

Dance, music brings India live to Range-E-Sangum

By Sejal Vora



Rang-E-Sangam is an annual celebration at UNC focused on South Asian tradition, culture and customs. It is a night filled with music, dance, and religion-oriented skits created to expose students and the surrounding community to South Asia and its heritage.

This year's night began with India's traditional style of dancing, Bharat Natyam, usually performed for religious ceremonies by young women. The dancer delineates a story being told by the music through her actions, facial expressions and hand gestures. The movements in this dance are fixed, meaning the dancers learn all of the steps, which each have their own specific meanings and connotations.

A hand instrument, a smaller version of the symbols-fitting in the palm of one's hand, beats in the background of the song - keeping the dancer on the right beat. Bharat Natyam is extremely demanding on its dancers, but the dancers on this evening made it look effortless and graceful.

Upbeat remixed songs, in which English music and lyrics fuse into original Hindi (the official language of India) songs, is growing in popularity with today's younger generation, especially with non-South Asians. Most of these songs come from Hindi movies, which is also one of the most popular and successful industries in India. Some dance movements of the evening originate from such Hindi films. Performers used creative westernized movements combined with person choreography to entertain audiences.

Bhangra is another style of dancing that comes from the Punjabi faith. The basic step in this dance is a type of bouncing on one foot while hands wave rhythmically in the air.

Clothing is another essential aspect of South Asian tradition that dazzled the crowd. These ranged from heavily beaded cloth entwining around women's bodies to pajama look-a-likes on the men.

The sari, the most well-known South Asian apparel, is worn by women, both on a daily basis as well as for more formal occasions such as weddings and religious functions. Fancier saris - made of rayon and silk - are heavily embroidered with pearls, beads and special gossamer threads. These dresses, though beautiful, tend to get fairly heavy in both weight and price.

Also seen at this year's Rang-E-Sangum were outfits known as Ghara, Salwar Kamiz, Punjabi, Chanya Chori and Choli suits. The Choli suit represents the latest style from India. The short-sleeve blouse skims the waistline and the long skirt extends to the ankles or longer. Complimenting the outfit is a long scarf worn as a shawl. The suit, saved for special occasions, displays heavy, intricate embroidery designs.

The men wear what non-Indians usually identify as pajamas. It consists of a long-sleeve shirt and pant set, baggy enough to be comfortable and worn every day along with special events. This outfit is generally made from cotton and is very loose fitting - ideal for the hot temperatures and humidity of India.

As Rang-E-Sangum showed UNC, music and dance are very influential aspects of South Asian culture and traditions. We use these everyday mediums to pray to our gods and ask for their blessings.

For those who attended Range-E-Sangum and thought this night was extraordinary make sure to come to SANGUM NITE!

BSM makes a love connection



By Betsy Lee

Some believe that you cannot understand others until you walk in their shoes. Though they did not switch shoes, students and professors from both UNC's campus and various Japanese universities did make efforts to understand each other during a conference on November 3.

The program, which was sponsored by UNC's Black Student Movement, was called "Japan and African Americans: A Comparative Perspective".

The event brought native Japanese professors to campus to discuss the growing interest on African American studies booming in Japan.

Throughout the day, professors of Afro-American studies - African

American, Caucasian American and Japanese alike - lectured on topics ranging from race and ethnicity in Japan to W.B. Debois' writings about Asia.

BSM's faculty advisor, Gerald Horne, said the Sonja Hanes Black Cultural Center and the Institute of African American Research were excited to sponsor the event. Horne said he believed the program would improve race relations and promote cultural understanding between Japanese and African Americans.

"I think it will increase knowledge and ties between Japanese and African Americans," Horne

said. "I think it will lead to scholarly collaborations."

For several Japanese professors, the program served not only as one in which they could learn more about African Americans, but also one in which they could learn about them-

selves. American Studies and Sociology professor at Tokyo Danke University, Akio Iwasaki said he would be able to study racism in Japan through learning about the history of African Americans.

"(In finding) out about how African Americans have been treated in America, we can identify the invisible racism in our country," Iwasaki said.

Professor at the Orbirin University in Japan, Masako Nakamura, also expressed a similar belief, saying that understanding race issues from a different view point was necessary.

"It's important to see things from other people's perspective," she said. "We don't have racial conflict (in

Japan), but we do have a caste-like discrimination."

The interaction between African American and Japanese professors and students fostered a connection that few people realized existed.

The conference allowed the attending Japanese professors to further their focus on their African American studies and research, said Professor Ken Chujo from Orbirin University. "This kind of program is a precedent breaking conference," Chujo said.

"I met a lot of people I want to keep contact with for my research - I want them to know that there are a lot of Japanese scholars concentrating on African American Studies."

