

CHAPTER 1: ENGAGING WITH THE FAMILY ARCHIVE



Illustration 1: “Pioneers” of Bharata Natyam in South Africa: from left to right: Salochana Naidoo; Rani Nydoo; and Prema Nydoo

The artifacts in Illustration 1 from my family archive are the central focus of this thesis as it depicts South African “pioneers” in the field of Indian Classical dance. The central picture in colour is deliberately meant to take “centre stage” as it is of my mother, and the main focus of this study. The picture on the left is the only picture that I could find, from a newspaper cutting pasted into my mother’s scrapbook, of Salochana Naidoo. My mother would always emphasise the fact that they all studied together. My aunt Prema, though an integral part of the development of Indian classical dance in this country, was a child for most of their career together, and therefore is given less emphasis in this thesis. Theirs was a unique experience due to the time and circumstances that were in play on two continents.

INTRODUCTION

‘Dance is in my blood. I may have stopped dancing, but the dancer in me will never stop’, as my mother Rani (Nyadoo) Govender revealed in an interview with Seema Gangaram (2000:4) in the family archive. This statement of my mother’s could well be my own. It is the archive; which comprises of photographs, performance programmes, newspaper articles, letters, literature, journals, books, television inserts, video footage and oral history and conversation, and the joint body of work that have taken place during the course of my mother’s and my careers. It is a dispersed archive that sits in and around my family environment and across multiple digital forms that is the foundation of this study. I have selected six pictures or groupings of artefacts for the beginning of each chapter that are a metonymic register of my archive experience. Other items from the Archive have been selected on an evidentiary basis, to highlight the various salient elements of this thesis. This archive is extremely vast and given the size limitations of a study of this nature including all of the artefacts would be overwhelming.

It is a study that is crucial at the level of South Asian Dance “acceptability”, and relevance to the South African creative sector. Historical distortion and scholarly manipulation of facts and events, as well as hegemonic systems, have brought me to a point in my career to be able to ask pertinent questions such as: What constitutes “pioneering” work in the field and how is it important? What value does the history of South Asian dance by South African exponents have for the art form and the country in the post-colonial, post-apartheid context? Why is South Asian dance still viewed as an alterity? Why, after 158 years of existence of the South Asian Diaspora, are South African tertiary institutions not offering South Asian dance as a legitimate area for scholarly accomplishment and development? And can my family archive be a lens to inform this investigation in terms of difference? I relate to the position that Ahmed subscribes to as the ‘willful’ archive: ‘I reflect on experiences that are difficult and do not wish to resolve that difficulty (to resolve difficulty would be to lose proximity to what is difficult).’ (2014: 20), and therefore consider the task ahead as difficult because of this context.

The archive that I inherited was started by my mother at the very beginning of her dance journey in 1959 and we continued to develop it together until her passing in 2005. Writing of my experience of re-engaging with the archive is a synthesis of absence and loss since her passing. This has been a difficult and healing process for me. The accident of birth has set me on the path to being and becoming the embodiment, witness, curator, and custodian of my family history and archive, a bridge of Indo-South African Dance tradition between the past and future. Therefore, the area of study is the origins and history of Indian/ South Asian dance (these terms are used interchangeably) by South African women who addressed a lack of and need for Indian dance, specifically the classical form through a lens of the lived experience.

A general aim of the thesis is to provide an accurate account of the Indian dance history; its origins, introduction, contribution and perpetuation; in this country, with an emphasis on Indian Classical dance and my family's first recorded advancement of Indian dance heritage in the South African context. A further aim is to appreciate the contribution of personal legacy and lived process, utilising the family archive to understand and address the gaps/ellipses and omissions made in Indian dance pedagogy and scholarly work in post- indenture, post- apartheid South Africa. The resultant objectives of the thesis are: firstly, to provide an accurate historical account of Indian Dance and its adaptation in the South African context, by descendants of indenture, by means of a family archive and the lived experience/process. To reflect on my family's leadership and work in the field of Indian Classical dance pedagogy in South Africa by contributing to the identity of the Indian Diaspora. Secondly, to provide agency to disenfranchised and marginalised purveyors of the South Asian dance forms by addressing and correcting the lack of scholarly work in this field in South Africa. This includes historical omissions or erasure by hegemonic authorities and scholarly work for future pedagogy. And finally, to advocate for the ancient Indian dance forms to be given the same recognition for scholarly work in South African tertiary institutions as their Eurocentric or colonial counterparts, thus decolonising the art form. The Indian Diaspora in South Africa is officially 158 years old, in November 2018, and are naturalised South Africans, why then is their right to scholarly cultural

expression not met and provided for, in order to achieve intercultural understanding and development?

With regard to its title, this thesis explores the following questions: What can I discover and make public of the history of the first recorded advancement of South Asian dance by South African Indian women through the lens of a family archive as a lived experience? I am further interrogating whether the archive has adapted to and addressed the ellipses in South Asian Dance and dance history pedagogy and thus, exposing a value for decolonising, new pedagogy, healing, shifting, change and assemblage with regard to Indian dance. To me this implies: In what ways does the archive reveal adaptations and ellipses in South Asian Dance and dance pedagogy in South Africa? What is the future pedagogical value and implications for decolonising Indian dance in post-colonial/ indenture, and post-apartheid South Africa?

Let us not begin at the beginning, nor even at the archive. But rather at the word "archive" - and with the archive of so familiar a word. *Arkhe* we recall, names at once the *commencement* and the *commandment*. This name apparently coordinates two principles in one: the principle according to nature or history, *there* where things *commence* - physical, historical, or ontological principle - but also the principle according to the law, *there* where men and gods *command*, *there* where authority, social order are exercised, *in this place* from which *order* is given - nomological principle. (Derrida & Prenowitz 1995: 9) (Italics in original)

Speaking to the value of this study, the language of dance is non-verbal - the body as the archive that transmits histories and transitions in the now. The theory into Indian dance for the same archive and the body considers the archive as dimensional. My sentiments on the preservation of the value of Indian dance are resonated by Lane Wallace (2009) in terms of 'language' in '*What's Lost When A Language Dies*', focusing on the language archives, referring to a language as '..."moribund", meaning it had only a few elderly speakers left, according to the UNESCO "Atlas of World Languages in Danger of Disappearing." ...' (npn). The gravitas of this statement lies in the fact that I am at a stage in my life and career; with a substantial body of work spanning 30 years to my credit; to recognise the dire need for scholarly work in the area of Indian Dance in South Africa. I am uniquely positioned to provide a responsible, ethical and accurate historical account, as I am the last of this lineage that can achieve this. Wallace goes on to provide a rationale in keeping with this study:

We feel the ache and pressure, as time grows short, to try to preserve as much of the wisdom and as many of the memories from those veterans as we can, sensing that when the last of them leave us, we will be bereft of something important; a part of our heritage, story and learning that will leave us the poorer for its loss....Our parents' and great-great-grandparents' memories, after all, tell us not only of the world before our time, but of who we are and where we came from. They give us our pride, our shame, our sense of grounding and roots, and a sense of continuity that is a unique part of our personal narrative and identity... (2009: npn)

In the era of British colonialism, Indian indentured was seen as a tribe of dislocated and disenfranchised slaves. My family is descendant of these slaves who were stripped of most human rights. According to historian Shireen Sarojini Munsamy's article, from the archive, in *POST* (1995), '...the Indians were slaves, because although laws were implemented to protect them, these in practice often worked in the interests of employers.' (p.13). The ravages of apartheid on their cultural identity and practices are different to other Indian Diaspora around the world, and was the direct result of the lack of diplomatic ties. India's relationship with our country and subsequently the Indian Diaspora, is verified in a recent article by the High Commissioner of India to South Africa, Ruchira Kamboj, "India, SA ties can only get stronger" in *Pretoria News* of 26 March 2018:

It was the first country to sever trade relations with the apartheid government in 1946 and subsequently imposed a complete diplomatic, commercial, cultural and sports embargo on South Africa, while working consistently to put the issue on the agenda of the UN and other multilateral organisations.... India's relations with South Africa were restored in May 1993, while formal diplomatic relations started in November 1993. (npn)

The ensuing South Asian Diaspora that took root in South Africa stemmed from a "cultural deprivation".

This study by no means "homogenizes" Indian dance; that is so complex, faceted and layered; but rather outlines a progression of my mother's and family's work at the time and circumstance when access was so limited that all genres of Indian dance had to be encompassed and encapsulated to provide a more holistic pedagogical experience, especially with the resurgence of Bollywood (film) dance (Appendix 3) popularity in South Africa in the 1980s and 1990s. South Asian dance classification and their identification have led to a common misconception amongst the South Asian Diaspora itself.

This journey is considered in the same spirit as Foucault's (1972) concept of 'archaeology of knowledge'; previously "buried" in time, now being unearthed, excavated and reincorporated into a national and inclusive archive. For me, it is a process of digging up a vast collection of items that have been buried in storage and various rooms in my home to reassemble the archive. Indian Classical dance and its advent in South Africa have received very little attention and what little research is available has been inaccurately recorded, with sketchy documentation. There is a theme of absence, as this research is, at its essence, about the pedagogical future of South Asian dance as the other, according to Gerard Samuel (2016) 'I have been defined as the other: Indian, non-white, and exotic, during South Africa's apartheid era.' (p.6). The need to know where we have come from in order to know where we are going is part of the human psyche, as explained by Adams and Marshall (1996)

As the self constructs an identity it searches for acceptable and employable values and goals. The most common values focus on individuation, self-determination, social approval, belonging, social responsibility, equity, and caring. ...Identity can function to provide structure for understanding the self, a sense of meaning and direction, a feeling of personal control, harmony in values, beliefs, and commitments, or a recognition of potential based on possible goals, alternative choices, or possible futures. (p. 428-9)

It is also a reminder that the majority of Indian indentured who arrived on South African shores during British Colonial rule, did so as slaves, with no rights or recourse to education, the economy or religion. They carved out their own niche in an attempt to exercise and preserve some semblance of an identity. This study looks at dance as a cultural response to these circumstances; where there was an absence of Indian Classical dance pedagogy for several decades after the arrival of the Indian indentured to this country from 1860. It should be noted that the indentured were farmers and brought with them a very limited repertoire of Indian folkdances.

My family's response to this "cultural dearth" was my grandfather sending his wife and 3 young daughters across an ocean to a culture which, though familiar, was at the same time largely foreign to them. My family were the other in both their country of birth as well as their ancestor's country of origin. My mother and aunts described their initial experience as 'unsettling' as they were young children of 9, 13 and 16 years of age. This was an act of liberation or defiance/ challenge to the status

quo; and a ‘... struggle to change the historical normative standards’ (Shapiro 2016:150). My family saw the power of knowledge as Shapiro does:

... a vehicle for understanding and naming my life concerns, to construct a meaningful framework for my professional work, and to think about how I might connect this work to democratic issues of dignity, equality, social justice and freedom. (2016: 6)

The impetus of my family’s endeavour was to enshrine the human right of culture and identity in a country fraught with disenfranchisement and marginalisation in terms of race, culture and class in order to teach and entrench the South Asian Dance forms as far and wide as possible - the start of serious pedagogy in that direction. The “shortage” of classical dance knowledge in the country became a yawning chasm for the Indian Diaspora, who had a limited number of its members who had the financial resources to effect such a major contribution. My grandfather happened to be one of them.

Reclamation of the South Asian dance history and the initial work by my mother and family in Indian classical dance in South Africa ensures that pedagogy in this area will have a firm foundation for scholarly work and further development and recognition in the South African context - a journey from personal to cultural significance. Brooks and Meglin (2016) most aptly encapsulate the aim of this study as an attempt at ‘Preserving Dance as a Living Legacy’ (nbn), for future scholars of Dance within the South African spectrum of genres, and South Asian Dance in particular.

My family and history has been the subject of extremely limited local studies, however, these scholarly projects have not been accurately researched or documented. An example in terms of the advent of Bharata Natyam by South Africans in the 1960s is left largely un-interrogated due to a lack of direct interviews and data collection from those dancers of a generation that consists of the researchers’ contemporaries from the late 1960s and early 1970s. My family made a lasting contribution to pedagogy and the subsequent focus on development and propagation of Bharata Natyam and Kathak by taking the initiative to travel to India, learn various different forms, and return to introduce them to South African students and audiences, as evidenced by the hundreds of articles preserved in the archive. There appears to be a “clique-ing” of contemporaries who assign random

credibility to each other, without any corroboration of the facts available in the public domain and from the dance exponents themselves. The events and particular efforts by South Asian dancers and the Indian Diaspora to educate themselves in terms of dance were well documented; however time and the possible factors already mentioned have left it an almost forgotten era.

...Indian dance i.e. dance emanating from the South Asian continent, also thrives in South Africa particularly in Durban and Johannesburg ... However, very few scholarly accounts of Southern African Dance exist within a rich, complex, diverse and highly contested terrain. (Samuel 2016: 3)

These innovative women of Indian origin have gone largely unrecognized for their fearless contribution to the rich and diverse arts and culture heritage tapestry of South Africa. Without their efforts South Asian Dance would not be as well entrenched on our shores, as is the current situation. This area of dance in South Africa still remains largely unexplored and unrecognized, with South Africans needing to travel to India or Mauritius to obtain degrees in Indian classical dance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A study of the literature has enabled the construction of a theoretical framework in order to define the study into the origins and history of South Asian classical dance in South Africa, through the lens of a family archive. A number of themes or layers have come to the fore in my interaction with my family archive:

THE FAMILY ARCHIVE AND 'WILLFULNESS'

The archive in this thesis is not merely a collection of heirlooms and artefacts.

The terms *archive*, *preservation* and *legacy* are used ...interchangeably in the dance community, while to professional archivists they have strictly defined meanings. Many choreographers consider their archive to be all the “stuff” they have amassed over the years that is significant to their artistic life ... (Brooks & Meglin 2013: 6)

It is a historical and oral record of how Indian Classical Dance migrated to, and evolved on South African soil.

As Kristina Lyons suggests, the Earth's soil has been 'host to all terrestrial experiments and tragedies', and as such is not only the sustainer of life, but both 'grave' and 'trash dump' (Cited in Gray & Sheikh 2018: 164)

There is a metaphoric connection to the archive as a repository of histories and experiences. By no means is this a defining archival study and I do acknowledge the sentiments that Derrida and Prenowitz's (1995) ideas about the archive are that it is active as in producing a "fever" as he quotes Hanold:

He begins to know ... what he did not then know, namely his "intimate drive" or "impulse." And this knowledge, this comprehension, this deciphering of the interior desire to decipher ... all of this comes back to him in an act of memory (p. 61)

I need to state that I recognise that in a post- colonial context, the use of the term "pioneer" is problematic; however I choose to use the term sparingly, critically, reflectively and subversively in order to appropriate it as a useful term to consider alongside notions of innovation and groundbreaking effort and actions. It is understood in critical post-colonial studies to refer to inverting or appropriating, and in this study it is used to indicate a sense of defiance of the colonial status quo.

Willfulness can be deposited in our bodies. And when willfulness is deposited in our bodies, our bodies become part of a willfulness archive. To follow willfulness around thus requires moving out of the history of ideas and into everyday life worlds. If we inherit this history, it leaves an impression on the skin. (Ahmed 2014:19)

Thus, the family archive is symbolic of my immersion in the South Asian dance community and leads me to agree with Ahmed (2014) and her work on the 'willful archive' and this study as being inscribed on my DNA, and therefore my person. The body is not then just an instrument of dance, but a repository of dimensional and metaphoric memory and tradition. I bear the visible and invisible adornments and scars of my ancestry.

Growing up in the Apartheid system from 1969 to its end in 1994, I witnessed the devastating effects it had on our country. We are accustomed to seeing South Asian dance performed in various shapes and forms- ever present on the periphery of the creative sector, however, there is a dearth of scholarly work around its origins and advent in South Africa. During Apartheid there appeared to be a trend in the field of dance, where anything deemed "different" was also seen as "unworthy". An example is that both during and post apartheid, "Indian" dancers were rarely granted the status of being professional performers. Most often we were included in events as a form of tokenism (marginalisation). One of those who not only recognised, but also celebrated our uniqueness was the

late Prof. Elizabeth Sneddon, by including us in her Youth festival at Natal University for its duration of 3 consecutive years; performing alongside “recognised” dancers.

Being the other in the South African dance landscape means that Ahmed’s concept of ‘wilfulness’ matters especially for us as black women and women of colour when she cites Alice Walker’s definition of ‘womanism’.

A black feminist or feminist of color, usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior. ... Alice Walker suggests here that the word willful conveys what being a black feminist or feminist of color is all about. Black feminists and feminists of color might acquire certain qualities because of what they fight against. The very behaviours that are dismissed as weakness or immaturity become not only strengths but signs of not being willing to be subordinate. She is serious, she knows things; she is responsible. (Ahmed 2017: npn).

The concept of wilfulness is the perspective through which I view the archive as active and performative. This particularly enables me to take a critical and personal view both of the archive and of the socio-political intentions of the dance training groups my mother and I created.

I assemble a wilfulness archive. This assembling is my method: a wilful method. What do I mean by a wilfulness archive? ... A wilfulness archive would refer to documents that are passed down in which wilfulness comes up, as a trait, as a character trait. (Ahmed 2014:130)

This may appear sentimental, and personal, however, on a professional level, it is redressing the reflective and critical aspects of Indian Classical dance and its developmental trajectory in South Africa in a manner that only a person living in that era could capture. Here the family archive, allows the audience a front row seat to facts and experiences that have previously been buried. Ahmed (2014) explains this as a ‘wilful archive’ meaning that it is in the finding and the making of South Asian dance pedagogy and history by South Africans, in South Africa that audacity is served. It is about ‘following a depositing’ (Ahmed 2014:17) rather than merely following the deposits - meaning I am following my own traces and lived experience, in engaging with the archive and that they also make the archive. This is how the feminist lens prescribes engaging with the archive through Ahmed’s description of wilfulness which includes ideas about persevering and “pioneering”.

...what does it mean to write a history of will? For some philosophers, to write such a history would be to write a history of a ghost even ghosts have histories, even objects that are understood as illusions or fancies have a story to tell, a story that is not independent of the

story of those for whom such illusions and fancies are tantalizingly real. A ghostly history may be no more or less real than any other. (Ahmed 2014:5)

A professional Indian dance practitioner gets the opportunity to posthumously adjust omissions and hegemonic influences on the art form. I am her narrator. Other artists such as Ntombela (2013) have focused on Black female artists and their ground breaking contributions to the South African cultural landscape. The fact that I choose my mother as the subject of this study does not detract from the importance, relevance nor the dire need for this kind of scholarly work for the Indian Diaspora, and South Asian dance in South Africa.

THE CONCEPT OF HISTORY

In my lived experience and practical observations, history is susceptible to manipulation and individual interpretation, as is often witnessed in many countries, including our own. Too often our cultural and artistic forms of expression are polarised as either Black or White. Anything “in between” is dismissed as “unworthy”. The irony is that these kinds of omissions are often made by so called authorities on dance. These inaccuracies have been referenced and re-referenced by academics. Overtime the facts and actual historical events become obscured into fiction. The South African Indian Diaspora and their dance history were also susceptible to this phenomenon during colonialism and apartheid, as I will further illustrate.

Facts can often be interpreted in a variety of ways. ... Historians also tend to filter history through their personal viewpoint. ... Although history is constantly being rewritten, the role of interpretation is impossible to avoid and should not be minimized. Facts themselves have no meaning. It is the organizing and interpretation of the facts that gives meaning to them. (Wesner 1994: npn)

Manan Vaidya (2016), in response to the question ‘Why is it so easy to manipulate history?’ on the Quora website states:

History as we know has been written by victors of the particular situation. It could be war or political move or anything for that matter. ... The viewpoint of the victors is penned and gets narrated to everyone else as the truth. Even the viewpoint of the losing side is written by the victors. (npn)

To emphasise this point, I performed a Google search for originators of dance forms, and only western dance dominates. A subsequent search of the SA History website revealed no dance artists of

Indian origin. I am pleased to note that subsequent discussions with the website have led to their request for this information to be published. The current High Commissioner to India in South Africa, Ruchira Kamboj, emphasises the value of this kind of recognition:

The Indian Diaspora in South Africa, one of our largest overseas communities, are the proud sons and daughters of India to this beautiful country, which is now their home and to which they so richly contribute (2018: npn)

In a keynote address presented to the Colloquium “India/South Africa: Re-imagining the Disciplines” at University of the Witwatersrand, 19-21 May 2006, Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie raised an interesting idea with regard to the date of the first arrival of Indians in South Africa:

In a thoughtful essay subtitled ‘A Little Known Aspect of Indian-South African Relations’, E.S. Reddy has detailed the existence of many Indian slaves in the Cape during the period of Dutch rule. They came from Batavia where the Dutch had taken Indian slaves but they also came directly from India - from Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, the Coromandel coast, and the Malabar coast - yes, there were slaves from Bombay and Surat too. (p.1-2)

The political contributions of the India Diaspora to South Africa have been well studied and documented by various scholars. The existence of the University of Durban-Westville (UDW) was designed to cater to the scholarly needs of the Indian Diaspora in South Africa. Departments of Music, Drama, Religious studies and Indian vernacular thrived. Dance was relegated to workshops and partial coverage as my aunt Prema found in her work with Prof. David Horner, head of the Drama department at UDW, who inducted her to teach students who comprised of the likes of Prof. Suria Govender.

For the purposes of this study, however, the Indian Diaspora will officially be addressed from the onset of indenture as the year 1860. It is of interest to note that there is no degree in Indian dance available in South Africa, after 158 years, when other Indian Diaspora have Institutes dedicated to this purpose in other regions of the world. I ask this, in the guise of a dance “archaeologist”.

An archaeologist is someone who studies the origin, development, and behaviour of human beings, past and present. They examine the cultures, languages, archaeological remains, and physical characteristics of people in various parts of the world. (Sokanu 2018: npn)

INITIAL DANCE DEVELOPMENT AMONGST THE INDIAN DIASPORA IN SOUTH AFRICA

A contemporary perspective of the “pioneering spirit” incorporates tenacity, vision, passion, courage

and perseverance that the Indian Diaspora needed to overcome indenture, colonialism and apartheid. This is in keeping with the contemporary nature of the term, according to the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum website (2018).

A pioneer is someone who sees potential, an innovator who is willing to try new things. A pioneer pushes boundaries to advance a cause or idea or break a record. These men and women have experienced success in their field, sometimes by overcoming great challenges.

“Pioneering” in this study refers to the “first recorded”, whether in my family archive, or via oral tradition. It has historical, cultural identity, colonialist and imperialist significance. It does not negate the possibility that there could have been a person amongst the indentured that arrived in South Africa in the 1800s, who was trained in classical Indian dance, however, the likelihood is fairly questionable, as Indian classical dance at the time was susceptible to hegemony by means of the prevailing caste system. Classical art forms were reserved by the Brahmin caste, while folk or tribal dance forms were enacted largely by the rural communities; from which the indentured came. The caste system, simplistically explained is as follows:

...the *Brahmin* caste have usually been priests and scholars. Individuals born into the *Kshatriya* caste have been warriors and kings. Individuals born into the *Vaishya* caste have been merchants. Finally, individuals born into the *Shudra* caste have been laborers. Besides, there was an additional ‘out-casted’ group called the *Dalits* or the ‘untouchables’ who occupied the lowest step of the social ladder (Pick & Dayaram in Sankaran et al 2017: npn). (Italics in original)

Further, this study’s main focus is on the South African born artists and front runners in Indian/South Asian dance.

My mother is therefore located as the sole originator of pedagogy in the full repertoire of Bharata Natyam at the time, for the following reasons: firstly, Sulochana Naidoo, returned to South Africa in 1961. She gave a few solo performances, married shortly after and immigrated to Canada. She never taught dance locally or internationally. Secondly, Prema was 11 years old, and as a child, lacked the maturity to be able to assume the responsibility of pedagogy. Therefore, my mother was the only South African dancer to actively participate in the pedagogical act of transference and dissemination of knowledge in order for perpetuation and propagation of Indian Classical dance to take root in the South Asian Diaspora and the country at the time. She was the only one to establish a school, teach

and pass on the knowledge that they had gleaned in India to the next generation of South Africans. Knowledge transmission is vital to the survival of any concept, entity or field, as potential or latent knowledge remains unshared and therefore does not constitute the act of "pioneering".

