

Pongal Festival in the Mannan Community

Pongal is one of the major festivals celebrated by the Mannan community, alongside Kalayoottu. The festival involves prayers and offerings to the deities of each region of the community settlements, collectively referred to as the 42 adiyar. Pongal is observed once a year at designated temples across the settlements, with dates scheduled by community elders in consultation with the families responsible for these temples.

On the eve of Pongal, community members gather at the local deity temple to prepare for the festival. This includes cleaning the temple premises and arranging the deities. Mannan Koothu is performed overnight to entertain and please both the gathered community and the deities, in a practice known as aattupattu visheshangal.

On the day of Pongal, prayers are offered for each family sub-clan in a ceremony called Kooshaduka to ensure good fortune for the year ahead. This involves the act of thadi kuthuka, where leaves of the koova plant are arranged to represent the 42 adiyar and their clan deities, and payasam prepared in a Pongal pot is placed on these leaves.

During the ceremony, community leaders such as the King (Rajamannan) call out each clan deity, offering prayers and spells in the Mannan language. Other leaders, including the Pullavasi, Vaathi, and Kaanikkar, assist in facilitating the rituals.

At the conclusion of the Kooshaduka, families observe rituals according to their mura system. Designated families sprinkle water on one another in a symbolic gesture tied to their clan relationships, marking the end of the festival. For example, during prayers for the Oorukaran sub-clan, designated families of Rajakkadan Ailavan sprinkle water on them. These rituals are celebratory, filled with laughter and communal joy.

The festival concludes as community members return to their respective hamlets, vowing to reconvene the following year, maintaining a cycle of tradition, devotion, and togetherness.

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