

# ANGADIVELA–THATHAMANGALAM: HOW THE FESTIVAL SUSTAINS INTERSTATE CULTURAL NETWORKS BETWEEN KERALA AND TAMIL NADU

BY

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## Abstract

*The Angadivela festival celebrated at Thathamangalam in Kerala represents one of the most significant cultural events fostering interstate cultural interaction between Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Rooted in centuries-old traditions, the festival functions as a vibrant platform where religious beliefs, folk traditions, artistic performances, trade activities, and social relationships converge. Every year, thousands of devotees, artists, traders, and tourists from both states participate in the festival, strengthening historical ties and promoting cultural continuity across regional boundaries. The festival facilitates the transmission of shared customs, language, folklore, rituals, and indigenous knowledge while contributing significantly to the local economy through tourism, commerce, and employment generation. Beyond its religious significance, Angadivela has emerged as an important instrument for preserving intangible cultural heritage, encouraging interstate cooperation, and fostering communal harmony. This study examines the role of the Angadivela festival in sustaining interstate cultural networks by analysing its socio-cultural, economic, and heritage dimensions. The study also evaluates the factors contributing to the preservation of the festival and suggests policy measures for promoting sustainable cultural tourism and heritage conservation.*

**Keywords:** *angadivela festival, interstate cultural networks, cultural heritage, kerala, tamil nadu, folk traditions, cultural tourism.*

**JEL Classification:** *Z10, Z13, Z32*

## Introduction

Festivals constitute an integral component of India's rich cultural heritage, serving as important mechanisms for preserving traditions, strengthening social relationships, and promoting regional integration. In the multicultural landscape of South India, festivals often transcend political and administrative boundaries, creating enduring cultural networks among neighbouring states. The Angadivela festival celebrated at Thathamangalam in Palakkad district represents one such remarkable

example of interstate cultural interaction between Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Situated close to the Kerala–Tamil Nadu border, Thathamangalam has historically functioned as a centre of commercial exchange, religious pilgrimage, and cultural interaction. The Angadivela festival attracts thousands of devotees, traders, artisans, folk performers, and visitors from both states, thereby reinforcing centuries-old socio-cultural relationships. The participation of communities from different linguistic, religious, and occupational backgrounds reflects the inclusive nature of the festival

and its contribution to interstate cultural integration.

The festival is not merely a religious celebration but also a dynamic institution that facilitates the exchange of customs, performing arts, culinary traditions, handicrafts, folklore, and indigenous knowledge systems. Traditional art forms such as folk dances, temple music, percussion ensembles, and ritual performances continue to flourish through the annual congregation of artists and cultural practitioners. Simultaneously, local markets and commercial activities associated with the festival contribute significantly to regional economic development by generating employment and supporting small-scale enterprises.

In recent decades, rapid urbanisation, changing lifestyles, migration, and commercialization have posed challenges to the preservation of traditional festivals and their cultural significance. Nevertheless, Angadivela continues to maintain its relevance by adapting to contemporary social and economic conditions while preserving its historical identity. The festival demonstrates how shared cultural practices can strengthen interstate relationships despite linguistic and administrative differences.

Understanding the role of Angadivela in sustaining interstate cultural networks is essential for designing effective policies for heritage conservation, cultural tourism, and community participation. The study therefore seeks to examine the multidimensional contributions of the festival towards preserving cultural identity,

strengthening interstate social networks, and promoting sustainable regional development.

### Review of Literature

Several scholars have examined the role of festivals in preserving cultural heritage, promoting tourism, and strengthening social integration across regions.

Victor Turner (1969) argued that festivals create a sense of *communitas*, fostering collective identity and social cohesion among participants regardless of social or geographical differences. Ritual celebrations strengthen interpersonal relationships and reinforce shared cultural values.

Dean MacCannell (1976) highlighted that cultural festivals function as important tourist attractions by preserving authentic traditions while generating economic opportunities for local communities. Festivals also contribute to destination branding and heritage tourism.

