Holi – The Festival of Colours

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Why in News?

Recently, Holi, the festival of colours, was celebrated across India and globally.

- **Observed in –** Holi celebrated ***on the Purnima (full moon)*** of the Hindu month of *Phalguna* (February–March).
- **Belief –** The festival represents or symbolizes the victory of good over evil, love, forgiveness, unity, and new beginnings.
- Marks the seasonal transition from winter to spring and the beginning of a *new harvest cycle.*
- **Origin –** The legend of ***Prahlad and Holika, which forms the basis of the Holika Dahan*** ritual during Holi, is found in the Bhagavata Purana and the Vishnu Purana.
- **Mythology –** Demon king Hiranyakashipu, empowered by a boon from Brahma, demanded worship from all. But his son Prahlad continued to worship Vishnu despite threats.
- Hiranyakashipu asked his sister Holika, who was immune to fire, to kill Prahlad.
- Holika's fire immunity failed and burnt her as it was used for evil, saving Prahlad, symbolising the triumph of good over evil.
- Holi ***also celebrates the divine love of Krishna and Radha***, especially in cities of Mathura–Vrindavan, which are associated with Krishna's birth and childhood.
- **History –** One of the oldest festivals in India.
- Mentioned in ancient texts such as
    - Jaimini's Purva Mimamsa Sutras,
    - Kathaka-Grhya-Sutras,
    - Narada Purana,
    - Bhavishya Purana and
    - Dasakumara Charita.

- Also referenced in the 7th-century Sanskrit drama Ratnavali.
- **Rituals – Holika Dahan –** Bonfire lit on the eve of Holi symbolising the destruction of evil and negativity.
- **Rangwali Holi –** Smearing gulal (fine coloured powder), throwing coloured water, music, dance and celebrations.
- **Regional Variations –**
    - **Lathmar Holi –** Barsana and Nandgaon (Uttar Pradesh).
    - **Dol Jatra/Dol Purnima –** West Bengal and Odisha.
    - **Shigmo –** Goa.

References

1. BCC | Holi
2. India Today | Holi 2026

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