

One Thousand Origami Cranes- Symbol of Peace

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Abstract

The word *origami* is from Japanese “ORU- to fold” and “KAMI- paper.” It is a strong majestic bird that mates for life and is said to live for a thousand years. It symbolizes honor, good fortune, loyalty, and longevity. Japanese believed that anyone with the patience and commitment to fold 1,000 origami cranes would be given good fortune and granted a wish.

Keywords

Japan, Origami, paper

Introduction

It is believed that Japanese Origami Cranes began in the 6th century, and because of the high costs of paper, origami was used for religious purposes only. The crane is considered as “Bird of happiness.” The wings of the crane were believed to carry souls up to paradise. Mothers who pray for their children will recite the prayer- “O flock of heavenly cranes, Cover my child with your wings.”

Sadako Sasaki’s Story

The One Thousand Origami Cranes were popularized after the story of Sadako Sasaki, who was exposed to radiation at the age of two, from the atomic bomb that had been dropped on the city of Hiroshima, Japan in an attempt to end World War II. At the age of eleven, Sadako Sasaki was diagnosed with leukemia, her friend told her that the crane, a sacred bird in Japan, lived for a hundred years, and if a sick person folds 1,000 paper cranes, then that

person would soon get well. After hearing the legend, Sadako decided to fold 1,000 cranes in the hope that she would get better, but before folding 1000 cranes, she died.

The Real Story

In the novel, Sadako did not reach her goal, and folded only 644 cranes, because she became too weak to fold anymore, and died on 25 October 1955. To honor her memory, her classmates agreed to fold the remaining 356 cranes for her. But the real story that her family told, especially her elder brother Masahiro Sasaki, at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum was, real-life Sadako did complete the 1000 cranes, and even folded over 1400 paper cranes before she died.

Hiroshima Peace Park

Shortly after the death of Sadako, her friends, and schoolmates helped create a memorial to her and all the children who had died from the effects of the atomic bomb. A statue of Sadako holding a paper crane was installed in the Hiroshima Peace Park, with a plaque that reads: "This is our cry. This is our prayer. Peace on Earth." This wish for peace is remembered each year on August 6 (Hiroshima Day). The tradition of making 1000 origami cranes for someone who is seriously ill is still followed today and has become a symbol of hope and healing during challenging times.

Symbol of Good Luck

In modern times, cranes are often given to a person who is seriously ill, to wish for their recovery, Cranes are given as gifts to bestow good luck, long life or healing. They are usually created by friends, classmates, or colleagues as a collective effort, offered to a shrine on the person's behalf or directly gifted to. Another common use is for sports teams or athletes, wishing them victories. Cranes are also a symbol of peace and are thus often seen at war memorials along with its original meaning for wishing good health.

Flames for World Peace

Several temples, including some in Tokyo and Hiroshima, have eternal flames for world peace. At these temples, school groups or individuals often donate Senbazuru (one thousand Origami Cranes) to add to the prayer for peace. The cranes are left exposed to the elements, slowly becoming tattered and dissolving as symbolically, the wish is released.

Obon Day

It is an annual event that lasts for three days, is celebrated in Japan, usually in July or August, as a symbol to pay respect to ancestors. It is a fusion of the ancient Japanese belief in ancestral spirits and a Japanese Buddhist custom to honor the spirits of one's ancestors. It has been celebrated in Japan for more than 500 years and traditionally includes a dance, known as Bon Odori.

Origami Paper

Origami paper can be of any size or material, like magazines, newspapers, notebooks, and printers. The size also does not matter, but the most popular size for Senbazuru is 7.5x7.5 cm. Origami paper used for Senbazuru is usually of a solid color, but patterned designs are also available, including flower designs, reminiscent of Kimono patterns. Senbazuru sets are also available, which include thousands sheets of paper, string, and beads. Beads are placed at the end of each string to stop the cranes from slipping off.

Styles of Origami

Origami, like other art forms, has many styles, some of which are-

- 1. Realistic:** Creations that exhibit the main features of the subject, often resulting in complex designs with many steps.
- 2. Minimal:** Creations that capture the essence of the subject with minimal folds and with an emphasis on simplicity.

3. Modular: Multiple geometric "units" made from multiple sheets of paper whose flaps and pockets tuck into each other to form polygons.

4. Composite: Multiple sheets of paper are used, and each sheet is folded differently to realize a different part of the subject. Composite origami was one of the most common styles in the 1950s and '60s but is relatively uncommon today.

5. Practical: Models that have a real-life application, such as for use as envelopes, boxes, cups, dishes, etc.

6. Pureland: Using only square paper and "mountain" and "valley" folds, resulting in models that are easy to duplicate.

7. Tessellations: A geometric folding technique in which the image is created by the pattern of folded edges across the paper. Tessellations are often periodic (repeating) and may be flat or three-dimensional, and many of them exhibit further structure when held up to the light.

8. Wet folding: In this technique, the paper contains a water-soluble glue (known as sizing) and is dampened slightly before folding. The dampness permits the paper to be folded into soft curves, which then harden in durability as the paper dries.

9. Crumpled: A technique created by Paul Jackson and developed by Vincent Floderer that involves the crumpling of the paper before folding. This technique can produce highly realistic organic forms.

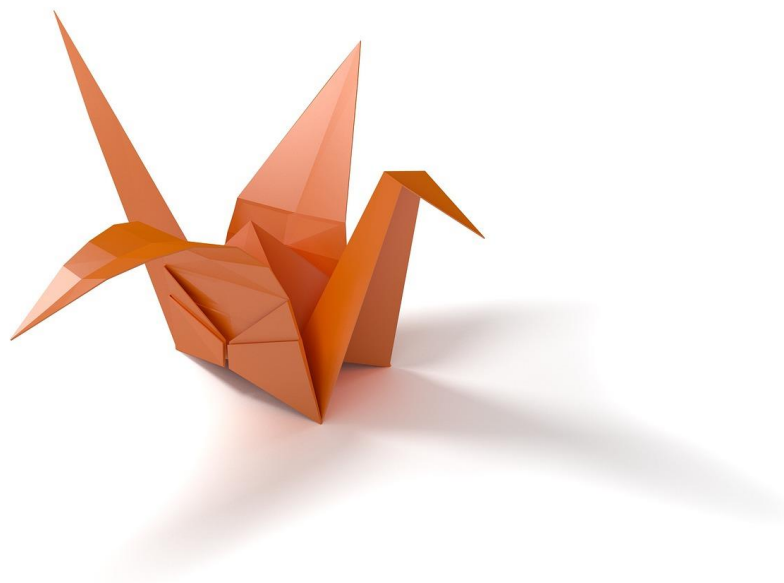


Image: Origami Bird

Conclusion

Let us take a pledge to continue the legacy of folding Origami Cranes, as a symbol of peace and patience. Let us inspire new generations to spread awareness against war and its consequences.

References

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About the Author

Dr. Suboohi Jafar "Aatika" is a young and dynamic poet, writer, artist and singer. By profession, she is an oncologist- Soldier in the fight against CANCER. She has been born and brought up in Varanasi, and currently practicing at Apex Hospital, Varanasi. She is an active member of various literary and creative platforms. She writes in English, Hindi and Urdu languages. Her write-ups have been published in several national and international journals and anthologies. She has won many awards and recognitions in her academic as well as poetic journey.

