

# Commentary

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## Holi has it all: Food, music, dancing — and dye

**PUBLISHER'S PICK**  
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**D**id you see the film "Outsourced"? Or last year's single-season television series of the same name?

If I had not seen these two productions, I would have been completely unaware of Holi, India's popular, chaotic, energetic springtime celebration.

First, some background information.

At every turn, "Outsourced" riffed bemusedly upon the Westerner's stereotypical perceptions of Indian culture. The series' politically incorrect premise was my weekly, must-not-miss guilty pleasure.

Main character Todd was portrayed as the ill-prepared manager of a telemarketing operation outsourced from the U.S. to India. There was no end to the variety of Todd's misunderstandings and mishandlings of his Indian employees. I relished every viewing moment when I knew — just knew — that Todd was about to mess up once again as boss and as a human being, yet was able to learn from his mistakes, to redeem a cultural faux pas or two by the end of the half-hour sitcom.

### A fish out of water

Everything I know about Holi — Festival of Colors, I learned from

an episode of "Outsourced," and from a scene in the 2006 film.

Here's what happened: One morning, Todd emerged from his apartment building, heading for work, and found the typically teeming city streets deserted. Looking all 'round, Todd sees no one. Suddenly, an Indian youth swoops up to Todd, pelts him with a brilliantly colored powder, and then quickly runs away. In moments, more youth run up to Todd, smear brightly colored powders upon his head, face and shoulders, then run away, yelling in exultation. Todd is utterly confused.

Todd soon learns that Holi is a good-humored celebration of the arrival of spring. Soon he's on the prowl, running with an artillery of colored powders in hand, seeking to smear other fun-loving Holi celebrants.

### First, a feast

My Indian friend "Andy" — Anantha Kollengode — called a couple months ago and invited me to attend Holi. I think he was surprised when I told him that I knew a little about the festival, as much as one could learn from an episode of "Outsourced." I marked my calendar to attend the function held Sunday afternoon at the UCR Regional Sports Center in Rochester.

Expecting only about 200, more than 300 celebrants attended. The weather was sunny-gorgeous and perfect-pleasant for a mid-March spring celebration of Indian culture. I arrived and was greeted

by men, woman and children in colorful native costumes.

First, a traditional Indian luncheon was served. Steamed white rice studded with green peas and flavored with spices. Deep-fried graham-flour balls swimming in a cumin-flavored sauce of chrome yellow. Circles of deep fried bread, curry-sauced chick peas, and carrot pudding. All quite tasty.

I sat and ate among a group of Mayo Medical School students, some Indian, some not. They were excited and jovial, anticipating their dance performance that afternoon. Rahul Suresh and Daniel Dudenkov told me that the troop of 15 or so young men and women had rehearsed their contemporary Bollywood choreography for weeks.

The cultural program was presented by the Rochester Vidhyalaya and Hindu Samaj Temple. I was honored to be asked, along with other Indian community leaders, to light the traditional Lamp of Knowledge, just as I did last November when I attended Diwali, Festival of Light.

A delightful even-dozen performances of music and dance followed lunch. For an hour or so, I was transfixed by mesmerizing sounds and sights of classical Indian performances. I was fortunate to be seated next to Krishna. His teen daughter was one of the featured dancers. Krishna quietly explained one of the dance performances, the story of Lord Ganesha, the elephant-headed god. Another dance was the depiction of a young



Susan Powell, right, and her family didn't shy away from the dye-throwing finale of Holi on Sunday on the UCR campus in Rochester.

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girl's eternal love and devotion to Lord Krishna. The sensational, too-brief Bollywood dance medley by Mayo medical students ended the show to thunderous applause.

For an hour as the Holi playing field was set up on the UCR lawn, an Indian DJ played get-up-and-get-on-the-dance-floor music. A dance beat is a dance beat, regardless of language or culture. Friedell Middle School teacher Susan Powell and her three children danced joyfully among the Indians and other guests.

### Splashes of color

Culmination of Rochester's Holi is the throwing and smearing of the colors upon those who wanted to participate. Three areas were cordoned off so that the little ones could play safely and colorfully with their own age group, youth in another area, and teens and adults

in yet another. Baggies filled with powder dyed to neon-colored hues were distributed, and the amazing fun began.

I hung back on the sidelines with the oldsters, enjoying colorful fun vicariously. I teased the diminutive, elegant, sari-clad mother of Dr. Gurpreet Sanhu, urging her to join in the powder-throwing fun. She demurred, mentioning that as a young girl in India, she was into all the festivities of Holi. Guri, astounded, wanted to know why his mother had never mentioned this to him. She looked up at her tall son and, with a sly smile, said that he doesn't need to know everything about her.

Regardless of culture, mothers and sons are the same everywhere.

Randy Chapman is publisher of the Post-Bulletin. He welcomes feedback to his weekly column at rchapman@postbulletin.com.

## Liberal media made a saint out of Sandra Fluke

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**W**riting in this space two months ago, I laid out the media advantage that President Obama has in his quest for re-election. According to a study done by the Pew Research Center, 32 percent of journalists say they are liberal, 53 percent moderate and just 8 percent conservative. Ask John McCain how the press treated him in 2008 if you want specifics on the tilt toward Barack Obama.

A great illustration of media bias is the dustup over Sandra Fluke. She is the liberal activist trotted out by the Democratic Party to deflect the contraception issue away from the "church-state" controversy which the White House was losing, into the more emotional "women's health" arena. Nancy

Pelosi herself organized a press dog and pony show for Fluke, who portrays herself as a law school student having a rough time paying for birth control pills. She wants the feds to pick up the tab through mandated insurance benefits even though the pills cost about \$9 a month at places like Wal-Mart, and are distributed free at health clinics under Title X legislation.

But you won't find those facts being discussed much in the national media. No, for them Fluke is a victim of a cruel system that wants to unduly burden American women.

Sure. Of course, Fluke was handed an enormous gift by Rush Limbaugh when he made demeaning comments about her. Immediately, the committed left wing media machine, led by the amazingly dishonest Media Matters website, cranked up two themes: that Limbaugh should be deported

to Tonga, and that he is the real power behind the Republican Party.

MSNBC, which is now partnered up with Media Matters in the quest to disseminate left wing propaganda, went wild and so, to a lesser extent, did other national media outlets. The story line is that because the Republican candidates did not call for Limbaugh to be sent to Guantanamo Bay, they endorsed his attitude toward Fluke. The analysis was so hysterical that it could have been a Jon Stewart bit, and in fact it was.

The bigger picture is this: voters who do not pay close attention to public policy and political controversies are at the mercy of so called "prevailing wisdom." That is what they hear around town, from their friends, etc. As long as most of the media, includ-

ing the entertainment industry, promotes one particular candidate for president, that person will have a major advantage in November.

But informed voters know the fix is in although there's little they can do about it. Another Pew survey taken in January finds that 67 percent of Americans believe there is bias in news coverage. They are right and it is to the left.

Few in the press are reporting the truth about Sandra Fluke. That is an indicator of what the American media has become, as well as what is likely to come as the election campaign unfolds.

Bill O'Reilly is host of the Fox News show "The O'Reilly Factor." He also writes a nationally syndicated column that appears weekly.

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