

‘Rakhi stand for pledge of purity for peace & happiness’

The power of purity is immense. It could compel Yomraj, the lord of death to restore Satyavan to Savitri. Nachiketa’s purity of heart could win over Yamraj’s blessing of spiritual wisdom on secrets of life and death. It is the same power of chastity with which Sati Anusaya could transform deities Brahma, Vishnu and Shankar into small babies when they in the guise of rishis wanted the Sati to serve them food without any clothe on her body.

Such great strength of divinity is also said to emanate from true observance of Raksha Bandhan which falls every Shravan Purnima and which is described in scriptures as a Punya Pradayak (merit giving) and Vish Todak(vice demolishing) Parv.

Many mythological stories that depict the magical powers of Rakhi, have been advanced in scriptures to restore civility and purity of relations among human beings even between husband and wife.

One such story says deity Indra’s humiliating defeat from devil Brutra in a fierce battle that spanned twelve years. Lord Indra who preferred death to dishnour decided to enter into final fight with the devil unto death. Indra took this vow oon 14th bright moon day of Shravan and next day on Shravan Purnima deity priest Brihaspati tied a Rakhi to Indra wishing latter’s victory and well being.

After that queen Indrani also tied Rakhi to her husband Indra’s right wrist by uttering divine wards of welfare. Thus empowered by rakhis of Dev Guru and Indrni, Lord Indra could regain his lost paradise by defecting and destroying the devil king. Probably taking cue from this story of diety priest Brihaspati tying rakhi to deity king Indra, the historical origin of Raksha Bandhan is normally traced back to Vedic period when Brahmins started the practice of tying *mouli* (red-saffron thread) round the wrist of their *yajmans* (clients) showering on them blessings of benefaction.

Rakhi in its must rudimentary form of a *mouli* made sacred by Brahminical chanting of hymns used to be taken as a token of divine protection. Even till today this practice of Brahmins tying the sacred thread to their *yajmans* on the day of Rakhi is still prevalent in many Hindu temples and families.

How and when this religious ritual took its cultural form of establishing an emotional bond of brotherly love and protection for sister is not known but another mythological story probably seems to serve as the basis for beginning of the cultural process and practice of sisters tying rakhis to their brothers.

The spiritual story narrates the rakhi tying cermany between Lord Yama and his sister Yamuna. Highly pleased by the purity and serenity of the ceremony, the lord of death declares that whoso ever ties rakhi from a sister, will ever remain free from the fear of Yamdoots (Emissaries of Yama).

Historically, during several foreign invasions starting from the Greeks to Mughals, Hindu women, as a matter of expediency, utilized Rakhi to communicate sisterly love and relations even to the invaders in anticipation of protection to self and to the kingdom. It is said that Greek hero Alexander duning his invasion of India had received a rakhi and repuest from king Puru’s wife to save her husband’s life in the battle field. Mughal emporers like Humayun and Akbar also had extended their hands of help and protection to Hindu Queen and ladies in danger, as a mark of rare respect to ‘Rakhi-sisters’.

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Now-a-days, the ceremony has almost lost its broader trans-cultural applications and deeper spiritual implications. The prospects of purity and protection which rakhi symbolizes and stands for have long been forgotten and forsaken with the onslaughts of modern materialistic values and lifestyles. The ceremony is simply serving as a routine reminder of those kinds of pure feelings, selfless love and a sense of caring and sharing (among brothers and sisters) which have become scarce in today's world of mundane madness.

Rakhi rituals in fact, reveal richer inner meanings and healthy implications which are worthy of inculcation by one and all. When a sister ties rakhi to her grown up brother, she spiritually seems to inspire him to see other's sisters as his own and not to look upon them with lecherousness.

While applying of Tilak (Vermilon) on brother's forehead by the sister should remind him of the true identity and image of his inner self as a soul in point-of-light form in the forehead between eyebrows, the piece of colored thread, Rakhi round his wrist is supposed to signify his pledge of purity in life and his promise for practising and promoting fellow feeling and fraternity in society.

Similarly, sharing of sweets between brother and sister on the day of rakhi spiritually implores us to be soft and sweet in our speech, manner and interactions, while the practice of presenting a gift in cash or kind to the sister in return for rakhi intrinsically enjoins on us the task of self transformation by surrendering and sublimating our innate vices i.e. lust, greed, anger, ego, attachment idleness etc. in the subtle fire of self introspection and divine meditation on Almighty Supreme Soul.

We will be said to have really bound (Bandhan) ourselves with the sacred nylon of God's love and protection (Raksha), when we pledge purity, virtuosity and righteousness in our thoughts, words and deeds and when we resolve to cooperate with each other and work for establishing of a vice less, non-violent, healthy, harmonious and happy society in powerful and loveful yoga or communion with the Supreme Being.

If we truly understand these higher meanings and wisdom behind the rakhi rituals and observe them as a lifelong process of practising and promoting human, moral, cultural, social and spiritual values and empowerment, it will help to restore positiveness and virtues in life and society which rakhi festival epitomizes.

(Brahma Kumar Sushant)

Media Coordinator, Brahma Kumaris Institution, R-4 Hari Nagar, Opp. Pratap Nagar Market, New Delhi-110064

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