

Pongal-Harvest Festival of Tamil Nadu

Pongal

- It's the harvest festival of Tamil Nadu. It is celebrated in different states in different names : Makar Sankranti in North India, Lohri in Punjab and Bihu in Assam.
- It is a four-day festival which according to the Tamil calendar is celebrated in Thai month(January -February), usually from 14 January to 17 January.
- This is the time when crops like rice, sugarcane, turmeric etc.. Are harvested.
- Meaning of word Pongal is “overflowing” or “to boil” signifying abundance and prosperity.
- This festival is celebrated as a thanksgiving ceremony for the year's harvest.
- Pongal is also the name of a dish(shown below) prepared during this festival.



First day- Bogi

- It's celebrated on the eve of Pongal in honor of Lord Indra (Lord of clouds).
- This is the day when houses are cleaned, decorated and useless items of the household are put into a bonfire made of cow dung cakes and wood.
- This also symbolizes burning of the society from bad and the evil.
- Girls dance around the bonfire, singing songs in praise of the Gods, the spring and the harvest.



Burning old things



Bonfire

Second Day-Thai Pongal

- This is the most important day of the festival ,celebrated on the first day of the Tamil calendar month Thai. It is also known as Surya Pongal.
- The festival marks the end of winter solstice, and the start of the sun's six-month-long journey northwards (the Uttaraayanam) when the sun enters the zodiac *Makara* (Capricorn)
- During the festival, milk is cooked in a pot. When it starts to bubble and overflows out of the vessel, freshly harvested rice grains and cane sugar jiggery are added to the pot. When the dish begins to boil and overflow, other participants blow a conch called the *sanggu* and shout "Pongalo Pongal!". They also recite "Thai Pirandhal Vazhi Pirakkum" ("the commencement of Thai paves the way for new opportunities"). This is repeated frequently during the Pongal festival.
- The Pongal is then served to everyone in the house along with savories and sweets such as vadai, murukku, paayasam.



Overflowing pot



conch

- People decorate their home with banana and mango leaves . Kolams/rangolis are drawn on doorsteps. Kolam is an auspicious design which is traditionally traced in rice powder mixed with colors.
- People wear new clothes(traditional dresses) on this day.



Kolam/ Rangoli



Pongal



Traditional dresses

Third Day- Mattu Pongal

- Third day is known as Mattu Pongal.
- Its celebrated by villagers to thank the cows for their favor in farming.
- Lord Shiva had once sent his bull, **Basava**, to earth with a message for the mortals, asking them to have an oil massage and bath daily, and to eat once a month. Basava, however, mistakenly announced Shiva has asked people to eat daily and have an oil bath once a month. Enraged, Shiva banished Basava to the earth forever, cursing he would have to plough the fields to help people produce more food. Hence, the association of this day to cattle.
- Cows are decorated with manjalthanni (turmeric water) and oil. Applied kungumam (kumkum) to their foreheads, painted their horns and fed them a mixture of venn pongal, jaggery, honey, banana and other fruits.
- Features of the day include adventurous games such as the Jallikkattu or bull taming (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=haLimnzibxY>).



Decorated Cow



Jallikkattu

Fourth Day- Kaanum Pongal

- It marks the end of Pongal festivities for the year.
- Kaanum in Tamil means “to visit”.
- This day is for family reunions.
- *Kanu Pidi* is a tradition observed by Brahmin ladies (women and young girls). They place a leaf of turmeric plant outside their home, and feed the leftover pongal dish from Thai Pongal and colored food (lemon rice, coconut rice, tamarind rice etc....) to the birds, particularly crow. They pray for their brothers' well being, Brothers pay special tribute to their married sisters by giving gifts as affirmation of their filial love. Landlords present gifts of food, clothes and money to their tenants.
- Villagers visit relatives and friends, while in the cities people flock to beaches and theme parks with their families.



View of a beach on Kaanum Pongal



Kanu Pidi

Harvest Festival

- Harvesting is an important activity in India.
- It's the time when a crop is sown by the farmers and is ready for reaping.
- Harvesting is a time of rejoice and celebrations for people. Each place in India has its own festival celebrating this time.



Makar Sankranti

- It's the harvest festival celebrated in North India.
- Makar Sankranti marks the transition of the Sun into the zodiac sign of Makara rashi (Capricorn) on its celestial path.
- It is usually celebrated on January 14th to honor the god of the sun, Surya.
- Kite flying and Kumbha Mela are the major events.
- In Gujarat, this festival is known as Uttarayana.



Kumbha Mela



Kite flying

Lohri

- Harvest festival of Punjab.
- It marks the end of the chilly winter and welcomes the arrival of spring and New year. Lohri is the longest night of the year.
- Celebrated on January 13th every year.
- In the morning, children go from door to door singing songs in praise of Dulha Bhatti, a Punjabi version of Robin Hood who robbed from the rich and helped the poor.
- In the evening, people gather around bonfires, throw sweets, puffed rice and popcorn into the flames sing popular folk songs and exchange greetings. This is symbolic of the homage to the Sun God for bringing in warmth.



Dance performance



Throwing puffed rice into flames

Bihu

- Bihu is the harvest festival of Assam.
- It refers to a set of three different festivals: Rongali or Bohag Bihu observed in April, Kongali or Kati Bihu observed in October, and Bhogali or Magh Bihu observed in January.
- The Rongali Bihu is the most important of the three celebrating the Assamese new year and the spring festival.
- The Kongali Bihu or the Kati Bihu is the sombre, thrifty one reflecting a season of short supplies and is an animistic festival.
- The Bhogali Bihu or the Magh Bihu is the one that is all about food.
- Special Bihu dances are performed across the state.



Bihu dance

