

The Cultural Appropriation, Secularization, Sacrilege, Desecration and Desacralisation of *Phagwa* (Holi)

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Introduction

Phagwa as it's known by the Indo-Caribbean Hindus or Holi as it's renowned to world popular culture is one of the most exhilarating and fun festivals in Hinduism, celebrated with immense merriment, pomp and fervor. However, Phagwa is quickly becoming a major Hindu festival that is experiencing slow but colossal cultural appropriation, secularization, sacrilege, desecration and is being commercialized, detached, dispossessed, disrespected, deconsecrated, defiled, denigrated, degraded, dishonored and desacralized. While there are a large number of non-Hindus and Hindus who enjoy the festivities with utmost respect in a balance of acculturation and assimilation there are plenty of mainstream media, movies, rationale, events, academia and activism both designed to misuse and malign the more religious and spiritual Hindu aspects of Phagwa outside of its sacred realm and dharmic context. This is being done both consciously by organized anti-Hindu forces and subconsciously being propagated by the public

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as well as for quick economic gain. Much of the desacralisation is taking place under the garb of institutions such as free speech, democracy, art and academia all meted out for dispossessing Hindus of their festival.

Meanwhile, many Hindus remain insufficiently cognizant of the current and future problems this pertains to the practice, existence and endurance of their religion. This paper will describe the aspects and address such concerns with global examples including from North America, Europe, India and within the Caribbean region. It will also discourse what methodology Hindus must adopt to ensure Phagwa or Holi maintains its spiritual character and how Hindus must remain vigilant, educate themselves and the world about such trepidations to safeguard cultural preservation and the collective intellectual property rights of their Hindu faith while sharing the festivals of Sanatan Dharma and its philosophies with humanity.

Brief History of Holi

Holi is a euphoric festival found in Sanatan Dharma. Its other sobriquets include 'the festival of colours', 'the festival of love', and even the 'festival of spring'. Like other ancient pagan festivals Holi envisions new beginnings, love, happiness and a triumphant reinvigorated spirit. Holi honors the harvest season and the culmination of the long winter months. The colours of the Earth are reflected in the traditions of the festivals; the splashing of manmade replicated colors is the main event. It exalts the triumph of dharma (righteousness) over adharma (ignorance and misdeeds).

Holi starts in the Hindu month of *Phalgun* deriving its other name, Phagwa. Phagwa is a regional name in many parts of India including Bihar, where many of the Indo-Caribbean Hindus are descended from. Holi has been celebrated for almost 160 hundred years in countries such as Trinidad, Guyana and Suriname (Trinidad Express, 2010).

The night before Holi begins is known as Holika Dahan or the burning of Holika. The next day is Rangwali Holi/Dhuleti/Dhulandi or Phagwa: throwing of colours, made in the *abeer* (powder) or *gulal* (liquid) form. The fun festivities of Phagwa are brewing an international phenomenon and catching the attention of the world.

The Cultural Appropriation of Holi

Cultural appropriation is defined as the act of copying or using the customs and traditions of a particular group or culture by somebody from a more dominant (powerful) group in society (Oxford University, 2021). In approximately the last decade, the festival of Holi has undergone a western transformation

becoming extremely popular outside of India and the Indian diaspora. Around the time that the festival of Holi is celebrated a number of events suddenly emerge around the United States, Canada, Australia, Europe, India and elsewhere, that appear to mimic the traditional practices of Holi including but not limited to the famous smearing of colour ritual. This ritual re-enacts the sacred divine love of Radha and Krishna.

While Hindus themselves have assimilated and acculturated within their respective countries the favor is not always returned in a balanced and respectful way. Hindus always follow the law of the land incorporating some of the majority culture's music or food where appropriate (for example Hindus may not include meat or music with profanity at their events). However, there are disturbing and growing trends with numerous red flags of cultural appropriation and other nuances.

During Holi partakers feel more socially relaxed and norm is overturned on social boundaries. There is a spirit of playfulness and inclusivity for all members of society to join the festivities. Naturally, this entices many non-Hindus to participate. Therefore, Holi lends itself to crossing ethnic and religious boundaries but, non-Hindus and Hindus alike need to be conscious of Holi's history, Hindu origins and its spiritual and religious significance to the Hindu religion. Hindus do not mind others partaking of their festivals like Holi, but they must show due respect.

The best examples of massive cultural appropriation of Holi on a global scale are from events like the *Holi Festival of Colors (HfoC)*, the *Color Run* and the *Festival of Colors: Holi NYC*.

