Pongal

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Art & Culture*

Why in news?

The Social Justice Monitoring Committee of the Tamil Nadu government made a strong case for including Pongal in the list of festivals recognised by UNESCO.

- Pongal is a ***harvest festival*** celebrated by the ***Tamil community*** in the state of Tamil Nadu.
- It is a celebration to thank the Sun, Mother Nature and the various farm animals that help contribute to a bountiful harvest.
- **Meaning –** The word Pongal comes from pongu ("to boil over"), symbolising prosperity.
- **Dates –** It is celebrated annually from 13 to 16 January, aligning with the ***Sun's northward journey (Uttarayan)***.
- **4 Days of Celebration -**

Name	Significance	Tradition
Bhogi Pongal	Old materials discarded, new items acquired	Symbolises renewal and fresh beginnings
Thai / Surya Pongal	Worship of the Sun God	Kolams (decorative patterns) are drawn at entrances. Marks the start of the Tamil month Thai (auspicious). Sweet Pongal dish prepared with rice, milk, and jaggery.
Mattu Pongal	Worship of cattle for their role in farming.	Cattle decorated with polished horns, garlands, beads, and bells. Symbol of gratitude for agricultural work.
Kaanum Pongal	Families gather for grand meals.	**Folk dances -** Mayilattam, Kolattam. **Games -** Jallikattu, Vazhukku Maram, Mallar Kambam, Uri Adithal, Kabaddi. **Pongal Mela -** fairs with sarees, jewellery, handicrafts, pottery

- It is also celebrated among the ***Tamil diaspora*** across the world, especially in Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore.
- **Celebrations in other states** – Thai Pongal coincides with harvest festivals celebrated across various states under different names, such as
    - **Makar Sankranti** - Andhra Pradesh & Telangana,

    - **Lohri –** Punjab,
    - **Sankranti** - Karnataka, and
    - **Magh Bihu** - Assam, etc.
- **Cultural Significance** – It is a deeply cultural event, rooted in agriculture, but also emphasises community, familial bonds, and gratitude for nature's bounty.

Various festivals of India recognised by UNESCO *– Ramman (2009), religious festival and ritual theatre of the Garhwal Himalayas; Kumbh Mela (2017); Durga Puja (2021); Deepavali (2025).*

References

1. The Hindu | Book on fairs & festivals of Tamil Nadu
2. TN Tourism | Pongal
3. Indian Heritage Centre | Pongal

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering