

Rituals, Practices and Significance of Holi in North India in the 1960's and 1970's, as relayed by Young Adults from the 1960's and 70's

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Abstract

This paper attempts to draw a picture of Phagwa in North India in the 1960s and 1970s on the basis of recollections recorded through oral interviews in 2021, with 6 people who were in their youth and in adulthood during 1960s and 1970s. Five interviewees were residents of urban areas during the 60's and 70's, and were high-caste Hindus. One person belonged to the agriculturist class and spent her childhood days in the village. A couple belonged to Jharkhand, which was part of Bihar in the 1960's. Despite the states or place of residence variation, there was an uncanny resemblance in the ways Phagwa was celebrated. In particular, cuisine, restriction on the participation of women (especially outside the precincts of their homes), and the ritual of Holi Milan as a promotion of amity between the relatives and acquaintances than flaunting of wealth and status in contemporary times, was common.

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Introduction

India is an ancient civilization. Geographically, India is secured by the Himalayas in the North and the Indian Ocean in the South. She is blessed with a favourable weather and climate. Barring a few areas, the length and breadth of the country is intersected by many rivers. The congenial atmosphere and a satisfied quiet life promoted deep philosophical thinking about the questions of existence and the universe. The sustainable and rhythmic agricultural life blended with happy philosophical thoughts. This feature translated into a pattern of life which was punctuated by several festivals. During these festivals, the mythology, atmosphere of the season and the pulse of the harvest time mingled beautifully. Each festival's customs, traditions, and practices bore the unmistakable stamp of the mythology, weather and agricultural production of that specific part of year.

Phagwa or *Holi* is one such festival which has travelled down the ages. The very mention of *Holi* brings to one's mind a riot of colours, happy spring weather, winter in retreat, warm and soothing weather, and the harvest season. Even animals and birds appear happy, and brightly coloured flowers bloom; all this makes the very air and overall atmosphere throb with life, laughter and merriment.

The origin of *Holi* can be traced to *Dasavatar* or Ten Incarnations of Lord *Vishnu*. *Hiranyakashyap*, the demon king, prayed to Lord *Brahma*. Pleased by his meditation, Lord *Brahma* appeared and promised a boon to *Hiranyakashyap*. At this, the demon king asked for *amaratva* (a state of eternal life). Lord *Brahma* refused to grant this boon, for, anybody who was born had to die. Then *Hiranyakashyap* asked for Lord *Brahma*'s blessings that he may die at a time of the day, when it is neither day nor night; that he may die when he is neither at home or outside the home; that he may die neither in air nor in water; that may he die at the hands of neither an animal nor a human; and lastly that no weapon may kill him. Lord *Brahma* granted his wishes. *Hiranyakashyap*'s joy knew no bounds, for fulfilment of these conditions amounted to a state of eternal life. With his ego and confidence revitalized, *Hiranyakashyap* went on a long military campaign, winning one territory after other and killing people mercilessly.

At the time of his campaign, *Hiranyakashyap*'s wife, *Kayadu*, was expecting a child. Sage *Narada* is said to have saved her from the ire of Lord *Indra* and other gods, who attacked the house of *Hiranyakashyap* in his absence. *Narada* told them that *Kayadu* was sinless and expecting a child, thus should be left alone. Sage *Narada* visited *Kayadu* off and on and sang devotional hymns. The aim was to implant a sense of devotion towards Lord *Vishnu* in the unborn child, and to erase the effect of heredity. *Kayadu* gave birth to *Prahlad*, who

showed extreme devotion to Lord *Vishnu*, even in his infancy. In the meantime, *Hiranyakashyap* was successful in his military campaign. Confident that he had attained *amaratva*, *Hiranyakashyap* had become very proud and cruel. He was incensed that his own son was devoted towards Lord *Vishnu* and lacked the qualities of a demon. He devised ways to kill *Prahlad* like throwing him off a mountain or giving him a cup of milk laced with poison, but *Prahlad* came out unharmed.

