



One More Thread of Promised Protection: Debriefing Raksha-Bandhan

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Abstract

The study attempts to unfold the means of subjugation a woman faces in socio-cultural festivities like Raksha-Bandhan – a festival that, on the one hand, symbolizes the piousness and selfless love between brother and sister and a symbol of an unbreakable bond and on the other, hinders a women's subjugated status under patriarchy. For instance, the festival is sugarcoated with symbolic significance. It camouflages the structural motives of male patriarchy accessing material/resources and exchanging social capital in between kinship, controlling female sexuality by appointing a brother as a lifetime bodyguard, objectifying women as property, and women being the historic victim of various forms of gender-based violence such as dowry being considered as a significant ritual, honour-killing justified in the name of male patriarchy's love for sisters or daughters, and the forms of sexual abuse such as rape threats used as means to punish sisters or daughters if found involved in transgressing social-boundaries and standardized gender norms.

Keywords: Raksha-Bandhan, Kinship, Hinduism, Patriarchy, Pop Culture, Global market, Women Empowerment, and Gender Equality

Introduction

One wonders how beautifully these days media portrays the festive season of *Raksha-Bandhan*¹. One can notice such festivities in streets, street vendors selling the threads of million designs along roadside hoardings of special discounts, merchandised corners of shops filled with greeting cards detailing bond between brother and sister, and government subsidising travelling fare for women in public buses etc. on this occasion. Every year, this festive season reminds me of an incident from my childhood when I was forced to be a part of this festival. It was funny and disastrous too. I was literally forced to tie this thread on my wrist (or the way a maniac is handcuffed in a mental asylum) with an intention that after tying that

‘sacred’ thread we (a group of boys) will not look at girls with any socially inappropriate/mischievous motive. Being entitled to the gender-identity of the male has its pro and cons. Being male is not all about being at privileged positions but also to bear the burden of it (a gender-victim), though the intensity of burden might differ than that of women’s place in society. But again, one cannot compare the two on the same scale. One might be in a graver situation than others in one context and maybe at better in another context. Not that I have any dishonourable intentions for those girls or lack of empathic values regarding the celebration. My resistance was wholeheartedly intended to oppose the way of celebration, the forcibly imposed manner, and violation of one’s civil rights. Though they labelled me as an example of arrogance, self-centred, and immoral, when I decided to oppose that act of forcible celebration.

The effort made in this study intends to inquire about the origin, motive, and manner of the festival Raksha-Bandhan. In other words, it aims to trace the historicity of the festival, and to identify the plausible arguments for the need of the same. It has been observed that most of the people are not even aware of the fact why do they celebrate this festival. Myths and tales attached with the festival consider Raksha-Bandhan, a Hindu festival, but the practice of the same in other religious communities (among Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists) questions the praxis of the same. It is also aimed to investigate how the changing nature of society gets feed by the various ideological phenomenon to maintain the customs (Raksha-Bandhan, here) in practice. How had the same been manifested under authoritarian regimes over the period? And, in the present context, how far pop-culture along with a globalised form of market rules people’s psyche? Or in other words, to investigate the concepts of materialistic conditions and consciousness enrooted in the practice and its relationship with the maintenance of kinship ties. Finally, the intention is where, why, how, and what to look in such folk festivities rather than simply accepting or practising the same.

Such festivities provide a momentary boost to people. People, those are tired of their routine workspace, or in other words, they get a space to escape from reality. But the way extremities and motives (power mechanism) ornate these festivities become the Gordian knot for the one with consciousness about the practice. The literal meaning

