

INDIA ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Arts 2 – Ragamala Dance Company

Ashwini Ramaswamy

Narrator

Dan Rein

Interviewer



**MINNESOTA HISTORICAL
& CULTURAL GRANTS**

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ORAL HISTORY PROJECT Arts 2 – Ragamala Dance Company

The India Association of Minnesota (IAM) was formed in 1973 as the India Club of Minnesota. IAM is a not-for-profit organization that represents people with an interest in the culture and heritage of India to **build** a sense of cohesiveness within this community, **represent** the community to the population at large, and **serve** as the focal point for advancing the educational, cultural, and charitable interests of the community. The organization is statewide, though the largest numbers of its members live within the Minneapolis and St. Paul metropolitan area.

“Arts 2 – Ragamala Dance Company” is the seventh project in a series conducted over the past 17 years between the India Association of Minnesota and the Minnesota Historical Society. This project has three goals:

- 1) Create an oral history of Ragamala Dance Company.
- 2) To preserve the recordings of dance performances by Ranee Ramaswamy and the Ragamala Dance Company.

Acclaimed as one of the Indian Diaspora’s leading dance ensembles, Minneapolis-based Ragamala Dance seamlessly carries the Indian classical dance form of Bharatanatyam into the 21st century. Artistic Directors Ranee and Aparna Ramaswamy retain roots in the philosophy, spirituality, mysticism, and myth of their South Indian heritage, while using their art form as a rich language through which to speak with their own voices as contemporary American choreographers. They see the classical form as a dynamic, living tradition with vast potential to move beyond the personal and spark a global conversation.

Ragamala has a unique & compelling story, with deep local roots & broad international branches. Yet the origins & early history of the company have never been formally documented. As Ragamala celebrates its 20th anniversary, it is vital to document its history & prominent place in the life of the Indian community, the dance community, & the broad fabric of people & cultures that make up our state of MN. Thus a key goal of the project is to digitize video recordings of the early years of Ragamala’s productions (1991-2002), which are currently stored in antiquated analog formats that are in danger of being lost as the technology becomes obsolete and to preserve them at the Minnesota History Center for posterity. This will enable all Minnesotans, not just people of Indian origin, to reap the benefits of the very highest quality of Indian classical dance presented in Minnesota over the years, into the future generations. The archive will also serve as a resource for historians and scholars of Indian music, history and culture in MN.

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The Interview

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DR: I am with Ashwini Ramaswamy and Ashwini maybe you could describe your role here at Ragamala.

AR: Sure, I am a Company dancer as well as the Director of Marketing & Publicity for the Company, Ragamala Dance.

DR: Ok and [chuckles] I will ask the obvious question but how did you become involved in Ragamala?

AR: I am Ranee Ramaswamy's second and younger daughter. My sister Aparna & I both started learning Bharatanatyam, which is the style of dance practiced by Ragamala, at roughly around age six. Each of us were six when we started. I would say that she was much more a child of the East while I was much more the child of the West. You know she was born in India, came over when she was three and was raised in a more you know little bit more strict kind of you know. She was their first child, they were just new to the States and her-her relationship with dance, she knew right way that's what she wanted to do. Her and my mom were partners in that and they trained very-very rigorously. And then, by the time I came around I think my parents had relaxed a little bit. They had gotten used to the United States and kind of the way people do things around here, which is try a bunch of different things, kind of see what you like. It's not the same as kind of the Asian mentality of education and things. [Background noise] So when I came across dancing I kind of did it more for fun and also tried piano and gymnastics and ice-skating and everything else that kids do. So my path was a little bit more meandering towards ending up as a dancer which I didn't actually think that was going to happen when I was young. Partially probably because they were so interested in-in having me do it that I wanted to not do that, you know rebel against what your parents want you to do. So I always had you know an aptitude for it but I didn't necessarily fall in love with it until a little bit later in life. So I danced and then when Ragamala formed in 1992, I was about twelve when the-when I started dancing with the Company. So I was very young. Everyone else was at least six or seven years older than me who were dancing with us and they were kind of an extended family, all the dancers and musicians. So, I danced