Hiranyakashyap's sister *Holika* had a shawl/shroud which was immune to the flames of fire. *Holika* advised her brother, *Hiranyakashyap*, that he should light a fire. *Holika* would drape the shroud and step in the fire with *Prahlad*. *Holika* would be immune to the fire's flames, but *Prahlad* would be burnt to death. However, the evil designs of *Holika* were defeated. Despite the shroud, *Holika* was burnt to death and *Prahlad* emerged alive and unscathed.

Hiranyakashyap, thus, failed to kill *Prahlad* through the method suggested by his sister *Holika*. *Hiranyakashyap* is said to have summoned *Prahlad* to his palace in the afternoon of the following day. Incensed at the loss of his sister, he threatened the innocent child and tried to convince him to abandon his faith towards *Vishnu*. *Prahlad* refused to do so and in turn, implored his father to accept the omnipresence of Lord *Vishnu*. Enraged *Hiranyakashyap* is said to have broken a pillar of the hall in which they were standing. *Hiranyakashyap* thundered that if *Vishnu* was omnipresent, He should be in that pillar. From the broken pillar emerged *Narasimha*, upper half lion and lower half human. The time of the day was twilight - neither day nor night (*kuberbiriya* – this time is considered inauspicious to take a nap). *Narasimha* is said to have roared majestically and carried *Hiranyakashyap* in his lap (in other words, neither on the earth nor in the water), sat on the threshold of the palace (neither inside nor outside), and ripped open the stomach of *Hiranyakashyap* with his nails (no weapon was used to kill *Hiranyakashyap* since lion's nails do not come under the category of weapons). In this way, *Hiranyakashyap* met his end. *Narasimha* was the fourth *avatar* of Lord *Vishnu*. one finds reference to the *Narasimha* incarnation in *Vishnu Purana*, *Bhagwat* and *Narasimha Purana* (interview with Prof. B.K. Shukla, Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Lucknow).

The destruction of *Holika* by fire and the unscathed emergence of *Prahlad* has a special significance. In sacred texts such as the *Mahabharata*, *Agni* has been referred to as 'oblation devourer' and the 'Purifier'. *Agni* is considered to be the mediator between God and men. *Agni* knows the thoughts of all people, and is a witness to all important actions. Any promise made in the presence of a fire is sacred and is called *agni sakshi* (witnessed by Fire). The safe emergence of *Prahlad* testifies to his purity, innocence and devotion to God, *Agni* delivers *Prahlad* safely, whereas *Holika*, with her evil designs, is devoured by *Agni*.

The above forms the narrative behind the celebration of Holi in Northern India. A day before *Holi* (mostly in the evening or night, sometimes even in the early hours of the day), *Holika Dahan* takes place, meaning that *Holika* is burnt. The next day is celebrated with colours to mark the victory of good over evil. *Holika Dahan* takes place on the full moon night (*Purnamasi*) of the *Phalgun* or *Phagun* month of the Hindu calendar, (the 15th day of *Phagun*).

In present times, materialism, ostentatious exhibition of wealth, urbanization (and for the past year, the COVID pandemic) have affected the spirit of all festivals; *Holi* is no exception. In the 1960s and 1970s, the festival of *Holi* was celebrated in a more religious and traditional manner. About a week before *Holi*, the ceremony of *samogotho* was observed. The earthen *chulha* (stove) was cleaned and plastered with cow dung and soil (of a slippery texture). In the 1960s and 1970s LPG gas cylinders were seldom used for cooking. Even in the cities, the main mode of cooking was the use of an earthen *chulha*. The well-to-do, too, considered it pious to cook the festival delicacies in the traditional manner. From this day, the preparation of the delicacies of *Holi* started. The kitchen was cleaned. The plastering of the earthen stove was done preferably by some elderly lady of the house at about noon time. One cannot start preparing *prasad* or offerings to God in an unclean kitchen. This lady then took a bath, wore silken garments and performed a *puja* (rituals) at noontime. The first dish to be prepared was *tikiya* or cakes of *urad dal*. After that, *Gujiya* or *Kusali*, the main items of *Holi*, were prepared. In the 1960's and 1970's, most of the families followed the tradition of making *gujiya* with wheat flour, though the practice of preparing *gujiya* with *maida* was getting popular. The *gujiyas* had a filling of *gur* or jaggery. Even today, many families prefer to make the first few *gujiyas* with a *gur* filling. As there was no facility of refrigeration, the preparation of sweet delicacies was done only a week before *Holika dahan*. Traditionally, each family member prepared five *gujiyas* out of wheat flour, with a jaggery filling.

