

# Holi

## The Festival

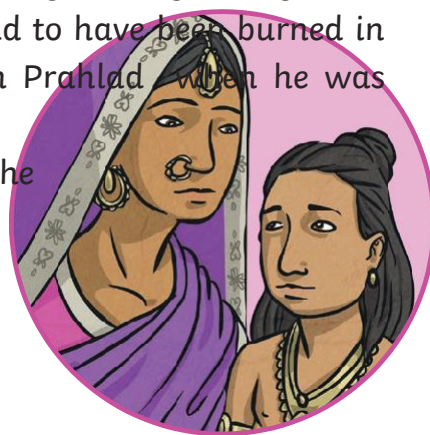
### What Is Holi?

Holi is the colourful Hindu festival celebrated since ancient times in agricultural areas to throw off the darkness of winter and welcome the light of spring. Holi is celebrated following the full moon in the month of 'Phalguna' in the Hindu calendar so its date varies. It usually falls between February and March.



Holi also commemorates various events in Hindu mythology, including the legend of a demon king. The name Holi is thought to come from Holika, the sister of the demon king, Hiranyakashyap. In Hindu mythology, Holika is said to have been burned in place of Hiranyakashyap's son Prahlad when he was sentenced to death

by his father for worshipping the Hindu god Lord Vishnu. Therefore, Holi is also seen as a time to celebrate good overcoming evil.

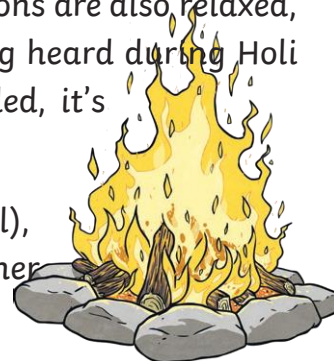


Holi, a national festival celebrated across India, is mainly a fun festival where people can relax. It is celebrated over two days. The first day is known as **Holika Dahan** and the second as **Rangwali Holi**.

### How Is Holi Celebrated?

Holi is associated with relaxed social expectations, which means that all people mix regardless of age, gender or wealth. Behaviour expectations are also relaxed, resulting in a fun but chaotic atmosphere. A common saying heard during Holi is '**Buran a mano, Holi hai**', which means 'don't be offended, it's Holi.'

On the evening of Holika Dahan (the first day of the festival), a public bonfire is lit to celebrate the burning of Holika rather than Prahlad. For the weeks leading up to Holi, Hindu boys traditionally collect waste wood for the fire, which is lit between 10 p.m. and midnight and everyone joins together



in the street creating much noise. People perform religious rituals, asking for forgiveness from their god and praying that any evil will end.



During Rangwali Holi (the second day of the festival), the colourful part of the celebration occurs, when people:

- throw coloured paint over each other;
- throw water bombs at each other;
- sing, dance and have fun together.

## How Is Holi Celebrated around the World?

### Nepal, Asia

Holi is also celebrated in Nepal as a national festival and is celebrated on the same date as the Indian Holi. Many of the same activities take place as they do in India, with a focus on traditional concerts being held in most cities.

### Guyana, South America

Holi arrived in Guyana in the nineteenth century with forced workers from India but has changed to have a unique Caribbean-Indian feel with traditional Indian **Chowtal** music combining with **creole** influences. Most people wear old white clothes with the expectation that they will not remain white for long!

### Germany, Europe

Held annually in the German capital, Berlin, is a modern take on the traditional Hindu festival. The Holi Festival of Colours, Berlin, is an electronic music festival, combining DJs from around the world with the colourful powder paint of Holi. Bringing together people from all backgrounds, the partying is a colourful experience for everyone!



### Glossary

**Agricultural** – Linked to farming.

**Chowtal** – Hindu folksong with singers and a drummer.

**Creole** – Music of African origin with a variety of instruments including drums.

# Questions

1. 'Holi also commemorates various events in Hind mythology...' Which word is closest in meaning to **commemorates**? Tick one.

- ignores  
 forgets  
 remembers  
 neglects

2. Match the question to the correct answer.

What is the first day of Holi called?

What is the second day of Holi called?

During which month in the Hindu calendar is Holi celebrated?

