

CHAPTER - 5

CONTRIBUTIONS OF

LATE SMT. ANJALI MERH

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5.1 PROFILE



Fig 5.1.1 Guru Smt. Anjali Merh

Late Guru Smt. Anjali Merh (22th September 1928 – 10th February 1979) was a great exponent of Bharatanatyam Dance, a choreographer, an educator, an author, a poet and music composer.¹ She was born in a Nagar Brahmin family.² Her mother was Smt. Mugdha Hora and her father was Shri Ramesh Hora.³ Her mother was a poetess. She

was born in a very educated family. She had a very good environment at home where all the arts were encouraged. Smt. Anjali Merh had an inborn talent and was very much interested in dance from childhood. According to Dr. Anand Merh, she even worked as a child artiste in a Hindi film. The film was produced by Shri Ramniklal Trivedi. Shri Ramniklal Trivedi's son was a class mate of Dr. Anand Merh in school in Bombay (Now Mumbai). Her parents encouraged her talent of Dancing as she was an extremely gifted and talented child. From a very tender age of four years, she started taking training in the Kathak Dance Style. She was known as "Baby Anjali" in Mumbai. She gave delightful stage performances during that time, and they were very much appreciated by the audiences. Her parents were Theosophists. They were very active members of Theosophical society. Around 1925 they came in close contact with Smt. Rukmini Devi.⁴

5:1:1 Training of Guru Smt. Anjali Merh at 'Kalakshetra':

Guru Smt. Anjali Merh's family was known to Smt. Rukmini Devi since 1925. According to Smt. Rukmini Devi, Smt. Anjali Merh came to 'Kalakshetra' at the age of seven years with her parents; she gave a very charming performance in 'Kalakshetra', which Smt. Rukmini Devi always remembered. According to Smt. Rukmini Devi she was a natural born artist. She considered Smt. Rukmini Devi as her mother and always addressed her as 'Amma'⁵

When Smt. Rukmini Devi started 'Kalakshetra' in Chennai, her parents sent her there in 1944 to take training in Bharatanatyam Dance Style. She was in the first batch of 'Kalakshetra'. When Smt. Anjali Merh was taking training at 'Kalakshetra', Great Gurus like Guru Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai of Pandanallur Village, his son-in-law Chokkalingam Pillai, Smt. Sharadambai who was a *Devadasi* from Karaikkal and Guru Shri Dandayudha Pillai taught at 'Kalakshetra'.⁶

Smt. Anjali Merh learnt Bharatanatyam from great Gurus like Smt. Rukmini Devi, Guru Shri Chokkalingam Pillai, Karaikkal Saradambal and Guru Shri Dandayudha Pillai at 'Kalakshetra'. Smt. Anjali Merh studied majorly under Guru Shri Chokkalingam Pillai. She was a very dedicated, devoted and hardworking student. She was one of the first students to graduate from 'Kalakshetra'. Other students who graduated with her were

Sharada Hoffman and Lalita Shashtri.⁷ She was the first Gujarati girl to study Bharatanatyam at 'Kalakshetra'.⁸

Smt. Anjali Merh studied all the aspects of Bharatanatyam at 'Kalakshetra'.⁹ She also learnt Karnatic Music at 'Kalakshetra'. It was not compulsory to learn Tamil at 'Kalakshetra' but she learnt to speak and write Tamil. She had a command over the language. According to her, it is important to learn the language to understand the art form better.¹⁰ She could sing South Indian songs in languages like Tamil and Telugu. Her knowledge of Tamil used to surprise Tamilians in Madras. She could not only speak and read Tamil but she could also write Tamil. She even wrote letters to Rukmini Devi in Tamil.¹¹ She loved speaking in Tamil and spoke to Tamilians in Tamil, which made her happy. Smt. Anjali Merh studied the art of 'Nattuvangam' thoroughly at 'Kalakshetra'.¹²

She also participated in many dance dramas of Smt. Rukmini Devi. She took a keen interest during the practice of Dance Dramas and learnt the different aspects of Dance Dramas by observing Rukmini Devi closely. 'Kuravanji Dance Dramas' used to be staged in the precincts of 'Brihadeshwara' Temple at Tanjore and other shrines in South India. These Dance Dramas were revived by Rukmini Devi. Smt. Anjali Merh was a part of reviving of these Dance Dramas. Smt. Anjali Merh participated in these dance dramas and she was travelling all over India with Rukmini Devi to perform.¹³ She participated in the 'Kutrala Kuravanji' choreographed by Smt. Rukmini Devi. She played the character of one of the 'sakhis' of the main character Vasanthavalli, which was played by Smt. Rukmini Devi herself.¹⁴ She also took active interest in and learnt choreography, stage decoration, the Art of Makeup, costume designing and other aspects related to the presentation of a Dance Drama. She also observed and gained knowledge of the other dance form Kathakali which was taught at 'Kalakshetra'. Everything about Rukmini Devi was beautiful, and she had a very good aesthetic sense. Smt. Anjali Merh imbibed her aesthetic sense and was reflected in her personality.¹⁵ Peria Sharada and Chinna Sharada were her classmates at Kalakshetra. She was trained at 'Kalakshetra' with great personalities of Bharatanatyam Dance Style like Jay Laxmi and Lalita Shastri who were also students of 'Kalakshetra' that time.¹⁶

Smt. Anjali Merh finished her Diploma at 'Kalakshetra' in 1947, with distinction. She stayed at 'Kalakshetra' for two more years as she wanted to acquire teaching experience.¹⁷ She observed Rukmini Devi and other Gurus at 'Kalakshetra' and honed her teaching skills. In 1947 the '*Kulapati*' Shri Kanhaiyalal Munshi noticed her at 'Kalakshetra' while she was teaching there. He was surprised and impressed that a Gujarati girl was teaching a Classical Dance Style of South India. He requested Rukmini Devi that he wanted Anjali Merh for the 'Nartan Sikshapith' of 'Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan' to train students in Bharatanatyam Dance Style. Rukmini Devi agreed and allowed Anjali Merh to join 'Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan'. Therefore she returned to Bombay. The legacy that she inherited from Smt. Rukmini Devi, she passed it to the students of Bombay who learnt dance from her.¹⁸

5:1:2 Guru Smt. Anjali Merh's contribution in dance In Bombay (Mumbai):

She was one of the first pioneers to teach 'Kalakshetra' style in Bombay. Smt. Anjali Merh had aroused interest and excitement amongst the dance students and dance lovers in Bombay by being the first Gujarati to teach Bharatanatyam in 'Kalakshetra' Style. She was very active as a dancer and a creative choreographer in Bombay. She was amongst the first few pioneers who promoted, propagated and made Bharatanatyam popular in the Western India. She practised her art every day and gave regular performances when she was in Bombay.¹⁹

She became the first principal of 'Nartan Sikshapith' of 'Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan'. Shri Kanhaiyalal Munshi understood the importance of arts. According to Dr. Anand Merh, Smt. Anjali Merh had very good relations with Shri Kanhaiyalal Munshi and he encouraged her a lot. She also started a school in Bombay named 'Rukmini Kalavihar', which she named after Rukmini Devi. It was located at 'Swadhin Sadan Building' (Ground Floor), Church Gate, Bombay (Now Mumbai). Smt. Anjani Arun Kumar, who is very well-known Bharatanatyam Dance Guru in Mumbai and Pune, was amongst her first few pupils who took training in her school. Other students who were learning dance with Anjani Arun Kumar were Smt. Nirmala Golikari, Smt. Mira Rao, Smt. Sudha Thakkar and Smt. Menaka Thakkar. Smt. Perna Desai, who is the sister of Anjani Arun Kumar and who is also a famous Bharatanatyam Dance Guru in Pune, used to

accompany her sister to Anjali Merh's Bharatanatyam class. She was inspired and motivated to learn Bharatanatyam Dance Style watching Smt. Anjali Merh teach dance. Smt. Prerna Desai Later learnt Bharatanatyam Dance style from Smt. Anjali Merh in Baroda in the College of Indian Music Dance and Dramatics.²⁰

5:1:3 Guru Smt. Anjali Merh as a Dancer:

In 1944, Guru Smt. Anjali Merh performed in the 'Kutrala 'Kuravanji'" choreographed by Smt. Rukmini Devi. She played the character of one of the four *sakhis* of the main character 'Vasatavalli', which was played by Smt. Rukmini Devi.²¹ Smt. Anjali Merh performed in the dance compositions of Smt. Rukmini Devi across India.

Smt. Anjali Merh gave a Bharatanatyam recital in the first 'Maharashtra State Dance and Music Festival', in November 1957 in 'Rang Bhavan' in Bombay. According to Shri Sunil Kothari, her dance had a spiritual flavour, which was a characteristic of 'Kalakshetra' style.²²

According to the information I got from the invitation card of the 'Gujarati Sangeet Nrutya Mahotsav' organised by 'Gujarat Sangeet Natak Akademi' in 1962, Smt. Anjali Merh performed on 17th October 1962 in the festival of 'Gujarat Sangeet Nrutya Mahotsava' organized by 'Gujarat Sangeet Natak Akademi' at 8 p. m. in Ahmedabad. (Invitation Card was shown to me by Smt. Prafulla Patel) This was the third dance festival organized by 'Gujarat Sangeet Natak Akademi' after it was established in 1961 with Mrinalini Sarabhai as its Vice Chairman and Indumati Chimanlal as its Chairman. Other artistes who performed in this festival were, Bharatji Vyas, Shri Nagar Das, Shri Shiv Kumar Shukla, Shri Vijay Raghav, Dagar brothers, Shri Gulam Kadar Khan, Shri Arvind Parikh, Shri Yashwant Purohit, Shri Monghibai Kurdikar, Shri Narayan Swami, Smt. Kishori Amonkar, Shri Damodarlal Kabra, Shri Maniram, Shri Jasraj, Shri Ravi Shankar, Smt. Nayana Zaveri and sisters, Smt. Rupande Shah, Shri Sunderlal Gangani, Shri Chatuni Panikar, Smt. Prerna Kilavala (now Desai), Smt. Prafula Patel and Smt. Priyamada Mohanty.²³

According to Smt. Anjani Arunkumar, who learnt dance in the institute of Smt. Anjali Merh, she gave many performances in Bombay. She performed regularly in

Bombay once in two or three months, solo as well as in group with her students. Smt. Anjani Arunkumar remembers her performing Bharatanatyam on Hindustani Music, on songs like, 'Tum Radhe Bano Shyam', 'Gauri Ardhangana', and 'Kahe Bansi Bajaye'. Smt. Anjali Merh was one of the first few pioneers to choreograph Bharatanatyam on Hindustani Music.²⁴

According to Smt. Tani Desai, her uncle Shri Parashar was a famous percussionist in Bombay who used to accompany performances of all the Classical Dance styles. He used to play *Mridangam* with Bharatanatyam, *Chenda* with Kathakali, *Pakhawaj* with Manipuri and *Tabla* with Kathak. He often accompanied Smt. Anjali Merh on *Mridangam* in her performances. Smt. Tani Desai had seen Smt. Anjali Merh, practise with Shri Parashar in Bombay. Later when Smt. Tani Desai came to Baroda as a student in the College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics in Baroda, she saw Smt. Anjali Merh's dance when she demonstrated while teaching. According to Smt. Tani Desai, she was a very graceful dancer and they (students) were on a different plane of ecstasy and divinity when they saw her grace and style.²⁵

According to Smt. Prerna Desai, when she was a student in the College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, in Baroda, she saw Smt. Anjali Merh, practising every day after the classes. Many times, Shri Kubernath Tanjorkar, used to sing and do 'Nattuvangam' for her. According to Smt. Prerna Desai, her dance was very spiritual. In Baroda Smt. Anjali Merh performed beautiful 'Abhinaya items'. Smt. Prerna Desai remembers performances of Smt. Anjali Merh doing *Abhinaya* on *Padam*, 'Shri Varugalamo Aiya'.²⁶

According to Shri Harish Gangani, he had once witnessed a programme in the play box of the College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, in which Guru Smt. Anjali Merh and Pandit Shri Sundarlal Gangani had given performance. Her *Nritya* or *Bhava* aspect was very strong. The programme was on a very big scale, and whole College was decorated for the event.²⁷

According to Smt. Yoginiben Merh, she had seen her solo dance performance in Baroda. According to her she was a very good dancer and there was perfection in her technique.

According to Dr. Anand Merh, photo of Smt. Anjali Merh was published on the front page of The Illustrated Weekly edition, which was an English language weekly newsmagazine and articles about her dance ventures used to come in many newspapers.



Fig 5.1.2 Guru Smt. Anjali Merh



Fig 5.1.3 Guru Smt. Anjali Merh this photograph is of the painting of Smt. Anjali Merh by Shri Vaghela.

કાર્યક્રમ			
તા. ૧૩મીથી ૧૭મી ઓક્ટોબર, ૧૯૬૨			
સંગીત			
તા. ૧૩ રાત્રે ૭-૩૦ થી			
૧. શ્રી. ભરતજી વ્રજાસ	...	કંઠ્ય	
૨. શ્રી. નાગરદાસ	...	દિલરૂપા	
૩. શ્રી. શિવકુમાર શુક્લ	...	કંઠ્ય	
૪. શ્રી. વિજયરાધવરાય	...	કંઠ્ય	
૫. શ્રી. કામરૂખ ખેડુઆ	...	કંઠ્ય	
તા. ૧૪ રાત્રે ૭-૩૦ થી			
૧. શ્રી. ગુલામ હદરખાન	...	કંઠ્ય	
૨. અમરિંદ પરીખ	...	સતાર	
૩. શ્રી. વસવંત પુરોહિત	...	કંઠ્ય	
૪. શ્રી. નારાયણ રવામી	...	વીણા	
૫. શ્રીમતી મોંઘીબાઈ કુરદીકર	...	કંઠ્ય	
તા. ૧૫ રાત્રે ૭-૪૫ થી			
૧. શ્રીમતી કિશોરી અમોળકર	...	કંઠ્ય	
૨. શ્રી. દામોદરલાલ ઠાપ્પા	...	સરોદ	
૩. શ્રી. મણિરામજી અને જશરાવ	...	કંઠ્ય	
૪. શ્રી. રવિશંકર	...	સિતાર	
નૃત્ય			
તા. ૧૬ રાત્રે ૮-૦૦ થી			
૧. શ્રીમતી નયના ઝવેરી અને બહેનો		મણીપુરી	
૨. શ્રીમતી રૂપાન્દે શાહ	...	ભરત નાટ્યમ	
૩. શ્રી. મુંદરલાલ ગાંગાણી	...	કથક	
૪. શ્રી. ચાતુરિણી પાનીકર	...	કથકલી	
તા. ૧૭ રાત્રે ૮-૦૦ થી			
૧. કે. પ્રેમલાલ કિલ્લાવાલા	...	ભરત નાટ્યમ	
૨. કે. પ્રફુલ્લા પટેલ	...	કથક	
૩. શ્રીમતી અંજલિ મેદ	...	ભરત નાટ્યમ	
૪. શ્રીમતી પ્રિયંવદા મોહાનને અને સાથીઓ	...	હિંદીસી	

Fig 5.1.4 The image of the invitation card of first 'Gujarat Sangeet Nrutya Mahotsava', organised by Gujarat Sangeet Natak Akademi in which Guru Smt. Anjali Merh performed on 17th October 1962

શ્રીમતી અંજલિ મેઠ



નૃત્યકાર જ નહિ, નૃત્યશિક્ષિકા તરીકે જાણીતાં થયેલાં શ્રીમતી અંજલિ મેઠ નૃત્યકલાની ભરત નાટ્યમ્ ક્ષેત્રેની વરેલાં છે. તેઓ શ્રીમતી રૂમિની અરેલનાં શિષ્યા છે. ભરત નાટ્યમ્ જ્ઞાતા વિવિધ પ્રકારેને પરંપરાગત રીતે રજૂ કરવા ઉપરાંત એમણે અનેક નૃત્યભેદે રજૂ કર્યા છે. ઉત્તર હિંદ અને પશ્ચિમ હિંદમાં ભારત નાટ્યમ્ને લોકપ્રિય બનાવવાને એમણે હિંદી અને ગુજરાતીમાં મૌલિક નૃત્યો રજૂ કરી જાણપાત્ર કાર્ય કર્યું છે. અત્યારે શ્રીમતી મેઠ વડોદરાની એમ. એસ. યુનિવર્સિટીમાં ભરત નાટ્યમ્ શીખવે છે.



પંડિત સુન્દરલાલ ગંગાણી

હિંદી નૃત્યમાં કથક પદ્ધતિની જન્મભૂમિ ધરાવનારા પંડિત સુન્દરલાલ ગંગાણી નૃત્યકાર છે. પંડિતજી અગ્રણ્ય નૃત્યકાર ઉપરાંત એક સુંદર સિસૃક પણ છે. હિંદજનમાં ઉત્ખાતા સંગીત મયોત્સવો અને પરિષદોમાં અનેકવાર એમણે એમની નૃત્યકલા બતાવી છે. પંડિત ગૌરીશંકરજીના તેઓ શિષ્ય છે. પંડિતજી નૃત્ય ઉપરાંત એક અગ્રણ્ય તબલાવાદનકાર છે અને આ કલા તેઓ પંડિતજી હજારીલાલજી પાસે શીખ્યા છે. અત્યારે પંડિત સુન્દરલાલજી વડોદરાની એમ. એ. યુનિવર્સિટીમાં નૃત્યના પ્રાધ્યાપક છે.



5.1.5 The picture showing photo of Guru Smt. Anjali Merh and Pandit Shri Sunderlal Gangani, from the invitation card of first 'Gujarat Sangeet Nrutya Mahotsava', organised by Gujarat Sangeet Natak Akademi, in which Smt. Anjali Merh performed on 17th October 1962

5:1:4 Guru Smt. Anjali Merh as a Nattuvnar:

Her '*Nattuvangam*' (rhythmic sound of cymbals, by *Nattuvnar*) was like a professional *Nattuvanar* (*The traditional Guru, who is the leader of the orchestra*). Smt. Anjali Merh had taken the training of Bharatanatyam from 'Kalakshetra'. Rukmini Devi made '*Nattuvangam*' a part of the course at 'Kalakshetra', so that students can do '*Nattuvangam*' themselves while teaching and conducting programmes. Hence, Smt. Anjali Merh had learnt the details of '*Nattuvangam*' at 'Kalakshetra'. She was very good in *Tāla* (Structured units of a rhythmical tempo) and *Laya* (Rhythm or Tempo). Her '*Nattuvangam*' was good. Her rendering to the *Shollakattus* (syllables), *Tirmaanamams*, *Jathis* and other *Nritya bols* was very good. She had an inimitable style of reciting intricate *Tirmaanamams* with perfect precision of *Tāla* in her pleasing voice. Her '*Nattuvangam*' was like a trained *Nattuvanar*. Knowledge of '*Nattuvangam*' is very important for a dance teacher. Her good '*Nattuvangam*' was a benefit for her students, which perfectly blended with the music of the items during the programmes. She was a perfect ideal as an accomplished Nattuvnar.²⁸ According to Rukmini Devi, she was astonished to see Smt. Anjali Merh's '*Nattuvamgam*'. She used *Taals* as an expert traditional Nattuvnar.²⁹

5:1:5 Guru Smt. Anjali Merh as a Singer:

Guru Smt. Anjali Merh grew up in a very artistic environment as her mother was a poetess and her father encouraged various arts. She had a very sweet, melodious voice and was a very good vocalist. She was a rare combination of a vocalist and dancer. Smt. Anjali Merh had taken training in all the aspects of Bharatanatyam dance at 'Kalakshetra'. She had also taken training in Karnatic music at 'Kalakshetra'. She also had a good knowledge of Hindustani music. She had good knowledge of *Raag* and *Tāla* of Karnatic as well as Hindustani music styles. Her singing had a South Indian accent. She could effortlessly sing songs in Tamil and Telugu languages. While conducting the Bharatanatyam Dance class, she would sing a *Kandikai* of an item with many different variations. Her singing was an advantage to her students. She used to beautifully sing *Bhajan* and *Garba* too. She had very good relations with Shri Jaydev Bhojak, who was the session director of All India Radio. *Bhajans*, *songs* and *Prabhatiyas* rendered by her

were often played by All India Radio in the morning broadcasts. She sang according to the occasion. There was *Bhava* (feeling) in her singing.³⁰

She encouraged Dance students to learn Music. In her words “Learning Vocal makes the dancer soulful”. She also had gramophone records made in her voice.³¹

5:1:6 Guru Smt. Anjali Merh as a Poetess:

Guru Smt. Anjali Merh wrote many beautiful songs and lyrics in Gujarati. She wrote ‘Chandramaulishwara 'Kuravanji'’ in Gujarati and the lyrics of a whole *Margam* in Gujarati. She wrote *Varnam* in Gujarati language in *Raag* 'Vasanta' and *Ādi Tāla*, a *Kirtanam* in Gujarati Language, ‘Pranamu tuj ne hai Parameshwar’ in *Raag* 'Arabhi' and *Ādi Tāla*, a *Padam* in Gujarati language, ‘Ja Ja Kanha Tuj, Karani Jani Nathi Re Sunavi Juthi Vani’, a *Tillana* dedicated to Smt. Rukmini Devi which was composed in *Raag* 'Sindhu Bhairavi' and *Ādi Tāla* and many other songs.³²

5:1:7 Guru Smt. Anjali Merh as an author:

Guru Smt. Anjali Merh wrote two books in Gujarati titled ‘Nartan Dharshika’ and ‘Chandramaulishwara 'Kuravanji'’. Details of the books are given in next chapter.

5:1:8 Personality:

(The following information is compiled from the information shared by Dr. Anand Merh, Smt. Yogini Merh, Smt. Jeethy Menon, Smt. Juthika Mahen, Smt. Kanan Patel and Smt. Prafula Patel in the interview taken by Present Researcher)

Guru Smt. Anjali Merh was a mother figure to all her students. Students lovingly addressed her as ‘Anjaliben’.³³ According to Rukmini Devi, every student that passed through her hands was devoted to her.³⁴

According to Dr. Anand Merh she was very strict about the purity of dance, did not compromise on traditional values and the technique of Bharatanatyam dance style. In the inauguration event of Anjali Memorial Hospital, Maharaja Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad was invited for *Deeppragatya* ritual on stage. Maharaja Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad came on the stage with shoes. Smt. Anjali Merh requested him to remove his shoes, as stage is like

a temple for artistes. Later in the speech Maharaja mentioned that he has a great respect for Smt. Anjali Merh's regard for stage. She was very strict about tradition and culture, but was very soft by heart. She was very compassionate and a loving person. She would many times spend her whole salary to help those in need. She was very broad minded and helped many couples in love get married by convincing their parents. She was very popular and was respected nationally and internationally.



Fig 5.1.6 Guru Smt. Anjali Merh

According to Smt. Yogini Merh (distant cousin and sister-in-law of Smt. Anjali Merh), she had a very helping and caring nature. When their family shifted to Bombay (now Mumbai), Smt. Anjali Merh and her parents helped them a lot as they were residents of Santacruz area of Bombay (now Mumbai). When Smt. Yogini Merh was pregnant, she

faced a major health issue. Smt. Anjali Merh supported her a lot during that period and she advised her to take a month's leave from the job. She took her to the doctors whom she knew very well. Smt. Anjali Merh took care of her for a whole month when she was on bed rest and thus was instrumental in protecting her baby (Dr. Anand Merh) in her womb.

According to Dr. Anand Merh who is the son of Smt. Yogini Merh he used to live with Smt. Anjali Merh since childhood and she cared for him as her own son. When he was 19 years of age, he had a major slip disc problem and was advised to take bed rest. That time Smt. Anjali Merh took care of him very affectionately and very lovingly for one and a half month, without the help of any care taker.

She even used to take care of students and specially who were living away from their homes, like a mother and would request her local students to take special care of students who were living away from home.³⁵ If a student was not well, she used to take him/her to hospital in her own car, and many times also take him/her home, and even cook food for them. Many of her students considered her as their mother. When students came to her home, she would also cook food for them. She was a very good cook.³⁶ She would take time from her very busy schedule to meet her old students. She was very respectful towards her elders and her seniors.³⁷

According to Smt. Prafulla Patel, she went to College in Smt. Anjaliben's car. On the way if Smt. Anjali Merh saw any one in need of help, she would stop the car and help, and if the person is not well, she even gave him or her lift in her car. She was so compassionate. According to Smt. Prafulla Patel, in 1971 she was going to USA. She requested Smt. Anjali Merh to record two songs for her brother's daughter. She very happily recorded two songs for her. "Chalo Ramiye Holi Holi" was one of the songs.³⁸

She had a very charismatic personality as she was a dancer, academician, a poet, a composer, a Nattuvnar, a singer and a choreographer with her multi linguistic knowledge of Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit, Marathi, Hindi and her mother tongue Gujarati, deep knowledge of Indian Mythology and Deities together with her expertise in Classical Dance, Classical Music and also other forms of music.³⁹

She had adopted Tamil culture and looked more like a Tamilian than a Gujarati. She was very traditional and believed in Indian culture and values. It was reflected in her dressing. She was very much influenced by South Indian culture, so she dressed up like a South Indian. She had a very melodious voice. She rendered traditional Bharatanatyam items like *Padams*, *Kirtanams*, *Javalis* and *Bhajans* in Classical Karnatic music in her mellifluous voice. She also had the knowledge of Hindustani music. She had a very good aesthetic sense.⁴⁰

She was a very strong willed person and believed in herself. Though many traditional artists, warned her not to choreographed 'Navagraha', she went ahead with her production.⁴¹

She was a seeker of knowledge. She loved Sanskrit language and had a good knowledge of it. She used to consult experts of Sanskrit language, whenever she choreographed an item in Sanskrit. She would also consult experts in the respective subjects if she had doubts. She was always ready to learn new things. She learnt Sanskrit from Shri Bharat Vyas. She consulted Shri Bharat Vyas, whenever she needed help while choreographing any item in Sanskrit language. She had a very good knowledge of languages like Sanskrit, Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi and Tamil.⁴²

Smt. Anjali Merh visited, performed and presented her new and sensitive experiments in many cities of India with her students. She also visited many countries like South Africa for presentation of her performances. In the year 1975-76 she was invited by Rukmini Devi to lead the 'Kalakshetra' troupe to China and other countries.⁴³

According to Dr. Anand Merh she had good relations with mostly all the famous exponents of Bharatanatyam and Kathak of her time. She was very close friend of Smt. Vijayanti Mala. She considered Smt. Anjali Merh as her sister. She considered Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai as her elder sister. Dr. Mallika Sarabhai used to come with Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai when she was invited as a chief guest for her dance performances. Shri Sunil Kothari used to visit their home many times. All the famous artistes of Bharatanatyam and Kathak had visited their home in Vikrambaug bungalow (Now Baroda Sanskrit Mahavidhyalaya), D. N. Hall Campus, M.S.University, Pratapgunj, Baroda. The

exponents of dance who came as examiner to the Department of Dance did not prefer to stay at the University Guest house. They would stay at their home. Mostly everyone in the art field knew her. Professor C. V. Chandrasekhar was her contemporary and she invited him as an examiner in the Department of Dance. She had very good relations with artistes like Bina Gandhi. She had good relations with dignitaries like Maharaja Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad, Shri Thakore bhai Patel, Shri Nanalal Choksi, Shri Kanaiyalal Munshi, Smt. Hansa Mehta, Shri Uma Shankar Joshi and many more.

She was inspiring and encouraging mentor. She gave opportunities to students to perform at professional level. She took promise from her students that where ever they would go they would promote and propagate Bharatanatyam dance style. Anjaliben was a very disciplined and traditional teacher. She was very particular about the purity of Bharatanatyam dance style and made no compromise with the art form, perfection of rhythm and technique of Bharatanatyam dance style. She had a treasure of traditional Bharatanatyam items which she never hesitated to teach her students. Smt. Anjali Merh's mother Smt. Mugdha Hora was a poetess. She inherited the art of composing poems from her mother Smt. Mugdha Hora. Smt. Anjali Merh wrote beautiful lyrics in Gujarati, composed it with her vast knowledge of music and choreographed the lyrics on the spot. She experimented by composing traditional Bharatanatyam items like 'Varnam', 'Padam' and 'Kirtanam' in languages like Hindi and Gujarati. She wrote and composed 'Shri Chandramaulishwar Kuravanji' in Gujarati without sacrificing the traditional elements of the dance drama form of 'Kuravanji'. It was a very big experiment during that period. She had vast knowledge of theoretical and practical aspects of Dance Dramas.⁴⁴

She was a gifted choreographer known for her instant choreographies. The credit of choreographing a Gujarati *Margam* of Bharatanatyam Dance Style goes to Smt. Anjali Merh, which she wrote, composed and choreographed in 1972. It was performed solo in the *Arangetral* of her student Smt. Kanan Amin. It was performed solo also by many students of Anjaliben and also in group, in many cities of India. Her compositions depicted Indian culture and tradition, for example "Radha Nu Shamnu" and "Chandramaulishwara 'Kuravanji'".⁴⁵ Her compositions and choreography portrayed the potential, power and sensitivity of women; for example in the 'Padam' which she had

written, composed and choreographed, “Ja Ja Kanha Tuja Karani Jani”, in Gujarati Language.⁴⁶

She was also known for her bold, innovative and new experiments. She choreographed a Dance Drama ‘Navagraha’. A priest and some other traditional artistes had warned her not to do the production as it might affect her personal life. But she was so interested in the topic and was so determined to do the production that, she went ahead with it. She believed in herself and followed her heart. She was a very strong willed, determined artist and woman. She did not let the beliefs of society stop her from doing what she believed in.⁴⁷ She finished the production. After the successful presentation of the Dance Drama ‘Navagraha’, she met the artistes and musicians. She returned home after that and was trying to open the cupboard to change clothes. She complained about severe pain in chest. Her son Adwait Merh and Dr. Anand Merh were at home. They tried to make her feel comfortable, but she suffered a serious and spontaneous heart attack and could not be revived. She passed away on 10th February 1979 at an age of fifty years.⁴⁸

Her untimely death created a vacuum in the Dance field, which was difficult to fill. The world of Dance lost a great dancer, teacher and a choreographer. The Dance field and especially people of Gujarat will always remain indebted to her for her immense contribution in the development of Bharatanatyam.⁴⁹

According to Smt. Yogini Merh, she was so popular in the Dance field on National and International level, that BBC news mentioned the news of her death in their news. The news of her death was also published in all the leading newspaper of India. According to Dr. Anand Merh great dignitaries like Shri Uma Shankar Joshi and Shri K. M. Munshi visited their home to mourn her death.

Smt. Anjali Merh expressed her views in 1972 which read, “It is up to the young dancers of today to keep the faith alive and not to yield to the temptations of catering to cheap tastes or else I have no doubt there will be again a social downfall of the sacred art. The high pedestal on which Bharatanatyam has been placed will face degradation. Becoming famous and popular is not very important but to preserve the art in its true and chaste form is most essential to a dancer.”⁵⁰

5:1:9 Family of Smt. Anjali Merh:

(Following information is shared by Dr. Anand Merh, Smt. Yogini Merh and Dr. Anjani Arunkumar in the interview taken by Present Researcher)

Guru Smt. Anjali Merh belonged to a Nagar Brahmin family. The family originally belonged to Surat. It was a simple middle class family. But later on they shifted to Bombay. Her Mother was Smt. Mugdha Hora, who was a poetess. She was blind. She was not blind from birth but later on she lost her vision. Though she was blind she used to cook and do all the other activities also. She supported Smt. Anjali Merh in all her activities.



Fig. 5.1.7 Dr. Sukumar Merh

Her father was Shri Ramesh Hora. He was an accountant by profession. When he was young he worked with Auditor general (Government) in Kutch for many years. Later on he shifted to Bombay (Now Mumbai).

