

Makar Sankranti

*(Meethe GUD me mil gaya TIL,
Udi PATANG aur khil gaye DIL,
Jeevan me bani rahe SUKH aur
SHANTI, MUBARAK ho apko
MAKAR SANKRANTI.)*



Makar Sankranti (Oriya: ମକର ସଂକ୍ରାନ୍ତି). Sankranti or Sankranthi marks the transition of the Sun into Makara rashi (Capricorn) on its celestial path. Traditionally, this has been one of many harvest days in India.

Owing to the vast geography and diversity of culture in India, this festival is celebrated for innumerable reasons and in innumerable ways depending on the climate, agricultural environment, cultural background and location.

Makar Sankranti is a major harvest festival celebrated in various parts of India. According to the lunar calendar, when the sun moves from the Tropic of Cancer to the Tropic of Capricorn or from Dakshinayana to Uttarayana, in the month of Poush in mid-January, it commemorates the beginning of the harvest season and cessation of the northeast monsoon in South India. The movement of the earth from one zodiac sign into another is called Sankranti and as the Sun moves into the Capricorn zodiac known as Makar in Hindi, this occasion is named as Makar Sankranti in the Indian context. It is one of the few Hindu Indian festivals which are celebrated on a fixed date i.e. 14th January every year.

Makar Sankranti, apart from a harvest festival is also regarded as the beginning of an auspicious phase in Indian culture. It is said as the 'holy phase of transition'. It marks the end of an inauspicious phase which

according to the Hindu calendar begins around mid-December. It is believed that any auspicious and sacred ritual can be sanctified in any Hindu family, this day onwards. Scientifically, this day marks the beginning of warmer and longer days compared to the nights. In other words, Sankranti marks the termination of winter season and beginning of a new harvest or spring season.

Til and Rice are two important ingredients of this festival. In the rice-eating belt of Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh, people have a special rice-centric meal on this day. Also known as Gangesagar Mela, on this day, people come from all over India for a ceremonial cleansing in the river Hooghly, near Calcutta.



To Hindus, the Sun stands for knowledge, spiritual light and wisdom. Makar Sankranti signifies that we should turn away from the darkness of delusion in which we live, and begin to enjoy a new life with bright light within us to shine brighter and brighter. We should gradually begin to grow in purity, wisdom, and knowledge, even as the Sun does from the Day of Makar Sankranti.

In Odisha, people prepare 'makar chaula (uncooked newly harvested rice, banana, coconut, jaggery, sesame, Rasagola, Khai/Liaa and chhena puddings for naivedya to gods and goddesses. The withdrawing winter entails change in food habits & intake of nourishing and rich food. Therefore this festival also holds immense scientific significance. According to the Sun's movement, the days from this day onwards become lengthy and warmer and so the Sun-God is worshipped as a great benefactor. Makar

Mela is observed at Dhabaleswar in Cuttack, Hatakeswar at Atri in Puri, Makar Muni temple in Balasore and near various deities in each district of Orissa. In the temple of Lord Jagannath this festival is observed as Nabanki and 'Uttarayana Yatra'. In Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, kalahandi, koraput and Sundargarh where the tribal population is more, the festival is celebrated with great joy. They have been celebrating this festival with great enthusiasm. They sing, dance and enjoy. Many tribals in our country start their New Year from the day of Sankranti by lighting bonfires, dancing and eating their particular dishes sitting together. The Bhunya tribals of Orissa have their Maghyatra in which small home-made articles are put for sale.

All over the country, Makar Sankranti is observed with great fanfare. However, it is celebrated with distinct names and rituals in different parts of the country. In the states of northern and western India, the festival is celebrated as the Sankranti day with special zeal and fervor. The importance of this day has been signified in the ancient epics like Mahabharata also. So, apart from socio-geographical importance, this day also holds a historical and religious significance. As, it is the festival of Sun God and he is regarded as the symbol divinity and wisdom, the festival also holds an eternal meaning to it.