

The Colors of Devotion



March 1 and 2 bring India's most famous Hindu holiday, Holi, which is known as the "festival of love" or the "festival of color," but it is really a festival that celebrates the victory of good over evil. Hindu scriptures tell of the arrogant

Demon King Hiranyakashyap, whose own son, Prahlad, refused to worship him in favor of Vishnu. The Demon King called on his sister Holika to sit with Prahlad atop a burning pyre. Thanks to Prahlad's prayers to Vishnu, he survived, but Holika, who thought herself immune to the fire, was consumed. It is through this story we learn how the virtues of goodness, faith, and devotion are used to conquer forces of evil. This story is so important that before this holiday was called Holi, it was called Holika after the Demon King's sister.

The first day of Holi sees the ritual burning of pyres, with celebrants daring to race through the flames, hoping to emerge as unscathed as Prahlad. The fire purifies the spirit, proving one's devotion and reaffirming the triumph of good over evil. But the story of Holi does not end here. The second day of the holiday is perhaps the most well-known. On this day, celebrants gather in massive crowds and throw colored powder at each other. This practice, too, has its roots in Hindu mythology.

The supreme deity Krishna fell in love with the goddess Radha but was concerned that they would be a poor match because his skin was blue. Krishna's mother advised him to paint her face in order to erase their differences. Like Krishna, celebrants joyfully paint each other in a rainbow of colors, erasing any and all notions of caste or ethnicity. During this celebration, it becomes nearly impossible to recognize others, so all are loved equally. Furthermore, colored powders are often made of crushed medicinal herbs such as bilva, haldi, kumkum, and neem. Throwing these healing herbs is reminiscent of the healing nature of the holiday—the power of spring and the vigor, purity, youth, and playfulness of the spirit.

March Birthdays

Resident

Charles Husband 3/03	Anastasia Prianos 3/24
Geraldine Walton 3/05	Nancy Lebaron 3/27
Helen Brown 3/06	
Jean Ooms 3/07	
Robley Ashby 3/07	
Jonathan Edwards 3/11	
Curtis Reese 3/12	
Martha Darrigo 3/13	
Louisa Orihuela 3/15	
Mattie Warren 3/16	
Stephen Nemeth 3/22	

Staff

Yulando Powell- Benard 3/05
 Harriet McCray 3/08
 Cornailius Byrd 3/09
 Farah Morival 3/16
 Tenia Sesler 3/19
 Margaret Williams 3/19
 Shawn Manden 3/20
 Nathalie Estime 3/20
 Shakira Page 3/26
 Shelly Personnel 3/29

The Boston Massacre

It was a cold, snowy night in Boston on March 5, 1770. Despite the weather, American colonists (calling themselves patriots) gathered outside Boston's Customs House to taunt the British troops who had been stationed in the city to enforce newly decreed taxation measures. When the redcoats affixed bayonets to their rifles, the Americans responded by throwing snowballs and rocks. Moments later, shots were fired. Five Americans were the first fatalities of the American Revolutionary War in what would become known as the Boston Massacre. What is often forgotten in this episode of American Independence is how avowed patriot and future president John Adams, a lawyer, defended the British soldiers who were subsequently put on trial. Two of the eight were convicted of manslaughter, but for many Americans, justice was far from done. Paul Revere, famed for his midnight ride, turned the Boston Massacre into a provocative engraving, creating an effective piece of propaganda that helped turn Americans against the British.

Palm Garden Post

Palm Garden of Tampa 3612 East 138th Ave, Tampa Fla 33613 (813) 972-8775



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Egg-ceptional Spring Traditions

With the arrival of spring on March 20 comes all the holidays and traditions associated with the end of winter: religious traditions like Passover and Easter, and Nowruz, the Persian New Year. All of these celebrations share an important symbol: the egg.

For millennia, the egg has been an exalted symbol of birth, rebirth, and hope. Ancient Egyptians told stories of the sun god hatching from an egg. Sometimes the sun was considered an egg, laid each day by Seb, a cosmic goose and god of the earth. In Hinduism, the egg represents the makeup of the universe. The shell is the heavens, the white is the air, and the yolk is the earth. In the Persian story of creation, Good and Evil are locked in an epic battle. When Evil is hurled into an abyss, Good lays an egg, which represents the universe, with Earth suspended from the heavens as a halfway point between Good above and Evil below. Eggs have always been a symbol of the beginnings of the universe and life itself. No wonder that after the long dark of winter, with the return of the sun, eggs are revered as harbingers of life.

When Jews sit together for the Passover seder on March 30, an egg will adorn the seder plate as a symbol of the ritual offering to the Temple in Jerusalem. Furthermore, the egg symbolizes—you guessed it—life itself. For Christians, Easter is a holiday celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ, so using an egg as a symbol of rebirth was a natural choice. The traditional color to dye Easter eggs is red, symbolizing the blood Jesus shed on the cross. In Macedonia, congregants bring their red eggs to Easter church services, and when the priest proclaims, "Christ is risen," it is customary to eat the egg as a ritual breaking of the Lenten fast. Elsewhere, in Iran, Persians prepare for their new year, Nowruz, by preparing their ceremonial table, the *haftseen*, with symbolic foods and objects, including painted eggs representing fertility. All over the world, people will be looking at eggs in a different light.