The term "pioneer" when used in this study is clearly defined; not in colonial terms; as the first South Africans to meet all the requirements of a full repertoire of a Classical Indian dance style and the first to introduce new folk, tribal and martial arts styles to the South African Indian Diaspora. This study will be my contribution to the foundation of pedagogical recognition, agency and location of the South Asian Dance forms at tertiary institutions in this country. Joann Kealiinohomoku,

... urges us to address the future in terms of the past, "we-ness" lies in a shared disciplinary history. She views the development of anthropology and ethnomusicology, calling on us to remember the pioneers of our field. (Sklar in Kealiinohomoku 2001: 90)

I have been inspired by several conversations with family and friends who had attained post graduate degrees, in particular, a conversation with Ms. Janet Andrews in 2017 - a 61-year old African American woman from New Orleans. She became a social worker to create change and support Martin Luther's "Dream". At 52, she obtained her Masters Degree in Social Work, based on her use of dance, Tap and Jazz, as a tool of social change amongst the Youth. Our lives seemed to be similar as she grew up during the Civil Rights Movement and was told that she could not be a Ballet dancer because she was black. This anecdote serves as an understanding of the intersection between colour, agency and dance.

Despite my attempt at "diluting the Indian-ness" of my South Asian classical dance training by taking classes in Modern, Jazz, Ballroom and Latin American dance; all the work that I strived toward was for naught when I attempted to study Dance at University level. I did not have the prerequisite Ballet training. My extensive training in South Asian Classical dance and level of expertise was considered inconsequential in the South African Dance milieu, my race an impediment. There was no tertiary institution to provide degrees in Indian Classical Dance in 1987. The situation has not changed in 2018/19.

Moreover, the scholarly work which does exist, limited as it is, isn't always accurate in this area, even though accuracy, ethics and accountability are strived for. One of the first theses on Bharata Natyam in South Africa; that I wish to challenge; is "Tracing the Development of Bharatha Natyam as a Religious and Theatrical Dance Form in the Context of South Africa" by Vasugi Singh. She was one of my mother's first students more than 50 years ago. As a founder member of the South African Indian Dance Alliance (SAIDA), an extract of her dissertation is posted on their website under the title "Indian Dance in South Africa" (2018). She accurately mentions some of the events and people who contributed to the Indian arts and culture propagation prior to 1959, however, the area that she leaves rather ambivalent and makes inaccurate sweeping references to (in bold font below) is as follows:

In 1959, Salochana Naidoo left for India where after two years of intensive training she had her "Arangetram" (equivalent to a graduation). Subsequently, other young women travelled to India. In the 1960s The Nydoo Sisters, Rani and Prema, Jayalakshmi Naidoo, and Kumari Ambigay qualified in the ancient dance style of Bharatha Natyam. On their return many young women studied classical dance under their tutelage.... Smeetha Singh was at that time the only South African girl to pursue the study of Kathak in Bombay. (Singh in SAIDA website 2018)

As per my initial claim on page 1, I will establish in more detail that the Nydoo Sisters did firstly, study with Sulochana (at the same institution) with a few months separating their departure from and return to South Africa, and have inaccurately been grouped with dancers who travelled to India 4 or more years after their return to South Africa. This fact is evidenced in the article in *The Graphic* about my mother and aunt entitled "Sisters Qualify in Bharata Natyam": 'Sulochana graduated early this year while the two Clairwood girls did so a little later.' (Anonymous 1961: npn). Further, the Nydoo Sisters were the first to study Kathak (1965) more than a decade ahead of Smeetha Singh. My assertion is that Singh is not an authority on Kathak, and should therefore have not ventured into unfamiliar territory in a dissertation based on Bharata Natyam.

My recent telephonic conversations with Vasugi Singh disclosed that she is turning her thesis into a coffee-table book. It revealed that she had large gaps in her knowledge of the history of Indian Dance in South Africa. She is now considered an "authority" on Indian Dance in South Africa based on her thesis. She requested updated information and pictures from me for the 1860 museum and her book.

In an attempt to challenge the hegemonic status quo, both during and post-apartheid, my mother and I made a conscious choice to cross linguistic and cultural barriers within the Indian Diaspora by practicing both Bharata Natyam (South Indian) and Kathak (North Indian). This was previously unheard of. Then, we crossed racial divides with African; Malaysian and Sri Lankan dance, to name a few. Our intercultural approach singled us out as unique and “different” - not always a good thing in apartheid South Africa. We are not just transformers, but also witnesses to transformation.

... an important sense of identity and narrative continuity among its diverse citizens ...not required, or even convenient, for efficiency of operation in a modern, globalized world, but essential for our sense of roots, security, identity, pride, continuity and wholeness. (Wallace 2009: npn)

Our choice to utilise Indian dance, and go beyond the classical format in our body of work was conscious ‘willfulness’ (Ahmed 2014) by the other to decolonise Indian dance in particular, in South Africa. To step out of the shadow that apartheid and its ramifications cast on artists and the art form.

In post apartheid South Africa, ideas of self, identity, and one's place in society pose a labyrinth of internal conflict and negotiation. ... students' dance education experiences generated transformative awareness of the self. This consciousness was primarily evoked by close interactions with diverse others through active, bodily involvement in dance education activities, which prompted more profound engagement with the self, stimulating discovery, liberation, affirmation and, ultimately, transformation of the self. (Marx & Delport 2017: npn)

INDIAN DANCE

Dance is specific to this study however, the styles are varied; classical, folk, tribal, multicultural and intercultural; in nature with a strong emphasis on Indian classical dance theory and practice in South Africa. For the purpose of this study the terminology “Indian dance” and “South Asian dance” require clarification. Though often used interchangeably, as will occur in this study, “South Asian dance” is an extension “Indian dance”, as demonstrated by Avanthi Meduri:

My preliminary ethnographic and archival research into the ‘name question’ revealed that this re-labelling occurred in the 1980s emergent stage of globalisation (Meduri 2008b: 298–302). Arts managers, academics, venue managers, and funding agencies, including the British Arts Council, were all implicated in the momentous renaming (Grau 2002b; Meduri 2008b). Yet the new ‘South Asian label’ did not replace or cancel the Indian term but merely doubled and enlarged the former to include the dance and musical forms of South Asia. South Asia, as is well known, does not refer to any one country of origin but includes in its encompassing ambit the countries of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, to name but a few. (2008: 223-

Indian dance, in ancient times, was created as succour for the body and soul, to enhance humanity and create a mind-body-spirit connection.

Diverse and kaleidoscopic, Indian dance is embedded in the context of a specific time, place and situation. Indian dance has an ancient history that extends into the contemporary era and beyond the Indian subcontinent throughout south-east Asia and other communities worldwide where Indians have immigrated. (Hanna in Thomas 1993:120-121)

The South Asian dance form, as with its colonial counterparts, consist of various genres of Dance:

Folk, tribal and martial arts dance

‘There is an eloquent tribal saying: “the tribe that dances never dies”. Apparently, the tribals feel deep within that dancing counteracts the forces of death.’ (Pani 2000:2). The original indentured carried mostly folk dances to South Africa. This form of dance dates far back in time, and was passed down by oral tradition. After a long day of physical toil in the fields, the entire family participated as a communal or group activity. Dance was a physical and energetic regeneration for those who worked from sunrise to sunset. Folk dance usually depicted activities of daily life and vocation.

These celebrative dances are now known as folk dances... mostly performed by a group rather than a solo dancer...the folk dancers, although decorating time and space while celebrating life, do not aim at showing their excellence in dancing. It is the pulsating togetherness that they wish to enjoy deeply. Therefore, the folk dances have recurring movement which may appear to an art dancer repetitive and monotonous. (Pani 2000:2-4)

Tribal dance is more ritualistic suggesting stories that date back to the origins of tribes.

Tripura has a large tribal population, comprising of the Riangs, who worship both tribal and Hindu divinities. They subsist on cultivation, and to ensure a happy harvest propitiate the Goddess Lakshmi. This includes a dance by young girls called Hajagiri, which also demonstrates multiple balancing skills. (Khokar 1987:149)

Martial arts dances, such as Velakai of Kerala, focus on physical and mental preparation for war and battle strategy. ‘The men put on a martial attire of sorts and hold swords and shields with which they dance.’ (Khokar 1987: 89). This is similar to the type of performance we designed for the South African Military Tattoo in 2011 at Montecasino, Johannesburg.

Classical Dance

South Asian Classical dance is the oldest known classical form of dance on the planet today, as is evidenced by dance choreography etched in prehistoric caves and carved into ancient temples for posterity.

Based on archaeological evidence, there is even widespread speculation among Indian scholars that the dance, like yoga itself, has its roots in the ancient culture that predates Hinduism as we know it. (Gupta 2000: npn)

Classical dance stems from a codified set of rules or for the dancer, a classification from various ancient texts.

The styles of Indian dances which are classified as *classical*, are designated in Sanskrit or Hindi as *shaastriya-nritya* which means: ‘a dance according to *shastra*’. The general meaning of *shastra* is: ‘manual or compendium of rules’. (Pani 2000: 2) (*Italics in original*)

The classical style is divided into 3 vital parts: *Nritta* is based on pure dance (decorative), without a storytelling or expressive component. ‘*Nritya* is a combination of pure dance and interpretive dance. ...makes use of *hastas*, each of which conveys a different meaning.’ (Samson 1987: 20). The final component is ‘...*natya* which refers to acting and gesticulatory exposition, with or without dance.’ (Samson 1987: 20) (*Italics in original*).

The style of South Asian Classical dance studied by my mother was a derivative of the “Devadasi” tradition of dance training.

Devadasi means ‘Servants of God or Goddesses’ and the practice of Devadasi was prevailed in ancient India. Under Devadasi practice, girls are dedicated ... into temple service or religious mendicancy. Even a few men were dedicated under Devadasi practice (Anonymous in Shodhganga 2018:43)

The Gurukul tradition was also a highly accepted and respected form of dance tutelage; however, with the occupation of the British Raj, a more colonial concept of the institutional or private school environment became an acceptable form of training in Classical dance forms. This is the format under which my family studied Indian dance.

Indian Dance is also viewed in the same vein as Yoga and Meditation, as similar principles have been utilised. As practitioners of all three disciplines, my mother and I came to the conclusion that they share, at their core, similar outcomes, approaches and foundations. They helped inform each other in

the work we conducted. According to, internationally renowned Bharata Natyam exponent, Leela Samson:

Classical dance in India has aptly been termed a form of yoga in recognition of its synthesis of physical energy and spiritual power. The diverse forms of classical dance that have over the centuries proliferated, declined and been revived share a common transcendental impulse. (Samson 1987: 9).

Lily (2001) writes about Yoga, meaning ‘to join with’ or ‘to harness’ (nbn), referring to the spiritual and transcendental quality of Indian dance and the classical form in particular. Indian Dance, therefore asserts a connection that takes dance beyond religion.

Multicultural and Intercultural dance

Being immersed in a culturally diverse environment such as South Africa, my family began the cross-pollination and intermingling of cultures during their early career. The sisters embarked on a nationwide tour in 1962 and gave spellbinding performances at every major centre, as evidenced by one of the many reviews they received, in the archive:

The famous Nydoo Sisters - Rani and Prema- rendered a scintillating farewell performance at the Bolton Hall ... before their tour of the Republic during the months of December and January. Dancing before a select and highly appreciative audience the Nydoo Sisters acquitted themselves with distinction. They were able to enthuse every member of the audience with the high quality of Indian classical dancing. (Graphic Reporter 1962: nbn).

|



Illustration 2: Ken Gampu, Nydoo Sister's guest of honour (The India Trend 1965)

The archive reveals that actor Ken Gampu was their guest of honour at their farewell performance prior to returning to India to study Kathak and other Indian classical dance forms.



Illustration 3: Article from the archive: performances with integrated audiences

These performances were of historical significance in relation to the apartheid era, as they were attended by diverse cultural groups. This is reflected in the archive:

Their mother, Mrs. M. A. Nydoo, told the Daily News that more than 85 percent of the audiences which attended the eight shows given in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and East London were Europeans. (*Daily News* 1963: npn)

In the analysis of these two artefacts (Figures 2 and 3), it is revealed that there is a connection in the epistemology of integration, race and class co-existence, even if it was for a few hours during an Indian classical dance performance. During apartheid these dance performances became an artistic cessation of the animosity and oppression generated by the political climate.

This particular tour introduced a new culture to South African audiences, and has direct bearing on the work arising from these early forays into surmounting cross-cultural divides coming out of defiance of the socio-political status quo, going beyond merely playing to mixed audiences to include the accommodation, adaptation, development and translation of dance genres in the South African context. We consistently sought to share platforms, collaborate with, and incorporate other artists and genres of dance into our body of work, long before it became popular in South Africa. Multicultural dance revolves around many different genres, particular or traditional to many cultures and race identities.

Datuk Ramli Ibrahim (2017); a Malaysian pioneering exponent of Ballet, Bharata Natyam and Odissi; in his Ted Talks video, explains Indian Dance most succinctly: The *Nāṭyaśāstra*, an ancient treatise on Indian Arts, written by Sage Bharata between 200 BCE and 500 BCE, claims that there is no axiom on the earth that cannot be reflected by the Human Body, which is the microcosm of the universe.

I breathe, I move, therefore I am....Humans move before we learn speech. Dance and the Arts are important for the Human soul/spirit because they form a matrix that constitutes the inner landscape of the mind building up an inner strength that reinforces that life is worth living. (npn)

He goes on to state that Dance is important for nation building, as it sustains a cultural ecosystem, identity and humanity. ‘Arts, culture and the social sciences are the software that makes the character of a nation’. (Odissi of Classical Indian Dance | Ramli Ibrahim | TEDxKL 2017)

With my roots in Dance, I attempted to create positive change in the Human condition. I explore the place of South Asian dance in South African society from the perspectives of those involved as dancers, dance makers, teachers, directors and audience members, and understand how dance impacts their value systems, from a non-Eurocentric, post-colonial perspective.

DANCE AS ACTIVISM

My mother and I subscribed to the same ethic as the great dancer and activist, from the 1930’s through to the 1970’s, Katherine Dunham, who believed in ‘...the end of racial discrimination on a global scale and the forging of world peace based on intercultural exchange and understanding’ (Das 2017: npn). The constant and consistent challenge to hegemony in various forms was a daily part of the spirit of our pedagogy and aesthetics.

The world has always used dance as an instrument for social activism.... Sometimes people counterpose dance and politics, as if dance has no politics.... Indeed, every art form has its own distinctive way of being political. Of course, the more imaginatively and brilliantly art is conceptualised, the better its chances of conveying its political message aesthetically.... Dance also played an activist role in resisting Colonialism. ...Dance can be used as an incredibly powerful tool ... Indeed, it should be used to activate and engage the minds of our audiences; to be a reflection of sorts to society; to show our audiences what they see all around them without really looking. The changing face of dance is, after all, an indicator of social change. Dancers should be its agents. (Bhargav 2012: npn)

In the absence of the current Constitution and Bill of Rights in South Africa, the indentured had very few rights. According to my paternal grandmother, elderly community leaders, teachers and family, the community of the time had to use their own initiative and funds to uplift their status. Mahatma Gandhi played a pivotal role in the development of the South African Indian Diaspora; however, prior to his arrival, they built their own schools at night after working in the fields. They also accessed teachers from India at their own costs.

Marginalised societies in apartheid South Africa had to find different forms of resistance. Thus dance and its execution, especially stage performances and the inclusion of the other, became one of them for my family. Although much has been written for and against Mahatma Gandhi, his words, ideologies and philosophies greatly influenced my mother and later my own creativity and work. Our dance mission became a Satyagraha (passive resistance) and Ahimsa (non-violence) of sorts, using dance and culture to reclaim agency and identity in an oppressive social and political climate in South Africa at the time, and in various stages in the evolution of our country to date.

The passive resistance campaigns led by MK Gandhi in South Africa had huge consequences not only for the history of the country but also for world history in general. Gandhi's campaigns forged a new form of struggle against oppression that became a model for political and ethical struggles in other parts of the world – especially in India (the struggle for independence) and the United States (the civil rights campaign of the 1960s...The first passive resistance campaign was started in Johannesburg in 1907 as a protest against the Asiatic Registration Bill of 1906. The bill was part of the attempt to limit the presence of Indians in the Transvaal by confining them to segregated areas and limiting their trading activities. (SA History online 2018)

Notwithstanding the recent controversial racism claims, towards Africans during his time in South Africa, against Gandhi (according to Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed in their book *The South African Gandhi: Stretcher-Bearer of Empire* 2015), we chose to embrace all people, regardless of colour, culture or creed. The threat of discovery always loomed, however, being artists we found creative and non-threatening means of challenging colonial ideologies and rules.

...Satyagraha was “soul-force,” in Satyagraha “there was no room for hatred”. The community was not bound as to when and regarding what subjects they should offer Satyagraha, in deciding which question ... they must only not transgress [their] appreciation

of their own capacity. ... *Satyagraha* was arguably a very South African notion. (Landau 2015: npn) (Italics in original)

The Indian Diaspora in South Africa has been caught in a proverbial tug-of-war with two strong sets of identities and heritages to embrace. My mother and I have never viewed any dance form, and particularly Indian dance, as the sole enclave of the linguistic; cultural; geographical area or the people of its country of origin. To us dance has always been a communal medium, and a supremely spiritual endeavour, promoting freedom of expression, subjective themes, and individual exploration and evolution of styles and genres. As a unifying force, our dance training embraced inclusive, reciprocity and diversity so much so that as the dance practice developed it embodied a form of knowledge making. Our contribution is worthy of a formal understanding and analysis in terms of dance and artistic activism and feminism.

We were a family of young women and children who are responsible for: crossing insurmountable racial divides; uplifting underprivileged individuals and communities; championing the excluded, by including marginalised cultures into our pedagogy; promoting social cohesion, peace and nation building; they never stopped; never gave up no matter the challenges and odds that they faced. Our work and therefore, this study encourages South Africans to be agents of their own destinies and on their own historical and cultural terms by re-purposing the archive as a pedagogical resource.

Our work also contributes to social change. Theo Spanos Dunfey (2017), in her online article ‘What is Social Change and Why Should We Care?’ states ‘What interests me, and what I hope interests you, is our collective power to influence social change’ (npn). Throughout my family’s dance history we have borne witness to profound artistic, social, political, economic and technological changes, amongst others- the constant has remained the power of dance to transform. Dunfey goes on to state:

Sociologists define social change as changes in human interactions and relationships that transform cultural and social institutions. These changes occur over time and often have profound and long-term consequences for society. (2017: npn)

Our past and current students were drawn from the lower socio-economic strata and included populations that were not familiar with Indian classical dance. Thus the cultural and linguistic

diversity of our student population became reflected in the repertoire or syllabus of the Institute I headed up.

On a community level, dance has been successfully used in reconciliation processes in previously divided or war-torn countries such as Rwanda, Australia, South Africa and Columbia. We related to others not just with language, but with gestures and physical contact. (Blumenfeld 2018:3)

Feminism is not a crucial theme of the archive but the archive can be read and engaged with through the feminist lens. Sara Ahmed in *Willful Subjects* (2014) considers being willful as a subject, and as a method, of assembling and reading the archive – it means ‘stretching’ (2014:17) the meaning of the archive and the evacuation of the archive, while considering willfulness as a trait of character. A proactive one in reading and assembling; persevering, physical and sweaty – like dance and action. ‘Concepts can be sweaty: a trace of the laboring of bodies. Willfulness becomes a sweaty concept if we can reveal the labour of its creation.’ (Ahmed 2014:18). Then also, the willful archive asks us to consider not only the depositing but our traces in engaging with the deposit – the archive then becomes active, lived and feminist.

A key aspect of the argument is that willfulness is not only deposited in certain places but that through this depositing the will is unevenly distributed in the social field. ... It is the depositing of willfulness in certain places that allows the willful subject to appear as a figure, as someone we recognize, in an instant. It is this figure that explains why we might hesitate in using the language of willfulness to describe the potential of the swerve. She is a powerful container. (Ahmed 2014:17)

Feminism relates to the empowerment my family experienced and created through Dance in the following manner:

- Creating a woman-centric dance leadership and lineage in South Africa as opposed to the predominantly male dominated lineages in India by breaking stereotypes in terms of male lineage and monopoly in Indian traditions, at the time in South Africa.
- Engaging in mutual gender respect, both professionally and personally, by ensuring that communication and equality exists in all aspects of our training by males and females learning each other’s dances irrespective of masculine or feminine styles. This engenders empathy and understanding for each other.

- De-sexualising touch and gender interaction by including male dancers in South Asian dance training and productions by discouraging violent and abusive behavior toward each other. We focus on technique and sensitivity to each other.
- Addressing homophobia around male participation in South Asian Dance within the Indian Diaspora. For decades, males assuming female roles were acceptable as opposed to women performing on stage. From the late 1970s and the tide turned and only found acceptance in the last decade again.

A study of the experience of Indian women under contract as indentured labourers serves not merely to write women back into that particular episode in Natal's and, indeed, South Africa's history, but illustrates how the materialist–feminist discourse can point to crucial issues in a broader analysis of relations not only of gender, but of race and class as well. (Beall in Jain 2009: 176).

In connection with the “mother” in the title of this study, it does not just refer to my biological mother or my DNA. The symbolism of a mother connotes the act of birthing and nurturing a cultural and national identity.

Shruti Patki, a Kathak exponent (2014) from Pune University passionately advocates for the place of women in Dance in terms of the heroine or ‘Nayika’ in Indian Classical dance as outlined by Sage Bharata in the Natayashastra:

A significant point, which I observed was that nowhere in the list of qualities of Nayika, does Bharata describe them as possessing intellect, skill or proficiency in arts. Does this mean that our classical art is male-centric? ...The Natyashastra was written in a period where the woman was always bound to the house...Society influences art, and we have the example of the Natyashastra to prove it. But now, I think it is time to influence the society with art. It is a slow process and it won't be completed in a matter of years. We need references which are relevant in today's society. What we refer to is irrelevant today and hence, many a times, while teaching I realise that my students are not able to connect with it. It is because their social conditioning is completely different from the material that they are learning.... If we expect the woman to be independent, we need to give her an independent status in art first. ... (Patki in Narthaki Online 2016)

The women of my family, and my mother in particular, took it upon themselves to break the stereotypes that Patki refers to, by excelling in all the roles they embraced, and perpetuating a strong sense of self-worth and dignity in the young girls they trained and motivated.

SOCIAL ASPECTS OF DANCE

As I prepared the many versions of my academic proposal, I realised that my social work studies not only made me acutely aware of the issues I would have to deal with as a woman and dancer of the other in South Africa, but made me a sensitive, effective and passionate performer, teacher, choreographer and director. However, my main impetus has and always will lie in dance. I discovered that all of those aspects that my social work training prepared me for only magnified what already existed in me as a performing artist.

Andrews et al (2007) gives a good description of the reasons that led me to choose Dance in an attempt to address needs facing Youth in previously disadvantaged communities.

There's no human endeavor that can't be improved with a little creativity, and social work is no exception. While social workers can draw upon any number of talk therapy techniques to help their clients, there are times when talk isn't helpful or can't be summoned. In such cases, the arts can open a back door to the psyche, drawing from individuals that which they cannot yet put into words, thus catalyzing subsequent therapeutic conversations. Creative arts therapies involve the use of the arts—visual art, music, dance and movement, drama, and poetry—to facilitate therapeutic goals. (Jackson 2015:22)

My initial thought was that I was practicing Creative Social Work, as the concept is approached in the following manner:

Dance can empower individuals and communities. It can unite, uplift, teach, build communities, inspire and heal. Quality dance programs can enhance the life of the whole individual. Learning occurs through programs of study that address the emotional, physical, social, intellectual and aesthetic development of youth. Dance is effective as a means of developing a range of creative aspects of critical thinking. (Andrews et al, 2007: 6)

In a similar vein, the other area I began actively exploring was Dance Movement Therapy as it intersects with the effort my family has consciously made to use dance as a tool for healing. 'The use of dance as a healing tool is known as 'dance movement therapy'.' (Levy in Ward 2008:33). Ward believes that 'With more evidence-based research using dance to address health issues in a variety of disciplines, the future of dance in promoting health and healing is limitless.' (2008: npn). It has to be noted that we have achieved that by addressing the hurts of the past and creating a "healing" through Dance, and in no way position ourselves as dance therapists. The existence of social work in our dance programme diminished over the passage of time. Elements of creative social work still exist,

even though dance training and the creation and attainment of professional artists and trainers have taken precedence.

