



## Harvest Festivals in India

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### Why in News

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The harvest festivals like Lohri, Makar Sankranti and Pongal have recently been celebrated all across the country. The festivals celebrate the hard work and enterprise of millions of farmers across the country.

### Makar Sankranti

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- Makar Sankranti denotes the entry of the sun into the zodiac sign of Makara (Capricorn) as it travels on its celestial path.
- The day marks the onset of summer and the six months auspicious period for Hindus known as **Uttarayan** – the northward movement of the sun.  
As a part of the official celebration of 'Uttarayan', the Gujarat government has been hosting the **International Kite Festival since 1989**.
- The festivities associated with the day is known by **different names in different parts of the country** — **Lohri** by **north Indian** Hindus and Sikhs, **Sukarat** in central India, **Bhogali Bihu** by **Assamese** Hindus, and **Pongal** by **Tamil** and other South Indian Hindus.

### Lohri

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- Lohri is primarily celebrated by **Sikhs and Hindus**. It marks the end of the winter season and is traditionally believed to welcome the sun to the northern hemisphere.
- It is observed a night before Makar Sankranti, this occasion involves a Puja Parikrama around the bonfire with prasad.
- It is essentially termed as the festival of the farmers and harvest, whereby, the farmers thank the Supreme Being.

### Pongal

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- The word Pongal means '**overflow**' or 'boiling over'. Also known as **Thai Pongal**, the four-day occasion is observed in the month of Thai, when crops such as rice are harvested and people show their gratitude to the almighty and the generosity of the land.
- Tamilians celebrate the occasion by making traditional designs known as kolams in their homes with rice powder.

## Makaravilakku festival in Sabarimala

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- It is celebrated at the sacred grove of Lord Ayyappa at Sabarimala.
- It is an **annual** seven-day festival, beginning on the day of Makara Sankranti when the sun is in the summer solstice.
- The highlight of the festival is the **appearance of Makarajyothi**- a celestial star which appears on the day of Makara Sankranti on top of Kantamala Hills.
- Makara Vilakku ends with the ritual called 'Guruthi', an offering made to appease the god and goddesses of the wilderness.

**Source: ET**