throughout High school. I also like my sister went to Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota and commuted down to keep dancing. But again it was always just more for the fun of it. Then the real serious this is going to be my life's work that my mom and sister always knew. Then after college I decided that I didn't want to dance any more at all and I moved to New York City and lived there for four years working in Publishing as a Publicist for Penguin Book Company. And I think it was one of those things once you don't have something in your life anymore you and then you wanted something this specific and unique and kind of...it's just...it's kind of...it's just very specialized you know, you can't do this anywhere else in this specific way, especially with your family. I decided you know, if I am going to give a go with this I can't wait till I am too old and I missed my family and I wanted to kind of see what it was like to put myself in a hundred percent and that was in 2007. So now I have been back here almost seven years. This February will be seven years back full time dancing every day. I just had my first solo show here on Saturday. It went very well at the Ritz theatre and it's the best decision I ever made. [Background clapping noise] So I-I use the skills I learnt in New York in Publicity. You probably know from other interviews that we all kind of have administrative roles as well as dancing roles. So I was able to fill a role that they didn't have here. So I manage the website and get all the...you know do all the outreach to newspapers, radio and all that, drum up, ticket sales and things for our shows here as well as our touring shows. We reach out to all the venues ahead of time to make sure that they have all the marketing materials they need, you know whatever they can do to get the word out about Ragamala and so I really feel like it fulfills both in physical dance spirituality all that-that you get in the performance side but also (you) I kind of get to do use you know other skills in the administrative role. So, I really feel extremely thankful that I-I get to come here every day and fulfill it.

DR: I am really curious what really changed you that after getting away from it that made you want to come back?

AR: Well like I said, I almost grew up on stage. I started...You know we started performing when we were really young and I think it's a natural...a. it's a natural high that I think you there is nothing else like it. And so there was not that, that's the basic thing to miss it. But I would talk to my mom and sister on the phone about the projects that they were developing and Ragamala has really, has become so I mean it's always been you know it's always had great dancing, great artistry but over the years as the years passed the themes and the ideas and the way that Bharatanatyam was presented is become so deep, so rich and so exciting. When I was young I didn't see. I just thought we were doing Indian dance and I felt very removed from it. But now it's-it's a whole contemporary dance experience that unlike exists in US right now. I love being a part of that. And I think once I kind of matured and became an adult and really started you know reading and listening to the music and kind of I connected with everything that they connected to

years earlier that I just kind of didn't allow myself. I think I was just too distracted by being an American kid and just kind of going through the you know just being a kid and (I) now it's just a... dance is such a part of who I am and everyday talking with people about the history and where-where we are taking the form and just from little details like the costumes and you know I teach many-many students. It's just I don't know if it was one thing. I think I just remember being in New York and-and having anything that felt deep in my life. It was all you know good. I had a good job. It was nice time. I loved books. I liked working with authors but I didn't feel like extremely invested like I was doing something that I-I could never stop doing. You know I just felt all of a sudden one day like I feel something big is missing. I think it might be this thing. I think I owe it to myself to go see if it is and it turned out to be right.

DR: It sounds like there was a part of you that wasn't-wasn't being fulfilled that the dance now has brought that out.

AR: Absolutely.

DR: Yeah.

AR: It's just so rich in-in theme and like I said in history and where you can take it and how because of all the emotions you know it's not just you do something that's physically difficult. It's very emotional and spiritual in it. It's-it's an extremely satisfying when you-you reach this plane and it's almost like some people have said that to us before like it seems like that once you start you just kind of go into this trance until the show is over, it's almost like that. During practice not just in performance, during practice when you just get so into what you are doing that all of a sudden it's like the hour has – the hour's gone by and you don't even know what happened. That's-that's not easy to find in every you know every vocation.

DR: Hm...

DR: I am curious especially with you because you know you had both your mother and sister but it sounds like they allowed you to pursue what you wanted to pursue.

AR: Yes, I think [chuckles] I think partially that was because as a child I was very-very stubborn and I think it was easier to just let me be than to try to change me and I think my sister was so focused on dance that it was kind of a let's just focus on her because she wants to do it and let's let Ashwini figure out what she wants to do. Maybe it's not dance that's got to be okay. And like I said who knows if I don't think it would have been that way if we had grown up in India. But because we were here... and that's why people who are raising their kids here are kind of more allowed... and I really actually I wouldn't...I don't take any of it back because all are really informed who I am as a person and I got some feedback, a lot of feedback on Saturday after my show that people really could see

my personality in my dancing and that's kind of up....that's part of what's made me the dancer I am today. It's doing those different things and not maybe being as serious when I was about when I was younger.

DR: Hm...

DR: So is there a difference then... I imagine that there is a difference from up until now you've mostly worked with the group and now you are pursuing, you actually did a solo show.

