

NATYA

M A G A Z I N E
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VOLUME 004

COLLABORATION

Dr. Divya Raghavan from the editor's desk

FEATURED

InSyncKathak

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

Maya Rau-Murthy

**Patient
Spotlight**

Akila Nagamani

RIGHT STACK PHYSICAL THERAPY



Hello readers, I am Dr. Divya Raghavan. I am a doctor of physical therapy with Board certification in orthopedics. I am a trained Bharatnatyam dancer, a Bollywood dance performer and a Kathak student. I was a physical therapist at the Google wellness centers for several years before deciding to start my own practice-Right Stack Physical therapy (RSPT) in Sunnyvale CA. I am passionate about injury prevention and do frequent community engagements on this topic. My niche is corporate wellness and performing arts. Natya Physical Therapy & Wellness is a sister company to RSPT. Having had my share of dance related injuries, I created the Natya Magazine to promote self-care and injury awareness in dancers. If you are a dancer and in pain, I would urge you to reach out to me at divya@natyapt.com

Collaboration

From the editor's desk

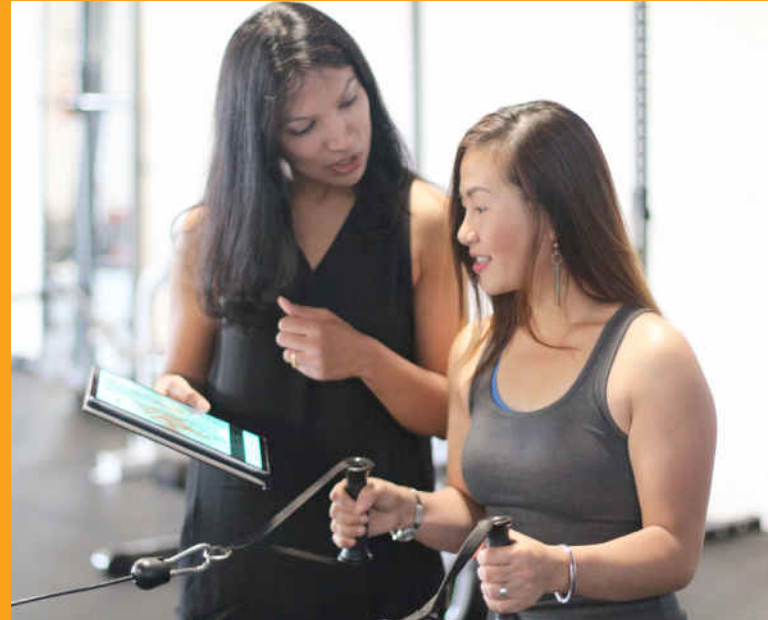
Dr. Divya Raghavan, PT, DPT, OCS

This issue's theme is Collaboration. Collaboration is the act of coming together for a common purpose. In healthcare, the common purpose should be getting patients back to health most efficiently and effectively. But what happens when several decision-makers are wanting to solve different problems- a lot of confusion and the one who bears the brunt here is the patient.

As a dancer, I have seen my share of orthopedic professionals-surgeon, physiatrists, physical therapists, chiropractors, massage therapists, acupuncturists. As a Doctor of

Physical Therapy, I have worked in collaboration with different clinicians. As I have experienced the complexity involved with multidisciplinary care firsthand, I can completely empathize with what patients go through when seeing a multitude of doctors. It is not easy to have to repeat your story-your pain story- to everyone without missing any relevant details. The medical terms can be hard to follow, and it is very difficult to get hold of one's medical charts. And what if each clinician you see gives conflicting advice. Whose opinion do you follow?

When I did an entrepreneurship program at Stanford, my venture idea of creating an app to help with provider-to-provider communication was selected. I got to pitch my business plan to a bunch of Venture Capitalists for feedback. Doctors in the audience exactly knew what I was talking about. EHR non-compatibility is when the electronic health record systems of two separate hospitals don't communicate with each other. In such a scenario, the doctor working in one hospital cannot get access to patient reports from another hospital even if the patient permits to do so. What if there was an easy way for a care team to talk to each other even if they belonged to different health systems? And what if the patient was part of this communication and fully in the know of



what decisions were being made regarding her care. Seems like a dream, correct?