Past hurts or “Intergenerational trauma” is very much an area that resonates with the personal experiences from indenture to current times, as well as with the students and their families that we have worked with.

It has been 22 years since Apartheid officially ended, and, by many accounts, the novelty of the *New South Africa* (the euphemism that was introduced to capture the hope, promise and expectations of post-Apartheid South Africa) has worn off. It is widely accepted that Apartheid's racially inspired injustices had profoundly traumatised all Black South Africans. Herman (1992) argues that one aspect of the past that needs to be dealt with is the long-term traumatic impact of the violence that usually accompanies civil strife. Lumsden (1997) further warns that traumatic memories of past conflict are seldom forgotten, while Bar-Tal (2003) contends that such memories come to affect not only those who have personally experienced the conflict and resultant trauma, but also successive generations through what is termed *transgenerational transmission of trauma* (Davidson & Mellor, 2001). (Adonis 2016, npn) (Italics in original)

Coming to terms with my own intergenerational trauma, and seeing the effects that dance has had on my life and the lives of my students, persuades me that dance is much more than entertainment or an art form. It can and should have practical benefits for a country such as ours. Choreographer

Terrence Lewis (2018) in his article reproduced in the website Indianspice says:

Dancing has a host of benefits, which I can't extol enough. ... It keeps you young, vibrant and alive. Research has shown that dancing for even a short while a day, sharpens your brain and improves your memory. Physically, it keeps you agile, flexible and active. Socially, it fosters bonding. Emotionally – it takes you out of your shell It lifts your spirits, keeps you happy, takes you to higher heights than before! And in this age of digital lives and technology that is welded to our hands – I think it's more and more important for us to break out of our sedentary lives and do something in the real, tangible world, side by side with other people! (npn)

I was born an asthmatic during apartheid, suffered various forms of censure and abuse; experienced a phobia of public speaking, yet when I danced all that disappeared including physical pain. I am epitomic of the descendents of slaves, and generations of oppression. The Knowledge that has been passed on from my mother is a relationship in motion. Dance became my symbol of freedom.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

‘...*subjectivity*, meaning human lived experience and the physical, political, and historical context of the experience.’ (Ellis & Flaherty 1992:10) (Italics in original). This research could not have been considered 25 years ago, when I completed my Honours degree. Limited access to resources existed in South Africa at the time as the literature and scholarly work in this direction was still developing. It is now more abundant after the end of apartheid, and this time lapse provides the distance and perspective to consider the work as a response to oppression and the changing circumstances post 1994. In order to do so it is imperative to investigate reactions and responses at the time as well as to examine these in the light of the ongoing socio-political changes. To this end I will be engaging with an archive of material which has been collected over two generations. Because of the length of time covered and the multiplicity of issues, experiences, and motivations being re-inscribed, an amalgamation or synthesis of approaches will be utilised.

Although each researcher’s goals may vary, everyone can benefit from realizing that a fuller illumination of one’s subject of study comes only with an understanding of how all the aspects of dance interact. A further stimulus for conducting holistic studies in dance is that the results may illuminate our knowledge of human beings in general. (Youngerman 1975:117)

The research methodology is, therefore, deployed in several ways:

Subjectivity: Research as a Lived Experience

There is a limited amount of scholarly work available on the subject of lived experience, so I had to depend heavily on the work of Ellis and Flaherty (1992), both associate professors in Sociology and proponents of research on Lived Experience, who assert that:

Traditional methodological tools tend to limit work on emotion to behavioral expressions, resulting in an unbalanced emphasis on outer displays of emotions; when subjective reports are collected, they are conventionally reported in terms of preconceived categories of the researchers that privilege individual and discrete emotions.(p. 2-3)

They go on to state:

Subjectivity is situated such that the voices in our heads and the feelings in our bodies are linked to political, cultural and historical contexts....dramatic events and barely noticed trends of history alter the ways in which people think and feel about themselves. (Ellis & Flaherty 1992: 4-5)

The relevance of subjectivity in this thesis is that Indian Classical dance is deeply connected to the emotions and the transference of it to the audience. The physical and emotional connections are not just limited to the act of performing, but also to the process and evolution that the form took to its own being and becoming in this country. The newness of the dance forms that my mother and, later, I experienced in India and were introducing first to the Indian Diaspora and later to South African audiences, were not always met with acceptance and positivity. The political climate of both apartheid and post-apartheid have served to polarise dance into extremes of “black” and “white”, losing sight of the dance forms of the minority cultures in-between. The struggle to attain recognition for this type of dance form, especially in terms of pedagogy still continues.

Ethnography, Anthropology and Biography

Diane Taylor (2003) states that culture, knowledge systems and performative gestures are important in terms of engaging with the archive and the writing process (p.57). Similarly, Lizabé Lambrechts (2012) cites Paul Ricoeur:

... documents housed in the archive can be measured by “not only a relation between the past and present, but between the event and evidence of its occurrence, and between the fabric of everyday life and its representations... that archives represented a pivotal point between memory (which is of the past) and the writing of history (which is of the present and/or future), that is subsequently inscribed in the public vernacular and becomes part of discourse. (p. 47)

As I have lived with, curated, journaled and observed the developments in my artistic family, there are elements of dance anthropology in this study. Helen Thomas states of dance anthropologists:

‘Initially they were concerned with the search for the origins of dance. This was followed by a consideration of the function of dance in society.’ (1995:167). She goes on to explain that ‘...dance anthropology is instructive in a way that cultural studies approaches to dance are not, because it directs attention towards dance as a serious topic of social and/or cultural inquiry.’ (1995:168)

On a deeper level, and of relevance to this study,

Anthropology engages history not as one but instead as many things: (1) sociocultural change or diachrony; (2) a domain of events and objects that make manifest systems of signification, purpose, and value; (3) a domain of variable modalities of the experience and consciousness of being in time; and (4) a domain of practices, methods, and theories devoted to the recording and the analysis of temporal phenomena. It emerged, and continues to serve, as that

branch of 'natural history' which investigates the psychophysical origins and diversification of the human race. (Anthropology website 2018)

This particular piece of research occurred over a period of 57 years, making my family and I, therefore, experts in this field and the major source of data, however not the only source. It was not conducted out of a conscious research, but began as meeting a social need and evolved over time into a research-worthy topic, and one that needs to be documented. To this end, Joann Kealiinohomoku believes that

...dance scholars need to know and honor the history of their discipline as background for their own studies and to prepare them for future studies. In many fields of dance scholarship, scholars increasingly feel the need to document and preserve the dance treasures of the past. (2001: 90-91)

Phenomenological Research

Gerard Samuel; '...the first male ballet dancer to emerge from an Indian community in a predominantly white classical ballet world in the early 1980s...' (2016: 97); in his PhD thesis entitled "Dancing the Other in South Africa" states:

The nature of Dance performance as ephemeral has been widely described as problematic for researchers seeking a more complete account of the fleeting phenomenon that is Dance. ...studies in Dance are suited to a broad range of phenomenological investigation that include Narrative analysis, Life history (Dhunpath and Samuel, 2009) that is different from Oral history. (2016:95)

Matt Bruce (2017) goes on to explain in his article "Phenomenology: One Way to Understand the Lived Experience":

While not a specific method of research, phenomenology is a series of assumptions that guide research tactics and decisions.... It derives perspectives defined by experience and context, and the benefit of this research is a deeper and/or boarder understanding of these perspectives. (npn)

However, it is Ahmed's (2014) stance that has the most profound bearing on this study:

Phenomenology has been an important resource in developing this argument by helping me to reflect on how wilfulness "comes up" given how what has been "already willed" ... or "generally willed" ... tends to recede or become background. The wilful subject might be striking in her appearance not only because she disagrees with what has been willed by others, but because she disagrees with what has disappeared from view. (p.16)

Archival research

My mother and I have curated newspaper articles, performance programmes, fan letters, interviews, South African book inclusions, observations and a lifetime of discussions or oral tradition to support and detail every aspect of a life, career and contribution worthy of documentary formalisation.

Initially this exercise was a bonding of mother and daughter later it became an attempt to keep documents in an orderly manner to validate our work. It expanded over time to encompass a sense that the archive would someday become the basis of concrete evidence in justifying the status of our family's work in furthering the cause of South Asian Dance pedagogy in South Africa.

Archives were ... seen to play a strong social role post-1994 with an official mandate to collect and preserve the experiences of South Africans that were marginalised by the Apartheid government. (Lambrechts 2012: 55)

I encouraged my mother to share details of the many recollections and events in her remarkable career, and then I began making notes, and recording discussions held with industry stalwarts of her time.

In examining the data I have several types of resources to engage with; all of these have been carefully archived. It is academically understood that an archive is 'an organization that collects the records of individuals, families, or other organizations.' (George State University website 2018).

Archival research methods include a broad range of activities applied to facilitate the investigation of documents and textual materials produced by and about organizations. In its most classic sense, archival methods are those that involve the study of historical documents; that is, documents created at some point in the relatively distant past, providing us access that we might not otherwise have to the organizations, individuals and events of that earlier time. (Mohr & Ventresca 2001: 2)

Archival research has only been given credible research status in the past three decades according to McKemmish and Gilliland (2013), who explain the area that is of particular interest to this study:

In response to societal challenges relating to social justice and inclusion, a new archival methodology is emerging. Influenced by post colonial, post conflict, and subaltern approaches, and the 'archival turn', it is concerned with ideas about decolonising and pluralising the Archive. It is closely associated with inclusive, participatory models of archival and recordkeeping practice and education (Lau et al, 2012; PACG, 2011) and community partnership research. (p. 93)

I would like to approach my research as a case study, which is defined as: ‘In-depth studies of a single ‘case’...that aim to generate rich pictures and insights that might be transferable to other cases.’

(McKemmish & Gilliland 2013: 233). The insights derived from my family comes from a South Asian cultural background, influenced by the culture of indentured labourers, with a unique perspective in relation to colonialism; we have worked through apartheid and the transition to post-apartheid South Africa; witnessing the socio-political conditions; developing dance techniques and methods that have relevance in such a context; and moving from a mono-cultural to multicultural and more especially an intercultural approach to dance. It should be noted that my approach to archival research is as a “lived process” as it

...teaches the value of attending to how our family, social, and cultural history is intertwined with more traditional notions of history and culture. It helps us understand and explore the fissures of historical narratives, the places at the margins where voices have been suppressed, silenced, or ignored. (Kirsch & Rohan 2008:3)

The archive provides a framework and documents chronological events of significance, as well as the response of the public and creative community of the time. It outlines the journey, both achievements and tribulations of South Asian dancers, where there were extremely limited opportunities and recognition. As I engaged with the archive, I was struck by what Sharon Lowen, a famous American born Odissi dancer, wrote on her Facebook page, on the passing of her 100-year old mother in August 2018: ‘When a great performance ends, we are not sad it ended but happy we saw it.’ That is exactly how I feel about my experience with the family archive. It is such a strong connection filled with love, gratitude, celebration, awe, sadness and a shared passion. It is so visceral that it feels that I can reach out and touch my mother. It is a deeply emotional experience - filled with pride, dignity and tears. Realisation courses through me that no other South African can both subjectively and objectively capture this occurrence as I can.

As dance educators, we can assist children in learning how to give voice to their life-stories through dance. Not only is moving their own stories pedagogically valuable as a way to deepen our understanding of who we are, but also moving them for others provides a place for students to share their stories. In voicing their stories a dialogue can begin. In learning how to represent the world as

they experience it they become better able to see themselves in others, and better able to develop that empathy for the life of another that a true and just community demands. As Bauman suggests, (in Smith 1999) they are able to reach towards a place where they may ‘grasp hold of the self and awaken it as an active moral agent disposed to care for the other’ (p. 181).

This thesis may at times appear encyclopaedic, however, the emphasis is on the process that shifts from being ‘a book, set of books, optical disc, mobile device, or online informational resource containing articles on various topics, usually in alphabetical arrangement, covering all branches of knowledge or, less commonly, all aspects of one subject.’ (Dictionary.com 2019), to an archival analysis that involves the lived experience and oral tradition that is unique to my family. Eric Anyanwu (2018), who studied Libraries and Librarianship, talks to the difference of an archive as follows:

Archive is a collection of old records of antiquities...which are not recent but can be consulted to whenever the need arise for referrals. ... serve important functions in the society as they tend to preserve our primary source materials. (Quora 2018)

There are times that I assume the role of historian and this I feel is necessary because a depository of knowledge needs to be created. What I also need to acknowledge is the usefulness of the insight amassed in activating the archive itself. The insights make sense in terms of the value of the process of engagement with the archive, including the re-synthesis of the relationship with my mother and decolonising Indian classical dance pedagogy. I know now how to read and value the archive.

CHAPTER 2: SETTING THE SCENE: INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCE ORIGINS

VARIETY DANCE PROGRAMME

Dancing Bells

Produced by the Nydoo Sisters – Kumari Rani and Kumari Prema
(PUPILS OF SARASVATI GANA NILAYAM – MADRAS)

PROGRAMME

1. Invocation .. Puja Dance Selvi, Rani Ambikai	10. Jyoti Folk-Dance Vasugi, Padmini, Kripandil
2. Alaripu Bharata Natyam Sandraganthi	11. Nautch Kathak Shyamala
3. Urvashi Kathak Natyā Tilakam Kumari Rani	12. Music
4. Snake Chramer . Natyam Vinnalaganthi	13. Gopi-Krishna .. Folk-Dance Selvi, Rani, Ambikai,
5. Music	.. Vinnalaganthi, Sulochana Salome
6. Jatisvaram .. Bharata Natyam Sulochana	14. Kurathi Folk-Lore Natyā Tilakam Kumari Prema
7. Music	15. Music
8. Abhinayam .. Bharata Natyam Vasugi	16. Kolatam Folk-Dance Asherville Andhra Patasala
9. Siva-Parvati .. Bharata Natyam Natyā Tilakam Kumari Rani	17. Sundara- Vaniata Natyam (Dance-Drama) Vasugi, Padmini, Kripandil
.. Natya Tilakam Kumari Prema	.. Rani, Shyamala, Sita, Cynthia,
	.. Annavalli, Deevina,
	.. Sandraganthi, .Nomaganthi,
	18. Music
	19. Radha-Krishna . Kathak (Marwari) Natyā Tilakam Kumari Rani
	.. Natya Tilakam Kumari Prema

Interval

NARRATIONS J. R. DEVAR

THE CALL IS FOR

"Up the City"

PURE CANE SPIRIT

Performers (Left Column): Vasugi, Padmini, Kripandil, Sandraganthi, Vinmalaganthi, Sulochana, Asherville, Andhra, Patasala, Rani, Shyamala, Sita, Cynthia, Annavalli, Deevina, Sandraganthi, Nomaganthi, Vasugi, Padmini, Kripandil, Rani, Shyamala, Sita, Cynthia, Annavalli, Deevina, Sandraganthi, Nomaganthi.

Performers (Right Column): Sita, Ambikai, Rani, Cynthia, Asherville, Andhra, Patasala, Rani, Shyamala, Sita, Cynthia, Annavalli, Deevina, Sandraganthi, Nomaganthi, Vasugi, Padmini, Kripandil, Rani, Shyamala, Sita, Cynthia, Annavalli, Deevina, Sandraganthi, Nomaganthi.

Illustration 4: Programme of performance before return to India with students of Indian Classical Dance in South Africa

This programme contains the first batch of young students that my mother trained in this country. More especially of relevance to this chapter, the full repertoire of Bharata Natyam was being taught to them. The art images reflect the movement (the dancer), rhythm (the jingles) and religious images (Krishna playing the flute) conjured up when linking this dance form to its source in India. One also notices that their sponsor was a brand of Cane spirit, which was ironically grown by our ancestors in the late 1800s. They came to South Africa with no Indian Classical dance and a very limited dance and music repertoire. This chapter focuses on the advent of Indian Classical dance in India, and the rigorous training my family and I had to undergo. This artefact is symbolic of the transfer of knowledge to our country and establishes a similar pedagogy in South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Our family archive, was systematically collected and filed from its beginning in order. It served a far more serious purpose – the ensuring of a dance pedagogy that would stand the test of time. I explain this process in chapter 4 in so far as the development of knowledge of decolonising dance. It also became my mother's and my reference library, and the source of the theoretical strength of the Indian dance training and education we provided in South Africa. We were not able to pursue academic studies in Indian classical dance in India, as firstly, at the time that both my mother and I studied the dance form the schools and government funded organisations that offered training were still situated outside formal pedagogy. It was only in the mid 1980s that the Karnataka State Sangeet Nritya Academy was affiliated to the Bangalore University and offered a professional degree in Kathak and we had both completed our formal Indian Classical dance training by then. Secondly, it was out of our budget to spend the finances and prolonged period of time required to live in India at our own cost, as the family wealth was lost after the passing of my maternal grandfather. Finally, we chose to continue the dance training that was lacking in South Africa within this country.

Our own research had to be conducted into not only the origins and development of Classical dance in India to maintain relevance in the South African context; we had to ensure that both we and the dancers we trained in this country had a firm grasp of the theoretical foundations. We also needed to establish and secure a continuity and authenticity of the dance forms being disseminated. The subsequent chapters will reveal the depth of involvement in mass education efforts on the part of first my mother and then me in the print, radio and electronic media's role in mass education in terms of Indian Classical dance. Its importance lies in the teachers, students, public and the reader's understanding that Indian classical dance development did not occur in isolation. It occurred within families; communities; geographical regions; nations and continents – against social, economic and political backdrops. Like every aspect of life, South Asian classical and other dance forms were influenced by, and influenced the colonial hegemony and economy of two nations – India and South Africa.

In this study we are uncovering the convergences of both countries; however each has their own unique path. This chapter focuses on India and the classical dance forms it gave birth to; a figurative “mother” that would find African offspring in my mother and I – yet another kinship we share with the Indian sub-continent. This chapter is very much a product of our archive as the sources utilised are from the vast collection of books and articles that my mother and I amassed in India. The content may appear encyclopaedic on the surface, however, it establishes the context and background to the Classical dance traditions that we were trained with.

To one whom is familiar with the Indian classical dance form, one would realise that it is very much like an onion, where the exponent has to continuously peel away the layers to fully comprehend the complexities that each style presents, let alone undertaking several of them. This was the challenge and odyssey that my mother and I were faced with straddling two continents. The subtleties and nuances that I have added to the theoretical façade can only come from years of honing ones skill, knowledge and experience. It is also written from the point of view of the reader who does not necessarily share my intimate understanding of the dance form.

The origins of Indian classical dance have a mythical and esoteric quality. It is a subject surrounded by various attitudes that encompass a wide range of emotion, and it is characterised by the proverbial “blood, sweat and tears” in order to attain a degree of expertise and proficiency.

... Brahma, the Creator, was deeply perturbed at the strife and turmoil that prevailed on Earth. As the four *Vedas* were kept a closely- guarded secret by the Brahmins, he decided to create a fifth *Veda* that would be accessible to all. The science of dramatic presentation that was contained in the *Natya Veda* was first taught by Brahma to the Sage Bharata. Bharata presented his threefold art-drama, music and dance – to Shiva. (Samson 1987: 9) (*Italics in original*)

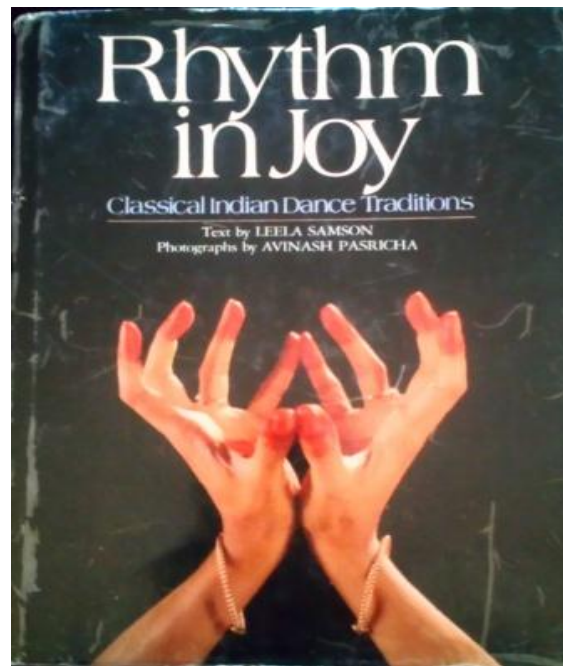


Illustration 5: Cover of Leela Samson's book in our personal book collection in the archive

Leela Samson (1987) explains this phenomenon in the following manner:

To this day, the classical dance tradition of India is closely related to religion and mythology; this is reflected not only in themes chosen for interpretation, but in the manner of presentation and frequent association with ritual worship. (p. 9)

This chapter will, specifically elucidate the Indian/ South Asian Classical dance traditions of ancient times, with particular focus on individual regional history and development, as well as the colonial underpinnings that affected it. The systematic hegemonic conditions that led to Indians having to leave their country is interwoven with the Indian Classical dance evolution and migration to other parts of the world, including South Africa. As the crux of this study lies in the first South Africans to introduce a full repertoire of Indian Classical Dance forms to South Africa, one needs to understand the significance and deep roots of the Indian Diaspora in South Africa that not only connects them to a cultural identity, but also has their religious and spiritual evolution deeply ingrained in their art forms. This will not be possible without first explaining how Dance (among the other art forms) is an extension of their beliefs, identity and social constructs. It reflects on the training we received in India, our research, development and understanding of each classical dance style, with reference to the various texts we have been exposed to. The literature review section is the introduction to this chapter.

THE HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCE IN INDIA AND SOUTH EAST ASIA



Illustration 6: Mohenjo Daro Dancing Girl Sculpture (Buzzify Media 2019)

The Indus Valley civilisation is ancient. The reality is that India as a Nation has seen some incredibly turbulent times, which has helped shape its creativity and therefore its artistic endeavours. This is evidenced in the archive.

Dance is found among all men whether in primitive or advanced societies. Its functions vary in these societies from religion to pure entertainment. ... dance goes back as far as man himself but its styles and forms are many- some very new, ... and others of great antiquity. ...the earliest civilizations discovered in the Indian subcontinent are those of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa in the Indus valley, and are dated at about 6000 B. C. ... one of the finds at Mohenjo Daro was a beautiful little statuette of a dancing girl. Not surprisingly however, almost nothing is known of the dance technique of this early period. (Singha & Massey 1967: 17)

There are archaeological finds that evidence Indian dance as pre-dating these discoveries. Afratakht (2018) in his paper comparing Indian and Iranian classical dance highlights earlier finds:

Archaeological and ancient drawings on the caves' walls are the first representatives of dance in India. These historical evidences which belong to the 10,000 to 20,000 years B.C. show the dance splendour of early pre-history in India. The paintings which belong to this early phase have been found in the Adamgarh quarry shelter near Hoshangabad and in about fifty shelters in the Mabadeo Hills lying around Pachmarhi. (p.623)

“Bhakti” or devotion is the embodiment of dance in India. The temples were the birthplace and the gurus the nurturers of the Dasis, young girls and women who surrendered their lives in service of the

divine. They came from the Brahmin caste and enacted and educated the lay people on the attainment of the spiritual path.

... the practice of performing arts was considered to be a high form of 'yoga' with the dancer going through all the states of meditation or 'yoga'. Even the audience is not left untouched by it because the emotional process that occurs during any dance performance transports the audience along with the dancer, into a realm of beauty binding them together in the thread of 'rasa' (or ultimate bliss). It is this experience and acknowledgment of profound 'ananda' (radiant delight) that is sincerely fulfilling and which goes past unimportant diversion. (Afratakht 2018: 624)

Indian classical dance predates most other dance forms in known existence. Although based in the very meticulous teachings of scriptures and texts from over 5000 years ago, the classical dance styles have evolved, changed and developed due to several factors: Trade with the Chinese predating the European and British and invasions by Mongols, and Persians that overthrew territories as far as Andhra Pradesh, but did not extend into the southern States due to resistance from the rulers of those territories; colonialism; slavery/indenture; political and social change; and most recently technology. A thread emerges of the history of India and South Africa sharing a kinship in terms of the susceptibility to all of the above similar factors, which will be further explored in subsequent chapters.

