

## Celebrating Colors with Care

Holi, the festival of colors, is a joyous celebration of spring, togetherness, and renewal. Streets come alive with laughter, vibrant hues fill the air, and communities gather to mark the triumph of good over evil. Yet, in recent years, the way we celebrate Holi has raised serious environmental and health concerns. As awareness grows around sustainability and responsible living, it is time to rethink how we play Holi - without dimming its spirit.

One of the biggest concerns during Holi is the widespread use of synthetic colors. Many commercially available powders contain harmful chemicals, heavy metals, and artificial dyes that can cause skin irritation, allergies, eye infections, and respiratory problems. Beyond personal health, these chemicals seep into the soil and water systems, harming plants, animals, and aquatic life. An eco-friendly Holi begins with a conscious shift toward natural, biodegradable colors made from flowers, turmeric, henna, beetroot, and other plant-based ingredients. These alternatives are gentle on the skin and safe for the environment.

Water wastage is another pressing issue. In many regions, Holi celebrations involve excessive use of water balloons, water guns, and hoses. At a time when several cities face acute water shortages, wasting large amounts of water for a few hours of festivity seems irresponsible. Choosing a dry Holi or limiting water usage can significantly reduce our environmental footprint. Playing with dry herbal colors, organizing community events that promote minimal water use, and spreading awareness about conservation can make a meaningful difference.

The tradition of Holika Dahan, the ceremonial bonfire held on the eve of Holi, also deserves attention. While it symbolizes the victory of good over evil, the large-scale burning of wood contributes to deforestation and air pollution. Communities can opt for smaller, symbolic bonfires using waste wood, cow dung cakes, or eco-friendly materials instead of cutting down fresh trees. Some neighborhoods have even begun planting saplings as part of the celebration, turning the festival into an opportunity for environmental restoration. Eco-friendly Holi is not about restricting joy; it is about redefining it. Celebrations can include cultural performances, music, organic sweets, and community meals served on biodegradable plates. Encouraging people to wear old clothes instead of buying new outfits reduces textile waste. Supporting local artisans who create natural colors and sustainable festive products also boosts the green economy. Children and young adults play a crucial role in shaping future celebrations. Schools and colleges can organize workshops on making natural colors at home, educating students about environmental impact while nurturing creativity. Social media campaigns and community drives can amplify the message that a responsible Holi is a happier Holi.

Festivals reflect our values as a society. By choosing sustainability over convenience, we honor not only tradition but also our responsibility toward the planet. The true spirit of Holi lies in spreading happiness, love, and positivity - not pollution. This year, let us pledge to celebrate with mindfulness. Let the colors we throw symbolize hope, harmony, and respect for nature.

An eco-friendly Holi is not just a trend; it is a necessity. And when we celebrate with care, the joy lasts far beyond a single day.

## Holy: The festival of colours, love and brotherhood

■ BAIRAJ CHAWALCAMI

India is the country of diverse cultures, traditions, customs, rituals and festivals and in different parts of the country different festivals are celebrated with pomp and show. Holi is one such festival and is rightly called as the festival of colors but is celebrated although in different ways across the length and breadth of India, however the sprinkling of the colors is common to all parts of the country. The festival of Holi fosters the unity and togetherness among the people of the country and therefore this festival of colors has got special importance for national cohesion and unity. The festival of Holi is celebrated to bade goodbye to winter and to welcome the season of spring and thus the Holi symbolizes positivity in life and is celebrated to encourage and have the feeling of positivity which is so important for life of the individual. This festival is celebrated to discourage and shun all negativity in lives of the people.

The pertinent question is as why do the people celebrate the festival of Holi and different legends stand woven around the celebration of the festival. In fact as already said Holi is celebrated in honor of the arrival of spring, the end of winter, the blossoming of love and for many it is the festive day to meet others, play, laugh, forget and forgive and above all to repair broken relationships. The festival also celebrates the beginning of a good spring harvest season. Generally it lasts for a night and a day, starting on the evening of the Purnima-full moon day falling in the Hindu calendar month of Phalgun, which falls around the middle of March in the Gregorian calendar. The first evening is known as Holika Dahan the burning of Demoness Holika or Chhoti Holi and the following day as Holi. The Holi festival of colors in India is a celebration of the victory of good over evil, the destruction of the demoness Holika.