of *Raksha-Bandhan* is ‘a knot of protection’. The Ancient mythologies and beliefs attached to the ritual of tying the knot on the wrist mean a blessing to save one from all the evil and bad omen. Whereas the value that festival entails changes in later ages of the medieval period as the thread of protection becomes the role or responsibility to protect someone (here, brother as protector of his sister). Though there are not any specific and authentic piece to validate the idea of the festival, so what we have got is a few mythical tales, and some medieval life-excerpts justifying the existence of Raksha-Bandhan as an important folk ritual turned into a festival. Followed by Raksha-Bandhan, the same day is also celebrated as *Upakarma* or *Avani Avittam* by Brahmin community in central and northern parts of the India, *Balrama Jayanti & Rakhi Purnima* in North India, *Gamha Purnima* in Orissa, *Jhulan Purnima* in West Bengal, *Pavitropana* in Gujarat, *Jandhyam Purnima* in Uttarakhand (Kumaon region), *Narali Purnima* in western parts of Gujarat, Goa & Maharashtra, and *Kajari Purnima* in the state of Madhya Pradesh. But how this festival came into the practice with such importance is what next section is going to deal with.

Historicity

Historically, Raksha-Bandhan as a Hindu festival has several origins (mythological narratives from ancient to medieval periods), though they do somehow contradict each other in the present form or the way it is in practice nowadays. So far, the ritual of tying this knot of protection is considered as a Hindu festival celebrated every year in between July and August (known as *Shravan Maas*) on the day of the full moon (*Shravani Purnima*). The narratives that justify the origin of this ritual fall under two categories as we already mentioned, i.e., for the blessing of protection and second, as a role or responsibility (brother protecting his sister).

As per ancient mythology, Goddess Lakshmi tied the first-ever Rakhi on King Bali’s wrist and asked for the return of Lord Vishnu to *Vaikunth* (home of Lord Vishnu), as Lord Vishnu was guarding King Bali’s empire. King Bali influenced by Goddess Lakshmi’s love for Lord Vishnu, accepts her request (Bhalla). Another excerpt of *Bhavishya Puraan* mentions Sachi (wife of Lord Indra) suggests Lord Indra, to tie a spellbound thread by Guru Brihaspati and

following so, Lord Indra won over demons and claimed back his empire (Jones and Ryan 346). A snippet from the epic *Mahabharata* also tells the practice of tying such knot of thread when accidentally Lord Krishna injured his finger by his *Sudarshana Chakra* and Draupadi tore a strip from her *Saari* and tied around his finger. Impressed with her concern and affection, Lord Krishna promised that he would protect her by any means (Aparna). The earliest cited historical evidence of *Rakhi* as a festival of brother and sister dates to 300 B.C. when Alexander, the Great's wife Roxane approached the King Puru (King Porus) with *Rakhi*. King Puru accepted her *Rakhi* and her as a sister and on Roxane's request did spare Alexander's life several times during the battle (Wieber332). But the most famous anecdote of *Raksha-Bandhan* is of Mughal emperor Humayun and Rajput Queen Karmawati (the widowedwife of Rana Saanga of *Mewar*). To save her empire from Bahadurshah (Sultan of Gujarat), Karmawati sent a *Rakhi* to Humayun and asked for help. Humayun accepted Queen Karmawati's request to protect her as a sister and marched with his troop but got stuck in the way, and in meanwhile Karmawati committed *Johar* (self-immolation) to save herself from the enemy. Though, Humayun did help Karmawati's son Vikramaditya by defeating Sultan of Gujarat and reclaimed his state (Harikrishna). But all these mythical tales and historical excerpts do not suffice the queries raised. In a way, they do contradict each other's stance.

A Handful of Contradictions

Despite the effort invested, to solve the puzzle by tracing its historical records, the labyrinth has further tangled as the query remains far-fetched. Looking closely at all the excerpts mentioned above regarding the origin of *Raksha-Bandhan*, none of these validly suffice the raised query. If analyzed, the tale of King Bali and Goddess Lakshmi is considered earliest, also known as first-ever *Rakhi* tied but the narrative lacks some primary ground. If Goddess Lakshmi tied a first-ever *Rakhi* on the wrist of King Bali, how King Bali can know the value that *Rakhi* possess, i.e., a medium of the bond between brother and sister. In that case, King Bali might be aware of *Raksha-Sutra* but not *Raksha-Bandhan* as *Raksha-Sutra* means the thread of protection irrespective of any blood-relationship and

Raksha-Bandhan as both a knot of protection and the symbol of the bond between brother and sister.

