



GARY REYES — MERCURY NEWS PHOTOGRAPHS

Divya Majji, 16, leads the Xpressions dance troupe at a dress rehearsal this week in Cupertino for Sunday's Youthsava competition.

Biggest Indian dance festival to feature 500 performers

RECORD NUMBER OF TEAMS TO BATTLE SUNDAY IN MILPITAS

By Lisa Fernandez and Gary Reyes
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A record number of Indo-American dancers will don richly colored saris and sparkling jewels Sunday to compete in the annual Youthsava dance festival competition at the India Community Center in Milpitas.

ICC spokeswoman Tanuja Bahal said more than 70 teams comprising about 500 dancers — the most in the festival's 11-year history — from all over the Bay Area are competing this year, with dances representing almost every state in India.

Dancers will perform ev-



Director Srividya Eashwar, right, helps members of the Xpressions dance troupe get ready for a rehearsal.

erything from Punjabi *bhangra* harvest dancing to modern Bollywood-inspired steps, from stick-dancing called

dandiya raas honoring the Lord Krishna to nomadic folk dances from the state of Rajasthan.

"Dance is an easy way to get into your culture," Bahal said.

Performers range in age from 3 to 18.

The prize? Knowing your grandparents are very proud of you, and a trophy.

Plus, there's the intangible prize of dancing just because it's fun.

"I love dancing so much," said Cupertino resident Shivani Sharma, 17, a junior at Monta Vista High School. "It lets me be free. It lets me be away from academic life at school and the outside world. It lets me just be myself and dance my heart out."

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