This is why when I created my practices, Right Stack Physical Therapy & Natya Physical Therapy, I made sure to take away the burden of clinician communication off the hands of my patients. If my patient has an appointment with an orthopedist concerning the same issue, I'm seeing them for, I make sure to send in a letter with a list of relevant questions to the surgeon that will help me make better rehab decisions. If my patient has a massage scheduled with a masseuse, I provide them with a list of muscles that need soft tissue work based on my clinical assessment. When my patients have met their rehab goals and are ready to be

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discharged from physical therapy, I facilitate a warm hand-off to a personal trainer so that they can continue improving on their fitness goals while preventing re-injury. This process seems cumbersome and time-consuming, but the care effectiveness and patient satisfaction are so high that in the end, it helps reduce healthcare costs. Patients get better faster and stay so for longer durations.

Remember you deserve better and asking for a collaborative care team is what you should demand!

In Health & Harmony,
Divya Raghavan







Image Credit: Illustration by Ellie Zahedi (@elaillu) for My Mind Our Humanity Campaign

Mental Health is a big component of the holistic well-being of a dancer. At Natya Physical Therapy & Wellness, we help dancers achieve and maintain optimal health. To further this mission, we will be featuring an article dedicated to mental health & awareness in every forthcoming issue of Natya Magazine. Stay tuned!

Maya Rau-Murthy

Maya Rau-Murthy is a mridangist, nattuvanar, and Bharatanatyam performer, choreographer, and teacher based in New York and San Francisco. She is a disciple of her mother, Dr. Nalini Rau (disciple of Guru Dakshinamoorti Pillai), and is the associate director of the Natya Anubhava Dance Academy. She has given hundreds of performances, including in the Seva Sadan Malleswaram, United Nations, New York City Hall, Jewish Museum, Hammond Museum, Javits Center, AKKA conference. She has directed and choreographed multiple dance ballets ranging from traditional topics in the Puranas to contemporary themes exploring gender and social justice. She has choreographed multiple margams, has taught over 40 students, and co-trained over 10 for their arangetram. Additionally, she regularly performs nattuvangam and mridangam. She has been training in mridangam from age 8 under Sri Balaskandan, a disciple of Sri Karaikudi Mani. She is trained in Carnatic music under Smt. Ranjani Veni Madhavan, and is trained in the western flute under Rebecca Kuehl. She is currently learning the karanas under Smt. Ashwini Srivatsan, a disciple of Smt. Sundari Santhanam and Chhau under Sri Rakesh Sai Babu.



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Wearing Multiple Hats

Maybe a cop-out, but for me, all these aspects bring together creativity and passion. For me, mridangam, nattuvangam, dance, teaching, and performing are so intertwined! Mridangam has given me rhythmic inspiration and foundation to dance. Teaching is incredibly meaningful for me- there is no greater satisfaction than seeing my students grow and succeed and become budding artists. My mother is my guru and our school- Natya Anubhava - is our family. I view my students as my younger sisters, and I know my mother views them as her own children.

I feel a constant itch in me for dance and rhythm- even as I go to sleep at night I will be thinking of exciting rhythms. The creativity, simplicity and beauty, and patterns in rhythm and my body in dance are similar

to the beauty I find in math as well. Math is so creative, and I love finding elegant solutions to problems.

Biggest Inspiration

Amma- she inspires me as my mother, as my guru for dance, as an artist, as an activist, and a woman with a strong moral compass who stands up for what she believes in.

Injuries and Prevention

It is unfortunate, but I think most Bharatanatyam dancers have injured themselves or have had knee issues by the time they are 25, and I am no exception. I am thankful to Divya for helping me heal from my knee injury two years ago! It's unfortunate the stigma there is around the injury and the pride there is in our community around ignoring it. It does not make one stronger to dance through an injury, and you are not weak if you get injured! And it is important to get help when we do- because many injuries are both preventable and recoverable.

I think part of the reason we get injured is due to this culture. There is a toxic culture around dancing through injuries. Also, a culture around artificially moving your feet out to 180 degrees even if your knees are not in line with your feet- which can cause injuries downstream! So many subtle things -ie arching your back and sticking your bottom back rather than holding your core and having your back in a neutral position- that can hurt us!

