

What is Makaravilakku?

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About Makaravilakku:

- It is a significant **annual festival celebrated at the Sabarimala Temple in Kerala.**
- It takes place on the **day of Makara Sankranti.**
- The festival **marks the culmination of the annual pilgrimage season to the temple.**
- On Makaravilakku day, the sacred Thiruvabharanam, the royal ornaments of Lord Ayyappa are brought to the temple from the Pandalam Palace.
- The **highlight** of the Makaravilakku festival is the **sighting of a celestial light, known as the “Makarajyothi” or “Makaravilakku.”**
 - According to popular belief, the light is a divine manifestation of Lord Ayyappa himself.
 - It is said to **appear on the horizon of the Ponnambalamedu hill**, located near the Sabarimala Temple.
 - However, there is **nothing supernatural** in the Makaravilakku.
 - **Previously it was a ritual** which the **Malayaraya tribe performed** at the temple in Ponnambalamedu.

- However, **now the Travancore Devaswom Board** is in charge and the age-old religious rituals continue to be performed.
 - **At the temple in Ponnambalamedu, a ritualistic Aarti is performed,** and the Makara Vilakku is the **light emitted from the camphor lit during the Aarti**, seen thrice from Sabarimala.
 - The Makaravilakku festival extends beyond the actual day of Makara Sankranti.
 - The **festival lasts for seven days** and **ends with** the ritual known as '**Guruthi " an offering** conducted to propitiate the gods and goddesses of wilderness.
 - No one remains in the temple premises after the performance of Guruthi.
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Q1: Who lights Makaravilakku?

Traditionally, it was the tribal community of Mala Arayans -historically said to be close aids of Lord Ayyappa- that used to light the sacred lamp 'Makara Vilakku' every year. After the Travancore Devaswom Board took over the administration from the royal family, the tribal community was displaced. Subsequently, the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) has been lighting the Makara Vilakku for over half a century.

Source: IT

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