Phalguna

Holika Dahan

Rangwali Holi

3. Give two things that people do during Rangwali Holi.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

4. In which country is Holi combined with an electronic music festival?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Find and copy a word or phrase from the second section which tells you that Holi is a hectic festival.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Why do you think that Holi is popular around the world? Explain your answer.

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7. Why do you think that people in Guyana don't expect their clothes to remain white?

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8. Would you prefer Holika Dahan or Rangwali Holi? Explain your answer.

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# Answers

1. 'Holi also commemorates various events in Hind mythology...' Which word is closest in meaning to **commemorates**? Tick one.

- ignores  
 forgets  
 **remembers**  
 neglects

2. Match the question to the correct answer.

What is the first day of Holi called?	Phalguna
What is the second day of Holi called?	Holika Dahan
During which month in the Hindu calendar is Holi celebrated?	Rangwali Holi

3. Give two things that people do during Rangwali Holi.

**Accept any of the following:**

- **throw coloured paint over each other;**
- **throw water bombs at each other;**
- **sing, dance and have fun together.**

4. In which country is Holi combined with an electronic music festival?

**Accept Germany only.**

5. Find and copy a word or phrase from the second section which tells you that Holi is a hectic festival.

**Accept 'a fun but chaotic atmosphere' only.**

6. Why do you think that Holi is popular around the world? Explain your answer.  
**Accept any reasonable explanation linked to text, e.g.**  
**There are a lot of Hindus living around the world who will celebrate Holi and other people will join in because it is a fun festival.**
  
7. Why do you think that people in Guyana don't expect their clothes to remain white?  
**Accept any relevant answer including: They know that there will be a lot of coloured paints and water thrown at them during Rangwali Holi so wouldn't expect to stay clean.**
  
8. Would you prefer Holika Dahan or Rangwali Holi? Explain your answer.  
**Children's own response linked to text, such as: I would prefer Rangwali Holi because it sounds like so much fun to have a huge, colourful waterfight and I am not keen on bonfires so would rather not go to Holika Dahan celebrations.**



# Holi

## The Festival

Celebrated since ancient times in agricultural areas to throw off the darkness of winter and welcome the light of spring, Holi is a colourful Hindu festival. Holi is always celebrated following the full moon in the month of 'Phalguna' in the Hindu calendar, so its date varies but it usually falls between February and March.



As well as celebrating the beginning of springtime, Holi also commemorates various events in Hindu mythology. The name Holi is thought to come from Holika, the sister of the demon king, Hiranyakashyap. In Hindu mythology, Holika is said to have been burned in place of Hiranyakashyap's son Prahlad when he was sentenced to death by his father for worshipping the Hindu god Lord Vishnu. Prahlad survived and so Holi is also seen as a time to celebrate good overcoming evil.

Holi, which is a national festival now celebrated across India, is mainly a time where people can relax with no religious requirements or prayers. The festival itself is celebrated over two days: the first day is known as **Holika Dahan** and the second as **Rangwali Holi**. Each day is associated with different activities, with the main focus being on having fun!



### Holi Celebrations

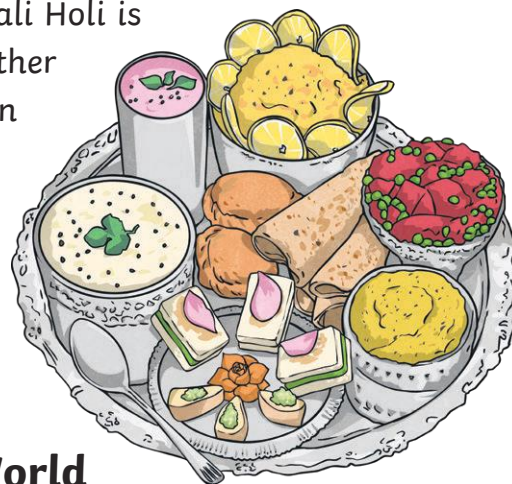
During Holi, one of the main characteristics is the relaxing of social expectations usually associated with Hindu cultures, allowing people of all ages, genders or wealth to mix. Behaviour expectations are also relaxed, resulting in an enjoyable but often chaotic atmosphere. A common saying at Holi is '**Buran a mano, Holi hai**', which means 'don't be offended, it's Holi.'

