

raksha bandhan

An Indian festival is incomplete without the family gatherings, exchange of sweets and gifts, lots of noise, singing and dancing. Raksha Bandhan is just the same, where we celebrate having a brother or a sister who is there to look after us.

Raksha Bandhan falls on Shraavan Purnima (full moon day of the month Shraavan), this usually happens in August. It is originally a festival celebrated in Northern and Western regions of India, but now it is celebrated everywhere with the same enthusiasm. Many weeks beforehand, the shops start filling up with Rakhi's and expensive gifts. Some people even prefer buying a new outfit to wear on the day. The sales of Rakhi's are even spread to supermarkets and newsagents, whereas for gifts, the interests vary and more choice is found in the shops.

On the day, the sisters usually wake up early and prepare a pooja sani. This consists of tubs of kanku, chokha, the rakhi threads, diva lamp, agarbati and something sweet. They then go to their brother's house to tie the rakhi's and in India, as they rarely see each other due to distances, both gift each other. Firstly the kanku is placed on their forehead, and chokha is then stuck upon it. Rakhi thread is tied while the sister chants a mantra. The mantra means that – as the sun shines sunlight, as the radish spreads its seeds, I tie the Rakhi to you, my brother and wish that you live long. I tie the rakhi that was tied to King Bali, the king of Demons, and I pray that this Rakhi never fails to protect you. They then light the diva lamp and agarbati, performing the aarti on the brother. Then something sweet is often offered to the brother.

what does the rakhi represent?

Tying the rakhi, you wish for the brother's well-being, success and protection for your brother. By giving you a return gift, he acknowledges the love and promises to be by the sister's side, through thick and thin. He wishes her a good life and pledges to take care of her. This day pulls the siblings together, is a day that celebrates the brotherhood and sisterhood, their love and togetherness.

how the view of raksha bandhan has changed

Our lifestyles are busier, and we don't usually have time to meet our brothers and sisters, no matter how near or far we live. Raksha Bandhan still brings us together, and reunites our family but some of the traditions have changed. Many sisters keep the tying of the rakhi very simple. The kanku, chokha is placed and the rakhi thread is tied. Many don't even say the mantra, not all females know the mantra or even knew you had to say one. Then something sweet is given and as we are busy through most of the day, this usually happens in the evening. Even the concept of rakhi's have changed, they can be replaced by wristwatches, or jeweled rakhis, such as bracelets. These are more durable, longer lasting, but have altered the whole concept of rakhi's which many people spend their time making by hand. However, Rakhi is a thread that is tied around the brother's right wrist, and it shows the sister's love, and reminds them of the times they spend together. A common gift is money, and many sisters collect the cash and buy one useful thing out of it. The view of Raksha Bandhan has changed, become more widespread but also seen as a simple festival, not about the togetherness, but about the value of yourself, which is shown by your "earnings" on that day.

As I said before, traditionally, gifts are given to the sister, and sometimes to the brother's as well. When choosing a gift, you have to keep in mind your siblings interests, anything they have been wanting for a long time. At the end of the day, it should remind the siblings of the love and togetherness, and this is not shown by what is written on the price tag but the meaning behind it.