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Demand for organic colours this Holi

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Store owners are witnessing a surge in demand for organic and herbal variants of gulaal. File photo The Hindu

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More Bangaloreans opting for herbal colours over synthetic ones

With the arrival of spring, comes Holi, the festival of colours. As the city gears up to celebrate the festival on Monday, Bangaloreans appear to be making a skin-friendly choice by going for herbal colours over synthetic ones.

Store owners are witnessing a surge in demand for organic and herbal variants of *gulaal*. "I find more and more people asking for herbal colours now as they are more conscious and don't mind spending more on herbal colours," acknowledged Bhavarlal Jain, who owns a fancy store in Mamulpet.

Prashanth, another wholesale dealer at Mamulpet, said while chemical colours cost about Rs.70 per kg, herbal ones cost around Rs.200 per kg and are not available in a very wide variety of colours, yet customers prefer them, he added.

Doctors too endorse this trend. Sachith Abraham, a dermatologist said, "I have come across patients who suffered rashes, irritation and oozing after using chemical colours." He added that these colours are all metallic compounds, like the red powder is mercuric sulphide, black — lead oxide, blue — Prussian blue which is used in paints, silver — aluminium sulphide, violet — gentieaviolet and green — copper sulphate, which can cause burns.

A lot of innovative designs of *pichkaris* (spray gun) have arrived this year. Pichkaris in the shape of rockets, guns, including the popular 'Angry bird', are filling the shelves of shops. All these are fitted with water tanks so that children do not have to repeatedly fill water.

Sajjan Raj Mehta, ex-president of Jain Yuva Sangathan, said the Jains celebrate Holi a day after burning the Holika bonfire, which symbolises the victory of good over evil. "We sing folk songs and play the *dholak*. But for youngsters today, Holi is not about tradition, it's all about enjoyment," he said.

Though campaigns have started for a 'dry Holi' elsewhere, the concept appears to be a less known one here.

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T. Venkataraju, Engineer-in-Chief, Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), said water consumption during the festival was pretty much the same as on other days. "Most of these places (pubs, hotels, resorts) use recycled water, so it does not make such a big difference," he added.

However, Kshithij Urs, convenor, Peoples' Campaign for Right to Water, while stressing on the need for 'water literacy', said even five per cent wastage of water holds weight in a city like Bangalore where water distribution is not 'socialised' and there is no upper limit for consumption.

Keywords: [Holi](#), [herbal colours](#), [Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board](#)

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