Holi was incomplete without the crackle of *papad* and chips. These days, a large variety of machine-made chips and *papad* are available in the market. However, in the 1960's and 70's, with the coming of *phagun* when the sun shines bright and the day is long, it was customary for families (especially the women) to start preparing *papads* and chips on their rooftops. Rice, potato and *sabudana papads* were the chief *papads* made at home. On the arrival of the guests, the *papads* were deep fried.

Pakka Khana was, and still is, cooked on *Holi*. The basic dishes remain *poori*, *kachori*, *dahi-vada* etc. Two popular drinks were also prepared *Holi-Kanji* and *Thandai*.

Today, *holika* is burnt in many parks, open spaces and crossroads. However, in the 1960s and 1970s, there were many homes in which *holika* was burnt in the courtyard or open space within the homes. In the homes the symbolic

holika was not logs of wood but a mound of cow-dung *balles*. With the onset of *Phagun*, the ladies of the house started preparing *balle* of cow dung. The round and oval *balle* had a hole in the middle. The conical ones were pierced on the sides. These *balle* were sun-dried. For making garlands of *balle*, the old *baan* was used. Traditionally, the length of the *charpoy*s or cots of the male members of the families were measured, using the *baan*. Ideally 7, 21 or 51 round or oval *balles* (were used for making a garland; these odd number are considered auspicious in the Hindu mythology. The garland for young male members usually had 7 *balles* and garlands for elder male members had 21 or 51 *balles*. The *baan* was passed through the holes in the *balle* and then tied loosely. The garlands of *balle* were laid one on another in the shape of a mound; this was symbolic of *Holika*, sister of *Hiranyakashyap*. The small conical *balle* were also similarly assembled in a garland, called *chhoti holi ki mala*. This garland was not lighted at home; it was sent to be lighted with the roadside *holika*. In many homes, the fire to light the *holi* was brought from the roadside *holika*.

The *holika* was burnt according to the time marked as auspicious in the *Panchang*, or the Hindu calendar. On the day of *Holika Dahan*, a round base of dry soil and dry sand was prepared on the floor, say about twelve inches in radius. The borders of this circle were decorated with flowers made of wheat flour. A white *swastika* was made in the centre (outside the circle). This base was prepared primarily to protect the floor from getting scorched.

Before burning the *holika*, the ritual of worshipping *gaurja* and *swastika* was observed, through an elder member of the family – male or female - sprinkling *abeer* and *gulal* (flowers and a few drops of water). He or she also burnt the *holika*. The elder person is supposed to sit with his/her face to the East.¹ The family members were forbidden to witness the first flame. Once the *holika* catches fire the mound of cow dung garlands bursts out in flames. A piece of *gujiya* is offered to *holika*. The male members circumambulate around the burning *holika* seven times. The male members were given a spool of white thread (usually raw cotton thread); they tucked one end of the cotton thread under their right foot then unwound the spool of thread clasping the spool between their fingers. The thread was measured over the head of the male member and then broken. The length of the thread was loosely folded and thrown in the *holika*. The measuring of thread beyond one's height is said to bring long life. Mostly *holika dahan* takes place at night. At night-time, the height of an individual is supposed to be at its maximum; in the daytime, it is said to be a few millimeters less.

¹ When fire is used to make sacrifices to the gods, it should be directed East. Source: Antaryami.com, accessed 14.02.2021.

In many homes, elaborate rituals were observed to ward off evil spirits. *Rai-lon-mircha* were circled around the head of each male member. Wheat flour was kneaded, and small round balls were prepared out of it. These were lightly touched on the eyelids of the male members. The raw thread (measured longer than the height of the male members), balls of wheat flour and *rai-lon-mircha* were all collected in a small bowl assigned to each male member and then consigned to fire. This offering was supposed to ward off evil spirits and bless the male members with long life.