Robert D. Putnam (2000) emphasized that community participation in collective cultural events enhances social capital by creating networks of trust, cooperation, and reciprocity. Festivals strengthen both bonding and bridging social capital among diverse communities.

Arjun Appadurai (1996) observed that cultural interactions across regions facilitate the movement of ideas, traditions, and identities, resulting in dynamic cultural exchanges that transcend political boundaries.

Recent studies on Kerala's temple festivals indicate that festivals contribute significantly to local economic development through tourism, handicrafts, transportation, hospitality, and informal employment. Researchers have also noted that border festivals play an important role in strengthening interstate cultural relationships by encouraging regular interaction among neighbouring communities.

Although previous studies have explored cultural tourism and temple festivals in Kerala, limited empirical research has specifically examined the Angadivela festival as a mechanism for sustaining interstate cultural networks between Kerala and Tamil Nadu. This study attempts to address this research gap by analysing the festival's contribution to cultural continuity, economic development, and regional integration.

## **Theoretical Review**

### **Social Capital Theory**

According to Robert D. Putnam (2000), social capital consists of networks, trust, and norms that facilitate collective action. The Angadivela festival strengthens interpersonal relationships among communities of Kerala and Tamil Nadu by encouraging repeated social interaction, cooperation, and mutual cultural participation.

### **Cultural Diffusion Theory**

Cultural Diffusion Theory explains how cultural practices, beliefs, rituals, languages, and artistic traditions spread through continuous interaction among different

societies. The Angadivela festival promotes the exchange of customs, performing arts, food traditions, and religious practices between neighbouring states, thereby sustaining interstate cultural continuity.

### **Network Theory**

Network Theory suggests that social relationships develop through repeated interactions among individuals and institutions. The annual celebration of Angadivela strengthens cross-border social networks involving devotees, traders, artists, temple authorities, and tourists, thereby reinforcing long-term interstate cultural connections.

### **Functionalist Theory**

The Functionalist perspective views festivals as social institutions that maintain social order, cultural continuity, and community integration. Angadivela performs multiple social functions, including preserving cultural heritage, promoting religious harmony, supporting local economies, and strengthening interstate identity through collective participation.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine the role of the Angadivela festival in sustaining interstate cultural networks between Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
2. To identify the socio-cultural factors contributing to interstate participation in the festival.
3. To analyse the relationship between festival participation and cultural heritage preservation.

4. To evaluate the economic and tourism benefits generated through the Angadivela festival.
5. To suggest policy measures for strengthening interstate cultural cooperation and promoting sustainable heritage tourism.

### Hypotheses of the Study

**H1:** Festival participation significantly influences the strengthening of interstate cultural networks between Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

**H2:** Cultural exchange activities during the Angadivela festival positively influence social cohesion among participants from both states.

**H3:** The Angadivela festival contributes significantly to the preservation and transmission of shared cultural heritage.

**H4:** Government and community support positively influence the sustainability of the Angadivela festival as an interstate cultural institution.

### Research Methodology

#### Data Sources

The study is based on both **primary and secondary data**.

#### Primary Data

Primary data were collected from **200 respondents**, including devotees, traders, artists, temple committee members, local residents, tourists, and cultural practitioners participating in the Angadivela festival. A

structured questionnaire was administered to respondents from both Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

#### Secondary Data

Secondary information was collected from:

- Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala
- Department of Archaeology and Museums, Kerala
- Kerala State Planning Board Reports
- Ministry of Culture, Government of India
- Research journals and books on festivals and cultural heritage
- Census of India
- Scholarly publications on interstate cultural relations
- Temple records and historical documents

#### Sampling Design

A **multistage sampling technique** was employed to select respondents from the festival area and neighbouring districts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

#### Sample Size

**200 respondents**

#### Study Area

The study was conducted at **Angadivela Festival, Thathamangalam, Palakkad District, Kerala**, covering participants from border regions of **Kerala and Tamil Nadu**,

where the festival serves as an important platform for interstate cultural interaction.

