

# Food, song, dance spice up Indian celebration

*The Utsav event Saturday night showcased India's cultural wealth and extensive diversity*

BY MORIAH BALINGIT  
NEWS REPORTER

Mark Twain once said: "In religion and culture, India is the only millionaire! There is only one India!"

On Saturday night, Students of the Indian Subcontinent got the chance to showcase the subcontinent's cultural assets with Utsav, a celebration that featured song, dance, stand-up comedy and, of course, Indian cuisine.

"There's not many events in the Northwest like this," stage manager Taimur Khan said.

Sophomore Jessica Nair, the program director, said Utsav was a chance to educate people about various aspects of Indian culture.

"We do it to give them a taste of

our entertainment, clothing and food," she said.

The program treated the approximately 350 attendees to masala, chicken curry, and naan, an Indian flatbread. For dessert SIS served gulab janam, balls of cooked flour in syrup. After dinner, performers of all ages highlighted the diversity of Indian culture for an audience that filled the EMU Ballroom. The event also drew students from Portland State University and community members from Portland.

Graduate student Ishwinder Kaur said the two-hour performance barely scratched the surface of India's culture.

"This is nothing compared to the diversity of India," she said. "There's not

enough representation of the whole of India in Eugene."

The show featured dances and performances from different parts of India. Bhangra, a folk dance from Punjab, and the Bharatnatyam, a temple dance from South India, were among the performances.

Bollywood, India's immensely popular film industry, influenced many of the dances. And although it was colloquially named for its counterpart in southern California, Bollywood produces far more films per year.

"It's bigger than Hollywood," Kaur said. "And I guess it's a culture in its own right."

Nair said in Bollywood films much of the story is told through song lyrics and dance.

"The music is kind of telling a story and we act it out through the dance," she said.

Other dances fused the East with the West. In one dance, four performers danced in long traditional linen shirts and pants before changing into black slacks and white ties to segue into a dance set to a Bhangra singer's adaptation of Usher's "Yeah."

Portland State University student Vishal Jhaveri, who performed in the dance, said a whole business has spawned from infusing American pop songs with Indian lyrics.

"It's an industry in its own," he said.

Two emcees polished off the evening with a bevy of jokes, which drew mixed responses from the crowd. However, a cue card that said "laughter" signaled the audience when necessary.

The performance concluded with a fashion show that displayed the vibrant spectrum of the traditional wardrobe. Women wore long silk tu-

nic and scarves in rich oranges, purples and greens, many adorned with sequins and rhinestones.

Jhaveri said the performances are often joint efforts with SIS students from a core community in Portland.



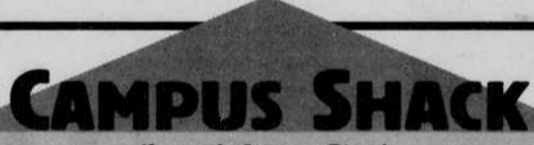
"We're all community members and we usually perform," he said.

Nair said performers from outside the University helped put on the show because the University's population of Indian students is not that large.

Junior Simon Saleem, one of the show's coordinators, said one of the purposes of Utsav was to help dispel stereotypes.

"Indians are portrayed as having that deep accent like Apu, from the Simpsons," he said. "This basically showcases the beauty of the culture."

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