They were two children in the family. Dr. Ajay Hora was Smt. Anjali Merh's brother. He is a very well-known doctor. Rukmini Devi considered Smt Anjali Merh, her father, her mother and her brother Dr. Ajay Hora, her faithful friends.

Smt. Anjali Merh used to come to Baroda as a visiting lecturer in Dance. That time she met Dr. Sukumar Shymmlal Merh and later on got married to him. Dr. Sukumar Shymmlal Merh was the Professor and Head of Department of Geology, The Maharaja Sayajiro University of Baroda. He encouraged and supported Smt. Anjali Merh in all her dance activities and ventures. Her son's name was Shri Adwait Merh.⁵¹

Smt. Anjali Merh's brother was Dr. Ajay Hora, who was a doctor, and he used to attend Rukmini Devi.⁵² Her sister-in-law's name was Urmi Hora. Her parents and brother were members of Theosophical society.

Shri Sharadchandra Merh was the elder brother-in-law of Smt. Anjali Merh. Smt. Rashmi Merh was the elder sister-in-law (*jethani*) of Smt. Anjali Merh. She was a teacher in the Alembic school. Later on she played a major role in the establishment and development of Utkarsh School, Baroda. She was a good singer, used to sing Garba in Navratri and also judged Garba events many times. She also played a major role in starting the Betha Garba in Baroda.

Shri Subhashchandra Merh is the younger brother of Dr. Sukumar Merh and brother-in-law of Smt. Anjali Merh. Smt. Yogini Merh is the younger sister-in-law (*Dewarani*) of Smt. Anjali Merh. She is originally from Surat but born and brought up in Ahmedabad. She is a distant cousin of Smt. Anjali Merh. Smt. Anjali Merh's father and Smt. Yogini Merh's father were very good friends. Smt. Anjali Merh was very close to her and considered her as a younger sister. She had a lot of love for Smt. Yogini Merh and was very fond of her. She wanted Smt. Yogini Merh to be a part of her family and therefore played a very important role in getting her married to her brother-in-law. Smt. Yogini Merh was a teacher by profession. She supported Smt. Anjali Merh in all her activities. Dr. Anand Merh is the son of Smt. Yogini Merh and Shri Subhashchandra Merh.

Dr. Anand Merh used to live with Smt. Anjali Merh from a very small age. She considered him as her son. He is a very good orthopaedic surgeon. Dr. Anand Merh has named his hospital as 'Anjali Memorial Hospital' in the memory of Smt. Anjali Merh.



Fig. 5.1.8 Dr. Anand S. Merh

5:1:10 Awards and Honours:

Government of Gujarat honoured Guru Smt. Anjali Merh posthumously with “Gaurav Puraskar” for her contribution in the field of dance.⁵³

A trust was made in her memory by her students, admirers and well-wishers. The trust was named ‘Anjali Memorial Trust’.⁵⁴

Anjali Merh’s student, Padma Subramaniam named her dance institute after her “Nupur Anjali”.⁵⁵

Smt. Anjali Memorial Gold Medal was created for the B.P.A students of The Department of Dance, Faculty of Performing Arts, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda.

In 2013, Smt. Sandhya Mungur conceptualized and organized “Nrityanjali” programme to pay tribute to Late Shrimati Anjali Merh.

Smt. Sandhya Mungur created Smt Anjali Merh Award for best students of B.A (Honours) Performing Arts, Bharatanatyam and M.A Performing Arts Bharatanatyam with donations from past students and staff.

In the programme which was organised in her memory after she passed away, Mrinalini Sarabhai said that, she would not be resting in peace. She would be dancing wherever she is.⁵⁶

Reference:

- 1) *Excerpts from the Personal interview of Desai. Tani, conducted by Present Researcher at Manjalpur, Baroda, on 13th June, 2018 in Gujarati language. The translation of the original interview in Gujarati is done by Present Researcher in English.*
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- 22) *Kothari, Sunil. 'Nrityanjali A Tribute to Smt. Anjali Merh A Doyen of Bharatanatyam from 'Kalakshetra'', Mahatma Gandhi Institute, July 2013.*
- 23) *Excerpts from the interview of Patel. Prafulla that I conducted at Fatehgunj, Baroda on 10th March 2019 in Gujarati Language. The translation of the original interview in Gujarati is done by Present Researcher in English*
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Photo source:

- 5.1.1 *The Present Researcher got this photo from Prerna Desai*
- 5.1.2 *Merh. Anjali, Shri Chandramaulishwara 'Kuravanji'. The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda Press. 1977*
- 5.1.3 *The Present Researcher clicked this photo at the home of Dr. Anand Merh*
- 5.1.4 *The picture is from the invitation card of first 'Gujarat Sangeet Nrutya Mahotsava', organised by Gujarat Sangeet Natak Akademi, performed on 17th October 1962, which the Present Researcher got from Smt. Prafulla Patel*

- 5.1.5 *The picture is from the invitation card of first 'Gujarat Sangeet Nrutya Mahotsava', organised by Gujarat Sangeet Natak Akademi, performed on 17th October 1962, which the Present Researcher got from Smt. Prafulla Patel*
- 5.1.6 *The Present Researcher got this photo from Prerna Desai*
- 5.1.7 *<http://www.insaindia.res.in/detail/N82-0453>*
- 5.1.8 *<https://www.justdial.com/photos/dr-anand-s-merh-anjali-memorial-hospital--fatehgunj-vadodara-orthopaedic-doctors-9s5492e382e-pc-79958548-sco-5976abfw>*

5.2 CONTRIBUTION IN THE CONTEXT OF TEACHING:

Guru Smt. Anjali Merh has contributed immensely in the field of teaching. She gained the experience of teaching at 'Kalakshetra'. Later on contributed in teaching at 'Nartan Shikshapith' of the 'Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan', Mumbai, The dance institute created by her 'Rukmini Kalavihar', and The M.S. University of Baroda, Vadodara.¹ She has also taught at 'Darpana Academy', Ahmedabad.²

Contribution of Guru Smt. Anjali Merh in the field of teaching is as follows:

5:2:1 At 'Kalakshetra':

Guru Smt. Anjali Merh finished her Diploma course at 'Kalakshetra' in 1947. After finishing Diploma at 'Kalakshetra', she stayed back at 'Kalakshetra' for two years to get experience in Teaching dance.³ When she was teaching at 'Kalakshetra' in 1947, Shri Kanhaiyalal Maneklal Munshi noticed her. Shri Kanhaiyalal Maneklal Munshi was an Indian independence movement activist, politician, writer and educationist from Gujarat. He was the founder of 'Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan'. He requested Smt. Rukmini Devi that he wanted Smt. Anjali Merh to teach dance at his 'Nartan Shikshapith' of 'Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan'. Smt. Rukmini accepted his request. Smt. Anjali Merh, therefore, came back to Bombay (Mumbai).⁴

5:2:2. At Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan Bombay (Mumbai):

After Smt. Anjali Merh returned to Bombay, she started teaching at the 'Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan' in Bombay. She became the first principal of the 'Nartan Shikshapith' of Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan. She trained many students at 'Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan', thus she propagated the 'Kalakshetra' style in Bombay. She was one of the first pioneers to propagate 'Kalakshetra' style during that period in Bombay.⁵

5:2:3 Establishment of the dance institute 'Rukmini Kalavihar':

Smt. Anjali Merh established 'Rukmini Kalavihar' in Bombay to train students in Bharatanatyam dance style. She had named her institute in memory of Smt. Rukmini Devi. She trained many students in her institute. Her institute was located at Swadhin Sadan

Building (Ground floor), 'C' Road, Church Gate, Bombay (Now Mumbai). Some of the students who took training in her institute are Anjani Arunkumar, Nirmala Golikari, Mira Rao, Sudha Thakkar and Menaka Thakkar. Smt. Anjali Merh gave several performances with her students of 'Rukmini Kalavihar' in Bombay. They performed consistently once in two or three month's period.⁶

5:2:4 Contributions through lecture demonstrations and programmes in Bombay:

Smt. Anjali Merh was very active in creative dance related activities in Bombay. Smt. Anjali Merh gave many solo performances and group performances with her students in Bombay. She also gave several lecture-demonstrations in Bombay. She performed Bharatanatyam on Hindustani music. It was a very big experiment during that period. She performed Bharatanatyam on songs like 'Tum Radhe Bano Shyam', 'Damaru Hara Kara', 'Kahe Bansi Bajaye' and 'Shiva Ardhang', in Hindustani music.⁷

5:2:5 At The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda:

Smt. Anjali Merh got married to Dr. Sukumar Shymlal Merh who was the Professor and Head of Department of Geology, The Maharaja Sayajiro University of Baroda. She relocated and settled in Baroda, Gujarat after her marriage to Dr. Sukumar Merh. Smt. Hansa Mehta who was the Vice Chancellor of The Maharaja Sayajirao University, appointed good educators in the University. Smt. Anjali Merh always wanted to pursue her career in academics. She had very good relations with Smt. Hansa Mehta. As Smt. Anjali Merh belonged to a very educated family, she was highly educated, very knowledgeable in dance and could teach dance in the new education system, Smt. Hansa Mehta recognized her talent and expertise and appointed her as a visiting Fellow at the Department of Dance, the College of Indian Music Dance and Dramatics. In 1964 she joined the Department as the Head. She worked as the Head of the Department of Dance till her early demise in 1979.⁸

During her tenure as the Head of the Department, she trained many students in the Bharatanatyam dance style. She was lovingly called 'Anjaliben' by her students. She encouraged her students a lot and was a very influential teacher who loved all her students and was a motherly figure for many of them. She inspired students to practise and perfect

the art form of Bharatanatyam. Her teaching methodology was pristine and clean. She was also strict and unbending while teaching, as far as the technique and tradition of the dance was concerned. This discipline brought out best in her students and they were moulded into good dancers and future dance *Gurus*, who would act as ambassadors of dance and culture. She used to give practice of the practical aspects of Bharatanatyam Dance by conducting long hours of practical sessions. She was very particular about doing warm up exercises before starting practice of Bharatanatyam Dance items. She was very particular about making the base of students strong. Hence, she made them understand the importance of *Adavus*, and made them practise *Adavus* everyday.⁹

She was also very particular about gestures. She insisted that the gestures should be clean. She was very particular about the recitation of *shlokas* of *Abhinaya Darpan* in the morning. Every day, all the students in The Department would recite the *shlokas* of *Abhinaya Darpan* together in the Concert Hall of the Department. She would remain present at that time and correct the mistakes of students. She taught students the value of time. She was very particular about reaching class on time, and taught the same values to her students. As she was trained in 'Kalakshetra', her gestures, postures, steps and movements were perfect. She had imbibed the best from her *Gurus* at 'Kalakshetra'. Her dance had a spiritual flavour. She trained students in the traditional items of Bharatanatyam *Margam* (Repertoire). She also wrote beautiful lyrics in Gujarati on the spot in class. She would also instantly compose and choreograph the lyrics written by her and teach students her creative choreographies.¹⁰

She gave students opportunity to perform in many programmes and dance festivals like 'Kal ke Kalakar Festival' organized by 'Sur Samsad', Bombay, which was a national platform for all the upcoming artists to perform. She had trained students who could perform as professional artists.¹¹ Her students presented traditional Bharatanatyam items and also items in other languages like Hindi, Marathi, Assamese and Gujarati.¹² Performances of her students were appreciated by stalwarts in the Dance field. She encouraged her students to promote and propagate the art of Bharatanatyam Dance form. She was an institution in herself for the students who wanted to take training in Bharatanatyam dance style.¹³

She was also very affectionate as a teacher. She was strict in class but very caring in nature. She was very much concerned about students who were staying away from home and would request her local dance students to take care of them. She was motherly figure to all her students.¹⁴

She was very strict about the dressing of students. She insisted that the girls of Department of Dance should wear *sari*, put a *bindi*, wear earrings and bangles in hand. She wanted to inculcate values of Indian culture in the students. She had a deep knowledge of ancient treaties like 'Natyashastra' and 'Abhinaya Darpana'. She had a huge knowledge of practical aspects of Bharatanatyam, folk dances like Garba and Gof and Dance Dramas. She taught students of Diploma, Graduation, Post-graduation and Doctoral level.¹⁵

Given below are some of her contributions in the The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda:

5:2:5:1 Based on the information collected from Smt. Tani Desai (Interview taken on 13th June 2016 at Manjalpur, Baroda) and Smt. Kanan Patel (Interview taken on 17th June, 2018 at Chhani, Baroda), given below is the list of some of the Bharatanatyam Dance items taught by Smt. Anjali Merh in the Department of Dance, College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, Baroda:

Item Name	<i>Raag</i>	<i>Tāla</i>
Allaripu	Nattai	Tishra
Allaripu	Nattai	Chatusra
Allaripu	Nattai	Mishra
Jatiswaram	Saveri	Rūpakam
Jatiswaram	Bhairavi	Rūpakam
Jatiswaram	Kalyani	Rūpakam
Jatiswaram	Vasant	Rūpakam
Jatiswaram	Rag Mallikai	Mishra Chapu
Shabdam 'Sarasi Jakshunu'	Mallikai	Mishra Chapu
Shabdam 'Iyer Sheriyar'	Raag Mallikai	Mishra Chapu
Shabdam 'Adu Mai Tane'	Raag Mallikai	Mishra Chapu

Item Name	<i>Raag</i>	<i>Tāla</i>
Kirtanam ‘Ni uraipa’	Raag Mallikai (Shre, Dhanyasi, Kanada, Vasanta)	Ādi
Kirtanam ‘Natanam adinar’	Vasantha	Ata
Varnam ‘Rupamu Juchi’	Todi	Ādi
Varnam ‘Sakhiye Inda velai’	Anand Bhairavi	Ādi
Tillana	Todi	Ādi
Tillana	Hindolam	Khanda Jati Eka <i>Tāla</i>
Padam ‘Karanam Ketavadi’	Purvi Kalyani	Ādi

5:2:5:2 Her lectures on ‘Theory of Dance’ for the students of other Departments:

She also took theory lectures of Dance for students of other Departments like Drama and Tabla. Her lectures were coupled with practical demonstrations. This module of Theory of Dance was a part of the syllabus of the subject of study which was compulsory for all students of Music, Dance and Dramatics.¹⁶ In theory also Smt. Anjali Merh’s teaching abilities were exceptional. She used different methods for maintaining interest of students throughout her lecture. She simplified the topics by demonstrating with hand gestures and movements. She was very compassionate and considerate and she was always ready to help students who needed her help or advice regarding studies.¹⁷

5:2:5:3 Contribution of Guru Smt. Anjali Merh as a Research guide:

Guru Smt. Anjali Merh guided students from Diploma level to Ph.D. level. The first Ph.D. that Anjali Merh guided was on “Rukmini Devi and Her Contribution to Dance” in 1977, a thesis by Jayanti Chandolkar (Vaishampayan). This was a tribute to her Guru Smt. Rukmini Devi. Shri Sunil Kothari who is a renowned critic and also an author completed his Ph.D. work under the guidance of Smt. Anjali Merh.¹⁸ Dr. Parul Shah also started her Ph.D. work under her guidance in 1977.¹⁹ Smt. Anjali Merh’s student Padma Subramaniam (Rajgopal) also started her Ph.D. under her guidance. Her topic was “*Devadasi* Cult in Indian Dance”. Smt. Anjali Merh encouraged her to start her Ph.D. She also guided her how to go step by step in her research work. She instructed her to meet

the *Devadasis* who were living and collect information from them. She also instructed her to collect information about the mother of Guru Shri Kubernath Tanjorkar, who was a dancer in the court of Maharaja Sayajirao. But she could not finish her Ph.D. as Anjali Merh passed away after some time of her starting her research work.²⁰ This proves that she had immense knowledge to guide students for Ph.D. work and was aware of the process of research work.

Given below is the information of the Thesis of the students who registered for Ph.D. under her and finished their doctoral work under her guidance:

Sr. No.	Name of Researcher	Title of Thesis
1)	Vaishampayan, Jayanti V	Contribution of Rukminidevi Arundale to Bharatanatyam
2)	Kothari, Sunil	The dance drama tradition of Kuchipudi Bhagavat Mela Nataka and 'Kuravanji' with special reference to rasa theory as expounded in Bharata's Natyasastra Volume 3

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5:2:5:4 Introducing the 'Stick Drawing Notation System' in Journal:

A major and noteworthy contribution by Anjali Merh was in introducing the "Stick Drawing Notation System" in Journal in "The Department of Dance, College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Baroda in the mid-1960s.²² She understood the importance of documentation, and was also aware of the difficulties students faced while memorizing the steps, movements, gestures, *nritya* sequences, *abhinaya*, various *korvais* and *Tirmaanams*. The students not only wrote the lyrics in *Tāla*, the meaning of the lyrics, but also drew the whole items with simple figure and detailed description of the dance steps, movements and gestures in "Journal". Small details like whether the right leg is used or left leg is used, which gesture is used, what is the movement of hand are also mentioned. Different positions of Bharatanatyam dance like 'Araimandi', 'Samapada' and 'Murumandi' are drawn in different ways so as to

differentiate between the positions. Developing the “Drawing Notation System” helped students memorize the item easily. The journal is also checked by the teachers so that students do not make mistake in documentation of the item. “Stick Drawing Notation System” was a big boon for the Dance students as it helped the student remember the items after they left the College and shifted to other cities or countries.²³ This system to document the Dance items still continues in The Department.

5:2:5:5 Invited Eminent Personalities at the Department:

Smt. Anjali Merh invited prominent people in the field of Dances for performances and 'Lecture Demonstrations' and as examiners in the Department. Smt. Anjali Merh was very close to Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai. She considered Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai as her elder sister. She called her frequently for the lectures in The Department of Dance, College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, The Faculty of Performing Arts, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Baroda.²⁴ She called very knowledgeable personalities from the Dance field as examiners and to give 'Lecture Demonstrations' like Guru Smt. Kanak Rele, Shobha Naidu (Kuchipudi dancer), Smt. Jay Laxmi and Professor C. V. Chandrasekhar.²⁵ She invited Rukmini Devi for *Arangetral* of her students, Padma Subramaniam (Rajgopal) and Jeethy Menon to motivate and inspire them and other students.²⁶

5:2:6 Contribution to help design the course of ‘Bhatkhande Music College’:

When Smt. Anjali Merh’s student Smt. Padma Subramaniam joined the “Bhatkhande Music College” as an Assistant Professor, she helped Smt. Padma Subramaniam to design the Bharatanatyam Course syllabus in early 1970s. She was guiding her at each step when Smt. Padma Subramaniam was making the curriculum for Bharatanatyam courses at “Bhatkhande Music College”.²⁷

5:2:7 Contribution at Darpana Academy, Ahmedabad:

According to Dr. Mallika Sarabhai, Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai and Anjaliben had lot of love for each other. Smt. Anjaliben respected Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai a lot and always addressed her as “*Akka*” (Sister) and she even maintained a relationship as a sister with

her. As Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai and Smt. Anjali Merh were teaching a South Indian Dance form in Gujarat, they were facing the same kind of problems due to cultural differences. This was also the reason for a special connection between them. Also, both talked in Tamil whenever they met. Smt. Anjali Merh was trained at 'Kalakshetra' and she had imbibed a deep knowledge of the practical and theoretical aspects of Bharatanatyam Dance from 'Kalakshetra' and she was very particular about the technique and purity of dance form. Mrinalini Sarabhai also was very particular about maintaining the technique, clarity and purity of Bharatanatyam dance style. Hence, Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai invited Smt. Anjali Merh to teach at 'Darpana Academy'. Smt. Anjali Merh came once a week to 'Darpana' to teach theory and 'Abhinaya Darpana'. She came every Friday and she taught theory and 'Abhinaya Darpana' to all the students of 'Darpana Academy'. Smt. Anjali Merh whole heartedly taught at the 'Darpana Academy' as she wanted to share with everyone the knowledge that she had acquired at 'Kalakshetra'.²⁸

According to the views shared by Dr. Mallika Sarabhai “Smt. Mrinalini was a South Indian and she came and settled in Gujarat. Anjaliben was a Gujarati and she went to South to learn Bharatanatyam and then she taught in Gujarat. Both of them faced the same difficulties and struggles due to the culture difference and that became a reason for a special bond between them. She was very fond of me. I was very small that time, she loved to teach me. She always told me, ‘No matter what you do, you will become a dancer only’. Her teaching style was very precise, very clear and very clean, so she got along with Amma very well. She loved teaching, and she wanted to share her knowledge with everyone. She wanted to share specially her knowledge of dance with Gujarati girls. It was her desire to spread and share the knowledge of this Diamond like Art that she had got, with as many people as she could”.²⁹

Smt. Anjali Merh invited *Amma* (Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai) to give lectures of Bharatanatyam in the Department of Dance, College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, Baroda. *Amma* (Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai) gave lectures in the Department of Dance on Bharatanatyam and Classical Dance. Smt. Anjali Merh insisted Amma (Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai) to make a book of the lectures so that it becomes easier for students to understand various topics related to dance, which are mentioned in Sanskrit texts like

'Natyashastra'. Hence, Amma (Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai) and Smt. Anjali Merh documented all the lectures in the form of a book, which was named 'Understanding Bharatanatyam'. Recently the Latest edition of the book is released. During that period, this was a very useful book for the students learning Classical dance. Even today it is a very popular book among students of Dance. Recently we have translated the book in Gujarati and released it as 'Chalo Samajiye Bharatanatyam'. Dr. Mallika Sarabhai had witnessed the performance of 'Chandramaulishwara Kuravanji' which was choreographed by Smt. Anjali Merh and it was performed by her senior students of 'Darpana Academy'. According to Dr. Mallika Sarabhai after Amma (Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai) if anyone has contributed in maintaining standard of Bharatanatyam, it was Smt. Anjali Merh. She was very particular about maintaining the technique of Bharatanatyam. She insisted that linings should be very clear in Bharatanatyam. According to Dr. Mallika Sarabhai, precision in Dance was very important for Smt. Anjali Merh. She insisted on clarity of gestures and technique while teaching at 'Darpana'.³⁰

5:2:8 Arangetrals Conducted by Guru Smt. Anjali Merh:

Smt. Anjali Merh mentored the arangetral of students like Smt. Prerna Desai (Killawala), Smt. Jeethy Menon, Smt. Padma Rajgopal (Subramaniam), Smt. Kanan Patel. Dr. Parul Shah, Akemi Sakurai and many more. According to Dr. Anand Merh, she never took money for Arangetral. She used to call great dignitaries as chief guests in the Arangetral function of her students. Maharaja Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad was an Art lover and always attended Arangetrals mentored Smt. Anjali Merh. He was many times invited as a chief guest in the Arangetral function.

5:2:8:1 Arangetral of Smt. Prerna Desai (Killawala)

Smt. Anjali Merh conducted the *Arangetral* of Smt. Prerna Desai (Killawala) in 1963. Shri Kanhaiyalal Munshi was the President of the function.³¹

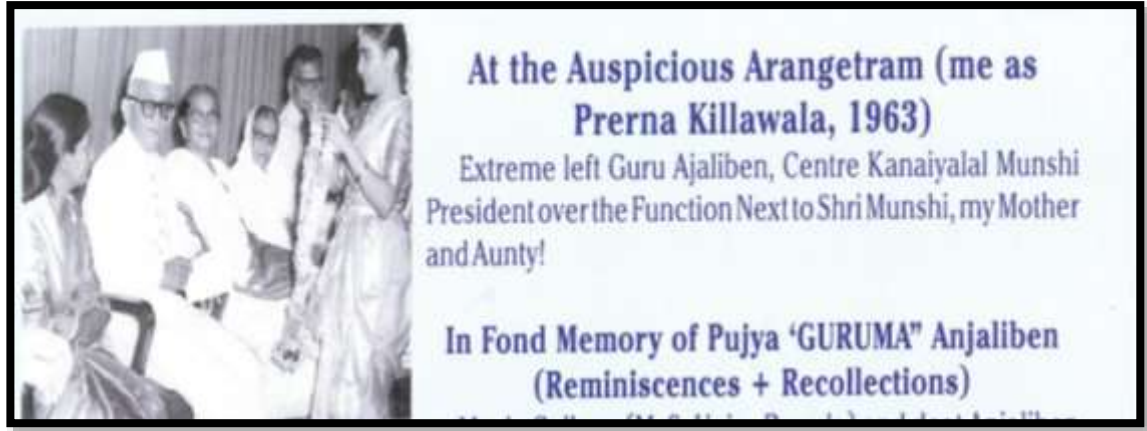


Fig. 5.2.1 A photo from the Arangetral of Smt. Prerna Desai mentored by Guru Smt. Anjali Merh, in 1963 in presence of all leading dancers and Shri K. M. Munshi.

5:2:8:2 Arangetral of Jeethy Menon and Padma Rajgopal (Subramaniam)



Fig. 5.2.2 From right Smt. Jeethy Menon, Smt. Anjali Merh, Smt. Rukmini Devi, Smt. Padma Rajgopal on the occasion of Arangetral of Smt. Jeethy Menon and Smt. Padma Rajgopal mentored by Smt. Anjali Merh

Smt. Anjali Merh mentored the *Arangetral* of Smt. Jeethy Menon and Smt. Padma Rajgopal (Subramaniam). For this *Arangetral*, Smt. Anjali Merh requested Smt. Rukmini Devi to grace the event as a chief guest and bless her Students Jeethy Menon and Padma

Subramaniam. Smt. Rukmini Devi willingly accepted the invitation and blessed Jeethy Menon and Padma Subramaniam for their *Arangetral*.³²

5:2:8:3 *Arangetral* of Kanan Patel (Amin):

Smt. Anjali Merh and her pupil Kanan Patel of Department of Dance, College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, presented a full Bharatanatyam *Margam* (Repertoire) in Gujarati and Sanskrit on 22nd February 1976 in C.C.Mehta auditorium, Baroda. The items presented in the *Arangetral* were the compositions of Smt. Anjali Merh on Gujarati Songs. Though the words of the items were in Gujarati and Sanskrit, the music composition was done in Karnatic style. It was for the first time that Gujarati songs were rendered in Karnatic music, and danced in Bharatanatyam dance style. These Gujarati dance items were choreographed by Smt. Anjali Merh so that people of Gujarat could enjoy and understand the richness and beauty of the ancient art form of Bharatanatyam dance style.³³



Fig. 5.2.3 Smt. Kanan Patel performing in her Arangetral mentored by Smt. Anjali Merh

The entire programme was presented in traditional Bharatanatyam Dance Style. Smt. Anjali Merh had taken much pain to ensure that authenticity, purity and classical elements of Bharatanatyam were not sacrificed or modified. In this programme the Dance direction, choreography, music composition and music direction was by Smt. Anjali Merh. Vocal was by Smt. Anjali Merh and Smt. Nirmala Natarajan. *Mridangam* was by Shri Natarajan, and sitar was by Shri Vijay Sant.

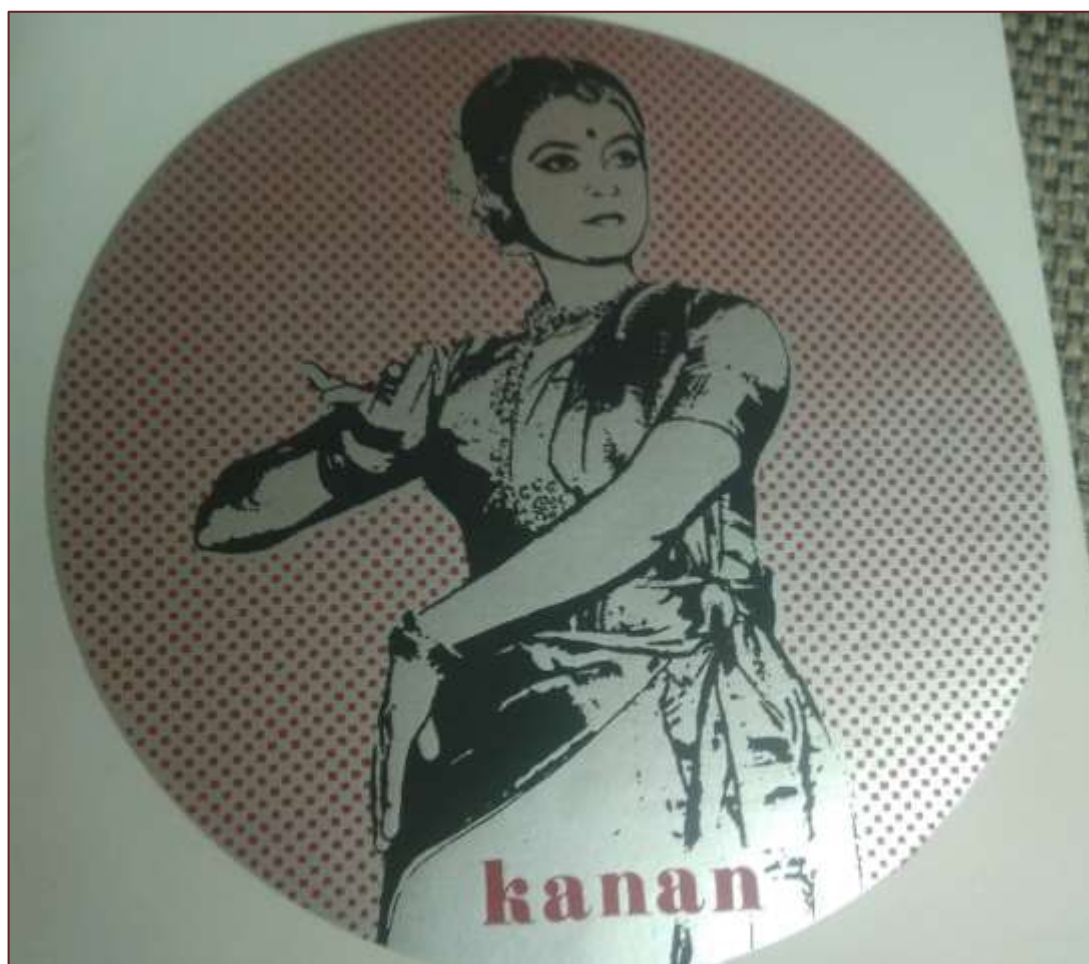


Fig 5.2.4 From The Arangetral card of Smt. Kanan Patel, which was mentored by Smt. Anjali Merh

The items performed by Kanan Patel in the *Arangetral* were as follows:

ITEM NAME	RAAG	<i>TĀLA</i>	Composed By
Melaprapti	Nattai	Ādi	
Jatiswaram	Kalyani	Tishra Ekam	Traditional
Yashogit (Shabdham)	Kafi	<i>Tāla</i> identical to Mishra Chapu of Karnatic Music Style	Smt. Anjali Merh
Varnam	Vasanta	Ādi	Smt. Anjali Merh
Kirtanam	Mishramandh	Roopakam	Premaldas
Kirtanam	Shriranjini	Ādi	Smt. Anjali Merh
Padam	Arabhi	Ādi	Smt. Anjali Merh
Natkeshwara	Raagmalika	Roopakam	
Tillana			Vinay Krishnacharya

Shrimati Anjali Merh and her pupil Ku. Kanan Patel of the Dance Department, M. S. University of Baroda, present before you today a complete Bharata Natya repertoire in Gujarati and Sanskrit. Smt. Merh has composed a number of items of Bharata Natyam on Gujarati songs so that the richness and beauty of this ancient dance form is properly understood and enjoyed by the people of Gujarat. It should, however, be noted that though the words of the songs are in Gujarati the music is essentially Karnatak, and it is for the first time that Gujarati songs are being rendered in Karnatak music danced in Bharata Natyam. The entire programme is essentially presented in the traditional style, and Smt. Merh has taken much pains to ensure that in her experiment, nowhere the authenticity, purity and classical elements of the Bharata Natyam are sacrificed or modified.

A Bharata Natya recital is essentially a worship (PUJA) of the Lord, and to the artist it is a path (MARGAM) to

be one with Him. Today's programme therefore appropriately begins with PUSHPA-NJALI and concludes with MANGALAM (Arati).