It is said that Harenyakashap the cruel king was asking all to worship him as he proclaimed to one and all that he was the god and thus he wanted his son Prahlad who was the

Vishnu Bhagat also to worship him the Harenyakashap. But Prahlad did not accede to it and so Harenyakashap ordered that his son to be burned along with his own sister Holika who was fire resistant

called Ganga Mela or Holi Mela. In Gorakhpur ,Holi begins with a special pooja and through the day brotherhood is celebrated among people. In Barsana village Lathmar Holi is celebrated. According to

Each major temple housing the idol of Krishna and Radha celebrate Holi on a different day. People throng the temples to get drenched in colored waters and make merry and joy and sing songs in praise of

Holika the ashes of the demoness were thrown on friends and relatives and this changed into sprinkling of the colors on the people. Thus the festival of Holi is celebrated in different ways in different parts of the country but the sprinkling of the colored water is common to all the Holi celebrations. On the occasion of Holi people sprinkle colors on the friends and on the passersby and dance to the beats of the drums and enjoy and make merry. In Maharashtra the festival of Holi is celebrated as the Rang Panchmi with gaiety and the colors are sprinkled on the friends and relatives. The festival of Holi fosters the mutual brotherhood and strengthens the spirit of unity and cohesion and thus this festival helps in strengthening the bonds of communal harmony and mutual brotherhood. Therefore this festival gives strength the pluralism and secularism which is badly needed for the flourishing of the secular democracy. Thus the festival of colors unites the people of different religions though it is a Hindu festival. In Gorkhpur people visit their friends and sprinkle colored water and sing songs in praise of Lord Krishna and Radha and it unites the people. Thus the spirit of oneness is fostered by celebrating this festival jointly by the different communities. The people throw colored water upon their friends and relatives and visit the houses of their friends and relatives and sing songs , enjoy and make merry. People of India wait impatiently for the arrival of the Holi festival and embrace the festival with open arms and use different colors and sprinkle it on the friends and relatives and even on the passersby. It is good if the eco-friendly Holi is celebrated by the people with the use of natural colors so that there is no harm to anyone and to the environment. Thus the festival of holi fosters the unique characteristic of the unity in diversity and strengthens this trait and theme of India. Let us all celebrate the festival of colors with great enthusiasm and fervor and may this festival be a harbinger of mutual brotherhood and peace?



and so it was conspired that Prahlad would be burnt in the lap of his aunt. But a miracle happened that there was no harm to Prahlad, however his aunt Holika got burnt and was reduced to ashes.

Thus to commemorate the victory of good over the evil the Holi is celebrated. Holi is an important Hindu festival but it is celebrated by the Sikhs, Jains and other communities across the spectrum and it fosters the spirit of oneness and mutual brotherhood and gives strength to tolerance and secularism. In fact all the important festivals are celebrated jointly by all the communities and this is the beauty of this land and of the principle and practice of unity in diversity which is the principle characteristic of India. The festival of Holi is celebrated in different forms and ways in different states but the sprinkling of the color is common in all states of India.

Thus most Indian states have their own way of celebrating Holi. In the state of UP men and women sing popular songs and shout chants to Radha and Krishna. In Kanpur Holi lasts for seven days and the last day has a grand fair

myths, Holi began in Barsana region of India, which includes Vrindavan ,Mathura ,Nandgaon , and Barsana .Interestingly the festival here is celebrated with not just colors but with Lathis. It is said that children of Mathrua annoy child Krishna and ask him why is he of black-shyam color and on this Youshodha called child Krishna to sprinkle any color on the children and therefore Krishna did the same and sprinkled colors on the children and the Gopies.

