



The Festival of Holi

by Kenneth Hartvigsen (19th- and 20th-Century Painting)

A jubilant crowd gathers in a loose circle, their bodies covered in colorful powders. In the center, an individual all but disappears, consumed by a radiant cloud of pink, yellow, purple, and blue. While each person has chosen to participate individually, together they form a community. In pageantry and celebration, they circle like the rays of a giddily painted sun or the petals of a radiant flower.

Originating in India but now celebrated throughout the world, the festival of Holi commemorates the eternal love of Hindu deities Radha and Krishna. It also signifies the end of winter and the ultimate triumph of good over evil. As participants gleefully throw colored waters and powders on each other, the entire community paints itself in life-affirming colors, recalling spring's glory and abundance.

Traditions, like the celebration of Holi, connect people across social and cultural boundaries and even unite generations throughout time. For example, one of the biggest Holi celebrations in the United States takes place in Spanish Fork, Utah. Every year, thousands gather in a town that was founded by early Icelandic members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (and given a name that remembers 18th-century Spanish exploration) to participate in a Hindu spring festival. This cross-cultural event draws people from different backgrounds, many of whom practice different faiths. As celebrants come together, they unite with millions of others around the world. They join their hearts through ancient rites that profess hope for the future. They express faith that life will triumph over death, and that, in the end, good always wins.

A person may believe that good will triumph over evil but still be weighed down by personal struggles. For some, the admonition to “endure to the end” rings with a kind of holy pessimism, and they focus only on the hard days that lie ahead. But Holi is about being joyful in the victory to come instead of stoically bearing the weight of today. By throwing the beautiful colors of God's glory, participants paint out the dull gray that so easily stains our lives. They literally share their joy at life's goodness by showering others with a physical manifestation of their faith in divine life and love. Holi, like many traditions, reminds us that a world surrounded by family, friends, and community is more vibrant, literally more colorful. It encourages us not to spend our days mourning for where or what we once were. Instead, we should dance and see God's goodness in all that's to come. ■

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