

Pongal

This is a season of festivities and this year 15th January marked the celebration of 4 festivals across India Viz Lohri, Makarsankranti, Magh Bihu and Pongal.

Since I am a TamiBram I am going to speak about Pongal from what I have heard from my grandparents . Pongal is one of the most popular harvest festivals of South India, mainly of Tamil Nadu. This four day long festival of Tamil Nadu is celebrated for showing gratitude to the nature. The literal meaning of Pongal is "spilling over" and it had been named so, because of the tradition of boiling rice in a pot till it starts overflowing.

The festival is spread over four days and is the most important and most fervently-celebrated harvest festival of South India especially in Tamil Nadu.

First day - Bhogi Pongal: On the first day it is customary to burn or destroy old clothes into a bonfire symbolizing burning out the old self, past sins, beliefs, negativity buying new clothes signifying prosperity and making space for New clothes, fresh harvest. The custom is a symbolic of New .

Second day – Thai Pongal: is dedicated to the worship of Surya, the Sun God. Here the new harvested rice is cooked in two different forms. One is a sweet Pongal and the other is a little salty Pongal. This serves as a full meal as it also has a desert in the form of sweet pongal.

Third day – Mattu Pongal : witnesses prayers being offered to bulls, cows and other farm animals that are being used in agriculture. Cattle are bathed, their horns polished and painted in bright colors, and garlands of flowers placed around their necks. The striking feature of Maatu Pongal is a festival named Jallikattu or taming the wild bull which makes it a little more entertaining.

Fourth Day – Kaanum Pongal: Family members visit each other exchanging gifts. In certain places the Pongal is offered to the Gods is also served to the crows and the sparrows signifying the bounteous living of loved ones. It is also believed that it is a way of thanking the sparrows for not destroying the harvest and sparing the crops. Here the fr-enemies are also served with love and shows co-existence.

This is how I have grown up celebrating Pongal. **If any of you have some other traditions of celebrating Pongal please do share them as it would be interesting to know.**

V S Parthasarathy

18th January, 2019