AR: Yes, well so the-the dance form is a solo form and Ragamala was one of the first...now there is many companies around the world doing solo forms as Company work but my mom really wanted to start something that she did earlier... is one of the pioneers of this making it a company work and now people are like oh really it's back ... is it actually... they don't know that it was meant to be solo. I am not...I wouldn't say that I am doing anything, breaking away from Ragamala it's just a really good way to develop as a dancer because you...it's all on you. You know the whole thing is on you and you need to take that...you need to make sure that the audience is with you the whole way through and that they see this journey that you are taking them on during that one or two hours that you are there. I personally did the show because I received a couple of grants last year, work grants to do solo work that I received so I was able to do that. It probably won't happen... I'd like it to happen more often. I got a McKnight last year too so I will be doing a solo piece [background noise] within the sixth...I suppose fall. So, that will be coming out and all the company dancers, Aparna is currently touring her solo show around the country and the other Jessica and Tamara and I are all working on doing a solo show at least once in the next year or two. Just to keep because you learn so much, not just in the performance but in the preparation. It's actually more about the preparation than it is about the finished product. I mean I practiced like crazy for that show and it was an amazing experience and I now feel like when I go back to group work, next week we will start rehearsing for our next group work, I am going to take all of that and put it into that show and it's gonna... I am going to be a different dancer for it. So I think it's really important for everyone in the Company...we all do individual practices but I think the training and the preparation and the mindset of doing a solo is really important and we didn't think about it as much before I think until Aparna did her solo when she was finding it helping her so much I think we all thought okay this is something that I think everyone should try and also I did one piece of choreography for this show. That was mine. Most of them were teachers from India but I decided to also try to do my own piece so that was another exercise that really is gonna kind of push me forward. So there is a lot of exciting things happening around here I think in terms of growth and seeing where we want to take our individual [pause] our individual paths and how that intersects with the huge path.

DR: It sounds like there were some amazing challenges for you in the fact okay now here you come up with your own choreography but you also push yourself into a situation where basically you are responsible and that's it.

AR: Well, you know it's interesting because the-the audience response to the new piece was really very-very positive and I think it's because when I was talking to people after the show I wasn't trying to convey someone else's vision on the stage. I was only beholden to me and so the level of comfort and the level of confidence in that piece was higher than in the other ones because I was...the other pieces were our teachers' pieces and I was trying so hard to do them justice and do them in with reverence and all that you know and then it was kind of the last piece was mine and I was free and so it's true that there were challenges but you know I had shown the piece to (every) my mom and sister. In the new I had gotten the feedback, I wasn't just blindly going in. I had practiced it a lot but I think I understand you know my sister is right now touring an evening of their work and she told me she said that there was something so freeing about being up there and doing...it's classical work but it's contemporary. It's all in the choreography within the classical structure and just how she felt like totally different doing a whole evening of her own choreography and even though I just did the one piece it was ...it was such a...it was like a mind trip. It was really very cool [chuckles].

DR: Hm...Hm... yeah, amazing.

DR: Is it-is it easy for you to go back and forth then between okay being the dancer and then being the marketing person?

AR: You know I think the model that we have going here is extremely effective because it's a small group of us and we all talk about all of the roles often, so we all know kind of the nuts and bolts of what everyone else is doing. So everyone is really invested obviously because they are all-they are all you know actually literally invested in the company's success artistically and you know for their jobs. And so because we are part of the whole process, we are here in the studio, we see how we wind up and create, we write you know we write descriptions in language for the pieces together. So it's kind of a natural, it goes naturally into marketing and publicity. I mean the first thing that I always think is no one is gonna want your product if you don't believe in it yourself and who wants to work on something that they do not believe in. So, we just kind of go along this you know with the model of we really believe in the work-in the work. We really believe in the vision of Rane and Aparna and...[clicking of tongue]. And then kind of the good things come into existence when you just work hard and you follow a singular vision that you believe in. So it-it's all very natural. Same with Tamara and the grant writing. She is here, she is seeing everything and it's just...it's almost like it's so inspiring you just go off and you know fire off your e-mails and make your phone calls and people can tell that...I mean if you are saying that you are a part of the company and doing all this you know they like it.

DR: Well I have to admit it is a very unique structure where everybody in the dance company is working in the office and... but I think which is what I hear you saying is that you guys then know it from the inside. It's not somebody from the outside saying well how am I going to present this. You already know and so I think it's a [background noise] gives you a unique, everybody unique voice in how to present it because of what you just said, the investment.