The *Holi Festival of Colors (HfoC)* was founded by three non-Hindus from Europe Jasper Hellman, Max Riedel and Maxim Derenko (Verma, 2015). The trio reportedly exported the appropriation of Holi across the globe in 30 countries spanning Europe, Africa, the Middle East, South and Central America, drawing in about 15 000 in Stratford Square, London alone (Kuruville 2018; Corbin, 2016). What an opportunity this would have presented to enlighten people globally on the principles of the Hindu religion which lacks a greater central authority or resources to do so effortlessly. Derenko gave vague answers about honoring the festival's origins like, 'always communicating the roots of the festival, ' and yet cannot point out any particulars (Kuruville 2018). His goals include, '[creating] a wonderful experience for the attendees, ' and not to 'harm [anybody] with the celebrations, ' and that, 'those values are universal, they should be accessible to everyone, ' (Kuruville, 2018). The founder was unable to show in what capacity they were not appropriating Holi. His answers show a less than subtle disrespectful dismissal of Hindus and their festival. Hindus are always willing to share their festivals with the world but the word 'should' is used in a demanding tone as though its compulsory and Hindus have no choice.

The disrespect of Holi through a dismissive and unapologetic attitude continues with the words of founder Jack Langerman of the event *Festival of Colors: Holi NYC*. In 2016, Langerman was reported to have said, 'I'm not a Hindu. I'm just some white kid who grew up in New York. I understand why that's bothersome. All I can say is Hindus figured out the best way to celebrate spring,' (Corbin, 2016). He has managed to draw in crowd of 4000 people, running this event since about 2011 with plans to do over 100 festivals in multiple countries (Corbin, 2016).

The *Color Run* is another instance of the appropriation of Holi. Founded by Travis Snyder, it continues across 35 countries drawing in thousands of participants (Kuruville, 2018). While some organizers admit to Holi as the inspiration for their event others like Snyder try to paint it as being inspired by Disney or even mud runs (Kuruville, 2018). However, the events are extremely reminiscent of the Hindu festival. The Color Run might be evocative of a mud run or 5k race but there is something uniquely Hindu about the splashing of colors during spring time. The organizers throw around words like 'universal', 'one love' or 'expression of love' to legitimize their appropriation while event attendees describe it as 'harmless' yet none are flocking to actual Hindu Holi celebrations like the N.Y. Phagwa Parade in Queens or those organized by Hindu temples (Corbin, 2016). To organizers and attendees of such events it's something redolent of a movie like 'Eat, Pray, Love' happy with their oriental vision and colonized mockery of the festival (Corbin, 2016). They are not reenacting a divine play; they are finding ways to turn a sacred festival into another drunken Woodstock with a sheepish and unapologetic attitude. It's a complete white-washing of a minority group's sacred festival by a larger dominant group or textbook case of crass cultural appropriation.

The Commercialization of Holi

Social and political problems never manifest themselves in a vacuum. In addition to the cultural appropriation of Holi, at the events listed above, come other problems: commercialization, commodification and the secularization of Holi. When events like the Color Run and the HfoC take place they must make accommodations for their participants. Those unfamiliar with the traditions and practices don't realize you need white clothing, or colours to play. Event planners will have to provide packages with clothes, colors, and even food and drinks. The events will continue to grow. Once business takes off it tends to become an unstoppable movement. The HfoC offers a Holi festival celebration package almost like VIP club package you might get for your birthday at a bar. It's a package with 5 bags of colours, a t-shirt, drinks and access to restroom facilities for a cost of \$120 (Kuruville, 2018). All it takes to appropriate Holi is

about 43 pounds in England (Verma, 2015). Organizers sometimes do give money to charity (it is uncertain where most of the money goes but it's a for-profit event) and many times the charity has almost nothing to support a Hindu cause, a Hindu project such as making Holi a holiday or even a Hindu temple in what appears to be a major snub to Hinduism.

The author believes that eventually other trends will follow. Organizers may develop certain types of clothing to make partying much more comfortable in the same way yoga clothes has spun off a billion-dollar industry. The company themselves may become a brand selling clothes under their licensed name. They may sell mugs, bottle holders, water proof jackets, water resistant watches, hoodies and other branded paraphernalia. Bikram Yoga already tried to copyright yoga; some corporation may try to copyright the Holi festival (Beck and von Werder, 2017).

