

# Diwali festival celebrates light over darkness

■ Students of the Indian Subcontinent honor the Hindu celebration Saturday night at Agate Hall

By Beata Mostafavi  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Streams of flickering Christmas lights covered the inside of Agate Hall on Saturday night, brightening up the room as if handfuls of glitter were tossed on the walls and ceilings. An archway of silver lights sparkled at the entrance, while pink and blue hues shimmered throughout the rest of the room. On this night, the lights were supposed to fight off darkness — symbolizing good over evil.

Students of the Indian Subcontinent celebrated Diwali, festival of the lights, with more than 100 people filling the building. Eating curry and tandoori chicken and participating in traditional Indian dances, students and community members honored the famous Hindu holiday.

"In India, it's like Christmas times two," SIS President Aarti Tanna said about the festival. "Fireworks are everywhere, and every house is lit with candles. On different days we are worshipping different aspects of what we feel is important in our lives."

With roots in Hindu mythology, "Diwali" comes from the Sanskrit

word "deepavali" — "deep" means "light" and avali means "row." The celebration marks Lord Rama's return to his kingdom after 14 years of exile and his conquest of places in India's southern subcontinent.

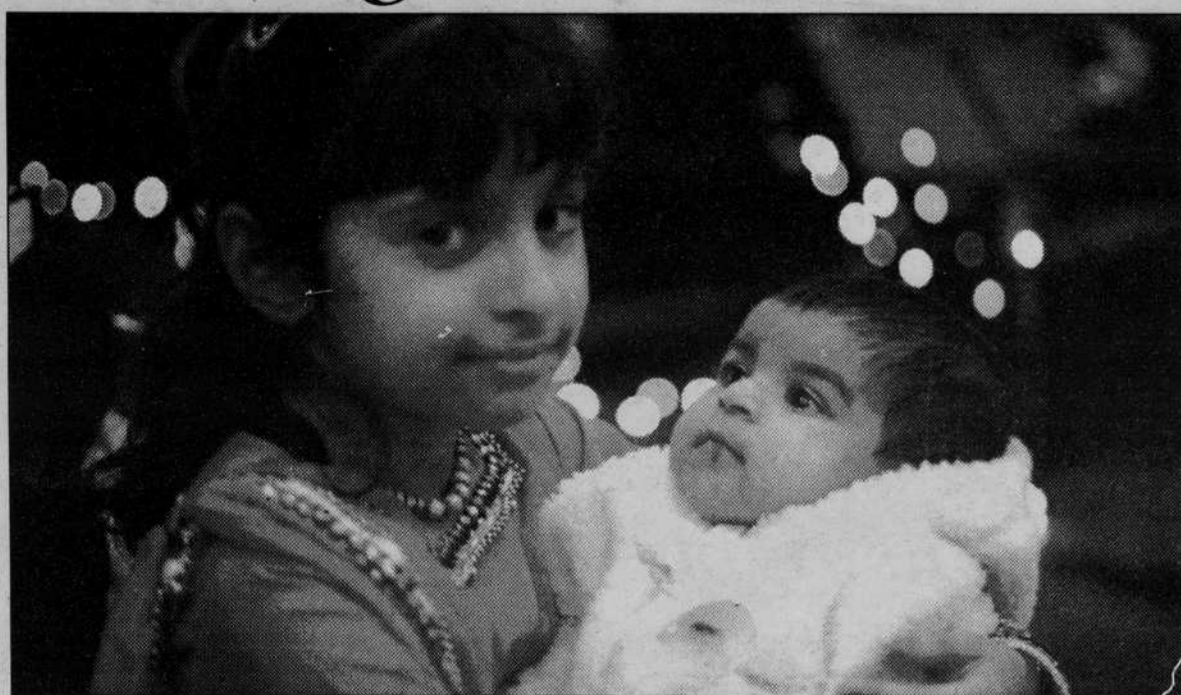
The five-day festival is also seen as the beginning of the New Year in India, where more than 80 percent of the population practices Hinduism.

In India — and areas Indians have settled, such as Nepal — homes are lit with oil lamps, candles and lights throughout the days and into the nights to ward off darkness and evil. Each region of India associates different myths and legends to each day.

