



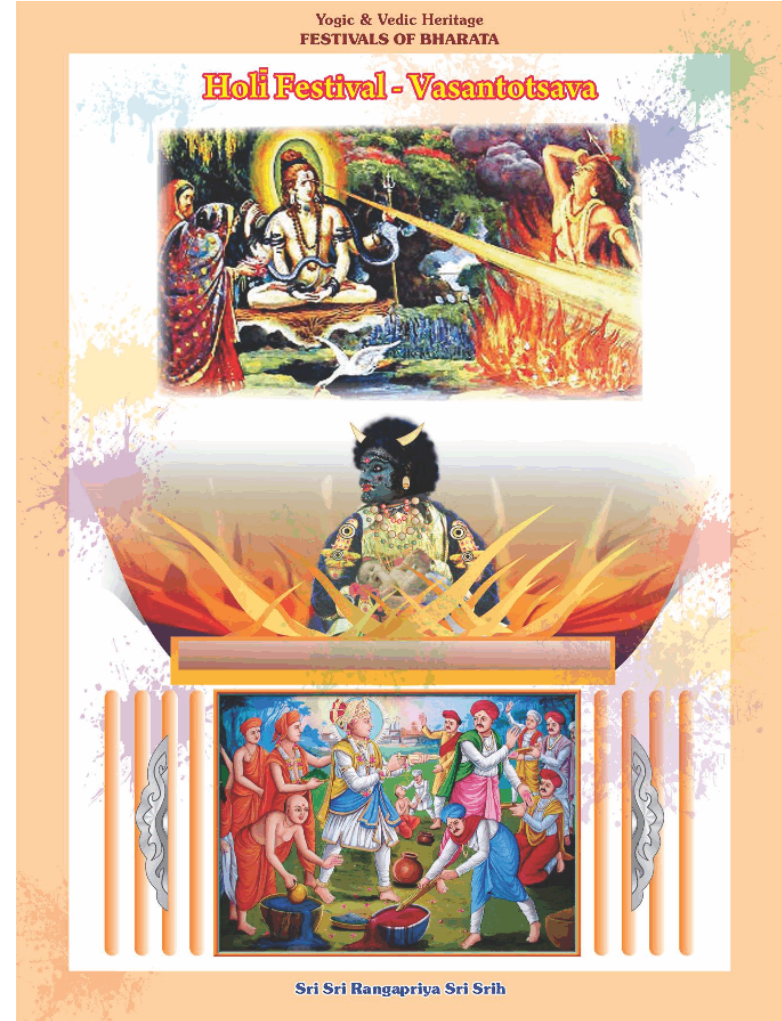
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***We Dedicate this Sacred Treasure at the holy lotus feet of***

**Sriranga Mahaguru and SriMata**

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## Transliteration followed in this book

अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ऋ	ॠ	ऌ	ॡ	ए	ऐ	ओ	औ	अं	अः
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	ṛ	ṝ	ḷ	ḹ	e	ai	o	au	am	ah
क	ख	ख	ग	ङ											
ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa											
च	छ	ज	झ	ञ											
ca	cha	ja	jha	ña											
ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण											
ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa											
त	थ	द	ध	न											
ta	tha	da	dha	na											
प	फ	ब	भ	म											
pa	pha	ba	bha	ma											
य	र	ल	व	श	ष	स	ह								
ya	ra	la	va	śa	sha	sa	ha								

Example:

क	का	कि	की	कु	कू	कृ	कृ	क्लृ	के	कै	को	कौ	कं	कः
ka	kā	ki	kī	ku	kū	kṛ	kṛ	klṛ	ke	kai	ko	kau	kam	kah



### ***Holikotsava, Holi Habba, Vasantotsava***

This is a famous festival celebrated all over India being called by the names ‘*Holāka*’, ‘*Holikā*’, ‘*Holī*’, ‘*Phālgunikā*’ ‘*Vasantotsava*’ and ‘*Kāmanahabba*’ etc. Though there are differences regarding the day of observance and the modalities, it is celebrated throughout India. Though in some places the celebration is begun on *Vasantapañcamī*. (i.e. *Māgha Śukla Pancamī*) it is specially celebrated on the day of *Phālguna-Pūrṇimā* only. Activities like burning of a pile of fire wood, (splashing) of rose colored water, dancing with happiness and excitement etc, are generally seen in all places. Only in the Bengal region the custom of performing ‘*Dolotsava*’ on that day to Lord *Kṛṣṇa* is in vogue.

