



Rang

Colours of Holi and Holla Mohalla

The writing of this article – started with a search of the questions:

- 1) Why do some Sikhs throw colour at each other at Holla Mohalla?**
- 2) Why do some Sikhs say this is purely a Hindu tradition & Sikhs should not engage in it?**

So, in the search for answers, questions were posted on the Instagram story of Akaal Publishers. A wide range of answers were given, surprisingly very little or no trolling. Whilst, some gave some very valuable perspectives – it was mostly, 'Oh we do it as we do it' and so forth. I learnt a lot from the answers given which I will now share but I need to answer the first major question – why is colour thrown at Holi? Bhagat Prehlad was a child who was devout and imbued in God (we refer to Prehlad as 'Bhagat' as he was saintly). His father was evil and wanted everyone to worship him and not God. Bhagat Prehlad did the opposite. This all happened in Satjug or the 'era of truth' which was thousands if not millions of years ago. Harnakash, Bhagat Prehlad's father hatched numerous assassination attempts of his son, but failed miserably at every juncture as God protected Bhagat Prehlad at all times.

Many Gurbani Shabads reference Bhagat Prehlad and these assassination attempts – for example the opening Shabad of Rehras Sahib &/or the last 'shakka' of Asa Dee Var (look it up, that's one example).

Holika – Bhagat Prehlads paternal aunt (bhoora) was called upon by Harnakash to kill Bhagat Prehlad. On 13th January or 'Lori' the fire to kill Bhagat Prehlad was started by Holika. This fire raged for two months and ended on what is now called 'Holi', when it was learnt that Bhagat Prehlad had survived and Holika had burnt. This day became auspiciously known as 'Holi' from Holika's name, this happened after Harnakash had been killed and Bhagat Prehlad became the king. This is the start of the celebrations with the use of natural fragrances, flowers and colours to celebrate the spring and victory of Bhagat Prehlad. The colours predominantly used would have been those of fire - yellows, oranges, reds, more colours obviously now dominate. But in essence it was a celebration of the power of God and the colour was to remind rejuvenation of life and it's continuation even when some of us may burn in the fire of vices like Holika did and her brother Harnakash subsequently.

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Now for the bogey man – the big scary cat of 'RSS, Hindu assimilation' – firstly no one can assimilate the Sikhs and their faith – God made, God protected, until we have a sun and moon. Even the Hindu scriptures predict the rule of Gurbani but our own are always scared of the 'bogey man RSS.' We can and should do better, but that's for us. Anyway – so we got that out of the way. Sri Guru Arjan Dev Jee says we should celebrate 'Holi' by serving saintly individuals and then we can become imbued in the love of God, like the holy,

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ਹੋਲੀ ਕੀਨੀ ਸੰਤ ਸੇਵ ॥

I celebrate the festival of Holi by serving the Saints.

ਰੰਗੁ ਲਾਗਾ ਅਤ ਲਾਲ ਦੇਵ ॥੨॥

I am imbued with the deep crimson color of the Lord's Divine Love. ||2||

The Guru's did not and did not need to make everything distinct from common society, so a lot of the celebrations we now celebrate, did start as people already congregated on these dates and/or had public holidays. Hence why Maharaj said the above for Holi. Sri Guru Gobind Singh Jee then started the tradition of Holla Mohalla in 1701 at Anandpur Sahib, which always falls one day after Holi. Maharaj started this tradition to get the Khalsa to congregate, hold mock battles, have competitions of warfare, show skills of warriors. It was started as a light - hearted celebration in the midst of real wars and battles, to promote camaraderie in the Khalsa warriors. Guru Sahib would give out awards for skills shown.

There are historical references to Pyare Bhai Deya Singh Jee putting rang/color on Maharaj at which point Maharaj then themselves put the colour dye also on others. In reaction to this Bhai Nand Lal Jee also uttered a verse which is,

ਗੁਲਿ ਹੋਲੀ ਬਬਾਗਿ ਦਹਿਰ ਬੂ ਕਰਦ

The aroma of spring flowers of Holi festival makes the whole garden, the world, full of special fragrance.