THE NATYASASTRA AND OTHER ANCIENT TEXTS

The *Natyasastra*, of which the archive consists of two different versions, is the oldest known treatise on Indian dramaturgy in the known world that is still being practiced today. This includes drama, music, dance, architecture, etc. 'In the title 'Natya' implies art and 'sastra' implies science so it is the science of the art of drama' (EML by Dr Padma Subrahmanyam 2014) - it is a synthesis of arts, science and philosophy. Dr. Subrahmanyam further states that the *Natyasastra* prescribes looking at life as a whole and in her opinion, 'is meant for entire Humanity' (EML by Dr Padma Subrahmanyam 2014). Every aspect of the pedagogy of Indian classical dance is carefully outlined in this text.

'Tradition' implies to the 'movement of action' through the passage of time. Performance traditions, like religious or literary ones, are best thought of as inherited collections of established ways of feeling, thinking, and doing that are passed down through generations and ... consist of the active and often contentious process of transmitting what has been received ... In other words, a performance tradition could be understood as a body of knowledge, including techniques of performances, texts, and aesthetic principles or rules or assumptions, which constitutes and defines what the particular genre is and it is simultaneously the process

of handing that knowledge on from one generation to another. In most, if not all Indian performance traditions, a convergence or synthesis of music, dance, and drama is inevitable just as in other traditional forms of Asian performance, the arts are a composite set of skills practiced by a team of artists who through creation of verbal, vocal, aural, spatial and visual patterns create a total performance. (Shodhganga no date: 74)

Dr. Padma Subramanyam (1997), my mother's second teacher in Bharata Natyam, is the president of Nrityodaya, founded in 1942 by her father, Mr K. Subrahmanyam (a friend of my late grandfather's), explains in her book *Natyasastra and National Unity*; from our archive; the significance of aspects of Indian dance in the *Natyasastra*, with reference to "Jambudvipa" (Eurasia); with special emphasis on "Bhaaratvarsha" (South East Asia); and "Bharata Khanda" (present-day India). In her PhD thesis *Karanas in Indian Dance and Sculpture*, she draws our attention to a 7th century temple panel in Mahabalipuram where Sage Bharata or Bharata Muni is seen dancing in front of Lord Shiva. Bharata is also given a revered place on altars in theatres in Cambodian and Thai cultures.

Bharata and other sages spread the knowledge of the art among people of the Earth. Being visible and audible, this new aesthetic form brought culture within the reach of the common people who had been alienated from the exclusive and esoteric intellectual pursuits of the literati. (Samson 1987: 9)

This could give credence to the tradition of "Gurupranam", where the student touches the feet of their Guru; they esoterically imbibe the energy of the teacher; that boosts the knowledge and ability of the student and therefore their energy dances within the student. The guru's lineage is said to go back to Sage Bharata who touched the feet of Lord Shiva the God of Dance. Thus every teacher has imbibed the energy of the teacher before them going all the way back to Lord Shiva. The result, in my case, relates to the dissertation title, where the energy of my mother/Guru dances within me. The system called "Guru-Shishya Parampara" (tradition of a teacher- disciple bond) and has been an integral part of the Indian nation, and dance traditions since the ancient times.

Gurukuls were great centres of learning in the ancient India. In the Gurukul System of Education, students lived in the kula (family) of their Guru (teacher) and studied the Vedas (Sacred Scriptures) and other subjects, such as Śikshā (Phonetics), Vyākaraṇa (Grammar) and Jyotiṣa (Astronomy), and sciences like Arthaśāstra (Economics), Dharmaśāstra (Laws), Śāstravidyā (Art of Warfare), Kalā (Fine Arts) etc. under his guidance for a minimum period of 9 to 12 years. (Shodhganga no date: 10)

TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCE

The body is the instrument or vehicle of any Indian classical dancer. In my experience and practice, I found that South Asian dance follows the aspect of “Union” (Yoga) of the mind, body and spirit, or like martial arts encourages the one to develop focus of the breathe and the body while being completely focussed on the moment one is in. The repetitive nature of exercising every muscle from head to toe is conducive to, and facilitates an almost meditative state for the dancer.

Bharata analyses the human form and divides it from the head to the extremities into *angas* (the principal parts), *pratyangas* (the subsidiary parts) and *upangas* (minor parts within major parts). (Samson 1987: 23) (Italics in original)

These “parts” of the anatomy can be simplified as follows:

Angas: head, hands, chest, sides, hips, and feet.

Pratyangas: neck, arms, abdomen, thighs and knees.

Upangas: the head (the whole face-eyes, eyebrows, eyelashes, pupils of the eye, nose, cheeks, teeth, lips, tongue, and chin); feet (toes, heels, soles and ankles); and hands (palms and fingers).

The Natyasastra also describes the technique or method used to utilise the stage in choreography, that is ‘... *charis* or movements on the stage and *sthanakas* or static poses’ (Samson 1987:23) (Italics in original). The “charis” involve movement of the lower limbs and hips. When both feet are involved in the movement they are known as *karanas*. The execution of a combination of three *karanas* is known as a *mandala*.

In India, Lord Shiva’s statues of his Nataraj form ‘is an exquisite study of balance and symmetry, of movement and at the same time of stillness.’ (Singha & Massey 1967: 32). Subrahmanyam’s interpretation of the 108 *karanas* (the basic body postures and poses in dance of Lord Shiva) is a major step towards the visualisation of what the original movements would have looked like in practice; in her thesis based on the sculptures in the temples of Chidambaram, Thanjavur and Kumbakonam. Sage Bharata defines “*karanas*” as ‘the conjoining of the movements of hands and feet in dance... not poses but movements.’ (The 108 *Karanas* | *Karana Prakaranam* | Dr Padma Subrahmanyam 2018). All movements or “*karanas*” are preceded by the learning of the basics – “*angas*”, “*upangas*”, “*charis*” and “*hastas*”. The tiniest muscles are trained to provide the minutest nuance of the emotion being conveyed to the audience. When it comes to dance and spontaneity,

Art is of two kinds: ‘kalpita’ (that which is taught and repeated), ‘kalpana’ (creativity) – we do both. Performing arts are like language – once you master the foundations, then you can have ‘kalpana’. (EML by Dr Padma Subrahmanyam 2014)

In terms of classical dance styles, the placement of the arms and hands around the body is vital to expressing the meaning of the gestures being conveyed by the dancer. Bharata Natyam exponent and author, Leela Samson, explains this phenomenon in the following manner:

Arms positions are not clearly defined as *sthanakas*. They are also fewer and less complicated but a fluid transition from one position to another can create the impression of several positions. ... The *hasta* or hand-positions facilitate the expression of the chosen *sahitya* or composition. The names of the hastas are common to different styles. (Samson 1987:24- 25) (Italics in original)

She goes on to state that: ‘A combination of two *hastas* can alter or develop the meaning. The two hands can hold either unconnected or complementary *hastas*.’ (Samson 1987: 25) (Italics in original).

In Samson’s (1987) opinion, with which I concur,

It has been said that a good dancer does not merely present *hastas*, she converses She performs a myriad motions seemingly all at once and it is difficult to imagine the restrictions and rules to which she adheres. (p. 25) (Italics in original)

Other significant texts that have been enacted via dance are: the *Puranas*; *Upanishads*; *Bhagavat Gita*; *Maha Bharat*. Of special significance to Indian Classical dance is *Abhinaya Darpana*, which set up the “Golden Rule” for all Indian classical dance execution or technical virtuosity. These ancient rules have been set to the poetry below:

It is truly said that the dancer should ‘sing with her mouth, express the meaning of the song with gestures of her hands, express *bhava* through her eyes, and beat the *tala* with her feet’ (Nandikeshwara’s *Abhinaya Darpana*). An undying rule goes thus:

Where the hand goes, there should follow the eyes,
Where the eyes go, there should go the mind,
Where the mind goes, *bhava* is created,
Where *bhava* is created, *rasa* or sentiment will arise.

A useful extension of this idea would be:

Let the hand stretch out, as far as it may,
Where the hand cannot stretch, let the eyes go,
Where the eyes cannot go, let the mind wander,
Where the mind wanders, *bhava* is created,
Where true *bhava* is created, *rasa* will be born. (Samson 1987: 25) (Italics in original)

RASA OR SENTIMENT

The performing arts have an integrating quality - hearts can be swayed and won over. Sensitivity is an inborn quality, but it has to be developed. The degree of sensitivity is dependent on exposure and the level of exposure - India is a sentimental country. The concept of rasa is unique to Indian dramaturgy and therefore, Indian dance.

Rasika is one who enjoys, what is enjoyed is Rasa ...feeling is bhava ... the art of communication is 'abhinaya'... that aesthetic enjoyment is called Rasa... Man loves rasa... momentarily you forget 'I'... so rasa becomes a spiritual experience. It is more than your body, it is not your intellect, it is something more than that. (EML by Dr Padma Subrahmanyam 2014)

Dr. C. S. Srinivas (2014), Assistant Professor at Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Technology Hyderabad, emphasises the significance of “abhinaya” to the Indian dramatic arts in the following manner:

If rasa is the purpose of Sanskrit drama then the tool, which is utilized to bring about rasa, is abhinaya. The word abhinaya means that which brings the thing to the spectator, or the different ways in which the actor brings the play with its meaning and feelings to the spectator. ... Thus, the concept of abhinaya expounded in the *Natyasastra* is a comprehensive one, covering the whole range of acting possibilities. (p.26)

According to Bharata, in his *Natyasastra*, there are four kinds of abhinaya:

Abhinaya may be either *lokadharmi* (realistic) or *natyadharmi* (stylized), with the use of stage conventions. The mode of expression may be purely physical (*angika*), vocal (*vachika*), ornamental (*aharya*) which involves the use of make-up, costumes and stage sets etc. or it may be purely emotional (*satvika*). (Samson 1987: 24) (Italics in original)

There are nine (nav) recognised rasas or expressions today that apply to all 8 Indian classical dance styles, giving rise to the term “Navrasa”. Being of a complicated and philosophical nature, I have used V. P. Dhananjayan’s many tabulations in his book *A Dancer on Dance* (1984), which is part of the archive, to create my own presentation and interpretation of a comparative presentation of the Navrasa (Table 1 in Appendix 1), as the reader does not have a teacher to explain and demonstrate these intricacies. The subtleties and nuances of expression/emotive dance takes dancers years to master.

On the basis of my experience and for the purposes of simplifying the volumes that have been written on the subject, I have taken the liberty of adding my own changes and interpretations to what is majorly his work, based on the *Natyasastra* and *Abhinaya Darpanam*, as well as several other classical works, including the *Ramayana*. The aspect of “Shantham” in particular is wholly my interpretation as

Today, Navarasa is common terminology and it has been so for quite some time, though some eminent scholars and famous authors ...mention only eight. Their contention is that Santham does not evoke any Rasa or enjoyment and consequently is a static, motionless state of mind. (Dhananjayan 1984:10)

I beg to differ on the fact that no emotion is evoked during the portrayal of Santham rasa, as this refers to the dancer tapping into one’s own devotional or spiritual reservoir to transmit or evoke the same or some emotion within the audience. As seen from the beginning of this chapter, South Asian Dance has been extensively described as “spiritual in nature”; as “having a soul”; and most certainly every one of the eight classical dances has its roots in the temples and spiritual or sacred practice. Every classical dance has an invocatory aspect in its repertoire, and each is deeply steeped in enacting the religious epics common to most of India and South East Asia. An alternative explanation to the great Sages’ approach to the particular rasa is provided by Subrahmanyam (2014) when she states ‘spiritual level cannot be taught – it has to be felt’. Therefore to not acknowledge the importance of that emotion in our act of divine connection to me is to nullify the great unifier that is Dance.

Bharata paved a path which came to be known as “marga”- ‘all regional observances were termed ‘deshi’...the marga and the respective regional deshis have coexisted in history.’(Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam's *Karana Prakaranam: marga tradition revived* – Bharatanatyam 2009). Until fairly recently, it has been commonly known that seven different classical dance styles existed in India: Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kuchipudi, Mohiniattam, Manipuri, Kathakali, Odissi. An eighth style, Sattriya or Sattriya Nritya has now been recognised as a classical form since 15 November 2000 by the Sangeet Natak Akademi of India.

THE CLASSICAL DANCE STYLES OF INDIA: COLONIAL INFLUENCES

Volumes have and still are being written on the Classical dance styles of India. I am attempting to provide a compendium to a rather complex and multi-faceted subject, and beg the reader's indulgence and understanding in this regard. In Appendix 2, each style is given an historical, geographical, aesthetical and technical emphasis, as well as highlighting some of the great Gurus and exponents. It should be noted that Bharata Natyam, Kathak and Odissi are the main areas of focus, as most of the other classical dance styles have their origins in these styles. These three styles have the most relevance to this study as it is where most of our study and training lies. The decay that colonialism introduced to the once deeply religious entity of Indian Classical dance is outlined. This forms a basis for the understanding of subsequent chapters and bears reference.

Bharata Natyam, like all the Indian classical dance forms, was originally known as “Dasi Attam”, due to its origins in the temples of Southern India. This was taught by a lineage of male gurus (Nattuvanars). The items performed by the Devadasis, in the service of the presiding deity of a Temple, were only devotional in nature. Due to Muslim invasions around the 12th and 13th centuries A.D. power-struggles, social decay, and ill-repute befell the Devadasis as many were abducted from the temples to serve as “entertainment” as royal court dancers and used in prostitution. This forced a sector of the dance population to go underground, while still pursuing their devotional art form. British rule brought with it not only industrialisation, but also Christianity, which challenged the caste system (explained in the Literature Review), and dance was then viewed as pagan. In the latter 19th century, the reputation of the “dancing girls” or Devadasis had reached an all time low, and there were calls to ban this style of dance.

Dancers, such as lawyer, E. Krishna Iyer, worked at reviving interest in Dasi Attam. In 1932 he moved to change the name to Bharata Natyam to encourage the high caste to engage in performance and pedagogy. Balasaraswati and Rukmini Devi Arundale became some of the first Brahmin women

to create a renaissance of the dance form, and brought the temple dance form back to “polite” society, by performing the religious and mythological works only, on stage.

Dr. Subramanyam’s work on the Natyasastra revealed that the Bharata Natyam of today is rather different from those carved into the Chidambaram Temple, which was built in the 10th century. The look and feel of these movements appear more Odissi-like, with a liquid, flowing quality as opposed to the advent of the popular “Kalakshetra” style, which has taken on a “stiffer” or more stoic stance with a Kathakali nuance.

Experimentation with the basic repertoire and making the dance form relevant to the youth being trained, began with a dancer called Chandraleka, who was interested in a feminist reform of the themes surrounding nayikas. She created a piece ‘based on the mathematical treatise, *Leelavati* of Bhaskara (12th century).’ (Singh 2000: 56). In more recent times, dance exponents such as Anita Ratnam and Mallika Sarabhai have used dance and the interpretation of the epics to create social and environmental reform in India.

Today Bharata Natyam is one of the most popular and widely performed dance styles and is practiced by male and female dancers all over India and abroad. Its verity of movements and postures and the balance of the rhythmic aspects take this art form to a higher level and other aspects lend itself well to experimental and fusion choreography. (Das 2012: npn)

Kathak is a unique fusion of the Hindu and Muslim cultures, originating from the groups of poets of ancient Northern India. Known as “kathaks”, or story tellers, these poets performed in village squares and temple courtyards recounting mythological and moral tales from the scriptures. Foreign invaders, such as the Mongols and Persians, took control of the Northern states of India as far as Andhra Pradesh. Here again, the temple dancers were abducted and turned into courtesans to entertain the “royalty”. Some of the Mughal heirs, born in India, gradually assimilated into the country. Some became patrons of the arts and artists, where they were once “ravishers” of dancers or Devadasis, the equivalent of nuns in temples.

The British went so far as to annex India as a colony of Great Britain in order to take advantage of the spice trade. India then became the granary for the British Empire. Famine and austere rules literally wiped out professions and people under the most barbaric conditions. Diarmaid Ferriter (2017) examines this phenomenon, that was experienced by my ancestors in India leading to their choice to leave the country, in a review of Shashi Tharoor's book *Inglorious Empire: what the British did to India*; in the following manner:

...The company had a private army of 260,000 at the start of the 19th century, and the champions of the British industrial revolution plundered India's thriving manufacturing industries. Under British rule India's share of world manufacturing exports fell from 27 per cent to 2 per cent as East India employees made colossal fortunes. The marquess of Salisbury, secretary of state for India in the 1870s, remarked that "India is to be bled", and by the end of the 19th century it was Britain's biggest source of revenue. ... Crucially, Britain also "helped solidify and perpetuate the iniquities of the caste system", which was made out to be more uniform and pervasive than it had been. Religion became a useful means of divide and rule, with the fostering of a two-nation theory that eventually divided the country and made partition inevitable; one million were killed and 17 million displaced. (nnp)

The dancers were then also used to entertain the British soldiers at their various encampments and only further contributed to the disrepute bestowed on performing artists.

With the British rule, the arts were neglected. However, the princely States extended patronage to musicians and dancers. The court and the Temple gave rise to different aspects of the dance. ... the court dance also shaped itself into a fine expression of the art of dance which aimed at pleasing patrons who happened to be the rulers of small native States under British rule. It was during this period that Kathak came to be known as 'Nautch', but the pure classical style remained within the temples. (Govender & Govender 1991:10)

"Respectability" in the dance form was restored by the likes of Madame Menaka, an upper class Brahmin woman, who with the support of Rabindranath Tagore revived social acceptance for Kathak. All of these influences shaped the pedagogy of Kathak into three different schools (Gharanas), yet the basic techniques remain uniform throughout, and are characterised by

... fast rhythmic footwork set to complex time cycles. The footwork is matched by the accompanying percussion instruments such as tabla and pakhawaj, and the dancer and percussionists often play with speed and ending in statuesque poses. The story portion, based on tales of Radha and Krishna and other mythological lore, contains subtle gestures and facial expressions. Lucknow, Banaras and Jaipur are recognized as the three schools, or gharanas, where this art was born and where the aspects were refined to a high standard. (Das 2012: npn)

Today, Kathak enjoys popularity in the Indian Film industry, on television and is practiced worldwide by dancers of various cultural backgrounds.

The practitioners have changed from professional *nautchwalis* to the educated young and inspite of the various demands made on it, Kathak has managed to survive, retaining its identity and character. This inbuilt resilience is indicative of its growth and popularity. (Kothar, 1989: 221) (*Italics in original*)

Odissi has originated from ancient North East India in the state Odisha (or Orissa). There was a time, when, like other classical arts of India, Odissi also faced persecution and had to survive. By the 1930s and 1940s, there were very few surviving practitioners of the art, despite the fact that this art form was documented in a prose from the *Abhinaya Darpanam* dating back to the late 7th century.

The stone dancers of Konark are characterized by a grace and fluidity that evokes a sense of movement. It is significant that when the Odissi style of dance faced extinction, the scholars who sought to revitalize the tradition studied the stances of dancing figures that adorn the temple walls in order to enrich the vocabulary of the revived repertoire of Odissi. (Samson 1987: 23)

Illustrated sketches documented of dance and music on ancient palm-leaf manuscripts are being collected by the State Museum at Bhubaneswar, Raghunandana Library at Puri; and the Utkal University.

... besides epigraphical, inscriptional, archaeological and sculptural evidence, there are a number of palm-leaf manuscripts containing information about the technique of Odissi dance” (Kothari & Pasricha 1990:33)

Odissi was only granted classical dance status in the 20th century. Over the years Odissi has become one of the most popular classical dance styles renowned for its elegance, lustre, brilliance and resilience.

In my study and experience, Odissi remains the closest to the origins of the figures sculpted into ancient temples studied by Dr. Subrahmanyam, while researching the ‘karanas’. It is interesting to note that the ancient temples of the North (Sun Temple, Konark) and South India (Chidambaram); supposedly having cultural differences; did appear to have very similar origins.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Dr. Subrahmanyam (2014) believes that dance creates ‘unity in variety’, especially in a nation like India. ‘From time immemorial the Vedas have been considered an authority on any aspect of our life. ... Our arts have a role to play in the lives of artists and audience.’ (Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam's *Karana Prakaranam: marga tradition revived - Bharatanatyam* 2009). She believes that the *Natyasastra* is the common denominator for pre-independence and post-independence India. All the performing arts, including dance, have a common grammar; the only difference is the costumes. Performing arts are a reflection of life.

As we enter the new millennium, dance is still the ultimate metaphor of the Indian view of reality. And the Indian dancer is still trying to capture the image of the cosmic dance. ... it is indeed as Ananda Coomaraswamy has said, “poetry, but nonetheless science.” (Singh 2000: 26)

Could this not then be juxtaposed to the South African context?

In recent times degrees in Indian classical dance in India and other parts of the world are abundant. It should, however, be noted that, even in India, pedagogy at University level took centuries to formalise. Like South Africa, dancers had to travel outside their country to obtain these academic qualifications.

In the 1950s, the Govt. of India was actively cultivating cultural ties with the USSR. Maya [Rao] was the first scholarship winner to study choreography ... became India's first and only Indian with a Post Graduate certificate in choreography from the USSR. (Sai 2015: npn)

In light of the detailed understanding of the origins and history of Indian classical dance and the political system of apartheid that we lived in, my mother created an archive with the awareness that as South Africans, we would have to have a firm and acute theoretical understanding of the subject matter we taught and practiced. Under those circumstances, we felt that we needed to be able to “defend” its value and to locate it under a similar kind of challenge that the dance form faced in its country of origin. This chapter is not a history lesson, but rather an argument that in the history of Indian classical dance lies many lessons for humanity. This chapter has evidenced the complexity and

challenge we met in having to master any single form, yet my mother and I were capable of teaching and performing several of these intricate forms. It outlines the tenacity and ‘willfulness’ (Ahmed, 2014) required in raising the standard of Indian classical dance in this country. It serves to establish that Indian Classic dance is not static and inanimate. It is dynamic, mutable, evolutionary, susceptible, yet capable of resurrection and rebellion - ‘willfulness’ (Ahmed, 2014), the very nature of my family and the archive.

There is a kinship between two countries separated by the Indian Ocean; India and South Africa. These two nations are prime examples of the consequences of imperialism and colonialism. The rights of the people of both countries were stripped away to a point of almost oblivion. The nature of the arts and the human spirit has more significance and similarity. Such oppression can only give rise to “rebellion”. History has borne witness to this fact in politics and the arts - where nations strive to self-actualise and assert their right to their identity and cultural expression. This is true for India, and it is true for my family’s choice of a peaceful resistance through the arts and Dance in particular.

The family archive is not just a collection of pictures and memorabilia, but more like a “library” filled with volumes of books; video footage; articles and interviews that my mother collected over both our lifetimes. I watched her research her craft. This chapter emphasises the level of training, expertise and self- development that was required to keep Indian dance in South Africa relevant against the odds, taking our approach to Indian classical dance beyond the status of a performing art. That lifetime of preparation made writing this painstaking chapter a pleasure, as it felt like we were doing it together. She was deeply aware of the trials and tribulations Indian Classical dance faced, and urged me to understand as much as I could. She viewed the art form with great respect and reverence - something she bequeathed to me. It is an oral tradition that we pass on to our students, so that we never forget the Humanity that Dance represents. It became our communion with the Divine. While this chapter contextualises both the history and the reader’s understanding of the development of this study, the next chapter will focus on the conditions in South Africa that gave rise to the Indian Classical dance form that my mother championed among the Indian Diaspora.

CHAPTER 3: INDIAN DANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA, THE 1ST 100 YEARS: THE SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURAL MILIEU OF THE INDENTURED PRIOR TO 1959

INTRODUCTION

B.M.25	B.M.25
DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS - DEPARTEMENT VAN BINNENLANDSAKKE	DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS - DEPARTEMENT VAN BINNENLANDSAKKE
<u>COPY OF SHIP'S LIST OF INDIAN IMMIGRANT</u>	<u>COPY OF SHIP'S LIST OF INDIAN IMMIGRANT</u>
Serial Number : 105 Colonial Number : 56616 Date of Arrival : 20.12.1894 Name of Ship : CONGELLA Place of Registration : Date of Registration : Number in Register : Name : PARUMAIL Father's Name : PARUMAIL Age : 22 YRS. Sex : MALE Caste : KOSAVA District : MADURA Thanna/Taluq : MADURA Village : KADAMANGALAM Height : 5'6" Bodily Marks : SCAR ON LEFT SIDE OF REU Name of Next-of-Kin : Relations Accompanied : FATHER Small Pox/Vaccinated : VACCINATED Remarks : : :	Serial Number : 231 Colonial Number : 36132 Date of Arrival : 06.03.1888 Name of Ship : BARQUE ZUATH LAMBA Place of Registration : Date of Registration : Number in Register : Name : M. RAMAYAH Father's Name : M. APPAYAH Age : 18 YRS. Sex : MALE Caste : KAPUDANUM District : GUNTAM Thanna/Taluq : KARAKAVALSU Village : RAVICHANDRI Height : 5'2" Bodily Marks : FACE PITTED WITH SMALL POX Name of Next-of-Kin : M. DULAPPE - BROTHER Relations Accompanied : Small Pox/Vaccinated : VACCINATED Remarks : : :
Certified a true copy.  REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE	Certified a true copy.  REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Illustration 7: Ships lists of my indentured maternal great-grandfathers from India

These ships lists or artefacts from the family archive are at the heart of this chapter and explain in stark detail the “dehumanising” inspections the indentured experienced on their arrival on our shores. The scars on the body, as well as the pitting on the face reveal the harshness of their lives in India, and they had to endure the trauma of its discovery and documentation. They were given the same status as livestock.