**Variables Used in the Study**

**Dependent Variable**

**ICN = Interstate Cultural Network Sustainability**

**Independent Variables**

- FP = Festival Participation
- CE = Cultural Exchange
- CH = Cultural Heritage Preservation
- ST = Cultural Tourism
- GS = Government Support
- CP = Community Participation

**Model Specification**

The econometric model is specified as:

$$ICN_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FP_i + \beta_2 CE_i + \beta_3 CH_i + \beta_4 ST_i + \beta_5 GS_i + \beta_6 CP_i + \varepsilon_i$$

**Where:**

- $\beta_0$  = Intercept
- $\beta_1 - \beta_6$  = Regression Coefficients

$\varepsilon$  = Error Term

**Variable Description**

**Variable Description**

<b>ICN</b>	Interstate Cultural Network Sustainability (Dependent Variable)
<b>FP</b>	Festival Participation
<b>CE</b>	Cultural Exchange

**Variable Description**

<b>CH</b>	Cultural Heritage Preservation
<b>ST</b>	Cultural Tourism
<b>GS</b>	Government Support
<b>CP</b>	Community Participation
<b><math>\beta_0</math></b>	Constant
<b><math>\beta_1 - \beta_6</math></b>	Regression Coefficients
<b><math>\varepsilon</math></b>	Error Term

**Profile of Respondents**

**Table 1. Age-wise Distribution of Respondents**

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Below 20 years</b>	20	10.0
<b>21-35 years</b>	82	41.0
<b>36-50 years</b>	61	30.5
<b>Above 50 years</b>	37	18.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Interpretation**

The majority of respondents (41%) belong to the 21-35 years age group, indicating that young adults actively participate in the Angadivela festival. Their involvement reflects the continuing relevance of the festival among younger generations and its role in sustaining interstate cultural interactions.

**Table 2. Educational Qualification of Respondents**

<b>Educational Qualification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Primary Education</b>	24	12.0
<b>Secondary Education</b>	48	24.0
<b>Graduate</b>	84	42.0
<b>Postgraduate and Above</b>	44	22.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Interpretation**

Graduates constitute the largest category (42%) of respondents, suggesting that participation in the Angadivela festival spans educated sections of society. This indicates growing awareness regarding the cultural, religious, and heritage significance of interstate festivals.

**Factors Responsible for Sustaining Interstate Cultural Networks****Historical and Religious Significance**

The centuries-old traditions associated with the Angadivela festival continue to attract devotees from Kerala and Tamil Nadu, strengthening interstate religious and cultural relationships.

**Cultural Exchange**

Traditional folk arts, temple rituals, music, dance performances, handicrafts, and culinary traditions facilitate continuous

cultural interaction between the neighbouring states.

**Community Participation**

The active involvement of temple committees, local residents, volunteers, artists, and devotees promotes social integration and strengthens interstate community networks.

**Cultural Tourism**

The festival attracts thousands of domestic visitors every year, generating employment opportunities and promoting the local economy through tourism-related activities.

**Government and Institutional Support**

Support from tourism departments, local self-government institutions, and cultural organisations contributes to the preservation and promotion of the festival.

**Economic Activities**

Temporary markets, handicraft exhibitions, food stalls, transportation services, and small businesses flourish during the festival, enhancing interstate commercial interactions.

**Descriptive Analysis****Table 3. Descriptive analysis for Angadivela festival**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
<b>Festival Participation</b>	4.28	0.76
<b>Cultural Exchange</b>	4.36	0.69

<b>Heritage Preservation</b>	4.12	0.83
<b>Government Support</b>	3.45	0.95
<b>Community Participation</b>	4.41	0.64
<b>Interstate Cultural Network</b>	4.48	0.58

The highest mean score is recorded for Interstate Cultural Network Sustainability (4.48), followed closely by Community Participation (4.41) and Cultural Exchange (4.36). These findings indicate that respondents perceive the Angadivela festival as an effective platform for preserving interstate cultural relationships and strengthening social cohesion between Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The comparatively lower mean score for Government Support (3.45) suggests that respondents believe greater institutional involvement is needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of the festival.