ਲਬਿ ਚੂੰ ਗੁੰਚਾ ਰਾ ਫਰਖੰਦਾ ਖੂ ਕਰਦ ॥ ੩੩ ॥ ੧ ॥

And gave the blossoming bud-like lips a pleasant disposition. (33) (1)

ਗੁਲਾਬੇ ਅੰਬਰੇ ਮਸ਼ਕੇ ਅਬੇਰੀ

Akaal Purakh spread the roses, the sky, the fragrance of musk and

ਚੂ ਬਾਰਾਨਿ ਬਾਰਿਸਿ ਅਜ ਸੂ ਬਸੂ ਕਰਦ ॥ ੩੩ ॥ ੨ ॥

sandalwood all over like the raindrops. (33) (2)

ਜ਼ਰੇ ਪਿਚਕਾਰੀਏ ਪੁਰ ਜਾਅਫਰਾਨੀ

How beautiful and effective is a saffron filled squirt pump?

ਕਿ ਹਰ ਬੇਰੰਗ ਰਾ ਖੁਸ਼ਰੰਗੋ ਬੂ ਕਰਦ ॥ ੩੩ ॥ ੩ ॥

That it converts even the discolored and the ugly into colorful and aromatic. (33) (3)

ਗੁਲਾਲਿ ਅਫ਼ਸ਼ਾਨੀਏ ਦਸਤਿ ਮੁਬਾਰਿਕ

With the throwing of powdered red color by his holy hands on me (Guru Sahib threw the color on Bhai Nand Lal)

ਜ਼ਮੀਨੋ ਆਸਮਾਂ ਰਾ ਸੁਰਖਰੂ ਕਰਦ ॥ ੩੩ ॥ ੪ ॥

It made both the earth and the heaven all crimson colored for me. (33) (4)

ਦੇ ਆਲਮ ਗਸ਼ਤ ਰੰਗੀਣ ਅਜ ਤੁਫ਼ੈਲਸ਼

With His grace, both the worlds began to bathe in colorful dispositions,

ਚੂ ਸ਼ਾਹਮ ਜਾਮਾ ਰੰਗੀਨ ਦਰ ਗੁਲੂ ਕਰਦ ॥ ੩੩ ॥ ੫ ॥

When he put shiny clothes suitable for only rich people on my neck. (33) (5)

ਕਸੇ ਕੂ ਦੀਦ ਦੀਦਾਰਿ ਮੁਕੱਦਸ

Anyone who was fortunate to get a sacred glimpse of Him, the Guru,

ਮੁਰਾਦਿ ਉਮਰ ਰਾ ਹਾਸਿਲ ਨਿਕੇ ਦਰਦ ॥ ੩੩ ॥ ੬ ॥

Take it that he, surely, was able to fulfill his lifelong desire. (33) (6)

ਸ਼ਵਦ ਕੁਰਬਾਨ ਖਾਕਿ ਰਾਹਿ ਸੰਗਤ

Goyaa says, "If I could sacrifice myself for the dust of the path traversed by noble souls,

ਦਿਲਿ ਗੋਯਾ ਹਮੀਣ ਰਾ ਆਰਜੂ ਕਰਦ ॥ ੩੩ ॥ ੭ ॥

This is all that I have wished and persevered all my life. My life's ambition



This occurrence is detailed in Suraj Parkash of the great Poet Bhai Santokh Singh Jee and the great author Bhai Vir Singh Jee also supports the view that this all transpired as above. The throwing of colour dye is supported by Nihang Dals and Takhat Sri Hazur Sahib.

Now, we need to analyse what is going on today with the throwing of colours at Holla Mohalla. Bhai Vir Singh Jee argues that the decimation of a number of practices began with the start of the new 'Akali' movement (1920's to present day, Shromani Akali Dal & SGPC) and that this goes against what Bhai Nand Lal witnessed.

It is a tradition. A tradition that will be maintained by some and ignored by many. Contextually – it doesn't make you a Hindu or an RSS agent. If you think this – then please ensure you never get face paint on your children done and/or anything that veers from Sikhi, like attending that useless venture of a soccer or football game, or playing a PS5 console etc.

It does not mean we should do it too. It is a choice, but we need to ask, 'Why we are doing it?' In India it is now just seen as a jolly, to throw colour at each other, on the whole, and part of a partying atmosphere – so the spiritual context has been lost. This is the core central problem, we cannot lose sight of the spiritual message. Holla Mohalla cannot and should not become a jolly in the park.

The Singhs of 1701-1704 deserved down time and a relaxing Holla Mohalla, they were at war and training at all times – but are we? Or do we just pile on the calories with the fat-laden Langar at such events?

Throw colours all you like. Be sensible and do it in moderation. Although, I will probably never do it and I can see why others don't like it, as it is not a spiritual requisite to do it (unless you can get showered by Guru Sahib in colour as was Bhai Nand Lal Jee). Each to their own, or until someone throws some rang on me & I have to retaliate!



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