There is now more of a movement around conditioning our body in Bharatanatyam- and that is wonderful! It seems so obvious- strengthening our muscles and working out to supplement our dancing- is what we need to do, just like any other athlete! I am glad that now there is also more of a culture around warming up and stretching properly before dancing.

And it's not just physical injuries- we must acknowledge and take care of our mental health as well. I remember when I was first physically injured, feeling ashamed and like I was less of a dancer, and therefore less of a person, which isn't right or true. The onset of social media has brought about an obsession with external validation, and sometimes we might forget why we dance in the first place- the meditative aspect and our inner journey. Pressure and stress around dance, burn-out, and performance anxiety are a reality for many, but it can be scary to talk about because of the stigma. But many of us are experiencing it, and it doesn't make us any less of a dancer or human to be dealing with injury and pain. So, I'm glad I got help for my injuries- both physical and mental therapy- because it was essential for my recovery and bringing me back to my fullest and happiest potential as a dancer and human.

Working on Mental Health Issues

I have been working as a director for content at 1pal- a nonprofit working on destigmatizing mental health for south Asian American communities.

I wish that as a teenager, I had learned about mental health and therapy, the same way I had learned about physical health. When I was in high school and college, unfortunately like too many other young girls, I was sexually abused and sexually assaulted. Due to the sexual trauma, I developed PTSD and depression.

I remember wondering why I was unable to sleep, to work, and why memories and events that had happened in the past continued to haunt me when I was not physically hurt. I wondered if I was secretly lazy and if I was just coming up with excuses in my head- whether my mental pain was all made up.

I didn't know what PTSD was at the time and didn't realize that depression is something that the common person- like me- could be dealing with. I didn't know how many other survivors there were of sexual assault- I am not sure if I even knew the proper terminology for what had happened to me. I worried about what others would think about me if they knew I was depressed. I also wondered what people would think about me if I told them about my sexual trauma- would they blame me and tell me it was my fault, ask me what I had done to incite the men, why I had not screamed louder or called the police- would they think it was all fake and dismiss me? Would they think it was ridiculous that years later I was still suffering- and think I was weak for still hurting? Or worse would they think I made it all up and was just being dramatic to seek attention? Would people think I was crazy- call me insane because of my mental suffering? I was even worried about the fate of the perpetrators if I broke my silence- I didn't want to hurt anyone else like I had been hurt. I was so scared, and without help or knowing what I was going through, these thoughts, the memories, and the pain churned in my head for years. It didn't help that the few I told responded negatively- either acting as a silent or active bystander or blaming me for not calling the police, even asking me what I had done to incite these men. I didn't understand the effect it was having on me mentally- didn't understand what my panic attacks were, my loss of sleep, and the effect it was having upon everything I loved. Every time I failed, I remember just thinking that those men who hurt me were right, and since I hadn't told anyone and was not getting help yet there was nobody to tell me otherwise.

There is a huge stigma around mental health in our community. People will dismiss depression as "laziness" and spend more time wondering what our commu-

nity will say than helping ourselves. Truth is that mental health is just like physical health- we would never tell someone with diabetes not to take their insulin or call them weak for going to the doctor.

As my mental health deteriorated, I could no longer hold the facade that everything was ok, and after my best friend sexually assaulted me, I had a suicide attempt.

I am fortunate that I have the best of friends and family who knew what to do- my parents helped me find therapy, and therapy changed my life. Today I am doing much better, I am much happier, thanks to therapy and thanks to dancing. I took some time off college, and in that time, I directed a dance drama that was performed in various venues in NY. I went through dialectical behavioral therapy. And the nerd I was, I did a lot of graph theory too. I did whatever I loved, went where my creativity took me, and it was healing. When I danced, I was in the moment- no longer lost in the past or worried about the future- the feeling it gave me was irreplaceable. It was so satisfying to teach and to mold my dance students into beautiful artists as well- their enthusiasm and passion were infectious. Also, the beauty of dance and rhythm- I would just get blissfully lost in it. Through dance and therapy, I was able to slowly build up my confidence and happiness.