Commercialization of Holi without consultation of relevant, local Hindu authorities, institutions and pundits can be harmful, such as environmental problems through the careless handling of the Hindu traditions for profit use among a myriad of other complications. When cheap chemicals, for example, are used for mass distribution with maximum profit without understanding why the traditional uses of *neem*, *kum*, *haldi*, sandalwood, indigo, beetroot, *amla* and different species of fruits and flowers including pomegranate, hibiscus and marigold, are used to create the colours, unforeseen problems are likely. Such entrepreneurial 'mistakes' coincidentally will fill the pockets of companies at the expense of an entire religion.

Comparing the Appropriation, Secularization and Commercialization of Holi with Yoga

In the near future, non-Hindus may try to detach Holi from its roots like they do with yoga. If it doesn't belong to a religion then you can exploit it at will. No cultural appropriation taking place means no need to give cultural credit enabling the for-profit and propaganda establishment to make money off this holy festival without consequences, to be manipulated and even denigrated at will. The future economic benefits will encourage big businesses to fund academics to substantiate by any means necessary how Holi isn't Hindu, creating atrocious literature against Hindus, Hinduism and India. We do not need to look far for an example of this. It is happening already with yoga.

Most yoga studios in western countries will boldly tell clients that yoga has nothing to do with Hinduism. These 'intellectuals' detach yoga from Hinduism even after quoting Hindu texts to have to disprove it like the Mahabharata, Rig Veda and Patanjali while claiming it's a 'syncretic' history (Menon, 2018). Ironic, since western yoga teachers initially went to India to study in an ashram

with a Hindu yogi to acquire this knowledge before yoga became an international phenomenon. This enables non-Hindus to create various yoga activities without consequences that serve to denigrate the experience and original intentions of yoga (Hinduism Facts, 2021). Activities like hot yoga, naked yoga, and beer yoga, make a mockery of the entire thing (Laskowski, 2020; Kabbyik, 2020; Liz, 2017). Advantageous companies create products for sale that completely misses the spiritual point of view, example, leather goods manufactured from cow being used to create yoga mats by Louis Vuitton (The Canadian Press, 2020). You can better sell yoga to a global audience by assuring the non-Hindus of the world that they can practice yoga because it isn't Hindu. Churches in good conscience can organize health events and include yoga especially when it's detached from its Hindu origins.

The same will happen to Holi, eventually. Holi's fun rituals will be its own undoing like the wonderful riches and resources of a colonized country is to the colonizer. In order to better commercialize and commodify Holi it will need to be secularized in the same way as yoga. This is done with the orchestrated funding of academics hostile to Hinduism creating a larger anti-Hindu environment dispossessing Hindus of their traditions (Rajaram, 2019). The mainstream academia touts this under the garb of free speech, democracy or in the media, its artistic license. Outspoken Hindus will be seen as the hostiles because the confused, misinformed public was already primed that Holi or yoga isn't Hindu.

Compare the atrocity literature already being generated in India against the Hindu religion by the academic establishment both internal and foreign to 'trivialize...relevance inherent in Indic traditions...[as] primitive and unscientific...primitive and inferior,' (Kumar, 2020; Rosser, 2015). For instance, environmental atrocity literature engendered through the academic establishment in league with non-profit, human rights, environmental and animal rights groups is characteristic of a proxy war to damage the image of Holi and Hinduism. They claim Holi is anti-environment due to the noise pollution, chemical colours, perilous for women, animals or even link Holi to caste issues while similarities concerning festivals of other religions isn't discussed (Perfect Pollucon Services, 2021; Krishna, 2013; Asian Age, 2017; Kamayani, 2021). Manipulative articles are titled 'why Holi is bad for your skin and health', indicating not just that the chemical colors are bad but that the festival itself is somehow inherently reprehensible (Iyengar, 2016).

Some articles claim Holi is unsafe for women because apparently women are safe everywhere in the world except during Holi. (Bhattacharya, 2018). The media constantly delivers biased alarmist titles like 'Hindu tradition of throwing 'Holi' colors may carry health risks', or 'effects of Holi Festival on the environment,' (Gillis, 2017; Outright News, 2021). An internet search shows Holi isn't safe but buying Holi colours from 'Big Business' is acceptable.

