

We'd also like to congratulate the creators of these noteworthy entries received for the 2005 contest.

Holi!

A Hindu festival of colors that celebrates good over evil.

The festival of colors.
I get out of bed,
And wear my milk white apparel,
Knowing it will never be this color again.
I excitedly go down the stairs,
Eat the *gujia* my mother gives
And run outside.
Now begins the fun!
We sing, we dance,
We toss handfuls of *gulal* at each other;
My brother uses a *pichkaari* and I see my friends
lob a *gubbare*,
We create spots on our attire, like berries on a bush.
A song of laughter and happiness plays in my ear,
As we celebrate good over evil.
Now, everyone is decked in color, from head to toe,
And I see that we aren't so different anymore.
Our castes have been forgotten,
Our colors have been forgotten.
The differences that keep us from one another,
Forgotten.
And finally,
We are unified,
We are one.

—Meghna Nandi, Indian American, 12, Massachusetts.

"I was born in Kolkata, one of the biggest and busiest cities in West Bengal and India. My name, Meghana, is also the name of a river in Bangladesh.

I think the theme of culture, country and community is a very deep and interesting topic. Holi celebrates good over evil. I like the idea of Holi, how everyone throws color at each other. I talked about the customs of Holi with my mom and was fascinated by the different stories about its origin. When I looked at some pictures of people celebrating Holi, I was struck by how similar everyone looked. In a land of diversity like India, I found it interesting that a festival could bring people of all castes and colors together."

Glossary: *Gujia*: sweets; *Gulal*: colored powder
Pichkaari: device used to spray colored water
Gubbare: a water balloon filled with colored water

My Country

My country is where I live,
My country is where I belong.
Over many mountains and deserts you walk,
Just to hear the Australia song.

My country, my country is home for me.
It is beautiful as far as the eye can see.

I love it, oh yes I do.
From every Aussie head to Australian shoe.

I live here now in such a warm heat,
In this weather, no shoes on our feet.
If I could live anywhere at anytime,
I'd stay right here—Australia's prime.

—Charlotte Officer, 12, Linfield, NSW, Australia.

Aisa Desh Hai Mera (This is my land)

Where the saris hang on white strings
Where the colors blend together
Where the music soars
Where the Himalayas thrive
Where the temple bell rings
Where the cows wander the streets
Where the fields stretch far and wide
Where the sun beats down
Where the history is rich
Where the Taj Mahal rests
Where I come from
Where I am proud of
Is my India.
Aisa Desh Hai Mera.

—Kamna Shastri, 11, Indian American, Washington, shares: "I was inspired to write this poem because I have always been proud of my heritage. I was listening to some Hindi music that day and the title of the song (also the title of my poem) inspired me to write it... the rest of the poem just flowed along with the title, illustrating the surroundings and sights of India.."

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