

Meaning of Holi (Rang Sabha)

as explained by

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Our true being, Purusha, is pure, free of all taint. It is the effect of Prakriti (nature) that covers our true being, our swarupa, with the various layers and colors of Maya. These various forms (रूपा) of Prakriti and her Maya are evocatively described in the Sanskrit verse, whose first line is :

या देवी सर्वभुतेषु क्षुधारुपेण समस्थिता ।

नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥

Yaa Devii Sarvabhutessu kshudaruupenna samsthitaa
Namastasyai Namastasyai Namastasyai Namoh Namah

Here *kshuda* (क्षुधा) is hunger, the deep-seated hunger of the being for varied sense and life experiences.

The verse continues to describe the other forms (रूपा), such as:

विष्णुमायेति शब्दिता, चेतनेत्यभिधीयते, बुद्धिरुपेण, छाया रूपेण, शक्तिरुपेण, तृष्णारुपेण, जातिरुपेण, लज्जारुपेण, शान्तिरुपेण, कान्तिरुपेण, जातिरुपेण, लक्ष्मीरुपेण, वृत्तीरुपेण, स्मृतिरुपेण, दयारुपेण, तृष्टिरुपेण, मातृरुपेण, भ्रान्तिरुपेण

There is a saying in Oriya : जीव आहार लंपटे, बंधन भव सिंधु तटे ।

Or in Hindi : यह जीव आहार के लंपट में ।

पडा है भवसिन्धु के तट में ।।

Hunger (**kshuda**) is the fundamental need for preserving the body, thus, kshuda compels us to feed our mind and body through the five senses and partake of prakriti, which then becomes the cause of our bondage to prakriti.

All that we imbibe or absorb from prakriti **colors our inner self** and cause subtle or overt distortions, or vikaras (विकार). Just as a crystal or a prism seems to take on the color of the light that shines upon it, the crystal-like pure self, purusha, becomes colored by prakriti's experiences, and takes on their hues, which are then manifested as the shadripus (षड रिपु) or the six foes (काम, क्रोध, लोभ, मोह, मद, मातस्य) : kama or lust, krodha or anger, lobha or greed, moha or attachment, mada or pride and arrogance, and matsarya or covetousness. These then spread out to further negative tendencies like jealousy, violence, greed etc.

Whenever we suffer and fail to find solutions to crises, we turn to God as the last resort. And if we are sincere in our turning, God's help does indeed come and we feel relief, our suffering eases. Does He not say that He is waiting always for us, to take away all our sorrows? But, strangely enough, we go to Him only in suffering, crying and lamenting, never joyfully or in complete trust, playfully.

So to bring us to Him in joy and play, He created one day in the year as Holi, a day on which we playfully submit to His lotus feet all our negativities, vikaras, colors or *rang*. This is why we call it ***rang-sabha*** (festival of colors).

Raja Kansa also organized a Rang Sabha in which Lord Krishna was invited and that day was the end of Kansa, as all his vikaras or colors were absorbed by Krishna and Kansa regained his purity and got absorbed in the supreme soul.

Similarly Kurukshetra war was another Rang Sabha.

Lord Jagannath Rath Yatra is another simile at bodily level and it means:

- First Chariot of Lord Balbhadra represents our gross body, which is pure.
- Second Chariot of Subhadra represents Nature (prakriti) which colors our body (Ignorance / अज्ञान) as explained above.
- Third Chariot is of Lord Jagannath which cleanses our body of all the colors by knowledge (ज्ञान).