While there are legitimate concerns about the chemicals in the colours, nothing is mentioned about Holi's original coloured powder being made from natural organic plant-based sources such as neem and turmeric (Marshall, 2018; Kandpal, 2021). These plant based sources have scientific benefits such as curing ailments, killing bacteria (during Holika Dahan bonfires) and cosmetic purposes (Singh 2021; Kandpal, 2021). No mention is made that these chemicals originate from cheaply made or unregulated products in China and/ or for-profit business elsewhere not adhering to any scriptural Ayurvedic standards (Adhikari, 2020; Qingqing 2016). The brunt of the blame is placed on Hinduism as though the ancient rishis assured them yellow dye No.5 is what Hinduism recommends. Nothing is said about Hinduism's respect for the environment or its worship of nature. According to the propaganda professionals, Hinduism is humanity's worst environmental offender. The religion is collateral damage or perhaps the main target all along. Holi's own Hindu sacred space in literature is desecrated and damaged publicly. Comparably, this same establishment is quiet when trees are cut down for Christmas or animals are slaughtered for Eid in India. The lack of due diligence on the matter becomes suspect that it's not really about Holi it's about anti-Hindu forces taking a cheap shot at Hinduism. Logically, it's atrocity literature.

Media, movies, networks and cable ads hijacking the splash of colors for advertising is telling of the forthcoming detachment of Holi to Hinduism. Detaching a religious or spiritual festival from its indigenous roots creates a vacuum for it to be sold off in pieces like spare parts and property.

The Secularization of Holi

The secularization of Holi is taking place on a local scale even without global foreign interjection. Bars and clubs in New York, Mumbai and Goa offer Holi packages and a night of dancing, partying and drinking to celebrate. They charge admission fees, sell alcohol, and play music and dance in the name of the festival. These trends seem to be originating and growing both in western nations as well as in India. Various Hollywood celebrities have been caught culturally appropriating Holi and other Hindu elements wearing saris, *bindis* and also splashing Holi colors like Selena Gomez's tryst with the *bindi* (Jackson, 2018; Kaufman, 2013; Puri, 2017).

Bollywood's cultural denigration and disrespect of this sacred festival, is now getting major attention. The Hindu diaspora masses have become so accustomed to Bollywood's denigration of Holi that they have been desensitized to its portrayal, and only notice Holi's appropriation by westerners. There are films like *Silsila* starring Amitabh Bachchan's character who's appropriately dressed in Kurta singing, dancing and smearing colors on his friends (Patokar, 2020).

Modern day film songs about Holi include wearing tight short jeans pants or skirts such as the song *Soni Soni* from the movie *Mohabbatein* (ImNepal, 2021). Movie scenes have become more frivolous over the years resembling a drunken rave or frat party; drinking activities are glorified and the heroes and heroines are wearing less and less clothing with sacred words and references to Gods used in the lyrics.

The Desacralisation of Holi

The first and last stage of the denigration of Holi would be desacralisation of the festival. The aforementioned problems trend towards the desacralisation of Holi. Yoga is a good example of desacralisation. While many of Holi's tribulations appear to stem from either a foreign, western source or an internal problem in India there is one that is unique to the Caribbean: comparing Holi to Carnival.

Comparing Holi to Carnival is Desacralisation

While Holi is analogized to a rave or party elsewhere in the world it is not actively compared or explicitly said to be a type of Coachella or Woodstock. However, over the years many have compared Holi to Carnival or 'Indian Carnival', in the Caribbean and even to J'ouvert (pre-Carnival festivities) (Discover Trinidad and Tobago, 2019; Ganase, 1999). Holi and Carnival are not the same. Hindu leaders have clarified that regularly (Trinidad Express, 2012). Trinidad's Hindu figureheads have expressed it is a, 'holy and religious festival', that includes fasting, refraining from meat, and alcohol, and includes puja (ritual prayers), chowtaals (type of Indian folk music) and bhajans (Hindu religious songs) (Trinidad Express, 2012).

Carnival is one of Trinidad and Tobago's biggest secular festival involving masqueraders; dance, in the form of wining, grinding and chipping; the consumption of copious and assorted amounts of alcoholic drinks; and the music of soca and calypso with its very sensual, erotic and carnal words. Carnival is not sacred to any religious group; comparing is sacrilege of Hindu traditions. Carnival is what happens right before an actual sacred time for Christians. Before Lent, Carnival revellers take the opportunity to engage in various impious activities with no spiritual meaning precisely because they must abstain after Lent begins, letting loose all their inhibitions and social norms (Britannica, 2020a). Frequently, Christians and churches more than Hindus condemn irreligiousness in Carnival.

