

An Excursion on the Occasion of the Holi Festival

For days the same word appears to be reoccurring: Holi Festival – without doubt the most beautiful, colourful and indeed most important festival of India. It was celebrated most extensively on the 27th of January. The festival, however, lasts between two and ten days.

At the "Festival of Colours", people from all social and religious backgrounds celebrate together. The constraints which Indian people are normally facing are completely forgotten on that day. People come together as friends to collectively celebrate the destruction of the demon Holika. Here is one of the most popular stories outlining the origins of the Holi festival:

"The main day, Holi, also known as Dhulheti, Dhulandi or Dhulendi, is celebrated by people throwing colored powder and colored water at each other. Bonfires are lit the day before, also known as Holika Dahan (death of Holika) or Chhoti Holi (little Holi). The bonfires are lit in memory of the miraculous escape that young Prahlad had when Demoness Holika, sister of Hiranyakashipu, carried him into the fire. Holika was burnt but Prahlad, a staunch devotee of Lord Vishnu, escaped without any injuries due to his unshakable devotion." (Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holi>)



Group photo with all participants of the excursion

In the following we will describe our personal experiences of the event. In a rented bus filled with about 70 persons our journey started in the early morning. We drove to a river in close proximity of Anand. Already during the bus ride the fight with the coloured powder and crèmes started. It did not take long until most people were covered in neon-green, blue, silver and many more colours – the friendly attacks always accompanied by the "Happy Holi" greeting. When we arrived at the parking site the play happily continued until really everybody was covered in colour from tip to toe. After about an hour we walked on a sandy path towards the river, which we then crossed with



Colour fight at the Holi Festival

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the help of little ferries. After having reached the other side of the river, a phenomenal water fight began. The water splashed and it was again made sure that everybody got drenched. Being exhausted and hungry we then enjoyed a delicious lunch consisting of chickpeas and yummy sides. After everybody was saturated and recovered a second round of holi fight started. Afterwards we began the journey back home. We again crossed the river and during the bus ride the Indian girls and Indian women sang traditional songs until we finally reached home.

This was one of the few days where adolescents, students and teachers of CDS were capable of forgetting their sometimes very harsh everyday life. One could read on their happy faces that they had thoroughly enjoyed the day. Many of the girls, who are normally very shy and reserved, manage to be more outgoing on that day.