Before proceeding any further, to avoid any misunderstanding, it is necessary here to differentiate the two, i.e., Raksha-Sutra and Raksha-Bandhan. In literal terms, Raksha means protection whereas Sutra means a thread (or a medium of connection between two, or to surround something to bind it), and *Bandhan* means tying or bonding. The values both Sutra and *Bandhan* entails also differ as Sutra is used in many rituals as a symbol of well-being, prosperity, a connection (in context of alliance of two parties, for example, *Parinay* Sutra in marriage) protection from any evil omen etc. whereas *Bandhan* has very limited role and value entitled, i.e., a tie between two or more parties. For instance, a *Bandhan* of marriage, *Bandhan* of people of same kin or different, a symbol of bond-like in the present context of Raksha-Bandhan between brother and sister.

The mythical tale of Lord Indra and Guru Brihaspati also falls under the concept of Raksha-Sutra. In most of the Northern states (Bihar, eastern Uttar Pradesh, some parts of Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh etc.), *Kul-Purohits* (Brahmins) still visits their patrons on this full moon day of Shravan month and tie the spellbound thread on their patron's wrist. The narrative of King Puru and Alexander is also not eligible to be considered as the earliest event of celebrating the festival. Though, the dramatic occurrence of circumstances mentioned by Premi (1957) in his play while narrating the story of Mughal Emperor Humayun and Rajput Queen Karmawati of Mewar gives a public-hype to the celebration and adds the moralistic essence to Raksha-Bandhan, a festival of brother and sister or abstract notion of love and bonding between the two. So far, the tale of Lord Krishna and Draupadi seems a bit convincing as Lord Krishna moved by Draupadi's affection and care for him, made a promise to look after her by any means. And Lord Krishna saves her from the unceremonious incident of *Cheer-Haran* (Disrobing) when Pandavas (the five husbands of Draupadi) lost her to Kaurav as in a game of gambling. If summarized, every other mythological tale depicts a value of exchange (every act of tying Rakhi was intended with prior intention to extract some value) except the tale of Lord Krishna and Draupadi as Draupadi had no intention of expecting material or spiritual gain, though Lord Krishna himself took the stand and

promised her a protection. As we also mentioned before how the act of tying Rakhi legitimized the brother's role to protect his sister (irrespective of the need of protection), or in other words how controlling a young female's sexuality is justified through the process of value exchange in the act of sister tying this so-called sacred thread on brother's wrist.

But despite such inadequate stances how the festival acquired its pre-eminent place in such a culturally diverse and flourished country? The next section is an attempt to explore this question.

Arguments behind Celebration

When asked, the response one gets is, 'we are aware of the fact that this thread does not guarantee the protection, but it is part of our culture.' If enforced a bit more, the response one often gets is, 'the festival is a symbol of a *pavitrata* (piousness) and *atoot* (unbreakable) *bandhan* (bond) between brother and sister'. Here, the dichotomy between Raksha-Sutra and Raksha *Bandhan* comes to an end as the general conscience of people is in accordance with obliterating the idea of Sutra or spellbound sacred thread entailing any abstract notions of powers to protect and considering the same as vague. Raksha-Sutra remains within the thousands of other ceremonial rituals performed in the presence of priests whereas the Raksha-Bandhan in kinship ties as the second response claimed it as a festival of brother and sister. But one must also keep the commonality distinguished between Raksha-Sutra and Raksha-Bandhan. The word 'Raksha' in Raksha-Sutra means protection from abstract notions of harm such as evil, bad omen, or spiritual elements with the potential of defilement. Whereas the word 'Raksha' in Raksha-Bandhan means of physical protection (as a blessing and return expectation) as also mentioned before that how the festival entails the concept of role or responsibility of protecting someone.

