

# Similarities Between the Indian and Japanese Harvest Festivals (Pongal and Niinamesai)

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## 1. Introduction

Festivals are an integral part of a culture. In all the religions, countries, regions, languages of people, communities and so on festivals play a crucial role in the culture. The festivals held in each country represent the culture, rituals, and customs in that country, community, religion. These festivals have been held for various religious reasons since ancient times and can be said to be an important part of the culture. By looking at the different festivals, we understand the reasons or occasions because of which these are celebrated. In the category of festivals there are sub categories like festivals of seasons, festivals of new year, festivals of various gods, festivals relating to abundance and wealth, festivals of memories of past occasions, national festivals, regional festivals, children's festivals, festivals of colours, festivals of animals, festivals of harvest. If two countries Japan and India very different in area, population are taken under consideration, there are some linkage in the cultures like number of people following Buddhism which was spread all over Japan through India, some gods and deities being very similar and even some festivals are similar in India and Japan. There are some important seasonal festivals, animal festivals, and festivals related to various deities that are held in India and Japan to preserve such cultures. Agriculture is given a lot of importance in Japan and India and the reasons respectively are Japan is an island country and rich in atmosphere suitable for agriculture and India is an agriculture dependent country with the need for agriculture for the huge population. In both India and Japan, agriculture provides the people with their daily food, and since ancient times agriculture has been so important it can be seen through the festivals that are there related to harvest and agriculture. If we talk about the harvest festivals in India, there are harvest festivals different in different states like makarsankranti in Maharashtra, Lohri in Punjab, in Tamil Nādu state there is a famous harvest festival called Pongal and so on. If we consider the harvest festivals in Japan, even in Japan there is a harvest festival called Niinamesai. And these festivals are an important part of the culture of both the countries. Since, festivals are crucial aspects a country's culture; In order to consider cultural similarities between India and Japan, it is most useful to look if there are any similarities in the festivals related to the harvest festivals of the two countries India and Japan. For this purpose, let's consider the two important harvest festivals that are celebrated in India and Japan since years. I will consider Pongal festival from Tamil nadu India and Niinamesai a harvest festival in Japan. Considering these two festivals as the focus of this research, like to examine whether there are similarities between the harvest festival Pongal and Niinamesai in Tamilnadu state India and Japan.

## 2. Documents Relevant

There are few research papers that have said that some festivals are very similar in the reasons behind them being celebrated and the way they are celebrated.

These studies are mentioned further.

Study by Dr.Tripathi (2013) is a study that raises cultural similarities between India and Japan. Tripathi (2013) cites cultural similarities between India and Japan, such as the family system, bows, and fireworks, and said that Hinamatsuri and Nagapanchami festivals are similar in terms of festivals as well.

Another study, Kumaran (1998) shows that if two regions have linguistic commonalities, they also have cultural commonalities. It is stated how the celebrations of Pongal and Japanese New Year are similar. There are also various Pongal customs, such as cooking food from the first harvest of the year and serving it to neighbors, dancing and singing that are similar to the customs in the celebrations of Japanese New Year.

Pongal has another important role as a harvest festival. Selvaraj (2021) is a study that compares Pongal as a harvest festival with the harvest festivals in other countries. According to this study, he studied the similarities between India and South Korea from the traditional trade relationship between India and South Korea. and Pongal festival have in common in terms of customs and food.

### 3. Method used for the observation

To see if these festivals are similar, we are considering harvest festivals. However even if the festivals are harvest festivals, since they are from two different countries, the reasons why people are celebrated and the ways in which they are celebrated do not necessarily have to be similar. In this study, in order to examine whether there are similarities between Pongal and Niinamesai, the further points have to be considered. To see if these two harvest festivals were similar or not,

- (1) Collected materials and documents that explain the Pongal festival in Tamil State in detail.
- (2) We collected materials related to the Niiname Festival on the Internet.
- (3) I read, compared, and analyzed the materials on the harvest festivals of Pongal and Niinamesai.

### 4. Pongal and Niinamesai Festival in Brief

#### 4.1 Pongal

Pongal is a harvest and New Year festival in Tamil, India, which takes place every year for four days. The festival starts from the 14th November. In India, where agriculture is thriving, Pongal has been practiced for a long time. The purpose of Pongal is to give thanks and celebrate the work of the gods, farm animals, climate and people to ensure a good harvest.

