

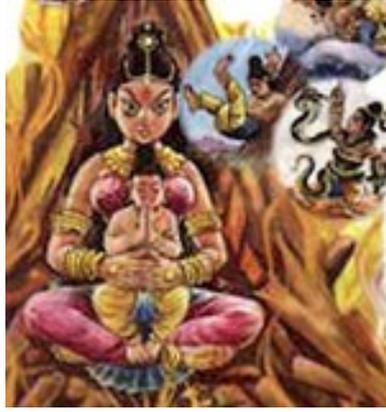
Holi 20th March 2019



Shree Radha and Lord Krsna celebrating Holi

In spite of being such a colourful and happy festival, there are various aspects of Holi, which makes it so significant for our lives. Though they might not be so apparent but a closer look and a little thought will reveal the significance of Holi in more ways than meets the eyes. Ranging from socio-cultural, religious to biological there is every reason why we must heartily enjoy the festival and cherish the reasons for its celebrations. So when, its time for Holi, please don't hold yourself back - enjoy the festival by participating with full enthusiasm. This year Holi falls on the 20th March. The literal meaning of the word 'Holi' is “burning” of the effigy of the demon Holika.

Holi gets us close to our religion and there are many lilas (pastimes) associated with this festival. Foremost are the pastimes of Prahlada Maharaj and his demon father Hiranyakashipu. Hiranyakashipu who considered himself God and wanted everybody to worship him. To his great dismay, his son, Prahlada began to worship, Lord Vishnu. To get rid of his son, Hiranyakashipu asked his sister, Holika to enter a blazing fire with Prahlada in her lap, as she had a boon to enter fire unscathed. Prahlada was saved for his extreme devotion for Lord Vishnu while Holika paid a price for her sinful desire. The tradition of burning Holika or the 'Holika dahan' comes mainly from this pastime. For a very detail account of this katha please visit this beautiful website to read more on these fascinating pastimes in detail. <http://www.srimadbhagavatam.org/canto7/c7-contents.html>



Holika in a fire trying to burn Prahlada

Holi also celebrates the pastimes of Srimati Radharani and Lord Krishna, which describe the extreme delight; Lord Krishna took in applying colour on Radha and other gopis. This prank of Shree Krishna later became a trend and a part of the Holi festivities. Holi is the celebration of death of the demoness Putana who tried to kill baby Krishna by feeding poisonous milk to it. For a very detail account of this katha please visit this beautiful website to read more on these fascinating pastimes in detail. <http://www.srimadbhagavatam.org/canto10/chapter6.html>

Holi helps to bring the society together and strengthen the secular fabric of our country. For, the festival is celebrated by non-Hindus also as everybody like to be a part of such a colourful and joyous festival. Also, the tradition of the Holi is that even the enemies turn friends on Holi and forget any feeling of hardship that may be present. Besides, on this day people do not differentiate between the rich and poor and everybody celebrate the festival together with a spirit of brotherhood. In the evening people visit friends and relatives and exchange gifts, sweets and greetings. This helps in revitalizing relationships and strengthening emotional bonds between people.

Besides, the colours when sprayed on the body have a great impact on it. Biologists believe the liquid dye or Abeer penetrates the body and enters into the pores. It has the effect of strengthening the ions in the body and adds health and beauty to it. There is yet another scientific reason for celebrating the Holi; this however pertains to the tradition of Holika Dahan. The mutation period of winter and spring induces the growth of bacteria in the atmosphere as well as in the body. When Holika is burnt, temperature rises to about 145 degrees Fahrenheit. Following the tradition when people perform Parikramaa (circumambulation or going around) around the fire, the heat from the fire kills the bacteria in the body thus, cleansing it. This way Holi is celebrated in South India. Holi also promotes good health. For, the day after the burning of Holika people put ash (Vibhuti) on their forehead and they would mix Chandan (sandal paste) with the young leaves and flowers of the Mango tree and consume it to promote good health.



Colours help to promote good health as colours are said to have great impact on our body and our health. Western-Physicians and doctors believe that for a healthy body, colours too have an important place besides the other vital elements. Deficiency of a particular colour in our body causes ailment, which can be cured only after supplementing the body with that particular colour.

Holika Dahan Celebrations:- On the eve of Holi, Holika Dahan takes place. The effigy of Holika, the evil minded sister of demon King Hiranyakashyap is placed in the wood and burnt. For, Holika tried to kill Hiranyakashipu's son Prahlada, an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu. The ritual symbolises the victory of good over evil and also the triumph of a true devotee. Next day, is of course the main day of Holi celebrations. The day is called Dhuleti and it is on this day that the actual play of colours takes place. There is no tradition of holding puja and is meant for pure enjoyment. The tradition of playing colours is where people take extreme delight in spraying colour water on each other. Amidst all this activity people relish traditional Holi delicacies with great joy.

Reference in Ancient Texts and Inscriptions: - Besides having a detailed description in the Vedas and Puranas such as Narada Purana and Bhavishya Purana, the festival of Holi finds a mention in Jaimini Mimansa. A stone inscription belonging to 300 BC found at Ramgarh in the province of Vindhya has mention of Holikotsav on it. King Harsha too has mentioned about holikotsav in his work Ratnavali that was written during the 7th century. The famous Muslim tourist - Ulbaruni too has mentioned about holikotsav in his historical memories. Other Muslim writers of that period have mentioned, that holikotsav were not only celebrated by the Hindus but also by the Muslims.

Celebration of the various pastimes associated with Holi reassures the people of the power of the truth as the moral of all these pastimes - is the ultimate victory of good over evil. The pastimes of Hiranyakashipu and Prahlada also points to the fact that extreme devotion to God pays as God always takes his true devotee in his shelter.

All these pastimes help the people to follow a good conduct in their lives and believe in the virtue of being truthful. This is extremely important in the modern day society when so many people resort to evil practices for small gains and torture one who is honest. Holi helps the people to believe in the virtue of being truthful and honest and also to fight away the evil.

Besides, Holi in India is celebrated at a time of the year when the fields are in full bloom and people are expecting a good harvest. This gives people a good reason to rejoice, make merry and submerge themselves in the spirit of Holi.

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