### Correlation Analysis

The analysis reveals:

1. A strong positive correlation between festival participation and interstate cultural network sustainability.
2. A positive relationship between cultural exchange activities and heritage preservation.
3. Community participation is positively associated with interstate social cohesion and cultural continuity.

4. Government support exhibits a moderate positive relationship with the long-term sustainability of the Angadivela festival.
5. Cultural tourism has a positive association with local economic development and the strengthening of interstate cultural interactions.

These relationships indicate that the Angadivela festival functions as a significant cultural institution that reinforces historical ties, promotes social integration, and sustains interstate cultural networks between Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

### Findings of the Study

1. The Angadivela festival serves as an important platform for strengthening interstate cultural networks between Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
2. Cultural exchange through folk arts, religious rituals, traditional music, and community participation significantly contributes to preserving shared cultural heritage.
3. Community participation is one of the strongest determinants of the festival's long-term sustainability.
4. The festival generates substantial economic opportunities for local traders, artisans, transport operators, and tourism-related enterprises.
5. The annual congregation of devotees from both states enhances interstate social relationships, religious harmony, and cultural understanding.

6. Government initiatives have contributed to festival management and tourism promotion; however, greater institutional support is required for comprehensive heritage conservation.
  7. Younger generations actively participate in the festival, ensuring the intergenerational transmission of traditions, customs, and indigenous cultural knowledge.
  8. Rapid urbanisation, commercialisation, and changing lifestyles pose emerging challenges to the preservation of the festival's traditional character.
6. Provide financial assistance and recognition to traditional artists, artisans, folk performers, and local craftsmen to preserve indigenous cultural practices.
  7. Organise interstate cultural exchange programmes, academic seminars, exhibitions, and workshops highlighting the historical significance of the Angadivela festival.
  8. Develop sustainable heritage management policies that balance cultural preservation, community participation, tourism development, and environmental conservation.

### Suggestions

1. Strengthen collaboration among the Departments of Tourism, Culture, Archaeology, and local self-government institutions for the comprehensive preservation of the Angadivela festival.
2. Promote the festival as an interstate cultural tourism destination through coordinated initiatives by the Governments of Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
3. Document and digitally archive the festival's rituals, folklore, traditional music, oral histories, and indigenous knowledge for future generations.
4. Encourage greater participation of youth through cultural education programmes, heritage clubs, and volunteer initiatives.
5. Improve transportation, sanitation, accommodation, and visitor facilities to enhance the festival experience while maintaining its cultural authenticity.

### Conclusion

The Angadivela festival at Thathamangalam represents far more than an annual religious celebration; it is a living cultural institution that has sustained interstate relationships between Kerala and Tamil Nadu for generations. Through the continuous participation of devotees, artists, traders, and local communities, the festival has successfully preserved shared traditions, strengthened social networks, and promoted cultural integration across state boundaries.

The study demonstrates that Angadivela contributes significantly to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage by facilitating the transmission of rituals, folk arts, music, dance, traditional crafts, and indigenous knowledge systems. Simultaneously, the festival stimulates regional economic development through tourism, commerce,

hospitality, and employment generation, thereby benefiting local communities on both sides of the interstate border.

Despite these achievements, increasing commercialization, urbanisation, changing lifestyles, and modernisation present considerable challenges to maintaining the festival's traditional identity. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts involving government agencies, temple authorities, cultural organisations, researchers, tourism departments, and local communities.

Strengthening heritage conservation initiatives, promoting sustainable cultural tourism, encouraging youth participation, and fostering interstate cultural cooperation will ensure that the Angadivela festival continues to function as an enduring symbol of shared history, religious harmony, and cultural unity. Effective implementation of these measures will not only preserve this unique cultural tradition but also reinforce interstate cultural networks and contribute significantly to the socio-cultural and economic development of the Kerala–Tamil Nadu border region.

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