



SEARCH ALL [input field] go

SPONSORED BY:

powered by you and TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT

## Hindu colors of Holi festival are for everyone

BY THAYUMANA SOMASUNDARAM • FAITH • MARCH 15, 2008

[Print this page](#) [E-mail this article](#)

SHARE THIS ARTICLE: [Del.icio.us](#) [Facebook](#) [Digg](#) [Reddit](#) [Newsvine](#) [What's this?](#)

One of the festivals of India that is literally colorful is Holi. At the end of winter when the harvests have been completed and signs of spring are in the air, it is the perfect time for happiness and play and therefore, for Holi. It is celebrated in Northern India on the full moon of Phalgun, the Indian lunar month that usually falls in March.

Locally, the Indian Association of Tallahassee is organizing a Holi Celebration at Tom Brown Park on March 22. Everyone is welcome to participate.

During Holi, young and old men and women participate by throwing colored powders or colored water on each and shouting "Holi hai." People don't mind getting their clothes and faces covered with colors. Expecting to be surprised, people tend to put on worn clothes during the celebrations.

With everyone painted in some random color, the barrier between different classes of people disappears and all are treated the same way. That may have been one of the reasons this practice began.

Even though Holi is a Hindu festival, it is very common to see everyone, irrespective of their religious affiliation, participate in the activities. That way Holi is not only a fun festival but it is also a festival that unites people. Revelers then eat sweets and some adults drink bhang, a traditional drink of north India.

On the night before Holi people join together and make a bonfire with small sticks and dried leaves and then sing and dance around the fire. The bonfire (Agni, the Hindu god of fire) signifies triumph of good over evil and getting rid of bad habits in fire and getting good things in life.

Like many Hindu festivals, there are many stories associated with the origins of the Holi festival. According to one, the name Holi is derived from Holika, the sister of the demon king Hiranya Kashibu.

The demon king prayed long and hard to the Gods and received boons that gave him near immortality. This made him very arrogant and he wanted everyone to worship him instead of the Gods. Everybody obeyed him except his own son Prahalad, who worshipped Lord Vishnu (Krishna is one incarnation of Lord Vishnu and Rama is another).

The demon king tried to first persuade and then threaten his son to worship him but Prahalad refused. The demon king asked his sister Holika, who had a special gift that made her immune to fire, to carry Prahalad into raging fire in order to kill him. However, when she carried Prahalad, he kept his faith in Lord Vishnu and prayed to him and the fire didn't singe a hair while Holika was burned.

According to one story Holika actually tried to protect Prahalad after realizing his unwavering faith in Lord Vishnu, so even though she listened to her brother she was actually pardoned by Lord Vishnu. But another story says that she deserved to be consumed by the flames. (The traditional bonfire marks this event.)

The demon king would eventually be killed by Lord Vishnu himself. Either way, the moral of the story is that Lord Vishnu will protect those who have strong faith in Him. Hindus celebrate this faith during Holi.

- Thayumana Somasundaram is the general secretary of IATLH, a nonprofit group that promotes the cultural and social activities of Indian people. He lives with his wife and son and has been a resident of Tallahassee since 1993.

### in your voice

READ REACTIONS TO THIS STORY

You must be logged in to leave a comment. [Login](#) | [Register](#)



Thayumana Somasundaram/Special to the Democrat

The public is invited to the Holi festival at Tom Brown Park.

#### IF YOU GO

What: Holi Celebration.  
Where: Tom Brown Park, Station Number 13  
When: 10:30 a.m. March 22  
Cost: Free, but bring food to share at a potluck. The association will provide the colors for Holi, drinks and cutlery.  
For more information: Visit [www.iaath.org](http://www.iaath.org).

#### RELATED NEWS FROM THE WEB

[Religion](#)

[Hindu](#)

Powered by [Topix.net](#)

#### more living headlines

[Old-school chefs harness fire and ember](#)

[LIMELIGHT EXTRA!](#)

[Bites](#)

[Learn to tell fact from diet myth](#)

#### latest headlines

[New Port Richey woman dies in Taylor-County crash](#)

[FSU basketball coach Hamilton looks forward to NIT](#)

[Olympic hopefuls continue quest despite injuries to Chiacchia's](#)

[Video: Interview #2 with rider Imtiaz Anees](#)

[Video: Interview #2 with rider Elisa Wallace](#)

### Ad Links



**Dining Services Westminster Oaks**  
Westminster Oaks, Tallahassee's  
Dining Services Westminster Oaks  
Westminster...

**Are you ready for a change**  
Are you ready for a change? Dynamic Sales...