On the evening of Holika Dahan (the first day of the festival), a public bonfire is lit (often in an unorderly way) to celebrate the burning of Holika rather than Prahlad. For the weeks



leading up to Holi, Hindu boys traditionally collect waste wood from their neighbourhood for the fire, which is lit between 10 p.m. and midnight (when the moon rises). It is a time when everyone joins together in the street creating lots of noise. People also perform religious rituals, asking for forgiveness from their god and praying that any evil will end.

During Rangwali Holi (the second day of the festival), the colourful part of the celebration occurs when people parade through the streets throwing coloured paint and water bombs over each other. Rangwali Holi is also a chance for friends and family to get together to sing, dance and have fun. Holi usually ends in the late afternoon when everyone goes home to wash and change clothes before visiting friends and relatives. Delicious feasts are prepared for sharing, including **Gujiya**, which is a sweet delicacy stuffed with dried fruits, nuts and other sweet treats.



## Holi around the World

### Nepal, Asia

In Nepal, Holi (also known as Phagu Poornima) is also celebrated as a national festival on the same date as the Indian Holi. Traditional music concerts are held in most cities along with many of the same fun and games that take place in India during Holi.

### Guyana, South America

Holi arrived in Guyana in the nineteenth century with forced (indentured) workers from India, who were mainly Hindus unwilling to give up their faith. Over time, Holi in Guyana has altered to have a unique Caribbean-Indian feel with traditional Indian **Chowtal** music (Hindu folksong with singers and a drummer) combining with **creole** influences (music of African origin with a variety of instruments including drums). During Rangwali Holi, it is customary to wear old white clothes with the expectation that they will not remain white for long!





### Germany, Europe

Held annually in the German capital, Berlin's Holi Festival of Colours is a modern take on the traditional Hindu festival. Holi Festival of Colours, Berlin, is an electronic music festival, combining DJs from around the world with the colourful powder paint of Holi. Bringing together people from all backgrounds, the partying is a colourful experience for everyone!

#### Did You Know...?

The festival of Holi is also associated with Lord Krishna and his love for Radha.



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# Questions

1. What is the main focus of Holi? Tick one.

- prayer
- having fun
- bonfires
- water fights

2. Draw a line to complete the sentences.

The name Holi is thought  
to

• various events in Hindu  
mythology.

Holi also commemorates

• come from Holika.

Holi is always celebrated

• following the full moon in  
the month of 'Phalguna'  
in the Hindu calendar.

3. Find two words in the second section that tell you that Holi is a hectic festival.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Fill in the missing words from this sentence:

On the evening of \_\_\_\_\_ (the first day of the festival), a \_\_\_\_\_ is lit  
(often in an unorderly way) to celebrate the \_\_\_\_\_ rather than Prahlad.

5. Find and copy a phrase from the text which shows that Holi is a festival during which people unwind.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. 'Don't be offended, it's Holi.' Why do you think that people say this?

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7. Why do you think that Holi is popular with children?

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8. How are the three other countries written about in the text similar in their Holi celebrations?

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9. In which country would you prefer to celebrate Holi? Explain your answer.

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# Answers

1. What is the main focus of Holi? Tick one.

- prayer  
 **having fun**  
 bonfires  
 water fights

2. Draw a line to complete the sentences.

The name Holi is thought to	various events in Hindu mythology.
Holi also commemorates	come from Holika.
Holi is always celebrated	following the full moon in the month of 'Phalguna' in the Hindu calendar.

3. Find two words in the second section that tell you that Holi is a hectic festival.

Accept '**chaotic**' and '**unorderly**'.

4. Fill in the missing words from this sentence:

On the evening of **Holika Dahan** (the first day of the festival), a **public bonfire** is lit (often in an unorderly way) to celebrate the **burning of Holika** rather than Prahlad.

5. Find and copy a phrase from the text which shows that Holi is a festival during which people unwind.

Accept any of the following:

- a time during which people can relax with no religious requirements or prayers
- relaxing of social expectations
- behaviour expectations are also relaxed

6. 'Don't be offended, it's Holi.' Why do you think that people say this?

