

THE GAME OF MANJHA

The object of the game is simple. Cut your opponent's flying line with your own flying line freeing their kite before they do it to you. Last kite flying wins! A beautiful part of the manjha game is that the opponents and spectators never have to wonder who won!

Although manjha is cotton line coated with powdered glass, it is not often a hazard to flyers or spectators. This is because the manjha flyers are very careful to choose places to fly where there are few if any people that could be affected. And, most of the binders or glues used to bond the glass to the cotton line are water based and when they get wet, the glass falls off. So when a cut kite hits the ground, even though it may have 20' or more of manjha still attached to it, the typical ground moisture will remove most if not all the danger to an animal or unaware person.

Manjha and the kites used in the manjha game are biodegradable. Paper, bamboo and cotton thread are the components, with the exception of some Indonesian manjha. I have seen Indonesian manjha that is made with a monofilament line, not cotton. This is a much stronger line, however, the manjha is 'melted' from it with water just as with other manjha, but of course the monofilament is not biodegradable and a definite hazard.

I've had a very limited amount of experience flying traditional Indian and Indonesian kites with manjha. I flew once in a international manjha competition where Peter Stauffer showed me the basic techniques of cutting. I only cut one kite, then my kite was cut.....a short flight ;o)

And I've flown a couple of times at Long Beach, WA under the instruction of Johnny Hsuing, Gopal Das and Basir Beria, all expert manjha flyers. Rich Hurd was there too, and although Rich is a much better manjha flyer than I am, he was learning from the masters too.

To really learn the finer subtleties of manjha flying you need to discuss it with very experienced manjha flyers; and the subtleties and finesse is what the winning flyers really know. All of the flyers mentioned above, as well as most members of Manjha Club International, are good sources of information.

Here's what I've learned.

There is a huge difference in the effectiveness of different manjhas. The top quality manjhas have a much faster cutting action because of the amount and type of glass and their smaller diameter, both qualities are important. I know that Basir Beria makes his own manjha and it is in high demand by other flyers because it is considered the best available. He told me it takes him up to a full day, about 7-8 hours, to make 1,000' of this special manjha. And special it is!

Some flyers tie a fixed length of manjha to their regular cotton flying line, maybe 100' or so. This way their hands are handling only the plain cotton line rather than the glass coated manjha. And because manjha is expensive, it reduces the cost of flying. It also means flyers will be trying to attack a portion of the flying line that is plain cotton for an easy and quick win, so it creates a slightly different strategy to the game. Sometimes the rules are changed so only a cut on the manjha portion of the line actually counts as a winning cut.

There are basically 2 techniques used to cutting an opponent's flying line. Both require your manjha to be touching the opponent's flying line and for your manjha to be traveling at a faster rate of speed across your opponent's line than theirs is traveling.

PULL and RELEASE Techniques

One technique is called 'PULL' and is just what the name implies, you pull or retrieve your line. When retrieving your flying line at a fast pace, the faster the better, your manjha slices like a fine toothed saw through your opponent's line. This is ONLY if the speed of your line is greater than the speed your opponent's line may be moving and your line is firmly pressing against your opponent's line. This only has to occur for a millisecond to cut the line, so timing and control is everything. When using this technique it is best to have a very maneuverable fast kite.

The other and equally effective technique is called 'RELEASE' and it is just what the name implies, you release your flying line. The object of the release technique is the same as for the pull....you are trying to move your manjha across your opponent's flying line at a higher rate of speed than your opponent's line is moving. The release technique works best with larger sized kites, because the greater surface area of the kites create more pulling power and can take flying line more quickly from your reel. And the faster the line travels, the better your chance of cutting your opponent's line. Often when too skilled flyers are using a release technique the length of the flying line is 1,000 to 3,000 feet or more by the time one of the lines is cut and the loser's kite freed.

BigGrins, bruce