One possibility could be of that Raksha-Sutra might have given birth to a separate ritual. A practice of sister tying the knot on brother's right arm for the prosperity and well-being to ensure that at times of crisis he will look after her or a medium to stay connected with the lineage of father or a bond with paternal kinship. Hinduism or any other religion of the world is not alien to the concept of rituals

and customs engaging people to perform the same irrespective of its form (may be severe to the extreme). *Kanyadaan* (giving away the daughter as a gift) is one of them in Hindu marriage system. The ritual is performed by the father of the bride or by a father like male-member in the same kinship (in case of a father's absence). The word *Kanya* means girl and *Daan* means to donate. Once donated cannot be taken back at any cost. So that is the reason behind the social notion of the concept of considering a girl as '*Paraya-Dhan*' means someone else's property. It is believed and practised according to Hindu belief that after giving away his daughter in *Kanyadaan* by performing certain ceremonial rituals, it is forbidden for the father of the bride to visit his daughter's in-law's house or stay or eat-drink etc. The custom is still in practice in many parts of northern Indian states. But to keep the kinship ties alive between the two families (connected with this act of marital alliance), the relationship with the brother plays the medium between the two. If in any case, a girl after marriage faces any sort of issue, it is the brother who handles things after that. As per Hindu patriarchal system, being the sole inheritor of kin's legacy (property), brother plays a vital role in such issues. Brother and Sister (son and daughter) are on the top of the list of legal heirs also known as Class-I heirs as per the Section 8 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956. So the bond between brother and sister might be not the way it has been defined in the contemporary context of self-less love between the two but the bond of these kinship ties to uphold the patriarchal system of the social relations to wield the social capital and other means of inheritance management.

About the establishment of ritual as a festival has a series of events mentioned in mythological excerpts, ancient and medieval historical records. The earliest historical records of Raksha-Bandhan in its present form of practice (a sister tying Rakhi to brother) traces back to the tale of King Alexander as King Puru gave him the boon of life on the request of King Alexander's wife Roxane (tying a Rakhi on King Puru's hand). Another tale of Mughal Emperor Humayun and Rajput Queen Karmawati also highlights the practice of the same with quite a show of secularism. But A.K. Singh claims that, as an established festival of the state it was a popular and elite festival of Mughal India. Singh further maintains that it was Akbar who declared it as the holiday of the empire while enlisting folk festivals

of communities for the same. Akbar declared Raksha-Bandhan as an empire holiday. By making it as a court festival and practising the ritual of tying a knot around his wrist, Akbar made it the custom of courtiers and other. After Akbar, Jahangir revived the practice of tying Rakhi but failed to establish it as a festival of commoners except for Brahmins. While referring to works of the likes of Abul Fazl and Al- Badaoni, Singh also points out that it remained the festival of elites as Brahmin community tying a thread on their patron's wrist on the full moon day of Shravan month. Though one might also argue that the celebration of the festival in Mughal India had its political motives, still the festival has been given place and the recognition.

The limitation and a commonality these cited records possess are of patronage. Most of these records talk about the history of the elite class and especially about the emperor as most of these records have been documented under the patronage of an emperor. Therefore, it will be an analytical error to conclude that Raksha-Bandhan was only the festival of elite and masses were alien to practice of the same. It can be justified in a way that only courtiers and people at higher rank used to get/celebrate a holiday on this day not because they celebrated the festival, but because they were paid on daily basis. Rest (or most, as most of the population, was depended on agriculture) of the masses might be alien to the concept of holiday due to their daily basis engagement in season-based activities of livelihood. There are not any written records of the celebration of the festival during British India except in 1905 when the British government decided to divide Bengal into Hindu majority and Muslim majority region. The initiation of the order of partition fell in the same month and around the date of the Raksha-Bandhan. On Rabindranath Tagore's call, people from both communities, i.e., Hindu and Muslims, came forward in protest of Bengal Partition based on religious grounds and tied Rakhi to each other. Students in Shantiniketan still follows the same by tying Rakhi to neighbours and common people to deliver the message of harmony. So, the dynamics of kinship ties and Raksha-Bandhan nurturing under the patronage of patriarchal dynasties/authority over different periods nullifies the abstract notion of values attached and reveals the purpose of exchange of material values it entails. But after the end of such patronage, how Raksha-Bandhan maintained its legacy or even flourished more than ever?