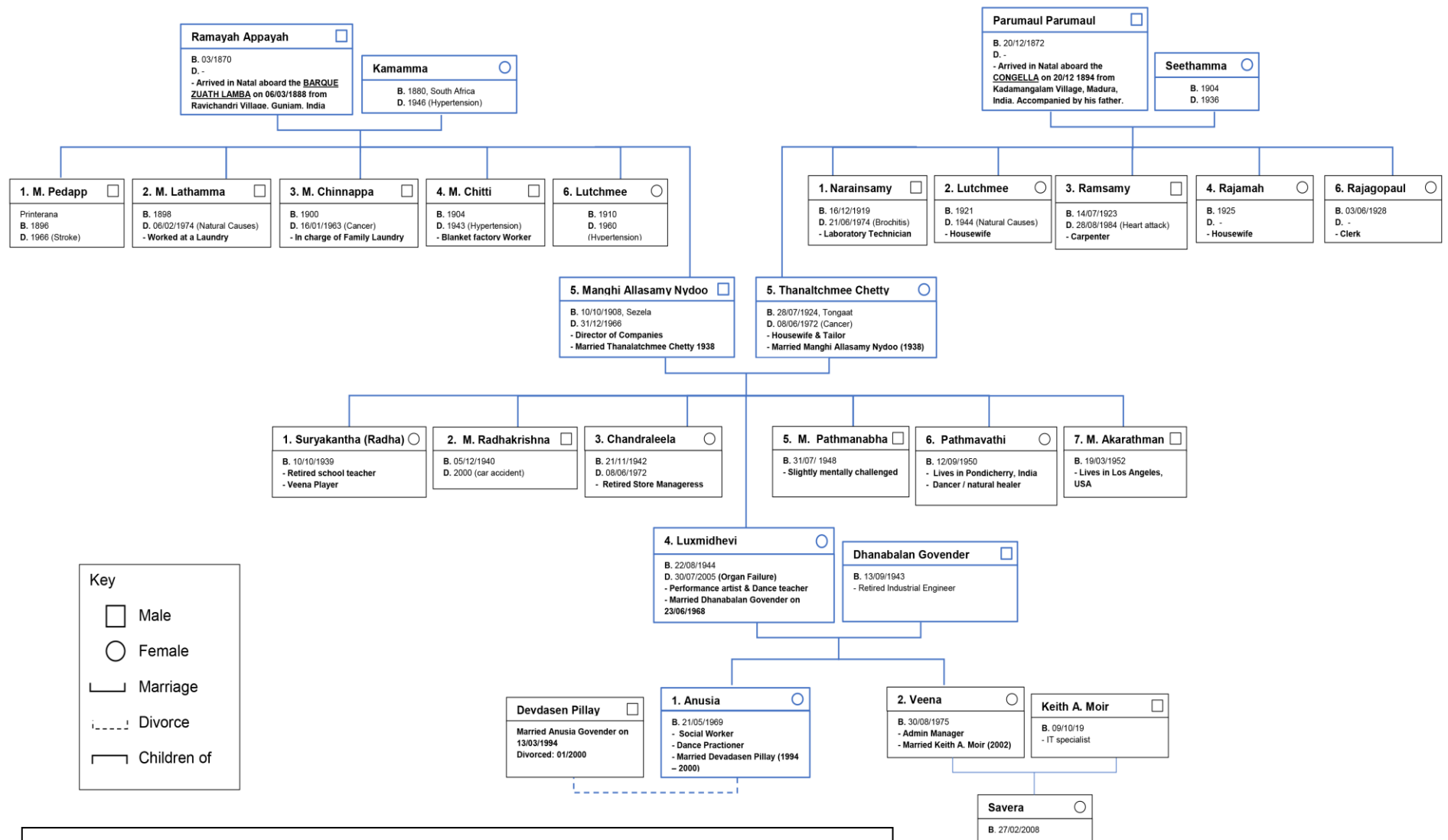


Illustration 8: Nydoo/ Govender Family Tree: Rani Govender (nee Nydoo) & Anusia Pillay

My Family tree, derived from the ships lists, is indicative of how the indentured have progressed since their arrival on South African shores to the point that my 10-year-old niece, Savera Moir is a product of Indian and British/Scottish ancestry. My family were descendants of farmers, skilled at tending the land. Any aspirations or inclination toward classical dance was the furthest from their reality in the South African context. There was a daily struggle for survival (detailed further in this chapter). It took three generations to allow my family to even consider the life and skills that they would one day contribute toward the Indian Diaspora and this country.

When we look at one another within what we think of as our families, we are also the objects of an external gaze, whether sociological, psychological, historical, or nostalgic and mythical. The dominant ideology of the family, in whatever shapes it takes with a specific context, super-poses it as an overlay over our more located, mutual, and vulnerable individual looks, looks which always exist in relation to this “familial gaze” – the powerful gaze of familiarity which imposes and perpetuates certain conventional images of the familial and which “frames” the family in both senses of the term. (Hirsch 1997: 11)

The external factors, such as the political and power structures, define us as much as the home or DNA in becoming who we are as people. Their knowledge and expertise made them a prized commodity; their poverty made them easy targets for the British Empire. My paternal great-grandmother told us her “girmet” (translated to “agreement” from her broken English) stories. This referred to the five-year long contracts offered to the indentured. Unethical practices were used to ensure that the expertise of the Indian labourers was retained under any circumstance.

At the end of the first five years, most labourers had accumulated numerous fines for petty offences which could only be repaid through another period of reindenture (usually another 5 years). Re-indentured labourers toiled under the more arduous and formidable conditions. As employers drew up their own contracts, which offered no protection to employees. At the end of 10 years continuous residence in Natal, the Indians were entitled to a free passage to India. (Maharaj 2010: 20)

Her parents were lured by promises of the “streets being paved with gold” and the opportunity to “pick up diamonds in the sand”. These inhumane conditions were reported to the Indian government and recorded by the first batch of repatriated Indians on return to India.

They could dream and prepare their future families for a life that would be very different to the one they had known in India. It should be noted that my maternal family surname was ‘Naidoo’. My

grandfather changed the family surname to “Nyadoo”; meaning “practitioner of the law” or “justice” in Telegu; so that wherever in the world it was seen, we would be able to recognise our family. My paternal great-grandfather was the highest ranking policeman of colour in Pietermaritzburg at the time, and my other paternal great-grandfather was the oldest living person in Pietermaritzburg for a long time, passing on at the age of 108. This story does have a “silver lining” despite the fact that they were initially lied to and lured ‘... to this land which was supposedly “flowing with milk and honey”.’ (Govender 2010: 21). This chapter focuses on the advent of Indenture, and the factors that led to the origins of Indian classical dance in South Africa.

Indian dance and the implications for the classical form particularly, can only be fully understood in the political, economic, social and cultural context of both India and South Africa. The ripple effects of the spice trade by various European nations and the British occupation of India were felt across an ocean, on the shores of South Africa. In an address delivered on Wednesday, 2 December 1942, at the Darragh Hall in Johannesburg, author of *The Indian in South Africa*, Sir Shafa’at Ahmad-Khan very succinctly summed up the situation in this country under the British regime and since colonial times:

In its present form South Africa is a thing of yesterday and there are many racial elements in its population which have not yet been assimilated, and there is little sign of their fusion for a long time. According to the school dominant at the present time, racial fusion will mean racial suicide. For these reasons many political controversies in this lane are transformed into racial quarrels, and centre round the eternal theme of differences between the Afrikaner and the English or between the European and the non-European. In these circumstances, the possibility of a lasting compromise, nay even of dispassionate discussion of racial problems, is remote. Even the most level-headed and responsible leaders of different races in this country are swept off their feet by ideological and racial rancour which destroys reason, logic, equity and commonsense. (1946: 2)

Thus the stage was literally set for the incubation of events that would eventually lead to the Indian Diaspora’s need to self-actualise. Articles written and collected by my mother in her archive are indicative of her acute awareness of the conditions our ancestors were faced with since their arrival in Natal. This chapter may give the illusion of a treatise on colonialism and indenture, however, its purpose is to draw attention to the reasons and conditions that presupposed the dance pedagogy they began, and hence the creation of the archive. Indian dance did exist in South Africa at the time,

though in an extremely limited capacity. The archive includes articles that commemorated 150 years of the arrival of the indentured in South Africa. This is a vital connection to the advent of Indian Classical dance in South Africa and is the prologue to my family's and mother's Indian dance journey. I was instilled with the sensitivity, awareness and empathy for my roots, and the struggle that ensued to practise our cultural tradition and identity. 'According to Rex (1995:31) the 'recognition of cultural diversity actually enriches and strengthens democracy'' (cited in Oliver and Oliver 2017: 7). Also highlighted are the convergences that both India and South Africa had to undergo to create the conditions that led to my family taking on the dance activist mantle.

SUGAR, SPICE AND COLONIALISM: AN ABUSE OF POWER

At a certain point in one's life one seriously begins to ponder and evaluate of one's origins. As a dance practitioner and director, my creativity and reflexivity turns often to my source or etymology. The wider perspective of our nation and humanity has reason and relevance for the manner in which Indian dance; the classical form especially; developed in South Africa.

According to the Big Bang theory, the cosmos had its origin about 13 700 million years ago, while earth was created almost 4600 million years ago (Meyer 2012:17). Round about 180 000 years ago, Africa was the origin (birthplace) of the modern human species to walk this planet (cf. Oliver 2014:104; Oppenheimer 2003:51). For the past 100 000 years, these modern people also resided in the southern parts of Africa before any other humans (South Africa 2015)... (Oliver & Oliver 2017: 2)

It is important to note that the imperialistic notion of colonisation was spread to various parts of the world: Mauritius, the Caribbean, Indonesia, the Orient and other areas in Africa. The colonisation of South Africa is not as straight forward as the British Empire being the sole villain of this story. As was the case in India, it should be noted and acknowledged that colonisation, or invasion and migration, was not the sole enclave of the western entities, as is popularly believed. Several authorities on South African history recognise that there were four different waves of "colonisation":

- About 2000 years ago: An unofficial colonisation by the black people groups from the north. This colonisation was ended in 1880 when the country was divided into four polities, two being ruled by the British and two by the Afrikaners.

- 1652: An official colonisation from the south by the Dutch VOC. This colonisation came to an end when Britain finally took the country from the Netherlands in 1806 (actually for the second time).
- 1806: An official colonisation of the country by Great Britain. This era came to an end when the country became a Republic in 1961.
- 1961: An internal colonisation of the country by the white Afrikaners, which ended in 1994 when the country became a Democracy.

All the different people groups that arrived in the Cape and started to ‘mingle’ with each other and with the indigenous people, saw the birth of a new people group in the country, called the mixed race people. ...Fortunately, after the fourth and last colonisation of the country and after much pain and oppression and apartheid, the country became a Democracy, establishing a rainbow nation where everybody has equal rights. (Oliver & Oliver 2017: 8)

Indians were unofficially part of the gene pool that contributed to the “mixed race” people, as they were also travelling to the Cape since the 1600s as slaves or traders. This has been established earlier in the literature review section.

In light of the above statement by Oliver and Oliver (2017), we have established that

Colonising refers not simply to the establishing of a European presence but also to the spread of a political order that inscribes in the social world a new conception of space, new forms of personhood, and a new means of manufacturing the experience of the real. (Mitchell cited in Howe 2008: npn)

This was the case for the displaced indentured. In the more recent past the one nation that held the monopoly on world domination was Britain. “‘The sun never set on the British Empire.’ For decades, this was true: the British colonial Empire touched all corners of the globe.’ (Pierce 2009:1)

Some historians suggest that most episodes of genocide and mass murder in world history have been associated with empire-building; and in a particularly thought-provoking and disturbing twist, Michael Mann has recently argued that ‘democratic’ colonisers are the most likely to be genocidal. (Howe 2008; npn)

Nowhere was this more evident than in India preceding its rebellion and subsequent independence from the Crown in 1947.

India became the reason for South Africa’s popularity, a port from the storms - a refuelling station with its own assets. They were contested by the same western entities - the currency was spices, slaves and later sugar. According to Koen (2015), ‘Sugar did exist in South Africa before British

colonists settled here. Although it is unclear what varietal it was, it certainly wasn't the sugar cane we know and consume today.' (npn). Koen further explains

When Britain took over Natal in 1845, the area was occupied by British settlers, a few Dutch settlers (most of them had moved inland) and the Zulu people... the Brits allotted 809 000 hectares of land to the Zulu people, about 1 million hectares to white settlers, and the rest of Natal was considered "crown land" and left uncultivated and unoccupied. It was considered unsuitable for white settlers and the black population to live together... (2015: npn)

The seeds of segregation were sown much earlier than the apartheid era in South Africa, first in the Cape and then in Natal. Sugar became the driving force behind the British Empire. A knowledgeable and skilled workforce was needed to procure the sugar. Mauritius was the initial trial in 1810; however, the ban on slave trade by the British Empire in 1807 did not curb the illegal trade of slaves to British colonies. According to Bhana (1987), the British government was forced to find 'safeguards against new forms of slavery.' (p.8)

The need for skilled labour gave rise to colonies in the tropical climates that suited the propagation and expansion of plantations and according to Koen (2015) a '...massive labour force was needed' (npn). Europe's demand for sugar increased and Britain used any means necessary to supply this lucrative commodity.

More of the 40 million slaves traded across the world were used on sugar plantations than on any other farms. Sugar refineries sprang up like wildfire along the ports of Europe to process the "white gold" for households. Refinery bosses made massive profit from the process. (Koen 2015: npn)

The slavery ban gave rise to the indentured system, what appeared to be a less hegemonic practice on the surface. This set in motion events that would lead to Mahatma Gandhi arriving in South Africa in 1893. His "satyagraha" (passive resistance) and "ahimsa" (non violence) movement inspired India to Independence, as well as the resistance in South Africa.

Ultimately, it was the rise of Mahatma Gandhi and his promotion of the moral values derived from *satyagraha* (nonviolent resistance) that "proved a repudiation of British liberalism and not its vindication". (Ferriter 2017: npn) (*Italics in original*)

After all it was in this country that he honed his philosophies and practices, leaving our shores as a freedom fighter to secure India's independence from Britain. He inspired hordes of people to voluntarily participate in hunger strikes while they were incarcerated for flouting the unjust British laws. According to Ahmad-Khan (1946) some even endured serving multiple jail terms – 'fourteen or fifteen times' (p.19). Resistance implies an unsettling of the status quo, and this was achieved by various means; besides the most obvious violence and aggression.

It is important, however, not to paint a picture of Indian workers as passive objects who bowed to their adverse circumstances and oppression as resistance to this adversity manifested itself in a variety of passive and active ways (Haraksingh 1987; Thiara, 1993). (Cited in Thiara 1999: 162)

It is here that the actions of my family and their use of the arts, and dance in particular to resist the oppressive and inhumane treatment that was meted out to the Indian Diaspora in South Africa, took root as an attempt at decolonisation.

... Macmillan clearly indicates the British realization that decolonization was inevitable, calling it a "political fact." Macmillan also gives reference to the significance of the prior movement in Asia, which was of course led by India. (Pierce 2009: 1)

INDENTURE

The British rule of their colonies, including Natal, can be described as hegemony and misogyny.

Their monopoly was based on their ability to control the sugar trade or "white gold" in the 1800s.

At that time, many Indians were crippled by debt or gridlocked by poverty due to India's caste system, so coming to South Africa seemed to offer better prospects... Indenture is a type of debt servitude, but is different from slavery. Workers received food and board, and a small monthly stipend, in return for their labour. These workers would also receive crown land and citizenship after five years. (Koen 2015: npn)

Indians boarded those ships either by choice or manipulation (this will be expanded on later in this section). All were seeking a better life free of the shackles of the caste system; some like my ancestors were sole survivors of plagues and famines that decimated entire villages; while others believed that they could support their families that they had left behind more adequately, and then return home.

Caste had been transgressed, parents had died and spaces for reintegration closed as colonialism tightened its grip. Home for these wandering exiles was no more. ... The modern

South African Indian community is largely descended from Indians who arrived in South Africa from 1860 onwards. ... In total, approximately 150 000 arrived over a period of five decades, later also as indentured coal miners and railway workers. ... Indians were imported as it was found by colonial authorities that local black Africans were economically self-sufficient and thus unwilling to subject themselves to employment by colonial farmers. (*Zululand Observer* 2017: npn)

The numbers of the Indian indentured recorded is reflective of the circumstances that led to sheer desperation. The circumstances in India created the optimal conditions to urge Indians to seek a life outside their own country.

The Durban office of what was formerly part of the Department of Indian Affairs, has in its possession 91 volumes of ship's lists for the total of 152 184 indentured Indians who came to Natal between 1860 and 1911. Each of the 384 ship's registers has against individual entries information about the person's names, caste or religion, age, physical markings if any, and places of origin in the form of village, thanna (police circle), and zillah (district). (Bhana 1987: 1)

What exactly were the details of their complaints based on? Ravi Govender (2010), in an article from the archive, begins this list when he describes their arrival in the following manner:

... the first batch of Indentured immigrants from India ...were herded off the SS Truro on November 16, 1860. Herded? As in animals? Certainly, the travelling conditions on board that are recorded for posterity suggest nothing less. (p. 21)

Another article from the archive reveals that everything from their housing, to their treatment was “sub-human”.

The immigrants huts were made of dried cane or mealie stalks bound together. They were allowed a couple of days to build these huts at the cost of 10 shillings. ...These huts at one stage were likened to horse stables. (Munsamy 1995: 13)

This is further borne out by Duncan Du Bois, author of *Sugar and Settlers: The colonisation of the Natal South Coast 1850-1910*:

“Accommodation was shocking. The houses these people were expected to stay in ... You wouldn't keep a pig in it.” ...Conditions were particularly bad for women. While a third of the indentured population was supposed to be female, there was only one woman to four men. Venereal disease was rife and women did not have their own ablutions, so they had to share with men. They also only received half the wages and rations the men did for the same amount of work. (Cited in Koen 2015: npn)

In terms of the gender ratio, Bhana (2015) explains that initially the landowners preferred unmarried male labour. They did not approve of “whole families”, and were uncertain of the value of women labourers. The female indentured also suffered other atrocities at the hands of their employers. ‘There were certain sugar barons who demanded that an indentured woman spend her wedding night with him. Overseers who brazenly raped women on the sugar-cane field.’ (Desai no date: npn). Even though these rapes were sometimes reported to the authorities, no action was taken against the British perpetrators.

‘The Government of India quickly learned that a way to stop the abuses was to suspend emigration to the offending colony.’ (Bhana 1987:10). In 1872, the Coolie Commission refuted the seriousness of the abuses, dismissing any abuse or oppression by the land barons in as: ‘Isolated and individual cases have doubtless occurred...’ (Maharaj 2010: 20). Indenture was reinstated by the Indian Government in 1874, under the stipulation that the working conditions were improved. While the Indian labourers toiled in the fields of the various sugar plantations; it was the likes of James Liege Hulett of Hulett’s sugar, the Crookes brothers, the Reynolds brothers, and Marshall Campbell of Illovo sugar; the British sugar barons that made a fortune from this ‘bittersweet enterprise’ (Koen 2015: npn). ‘Sir John Hulett stated in 1908 in his address to Parliament that “it was absolutely to save the colony from ruin that Indian labour was introduced.’ (Munsamy 1995: 13)

The promise of freedom after indenture was also a pipe dream for those who chose to remain in South Africa.

The labourers soon discovered that their new working conditions were far from fair as many were made to toil from sunrise to sunset, six days a week and in 1891, the original promise of land and citizenship from the government was revoked and only 51 Indians actually received crown land from the colony.... By 1888, Indians were required to carry passes; and could not own land, live or vote outside designated areas. (*Public Eye* 2017: npn)

My ancestors were subjected to the same conditions and worked on the numerous estates established by the Natal government

The early estates were at Isipingo and Springfield Flats. In 1861 four sugar mills were erected in Isipingo alone. ...The importance of 1863 is that the average sugar crop was

heavier than in any previous year, being 2, 5 tons an acre. By 1865 there were 50 sugar mills in Natal alone. (Munsamy 1995: 13)

In 1890, the Crown allowed the indentured who qualified for free passage to India, to exchange it for land. The result is that many ex-indentured either purchased or rented land and excelled at various enterprises such as agriculture, fishing and hawking their fresh produce.

By 1904, Indians outnumbered whites in Natal.... Former labourers, who did not return to India, quickly established themselves as an important general labour force in Natal, particularly as industrial and railway workers, with others engaging in market gardening, growing most of the vegetables consumed by the population. (*Zululand Observer* 2017: npn)

It is important to note that not all Indians who arrived in Natal did so as indentured labour, some sought commercial opportunities, while a few were professionals such as doctors, lawyers and teachers. According to Rastogi (2008)

This community flourished commercially and spread its population to the Transvaal and Cape Colony. The white settlers, apprehensive of Indian financial prosperity, consequently promulgated divisive laws disempowering Indians. (p. 11)

Some of the ex-indentured chose to broaden their opportunities geographically, moving inland. They established businesses and residential communities along the main route between Durban and the Transvaal. They superseded the 'white business owners by garnering their customer base of all races' (Rastogi, 2008), building up resentment toward certain sectors of the Indian Diaspora.

This resentment could have ultimately been one of the contributing factors that led to the 1949 Riots in Durban, between "black Africans" and those of Indian origin and descent.

Although the 'riots' lasted only three days, they left an enduring psychological legacy which is of continuing significance to Indians, informing not only the way they perceive African people but also their ambivalence towards majority rule.... This differential incorporation was accompanied by an emphasis on racial, cultural and institutional differences to promote racial separation. (Thiara 1999: 161-162)

Journalist Brij Maharaj in his article, from the archive, 'The Truro people made SA what it is' in the 10-14 November 2010 edition of *POST* newspaper, quotes the former Prime Minister of Natal, Sir Liege Hullet as stating that the indentured Indian labour was vital to revive the waning local economy

and strengthen the position of the British Empire. Thus the indentured class were vital to the maintenance of the economy of the British Empire.

DANCE IN TROUBLED TIMES

The previous chapter has described the Classical art forms of the high- born castes in India in great detail, with the promise of expansion on the folk and tribal arts, particularly dance, of the country and how they were assimilated into the South African Indian Diaspora. As with the Indian sub-continent, Christianity became the only acceptable form of religious expression under British rule, and all “natives” were perceived as “heathens”. This is the situation that the indentured faced. Like the slave traditions around the world, the music and dance traditions that they carried with them to this new country, became their own form of passive rebellion to thwart the status quo. It was common place for the overseers of the plantations to threaten the indentured with severe punishment for music and dance.

Like in India they danced under the stars, around a central fire to ease aching bodies, frustrations of an extremely long work day and almost broken spirits in the manner that their ancestors passed down to them.

India is marked by its rich traditional heritage of Tribal/Folk Arts and Culture. Since the days of remote past, the diversified art and cultural forms generated by the tribal and rural people of India have continued to evince their creative magnificence. (Sharma 2015: 307)

One of India’s most renowned authorities on Dance, Mr. Jiwan Pani, explains the vastness of the dance form thus:

The range and variety of folk dance traditions surviving in India is indeed amazing. The sub-continent has around thirty different cultural regions. In each there are scores of differing styles of folk dances. (2000: 4)

As is established by the archive, like its classical counterpart the folk and tribal styles are ‘... akin to prayer, in which context it becomes a profound and an intense experience.’ (Khokar 1987:18)

These folk and tribal dances are composed of two categories: ritualistic and celebrative, and is further broken down into two traditions: those that have an audience and those that aren't performed before an audience. They are known to mark the rites of passage in a person's lifetime.