Once the flames of *holika* subsided and *balle* became glowing red balls of fire, a *lota* full of water was placed on them. Next morning, the water was sprinkled in the entire home. This water was supposed to remove negativity.

There were variations in *holika dahan* on the streets. It was (and the practice still continues) on the day of *Basant Panchmi* that branches of trees were laid on cross-roads or other convenient places where *holika* was to be lighted. These branches were brought by the contributions (*chanda*) collected by the *mohalla samitis*. After customary rituals, *holika* was burnt. In some places, as soon as *holika* was torched, a branch (considered to be a symbol of *Prahlad*) was pulled out of the fire and doused with water. The *holika* was allowed to be consumed by flames. In some places, a replica of *Holika* was created out of wheat flour dough and allowed to be consumed by fire. In most places, the entire blocks of woods were (are still) allowed to burn down to cinders. The ritual of measuring raw thread more than one's height and then consigning it to *Holika* was observed. Circumambulating *holika* seven times was considered auspicious.

In villages, *holika dahan* takes place near a pond or any other water body, so that the symbolic *Prahlad* could be saved from fire. In villages, it is considered auspicious to lightly fry wheat earrings, barley earrings, gram pods, flax seed pods and even sugar cane on the *holika* fire and then consume the same. In villages, *balle* of various shapes were made. Most probably, it was a pastime for girls. The popular shapes were sun, moon, stars, utensils and even animals. The dried *balle* of these shapes were lightly tossed in *holika* and then retrieved. These were taken home and while cooking food on earthen stove, the use of these *balle* was considered auspicious. However, in many homes the entire lots of *balles* are consigned to fire and carrying any of them home was considered inauspicious.

In many homes, it is still considered inauspicious for a newlywed daughter-in-law to celebrate her first *holi* in the in-law's home. The daughters-in-law were sent to their parents' home on the first *holi*. From the second *holi* onwards, they could stay at their in-law's place.²

² On the other hand, the celebration of their first *Diwali* in the in-law's home is considered auspicious.

On the night of *holika dahan*, flowers of *tesu* were immersed in buckets of water, and in the morning, an auspicious yellow-coloured water was ready for a wet *holi*.

The family members apply *gula tika* (on the forehead) or dry colours on the cheeks after *holika dahan*. Traditionally, people of the same rank in the family played *holi* amongst themselves. Young members of the family were not supposed to apply colour on elder family members. Young family members were supposed to sprinkle dry colour on the toes of their elders and touch their feet as a mark of respect.

The different colours impart *Holi* with a cheerful, happy ambience. The colours affect our thinking, mood, action, expression and reactions. Colour therapy helps to reduce stress, increase the flow of energy thorough the body, and induce complete relaxation of mind and body. Each colour has a specific effect on the body's energy and vitality.³

Dry *gula* of red, green, a dark shade of yellow and purple were generally used. The color significances are:

- Red, Bold and bright, is the sign of love.
- Green indicates growth and hope. It symbolizes freshness and fertility. Green has a great healing power. It is the most restful colour and suggests stability and endurance.
- Yellow, as the colour of the Sun, promotes optimism; it, is associated with intellect and energy, and stimulates mental activity.
- Blue has a calming effect; it is the symbol of stability and confidence.

On the day following *holika dahan*, people play with wet colours. Wet colours are considered to be auspicious. While women folk play *holi* at home, men and boys assemble in groups and go around playing *holi* in their localities and villages. Before playing with wet colours, people usually apply oil on their hairs and bodies to help with the quick and easy cleaning of colour later.

Before playing, people often wear old clothes or clothes that are to be discarded to play wet *holi*. These clothes are generally thrown away after *holi*. The colour was usually prepared in buckets. Piston shaped sprinklers (*pichkaris*) were used. People often splashed colours using a mug or *lota*. Strict decorum was observed while playing *holi*. Eve teasing or indulging in even mild indecent behavior in the garb of playing *holi* was strictly prohibited. Nearly all the respondents agreed that portrayal of *holi* on the silver screen had maligned the spirit of *holi* and was misleading. Even playing of *holi* between an elder sister-

in-law (*bhabhi*) and a brother-in-law (*dewar*) was marked with respect. The *dewar* was supposed to touch the feet of *bhabhi* and sprinkle colour just on the toes. In return, *bhabhi* applied *tilak* on his forehead and blessed him.

