

Bonalu festival

November 5, 2022

In news— Rahul Gandhi during his Bharat Jodo Yatra, participated in Telangana's traditional Bonalu festival.

What is Bonalu festival?

- **Bonalu is a traditional Hindu festival centered on the Goddess Mahakali from Telangana.**
- **It is celebrated in the month of Ashada Masam, which is around July and/or August.**
- The festival is also considered a **thanksgiving to the Goddess for fulfillment of vows.**
- **The word Bonam is a contraction of the word Bhojanam, a Sanskrit loanword which means a meal or a feast in Telugu. It is an offering to the Mother Goddess.**
- Women prepare rice cooked with milk and jaggery in a new brass or earthen pot adorned with neem leaves, turmeric, vermilion and a lit lamp on top of the pot.
- Women carry the pots on their heads and make an offering of the Bonam along with turmeric-vermilion, bangles and sari to the Mother Goddess across the temples.
- **Bonalu involves the worship of Mother Goddess in regional forms like Maisamma, Pochamma, Yellamma, Peddamma, Dokkamma, Ankamma, Poleramma, Maremma, Nookamma.**
- Special "poojas" (**worship/ ceremonies**) are performed for **Yellamma (one of the many regional forms of Mahakali) on the first and last day** of the festival.
- **Potharaju, a key figure in the Bonalu festival, is the fearsome brother of the goddess Mahankali, who wields a whip to protect the goddess.**
- During Bonalu, women walk in procession to temples led by **'potharaju' who violently dances to loud drum beats** and whips the crowd with his ropes.
- Potharaju is considered to be the brother of seven

sister goddesses – different forms of the goddess
Mahankali.