Holi cannot be juxtaposed to Carnival simply due to the presence of music, fun, fanfare or even the presence of an intoxicant. Drinking wine in church,

playing the organ and singing does not mean its Carnival neither does a mela or bazaar signal a carnival-esque event at a church or mosque. Hosay, commemorating the martyrdom of the Prophet Mohammad's grandsons, includes a parade and drumming in the streets of Trinidad - that doesn't indicate its Carnival or Mardi Gras in New Orleans or Rome (History, 2021; Britannica, 2020b; Destination Trinidad and Tobago, 2021). There is a sacred place for the divine being re-enacted by participants in Holi and other religious festivals.

Bhang is an Ethneogen unlike alcohol

Bhang, often referred to as an intoxicant used in Holi, is inaccurately compared to alcohol in Carnival. Bhang is made from grinding the cannabis plant seeds with saffron, cardamom, honey, rosewater, sugar and various other spices into *bhang*, *bhang lassi*, *bhang thandai* and *bhang chutney* (Bawarchi, 2021; Sensi Seeds, 2020). Bhang, part of India's Hindu spiritual tradition for thousands of years has psychotropic properties and is used as an entheogen with major medical benefits for arthritis, malaria and dysentery (Petre, 2019; Jaiswal, 2016). An entheogen is a psychoactive drug derived from plants or fungi that causes changes in perception, behavior, mood, consciousness or cognition for the purposes of engendering spiritual development in ritualistic or sacred contexts (Medical Dictionary, 2021). Bhang is used in a sacred context to aid in meditation, transcendence and to ponder deeply philosophical subjects: key features in Hindu spirituality (Spiritual Life, 2020). Psychotropic use goes back to the Rig Veda using *soma* to achieve transcendence and the Artharva Veda dating back to approximately 2000 B.C.E. (Frawley, 2020; Courtwright, 2001). It is used during Divali, the Maha Kumbh Mela and Mahashivraatri in India. It is offered to Shiva, who brought it from the Himalayas and also having origin in the *Samundra Manthan* (churning of the ocean) (Sapru, 2016). The devotee surrenders all of life's intoxication in its usage which is offered to Shiva whose yogic powers exempt him from its potency (Sapru, 2016). Devotees want to imitate Shiva's, path not 'get high'.

These substances were found across the historical world to induce spiritual transcendence among the Hindus, Buddhists, Celts, Egyptians, ancient Greeks (Eleusinian and Dionysian Mysteries), ancient Norse (Goddess Freya), Native Americans (Peyotism) and Shamanism (Spiritual Life, 2020). The 'intoxicant' brings you closer to God and not to let your wildest uninhabited desires to be surfaced. Simply because bhang is present in an event does not mean it's like alcohol in carnival. Sufi Qalandars witnessing the sacred dhama dance at the shrine of Shah Jamal smoking hashish is built on a spiritual transcendence and certainly isn't Carnival (Khan, 2018).

Adding actual intoxicants in Holi such as vodka, puncheon or whiskey without it being an entheogen would amount to deconsecration of the sacred space held by Hindus. Holi can never be akin to Carnival. Desecration and sacrilege of a sacred space with alcohol and other intoxicants with no spiritual value or tradition defiles the idea of a festival, dishonors the Gods and ancestors by deconsecrating a sacred space or entity amounting to desacralisation.

Religious and Spiritual Aspects of Holi

Understanding the thesis of this paper requires a brief synopsis of Holi's sacred narratives or 'mythology' associated with the festival.

Three main Hindu sacred narratives abound when it comes to Holi: Radha and Krishna; Holika and Prahalad; and Shiva, Rati and Kamadeva. Holi is symbolic of the love between Radha and Krishna. Krishna allowed Radha to colour his face due to the discolouration caused by the poison administered to him by the rakshasa *Putana*, commemorating their relationship ever since.

In Holika and Prahalad comes the moral of dharma over adharma. Lord Vishnu enters the world as an avatar to restore righteousness and protect his devotee Prahalad from the adharmic King Hiranyakashipu whose powers made him indestructible. The king forced his son Prahalad to worship him. The king's sister Holika tried to trick the boy into being burnt for refusing to worship another besides Vishnu, but Holika instead was demolished. Vishnu then incarnated on Earth as Narasimha to kill King Hiranyakashipu (*Bhagavad Purana*).

Goddess Parvati wanting to bring Lord Shiva out of deep meditation had Kamadeva the God of Love reign his arrows upon Shiva who opened his third eye and incinerated him. Rati, Kama's wife performed asceticism for 40 days upon which Shiva compassionately forgives and restores Kamadeva to life.

