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Learnings from Kite Flying

By Aparna Sharma January 14 2020 aparna@aparnasharma.in (<mailto:aparna@aparnasharma.in>)
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Snapshot

- *This article starts with the festival of Makar Sanskranti and the tradition of kite-flying. Next it relates the learnings from kite-flying with day to day living.*

My thirteen year old nephew Ravi, who studies in Class VIII, visited us during recent winter break in December. While we were discussing his studies & school schedule, he promptly said that would have very few holidays in the first quarter of 2020. He was upset that he would be in school on January 14, writing an exam and so cannot bunk that day.

I got curious and asked why he wanted a holiday on January 14. He smirked and then laughed saying it is the day when men & women of all ages are on their terraces flying kites. He began to share memories of his kite flying experiences with friends and family in the yester years.

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Author with nephew.

January 14 is celebrated as “Makar Sankranti”, also known as Uttarayan (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uttarayana>) in India (<http://maps.google.com/maps?ll=28.6133333333,77.2083333333&spn=10.0,10.0&q=28.6133333333,77.2083333333%20%28India%29&t=h>). Makar Sankranti is also celebrated as the harvest festival and marks the arrival of spring. The day is synonymous with kite flying.

The time is thus spent socializing and family get-together, taking care of the cattle, celebrating around bonfires and flying kites. In fact a whole lot of people fly kites almost through the month....and in some parts of our country kite flying competitions are held, esp. in Gujarat.

Flying kites, preparing traditional sweets (laddoos) with jaggery and sesame seeds and taking holy dip in rivers form an integral part of this festival as is meeting with loved ones and offering sweets.

Uttarayan, the six month period between Makar Sankranti and Karka Sankranti (the day that marks the movement of the sun into Karka rashi) marks the northward movement of the earth in the celestial sphere. People continue with their celebrations during Uttarayan as colourful kites adorn the sky. However, much like all other traditions, there is a reason why people fly kites during Makar Sankranti and in the days that follow the festival.

Traditionally, it was believed that winter brought in a lot of germs and caused illness and flu. Thus, a huge number of people would turn up during Makar Sankranti and in the following months to bask in the early morning sun, hoping to get rid of bacteria and fly kites too. The act of flying kites was said to have been initiated to make this act more exciting.

Of course, the symbolism of kites flying up to the heavens during Makar Sankranti and Uttarayan is deeper. Many consider flying kites high up into the sky as a form of thanksgiving to the gods. It is also considered a signal for their awakening as it is generally believed the gods have been taking rest and sleeping for the last six months, and now it's time to wake up. The clear, blue sky during Makar Sankranti and Uttarayan also present an ideal scenario to fly kites.



After the discussion with my nephew, speaking to elders in the family & reading up on the subject, I have written about the lessons we can learn from Kite Flying. Here are some profound ones.

1. It's difficult to rise; easy to fall.

It requires energy and strength to rise. Special efforts are needed to succeed in every walk of life. But to fall down is easy. Greed, misuse of power, wrongful deeds are enough to bring anyone down.

In the same way, we also need to put in extra effort to reach a higher level. To go with the crowd or along the stream is always easy as it does not require any hard work or special effort.

2. A kite needs favourable winds to go higher.

If there is no wind, it is very difficult to fly a kite and rise up in the sky. Similarly, there is interdependence in our ecosystem; even we need help and support of others to reach our goals.

3. A string is almost invisible but guides the kite.

It's the string which guides and directs a kite, however it's almost invisible.

Similarly, we are constantly guided and motivated by our guides and mentored from the backstage. They play an indispensable role. Just like a kite cannot fly without the string, even we will find it difficult to achieve our goals without our guides and gurus.

4. A kite may get cut.

A kite may get cut by another kite. Similarly, sometimes we may be defeated by someone who is better than us. But it is not something to be ashamed of. We can always learn and imbibe a new lesson from every difficult situation.

5. A kite can fly irrespective of its colour or type.

A kite can fly with same efficiency and reach the same heights irrespective of the color of the kite or of the type of material of which it is made.

Similarly, every person can achieve their aims and objectives irrespective of their religion, caste or creed. So, let us have a broad outlook and not differentiate people on these issues. Each one of us is capable of achieving our goals.



6. A kite can go on higher and higher.

A kite can go on higher and higher up in the sky.

Similarly, we can reach unprecedented heights. All that is required is dedication, hard work and most importantly, persistence to reach our goals.

7. A kite may get struck on trees and poles.

After getting cut a kite may get struck on trees or poles.

Likewise in life, we may face difficult (not impossible) challenges and get stuck. But we must know that it's not the end. With a little bit of extra effort & self-belief, we can overcome every adversity.

8. Loosen the string to prevent the kite from getting cut.

The string of the kite is left loose so that it may not get cut by another kite. If the string is tight and tense it breaks more easily.

Similarly, we need to d-stress ourselves. Stress is a big killer and it prevents us from wholeheartedly enjoying our life and hinders in achieving our goals. So, from a kite we can learn to "let go" in some of the difficult situations in order to avoid getting stressed up.

9. Kites' success depends on the Kite flyer.

Along with the qualities of a kite, the success of a kite also depends on the flyer. In our case, we are the kite and God is the flier. So, in some cases we may give our 100% efforts for a cause but sometimes the final results depend on luck and God. So let us learn to accept it willingly. Some things may happen as destined. But at the same time it also does not mean that we should stop working to reach our goals.

10. A kite may not return back to the person it belongs after getting cut.

After getting cut the kite belongs to the person who catches it. It no longer belongs to its previous owner. It is again ready for a new flight.

Similarly after facing a difficult situation we change. We are no more what we used to be. We learn from our mistakes. And finally we are ready to face new challenges again.

In the game of kite flying a loss of kite is just a small event, the flyer is always ready with the second kite and join the game afresh. Even when you cut a kite, the joy is for a moment, there is always the next kite waiting for you to attack.

Life is a game worth enjoying only when we can be happy in all events, and that is truly the art of kite flying - the real art of living.

I promised my nephew that I would write an article on this topic & share it with him before January 14, 2020 so here it is. While he will enjoy the sport & have fun, here is food for thought for all of us!


Happy Makar Sankranti and Uttarayan!


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1. Why do we celebrate Makar Sankranti (<https://www.esamskriti.com/e/Culture/Festivals/Why-do-we-celebrate-Makar-Sakaranti-1.aspx>)

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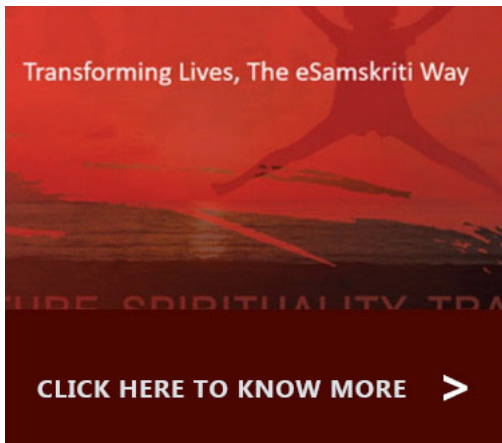
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