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World Religions
Dr. Ko
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Site Visit Report I: Interfaith Food and Music/Dance Performance

I am a conservative Christian who identifies with the non-denominational church. I am very serious about my faith as well as its principles and traditions. Even so, I have greatly enjoyed learning to understand and appreciate other religious views throughout the duration of this course.

I attended the second Interfaith Food and Music/Dance Performance as one of my site visits. The event took place on Friday, November 14, 2014 in Spitzer Center on the campus of Lorain County Community College. This performance focused on the food, music, and dance of the Hindu and Jainist religions. Since the performance took place at Lccc, there were no distinctive markings or symbols in the building that pointed to either of the religions. However, the two musicians did have some traditional clothes/rugs set out during their performance. Also, the food was labeled with signs that contained the original language of each religion. The performance began at 2 pm, and lasted for about an hour and a half. The musicians performed first, then the dancer, and finally the speaker who explained the significance of food in the Indian culture/religions. A mid-size crowd attended (possibly around 50 people) and was comprised of both men and women of all ethnicities. I noticed African Americans, Asian Americans, Indian Americans, and Caucasian people.

Since this was more of a non-traditional “service” by way of performance, there was no single officiant leading the occasion. Each of the groups led themselves in a way, only after a brief introduction from an emcee. The first group, two musicians, were two males, one older and one younger. One dressed in traditional Indian clothing while the other wore American street clothes. They both sat on the floor with their respective instruments, and performed for about 15 minutes. The younger boy played an Indian Israj, which is a stringed instrument. The older accompanied him with Indian drums called Tamburas. The second performance was given by a single woman. She presented two dances which represented classical Indian dance. She wore a very ornate traditional costume that was brightly colored, conservative, and included excessive ornamentation. She also wore heavy make-up and a large amount of jewelry on her body and in her hair. The dance moves were much different than common in Western culture. Some were very graceful, while other appeared to be jumpy and abrupt. Overall, the performance was visually appealing and fun to observe. Her extensive facial expressions drew the audience into her performance, and aided in the storytelling she did through movement.

The final presentation was given by Dr. Ramaswamy Sharma, who spoke briefly on the Indian Vegetarian Food. He spoke of the three classes of food (Tamasic – dull, Rajasic – passionate, and Sattvic – pure), and how they are to be balanced in a proper Hindi diet. After his presentation, were able to sample some of the foods that are common to Hinduism and Jainism. My favorites were the vegetable fried rice and fried flat bread.

Overall, this was an eye opening experience to the practical manifestations of these religions. I have never experienced the food, music, or dance of Indian culture, and was very glad to learn some of their customs.