

Celebrating...

Raksha Bandhan

August 2nd offers practitioners a great chance to emphasise the value of strong sibling relationships, says **Linda Mort...**

Raksha Bandhan is an Indian celebration of sisterly and brotherly respect and love. 'Raksha' means protection and 'Bandhan', to tie. A sister will wrap a red and gold rakhi (sacred thread of love) round her brother's wrist and say a prayer for his wellbeing, as she makes a mark on his forehead with red powder. She may also give him a gift of sweets, such as coconut burfi. In return, her brother will promise to protect her always, and will also give her a gift, perhaps of sweets, clothing or money.

The festival is celebrated by both Hindus and Sikhs. It is thought that the celebration originated from the Hindu story about Indra, king of the lesser gods. The god Vishu gave Indra's wife a thread to tie on Indra's right wrist in order to protect him from the demon king Bali.

Exploring the festival

GUESSING GAMES

Ask girls who have brothers to bring in photographs of their siblings. Display the pictures for other children to guess whose brother they are, talking about how they look similar to and different from their sisters.

POETRY, PLEASE

Sisters can make up simple poems for their brothers and write, or have them scribed, in a card. To help them think and talk about what they feel about their brothers, lay a length of

about the author

Linda Mort is an early years specialist. Next issue, she will look at Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year.

wallpaper, reverse side up, on the floor and ask girls to sit around it. At the top of the sheet draw some hair with felt-tipped pens and, underneath, a pair of eyes. Below this, mark a simple 'face' with two eyes and a smiley mouth, and underneath that, another face with a laughing, open mouth. In turn, each sister can talk about the colour of her brother's hair and eyes, what makes him happy, and what makes him laugh. When written, a poem could be something like: 'Brown hair and brown eyes, you are happy when you play football and you laugh when I tickle you. I love you, my brother.'

MAKING RAKHIS

Rakhis are made from intertwined red and gold thread and can be simple or adorned with glittery beads. Some can be personalised with pictures of a brother's interests and hobbies. Show children pictures of rakhis on the Internet (Google search: pictures of raksha banhan rakhis).

Children can make simple rakhis by twisting red and yellow wool together. Stick the ends of the two lengths of wool to the edge of a table, so that they hang down, and ask children to twist one length over the other. Help each child, as necessary, to knot both ends and tie them together. Some girls may like to cut out a small circle of card, punch a hole on each side, then draw an item of interest to her brother. The ready-twisted wool can then be threaded through the holes and tied together to make the rakhi.

Sweet Offerings

WHY NOT TRY A SIMPLE COOKING ACTIVITY WITH A TIMELY CULTURAL TWIST?

Regardless of whether or not they have opposite gender siblings, children will love to make coconut burfi sweets and take them home in a decorated box. Ask each child to bring from home a washed margarine container or cottage cheese pot, with lid. They can cut paper to cover their containers, decorate this using felt-tipped pens, sequins, etc., and then use glue or sticky tape to fix it in place. For each sweet, mix one tablespoon of desiccated coconut with one teaspoon of condensed milk, pat down into an eggcup and chill for a minimum of 15 minutes. Children turn their eggcup upside down, 'bang' it sharply onto a plastic plate, and use a dessertspoon to lift the sweet gently into their decorated pot.



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