Role of Pop-Culture and Globalised Society

The question raised before that after the end of patronage how it became the festival of so much importance not only among the Hindu community but others too like Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists. And the credit goes to the rapid advancement of Pop-culture (media/movie-culture) after Independence and the role of the global market in the twenty-first century. The Table 1, shows the list of movies in which the festival of Raksha-Bandhan has been demonstrated as the core part of the storyline. The ways to manifest Raksha-Bandhan and its importance in one's life has been eulogised in such a way that each time the audience surrenders themselves of their common conscience. Emotions rule over logic, common-sense and blind people of their consciousness. For instance, one narrative explains the dynamic nature of human psyche as a villain had this change of mind (transforming from a rapist to saviour brother), the moment girl ties a strip of cloth on his wrist. Such manifestations of the practice or festival not only aided the importance but also provided the potential to influence the wider arena of society. As the act of tying Rakhi is often used as an instrument to punish socially mischievous elements or an alternative for making culprit realise of his deed ("Girl").

Table 1. List of Movies on Raksha-Bandhan Festival			
Year	Name of the Movie	Year	Name of the Movie
1959	Chotti Bahen	1991	Sanam Bewafa
1962	Rakhi, Anpadh	1992	Tirangaa
1965	Kaajal	1994	Hum Apke Hain Kaun
1969	Anjaana	1998	Pyaar Kiya to Darna Kya
1971	Hare Rama Hare Krishna	1999	Hum Sath Sath Hain
1972	Be-Imaan	2000	Krodh & Fiza
1974	Resham Ki Dori	2008	Jaane Tu Ya Jaane Na
1975	Dharmatma	2012	Agneepath
1976	Raksha Bandhan	2013	Bhaag Milkha Bhaag
1983	Andha Kanoon	2015	Dil Dhadakne Do
1987	Marte Dam Tak	2016	Sarbjit

Source: Internet Movie Database (IMDB)

Table 2, shows the list of songs that became the anthem of this festival. Beautifully written lines of Anand Bakshi (1971), '*Phoolon*

*ka taron ka sab ka kehna hai, Ek hazaron mein meri behna hai*² in the 1970s, and after that became a hymn to celebrate the festival of Raksha-Bandhan and added one more ornament to beautify the bond between brother and sister.

Sr. No.	Songs	Movie	Year
1	Bhaiya Mere Rakhi Ke	Chhoti Bahen	1959
2	Rakhi Dhagon Ka Tyohar	Rakhi	1962
3	Mere bhaiya mere Chanda	Kaajal	1965
4	Hum Behno Ke Liye Mere Bhaiya	Anjaana	1969
5	Phoolo Ka Taaro Ka Sabka Kehna Hai	Hare Rama Hare Krishna	1971
6	Yeh Rakhi Bandhan Hai Aisa	Be-imaan	1972
7	Behna Ne Bhai Ki Kalai Se	Resham Ki Dori	1974
8	Ise Samjho Na Resham Ka Taar	Tirangaa	1992

Source: Internet Movie Database (IMDB)