Thus it became the practice in Barsana Utter Pradesh that females beat males with Lathis and it is known as the Lathmar Holi and this practice is present even to this day. With great gusto and anticipation, the people of India welcome Holi the festival of colors. But did you imagine there could be so many incredibly different ways this festival is celebrated in different places of India. Holi at Mathura and vrindavan is celebrated with great gusto for many days. For these were the places where Krishna spent most of his childhood. Situated in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, the celebrations there span over a week or so.

lord Krishna and Radha. In Punjab, a ritual called Holi Mohalla was initiated by the Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh where Holi is celebrated by demonstrating physical agility by indulging in martial arts. Punjab celebrates Holi Mohalla which looks, sounds and feels like Holi for warriors. It is celebrated a day before Holi. The day starts early on the day of Holi, people get dressed to play and stock up the colors and sweets to welcome their friends to play and enjoy. The Holi celebrations in Punjab bring with it a riot of colors, songs dancing and scrumptious treats all to welcome spring. Traditionally Holi Mohalla is the way Holi is celebrated in Punjab but the typical tradition of playing with color and water ,continues to be the integral part of the festivities. In Punjab the Holi is the occasion to mingle with friends and family.

It is the occasion to forgive and forget and embrace one and all as the colors signify the binding and mixing with all. In some parts of the Uttar Pradesh the idols of Holika are burnt to remember the victory of good over the evil. It is said that on the next day of the burning of

## Status &amp; Empowerment of Women

■ ISHER SINGH JASROTHIA

We are proud of the largest democracy in the world and the philosophy of our Constitution is that despite the different religions, castes, culture, traditions, regional disparities, India has demonstrated in the world over that India is developing its economy at a very rapid rate in the present context.

It is pertinent to mention here that on the one hand India is emerging as developing country and is on the path of developed country/Super Power; on the other hand, it is a matter of great concern that there are many atrocities being meted out to the women as has happened on 16th of December 2012 regarding the gang rape with 23 years girl and thereafter.

The most controversial issues and challenging considerations before the society are education, Status of women, growing terrorist activities and allied coinciding problems have been discussed and debated so many times.

The educated citizens and even bureaucrats of this biggest democracy to a greater extent, are indifferent and ignorant to the basic features of our constitution - social justice, liberty, equality, fraternity which are envisaged in our constitution. The essence of these features is

that these are the fundamental features & foundation of our modern civilization and contemplation of these features are the vision of our society, are of paramount importance for consistent growth in all the sectors in the present context.

Social Justice - as a fundamental might in the comprehensive form in fact, is an important factor to determine and remove social imbalance by law harmonizing the interest of different groups/sections of society- a way to built up a "Welfare State".

The subject matter under discussion in the present day scenario is Status & Empowerment of Women. The reality of the philosophy is that women are mothers, sisters, daughters and their counterpart in-laws - all are human being, forming part of our society. From the days our society came into existence, the women are not treated equally due to numerous constraints, cultural traditions, ethos, and inhuman treatment and vice versa. In the recent years, the women have played tremendous role in making the society as civilized society, may it be education, industry, banking, Government/private undertaking or the else.

Subsequently, due to these numerous constraints and compulsions, the women have



been victim to various atrocities like physical and mental torture, economic and sexual harassment, child marriage, dowry death, infanticide and other multifarious crimes and victimization commensuration with innumerable other impediments which have been the root cause of impairment of our society & have endangered and damaged the society to a larger extent in the present context.

In the olden days when there was little awareness of the society, the liberty of the women was confined to the

four-wall of the house and they were even sacrificed when the tradition of Sati was prevalent. But with the change of time, our social reformers like Keshab Chandra Sen, Dhondo Keshav Karve, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Saralabala Devi Chowdhari, Sir, Syed Ahmed Khan, Swami Viveknanda, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi and similar other reformers had the vision of plight of women, enlightened and awakened our society. Similarly, since our constitu-

tion was formed and the education was considered as the main factor for making change in the society, women got the opportunities to excel their potentials in every field.