The dancing of folk and tribal people is spontaneous and true, but this does not mean that they dance anywhere, any way or any time. There is certainly a method in it all, a rhyme and a reason, even if not a consciously cultivated one. There are certain promptings, certain stimuli that inspire, provoke, urge or compel people to dance. And when they dance, they evolve and sustain certain norms.... there is the cycle of life embracing birth, wedding and death. Included in this are ceremonies like puberty, initiation, betrothal and ancestor worship, all of which are of considerable significance to the family and to the immediate community. The attendant feelings, joyous or drooping, often find expression through dancing. (Khokar 1987:14)

The Folk, Tribal and Martial arts section, in the literature review, has introduced the concept and bears reference. At the time of the indentured arrival no tribal dances are recorded as oral tradition, nor mentioned by those in the know. This does not in any way discount the possibility that they could have existed, but either died out or became merged into the culture and traditions of the majority.

It should be noted that the scholarly work in this area is extremely limited. Most of the knowledge that exists has been passed down the generations of the Indian Diaspora via observation, participation at community events and oral tradition. Bodies of linguistic and cultural affiliations began to form a few decades into the 20th century, as the Indian Diaspora's attempt to salvage and reclaim their right to practice their traditions. Popular journalist and cultural commentator, Mr. Jugadeesan Devar, the regular compeer at my mother's performances, wrote in an Indian newspaper, from the archive:

Annual festivals of music and dramas are organised by many leading Societies. The Eisteddfod festivals have become a part of Indian culture there. The South African Andhra Maha Sabha the Hindi Shiksha Sangh and the Tamil Vedic Society conduct these Eisteddfod which are Competitions in music, singing, dance, drama and speech. The competitions for children and adults are held in Telegu, Hindi and Tamil by the three organisations respectively. This Eisteddfod tradition was given to the people by late Mr. J. C. Wariner, a European who took a great interest in Indian culture. (Devar 1966: 4)

Most of the sources are in consensus that there was no classical form of Dance until women of Indian nationality, with a limited knowledge of the art form, married into the Indian Diaspora in Natal in the late 1940s and 1950s, as is evidenced by one of my mother's first students, Vasugi (Devar) Singh,

Classical dance forms particularly Bharatha Natyam and Kathak were not introduced into South Africa for many decades following the arrival of the early Indian settlers. Between 1860 and 1940 these classical forms were virtually non-existent. Based on the premise that Bharatha Natyam suffered a decline in status in India and that only after the 1930s was there a resurgence of this ancient temple art, could be a reason for the interest and subsequent introduction of this art form to this country... (Cited in SAIDA website 2018)

Professor Ashwin Desai, in his article in *POST* of 6-10 November 2018, entitled “The long struggle for Diwali”, asserts that it was a fight for survival. Being able to practice their secular beliefs was considered a privilege and a struggle for the indentured.

It is one of the fascinating aspects of history that the first official recognition of Diwali was in 1910, 50 years after the very first landing.... Historical records reveal that despite the warnings and violence meted out by the bosses, in their time-off, the indentured used drama and music to keep their spirits going.... (Desai 2018: 6)

He goes on to say:

The only time the indentured could leave the plantation was for three days to celebrate Muharram, what the whites called “c***** Christmas”. Despite being a Muslim celebration, indentured of all religions arrived in the city to celebrate. (Desai 2018: 6)

Their socialisation into the British colony only served to further inhibit any or all recreational time.

The “coolie barracks” were overcrowded and soon became slums. Working hours extended from 6am to 5pm. On Saturdays work stopped at 1 pm, after which rations were handed out. Suffering and unhygienic living conditions gave rise to a “high degree of diseases and illnesses”. Because of the drudgery experienced in their daily lives the early immigrant hungered for diversion and recreation. Although the Indentured labourers were considered illiterate by the British colonialists, they certainly did not lack a quest for religion, music, song and dance. (Singh cited in SAIDA website 2018)

The prevailing medium of dance was essentially folk in nature comprising of a limited number of dances such as Garba and Dandiya Ras (from Gujarat, North of India); and from the South, Kummi; Kollattam and Therukoothu (commonly known as “6 foot dance”), as per the archive.

The performance of these dances while giving recreational pleasures to the dancers, entertains the onlookers. Under this category of dances are included those forms of folk dances which have unmistakable elements of theatre. ... there is a very thin line between dance and theatre in India. (Pani 2000: 110)

As the majority of the indentured were South Indian, the dances and festivals of the Tamil and Telugu speaking sectors were most prevalent. The Therukoothu was a celebration of an abundant harvest,

which also served as an opportunity to educate the illiterate rural folk of the religious scriptures via the medium of dance theatre. In its strongholds such as Mount Edgecombe sugar plantations, the entire performance was enacted by men only, who assumed the feminine roles as well, in celebration of “Thirunaal” (Festival Day).

Performances were presented in open grounds, under shaded trees and under crudely constructed shelters with only a demarcated area for a stage. ... It is important to note that Therukoothu in no way influenced the development of Bharatha Natyam in this country. (Singh cited in SAIDA website 2018)

Kummi (clapping with the hands) and Kollatam (keeping time with sticks) were South Indian dances, performed in a circle and in line formations, by women only, during most auspicious festivals.

Clapping is common to most folk dances from various parts of India, and even extends to the clicking of fingers in combination with fluid hand movements. According to Khokar (1987), the arms and hands can be maneuvered in numerous ways to create choreography which includes ‘holding or clasping hands, holding the waist or slinging the arms around the shoulders’ (Khokar 1987: 22). The festival of nine nights in celebration of the Mother Goddess (Navaratri), is also the most popular interaction of men and women in the social dances of Garba (the equivalent of Kummi in the South) and Dandiya Ras (dance with sticks) emulating the battles of the epic works such as the *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat*.

The occurrences of these Folk celebrations travelled with, and established themselves wherever the Indian Diaspora settled and thrived.

Since Natal had the largest Indian population, localities such as Pentrich, Pietermaritzburg, and the suburbs of Clairwood, Overport, Mayville, Cato Manor, Stella Hill, Puntans Hill, Riverside, Seaview and Central Durban became centres of cultural activities. Further afield, Indian Culture thrived in regions like Port Elizabeth, East London, Kimberly, Fordsburg, Vrededorp, Benoni, Germiston and Pretoria. (Singh cited in SAIDA website 2018: npn)

Modernisation, and the strong western influence, also affected the Indian Diaspora, and for the first time, they were exposed to the trends and cultural developments on the Indian sub-continent. This made them aware of the lack of cultural connection to their “motherland”.

The interest in the performance of Indian dance was introduced and kept alive through the Indian film industry which was major influence on style and technique in the 1930s. It was much later that the north Indian classical dance form, Kathak, surfaced. (Singh in SAIDA website 2018)

The 1940s and 1950s saw more established sea travel between India and South Africa, as well as Indian brides being sought for the members of the Indian Diaspora. This resulted in a cultural lifeline being formed by the Diaspora itself, in response to the sanctions imposed by the Indian Government in 1946 against South Africa.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

‘The indentured system was formally ended in 1917...’ (Bhana 1987:19), yet the echoes still reverberate throughout the passage of time.

With the departure of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa, in 1914, and the lack of his dynamic personality, Indian leadership withered away, and Indian society itself disintegrated. Political activity receded into the background, and the yearning for freedom and culture was nipped in its unfolding season by the greed for wealth and profit. It seemed as if the arenas of Indian energy were closed, and the political instincts of the people were concentrated into the channels of trade and commerce. Mahatma Gandhi having created a new technique and a new cult in South Africa, found himself at strife with mightier forces in India and this, in its turn, led to the application of South African remedy, mass civil disobedience, throughout the length and breadth of India. In India, as in South Africa, he directed the movement of the self-emancipating mind beyond the stage of resolutions and petitions into the stage of resolute agitation, and he infused into his political warfare the spiritual principles which had been his chief motive on his entry into political life. (Ahmad- Khan 1946: 21)

The trials and tribulations of a new land made the indentured determined to materialise the life they dreamed of in a new country. ‘Nevertheless, they started a new life with nothing and through sheer determination and willpower, they made a difference.’ (Govender 2010: 21). Their indomitable spirit saw them rise above their situation. ‘What the history of indenture teaches us is that good only overcomes evil, not because it is written in the scriptures, but because it is fought for.’ (Desai no date: npn). Despite the tensions that boiled over during the 1949 riots, Zulu leader, Chief Mangasuthu Buthelezi emphasised his admiration in the following manner:

Simply and plainly put, without the blood, sweat, suffering and toil of the people of the Truro and the many more Indians who followed them, South Africa would not be what it is today and would not enjoy the levels of prosperity, development and stability which we now have... (Maharaj 2010: 20)

As it has been observed, Dance could not be a priority to the indentured initially, yet served an important purpose in stamping their ownership on their right to their identity and to practice their religion and culture. They exercised this right at every opportunity with great passion and gusto, however, this phenomenon is not an isolated one. In terms of Indian classical dance, the global circumstances need to be understood in order to put the South African Indian Classical dance context into perspective. It is initially; as a result of the British colonial urge that the Indian Diaspora was spread around the world in their numbers. The table below, that I have created from our travels, the archive and various scholarly sources, allows the reader to put the Indian Diaspora in perspective in terms of geographical colonial movement (a sample of just 4 colonies from several for this purpose), population, history and the beginnings of formal pedagogy in terms of Indian Classical Dance, in particular (sourced from Allen-Agostini 2008; Chand no date; Jain 2009 and Thiagarajan 2017; and archive material):

The table below is reflective of the attitudes toward the significance each country has given to imbibing the Indian culture into its academic ranks - except South Africa. More and more the pedagogy and scholarly investigation of the arts is viewed as an arena of self-actualisation; reclamation and decolonising of a previously disenfranchised, subjugated and oppressed nation and people. One needs to question the value and meaning of “citizenship” and ask - is the colonist standard that “some are more equal than others’ still being perpetuated through the medium of dance?

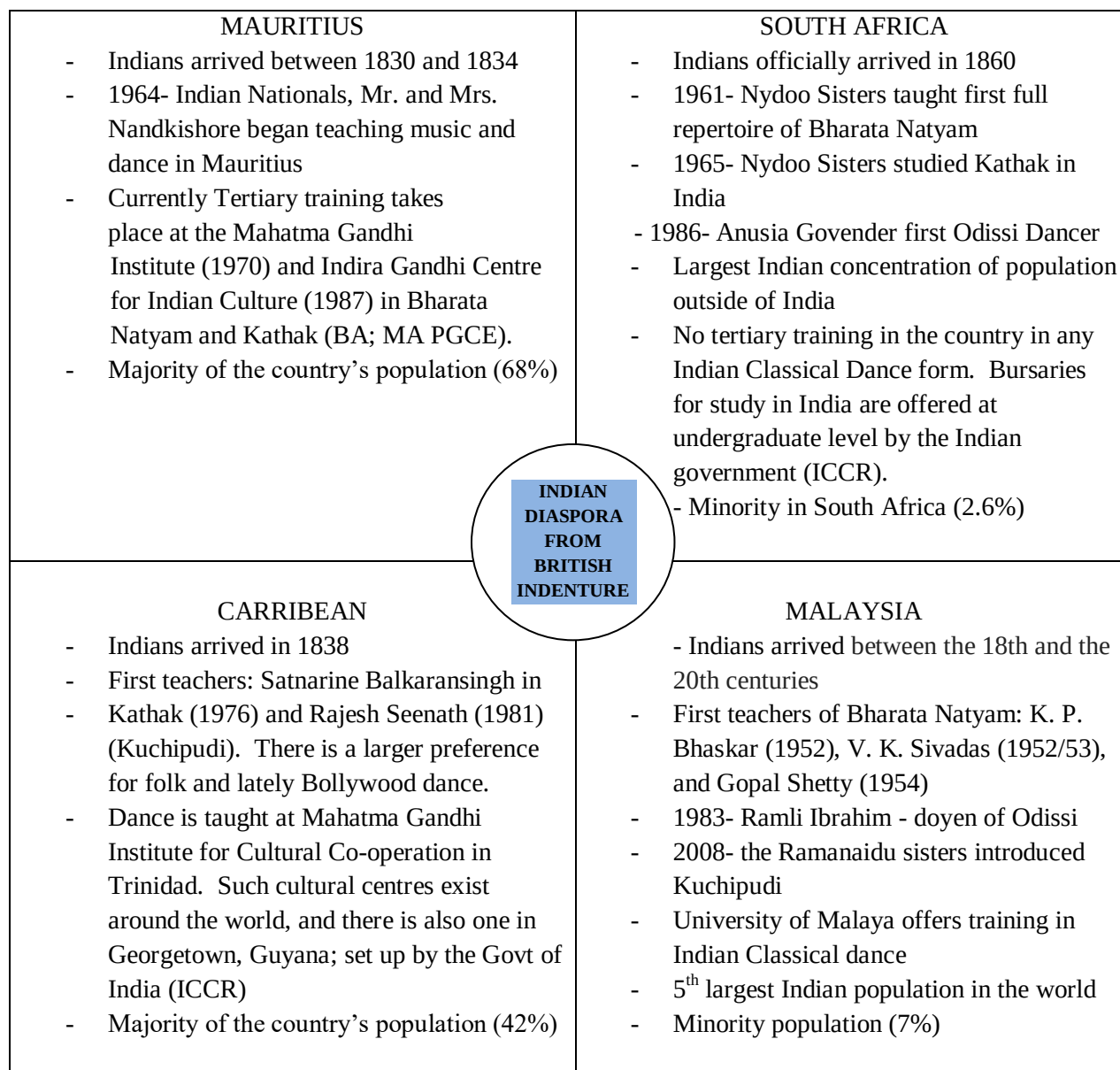


Illustration 9: A description of Indian Classical Dance pedagogy in 4 Indian Diasporas

When writing the previous chapter; which established what the earliest origins and impetus for Indian dance was; and this chapter, that provides the reasons why oppression gave rise to an unexpected response from the Indian Diaspora in South Africa; I feel overwhelmed by the sheer audacity that a single nation exercised on several continents and this country in particular. No one was left unscathed, irrespective of caste, colour or creed. The response is a sense of pride, progress and rebellion which proves part of my hereditary trait as a ‘willful’ (Ahmed, 2014) spirit, and an acknowledgement that thus far the interplay between history, memory and the archive is not substantial enough.

CHAPTER 4: RE-STORYING DANCE HISTORY THROUGH THE ARCHIVE: THE NYDOO SISTERS: THE FIRST RECORDED SOUTH AFRICANS TO PROPAGATE A FULL REPERTOIRE OF INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA, FROM 1959

INTRODUCTION

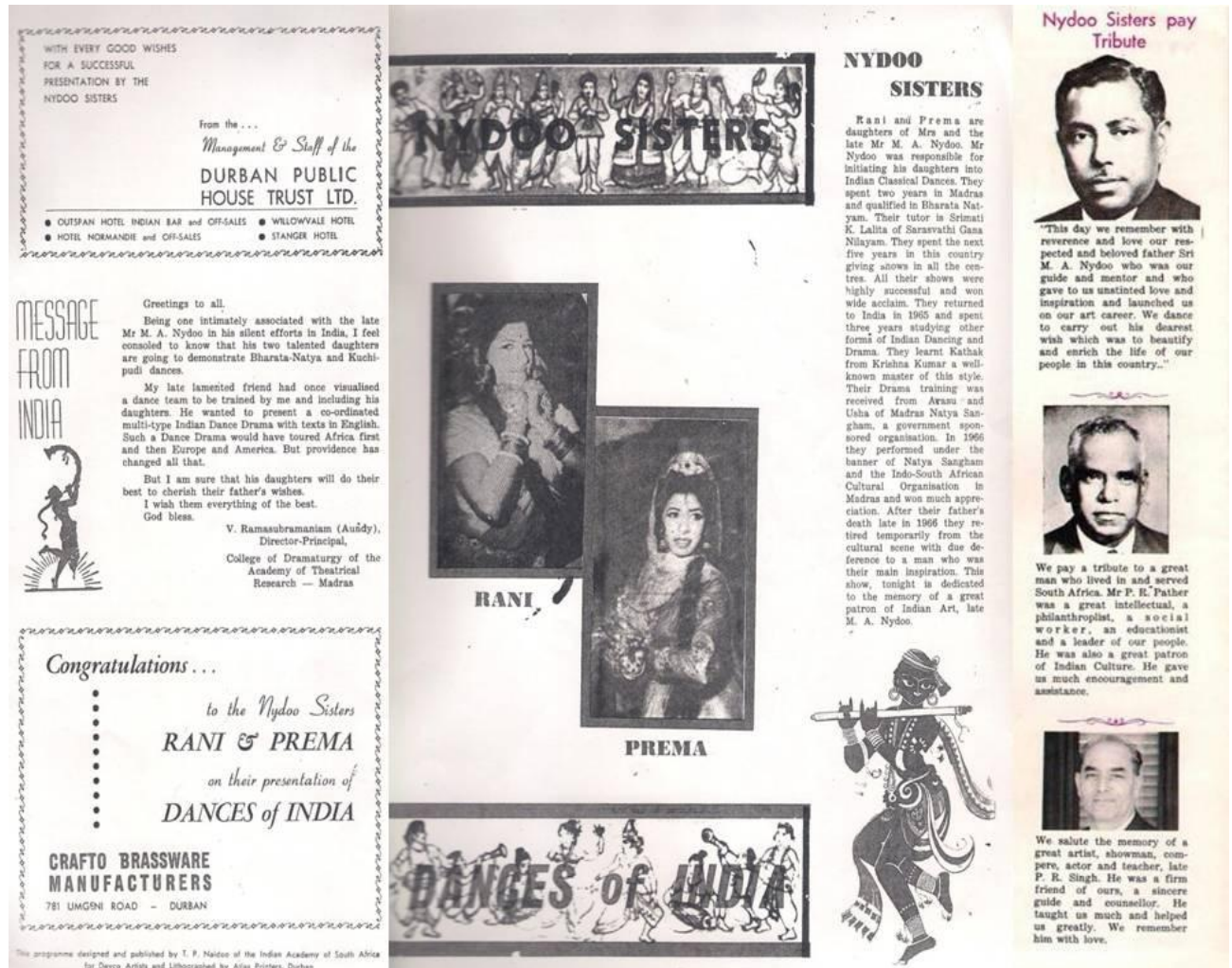


Illustration 10: Programme of Nydoo sister's final performance, 1971

The post-event euphoria of my mother's last public performance was marred by the failure of the programmes to be distributed to the audience at the event. The programme had been crafted as a tribute to not just their father, but also other artistic and community leaders, and to the Nydoo Sister's career together, marking the end of an era. My mother's mentor also paid tribute to a career plan with my grandfather that would never materialise:

My late lamented friend had once visualised a dance team to be trained by me and including his daughters. He wanted to present a co-ordinated multi-type Indian Dance Drama with texts in English. Such a Dance Drama would have toured Africa first and then Europe and America. But providence has changed all that. But I am sure that his daughters will do their best to cherish their father's wishes. I wish them everything of the best. (Aundy 1971: npn)

A dancer, now a famous performing artist, who had just returned from India and was being recognised for her talent in the short absence of the Nydoo sisters; since my mother's marriage; was married to a member of the organizing committee of the Nydoo Sister's final show in 1971, and he was responsible for the printing and distribution of the programmes. The archive contains this dancer's debut performance programme for 8 March 1971 at the Durban City Hall. When members of the organising committee went to his fish shop; not far from the performance venue; to ask for an explanation for non-distribution of the programmes at the event, he became very evasive and acted peculiarly. This sparked a search of his shop as he said that he had received it there and could not find it on the day of the event. According to my mother, she was informed by a member of the committee that the programmes were found in one of his freezers still wrapped in the delivery packaging clearly marked "programmes" and was allegedly hidden by his wife. My mother was completely astounded. Until that moment all her encounters and dealings with other artists had been honorable and marked with integrity. She wondered what could have sparked such malicious behaviour - was that a sign of the times? Did a performing artiste's retirement from the public eye signify the end of her career? Was she now considered obsolete in favour of "the flavour of the month"? Are these the sacrifices women had to make and the challenges they would have to face? This was new territory for my mother, yet it became a constant companion over decades - professional jealousy in various forms.

The previous two chapters have established a pattern of centuries of colonial hegemony that has shaped both Indian and South African society. My family did not allow themselves the luxury of victimisation. They have created a presentation of history through assembling the archive. They preferred to be survivors and innovators, and found a creative way to resist and rise above the status quo – a lasting and inherited trait of creativity and perseverance.

The opening line of Marianne Hirsch's book *Family Frames: photography, narrative and postmemory* (1997), asks a very pertinent question: 'Is History not simply that time when we were not born?' (p.1) - the answer is both yes and no. The period that this chapter covers - the 10 years preceding my birth,

including the first two years of my life - the span of my mother's career as a performing artist and part of the Nydoo Sisters entourage, was only accessible to me through the oral tradition, family tales and the collection of photos and documentation I have in my possession. I am '... beginning to understand why family members act as they do, even how you came to be who you are.' (Lichtman 1978: 4). Yet, I have lived through the telling and re-telling of every detail and poring over the seemingly endless collection of my mother's memorabilia making me an active and very willing participant in my family's lived experience. Here, like Hirsch, with the aid of the family archive

...I trace this intersection of private and public history. I examine the idea of "family" in contemporary discourse and its power to negotiate and mediate some of the traumatic shifts that have shaped post-modern mentalities... (1997: 13)

The reader should note that this chapter is a focus on the family archive and my mother's evolution into the stalwart of Indian Dance in this country. A large number of quotations are taken directly from the family archive and is relevant to establish the time in which my family and specifically my mother found herself. My mother carefully collected the articles and what follows is my perspective of how my mother explained these events to me.

The "colonised" and "colonisation" can be viewed as four waves of political control over land and people since before 1652; to establish control and 'appropriate a place or domain for one's own use' (Oxford Dictionaries in Oliver & Oliver 2017: 2). The most recent, according to Oliver and Oliver (2017), is ironically also the year that my family returned from their first sojourn to India.

The year 1961, when South Africa became a republic, witnessed the introduction of more than three decades of white Afrikaner supremacy over the black people in the country, independent of Britain (cf. Heldring & Robinson 2012). (p.2)

Despite the inhumanity and complete hegemony of such systems, understandably yet surprisingly, other arguments exist also, ones that were touted throughout the ideology of these systems. These are the very ideologies that required challenge and drastic actions to be taken.

One could over-simplify, say that one camp sees the crucial relationships for analysing colonial and indeed postcolonial histories as being those between knowledge and power, whereas the other views them as being those between *interest* and power. The focus on a knowledge-power nexus involves not merely a stress on the centrality, power and purposefulness of colonial discourses (or ideologies: those two concepts are, disconcertingly

often, used as synonyms) but on colonialism's capacity in a strong sense to create that which it claimed to find in colonised societies. Arguments doubting this, ones seeing colonial knowledge either as essentially neutral 'information' or as being created by colonised as well as colonising subjects, ... ones stressing the weakness of colonial power and the degree of agency retained by the colonised, all amount (in Nicholas Dirks's terms) to an abject 'disavowal of colonial power and prejudice' or, yet more starkly, to 'blam[ing] the victim again'. (Howe 2008: npn) (*Italics in original*)

For the Indian Diaspora, and my family, the best way to resist both circumstances, was to take an action that would not be seen as a direct challenge to the status quo, considering the Diaspora's precarious position in South African society at the time. Thus the family trait of 'wilfulness' continues past indenture, into establishing roots and an identity that was their own; that was previously an unquestionable right in India - a dance activism of sorts.

This chapter is linked to the family archive in the most significant manner. The focus is on the origins of the first full repertoire of Indian Classical Dance in South Africa. Inadvertently this chapter becomes a tribute to and a study in the role of women in the overcoming of the challenges that indenture, resentment and rebellion posed for the Indian Diaspora and their descendants.

SATYAGRAHA AND DANCE

As a result of '...Gandhi's leadership in the satyagrahas conducted between 1907 and 1914' (Reddy & Hiralal 2017: 45), as well as the "threat" posed by the 1949 riots, the Indian Diaspora found the impetus to forge a stronger presence in this country. There was a sense of "abandonment" as a result of the Indian government's withdrawal of diplomatic ties in 1946. For most of the Indian Diaspora returning to India was not an option. They therefore resigned to locate themselves in terms of both security and identity in an attempt to create roots in South Africa.