I just needed help- and once I got it, I started to heal. I wish I had known as a teenager about depression and anxiety, and that there is help there! I wish I knew what therapy was, I wish I was less worried about what others would think. Just like in physical therapy we learn skills to strengthen our muscles and recover from injuries, in dialectical behavioral therapy we learn skills to help us cope and recover. However, cliché it is- there is light at the end of the tunnel, I just needed some

guidance to find it. If I had been taught the symptoms of depression and anxiety, and the possible treatment then perhaps I could have gotten help earlier and saved myself from a lot of suffering. I am glad I got help eventually!

Therefore, I am so passionate about destigmatizing mental health, and why *ᵀᵀᵀᵀᵀ* means so much to me! *ᵀᵀᵀᵀᵀ* aims to reduce the stigma around mental health in the South Asian-American community by providing educational resources. Instead of shying away from cultural norms, spirituality, or things unique to being Desi in America - we hope to embrace that and explain mental health from a lens that is relatable but still backed by scientific research. I hope that *ᵀᵀᵀᵀᵀ* can help spread the awareness of mental health I wish I had as a teenager, and perhaps help our community to act more compassionately with regards to mental health.

On Collaboration

I love to dance, I love mridangam, but what I love even more is people.

Getting to jam with other musicians, dance with others who are also so passionate- is honestly where I am happiest- and where I find myself growing the most. Dance and music are not meant to be done in isolation, not meant to be done as a competition - it is meant to be shared!



Watch Maya's rendition of The Nettu Rattiri Javali and other dance videos of her at her youtube channel.

<https://youtu.be/TlehhnXWkpw>

Patient in Spotlight

Akila Nagamani

“ I started learning Bharatnatyam and was experiencing discomfort on my knees with some poses. To add to it, I had my dose of leg strengthening home workouts which worsened the pain. I came to know about Dr. Divya and her work through a workshop at my dance school and reached out to her. In just a matter of three weeks, my knees started improving. She gave PT exercises that improved consciousness and weight balance on my feet and reduced stress on my knees. As a dancer herself, she was able to relate to my issues and diagnose them better. She is readily available for any queries and concerns. Divya is very thorough with her work and I am super satisfied with my progress.

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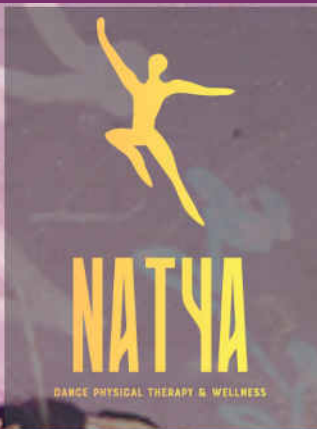


NATYA REHAB & WELLNESS IS NOW TRADEMARKED!!!

Our proprietary process of providing injury prevention education, group rehab sessions as well as 1-1 assessment & treatment to injured dancers is now trademarked.

Reach out to our team at NatyaPT to enroll in this comprehensive one-of-a-kind program.

Email us at swastika@natyapt.com



NATYA Workshop

JOIN US FOR THE MASTERCLASS WORKSHOP THAT HAS BEEN CREATING WAVES IN THE PERFORMING ARTS COMMUNITY!!

**LIVE SESSION BY
DR. DIVYA RAGHAVAN**



Topics Covered

- **Common injuries faced by dancers, musicians and theater professionals**
- **How physical therapy needs of this community differ from athletes**
- **Evidence-based self-care tips**
- **Nutrition & Mental Health**

Followed by Q/A



**Virtual Zoom
Conference**

**Check out our new and improved website
www.natyapt.com**

InSyncKathak

Anupama Srivastava Founder & Artistic Director

Anupama Srivastava, disciple of Padmashri Guru Shovana Narayan, is the Founder and Artistic Director of InSyncKathak Dance School. She uses the North Indian Classical Kathak Dance form as a creative medium to promote physical, mental, social, cultural, interpersonal and spiritual enrichment.