Dance &	: Shrimati Anjali Merh
Music Direction	: Shrimati Anjali Merh
Nattuvangam	: Shrimati Anjali Merh
Vocal	: Shrimati Anjali Merh
	: Shrimati Nirmala Natrajan
Mrudangam	: Shri Natrajan
Sitar	: Shri Vijay Sant

Fig 5.2.5 From The Arangetral card of Smt. Kanan Patel

Indian dancing today, enjoys a very high social status even at an international level— and who can deny that Bharata Natya is indeed at the zenith of its glory. Yet perhaps very few people realise that selfless and untiring efforts of Smt. Rukmini Devi brought the classical dance of India into a golden age. I have no doubt that her's is the greatest contribution to the revival of Bharat Natya and consequently of Indian dancing too and to the unveiling to the world, the richness and wealth of this sacred art.

It is upto the young dancers of today to keep this faith alive and not yield to the temptations of catering to the cheap tastes or else, I have no doubt there will again be a social downfall of the sacred art. The high pedestal on which Bharata Natya has been placed by Rukmini Devi will face degradation. Becoming famous and popular is not very important but to preserve the art in its true and chaste form is most essential to a dancer.

Anjali Merh



Fig. 5.2.6 From The Arangetral card of Smt. Kanan Patel



Sheetal Printers, Baroda

Kumari Kanan belongs to a Gujarati family of Baroda and since her childhood, she has been learning dance from Smt. Anjali Merh at the College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics of the M. S. University of Baroda. She has taken her Diploma and Degree in Bharata Natya and is at present engaged in post-graduate studies in dance at the same College. She has received National scholarship on Merit Basis. With her Degree in Dance she is also holding a Bachelor Degree in Arts with Geography and Sociology.

Kumari Kanan at a fairly young age, has mastered the technique of Bharata Natya, and is now one of the few accomplished artists in Gujarat, trained in the Kalakeshetra style. Her Guru Smt. Merh is a noted dance exponent, having learnt the art from Rukmini Devi at Kalakeshetra. Kumari Kanan's dance expositions fully reflect the characteristics of Smt. Rukmini Devi's style.

Kumari Kanan has participated in a number of programmes in Baroda, Ahmedabad and Bombay. She has appeared before the Bombay Television also. She has received the title 'Singarmani' for her notable performance in 'Kal Ke Kalakar' at Bombay. Currently, she is busy learning a number of Bharata Natya items composed in Hindi and Gujarati. It is her ambition to popularise Bharata Natya art through Hindi and Gujarati, without sacrificing the purity and classical elements of the divine art.

Fig 5.2.7 From The Arangetral card of Smt. Kanan Patel

5:2:8:4 Arangetral of Dr. Parul Shah

According to Smt. Kanan Amin, the arangetral of Dr. Parul Shah was mentored by Smt. Anjali Merh in February, 1976 in Baroda. Dr. Parul Shah's arangetral was after one or two days of Smt. Kanan Amin's arangetral. Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai was invited as a chief guest in the arangetral.

5:2:8:5 Arangetral of Akemi Sakurai

According Dr. Anand Merh Smt. Anjali Merh mentored the arangetral of Akemi Sakurai who was the first Japanese student to learn Bharatanatyam dance style. Arangetral was in Shanmukhananda Hall, Bombay (Now Mumbai). Smt. Vijayanti Mala was the chief guest of the function. Many big dignitaries of India and Japan, like the ambassador of Japan had come to grace the function.

5:2:9 Performances:

Smt. Anjali Merh encouraged her students to perform in programmes in various events, functions, and festivals like 'Kal ke Kalakar' festival organized by 'Sur Samsad' in Bombay. Students of Smt. Anjali Merh and Guru Shri Kubernath Tanjorkar performed in the "Kal ke Kalakar" function every year in Bombay (Mumbai), and before going to Bombay (Mumbai) they would perform in Baroda. Smt. Anjali Merh gave a lot of exposure to her students by giving them opportunity to perform in various programmes.³⁴

Smt. Tani Desai performed and participated under Smt. Anjali Merh's guidance in Gujarat State Festival in Music College in Open Air Theater, in 1968.³⁵

Smt. Anjali Merh's Dance Ballet in Gujarati "Radha nu Shamanu" was performed by her students at 'The College of Music, Dance and Dramatics' in 1968.³⁶

Padma Rajgopal (Subramaniam) performed in many programmes choreographed by Smt. Anjali Merh. She performed in a programme which represented the 'College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics', at the Gujarat State Festival in 1970.³⁷

Smt. Anjali Merh trained Padma Rajgopal (Subramaniam) and conducted her programme which was performed on 11th 'Kal Ke Kalakar', Sangeet Samelan, organized by 'Sur Singar Samsad', Bombay (Mumbai) on 18th November 1972. Smt. Jeethy Menon also performed in the 'Kal ke Kalakar' programme, organised by 'Sur Singar Samsad', Bombay (Mumbai) in November 1972 mentored by Smt. Anjali Merh. Smt. Anjali Merh composed and taught Padma Rajgopal (Subramaniam) and Jeethy Menon Bharatanatyam items on North Indian music like *Thumaris* and *Horis*, 'Kaheko rar Machayi', a composition of Bindadin Maharaj, 'Brij Mai Hari Hori Machayi' in Bharatanatyam Dance

Style for this Programme. Padma Rajgopal (Subramaniam) and Jeethy Menon, performed together in many programmes mentored by Smt. Anjali Merh between the period of 1967 to 1972. Padma Rajgopal (Subramaniam) and Jeethy Menon performed mostly together in duet. They performed in many functions and events together. They performed in a programme of 'Tamil Association' in Baroda. They performed together in a function organised by 'Petrochemicals, Baroda'. Smt. Hema Malini was invited as a chief guest in this function. They also performed in duet at the function of 'The Department of Atomic Energy Recreation club' in Bombay (Mumbai). They performed together under the guidance of Smt. Anjali Merh in Shankarnagar, Hyderabad, in a programme which was organised by the parents of Padma Rajgopal (Subramaniam). Padma Subramaniam and Jeethy Menon performed together in a programme called 'Vaitalik' at Taj Hotel Mumbai. Taj Hotel Mumbai used to have special Classical Music and Dance performances at a programme called 'Vaitalik' for selected audiences and tourists in those days.³⁸



Fig. 5.2.8 Smt. Jeethy Menon and Smt. Padma Subramaniam



Fig. 5.2.9 Smt. Jeethy Menon and Smt. Padma Subramaniam

In 1974 Smt. Anjali Merh presented whole Bharatanatyam Dance Style *Margam* in Gujarati Language, in the 'Kal Ke Kalakar' dance Festival, in Bombay. The students who participated were Manik Ambikai, Kalarani Iyer, Kanan Patel, Parul Shah and Kamini Kothari.³⁹

Smt. Sandhya Mungur performed at Sur Singar Samsad, at Bombay at 'Kal ke Kalakar Sammelan', and was honoured with the title of 'Shringara Mani' in 1974, under the guidance of Smt. Anjali Merh.⁴⁰ (Sandhya Mungur)

In 1974 Smt. Sandhya Mungur performed for 'National Centre of Performing Arts' (NCPA) Bombay and Bombay Television, under the guidance of Smt. Anjali Merh.⁴¹

In the year 1974 or 1975, the whole Gujarati *Margam* choreographed by Smt. Anjali Merh was presented in 'Darpana', Ahmedabad. The participants were Manik Ambikai, Kalarani Iyer, Kanan Patel, Parul Shah and Kamini Kothari.⁴²

When Smt. Indira Gandhi was the Prime minister of India, and Saddam Hussein was the president of Iraq, he had come to meet Smt. Indira Gandhi to India in 1974. According to Dr. Anand Merh, students of Smt. Anjali Merh performed under her guidance for this important event. This programme was in honour of the visit of Vice President of Iraq Saddam Hussein to India on 25th March 1974. Smt. Jeethy Menon and Padma Subramaniam were among the students who performed in the Rashtrapati Bhavan in March, 1974. They also performed another programme in Delhi which was arranged by Shri Mohan Khokar and 'Sangeet Natak Academy'.⁴³

Smt. Anjali Merh's students performed in a programme at O.N.G.C Ankaleshwar.⁴⁴

Smt. Anjali Merh's students got an opportunity to perform in many cities of India like Baroda, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Bombay, Hyderabad, Dahod, and Surat in various programmes under her guidance.⁴⁵

Smt. Anjali Merh visited many countries with her troupe to perform and present her creative productions to propagate Bharatanatyam dance style in the year 1975-1976. She was invited by Smt. Rukmini Devi to lead the 'Kalakshetra' group to China and many other countries.⁴⁶

Smt. Anjali Merh presented 'Chandramaulishwara Kuravanji' in 'Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan', Bombay (Mumbai) on 7th February 1977.⁴⁷

In 1977, Smt. Anjali Merh presented 'Chandramaulishwara Kuravanji' in Baroda. It was later performed at many places in India. It was also telecast on National Television⁴⁸

'Chandramaulishwara Kuravanji' was also telecasted on Bombay Doordarshan.⁴⁹

Chandramaulishwara Kuravanji was performed at Rang Bhavan, Bombay. It was also performed at Surat, Ahmedabad and Baroda.⁵⁰

Kanan Patel performed in 'Kal Ke Kalakar' organised by 'Sur Singar Samsad', at Bombay under the guidance of Smt. Anjali Merh. She got 'Shringara Mani' award for the same.⁵¹

Nirva Shah performed in the 'Kal ke Kalakar' in Mumbai organized by Sur Samsad under the guidance of Smt. Anjali Merh. She received 'Sringara Mani' award for the same.⁵²

Smt. Anjali Merh's last production 'Navagraha' was presented in Feb, 1979.⁵³

5:2:10 Contribution as an author:

(This information is based on the books written by Smt. Anjali Merh.

- 1) Merh. Anjali, 'Nartan Darshika', Published by Markand J. Bhatt, 'Gujarat Sangeet Nrutya Natya Academy', Ahmedabad 1965
- 2) Merh. Anjali, 'Shri Chandramaulishwara 'Kuravanji'', Published by Markand J. Bhatt, Principal, College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, The M.S.University of Baroda, December 1977)

Guru Smt. Anjali Merh wrote two books on Dance. The Titles of the books are as follows.

- 1) Nartan Darshika
- 2) Chandramaulishwara Kuravanji with Ashta *Nayika*

The details of the books are as follows:

5:2:10:1 Nartan Darshika

This book is written by Smt. Anjali Merh in 1965. It was published by 'Gujarat Sangeet Nritya Natak Academy', Ahmedabad. The Language of the book is Gujarati.

The foreword is written by Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai. She has mentioned about the contribution of the Tanjore quartet in the development of Bharatanatyam in form of the Bharatanatyam *Krutis*.

Smt. Anjali Merh, in her preface, writes that she tried her best to make Bharatanatyam simple to understand for the Gujarati students. She says she was inspired to write this book by Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai. Some of the items mentioned in this book are taken from the book *Ponaiya Manimalai* in Tamil, which was published by 'Darpan Prakashan'. Smt. Anjali Merh further says that according to her, this Art of Bharatanatyam doesn't belong only to South but belongs to whole world. The Language of this Art form of dance is the Language of Art, which doesn't have any barriers or limits. She says this Art form belongs to the whole world and gives her salutations to it.

First song is an 'Archana' dedicated to 'Lord Nataraja', "Pranamu pratidin he Natarajan, Nartan nu arpu muj arachan".

Next chapter is on 'Nartan Kala'. In this chapter she explains as to how *Nartana* developed in this world. She further says *Nartan* developed due to three main aspects, viz., love, war and *dharma* (religion). She explains how *dharma* played an important part in the development and preservation of *Nartana*. She says that the base of Indian dance styles is spiritualism.

The next chapter is on the four classical dance styles. (*Bharat Ni prachalit char nartanshaili*). She mentions that the scholars of all the four classical dance styles, Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Kathak and Manipuri, believe 'Natyashastra' is the base of all the dance styles. She explains the origin of dance according to 'Natyashastra' and 'Abhinaya Darpana'. She concludes that art and religion are related to each other.

The next chapter is on Bharatanatyam. She explains the origin, history and development of Bharatanatyam dance style. Contributions of *Devadasis* to the art of Bharatanatyam are mentioned in this chapter. She also mentions the contribution of 'Tulaja Maharaja', in whose time 'Mahadev Annavi' from 'Tennaveli' was called in his court, who made many changes in the dance form and composed many *Padavarnams* for the dance form. She mentions the time of 'Sarfoji Maharaj' and 'Shivaji Maharaja', which was a

golden period for all the arts. She further refers to the contribution of the 'Tanjore Quartet' in Bharatanatyam dance style. She gives information about the other traditional *Gurus* like Guru Shri Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai and institutions which contributed in the development of Bharatanatyam dance style. The information about *Gurushishya parampara* is mentioned. The importance of theory and practical in dance is also specified. The meaning of *Nattuvanar*, '*Nattuvangam*' and *Arangetral* is explained.

The chart of the inheritants of Ponaiya brothers is given in the next Chapter.

In the following chapter information is specified about the three types of *Nartan*: 1) *Natya* 2) *Nrutya* 3) *Nritta*. Information regarding the four types of *Abhinaya* is noted. Information regarding *Navarasa*, different types of *Nayikas*, *Asamyukta hasta* and *Samyukta hasta* is introduced. *Asamyukta hasta* are demonstrated with photographs. The *shlokas* and meaning of *Drshti bheda*, *Shirobheda*, *Griva bheda*, *Mandala Bheda*, *Utplavan bheda*, *Sthanaka bheda*, *Chari bheda*, *Devata hasta*, *Navagraha hasta*, *Dashavtara hasta*, *Varna bheda*, and *Bhandava hasta* are mentioned in the book. The different *Shabdarath* of the *hasta* are also mentioned. Information about the *Adavus* of Bharatanatyam dance style with their *shollakatus* is mentioned with photographs. Then meaning of *Tirmaanam* is explained in detail. The names with meaning of six *pada karma* are specified.

In the next chapter information regarding the Karnatic music system is made known. Information regarding names of five *jatis*, *laghu*, *dhruva* and *anudruva* and the seven *Tāla* is specified with charts in very simple language, which is very easy to understand. In the next chapter, detailed information regarding the Bharatanatyam *margam* is mentioned. Each item is explained in detail.

In the next part items of Bharatanatyam are mentioned with *raag* and *Tāla* and notation. The list of the items mentioned with notations is as follows:

Sr. No	Item Name	Raag	Tāla
1.	Allaripu	Nattai	Tishra Ekam
2.	Jatishwaram	Todi	Tishra Ekam
3.	Jatishwaram	Shankarabharanam	Tishra Ekam
4.	Jatishwaram	Athana	Tishra Ekam
5.	Jatishwaram	Bhairavi	Tishra Ekam
6.	Jatishwaram	Kalyani	Tishra Triputa
7.	Jatishwaram	Todi	Ādi
8.	Jatishwaram	Khamas	Tishra Ekam
9.	Jatishwaram	Mallikai	Mishra Chapu
10.	Jatishwaram	Shankarabharanam	Mishra Chapu
11.	Jatishwaram	Saveri	Tishra Ekam
12.	Jatishwaram	Hemavati	Mishra Chapu
13.	Jatishwaram	Vasanta	Tishra Ekam
14.	Jatishwaram	Kalyani	Tishra Ekam
15.	Jatishwaram	Chakravakam	Tishra Ekam
16.	Jatishwaram	Purvi Kalyani	Ādi
17.	Shabdam: ‘Melu vadani chalavalgina’	Kamboji	Mishra Chapu
18.	Shabdam : ‘Sarasi jakshulu jala ka made’	Kamboji	Mishra Chapu
19.	Shabdam: ‘Venu ganane kori yanmanam’	Kamboji	Mishra Chapu
20.	Swarajati : ‘Gopala lola ivetala jala bala’	Dhanyasi	Ādi
21.	Chawka Varnam: ‘Sami ni ram’	Khamas	Ādi
22.	Varnam : ‘Sakhiye inda velai’	Anand Bhairavi	Ādi
23.	Kshetragya Padam: ‘Atuvanti vade vadu’	Nilambari	Mishra Chapu

Sr. No	Item Name	Raag	Tāla
24.	Kirtanam: ‘Varugalamo aiyya undhan’	Manchi	Mishra Ek Talam
25.	Kirtanam: ‘yaro andhrennamale nadum ivane nira’	Dhir Shankarabharanam	Ādi
26.	Padam: ‘Ponchi juchutele polatiro muva’	Anand Bhairavi	Tripata
27.	Shlokam: ‘Leela sukasya krishnakarnamrutam’		
28.	Shloka from Jaydev’s Ashtapadi		
29.	Dashavatara Shloka of Jaydeva’s Git Govind		
30.	Hori (Hindi Thumari) ‘Brij mai hari hori machai’		
31.	Radha nu Shamanu		
32.	Padam : ‘ ra ra sita’	Hindolam Vasant	Rūpakam
33.	Padam : ‘Paradi varuhu duruhu te’	Kamboji	Tishra
34.	Padam: ‘Innumparamukhameno’	Begada	Rūpakam
35.	Javali : ‘Sariga kongu’	Suruti	Ādi Tāla
36.	Javali : ‘yera ra ra chaiterayi’	Khamas	Ādi
37.	Tillana	Adana	Ādi
38.	Tillana	Kapi	Ādi
39.	Vrutnam: ‘Anjalendra karatalamuma’		

5:2:10:2 Chandramaulishwara 'Kuravanji' with Ashta Nayika:

This book was written by Guru Smt. Anjali Merh in 1977 when she was the Head of the Department, Department of Dance, College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. The Language of the book is Gujarati.

The front page of the book has the photo of the production 'Chandramaulishwara'. The foreword is given by Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai. She gives information about "Kuravanji" and further explains what "Kuravanji" dance dramas are. She then writes about the stories of "Kuravanji" dance dramas and further gives explanation about various characters of "Kuravanji" dance dramas. Then she gives information about the 'Chandramaulishwara' production of Smt. Anjali Merh.

Further there is information on 'Kuravanji' dance drama and its history by Shri Sunil Kothari. There is information about "Kuravanji" dance dramas by Smt. Anjali Merh. She gives information about its origin and the stories of "Kuravanji" dance dramas.

The lyrics of the production 'Chandramaulishwara' are given. Further there is information about *Ashta Nayika* and there are poems written by Smt. Anjali Merh for all the eight *Nayikas*.

There are two beautiful photos of Smt. Anjali Merh in dance posture in the book. The last page has a *shloka* dedicated to Lord Somnath.

5:2:11 Contribution through 'Sangeet Sabha':

According to the information given by Dr. Anand Merh, Smt. Anjali Merh had established an institute called 'Sangeet Sabha' in Baroda. Through 'Sangeet Sabha' Smt. Anjali Merh invited well-known artistes of Dance and Music for performances. It used to be a very big event of dance and music. Great Maestros of dance and music like Shri Omkarnath Thakur and Shri Kishan Maharaj performed in the event.

5:2:12 Analysis of unique Qualities of Smt. Anjali Merh as a teacher:

- 1) She was trained in 'Kalakshetra' style, which was systematized scientifically by Smt. Rukmini Devi. She taught in the same way as she had learnt.

- 2) She had good knowledge of Karnatic Music and Hindustani music. She was a good singer.
- 3) She was a good *Nattuvnar*. She was perfect in *Tāla* and rendering of *shollakatus* and *Tirmaanamams*.
- 4) She was very particular about the technique of dance, lining in dance, clarity in gestures and movements.
- 5) She was very particular about discipline and timings
- 6) She was very open hearted in teaching and wanted to share all the knowledge she had with her students.
- 7) She was very creative.
- 8) She had a good knowledge of many languages like Gujarati, Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Marathi and Tamil. She could understand, speak and even write in Tamil. Therefore she could easily explain to her students the art form like Bharatanatyam which was based mostly in South Indian languages, particularly in Tamil.
- 9) She was very particular about dressing, i.e. traditional dance dresses in class and to College.
- 10) She gave exposure to students in several programmes.
- 11) She invited eminent personalities in the field of art for lecture demonstrations so that students get overall knowledge of the art form and art in general.
- 12) She had good theoretical knowledge of dance. She also had knowledge of the various dance forms of western countries.
- 13) She came from an educated family and was highly educated and very knowledgeable which made it very easy for her to teach in a modern education system.
- 14) She had a good knowledge of folk dances, and she taught folk dances like *Garba*, *Tippani*, *Gof* and *Pinal Kollatam* to her students.
- 15) She was very traditional and celebrated all the festivals. She tried to teach the importance of our tradition and culture through the celebration of festivals like ‘Navratri’ with her students.
- 16) She had good knowledge of all the aspects of Bharatanatyam dance.

- 17) She knew many 'Abhinaya Darpan' and 'Natyashastra' *shlokas* by heart. She would recite and correlate it while teaching Dance which would make students aware of the literature of dance.
- 18) Rukmini Devi trained the students in the art of 'Nattuvangam' so that they would not have to depend on the *Nattuvanars*; thus she trained students in all the aspects of Bharatanatyam dance so as to make them good teachers.

5:2:13 Students of Smt. Anjali Merh:

Some of the well-known students of Smt. Anjali Merh are : Anjali Arunkumar (in Mumbai), Prerna Desai (Killawala, in Pune), Late Shri Pradeep Barua (in Baroda), Dhruti Chaya, Sudha Thakkar (Khandwani in Canada), Menaka Thakkar (Canada) Kamini Kothari (in Nairobi), Sandhya Mungur (in Mauritius), Kanan Amin (in Baroda), Tani Desai (in Baroda), Akemi Sakurai (Japan) Jeethy Menon (in Trivandrum), Padma Subramaniam (in Ohio, Cleveland, U.S.A), Late Smt. Jayanti Chandolkar (in Baroda), Ambika Sridhar (in Australia), Rekha Deepaul (in Mauritius), Dr. Parul Shah (in Baroda), Juthika Mahen (in Baroda), Smt. Lalita Iyer (in Baroda), Dr. Francis Barboza (in U. S. A.), Manik Ambikai (in Pune), Nirva Shah (in U. S. A.), and Kalarani Iyar (in Madhurai).⁵⁴ According to Dr. Anand Merh Smt. Anjani Ambegaokar who is a famous Kathak exponent in U.S.A was very close to Smt. Anjali Merh and respected her very much, though she was a student of Kathak dance style.

Her students settled in different cities of India and other countries and propagated her teachings and style like her cultural ambassador across India and in other countries and they propagated Bharatanatyam there and made it popular in many regions of India and countries like Canada, Australia, and U.S.A. Students of Smt. Anjali Merh settled in other countries and they propagated Bharatanatyam there. Following is the information about students who were trained by Smt. Anjali Merh and their contribution in the development of Bharatanatyam.

5:2:13:1 Dr. Anjani Arunkumar (Bharatanatyam Dancer, Guru, Author, Musician, Founder and Director ‘Aradhana Sangitalaya’, Bombay)

Dr. Anjani Arunkumar is a renowned Bharatanatyam Dancer and Musician based at Bombay. She is a student of Classical Dance and Music since 1951. She took training in Bharatanatyam from *Guru* Smt. Anjali Merh; in 1951 she joined the dance institute ‘Rukmini Kalavihar’ of Smt. Anjali Merh in Bombay. She started learning from Smt. Anjali Merh from the basic *Adavus*. She also had intensive training in Hindustani Vocal Classical Music under *Guru* Balkrishna Kapileshwari. *Guru* Balkrishna Kapileshwari was a disciple of the great Ustad Abdul Karim Khan, the founder of 'Kirana Gharana'. Later she also took training in Bharatanatyam from *Guru* Nana Kasar. She studied the art of 'Nattuvangam', the musical forms used in Bharatanatyam and Karnatic *Tāla* System, from *Guru* Nana Kasar.⁵⁵

She did M.A in Music from S.N.D.T University. She studied the musical forms like *Dhrupads*, *Dhamars*, *Kirtans* of 'Haveli Sangeet', very deeply. She was very happy and delighted to find out the hidden resources underlying in the above musical forms.

She was inspired by Smt. Anjali Merh who composed items in Hindustani Music and Gujarati *Margam* in Bharatanatyam and performed in many programmes choreographed by her. Two years before Smt. Anjali Merh shifted to Baroda, Anjani Arunkumar constantly accompanied her to all the programmes; hence she learnt a lot from her. Anjani Arunkumar composed Bharatanatyam *Margams* by using Hindustani musical forms and gave a new format ‘Devangananritya’- and gave performances along these lines. She introduced fractional rhythm cycles like 'Sudip-Tāla' (7.5 beats), 'Abhinav-Tāla' (12.5 beats), 'Sripati Tāla' (10.5 beats) for Bharatanatyam *Margams* for the first time.

She received Ph.D. from Bombay University for her thesis – “Aspect of dance in the 10th *Skandha* of the 'Bhagavata Purana’, under the guidance of Professor Suresh Upadhyaya. Anjani Arunkumar had the good fortune to assist Late Smt. Rukmini Devi in her last production, ‘Meera of Mewar’ in January 1984. She was a member of 'General Council of Rukmini Devi Birth Centenary Celebrations' in the year 2003-2004. She gave a

performance of Music in the same event on 24th January 2004 at 'Bharata 'Kalakshetra' Auditorium', Chennai.⁵⁶



Fig. 5.2.10 Smt. Prerna Desai and Smt. Anjani Arunkumar

She has choreographed many Bharatanatyam dance items on Hindustani Music. She has choreographed three dance ballets, 'Mukti', 'Basant Bahar' and 'Dhanvarsha'. The music concept in these ballets was by Padmashree Pandit Vijay Raghav Rao. She has worked as a Visiting Lecturer at 'Kalidasa University' for two years. She has taught 'Devagananritya' to the MFA students at the 'Kalidas University'.

She is the founder of 'Aradhana Sangitalaya' which she established in Bombay in 1972 to propagate and promote the art of Bharatanatyam in its true form and spirit, where, Bharatanatyam is taught traditionally through Karnatic Music and also through Hindustani Music which include *Dhrupads Dhamars, Haveli-Keertans, Bhajans, Stutis*, musical forms like *Swaramalikas Tarana-Trivats* in rare Taals of *Pakhawaj*. Hindustani Music

based on 'Kirana Gharana', Light Classical Music and *Bhakti* Music are also taught at 'Aradhana Sangitalaya'. She also conducted many workshops, demonstrations and *Arangetral* of her students. She has taught numerous students in her institute.⁵⁷

She is the author of the book 'Compositions for Bharatanatyam'. This book was released by the Governor of Maharashtra, His Excellency P.C.Alexander as one of the publications of 'Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan' on May 25, 2002. Shri R. Venkataraman, the former President of India presided over the function. The book also has been translated in Gujarati. This book is a very valuable contribution to dance. She is also instrumental in releasing Video-C.D.s, Audio-C.D.s, and Audio Cassettes which would be helpful for dance and music students. She combined the two art forms of North and South through her mission to teach Bharatanatyam in Hindustani Music.⁵⁸

5:2:13:2 Smt. Prerna Desai (Bharatanatyam Dancer, Guru, Founder and Director 'Aradhana Institute of Dance', Pune)

Music, Dance and Dramatics have played an important part in Smt. Prerna Desai's life from the childhood. She is the sister of Dr. Anjani Arunkumar who is a renowned Dancer and a Musician. She got inspired to learn Bharatanatyam, seeing her sister learn Bharatanatyam from Smt. Anjali Merh. She sometimes accompanied her sister to Bharatanatyam class of Smt. Anjali Merh and was very fascinated by Smt. Anjali Merh's dance and personality that she decided to learn Bharatanatyam from her. She joined the College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, The Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda to take training in Bharatanatyam and graduated in 1962 with a B. Mus. Degree in Bharatanatyam. She learnt the theoretical aspects and practical aspects from Smt. Anjali Merh, *Guru* Shri Kubernath Tanjorkar and also from other teachers of the Department. She was fortunate to get opportunity to learn 'Kalakshetra' Style of Bharatanatyam from Smt. Anjali Merh in the College. Smt. Prerna Desai has been fortunate to receive intensive training in College and guidance from *Guru* Smt. Anjali Merh even after she finished the course at College. Her *Arangetral* was mentored by *Guru* Smt. Anjali Merh, in 1963 in presence of all leading dancers and Shri K. M. Munshi (Founder of 'Bhartiya Vidhya Bhavan').

She performed in 'Kal Ke Kalakar' on 2nd November, 1975. It was witnessed by the leading dancers. The 'Sur Sringar Samsad', Mumbai has bestowed upon her the prestigious 'Shringara Mani' award.

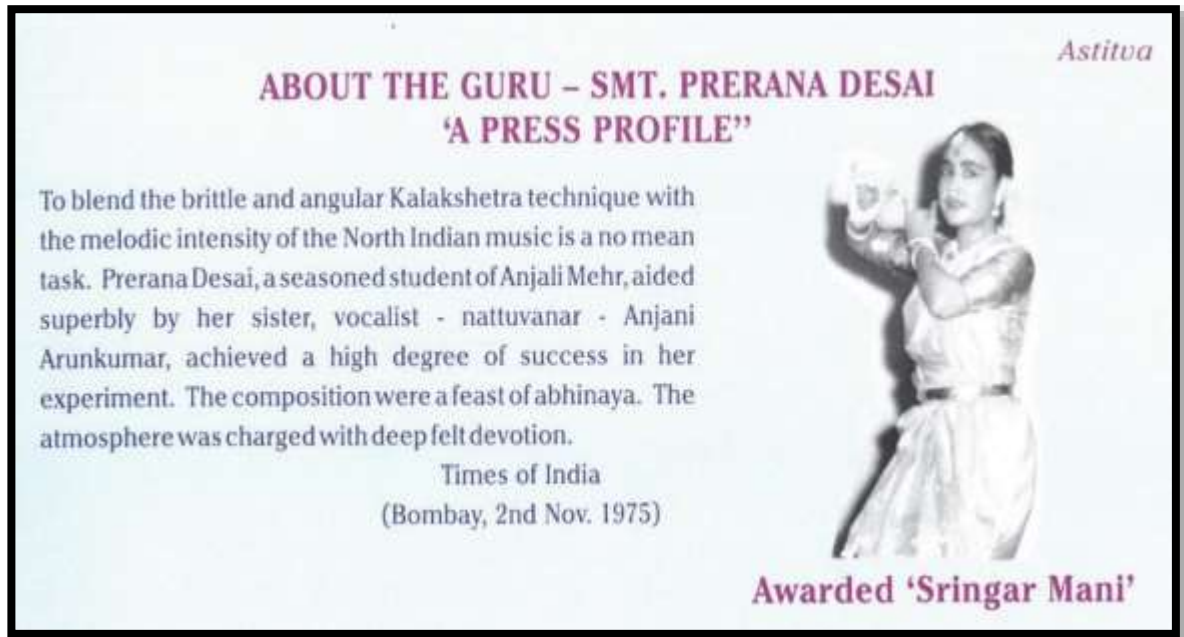


Fig. 5.2.11. Smt. Prerna Desai

Her footwork was very precise, her *araimandi* perfect, her lines were very clear, and her *abhinaya* was very intense. She also performed Bharatanatyam items on Hindustani Music. She dedicated herself to the purpose of spreading 'Devangananritya' by performing innumerable recitals and training many students in this discipline. She has been recognized as 'The Best Teacher' by the Lions club, Pune, in 1990. She has the unique ability to mould students to performances of a high standard.

She and her sister Anjani Arunkumar established, in 1968, 'Aradhana Institute of Dance', through which they give training to students in Bharatanatyam Dance style in Bombay and Pune. She and her students have always been leading contributors to the

cultural scene of Pune. Her institute was one of the first institutes to teach Bharatanatyam Dance Style in Pune. *Guru* Smt. Anjali Merh used to tell her “You are my cultural ambassador in Maharashtra”, building a *Sanskar Setu* between Gujarat and Maharashtra. She is genius as a dancer, teacher and choreographer. She was always determined to achieve technical finesse. Her perseverance to make her students perfect was a reflection of her own disciplined training from *Guru* Smt. Anjali Merh.

