

#FESTIVITIES

Celebrating The Harvest Festival

The festival has both religious and seasonal significance



Makar Sankranti is one of the important festivals in India, which is dedicated to the Sun God and marks the end of winter. Also known as the harvest festival, Makar Sankranti marks the transit of the Sun into Makara Rashi (Capricorn constellation or zodiac). It heralds the start of longer days and the Sun moves northwards, which is why this period is known as *Uttarayan* and is considered very auspicious. Makar Sankranti is celebrated according to the lunar calendar, so, it falls almost on the same day every year.

History and significance of Makar Sankranti

The festival has both religious and seasonal significance. In ancient times, the shift of the Sun and resultant longer days were celebrated for the change of seasons, from a harsher to a milder climate. This was considered a sign of hope and positivity. Considering the northward transition of the Sun, Makar Sankranti marks the end of the winter season. Besides marking the end of winter, it also sets the beginning of longer days. The harvest festival is a time of joy, abundance and celebration in the farming communities, when they reap the fruits of their hard labour.

Where is Makar Sankranti celebrated in India?

The festival is celebrated in Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Rajasthan. There are variations of this festival across India and around Asia. In West Bengal and Northeastern states of India, it is celebrated as *Poush Sankranti* and *Bihu*, Tamil Nadu celebrates it as *Thai Pongal* and Kerala as *Makaravilakku*. In Gujarat, this time is celebrated as *Vasi Uttarayan*, *Maghe Sankranti* in Nepal and *Maghi* in Punjab, Thailand and Cambodia also celebrate Makar Sankranti, as *Songkran* and *Mohan Songrak*, respectively.

Makar Sankranti 2024: Interesting facts and more

You might wonder why observance of Makar Sankranti involves specific practices and activities such as flying kites and making food items involving sesame seeds and jaggery as the prime ingredients. As per Hindu mythology, God Yama blessed the sesame seed (*til*), to regard it as the symbol of immortality. According to the festivals of India, it has several health benefits to offer. It becomes one of the important aspects of the celebration of Makar Sankranti. Additionally, the use of jaggery marks one of the crucial ingredients in the traditional Makar Sankranti recipes that offer warmth and sweetness together. Flying kites is significant as it marks the onset of spring, symbolising that now, people can spend more time outdoors. The celebration also involves worshipping the cattle, as cows and oxen are the major boon to a farmer. This activity links to welcome the season of harvest.



Anjali Sharma
Senior journalist & wildlife enthusiast

had the profound occasion to see a wonder, called Himalaya, and the cherry on the cake was that, I saw it through the eyes of Nicholas Roerich in his paintings of the ranges. He not only travelled across the Himalayas but also painted over 500 paintings that depicted the enigmatic and the subtle spirituality, tranquility and harmony of the mountains.

Their solemn, majestic, mighty essence and significance for humanity is a symbol of purity, which is the highest aspiration towards beauty and knowledge. He also painted monasteries, monks and local architecture, flora, fauna and folklores of the region. Looking into his paintings, therefore, is like understanding the culture that lives in these Himalayan ranges.

One of my favourite paintings is "Koksar Camp, the oldest place in Lahaul." Koksar village is the gateway into Lahaul and the oldest place in the region. Drawn inexplicitly to the vast mountain ranges of the Koksar Valley, the painting is so rich in both, form and colours, that the viewer is transported to the valley. The division of space, majestic peaks and houses are given a dramatic, mystical meaning. The tiny people and tents add life to the work.

Roerich painted fine hues and tones of the mountains and their ethereal transparency. His love for the Himalayas is truly depicted in his works. Their splendour, with vivid yet subtle colours, a touch of cubist approach, depicts these mountain ranges with all their tonalities which he could fathom. This became his distinctive style, inspiring generations of artists

Nicholas Roerich Master Of The Himalayas

He spoke of the need to 'think more broadly,' to be less confined by borders and boundaries, especially, when it came to arts and sciences. Just as with people, he felt that objects should not be confined to their place of creation, that these objects should be given freedom 'to move about and to bring new conditions of life where they are, at the time, most needed.' Again, to quote Mary Siegrist, he was architect, archaeologist, educator, poet, painter, prophet, with the last three categories forming the peak and imparting to his works of art, a peculiar 'iridescence that is his alone.' He always followed his 'own line of light.' No man, woman or child could stand before his paintings and not get back 'sounds of the infinite sea beyond,' listening with the inner ear, seeing with the inner eye, bringing back 'some tidal wave of beauty.'

such as Bireswar Sen. Sen was well-versed with the Bengal School of art, when he decided to paint the Himalayas, after his encounter with Roerich in 1932. Sen made numerous miniature paintings in watercolour, depicting the Himalayas. These are now considered as national treasure. That he drew inspiration from Roerich can be witnessed through one of his works.