Racist policies and practices disenfranchised PIO [People of Indian Origin] in South Africa ... for exactly 123 years following their arrival in 1860. When the Union was proclaimed in 1910, they were classified as second-class citizens as it was the official policy of the government to repatriate them to India. It was only in 1961 that ... PIOs were formally incorporated into the South African citizenship category. (Gopala et al 2014: 31)

The plight of the Indian indentured is highlighted by Dr. Enuga Reddy and Dr. Kalpana Hiralal in their book *Pioneers of Satyagraha, Indian South Africans Defy Racist laws, 1907-1914*, that is handled in a different manner to the usual.

Satyagraha is treated more as an Indian struggle rather than an important event in South African history. Several studies by scholars since the 1980s describe the socio-economic background to the Indian resistance in South Africa, but none of them identify many of the resisters and their role in the struggle. *Pioneers of Satyagraha*, whilst acknowledging the leadership of Gandhi in the satyagraha movement, shifts the focus to the role and contributions of tens of thousands of resisters, many of whom still remain unknown. (2017: 45)

Reddy (1991); the former director of the United Nations Centre against Apartheid, stated:

Gandhiji found that "passive resistance" was seen even by European friends as a "weapon of the weak." He sought a term which could be understood by Indians and make it clear that the resistance was out of moral strength rather than any weakness. He invited suggestions and, in November 1907, invented the term "satyagraha" (firmness in truth). The choice of the term itself appears to have helped crystallise his thinking. (p. 21)

India and South Africa's challenge to colonialism has the same kinship and architect. The young barrister, Gandhi arrived in South Africa in 1893. In 1894, Gandhi's resistance to the injustice and racism was to found the Natal Indian Congress. The aim was to unite all Indians regardless of class and language in South Africa.

The humiliations and indignities to which the people of Indian origin were subjected in South Africa, and the struggle for their human dignity led by Mahatma Gandhi, have had a great influence on the Indian national movement. ...espousing uncompromising opposition to colonialism and racism and recognising that India's own freedom was meaningless unless all the peoples under colonial and racist domination were free. (Reddy 1991: 4)

The "pass" laws for Indians enacted by the Transvaal Government in 1907, sparked a renewed wave of rebellion resulting in General Jan Smuts release of prisoners and repealing '...the Act in return for voluntary registration by the Indians.' (Reddy 1991: 4-5). The Government reneged on the agreement and

Thousands of Indians burnt their registration certificates. The Satyagraha continued this time for several years as the white authorities, who were negotiating for "self-government", resorted to harassment rather than mass arrests. ... Gandhiji then revived the Satyagraha on a much bigger scale, inviting women and indentured labourers to join. Tens of thousands of workers in the Newcastle coal mines and in plantations on the Natal coast went on strike and defied brutal police violence. Thousands of Indians went to jail. (Reddy 1991: 5)

According to Reddy (1991), both Gandhi and Pandit Nehru felt 'a duty to help Africa regain its dignity and freedom' (p.7). This resulted in the Indian government taking the matter of racial discrimination against Indians in South Africa as a complaint to the United Nations. Following Gandhian principles, '... India was able to secure a two-thirds majority for a resolution on its

complaint.’ (Reddy 1991: 9). Gandhi would later become an inspiration to our first democratically elected State President:

"It would be a grave omission on our part if we failed to mention the close bonds that have existed between our people and the people of India, and to acknowledge the encouragement, the inspiration and the practical assistance we have received as a result of the international outlook of the All India Congress." - Nelson Mandela in his letter from prison in 1980. (Reddy 1991 :7)

My family chose a rather unique form of resistance - arts and culture, more specifically Dance. It was non-violent and innovative. My grandparents travelled regularly to India to meet with producers and studios to purchase films for screening at their Durban cinemas. With exposure to the film industry and cultural eisteddfods, my mother would choreograph dances, displaying a flair for it. This occurred against a growing awareness of the need for religious and cultural identity in the Indian Diaspora.

From the 1920s onwards, Hindu priests did begin to arrive in South Africa and this helped to consolidate some of the rituals, festivals, traditions, beliefs, and practices in a more formal way. Brain (1990) suggests that these priests helped Hindus to establish themselves around common religious practices, and that these instilled a sense of belonging to a wider faith community globally. Together with educated and business elites, they also helped to form numerous Hindu institutions. While this, on the one hand, helped to make permanent the Hindu presence in the country, it also led to a greater awareness of one's own practices and how these may be distinguished from the beliefs and practices of others. (Gopala 2014: 32)

This prompted my grandfather, who was at the time one of the wealthier members of the Indian community in South Africa to arrange for Rani, Prema and Salochana to attend training at the same institution in India, as he was aware of the widening crevice in South African Indians' cultural needs. Mr. M.A. Nydoo, my grandfather, was the founder President of the South African chapter of the Andhra Maha Sabha, in 1931 in Durban. Other linguistic groups in South Africa were also establishing entities to ensure the propagation of cultural practices around this time.

The interest has since spread and broadened with initiatives such as the Eisteddfod movements and cultural organisations. Many girls with profound talent for dance were discovered during these competitions. (Singh cited in SAIDA website 2018)

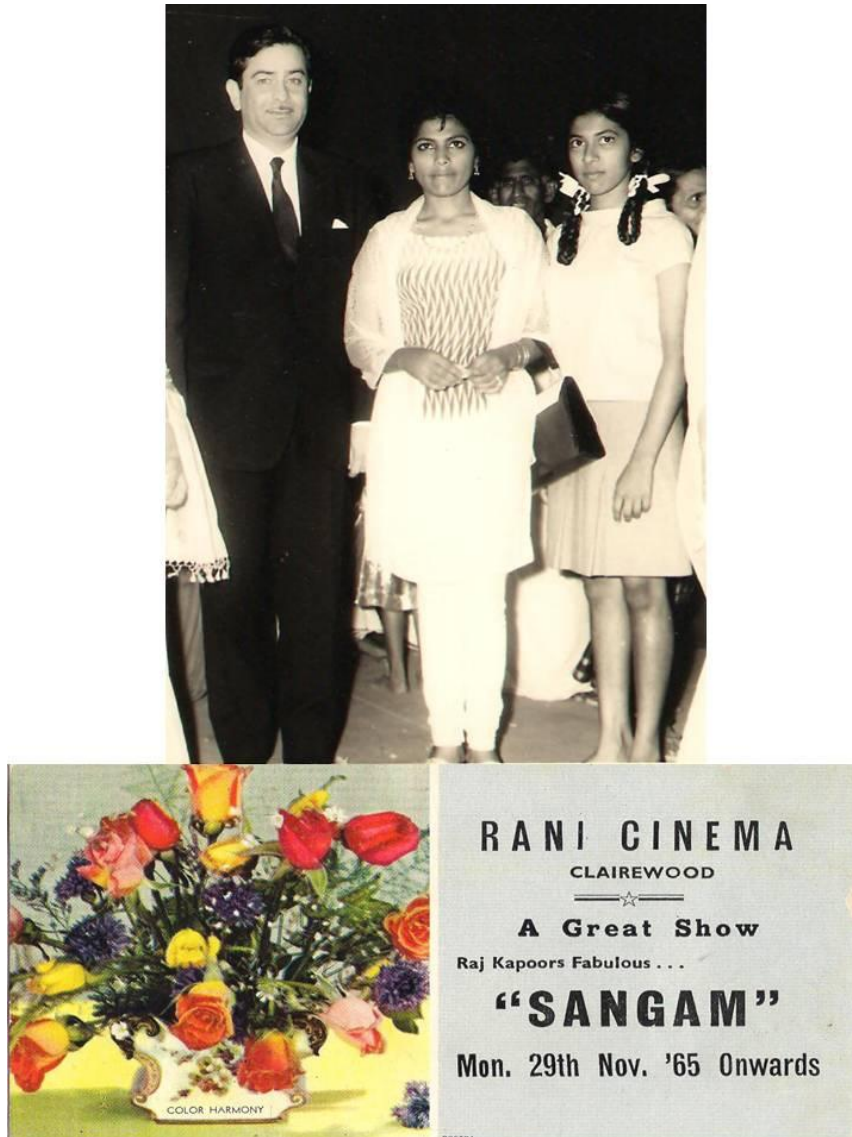


Illustration 11: Rani and Prema with legendary Bollywood actor and film maker, Raj Kapoor; and a ticket to one of his films from Rani Cinema

M. A. Nydoo was the Managing Director of Manbro Furnishers, Rani Cinema (Clairwood) and Vijay Cinema (Asherville). These theatres were founded in the same year as the popular Avalon group of cinemas in South Africa and brought the images of Indian dance never before experienced to our shores.

Seventy-one years of independent South African cinema is to be celebrated in October 2010 when the Moosa family's Avalon Group, once almost destroyed by apartheid ... In Durban during the 1920s a young man named Aboobaker ... Moosa fell in love with the cinema In 1939, at age 37, his dream was realised when he and Abdulla Kajee co-founded the Avalon Theatre in Durban's Victoria Street. (Stead 2010: npn).

'The films had a positive impact for retention of vernacular languages and became a source of religious and moral education.' (Devan 2014: npn). This was vital to a community that was already

cut-off from their land of origin since 1860 and then again in 1946 in response to the oppressive laws of South Africa. This sense of isolation was exacerbated by the fact that

Indian immigrants to South Africa in the late nineteenth century differed in terms of their origins, motivations, belief systems, customs, and practices from the indigenous African population as well as from the ruling white settler elite. (Gopala et al 2014: 1)

The actions of my family were inspired and motivated by Gandhi's principles, and were in line with Oliver Tambo when he spoke of Gandhi in New Delhi on November 14, 1980: 'His imprint on the course of the South African struggle is indelible.' (Reddy 1991: 6)

THE SOUTH AFRICAN ORIGINS OF INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCE AND PEDAGOGY



Illustration 12: Rani and Anusia with Mrs. Sharda Naidoo

An important aspect to note is that prior to my mother, there were other dance teachers; most notably Dr. Thirupurasundari Pillay, a medical doctor from Madras, and Mrs. Sharda Naidoo from Hyderabad both being women of Indian nationality, married to South Africans of Indian descent in the 1940s and 1950s.

Indian nationals who settled in South Africa through marriage tutored the early dancers. They were, Dr Thirupurasundree and Shrimati Sharda Naidoo and Shrimati Janaki Naidoo. They introduced Indian classical dance that resembled the ancient art form. The first few students who learnt the early dance styles were Komala Moodley, Kanya Kumari (The daughter of the late Dr Goonam) and Padma Maistry.... (Singh in SAIDA website 2018)

In my mother and my conversations with Mrs. Naidoo (before her passing, which was recorded on video) and the son of Dr. Thirupurasundari; Dr. Mahesh Pillay from Chennai who were family friends; it was acknowledged that their Bharata Natyam education was as a result of limited exposure in India, and that they had not studied full repertoires. Dr. Thirupurasundari's father was the physician to a Nawab (landlord with Royal ties), and as a young girl she would sometimes be allowed to take lessons with the Nawab's daughter. Mrs. Naidoo took lessons at school and only partially completed her studies in the dance form. They both found a deficit in the dance repertoire of the Indian Diaspora as the prevailing medium of dance was essentially folk in nature. They served as inspirations to the three young "pioneering" South African women. According to my mother, 'These two women were the real pioneers in bringing Bharata Natyam into this country.' (Rani Govender in Gangaram 2000: 4)

Despite the cultural disinvestments campaign the Indian performing arts have enjoyed unprecedented growth in this country. One of the reasons for this was that students from South Africa travelled to India to study the authentic genres in music, song and dance. In the face of a major obstacle like the cultural boycott, the South Africans of Indian decent can be commended for employing creative ways in importing the performing arts from India to the land of their birth. ...Unlike their white counterparts, government funding was unheard of. The community rallied together and raised the necessary funds to send talented students to study in India. (Singh in SAIDA website 2018)

Both these women trained young girls and held stage performances to commemorate significant religious and cultural events, but could not complete a full dance repertoire. Their concerts were of an amateur nature, as were the popular eisteddfod opportunities. A professional calibre of dance was rare and usually reserved for the cinema halls.

RANI AND THE NYDOO SISTERS

SUNDAY TIMES KZN, July 9 2000

HERITAGE

Dance turned Nydoo sisters into celebrities

Rani and Prema were among the first South Africans to qualify in classical Bharata Natyam in India

SEEMA GANGARAM

IN JANUARY 1960 three young sisters, accompanied by their mother, boarded the SS Karanja bound for India.

Two years later Rani, 17, and Prema Nydoo, 12, sailed back into a packed and noisy Durban harbour a celebrities, after being among the first South Africans to qualify in the ancient classical dance form of Bharata Natyam.

Their oldest sister, Radha, 21, returned as the first qualified female waza player in South Africa.

On November 20 1961, Rani and Prema waited nervously backstage at the Durban City Hall to give their first public performance on South African soil. The hall was filled to capacity with an audience who had paid between two-and-a-half shillings and one pound and one shilling to catch a glimpse of the bejewelled sisters.

They sat enthralled as dance after dance, costume after colourful costume was revealed before their eyes — a host of culture hundreds of years old.

At the end of the two-and-a-half-hour performance, the Nydoo sisters were exhausted after performing 3 hours and more.

Months of touring the country followed, with visits to Cape Town, Pretoria, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, East London and Kimberley.

"People were seeing Bharata Natyam for the first time. It was an amazing experience for them and us," recalls Rani.

"In some places the white audience would sit on one side of the hall and Indians on the other. There were some places where we were not allowed to perform because we were black. We were not allowed to perform at the Playhouse.

"As an artist, when the audience appreciated my dance, that made me want to continue. People used to follow me around, as far as they could travel, to catch and hear," Rani and Prema were among the first three South Africans to study Bharata Natyam at the Saravasthy Sana Nilayam in Madras under Sri-nathi K Latha, who was well into her 90s when she died in 1992.

The other young girl was Salochana Naidoo, who now lives in Canada.

Rani married Dhanabalan Govender, a former deputy director of the House of Delegates in 1968, and they had two daughters. Prema returned to India eight years ago and lives in Madras where she dances and teaches Bharata Natyam.

Rani was born in Mangli Lodge in Rosburgh, opposite the Hulet's sugar barracks, which she and her siblings would visit to watch the Indian labourers dance.

"She says the barracks were the first arts and cultural centre of the community. It was in these barracks that folk dance was practised and kept alive before it went onto the stage — and also the place where I first experienced dance. Later on, I would sneak into the cinema that my father ran in Jacobs to catch authentic Bharata Natyam on the big screen."

The ancient art form, often referred to as the

"Dance of the Gods", was introduced to South Africa in a small way by Sharda Naidoo in the 1940s.

"She was an Indian national from Hyderabad who married a South African. Then there was Dr Thirupurasundari Pillay, who also married a South African and moved here in the '50s. These two women were the real pioneers in bringing Bharata Natyam into this country."

Bharata Natyam was recorded in the Natya Shastra around 400 BC by Sage Bharata Muni. Originally called Sadir and only danced by women in temples and at religious functions, the dance is said to have divine significance. The art form has been revolutionised and made popular largely through the efforts of Rukmini Arundale, who brought the dance out of the temples and onto the stage.

Since the Nydoo sisters' return to the country, hundreds of young girls and women eager to learn this mystical dance have flocked to India to study.

"In the '70s a host of dancers returned from India, some having studied for only a few months. The sad thing about this is that the quality of dance deteriorates because people are eager to finish their studies quickly and dance schools are popping up like mushrooms," says Rani.

Rani and Prema and their mother, Dhanalutchmee, returned to India in 1965, so the young women could continue learning more about Bharata Natyam and also to study the classical north Indian dance form, Kathak. On New Year's Eve of 1966, the sisters, after an evening of celebrations, received a telephone call from South Africa telling them that their father had died.

"Two weeks before he had visited us in India. He took our passports back with him to have them endorsed for the United States because we had been invited to perform there.

"He never got a chance to send them back. A plan was made for our mother to fly to South Africa but, unfortunately, Prema and I were not able to attend our father's funeral and that had a terrible effect on me. I felt I needed to make peace with myself and, in 1972, when my daughter Anusia was about two years old, I gave my last performance, dedicated to my father, at the M L Sultan Technikon."

Shortly after her husband's death, Rani's mother was diagnosed with leukaemia and died in 1972.

"She didn't want Prema and me to stop our studies and come back home just because she was sick. She insisted we stay on and complete our course, which we did."

Rani went on to teach Bharata Natyam for 10 years at the Cato Manor Technical College with the help of her daughter, Anusia.

"I was diagnosed with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, a hereditary heart condition from which my father died, and was unable to continue dancing. Strenuous exercise and movement would worsen my condition."

Today Rani lives with her husband in Amanzimtoti, researching different forms of folk dance.

"Dance is in my blood. I may have stopped dancing but the dancer in me will never stop."

Picture: JACKIE CLAUSEN

MAKING HISTORY: Sisters Prema and Rani perform the Radha-Krishna folk/classical dance in Cape Town, during their national tour in 1962

CLASSIC BEAUTY: Rani in full Bharata Natyam costume

Illustration 13: Rani's interview with Seema Gangaram, *Sunday Times* 2000 (original article)

No other dancer, besides Salochana Naidoo, has had the similar experience as my mother and her family, as they were the first to experience this phenomenon. I believe that the importance of the lived experience is firstly in establishing a time frame for the events that unfolded in South Africa during my family's dance career, as well as the events that shaped that time. Secondly, it was years later that other South Africans could achieve the same feat, and my family was able to help them "transition" easily as a result of their experiences. The documentation of these events is vital to establish the

challenges and successes that they experienced under trying circumstances. Dancers who today travel to India to train and study, are dealing with a comparatively easier task.

My maternal grandfather's family was huge, living as an extended family, and came from humble beginnings. Rani grew up before apartheid took hold of the country. Despite the tense under currents of South Africa's history, she and her siblings did not see living together with various races and cultures as unusual, and embraced it.

Rani was born in Manghi Lodge in Rosburgh, opposite the Hulletts sugar barracks, which she and her siblings would visit to watch the Indian labourers dance. She says the barracks were the first arts and cultural centres of the community. "It was in these places that folk dance was practised and kept alive before it went onto the stage – and also the place where I first experienced dance. Later on, I would sneak into the cinema that my father ran in Jacobs to watch authentic Bharata Natyam on the big screen." (Gangaram 2000: 4)



Illustration 14: Clockwise from left to right: **The 3 Nydoo sisters preparing for their sea voyage to India, 1959; The Nydoo Sisters at their performance on their return to South Africa; The Nydoo family:**standing: Chandraleela, Radhakrishna, Prema and seated Pathmanabha, Suryakantha, Mr.and Mrs. M.A. Nydoo, Rani and Akaratnam family; and the Nydoo family disembarking in India, 1960.

In 1959, Rani (Luxmidhevi) Nydoo and her sister Prema (Pathmavati), along with their eldest sister Radha (Suryakantha) and their mother; Mrs. Thanalutchmee Nydoo; left South African shores on board the S.S. Karanja arriving in Bombay in 1960 after a long sea voyage. They then had to take a

train to Madras. The sea voyage itself was a unique experience for the young girls. They travelled in the first class section, and experienced no segregation in terms of race onboard. Their meals were served in their rooms and there were a lot of activities, games and entertainment to fill their 21-day journey. They also made many stops along the coast of Africa, and as children we were regaled with stories pertaining to various curios and trinkets, as well as the memories attached to them. They experienced some sea sickness, and on their first voyage to India, witnessed a burial at sea. It was of a 10-year old child and is an event that my nearly 80 year old aunt can still picture today. The same experience of equal and caring treatment was true for their return voyage on the S. S. Kampala too.

Rani and Prema were amongst the first three South African girls to study a full repertoire of Bharata Natyam in India along with Sulochana Naidoo at the prestigious dance institution, “Sarawati Gnana Nilayam” in Triplicane, Madras.



Illustration 15: Radha Nydoo: First South African woman to study the Veena in India

Their eldest sister, Radha went on to become the first internationally trained woman Veena player in South Africa. She was drawn to the instrument when she watched local Maestro S. Nanda perform at her school in Clairwood. She wanted to learn something different from her sisters so she chose the Veena and studied it at Saraswati Gana Nilayam. Radha went on to teach pre-school, and at fifty years of age, she obtained her teachers diploma, and taught at governmental schools until her retirement. She raised two children.

My grandmother stayed with them initially in Madras, and once they were settled, travelled back and forth between India and South Africa, leaving the three sisters in the care of an “aya” (nanny) who lived with them. My mother and both my aunts often described the experience as a “culture shock”. My mother and her sisters (and I), having lived at least half our lives on two continents, initially experienced the similar identity crisis as Dr. Laloo, a South African medical practitioner and dance exponent :

For Dr. Ranjit there was this great conflict of the mind, being brought up in South Africa as a South African Indian and then spending 7 years in India Dr. Ranjit felt as an Indian in South Africa he was different from an Indian in India, he was sure that other Indian South Africans felt the same. (Jhankaar School of Dance 2014)

It wasn't all hard work for the sisters. They got to be tourists in India with their mother and sometimes father, and had enjoyable experiences, as they had shipped one of the family vehicles with them and travelled around parts of the country with the entire family. My mother would tell us stories of how the locals thought that they were movie stars as they rode in their car and stepped out in sunglasses. The children in the villages would run alongside the car trying to catch a glimpse of them.

Being born as a descendent of Indians had not prepared them for India or the difference in their socialisation.

...Landy, Maharaj, and Mainet-Valleix argued that though “Indian” identity was alive in Durban, it was fragmented according to generation, religion, language, and class, and that India was a key referent “transcendentally” since it only has an abstract existence, which is spoken of, dreamt of, and sometimes visited, but always as a whole since the region of one's ancestors is almost never at the forefront. In a similar vein, Bhana argues that people of Indian origin (PIO) have lost much of their ancestral legacy as they became “South Africans”, with English the dominant language for almost all of the 1.2 million Indians. (Gopala et al 2014: 1)

The sights and smells overwhelmed them constantly. My mum and aunts often describe the India of the 1960s as ‘...very dirty, with chewed red betel nut spat on the floors and streets and street urination everywhere and anywhere. We felt very awkward to walk on the streets and eat out.’ Their dressing was also impacted. ‘India was not modern; no women wore western clothing, so we ended up dressing very traditionally too.’ They took busses everywhere they had to travel. They were raised with all the technological conveniences in South Africa- running water; indoor toilets; washing machines, refrigerators; liquidisers, and to them it felt like they had stepped back in time. They had

ice boxes and my mother often described their technique of washing their bed sheets next to a well. She and her younger sister, Prema who was around 9 or 10 years old, would have to draw buckets of water from their well, place the sheet on the ground and wash inward from both directions, in terms of their reportage and testimony conversation.

They worked harder and longer than the local students under the tutelage of Srimathi K. Lalitha; as they completed the full repertoire in less than two years as opposed to the regular 5- 6 years of training received at that time. All of this while still attending school. As difficult, and funny as all this was, these young children could not lose sight of the very serious reason they were living in a country so different from the one they were born in. My mother had to study French at school to achieve her matriculation, a language she had never been exposed to before. My eldest aunt, Radha and my mother described their daily routine in the following manner: The two younger girls would attend school and travelled by bus to dance class. They trained for 2 hours a day and longer as their “Arrangetram” approached.



Illustration 16: Rani's artwork

Rani matriculated and obtained her driver's licence in Madras. She and her sisters took Carnatic (South Indian Classical) singing lessons at their Madras residence, and my mother also studied visual arts.

While in India, South African dancers were such a rarity that Rani and Prema were interviewed on All India Radio and by the BBC on their experiences. Stereotypes still followed them. My mother often recounted her first interview with an Indian journalist who was keen on interviewing the African dancer he had heard of. Her copy of the article has been lost in time; however my mother always retold the experience in a very “tongue-in-cheek” manner. She described how he had approached her with the preconceived notion of her being a “native African”. He wrote something of this nature, according to my mother: ‘I walked into the dance school expecting to see an extremely dark female with cruse hair and an inability to relate to our culture. What I found was the opposite. A woman with long flowing hair, who looked like me and took to the intricacies of Bharata Natyam as if she had been exposed to it since early childhood’. My mother was quite amused by his surprised reaction, and said that she had to be very patient with him, as he persisted in repeating this fact. All young Rani wanted as a teenager was to be seen for herself and her own abilities. She believed that India would provide a respite from being viewed as “less than” or “a second-class citizen”, and as flattering as he thought he was being, the journalist had unsuspectingly touched on a sensitive subject for her.



