening to revere and draw upon from the energy of Shakti, and beseech her to protect the Kavals, cattle, villagers and their livelihoods for posterity.

Throughout the festivities, a variety of local handicrafts and cultural artefacts are exhibited and sold by artisans, and the place is a buzzing hive of activity what with farmers markets, cattle fairs, hawkers selling pots, bamboo baskets, the famous Challakere Kambli (blankets oven from wool of the Challakere sheep), trinkets, vegetables, fruits, local sweets and a range of other stuff.

Why you should attend

The Challakere Amrit Mahal Kavals are the last remaining large and contiguous grassland habitats of the State of Karnataka. These kavals have been revered and protected by the local communities for generations. The Kavals constitute healthy habitats for the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard and the Lesser Florican, and the highly threatened Black Buck. The grasslands for hundreds of years have held rural life together by providing meat, milk, wool, manure, herbal medicines, water and a host of other eco system services. The symbiotic relationship with this habitat has provided agrarian and pastoral communities the possibility of living with dignity and celebrating a life rich in tradition and customary beliefs that have animistically revered the Kavals and its diversity. These very Kavals are now threatened with extinction as the government has proposed to locate defense, nuclear and various infrastructure facilities, without in any manner consulting communities or conforming to legal procedures.

It is time we joined hands with Challakere's pastoral and agrarian communities to celebrate their life rich in traditional knowledge, their content and self-governed livelihoods, and thus help save this wonderful bio cultural heritage.

How to Reach?

Dodda Ullartha village is about 15 kms from Challakere Town, Chitradurga District. It is approximately 204 kilometres north of Bangalore city on NH4. Driving directions: Bangalore-Nelamangala-Dobbaspete-Tumkur-Sira-Challakere

Trains: 1.Bangalore City-Hospet Passenger Sleeper/56909-Sleeper 2.Chikjajur-Hospet Passenger/56911 3.Guntakal Chikjajur Passenger/57452 4.Chikjajur Guntakal Passenger/57451 5.Hospet - Bangalore Passenger/56910-Sleeper

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