the guidance of Sanyal that I started to take lessons in dance," recalls Jhunu.

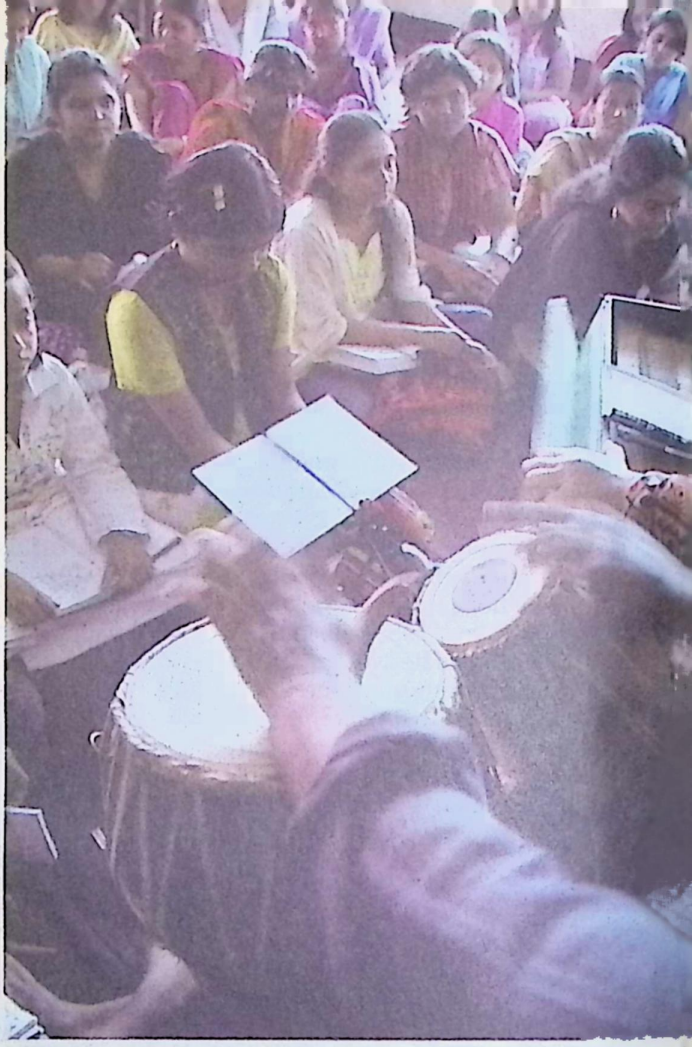
However, Sanyal did not stay with BAFA for long. "After his departure GA Mannan came along and it was around 1958 that an offer came for BAFA to stage a dance drama. Mannan was adamant that he would do Jasimuddin's *Nakshikanthar Math*. Though everyone else was skeptical about it, and thought it was not suitable for the audience of the city, he stuck to his resolve. And after rehearsing for three long months it was staged in the then Eskander Mirza Hall, which is now the Engineers' Institute. The show was a resounding success," remembers Jhunu.

It is noteworthy that the drama was staged in the year 1958, and at that period there were only six to seven students in the dance class. Mannan's acumen lay in the fact that he could sense who was fit for what role. "Not only was Mannan determined to perform Jasimuddin's rural saga but also decided on using me as its heroine," recalls Jhunu. She was a young student of BAFA and had the look that suited the role. While authorities at BAFA did not have much confidence in the young Jhunu, Mannan let her through rigorous training and made her prepare for the lead role.

The dance drama, staged for the first time, brought immediate renown for its director and the actors. "Offers started to pour in and we travelled to most of the cities of the then West Pakistan with the drama. We even visited Iran and Iraq to stage the same act. It was in Iran that I earned the epithet of ballerina," recalls Jhunu.

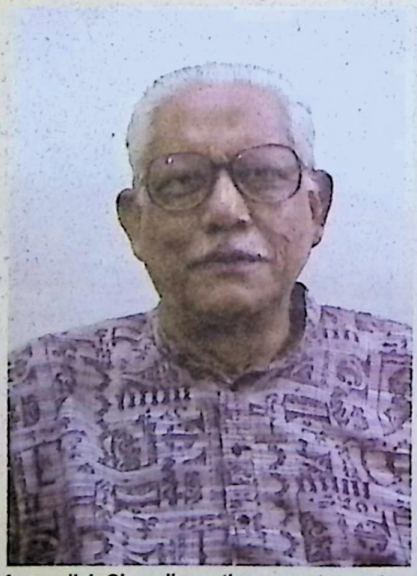
If the performances brought fame for Jhunu, it was her determination to stay with BAFA that whittled out her future course. Jhunu completed her certificate course in 1960 and joined immediately as a teacher at BAFA.

It was in 1998 that she became the principal of the organisation with which her name and fame has got forever entwined.



In the last 50 years BAFA has produced most of the talents in the performing arts.

Reflecting on the era when she was taking dance lessons at BAFA, Jhunu says that there were only a handful of parents who wanted their children to grow up as artists. "At present that scenario has drastically changed. Parents of children are now ready to dedicate a lot of time to nurture the talent in their children," says Jhunu who feels that for the performing artists the opportunities are now plentiful. It was not so in the time when Jhunu was young. "To enter the domain of arts was unthinkable for a girl from any Muslim family during the 1950s and 1960s, as the predominant religious sentiment was that any art was anti reli



Amanullah Chowdhury, the present secretary.



Rahiya Khanam Jhunu, the Principal.