At one hand, where this Raksha-Bandhan anthem deepened the love for a sister or strengthens the bond between the siblings, on the other hand, it is ironical as it also explains the status of females in our country in comparison to their male counterparts. Ironically, these lines itself explain the imbalanced pattern of sex-ratio as it is only one in thousand (as per Census of India, child sex ratio among age-group of 0-06 falls from 976 in 1961 to 964 in 1971, whereas in the age-group of 06-09, it falls from 962 to 948 in the years 1961 and 1971 respectively). As of now, child sex-ratio declined from 927 in 2001 to 919 in 2011 (Census of India 1961, 1971, 2001, & 2011). Speaking of imbalanced sex-ratio, in the last three months, 132 villages of Uttarkashi district (Uttarakhand) delivered 216 male children, but not a single girl child ("In 3 months"). One might also argue that what the lyricist meant was that my sister is unique from 1000 other girls. In that case, what I see is that my sister will be the only girl I will respect and protect among 1000 other girls or in other words we can say how the process of maintaining intra-kin relationships has been appropriately justified. Maintaining intra-kin relationships to prevent the cases of elopement, inter-caste marriages, and justifying the superiority-inferiority concept of the caste system

or in simple words, the concept of a brother as a protector acting as a tool of surveillance to control the female sexuality.

In the first phase (Post 1947 - early 2000s), media in the form of movies eulogised the Raksha-Bandhan by portraying such festivities in a most evocative way to rule the conscience of the mass to consider the festival as an essential part of life. The aspect of material conditions has its motive in-built (kinship ties) but developed further with society becoming more global. The sort of short videos, quotes-sharing on social media on such festivities are the primary agents of manifestation. The access to the worldwide web and globalised market not only blurred the physical boundaries but socio-cultural too. And that clarifies the Raksha-Bandhan as an important festival being practised not only among Hindu communities but also among Jains, Sikhs, & Buddhists and between Hindus and Muslim, Sikhs and Hindus, Sikhs and Muslim, Jains and Sikhs, and between Jains and Hindus. The forms of manifestations are so convincing that society does not care much about socio-cultural boundaries. Raksha-Bandhan as a symbol of pious bonding between siblings has created an urge to be part of it and the sole benefiter of this need is a global market. The price range in which these threads of protection have a variety covering every other level of income group. It may cost a person a minimum of two rupees to the range of thousands. And the returning gift may vary according to the choice and income level. The global market has successively exploited the most interesting characteristic of human being's mind-set, and that is the maximisation of behaviour and act of choice as Amartya Sen defines it. In the present context, the person will never buy a Rakhi (for brother) and a gift (for sister) of lower value than of the previous year. One always will be in the process of maximising his/her action of choice.

Another aspect of how this festival survived and maintained its essence is nothing else but the kind of patronage it received. Under Sultanate reign, Muhammad bin Tughlaq asks Brahmins to tie the thread on Emperor's arm (Rahman); under Mughals, it received patronage by Emperor Humayun, Akbar-the Great, Jahangir, and Shah Alam II; under the British empire, the Raksha-Bandhan didn't get any patronage by authoritarian regime but by revolutionists and socialists leaders such as Chandrashekhara Azaad and Rabindranath

Tagore, and lastly in the democratic country of India, the festival received its importance in the form of helping hand or in other words, the patronage it receives by government authorities (under the umbrella of women-empowerment), as the government charge no fare from women in public transport on this occasion. Along with it, events are organised to celebrate the festival by Prime-Minister of the country himself (“Pakistani-origin”; “Modi”), military officers at the different border (extreme) military posts etc. (Smriti”). One still wonders, for what reason all those mythical tales were revered, or historical excerpts eulogised in such way. Such endeavour to portray the love and bonding between siblings seems a little eccentric. There must be something in it, some idea, some purpose, or some value to look for.