AR: Absolutely and then everyone, everything is kind of [clicking of tongue]...is integrated in terms of you don't have a bunch of different voices coming at you. You know everyone's on the same page and kind of comes at it with the same mindset. So, I think it's mainly all a good thing.

DR: Hm...So, so I also have this image of when you are all traveling you're all working all the time even when you are not dancing. Is this the case?

AR: It's the case. I mean it's kind of funny we're... you know we all...sometimes we get together we're talking and talking like [background noise] maybe we shouldn't...maybe we can just stop talking about dance for five minutes [chuckles] because it's really that's all we do because you know it's what we do. But it's...whether it's about our dancing or whether we are going to see someone else or whether we like the way someone presented this you know, what we are going to do for the next...I mean there is just...there is festivals to apply for, there is grants to apply for, there's storage that you want to pick, you know there is venues that we really wanna go to and how do we strategize to get to those venues and how do we you know...and then there is the school and you know making sure that we have got everything figured out at home. So yeah, I mean we just [background noise]...we love it you know but sometimes I think when we are home with our husbands and we are all hanging out together we need to say, okay we will talk about something else. [Laughter]

DR: Yes.

DR: So you teach as well then?

AR: Yes we have a school of about forty to fifty students that all of us teach at. Rane and Aparna mainly just take private students and Jessica and Tamara & I teach the group classes and have private students. So, it's actually getting to be the demand for teaching is actually getting to be something that we have to work out because when we go on tour we teach on Saturdays because that's when the kids can you know come in during the day and we will be gone half the year and need subs and we have some subs but it's not the same...people want the same teachers and it makes sense. We really pride ourselves in having a top school and giving people the best. And so, that's you know a huge part of this legacy that we want to give to people. So, yes there is a school and I teach Saturdays and Wednesdays. I have private classes.

DR: Yeah.

DR: So you-you trained with you know your mother and you also trained in India as well?

AR: So for me what happened was I because I didn't have the focus for so long I knew that I wasn't...I didn't have the...I don't want to say this...how do I say this? So our teacher in India is in our opinion the greatest artist to live I mean in any form [chuckles]

DR: Hm...Hm...

AR: I think she is...

DR: True.

AR: One of the best performers. I have seen tons of dance and I have realized I am biased in some ways but I just this is why we follow her, right?

DR: Hm...Hm...

AR: And I-I...it would not have...I would not have done service to her as a student when I wasn't hundred and fifty percent committed to be going to her. So many-many and always...I have always...you know we are very close. I have known her since I was three or something and I...once I came back in 2007 I was kind of trying to figure out how do I start that relationship again and so I started....I went to India, I asked her if I could learn from her and in (2000) I went 2011 I have to say out on a side note that the Minnesota State Arts Board artist initiative grant that no longer allows you to travel, is like the reason that I have progressed the way I have and it's very-very sad that they have taken away that ability. With that grant I went to India and stayed for a few weeks with my mom and studied with her and then (our) that relationship started. So, Now I've gone every year. She is my McKnight solo choreographer. She came here in May and set the piece on me for ten days-over ten days. And now we...you know I... e-mailed each other and she...it's like an amazing thing. So I can't say that she is you know my...I learnt most things with my mom and sister but every time that she teaches me the level of...the amount of improvement is staggering to me. Just in one week she'll change me, she'll change my outlook and it's like a real...so what you want...everything you want in a teacher-in a teacher student you know relationship. So, that's been really exciting too. So I love to teach. There's obviously there's...there are certain kids who have...it's not necessarily a physical aptitude, it's the desire and they want it so bad and they want...you know that's what...that spark when I see that that's the most exciting thing because it's-it's hard when kids come that you know their parents are making them do it. It's-it's hard to get inspired by that but we have got a really great group of kids these last couple of years who have... They are just...they want to come any time we'll teach them, they'll come and come to all the shows and write e-mails about how inspired they were and

it's...So that's a really nice like...because I've gotten so much. It's nice to try to give it too.

DR: Hm...Hm...

DR: Yeah now you have to say there is a [background noise]...when there is that desire to learn that's you know most exciting part about teaching...

AR: Hm...Hm...

DR: You know the... you can connect to someone. Well, you had it [chuckles]. So you recognize it.

AR: Exactly.

DR: Yeah.

AR: Exactly.

DR: Yeah.