Inspired by Smt. Anjali Merh and her sister Dr. Anjani Arunkumar, she composed items in Languages like Gujarati, Marathi, and Hindi and composed them in Hindustani Music. This was a new experiment in those times. She was the first to choreograph Bharatanatyam Dance on 'Haveli Sangeet' in Pune. She presented the play “Radha nu Shamnu” in Nadiad, which was choreographed by *Guru* Smt. Anjali Merh. It was appreciated by the audience. She choreographed Dr. Anjani Arunkumar’s compositions of Bharatanatyam in Hindustani Music. She has choreographed many dance ballets like ‘Dashavatar’ and ‘Santo ki Amrutwani’. Her Ballet Jaydev’s ‘Dashavatar’ was a master piece choreographed by her. She choreographed ‘Dasi Puspanjali’ inspired by *Guru* Smt. Anjali Merh. Her Ballet ‘Ramkrishna Sankirtan’ is based on Ramayan by 'Goswami Tulsidasji', and ‘The Passage on Time’ from Austin Dobson. She is very spiritual by nature and also a prolific writer.

A number of Bharatanatyam Dancers and *Gurus* who are conducting their own academies in Pune today, have been trained by Mrs. Perna Desai. She has given encouragement and support for their endeavours. Her institute ‘Aradhana, Institute of Dance’ remained as a leading Bharatanatyam Institute in Pune for years producing some of the best dancing talents honed to perfection like Swati Datar, Anjali Bagal, Shumita Mahajan, Dr. Vidhi Gokhale, Rupali Chaudhari, Neeta Sura, Manjari Nitsure, Swati Gujarati, Shumita Chatterji and Adhishri Atre. She has a very dynamic personality and is still very enthusiastic about dancing. She still dances at the age of 80 years.

Astitva



The Highlight of The Function was
Astapadi of Kavi Jaydev – 'Khandita Nayika'

Witnessed by Leading Dancers

Photos from
Kal Ke Ka akar
(2nd Nov., 1975)

Item :
Varna Dhupada
Rajata Chandra

Compositio n were
Feast of Abhinaya



Yahi Madhava,
Yahi Keshava,
Ma, Vada,
Kaitava Vadam.

The atmosphere
was charged with
deep felt
Devotion.

Fig. 5.2.12 Smt. Prerna Desai



At the Auspicious Arangetram (me as Prerna Killawala, 1963)

Extreme left Guru Ajaliben, Centre Kanaiyalal Munshi President over the Function Next to Shri Munshi, my Mother and Aunty!

In Fond Memory of Pujya 'GURUMA' Anjaliben (Reminiscences + Recollections)

Music College (M. S. Univ., Baroda) and dear Anjaliben were my inseparable companions during college life.

Oh! The Palacial Music college with its Dancing Halls and the melodies Music rooms!! Learning under her highly capable and strict discipline (I use to shiver with fear at times and cry with joy sometimes!) observing her from so close and imbibing everything (how she sat for Nattuvangam, her voice would Reverberate in college).

The leading dance disciple (1st Gujarati lady) of Great Guru Rukminidevi (Kalkehetra) entered into my system with her Gurukula style, so much that I almost became her "replica" in a short period of time she opened up "The vision of Great Classical Art World" for me!

Ever since, I left college, I became her "true follower" of this Divine art! She conducted "My Arangetram, (dream come true)" in presence of all leading dancers, Shri K. M. Munshiji (Founder of Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan) he praised Anjaliben as "Leading Lady Nattuvnar of her time".

Later, when we (me and my Guru Bhagini) inaugurated "Aradhana" in 1968 - and with time "the Baniyan tree spread very wide!! She then called me her "Cultural Ambassador". In Maharashtra + building a sanskar setu between Gujarat and Maharashtra!

These memories are endless but due to time and space limit can't go on! Still, I have to write about great Guru's remarks : Guru (Pandita) Mrinaliniben, watching me perform, playing Nattuvangam and reciting Turmanams flawlessly, invited me to come and Be on her Staff of DARPAN Academy! (This was, when she came as Examiner for B. Mus) Great Gurus Rukminidevi, Ramaiyah Pillai and E. Krishna Iyer (Kalakshetra Scholarship test) said we remember "Anjali Dancing here in Hall, you are her replica!! Same memories with Guruji Nanubhai Kasar (he presided for Silver Jubilee, we had unforgettable time, for 7 days!! - He thought "DASHAVATAR" was "HIGHLIGHT")

Finally a sad story and end of our Great Guruji's Life - Her sudden Demise at a very young age (50) shocked and shattered us all - Life in Baroda College was, STILL for sometime! While she Brought the Nakshatra's down in a ballet "Nava Graha" She had "union with almighty in Heaven" Ever since then onwards I cherish her memories in my heart and she lives in our "Soul".

I am very proud and happy that I am able to present her unique, out standing Dance Drama Radha Nu Shamanu in this book!! The ballet in Gujrat (Nadiad) took people to Great heights! Like express gratitude in beginning - I do it at the end thanking God for giving us the "Destiny of a Dasi".

That's the photo of our dear father! "Giving speech at my arangetram! He was a very good orator and an Actor too! (He use to perform at our Gujarati Mandal activity! I still remember the drama "Ghar no Divo" and we (both the sisters) bow to them (parents) with Reverance!! I quote the two lines here again "Kalpa Vriksha He Kanye Sathi Lavunio Ha Ba Ba Gela"!!! feel indeed fortunate to be a member of such an Artistic Family.

(Pardon me for any small mistakes of even misprint)



Fig. 5.2.13 In photo on the top of this figure, is of the Arangetram function of Smt. Prerna Desai mentored by Smt. Anjali Merh, Shri K. M. Munshi had graced the function as a Chief Guest

5:2:13:3 Padma Rajgopal (Subramaniam), Bharatanatyam Guru, Founder ‘Nupur Anjali, Cleveland Ohio



Fig. 5.2.14 (L-R) Smt. Jeethy Menon, Shri Sukumar Merh, Smt. Anjali Merh, Smt. Padma Subramaniam (Rajgopal)

Smt. Padma Subramaniam belonged to a family interested in the Arts. From a very young age she was interested in Dance. Padma Subramaniam joined The Department of Dance, College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in 1967. In 1970 she obtained first class first in Bachelor's degree. She also did her Post graduation in Bharatanatyam. She was very fortunate to take training from Smt. Anjali Merh in College and other teachers of the Department.

She was very much inspired by Smt. Anjali Merh. She tried to imbibe all the knowledge of Bharatanatyam from her. She performed in many programmes

choreographed by Smt. Anjali Merh. She performed in a programme which represented the 'College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics', at the Gujarat State Festival in 1970. Jeethy Menon, another disciple of Smt. Anjali Merh and she performed together in duet, in many programmes choreographed by Smt. Anjali Merh. Smt. Anjali Merh used to get many dance events in those days and hence, they performed at many events in Baroda under the guidance of Smt. Anjali Merh. They performed at the 'Tamil Association' in Baroda. They also performed in the programme arranged by 'Petrochemicals, Baroda' in which the famous Classical dancer and film actress Smt. Hema Malini was invited as a chief guest. She performed in Mumbai in 'The Department of Atomic Energy Recreation Club' with Jeethy Menon. She performed in a programme under the guidance of Smt. Anjali Merh and also conducted by her in Hyderabad, with Jeethy Menon as her partner in Shankarnagar. The programme was organised by Padma Subramanian's parents.

She performed with Jeethy Menon in Taj Hotel Mumbai in a programme called 'Vaitalik'. Taj Hotel Mumbai used to have special Classical Music and Dance performances at a programme called 'Vaitalik' for selected audience and foreigners. No food or beverages were served in this programme.

She performed in the 11th 'Kal Ke Kalakar Sangeet Samelan', organized by 'Sur Sringara Samsad', Mumbai on 18th November 1972. The programme was conducted by Smt. Anjali Merh. She composed Bharatanatyam items on North Indian music like *Thumaris* and *Horis*, 'Kaheko rar Machayi', a composition of Bindadin Maharaj, 'Brij Mai Hari Hori Machayi' in Bharatanatyam Dance Style. She performed in programmes mentored by Smt. Anjali Merh in cities like Mumbai, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Dahod, Surat and many more.

Her *Arangetral* was conducted by Smt. Anjali Merh. She and Jeethy Menon did the 'Arangetral' together. For this *Arangetral*, Smt. Anjali Merh requested Rukmini Devi to grace the function as a chief guest. Rukmini Devi willingly accepted the invitation and blessed Jeethy Menon and Padma Subramaniam for their *Arangetral*.

She also performed in the Rashtrapatibhavan in March, 1974 when Indira Gandhi was the Prime minister. This programme was in honour of visit of Vice President of Iraq Saddam Hussein to India.

She participated in the Ballet 'Radhu nu Shamanu' which was choreographed by Smt. Anjali Merh. She did the role of 'Sakhi' in the ballet.

After finishing Masters, she joined the 'Bhatkhande Music College', Lucknow as an Assistant Professor. Smt. Anjali Merh helped her to set the curriculum there, and with her help she designed the curriculum of Bharatanatyam in the College at Lucknow. She choreographed many items in Hindi, following the footsteps of Anjali Merh, in North India. She had learnt and performed on many Bharatanatyam items in Hindi of Smt. Anjali Merh; hence she could choreograph it without much difficulty. People understood and appreciated items of Bharatanatyam Dance Style more in Hindi than in South Indian languages. She performed at many places like Banaras and Kanpur in Uttarpradesh while working in Lucknow. She also performed in Ayodhya in 'Shri Ramnavmi Sammelan'. She mentored an *Arangetral* of a student in Lucknow. She taught in Lucknow for four years. In approximately 1977, she joined Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai's 'Darpana'. She was teaching in 'Darpana' and performing with the 'Darpana' group. She participated and performed in Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai's Productions like 'Meera', 'Tashir Desh', 'Chendalike' and many more in many cities in India and many countries abroad like China, Europe, Korea, And U. S. A and others. She learnt a lot from Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai about teaching, performing and also compeering. She started her Ph.D. under Smt. Anjali Merh on the topic '*Devadasi* Cult in Indian Dance' but she could not finish it, due to the early demise of Smt. Anjali Merh. In 1980 she left 'Darpana' and came to Hyderabad and started her institute 'Nupur Anjali'. In 1981, she got married to Shyam Sunder Rajgopal and shifted to Bhopal with her husband. She was teaching and performing in Bhopal for a year. Then she shifted to U. S. A in Cleveland Ohio, and from 1983 to 2018 she is teaching in U. S. A. She has performed at many places in U. S. A. Cleveland State University, Pennsylvania, Indiana and many more. She has trained many students in Indiana and Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A, choreographed many programmes and conducted several *Arangetrals*.

(The above information is based on the Excerpts from the interview by Present Researcher on phone call with Padma Subramaniam on 22/05/2019)

5:2:13:4 Smt. Jeethy Menon (Bharatanatyam Guru, Founder ‘Samyukta’ Trivandrum, Kerala)

Smt. Jeethy Menon joined The Department of Dance, College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in 1967. Her father R. Parmeswara Menon known as ‘Pammam’ was a prolific Malayalam novelist from Kollam, Kerala. He has also written script for several Malayalam movies. He was working as a General Manager for Western Railway and was based in Mumbai. Smt. Jeethy Menon got all the support and encouragement from her family to take training in Bharatanatyam dance style. In 1970 she obtained first class first in Bachelor’s degree examination earning her the Merit Scholarship. She was very fortunate to take training from Smt. Anjali Merh in College.

She performed in many programmes choreographed by Smt. Anjali Merh. She performed in a programme which represented the ‘College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics’, at the ‘Gujarat State Festival’ in 1970. Most of her performances were with Padma Subramaniam, another disciple of Smt. Anjali Merh, as her partner. They performed together in many programmes mentored by Smt. Anjali Merh like, for the event of ‘Tamil Association’, Baroda, in the programme arranged by ‘Petrochemicals, Baroda’ (Smt. Hema Malini was invited as a chief guest in the event), in Mumbai in ‘The Department of Atomic Energy Recreation club’. She performed in Hyderabad, with Padma Subramaniam as her partner in Shankarnagar in the programme which was arranged by Padma Subramanian’s parents and was mentored by Smt. Anjali Merh.

She performed in a programme called ‘Vaitalik’ in Taj Hotel Mumbai, which was a special programme arranged by the Hotel for selected audiences and foreigners, where no food or beverages were served.

She performed in the 11th ‘Kal Ke Kalakar’, ‘Sangeet Samelan’, organized by ‘Sur Sringara Samsad’, Mumbai on 18th November 1972, mentored by Smt. Anjali Merh. Smt. Anjali Merh composed items like North Indian *Thumris* and *Horis*, ‘Kaheko rar Machayi’,

a composition of Bindadin Maharaj, 'Brij Mai Hari Hori Machayi' in Bharatanatyam Dance Style for the programme. She also performed in European countries like Spain, Germany, Switzerland, and Belgium. This tour was sponsored by 'Seva Niketan', Mumbai. In this tour, folk dancers from Manipur and other Classical Dancers also accompanied them.

Her *Arangetral* was conducted by Smt. Anjali Merh. She and Padma Subramaniam did the '*Arangetral*' together. For this *Arangetral*, Smt. Anjali Merh requested Rukmini Devi to be the chief guest and grace the function and bless her and Padma Subramaniam. Rukmini Devi willingly accepted the invitation and blessed Jeethy Menon and Padma Subramaniam for their *Arangetral*.

She also performed in the Rashtrapati Bhavan in March, 1974 when Indira Gandhi was the Prime minister. This programme was in honour of visit of Vice President of Iraq Saddam Hussein to India.

She participated in the Ballet 'Radhu nu Shamanu' which was choreographed by Smt. Anjali Merh. She did the role of 'Radha' in the ballet.

After finishing Masters, she joined the teaching staff at 'Nalanda Mahavidhyalaya', Mumbai where she was conducting classes for the degree courses. She gained a lot of understanding of aesthetics and dance from Smt. Kanak Rele who is the founder of Nalanda Mahavidhyalaya, Mumbai.

Her mission has always been teaching this great art to students giving emphasis to the rich Indian culture, Philosophy, tradition and not only the practical aspect of Dance alone. She started her Dance Institute 'Samyukta' in Trivandrum, Kerala which strives to impart this art form in its pure undiluted form on the lines of a *Gurukul*. Her student 'Khushi' (adopted daughter) who is also a trained and qualified Bharatanatyam dancer, is assisting her in 'Samyukta'.



Fig. 5.2.15 Smt. Jeethy Menon in the production 'Radha nu Shamnu' as 'Radha'

5:2:13:5 Rekha Deerpaul (Bharatanatyam dancer and Former educator at The School of Performing Arts, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Mauritius)

Rekha Deerpaul had taken training in Manipuri dance from Shri Madhav Singh of Manipur from a very tender age of three years. She also learnt Kathak dance from Shri Bhola Vishwas. She was a very well-known folk dancer in Assam. Her father Late Shri Pushpa Dhar Borah was very much impressed with the dance of Indira Borah, who was a student of Late Smt. Rukmini Devi. He, therefore, insisted that she learn Bharatanatyam

Classical dance. In 1968 she joined the Department of Dance, The College of Indian Music Dance and Dramatics, The M. S. University of Baroda. She learnt the theoretical and practical aspects of dance in the Department from Late Smt. Anjali Merh, Late Guru Shri Kubernath Tanjorkar, Late Shri Pradeep Barua, and Late Su. Shri Nargis Katpitia and Smt. Prafula Patel.

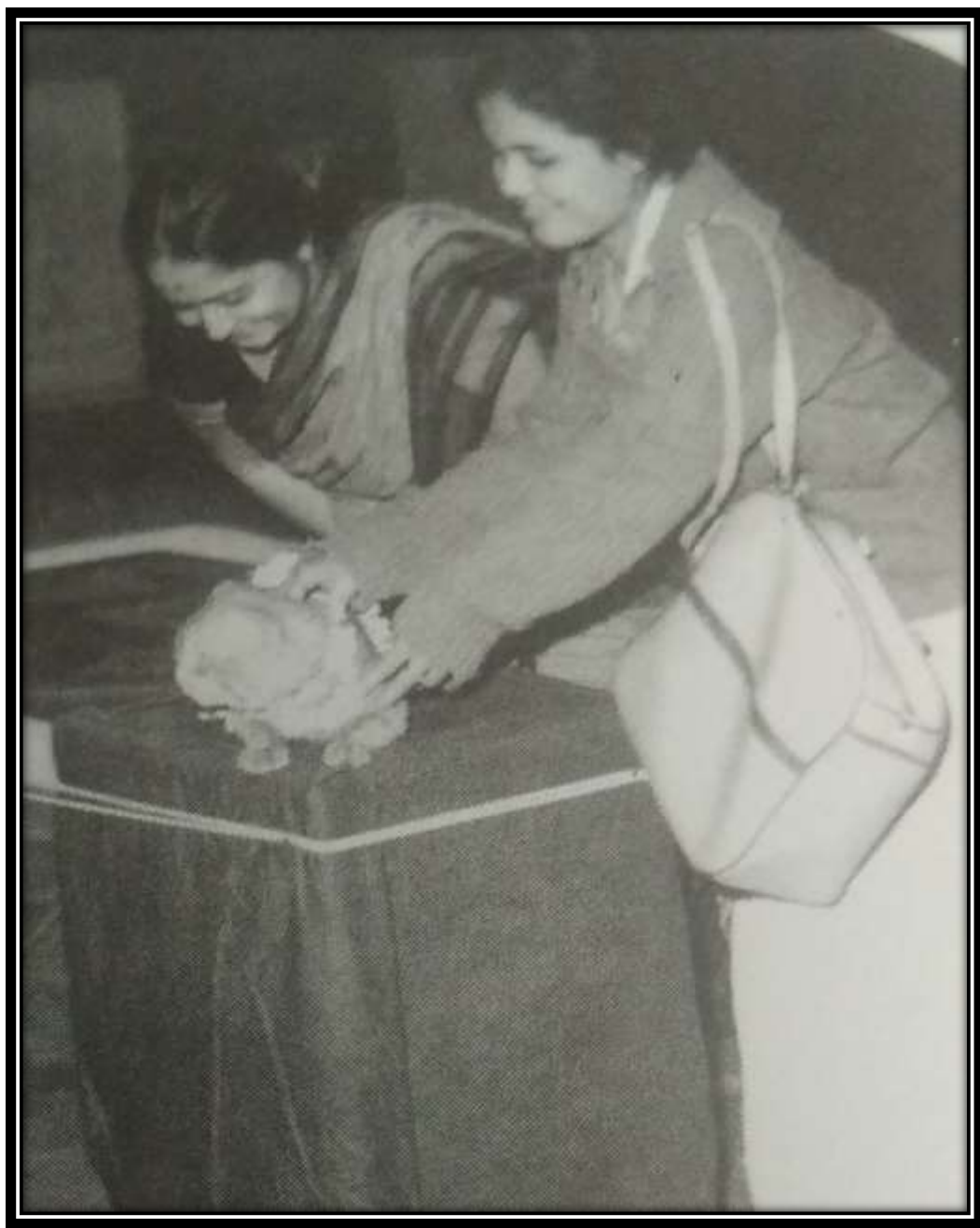


Fig. 5.2.16 Smt. Anjali Merh and Smt. Rekha Deerpaal

Smt. Anjali Merh gave her important roles in the Bharatanatyam programmes due to her graceful movements. She has also given her vocal support for many of her programmes. She has given her services in the 'Mahatma Gandhi Institute' at Mauritius. She has trained many students in the art of Bharatanatyam. She and Smt. Sandhya Mungur were the first pioneers to teach and propagate Bharatanatyam dance in Mauritius. She has choreographed many Bharatanatyam items in Hindi and Assamese languages. Thus, she promoted and propagated Bharatanatyam in Mauritius and surrounding countries.

5:2:13:6 Sandhya Mungur, Former Head, The School of Performing Arts, Mahatama Gandhi Institute, Mauritius



Fig. 5.2.17 Smt. Sandhya Mungur and Smt. Kanan Patel

Sandhya Mungur is a noted exponent and pioneer of Bharatanatyam in Mauritius with teaching, performing, choreographing, organizing and administrative experiences.

She is originally from the State of Gujarat in India. She was born on 24th September 1953, at Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India. She took the basic training under Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai at the 'Darpana Academy' in Ahmedabad. She performed *Arangetral* at the age of 14 and half years, and was awarded the certificate of Merit by 'Darpana Academy', Ahmedabad in 1968. Thereafter she obtained a Bachelor's degree in Bharatanatyam in 1974 from The M.S. University, Baroda under the tutelage of Smt. Anjali Merh and obtained First Class with Distinction in B.Mus. course, hence she was awarded Merit Scholarship to pursue the Master's Degree course at The M. S. University of Baroda, by the Department of Culture, Government of India. Later on she obtained Master's degree in Bharatanatyam in 2001 from University of Mumbai's 'Nalanda Nrityakala Mahavidyalaya', under the guidance of Dr. Kanak Rele. She did her dissertation on the topic, 'Shri Krishna – The Divine Lover as depicted in Bharatanatyam' in the Masters course.

She finished her Diploma in Music, Vocal Hindustani in 1972, from The Maharaja Sayajirao university of Baroda. She also finished her Visharad in Vocal Hindustani music from the 'Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Vidhya Mandal' in 1968.

She performed under the guidance of Smt. Anjali Merh at 'Sur Singar Samsad', at Bombay at National Level, India and was honoured with the title of 'Shringara Mani' in 1974. She is a Member of Advisory Board, International Dance Alliance, New York.

She worked as a dance teacher at Rosary High School, Roman Catholic Missionary School at Baroda from 1972 to 1974. She joined 'Mahatma Gandhi Institute' in February 1975 as part time teacher in Bharatanatyam. She was appointed as Education Officer at MGI in February 1976 to teach Bharatanatyam and Vocal Hindustani Music at School of Indian Music and Fine Arts. She was appointed as Lecturer at MGI in February 1994 to serve Department of Indian Music and Dance. She was promoted as Senior Lecturer in Department of Indian Music and Dance, MGI, Mauritius in September 2002. She was Head, Department of Indian Music and Dance, MGI during the period May 2004 to August 2006. In December 2012 she became Associate Professor and Head, School of Performing Arts, Mahatma Gandhi Institute from August 2006 to December 2012. She worked as a Head from January 2013 to January 2017. She taught Bharatanatyam at Certificate, Advanced Certificate, Diploma, Degree levels [B.A, Performing Arts

(Bharatanatyam) with Education Programme] [MA Performing Arts (Bharatanatyam)] and PGCE at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute – 1975 to 2017.

She has given several acclaimed stage and TV performances in Mauritius and abroad. She has performed for International conferences and delegations. She has choreographed and performed Dance Ballets and choreographed the dances for the 'National Day Celebrations' on various occasions, and choreographed dances for various religious organizations and socio-cultural organizations of Mauritius.

In 1974 she performed for 'National Centre of Performing Arts' (NCPA) Bombay and Bombay Television. She gave first performance on National Television in 'Naya Desh Nayi Zindagi' programme in Mauritius, April 1975. In 1975, she prepared and performed the programme for Prime Minister's Relief Fund by School of Indian Music and Dance in Mauritius. In 1976, she performed for 'Second World Hindi Convention' at MGI auditorium. In 1978 she choreographed the dance sequences for the musical One Act Play 'Abhishipt Manav' based on the legend of Mudiya Pahad, at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute. In 1979 in the context of International Children's year, she presented a ballet 'Radha nu Shamanu' for National TV (Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation), which was based on the ballet 'Radha nu Shamanu' of Smt. Anjali Merh. In 1985 she mounted and performed 'Shraddhanjali' programme in memory of Guru Late Smt. Anjali Merh at Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation. She has also given several solo concerts.

She founded 'Nupoor Cultural Troupe' for performances in Bharatanatyam and Folk Dances of India. In 1983, she choreographed and mounted a full fledge programme of Folk Dances of India (15 folk Dances from North and South) at the request of 'Mauritius Gujarati Cultural Society'. She performed ballet entitled 'Radha nu Shamanu' for the International Women's Association. In 1984, she choreographed and performed dances for 'Sanskrit Sammelan' in Mauritius at MGI. In 1985, she choreographed and staged 'Amar Sandesh' a programme in memory of Mahatma Gandhi on Gandhi Jayanti day at MGI. In 1990 she choreographed the famous dance sequence for the popular Children's film 'Stone Boy' filmed in Mauritius. In 1992 she performed and gave Lecture Demonstration at the University of Florida, Gainesville, in the United States of America. In 1994 she was delegated by Mahatma Gandhi Institute to lead the troupe of Government

of Mauritius to take part in competition held in Paris in the context of 'Francophonie'. She choreographed and prepared dance sequence with multidisciplinary approach for the same competition. In 1997, she choreographed and performed a ballet entitled 'Rukmini Kalyanam' for Tamil New Year in Reunion Island along with MGI artistes. In 2002, she conceptualized and choreographed a dance programme on Water Cycle 'H2O the Perpetual Cycle' at the request of Ministry of Utility for Inauguration of Midlands Dam. In 2003, she choreographed the dance ballet 'Dashavatara' for Diwali festival organised by the MGI. In 2004, she conceptualized and choreographed a dance item entitled 'Rhythm, Dance and Harmony' mounted by the Mahatma Gandhi Institute in collaboration with the Ministry of Arts and Culture, for the Official Programme of the 'National Day Celebrations 2004'. In 2007 she conceptualized and choreographed the dance sequence entitled 'Mauritius, the Rainbow Island' for the '1st Asia Pacific Youth Arts Festival' and led the Mahatma Gandhi Institute's troupe for participation in AYAF at Shenzhen, China. In 2012, she mounted a Gujarati Folk Dance on the occasion of 'Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, Mauritius'. In 2012, she organised cultural and academic events for 18th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers organized by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources. In 2013, she conceptualized and organized 'Nriyjanali' programme to pay Tribute to Late Shrimati Anjali Merh.

She created 'Smt Anjali Merh Award' for best student of B.A (Honours) Performing Arts, Bharatanatyam and M.A Performing Arts Bharatanatyam with donations from past students and staff.

5:2:13:7 Late Smt. Vaishampayan 'Jayanti V (Bharatanatyam Guru, Baroda)

Late Smt. Jayanti Vaishampayan was one of the senior students of Smt. Anjali Merh. She did her graduation and post-graduation and doctorate in Bharatanatyam Dance Style from the College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. She did her Ph.D. under the guidance of Smt. Anjali Merh on 'Contribution of Rukminidevi Arundale to Bharatanatyam' in the year 1976.

She participated and performed in many programmes choreographed by Smt. Anjali Merh. She had learnt the Gujarati *Margam* choreographed by Smt. Anjali Merh

and she taught that to many of her students. She also taught in the Department of Dance, Faculty of Performing Arts, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, for one year.



Fig. 5.2.18 (L-R) Shri Pradeep Baruah, Smt. Jayanti Vaishampayan, Smt. Jeethy Menon in the production 'Radha nu Shamnu'

She has trained many students in Bharatanatyam dance style in her 'Niharika Nritya Academy'. She trained students like Shri Darshan Purohit, Sushama Pandhya, Deval Purohit and many more who are contributing to the field of art.

5:2:13:8 Tani Desai, Bharatanatyam Guru, Founder, Director, Pagrav Bharatanatyam Dance Institute, Baroda



Fig. 5.2.19 Smt. Tani Desai

Smt. Tani Desai is one of the foremost disciples of Smt. Anjali Merh. She started learning Bharatanatyam in Bombay from her uncle Shri Arjun Desai. Her parents and her uncle

encouraged her a lot in Dance. She participated and performed in many of the programmes of her uncle as a leading dancer. Smt. Anjali Merh stayed very close to her home in Bombay, and Tani Desai's parents knew her very well. She went to Baroda to learn dance as Smt. Anjali Merh was teaching there. At the age of 19 in June 1967, she joined the Department of Dance, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. She finished B. Mus in April 1971. She joined the Masters course again after a short break in June 1976 and finished the Masters course in April 1978. She also joined Post Graduate Diploma in 'Nattuvangam' in June 1990 and finished in April 1991. She has a 'Visharad' in Bharatanatyam and Manipuri dance.

During her training in Bharatanatyam dance in the College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, in Vadodara, her classes were mostly taken by Smt. Anjali Merh. She learnt many Bharatanatyam items from Smt. Anjali Merh. She performed under her guidance in a number of Solo, Group and Ballet productions. Under Anjali Merh's guidance she participated in 'Gujarat State Festival' in the College of Indian Music Dance and Dramatics, Baroda in Open Air Theater, in 1968. She participated and played the pivotal role of 'Sutradhar' in Smt. Anjali Merh's Dance Ballet in Gujarati 'Radha nu Shamanu' at the 'College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics' in 1968. She was fortunate to learn from the great stalwart Guru Shri Kubernath Tanjorkar, during her studies in The Department of Dance, though for few classes. She also took training in 'Nattuvangam' from Professor C. V. Chandrasekhar.

She is the Founder and Director of the 'Pagrav Bharatanatyam Dance Institute' in Vadodara since 1976.

She has choreographed Dance Ballets in Bharatanatyam dance styles like, 'Chitrangada', 'Tana-Riri', 'Sambhavami Yuge Yuge' and 'Murli Tari Preet'. She has trained students like Shambhavi Desai, Dhruti Nanavati, and Hitakshi, Gargi Vyas, and many more. Shambhavi Desai is a performing Artist and has her full-fledged Dance and Music Academy in Pittsburg, USA for the last 20 years. Dhruti Nanavati is a performing Artist

and she has her Dance classes in Boston USA for the last ten years. Hitakshi is a Performing Artist in Ahmedabad and Gargi Vyas is a Performing Artist in Bengaluru.

5:2:13:9 Smt. Kanan Amin (Patel), B.Mus, M.Mus Bharatanatayam, Baroda



Fig. 5.2.20 Smt. Tani Desai Smt. Kanan Patel

Smt. Kanan Amin (Patel) belongs to a Gujarati family from Baroda. She finished her Diploma in Bharatanatyam from the ‘College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics’, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Baroda in 1970. In 1974, she finished her Bachelors and in 1976 she did her Masters from the same College. She received National Scholarship on Merit Basis. She also holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Arts with Geography and Sociology.

During her studies in the 'College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics', The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Baroda, she learnt dance and theory from the various teachers like Smt. Anjali Merh, *Guru* Shri Kubernath Tanjorkar, Shri Pradeep Barua, Su. Shri Nargis Katpitia and Smt. Prafula Oza (Patel). When she was in Diploma third, fourth and fifth year, Smt. Anjali Merh was taking her classes. She was deeply influenced by her. Smt. Anjali Merh also taught her when she was in Degree third and fourth year and two years of Masters. She did her *Arangetral* on 22nd Febuary, 1976 in C. C. Mehta Auditorium, Baroda, under the guidance of Smt. Anjali Merh. She performed the Gujarati *Margam* choreographed by Smt. Anjali Merh in her *Arangetral*. Some items of the *Margam* were specially choreographed by Smt. Anjali Merh for her *Arangetral*.



Fig. 5.2.21 Smt. Kanan Patel

At a fairly young age of 20 years she mastered the technique of Bharatanatyam and she is one of the few accomplished artists trained under Smt. Anjali Merh. She performed in many programmes of Smt. Anjali Merh at places like Baroda, Ahmedabad and Bombay. She performed in the ballet 'Radha nu Shamnu' choreographed by Smt.

Anjali Merh. She has received title ‘Sringar Mani’ Award for her notable performance in ‘Kal Ke Kalakar’ at Bombay organised by 'Sur Singar Samsad' under the guidance of Smt. Anjali Merh. She learnt many Hindi and Gujarati items from Smt. Anjali Merh. She taught Bharatanatyam in Rosary School, Baroda for some time.

