

# Makar Sankranti

Makara literally means 'Capricorn' and Sankranti is the day when the sun passes from one sign of the zodiac to the next. The Sankranti of any month is considered auspicious as it signifies a fresh start. However Makara Sankranti is celebrated in the month of Magha when the sun passes through the winter solstice, from the Tropic of Cancer to the Tropic of Capricorn.

This feast is celebrated on January 14th, and is the only feast of the Indian calendar which is not celebrated on a fixed day of the lunar month.

On this day the sun enters the constellation of Makar (Crocodile) and begins to move towards the north. Throughout the year the sun passes through twelve constellations: Mesh (Ram, Aries), Vrishabh (Bull, Taurus), Mithun (Couple, Gemini), Kark (Crab, Cancer), 5mb (Lion, Leo), Kanya (Girl, Virgo), Tula (Balance, Libra), Vrishchik (Scorpion), Dhanu (Bow, Sagittarius), Makar (Crocodile, Capricorn), Kumbh (Waterjar, Aquarius), Mm (Fish, Pisces). When the sun does not cross any constellation then there is an extra month called "Adhik Mas". The crossing of the Makar constellation takes place in the month of Paush.

Makara Sankranti is also celebrated throughout India as a harvest festival. It is a way of giving thanks to the elements of nature that help man. This is the period when the winter recedes, paving the way for the summer. It is the time the farmers bring home their harvest. In the coastal regions, it is a harvest festival dedicated to Indra. In Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, it is celebrated as a three-day harvest festival Pongal. In Assam, the festival is celebrated as Bhogali Bihu, and in Punjab it is called Lohri.

## The Hindu Festival Of Makara Sankranti

Makara Sankranti marks the auspicious moment when the sun moves into its northern sphere, crossing over the tropic of Capricorn. It takes place during the Hindu month of magha (January). It is said to mark the beginning of the year.

Makara literally means crocodile but it is also the name of one of the solar months in the Hindu calendar. Thus given that the names of the solar months are also the names of the signs of the zodiac, makara also denotes the name of the zodiacal sign Capricorn. The word sankranti is derived from the Sanskrit word sankrama, which means course or passage. The northern course that the sun takes on this day is called the uttarayana.

Makara sankranti denotes the end of an inauspicious time of the year, the winter equinox, and the month of Paush in particular. It initiates a six-month period when the sun travels through its northern phase.

The epic poem the Mahabharata relays that the leader of the Kauravas, Bhishma lay wounded on his deathbed of nails, awaiting the commencement of this phase before he chose to depart this world.

Makara sankranti is one of the most important bathing days in the Hindu calendar. It is considered particularly auspicious to bathe at the confluence of the rivers Ganga and Jamuna in Allahabad, also known as Prayag. In Indian mythology, it is believed that a third river also meets at this point called the Saraswati, yet this is not visible to the eye. At this time each year an important festival is held in Allahabad called the magha mela.

# THE MAKAR SAÑKRĀNTI PARV

Please offer the oblations into The Holy Fire

१. ओ३म् सहश्च सहस्यः च हैमन्तिकावृतू ।  
अग्नेरन्तः श्लेषो स्वाहा ॥
२. ओ३म् कल्पेताम् द्यावापृथिवी स्वाहा ॥
३. ओ३म् कल्पन्ताम् आपः ओषधयः स्वाहा ॥
४. ओ३म् कल्पन्ताम् अग्नयः पृथग् मम ज्येष्ठ्याय सव्रताः स्वाहा ॥
५. ओ३म् तपश्च तपस्यश्च शैशिरावृतू  
अग्नेरन्तः श्लेषो असि स्वाहा ॥
६. ओ३म् ये अग्नयः समनसः अन्तरा द्यावापृथिवी  
इमे शैशिरावृतू अभिकल्पमाना इन्द्रमिव देवा अभिसंविशन्तु  
तया देवतया अंगिरस्वद् ध्रुवे सीदतम् स्वाहा ॥ यजुर्वेद अ १५
७. ओ३म् त्र्यंबकम् यजामहे सुगंधिम् पुष्टिवर्धनम् ।  
उर्वारुकमिव बन्धनात् मृत्योर्मुक्षीय मा अमृतात् ॥ Rg. 7.59.12