Nurturing Talent

BAFA, the oldest art, dance and music academy in Bangladesh has its main branch in Wiseghat. Established in 1955 the academy expanded its activities by opening two branches one at Dhanmandi, which began in 1973, and another at Motijheel, which was launched in 1975.

If one person can represent the history of BAFA it is Rahija Khanam Jhunu. "I was, at the onset, a student, then a teacher and now the principal of BAFA," says Jhunu. In the year 1955, she joined BAFA as a student of dance. She recalls her student life as vividly as if it occurred only yesterday. She also recalls how the initiation to BAFA took place.

"I was a student of Gandaria Girl's School and the headmistress was Bashanti Guha Thakurata, who was very culturally inclined. Every year after the final exam there used to be a function where students got the chance to show their talents in performing arts. When I was in class five, Ajit Sanyal, who was one of the founders and a teacher of the newly established BAFA, was summoned to direct a dance drama called *Ghumanto Rajkanya*, in which I got the part of the cowboy. The role attracted a lot of attention as well as accolades from those who attended the annual function," remembers Jhunu who at the insistence of Sanyal joined BAFA. "I became one of those students who earned a scholarship. At BAFA, it was under