AR: And I-I thought about you know I used to go to flute class and piano class. I didn't practice and I didn't care and now oh my poor teacher you know that's...I am sure they hated that hour that they had to sit with me and they knew I didn't practice and knew I didn't want to be there. Anyway... [Laughter]

DR: Yeah, there's many teachers I'm sure.

DR: So, I was trying to think is there anything you wanna add that we haven't touched upon?

AR: Are you...? I don't know is there other things that you are interested in. This is just...

DR: Well, maybe we should talk about how you know okay because you spent lot of time touring maybe you can talk about some of [clicking of tongue] the challenges and challenges and successes of touring.

AR: [Sighing] Well I actually I'm gonna...I'll start this with the challenges and successes of this life in general.

DR: Hm...

AR: If you want I can say specifically in touring because it's hard to be-it's hard to be an artist in a lot of ways because just when you think that you have got something you realize that the next week that... you'll feel like you're on top of the world and then the next week you will feel like you're nothing in some ways because it's an always an...it's a upward battle of getting better and then being frustrated and you didn't realize that you are not

doing this right, you don't get this, you don't have the time to look at all the information that you need to know about or even be doing what you are doing. How can you think that you know this when it is so vast and so old and so much potential? So there is always that frustration which is also exciting because there is always somewhere to go. And I think on tours sometimes it's hard because you know we've got to keep our work...we've got to keep our office work up but then we are at the theatre all day teaching and then there's outreach. We're got to teach this and this and this classes and make sure we practice and it can feel-it can feel overwhelming but I think way more than that it's satisfying because that's-that the goal of this is to be able to tour and bring it places, bringing it to people who have never seen it before. And I think last two years back we made the decision, we...Ranee and Aparna made the decision to only perform [background noise] with live music which was a risky decision because it means it cost more and it means that there is less availability because there is more people involved. Best decision because the - the...since that decision was made the level of venue and the level of professionalism and the level of the shows have just...And we love our musicians. They are so talented, mix everything. So now the music and the dance it's all one show. I mean it's...there are all...all those artists are part of the tour. It's no longer like bunch of dancers and then you bring a CD or something you know. So, I think now that we have them on tour with us we rehearse with them. I think the whole experience has become... I think that has made the whole experience a lot more, feel more organic and feel more spiritually fulfilling. So I love that. I am glad that that's happening. And I think the challenges are few and far between. They are just like you know they are just oh we miss our families or... But then I get to be with my family too so that's nice. And yeah I think we are hoping one more touring so...

DR: So as a marketing person you are the one that has to do lot of that I suppose.

AR: Well, we have an agent.

DR: Ok.

AR: So they do the booking.

DR: Ok.

AR: I just have...I sort of feel responsible for you know when we go somewhere and if there is a poster that's...sometimes people design strange posters or use strange language that I never sent them or you know I feel kind of responsible for that stuff. But usually each venue knows you know what they are doing and how to sell their tickets. We need to make sure that people aren't pigeon holing us into the Indian audiences only. That's one challenge. I'll call them you know six months ahead of the show to find out you know what we can do. I am going to say you know we put out an ad in all the Indian newspapers or will you know...but I've to say to them that's great but our predominant

audience is not an Indian audience. It is an American audience and we while an Indian company, we are...you are booking us on a season with other American contemporary companies. Just because what we do is Indian dance I would hate to think that you are only marketing us to that audience because I think you missed an opportunity here. So, that's kind of something that we have to work on as a challenge. And I think playing up the live music component I think people don't understand just how spectacular these musicians are and that they are really getting a full concert as well as you know dance performance. And so getting music audiences into a dance venue is also a challenge but something that we are trying to work on.

DR: Yeah because well in Indian specially your type of dance they are just interconnected...

AR: Hm...Hm...

DR: You know as one I have to say this one of the beauties when I was in India to go...I was there during the season, go see the dance...

AR: That's right.

DR: With live music.

AR: It's all like as our teacher says you should be able to see the music and hear the dance. Her dancing is absolutely an expression of the music down to the very [background noise] moving of her toes. You know she's...it's part of the -it's part of what makes it so difficult and what makes it so magical. So that's you know why I am so glad we do with the live music and I think that's was a really tipping point for us in the direction the Company is going.

DR: Hm...Hm...

AR: The whole you know creating a whole experience as soon as you walk into that theatre it's a journey for everyone and I think down to every element being planned perfectly and the music is such a big part of that.

