

# Tamil New Year

# TAMIL NEW YEAR- PUTHANDU

- Tamil Puthandu ( தமிழ்புத்தாண்டு ), also known as Puthuvarsham or Chithirai Vishu or Tamil New Year or varudapirappu.
- It is the first day of year on the Tamil Calendar.
- It is the first day of the Tamil month Chithirai ( mid-April to mid-May ).
- It usually falls around April 14 on Gregorian calendar.
- This day is celebrated with families and friends.
- Puthandu is also celebrated by Tamilians outside Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, such as in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore and Mauritius.



# SIGNIFICANCE

- The Tamil New Year follows the spring equinox.
- This day symbolises the first day of the traditional Tamil calendar.
- It is a public holiday in both Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka.





# HISTORY

- There are several indications in early Tamil literature for Tamil New Year.
- Nakkirar (Sangam period author of the “Nedunalvaadai”) wrote in the third century that the Sun transits from Mesha Raasi (Aries zodiac) through the eleven successive signs of the zodiac.
- Kudalur Kizhaar in the third century refers to Mesha Raasi / Chithirai as the commencement of the year in the Puranananur (Tamil poetic work in the Ettuthokai).
- The Tolkaapiyam (the oldest surviving Tamil grammar that divides the year into six seasons) marks Chithirai as the start of summer.
- The 8th century Silappadikaaram mentions the 12 Raasis or zodiac signs starting with Mesha/Chithirai.
- Adiyarkunalaar, an early medieval commentator or Urai-asiriyar mentions the twelve months of the Tamil calendar with particular reference to Chithirai.



# PRACTICES

- On the eve of Puthandu, a tray is arranged with three fruits ( mango, banana and jack fruit ) , betel leaves and arecanut, gold / silver jewelry, coins / money, flowers and a mirror. This is called “Kanni” meaning auspicious sight. This is auspicious as the first sight upon waking up on the new year day.
- The home corridors will be decorated with patterns called Kolams. These are drawn with coloured rice powder.
- A lamp called “kuthuvilaku” is placed in the centre of the Kolam. This is done to eliminate darkness.





- In Madurai (temple city in Tamil Nadu), the Chithirai Thiruvizha is celebrated in the Meenakshi Temple. An exhibition, called Chithirai Porutkaatchi, is conducted.
- On the day of Tamil New Year, chariot festival is held at Tiruvidaimarudur near Kumbakonam. Festivals are also held at Tiruchirappalli, Kanchipuram and many other places.



Chithirai  
Porutkaatchi.



Chithirai Porutkaatchi.



Chariot festival





- People wear new clothes on this day.





- People prepare special vegetarian dishes on this day. A special dish called Mangai-pachadi (a curry made of raw mango) is prepared.



Mangai-pachadi



Vadai



- Sri Lankan Tamils mark this day with the first financial transaction known as the 'Kai-vishesham'. This a practice where the youngsters go to elders pay their respect, and elders giving their blessings and gift pocket money to them.
- On this day first ploughing of the ground is done to prepare for the new agricultural cycle. This practice is known as 'arpudu'.
- Youth play games such as 'por-thenkai' meaning coconut war and cart races in villages through the Tamil north and east of the island .
- The festive Puthandu season in April is a time for family visits and the renewal of filial bonds.



Kai-vishesham



Cart race



# Tamil New Year Greetings

- In case you want to wish your friends from Tamil Nadu, here is what you could say in Tamil- "Iniya puthaṇḍu nalvalthukka!" or "Puthandu valthukka!" which means "Happy New Year".





Wishing you  
A New Year...  
Happy and bright...  
With plenty of joy...

**PUTHANDU  
VAZTHUKAL !**