**Accept any relevant answer including: People are behaving in ways they wouldn't usually due to the relaxing of social and behaviour expectations, but they don't want anyone to be upset by the fun they are having.**

7. Why do you think that Holi is popular with children?

**Accept any relevant answer including: Holi is a fun festival when everyone gets together to sing and play. Children love water fights and the addition of coloured paint will make it even more enjoyable for children.**

8. How are the three other countries written about in the text similar in their Holi celebrations?

**Accept any relevant answer including: All three countries written about have music festivals as part of their Holi celebrations.**

9. In which country would you prefer to celebrate Holi? Explain your answer.

**Children's own response linked to text, such as: I would prefer to celebrate Holi in India because I would like to experience a more traditional festival with a large bonfire and all of the sweet foods.**



# Holi

## The Festival

Celebrated since ancient times in agricultural areas to throw off the darkness of winter and welcome the light of spring, is the colourful Hindu festival of Holi. Holi is always celebrated following the full moon in the month of 'Phalguna' in the Hindu calendar, so its date varies but it usually falls between February and March in the Gregorian calendar (the most widely used calendar across the world).



As well as celebrating the beginning of springtime, Holi also commemorates various events in Hindu mythology. One of these is the legend of a demon king. The name Holi is thought to come from Holika, the sister of the demon king, Hiranyakashyap. In Hindu mythology, Holika is said to have been burned in place of Hiranyakashyap's son Prahlad, who had been sentenced to death by his father for worshipping the Hindu god Lord Vishnu. Prahlad survived and so Holi is also seen as a time to celebrate good overcoming evil.

Unlike many other Hindu holidays, Holi, which is a national festival now celebrated across India, is mainly a time where people can relax with no religious requirements or prayers. The festival itself is celebrated over two days: the first day is known as **Holika Dahan** and the second as **Rangwali Holi**. Each day is associated with different activities, with the main focus being on having fun!



### Holi Celebrations

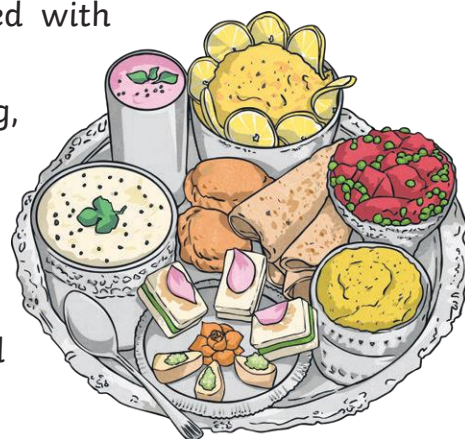
During Holi, one of the main characteristics is the relaxing of social expectations usually associated with Hindu cultures. This means that people mix regardless of age, gender or wealth and behaviour expectations are also relaxed, resulting in an enjoyable but often chaotic atmosphere. It is common to hear people saying, "**Buran a mano, Holi hai,**" during Holi, which means 'don't be offended, it's Holi.'



On the evening of Holika Dahan (the first day of the festival), a public bonfire is lit (often in an unorderly way) to celebrate the burning of Holika rather than Prahlad. For the weeks leading up to Holi, Hindu boys traditionally collect waste

wood from their neighbourhood for the fire, which is lit between 10 p.m. and midnight (when the moon rises). It is a time when everyone joins together in the street creating lots of noise. People also perform religious rituals, asking for forgiveness from their god and praying that any evil will end.

During Rangwali Holi (the second day of the festival), the colourful part of the celebration occurs when people parade through the streets throwing coloured paint and water bombs over each other; many adults wear a white kurta (a traditional Indian tunic-style top) and carry some of the dried powder called gual with them, while children tend to be armed with pichkaris (water squirters). Rangwali Holi is also a chance for friends and family to get together to sing, dance and have fun. Holi usually ends in the late afternoon when everyone goes home to wash and change clothes before visiting friends and relatives. Delicious feasts are prepared for sharing, including **Gujiya**, which is a sweet delicacy stuffed with dried fruits, nuts and other sweet treats.



## Holi around the World

Now an international festival due to the movement of Hindus around the world, Holi has altered according to the country within which it is being celebrated.