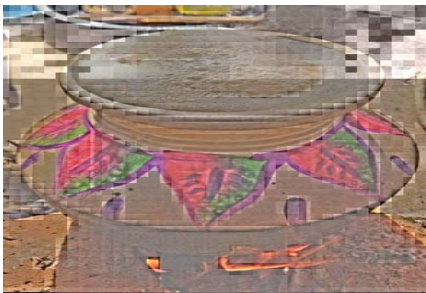


Fig. 3 Meal for Kannum Pongal

All four days of Pongal have special ceremonies. The first day is the day of the Indian god Indra, this day is referred to as Bhogi Pongal. Indra is believed to be the rain god. Thanks to the lord

Indra because rain plays a very important role for the harvest and specially in harvesting rice. For Bhogi Pongal, people clean their house, make a beautiful Rangoli and light a bonfire. For the actual celebration, people then gather around the bonfire to sing and dance once the pongal is offered to the lords.

The second day is Surya Pongal. Surya Pongal is a day to give thanks to the Lord Surya, the Sun God. There is a custom in Surya Pongal to prepare a special sweet dish called pongal from the first harvested rice, milk and sugar (Fig. 1) and to eat it with the whole family after offering it to Lord Surya.

The third day is said to be Mattu Pongal. Mattu Pongal is the day dedicated to the cattles who are such an important part of our environment and help us in the harvest of various crops throughout the year. On Mattu Pongal, Giving pongal to cows and decorating them with flowers (Fig.2) and appreciating animals is done.

The last day is called Kannum Pongal, the day when we meet with relatives and family members, give presents, and have lunch together (Fig. 3). Kannum Pongal also has a custom where women pray for the health and longevity of their brothers and sisters.

#### 4.2 Niinamesai

Niinamesai is a harvest festival in Japan, held on November 23rd every year. The purpose of celebrating Niinamesai is to thank God and nature for a good harvest.

Niinamesai is held at the Imperial Palace, Ise Jingu Shrine, and Izumo Taisha Shrine, where the emperor offers the year's first harvest of rice to the gods to express gratitude and gratitude for the year and the new year. On the day of the Niinamesai, a bonfire is lit in the shrine and people gather at the shrine, but only the emperor can offer the harvest to the gods.

Not only is rice the most important food, but it has special importance because it is believed that Amaterasu Omikami is present in every grain of rice. In recent years, it is also called Labor Thanksgiving Day.

### 5. Similarities between Pongal and Niinamesai and their Analysis

Table 1. Similarities between Pongal and Niinamesai

Pongal	Niinamesai
- Pongal takes place in November.	- Niinamesai is held in November.
- Celebrated as thanksgiving to God at the Harvest Festival	- Give thanks to the God at this harvest festival.
- Bonfire is kept up.	- Bonfire called Ohtaki is lit up.
- Specific climate conditions are necessary for the rice here.	- Here as well the climate for harvest is very crucial.
- Rice is the main food, and dishes made from rice harvested for the first time are offered to the gods.	- Rice has a special importance and the first harvested rice is offered to the gods by the emperor.
- Use rice harvested for the first time in the year.	- Offering the first harvested rice of the year to the gods.
- Give thanks for the year's good enough harvest and pray for the coming year.	- Say thanks for the good harvest of the year and pray for the coming year.

- Give thanks to the gods of the sun and rain, especially needed for agriculture, and cows.	- Thanks especially to the gods of nature.
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Table 1. shows the similarities between Pongal and Niinamesai. An analysis of the similarities follows.

o Bonfires are believed to be lit during religious ceremonies in both India and Japan, as fire is considered sacred.

o The reason why rice is particularly important is that both Tamil State in India and Japan have suitable climates for rice harvesting, and it seems that a large amount of rice is harvested.

o In both Pongal and Niinamesai, the first harvested rice is first offered to the gods. This is thought to show gratitude to God and respect for God.

o People's livelihoods are greatly influenced by food and harvests, so there are festivals to give thanks to gods, cows and the weather.

## 6. Conclusion

In this study, we compared Pongal and Niinamesai and found similarities. The similarities reflect the respect that Indian and Japanese people have for gods, the importance of animals, and the gratitude they have for both gods and animals. It is also interesting to note that both India and Japan place special importance on rice, and that different countries have customs to celebrate agriculture and the harvest, not just traditional or religious festivals.

Until now, there has been a perception of similarities between Nagapanchami and Hina matsuri, but from the results of this research, it may be possible to say that Pongal and Niinamematsuri are also similar. It also became clear that India and Japan have cultural commonalities through festivals.

It is natural that festivals in India and Japan differ from each other due to differences in religious beliefs and traditional ways of celebrating the two countries. deepening, the relationship between the two countries will become stronger and stronger.

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