

Raksha Bandhan



Shravani is an ancient Vedic festival traditionally associated with the Brahmins on which day they change their sacred thread. Both Raksha Bandhan and Shravani are celebrated on the full moon day of the month of Shravan (August).

Rakshabandhan or Rakhi the more popular of the two festivals is a day when brothers and sisters reaffirm their bonds of affections. Sisters tie colourful threads or Rakhis on their brother's wrists. This thread which pulsates with sisterly love and sublime sentiments, is rightly called the Rakhi. The brothers in turn promise to protect their sisters and give them gifts. Raksha Bandhan is celebrated in different forms in different areas and it is also known by the names like rakhi,

rakhri and saluno.

Rakshabandhan is a very special Indian festival, the celebration of the special bond between a brother and a sister. Around mid-August, on Shravan Purnima, Hindus all over celebrate Raksha Bandhan. "Raksha" means protection, "bandhan" means bound or binding. The festival is also known as Balev. As per the traditions, the sister on this day prepares the pooja thali with diya, roli, chawal and rakhis. She worships the deities, ties Rakhi on her brothers' wrists and wishes for their well-being. The brother in turn acknowledges the love with a promise to be by the sister's side through thick and thin and gives her a token gift. Raksha Bandhan tightens the bond of love between the sister and brother.

The practice of tying thread, was prevalent among the Rajputs and our history is full of instances related to the significance of this tradition. At the time of war when the brave Rajput soldiers prepared to go to the battlefield, the womenfolk followed the ritual of tying a thread around their wrist after applying a dash of vermilion powder on their forehead. This was considered a sign of good omen and the ladies believed that it would protect their men from the enemy's blow and bring them victory. Today children and women all around the country filling the soilders with the zest to protect them against the dangers of the enemy tie Rakhi on the wrists of soldiers.

Rakshabandhan if taken in true sense has a much broader perspective; the festival encompasses the true sense of peace and brotherhood. The values propagated by the occasion if inculcated by all human beings can bring the much-needed relief from the ongoing violence and mistrust.

The rich Indian mythology provides a religious reason to celebrate the day in a specific way. Many epics are related to the day and the origin of Raksha Bandhan. The festival finds a mention in most of the epics and its origins can be traced back to the mythological Pouranik times.

The Shravana or the monsoon month carries all hues and shades of nature and emotions. Religiously speaking Shravan is a pious month and the full moon day of this all-important month is considered to be a very holy day. It is celebrated in different ways for different reasons almost throughout the country.

For the siblings it is the eternal tie of love, for Brahmins the day to take the pledge of Brahmanik rites and for those who depend sea and monsoon, it is the beginning of the new season.

Indian festivals are based on the weather changes and their significance in the lives of people, but they do have a story to support the celebrations.

The legend in the Bhavishya Puran refers to a war between the Gods and the Demons. The demon King Brutra was advancing and the Gods lead by lord Indra, were on verge of defeat. The king of Gods, Indra approached Guru Brihaspati to find a solution to the situation. Brihaspati asked Indra to tie a sacred thread on his wrist, powered by the sacred mantras on the Shravan Purnima. Lord Indra's Queen Sachi, also called

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Cultural Calendar for August 2007

August 10

Film: Gandhi
Language: English
Directed by: Richard Attenborough
Venue & Time: ICC 5.30 p.m. Duration : 3 hrs

August 15

Performance by renowned Odissi danseuse Ms. Bindu Juneja & her troupe from India to celebrate the 60th anniversary of India's Independence. Sponsored by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, New Delhi
Venue & Time: Bishops College Auditorium, Colombo 03 at 6.30 p.m.

August 17

Lecture cum demonstration by Ms. Bindu Juneja & her troupe
Venue & Time: ICC 6.30 p.m.

August 24

Film: Nehru
Language: English
Venue & Time: ICC 5.30 p.m. Duration : 3 hrs

August 29

Bharatha Natyam Recital by Ms. Prashanthini Yogaraja & Ms. Rishathini Vamadevan, Diploma holders of Rukmini Devi College of Fine Arts, India
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m.