The monumental expanse of the snow-laden mountains is beautifully depicted in this work, with a subtle inclusion of tiny human figures at the centre, which adds to the limitless nature of the peaks.

The artist's quest to find mystical sensibility and spirituality continues through his various creations and depictions of the Himalayas.

The National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi is a place I love going to, although, I must also say that I don't visit it as often as I should. One of India's few and the best by a long shot, state-owned art galleries, NGMA's collection is a medium sized but fascinating one. Leaving aside the Gallery's collection of contemporary Indian art, which is sizable, it is the permanent exhibits of the Bengal School of Art and those of other artists related to it like Amrita Sher-Gil, that keep drawing me back. There's a degree of inventiveness and boldness to the work of this large body of artists that I find lacking in most of our contemporaries.

The collection that I never miss, however, is that of the Russian artist-philosopher-mystic-anthropologist-archaeologist-traveller, Nicholas Roerich. His mountain paintings are unmatched in their breadth, depth and scope. It's almost like stepping into an alternate universe where mountains perform the roles of deity, habitat, scenery and a spiritual challenge, all at once.

Nicholas Roerich was born in St. Petersburg (later, called Leningrad by the Soviets and now St. Petersburg, again) on September 27, 1874. He grew up on his family's old estate at Isvara,

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Study of Mountains. 1934-5 (3)



Study of Mountains. 1934-5 (12)



Study of Shey Monastery, Ladakh. 1934-35

and 'his days were devoted to outdoor wanderings,' where his fascination for the undulating terrain

of the land as well as 'visages of antiquity' grew. He had 'beheld the image of beauty.' He went on

#ART

A Ladakhi Song

Though the gates of the East entered the Hindu Faith. Say did you pass by the way of the sacred word? The Persian kingdom erects the gates of the South. Did you pass through them? The celestial message of China opens to us the western gates. How did you pass the way of the Chinese Sign? And the gates of the north belong to Gesar Khan. How did you pass by the way of the sword stroke? Did you pass the gates leading to Lhasa, where lies the way of the seekers of truth? The East—the gates of Indra. There, hollowing the sacred word and custom, we rested. The Persian kingdom possesses the gates of the south. There we revered the border of the noble ones. The celestial message of China opened to us the western gates. Affirming the dates it gave us happiness. The gates to the warrior, Gesar, are on the north. By the clash of swords we passed these nations. And through the gates of Lhasa, seeking for truth We passed, testing in silence our spirit.

to study both, law and art, excelling academically in both, although, his heart and soul were in artistic creation. His first painting, 'The Messenger,' exhibited in 1896, was bought by no less an *astute connoisseur* (the greatest honor, Russia could bestow upon the young artist at this first appearance) than the famed, *Paul Tretyakov*, who gave his name to the magnificent *Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow*.

The 'Roerich effect' was great on America, too. When the exhibition of his works opened in New York in 1920, his paintings 'laid claim to the love of thousands,' for their strength lay beyond the mere visual and intellectual, for they added to these qualities, 'the ingredients of immortal things, truth which speaks directly to the hearts of men,' a truth that 'America recognized as calling to her own spirit of creation.' The American poet, *Mary Siegrist* said of Roerich, 'If as Dostoevsky

Veganuary Month

Veganuary Month is a month-long celebration of all things vegan and was created to encourage non-vegans to try out the lifestyle. Often referred to as a lifestyle and not a diet, vegans, who practice *veganism*, aim to reduce the suffering of animals, help the planet and improve global health by not eating any animal products such as meat, dairy, or eggs and also by abstaining from contributing to animal exploitation such as honey production, creation of leather goods and industrial farming of animals.



Shang Thang Highland. 1924-25



Study of Mountains. 1924-28



Buddhist Monks Returning from Lahaul. 1934-35

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Then, after beholding America, he travelled to India and Tibet. He was already a connoisseur of Indian eyes. *Rabindranath Tagore* said, (for Roerich's creations) "How great is your art!" Roerich was hearing the call of Asia, for in his words, "There is pitched the tent for all travellers and seekers." It was a view that saw only 'mutual ignorance' as constituting the borders between Asia and America and Europe, where a 'haughty Western civilization' had blinded the Europeans. Roerich was the first to say, "I wish our priests would think about Buddha in the same manner that the cultured Lamas speak of Christ. Only in such sympathetic understanding lies the guarantee of future growth."

