***A Holiday That I Do Not Celebrate***

Makar Sankranti, also known as Uttarayana, is a significant Hindu festival observed annually on 14th January (or 15th January in leap years). This auspicious occasion marks the transition of the sun from the zodiac sign of Sagittarius (dhanu) to Capricorn (makara). As the sun begins its northward journey, Makar Sankranti symbolizes new beginnings and the end of winter. Here are some key points about this vibrant festival:

Solar Transition: Makar Sankranti is set by the solar cycle and corresponds to the exact time when the Sun enters Capricorn. It signifies the shift from the southern hemisphere to the northern hemisphere, bringing longer days and warmer weather 1.

Regional Celebrations: The festivities associated with Makar Sankranti vary across India and are known by different names:

Magh Bihu in Assam, Pongal in Tamil Nadu, Maghi Saaji in Himachal Pradesh, Maghi Sangrand in Punjab, Uttarain (Uttarayana) in Jammu, Sakraat in Haryana, Sakrat in Rajasthan, Ghughuti in Uttarakhand, Dahi, Chura in Bihar, Makar Sankranti in Odisha, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Goa, and West Bengal, Peddha Panduga in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Maghe Sankranti in Nepal, Songkran in Thailand, Thingyan in Myanmar, Mohan Songkran in Cambodia, Til Sakraat in Mithila, Shishur Senkrath in Kashmir

Rituals and Traditions:

People take holy dips in rivers or lakes as a gesture of gratitude to the Sun.

Colorful decorations adorn homes, and rural children go house-to-house singing and asking for treats.

Melas (fairs), dances, kite flying, bonfires, and feasts are part of the celebrations.

Surya (the solar deity) is worshipped along with Vishnu and goddess Lakshmi 1.

Kumbha Mela: Every twelve years, Makar Sankranti coincides with the Kumbha Mela—a massive pilgrimage where millions of devotees gather to bathe in sacred rivers

**Kites** soar, their tails trailing like **rainbow ribbons**, **Jaggery sweets** melt on eager tongues, a taste of tradition. **Terracotta pots** hold the promise of harvest, And **bonfires** crackle, chasing away winter’s chill.

In the **saffron-hued dawn**, families gather, Their hands weaving intricate **rangoli** patterns, A symphony of colors adorning thresholds, Welcoming prosperity and goodwill.

**Til seeds**—tiny and resilient—find their way, Into **laddoos** and **chikkis**, sweet tokens of love. The air hums with **bhajans**, voices lifted in devotion, As the sun embarks on its celestial journey.

Children clutch **kite strings**, eyes fixed on the sky, Their laughter echoing across rooftops, Chasing dreams as high as the soaring **patang**, Each tug a reminder of life’s delicate balance.

And when night descends, the **Lohri fire** blazes, A dance of warmth and camaraderie, As families circle, hands linked, hearts aglow, Celebrating bonds that transcend seasons.

So here’s to Makar Sankranti, a tapestry of traditions, Where old meets new, and the sun whispers secrets, Where love, like the moon, waxes and wanes, And hope takes flight on the wings of a kite.

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