It is believed that the tradition of playing with colours on *Holi* has its origin in the stories of Krishna and Radha. Krishna had a dark complexion and thus was jealous of Radha, who had a fair complexion. Yashoda, Krishna's foster mother, jokingly pacified her son by asking him to apply colour of Radha's face. Out of mischief, Krishna applied colour on Radha's face, and thus the tradition of applying colour on one's beloved was born. *Holi* is a festival of colours and a day meant for rejoicing, as the vibrancy of colours is something that brings in a lot of positivity in one's life. Besides, *holi* is celebrated at a time of the year when the fields are in full bloom and people are expecting a good harvest. This is a good reason to rejoice, make merry and become submerged in the spirit of *holi*.

While women played *Holi* with wet colours in the safe confines of the home, the males moved around in groups. The *holi* of men had a different hue and mood. They moved from one end of the locality to another. In villages too, men made groups and started from one end and went about the entire village. Wet colours, mud, balloons full of coloured water (now prohibited), etc. were used. As one was supposed to throw all their worries, bitterness and evil memories on the fire of *holika*, similarly, on the day of *holi* all embraced each other. Disputes, differences of opinions, distinction of high and low, rich and poor, or caste, were set aside. All were coloured in the same hue. Thus, one is supposed to begin life on a new note with celebration. People get to unite, forgetting all resentments and all types of bad feelings towards each other.

Music is an essential part of *Holi*. Music helps reduce and manage stress. Scientifically, music releases dopamine – the feel-good chemical in our brain. 'Music can calm neural activity in the brain, which may lead to reduction in anxiety, and it may help to restore effective functioning of the immune system' (Stuckey and Nobel, 2010: 254-263). Singing of *faag*, songs of *phagun*, begins with *Basant Panchami*. During *holika dahan* traditional songs of Krishna and Ram are sung. *Holi Khelat Nandlal Biraj mein* (son of *Nand*, i.e. *Krishna* is playing *holi* in his native place Brij), *Holi Khelat Raghuvira Awadh mein* (*Raghuvira*, i.e., *Ram* is playing *holi* in *Awadh*) were the traditional songs. Apart from this, popular Bollywood songs - *Are ja re hat naikhat* (Leave me alone you naughty boy, from the film *Navrang*, 1959), *mohe panghat pe nand lal cher gayo re* (the son of *Nand*, i.e. *Krishna* teased me near the well, from the film *Mughal-e-Azam* 1960), etc., were played in the 1960's and 70's. People pooled money together and arranged for the sound system (usually a loud speaker) to play these songs. *Phagwa*, *bhajans*, *holi* songs were sung to welcome *holi*. Apart from reinforcing the joyous spirit of *holi*, singing - especially group singing along with

³ Christineomsted.com/importance-colour-life/ accessed 27.01.2021.

musical instruments like *dafali*, *dholak*, *manjira*, *harmonium*, etc., creates greater joys.

By the afternoon, the playing of wet colours came to an end; the exhausted men returned home. All members of the families were smeared in colours. The first step for cleansing was to apply *ubtan* on face, neck and exposed parts of the body, and scrubbed. The *ubtan* absorbed most of the colour. After this, family members took baths or showers. In the evening, people wore new clothes according to their economic conditions and visited near and dear ones. This is called *Holi Milan*. When the relatives came over (in well-to-do-families), *kewra* water was sprinkled on them. *Gujiya*, *papad* and other snacks were served. The married women visiting a family were greeted by a young unmarried girl. It was considered auspicious for the young girl to apply *gula* as *bindi* and in the *maang* parting of hair. The young touched the feet of the elders. In return elders blessed them and gave them some token money. Men of equal rank embraced each other (*holi milna*) and so did women.