As earlier mentioned, now women are taking active part in every field- may it be political, defense, security forces, education, industry or any other field. To cite few examples, our late Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the First Woman Prime Minister of India - a courageous, brave, bold lady, who had passion for peace, Krishna Mehta - our Ist

Woman M.P from Jammu & Kashmir State ( Now U.T) who had the vision of social transformation, Kiran Desai, a noted writer and youngest woman awarded Britain Highest literary award, Mrs Pratibha Partil, the Ist Woman President, Kiran Bedi and similar others women who had/have been chief Ministers, MPs. If the aims and objectives of social justice are to be achieved through liberty, equality and fraternity, the basic essential reflected in the preamble of our constitution, changes are utmost in

our society. To establish a socialistic society (Welfare society) and civilized society, the enjoyment of liberty, respect and dignity to all including women - ideal of living a peaceful life through freedom of thoughts, expression, fellow feeling, brotherhood which will lead towards a modern civilization and socio-economic development is need of the hour. It is firm conviction and admitted fact that the education, which is an important and fundamental factor to a greater extent, can save our society from extinction, degradation and deterioration.

Under Article 15, Prohibition of determination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, it has been held that Section 497 of IPC, which say that it is an offence of adultery though the man is punishable for adultery, the woman is not punishable as an abettor; is not unconstitutional, because such immunity is necessary for the protection of woman in view of their existing position in Indian society. Clause (3) of article 15, which permits special provisions for women and children, has been widely resorted to and the courts have upheld the validity of special measures in legislation or executive orders favouring women.

In the context of sustained

and substantial technological development, political awakening and consistency in the global environment, taking into consideration the plight of women, it is imperative that our society is brought up to the fashion of modern civilization by educating new generation & enforcing stringent law.

There are long pending issues regarding plight of women which have been debated in many sessions in Parliament for the uplift of women.

Unless concrete and vigorous legislations are not formulated and enforced, these trends of women victimization, crimes and harassments will continue to exist.

Taking the above in view, it is essential that positive steps are required to be taken through educating the society and making the masses aware of the status and empowerment of women. Some of the result oriented measures which can be taken, are by educating the masses through various cultural, social-welfare programs in the educational institutions and colleges making the public and youngsters aware of the problems of the women, concrete, enforcement of vigorous and stringent legislation.

(The author is Chairman of Modern Educational Society, 2006)

## Is the real spirit of Holi fading away in Jammu?

■ BHARTI SHARMA

I still remember my childhood when Holi was the most exciting day of the year. We did not play Holi for just one or two hours - we played the whole day. Early in the morning, we filled buckets with water and made water balloons. We ran through the streets, laughing loudly and shouting "Holi Hai!" Our clothes were completely wet and our faces were covered in so many colors that even our parents could not recognize us. We did not care about getting dirty. All we cared about was fun and happiness.

But when I look at Jammu today, I feel something has changed. The streets are not as lively as before. The loud music, the groups of children running around and the cheerful noise in every lane seem less now. Holi has slowly become more of a private celebration



inside homes instead of a big festival on the streets.

Earlier, on Holi, we used to visit our neighbors one by one. We would go from

house to house in big groups. Every door was open and every person wel-

comed us with a smile. We would apply a little color on their faces, share warm hugs and enjoy sweets like rasgullas, jalebis and homemade gujyas. In many homes, people also offered lassi or thandai to guests. We would sit together, laugh, talk for some time and then move to the next house. It did not matter if someone was a close relative or just a neighbor. On Holi, everyone felt like family. The whole mohalla celebrated together.

Today, many people prefer sending "Happy Holi" messages on WhatsApp instead of meeting each other. Children are busy with mobile phones, video games and taking selfies for Instagram rather than playing outside with colors. The excitement that we once saw in areas like Pacea Danga and Jain Bazaar is slowly disappearing. The festival feels quieter than before.

Of course, times have changed. People are more careful now about chemical colors and safety, which is important. But along with safety, we should not lose the joy of meeting each other. A festival is not just a holiday or a day for social media posts. It is about togetherness, laughter and sharing happiness.

I truly feel that we should bring back that old warmth. Let us keep our phones aside for a few hours, step out of our homes, visit our neighbors and celebrate Holi together again. Let us fill the streets with laughter and bright colors like we used to. Because festivals are beautiful only when hearts are connected - and we must make sure the true spirit and colors of Jammu never fade away.

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