

SEEKING THE SACRED OF ASIA: PART II

First and foremost, I would like to thank you Dr. Ko for organizing yet another fabulous event! I think I was even more impressed with Seeking the Sacred of Asia Part II. Though there were fewer performers and presenters, I was not disappointed! Admittedly, during the Indian Israj performance I completely lost my train of thought. The scene and melody were and positively mesmerizing. After I came back to my senses, I suddenly remembered what had impressed me most about Seeking the Sacred of Asia: Part I — the passion in the room. All the guests exuded incredible passion and displayed it through their performances and cultural presentations. I felt as though I had been transported 6,000 miles to Asia all over again.

I come from a Christian, specifically a Roman-Catholic religious background. I was born and raised in suburban Lorain County, Ohio. As I suppose was fairly typical, my parents made few if any attempts to introduce my siblings or I to any sort of cultural diversity. I didn't mind. All I that concerned me if life were what my friends were doing, and how my favorite pro sports team was doing. That all started to change in the years following high school. I joined the military, traveled extensively (still do), and saw the world. What I've experienced isn't unique per se but it was what I needed. Travel changed me. To the "new me", the world now is not interesting without diversity, it's boring actually. How boring would our lives be if we all looked the same, enjoyed the same music, and believed in the same God? Fortunately, now I know. The world is full of wonderful beautiful diversity, it beckons to me.

The "Seeking the Sacred of Asia" at LCCC on Friday afternoon was the perfect example of the beauty that diversity can bring. The turnout was much lower than the previous session,

but still impressive, in my opinion, considering the time of day. I estimate that about 75 guests attended the event. On a positive note, fewer guests made for a more intimate experience, and acoustics were much improved. Like the first session, the crowd ranged from young to old, from white to black to Hispanic to Asian. Those in attendance were treated to more than an hour and a half of cultural performances, a presentation, and even food samplings from the Asia community of greater Cleveland.

The first performer, Tejas Nair masterfully played the Indian Israj, a traditional Indian musical instrument, while another man played Indian Tabla drums at his side. The performance by the two men, whose body language seemed to indicate they had never played together before, blew me away! As I mentioned earlier, I completely lost my train of thought half way through this performance. I had never heard sounds like these in person before. They played for what had to have been 20 minutes and I was left wanting more. Indian culture has always fascinated me, perhaps a trip to India should happen soon. Up next was the skillful and beautiful, Pooja K. Shyam. She performed several Bharatanatyam dances. Each of her dances told a unique story from Indian culture. Her traditional clothing and jewelry were beautiful and unlike anything I had ever seen before. The colors were vibrant and exciting, much like her dancing. Her ability to rhythmically move and contort her body to the beat of the music was impressive. It seemed as though she was constantly jumping or pirouetting from one end of the stage to the other.

The afternoon's only presentation came from Dr. Ramaswamy Sharma, he spoke about Indian Hinduism and Jainism and how they classify foods. Specifically, Dr. Ramaswamy spoke about Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic foods. According to his presentation, Sattvic foods are light soothing and represent the purest diet spiritually. Rajasic foods are typically hot, bitter, sour, dry or salty. Rajasic foods maintain the mind-body equilibrium and are typically consumed by

working people. Tamasic foods, on the other hand, are considered dull foods. Meats, poultry, fish, eggs and alcohol etc. are considered Tamasic. These are considered unhealthy because they do not benefit the mind or body. Dr. Ramaswamy's presentation on Indian culture was insightful and much appreciated.

Looking back on both of these events, I feel as though they were a huge success, not only for their entertainment value, but for their ability to bring the Asian community to place it doesn't get much attention, Lorain County. That in itself is priceless. I can only hope events like these continue into the future so that others may get to experience the beautiful cultures of the world so close to home, as I did. Thanks again, Dr. Ko. Happy Holidays!