August 31

Vocal & Instrumental Recital by the students of Nadeshwaralaya Academy of Fine Arts
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m.

(Admission to all programmes is free and on first come first served basis except to the 15th August 2007 programme, which is by invitation)

Indrani, empowered the thread and tied it on to his hand on the decided day. The power of the sacred thread called Raksha helped the Gods to victory.

The tradition of thread tying still continues. It is a gesture of goodwill. According to another legend, the demon King Bali was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu had taken up the task to guard his kingdom leaving his own abode in Vaikunth. Goddess Laxmi wished to be with her lord back in her abode. She went to Bali disguised as a Brahmin woman for seeking refuge till her husband came back.

During the Shravan Purnima celebrations, Laxmiji tied the sacred thread to the King. Upon being asked, she revealed who she was and why she was there. The king was touched by her goodwill for his family and her purpose and requested the Lord to accompany her. He sacrificed all he had for the Lord and his devoted wife. Thus the festival is also called Baleva, that is Raja Bali's devotion to the Lord. It is said that since then it has been a tradition to invite sisters in Shravan Purnima for the thread tying ceremony or the Raksha Bandhan.

It is said that the Raksha Bandhan was a ritual followed by Lord Yama (the Lord of Death) and his sister Yamuna. Yamuna tied rakhi to Yama and bestowed immortality. Yama was so moved by the serenity of the occasion that he declared that whoever gets a rakhi tied from his sister and promised her protection will become immortal.

In the epics Raksha Bandhan finds a mention in Mahabharata when Lord Krishna advised Yudhishtir to perform the ceremony to protect himself and the army from the dangers of the war. It is said that Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas tied rakhi on her grandson Abhimanyu and Draupadi on lord Krishna.

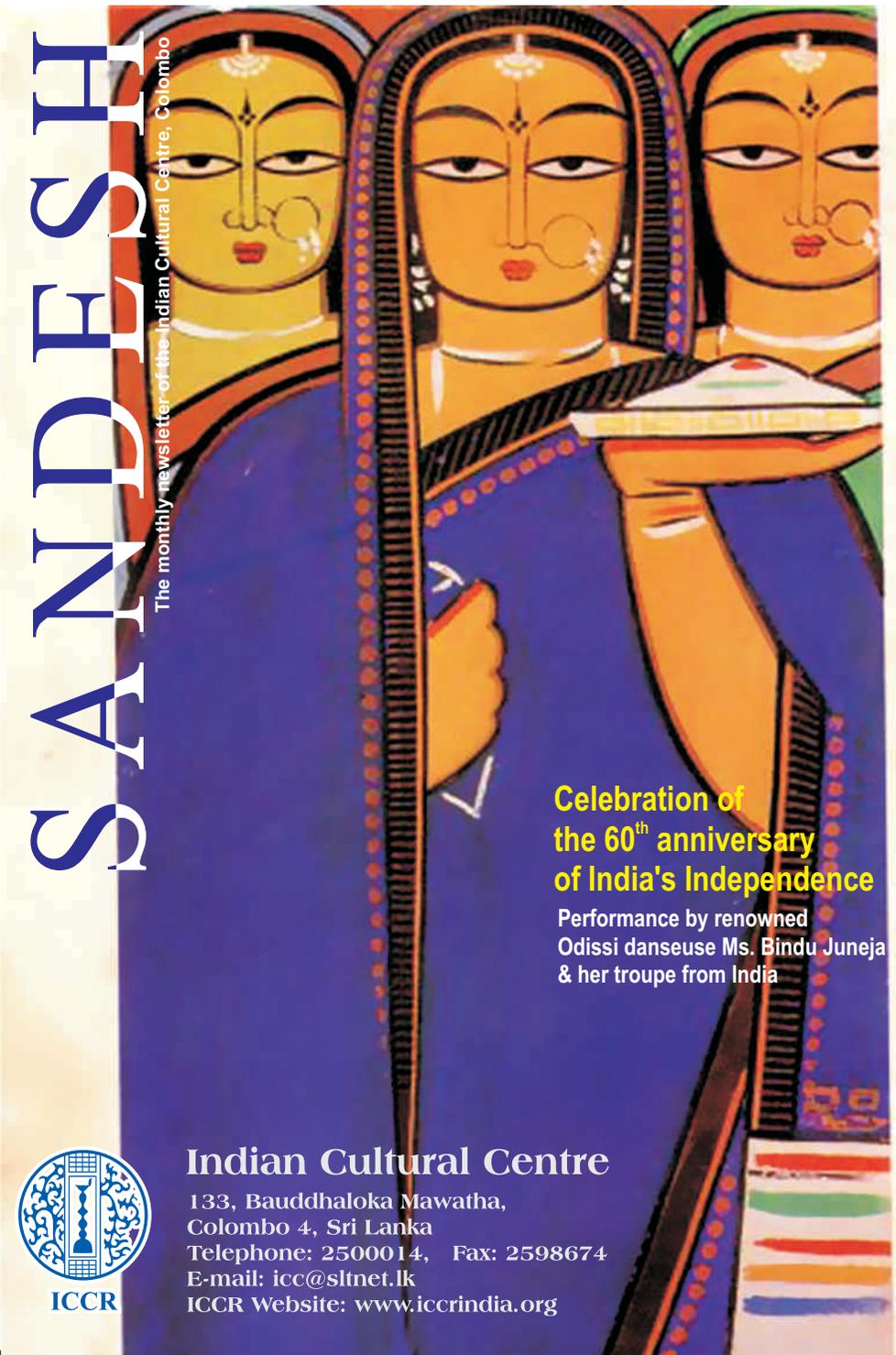
Though now it is considered as a brother and sister festival, it was not always so. There have been examples