The remains of the *holika* burnt at homes were cleared on the third evening. Generally, a young daughter-in-law of the home, who had an infant son, did this job. It was compulsory for the son that he should have not received his first haircut. She dressed in traditional *lehang*a and took the child in her lap. She circumambulated the *holika* seven times; by now a pile of burnt cow dung *balle*, soil, *gaurja*, wheat-flour flowers, adorned with *gula* and *swastika*, remained. Using a broom, the remains were collected. Usually these remains were either piled on the soft ground of the garden, or in a flower pot; many threw these in a river. The throwing of the remains of *holika* in a river has now been discontinued by environmentally conscious citizens.

Many *Kavi Sammelans* (poetry recital shows) were also organised during *Holi* in keeping with the jovial spirit of the festival. This has therapeutic significance: 'engagement with artistic activities, either as an observer of the creative efforts of others or as an initiator of one's own creative efforts, can enhance one's moods, emotions and other physiological states as well as have a salient impact on important physiological parameters (Stuckey and Nobel, 2010).

Many of the poems and recitals had satirical content. Although satire appeared humorous on the surface, its deeper purpose was constructive social criticism, and to make audience think later. The theme of the recitals had a variety of subjects—social evils, political events, foreign affairs, film personalities, changing traditions and social relations, etc.

The day after wet *holi*, the festival of *bhaidooj* was celebrated in some homes in North India, in which sisters pray for the well-being and long life of their brothers. On the eighth day after wet *holi*, the festival of *Sheetla Ashtami* was celebrated, which marked the end of *holi*.

The festival of *holi* in the 1960s and 1970s was celebrated in a traditional, pious and frugal manner, with an emphasis on the use of indigenous natural and environmentally friendly products, be it cow-dung made *balles* or *tesu* flowers or *gujiyas* made of wheat flour with a filling of *gur*. There was much emphasis on personal contact - a pious and reassuring feeling of togetherness and brotherhood. Besides being joyous and colourful, *Holi* assured people of the ultimate victory of good over evil and that extreme devotion to God paid off.

Change, however, is the essence of life. There has been a phenomenal change in people's living patterns. Now nuclear families, with greater numbers of females taking jobs, is prevalent. Also, the big and small independent homes with rooftops have given way to flats which have small balconies. The net result is that Indian families – with a reduced work force at home and a reduced floor space - cannot afford to make all *Holi* preparations at home compare to what could be achieved in the 1960's and 70's.

Glossary of Hindi Words:

- *Abeer* are small crystals or paper like chips of mica, used in *gula* to give it a rich shine.
- *Avartaar*, incarnation.
- *baan*, cords made of cotton, natural fibers and date leaves.
- *Balle*, round, oval and conical dumplings of cow dung.
- *Bhajan*, pl. *bhajans* Devotional songs in praise of God.
- *Bindi*, a dot between the eyebrows on the forehead.
- *Brahma*, the originator of the universe in Hindu mythology.
- *Charpoy*, People used *charpoy* (*Char*- four, *poy* or *paye* legs; having four legs) or cot for sitting and sleeping. These cots comprised of a rectangular frame of wood. The frame was filled by using *baan*, in a criss-cross pattern. Over a period of time, *baan* becomes brittle and starts to wither. For making garlands of *balle*, this old *baan* was used.
- *Chutney*, Savory condiment made of herbs and spices, ground with a mortar and pestle in the 1960s and 1970s; now ground in an electric mixer-grinder.
- *Dahivada*, Skinned black gram lentil is soaked overnight and ground with spices, deep fried, soaked in *dahi* (yoghurt), garnished with green coriander leaves, or tamarind *chutney* or green *chutney*.
- *Dafali*, A handheld bass producing device used in rural folklore, religious festivals or *bhajans*.

