

## THE TRUE SIGNIFICANCE OF ***RAKSHA BANDHAN***

The **Festival of Rakhi** has a special place in the hearts of all sisters and brothers, because on this day, they *reinstates the commitment to their pure relationship*. But does it hold the same richness that it began with? Do we know why it started or has it become ‘just one of those things we Indians do’? We know the literal meaning of Rakshabandhan – the **bondage of protection** and as per tradition, sisters apply ‘*tilak*’ on the forehead of their brothers, tie a colourfully decorated “*rakhi*” or thread on their brother’s wrist, and offer *sweets* as a token of their love. In return, the brother vows to protect his sister under all circumstances and of course, gives his sister ‘*kharchi*’ or a gift. But do we stop to wonder what happens if the brother is younger than the sister or if both of them live miles apart, or what if a girl does not have any brothers? Do only females need protection? Are their brothers immune to sorrow and problems? This is not an attempt to make a mockery of our auspicious festival, but is it celebrated with the correct attitude? Today, it seems to be more commercialised – what with all the different sizes and designs of Rakhis and the greeting cards that we find in the stores. *All of our Indian festivals have a reason behind them; all we need to do is use our intellect to appreciate our rich culture.*

**Raksha bandhan** has a much deeper spiritual explanation. It is a reminder that as souls, we are children of the One Supreme Soul, our Spiritual Father. Its true significance lies in portraying the viceless and pure love between brother and sister. The ‘*tilak*’ is a symbol of awakening one’s awareness of “***Soul-consciousness***” – i.e. *realization of being a Soul, or divine light energy, and NOT the physical body*. It is also a sign of being victorious. **Victory** here signifies overpowering man’s greatest enemy - the VICIES of anger, sex-lust, greed, attachment, ego..... Tying a “*rakhi*” is a symbol of a bond of chastity or purity in thought, word and deed. We face difficulties when we come under the influence of the vices and commit wrong actions. No action goes fruitless – good or bad, we will face the consequences. So, when we make a pledge to God - that we will not allow our thoughts, words or our deeds to be ruled by the vices - God bestows on us Divine wisdom, becomes our true protector and liberator, and showers us with unlimited peace and happiness! Under His canopy of protection, we can be truly safe.

*Sweetening of the mouth* is symbolic of the victory we will feel when we overcome the vices. God does not ask us for money or elaborate gifts – all He asks is that we *give up the vices* that are deeply hidden in the ‘pockets of the souls.’ We have to earn our happiness and security – we do not need to be dependant on anyone.

At the present time, *fear is one the biggest diseases spreading in our world*. By staying in soul-consciousness and re-affirming our vow to God, the Almighty, we can bring about a world of purity, peace and prosperity! This is how to truly celebrate Rakshabandhan.