

The great Sun and Agrarian Festival Makara Sankranthi – 15th Jan 2024

Makara Sankranthi is the festival celebrated in Bharat and in many other parts of the world, as per the Hindu panchang, Makara Sankranthi marks the transition of Sun into Makara Rashi, or Capricorn as per the solar calendar. Although the Sun transitions into one rashi or the other every month, Makara Sankranthi is an important event as it also marks the northward journey of the Sun- the beginning of the Uttarayana punya kala. Usually it is a fixed date, in the last few years the sankranthi is falling on 15th of January on the Gregorian calendar. On Makar Sankranthi, the Sun God Surya is worshipped, the significance of Surya is traceable to the Vedic texts, particularly the Gayatri Mantra, a sacred hymn of Hinduism found in the holy scripture of *Rigveda*, Sri Maha Vishnu and goddess Lakshmi are worshipped throughout India during the festival.

Makara Sankranthi is known in the same name in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Odisha, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Goa, Telangana and West Bengal; it is known as Maghi Saaji in Himachal Pradesh, Maghi Sankrand in Punjab, Uttarayana in Jammu, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, *Shishur Senkrath* in Kashmir, Ghughuti in Uttarakhand, also Khichdi Sankranti in Uttar Pradesh and Dahi Chura in Bihar, Til Sankraat in Mithila, Magh Bihu in Assam and Pongal in

Tamilnadu. As Bharat has great cultural impact all over Asia, especially south and south-east Asia, Sankranthi is celebrated in all these countries. It is known as *Maghe Sankranti* in Nepal, *Songkran* in Thailand, *Thingyan* in Myanmar and *Mohan Songkran* in Cambodia.



Makar Sankranti is observed with social festivities such as colorful decorations, children visiting relatives' houses, singing and celebrating in *melas* (fairs), dances, kite flying, bonfires and feasts. The Magha Mela is mentioned in the Hindu epic Mahabharata. People go to sacred rivers or lakes and bathe in a ceremony of gratitude to the Sun God. Every twelve years, the Hindus observe *Makar Sankranti* with Kumbh Mela – among the world's largest mass pilgrimage, with an estimated 100 million people attending the event.



Devotees pray to the Sun and bathe at the Triveni Sangam in Prayaga Raj, a confluence of the sacred rivers of Ganga and Yamuna, with Sarasathi flowing as antar-vahini, the tradition of kumbh mela is attributed to Adi Shankaracharya. Makar Sankranti is a time of celebration and thanks giving, and is marked by a variety of rituals and traditions.



Many shared cultural practices found amongst Hindus of various parts of India is making sweets with sesame (*til*) and jaggery (*gud, gur, gul*). For most parts of India, this period is a part of early stages of the Rabi crop and agricultural cycle, where crops have been sown and the hard work in the fields is mostly over. The time thus signifies a period of socializing and families enjoying each other's company, taking care of the cattle, and celebrating around bonfires, in Gujarat the festival is celebrated by flying kites.

The festival **Sankranti** is celebrated for four days in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Telugu women decorate the entrance of their homes by geometric patterns drawn using colored rice flour, called Muggu.

- Day 1 – Bhogi
- Day 2 – Sankranti
- Day 3 – Kanuma
- Day 4 – Mukkanuma

Makar Sankranti is set by the solar cycle and corresponds to the exact astronomical event of the Sun entering Capricorn, a day that

usually falls on 14 January of the Gregorian calendar, and on 15 January in leap years. Makar Sankranti's date and time is analogous to Sidereal time of Zodiac sign of Capricorn (when sun enters). The year is 365.24 days, and to offset the extra .24 of a day in a year, every four years the calendar is offset by one day which is adjusted by adding leap day (29 February). Sidereal time of sign of Capricorn also shifts by a day due to leap year. Similarly, the time of equinoxes also shifts by a day in each four year window.

Makar Sankranti and Uttar Ayana

Makar Sankranti is celebrated when the Sun's ecliptic longitude becomes 270° measured from a fixed starting point which is in opposition to Spica, this is a sidereal measure. Uttarayana begins when the Sun's ecliptic longitude becomes 270° measured from the Vernal equinox, this is a tropical measure. Hence, Makar Sankranti and Uttarayana occur on different days. On the Gregorian calendar, Makar Sankranti occurs on 14 or 15 January; Uttarayana starts on 21 December. Due to the precession of the equinoxes, the tropical zodiac shifts by about 1° in 72 years. As a result, the December solstice (Uttarayana) is continuously but very slowly moving away from Makar Sankranti. The December solstice (Uttarayana) and Makar Sankranti must have coincided at some time in the distant past. Such a coincidence last happened 1700 years back, in 291 CE.



A night lit up on Makar Sankranti Uttarayana Festival with Kites and Lights.

Book Launches

Samvit Prakashan and Dakshinapatha launched two Telugu books in the month of February 2024 in the Hyderabad book fair held at NTR maidan, Hyderabad. Both the books are well-received.



Vidyaku Vimukti?

Written by Sri T. Hebbar Nageswara Rao was launched on Vasantha Panchami 14th February 2024. Retd IAS Sri Chamarthi Umamaheswar Rao was the chief guest, while Dr Boppa Bhaskar introduced the book to the audience.



Swarna Bharati – India's economic history

Written by Sri Khandavalli Satyadev Prasad was launched on Rathasaptami 16th February 2024. Sri Sai Prasad, IA&AS was the chief guest on the occasion.

