

Sankranti, also known as Makar Sankranti or Uttarayan, is a widely celebrated festival in India. It marks the transition of the Sun from one zodiac sign to another and is celebrated on the 14th of January every year. The festival is observed with great fervor and enthusiasm across the country, with various customs and traditions associated with it.

The name Sankranti is derived from the Sanskrit word "Sankramana" which means to move from one place to another. This is because the Sun, which is considered a significant deity in Hinduism, moves from the southern hemisphere to the northern hemisphere on this day. This is also the day when the days start becoming longer and nights shorter.

Sankranti is primarily a harvest festival, and various agricultural practices and traditions are associated with it. People thank the Sun God for the successful harvest and pray for a bountiful crop in the upcoming season. In some parts of the country, people fly kites to celebrate the harvest season.

One of the significant customs associated with Sankranti is taking a dip in holy rivers like the Ganges, Yamuna, and Godavari. People believe that taking a dip on this day washes away all sins and brings good luck and prosperity. In many parts of the country, people also offer food and sweets to the poor and needy.

Another important aspect of Sankranti is the preparation of special dishes like tilgul (a sweet made from sesame seeds and jaggery), khichdi (a savory dish made with rice and lentils), and puran poli (a sweet flatbread made with jaggery and lentils). These dishes are prepared in many households and distributed among friends and family.

Sankranti is celebrated differently in different parts of the country. In South India, it is known as Pongal and is a four-day festival. On

the first day, people clean their houses and decorate them with colorful rangolis. The second day is dedicated to offering prayers and preparing the special dish Pongal. The third day is marked by cattle worship, and on the fourth day, people visit their friends and family to exchange sweets and greetings.

In North India, Sankranti is celebrated with the flying of kites. People gather on rooftops and fly kites while enjoying special dishes like til ke laddoo and gajak. In Gujarat, the festival is celebrated with the kite-flying festival of Uttarayan, which attracts tourists from all over the world.

In conclusion, Sankranti is a significant festival in India, and its celebration varies from region to region. It is a festival that celebrates the change of seasons, the harvest, and the Sun God. It brings people together, promotes unity and harmony, and spreads joy and happiness. Sankranti is a reminder of the rich cultural heritage of India and its diversity.