- *Dasavtaar*, Ten incarnation of Lord Vishnu.
- *Dholak*, a two-headed Indian drum
- *Gaurja*, is the corrupt form of *Gaur* or *Gaura*, i.e. *Parvati*, a symbol of eternal devotion to the husband's life. Seven dried very small mud cakes are considered as *gaurja*, probably as *Parvati* was daughter of *Himavan*, Lord of Mountain; seven is an auspicious number.
- *Gujiya* or *kusali* – Traditional sweet preparation of Holi. For making *gujiyas*, dry *maida* is sprinkled with a liberal amount of *ghee* or clarified butter. *Maida* and *ghee* are mixed evenly till a small ball of *maida* can be held in the palm. Using lukewarm water in small quantities dough is kneaded. The amount of water is kept at minimum. Small round balls of *maida* are cut from the dough. Each ball is flattened with a rolling pin (*belan*) till it is about five inches in diameter. The flattened *maida* round loaf is put on a *gujiya sancha*, a plastic or a metal case for giving shape to a *gujiya* (like a half moon). Jaggery or a mixture of roasted semolina with dry fruits and ground sugar or a mixture of *khoya* with dry fruits and ground sugar are placed on the round loaf. A paste of *maida* and *water*, is prepared in a bowl, which acts as an adhesive. The edges of the *gujiya* are touched with this paste. The plastic or metal case is then folded. The edges are thus secured. The *gujiya* is dipped in hot oil and deep fried. Nowadays *gujiyas* are filled with *khoya*. Dry fruits crushed cashew nuts, grated coconut, ground sugar are added to the *khoya* or *mava*. More exquisite *gujiyas* are dipped in highly concentrated sugar syrup which *dries when exposed to air*. This gives the *gujiyas* a coating of sugar.
- *Gulal* is the traditional name given to the coloured powders used for the Hindu rituals, especially for the Holi festival. *Gulal* is of yellow, green (light and dark), red and magenta colour.
- *Harmonium* is a keyboard instrument that is a lot like an organ.
- *Hiranyakashyap*. Demon King in the *Narasimha* Incarnation of Lord Vishnu.
- *Holika Dahan*, Burning of *Holika*.
- *Holi Milan*, People visit each other and exchange greetings; in offices, clubs, and residential societies, social programmes are organized.
- *Indra*, The Lord of the Heaven in Hindu mythology.
- *Kachori*, a spicy snack with mixture of ground *moong dal* (yellow split gram), or *urad dal* (black gram skinned) and other spices. This is used as a filling in wheat dough, flattened by a *belan* (rolling pin) and then deep fried as *poori* and consumed with Indian curries.
- *Kadahi*, A deep circular vessel resembling a wok, traditionally of cast-iron.

- *Kanji* is a fermented drink made with ground mustard seed and a few spices. *Kanji* is consumed in *holi* as it aides the digestion of heavy food.
- *Kayadu*, Wife of *Hiranyakashyap* and mother of *Prahlad*.
- *Kewra*, essence or *kewra* water is extracted from the flowers of *Pandanus tectorius*. It has a cooling effect.
- *Khoya*, obtained after heating milk over low flame in a heavy bottomed *kadahi*, so that water evaporates and fat content remains and it is soft solid.
- *Krishna*, the seventh incarnation of Lord *Vishnu*.
- *Lehenga*, long traditional skirt worn by Indian women embellished with sequins, mirror work, embroidery, etc.
- *Lota*, is a globe shaped water pot, usually of brass.
- *Lord Vishnu*, The sustainer of the universe.
- *Maang*, parting of hair.
- *Maida*, finely textured flour obtained after sieving wheat flour. In olden times, wheat was ground at home by manually driven grinding stones. Home ground wheat flour was considered pure. *Maida* was obtained in homes by sieving wheat flour thorough a fine cloth. Nowadays, it is obtained by finely grinding wheat flour in the machines and sieving it. This process removes roughage or fiber from wheat flour. The product obtained is fine textured flour. This flour *maida* is considered unhealthy for the gut and general health. But it goes well in the preparation of Indian delicacies- sweet and salty.
- *Mohalla samitis* On the occasion of *holi*, the local area committee, generally restricted to a colony, collected money for procuring wood, distribution of sweets (not very expensive) and observation of rituals at the time of *holika dahan*. Many times, a local priest (*pundit*) obliged and volunteered for the *puja*.
- *Manjira* a pair of clash cymbals originating in the Indian subcontinent, which make high-pitched percussion sounds.
- *Mundan* Act of shaving of baby's first hair, is the eighth of the sixteen Hindu *sanskaras* in which a child receives his/her first haircut. Usually, this ceremony takes place before the end of the first year or in the odd years, third year or fifth year. It is after *mundan* or tonsuring that a baby can get a regular haircut.
- *Nand* - foster father of *Krishna*.
- *Narada* - sage who figures in many stories of Hindu mythology.
- *Narsimha* -the fourth incarnation of Lord *Vishnu*.
- *Pakka Khana* – foodstuff requiring more elaborate preparation, generally, fried heavy food. The basic dishes are *poori*, *kachori*, *doli-vada* etc.

