Source: *Tabla!*, p7
Date: 17 January 2025

Sharing the sweet and savoury of Pongal

YOGITA ANBUCHEZHIAN

To share the festive spirit and give back to the community, the Little India Shopkeepers and Heritage Association (Lisha) organised a Pongal feast on Jan 14, which brought together 60 elderly residents from various nursing homes at a tentage in Poli@Clive Street.

The annual event aimed to involve seniors from all walks of life in Pongal festivities and let them experience the rich Tamil culture, said Lisha chairman Regunarth Siva.

Minister of State for Home Affairs Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim attended the event as the guest of honour, and joined the elderly for a meal after distributing $20 cash envelopes and gift bags to them.

Pongal, which is also the name of the signature rice dish made during the harvest festival, was also traditionally prepared atop a blazing wood fire during the event. As the rice and milk mixture boiled over, signifying abundance and prosperity, shouts of "Pongalo Pongal!" reverberated through the tentage despite the pouring rain outside.

"Every festivity we have here in Singapore is a celebration of our people and our nation," Associate Professor Faishal told tabla! He added that events like this provide opportunities to celebrate as one united Singaporean community, and urged Singaporeans to uphold the spirit of giving back to society.

Members of the National University of Singapore's Tamil Language Society (NUS-TLS) volunteered at the event to spend time with the seniors.

"It was a fulfilling experience to partner with Lisha and help serve meals to the elderly. It was a chance to share food and conversation, reflecting the true spirit of Pongal which is to spread joy and togetherness," said president of NUS-TLS Subramanian Karthikeyan, 23.

Later in the evening, Lisha held another event outside Little India Arcade, where the sweet version of Pongal was distributed to the public.

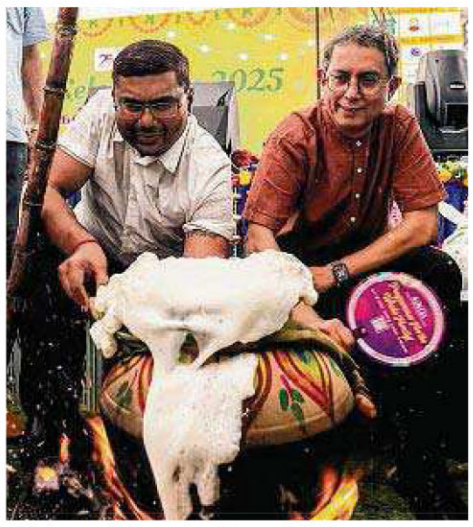
The dish was also prepared at three temples – Sri Veeramakaliamman, Sri Srinivasa Perumal and Sri Siva Durga – and distributed to around 10,000 people – from Singaporeans to migrant workers to tourists – from Jan 14 to 16.

Despite a half-hour delay due to heavy rain, hundreds gathered to get their hands on a bowl of the sweet treat.

Mr Aravind, a foreign worker, said he decided to visit Little India after finishing work in Jurong East that day.

"When I arrived, I saw they were celebrating Pongal. It brought back memories of my home in India," he said.

➥ yogitaa@sph.com.sg



Minister of State for Home Affairs Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim (right) and Lisha chairman Regunarth Siva watching the signature rice dish being prepared atop a blazing wood fire. PHOTO: T. KAVI

Source: Tabla! © SPH Media Limited. Permission required for reproduction.