**Determining the time of celebration:** This is

a festival celebrated on *Phālguna Pūrṇimā*. But on the evening of *Pūrṇima*, the *Karaṇa* by name *Bhadrā* should not be prevailing. If it prevails for two days in the evening, or if it prevails partly during the next evening, the festival should be celebrated the next day only. If the blemish of *Bhadrā* prevails on the previous day, and if *pūrṇimā* doesn’t set in till the evening of the following day, or, if *pūrṇimā* prevails for a period of three *praharas* or more, the festival will be in the evening of the following day only. If *prathama* gets shorter, then the time of either the tail or the face of *Bhadrā* should be avoided, and *Holī* should be celebrated during the period of *Bhadrā* only. *Holī* should never be celebrated during day time.

#### **Some stories related to *Holī*:**

We come across a number of stories in the *purāṇas* pertaining to the festival of *Holī*. Some of them may be summed up as follows. If the story is observed, the *tattva* and the modalities related to the festival can be understood well.

According to one story, *Holikā* was the sister of *Hiraṇyāksha* and *Hiraṇya Kaśipu*. She was a *Mahāmāyāvinī* who possessed ‘*Agnisiddhi*’. She had the capacity to remain unharmed even when she sat on fire. Though *Hiraṇyakaśipu* the

king of demons tried to kill his son *Prahlāda* who was a great devotee of Lord *Mahāviṣṇu* in many ways, he could not succeed. Then he ordered his sister *Holikā*:— Holding *Prahlāda* "you sit on a burning fire. He will be burnt to ashes; but you will come out of the fire unscathed as usual". Honouring the orders of the elder brother, she embraced *Prahlāda* and made him sit on her lap, and asked the demons to pile up firewood on her, and set it on fire. When fire was lit as told, the result was contrary to what *Holikā* intended. *Prahlāda* sat comfortably without any torment of heat as a result of his devotion to *Viṣṇu*. Though *Holikā* kept screaming with distress due to intense heat, the demons felt that she was screaming so, only out of mercy for *Prahlāda* and started adding more and more firewood to the fire. In the end *Holikā* the female demon was completely burnt to ashes without even a trace of her bones. *Prahlāda* came out of the heap of ash happily and started singing the praises of God. *Holikā* suffered on account of her own sins, and the pious person (i.e. *Prahlāda*) got saved. In memory of this, the festival of the burning of fire wood began.

According to another story, this festival is in memory of the killing of a female demon by name

‘*Dhundhā*’, who was killing infants, during the time of king *Pr̥thu* alias *Raghu* in *Satyayuga*.. That wicked female demon, roaming through day and night, used to grab children found in lonely places without getting noticed by others, and kill them. Some children would get struck with illness the moment they saw her and would suffer extreme distress. No person could capture that female demon who was a witch. She was the daughter of a demon king by name ‘*Mālī*’. By observing a severe penance addressing *Śiva*, she obtained a boon by which she could not be killed either by young or old men, *Devatas*, or any animal. She ignored children thinking that they could cause no harm to her. The king getting to know of this secret from the great sage *Vasishṭha*, appointed some wayward boys to capture her. Frightened by this, she tried to hide, run away and so on, trying to save her life. But the king ordered all the boys in the country to dance frenziedly and to make a pile of fire wood, dirt, and dried cakes of cow dung etc, and to set fire to it. When the boys did so, she became frightened and left the human world itself and ran away. In memory of this, the custom of setting of fire in the festival of *Holī* has come into vogue.

Another famous story is related to the

*Kāmadahana* performed by *Śiva*. *Kāmadeva* tried to stir the mind of Lord *Rudra* who was immersed in *Samādhi*. Then the fire which erupted from the forehead of *Śiva* burnt down that cupid to ashes. This story is seen in all the *purāṇas* and *Itihāsas* also. *Holi* festival is observed in memory of the burning of that *Kāmadeva* which involves the custom of setting fire and burning (firewood etc.,)

This festival is also called the festival of the season, the festival of burning of a female demon or the festival of the burning of *Kāma*

It is also possible that the festival is named *Holikā*, after a sweet dish called *Holikā* or *Holige* which is specially prepared and offered as *naivedya* to God, and then taken as *prasāda*.