DR: So you-you brought up audiences so how have you seen the audiences change over the years?

AR: You know it's interesting I think we have always had a little bit of an issue trying to bring in an Indian audience to our work. It's a challenge that at home even that I am trying to work out you know how to fix that because we want people to be you know be proud that we are here and then we are representing them and on such a high level, such a national level and no one else here is doing that on the stages that we are doing them at. And so that's you know something that I'd liked to see changed [background noise]. I think it's because a lot of it is because there is just a lot of focus on community events, temple

events and events that frankly don't cost money. And so, our-our audiences are great, we've no problems with our audiences here. I mean doing well with audiences here they are just predominantly American audiences, which we love. I mean that's in some ways that's amazing because I think a lot of other people would have the opposite problem and that's exactly what we want to be in terms of being seen as a contemporary American company that does Indian dance instead of Indian dance. So, and we're always looking like I said to bring in music audiences. I really like to see more young Indians who are maybe like me who were born here and who maybe when they were younger weren't as ...didn't realize you know what came from India and what it meant to them. Then maybe later in life they just realize that they-they do want a connection to that and they do want to see what's going on in the art. They don't want to see a museum. At least they want to see something that's moving forward. This is kind of perfect for that. So those were all kinds of things that we were you know talk about and try to figure out what to do, what more we can do to make that happen but it's just a super interesting job [laughter]. I mean, challenging but...

DR: Hm... yeah, so...

DR: Well you need a... you know in relationship to the music there have been some unique collaborations. So it's not just all south Indian musicians...

AR: That's right.

DR: So you (guy)...you...in-in dance company you are taking a risk and a challenge in creating it seems like.

AR: Yes and I think also what I like that's happened recently is we collaborate with another kind of musician but we will have one or two Carnatic south Indian musicians in the mix because that feeling, the feeling that they bring to us we need that. We need that feeling in our bodies, in our brains, in our souls in order to communicate through dance. So the next project is with Jazz Saxophonist, Bass Guitar, Indian violin and Indian drums and Indian flute.

DR: Is the Saxophonist south Indian?

AR: He is south Indian.

DR: Yeah.

AR: But he does American Jazz.

DR: Yeah, yeah.

AR: Yep.

DR: Right.

AR: So, you know we wanted, Ranee and Aparna wanted to make sure we had that Bass [clapping sound], we have our music...

DR: It's your root.

AR: We need that.

DR: It's really your root.

AR: Same with the last year's piece with the Taiko drummers. We had the...we had four type of drummers and then we had vocal, violin, drum, south Indian and another drum from south-west India and I think it's been working really well to have both elements because then the musical-the musical, the players and the composers they create together as well, so that the sound is really, it's not just like a bunch of people coming together at the last minute. They work for months so that they make a new orchestra. So it's-it's all really together.

DR: So, anything you wanna add that...

AR: [Sigh] Hm...anything...well I mean just...No, I don't think so. I just think it's... I like it. It's nice to have these conversations about you know what art is doing and what it does to one person individually, what it does to a group, what it does for a community and I hope that...I just want...hope people you know come out see art, see dance, see music and don't let that you know kind of disappear from...

DR: Hm...Hm...

AR: Everyday life... it's so important.

DR: Yeah.

AR: And it feels sometimes we are in this insular world where it's happening all the time and I forget the...for other people they may not think about this work thing that often and hopefully, in some small part work should fit into that.

DR: Hm...

DR: So how do you see the future for Ragamala?

AR: [Pause] In my-my dream future for Ragamala is that we well we kind of create that we are seeing as a dance...I hate to say the term dance brand because that makes it sound so businessy but kind of like what Alvin Ailey was able to do or Martha Graham, what were they...they-they became synonymous with a style of dance that was known throughout the country [pause] just because there...it's a very specific style of Bharatanatyam that

nobody else does and in my opinion is [pause] very-very it's difficult, it stands above a lot of other styles and with more globalization, more people coming, more people who are Americans from different cultures happening... I think there is a possibility and we don't have to be just outsiders who dance anymore. We should be woven into the real fabric of it so the contemporary dance, modern dance isn't just seen as one type of thing. It's seen as many type of things. So my dream would be something like I mean that's a big dream but we are slowly getting there.

DR: Why not dream? [Chuckles]

AR: Hm...Hm...

DR: Great. Thanks a lot Ashwini.

AR: Thank you so much.

DR: Yeah.

AR: This was really fun.

DR: Yeah.
