

**Perfect stance**

Chandan Thakore guides his disciples at Nrityabharti Performing Arts academy in Bharatanatyam

Chandan Thakore of Nrityabharti Performing Arts says he is also working to popularise an annual dance festival in Ahmedabad which will bring together dance students in the state on one platform to popularise the classical dance forms.

His mother, Elakshi Thakore, who founded her academy in 1960, says "Gujarat is one of the top states in India for classical dances. Many find it difficult to believe that Gujarati's can excel in dances that are inherently North In-

dian, South Indian or from Orissa, but we do manage to get most applause anywhere in India. For instance, when our group participated in the Natyanjali Dance Festival at Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, some locals wondered how a Gujarati could perform Bharatanatyam. But after watching our performance we got a great response."

Thakore is right because Gujarat has great dance schools in almost all its major cities. To list a few in Ahmedabad: there is Mrinalini Sarabhai's famed Darpana for various dance forms, Lakhia's Kadamb and Anart for Kathak, Smita Shastri's Nartan School of Classical Dances for Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi, Bhaskar Menon's Mudra School of Indian Classical Dance for all South Indian dance forms, and Thakore's Bharatanatyam Academy. As many students trained in these schools have started their own establishments, there are about 150 places where parents can send their children to learn classical dance forms. Nor is this fascination for classical dances limited to Ahmedabad, there are good places in Vadodara, Surat, Rajkot and Bhavnagar too.

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Gujaratis are developing a fancy for classical dance like never before. SIMPLY GUJARATI talks to a few gurus.

Thakore's Bharatanatyam Academy is located in the Gujarat Society at Paldi with the performing hall built like a temple theatre replete with a Natraj and a huge Ganesh. "More than 12,000 students have been trained by my mother and about 2000 by me, of whom 1300 of the former and 300 of the latter have completed their solo *arangetram* (initiation as a public performer) performance, 150 have completed higher studies in Bharatanatyam like Alankar, and 85 of my mothers and 15 of my students have been awarded national scholarship!", proclaims Chandan with unabashed pride.