Just as the event of *Mahādeva* burning down *Kāmadeva* is observed with joy, there is also a custom of invoking *Kāmadeva* on that day and worshipping him with *shoḍaśopacāras*, and consuming the flowers and tender sprouts of mango as *prasāda*. Thus, this is a distinct practice of observing the same festival in the form of both the subjugation of *Kāmadeva* and also seeking his blessings. (This is because *Kāmadeva* becomes worshipful or abandonable

depending upon the context and the person involved.)

As the festival is celebrated in the month of '*Phālguna*' it is called '*Phālgunikā*'. *Holikā* and other names have come because of the female demon, or the special dish. As the worship of *Kāmadeva*, the friend of *Vasanta* is performed, it is also called *Vasantotsava* and the festival of *Kāmadeva*.

The festival of *Kāmadahana* itself might have become, in short, the festival of *Kāma*.

#### **The method of celebration of the festival:**

As observed earlier, there are many ways in which the festival is celebrated. In *Vangadeśa* it is observed in the form of '*Ḍolayātra* of *ŚrīKṛṣṇa*'. The festival is celebrated there for three or five days. *Agnideva* should be worshipped on the night of the *caturdaśī* of the bright half of *Phālguna*, on the eastern side of the pandal.

An idol of Lord *Govinda* should be made, and should be installed on the platform of a *pandal* having sixteen pillars. The Lord should be given a holy bath with '*Pancāmṛta*' etc., and should be decorated and placed on the cradle, and should be swung seven times. The sacred fire that has been lighted up on the first day of the festival, should be kept burning till the festival is completed. In the

end the cradle should be swung twenty-one times. It is believed that the great king *Indradyumna* started this festival in *Vṛndāvana*. *Pūrṇimā tithi* is important for this festival. Whether the star *Uttaraphālguni* prevails or not, this festival should be observed if *Pūrṇimā* prevails.

According to another scriptural rule, *tarpaṇa* should be offered to *Devatās* and *Pitṛdevatās*, and the dust of *Holi* should be saluted to ward off blemishes. The courtyard of the house should be mopped up and cleaned with a wet cloth and decorated with *śobhanākshatā* and *Raṅgavalli*, and then a white cloth pedestal should be placed in the centre. A *kalaśa* with tender mango leaves on it should be installed, and golden colored *akshatās* should be offered to the holy pot, and white sandal paste should be anointed on it, and a red cloth should be wrapped around it, and should be decorated with garlands of flower. On the top of the *kalaśa*, an idol of *Kāmadeva* adorned with flowers and accompanied by *Ratidevī* should be installed. He should be worshipped with sandal paste, flowers, incense, *dīpa* and *naivedya* and then he should be offered *arghya*. After the worship of *Kāmadeva* like this, a person who has restrained his senses should chant the *Veda mantras*. Women with auspicious marks, and wearing ornaments of

red colored beads and bangles, should worship the sandal-wood tree. If the worship is done with the offerings of garland of flowers, curds, *dūrvā* and *akshatā*, and then saluted, one is bestowed with the enhancement of life span and good health.

Then the tender mango leaves together with sandal paste should be consumed saying ‘Let *Kāmadeva* be pleased’, and gifts etc should be given in keeping with one’s ability. Afterwards, at the time of taking food, well cooked *pāyasāna* should be taken first and other dishes of choice should be had afterwards.