Other books:

Four English books were published during this period. All the titles are available on www.hindueshop.com and www.amazon.in.

- Political Islam: Origins, Strategy and Mobilization by Prof SV Seshagiri Rao
- The Luminary of Compassion: Sri Ramalinga Swamigal
- Marx to Mother by Dr Rahul A Shastri
- Tipu as he really was by Sri Gajanan Bhaskar Mahendale

Vasantha Panchami 14 February 2024

Saraswathi puja is conducted on Vasanta Panchami regarded as Saraswathi Jayanthi, it also marks the beginning of the preparations for the spring season and the preparation for Holika and Holi. Vasanta Panchami is the festival of Mata Saraswathi, the goddess of knowledge, languages, music, and all arts. She symbolizes creative energy and power in all its forms, including longing and love. The season and festival also celebrate the agricultural fields' ripening with yellow flowers of mustard crops, bougainvillea, chrysanthemums and marigold, Devi Saraswati's favorite color. People dress in yellow saris and yellow kurtas, add saffron to their rice, eat yellow-cooked rice like pulihora, as part of the elaborate feast. Young children are taught to write their first alphabets and words with their own hands, and people study books or sing music



together. Saraswati puja is done in all Devi temples, schools and all traditional educational institutions to seek the blessings from the Goddess of learning. Poetry and musical gatherings are held by literature and music lovers.

A FUN FACT

Vasanta Panchami in Bharat is also a day and a season dedicated to spring, nature, new leaves and fresh flowers, singing birds, romance and lovers, long before the Valentine's Day was born. As spring arrives bright after the harsh winters, Hindu tradition celebrates love and friendship; Vasanta Panchami to Holi was the Season of Love. It is also an occasion for worshipping the God of Love, Manmadha /Kamadeva and his consort Rati Devi. Sanatana Dharma need nor borrow a Valentine's Day from an alien culture to promote love !!

News Updates

HYDERABAD CHAPTER

- In the Hyderabad chapter, a few resource persons were contacted for further ongoing work.
- The Koti women's college HoD, History dept was met and a mode of collaboration is being worked out for holding seminars, however it would take time as the annual examinations would be going on now.
- The Telugu website of Dakshinapatha is being constructed to post Telugu articles.
- A Telugu Dakshinapatha Newsletter is also being prepared with focus on calendar dates and events.
- Two online study circle sessions were conducted:
 - a. Tax systems in Kakatiya Kingdom by Sri Kalyan Chakravarthy on 13th Jan 2024
 - b. Irrigation and water tanks systems in Kakatiya Kingdom by Dr Hemalatha Gooda on 10th February 2024.

KOCHI CHAPTER

- Following the Hyderabad CSIS Dakshinapatha workshop in December 2023, the CSIS Kerala chapter held a two-day workshop in Ernakulam in the month of January 2024. 25 persons participated in the workshop.
- Plans are for the preparation of five modules on various topics emerged in the workshop.

CHENNAI CHAPTER

- CSIS Chennai team members attended the fourth international conference of Akhanda Tamil Ulagam held in Coimbatore from 5th – 7th January 2024.
- The CSIS research team convened on 7th-8th January 2024 in Coimbatore. Sri Kumaresan, Sri Aravind Kumar and Sri Sandeep Kumar attended the meeting and guided the study team.
- Sri Mukul Kanitkar toured Tamilnadu from 29th -31st January 2024, he and the CSIS Tamilnadu team visited the Sarasawati Mahal Library in Thanjavur, the M. Kashiviswanadan Chettiar Branch Library in Paganeri village near Sivagangai, and the French Institute in Pondicherry.

- The team met Prof. Dr G. Daiva Nayagam, head of Thanjavur Tamil Sangam and secretary of the Indian Institute of Public Administration in Delhi, a specialist in Tamilology, Paleography, Iconography, and South Indian History. He is the author of the book `Thanjavur Sri Rajarajeeswaram: Dhakshinameru and the Kailash'.

The first native voice of Madras: Gazula Lakshminarasu Chetty

Gazula Lakshminarasu Chetty's biography research assignment has been completed. The CSIS Chennai chapter intends to publish four separate volumes (a master-book of approximately 840 pages, and English, Tamil and Telugu mini books of approximately 240 pages). Dr. K.V. Balasubramanian is translating the book into Tamil, while Sri Vedula Narasimham is translating it into Telugu. The books are expected to be published in June 2024.

Discovering Tamil Nadu INA Veterans' Memories

The CSIS Chennai has visited families of INA veterans in Tamil Nadu to gather their memories and the team led by Kumaresan Gopal completed the mammoth assignment effectively. The project report is being prepared in two volumes - "The sweat, blood, and tears: Indian National Army veterans of Tamil Nadu". This project report was submitted to the Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu, Sri R.N. Ravi, on 7th February 2024, he thoroughly reviewed the project report and expressed his great appreciation.



The CSIS Chennai chapter has launched a Facebook page and a YouTube channel called "Sarithira chuvadugal". It is publishing the collection of INA Veterans' families' memories. The series is called "Bosein Porpadai" (INA's military force), and it now has two videos available.

FB Link: www.facebook.com/61556604800064/

YT Link: www.youtube.com/@sarithirachuvadugal/

Dakshinapatha Studies

Address: #43, 1st Floor, Asbestos Staff Colony, Karkhana, Secunderabad - 500009

Contact - Hyderabad: 70758 81925, Chennai: 98844 16677, Kochi: 94974 79544

Email : research@csisindia.com & dakshinapatha.studies@gmail.com