Roerich made India his home for the rest of his life, and his identification with this country was a permanent one, as if he had finally come to rest, after all his journeys, in search of that beauty of life, the dream that had captured his imagination from his childhood days on his parents' estate outside St. Petersburg, as if the spirit of Russia had co-mingled with the soul of India. It was the perfect union.

He spoke of the need to 'think more broadly,' to be less confined

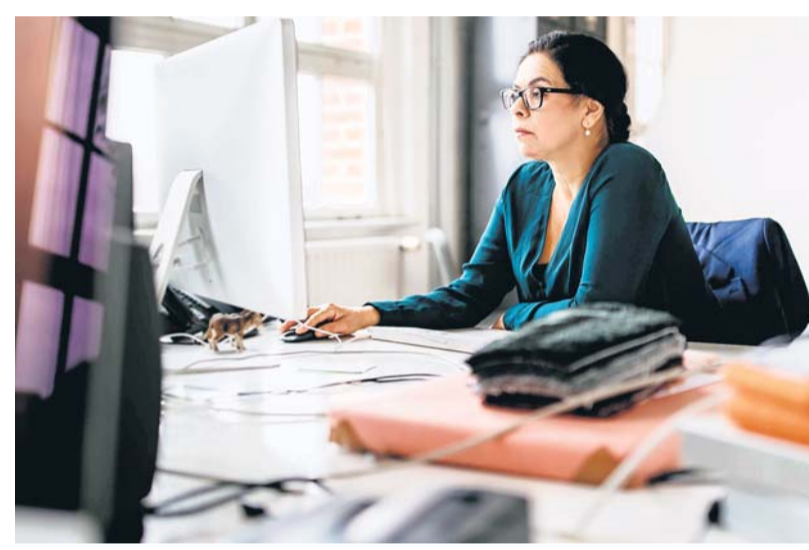
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#CAREER EVOLUTION

How to decide if you should change jobs or entire industries

Are you just frustrated with your work environment? Or the problem is the actual work that you're doing?

It's been one of those days, you've been toiling away on a project that you don't care about, for weeks, when your co-worker dismisses everything you did in front of your boss. This, they did, after they refused to help, lounging at their desk, shopping on Amazon. You tally the satisfaction that work provides you and it scores zero. You want to quit but it's hard to discern if you want to abandon your job or the field entirely. While job dissatisfaction can be fleeting, many of us can remain at a job that we despise for years, without making a move, especially when we can't figure out, if we just dislike the gig or the entire occupation.



Take your time

"Many of our parents worked at the same jobs their entire lives, but today, it's fair to give a job in a year or less before peacing out, if it's not a good fit," says Ebony Butler, a psychologist and creator of My Therapy Cards. "Once you get an understanding of what the job is, you can evaluate it from a good place of objectivity."

"Before leaving a job or field, ask yourself, why you want to leave and why now," advises career expert at LinkedIn, Catherine Fisher. "No one loves their job every single moment of every single day, but if you feel like you're struggling more days than not, it could be time to switch things up. Ask yourself if there are ways to improve areas of dissatisfaction, and what would make you happier."

The goal is to not do anything impulsive, but to seek to answer the question of "Is it the people and the processes around you that are frustrating you or is it the nature of the work itself?" says Ranjay Gulati, a Harvard Business School professor and the host of the Deep Purpose podcast. How much of your dissatisfaction can you attribute to "your boss, your colleagues, and the work environment and culture of the place you work for?"

Dream big

Before making a move, ask yourself these questions: What do you value



in a job or occupation? Flexibility? Community? The ability to travel? Helping others? Distance yourself from any expectations pushed upon you by your parents, by society, or by fate, and ask yourself, if you could do anything for a living, what would you do?

"One of the things, that is the main culprit of us staying in jobs, is our inability to dream," says Butler. "The world is set up in a way that makes you think that you have to have your career figured out by a certain age and certain time, so, by the time you get there, you've stopped dreaming."

Question distorted thinking

Many of us hold onto warped views on what it means to succeed, often echoing our parents' voices. If we

want to quit a job, we call ourselves lazy. This gets exacerbated when you don't trust your own judgment because you've made rash decisions in the past. A lot of times, our confidence is wiped out by things that happened to us in our lives," Butler says.