वृत्ते तुषारसमये सितपञ्चदश्याः

प्रातर्वसन्तसमये समुपस्थिते च।

सम्प्राश्य चूतकुसुमं सह चन्दनेन

सत्यं हि पार्थ सततं पुरुषस्सुखी स्यात् ॥

Those who consider the *Holi* festival as a festival of driving out the female demon ‘*Dhundhā*’ with the belief that misfortunes get warded off if she is worshipped first and then driven away, follow the modality as follows:— Right from the night of *Vasantapañcami*, preparations for the *Holikādahana* begin. A person purified by bath etc should install a branch of a tree in a specific place. Then he should take a vow—“I with my family am doing

the worship of *Holikā* for the pleasure of the female demon *Dhundhā Rākshasī* so that I get free from her torments." Then he should be under *Vrata Niyamās* for the whole day. Keeping that branch of the tree as the centre, he should collect dried firewood and cakes of dried cowdung. All people should cooperate in this work. Children should be given small pieces of fire wood, and just for fun, should be made to enjoy a free mock fight mutually, fancying the pieces of firewood as swords. Then that female demon who was invoked in that heap of wood should be offered *Shodaśopacāras* with the chanting of a *śloka* which carries the following meaning.

"O *Holikā*! The boys frightened by the diseases caused by you, drove you away. Therefore I worship you, O! *Bhūtā*! Bless me with prosperity". ("असृक्क्यामयसन्नस्तैः कृता त्वं होलि बालिशैः । अतस्त्वां पूजयिष्यामि भूते भूतिप्रदा भव"॥) (Water sanctified by *mantras* should be sprinkled on the pile of pieces of wood in which the demon is invoked and then firewood should be heaped on it). Then, Fire from the house of the most impure or from the house of a woman who has recently delivered a child, should be fetched through children, and the pile of firewood should be set on fire. Everyone should circumambulate that fire three times, and all

should indulge in gossip, singing, laughter, amusement and dancing, unabashed.

तमग्निं त्रिः परिक्रम्य गायन्तु च हसन्तु च।  
जल्पन्तु स्वेच्छया लोका निश्शङ्का यस्य यन्मतम् ॥

Starting from *pañcamī*, *Holikā Dahana* should be done for all the ten days with stolen firewood for fun. And on *Pūrṇimā*, fire should be lit. This act should be performed either outside the village or in the centre. The king himself, purified by bath etc and getting the *svastivācana* done, should arrive there to the tune of music band, and after making gifts, should light the fire.

दशस्युः शोभनास्तास्तु काष्ठस्तेयं विधीयते।  
चण्डालसूतिकागेहाच्छिशुहारितवह्निना ॥

प्राप्तायां पूर्णिमायां तु कुर्यात्काष्ठप्रदीपनम् ।  
ग्रामाद्वह्निश्च मध्ये वा तूर्यनादसमन्वितः ॥

स्नात्वा राजा शुचिर्भूत्वा स्वस्तिवाचनतत्परः।  
दत्त्वा दानानि भूरीणि दीपयेद्धोलिकाचितिम् ॥

Then pouring ghee and milk on that fire and putting out the fire of the central post with cold water, it should be kept in a secluded place. Coconuts, pomegranate and guava fruits should be gifted. That night should be spent happily with dance, vocal music and instrumental music. Afterwards, that fire should be circumambulated three times and obnoxious words should be uttered.

The female demon gets satisfied by those words. The plants of wheat, chick-peas and barley-corn should be burnt in that fire and should be brought home along with the ashes. Everyone at home should smear his body with that ash. In some places, there is also a practice of heating water for bath on the following day, with the fire that was brought home.

After observing *Holikotsava* in this way during the night, people belonging to all classes of society should come together and enjoy the pleasures of *Amoda*, *Pramoda*, sports and amusements. The custom of offering rose colored water first to God and then to elders in small quantities, and the remaining rose water being taken as *prasāda*, and splashing it with syringes etc, on each other and enjoying it, has been there from ages.. (But some people say that this is a part of *Vasantotsava* and not a part of *Holikotsava*. And, all these viz., the festival of worshipping *Kāmadeva*, the festival of praising *Śiva* for burning down *Kāmadeva*, the expulsion of the female demons *Dhundhī* and ‘*Holikā*’ - all these are combined in the festival that is observed this way). This *vidhi* of setting fire to both the female demon *Dhundhī* who was an agony for children, and *Hoilkā* the female demon who burnt herself to death while trying

to burn down the boy *Prahlāda*, is representative of burning down both of these female demons. The incident of *Rudra* burning down the wicked *Manmatha* by his foreheadfire for disturbing his penance is also praised hereby. People from the lower strata of society capriciously utter vulgar words, expressing happiness at the sorrow of the family of *Kāmadeva* after he was burnt down.

