

HOLI



Holi is the spring harvest festival which is held at the start of the dry season in India. It is a festival of fire and water, with many variations from one village or one region to another. Fire being a form of life; a destroyer but also a purifier and water being a purifier and associated with fertility. In some places it is a single-day festival, in others it can last for two or three days. There are the common features of fire and water - a bonfire, on which coconuts are thrown to roast (the kernels being eaten with other foods such as popcorn, dates and roasted lentils) There is dancing, singing and much fun, games and pranks. For farmers in India it is the time to harvest the winter crop and to begin the new sowing.

During the celebrations several stories are re-told, Krishna's mischievous pranks as a child of Kama-Deva (god of love) and Shiva (the destroyer aspect of the One God). Holika (a demoness) whose power was broken by Prince Prahlad as he escaped the flames of the bonfire set as a trap for him and she was consumed in its flames. It is probably from Holika that the festival gets its name. Holi is also called 'The Festival of Colours', and people celebrate the festival by smearing each other with paint, and throwing coloured powder and dye around in an atmosphere of great good humour (in the UK perhaps not with the same exuberance as can be seen in India!).





- ① Sit down with the children and show them the series of pictures overleaf. You may wish to lay the sheets out either on a table or the floor, and then read the story.
- ② Ask the children the following questions and discuss them:-
Who is your favourite character in the story?
Which is your favourite picture and why?
- ③ There are many ways to celebrate this festival.

Colour

Using paint, get the children to flick lots of different colours onto paper and see the patterns made. They can then fold the paper to learn about Symmetry.

Fire

Draw pictures of bonfires with the children. Talk about when bonfires are lit and talk about the dangers of fire.

Food

All celebrations have food. You'll find some traditional recipes within the Holi section on iChild.

The Legend of Holika and Prahlad



Once upon a time there was an evil king called Hiranyakashipu (which means “dressed in gold”) who demanded that everyone should worship him as a god. He thought of himself as the ‘Lord of the universe’, but his son Prahlad would only worship the great God Vishnu.



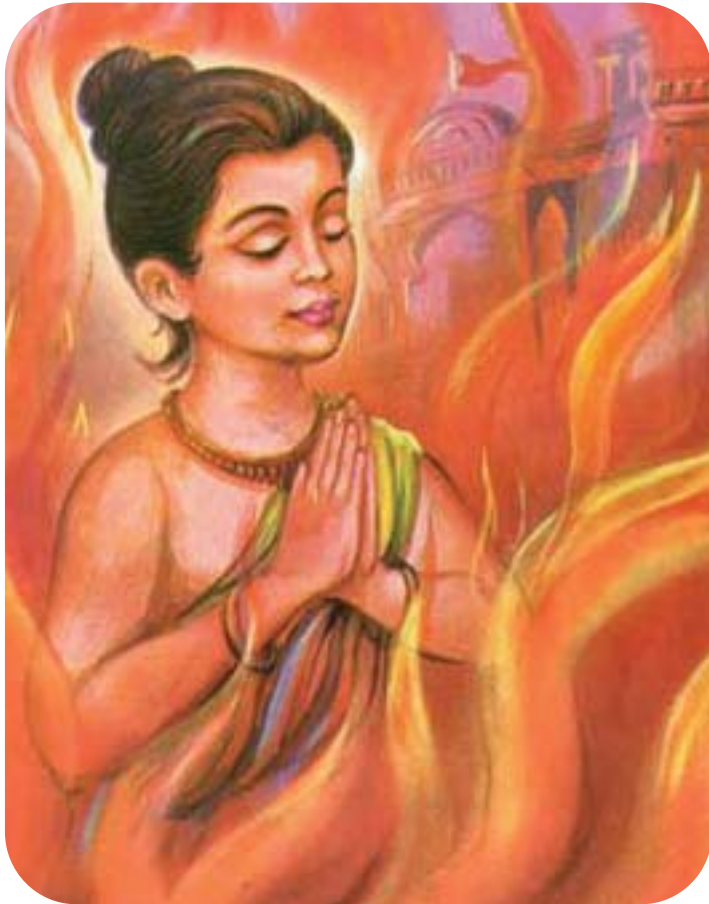
The king tried to force his son to bow down to him, but Prahlad refused.

The king ordered his army to kill his son, but Prahlad called on the great god Vishnu and the soldiers lost their strength. Then the king had him thrown into a pit of poisonous snakes.



Again Prahlad called on Vishnu and survived. The king tried many ways to kill the boy, but every time Prahlad called on Vishnu and was saved.

