

Tulane doctors form krewe to bring Bollywood to Mardi Gras

Carolyn Scofield

scofield@tulane.edu

(504) 881-4542

March 24, 2024 11:00 AM



Krewe da Bhan Gras danced through the Marigny and French Quarter as part of Krewe Boheme. (All photos by Fernando Lopez)

Vid Raturi moved from New Jersey to New Orleans six years ago to attend Tulane University as an undergrad. Now a first-year student at Tulane University School of Medicine, Raturi longed to see more south Asian representation in her adopted home. So, she jumped at the chance to join the newly formed Krewe da Bhan Gras, a Bollywood-inspired dance group that made its debut this Carnival season and was founded by her mentor, [Anjali Niyogi, MD, MPH](#), and [Monica Dhand, MD](#).

“It’s been incredible to be able to represent the south Asian community in such a pivotal part of the New Orleans experience,” said Raturi. “Dancing in the parade, I

saw people watching us who were smiling and tearing up.”

The krewe’s cofounders are both physicians at Tulane University School of Medicine. Dhand is a clinical assistant professor of medicine and co-director of the RIGHT Program (Resident Initiative in Global Health at Tulane). Niyogi is an associate professor of internal medicine and pediatrics, co-director of the RIGHT Program, and an adjunct assistant professor at the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.

Their idea for the krewe came together when the physicians met with their friend, Hunter Hutchinson, who had just been named art director for [Krewe Boheme](#), one of the first parades of the Carnival season.

“The city has always had this great mix of cultures coming together, and, more recently with Mardi Gras, there are more and more groups highlighting their own cultural practices and traditions,” said Niyogi. “South Asian clothes and textiles are so bright and colorful, and our dances are lively. It seemed like a natural fit with Mardi Gras.”

The parade took the krewe’s 32 dancers and 10 support staff through the Marigny and French Quarter as crowds of thousands lined the streets. Krewe members handed out bags of spices, bangles, incense, bindis, and this [Krewe de Bhan Gras cookbook](#).

“Our krewe members contributed so much to make this happen,” said Dhand. “Some dancers showed up in scrubs directly from the hospital, painted the carts, made throws, and drew mehndi. The practices were so joyful! It’s impossible to dance bhangra and not feel happy.”

With Carnival season now over for 2023, Krewe da Bhan Gras is looking forward to what’s next.

“I didn’t realize I was missing something until we came together,” Niyogi said. “It was just so natural to be together and re-express our childhood in certain ways. We want to keep this going in some form or fashion, even for ourselves, keep practicing and dancing.”

Read more about the krewe [in this feature story](#) by *The Bitter Southerner*.