After marriage she moved to Canada. She performed Bharatanatyam in TV programme in Calgary, Canada. Later, she moved to Edmonton in Canada and taught Bharatanatyam there for two years. In 1985 she moved to New York, USA. She taught Bharatanatyam there for one year to students privately. In 1987, she moved to California, USA. She established ‘Nupur Dance Class’ in California, USA in 1989 to propagate Bharatanatyam dance style. Later, she moved to Florida, USA and she continued propagating Bharatanatyam dance style there through her Academy ‘Nupur Dance Class’. She taught students Gujarati and Hindi items that she learnt from Smt. Anjali Merh, as it was easier for students to understand the items. She popularized Bharatanatyam in USA, through the Hindi and Gujarati items that she had learnt from Smt. Anjali Merh.

She is now in Baroda, and she shares her knowledge and items that she learnt from Smt. Anjali Merh, with students of Dance, who approach her for guidance. She taught present researcher a *Padam*, *Kirtanam*, and *Tillana* of the Gujarati *Margam* choreographed by Smt. Anjali Merh.

5:2:13:10 Smt. Manik Ambikai, Bharatanatyam Guru Nrityangana, Pune



Fig. 5.2.22 Smt. Manik Ambikai

Manik Ambikai is a very senior disciple of Guru Smt. Anjali Merh. She is from Pune. She was inspired to learn dance when she saw the *Arangetral* of Smt. Perna Desai, in Pune, who was the student of Smt. Anjali Merh. She used to perform folk dance in a folk dance group, and was also learning Kathak. She joined the Department of Dance, College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, in 1968. In the College she learnt from Shri Pradeep Barua in first year and Su. Shri Nargis Katpitia in second year. She learnt from Guru Shri Kubernath Tanjorkar in the third and fourth year. In 1972, she finished her bachelors. She stood first in the whole College. She took one year gap and later on joined Masters in Dance. In Masters, she was very fortunate to learn from Guru Smt. Anjali Merh.

She participated and performed in dance compositions choreographed by Guru Smt. Anjali Merh. She learnt the Gujarati Margam from Guru Smt. Anjali Merh. She participated in the ballet 'Radha nu Shamnu' choreographed by *Guru* Smt. Anjali Merh and in the 'Kal Ke Kalakar' programme in Bombay in the year 1974, under her guidance. She, with other students, presented whole *margam* in Gujarati, which was composed and choreographed by *Guru* Smt. Anjali Merh. She performed the *Padam* 'Ja ja Kana, tuja karani jani' solo in the programme. She learnt many items from Smt. Anjali Merh like 'Allaripu' in *Tishra*, *Chatusra* and *Mistra Tāla*, Saveri Jatiswaram, Bhairavi Jatiswaram, Rag Mallika Jatiswaram, 'Sarasi Jakshunu', 'Venu Gananae', 'Iyer sheriya', 'Ni uraipa' Kirtanam, 'Natanam Adinar' Kirtanam, 'Karanam Ketavadi' Padam, Ashtapadi 'Hari Riha', Ashtapadi 'Yahi Madhava', Tillana in raag 'Hindolam', 'Todi' and 'Sindhubhairavi', and Varanam in Raag 'Ananda Bhairavi', 'Sakhiye inda velai'. She learnt a kriti by Gyaneshwara 'Mogra fulala'.

After finishing her Masters, she started her dance institute 'Nrityanagana' in Pune. She was amongst the first few pioneers to teach the 'Kalakshetra' style of Bharatanatyam Classical Dance Style in Pune. Inspired by *Guru* Smt. Anjali Merh's *Margam* in Gujarati language, she composed *Margams* in Hindi and Marathi. She was the first teacher of Bharatanatyam Dance Style to start *Arangetral* in a group in Pune. She choreographed a ballet 'Maharashtra Darshan'. She has received many awards and is also honoured by many institutions for her contribution in the field of dance. She was honoured by 'Kalasat'

in 2015. She was honoured by 'Pune Mahanagar Palika' in 2012 by 'Guru Pandit Rohini Bhate Samman'. In 2016, she was honoured in the 'Shanivarvada dance and music festival' in Pune.

5:2:13:11 Smt. Ambika Sridhar (Chari) Bharatanatyam Dancer, Exponent (Australia)

Smt. Ambika Shridhar is a post-graduate in Bharatanatyam dance style. Smt. Ambika Sridhar joined as a Diploma student of Bharatanatyam Dance Style in the Department of Dance, the College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Baroda in 1969. In 1972, she joined the Bachelors course in Bharatanatyam Dance Style. She got admission directly in second year as she had already finished Diploma Course. She was fortunate to learn Bharatanatyam from *Guru* Smt. Anjali Merh and *Guru* Shri Kubernath Tanjorkar. She also learnt the basics of Bharatanatyam Dance Style from Shri Pradeep Barua and Su. Shri Nargis Katpitia. She also completed her Post graduation in Bharatanatyam Dance style. She took Vocal (Hindustani Style) as a second subject and learnt vocal for three years.

She participated in 'Kal Ke Kalakar' programme organized by 'Sur Samsad' at Bombay in 1973. She participated in many ballets while she was studying, like 'Chandramaulishwar', 'Radha nu Shamnu', choreographed by *Guru* Smt. Anjali Merh. Music of 'Radha nu Shamnu' was composed by *Guru* Shri Kubernath Tanjorkar. She performed in 'Chandramaulishwara Kuruwanji', in cities like Bombay, Ahmedabad, Surat and also performed for Bombay Doordarshan in 1974. She played the role of 'Kurathi' in 'Chandramauliswhara Kuruwanji'; she participated in ballet 'Chitrangada' in Bengali language choreographed by Shri Pradip Barua. She participated in many programmes and annual functions of the College of Indian Music Dance and Dramatics choreographed by *Guru* Smt. Anjali Merh and *Guru* Shri Kubernath Tanjorkar.

She started her institute 'Nrityashikhar School of Dance', to give training in Bharatanatyam Dance Style at ONGC Manjalpur. She was working with Indian Railways. She got married in 1979. She finished her vocal degree (1982 to 1986) from Faculty of Performing Arts, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Baroda. She did her post

graduate diploma in 'Nattuvangam' (1986 to 1987) under Professor C. V. Chandrasekhar. She also gave two full-fledged solo Bharatanatyam performances for Telugu and Kanada Association of Baroda, mentored by Professor C. V. Chandrasekhar. In 1988 she worked as an assistant Professor in the Department of Dance, Faculty of Performing Arts, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Baroda, under the head-ship of Professor C. V. Chandrasekhar. In 1991 she migrated to Australia. She established her Dance institute in Sydney. She trained more than 50 students. She mentored the *Arangetrals* of 6 students. She performed solo at various Indian Cultural Events, International Fairs in Australia. Her students too performed at various programs in Australia. She worked as a visiting lecturer in Faculty of Performing Arts, at the University of Western Sydney, Australia.

In 2004, due to knee surgery, she had to give up dance and close her Dance classes. However, she is still choreographing folk dance and semi classical dance with Indian community in Australia.

5:2:13:12 Nirva Shah (Bharatanatyam Guru, Dallas, Texas)

Smt. Nirva Shah has earned a Bachelor's in 1979 and Master's Degree in 1981 with distinction in Bharatanatyam from M.S. University, Baroda, Gujarat, India. She is disciple of Smt. Anjali Merh and has also taken training from Prof. C.V. Chandrasekhar, *Guru* Sri Kubernath Tanjorkar, *Guru* Pradeep Barua and Su Shri. Nargis Katpitia. She participated in many programmes of Smt. Anjali Merh. She performed in the 'Kal ke Kalakar' in Mumbai organized by 'Sur Samsad'. She received 'Sringara Mani' award for the same. She participated in the Ballets like 'Kuravanji' and 'Navagraha', choreographed by Smt. Anjali Merh. She learnt many dance compositions of Smt. Anjali Merh like the Gujarati *Margam* and many other Gujarati and Hindi innovative items of Smt. Anjali Merh. Smt. Nirva Shah established the 'Payal Dance Academy' in India in 1979. She has trained many students in the art of Bharatanatyam. She choreographed a Dance Ballet 'Sonal'. She was honoured by the Government of Gujarat for her Ballet 'Sonal'.

She has published a book 'Nritya Samiksha', a theoretical review of Bharatanatyam. She has also held the position of Honorary Professor of Bharatanatyam at 'Sardar Patel University' which was earlier known as 'Kalakendra'. One of her groups

was invited to participate in the Indian TV show, 'Chak Dhoom Dhoom', in 2011. She shifted to USA in 1994. She is now propagating and promoting Bharatanatyam in Dallas, Texas. She has given many programmes of Bharatanatyam in Dallas, Texas and mentored *Arangetral* of her students. She has trained over 500 students in India and USA.



Fig. 5.2.23 Smt. Nirva Shah

4th January '79

ગુજરાત સમાચાર

વડોદરા જ્ઞાન્ય ઓફિસ: કુમકુમ બંગ્લો, લોહાણા

સિંગારમાળી એવોર્ડ મેળવતી વડોદરા યુનિ.ની બે વિદ્યાર્થીની



ક. બીના બારબૈયા



ક. નીરવા શાહ

વડોદરા, તા. ૩
મ. સ. યુનિ. ના. મ્યુઝિક કોલેજના નૃત્ય વિભાગમાં બી. ૧યુઝ.ના ઉચ્ચ વર્ષમાં અભ્યાસ કરતા ક. બીના બારબૈયા તેમજ ક. નીરવા શાહે "સિંગાર માળી" એવોર્ડ પ્રાપ્ત કર્યા છે.

મુંબઈ મુકામે ૧૭ મે "કલકે-કલાકર" ના ઉપક્રમે આ બન્ને કલાકરોએ તેમના કલા ગુણ અભિવ્યક્તી કરાવ્યા હતા. આ કાર્યક્રમમાં ભાગ લેનાર કલાકરોમાં ભારત નાટ્યકળા પ્રધાન તાલીમ આપનાર જ હોય છે. પરંતુ કલાકરોની

કાંઈથી બેને તેનું આયોજન ગુજરાતી, મરાઠી ને ગિન્દીમાં કર્યું હતું.

આ પ્રસંગની એક વિશિષ્ટતા એ હતી કે આખર સુધી કાર્યક્રમ નૃત્યકાર સાથે બાવા, વગાડવા તેમજ નટ્ય કાંચક માટે ગુણ ગણના કર્યું પરંતુ આ આયોજન પ્રધાન મ્યુઝિક કોલેજના વિદ્યાર્થીઓએ મળીને કર્યું તેમાં જી. એચ. ડી. ના વિદ્યાર્થીની ક. શરૂઆતમાં જી કૃષ્ણ રસ લઈ આ બન્ને કલાકરોને તેમના પ્રધાન શરૂઆત કરવામાં જ આનંદ બતાવ્યો તે અત્યંત પ્રશંસનીય છે.

5.2.24 Newspaper clipping dated 4th January 1978, from Gujarat Samachar about Shringar Mani award received in 17th Kal Ke Kalakar programme by Nirva Shah and Bina Barbaiya students of Smt. Anjali Merh



5.2.25 Newspaper clippings of Nirva Shah and Bina Barbaiya students of Smt. Anjali Merh about receiving the Shringara Mani Award from Sur Singar Sansad, Bombay (Now Mumbai)

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- 3) Shah, Parul. 'ANJALI MERH'. Attendance *The Dance Annual of India Gujarat Special 5th Anniversary Issue*, 2003, page 25
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- 6) Excerpts from the interview of Smt. Anjani Arunkumar taken by Present Researcher on phone taken on 2nd June, 2020.
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- 26) *Excerpts from the Phone interview of Menon Jeethy, conducted by Present Researcher, 19nd July 2018.*
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Photo Source:

- 5.2.1 The Present Researcher got this photo from Prerna Desai from the booklet 'Astitva' by 'Aradhana Institute of Dance by founders Dr. Anjanai Arunkumar and Smt. Prerna Desai
- 5.2.2 The soft copy of the photo was shared by Smt. Jeethy Menon to the Present Researcher.
- 5.2.3 The Present Researcher got this photo from Smt. Kanan Patel (Amin)
- 5.2.4 From the Arangetral card of Smt. Kanan Patel
- 5.2.5 From the Arangetral card of Smt. Kanan Patel
- 5.2.6 From the Arangetral card of Smt. Kanan Patel
- 5.2.7 From the Arangetral card of Smt. Kanan Patel
- 5.2.8 The soft copy of the photo was shared by Smt. Jeethy Menon with the Present Researcher
- 5.2.9 The soft copy of the photo was shared by Smt. Jeethy Menon with the Present Researcher
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- 5.2.19 *The Present Researcher got this photo from Smt. Tani Desai*
- 5.2.20 *The Present Researcher got this photo from Smt. Kanan Patel (Amin)*
- 5.2.21 *The Present Researcher got this photo from Smt. Kanan Patel (Amin)*
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5.3 Contribution as a choreographer and a music composer:

5:3:1 Contribution of Smt. Anjali Merh as a Choreographer:

(Following information is complied with the information collected from the Interviews of Smt. Juthika Mahen, Smt. Kanan Patel, Smt. Padma Rajgopal, Smt. Jeethy Menon, Smt. Manik Ambikai, Smt. Prerna Desai, Smt. Anjani Arunkumar, Shri Dwarkanath Bhosle, Smt. Madhuri Bhawe, Smt. Sandhya Mungur, Smt. Tani Desai, Smt. Nirva Shah, Smt. Lalita Thakar, Smt. Prafulla Patel and Shri P.S.Chari)

Smt. Anjali Merh was very creative and imaginative choreographer with excellent choreographic abilities. Choreography was her forte and she could give a very artistic form to her visualization in her beautiful dance choreographies. She had very good knowledge of Sanskrit, literature and dance treatises like 'Abhinaya Darpana' and 'Natyasastra'. She created poems, composed the music of the poems and also choreographed it with enthusiasm. She introduced North Indian Languages to the Dance Dramas. Her dance dramas like 'Ramayana' and 'Sudama Charitra' were appreciated by all.

She had choreographed many items in Bharatanatyam Dance Style like, the Narsinh Mehta Bhajan, 'Hari ne Bhajata Haji koi ni Laj jata nathi jani re', 'Abhangas of Vithoba', 'Sundar te dhyani ubhe vitevari', 'Hori', Meera Bhajan like 'Hari tum haro jan ki peer', Swati Thirunal's hindi *Tillana* 'Gita thunika taka dhim nadir kita tom'. She has choreographed 'Ashtapadi' 'Yahi madhava Yahi Keshava', 'Lalita Lavanga Lata parishilana' and 'Hari Riha Mugdha Vadhu Nikare'. She choreographed a kriti of Saint Gyaneshwara 'Mogra fulela'.

She liked to choreograph Bharatanatyam Dance items in different languages. She specially choreographed Bharatanatyam Dance style items for her students in their own mother tongues who came from different states and regions of India to learn dance in the Department of Dance, College of Indian, Music, Dance and Dramatics.

In the choreography of her *Tirmaanams* /jathis or nritya (pure dance) sequence, her selection of movements, *adavus* and patterns had beauty along with simplicity. Her

choreography was refined. Her choreography had different geometrical patterns woven together which created an aesthetically appealing vision. To a connoisseur of dance, they revealed intricate complexity and well-formed patterns.

Smt. Anjali Merh composed many items in Hindi, Gujarati and other regional languages so that the richness and beauty of this ancient form of classical dance Bharatanatyam can be understood and enjoyed by the people of Gujarat and other regions who do not understand South Indian Languages. Tamil and other South Indian languages are not understood by people living in other states, especially in North India Western India and Eastern India. She popularized Bharatanatyam in Gujarat specially and made it easy to understand for the people of areas where South Indian languages are not understood.

Smt. Anjali Merh choreographed items of Bharatanatyam in Hindustani music. When she was in Bombay. She performed in solo as well as in group with her students the Bharatanatyam items that she choreographed in Hindustani music like, 'Gauri Ardhang', 'Radhe Tum Shyam Bano' and 'Kahe Bansi Bajaye'.

The credit of composing a whole *Margam* of Bharatanatyam Dance Style and a *Kuravanji* in Gujarati goes to Smt. Anjali Merh. In many of her compositions though the lyrics are in vernacular languages like Gujarati, she composed it in Karnatic music. This was a very new experiment that she did during that time. She composed several items like *Bhajans*, *Padams*, and *Kirtanams* in other languages like Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi, Assamese, Bengali and many more which was a very novel experiment and a bold step during that period. She continued choreographing in other languages with great perseverance and creativity. She choreographed poems of poets like Narsinh Mehta, Premal, and Avinash Vyas as also of her mother.

Dance Dramas:

Smt. Anjali Merh choreographed many dance dramas with impressive choreography and good music such as 'Radha nu Shamanu', 'Sachi Paolomi', 'Natir Puja', 'Stulibhadra Kosha', 'Sudama Charitra', 'Ramayana', 'Shri Chandramauliswara Kuravanji' and 'Navagraha'. The following is the information about various dance dramas choreographed by her.

5:3:1:1 Ramayana:

Lyrics: Lyrics were taken from the 'Ramayana' written by Poet Tulsidas.

Theme: It was based on the story of Ramayana.

Dancers: Shri Pradeep Barua played the role of Shri Rama, Smt. Anjali Merh played the role of Sita, and some students from the Diploma played the roles of the queens of Dashratha i.e., Kaushalya, Kaikai and Sumitra.

Tandava aspect was used in choreography for the characters like Shri Rama in the choreography. For the character of Sita, *Lasya* aspect was used in the choreography. The male dancers and female dancers both participated in the dance drama. Gestures used were from 'Abhinaya Darpana'. Basic *adavu* steps of Bharatanatyam were used in the choreography.

5:3:1:2 Radha nu Shamnu:

Lyrics: Lyrics were written by Smt. Mugdha Hora. Mugdha Hora was a poetess and mother of Smt. Anjali Merh.

Choreography: Choreography was done by Smt. Anjali Merh.

Music: Music was composed by Guru Shri Kubernath Tanjorkar. Music was very haunting, had popular tunes and was one of the reasons for the success of the Dance Drama.

Language: Gujarati

This Ballet, choreographed by Smt. Anjali Merh around 1968, was choreographed in Bharatanatyam style. The theme was based on an old story about the dream of Radha. Radha saw a dream of her marriage with Lord Krishna. When Radha wakes up, she describes the dream to her mother.

In South India story of *Andal* is well-known. The story is presented by Bharatanatyam dancers as 'Andal Kalyanam'. Kalyanam means marriage. This story is related to 'Vaishnava Sampradaya'. The storyline and theme of 'Radha nu Shamnu' is

similar to the story of *Andal*. The rituals of marriage depicted in 'Radha nu Shamnu' are influenced by Gujarati marriage rituals.

Radha describes the sequence of her dream with Shri Krishna to her mother. In the production, the marriage ceremonies were choreographed in Bharatanatyam dance style. The main characters are of Radha, Krishna, Shiva, Parvati, Devaki, Vasudev, Sutradhara and Sakhis in the production. All the marriage rituals were shown with a brilliant choreography. *Nritta* (pure dance) and *Nritya* (*abhinaya*, expressions) were beautifully incorporated in the choreography by Smt. Anjali Merh. The sequences of marriage in dream were depicted with great artistry and great sensitivity. How *sakhis* (friends of Radha) came to the marriage ceremony is described. The costume and ornaments worn are described. The musical instruments played in the ceremony are beautifully depicted in the choreography. Decorations are described very beautifully in the choreography. Other gods like Indra also come to the marriage, which is shown in the choreography too. Radha tells her mother that she considers herself lucky that she is married to Shri Krishna. The choreography is apt with the theme and the music.



Fig. 5.3.1 from the production 'Radha nu Shamnu'

It was performed by different students at different times. Students of Smt. Anjali Merh like Late Shri Pradeep Barua, Smt. Jeethy Menon, Smt. Padma (Rajgopal) Subramaniam, Smt. Tani Desai Smt. Sandhya Mungur, Smt. Jayanti Chandolkar and Smt. Kanan Patel have performed in this Dance drama.

In the first performance of the dance production, Smt. Jeethy Menon played the role of Radha, Shri Pradeep Barua played the role of Shiva, Smt. Jayanti Chandolkar played the role of Parvati, and Sandhya Mungur had played the role of Sakhi. Padma Subramaniam and Tani Desai had played the role of *Sutradhar*.

It was performed in Baroda in 1968 at the 'College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics' in Baroda. Later on, it was performed in other cities like Ahmedabad, Surat and Bombay. It was performed in Bombay in 1974. It was also telecasted on Bombay Doordarshan.



Fig. 5.3.2 From the production 'Radha nu Shamnu'

5:3:1:3 Chandramaulishwar Kuravanji:

5:3:1:3:1 About Kuravanji:

'Kuravanji' is a dance drama form belonging to the Southern region of India. 'Kuravanjis' are the dance dramas enacted in the temples of Tamilnadu and Andrapradesh region of South India as a part of worship and temple rituals. In the seventeenth century in many temples of South India "Kuravanjis" were performed. It is a very ancient art form, as ancient as the 'Sadir Natyam'. 'Kuravanji' is a play written in a verse form. The "Kuravanji" dance dramas were performed by a group of women who were associated with the temple as a part of ritualistic worship. Not much information is available regarding the origin of this dance form but it appears that the tradition of 'Kuravanji' dance dramas is three hundred years old. After the period of Bharata, more forms of dance dramas started to develop other than 'Dasa Rupaka', which had more dance and music elements - these were called 'Uparupakas'. The dance drama forms like 'Bhagwat Mela Natakam' and 'Kuravanjis' also belong to the 'Uparupaka' tradition. The influence of 'Git Govind' is seen in 'Kuravanjis, in the role of 'Sakhi', whom the *Nayika* requests to convey her message to her beloved.¹

It is believed that the 'Kuravanji' dance-dramas originated from the dances which were performed by the 'Kurava' tribes. The word *Kuravan* means a tribe and *Vanji* means a woman born in a gypsy family and belonging to a hilly region. 'Vanji' is generally a fortune teller. The term *Kuravani* is used for a gypsy tribe. So gradually the term 'Kuravanji' was used for the compositions in which the character of 'Kurathi', who was a gypsy women appeared. The main theme of the 'Kuravanji' dance drama is human love for God and other human beings. In the 'Kuravanji' dance drama, the important character is of the 'Kurathi' woman, who plays the role of a forecaster. Traditionally in 'Kuravanji' dance drama, all the roles were played only by women. Only the role of 'Kattaikkaran', the announcer, was played by a male dancer. The technique used in the 'Kuravanji' dance drama was of 'Dasi attam' or 'Sadir attam'. Bharatanatyam was known as 'Dasi attam' or 'Sadir attam', during that period.²

The stories of the 'Kuravanjis have a common and similar theme. The *Nayika* falls in love with the king, minister, a noble person or with the presiding deity of the local temple. Each deity has its own 'Kuravanji'. In some 'Kuravanjis deity is the *Nayika* himself. Before the beginning of the 'Kuravanji', the *Sutradhara* or *Kattiakaran* enters the stage with a prayer. Then the *sakhis* enter. They introduce themselves and the *Nayika*. Then the *Nayika* enters who is young and pleasing. The *Nayika* sees in a procession the *Nayika* who is either the King or the Presiding Deity. She falls in love with him. She longs to be with him. Pangs of her love and separation are portrayed. She appeals to all her friends (*sakhis*), and her natural surroundings, the moon, the breeze and the birds to help her. *Kurathi* or a wandering gypsy woman appears on the scene in the end. She sings praises of her own land. She evokes her god and performs various rituals. She reads the palm of the *Nayika*. She tells her that she will soon be united with her beloved. The *Nayika* is very happy to hear this and gives her precious Presents for a happy forecast. *Kurathi* gives her good wishes and exists singing and dancing. The *Nayika* is happily united with the *Nayika* in the end.³

According to 'Natyashastra', there are two aspects of *Shringara*, the *Sambhoga Shringara* and the *Vipralambha Shringara*. In 'Kuravanji' *Vipralambha Shringara* is often portrayed. The music of 'Kuravanji' is classical Karnatic music. The *Raga* used in 'Kuravanji' are 'Rakti raag'. Some folk tunes are used for the character of *Kurathi*. Sequence of *Jatis* and rhythmic passages are woven in between the *Sahitya*, to maintain a lively atmosphere. The *patrapravesha darus* are used to introduce the characters from behind the curtain, which is held by stage hands. Verses are sung in between the songs which serve as a narrative which link different *darus* of the story. 'Saveri raag' is used for these verses. For the conversation of the characters, 'Kuravanjis also have 'Samvada darus'. 'Ādi Tāla', 'Misra Chapu Tāla', 'Tishra Eka Tāla' and 'Rupaka Tāla' are used in most of the 'Kuravanji's.⁴

The performing arts like 'Kuravanji' as all the other arts flourished because of the support and security given by the Kings in South during the period of Vijaynagar Kings, Chola rulers, the Nayak rulers, and the Maratha rulers. As the time passed different elements were added to the performing arts to enrich them. The credit of preserving the

tradition of dance in the temples goes also to *Devadasis*, who performed various rituals in the temples through dance. 'Brihadishwara' temple at Tanjavur was a great center of art which supported, promoted and preserved art during the time of Chola Kings. Four hundred '*Devadasis*' were sent to the 'Brihadishwara' temple from other states. These '*Devadasis*' used to perform various rituals in the temple through dance. It is possible that the successors of these '*Devadasis*' later on performed the 'Kuravanji' dance-dramas. There is a special platform in front of the temple where the 'Kuravanji' dance dramas used to be performed during the rule of Maratha Kings.⁵

Shahaji II (AD 1684-1711), who was the son of Ekoji, the first Maratha ruler of Tanjavur, was a great philanthropist of arts who supported poets and artists. It is believed that Shahaji II wrote 'Thyageshvar Kurvanji'.⁶ 'Thyagesar 'Kuravanji'', is in praise of Lord Thyagesa. 'Thyagesar 'Kuravanji' used to be performed at the 'Tiruvarur' Temple in praise of Lord Thyagesa in the time of Shahaji II. Rulers who succeeded Shahaji were Sarfoji I, Tukoji, Bavasaheb, Pratapsinh, Tulaja and Sarfoji II. The art forms like 'Sadir' and 'Kuravanji' flourished remarkably during the time of Tulaja and Sarfoji II. There are references in the 'Sangitasaramrita' that indicate that there was a tradition of 'Sadir Natch' which was used by *Devadasis* for the solo dance and 'Kuravanji' for dance dramas, technique of which is similar to Bharatanatyam dance style. The solo dance was a part of 'Nityotsava', for the rituals of daily worship. The 'Kuravanji' dance dramas formed the part of 'Brahmotsava', which were the rituals of the annual festivals. There are sixty or more 'Kuravanjis which are written in different languages like Telugu, Malayalam and Marathi. 'Kuravanjis can be classified on the basis of music, the deity or the King in whose praise it is written or on the intention or the reason behind the composition and presentation of the 'Kuravanji', like some 'Kuravanjis were intended to be used as 'Kathakalakshepam', dance drama and singing. Different types of 'Kuravanjis are 'Kutrala Kuravanji', 'Sendil Kuravanji', 'Thyagesar Kuravanji', 'Azhagara Kuravanji', 'Kumbesar Kuravanji' etc. In 'Kutrala Kuravanji', 'Thyagesar Kuravanji', 'Kumbesar Kuravanji' and 'Azhagara Kuravanji', the theme of the first half is about 'Madhura Bhakti'. Because of the 'Bhakti' movement, the literary compositions had similar influence in many 'Kuravanjis that were written in that time. The main base of the story was the longing of the soul or *jivatma* for union with the supreme lord or *Paramatma*. Some *nattuvanars* and dancers like Rukmini

Devi, Dandayudhapani Pillai, Kamala, Vyjanthimala, Padma Subramaniam and Mrinalini Sarabhai have choreographed 'Kuravanji' dance dramas.⁷

'Thyagesar Kuravanji' is believed to have been written by the great Tamil scholar, Muttu Kavirayar, who was in the court of Shahaji. However, there is controversy about its authorship. Until recently this 'Kuravanji' used to be enacted in the 'Devasiriya Mandapam' in the 'Thyagesa' temple at Tiruvarur, during the 'Brahmotsava' festival for three nights.⁸

Most of the 'Kuravanjis' are in Shaivite theme. 'Azhagara Kuravanji' is in Vaishnavite theme, which was written by Kavi Kunjra Bharati (1810-96) in the year 1840. Kavi Kunjra Bharati was a *samasthan vidwan* (scholar) in the court of Ramnad and Shivaganga. This 'Kuravanji' is in the praise of 'Sundararaja Perumal' who is the presiding deity of 'Azhagara Kovil' in Madura district. The *Nayika* of this 'Kuravanji' is Mohanavalli, who falls in love with Malazhagara, when she sees him in a procession.⁹

'Kumbesara Kuravanji' is in the praise of 'Kumbesara', who is the deity of the Shiva temple in Kumbhakonam. It is a work of Papanasam Mudaliar who was a Tamil Composer in eighteenth century. During the period from 1835 to 1875, it was performed in the Soolamangalam village in the 'Vasantotsavam' of the local deity by *Devadasis*. This tradition was at its peak during this period.¹⁰

'Sendil Kuravanji' is in the praise of the Lord of Tiruchendur, which is in Tirunelveli district. The main *Nayika* of this 'Kuravanji' is 'Madanamohini', who falls in love with Lord Murugan, when she sees him in a procession.¹¹

'Kannappar Kuravanji' was composed by Navalar of Tozhuvur in 1880. It is different from the other 'Kuravanjis'. It is known as 'Kuravanji pan-kirtanam'. It was used as a dance drama, singing and *Kathakalaskepam*. The theme is about a hunter, though born low, through his devotion is enlightened and is included as one of the Shiva saints.¹²

Some 'Kuravanjis' are composed in praise of a King, the *Nayaks* and *zamindars*. 'Viralimalai Kuravanji' and 'Sarabbendra Bhupala Kuravanji' are examples of such 'Kuravanji's'.¹³

5:3:1:3:2 Kutrala 'Kuravanji':

The 'Kutrala Kuravanji' was written by Tirukuda Rajappa Kavirayar in 1720. The 'Kutrala Kuravanji' was performed annually in the temple of Tirukutram in Tirunelveli district. It is in praise of Lord Kutram. It was also performed in the 'Brihadeshwara' temple at the time of *Navaratri* festival. It was discontinued later, when the *Devadasi* Bill was introduced. The revival of 'Kuravanji' is due to Rukmini Devi. Around 1945 Rukmini Devi produced 'Kutrala Kuravanji' with the help of great Musician Veenai Krishnamacharya.¹⁴

5:3:1:3:3 Kutrala 'Kuravanji' choreographed by Rukmini Devi:

Rukmini Devi's contribution is noteworthy in the revival of 'Kuravanji' dance dramas. She realized the artistic and the literary richness of 'Kuravanjis'. She studied all the literature related to 'Kuravanji'. She revived the tradition of *Shringara Bhakti Marg*. In 1944 she produced 'Kutrala Kuravanji'.¹⁵ She took the help of great Musician Veenai Krishnamacharya to revive it. It was a mile stone production of Rukmini Devi and she got appreciation from all the quarters. The composition of the dance drama was done in just eleven days. Rukmini Devi edited the text in such a way that it was not unnecessarily lengthy and made it suitable for a dance drama Presentation. Her choreography was imaginative and apt for a dance drama Presentation. In her choreography the *Nayak* did not come on the stage, but he was described by the 'Kattikkaran', 'Sakhis' and *Nayika* through the dance. The presence of the *Nayak* was felt on the stage through the description and through the dance. Rukmini Devi removed all the elements which could look cheap on the stage, for example 'entry of 'Kurathi' with rolling lips, chewing betel leaf and making faces with exaggerated gestures' was removed by Rukmini Devi. Graceful dance movements were added. The entry and exit of the characters were done in a proper way which added to the appeal of the whole production. This 'Kuravanji' was performed at many places and it also got good press reviews. Rukmini Devi had choreographed the 'Kuravanji' in such a way that it was enjoyed also by people who did not understand Tamil.¹⁶ Rukmini Devi played the Central role of 'Chandravalli' in the 'Kuravanji'. Smt.

