



Kelsey Stroze

**High School: 1st place
winner**



IndiaFEST 2010– Essay Contest

India After 60 Years of Independence

India may have won its Independence 60 years ago, but it is still fresh in the minds and in the hearts of every Indian. The memories of the long and bloody struggle for that freedom are kept alive through writings, documentaries, and referenced in numerous Bollywood films. These movies serve to remind the public of what freedom fighters died for, and their impact on society is undeniable. Indians are no longer standing for the corruption in government, for the broken promises and the lack of basic necessities.

India may have fallen into a lassitude for years, but now, 60 years after its first Independence Day, political corruption and cultural disrespect will no longer be tolerated. Gone are the days of former Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao buying votes and civil servants being given exorbitant sums of money for permits and the like. What was and what now is reflected in Indian cinema and serves to further warn the public about such vices. These stories give people the hope that they can eradicate such infamous practices and live truly free and honest lives. In *Krazy 4*, Gangadhar believes he is a freedom fighter, and when he goes up to a man dressed up as Gandhi, he is slapped for his efforts. Gandhi had just become a part to play for this man, not an example to follow as a way of life. Diya Mirza, who plays a news reporter, asks who wrote the national anthem and nobody knows. That knowledge had become unimportant in light of the upcoming cricket game. Ravi K. Sanyal kidnaps his own wife in order to free a man, a doctor, for a large sum of money. Money won out over love, over marriage vows, over duty. These fictional Indians, Indians who don't respect and don't know about their heritage, mixed in with a handful of corrupt politicians, do not succeed. Mahatma Gandhi is the true role model to these mental hospital patients, and by following his example, they take action and bring down a piece of corrupt government.

Some films such as *Rang De Basanti* (2006), inspire more than hope- they inspire great change. In this film, a group of five young men initially act out the Independence movement for a documentary, but they eventually die while fighting against the corruption in today's government. Their values and morals were not stymied by inaction. These men took action, made a statement, changed the world. This new generation of freedom fighters inspired people to stand up for what they believed not only in the movie, but in real life as well. The intolerance against corruption that *RDB* motivated has been so widespread that it has even been termed the "*RDB Syndrome*" by the University of Delhi.

The *RDB Syndrome*, the social reawakening and reform of India has gone far past just being appreciative for the right to vote. India has recovered its right to do, its right to protest and correct wrongs. When Manu Sharma was acquitted in the Jessica Lal murder case a month after *RDB* was released, the public reaction was unbelievable. Indians protested with emails and text messages, with petitions and editorials, the media campaigned against the verdict with t-shirt campaigns and invigorating articles, one group of demonstrators, taking their cue from the protest in *RDB*, held a silent candlelight vigil at New Delhi's India Gate. This protest resulted in Manu Sharma's acquittal being appealed, and his conviction a mere 25 days after ward. His life sentence only came about because of the re-energization of Indians, and this energy has continued to impact every aspect of Indian life.

India has also come a long way in relations with Pakistan since its partition in 1947. There were some tense times in the 1990s with the arms building race, and although nuclear weapons are still a matter of concern, India and Pakistan have reached a fragile diplomacy. It is something termed "cricket diplomacy". Cricket is the means that lets the citizens of both countries be in the same stadium without widespread violence. Earlier matches were always played outside of India and Pakistan for safety reasons and were often under the threat of boycott, but in the 2003-2004 season, the Indian team completed a tour of Pakistan, and the fans learned to coexist. Pakistan completed a reciprocal tour in 2005, and their playing in the "Friendship Cup" together is a small step towards peace.

India is just that- India. She is not Britain's colony, and she's not a little Britain. Instead, she is a beautiful tapestry of her unique customs and religions, albeit with more modern technology. India has built herself a thriving economy while respecting and appreciating the traditional way of life. Call centers have provided an avenue for young graduates not only in secretarial and accounting-related work, but in IT work and translations as well. These jobs have helped to alleviate some of the widespread poverty

known in some regions, and as the twelfth largest economy in the world, things are still looking good.

India, in her years since Independence, has made her name known throughout the world not only through the trading of her goods and services, but through the immigration of her citizens. However, these citizens may leave the home soil of India, but they do not leave her customs and traditions, her foods and dances behind. These immigrants form little pockets of India throughout the world, whether they be in London, Sydney, or Miami. They are India's unofficial ambassadors, and because of them, the beauty and history of India is spread, told to the entire world. India in her Independence is not constrained to one continent, one region of the world. She is in the hearts of every Indian and every person who has witnessed the beauty of her country. India is in the United States, in every festival held in honor of Indians because she has stolen the hearts of her people. She is not just cricket and call centers, movies and music. India is life and laughter, honor and hope, reverence and respect. This is the real India, the India that exists after 60 years of Independence.