

Tamil New Year (Puthandu) - 14th April 2026



Tamil new year decorations (kolam) for Puthandu

The Tamil New Year, Varsha Pirappu or Puthandu, is observed on the first day of Tamil month Chithirai, the first month as per traditional Tamil Calendar. Chitirai is an auspicious day for Tamil speaking people in India (Tamil Nadu) and across the world, especially in Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia and South Africa. In 2026, the date of Varsha Pirappu or Tamil New Year is April 14th.

On this day, Tamil people greet each other by saying "Puthāṇḍu vāazhthugal!" or "Ṇiya puthaandu nalvāazhthugal!", which is equivalent to "Happy new year". The day is observed as a family time. Households clean up the house, prepare a tray with fruits, flowers and auspicious items, light up the family Puja altar and visit their local temples. People wear new clothes and children go to elders to pay their respects and seek their blessings, then the family sits down to a vegetarian feast.

Origin and significance

The Tamil New Year follows the spring equinox and generally falls on 14th April of the Gregorian year. The day celebrates the first day of the traditional Tamil calendar and is a public holiday in both Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. There are several references in early Tamil literature to the April new year. Nakkirar, Sangam period author of the *Neṭunalvāṭai*, wrote that the sun travels from Mesha/Chitterai through 11 successive signs of the zodiac. The *Tolkaapiyam* is the oldest surviving Tamil grammar that divides the year into six seasons where Chitterai marks the start of the *lavenil* season or summer.

To Begin

House is thoroughly cleaned and doors and windows are decorated with festoons - especially leaves of mango.

After bathing, the eldest female member in the family starts the Puja arrangement.

Kolam or Rangoli is drawn; the Vilakku kolam is the preferred one during the New Year.

If new clothes are distributed to family members, then it is arranged in front of the house deity.

Neem leaf Pachadi is prepared. It is basically a mixture of jaggery, chillies, salt, neem leaf or flowers and tamarind. It symbolizes that life is a mixture of sweet and sour.

In places where Kanni is viewed, an elderly member guides others to the view the arrangement of auspicious things. This arrangement is usually done on the previous night.

In other places, all members wake up and take bath and receive new clothes.

The list of what to do on Tamil New Year day varies from region to region and from community to community.

Things Needed

New clothes for the family

New Year Panchangam (calender)

Neem/ Syringaberry leaves and Neem/ Syringaberry flowers

Usual fruits used for Pujas viz, bananas and coconut

Usual Flowers viz, marigold, etc

For Kanni - viewing of auspicious things in the morning of New Year - Gold, silver, jewelry, mirror, new clothes, new calendar, bananas, areca (betel) nut, betel leaves, raw rice, coconuts, fruits, vegetables and other newly harvested farm products.

The Puja

The most important puja on the day is the Panchanga Puja. Some people also perform the Navagraha Pooja.

For Panchanga Puja, the latest Panchangam is placed in front of the deity in the Puja room.

It is then anointed with chandan (sandalwood paste), kumkum and turmeric paste.

Some flowers are placed on the panchanga.

A simple puja and aarati is performed for the deity.

The neem leaf pachadi is eaten on empty stomach.

People then wish friends and relatives - puthandu vazhthugal.

After the Pooja, the Panchangam is read especially the predictions for the next year. People who do not perform the Panchangam puja perform

a simple puja. Some prefer to listen to the Panchanga padanam held in temples.

Celebration

On the eve of Puthandu, a tray arranged with three fruits (mango, banana and jack fruit), betel leaves and arecanut, gold/silver jewellery, coins/money, flowers and a mirror. According to the Tamil tradition, this festive tray is auspicious as the first sight upon waking on the new year day. Home entrances are decorated elaborately with colored rice powder. These designs are called kolams.



Tamil Hindus decorate their homes with various auspicious colorful geometric designs from rice powder called Kolam. The 'kolam' is believed to bring good fortune to the family members. Then, the doorways are decorated with mango leaves.

After this the family assembles for prayers. The prayers begin with the lighting of the traditional lamp (kuthu vilakku). The lamp is placed next to a brass bowl with a short neck, which contains water and is decorated with mango leaves - called the niraikudum. Then, it is time to head to the nearby temples to seek the blessings of the Deities. In some temples, people gather to listen to the Tamil Panchangam, which contains the predictions of the coming year.

Some Tamils observe the traditional new year in April with the first financial transaction known as the Kai-vishesham. In this transaction children go to elders to pay their respect, and elders give their blessings and gift pocket money to the children in return. The event is also observed with the 'arpudu' or the first ploughing of the ground to prepare for the new agricultural cycle. The festive Puthandu season in April is a time for family visits and get togethers.

Later in the day, families enjoy a feast.



The menu for the day usually consists of food made from fresh vegetables. Green banana and jack fruit preparations are a must in many families. Sweet includes any one or two variety of payasam (sweet rice). Some families perform Tarpan (water offerings to the late departed ones and also offerings to food to their departed ones) - remembering the dead ancestors and other rituals on the day.

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