Though there is diversity in the modalities of this festival, it is indeed observed all over the country. There can be no doubt at all in the fact that this is one of the most important festivals of *Bhārata*.

In this row of festivals, the *Śrāvaṇī* (*upākarma*), *Dasaharā* (*śarannavarātra*), *Dīpāvalī* and *Holi*—are sometimes categorised as the most important festivals for the *Brāhmaṇas*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaiśyas* and *Sūdras* respectively. The wearing of the sacred thread and the beginning of the study of *the Vedas* are related to the twice born, as evident from “उपवीतं सार्ववर्णिकम्”, *Śāstras* permit even some non-*Brāhmins* to wear the sacred thread for some special reasons. So, it may be said that ‘*Śrāvaṇī*’ (the festival of the sacred thread) belongs to people all the *varṇas*. One may ask—"The non-twice borns have no right to begin the study of the *Vedas*. Therefore how can *Upākarma* be a



festival for the people of all the *varṇas*? The answer is, even though they are not supposed to study the *Vedas* directly, people of all the *varṇas* have access to the study of *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and *purāṇas*, which are the counterparts of the *Vedas*, and every one has the right to divine knowledge (*gnāna*) which is the important substance of *Vedas* of and which is main objective of the *Vedas*. The tradition of our sages proclaims that people of all classes have the right to acquire divine knowledge and obtain *ātmoddhāra*. That people of all classes have the right to study *Śāstras* like sculpture etc, is established by the ‘*Nishādasthapatinyāya*’ which is famous in scriptures. It is prolixity to consider the word ‘*nishādasthapati*’ as a ‘*tatpurusha- samāsa*’ and resolving it, whereas it is brevity to consider it only as ‘*karmadhāraya samāsa*’ Therefore, the correct meaning of the sentence is that *yajna* should be gotten performed by a sculptor belonging to the caste of hunters (*Nishādaścāsau sthapatiśca*). Then one may question-"But the hunter has no right for the study of the *Vedas*! He has no right to perform any *yajnas*, isn't it?" The answer is, he also does have the right in some distinct *yajnas*. He can also be taught the *mantras* which are related to those *yajnas*. This is the conclusion of the *Mīmāṃsa Śāstra*.

This is called ‘*nishādasthapati nyāya*’. By this conclusion, *Śrāvāṇi* becomes a festival of all people indeed. And, as it is well known that *Śarannavarātra*, *Dīpavali* and *Holi* are observed by the people of all *varṇas*, there is no doubt that ‘*Śrāvāṇi*’ is a festival of all. (On the day of *Upākarma*, there is a practice of getting the protective sacred thread tied around the wrist of the right hand (*rakshā- bandhana*) by people of all *varṇas*. This custom is specially seen in North India). So it is not correct to interpret that the above four festivals are limited only to certain *varṇas*. It can be generally said that that people of certain *varṇas* have special interest in certain festivals. Only because some people use vulgar language in the *Holi* festival, it is not correct to interpret that it is a festival of the people of the fourth *varṇa* only. It shall be indeed conforming to the *Śāstras* if people celebrate it as per their culture. There is no doubt that it is the best option for everyone to ascend to the ideal of a superior culture. (There is a scriptural rule that ‘*yajna*’ should be gotten performed by ‘*Nishāda Sthapati*’. One may ask—A *nishāda* belongs to the fifth *varṇa*. How can he have the right to perform a *yajna*? The answer is, the term *Nishāda Sthapati* refers to a twice born *sthapati* who is patronized by a king

who belongs to the caste of *Nishāda*. ("*Nishādasya-Sthapati*" is a '*tatpurushsamāsa*'. The *yajna* should be gotten performed by such a person only. *Sthapati* means a sculptor. The opinion of the *pūrvapaksha* here is that a person who belongs to the fifth *varṇa* has no right to perform any *yajna*).

Thus, we have discussed the various modalities of the *Holi* festival. Now, we shall drive home some important matters related to this festival in the format of questions and answers.