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Celebration of the 60th anniversary of India's Independence

Performance by renowned Odissi danseuse Ms. Bindu Juneja & her troupe from India

Past Events

June 8

Hindustani Vocal Music Recital by Mr. Asith Attapattu



Mr. Asith Attapattu an ICCR scholarship holder from the Bhathkhande Music University presented a captivating Hindustani vocal music recital at the Centre. Asith commenced his performance with raag Bageshri set to Vilambit ek taal, Drut teen taal and Drut ek taal this was followed by Drut Khyal in raag Hansadhvani and Tappa in raag Kafi. He concluded the recital with Banaras Gharana.

June 12

Bharatha Natyam Recital by Hari Padman



Hari Padman, Lecturer from Kalakshetra presented a brilliant Bharatha Natyam recital which captivated the audience. He presented around seven items including a brisk Thilliana.

June 15

Kathak dance recital by Roshani Ratnayake



Ms. Roshani Ratnayake, student from Bhathkhande Music University presented a Kathak dance recital at the Centre. Her performance included "Vishnu Vandana", "Vilambith Laya" – a section containing different varieties of Lucknow Gharana, "Madhya Laya", "Dreth Laya" from Lucknow Gharana and also a "Thumri"

June 19

Sangeet Sagaram – An introduction to Carnatic classical music



A four-part lecture series on understanding and appreciating Carnatic classical music was conducted by the Centre starting from 19th June 2007. Kalasuri Arunthathy Sri Ranganathan, eminent vocalist and musicologist conducted the lecture series. She was joined by several eminent musicians demonstrating on various instruments. The lecture series took place at the Centre on 19th, 21st, 25th & 26th June 2007. Various elements of Carnatic vocal music, which were explained and demonstrated very well, were greatly appreciated by those who attended the lecture series.



