

## February- Holi – Hindu

Hinduism began in India over 5,000 years ago. Hindus believe that God is everywhere and that everything in nature is part of God and worshipped in different forms. Hindus have many gods and goddesses and these are often celebrated at important festivals during the Hindu year.

Holi is a favourite Hindu springtime festival when chaos reigns as people cover themselves and each other in bright coloured powders and water! The festival is named after Holika, a wicked character in Indian mythology. Holi is also known as 'The Festival of Colour' and remembers the tricks the god Krishna played. Krishna is often depicted as having deep blue skin because his name means the 'colour of the night sky'. Legend tells that at Holi Krishna played tricks on his love, Radha by drenching her and friends with coloured water!

Have some messy painting fun using lots of different techniques!

Make sure that the painting area is well covered with newspapers or polythene and have plenty of 'cleaning-up' equipment for Beavers! These activities could get very messy!! Old shirts make good painting shirts!

- Tennis ball painting**      Equipment: cheap tennis balls, shallow bowls, thin poster paint, large sheets of paper
- Put some thin paint in each shallow bowl and place a tennis ball in each one.
  - The Beavers can dab, roll or drop 'gently' the paint balls onto the paper.
  - Make sure the Beavers return the tennis balls to the correct bowl so the colours don't mix too much!
  - Hang the painted sheets up to dry as this allows the watery paints to flow and the colours mix!

- Straw Painting**      Equipment: drinking straws, thin paint or food colouring mixed with water, thin card
- Use thin card as it is stronger than paper which may go soggy!
  - Place a little paint or coloured water on the card and blow (not suck) the paint in different direction!

- Spray Painting**      Equipment: cheap plant spray bottles, thin paint, large sheets of thick paper (wallpaper), washing line & pegs
- Erect a make-shift washing line and securely peg some thick paper to it.
  - The Beavers can squirt and spray paint on to the paper watching how the colours mix and mingle as they run down the paper!

Another favourite Hindu festival is Diwali or Divali, visit NIBS November Programme for some Diwali themed activities. During the festival of Diwali Hindus celebrate the return of King Rama after defeating the evil Ravana. They light candles, diva lamps and fireworks in the hope that Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth will visit their homes.

# The Flying Monkey

a version of an Indian folktale

The terrible demon Ravana, who had ten hideous heads and many arms, had tricked Prince Rama into leaving his beautiful wife, Princess Sita, alone in the forest. Ravana changed himself into a giant bird, swooped down and carried Princess Sita off into the sky!

Prince Rama was angry and very worried about poor Sita, he searched everywhere for her. He went into the mountains and asked the King of the Monkeys if he knew where the evil Ravana might have taken her. The Monkey King showed Rama some rich jewels and a silk veil and told him that Ravana's chariot had flown over the mountains a few days before. He said that a beautiful woman had leaned out of the chariot and thrown down the jewels and the veil. Rama gasped, these things belonged to his beloved Sita.

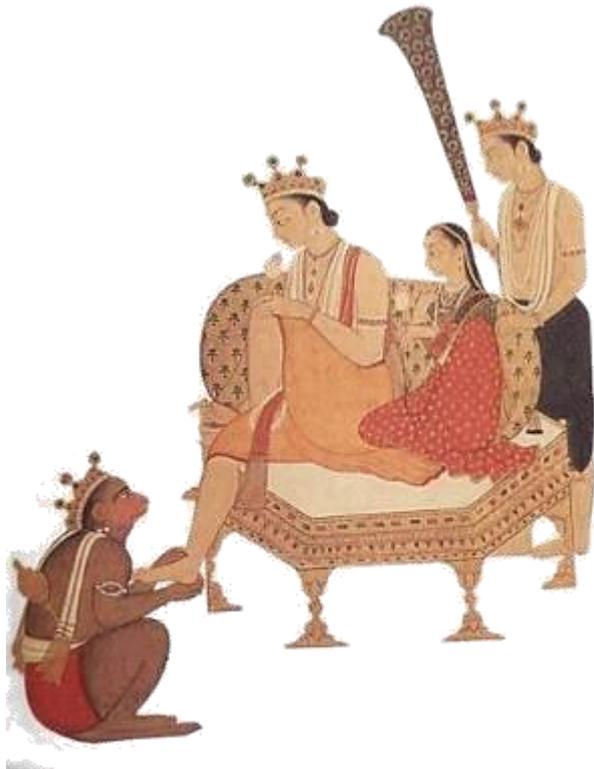
The Monkey King offered Rama the services of his best general, Hanuman and his army of monkeys to help him rescue Sita. Hanuman was the son of the god of wind and had special powers. This amazing monkey was clever and very brave and he could fly across great distances in the time it took to take a single step! He was delighted to help Rama.

Rama, Hanuman and the monkey army searched all over India but there was no sign of the demon Ravana and Sita. Finally they arrived exhausted at the seashore. While they rested on the sandy shore a great vulture landed and whispered to Hanuman that with his sharp eyes he had seen Ravana carrying Sita across the sea to his castle on a nearby island. This island is known today as Sri Lanka. With a mighty leap Hanuman landed on the island but it was well defended by fearsome demons and armoured elephants. Using his special powers Hanuman made himself very, very small and crept into the castle without being seen. At last he found Sita and he quickly changed back into his normal size. Hanuman told Sita to climb onto his back and he would carry her to safety. Even though Sita wanted to be free she was too frightened to move.

In a flash, Hanuman went back to Rama waiting on the seashore and they quickly worked out a plan to cross to the island. Hanuman flew to the Himalayas and brought back lots of stones. The monkey army began to build a causeway of stones from the beach to the island but suddenly the sea was full of vicious sea monsters. They battled across but when they reached the island more fierce demons attacked them. Hanuman threw great rocks down from the sky killing the demons and clearing a path for Rama to get to Sita. When Rama was nearly at the castle the terrible demon Ravana appeared. He was a very frightening sight dressed in golden armour and with a golden helmet on each of his ten heads and a sharp sword in each of his many hands!

Rama fought the demon and even though Ravana was much bigger and stronger Rama killed him with his magic sword. He ran into the castle and rescued his beautiful princess. Hanuman and his army had fought fearlessly too but all his soldier monkeys were either dead or badly wounded. Hanuman leapt back to the Himalayas, he knew that on the highest mountain in the world grew a magical healing plant. Hanuman wasted no time to pick the plant, he tore off the top of the mountain and carried it to the island where the magical plants healed his monkeys' wounds and brought the dead back to life!

When they got back home Rama and Sita were crowned King and Queen. They and Hanuman lived happily ever after and had many more exciting adventures together!



© All rights reserved by Marc Shandro

Hindus view certain animals as sacred and allow them to wander freely about towns and temple buildings. Hanuman Langur monkeys are named after Hanuman and in some temples hundreds of these sacred monkeys live! Hindus believe that the monkey god Hanuman is the ancestor of all monkeys. There are different stories about how Hanuman monkeys got their black hands and faces! One folktale tells how a Langur was caught stealing mangoes from a giant's garden in Sri Lanka to give to the poor people of Bengal in India. As a punishment, the giant set fire to the Langur's tail! The brave monkey put out the flames by blowing on them and hitting them with its paws - it survived but with a burnt face and hands! Today, these monkeys have dark face and hands!