

Attukal Pongala

March 9, 2023

In news– Attukal Pongala, considered one of the largest women's gatherings in the world, around 15 lakh women participated in the festival.

About the festival-

- It is a **10-day religious festival celebrated at the Attukal Bhagavathy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.**
- **On the ninth day there is a huge gathering of millions of women on the temple surroundings.**
- These women **prepare a divine food made of rice in earthen pots** and offer it to the Attukal Amma (Goddess of the Temple).
- The pongala preparation starts with the ritual called **'Aduppuvettu'**. This is the lighting of the pongala hearth (called Pandara Aduppu) placed inside the temple by the chief priest. **This is the earliest Pongala festival in Kerala.**
- The festival is **marked as the largest annual gathering of women by the Guinness World Records.** In 2009, a new Guinness World Records celebrated 2.5 million attendance.
- Attukal Bhagavathy Temple is also known as "women's *Sabarimala*" and is famous for its Pongala festival.

Attukal Bhagavathy temple-

- The **deity worshipped in the temple is Kannagi, an incarnation of Goddess Parvati**, Lord Shiva's consort.
- As we know from the **Tamil poem Silappathikaram** (the Epic of the Anklet by Ilango), Kannagi's husband Kovalan was sentenced to death by the Madurai king for reportedly stealing the queen's anklet.
- After proving the innocence of her husband, Kannagi

leaves Madurai and heads to the Kodungalloor temple.

- On the way, she stops at Attukal and her incarnation is said to be Attukalamma, the Goddess in the temple.
- Attukal is where her rage was said to have subsided and Attukalamma became compassionate and helpful towards those who worshipped her.
- Devotees believe that she hears their prayers and vows and alleviates their pain. The celebration of Attukal Pongala is said to bring happiness and prosperity to the family.

Note: _____

- Silappathikaram or Silappatikaram is the earliest Tamil epic. It is a poem of 5,730 lines in almost entirely akaval meter. The epic is a tragic love story of an ordinary couple, Kannaki and her husband Kovalan.
- It was written in the 5th–6th century AD by Prince Ilanko Adikal (Ilango Adigal).
- The *Silappathikaram* has more ancient roots in the Tamil bardic tradition, as Kannaki and other characters of the story are mentioned or alluded to in the Sangam literature such as in the *Naṛṛiṇai* and later texts such as the *Kovalam Katai*.