Question 1: - The above festival is observed by some in the form of *Dolā*—worship of *ŚrīKṛṣṇa*. Some others observe it in the form of worship of *Kāmadeva*. There are also people who consider it as a worship of *Śiva* who burnt down *Kāmadeva*. It is also observed as a festival of the demolition of the pride of the female demon *Dhundhī* or *Holikā*. Are not these an example of a strange mixture of cultures opposed to each other?

Answer: There is not even a bit of an admixture of different cultures in this. When two very important events occur on the same day, there is nothing wrong indeed in observing a festival, praising both of them on the same day itself. In this example, the burning down of *Manmatha* and the

burning down of *Holikā* the female demon, are considered two events that occurred on the same day, and both the happy events are celebrated as a part of the same festival. There is no admixture of different cultures at all here. The burning down of the wicked *Manmatha* and the burning down of the wicked female demon who wanted to cause adversities to the devotees of God—both these are indeed dear to the virtuous. Actually speaking, it is more appropriate and beneficial to treat both of these events as *tāttvik* events, than considering them as historical happenings.

Question 2: What is the *tāttvik* sense present in the burning down of *Kāma* and *Hoilkā* the female demon?

Answer: - *Kāma* is a vile *vikāra* that disturbs the *dhyānasamādhi* of God. *Manmatha* means the churning of the mind. ('मनः मथ्नाति इति मन्मथः'). It is a great enemy of *yogis* and the all pious people who are engaged in serious work. It is clear that God himself has blamed this wicked thing (*Kāma*) in the *Gīta* as follows:- "This is *Kāma*. This itself assumes the form of anger. It is begotten of the element of *rajas*. It is insatiable even with sizeable quantities of food consumed, and is grossly very wicked. Know this as an enemy". काम एषः क्रोध एषः रजोगुणसमुद्भवः । महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वैरिणम्' Lord

*Mahādeva* who is beyond the *triguṇās* remains a great *yogīśvara* by burning down this wicked enemy.

It is the attitude of the virtuous to pray (Lord *Śiva*) to wish that everyone should try to restrain this enemy. The *tāttvik* sense of *Kāmadahana* is to obtain inspiration by praising the destruction of the wicked enemy, brought about by the great Lord of *Yoga*.

*Prahlāda* is indeed a representative of the steadfast devotion to *Vishṇu*. The name ‘*Prahlāda*’ is an appropriate one, because complete and exalted bliss is indeed the result of such a devotion to God. *Holikā* is a terrible wicked force that ruins such a *Bhakti Yoga*. It disturbs the ordinary devotees. But when it tries to disturb the *Samādhi* of people like *Prahlāda* who are at the zenith of devotion, it gets burnt by itself due to the sin of *Bhāgavatāpacāra*. Thus the precept of *Hoilka Dahana* drives home to us very convincingly, the glory of the devotion to God, and also the harm that is reaped for causing *apacāra* to *Bhāgavatas*.

Question 3: - *Jnānis* say that *Kāma* is highly wicked and extremely difficult to restrain. So, the custom of setting fire to and burning the

firewood of *Kāma* which is such an enemy, and which was subjugated by *Mahādeva* with his *Yogabala*, and so, praising the great glory of *Mahādeva* during this custom, is both meaningful and effective. It may be even right to disparage *Kāma* as it is a wicked thing. But why did the custom of worshipping *Kāmadeva* on that day itself has come into practice? Is *Kāma* fit for contempt or is he worshipful? Were the sages themselves uncertain about this? Or, is there a synthesis of both the opinions of disdain and praise? Also, is it possible that the same person becomes worshipful at certain times and disdainful at other times?

Answer: - The same *Kāmadeva* becomes fit to be rejected at certain times and worshipful at other times. There are sentences of reproach in *Śrībhagavadgīta*, which refer to *Kāma* as a great sinner and a great enemy.

महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वैरिणम्

The very same *Bhagavad-Gīta* proclaims that *Kāma* which is not opposed to *Dharma*, is a form dear to God.

धर्माविरुद्धो भूतेषु कामोस्मि भरतर्षभ’’

Question 4: Can’t it be that the *Gītacārya*, also was in a state of confusion, as he brands the same

thing as both boding ill and desirable in the same breath?

