Show offers poignant and human view of 9/11 terror attacks

After reading her work, Professor of Comparative Religion Karen
Pechlis invited MisirHiralall to hold an interactive dance workshop. Although not her first time in the Forest, MisirHiralall noted the unique nature of the request. “Usually I’m invited to do lectures, not interactive dance workshops,” MisirHiralall said, and expressed happiness in having the opportunity to share such an experience with a group of non-Hindus. The workshop began with a brief lecture by MisirHiralall, in which she outlined the topic of her article in relation to the workshop. She took time to explain the nature of Hindu dance and how it differs from Christian liturgical dance. Then, she touched upon the sacred nature of dance in Hindu history, and how British colonization of India warped the act into something vulgar. Despite this, Hinduism continues to encourage dance as practice of faith. Though she noted the hierarchy of Hindu dance and its sacred nature, MisirHiralall presented what she called a “dance meditation” that would not infringe upon the beliefs of the participants. MisirHiralall noted the importance to create an environment in which people with various systems of beliefs could connect to something more spiritual. Discussing how she took this factor into account when planning the event, MisirHiralall said, “Religion and those who don’t believe in religion are all paths on the same mountain.”

The meditation, which itself lasted three minutes, paid homage to natural forces. MisirHiralall wanted the group to contemplate the importance of “the world’s ornaments” including the moon, the sun, the Earth, water and the stars, all of which are necessary for life, but are often taken for granted.

Though the dance moves came naturally to MisirHiralall, the participants struggled to keep up with the fast pace of the music. The room filled with laughter as Dreads tried their best to imitate MisirHiralall. “It’s not about perfection, it’s the experience,” MisirHiralall said prior to the dance portion of the workshop.

When asked about what she wanted Dreads to take away from the workshop prior to the event, MisirHiralall said, “I hope to give us a chance to use our bodies to connect with nature and all it has given us” as well as provide a call for participants to “...take the moves I am showing them and make them their own.”

The workshop ended with the group sitting in a circle on the floor, discussing and taking in the experience of engaging in a completely new form of dance. MisirHiralall was pleased with the coming together of schools of thought, and said, “Regardless of whether we are from the West or from the East, we are members of the human race.”