

Banarsidas Chandiwal Institute of Physiotherapy

Khelo Holi Naturally

Date: 13-14th March 2025

Introduction

Holi, the vibrant Festival of Colors, is celebrated with immense joy across India and other parts of the world, symbolizing the arrival of spring and the victory of good over evil. It is traditionally marked by the throwing of colorful powders, known as *Gulaal* (colored powder), which are applied to friends and family in a spirit of fun and unity. While Holi was once celebrated with natural, eco-friendly colors made from flowers, herbs, and spices, the use of chemical-based gulaal has become more prevalent in recent years. These synthetic colors, which contain harmful substances like lead, mercury, and artificial dyes, pose significant risks to both health and the environment, causing skin irritation, eye damage, and polluting water sources. As a result, there has been a growing movement toward promoting natural, non-toxic alternatives, encouraging a safer, more sustainable way to celebrate this joyful festival.

Objective of the Activity

The primary objective of the "Khelo Holi Naturally" activity was to encourage college students to celebrate the vibrant festival of Holi in a sustainable and eco-friendly manner by making their own natural gulaal (colored powder) at home. By avoiding harmful chemical-based colors, the activity aimed to raise awareness about the adverse environmental and health impacts of synthetic colors and promote the use of safe, biodegradable alternatives.

Activity Overview

This year, due to the increasing need for eco-conscious celebrations, the traditional Holi event was reimagined as a "home-based" activity where students were asked to create their own natural gulaal. Rather than attending a workshop or gathering, students were given guidelines on making the powder at home using easily accessible natural ingredients like flowers, vegetables, and spices. This approach not only made the event safe and personal but also aligned with the goal of promoting sustainability during the Holi celebrations.

How the Students Celebrated:

1. **Creating Natural Gulaal:** Students were provided with instructions to create their own colors using simple and safe ingredients. These ingredients are common in households and have natural coloring properties that are safe for the skin and the environment. Some of the key ingredients included:

- **Beetroot Powder (for Red):** Beetroot, when dried and powdered, creates a rich red color, perfect for a vibrant Holi celebration.
- **Turmeric Powder (for Yellow):** A common kitchen spice, turmeric has a vibrant yellow hue that is commonly used in natural coloring, and it is known for its antibacterial properties.
- **Spinach or Moringa Powder (for Green):** These greens provide a beautiful natural green color while being healthy for the skin.
- **Hibiscus Petals or Rose Petals (for Pink):** Dried petals from hibiscus or roses offer a beautiful pink hue and have anti-inflammatory properties, making them safe to apply to the skin.
- **Pomegranate Peel Powder (for Purple):** Dried pomegranate peels provide a unique purple color, adding diversity to the natural palette.
- **Rice Flour (Base Powder):** Rice flour was suggested as a base to mix the colored powders, providing a soft texture and making the colors easy to apply.

Students were encouraged to experiment with various ingredients to come up with unique shades, mixing them with rice flour or other natural binding agents to create the ideal consistency for throwing or applying.

2. **Celebrating Holi at Home:** Once students made their natural gulaal, they were encouraged to celebrate Holi with their family or housemates in a safe and festive manner. Students painted their faces and each other with the homemade gulaal, played traditional Holi games, and danced to Holi songs. Since the activity was home-based, many students shared their celebrations online, showcasing the beautiful natural colors they had created and promoting the eco-friendly initiative. They also used the occasion to spread awareness about the importance of natural Holi celebrations by using sustainable and non-toxic ingredients.
3. **Engagement and Sharing:** To maintain engagement, students were invited to share photos and videos of their Holi celebrations on social media. These posts were shared within various college online groups and on personal social media accounts. Students also exchanged ideas on how to make more colors or how to host safe and eco-friendly Holi celebrations at home, fostering a sense of community. The event allowed for virtual collaboration and celebration, with many students interacting, complimenting each other on their creativity, and learning new techniques to make even more natural colors.
4. **Additional Engagement Activities:** Some students went beyond just making gulaal by also crafting their own Holi-themed decorations using flowers, leaves, and other natural materials. They shared pictures of these home decorations, creating an even more festive atmosphere and adding to the overall eco-friendly spirit of the celebration.

Student Participation

The event saw enthusiastic participation, with more than 40 students from BPT Third Year joined in. Though the celebration took place at home, the virtual sharing and collaboration brought a sense of unity. Many students expressed their delight in making colors that were safe for the environment and their skin. The use of social media as a platform helped increase the reach of the

initiative, with students sharing their eco-friendly celebrations with their friends and family, creating a ripple effect and encouraging others to participate in similar ways.

Benefits of the Activity

1. **Health and Safety:** One of the primary concerns with traditional Holi celebrations is the use of chemical-based colors that can lead to skin irritation, allergic reactions, and even eye damage. By making natural gulaal at home, students ensured that they were celebrating the festival safely. The ingredients used, such as turmeric, hibiscus, and spinach, are natural and generally safe for skin contact. The activity, therefore, helped in promoting a health-conscious way of celebrating.
2. **Environmental Sustainability:** Traditional synthetic colors are not only harmful to human health but also have detrimental effects on the environment. They contain toxic chemicals that pollute water sources and soil. By using organic, biodegradable ingredients to make gulaal, students contributed to reducing pollution, making the festival much safer for the planet. The initiative aimed at spreading awareness about the importance of using sustainable materials during festivals and reducing waste.
3. **Promoting Creativity:** Students were encouraged to use their creativity to create their own custom colors. Many shared their unique color mixes and even developed new techniques for applying natural colors. Some students experimented with various textures and ways of applying the colors, turning it into a fun, creative activity that allowed for self-expression.
4. **Spreading Awareness:** Through social media and online sharing, the students were able to spread awareness about the harmful effects of chemical colors and the benefits of using natural, eco-friendly alternatives. This created a wider impact beyond just the participating students, as their posts encouraged others to think about the environment and health during Holi celebrations.
5. **Sense of Community:** Even though the event was celebrated individually at home, students felt a strong sense of community. By sharing their experiences and ideas online, they felt connected to each other. The initiative not only celebrated a traditional festival but also built a sense of unity among students as they embraced sustainable practices together.

Conclusion

The "Khelo Holi Naturally" activity was a resounding success, highlighting the importance of celebrating Holi in an eco-friendly and health-conscious way. The initiative empowered students to create their own natural gulaal and celebrate Holi without compromising on environmental safety or personal well-being. The activity inspired students to think more critically about their festival celebrations and embrace more sustainable practices.

Impact of the Activity

This event successfully achieved its goal of promoting awareness about eco-friendly Holi celebrations. The students learned about the harmful effects of synthetic colors and were motivated to adopt more sustainable practices in future celebrations. Additionally, the event sparked

conversations about sustainability and personal responsibility, which resonated with a wider audience both within the college and beyond.

Future Recommendations

- **Collaborative Initiatives:** In the future, the initiative could be expanded to include collaborative projects where students from multiple colleges or institutions can share their recipes and methods for making natural gulaal.
 - **Incorporating Local Communities:** Engage local communities, including schools and neighborhoods, in making natural colors for Holi, creating a larger-scale impact.
 - **Continuous Awareness Campaigns:** Launch a series of awareness campaigns that run year-round to keep the focus on sustainability and eco-friendly celebrations for other festivals as well.
 - **Workshops and Seminars in Future Years:** Though no workshop was conducted this time, future editions could include virtual or in-person workshops to further guide students in creating their own natural products and raise awareness about the harmful effects of synthetic colors.
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