The Sacrosanctity of Holi

Holi is pure fun but, under all of it are deeply sacred narratives revered by the Hindu mind and heart. These holy Holi beliefs connect Hindus to their religion and their Gods creating an aura of a spiritual realm and a sacred space wherever Holi is celebrated. Participants smearing colours are symbolically reenacting the love between Radha and Krishna. This is not simply a play but a divine play, a divine re-enactment.

Holi, given its connection to Vishnu, Krishna, Shiva and the Devi (Goddess) then encompasses many of the Hindu realms including the traditions of the Vaishnavas, Shaivism and Shaktism. It is a space of unity and a unifying force among Hindus bringing together an entire civilization across geographical borders.

Such depth of devotion of the Hindus for their Gods and the creation of a sacred ground where Holi is re-enacted is what needs to be respected by those who are non-Hindus or even Hindus partaking in Holi, lest they mistreat or abuse the sacred space and aspects of the Hindu religion. Due to the sacrosanctity of Holi and its significant connections to the many worshippers in Hinduism, defiling of the sacred space would be an immense affront to all Hindus.

Solutions

In globalization, what happens in India won't stay in India. Atrocity literature is causing NY legislation to label the swastika as a symbol of hate affects all Hindus and the defining of Hindu history with colonial inaccuracies in California textbooks affecting all Hindus (CoHNA, 2020; The South Asian Times, 202; Medina, 2016; Shukla 2017). The same will happen with Holi, being part of a larger religious Hindu existential crisis. India's politics often trickle down to the Caribbean through the Indo-Caribbean diaspora in western nations returning to the islands influenced by foreign desacralisation of Hinduism such as Holi without understanding the perverse designs mistaking them as modern academic perspectives with secular outlooks.

Meanwhile when problems do appear the academics are quick to point fingers at Hinduism. The religion is taking most of the heat for anything unscrupulous about Holi, typically in India, but this phenomenon might expand globally. While few media outlets pay lip service to the cultural appropriation of Holi most feign impartiality spending more time printing atrocious literature to malign Hinduism with properties the religion itself does not engage in or condone. Problems stemming from the disregard of Hindu traditions is vast. There is a creeping and *crypto-colonialism* Hindus would be *self-colonising* to engage in it. If institutions and individuals are boldfaced enough to dismiss and disrespect Holi arrogantly, Hindus must be equally unapologetic about the defence of Hindu dharma and Holi. Hindus themselves tend to allow the denigration of their own religion because they are not theologically or politically conscious. Their silence breeds hostility towards them. Change must take effect through education of the Hindus as well.

Some solutions to stop this growing trend to secularize and desacralize Holi include local and vocal Hindu organizations globally like the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha of Trinidad and Tobago as well as the Guyana Dharmic Sabha. These institutions can decelerate snaking nefarious activities during Holi and enlighten the public of better choices by providing more information about Holi's Hindu foundations.

In Utah, Hare Krishna gives out information on Holi, its history and Hindu origins. Musicians perform mantras, performers explain Holi through dance,

yoga and also count down on the hour to shout the name of Krishna (Kuruville, 2017). Organizations hosting Holi *should* be respectful of the festival's origins and play a bigger part in outlining the history, origins, the Hindu religion and acknowledgement of Holi's Hindu cultural and religious context before attending the event.

Indo-Caribbean people must engage in discourse and speak confidently. Our organizations *should* write and condemn this desecration of Hindu festivals internationally and locally. They can express dissatisfaction to companies and their sponsors and suggest how they can create more awareness of Holi without appropriating it. Beginning by writing to film boards, directors and industry professionals our concerns about their mistreatment of Holi in their films, as well as to the Government of India, we can get them to know we are watching. While India is the hub of Hinduism, the Caribbean region has the hub of Hinduism's identity in the West. We don't need to wait for India to give us their permission to call out disrespectful behavior towards the Hindu religion. Indo-Caribbean people have survived indentureship and colonization. We are pioneering in the field of gaining our own rights and even creation of the Holi parade in Queens NY, and hosting the First International Phagwa Conference. India had 70 years and more to pioneer a conference on Holi but here it is, first, in Trinidad and Tobago.

Safeguarding Holi against degradations and denigrations requires a national holiday. The author takes the opportunity in this paper to make an official verbal and written academic request to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to designate Holi a national holiday, following the footsteps of Guyana and Suriname. Holi's recognition as a national festival celebrating its indigenous Hindu identity impedes further desacralisation. The Indo-Caribbean people can lead the way in keeping Holi from being appropriated, secularized, sacrilege, commercialized, detached, disrespected, deconsecrated, defiled, denigrated, dishonored and desacralized thus saving Holi's Hindu spiritual ethos.

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