# FREEDOM FROM BINDING DESIRES UNITY IN DIVERSITY

#### **FESTIVAL: HOLI**

- From "Hindu Festivals and Celebrations" by Smt. Anasuya Sastry and other sources
- Holi is celebrated every spring on the full moon day of the month Phalguna
- Men, women and children, regardless of age or wealth, enjoy this festival of color ("unity in diversity")

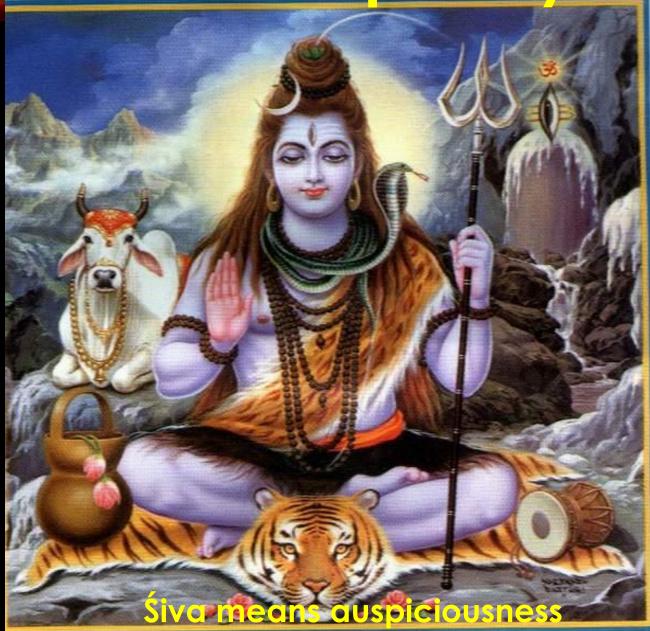
#### KĀMADAHANA

- It is also the day of Kāmadahana (legend from the purāņas)
- A wicked demon named Tārakasura was tormenting the good people
- The Gods were hoping for the wedding between Parvati ( daughter of the king of the Himalayas) and Lord Siva because the divine son from this union was to kill the wicked demon

#### KĀMADAHANA

- Parvati, daughter of the king of the Himalayas, was deeply immersed in penance to seek the hand of Lord Shiva in marriage
- Lord Shiva was oblivious of everything since He was immersed in deep meditation
- The Gods sent Kāma (Cupid) and his consort Rati to break Lord Shiva's meditation

# Om Namah Śivaya



#### KĀMADAHANA

- Kāma's shot an arrow, to break Lord Shiva's meditation
- His meditation disturbed, Lord Shiva's third eye opened and burned Kāma to ashes
- Rati prayed to Lord Shiva to restore her husband's life and He graced her request
- Lord Shiva also saw Pārvati and granted her wish

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF KĀMADAHANA

- Kāma represents binding desire
- Lord Shiva represents dispassion (vairagya)
- This puranic story of KĀMADAHANA shows that binding desires are neutralized by cultivation of dispassion

### HOLIKA AND PRAHLADA

- Prahlāda was a great devotee of Lord Nārayana
- Prahlāda's wicked father, Hiraņyakaşipu wanted Prahlāda to denounce Lord Nārayana and tried in vain to make him do so
- Frustrated, the demon Hiraņyakaşipu even asked his sister, the demon Holika, to destroy his own son Praḥlāda!

### HOLIKA AND PRAHLADA

- Holika had a boon that fire would not burn her; she took Praḥlāda on her lap and entered a blazing fire
- The Lord always protects his devotees and since Holika tried to intentionally harm one of the Lord's own devotees, Holika's boon that fire would not harm her was suddenly withdrawn
- Holika was destroyed in the fire but Prahlada came out unscathed!

## SIGNIFICANCE OF HOLIKA AND PRAHLADA

- Holika represents ignorance
- The fire represents self-knowledge
- Holika was destroyed in the fire signifying that ignorance is destroyed in the fire of self-knowledge
- The puranic story also assures us that Isvara always protects his devotees

### KAMSA AND KŖṢŅA

- Kamsa, was a tyrant who tried to kill his nephew Kṛṣṇa because of a prophecy that the child would put an end to him and his bad deeds
- When Kṛṣṇa was still an infant, Kaṃsa sent a demon, Pūtana, to kill Kṛṣṇa by feeding him poisoned milk from her breast
- Instead, Lord Kṛṣṇa sucked her blood out and the demon Putana was killed
- The religious element in Holi is the worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa
- People remember Lord Kṛṣṇa as a baby or as a young boy playing with the merry milkmaids of Brindavan

#### **SIGNIFICANCE OF HOLI**

- The fire during the festival of Holi symbolizes the yajña (fire ritual) into which we offer our desires and tendencies, so that the spiritual blaze of enlightenment illuminates our heart and mind
- During this festival, men, women and children from all stations of society cast aside their individual differences and immerse themselves in the colors representing unity in diversity!