In many areas, Lord Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and fortune, is worshipped one day. Some people also set aside a day to honor Kali/Durga, the goddess of strength. People clean their houses, decorate their homes with flowers and bake sweet treats to honor the gods.

Although more than 20 different states in India have their own languages and traditions, Diwali is a holiday that unites everyone, graduate student Avik Chakraborty said.

"This is one festival that is celebrated in uniformity and with equal enthusiasm," he said. "It brings the same meaning to everyone — light over darkness. And it



Thomas Patterson Emerald

Sabeen Waqar holds young Irah Shaikh while lights shine behind them at the Diwali festival at Agate Hall on Saturday night.

brings people together."

Chakraborty moved to the United States from Calcutta, a city in western India, a couple of months ago. He said SIS's celebration helped introduce him to the Indian community and keep the tradition alive even far from home.

"If I had not been here, I'd really have missed (the celebration in In-

dia)," he said. "I didn't expect to find something like this in Eugene."

International Student Association co-director Shruti Shah has also been in the country for only five years. Born and raised in Gujarat, located on the western coast of the Indian Peninsula, the junior agreed that this kind of event helps preserve the culture and share tra-

ditions with others.

"This maintains the tradition in India, and it gives us a chance to come together," she said. "It reminds us of home."

Beata Mostafavi is the student activities editor for the Oregon Daily Emerald. She can be reached at beatamostafavi@dailymerald.com.

## School officials fail to agree on how to amend budget shortfall

■ Some board of education members feel research should be protected from budget cuts during draft plan process

By Eric Martin  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Officials objected to portions of a draft plan Friday that would chop as much as \$80.9 million from the Oregon University System budget to accommodate a predicted state budget shortfall.

Gov. John Kitzhaber ordered all OUS schools to submit plans that detail how each would trim costs in 2 percent increments up to 10 percent to clear financial room for a projected \$290 million state budget shortfall, which could grow larger if the economy follows a similar earthward trend. For the University, that means cutting anywhere from \$3 million to \$15 million from the school's budget.

The draft plan, critiqued during Friday's meeting of the Oregon State Board of Higher Education, is the second segment of a two-part plan to reduce school budgets with

specifically targeted cuts in administration, academic programs and non-academic programs.

Some members of the board, the governing body for Oregon's seven public universities, said the draft plan did little to safeguard research and graduate student programs while affording too much protection to engineering and the new Oregon State University branch campus in Bend.

"Research is important on campuses," Geraldine Richmond, a University chemistry professor and board member, said. "This (draft plan) sends a statement that the board values public services as much as research."

Student board member Tim Young said research can generate substantial revenue with limited investment, and agreed with Richmond that research programs should be shielded at the cost of public services.

But the cuts, which could run as shallow as \$16.2 million or as deep as \$80.9 million, must be made somewhere, and there are many interests to represent, OUS Chancellor Joe Cox said.

"Research is clearly a revenue-generating activity that pays real dividends," Cox said. "But if we move funds into research, they have to come from somewhere. And when you're talking about large numbers, pretty soon you get into instruction."

The board has said from the outset that the top priority in making reductions is to mitigate the impact those reductions could have on instruction and undergraduate programs. The draft plan arms those areas until cuts reach the 6 percent level, but leaves others, such as statewide public services, exposed at higher levels.

Hardest hit would be non-instructional programs like the OSU extension services, agriculture experiment stations and forestry research laboratories.

"Those would sustain a reduction of about 16 and 17 percent at higher levels," OUS spokesman Bob Bruce said.

Cox said protections for all programs, including instruction, would erode with higher-level cuts. He said another route the board may consider is capping enrollment to shield the integrity

of academic programs.

"I believe so strongly in access" that enables colleges to accept new students, Cox said. "But if it's not access to quality, we haven't done the right thing."

Authors of the draft plan — vice presidents of finance and administration at each OUS school — will take board member sug-

gestions and submit a revised proposal for evaluation at a Nov. 16 meeting in Portland. The plans will be finalized at the meeting and passed to Kitzhaber for review.

Eric Martin is a higher education reporter for the Oregon Daily Emerald. He can be reached at ericmartin@dailymerald.com.

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