

# New Year Celebration in Sri Lanka



Traditional Sinhala New Year game ins Sri lanka. for new year theme. peoples playing many more games. for aluth awrudu kreeada. full vector. Abstract design

The April New Year season is a widely celebrated occasion in Sri Lanka, with a majority of the population participating in the festivities. The Sinhala New Year is the most commonly observed event during this time, while the Tamil New Year is celebrated by the second-largest population, the Hindus in the country. In addition to these celebrations, many individuals get an opportunity to take time off from work and enjoy a much- needed holiday break.

The month of April holds significance as the most extended holiday season, marked by the celebration of Sinhala and Tamil New Year as stated in the famous calendar. The festival is observed worldwide by the Sinhala and Tamil communities on the same days. Buddhists regard it as an important occasion and celebrate it as a festival and a ritual, following the 'Neketh' or auspicious times. The timing of the festival is another crucial aspect that adds to its significance.

According to the lunar calendar, the month of 'Bak Māsaya' or April, as per the sun's movement, translates to 'Bhāgya' in Sanskrit, signifying fortune. This holds significant importance for farming communities in villages, as it marks the

reaping of the First Harvest in the year. The customs and rituals associated with this new year are widely known and followed amongst the village people. Although astrology plays a significant role in determining auspicious times, religious rituals are never overlooked. Families, relatives, and neighbors come together to inaugurate this festival, and the ruling party of the country celebrates it as a state festival.

As the New Year season approaches, Sri Lanka comes to life with vibrant signs of celebration. Fresh leaves sprout on trees, and local flowers such as 'Erabadu Mal' bloom in abundance, and the fragrance of seasonal fruits such as mangoes, rambutans, avocados and jack fruits fill the air with their sweet aroma. The rare bird called 'KOHA or KOWULA', similar to a crow, signals the arrival of the New Year with a special message.

While the townspeople are well-prepared for the festivities with readily available supplies in supermarkets, the village folks demonstrate a deeper interest and enthusiasm towards the New Year celebrations. They adorn their homes with decorations and prepare sweetmeats like Kewum, Kokis, Athirasa, Aggalā, Āsmee, and Aluva. Furthermore, they follow astrology guidance for special colored dresses for the occasion. Despite the convenience of the townspeople's preparations, they cannot match the mental and physical phenomena of the villagers when the New Year dawns. The true essence of the Avurudu or New Year celebration is found in the timeless traditions of the villages, where the spirit of the festivities comes to life.

In addition to the auspicious times, there are customary traditions to follow during the New Year, such as the practice of viewing the moon. Prior to the arrival of the New Year, it is customary to view the moon for the old year, as well as the moon on another day according to the 'Neketh' (the new year auspicious timetables). This entails adhering to the New Year rituals outlined in the astrology guidance or 'Litha' to fulfill the traditional customs. Additionally, individuals will bathe at an auspicious time during the festival by applying specified herbs, as indicated on the calendar. To signal the auspicious time, drums or 'Hevisi' bells are used in temples, while today, firecrackers are also used.

In contrast to old traditions, rituals are typically observed during the 'Nonagathaya', which is a neutral period that is not influenced by astrology. As such, adherents of New Year customs are advised to abstain from undertaking

any form of work or business during this time and instead engage in religious activities. This period, commonly referred to as 'Punya Kālaya', presents an auspicious time for relaxation and the opportunity to spend time with family. By doing so, one can reap benefits such as improved well-being, mental clarity, and increased mindfulness.

The Litha calendar marks the dawn of the new year on the 14th of April each year. Celebrants of the New Year observe several rituals on this day. The first half of the day is reserved for cooking and consuming meals while refraining from all types of work before fulfilling their religious traditions. In the second half of the day, they partake in meals and engage in work. A special traditional meal, such as 'Kiribath' or milk rice, is typically consumed during this occasion. Before that, celebrants must light the hearth at an auspicious time, facing a specific direction known as 'Subha Disāwa,' and boil milk in a new earthen pot, which overflows to symbolize prosperity. After the proceedings, the celebrants partake in milk, rice, and sweetmeats.

In Sri Lanka, one of the customs during the Avurudu season is to offer a sheaf of betel to elders as a sign of respect. In return, elders bless the younger generation and present them with gifts. Moreover, people exchange New Year presents with their relatives and friends, visit each other's homes, and strengthen their relationships and friendships. This is also a time to forget past mistakes and misunderstandings with loved ones and maintain a calm and happy social environment. In addition to these customs, people organize New Year's games called 'Aluth Avurudu Krida' such as Olinda keliya, Eluvan keliya, Raban gaseema, Onchili Vāran, Keta gaseema, Gamavate Diveema, Kamba Edeema, as well as marathon and bicycle races.

As the New Year celebration draws to a close, there is one final tradition that must be fulfilled: the selection of the Avurudu Kumāraya and Avurudu Kumāri, or the New Year Prince and Princess. This longstanding custom is followed by a tree plantation campaign, an example of modern-day environmentalism. The season concludes with a series of blessings, including anointing with special oil, stepping on unique herbal leaves, and placing additional herbal leaves above the head. By adhering to these time-honored rituals and religious services, they believe they can protect themselves from evil and receive blessings for good health and longevity.

After the onset of the New Year, it is customary for individuals to resume their professional pursuits or initiate a business venture. As per age-old traditions, it is considered auspicious to determine an appropriate time and direction to embark on this journey. Furthermore, it is customary to adorn oneself in new attire of a particular color and indulge in delicacies such as milk rice and sweetmeats to preserve these age-old practices.

New Year celebrations are a time-honored tradition that many of us look forward to. However, it is essential to remember that there is a downside to the festivities. Some individuals may indulge in alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or gambling, which can have detrimental effects on their health, finances, and relationships. It is crucial to celebrate the New Year in a meaningful and responsible manner to achieve our goals and maintain our well-being.

In conclusion, I extend my best wishes for good health, longevity, and peace to all our readers and people around the world. May the world be free from sorrow and conflict, and peace prevail in the coming years. "SUBHA NAWA WASARAK WEWA !"

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