- *Panchanga* is an ancient time reckoning system used for determining dates of Hindu festivals, lunar eclipse, solar eclipse, fasts, auspicious days for marriage and other ceremonies.
- *Papad* Rice, potato and *sabudana* are boiled to a thick consistency. Salt and sometimes red chili powder is added to the broth. With the help of a ladle, a small quantity was poured on a thin cotton *sari* (nowadays poly-thene sheets are used) on the rooftops of the homes during daytime. By evening, the *papads* were half dry. The *sari* was folded and kept in shade. The next day, this *sari* was again laid in the sun, till the *papads* were stone dried and stored.
- *Prahlad* – Son of *Hiranyakashyap*.
- *Prasad* Offering to God.
- *Poori* is puffed Indian bread which is made using whole wheat flour and fried in oil; usually prepared in festivals, along with Indian curries.
- *Radha* Consort of *Krishna*.
- *Rai-lon-mirach* Black or yellow mustard seeds-a pinch of salt-one red dried chilli, all three are held between the four fingers and the thumb and encircled around the head to ward off evil spirits.
- *Sabudana* or sago is a food product made from the milk of tapioca root.
-  *Swastika* symbol right-facing or clock wise is an ancient religious icon in the cultures of Eurasia. The word *Swastika* means 'conducive to wellbeing'. It is a symbol of prosperity and good fortune, and the *swastika* generally takes the form of a cross, the arms of which are of equal length and perpendicular to the adjacent arms, each bent midway at a right angle.
- *Tesu* or *Palaash* is the traditional Indian name for the Flame of Forest. The botanical name of the flower is *butea monosperma*. It has a number of beneficial qualities. It is anthelmintic (used to expel parasitic worms and other internal parasites from body), depurative (herbs that are considered to have purifying and detoxifying effects) and works as an astringent (minor skin irritation, allergies, insect bite, fungal infection such as athlete's foot). The parts of the plants that are used are flowers, leaves, bark, stem and gum.⁶ (compiled from the Database of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants in Rajasthan. Birla Institute of Scientific Research Accessed 24.01.2021. The medicinal properties of *Tesu* were confirmed by Prof. Amritesh Chandra Shukla, Department of Botany, Faculty of Science, University of Lucknow, Lucknow).
- *Thandai* is an Indian cold drink prepared with a mixture of ground almonds, fennel seeds, watermelon kernels, rose petals, pepper, poppy seeds, cardamom and saffron in milk and sugar. All these ingredients have

a cooling effect on the body and mind. Many times, cannabinoids (*bhang*) was added to *thandai*.

- *Tika* or *tilak*, a small vertical line of vermillion, starting between the brows, applied with the thumb and marked with a few grains of rice.
- *Tikiya* -the *urad dal* or split black lentil was soaked overnight. The *dal* was ground coarsely; no salt was added to this paste. Small round cakes were prepared and deep fried).
- *Ubtan*, a paste of *besan* (chick pea flour), turmeric powder, little mustard oil and water.
- *Urad dal* split black lentil.
- *Yashoda* foster mother of *Krishna*

References

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Interviewees

Bajpai, Ranjana, a prolific Hindi Writer, based in New Delhi.

Dixit, Mrs. Maitrayee, (1945---) retired Hospital employee, Allahabad

Pandey, Dr. V.N. m (1956---), Head of Hindi Department, Ranchi College, Ranchi, Jharkhand, Retired 2018.

Pandey, Manorama, (1955---), wife of Dr. V.N. Pandey.

Rawat, Sheila, (1960--), Domestic help, belongs to a village in Sitapur, 90 kilometres from Lucknow.

Shukla, Dr. Anita, (1960---), Associate Professor & Head, Political Science, Isabella Thoburn P.G. College, Lucknow.

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