

# SIS hosts UTSAV to celebrate South Asian culture

■ Guests enjoyed food, music, dancing, fashion and displays, exposing them to a wide array of cultural traditions and customs

By Diane Huber  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Members of Students of the Indian Subcontinent (SIS) prepared enough food at Sunday night's fourth annual UTSAV to feed its more than 400 guests. The menu included traditional Indian and Pakistani food, including a spicy pea and potato dish called aloo matter and naan, a traditional Indian bread.

The EMU's skylight and ballroom were packed full of students,

community members and families, many traveling from as far as Portland. The faces in the room represented ethnicities from all over the world. Some said they came to learn more about Indian culture; others came to reconnect with their own Indian and South Asian cultures in Eugene.

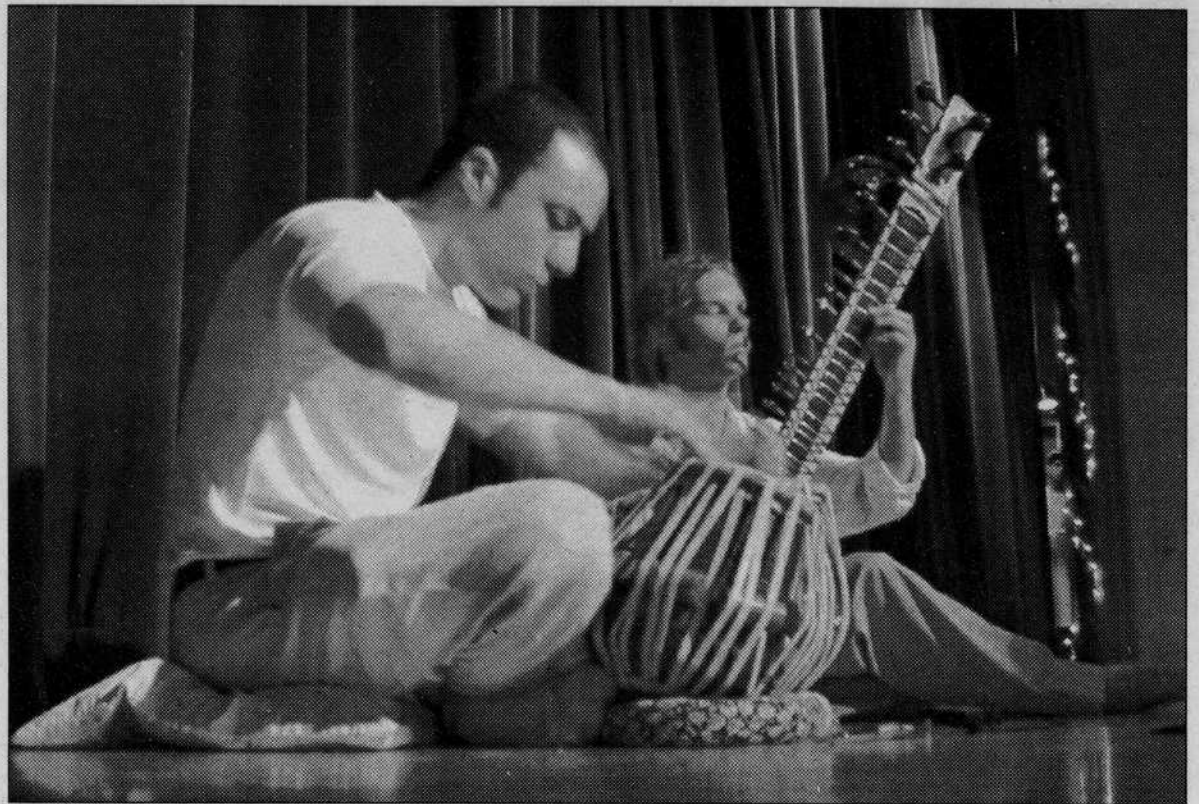
Behind the scenes, this year's UTSAV — which means "celebration" in Hindi — was also more diverse than ever. One organizer, Ram Ganapathy, said that in its fourth year, UTSAV is no longer a celebration of solely Indian culture. This year's posters read "A Celebration of South Asian Culture" because so many more students are involved and so many more cultures are represented, he said.

