

Pongal Special!



After noticing the picture, you might have figured out that the pictures correspond to various events related to the pongal, which is called as Sankranti in Andhra Pradesh.

Sankranti festival reminds us about the cock fighting, bonfire, Bommala Koluvu (displaying the characters from Ithihaas and puraanas), Flying kites, Haridaas, Rangoli decorated by Gobbemmas (made of cow dung), variety of folk artists, puppet shows etc. There is meaning for these customs and

they help each individual to evolve mentally and spiritually. For example folk artists (Chekka Bhajana artists, Haridaasu etc.) sing songs based on Vishnu, his devotees, Ramayan and Bhagawat stories. While singing the artists move their steps rhythmically and in coordination. Usually the group consists of Six or more artists. One of the artists act as leader and the rest follow the leader. Just by listening those songs we can acquire knowledge about our puraanas, which help us live peaceful and contended life. There is a belief that 'the donor by giving a fist full of grains can be relieved from most of the past karmas'. During this festival, the family consisting of sons, daughters, mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, grand-sons, grand-daughters and other significant members of family gathers and share the joy. This gathering reminds the power of staying together and the saying 'United we stand and shine'.

During Sankranti people offer clothes, food for under privileged families in the name of their ancestors. In fact this festival is celebrated after harvesting season and grains are distributed to people in need paying respects to those who helped directly or indirectly.

This festival is like 'Thanks giving' in United states of America. The basic idea is to show gratitude towards them who directly or indirectly sacrifices their resources. That is why people offer 'Pongal', a south Indian dish made of different types of grains, to Sun god for giving light and heat. The first day of festival is Bhogi. At dawn people light a bonfire with wooden logs, other solid-fuels and unused furniture. In many families, infants and children (usually less than 3 years old) are showered with fruit (Regu pandlu) to protect them from evil eye. Second day is Makara Sankranti (Pedda Panduga), on which the ancestors are remembered for their sacrifice and giving us knowledge. Third day is called Kanuma on which the cattle is treated with respect and farmers decorate them with turmeric and Kumkum. Fourth day is Mukkanuma where the instruments used for farming are decorated and worshipped.

Let us meet again in April issue. Till then good bye!