

Hindu perspective on death discussed

■ A Hinduism discussion marked the second part of a five-week series on cultural traditions and perspectives surrounding life, death and interpretations of the afterlife

By Beata Mostafavi
Oregon Daily Emerald

Professor Veena Howard's special discussion Wednesday, "Life and Death from a Hindu Perspective," emphasized that traditional ideas about death aren't explored and discussed enough in Western culture.

Howard and about 20 other individuals spoke about Hindu traditions and perceptions of life and death in the second part of a five-week series titled "Living, Dying and Bereavement," introduced by the Lane Institute of Faith and Education (LIFE).

LIFE launched the series last week so that it would fall as a follow-up to Bill Moyers' September PBS series about death. During the five-week period, LIFE aims to present the same issues from interfaith viewpoints and to expose people to lesser-known traditions of Western culture.

Howard, who teaches religion and philosophy at Lane Community College and has taught summer courses at the University, emphasized her belief that although there are countless different traditions in the world, they all have an underlying unity.

"Whether we live in India, Africa or China, we're all trying to answer the same questions about life and death," she said. "We're all trying to understand the nature of the self and soul, something that is eternal and lives on even after we die."

Howard mentioned that just as some believe in heaven and hell, every tradition has a theory about life after death. She spoke specifi-

cally about the Hindu belief that the soul continues its life through reincarnation. She did a chant in Sanskrit, which described the soul's transition from one life to another.

Howard said that Hindus rarely use the term "died" but rather "he left his body" or "she has gone to another world." She spoke of the Hindu belief in a perpetual life cycle that seeks to achieve nirvana, unity with the divine, and said the body serves as the "chariot" of the soul. She said it could take some people thousands of years to attain this goal.

“Whether we live in India, Africa or China, we’re all trying to answer the same questions about life and death.”

Veena Howard
professor
religion and philosophy
Lane Community College

"In Hinduism, this life is a small piece in the continuous immortal life of the soul," she said.

Howard also described Hindu rituals performed after someone dies. She said that the body is always cremated unless the person was a child or holy person, and the family of the deceased mourns and celebrates for 13 days after the death. This is the transition period when the soul leaves the body and isn't ready to leave his or her fami-



Dan Brunell Emerald

Veena Howard speaks about issues of life and death in the Hindu tradition Wednesday.

ly. The family also has numerous discussions about its lost loved one.

Howard also spoke about the various ways different traditions approach the topic of death. She believes Western culture tends to avoid the issue, which forms a barrier to meeting death with peace.

"Death is a reality we cannot run away from," she said. "It's a transition to another place."

LIFE co-founder Barry Nobel said that because death is a sensitive topic, it is not discussed enough in American culture and a general lack of knowledge exists about what it means and what traditions it incorporates.

"Death is an important part of life but somewhat taboo in this culture," he said. "People don't like to talk about it."

Beth Eldridge, a senior language student at LCC, said the discussion was enlightening.

"In India, death seems to be a part of life," she said. "People get to discuss it beyond what we know in the Western world."

The series will run at 7 p.m. Wednesdays at the First Christian Church, located at 1166 Oak St. The next three sessions will cover issues on death from Buddhist, Islamic and Bahá'í faith perspectives on Nov. 15, Dec. 6 and Dec. 13, respectively.

Vida Ellins, a member of the LIFE steering committee, said the purpose of the interfaith series isn't to persuade anyone to believe the traditions presented, but to encourage people to be open-minded about different ideas pertaining to death.

"In the education system we have little opportunity to touch on spiritual aspects of what we learn," she said. "[LIFE] hopes to offer a broader perspective and a forum of ideas that we can explore."

EPD

continued from page 1A

summer, but said he could not speak about the details of the earlier investigation.

Former employees and those close to DPS allege that as the organization's management moves forward with its plans to create a more professional security force with many of the same rights as the police, conflicts are arising between DPS and EPD about who has authority on campus.

“The relationship is a good business relationship, but are there frictions?”

Yes.

Tom Fitzpatrick
director
Department
of Public Safety

Oregon Public Employee Union steward Anthony Hensley, who deals with OPEU employees, including DPS officers, said DPS officers are using more police equipment. He said the equipment and new uniforms are resulting in confusion and conflicts.

"There are reasons police carry weapons and there are reasons security guards don't," he said. "When they look like each other, there are going to be problems."

Fitzpatrick, however, said there were no serious problems between the two departments, which he said enjoyed a "professional relationship."

He said at times small conflicts

may arise at the officer level between police and DPS about the seriousness of situations on campus, but he said this did not signify a serious rift between police and public safety personnel.

"The relationship is a good business relationship," he said, "but are there frictions? Yes."

Fitzpatrick said some of the friction arises from the fact that police officers come to campus expecting the demands of the detail to be less strenuous than the city patrol. This leads to disagreements between officers from the two departments on how best to respond to incidents on campus.

EPD Chief Jim Hill also said relations between DPS and EPD have remained good.

He said that some of the conflicts or "rubs" between the departments came from the fact that police officers are often spread too thin and can't get to every DPS call for assistance. Hill added there has been some conflict about incidents that the two departments perceive differently. Because of public safety's security role on campus, Hill said DPS officers often believe that police should take more action than is warranted.

"There can be some misunderstanding about roles," he said.

Despite the occasional disputes between the two departments, Hill said that overall relations are stable between the police department and DPS. An example of this was the fact that Hill has not had to step into any of these conflicts.

"It hasn't been at such a magnitude that it has required my intervention as a chief," he said.

Calendar

Thursday, Nov. 9

— **Veterans Day Display:** Honors all UO students, faculty and staff who are veterans of military service. 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Business Affairs Lobby, First Floor, Oregon Hall. Free.

— **Sociology Colloquium:** Bert Buraston, Sociology graduate student, discusses "Modeling the Effects of Older Siblings' Academic Growth on Younger Siblings' Academic Performance." 4-5:30 p.m. Room 127 Chiles Business Center. Free.

— **Center for the Study of Women in Society Teaching and Tea:** Stephanie Wood, History, presents "Using the Gender and History Database to Teach Aztec Culture." 4-5:30 p.m. Room 330 Hendricks Hall. Free.

— **Fall Social:** The Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns hosts a mid-term break to mix and mingle for LGBT students, faculty, staff, family and guests. Food and beverages served. 4:30-6 p.m. Alumni Lounge, Gerlinger Hall. Free.

— **Solar Lecture:** Steven Strong, Solar Design Associates, Inc., president, gives a slide-illustrated presentation on "Photovoltaics in Buildings." Named by Time magazine as an environmental "Hero of the Planet," Strong is an international pioneer in the integration of solar electric systems with environmentally responsive building design. 7-9 p.m. Room 177 Lawrence Hall. Free.

— **Author Event:** Doug Lorain, author of "Backpacking Oregon," presents a slide-illustrated discussion of the 27 hikes outlined in his book. 7:30 p.m. 100 Willamette Hall. Free.

You're Invited...

to Try a Special Alternative:

Acupuncture
Treatment

for
Smokers who want to quit

Celebrate the Great American Smoke-out!

Thursday, November 16th from 4:30-6:00pm

University Health Center Library (Basement)

RSVP by calling 346-4456

or by visiting <http://healthed.uoregon.edu>