

Published March 29th, 2023

Rites of spring - Holi Lamorinda

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Participants celebrate Holi at Orinda Community Park March 19. Photos courtesy Saurav Mohapatra

Many cultures around the world acknowledge the end of winter and the coming of spring. In the Indian subcontinent this welcome is the exuberant and sometimes riotous celebration of colors called Holi. The festival has evolved over the years, tacking on new traditions and symbolisms. Urban centers see people from all backgrounds pour out into the streets and interact with each other. Greetings range from the genteel exchanges of colored powder (applied on the face, hair, or garments), running away from or running squirting colored water through a pichkari (a hand piston powered soaker) to rowdy, uninhibited revelries fueled by bhang (within known communities). Something about the bright colors that seems to unlock a sense of childlike abandon and mischief. At some point after everyone seems to be duly color checked, whatever color is left ends up thrown into the air. A grand finale to a festival filled with energy, laughter, and hope for the future.

This little bit of India was brought to Lamorinda on March 19 by a small group of volunteers from the Indian community who wished to share their own fond memories of the festival with their children, friends, and the Lamorinda community. After much moving about due to the atmospheric river-soaked spring, the final venue at Orinda Community Park splendidly accommodated the festivities that included traditional sweets, food, music, games and colors (bleached flour with food coloring,

yummy .cough, cough .no don't eat that). The 100 or so festival attendees saved their appetite for the Vada pav (savory potato patty with buns) Jamuns and Jalebis. Yes, Mira. Yes, Alex. Today is your "Yes day." Sugar up. Go get your clothes dirty. Go spread joy.



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