Anjali Merh got the good fortune to perform the character of one of the four 'sakhis'. Smt. Anjali Merh got the inspiration to choreograph a 'Kuravanji' in Gujarati for her Motherland Gujarat while she was playing the role of a 'sakhi' in the 'Kutrala Kuravanji' choreographed by Smt. Rukmini Devi.¹⁷

Rukmini Devi made changes in the costume and hair style. The *Devadasi* did not introduce any changes in the costume while they performed 'Kuravanji' traditionally. The costume of 'Sadir Natya' usually was worn by all the participants. Rukmini introduced the typical South Indian *Sari-Shungani*. She designed a skirt for the character of 'Kurathi'. The hair style of 'Kurathi' was also made typically like a gypsy woman with a bun on the side of the head.¹⁸

When Rukmini Devi presented the 'Kutrala Kuravanji' for the first time, through it, people of that period, saw the possibilities and potential of a dance-drama. This 'Kuravanji' laid the foundation for the choreography of the productions or dance drama, of which we see so many today.¹⁹

5:3:1:3:4 Chandramaulishwara 'Kuravanji' choreographed by Smt. Anjali Merh:

Lyrics: Lyrics (poetry) were written by Smt. Anjali Merh herself. Poetically the lyrics are very elegant.²⁰

Music Composition: Music was composed by Shri Dwarkanath Bhosle. More than 20 *ragas* were used in the music composition. Music is composed very beautifully. The music is haunting and the rhythmic melodies are brilliant.²¹ According to Shri Dwarkanath Bhosle, the ragas like Yaman, Hamsadhwani, Ahirbhairav, Kalavati, Hamir, Jog, Charukeshi, Chandrakauns, Gaud sarang, Darbari, Bageshri, Zinzoti, Vasanta, Vasanta Bahar, Madhuvanti, Sarang, Bhinna Shadaja, Sudha Sarang, Gauri, Anand Bhairavi, Sohani, Abhogi, Khamaj, Kafi, Bairagi and Bhairavi were used in the music composition of the production.

Language: The lyrics of the 'Kuravanji' are written in Gujarati. The interesting and special aspect of this Kuravanji was that it was written in Gujarati, by a Gujarati and for Gujarat. It was for the first time that 'Kuravanji' was written in Gujarati.²²



Fig. 5.3.3 From the production 'Chandramaulishwara 'Kuravanji'

Choreography: Choreography was done by Smt. Anjali Merh.²³

Performance: It was performed in Baroda in 1977. Afterwards it was performed at many places across India in cities like Surat and Ahmedabad. It was also performed on national Television.²⁴ According to Dr. Anand Merh it was telecasted on Bombay Doordarshan. It was also presented on 7th February 1977, in 'Bhavans' in Bombay, during Shri Kulapati Munshi's Birthday Celebrations.²⁵

Participants: In the first performance of the 'Kuravanji' the Participants were Dr. Parul Shah in the role of Princess Chandravali, the role of 'sakhis' was played by Lalita Thakar (Iyer), Trusha Jani, Bina Pathak and Nirva Shah.²⁶

'Chandramaulishwar Kuravanji' was one of the finest and artistic productions of Smt. Anjali Merh. It was a very impressive and milestone production in terms of experimentation, music and choreography. It is a 'Kuravanji' in traditional style. Guru Smt. Anjali Merh followed the example of 'Kutrala Kuravanji'. She used to dance as a 'Sakhi' in the 'Kutrala Kuravanji' choreographed by Smt. Rukmini Devi. She was inspired to choreograph a 'Kuravanji' in Gujarati that time. She wanted that people of Gujarat should also get the opportunity to witness the art of 'Kuravanji' of South India as they are unaware of the dance tradition of 'Kuravanji'. According to the dance literature of *Shashtras*, dance originated in Saurashtra. The 'Somnath' Temple of Saurashtra region is an important temple of Lord Shiva. According to the historians there were around four hundred artists in the Somnath Temple. According to Smt. Anjali Merh, if 'Kuravanji' dance dramas are performed in the temples of South India, than it should also be performed in the Somnath Temple. Therefore, she wrote the 'Kuravanji' dance drama in Gujarati.²⁷

The 'Chandramauliswhar Kuravanji' which is choreographed in Bharatanatyam dance style is extremely pertinent to the splendorous traditions and culture of Saurashtra region of Gujarat. In this 'Kuravanji' the *Nayaka* is none other than Shri Chandramouli who is the Lord of Somnath. Shri Chandramouli is the one who makes the world dance. It is a devotional 'Kuravanji'. This 'Kuravanji' helped the audience and students understand the culture of 'Kuravanjis of the South. Smt. Anjali Merh had dreamt of performing this 'Kuravanji' in the 'Nartan Mandap' of the Somnath Temple in Gujarat. According to Dr. Anand Merh and Smt. Yogini Merh, Smt. Anjali Merh had danced a few steps of the dance drama 'Chandramauliswhar Kuravanji' in the Somnath Temple. On 11th May, 2000, on the

occasion of 'Prana Pratistha Jayanti Mahotsava' of the Somnath Temple, her students performed 'Chandramaulishwara Kuravanji' in Somnath Temple.²⁸

Theme of 'Chandramaulishwara 'Kuravanji':

It is dedicated to Lord Somnath. The Kuravanji starts with a 'Vinayak stotra', followed by 'Shri Someshwaram stotra', 'Parvati stotra', 'Saraswati stotra' and 'Skhamapana stotra'. After that there is 'Yatra varnan' (description of procession) of Lord Chandramaulishwara, where in the Pallavi poet describes how people of the *nagar* (city) have gathered to have a glimpse of the procession. All the gods including Brahma and Vishnu and all the *Gandharvas* and *Kinnaras* bow to Chandramauliswara. Later Shiva's form is described as one who wears Ganga on head and garland of snakes in neck, wearing *vyaghrambara* on waist and having Amba on left side.²⁹

After that in the Kuravanji there is description of the arrival of young girls to see the procession and description of the form of Lord Chandramauliswara by the young girls.³⁰

Later in the Kuravanji *Sutradhara* describes Chandrawali's form by comparing her beautiful golden complexion to lightning of sky, followed by the description by *sakhis*, when they see Chandrawali. After that *Sutradhara* describes how Chandrawali sees Chandramauliswara and Chandrawali describes Lord Chandramaulishwara as she sees him. She says 'who is this *sidha* (pious person) on whose arrival there is a magic in the city. He has so many snakes around his body and poison in his neck, he is wearing skin of tiger on his waist. My heart is wounded by his eyes. Again the *Sutradhara* describes the mental state of Chandrawali on seeing the Lord. Then is Chandrawali's dialogue with the *sakhis*. She says, she suffers the pangs of separation from her beloved. *Sutradhara* describes how *sakhis* console Chandrawali. *Sakhis* try to console Chandrawali with music, dance, Chandan etc. *Sakhis* console her that she will definitely meet her beloved. Later Chandrawali talks to the moon, saying why do you hide today behind the clouds, you are intoxicated as you have a place on the head of the Lord, why do you hide behind the

clouds. My body is burnt due to your cool rays. Please tell, Oh moon, whether the Lord will take me in his refuge.³¹

Vasant season is described after that in the Kuravanji by sakhis, they say *Vasant* makes the *Rangoli* (Design of colours), with five colours, spreading fragrance everywhere, the queen of seasons *Vasant* comes joyfully, with the murmuring of bees, song of cuckoo, all the beautiful ladies dance to the tune of peahens, spreading fragrance everywhere.³²

After that is the dialogue of Chandrawali to Manmatha. She asks him, why do you hit (pierce) me with your arrow of flowers. She is suffering due to separation from her beloved so neither the moon rays nor the *Vasant* season, nor do the songs of cuckoo soothe her. On seeing the sufferings of Chandrawali, the *sakhis* tell Manmath, that on seeing her hair, did you think it is the snake of Lord Shiva, no, it is the innocent girl, she is not Mahesh who burned you, converting you into *Ananga* and giving you separation from *Rati*. Why do you get angry?³³

Sakhis then advice Chandrawali saying that you are a mortal being who belongs to *Mrutyulok*, so don't expect union with the Lord of *Swargalok*. Later Chandrawali sends a message to her Lord through her *Sakhis*.³⁴

The *Sutradhara* recites the entry of 'Vanjari' or the gypsy woman. The *Sakhis* inform Chandrawali about the arrival of the Gypsy woman 'Vanjari'. The 'Vanjari' then introduces herself as a gypsy girl who has travelled to many places and is a fortune teller, whose predictions are always true. There is conversation between Chandrawali and 'Vanjari'. Chandrawali asked 'Vanjari' to predict her future seeing her hand as she was suffering due to separation from her beloved, the *Sutradhara* describes the rituals performed by 'Vanjari' before predicting Chandrawali's future. 'Vanjari' then tells about how Chandrawali saw her Lord in the procession, and how he stole her heart. Chandrawali tells her she wants to know about future and not past. 'Vanjari' tells Chandrawali that her Lord will help her to cross this *Bhavsagar*. Chandrawali tells 'Vanjari' to tell her the truth, about who will be her Lord.³⁵ 'Vanjari' asks her, 'If she tells her the truth, will she give her wealth?' She predicts that Chandramauli will be her *Swami*. Chandrawali asks her *sakhis*

to gift jewels to 'Vanjari' as she predicted her union with her beloved Chandramouli. In the end there is 'Mangalam Arti'.³⁶

Costume: *Guru* Smt. Anjali Merh made changes in the costume. Costume was very innovative. The 'Bhandhani' and 'Jari Panetar' which are unique types of saris of Gujarat, were used in the costume, and the *pallu* of the costume was worn in Gujarati style. The costume was very appropriate with the theme and also a new experiment in the costume of Bharatanatyam Dance Style. It was apt with the theme, music and language of the production.³⁷

Hair style: Changes were made in the hair style too in Chandramaulishwara production. A bun on one side of the head was made. It enhanced the overall look of the character.³⁸

The sequence in Kuravanji flow smoothly from one to the other. The story has a dramatic impact. The steps were appropriate with the theme.

Chandramaulishwara 'Kuravanji' is choreographed very brilliantly in the Bharatanatyam Dance Style.

5:3:1:4 Navagraha:

Lyrics: Navagraha are based on 'Muthuswamy Dikshitar's Sanskrit composition.

Theme: Theme is based on the *Navagraha* (Planets)

Language: Sanskrit:

Music composition: To show the planetary movements, Smt. Anjali Merh composed different and unique *Tirmaanams* of this production.³⁹

It was an outstanding work of classical choreography. It was a very bold and milestone production of Anjali Merh. It was performed in Baroda on 9th February 1979.

Navagraha was the last production of Anjali Merh.

Dancers were Juthika Mahen, Nirva Shah, Francis Barboza, Parul Shah, Beena Barbhaiya and Uma Shah.



Fig. 5.3.4 From the production 'Navagraha'

It had complex choreography. It recreated the movements of heavenly stars and planets. The movements and the steps were choreographed according to the unique qualities of the Navagraha *Surya* (Sun), *Chandra* (Moon), *Buddha* (Mercury), *Shukra* (Venus), *Mangala* (Mars), *Brhaspate* (Jupiter), *Shani* (Saturn) and *Rahu* (Dragon Head). The Complex Geometrical designs were used in the choreography to depict the movements of the Navagraha or the planet. The movements of 'Shani Graha' was performed brilliantly by Francis Barboza. The movements were apt to 'Shani Graha'.

According to Dr. Anand Merh it was performed on 9th February, 1979 in C.C.Mehta Auditorium, Sayajigunj, and Baroda in the meeting of IMA.

5) According to Smt. Yogini Merh, Smt. Anjali Merh had choreographed a production called 'Atma Dipa Bhava', which was very successful. It was performed in Ahmedabad. Smt. Anjali Merh also choreographed a dance Ballet on Budha according to Smt. Yogini Merh. Sachi Paolomi, Sudama Charitra, Natir Puja and Sthukibhadra Kosha were some of the other dance dramas choreographed by Smt. Anjali Merh.

5:3:1:5 Bharatanatyam Dance compositions of Anjaliben:

(Present Researcher got the following information from Smt. Kanan Patel and Smt. Juthika Mahen)

5:3:1:5:1 Yashogiti (Shabdam)

Ragam: Kafi

Talam: Similar to Mishra Chapu *Tāla* of Karnatic Music Style

Composition: A *kriti* by 'Dayaram'

Music Composition: Smt. Anjali Merh

Dance Choreography: Smt Anjali Merh

Language: Gujarati

The item *Shabdam* or *Yashogiti* is in the praise of Lord of a King. It is a *Nritya* item. This is the first item in which *Abhinaya* is introduced. Here the words of *Sahitya* are set to music, and *Abhinaya* is done on those words. It is usually sung in *Raag* 'Kamboji' or *Raag* 'Mallikai'. The *Tāla* of 'Shabdam' is usually 'Mishra Chapu'. The choreography of this Shabdam is done in traditional Bharatanatyam style. Gestures are from Abhinaya Darpana and Basic Bharatanatyam Adavus are used for the jathis.

5:3:1:5:2 Kirtanam: Pranamu Pratidin he Natarajan

(Present Researcher has learnt this item from Smt. Kanan Patel who was a student of Smt. Anjali Merh)

Ragam: Shriranjani

Talam: Ādi

Composer: Smt. Anjali Merh

Music Composition: Smt. Anjali Merh

Language: Gujarati

Kirtanams are the songs in the praise of the deity. The verses of this *Kirtanam* are written by Smt. Anjali Merh, which describes the *Anand Tandava* of Lord Nataraja at Chidambaram. The dancers as devotees are making offerings of their dance to Lord Nataraja. The *Kirtanam* is written in praise of Lord Natarajan, describing the *Anand Tandava*. This *Kirtanam* is choreographed in pure Bharatanatyam dance style. Gestures used are from 'Abhinaya Darpana'. *Adavus* are used from the Bharatanatyam dance style. The choreography is apt with the lyrics of the *Kirtanam*. The basic *adavus* like *Nattadavu* and variation of *Peri adavu* are used and included in the choreography. Different poses of Lord Nataraja are used in the choreography. Some variations of the *Adavus* like *Dhi Dhi tai Adavu* is also used. 'Tandava' aspect is used for the choreography of Lord Shiva. *Lasya* aspect is used to show Uma. The choreography perfectly describes the *Anand Tandava* of Lord Nataraja in Gujarati.

5:3:1:5:3 Kirtanam

Ragam: Mishramandh

Talam: Roopakam

Composer: Premaldas

Music Composition: Smt. Anjali Merh

Language: Gujarati

Smt. Anjali Meh had choreographed this item in traditional Bharatanatyam dance style. The gestures of Abhinaya Darpana and basic adavus of Bharatanatyam dance style are used for the jathis.

5:3:1:5:4 Varnam: Kya gayo Krishna Murari, Sakhi ri

Ragam: Vasanta

Talam: Ādi

Composer: Smt. Anjali Merh

Music Composition: Anjali Merh

Language: Gujarati

The Varnam is based on *Khandita Nayika*. The *Nayika* is sad due to separation from *Nayaka* (Lord Krishna). She tells her feelings to her *Sakhi* (friend). The *Nayika* is awaiting the arrival of Lord Krishna but on account of his preoccupation with other engagements he does not come. This makes her anxious. She is sad due to separation from her Lord.

As *Varnam* is the most important item in a Bharatanatyam programme, Smt. Anjali Merh has taken care of maintaining all the important elements of the traditional *Varnam* item of Bharatanatyam dance. The choreography of this *Varnam* has all three fundamental elements of Bharatanatyam that is *Bhava*, *Raga* and *Tāla*, which are weaved into an intricate and beautiful composition. Only the language is Gujarati. The basic structure of the *Varnam* is same. So it is easily understood by people of Gujarat.

In this *Varnam* the *Nayika* is 'Virahotta Kanthita' *Nayika*. The agony of the *Nayika* who is separated from her lord Krishna is beautifully depicted through apt use of *Mukhaja Abhinaya* (facial expression) and *Mudras* (gestures). The *Tirmaanams* are choreographed using a beautiful combination of the steps of Bharatanatyam dance style. The *Nritya* sequences are also choreographed using the gestures from 'Abhinaya Darpana'.

5:3:1:5:5 Padam: 'Ja Ja Kana tuja karani jani, Nathi re sunavi, juthi vani'

(Present Researcher has learnt this item from Smt. Kanan Patel who was a student of Smt. Anjali Merh)

Ragam: Arabi

Talam: Ādi

Composer: Smt. Anjali Merh

Music Composition: Anjali Merh

Language: Gujarati

Padam is an *abhinaya* item of Bharatanatyam Dance style. This *Padam* portrays Radha as a *Khandita Nayika*. *Nayika* who is deceived or jilted by her Lord due to his attachment to another *Gopi*. Radha is broken. In anger she reprimands Lord Krishna for his unfaithfulness. She tells him ‘Go away, Krishna, I have known your secrets, I do not want to hear your falsified explanations’. It is composed in Karnatic music style.

The *Mudras* used in the *Padam* are appropriate to the lyrics and rasa of the song. The movements used are simple. The choreography is done in the traditional Bharatanatyam dance style. *Khandita Nayika* is depicted in with apt gestures and dance movements. Gestures used are from 'Abhinaya Darpana'. *Pada Bheda* like *Samapada*, *Swastika Mandala*, *Motita mandala*, *Parshvasuchi Mandala* and *Prenkana Mandala* are used in the choreography. It is a pure *Nritya* item. The item is similar to ‘Yahi Madhava Yahi Keshava’ *Ashtapadi*.

5:3:1:5:6 Melaprapti:

Ragam: Nattai

Talam: Khanda Ekam

In Karnatic music 'Mallari' is associated to 'Nadaswaram' instrument, the *Mangala vadyam* (auspicious instrument). Redention of 'Mallari' is an important part of 'Nagaswaram' repertoire. 'Nagaswaram' music is a part of everyday temple ritual. During 'Deepaaradhana' and temple processions 'Mallari' is played with this instrument along with 'Tavil'. The common *ragas* in which 'Mallari's are presented are '*Gambheera nattai*', '*Nattai*', '*Gowla*', and '*Arabhi*'. It is an invocatory item of pure dance or *Nritta*. It is similar to '*Allaripu*'. '*Melaprapti*' is an item of rhythmic syllables played on *mrigandam*, before the beginning of dance or music recital.

Smt. Anjali Merh had composed this item as an invocatory item. The dance movements are set to the syllables of *Mridangam*.

5:3:1:5:7 Badrinath Stuti:

Ragam: Sindhu Bhairavi

Talam: Mishra Chapu

Composer: Smt. Anjali Merh

Music Composition: Smt. Anjali Merh

It is an item composed in praise of Lord Shiva, who resides in Badrinath. The lyrics of the item describe the auspicious atmosphere of Badrinath, which is situated on the bank of river Ganga. The song depicts the glory of Lord Badrinath. It says Lord Badrinath is venerated by Brahma, Indra, Ganesh, Surya, Chandra and great sages sing his praises. The celestial dancers and musicians are astonished by his greatness. Oh! Lord Badrinath, you are the protector of the universe. It is composed in traditional Bharatanatyam dance style. Gestures are used from Abhinaya Darpana.

5:3:1:5:8 Tillana: Dhim Dhim ta tana direna tana nadir tani tumdirtani tadhim tadhira Tillana

(Present Researcher has learnt this item from Smt. Juthika Mahen)

Ragam: Sindhubhairavi

Talam: Ādi

Choreography: Smt. Anjali Merh

Tillana is the final stage in performance in Bharatanatyam. It is pure dance item with statuesque postures, intricate rhythms and steps woven together. This *Tillana* Smt. Anjali Merh has dedicated to Smt. Rukmini Devi. This *Tillana* is choreographed in the traditional Bharatanatyam dance style. There are eye movements in the beginning. Then there are five *Mai Adavus*. There are some

variations in two *Mai Adavus*, where *Kapitha hasta* is used to show the movement of *Ghunghatta*. And in another *Mai adavu*, 'Prenkhana Mandala' variation is introduced, where in 'Prenkhana Mandala' leg is extended in full sitting position. In the same *Mai Adavu*, *eka pada Bhramari* is also used in the choreography. All other *Mai adavus* are the *Mai adavus* used in traditional Bharatanatyam item of *Tillana*. There is a *Tirmaanam* after the *Mai Adavu*. The *Korvais* are choreographed using the basic Bharatanatyam steps. The choreography of the *Tillana* is pleasing to watch. One of the *Aradhis* is choreographed very innovatively using the 'pataka hasta' like mirror. 'Murumandi' position is used very innovatively in the *Mai Adavu*. The *Sahitya* is choreographed beautifully, which is dedicated to Smt. Rukmini Devi. The whole *Tillana* has a feel of grace and *Lasya* element.

5:3:1:5:9 Natakeshwara Stotram:

Ragam: Ragmallika

Talam: Roopakam

This Ashtakam is in praise of Lord of Dancing 'Natakeshwara', - Lord Shiva which is choreographed using the gestures and movements from traditional Bharatanatyam dance style.

5:3:1:5:10 Ashtapadi: Lalita Lavanga Lata parishilana

Present Researcher has learnt this item of Smt. Anjali Merh, from Smt. Juthika Mahen.

Raag: Vasanta

Tāla: Ādi

Lyrics: Jaydev

Language: Sanskrit

Choreography: Smt. Anjali Merh

This item is choreographed in Traditional Bharatanatyam dance style. It is an *Abhinaya* item. *Nritya* aspect is choreographed very beautifully and is appropriate to the lyrics of the *Ashtapadi*. Gestures used are from 'Abhinaya Darpana'. Gestures like *Kartarimukha*, *Alapdama*, *Mayura*, and *Bharamara* are frequently used in the choreography. The gesture, *Ardhasuchi* is very innovatively used to depict *Lavanga* (clove). *Mayura* is very innovatively used to show Lalita. One innovative gesture is used to show *Bhramara*, from Kathakali dance style, which is the variation of *Simhamukha hasta*. *Mandala Bhedas* like *Ayata Mandala*, *Prekhanamandala*, *Motita Mandala*, and *Swastika Mandala* are used in the choreography. *Sthanaka bheda* like *Samapada*, *Indrasthanam* are used in the choreography. Variation of *Kuditametta Adavu* is used with *Mrigashirsha hasta* in one hand and *Katakamukha hasta* in the other hand. Variation of *Peri Adavu* is used with variation of *Katakamukha hasta* in one hand and *Shukatunda* in the other hand. Variations of 'Dhi Dhi tai' and 'Ekapada Bharamari' are used for showing the *Raas* dance. Variation of 'Dhi Dhi Tai' with *Alapadma* in left hand above the head and *Kapitha hasta* in right hand near the chest is used to show the play of *Gopies*. In the choreography the *Lasya* aspect is predominant. Though all the elements are used from the traditional Bharatanatyam dance style, still the overall picture created by the choreography looks different than the usual choreographies in Bharatanatyam dance style. *Virahotakanthita Nayika* is depicted relevantly in the choreography. Description of the *Vasant Ritu* (spring season) is also done with gestures and movements which are apt with the words of the *ashtapadi*. The choreography beautifully paints the feeling of *Virahotakanthita Nayika* in *Vasanta Ritu*.

5:3:1:5:11 Abanga: Sundara Te dhyan

(Present Researcher has seen the performance of this choreography by Smt. Nirva Shah's student)

Raag: Mishra

Tāla: Ādi

Lyrics: Saint Tukaram

Composition: Traditional

Language: Marathi

Choreography: Smt. Anjali Merh

Theme: It is a devotional Marathi Song written by Saint Tukaram, in praise of Lord Vithala.

It is choreographed within the traditional framework of Bharatanatyam. Main *rasa* or *Bhava* is of *Bhakti* or Devotional. Choreography appropriately describes the *Bhakti bhava*. It is an *nritya* item, but has one *Tirmaanam*, which is composed by Smt. Anjali Merh. Gestures used are from 'Abhinaya Darpana'. Gestures like *Kapitha*, *Hansasya*, *Chatusra*, *Pataka*, *Anjali hasta* and *Makara* are used. *Mandala bheda* like *swastika*, *pada bheda* like *Sama pada* and *prenkhana mandala* are used. Some *Adavus* like variations of 'Dhi Dhi tai' with *Kapitha hasta*, to show the playing of cymbals, Variation of *Pakam Adavu* with *Kapitha hasta*, to show the playing of cymbals, *Kuditta metta* steps and *Tatta metta* steps are used. There is *Aradhi* after each variation performed in *Tatta metta*. *Aradi* makes the choreography interesting. *Sanchari* based on the mythological story of 'Gajendra Moksha' is also included in the choreography. In the end *Bhramaris* are used, and the speed or *Laya* also increases. *Bhramaris* are used with *Kapitha hasta* and *Anjali hasta* to show the devotee dancing in ecstasy.

5:3:1:5:12 A scientific and critical analysis of Smt. Anjali Merh's Choreography reveals following special features:

- 1) The choreography of Smt. Anjali Merh is within the frame work of Bharatanatyam dance.
- 1) *Angika*, *Satvika* and *Aharya abhinaya* are used more in her choreographies.
- 2) Smt. Anjali Merh introduced some variations in the *adavus* depending on the lyrics and music composition.
- 3) Smt. Anjali Merh introduced some variations of gestures depending on the lyrics of the item.

- 4) In some items like 'Lalita Lavanga' *Ashtapadi*, *Padam* 'Ja ja Kanha', *Lasya* element is predominant. While in items like 'Pranamu tujne' *Kirtanam*, and *Varnam* 'Kya gayo Krishna Murari' *Lasya* and *Tandava* elements are used.
- 5) Though Smt. Anjali Merh choreographed in many vernacular languages like Gujarati, Marathi, Sanskrit or Assamese, it was within the framework of Bharatanatyam.
- 6) Smt. Anjali Merh has also choreographed Bharatanatyam on Hindustani Music.
- 7) Her choreography had simple as well as complex geometrical patterns.
- 8) She used *Aradi* in most of her items, which made the music composition very interesting.
- 9) Her dance dramas like 'Chandramaulishwara', 'Radha nu Shamnu' and Navagraha' were presented sophisticatedly.
- 10) She used *Lasya* aspect more while choreographing the dance for female characters, while for male character she used *tandava* aspect more. Both male and female characters participated in her choreography and performed their respective roles.
- 11) She introduced changes in the costume and hairstyle according to the requirement of the choreography. She used Gujarati local textiles like *Bhandhani*, *Jari Panetar* and *Patola* sari for her productions.
- 12) Some of her choreographies of folk dances like *Garba*, she used to add classical Bharatanatyam steps and make it more interesting.
- 13) Her dance choreographies were easily understood by all and also enjoyed by all.

5:3:2 Contribution of Smt. Anjali Merh as a Music Composer:

Smt. Anjali Merh wrote poems, an art which she inherited from her mother Smt. Mugdha Hora who was a poetess. Smt. Anjali Merh grew up in an environment where artistic activities like poetry, dance and music were encouraged.

Smt. Anjali Merh was so brilliant that many times in class she will write lyrics, compose the lyrics on the spot, choreograph it and teach her students. Her training in '*Nattuvangam*', Karnatic Music and her knowledge of Hindustani music made her a good composer. Smt. Anjali Merh composed a number of items of Bharatanatyam on Gujarati

songs so that the richness and beauty of this ancient dance form is properly understood and enjoyed by the people of Gujarat.

She composed the music for many Bharatanatyam items. She composed the music for the whole Gujarati *margam*. It should, however, be noted that though the words of the songs are in Gujarati, Smt. Anjali Merh used Karnatic music to compose the songs. It was a very bold experiment during that period. And it was a very novel experiment that Gujarati Songs were being rendered in Karnatic music and dance based thereon were set in Bharatanatyam style. It was for the first time that the lyrics of whole Bharatanatyam *Margam* were written in Gujarati. Smt. Anjali Merh took lot of pains to ensure that in her experiment, the authenticity and purity of the classical elements of the Bharatanatyam dance style are maintained. She did not modify or change the basic elements of the Bharatanatyam dance style. Singers like Shri Dwarkanath Bhosle, Nirmala Natrajan, Smt. Madhuri Bhav and Smt. Rekha Deerpaal, have given vocal support in her programme. Shri R. Natarajan has played *Mridangam* in her programmes. Shri Ganekar used to play violin in many of her programmes. Shri Narayan K. Bhavariya has played *Sitar* in her programmes. According to Shri Narayan Bhavariya, Smt. Anjali Merh, guided him as to how to accompany with Bharatanatyam dance style.

The music of the following items of the Gujarati *Margam* was composed by Smt. Anjali Merh.

5:3:2:1 Melaprapti in Raag Nattai and Khanda Eka Talam

Melaprapti is the invocatory item of pure dance or *Nritta*, Similar to *Allaripu*. Generally *Melaprapti* is an item of rhythmic syllables played on *Mridangam* before the commencement of any dance or music recital. Here, Smt. Anjali Merh composed it as an innovation by choreographing dance movements on these syllables.

5:3:2:2 Shabdam (Yashogiti)

Ragam: Kafi

Talam: *Talam* used was identical to the *Mishra Chapu Talam* of Karnatic music.

Choreography: Smt. Anjali Merh

This Yoshogiti is an innovation by Smt. Anjali Merh of the traditional dance repertoire. The Dance is composed on a traditional Dayaram *Kriti*.

5:3:2:3 Varnam: Kya Gayo Krishna Murari

Raag: Vasanta

Talam: Ādi

It was for the first time that *Varnam* was written and composed in Gujarati by Smt. Anjali Merh and set to music in Karnatic style. Smt. Anjali Merh used the three important elements of music viz. *Bhava*, *Raga* and *Tāla* to create an intricate and beautiful composition. The composition of the *Varnam* beautifully depicted the agony of the devotee portrayed as a *Virahotkanthita Nayika* and relates the agony of a devotee separated from her Lord Krishna. The structure of the Varnam was same as traditional Pada Varnam, consisting of *Pallavi*, *Anu Pallavi*, *Muktayiswara*, *Charam*, *Chittaswaram* and *Sahityam*. The Raga of the Varnam was apt with the central idea and lyrics.

5:3:2:4 Kirtanam: Pranamu Pratidin he Natarajan

Ragam: Shriranjini

Talam: Ādi

In this *Kirtanam*, Smt. Anjali Merh wrote the verses in Gujarati describing the 'Anand Tandava' of Lord Nataraja at Chidambaram. The music was composed by Smt. Anjali Merh. She composed it in Karnatic music style. The basic structure of traditional Kirtanam was followed by her of *Pallavi*, *Anu Pallavi* and *Charanam*. The *sahityam* are intervened with crisp and refreshing *Tirmaanams*.

5:3:2:5 Padam: Ja Ja Kana

Ragam: Arabhi

Talam: Ādi

The lyrics of this item were written by Smt. Anjali Merh in Gujarati in such a way that all the classical elements of Tamil and Telugu compositions of a padam, which portray Radha as *Khandita Nayika* are included in lyrics and music composition. The expression and *Bhava* of Radha as *Khandita Nayika*, who feels humiliated on finding that her Lord spent his night with another Gopi and that she reprimands him, are perfectly expressed through the music composition. The lyrics and the central idea of the composition are similar to the *Ashtapadi* ‘Yahi madhava yahi Keshava’.

5:3:2:6 Natakeshvara Strotam:

Ragam: Ragamalika

Talam: Roopakam

The lyrics of the *Ashtakam* were written in praise of Lord of Dancing, ‘Natakeshvara’ that is Lord Shiva. The music composition done by Smt. Anjali Merh was apt with the meaning of the lyrics.

