



The traditional Indian Calendar is based on lunar positions but *Sankranti* is a solar event. So while dates of all Hindu festivals keep changing as per the Gregorian calendar, the date of *Makar Sankranti* remains constant, every year on 14 January. *Makar Sankranti* is celebrated as per the Hindu calendar month of *Magha*. This festival is celebrated for innumerable reasons depending on various climate, agricultural environment, cultural background and location. *Makar Sankranti* marks the transition of the Sun into Capricorn on its celestial path. There is another significance of this day i.e. the days start becoming longer and warmer and thus the chill of winter declines.



SIGNIFICANCE OF MAKAR SANKRANTI

The festival of Makar Sankranti is associated with much cultural significance:

- *The Puranas say that on this day Sun visits the house of his son Shani, who is the swami of Makar Rashi. This day symbolizes the healthy relationship of father & son. It is the son who has the responsibility to carry forward his fathers dream and the continuity of the family.*
- *It was on this day when Lord Vishnu ended the ever increasing terror of the Asuras by finishing them off and burying their heads under the Mandara Parvata (Mountain). So this occasion also represents the end of negativities and beginning of an era of righteous living.*

- *This festival is also called as Harvest Festival.*

CELEBRATION OF MAKAR SANKRANTI



The name for this festival varies depending upon the people of various regions of our country. From this day Goddess Saraswati is worshipped as it marks the beginning of Vasant Navaratri. In some parts of India people offer thousands of their colorful oblations to the Sun in the form of beautiful kites. Various sweets are prepared and distributed among the near and dear ones. In the rural and coastal areas, cock fights are held on this day. People abstain from doing their regular chores and spent time in musical soirees with their friends and relatives.

MAKAR SANKRANTI IN ORISSA

This festival is observed largely in Orissa by both Arya and Anarya i.e, by general and Adivasi (Tribal) caste. Since this occasion falls just after the harvesting of the paddy crops is over in Orissa. Particularly, the festival is observed largely among all with joy and ceremony.

In Jagannath temple at puri this festival is observed as Uttarayana Yatra and Uttarayan Vandapana of lord Jagannath. People offer a special kind of newly harvested rice and sugarcane mixed with jaggery, grated coconut, banana, molasses, chenna (cheese), Khua, various fruits, dry fruits and milk called "Makara Chaula" to the presiding deity, the Sun-God & lit solemn pyre for satisfying the evil elements plaguing household. This day



is also observed in Jagannath temple, Puri with two popular Veshas (costumes) of Lord Jagannath i.e. Nabankā Vesha (one day before Makar Sankranti) and Makara Chaurashi Vesha (on the day of Makar Sankranti).



In the districts of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Sundargarh where the tribal population is more than forty per cent, the festival is celebrated with great joy and merriment. Moreover, the time of the festival is

best suited for them as all agricultural operations are over by that time and each family possess something after the harvest. Liquor is freely consumed by men and women. They sing and dance and enjoy life for about a week. Young girls of certain communities mostly Kudumi, Bastiti, Rajual etc. worship 'Tushu', a female deity and immerse it in the river or tank singing songs of a special variety.

MAKAR SANKRANTI, 2010

This year during Makar Sankranti, a special Mela i.e. Kumbha Mela is going to be organized at Haridwar. It is a very auspicious Mela where people will take holy bath at Sangam (confluence of Yamuna, Saraswati and Ganga) in Allahabad and also in the famous bathing ghats on River Ganga. So people in large numbers must attend the Mela this year on Makar Sankranti. It is believed that taking a holy dip on the day is considered to cleanse sins committed and this will lead to Moksha (Salvation).