Anupama's choreographic works have been presented at dance festivals and concerts in the US and Canada. Anupama has also produced collaborative work with musicians and dancers of different genres. Anupama is an energetic and enthusiastic Guru, and provides Kathak education and training to about 80 students. A keen educator of this classical Indian dance form, Anupama holds lecture-demonstrations and workshops regularly for InSyncKathak students and also at UC Santa Cruz. In 2015, she organized a nine-city "Guru Shovana Narayan USA Tour" across Texas, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and California, and won critical acclaim for this effort.

Anupama holds a BS in E&C Engineering from BIT Sindri, India and MS in Electrical Engineering from San Jose State University. After an eighteen-year career as a Hardware Engineer in Silicon Valley, she made her passion for dancing her full-time career, and splits her time between family, dance, writing, hiking, and yoga.





Anupama Srivastava

What inspired you to move to teaching dance from being a corporate professional?

Dance has been a part of my life since childhood. I always balanced dancing with academics, family, and professional life. My biggest inspiration is my Guru, Padmashri Shovana Narayan (disciple of Padma Vibhushan Pt. Birju Maharaj ji) who had a dual career as a world renowned Kathak artist and a senior bureaucrat in the Indian Government as an IAAS officer. So, I was never in doubt that having both aspects in your life is possible. InSyncKathak Dance School was started with my desire to share the beautiful art form Kathak with my daughter, and slowly grew to its present form with almost 80 students. I was dancing and teaching along with my corporate job for a while, and moved to full-time dancing and teaching only since the last four years. With the increasing size and engagements of the school this transition seemed to be a natural progression.

What differentiates InSyncKathak from other kathak studios in the area?

The focus of InSyncKathak is to use the North Indian Classical Kathak Dance form as a creative medium to promote physical, mental, social, cultural, interpersonal and spiritual enrichment for students of all ages.

This is a complete program that produces exceptional Kathak dancers who are strong, confident, sensitive and grounded individuals, and responsible citizens of the world.

In the true spirit of the Guru-Shishya Parampara, students are given rigorous training in a nurturing environment in all aspects of the Lucknow Charana style of the traditional classical Kathak dance: nritta, nritya and natya. To develop into exceptionally strong dancers, they learn many life skills that help them succeed in other aspects of life as well. They are encouraged to internalize their dance experience and enrich their lives, and at the same time use dance as a means to express themselves and make a positive difference in the world. They stay rooted to their Indian origin, history, mythology and culture, and are also responsible and active contributors to the community they are currently a part of. They are guided towards developing cultural sen-

sitivity, respect and appreciation of all other dance and music traditions as well.

How were you able to keep your students motivated to attend classes online during the pandemic?

We took on the challenge of distance learning head on, starting regular virtual classes less than a week after shelter-in-place was announced in the Bay Area. In addition to regular classes throughout this phase, we organized Kathak workshops with Padmashri Guru Shovana Narayan from India, rhythm training with a tabla artist Sri Hiren Chate from UK, Yoga and Pranayam sessions with Aarti Patil, a talk by a student and occupational therapist Parita Lakhani on tips to safely work and study from home, as well as several virtual workshops, summer-camp, lecture-demonstration and video tutorials by myself to continue educating the students. Additional learning formats were introduced where several students started training for solos and duets, an ideal fit for the social distancing phase. In addition, we had several video projects where students participated with sending their dances and thoughts that were compiled and shared widely. Students were also encouraged to develop video taking and editing skills.

We had several Facebook and Instagram Live performances. We organized a three-day solo/duet showcase in December to give students some performance opportunities, that eventually led to the video series involving other dance and music schools in the Bay Area as well.

We had virtual hangouts to check on each other, share how everyone was dealing with social isolation. Recipes, remedies, photos of family outings and celebrations were swapped on WhatsApp groups. We start every class with checking on each other and feel really connected and happy to see our friends and fellow students even though it is virtual.

I am happy to say that the students were engaged and excited about being able to continue their Kathak journey through this pandemic and found it a much-needed respite

and safe haven through this unprecedented challenging time.

In the realm of dance, what does collaboration mean to you? Can you share about recent projects that have been done collaboratively by InSyncKathak Dance School?

Through each collaboration, you gain a deeper appreciation and learning of another dance or music discipline, and develop a deeper understanding of your own art-form. In addition, the bonds and friendships formed are invaluable. It's a win-win situation!

