

## Importance of Pongal.



Seeing the cover picture, you might have gone into vacation mood. Am I right? But, some thing special about the picture. Sun rise takes place everyday, but Sankranti day (January 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup>) the sun rise is different, where Sun's direction is changed. Sankranti (in Andhra Pradesh), also known as Pongal (in Tamilnadu), Khichiri (in Uttar Pradesh), Maghi (in Punjab), Sakarat (in Madhya Pradesh), Bhogali Bihu (in Assam) is a festival celebrated on the day when Sun enters into Capricorn from Sagittarius, during the winter solstice in the northern hemisphere. Six months starting from this date is called 'Uttarayana' and the following six months is called 'Dakshinayana'. Uttarayana is believed to be the day time for 'Devas' and thus it is auspicious time.

Most of the places it is celebrated as harvest festival. Fresh crop arrives home, the grains & pulses are boiled in milk, butter is added and offered to Sun. Prayers are offered to Sun god requesting him to bless knowledge and wisdom. Remembering ancestors, Annadana (food donation) is done on this day. Seeking blessings from elders is very common. Donations are given generously to needy people. Usually elder family members bless the youngsters and provide gifts.

There is another belief from Mahabharata, Bheesmacharya (having boon of Icchamrityu) stayed on 'bed of arrows' awaiting this auspicious day and left his body during 'Uttarayana'. Puranas say that Sun visits the house of his son Shani, who is the master of Capricorn. Sun and Shani do not get along nicely, but Sun meets his son on this day, which denotes the importance of father-son relation..

All of us know Ocean is made of so many water droplets. Similarly if everyone contributes a penny from their income and spends it for the welfare of less privileged, the world will be different. But, it will not happen overnight. A thousand mile walk also begins with a single step. So let us take that first step. Let us make this as our resolution for this new year 2009.

Let us all wish for a peaceful world! Let us all work for a better world where every one gets enough Food, Clothes and Shelter. Let us become friends of our society, Sanghamitra. Wishing you all a happy new year.

- SuSri.