Ideological Stance

In such a diverse realm of social practices, customs, or rituals, why and how one needs to be a rational being. What to accept/follow/practice, and what not? The question is not the origin or controversies attached to a practice but of *what, why, where, and how*. What value it inherits (the value), and relevance through why (the idea)? Is it universally applicable (the where aspect)? And how it should be conducted, if necessary (the purpose). V.L. Allen defines ideology as a process influencing behaviour with the help of three major elements, an idea, a value, and a purpose (224). And every custom/ritual/practice follows the same pattern. Allen further explains while citing Marx that there cannot be any custom or festival in practice without any preceding intentional consciousness. Every practice developed in the form of consciousness and later imposed in the form of norms, values, customs or ritualistic means through various institutions on the rest of the mass, irrespective of their level of consciousness about the practice being practised. In that case, after ensuring the material means of subsistence (production of material life), consciousness is the second feature of practice as an intentional activity followed by the transformation of the men, Marx affirms (41). The whole ideological process remains invisible in the core structure of the custom or festival here, being practised. The hoardings, those covers these structures not to reveal publicly are of widespread irrational abstract notions in the form of values such as piousness, sanctity, self-less love and affection, unbreakable bonding

etc. As Allen claims that values do not question the structure; they assume their continuity (21). In the name of such moralistic attributes of values and practices adorned with such values hinders socially-ill actions like honour-killing, dowry, women as the first-hand victim of domestic issues, riots & war and portrays it as an essential part of social-life without providing alternatives to question the same.

a. One Must Raise a Hand, if in Doubt:

Let us analytically conclude the given context in this ideological framework of analysis step by step. Raksha-Bandhan as a festival sugar-coated with the symbol of piousness and selfless love between the two, a symbol of unbreakable bond which perfectly hinders all other aspect like, motive of accessing material/resources and social capital in between the kinship, control of female sexuality by appointing brother as a lifetime bodyguard, practice of honour-killing and justified in the name of brother's love for sister's well-being, rape threat used as punishment for sisters if caught or involved in transgressing social-boundaries, considering women as a property or objectification of women, dowry death etc.

b. Existing Ballyhoo

- Raksha-Bandhan as a symbol of the bond between brother and sister, a symbol of piousness, selfless love, and an unbreakable bond.
- The Sister ties Rakhi on the right hand of the brother as the right half part of the body is considered masculine enough to protect her.
- Draupadi tied a strip of cloth on Lord Krishna's injured finger and along the wrist, and in returns, Lord Krishna came to Draupadi's rescue as he had given his words to protect her.
- The power of Roxane's Rakhi made King Puru not to kill King Alexander.
- After tying spellbound thread, Lord Indra defeated all the demons.

- Goddess Lakshmi asked for Lord Vishnu to return as he was guarding King Bali's empire.
- Rajput Queen Karmawati's Rakhi melted the heart of Mughal Emperor Humayun.

And What is Practically Incumbent?

All the ballyhoos cited above shares a commonality which nullifies the statement that festivals entail the values to inspire people to live in harmony and peace. Every tale or historical excerpt mentioned above explains the act of power accumulation and process of justifying war. If appropriately examined, why the terms like piousness, selfless love or bond are highly eulogised? As the country is suffering from the crisis like threatening sisters for rape as a form of punishment ("Indian"), property disputes between brother and sister ("She"). The Family ends up all relationship/ties with the girl if she claims her share of the inheritance. What sort of '*Atoot*' (unbreakable) bond is that? What kind of selfless love that is going to be? The other aspect is of tying Rakhi on the right arm only but what if the brother is left-handed? Isn't he going to be masculine? Or his masculine part will be on the left side. But that will again challenge the concept of '*Ardhanarishvara*'³. In the context of tales and excerpts, no one questions about Raksha-Bandhan as to why Lord Krishna has to save Draupadi and from whom? Why were women considered as a property to be used for gambling in a game? Why Lord Vishnu has to guard King Bali if King Bali was the bravest of all? Despite knowing that King Alexander's actions were not justifiable, what makes Roxane to beg for his life and not put an end to tyranny of her husband? How blurred socio-cultural boundaries (due to the influence of pop-culture and globalised society) do not reflect in reducing the practices of social discrimination? The reason might be that roles are well defined and considering the practice of such roles a good thing created a mirage of society living smoothly (Connell 23). The reality of everyday life has been taken for granted as reality (Allen 14).

