

# Indian cultural organizations host annual Holi event

Bringing together diverse student groups across campus, the celebration fostered lifelong friendships and community

**Lillian Haynes, Life & Arts Writer**

Known as the festival of colors, this year's Holi celebration at Texas A&M took place on Simpson Drill Field on Sunday, March 23. Hosted by the Indian Graduate Student Association, also known as IGSA, the event was a collaboration between several cultural student organizations, including the Hindu Student Association, the Hindu Yuva, The Indian Student Association and Bhakti Yoga.

It saw a crowd of more than 800 students, faculty and family members, and participants enjoyed music, complementary gulal — the colorful powder thrown during Holi — and limited edition shirts sold by the IGSA.

The tradition began in India and represents the beginning of spring and a fresh harvest. It also has a large connection to Hinduism, showing the triumph of good over evil. While the traditions related to Holi vary regionally, the colors placed by and on participants are a unifying factor, as they represent new and prosperous beginnings.



Sarthak Dalal

Students dance while celebrating Holi at Simpson Drill Field on Sunday, Mar. 23, 2025 (Sarthak Dalal/The Battalion)

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"We celebrate it with colors because we believe the start of spring is the end of winter," IGSA president and computer science graduate student Kathan Vyas said. "The darker times are gone and the brighter times are upon us."

The small bags of gulal — a mix of natural ingredients of various pigments — were put together by members of the undergraduate student organizations leading up to the event.

"They are very enthusiastic and rewarded," Vyas said. " ... We had almost a thousand bags of colors given to almost a thousand students"

An executive member of the event portfolio of IGSA, civil engineering graduate student Sanjana Bhadri helped organize and choreograph the flashmob that took on Simpson Drill Field, as participants sang and danced to songs from India's diverse regions.

"In India there are a lot of languages being spoken," Bhadri said. "We tried to bring up songs from every part of India ... to bring all the cultures together so every person in the crowd feels included in the celebration of this bright festival of India."

Bhadri said Holi is a time of colors, happiness and energy. It's where families and friends come together to forget about life's difficulties and partake in an occasion of joy.

She added that IGSA and other cultural organizations exist to help students every step of the way during their time at A&M — not just during Holi.

"IGSA supports you from every corner," Bhadri said. "IGSA is an organization to celebrate festivals but also to help students with career opportunities and networking."

Computer engineering junior Archit Goyal arrived at the event alongside his friends about thirty minutes after it began. Unlike most Holi celebrations, Goyal said the IGSA provided all the gulal for free, creating a sense of inclusivity.

"You're basically going around and you're putting color on your friends," Goyal said. "I got to meet so many people that I had never met. There's this saying in India that, 'It's Holi, you can't get mad.' .... I would go up to someone random, [and] I'd put a little color on them and just say, 'Happy Holi,' and no one really gets annoyed .... They reciprocate the action. You get a hug."

Goyal said Holi is a great way for international students to feel at home again, as they can connect to their traditions and families in India. He also mentioned his own experiences at Holi and how they served as a cultural reminder of where he comes from.

"I moved here when I was 10," Goyal said. "For people like me who kind of grew up half and half, [Holi] makes me feel like I'm back in India. It makes me feel like I'm back to my own culture, back to my own childhood."

This cultural enrichment extends to all students at A&M, as celebrating Holi creates a closer sense of community between cultural groups on campus, Vyas said.

"I see Americans equally as excited as Indians are," Vyas said.

As a graduate student entering into his final years at A&M, Vyas said it was an emotional day as he watched one of his most beloved traditions come to life. Holi lets him step back and connect to his roots, even from thousands of miles away.

"And that is an amazing thing here, which I personally feel, is that A&M gives you the freedom to be you," Vyas said. "It gives [us] this freedom even if we are in a different country."