LIBRARY

Recent Library Accessions

The Cultural Heritage of India: Vol.1: The Early Phases (Prehistoric, Vedic, Upanisadic, Jaina & Buddhist)
Calcutta : Ramakrishna Mission, 1993, 652p. 002842
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The Cultural Heritage of India: Vol.2: Itihasas, Puranas, Dharma & other Sastras.
Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission, 1993, 738p. 002843
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Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission, 1993, 695p. 002844
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The Cultural Heritage of India: Vol. 4: The Religions
Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission, 1993, 775p. 002845
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The Cultural Heritage of India: Vol. 5: Languages & Literatures
Calcutta : Ramakrishna Mission, 1993. 839p. 002846
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The Cultural Heritage of India: Vol.6: Science and Technology
Calcutta, Ramkrishna Mission, 1993, 550p. 002847
306.54CUL

The Mahavamsa or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon
Geiger, Wilhelm (Trans)
New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2006, 300p
002848
954.930.1MAH

Culavamsa : Being the more recent part of the Mahavamsa
Geiger, Wilhelm (Trans)
New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2003, 362p.
002849
954.930.1CUL

Films in August



Gandhi

Nehru

A series of films based on the freedom movement and its front rank leaders. Films sponsored by the Secretariat for commemoration of 50th Anniversary of India's independence Government of India and release by the National Film Corporation of India

Raksha Bandhan .. Contd..

in history where in rakhi has just been a raksha or protection. It could be tied by wife, a daughter or mother. The Rishis tied rakhi to the people who came seeking their blessings. The sages tied the sacred thread to themselves to safe guard them from the evil. It is by all means the 'Papa Todak, Punya Pradayak Parva' or the day that bestows boons and ends all sins as it is mentioned in the scriptures.

Rakhi for many centuries encompassed the warmth shared between the siblings but now it goes way beyond it. Some tie rakhi to neighbors and close friends signifying a peaceful co-existence of every individual. Congregations like Rakhi Utsavs, popularized by Rabindranath Tagore, promote the feeling of unity and a commitment to all members of society to protect each other and encourage a harmonious social life.

The day has a deeper perspective in today's scenario. The occasion holds for a life long pledge to practice moral, spiritual and cultural values. The values and the sentiments attached to the rituals of this festival are worth inculcating by the whole human race, the sentiments of harmony and peaceful coexistence.

Raksha Bandhan assumes all forms of Raksha or protection, of righteousness and destroyer of all sin. The rakhi tying ritual has become so much a part of the families that come what many brothers and sisters try to reach out to each other on this particular day bringing back the oneness of the family, binding the family together in an emotional bond.

It is not the rituals, customs and traditions that change over the time but the celebration styles and perspectives that become contemporary. For centuries this festival has been celebrated in the same way. The traditions are followed with the same enthusiasm. Only the festivities have been blown up to a larger scale. It is the celebration of the chaste bond of love amongst the siblings.

The preparations begin much in advance. Some twenty days ahead of the festival you can see colorful rakhis in the market. Girls start the shopping and preparations quite early. They shop for new clothes and buy rakhis, especially the ones that have to be sent to the brothers staying far. The sweet shops, the garment shops, gift shops, all are flooded with things to attract people.

On the Raksha Bandhan day, the festivities start by the day break. Everyone gets ready early and gathers for the worship of the deities. After invoking the blessings of the Gods, the sister performs brother's arti, puts tika and chawal on his forehead and ties Rakhi amongst chanting of mantras. Then she gives him sweets and gifts. The brother accepts her offerings and vows to take care of her and be by her side in the time of need. As a token he gives the sister a return gift and sweets.

The Raksha Bandhan ceremony ends here and the celebrations begin. The family reunion itself is the reason for celebration. Tasty dishes, sweets, gifts, sing and dance and what not. Any Indian festival is incomplete without this.

For those siblings who due to distances are not able to meet, it is a day for remembering the bygone time when the day was celebrated together. Emotions are expressed through e mails, e cards, rakhi greeting cards, and rakhis through internet or mail. Nothing on this day can stop the overflowing emotions.

Congregations like Rakhi Mohotsavas were started by Rabindra Nath Tagore in Shantiniketan. He started this to propagate the feeling of brotherhood amongst people. This invoked trust and feeling of peaceful coexistence. The festival for them is a symbol of harmony. The tradition continues as people tie rakhis on neighbours and close friends. It is a festival denoting the national sentiments of harmony.

Source: website