But let us not put this into another blame-game debate of men are bad, and women are good or vice versa. Both are responsible at their end. Both consciously and unconsciously support the practices that

might be beneficial for men and certain strata of women and might be violating other women's rights. For instance, women unintentionally became the active agent of violating their rights in cases of dowry-related crimes, or by following any other practice/ritual of receiving any materialistic capital in the form of a gift from their kinsfolk. There is a possibility of thought existing that abolishing dowry has not only displeased in-laws but somehow daughters too. As now she is aware of the fact that getting not much in her name after marriage will leave her in possession of no significant materialistic capital. So the compensation (a desire to have strong possession of capital) might be carved (with no prior intention) in other rituals/customs (like receiving such capital during Raksha-Bandhan as brother is expected to give a gift to sister, during the birth of a child or especially a male child etc.) where a girl receives such capital.

To suggest, one must look beyond such illusions. One must not only fall for the manner but to look for hidden values and ideologies of the alliance between market and patriarchal structures enslaving marginalised sections. In whole, Raksha-Bandhan is a festival sugar-coated with the value of selfless love for sister (to build-up a medium of connection between two families); with an idea of providing protection to sister (as an invisible form, making her dependent on both side of families); and with a purpose of life-long source of support through tying this sacred thread called as Rakhi (by inheriting her share of property, to control and accumulate the power over women and in order to access the resources and social capital of other party through the approach of sister and vice versa). And ideologically it works in a process, under the patronage of different regimes and authority, the festival of Raksha-Bandhan has been exploited for political motives by Sultanate and Mughal dynasties to gain the trust of Hindus; used by rebels and intellectuals to spark the light of patriotism for freedom during British Empire; by entrepreneur through pop-culture and global market to control the economy and build business empires; and by leaders of democratic nations for vote-banking, politics of power accumulation etc.

Areligious practice may differ from any otherworldly religion, but it serves the same purpose. Our religion is no different than any other; our patriarchy is not much different than other patriarchal

societies. Every social institution has the same narrative, same values attached to it (with different forms of practising), and are an inextricable part of the society, and what else society is made up of is no more to be discovered.

Conclusion

To conclude, by no means at all, the study supports to discard such festivities or suggest to abolish such traditions but to advance. The ancient literature (*Vedas, Puranas & Upnishada*), traditions, belief system etc. may be little outdated but are of enormous importance and contain vast sources of knowledge. As Feyerabend (1988) maintains that 'We should regard the world-views of the Bible, the Gilgamesh epic, the Iliad, the Edda, as fully fledged alternative cosmologies which can be used to modify, and even to replace, the 'scientific' cosmologies of a given period'. Festivals represent an ambience of harmony and peace, and so they should be. But one must not repeat the mistake of blindly following such practices; one must not be only aware but responsible too, to advance the form of manifestation as per the applicability in the present. As P. Kumar puts it, India needs renewal, not revival. One must not accept the past without questioning it, one must look for scientific rationale.

Endnotes

1. The *Raksabandhan* festival (Raksha means protection and Bandhan means bond/to bind), which takes place on the full Moon of the lunar month of Shravana (July–August), is one of the most popular festivals in India. On this day sisters tie an amulet of red or yellow threads on their brother's wrists to guard them for the year. If they are more learned, they may utter a well-known Sanskrit mantra. The brothers then offer them presents (For details see, Jones and Ryan).
2. My sister is one (unique) in thousand, and everyone believes and say the same.
3. *Ardhanarishvara* is a concept that believes that human body represents the synthesis of masculine (right half of the body) and feminine (left-half) and depicted as half-male (Shiva) and half-female (Shakti).

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