5:3:2:7 Thillana:

Ragam: Sindhubhairavi

Talam: Ādi

Smt. Anjali Merh had composed this *Tillana* in honour of her Guru Smt. Rukmini Devi. It is composed in Karnatic style which includes all the elements of the structure of a traditional Tillana. The *Sahitya* was dedicated to Smt. Rukmini Devi.

5:3:2:8 Badarinath Stuti

Ragam: Sindhubhairavi

Talam: Mishra Chapu

The lyrics were written by Smt. Anjali Merh. The song was written by her in praise of Lord Shiva who dwells in Badrinath Temple. The music composition using

Sindhubhairavi Raga was done by Smt. Anjali Merh in such a way that it evokes Bhakti rasa and describes the auspicious atmosphere of Temple Badrinath which is located near the Sacred River Ganga. The lyrics and music composition paint and portray the image and glory of Lord Badrinath who is revered by Gods like Brahma, Chandra, Ganesh, Indra and Surya. The lyrics describe the praise of Lord Badrinath by the Sages.

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- 4) Kothari. Sunil. *Bharatanatyam*. Marg Publication, first published 1979, revised edition: 1997 'Kuravanji' Dance Drama'
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- 17) *Merh. Anjali, Shri Chandramaulishwara 'Kuravanji'. The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda Press. 1977. From the Foreword written by Smt. Anjali Merh on 'Kuravanji'.*
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- 20) *Merh. Anjali, Shri Chandramaulishwara 'Kuravanji'. The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda Press. 1977. From the Foreword written by Smt. Anjali Merh on 'Kuravanji'.*
- 21) *Shah. Parul, Attendance The Dance Annual of India, Gujarat Special, 5th Anniversary Issue, Attendance The Dance Annual of India, Gujarat Special, 5th Anniversary Issue, Published by EKAH-Printways, page 26*
- 22) *Ibid.*
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- 25) *Kothari, Sunil. 'Nrityanjali A Tribute to Smt. Anjali Merh A Doyen of Bharatanatyam from 'Kalakshetra'', Mahatma Gandhi Institute, July 2013.*

- 26) *Excerpts from the Phone interview of Thakar. Lalita, conducted by Present Researcher, in Gujarati, translation is done by Present Researcher in English.*
- 27) *Merh. Anjali, Shri Chandramaulishwara 'Kuravanji'. The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda Press. 1977. From the Foreword written by Smt. Anjali Merh on 'Kuravanji'.*
- 28) *Shah. Parul, Attendance The Dance Annual of India, Gujarat Special, 5th Anniversary Issue, Attendance The Dance Annual of India, Gujarat Special, 5th Anniversary Issue, Published by EKAH-Printways, page 26*
- 29) *Merh. Anjali, Shri Chandramaulishwara 'Kuravanji'. The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda Press. 1977. From the Foreword written by Smt. Anjali Merh on 'Kuravanji'. Page 11*
- 30) *Ibid., Page 12*
- 31) *Ibid., Page 13-14*
- 32) *Ibid.,page 15*
- 33) *Ibid., Page 15*
- 34) *Ibid., Page 15-16*
- 35) *Ibid., Page 16, 17, 18*
- 36) *Ibid., Page 17, 18*
- 37) *Shah. Parul, Attendance The Dance Annual of India, Gujarat Special, 5th Anniversary Issue, Attendance The Dance Annual of India, Gujarat Special, 5th Anniversary Issue, Published by EKAH-Printways, page 26*
- 38) *Excerpts from the Phone interview of Shah, Nirva. Conducted by Present Researcher, in Gujarati, translation is done by Present Researcher in English.*
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Photo Reference:

- 5.3.1 *The photo was shared by Smt. Jeethy Menon with the Present Researcher.*
- 5.3.2 *Ibid.*

5.3.3 *Merh. Anjali, Shri Chandramaulishwara 'Kuravanji'. The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda Press. 1977. From the Foreword written by Shri Sunil Kothari on 'Kuravanji'. (Cover Page)*

5.3.4 *The Present Researcher got this photo from Smt. Juthika Mahen*

5.4 Views of disciples and personalities from different walks

5:4:1 Smt. Rukmini Devi ('Kalakshetra')

(The below mentioned review of Smt. Rukmini Devi for Smt. Anjali Merh is taken from, 'Nrityanjali', July 2013, Printed at Publishing and Printing Department, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Moka)

‘A very great loss to the art world and to me personally has been the passing away of Smt. Anjali Merh, Head of the Department of Dance in The M. S. University of Baroda. Her family has been known to me since 1925. She came to 'Kalakshetra' as a child of seven and gave a performance which was very charming and which I cannot forget. She was a natural born artiste and travelled with me taking part in many performances. Her death is very sad indeed for her mother who is blind and who has just lost her husband. Mr. Ramesh and Mrs. Mugdha Hora, their son, Dr. Ajay Hora are few of my most faithful friends.’¹

‘The above is what I wrote in 'Kalakshetra' News Bulletin some time ago. I am very glad that in memory of Anjali a memorial fund has been started. It is absolutely right that she should be remembered and I know that every student who has passed through her hands is devoted to her. To earn such a reputation is a crowning jewel for an ideal teacher. Her love and interest in her pupils was outstanding and I have had pleasure of seeing her not only teaching but also conducting a performance. What surprised me was the fact that she could sing South Indian songs both in Tamil and Telugu languages. She was a wonderful student of 'Kalakshetra' and though it was not compulsory, she made it a point to learn Tamil. In fact, she even wrote Tamil letters to me calling me ‘Amma’. Over and above this, when she conducted dance recital of a pupil I was surprised at her 'Nattuvangam' and the way she recited *Thirmanams*. I can easily say that the way she used the *Talas* was as expert as in case of traditional *Nattuvanar*. We will certainly miss her charming personality but I am sure that wherever she is now she will be devoting herself to the dance art more than anything else. She is very close to me and she considered me as her own mother. I am fortunate to have such a pupil.

Shrimati Rukmini Devi'²

5:4:2 The views of Padma Bhushan Dr. Mallika Sarabhai (Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi dancer, choreographer, actor, director, writer, social activist) are quoted below from an interview that Present Researcher conducted at Darpana Academy, Usmanpura, Ahmedabad in Gujarati. The Translation of the original interview is done by the Present Researcher in English.

Anjaliben respected Amma (Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai) a lot. Anjaliben and Amma (Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai), talked in Tamil whenever they met. Amma (Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai) and Anjaliben had too much love for each other. Anjaliben always addressed Amma as ‘Akka’ (Sister) and she even maintained a relationship as a sister.

Amma was a South Indian and she came to Gujarat. Anjaliben was a Gujarati and she went to South to learn Bharatanatyam, and then she taught in Gujarat. Both of them faced the same difficulties and struggles due to the culture differences, and that became a reason for a special bond between them. She came once a week to ‘Darpana’ to teach theory and 'Abhinaya Darpana'. She came on every Friday and she taught theory and 'Abhinaya Darpana' to all the students of 'Darpana Academy'. She was very fond of me. I was very small that time; she loved teaching me. She always told me, ‘No matter what you do, you will become a dancer only’. Her teaching style was very precise, very clear and very clean. She, therefore, got along with Amma very well. She loved teaching, and she wanted to share her knowledge with everyone. She wanted to share specially her knowledge of dance with Gujarati girls. It was her desire to spread and share the knowledge of this Diamond like Art that she had got with as many people as she could.

She invited Amma to give lectures of Bharatanatyam in the Department of Dance, College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, Baroda. Amma gave lectures in the Department of Dance on Bharatanatyam and Classical Dance. Anjaliben insisted Amma to make a book of the lectures so that it becomes easier for students to understand various topics related to dance, which are mentioned in Sanskrit texts like 'Natyashastra'. Hence Amma and Anjaliben documented all the lectures in the form of a book, which was named ‘Understanding Bharatanatyam’. Recently the latest edition of the book is released. During that period, this was a very useful book for the students learning Classical dance. Even today it is a very popular book among the students of Dance. Recently we have

translated the book in Gujarati and released it as 'Chalo Samajiye Bharatanatyam'. I have seen the performance of 'Chandramaulishwara Kuravanji' which was choreographed by her and it was performed by the senior students of 'Darpana Academy'. According to me, after Amma if anyone has contributed in maintaining standard of Bharatanatyam, it was Anjaliben. She was very particular about maintaining the technique of Bharatanatyam. She insisted that linings should be very clear in Bharatanatyam. Precision in Dance was very important for her. And because of that, for many years, the high standard of Bharatanatyam was maintained in the College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda.

5:4:3 Dr. Anjani Arunkumar (Bharatanatyam Dancer and Musician, founder 'Aradhana Sangitalaya', Bombay) has expressed the following views for Smt. Anjali Merh, based on the phone interview taken on 02/06/2020, and the hard copy of the interview submitted to me on 12/06/2020.

In 1951 I joined Smt. Anjali Merh's dance class 'Rukmini Kalavihar' which was located at 'Swadhin Sadan' building (Ground floor), 'C' Road, Church Gate, Bombay (Now Mumbai). She was very strict but very loving as a teacher. I learnt from her the basic steps *Taiya tai (Tatta adavu)*. I thought I would be able to learn everything very fast. But then I realized how difficult it is to dance with *Angashudhi* (clarity in technique). She was very particular about *Angashudhi* and clarity in dance.

She was a very good singer. She had double talent of dance and music. In some of her demonstrations, she sang herself and demonstrated. I always accompanied her wherever she went, for last two to three years before she went to Baroda. Hence, I was inspired by her a lot. I also sang in her dance programmes. I remember few dance items like, 'Tum radhe bano shyam', 'Damaru Hara Kar', 'Gauri Ardhanga' and 'Kahe Bansi Bajaye' which Anjaliben performed. These were very well known dance songs.

When I was taking training from Anjali Merh, other students like Nirmala Golikari, Mira Rao and Sudha Thakkar were also taking training from her. We lived in Santacruz and Khar area; so while returning, we travelled together by train and discussed a lot about dance on the way. I performed in many programmes with her. We regularly

performed once in two or three months. Anjaliben also performed in the programmes. Sometimes we performed in group with her. We also came for performance to Baroda. We stayed there for a fortnight. We performed twice in the College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics' in Baroda. I remember she taught us 'Pinnal Kollatam' for one of the programmes.

She has contributed enormously in the development of Bharatanatyam. She choreographed Bharatanatyam items on Hindustani music. She choreographed many items in 'Dhrupad Dhamar', like 'Gauri Ardhang'. She also choreographed a whole *margam* in Gujarati language. This is her noteworthy contribution. Rukmini Devi also blessed her. Rukmini Devi choreographed her last production 'Meera of Mewar' in 1984. It was because of Anjaliben, that I got the honour to assist Late Smt. Rukmini Devi in her last production. Rukmini Devi had too much affection and love for Anjaliben. Rukmini Devi also believed that choreographing Bharatanatyam on Hindustani Music was a great contribution by Anjaliben.

5:4:4 The Present Researcher met Smt. Prerna Desai (Killawala) (Bharatanatyam Guru, Aradhana Institute of Dance, Pune) at Aundh, Pune, on 21/12/2018 who told her as follows:

The 'College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics' known as 'Music College' and dear Anjaliben were inseparable part of my life during my College days. I remember the Palatial Music College with its huge Dancing Halls and the Music rooms melodies resonating. I learnt under Anjaliben who was highly capable and a strict disciplinarian. I used to shiver with fear at times and cry with joy sometimes while learning from her. I imbibed so much from her by observing her so closely; how she sat for 'Nattuvangam', how she demonstrated steps and *abhinaya* and how she sang. Her voice would reverberate in College. She was the leading dance disciple and first Gujarati lady of Great Guru Rukmini Devi of 'Kalakshetra'. I was so inspired by her and I admired her so much that I became her 'replica'. In a very short period of time she opened up 'The vision of Great Classical Art World for me'. After taking training from her in College, I became her true follower. She mentored my *Arangetral* in the presence of all leading

dancers and Shri K. M. Munshiji, who was the founder of Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan. He praised Anjaliben after the programme saying, 'Leading Lady Nattuvnar of her time'.

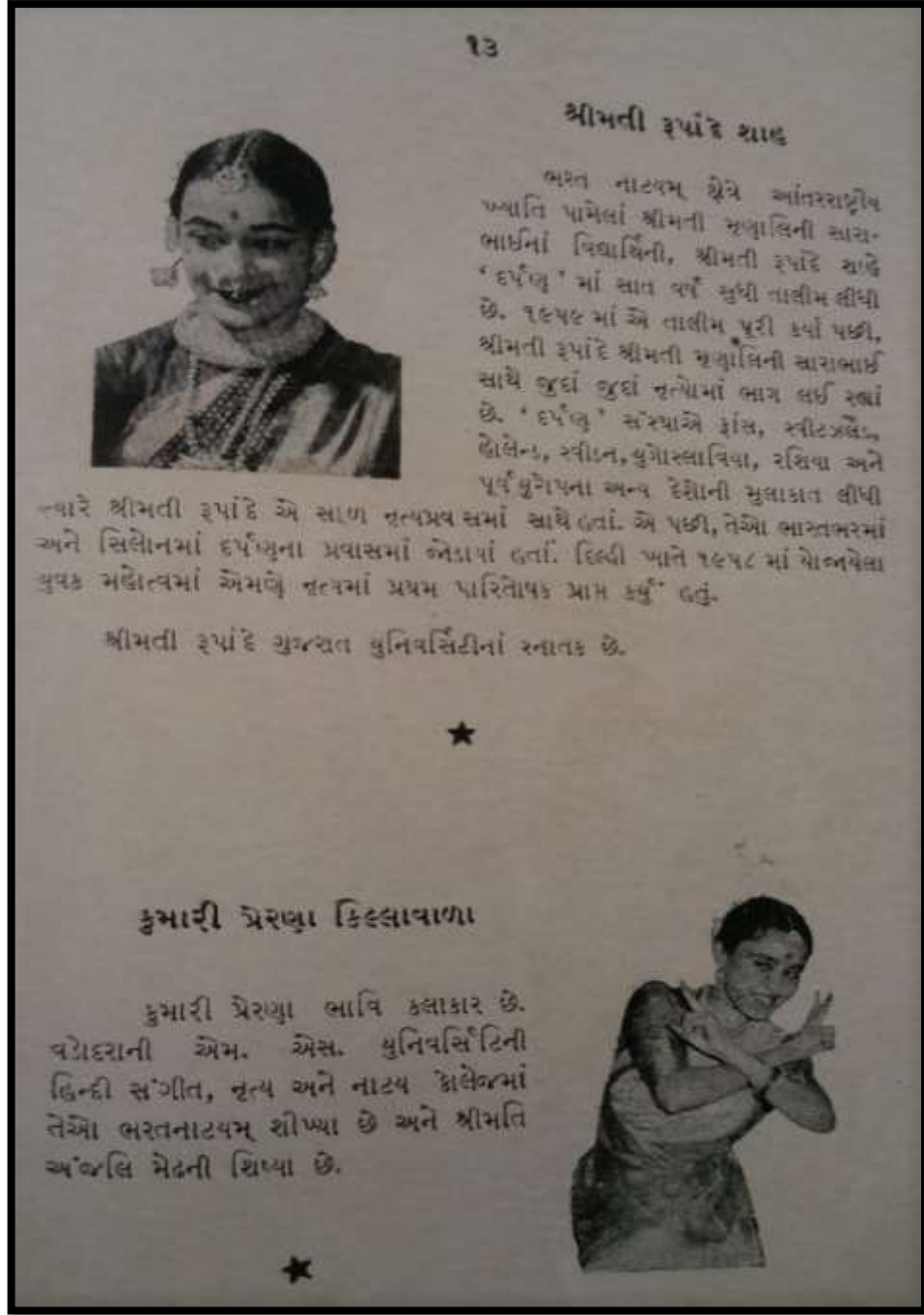


Fig. 5.4.1 Smt. Rupande Shah on Top, Smt. Prerna Shah Bottom

(This picture is from the invitation card of first 'Gujarat Sangeet Nrutya Mahotsava', organised by Gujarat Sangeet Natak Akademi, performed on 17th October 1962)

Later, my sister Smt. Anjani Arun Kumar and I, established 'Aradhana Institute of Dance' in 1968. Anjaliben called me her 'Cultural Ambassador', as I was propagating her teaching in Pune. She said that I built a *Sanskar setu* between Gujarat and Maharashtra. The great *Guru* Mrinaliniben Sarabhai had come to take our exam. When she watched me perform and play '*Nattuvangam*' and reciting *Tirmaanams* flawlessly, she invited me to come and be her staff in 'Darpana Academy'. When I went for the 'Kalakshetra' Scholarship test, the great Gurus Rukmini Devi Arundale, E. Krishna Iyer and E. Rammiah Pillai said after seeing my dance said that, 'We remember Anjali dancing here in Hall; you are her replica'.

She had choreographed an outstanding dance ballet 'Radha nu Shamnu'. I taught the same ballet to my students and presented it in Nadiad. People in Nadiad were very impressed by the Ballet and appreciated it a lot.

The sudden demise of Great Guruji Anjaliben Merh at a very young age of 50 years shocked and shattered us all. Life in Baroda College came to a standstill for some time. She choreographed the Ballet 'Navagraha' in which she brought the *Nakshatra* on stage. After the performance of the ballet, she had union with almighty in Heaven. I cherish her memories and teachings in my heart. She lives in my soul.

5:4:5 The views of Smt. Sandhya Mungur (Former Head, Department of Dance, Former Head, School of Performing Arts, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Mauritius) based on an interview conducted on phone.

I had a great fortune of learning Bharatanatyam at The M. S. University of Baroda from 1969 to 1974. I have the most cherished and fond memories of my *Guru* Smt. Anjali Merh during that period. At a very tender age of six, my father Dr. Vaikunth Majmudar and my mother Dr. Dinmani Majmudar encouraged me to learn Bharatanatyam at 'Darpana Academy' established by Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai at Ahmedabad, Gujarat. At 'Darpana' I had my training under Shri Chatuni Paniker and Shri Govindan Nambudri. At the age of fourteen and a half, I performed my '*Arangetral*', my maiden performance at 'Darpana'. On seeing my performance and my inclination to Art, my maternal uncle Shri Damu Jhaveri who was the chairman of Indian National Theater in Mumbai, advised my

father to send me to Smt. Anjali Merh for further studies at the M. S. University of Baroda. This is how I met Anjaliben.

She was a very disciplined teacher and a traditional master. She believed in the pure 'Kalakshetra' Bharatanatyam Dance style and made no compromise in the Art form. While teaching she was very particular about the clarity of postures, clarity of movements and gestures. She trained us in the traditional items of Bharatanatyam Repertoire. At the same time she wrote beautiful lyrics in Gujarati, composed music and choreographed on the spot. It was a real treat to the eyes and a great experience to watch her choreographic works.

Anjaliben was a gifted artist and a poet; she had inherited the art of writing poems from her Mother Smt. Mugdha Hora. She carried out experiments by composing traditional Bharatanatyam items like 'Shabdham', 'Kirtanam', 'Varnam', 'Padam' in Hindi and Gujarati in Hindustani and Karnatic Music. She had written and composed 'Shri Chandramaulishwar Kuravanji', a dance drama in Gujarati without compromising the traditional aspects of the dance drama form.

Anjaliben was an encouraging and inspiring mentor. She gave us many opportunities of performing in Professional Programmes. I performed in the 'Kal Ke Kalakar' festival organized by the 'Sur Sringara Samsad', Bombay which was a National Platform for all aspiring Artists. We presented a traditional *Margam* in Tamil and another *Margam* in Gujarati there, on an experimental basis. Both the *Margams* were appreciated and received much praise from the audience. I received the Title 'Shringara Mani' which was much coveted title for this performance. We also performed at the National Performing Arts Center and Bombay Television, which was a much cherished experience.

Anjaliben was a very motherly figure to me. She inspired me and took a promise from me when I was leaving India for Mauritius. She told me "Sandhya, where you are going, nobody knows about Bharatanatyam. You will have to work hard for the promotion and propagation of this art form. Fully dedicate yourself to the promotion of the art and

make it a mission of your life". For more than four decades, i.e. since 1975, I introduced Bharatanatyam in Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Mauritius. It was difficult in the beginning. Slowly I made people realize about the spiritual background and origin of this art form. Gradually I was able to convince people to take up studies of this sacred art form of Bharatanatyam Dance.

Today I feel proud that I fulfilled the promise I gave to my Guru. Bharatanatyam has been established in Mauritius with a strong base. People in Mauritius have understood the advantages and importance of training in Bharatanatyam Dance Style for developing the overall personality of a child.

I have been fortunate to have Anjaliben as my Guru; she has been a great inspiration to me for all the painstaking efforts which I have put in the promotion of this Art form.

5:4:6 Following are the views of Indurduth Deerpaul (Former Head, Department of Indian Music and Dance, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Mauritius) based on the interview on phone taken on 27/05/20 and the soft copy of thereof sent to me.

I was fortunate to have interacted with Smt. Anjali Merh. She was a great exponent of Bharatanatyam and Head of The Department of Dance, College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. I was a student of 'Tabla' in the same College. Smt. Anjali Merh used to conduct several lectures on the theory of Dance, which she made interesting and simple through her practical demonstrations. For all the students of Music, Dance and Dramatics, this module of dance was a part of the syllabus which was compulsory. Smt. Anjali Merh was an extraordinary teacher. Her lectures were always interesting. She always maintained the interest of all the students throughout her lectures.

I was not a Dance student but many times Smt. Anjali Merh encouraged me to learn Bharatanatyam. Due to my busy schedule, I could not spare time for that. I was the only student from Mauritius in the whole College who was learning Music at that time i.e. during the late 1960s. Mrs. Anjali Merh would request her Bharatanatyam students to take

care of me and give me company as I was away from home and sometimes nostalgic. She was very compassionate and loving as a human being. She was always considerate and ready to help any student who would approach her regarding studies.

It was Mrs. Anjali Merh's initiative to popularize Bharatanatyam amongst people who did not understand Tamil. Though Tamil is a very scientific language, many people in other communities and general public do not understand it. Mrs. Anjali Merh composed many items of Bharatanatyam like *Padams* and *Bhajans* in languages like Gujarati, Hindi, Sanskrit, Hindi and Assamese. It was very unusual in those times and required a lot of creativity.

I had an opportunity to visit residence of Mrs. Anjali Merh as she had invited my wife Rekha Deerpaal, my daughter Sangita and myself for lunch. We had a good discussion about Dance in general and Bharatanatyam in particular, during the lunch time.

It is an unquestionable fact that if Bharatanatyam has prospered and propagated in Mauritius, it is due to the enormous contributions of Mrs. Anjali Merh; Mrs. Sandhya Mungur and Mrs. Rekha Deerpaal are the two direct disciples of Mrs. Anjali Merh who are teaching in Mahatma Gandhi Institute for many decades. They have been the pioneers to spread Bharatanatyam Dance style in Mauritius by giving their services in the Mahatma Gandhi Institute. It is their very big contribution in the development of Bharatanatyam in Mauritius.

Credit goes to the students of Mrs. Anjali Merh for the progress of this art form. They gave stage and Television programmes to make people aware of the greatness of this Dance Style. They passed on the teaching of Mrs. Anjali Merh to future generation through their hard work and dedication. Today there are many performers and teachers of Bharatanatyam in Mauritius who are directly or indirectly influenced by the teachings of Mrs. Sandhya Mungur and Mrs. Rekha Deerpaal.

In the Mahatma Gandhi Institute in Mauritius, Presently the programme of studies in Dance ranges from certificate level to post-graduate level. It is due to the immense contribution of the students of Mrs. Anjali Merh that Bharatanatyam Dance has reached

to such a high level in Mauritius. Mrs. Sandhya Mungur's contribution as a Head is immense in the development of Bharatanatyam in Mauritius.

5:4:7 The view of Rekha Deepaul (Bharatanatyam Dancer, Educator, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Mauritius) are mentioned as follows based on the phone interview on 04/06/2020 and the soft copy thereof received from her.

I arrived in The Department of Dance, College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in 1968. Since the age of three I had taken training in the Manipuri Dance Style from Shri Madhav Singh of Manipur. My father insisted that I learn the art and science of Bharatanatyam Dance Style. Simultaneously, I was also learning Kathak from Sri Bhola Vishwas. I was also a famous folk dancer of Assam, of the Bihu folk Dance. Though I had a strong back ground in Dance still I felt I wanted to learn the Bharatanatyam Classical Dance Style. Hence, I came to Baroda. I began to study the practical and the theoretical aspects of Bharatanatyam Dance Style under the guidance of Smt. Anjali Merh. I studied the ancient treatise like 'Natyashastra' and 'Abhinaya Darpana' under the guidance of Smt. Anjali Merh. She gave us (students) long hours of practical sessions. She gave us systematic and professional training in all the aspects of Bharatanatyam Dance Style. I was fortunate to receive training in Bharatanatyam Dance Style for four to five years. There were many students from Japan, U.K and other countries learning Bharatanatyam from Smt. Anjali Merh in the Department.

She gave me important roles in her cultural programmes because of my graceful movements and stamina. I also gave vocal support to her for many of her programmes. I learnt the art of choreography from Smt. Anjali Merh. I consider myself fortunate to study under such an eminent *Guru* whose choreographic abilities were excellent and whose teaching methodology was superb. I came to a conclusion that a good knowledge of Bharatanatyam and the knowledge of *Shastras* are important to do compositional and creative works in Dance.

Mrs. Anjali Merh was a very loving and compassionate person. I remember one occasion, when I was sick, she took me to a hospital in her car. She gave me food which

she had cooked herself. She was very considerate. She was also a very good vocalist. She had good knowledge of languages like Gujarati, Hindi, Sanskrit, Assamese, Tamil, and Marathi. She had contributed immensely in popularizing Bharatanatyam amongst that section of Indian population who did not understand the South Indian Languages.

I shifted to Mauritius in 1971. I have given many stage performances, Television performances and lecture demonstration in Mauritius. I have worked hard with Smt. Sandhya Mungur to promote and propagate Bharatanatyam more and more in Mauritius and surrounding countries. Anjaliben has been a great *Guru* and inspiration for me.

5:4:8 The Present Researcher met Akemi Sakurai (Bharatanatyam Dancer and Guru, Founder Geetanjali Institute for Dances of India', Kyoto, Japan) on 24th Feb, 2015, and took her interview on phone on 05/06/2020, whose views are as follows:

I met Smt. Anjali Merh when I came to learn Bharatanatyam Dance in India. I learnt from Smt. Anjali Merh, *Guru* Shri Kubernath Tanjorkar, Su. Shri Nargis Katpitia and Shri Pradeep Barua of the Department of Dance. Later, I also took training from Professor C. V. Chandrasekhar.

I was learning Japanese Classical dance since the age of seven years in Japan. Later, when I joined College in Japan, I read two books on Indian Dance in the Library. The books were 'Natyashastra' and another book was on 'Ramgopal'. That's how I became interested in learning Indian Classical dance. I was the first Japanese to learn Bharatanatyam Dance in India. I came to India on a scholarship and joined the bachelor's course in Bharatanatyam in the 'College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics' in 1965. During my graduation course in Bharatanatyam, I mainly took training from Smt. Anjali Merh.

I participated in her dance dramas like 'Ramayana' and 'Sachi Poulomi'. I also performed in some of the programmes choreographed by her. I learnt *Tishra Allaripu*, *Chatusra Allaripu*, *Mishra Allaripu*, *Saveri Jatiswaram*, *Sarasi Jakshulu Shabdam*, *Ni Uraipu Kirtanam*, *Tillana in Raga Kafi and Raga Dhanyasi*, *shlokam*, *Kautvam* and many

other items. I stayed in India for five years. I also learnt Odissi from Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra.

I later on took advance training in Bharatanatyam from Prof. C.V.Chandrasekhar. I established 'Geetanjali Institute for Dances of India', in Kyoto Japan. I have choreographed many Ballets. Smt. Anjali Merh was a very talented and devoted teacher. She was very particular about clarity in *hasta*, footwork and technique. She liked discipline and taught in very systematic manner. She was a beautiful person.

5:4:9 Shri Harish Gangani (Former Head of Department of Dance, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Baroda.) has the following views: (based on the interview taken by the Present Researcher on 29th May 2019 at Faculty of Performing Arts, Baroda in Gujarati. The translation is done by me in English.)

Anjaliben belonged to a Gujarati 'Nagar Brahmin' family. She could speak Tamil very well. She was trained at 'Kalakshetra' and well qualified for teaching in the Department of Dance, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. She also became the Head. There were two great dance *Gurus* in the Department of Dance, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Smt. Anjali Merh and *Guru* Shri Kubernath Tanjorkar; the Department was running smoothly and efficiently under the guidance of both these great teachers.

The credit of composing and choreographing a Gujarati *Margam* goes to Smt. Anjali Merh. Anjaliben choreographed many dance dramas like 'Kuravanji'. 'Navagraha' was her last dance drama. She trained many students in Bharatanatyam dance.

She too used to dance. I had seen her performing on some occasions. I remember seeing her performance once in playbox of the faculty. That day there were two dance performances by the Dance Department. One was by Smt. Anjali Merh and other was by my father *Guru* Shri Sunderlal Gangani. Both had given the dance performance and the programme was on a very big level. I had seen her *abhinaya* and it was very impressive.

I was a student in the same faculty. I remember one incidence, when once class was going on, Anjaliben came to the class. My father was demonstrating *gat nikas* that day. She came from the door. She saw my father performing and she became very emotional. She said ‘*Bhaiya, ap baitho mat, Ap bas karte rahiye*’. (Brother, please don’t sit, please continue dancing). She told me ‘*Harish tum baith jao*’, I want to see your father dance. She told me further, ‘*Harish dekho, bhaiya kitna acha nritya kar rahe hai, kitna acha bhav ho raha hai*, see his hands are so graceful’, so she had the very good quality of appreciating the good things. She became emotional on seeing or hearing good art. That is a very good quality she had, she could understand good art and also appreciate it whole heartedly.

These are the true stories of great personalities like Anjaliben that inspire us in our Present time and our Present is shaped listening to the great stories of great personalities like Anjaliben. And on the basis of Present, the future will be shaped. The teachers like Anjaliben were very simple in looks but great in knowledge as they were trained by their great teachers. As such, the talks about them can never stop. If I talk tomorrow about her, maybe I will remember some other inspiring story about her. Anjaliben prepared a very strong base of the Department and the future teachers and students benefitted a lot because of her efforts. This was their *patra parichay*.

As a teacher, she was very strict in class. She was very demanding as a teacher. She did not compromise as far as technique was concerned. After the class, she was very loving towards her students. She was very sincere and hardworking as a teacher. She has given immense contribution to form a very strong base of the faculty and she will always live in the dance of the students, whom she trained and who are training a number of students today.

I can never stop praising *Guru* like her or talking about her contribution.

5:4:10 Smt. Juthika Mahen (Former Head, Department of Dance, Faculty of Performing Arts, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara) has the following views, based on the interview taken on 04/07/2015 in Gujarati language at

her residence, 22 B Tarangan Society, New Sama, Baroda). The translation is done by the Present Researcher.

I came in contact with Smt. Anjali Merh when I joined the Department of Dance, The Maharaja Sayajiroa University of Baroda, for my graduation course in Bharatanatyam. We used to call her 'Anjaliben'. The interesting thing about the Department of Dance was that Anjaliben was a Gujarati and she went to 'Kalakshetra' in Chennai, learnt the dance form, Tamil language and Tamil culture. She was Gujarati but she adopted Tamil culture and could speak and understand Tamil, while Guru Shri Kubernath Tanjorkar, though was a Tamilian, could speak Gujarati well. This is the greatness of such great Stalwarts like Smt Anjali Merh. She was very traditional and she adopted the Tamil culture, she looked like a Tamilian. She also insisted that we dressed up traditionally.