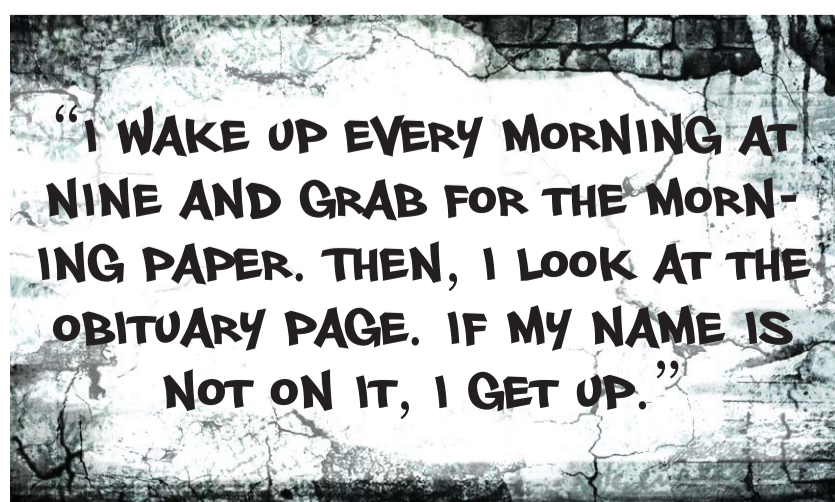
She recommends reminding yourself that it's okay to strive to be happy. Then ask yourself, what is the worst thing that could happen if you did quit? "If it doesn't work out, I can always go back to being there," she says. "Nobody can take away my credentials and experience."

Educate yourself

Before leaving a job or career, talk to others who have explored new career paths and jobs, especially if they come from a similar background as you. "Get some wise counsel," says Butler. "These decisions don't have to be made in a vacuum."

"Look to the experts in the field that you'd love to be in, and see if your skills line up with theirs," says Fisher. "You'll get a sense of the problems that they're trying to solve and the skills needed to solve them." Even if you aren't able to leave your current job or field immediately, you can always take steps toward a more satisfying future, attending classes at night to learn the skills that will help you reach your goals. Adding new skills will make you more attractive to hiring managers, no matter where you end up.

THE WALL

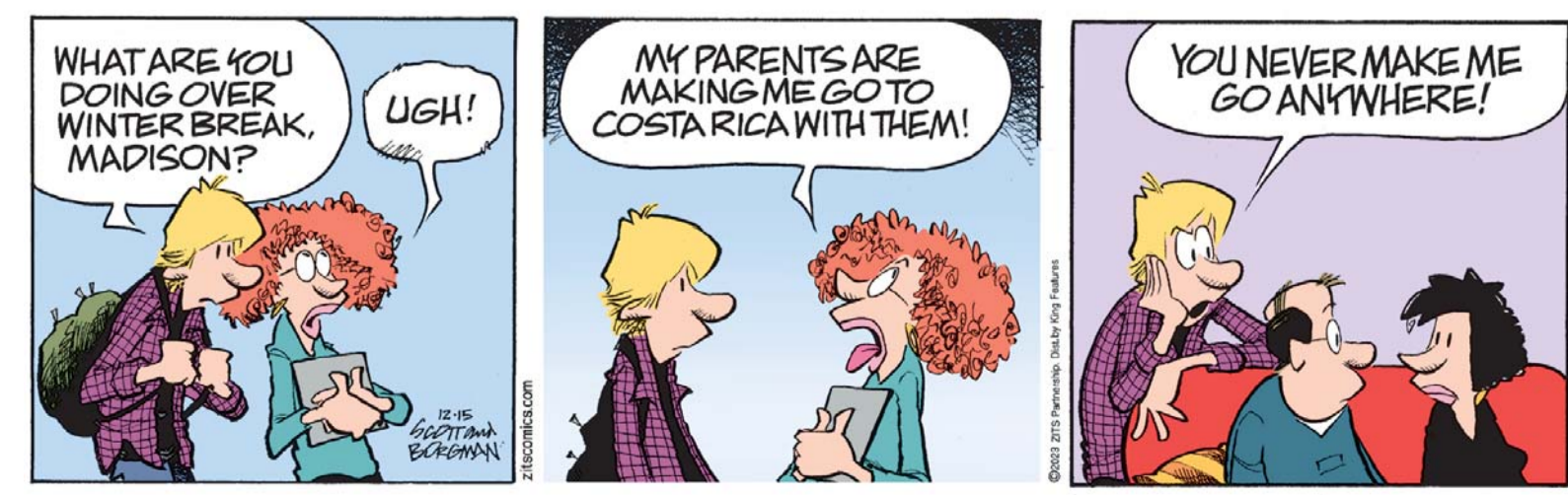


BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