Answer: -The *Gītacārya* does not have even an iota of either illusion, doubt, *viparyaya* or confusion. He has preached the *Gīta* only to remove such confusions.

Question 5: - Anyway is it not a contradiction that the same person describes a stuff, both as something to be eschewed and to be revered!

Answer: There is no such contradiction in the teaching of *Gīta* at all. One can find around that the same person becomes fit to be disdained at certain times and may become respectable at some other times. At present, when *Kāma* works against *Dhyāna*, *Tapas*, restraint of the senses and discipline, it becomes something to be rejected. But when it fosters *Dharma* it becomes worshipful. The (stories of) *Gopikās* described in *Śrīmadbhāgavata*, the stories of *Andal*, *Akkamahādevi* and *Mīrādevi* stand out as examples for the point that *Kāma* related to divinity can lead to *jnānasamādhi* itself.

Our national poet *Kālidāsa* convinces through beautiful examples in his *Kumārasambhava*, that *Kāma* can be either *Tyājya* or *Pūjya* to the same person, depending upon the context and situation. Lord *Śiva* burnt down *Manmatha* to

ashes when he tried to disturb his *Tapassamādhi*. But, says the great poet, when *Śiva* was seated with *Pārvatī* on the *Hasemaṇe* as a bridegroom, he himself welcomed the shooting of arrows from *Kāmadeva*.

तपःपरामर्शविवृद्ध मन्योः.... कृशानुः किल निष्पपात।

तावत्स वह्निर्भवेनेत्रजन्मा भस्मावशेषं मदनं चकार ॥ (सर्ग 3/71-72)

तस्यानुमेने भगवान्विमन्युः व्यापारमात्मन्यपि सायकानाम् । (सर्ग-7-93)

*Śrī Raṅgamahāguru* had explained to us in a beautiful pity sentence, how either *Kāma* becomes *Tyājya* or *Pūjya*. "When *Kāma* comes as one of the group of the six inner enemies (viz., *Kāma*, *Krodha*, *Lobha*, *Moha*, *Mada*, and *Mātsarya*) it becomes *Tyājya*. This was his loud statement. He had also explained that when *Kāma* is controlled by *Dharma* and *Moksha* on both sides, it indeed becomes fit to be welcomed.

In the present *parva*, both the burning down and worshipping of *Kāma* conform to *Dharma* only. This custom drives home a moral to us –i.e. when he *Kāma* facilitates *Dharma*, the seekers should worship him and he should be destroyed if found opposed to *tapassamyama*. Thus it becomes a festival of both, i.e the worshipping of *Kāma* and the burning down of *Kāma*.

Question 6: - Is it not bad manners to splash colored water on anybody and everybody that comes

by during the festival of *Kāma* and foul their things?

Answer: - It is not civilized behaviour to splash coloured water on any person who comes by. The *Śāstras* do not approve of this as civilized behaviour. But it will not be an offending act if it is splashed on a person within the limits of decency, provided that person also is in a state of delight, with the clear knowledge of the meaning and spiritual aspect of that festival. It is not decency at all to throw mire on a person instead of *Vasantodaka*.

Question 7: - *Kāma* may be wicked on some occasions. *Holikā* the female demon also might have indulged in very bad deeds. And so the custom of hurling obnoxious and vulgar words at them with no bounds, is in vogue in this festival. Moreover it is said that the more the female demon *Dhundhā* hears it, the more she feels happy. Are all these right?

Answer: - Decent people do not use vulgar words in public as a part of the festival. Only lay people of a very low level, indulge in such a thing. In festivities of happiness, it won't be considered a great offence, if a few holds are relaxed to a little extent.

Moreover the statement that *Dhundha* the

female demon feels happy all the more when she hears bad words, has a moral to deliver—"Bad words please only the demoniacal forces but shall not cause happiness to the divine forces"—This is the *tattva* hidden here.

Critics observe one more thing here. The wicked tendency to use foul language is generally present more or less in all people. (There may be exceptions to this). An important aspect to be noted here is that such people should follow civility by satiating themselves with that addiction only on that day of the festival, and in the remaining days should speak only decently. This spirit is also hidden here.

Question 8: - Should the female demons *Dhundha* and *Holikā* be worshipped on that day or should they be driven away?

