

HOLI

This festival is celebrated on Phalguna suddha pournima. This heralds the spring season.

Procedure : On this day, the people in the locality gather in a place in the evening, collect cowdung cakes and firewood and other combustible materials, and make a bonfire by burning a picture of cupid and raise a huge noise yelling, "Eka Rangicha Rangacha botache bota" meaning Cupid is no more. He has been finished to the last. Only menfolk celebrate in South India. In the North, both men and women along with their children celebrate this festival by splashing colours and coloured water on each other and enjoy themselves to their hearts' content.

It commences about 10 days before the full moon of Phalgun, but is usually observed for the last three or four days terminating with the full moon.

Holi is the time when people from all castes and social strata come together forgetting all past differences and grievances. Originally the festival was primarily for the Shudras who were otherwise not allowed to participate in festivals. Today having lost its original significance, the festival is a favourite with most Indians for being the most colourful and joyous of all. Every year it succeeds in bridging the social gap, between employers and employees, men and women. People visit homes, distribute sweets and apply gulal on each other, signifying the colourful and happy spring times ahead. They greet each other, embracing three times. This is especially significant in the rural areas where in many places there still exists a clear demarcation between each caste community. And people of a high caste do not associate much with those of the lower.

In fact Holi bears close resemblance to the important ancient festival called Vasantotsava. Holi is not celebrated in south India, but a similar festival in honour of the God of love, Kama, takes place at the same time. While there does not seem to be a direct link between the two rituals, literary sources suggest that both occasions are examples of an age-old tradition of celebrating the arrival of spring.

Holi can also be termed a youth festival, as it provides an opportunity for young men and women to mingle freely and participate in dances and cultural programmes in an otherwise conservative society. Young men throw colored powder and colored water on women, using pichkaris. The origin of this custom can be found in the pranks of Krishna, who used to drench milkmaids in the village with water and play various other tricks on them. The singing of lewd songs, shouting and dancing, also marks Holi celebrations. Thandai, a drink made with almonds and milk, and cannabis pakoras is extremely popular on this day.

Story of Holi

1. As per the mythology, the Holi fire is regarded as a funeral pyre, for it is understood to have destroyed Halida, a demoness. According to a legend, Hiranyakashipu was a demon king. He wanted to avenge the death of his younger brother, who had been killed by Vishnu. He performed severe penance for many years to gain enough power to become the king of the three worlds. So intense was his penance

that a smoke billowed from his head and the entire world was in danger of annihilation. Worried, the Gods ran to Brahma for help.

2. A demoness (rakshasi) by name Hunda was giving trouble to the children, but when a lot of noise was made, she used to run away. The noise was made to scare her. It is on this day, that Lord Siva burnt Kamadeva, the God of Love, who tried to disturb the Lord and tried to kindle love. Lord Siva then ordained that "Holi" festival should be celebrated in memory of Kamadeva.