"You look at the energy of the organizers and you feel like you have to get involved," he said.

The more than 50 organizers and performers of this year's UTSAV included members of SIS as well as many other student groups. SIS represents students from India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives, Myanmar and Bhutan.

A performance of South Asian music and dance followed dinner. All the dancers wore vibrant colors, with their hands and arms being a central part of the dances.

The first dance, diya, was performed in darkness with lighted sticks. According to SIS, some of the dances told a story, such as Yeh Ladki Hai Allah, a story of a romance, and jau-jau rail-lai ma, a



Thomas Patterson Emerald

Sanjay Schmidt and Mick Miller, on the tabla and sitar respectively, entertain the crowd before the UTSAV 2002 celebration.

dance native to the Kathmandu region of Nepal about girls asking boys to go for a train ride.

In dandiya, a dance native to the state of Gujarat, India, dancers held red and white sticks in each hand. They tapped the sticks together in the air, on the floor and with each other in time to the music.

A fashion show concluded the performance. Students modeled "ghaghra," traditionally worn by youth, "sari," a traditional dress of India worn primarily by older generations, and "salwar kameez," a three-piece suit worn by men and women in both casual and special occasions.

Most of the women wore bracelets, earrings and jeweled headpieces — a central part of Indian culture, International Student Association

co-director Shruti Shah said.

"We love to dress up every part of our body," she said.

The event also featured exhibitions from Nepal, Pakistan, India and Fiji.

*"You look at the energy of the organizers and you feel like you have to get involved."*

Ram Ganapathy  
UTSAV organizer

Ashis Shrestha, who moved to Eugene six months ago from Nepal, described items displayed on the Nepal table, including a brass candle holder used before prayers,

small figures wearing traditional, hand-made Nepal clothing, and a miniature intricately carved ivory knife used for fighting.

He said the exhibition was an important reminder "that there's a country Nepal, since nobody knows where it is."

He hopes that guests such as art major Leah Mathis learned more about South Asian culture.

Mathis, who has been interested in mehndi — Indian henna body art — for the past couple of years, said she came to the event because she's always been interested in Indian culture.

"It's important to have a multicultural experience," she said.

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## Better Rooms

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This year's "best use of floor space" prize went to Hamilton complex duo Norm Ofstead and Jesse McIntire.

They were rated on their use of open floor space and creative use of storage ideas and furniture. Their high-tech bachelor pad has not one but two televisions, so guests can watch television while playing video games — the best of both worlds. While this may not be space-saving, the two made the most out of their room with crafty ideas for storage.

The double room can be transformed into a visitor's lounge in a matter of moments, as beanbags and chairs stored under the beds provide extra seating comfort.

Roommates Jamie Curtis and Erin Toews were named the "most harmonious" pair, thanks to their flair for school spirit. Their green and gold quarters screamed "Go Ducks," from the matching Ducks blankets and news clippings on the ceiling down to the sound of

"Mighty Oregon," the University fight song, ringing in the air as guests enter.

The "most harmonious" award goes to the team with the best mix of color coordination, clear personality representations and similarities in spatial arrangement.

*"It was not just their room. Everyone in the hall collaborated."*

Tenaya Meaux  
University Housing,  
ass. director of Public Affairs

The judges were in gridlock over the "most creative" award, finally deciding on a tie between roommates Yasmin Ravard and Amy Merriman and single room occupant Evan Lacour. Entrants had to display not only a good use of wall space, but also their own unique touches to the room that represent a clear personality through furniture, art or other decorations.

Lacour's "retro" theme, with a

blend of pale orange, lime green and yellow tones, made him a shoe-in for the winner's circle. Working on a college budget, he found most of his accents in consignment shops. His signature piece is an orange and gold floral velvet couch he bought at the Salvation Army.

"It's sort of fruity," he said. This was a tough act to follow for co-victors Ravard and Merriman.

The women solicited the help of neighbors to deck their hall with a mural painted around their door. A leather recliner in their pseudo-lounge with a background of snapshots of friends and fun times gave the space a casual, welcoming atmosphere.

"It was not just their room," Meaux said, "Everyone in the hall collaborated."

While decorating can be very personalized, it can also bring people together.

"Lots of good roommate relations came through," she said.

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