Answer: - They should be worshipped first and then should be driven far away, asking them not to wander or roam about until the following year's festival.

Question 9: Both the concepts i.e. the burning down of *Kāma* and *Holikā* the female demon, and accordingly collecting firewood and piling them and burning them is all O.K. But the rule that firewood should be collected by theft and fire should be brought from the house of persons

contracted with impurity, and that it should be used to light fire is laid down. Is this right? Is it not better to collect firewood through fair means and set it on fire by the fire brought from the house of persons who are pure?

Answer: Collecting material by fair means is a good *Dharma*. Even though *Agni* is by itself pure, fire from the home of persons who are pure is much purer no doubt. But the evil forces do not relish such *samskāras* which are full of righteousness. The purport here is that their birth, existence, desire for life and the final rites are all filthy. But persons who experiment this purport have to be careful not to really get stuck to that filth.

Question 10: - What is the reason for the practice of bringing home the ashes of the burnt fire and smearing it on the body?

Answer: - We hear the story of Lord *Mahādeva* who killed the demon *Tripura* and applied the ashes of that demon as a mark of his victory. "If one smears the ashes of burnt *Kāma* (*Holikā*) with a feeling of *prasāda*, and with the remembrance that by the grace (blessings) of God, the evil *Kāma* was destroyed and the forces of demons were vanquished, then only it comes to be called as *Rakshā*. By that, the

misfortunes get warded off and inspiration to (follow the path of) *Dharma* and devotion to God will be obtained.

Question 11: - The idea of burning down *Kāma* is good. It's external symbol (i.e. the heap of fire wood) can be burnt down to ashes by fire. But *Kāma* is *manasija*. The one which is born in the mind). It is aptly called by *Jnānis* by names such as '*Manmatha*' (the one which churns the mind), *Madana* (the one which causes infatuation) etc. Like the proverbial head of *Rāvaṇa*, it keeps growing again and again though severed. *Devatās* also become the victims of its attack. When it is so, is it possible to destroy it?

Answer: - We come across stories which say—"Vanquishing of *Kāma* is no doubt very difficult but not impossible; Lord *Mahādeva* burnt it down, the great Sage *Nārāyaṇa* trampled it and let out a loud laughter" etc. It (i.e. *Kāma*) vanishes only when one achieves a total *Samādhi* in the *Parañjyoti* who is called *Śankara* and *Nārāyaṇa*. Knowledgeable persons say that till that (state is achieved), its *samskāra* will be present in some proportion even in ascetics. The purport of the following *śloka* of *Bhagavadgīta* is well remembered here:—

विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः ।

रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते ॥ (2-59)

"When a person does not consume foods (objects of senses), those objects turn away from him. But the *rasa* (*rāga*) does not get away merely by that. Only when the *Parabrahman* is realised, that *rasa* (*rāga*) vanishes."

For example- On the days of *ekādaśī*, even during fasting, the mind of a person may be filled up with the *rasa* (*rāga*) of the various food items viz. *Bhakshya*, *Bhojya*, *Coshya*, *Lehya* and *Pānīyas* to be consumed on *Dvādaśī* for *Pāraṇa* (only if he is not in the *rasa* of *Bhagavaddhyāna-Samādhi*) If one is immersed in *Bhagavaddhyāna Samādhi*, even that undesirable relish also gets dried up in the fire of divine knowledge. And if one keeps on weakening the wicked *Kāma* by means of holy company, pure food and good thoughts etc. and attains *Paramātmā Samādhi*, it gets completely dried up even without a trace.

When *Śrīrāma* severed the heads of *Rāvaṇa*, they kept on sprouting again and again. Finally, when He shot the *Brahmāstra* at the heart of the demon, *Rāvaṇa* was slain, isn't it? So also, when *Brahmāstra* is shot at the mind which is the origin of *Kāma*, it gets destroyed. Though this can be

done with very great difficulty, it becomes possible indeed, in the ripening of *Tapassamādhi*.

So much for *Samādhi*. But in day to day life, it is commendable to have desires which foster the welfare of the soul and the welfare of the world. But even then, the desires pertaining to the maintenance of the world should be in bounds and should merge in *AtmaKāma* (love of *Brahma*) only.