Anjali Merh was a direct student of Smt. Rukmini Devi and she imbibed all the aspects of Bharatanatyam Dance at 'Kalakshetra'. Her mother Smt. Mugdhaben Hora was a poetess. She belonged to a very educated family. From the very childhood she had a rich background of literature, poetry, art, culture, and sugam Sangeet in her home. She had a good sense of music. She had the knowledge of Karnatic music. She was well versed in literature. She knew languages like Gujarati, Hindi, English, Sanskrit and Tamil. She understood both the Gujarati culture and the Tamil culture. She was a dancer, choreographer, composer, educator and a lyricist. Being a Gujarati, she understood the people of Gujarat and the culture of Gujarat well. Hence, she choreographed items which people of Gujarat could understand and relate to the art form of Dance which was mainly in the South Indian languages.

She choreographed poems of poets like Narsinh Mehta, Premal, Avinash Vyas and also poems of her mother. She composed a *Tillana*, the *sahitya* of which was dedicated to Smt. Rukmini Devi. She composed the whole *Margam* of Bharatanatyam dance in Gujarati language, which is normally in South Indian Languages. She composed and choreographed a Kuravanji, 'Chandramaulishwara' in Gujarati. 'Kuravanji' dance drama, were usually danced in South Indian Languages. These were very revolutionary and a very big contribution from her side to Bharatanatyam on the whole and to the development of

Bharatanatyam in Gujarat. She had a mastery over choreography. She had choreographed good solo dance items like 'Varnams', 'Padams', 'Ashtapadis' and also group dances and wonderful Ballets like 'Ramayana', 'Radha Nu Shamnu' and 'Navagraha'. 'Chandramaulishwara' Kuravanji is one of her special choreography. 'Lalita Lavanga' *Astapadi* was one of her very beautiful choreographies, which she taught me with special attention. Thus, she was one of the pioneers in the development of Bharatanatyam Dance in Gujarat.

As she had learnt dance at 'Kalakshetra', she followed 'Kalakshetra' Bani. We were very lucky in Gujarat that Anjaliben was a very senior student of Rukmini's first batch. We, therefore, were privileged to learn the pure 'Kalakshetra' style from her. She was very strict about the technique and linings of Bharatanatyam dance. She gave a lot of importance to the *Araimandi* position or the half sitting position in Bharatanatyam dance. She insisted that *Natyarambhe* position and the linings of hands should be clear and perfect. She believed a lot in discipline. The training given by her was in a disciplined way and also the Presentation of Bharatanatyam by her was in a very systematic way. The audience would also enjoy the performances and carry an impression that the artistes have taken systematic training in Bharatanatyam dance.

Her 'Nattuvangam' was very good. She was perfect in *Tāla* and rendering of *Jatis* and *Tirmaanams*.

I had a very special relationship with her. She was a very strong personality and very influencing personality. She was very demanding and strict about maintaining Indian tradition and culture. Students had to perform according to her expectations. She insisted on Indian traditional clothes. We had, therefore, to go to College in Sarees. She insisted in proper hairstyle with oiled hair and a center parting. She insisted we put a bindi, wear earrings, chain in neck and bangles in hand. Even after the dance class was over, she would insist that students dress according to Indian tradition. She believed in natural beauty. According to her a student of classical dance should dress according to Indian tradition.

As a Gujarati, she has contributed immensely to the development of Bharatanatyam dance. She went to 'Kalakshetra', stayed there and learned and imbibed all

the aspects of Bharatanatyam dance. She adopted Tamil culture and language. When I visited her home, it felt more like a South Indian home than a Gujarati home. There was influence of South India in her dressing, her style of expressing, her personality and her thoughts. She wore South Indian sarees and ornaments. She had influence of Rukmini Devi and 'Kalakshetra' in her personality. After learning the art form from 'Kalakshetra', she taught and presented it in Gujarat; she presented South Indian items as well as items in Gujarati and other languages very beautifully. She trained many good students like Smt. Kala, Late Jayanti Chandolkar, Late Shri Pradeep Barua, Smt. Parul Shah, Smt. Sandhya Mungur and many more. She has contributed immensely in establishing Bharatanatyam and making it popular in Gujarat.

5:4:12 The views of Prof. Dr. Jagdish Gangani (Former Head, The Department of Dance, The M. S. University of Baroda, Baroda.) are quoted below from the interview that I conducted on 03/03/2020 at Faculty of Performing Arts, The M. S. University of Baroda.

I know Late Smt. Anjaliben Merh since I was a child. My father Pandit Sundarlal Gangani was teaching Kathak in the Department of Dance of the 'College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics', The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. Anjaliben was the Head of the Department after Shri Mohan Khokhar. Founder Head was Shri Mohan Khokhar. In this connection I was able to know Anjaliben but I was not matured enough to understand her qualities that time.

But after my S.S.C., when I joined the Degree College in 1977 as a student, I came to know Anjaliben. Every Saturday in the evening she taught us 'The Art of Production'. She gave us the knowledge of production, make-up art and costume. I remember it was 1978 or 1979, Swapna Sundari was invited to the Department for Lecture-Demonstration. After her Lecture-Demonstration, it was every one's wish that Anjaliben should perform something. She performed an *Abhinaya* item. I do not remember exactly what item it was, but it was a great opportunity for me see her *Abhinaya*, which was extraordinary. I remember in those days in mid-seventies, she started composing a *margam* in Gujarati. Then after that a trend of using regional languages other than the south Indian languages started in Bharatanatyam.

She belonged to the 'Nagar Brahmin' family. She had gone to Adyar, under the auspicious training of Rukmini Devi ji, where she had learnt the finest form of Bharatanatyam. She also learnt Tamil there and spoke Tamil fluently.

I remember that she had composed dance ballets like 'Radha nu Shamnu', 'Chandramaulishwara 'Kuravanji'', 'Ramayan' and many others. The 'Navagraha' dance ballet, which she produced and directed, was her last production as immediately after the performance, she passed away. I remember many of her well-wishers and colleagues requesting her not to choreograph the dance ballet but it was because of her strong will power and determination that she completed the dance ballet.

She had a very deep faith in Goddess Amba and she used to celebrate *Garba* during the *Navratri* in the Department. Since then this tradition of celebrating Garba in *Navratri*, came into the existence and still continues.

The chanting of 'Abhinaya Darpana' *Shlokas* in the morning in the Department of Dance by Bharatanatyam students was introduced by Anjaliben Merh. The dissertation in the Masters was also introduced by her.

She was also a vocalist. She had a tremendous grip over singing. She sang in Tamil and other languages like Telugu, Gujarati and Hindi. She was also a music composer, choreographer and a dance director.

Her contribution was recognized for which she was awarded 'Gaurav Puraskar', even after she passed away. She was a gem of an artist. Her teaching is still alive in her disciples, which they are passing on to the future generations.

5:4:13 The views of Prof. Dr. Jaydev Arunoday Jani, Former Head, Department of Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit, The M. S. University of Baroda, Baroda, are quoted from the interview conducted by me at Pratapgunj, Baroda on 14/06/2018.

During my study in the first year Degree classes of Dramatics, in 1972-73, I met Mrs. Anjali Merh many times as she taught us (The first year students of Music and Dramatics), 'The principles of Dance'. She initially gave Introduction of the forms of different dances, such as Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Manipuri and even folk

dances of Gujarat and Maharashtra. Her lectures were lucid and easily graspable. For the dance was in her blood, many of the different gestures and expressions were expressed nicely by her. I had this opportunity for some lectures only because later on the lectures were passed on to Mr. Pradeep Barua.

During the lectures though, not in a good number, she influenced me (us, the students) through her effective and thorough teaching skills. One can imagine that Mrs. Merh was one of the great Bharatanatyam dancers of her times in India.

5:4:14 Tani Desai (Founder, Director ‘Pagrav Bharatanatyam Dance Institute’, Baroda) has the following views which are based on the interview taken by the Present Researcher on 13/06/2018 in Gujarati and the hard copy of the questionnaire filled by her. Translation is done by the Present Researcher in English.

The passion to further enrich my innate talent in the field of dance and due to active encouragement of my parents and my first Guru and uncle Late Shri Arjun Desai, inspired me to run away from Mumbai and come to Baroda to Smt. Anjaliben, who was groomed as the perfect performing Dancer by none other than Smt. Rukmini devi of 'Kalakshetra' Chennai. She was known to our family. My training under Smt. Anjaliben started at the age of nineteen, in June 1967. While I was doing my B.Mus, where Late Smt. Anjaliben Merh, Late Shri Kubernath Tanjorkar, Late Smt. Nargis ben Katpitia and other faculty members, taught us for four years. More classes in practical were taken by Anjaliben than the other *Gurus*. Later, when I again joined the faculty to do my M.Mus, Anjaliben taught me (us, students) for two years in masters.

As a teacher Anjaliben was perfectionist in teaching *Nritta* and *Abhinaya* and expected her students to do the same, i.e. to be perfect. She was well versed not only in dance but also in Karnatic as well as in Hindustani Music, which enhanced the quality and variety of her Dance compositions. She was a real hard task master; yet very loving and considerate as a human being. Although I was not fortunate to see her performing on stage frequently, from our exposure to her grace and style while learning, we were on a different plane of ecstasy and divinity. She was a perfect Ideal as accomplished *Nattuvnar*. She had an inimitable style of reciting intricate *Tirmaanams* with perfect precision of Tāla, in her

melodious voice. With her multi linguistic knowledge of Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit, Marathi and her mother tongue Gujarati and in-depth knowledge of Indian Mythology and Deities together with her expertise in Classical Dance and music, she had a remarkable ease of excellence in her choreography and compositions.

My association with Smt. Anjaliben as my teacher and a very compassionate human being has been a very strong and it has a lifelong influence on my life, so much so that Dance with discipline has become my way of life; It has provided tremendous satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment when I pass on this wonderful heritage to my students and next generation for more than four decades by now.

5:4:15 Mahen Hajernis, A painter, Poet, Actor, Director, Writer, Presenter on theatre and Television artist, active for more than five decades, told the Present Researcher as follows in an interview given at Neelkanth Society, New Sama, Baroda in Gujarati. Its translation is done in English by the Present Researcher.

I saw Anjaliben as a dedicated personality. She was one of the pioneers in the field of Bharatanatyam, who is remembered for making Bharatanatyam popular in Gujarat and also other parts of world by training students; they are training again innumerable students in different parts of the world.

I have seen two productions of Anjaliben, “Chandramaulishwar Kuravanji” and “Navagraha”. The music of both the productions was composed by Dwarkanath Bhosle, and they were nicely choreographed and were enjoyable.

Anjaliben was a very strong willed woman. She believed in herself. This we can say by the fact that, many people had warned her not to choreograph the production “Navagraha”; But she was determined to go ahead with the production. She passed away after the Presentation of the production “Navagraha”. This proves that she had tremendous determination and dedication for the art form.

5:4:16 Shri P. S. Chari (Director, Vadodara) gave the following views in the interview conducted by the Present Researcher at Akota, Baroda in Gujarati. The translation is done by the Present Researcher in English.

I used to visit the ‘College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics’ (Now, Faculty of Performing Arts), many times which gave me an opportunity to meet Anjaliben many times. I could speak Tamil and as Anjaliben loved talking in Tamil, she used to talk to me many a times. Students of Anjaliben and Tanjorkar Sir performed in the ‘Shringar Mani Awards’ and ‘Kal ke Kalakar’ function every year in Bombay, and before going to Bombay, they would perform in Baroda. I had a chance to witness many of those performances many a time.

Anjaliben used to choreograph Ballets more. One gets to see the element of Ballet in her choreography which was a new concept in that period for the people of Gujarat. When you are small, you are impressed by the choreography. Anjaliben’s choreography impressed me. And Anjaliben used Gujarati a lot in her choreographic works, so it would impress the audience. This is how I knew Anjaliben. Anjaliben had presented one program in O.N.G.C Ankaleshwar; I had accompanied the troupe; in this way I became more familiar with Anjaliben’s work.

The costumes in Anjaliben’s programmes were very nicely stitched. Costumes would be neatly pleated and tucked properly. Hair style would be perfect and neat. She also used Gujarati traditional sarees like *Bhandhani* and *Patola* in her programmes. Choreography in Anjaliben’s programme was stylized. It had a western element in the choreography. Anjaliben used a lot of Geometrical designs in her choreography. *Adavus* were used in her choreography in different patterns. Anjaliben knew how many dancers to be used in a particular choreography. There was an element of ‘Set’ which you see in Anjaliben’s choreography. She choreographed the *krutis* or poems of the well-known poets of Gujarat. She was one of the first few dancers who choreographed Bharatanatyam items in Gujarati language. It, therefore, became easier for people to understand and to relate.

Her students participated in ‘Kal Ke Kalakar’ festival every year. Her students also performed and participated in other prestigious festivals and events.

Anjaliben came from a very educated family; she knew and understood the modern education system well. Anjaliben belonged to a family where education was very

important. Even when she was a student she was aware about the modern education system. Therefore, when she joined the Department as a Head, it was very easy for her to give the education of dance in the modern education system. Anjaliben too was educated. She was aware of the new methods of modern education system. Her English was good, so she could teach and communicate in English when required. She introduced the concept of drawing items in journals. She had a deep knowledge of the theory of dance. She knew about the dances of western countries as also dances all over the world. She gave that knowledge to her students. Anjaliben was connected with all the dancers and dance teachers of 'Kalakshetra' and other renowned dancers of India. 'Kalakshetra' was an upcoming institute that time, with a new vision and new ideas. As Anjaliben took training from 'Kalakshetra', she gave these new thoughts and vision to her students. Girls from good and well known families of Baroda came to learn dance in the Department due to Anjaliben. *Guru* Shri Kubernath Tanjorkar came from a traditional background. Hence, the beginning of the Department of dance was on a very balanced base of traditional and modern dance education, which was very beneficial to the students.

Her big contribution was that during the period 1966 to 1978, she took the students of the Department of Dance to the prestigious festivals and programmes for performances. By Presenting dance performances in such events, students got a different kind of exposure. Anjaliben even took students for performance to other countries. She was the first teacher of the Department to take students for performance outside India. Thus, Anjaliben made a strong base of Bharatanatyam, not only for Department of Dance in Baroda but also in Gujarat, India and outside India too, as her students are settled in different countries.

5:4:17 The Smt. Kanan Amin (Patel) (Bharatanatyam Dancer, Teacher, Baroda) has the following views: (Based on the interview taken by the Present Researcher at Chhani, Baroda on 13th June 2020).

I completed my Diploma in 1970, Bachelors in 1974 and Masters in 1976 in Bharatanatyam dance style from the 'College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics', The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Baroda. During my training in the College I learnt dance from Smt. Anjali Merh, Shri Kubernath Tanjorkar, Shri Pradeep Barua, Su.

Shri Nargis Katpitia and Smt. Prafula Oza. When I was in the third and fourth year of Diploma Anjali Ben was taking my class. Later she also took my classes in the third and fourth year of Degree and two years of Masters.

I was highly influenced by Anjali ben. She was like a mother to me. She took training from Kalakshetra directly from Smt. Rukmini Devi and passed on all the knowledge that she acquired to us. She was a very good teacher and was very particular about the technique, clarity of gestures, perfect linings, Araimandi, perfection in movements, discipline and dedication. She was very particular about reaching College on time. She insisted we recite the shlokas of Abhinaya Darpana on time in the morning.

I have seen her dance when she demonstrated some Adavu or Abhinaya or some nritya piece in class. Her linings were very good and her technique of Bharatanatyam was perfect. Her Abhinaya was also very impressive. She had learnt Karnatic music at Kalakshetra and also had knowledge about Hindustani music. She was a very good singer and a Nattuvnar. She was an expert in choreography. She wrote beautiful lyrics, composed the music of the lyrics and choreographed it very beautifully in Bharatanatyam dance style.

I performed my *Arangetral* on 22nd February, 1976 in C. C. Mehta Auditorium, Baroda, under the guidance of Anjali Ben. She had composed and choreographed a Gujarati Margam in Bharatanatyam dance style. This was a very big contribution by her and she will always be remembered for it in the history of dance. I performed the Gujarati *Margam* choreographed by her in my *Arangetral*. She choreographed many beautiful Ballets like Ramayana, Chandramaulishwara Kuravanji, Radha Nu Shamnu and Navagraha.

Anjali Ben always encouraged and gave us opportunities to perform in various programmes. We performed at many cities like Baroda, Ahmedabad and Bombay under her guidance. I performed in the ballet 'Radha Nu Shamnu' choreographed by Anjali Ben. I also performed in the ballet 'Radha Nu Shamnu' in Bombay. I received 'Sringar Mani' Award for my performance in 'Kal Ke Kalakar' at Bombay under the guidance of Anjali Ben. Anjali Ben choreographed many dance items in Hindi, Gujarati and other regional

languages. This was a big revolutionary contribution in those times. I picked up few items from her.

She started the system of stick drawing notation system and making a journal which was very useful to me when after Marriage I moved to Canada. I taught there for two years. In 1985 I moved to New York, USA. I taught Bharatanatyam there for one year to students privately. In 1987 I moved to California, USA. I established 'Nupur Dance Class' in California, USA in 1989. Later I moved to Florida, USA and continued teaching Bharatanatyam through my Academy. I was fortunate to take training under Anjali Ben and pass on her teachings in countries like Canada and USA. I taught students the Gujarati and Hindi items choreographed by Anjali Ben, as they were easier for students to understand.

Anjali Ben has been a great influence on my personality and life. She will always have a special place in my heart.

5:4:18 In an interview taken on phone, Smt. Nirva Shah, on 23/05/2019 gives the followings view about Smt. Anjali Merh.

I was a student in the 'The Department of Dance, College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. I was only 18 years old when I met Anjaliben for the first time. Her choreography was impressive. I admired her simplicity. I loved her as a teacher. I was fortunate to have studied Bharatanatyam from her when I was doing my Bachelor's Degree. She was very creative as a choreographer. She choreographed items in different languages and themes. I learnt the Gujarati *Margam* from her.

It was great period of my life to learn and train under her. She always trusted my dance talent. I remember that she taught me 'Mai Nahi Makan Khayo', just before a day of a show. After my performance she said to me, 'Nirva, you performed so well'. I was very happy to get this compliment from her. She was very encouraging as a teacher.

She composed 'Chandramaulishwara Kuravanji' in Gujarati. We (students), performed this Ballet at many places. I also participated in 'Navagraha', which was her

last production. We presented the Ballet 'Navagraha' in C. C. Mehta Auditorium, Baroda. After the performance as soon as I reached home, I got a phone call with the sad news that Anjaliben was no more. I immediately went to her home. It seemed as if she was sleeping peacefully. So many years have passed, but I cannot forget Anjaliben. She had influenced my life in so many ways. My *Sat Sat Vandana* to my *Guruji*.

My class mates were Francis Barboza, Bina Barbaiya and Lalita Iyer.

5:4:19 The views of Smt. Jeethy Menon (Bharatanatyam Guru, Trivendrum, Kerala) are quoted below: (Based on the interview taken on phone on 19/07/2020 by the Present Researcher)

Anjaliben Merh was our family friend. I wanted to take admission in Fine Arts, but Anjaliben insisted that I should take admission in Dance; I therefore joined Department of Dance, College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in 1967.

She had taken training at 'Kalakshetra', Chennai. Hence, she followed 'Kalakshetra' *Bani*. As a teacher she was strict in Class and wanted perfection in technique. Perfection of Linings in dance was very important to her. She insisted on wearing traditional clothes. She insisted that we dressed according to Indian culture in Sari, have a bindi on forehead and bangles. As a person she was very affectionate. I addressed her as 'Amma'. She was very particular about the clarity of dance. As a teacher, she always wanted to teach new items. She was very true to her art. We went to her house on every 'Dushera' for *Puja*. She always taught us new items. She always wanted to share all her knowledge with her students. She was very loving and caring. She even cooked food for us. She loved to talk in Tamil. She used to talk with me and my friend and classmate Padma Subramaniam in Tamil.

She conducted my *Arangetral* and that of Padma Subramaniam. She didn't take any money from us for *Arangetral*. She was very much against taking money for *Arangetral*. She invited Smt. Rukmini Devi as Chief Guest for our *Arangetral*. Smt. Rukmini Devi gave her blessings to us.

She has choreographed many items. She used to write her lyrics in class, compose the music instantly and choreograph it on the spot. She has choreographed many items in Hindi, Gujarati and other regional languages. She choreographed a whole *margam* in Gujarati. It was a very big contribution that time. She also choreographed ballets like 'Radha Nu Shamnu'. I played the role of Radha in 'Radha Nu Shamnu' Ballet. She also choreographed many items like *Padam*, *Javali* in Tamil and Telugu. She choreographed a *Kuravanji* 'Chandramaulishwara' in Gujarati. She also choreographed the ballet 'Navagraha'. Many artists advised her not to choreograph that but she was determined to choreograph it.

She introduced the system of drawing the items in journal. It was a big contribution by her as it is useful to remember items after we leave College after finishing our course. She invited many renowned dancers at the Department for lecture-demonstrations like Smt. Rukmini Devi, Smt. Sanjukta Panigrahi, Shri Kelu Charan Mahapatra, Smt. Sonal Mansingh and many more.

She celebrated festivals like *Navratri* with performances of *Garba*. She also taught us folk dances like *Garba* and *Tippani*. We also performed *Garba* in many of her programmes. She took me and Padma Subramaniam to 'Kalakshetra'. We presented our performances of folk dances there. We taught *Garba* and *Tippani* to the students of 'Kalakshetra' and learnt some steps of folk dances of Tamilnadu from them.

I also performed in the Rashtrapatibhavan in March, 1974 when Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister. This programme was in honour of visit of Vice President of Iraq Saddam Hussein to India. Padma Subramaniam and I performed together in many programmes of Anjaliben Merh. I learnt a lot of discipline, devotion and aesthetics from her. She was a mother figure to me. She passed away at a very young age. I cherish her memories and her teachings. Forever she lives in my heart. I consider myself fortunate to have taken training from Smt. Anjali Merh in College.

5:4:20 Smt. Padma Rajgopal (Subramaniam) Bharatanatyam Exponent (Cleveland, Ohio, U. S. A) has the following views: (Based on the interview taken by the Present Researcher on phone on 22/05/2020)

I have very sweet memories of *Guru Smt. Anjali Merh*. I used to call her Amma. She was like a second mother to me. I was fortunate to learn various aspects of Bharatanatyam from Smt. Anjali Merh when I was doing my Bachelors and Masters in the Department of Dance, College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics, The M. S. University of Baroda.

She was a wonderful dancer. I saw her dance on many occasions. She used to demonstrate when she taught us. Her linings were perfect and her *Abhinaya* was excellent. As a teacher she was par excellence. She was very patient and a perfectionist. She insisted we first perfect, whatever we were learning and then start learning a new step or an item. She was very strict and particular about *Araimandi* and linings. She taught us (students) all the aspects related to dance like 'Nattuvangam', singing the item in *Tāla* and choreography. When we finished Masters, we were all rounder. She moulded us (students) into confident performers, teachers and choreographers.

She was a very good singer. She had the knowledge of Karnatic music. She could not only speak Tamil but she could also read and write Tamil. Choreography came to her very naturally and easily. She could choreograph items very quickly.

She took me and my classmate Jeethy Menon to visit 'Kalakshetra'. That was a very good experience. We met Rukmini Devi. We also met her class mates Smt. Jaya Laxmi, Smt. Chinna Sharda and Smt. Lalita Shastri.

I was very close to her. She used to share her inner thoughts and feelings with me. My class mate Jeethy Menon and I had the good fortune to stay at her home for a few days. She would be teaching us all the time. When she was cooking, she would teach us. Even while resting, she would teach us. Such a dedicated teacher she was. She would be ready to teach any item that we wanted to learn from her. She never kept things to herself. She shared her knowledge with students with open heart. Smt. Anjali Merh's husband Shri Sukumar Merh was also very helpful and many a time he would help us whenever we required any help.

After my masters, when I started working in Lucknow in 'Bhatkhande Music College', she helped me to set the syllabus. She encouraged me to start my Ph.D. for which

I left Lucknow and joined Mrinalini Sarabhai's 'Darpana', so that I can be near her and start my research work under her. I started doing my Ph.D. under her on 'Devadasi cult in Indian Dance'.

I still remember the time when she was busy with the production 'Navagraha', when I came to meet her in February 1979. She gifted me a coral with Ganesh carving and said, "Keep this always with you, it will remind you of me". She came to drop me at the bus station and she had tears in her eyes. She said, "She feels as if she is seeing me for the last time". And after a week just after the Presentation of her production 'Navagraha', I heard that she passed away. It was a very sad moment for me and for the Dance field. But I always remember her and she lives in me, in my teachings.

5:4:21 Smt. Manik Ambikai (Bharatanatyam Guru, Nrityanagana, Pune) has the following views: (Based on the interview taken on phone on 01/06/2019)

Smt. Anjali Merh has influenced my life in many ways. I saw the *Arangetral* of Smt. Prerna Desai, who is a senior most disciple of Smt. Anjali Merh. I was inspired and motivated to learn Dance, seeing her performance and so in 1968 I joined the 'College of Indian Music, Dance and Dramatics', The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Baroda. I learnt from Shri Pradeep Barua and Su. Shri Nargis Katpitia in first and second year. I learnt from Guru Shri Kubernath Tanjorkar in the third and fourth year of Bachelors. In Masters, I was fortunate to take training from Smt. Anjali Merh.

As a teacher she was strict and a perfectionist. She was a beautiful dancer herself. She used to demonstrate while teaching. It was a pleasure to see her dance. She was a fantastic singer. She also composed music. She started the system of maintaining journals of the items, which was very useful to me when I started teaching in Pune. She was very imaginative as a choreographer. Influenced by her experiment of choreographing a Gujarati *Margam*, I choreographed Marathi and Hindi *Margams*. In 1974 we performed the whole Gujarati *Margam* choreographed by her, in 'Kal Ke Kalakar' programme in Bombay. Same performance was presented when we performed in 'Darpana' in 1974 or 1975.

She was very much interested in choreographing Bharatanatyam Dance items in different languages. She used to choreograph a dance item for students in their mother tongue. For me and my classmate Jyoti Deshpande, she specially choreographed a saint Gyaneshwara Kriti in Marathi, 'Mogra Fulela'. She encouraged me to learn Vocal.

Her teaching was so perfect that I still remember whatever she taught me. I can never forget whatever she taught me. When I started my Dance institute in Pune, I taught to my students what I had learnt from Smt. Anjali Merh. I passed on her precious teachings to my students.

5:4:22 Smt. Parul Pankaj Masher, Assistant General Manager, Official Language, Bank of Baroda, Baroda, has the following views, shared in an interview taken in Chokaripura, District Baroda by the Present Researcher:

I was in Bombay (Now Mumbai) when I was a teenager. Smt. Anjali Merh's name was very popular in Bombay and Gujarat. As my father Shri Suresh Shah was a press reporter, I got many opportunities of see classical dance programmes. As I was interested in classical dance and classical music, articles in newspaper about dance and music always attracted me. I remember reading about Smt. Anjali Merh's programmes and seeing her photos many times in newspapers during those days. She was a very well-known Bharatanatyam dancer and teacher. I remember watching 'Chandramaulishwara Kuravanji' which was in Gujarati language at Bhavans Vidhya Bhavan', Bombay. I enjoyed watching the programme, choreography and music, though I didn't have any knowledge of classical dance. The music and dance of the programme was so imposing that I still remember it after so many years. My Husband Shri Pankaj Masher was a painter and so I had an opportunities of meet many artistes like Shri Bhupen Khakhar, Smt. Tejal Amin, Shri Sunil Kothari and many more. Whenever we met Shri Sunil Kothari, who is a famous dance critic and an author, he talked very highly about Smt. Anjali Merh. Smt. Anjali Merh created a very vibrant atmosphere of Bharatanatyam dance style in Bombay and Gujarat, which is a classical dance style from South India, due to which it reached to people like me who belonged to a very simple family with no background of classical dance or classical music. She contributed majorly in the propogation of Bharatanatyam dance style in Bombay and Gujarat.

Photos of Smt. Anjali Merh



Fig. 5.4.2 Guru Smt. Anjali Merh



Fig. 5.4.3 Guru Smt. Anjaliben



5.4.4 Smt. Anjali Merh



Fig. 5.4.5 (R-L) Smt. Anjali Merh, Shri Patel, Smt. Kanan Patel, and Dr. Sukumar Merh



Fig. 5.4.6 Anjali Memorial Hospital



Fig. 5.4.7 Smt. Anjali Merh

Anjaliben with 'Amma'



"A very great loss to the art world and to me personally has been the passing away of Smt. Anjali Mehr, Head of the Department of Dance in the M.S. University of Baroda. Her family have been known to me since 1925. She came to Kalakshetra as a child of seven and gave a performance which was very charming and which I cannot forget. She was a natural born artiste and travelled with me taking part in many performances. Her death is very sad indeed for her mother who is blind and who has just lost her husband. Mr. Ramesh and Mrs. Mugdha Hora, their son, Dr. Ajay Hora and Anjali are a few of my most faithful friends."

The above is what I wrote in the Kalakshetra News Bulletin some time ago. I am very glad that in memory of Anjali a Memorial Fund has been started. It is absolutely right that she should be remembered and I know that every student who has passed through her hands is devoted to her. To earn such a reputation is indeed a crowning jewel for an ideal teacher. Her love and interest in her pupils was outstanding and I have had the pleasure of seeing her not only teaching but also conducting a performance. What surprised me was the fact that she could sing South Indian songs both in Tamil and Telugu languages. She was a wonderful student of Kalakshetra and though it was not compulsory she made it a point to learn Tamil. In fact, she even wrote Tamil letters to me calling me 'Amma'. Over and above this, when she conducted the dance recital of a pupil I was surprised at her nattuvangam and the way she recited the Thirumanams. I can easily say that the way she used the Talas was as expert as in the case of a traditional nattuvanar. We will certainly miss her charming personality, but I am sure that wherever she is now she will be devoting herself to the dance art more than anything else. She is very close to me and she considered me like her own mother. I am fortunate to have had such a pupil.

Shrimati Rukmini Devi

Source: Anjali Merh Memorial Fund Magazine

Fig. 5.4.8 Smt. Anjali Merh with Smt. Rukmini Devi

Reference:

- 1) 'Nrityanjali', July 2013, Printed at Publishing and Printing Department, Mahatma Gandhi Institute Moka (Source : Anjali Merh Memorial Fund Magazine)
- 2) Reference : 'Nrityanjali', July 2013, Printed at Publishing and Printing Department, Mahatma Gandhi Institute Moka (Source : Anjali Merh Memorial Fund Magazine)

Photo Reference:

- 5.4.1 The picture is from the invitation card of first 'Gujarat Sangeet Nrutya Mahotsava', organised by Gujarat Sangeet Natak Akademi, performed on 17th October 1962
- 5.4.2 Nrityanjali -A Tribute to Smt. Anjali Merh, A Doyen of Bharatanatyam from 'Kalakshetra', Source mentioned: Anjali Memorial Fund Magazine
- 5.4.3 The Present Researcher got this photo Smt. Prerna Desai (Pune)
- 5.4.4 Merh. Anjali, Shri Chandramaulishwara 'Kuravanji'. The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda Press. 1977
- 5.4.5 The Present Researcher got this photo from Smt. Kanan Patel
- 5.4.6 <https://www.lybrate.com/vadodara/clinic/anjali-memorial-hospital-main-road-3900>
- 5.4.7 Nrityanjali A Tribute to Smt. Anjali Merh, A Doyen of Bharatanatyam from 'Kalakshetra', Source mentioned: Anjali Memorial Fund Magazine
- 5.4.8 From article written by Smt. Rukmini Devi in 'Nrityanjali - A Tribute to Smt. Anjali Merh, A Doyen of Bharatanatyam from 'Kalakshetra', Source mentioned: Anjali Memorial Fund Magazine