### Nepal, Asia

In Nepal, Holi (also known as Phagu Poonima) is also celebrated as a national festival on the same date as the Indian Holi. Traditional music concerts are held in most cities along with many of the same fun and games that take place in India during Holi (although there is less of a focus on having bonfires as in India).

### Guyana, South America

When forced (indentured) workers from India arrived in Guyana in the nineteenth century, they took Holi with them as most were Hindus unwilling to give up their faith. However, over the years, Holi has changed to have a unique Caribbean-Indian feel with traditional Indian **Chowtal** music (Hindu folksong with singers and a drummer) combining with **creole** influences (music of African origin with

a variety of instruments including drums). As with most Holi celebrations, it is customary to wear old white clothes with the expectation that they will not remain white for long!

### **Berlin, Germany, Europe**

Held annually in the German capital, Berlin's Holi Festival of Colours is a modern take on the traditional Hindu festival. Holi Festival of Colours, Berlin, is an electronic music festival, combining DJs from around the world with the colourful powder paint of Holi. Bringing together people from all backgrounds, the partying is a colourful experience for everyone!



### **Did You Know...?**

Traditionally, Holi paint was made with natural ingredients, such as turmeric or sunflowers mixed with extracts of Neem (Indian Lilac) and Bilva (wood apple) to create a naturally coloured paste. Modern times have seen more people using dyes and synthetic chemicals, which are easier and cheaper to produce, but many people worry about the negative effects of these chemicals on people and the environment.

# Questions

1. '...resulting in an enjoyable but often chaotic atmosphere.'

What does **chaotic** mean? Tick one.

- clean and tidy
- quiet and peaceful
- loud and untidy
- confused and disorderly

2. What does Holi celebrate? Tick one.

- the beginning of spring
- good overcoming evil
- various events in Hindu mythology
- all of the above

3. 'Holi, which is a national festival celebrated across India...'

What does the word **national** mean?

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4. Find and copy the names of three things that people use during Rangwali Holi.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Find and copy a phrase from the text which shows that Holi is celebrated around the world.

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6. Why do some people worry about the paint used during Holi?

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7. Summarise what you have read in paragraphs 4-6 in one sentence.

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8. Why might some people be offended during Holi?

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9. Explain why Holi is now celebrated around the world.

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10. Do you think that Holi would be an enjoyable festival to attend? Give evidence to support your answer.

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# Answers

1. '...resulting in an enjoyable but often chaotic atmosphere.'

What does **chaotic** mean? Tick one.

- clean and tidy
- quiet and peaceful
- loud and untidy
- confused and disorderly**

2. What does Holi celebrate? Tick one.

- the beginning of spring
- good overcoming evil
- various events in Hindu mythology
- all of the above**

3. 'Holi, which is a national festival celebrated across India...'

What does the word **national** mean?

**Accept any reference to 'national' meaning across the whole country.**

4. Find and copy the names of three things that people use during Rangwali Holi.

**Accept any of:**

- **coloured paint**
- **water bombs**
- **gulal (dried powder)**
- **pichkaris (water squirters)**

5. Find and copy a phrase from the text which shows that Holi is celebrated around the world.

**Accept only 'Now an international festival'**

6. Why do some people worry about the paint used during Holi?

**Accept reference to the text including: People often use dyes and synthetic chemicals which have negative effects on people and the environment.**

7. Summarise what you have read in paragraphs 4-6 in one sentence.  
**Accept any relevant answer including: Holi is a fun festival taking place over two days: Holika Dahan is where people have large bonfires, and Rangwali Holi is where people enjoy large paint and water fights.**
  
8. Why might some people be offended during Holi?  
**Accept any relevant answer including: During Holi, the usual religious, social and behaviour expectations are relaxed, meaning many people behave in a more unorderly manner, which could offend some.**
  
9. Explain why Holi is now celebrated around the world.  
**Accept any relevant answer including: Over time, Hindus have travelled around the world and so have taken their beliefs and festivals with them.**
  
10. Do you think that Holi would be an enjoyable festival to attend? Give evidence to support your answer.  
**Children's own response linked to text, such as: For me, Holi would not be an enjoyable festival to attend because I do not like loud noises or hectic places.**