In the end, the evil king called on his sister Holika to carry Prahlad into the flames of a bonfire. She had been promised that she had a gift from the gods that would save her from being burnt.



The evil Holika cackled with laughter as the flames began to rise around her and Prahlad. But again he called 'Vishnu, Vishnu!' and the power of the Vishnu was so great that Prahlad was protected while Holika was burned.



Hours later, the king came to watch the dying fire. No courtier dared to warn him what he would find. There on the mound of ash sat Prahlad. 'God saved me', said Prahlad, simply. 'I'm sick of your God', said the King.

'Where is this God, then? See if he'll save you from me.'

The king drew his sword.

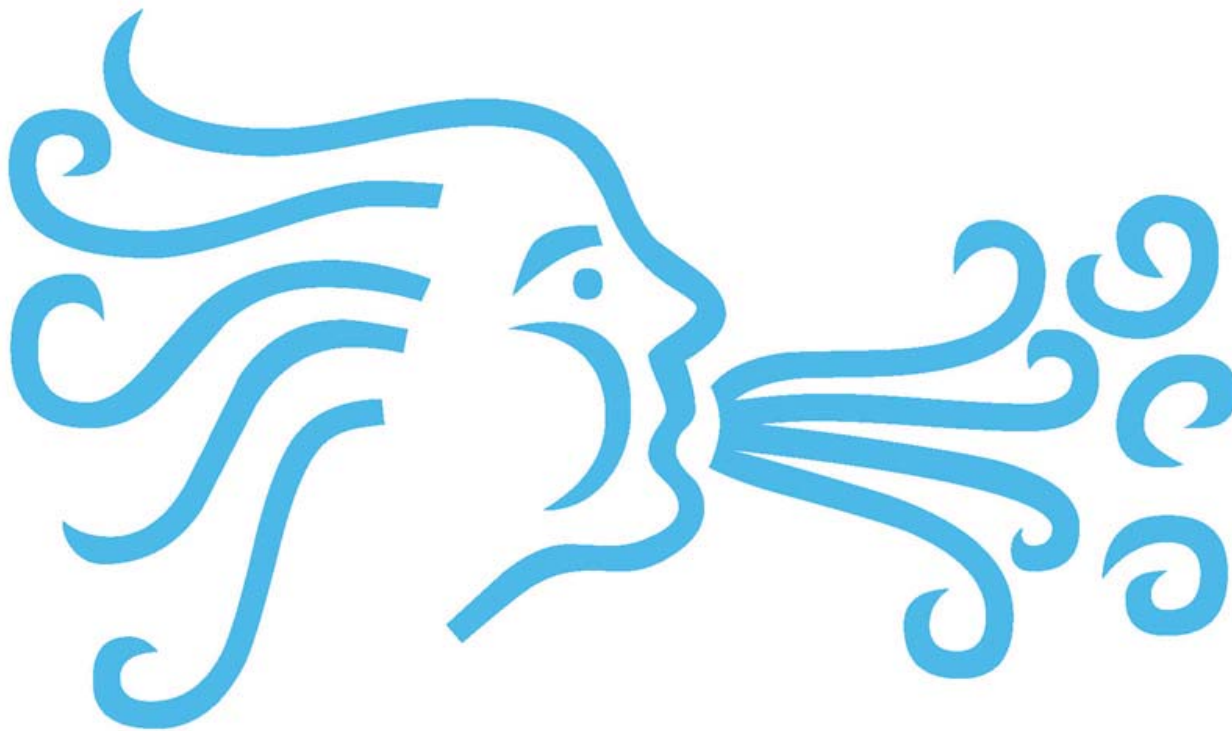


**'God is everywhere,'
said Prahlad.**

'He is in the fire,



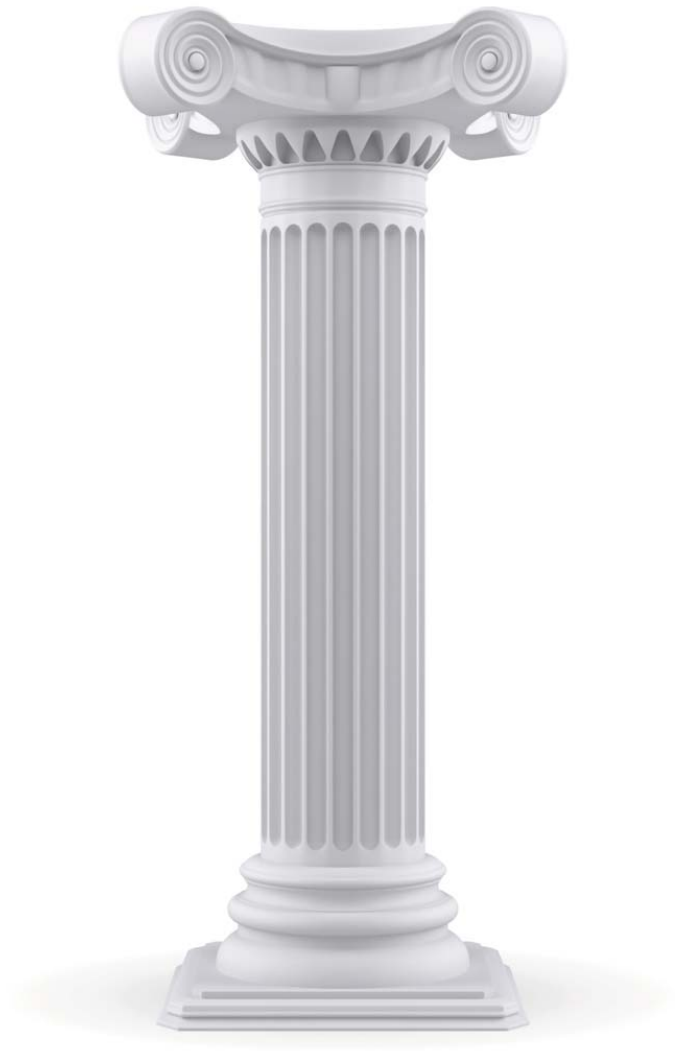
In water,



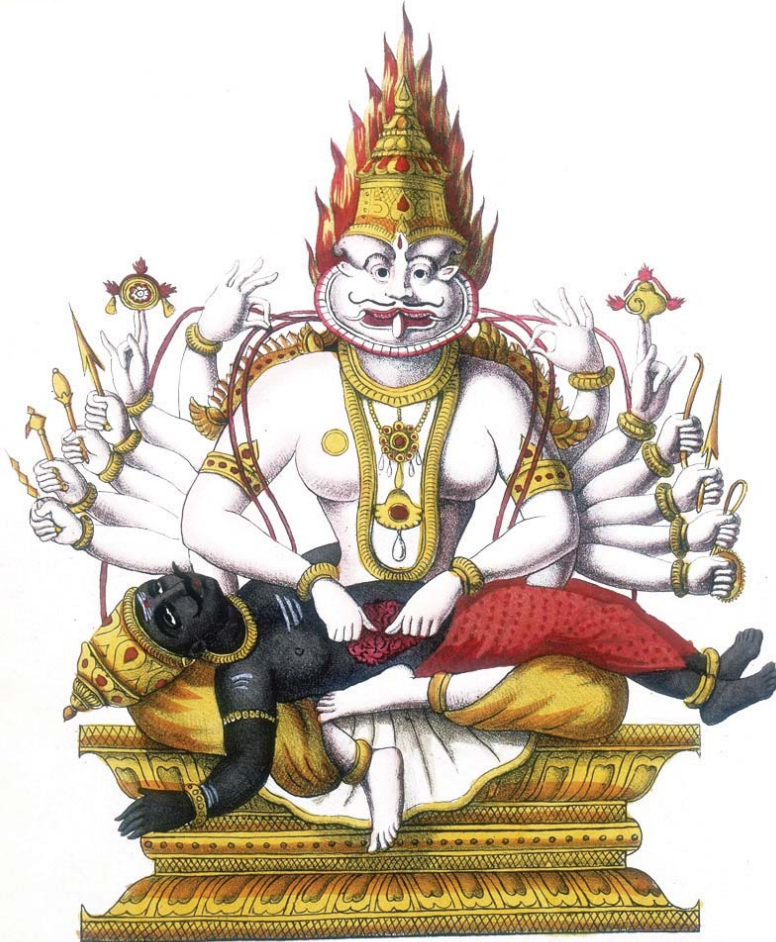
In the wind



And the grass,



Even in that stone column behind you.'



With that the column broke in two. Out came God but his shape was strange. The upper part of his body was that of a lion, the lower that of a man. He was neither man nor animal. He lifted the king, carried him to the palace door and placed him on his lap.

Then he killed him with a single swipe of his great claws. Vishnu made Prahlad the king and he ruled wisely and well ever after.