

# HOLI

Holi (Ho-lee) the Hindu Indian Festival of Colours marks the end of Winter and the coming of Spring. Holi takes place annually over two days in the month of *Phalguna* (late March to early April) based on the Hindu calendar. This festival is celebrated with bonfires, street festivals, music, dance, fine foods, colour and water games. Holi creates the opportunity to give thanks for the coming harvest.

Holi is called the Festival of Colours because people smear each other with *gugal* (dry coloured powder) and then spray coloured water. Hindu people believe that the Five Elements of Nature – Earth, Wind, Water, Space and Fire support life here on Earth.

Day 1 is Fire Day. Fire cleanses and purifies. *Dipas* (small clay lamps) are lit as a Symbol for Goodness and Fire. Fire renews the soil so that the crops can grow. With the coming of Spring, fires are lit to cleanse before planting the new crops. Organised bonfires are lit. Hindu families march around the bonfires to receive blessings from Fire. Coconuts (also a Symbol of New Life) are hurled into the fire and later retrieved. The coconuts are cracked open and the toasted insides are shared.

Day 2 is Colour Day. This is a day when chaos reigns. After the cleansing by Fire people amuse themselves by shouting *Holi Hai* (Holi is here) and smearing each other with *gugal* (dry colours). Later comes the spraying with coloured water. Nobody seems to mind that clothes are stained. Everyone is equal and nobody is spared, and age has no barrier. Everyone is forgiven during this truly chaotic time. The barriers of caste are broken down and Holi is meant to be fun. Holi Fairs are set up providing entertainment, snacks, amusements and a carnival atmosphere.



Holi is a time of joy and laughter when Hindu people celebrate Mother Earth, make peace with their neighbours and friends, joke, smear coloured powders and water splash, and generally have fun.

Holi is *Rang* (colour), *Ras* (dance) and *Rag* (song) and total chaos.

Holi has been chosen because it is a fun celebration that can be shared by all, especially with the warmer weather. Holi provides a wonderful opportunity to indulge in water play.

# WATER ACTIVITY

An idea for HOLI

## YOU WILL NEED

- Plain white sheet (or similar)
- Spray bottles
- Food dyes (range of colours)
- Water

## WHAT TO DO

- Hang a plain white sheet outside
- Fill bottles with water
- Add food dye colour to each bottle
- Supply children with spray bottles
- Allow children to squirt colours onto the sheet

Once everyone sprays the sheet with the coloured water, a kaleidoscope of colours emerges. What a beautiful masterpiece! Simply wash the sheet and repeat the activity again on another day. Or if you want a real wall hanging, allow the colours to dry and display.