A good understanding of music and rhythm, along with theory and history of your repertoire pieces, is at the foundation of dancing, and this is tested and enhanced via collaboration. The nature of classical dance itself demands collaboration. The first level of collaboration is with the accompanying musicians. At InSyncKathak, we have presented collaborative works with several music and dance genres in the past, both with live and recorded music. We presented a Kathak group dance along with a live group table accompaniment. We have presented Kathak solo, duet and group collaborations with Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam dancers set to both Hindustani and Carnatic music.

Recently, we produced a curated 10-episode video series. The motivation behind this project was to provide a performance and discussion platform for youth artists along with some seasoned artists, who might be low on motivation during the current pandemic. This was a forum for them to connect, discover common threads between different dance traditions, promote understanding and respect for diverse cultures, and explore possibilities for future collaborations. They also learnt about the two classical music traditions from India.

My student and daughter Reva Srivastava was the Artistic Director and Video Editor for this project titled "InSync We D.A.N.C.E." (Deriving.Artistic.Narratives.Via.Cultural.Exchanges)

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We presented 50 items showcasing 6 out of the 8 Indian classical dances (Kathak, Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Mohiniyattam, Manipuri), 2 classical music disciplines (Hindustani/Carnatic), 125+ participants (predominantly youth), 16 bay area dance and music institutions.

We showcased similar Nritya items across different genres (Tarana/Thillana/Pallavi) based on raagas from 8 out of 10 Hindustani Music Thaats (Bilaval, Bhairav, Bhairavi, Kaafi, Kalyan, Khamaaj, Marwa, Todi) and their equivalent Carnatic Melakartas, and Nritya items themed around festivals and general themes (Seasons, Saraswati Puja, Shivaratri, Holi).

We also had discussion forums to exchange thoughts, perspectives and views among various youth and senior artists to foster friendships, collaborations, sense of community, respect, learning and camaraderie. Eminent Hindustani Vocalist Sri Nachiketa Yakkundi and eminent Carnatic Vocalist Smt. Snigdha Venkataramani explained the nuances of the Hindustani-Thaat/Carnatic-Melakarta and raagas presented in

each episode, which proved to be an incredible learning opportunity for senior-junior dancers and non-dancers alike!

What is your message to young Kathak dancers on injury prevention and wellness?

If you love dancing and want to continue doing it for a long time, it is essential that you prepare your body and mind for it and take good care of yourself. It is important to listen to your body and take adequate steps to prevent injury. Always warm up, with basic stretches, tatkaar (footwork), and movement exercises. Start slow and then build up to fast paced pieces. Stop when you need to. If you have a recurring pain or discomfort, don't wait to get medical help until very late. I always highly recommend Yoga as a means to relax, stretch and strengthen. Also deliberately breathe deeply, smile, hydrate (when not dancing), eat well, and rest well.

Keep reminding yourself of why you love to dance, and use that as a motivation to keep going despite all hurdles and setbacks!

Check out Anupama's work on her youtube channel & Facebook page:

<https://youtube.com/user/inSyncKathak>

www.facebook.com/inSyncKathak



New Whatsapp Group for Dancers

'Dancer Health & Wellness'

Dr. Divya personally shares tips on a regular basis. If you want to be added to this invite-only group, send us a message @ 669-241-1062



Subscribe to our YouTube Channel!



Watch Dr. Divya Raghavan show you how to heal your heel pain

 **Right Stack Physical Therapy's YouTube Channel**



At home Ankle & Foot exercises by Dr. Divya Raghavan



At home Shoulder exercises by Dr. Divya Raghavan



At home Knee exercises by Dr. Divya Raghavan

A lot of dancers suffer from knee discomfort which worsens when they put repetitive strains like squatting, jumping & spinning. Knee pain can shorten a bright dancer's career and can dissuade student dancers from furthering their skills.



For dancers who would like to improve their knee health, NatyaPT has created the 'Healthy Knee Program'. This 4 weeks 240-hour group class will teach you all you need to know about preserving your knee joints.

Enroll at <https://natyapt.com/online-programs-courses>

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