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Holi, the Indian Festival of Colors Celebrated

THAYUMANASAMY SOMASUNDARAM • READER SUBMITTED • MARCH 22, 2009

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Holi, the Indian Festival of Colors Celebrated

An article by Thayumana Somasundaram

Many shades of yellow to green colored pollen from mighty oaks to gentle maples coat cars, driveways, and roads announcing the arrival of spring in Tallahassee. Notwithstanding the itchy noses and watery eyes the pollen blankets bestow upon us, we welcome the change of the season especially after this year's long and colder winter. Indian families and neighbors living in Tallahassee coated themselves and others with even wider shades of color and enjoyed it during the celebration Holi (the Indian Festival of color) which signifies the traditional arrival of spring in India.

Holi is celebrated all over northern India on the full moon day in the month of Phalguna in the Indian (lunar) calendar which usually falls in the month of March in the Western calendar. During the celebration young and old go around neighborhoods with colored powder or colored water, greet people, and throw the colors on them. In turn the neighbors do the same thing to the greeters. People don't mind walking around in Eastman colored clothing since it is done for fun and games. Soon everyone in the neighborhood gather for a drink, a delicious meal, and exchange of stories. The origins of the Holi celebration is linked to the end of winter harvest but now everyone from city dwellers to farmers participate in the celebration. Like many Hindu festivals, there are many stories associated with the origins of the celebration. According to one, the name Holi is derived from Holika, the sister of a demon king Hiranya Kashibu who was killed by Lord Vishnu when he became a menace to the society. Holi marked this occasion.

Members of India Association of Tallahassee (www.iatlh.org) and their friends celebrated this traditional spring festival in Tallahassee at AJ Henry Park, on Saturday, March 21, 2009, on the second day of spring. Well over hundred-fifty people descended on the park bringing delicious Indian food to share, colored powder to throw, and to simply have on with family and friends. Several students from local schools and colleges joined the party. After the food everyone was in a mood for Indian movie (bollywood) music and dance. In all everyone had a fun afternoon.

About the author:

Thayumana Somasundaram is the current General Secretary of IATLH. His family has been living in Tallahassee since 1993.

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Tallahassee children celebrating Holi at AJ Henry Park on Saturday, March 21, 2009. Holi, Indian festival of color celebrates the arrival of Spring. Photo taken by: Thayumanasamy Somasundaram. (Children celebrating Holi at AJ Henry Park on Satu)

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