Illustration 17: Nydoo family meeting with Prime Minister Nehru in India

One of the highlights was meeting Prime Minister Nehru, who had attended a temple opening in Madras as the guest of Honour. He met with my family at this event and they were invited to tea with him at his residence in the city. Prime Minister Nehru was interested in their past and discussed their current situation in South Africa.

He said in the Lok Sabha on March 28, 1960, a week after the Sharpeville massacre: "The people of Indian descent in South Africa, as we all know, have had to put up with a great deal of discrimination and suffering and we have resented that. But we must remember that the African people have to put up with something infinitely more and that, therefore, our sympathies must go out to them even more than to our kith and kin there." (Reddy 1991:10)



Illustration 18: Nydoo Sisters' Arrangetram with their teacher, Smt. K. Lalitha, certificate of dance title, programme

The "Arrangetram" or "Arangetral" of Rani and Prema was a grand event. An audience of 2000 were in attendance at the Rasika Ranjani Sabha (Hall) on 15 June 1961 in Mylapore, Madras (Appendix 4).

The Hon. Smt. Lourdammal Simon, Minister of Local Administration in India, who presided at the graduation ceremony of South African dancers, Rani and Prema said: “The South African girls have shown ability to equal or better some of the local pupils in the art of classical dancing...I have no doubt that they can take their place with some of India’s best dancers. (Pillay 1962: npn)

When I asked my mother what it felt like to experience such an unusual event at such a tender age (15), she was quite reticent. She stated that she wasn’t sure whether it was their age or the training or both, but both Prema (11) and she were fairly calm and focussed on executing the routines they had been taught and rehearsed ad nauseam. They were too young to comprehend the magnitude of what was unfolding.



Illustration 19: Rani with Jayalakshmi Naidoo, advising her on study options in India.

My mother also went on to advanced Bharata Natyam training with Dr. Padma Subramanyam; their neighbour and family friend in Gyndi Road, Adyar; which resulted in their return to South African shores a little later than Sulochna in 1961. As it was not etiquette to attend two schools of dance at the same time, Padma’s father arranged for my mother to do advanced training with at “Nrityodaya” on completion of her debut. Famous Indian travel agent Mr. M. K. Bobby Naidoo’s sister-in-law, Jayalakshmi, was keen on pursuing the dance form in India and went to my mother’s Edwin Swales drive home to discuss her options and requirements in India. My mother introduced her to Padma’s institution, which was government funded and offered free tuition to foreign students. Jayalakshmi enrolled and lived at Padma’s home. She left in 1962 and returned to South Africa 4 years later to teach students such as Prof. Suria Govender, Manormani Govender and Yogambal Singaram. She later married Padma’s younger brother and immigrated to Canada.



Illustration 20: Nydoo Sisters' tour pictures. Clockwise: Bharata Natyam duet; Radha – Krishna dance; Curtain call; and Shiva Tandavam dance

Rani recalled their nervousness backstage at the filled-to-capacity Durban City Hall, before their first South African stage performance on 30 November 1962. The audience; for the price of between two-and-a-half shillings and one pound and a shilling; appreciated their brave actions both artistically and as cultural innovators:

They sat enthralled as dance after dance, costume after colourful costume was revealed before their eyes – a feast of culture hundreds of years old. At the end of the two-and-a-half hour performance, the Nydoo Sisters were exhausted after performing 13 duets and solos. (Gangaram, 2000:4)



Illustration 21: The Nydoo Sisters Tour Programme, 1962-1963 (printed on different coloured paper)

These productions were unique as they combined Dance, Music and song. The programme, compeered by popular radio personality and journalist of the time Mr. Devar, in their first performance was the same as that of their national tour, interspersed by musical performances by Radha and other musicians to facilitate costume changes. The first half consisted of an Invocation (Rani and Prema); Jatiswaram (Rani); Ennadi Enathu (Prema). The reporter for the *Cape Argus* of 13 December 1962 wrote:

The most appealing item in this part of the programme is undoubtedly the gay Thillana, given by Rani and Prema, in which the required blending of music, singing and dancing was very successful. (nqn)



Figure 22: Nydoo Sisters' later performance pictures. Clockwise: Marwari dance; Shiva- Parvati; Kurathi dance; and Snake charmer dance

After interval the Kurathy (a gypsy dance from the mountainous areas of South India by Prema); Menaka (Rani); Radha- Krishna (Rani and Prema); Snake charmer (Rani); Nautch (Prema); and Shiva Tandavam (Rani). The same reporter wrote in review of their performance:

... these are young girls, and it is tribute enough that one is tempted to compare their performance with that of much older and more experienced dancers. ... Here is something different for those people who have been complaining lately about the same-ness of dance programmes. (*Cape Argus* 1962: npn)

Rani and Prema were lauded for their duet piece, Shiva Parvati and Rani's Marwari item. Rani choreographed many of her own items for these events. An audience member from Clairmont in Durban wrote to the editor of *POST* newspaper, on 16 December 1962 under the pseudonym "On with the Show", the following:

I never realised what a fine art dancing was until I saw the little Nydoo sisters perform "Dances of India" here recently. Every turning of the hand or the leg of the dancer created an expression. This could be easily noticed after the fine introduction by the compere. And the dresses were so colourful and splendid. I really must praise the sisters. (npn)

The demand for and “fevered” nature of the appreciation for the Nydoo Sisters “international” brand of Dance and artistry was overwhelming, yet understandable based on the conditions that the Indian Diaspora was faced with. In the 1960s, there was a hunger for the Indian Diaspora to understand and locate themselves in a new Republic and in the face of the apartheid system. This kind of dance format and the sisters’ professional treatment of their productions had rarely been experienced by the masses in South Africa previously.

It must be noted that in the face of numerous obstacles experienced by Indians in South Africa, they fervently pursued an art form that was beyond the boundaries of the host country. It would appear that a shift in place and time would not deter their quest in maintaining and perpetuating a cultural heritage so steeped in religio-ritual and aesthetic character. Perhaps this is one of the reasons for the classical dance Bharatha Natyam to have successfully earned the reputation of being the most popular in this country. (Singh in SAIDA website 2018)

This should not be mistaken for the Indian Diaspora having a lack of talent. On the contrary, classical and folk music was already well established with both local and international teachers traversing the Indian Ocean for the purposes of learning, teaching and performing. Dramatic arts were well established and occurred locally as a form of cultural and activist expression.

Concerts similar to the kacheries and classical concerts held in India are also in vogue in South Africa ... In the very early days there were many proficient artists and scholars among the people who went from here and it is they who laid the foundations for the preservation of traditional Indian culture. (Devar 1966: 4)

One of the most commented on performances on South African shores at the time was “King of the Dark Chamber” by Bhaskar, an international dancer, and it was held up as a gauge to almost every artist of the time.

Those who saw “King of the Dark Chamber” will recall the intricate “Dances of India” by the red-haired Bhaskar who is a world exponent in classical Indian dancing. I have often heard people of all races say that they wish they could see more of these dances. Their wish will be granted when a programme “Dances of India” will be featured at the Pietermaritzburg City Hall on March 17. (Pillay 1962: npn)

I am aware that the academic reader may be looking for alternative view points; however none exist in the hundreds of articles that are contained in the family archive. Every artist, student, journalist and photographer that had witnessed my family’s performances, to date, has only praise and accolades for their artistic integrity and contribution to the art form in South Africa.

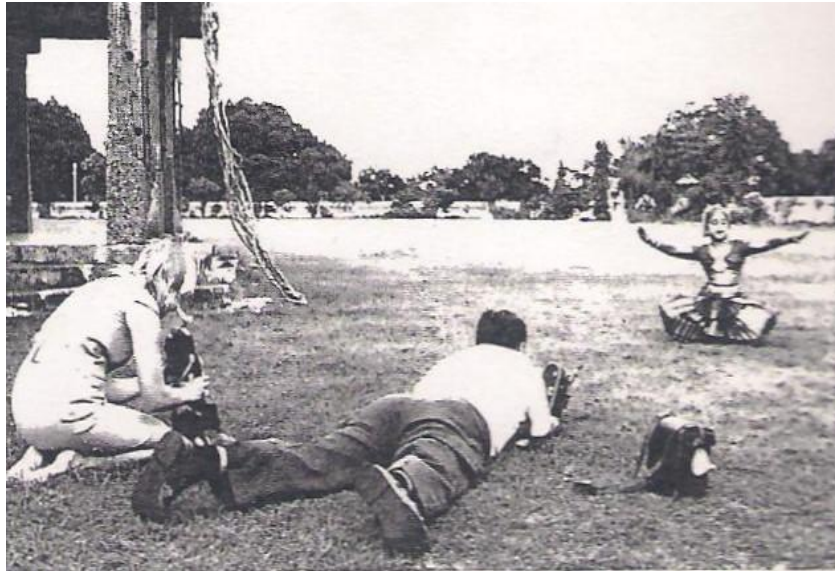


Figure 23: Standard Bank Centenary Commemorative Film-Shoot with the Nydoo Sisters

At this time there were no other local dance artists to compare the Nydoo Sisters to. Another validation of the calibre of their professionalism and uniqueness came when the Standard Bank of Britain celebrated their Centenary (1962). Rani and Prema were filmed by them as part of a commemorative documentary. A film shoot in Durban's Botanical Gardens in full Bharata Natyam costume was part of the schedule. *The Leader* of 3 May 1963 wrote the following: 'The Nydoo Sisters...made a name for themselves... Their latest is a documentary film of their dances by African Film Productions at their Killarney Studios in Johannesburg' (nnp). My grandfather owned a hand held movie camera and recorded all their milestones. The film reels were stored in a room at the back of his furniture factory in Clairwood. Unfortunately, that part of the factory caught alight and all the footage was destroyed. I never got to see any of their earlier footage, making this is an extremely sore subject for me as I felt "robbed" of this experience. I did try to contact the Standard Bank in Britain, only to be told that they have no such footage in their archives.

The sisters undertook months of touring including centres like Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Kimberley (prior to the Group areas Act and the compulsory curfew for people of colour).

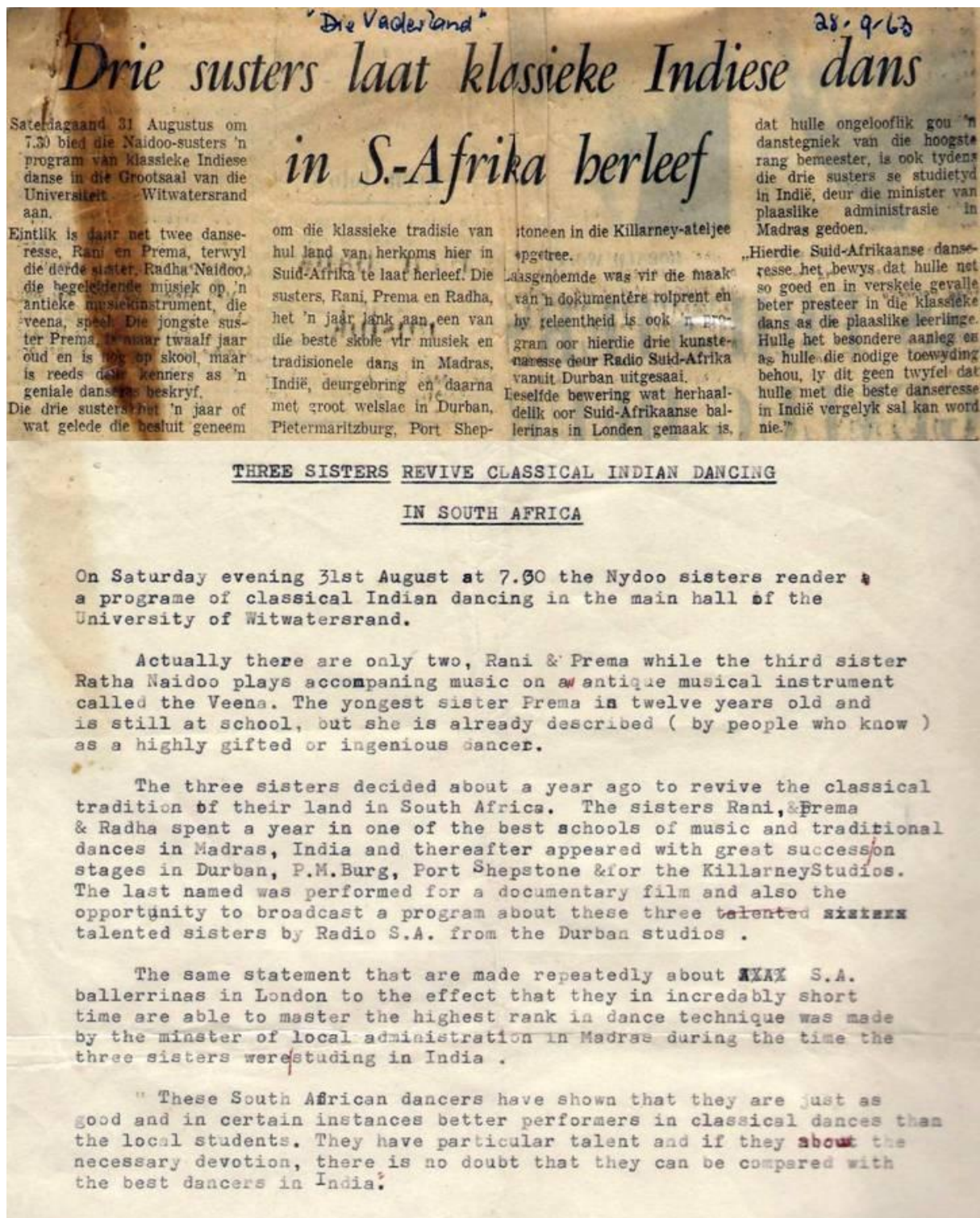


Illustration 24: *Die Vaderland* (1963) Article and Translation sent to Rani by a fan from scrapbook

Their audience was so diverse that they received fan mail written in Afrikaans and had to be translated to English as my mother never learnt the language; from all over the country.



Illustration 25: Re-launch of The Playhouse Company, 1995.

My mother recalls:

People were seeing Bharata Natyam for the first time. It was an amazing experience for them and us... In some places the white audience would sit on one side of the hall and Indians on the other. There were some places where we were not allowed to perform because we were black. We were not allowed to perform at the Playhouse. As an artist, when the audience appreciated my dance, that made me want to continue. People used to follow our shows as far as they could travel, to watch and learn. (Rani Govender in Ganagaram 2000:4)

The irony of this statement is that we were the only Indian act to be invited to perform at the re-launch of the Playhouse Company in 1995. The Sisters' performances were well attended and documented by critics and journalists alike. An historical performance in Johannesburg was held at The University of the Witwatersrand; one of the first productions by artistes of colour; and was reviewed in the following manner;

The evening of music and dancing in the University Great Hall featured the Nydoo Sisters ... excellent, most polished dancers ... These dances all have a deeper symbolical meaning which is probably lost on a European audience... one admired the spirit and beauty of it all... (Naude 1963: npn)

Some of my mother's most treasured experiences, passed on in oral tradition, have no material evidence in our archive – not even a picture exists to commemorate these rare moments. She told and

re-told the stories with the sparkle of youth. The “Shiva Tandavam” (Lord Shiva’s cosmic dance of destruction) became my mother’s signature solo performance, and was so popular that the late South African politician and Tamil scholar, Mr. P. R. Pather insisted on every Tamil eisteddfod being opened with her rendition of the piece. Some of these special memories involve three Swamis (religiously ordained spiritual leaders in the Hindu tradition; the equivalent of modern- day sages). It is considered extremely auspicious to encounter such souls during a lifetime. The first incident happened when my mother and aunts had just begun their stage performances after returning from India in 1961. The presiding Swami had received the customary gesture of welcome, a floral garland, which he wore around his neck and retained throughout the recital. My mother performed the “Shiva Tandavam” to great applause and she bowed in acknowledgement. At this stage, the Swami stepped onto the stage with tears in his eyes and placed his garland around her neck. The second incident ironically also involved the same performance piece, only this time another Swami ran onto stage and bowed before my mother to touch her feet. She said that at 16 years of age, in her naiveté, she was overcome and stepped back saying to him ‘But Swamiji I should be the one touching your feet!’ His response was the greatest blessing and compliment of her professional career: ‘My child, it is not your feet, but the feet of Lord Shiva that I am touching because it is him that I witnessed performing on stage today’. The final and most profound was on their return to India, when my family visited the home of Swami Sivananda in Rishikesh. It was on my mother’s 17th birthday that she received his blessings while he told her that she would go back to South Africa and spread the dance teachings with great dedication and success. It is only much later in life that one realises the significance of such happenings, and it is truly humbling to realise that I am part of the Swami Sivananda’s prophetic words to my mother - even before my birth. Over the course of both our lives, we have had the privilege of encountering several more Swamis; however these experiences reinforced my mother’s credibility as a performer for herself.

The Nydoo Sisters, had not only had a taste of “celebrity” in the span of 3 years, but also had the opportunity to teach, hone their newly acquired skills and realise that they had so much more to learn in order to truly serve the Diaspora’s need for a more holistic knowledge and perspective on the seven

classical dance forms that existed at the time. They gave a farewell performance, which was captured in a popular magazine, *The India Trend* (1965), in the following manner:

It was an evening of sadness and joy. Sadness because two stalwarts of the Indian cultural renaissance were leaving for India – joy because they brought home a vivid message for our glazed eye “westernised” lost souls ... with sixteen pupils whose ages could not have ranged more than a average nine years, the Nydoo Sisters...provided three hours of sheer dancing delight ...A touch of filmland’s glamour was present when Ken Gampu of Dingaka fame was introduced to the audience ... The outstanding feature of this show was the impact the Nydoo Sisters have made on the younger generation. The little girls who participated in this show are very good and full of promise. (p.5)

They had already introduced new folk based dances such as the Marwari (a Rajasthani folk dance), Kurathy and their Radha- Krishna duet also became a favourite, especially among the north Indian segment of the Diaspora. They were challenging the performance status quo that had been established with the Indian Diaspora in South Africa.

The earliest South African Indian dance teachers (Studied the art during a short visit to India), teaching mainly north Indian folk styles akin to Kathak were Mr P.R.Singh and Mr Donald Singh. Their students were mainly males because women in South Africa were not allowed to perform. (Singh in SAIDA website 2018)

Rani’s passion to instill this long awaited dance form in South African society did not stop at her students (Appendix 5). From their farewell production in 1963 a journalist from *The Leader* of 9 April wrote the following about the sister’s pedagogical abilities: ‘These girls were taught by the sisters for more than a year and have acquitted themselves creditably at the Durban eisteddfods winning solo sections, group dances and dance-dramas.’ Rani adjudicated eisteddfods of almost all the linguistic groups that the Indian Diaspora was composed of. She wrote articles for various magazines and newspapers at the time on dance and became a regular guest on radio. The South African Broadcasting Corporation became a tool for her to advance the public’s understanding of Indian dance, the classical form in particular. She was the first dancer of the Indian Diaspora to be given the opportunity for serious mass pedagogy at the time. This is a pattern that continued for most of her life, as she was considered an expert in her field by those in the know - or rather those in the Indian Diaspora who chose to acknowledge her as such.

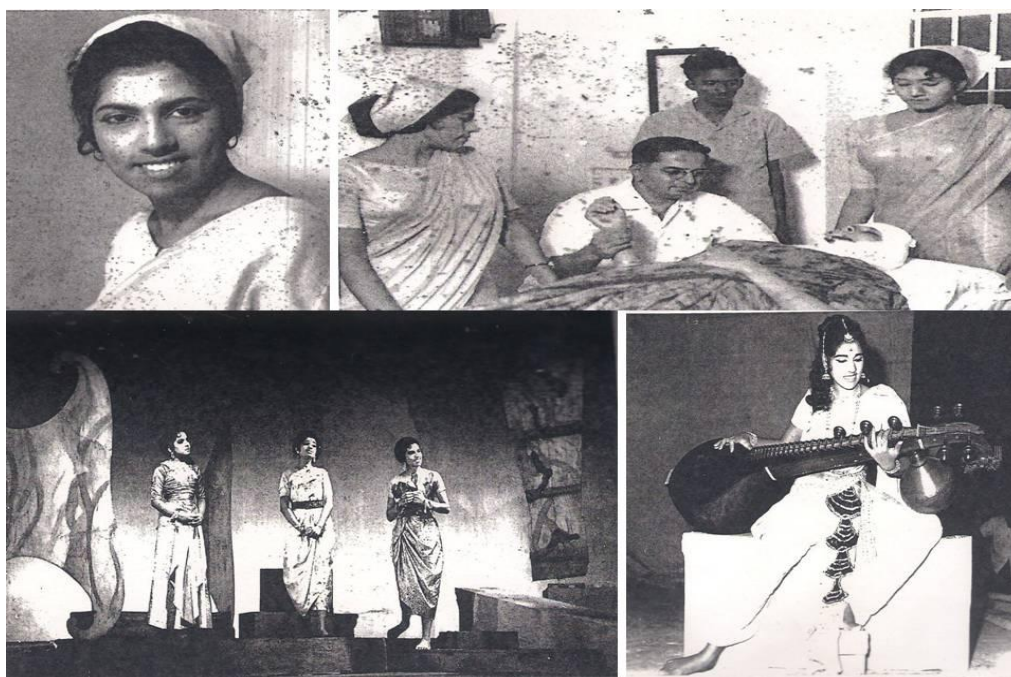


Illustration 26: Rani's Documentary Film and Drama Pictures in India. Top row: Indian Documentary. Bottom row; Stage performances, Madras Natya Sangh

With the means and motivation to achieve this task, they returned to India to expand on their repertoire. In 1965 Rani and Prema studied Kathak (Lucknow gharana) under Guru Krishna Kumar, a member of the Mysore State Nataka Academy. They also used the opportunity to further their Bharata Natyam education and pursued other dance forms at the “Madras Natya Sangam”. My mother studied drama and performed in several stage plays and a documentary on India’s surgical equipment for the Government of India, where she played a nurse. Her hunger for more knowledge and skill in the dance arena put her in regular communication and collaboration with academics and Indian scholars, such as Mr. V. Ramasubramaniam (Aundy), the Director-Principal of the College of Dramaturgy of the Academy of Theatrical Research in Madras. During her second sojourn in India, they formed the “Indo-South African Cultural Organisation” which met and staged performances regularly. He became her mentor, and she maintained regular contact and visits with him until the end of his life.

Apartheid was an ugly reality for my family. According to my family’s testimony, they were directly impacted by the Group Areas Act while my mother and aunt were in India to study Kathak amongst other dance forms.



Figure 27: Family home in Wentworth, Durban before Group Areas Act forced removals

With the relocation arising from the Group Areas Act, Indians from Indian townships such as Chatsworth Phoenix, Tongaat, Mount Edgecombe, Stanger, and Umzinto, along the north and south coasts, Pietermaritzburg, the capital of KwaZulu-Natal and in the midlands and northern Natal, Ladysmith, Newcastle, Dundee, and Glencoe were established. This relocation ... enforced racial divisions through forced removals and settlement into racially designated human settlements. (Gopala et al 2014: 29)

Her family was offered a pittance for their mansion on Edwin Swales Drive in Wentworth, and they moved into a modest 3-bedroom home in Isipingo Hills.



Illustration 28: Local article announcing American tour of the Nydoo Sisters (Source unknown)

My grandfather left Durban on the same night of the relocation to join my aunts and grandmother in India for Diwali. He returned to South Africa for Christmas. On New Year's Eve in 1965, he experienced a fatal heart attack. My mother shared this painful event in her 2000 interview for *Sunday Times*.

Two weeks before he had visited us in India. He took our passports back with him to have them endorsed for the United States because we had been invited to perform there. He never got a chance to send them back. A plan was made for our mother to fly to South Africa but, unfortunately, Prema and I were not able to attend our father's funeral and that had a terrible effect on me. I felt I needed to make peace with myself ... (Gangaram 2000: 4)

My grandmother had to travel to Durban with the help of family friends, both governments, and via special documents being issued. Shortly after this more traumatic news was received by the two sisters in India, and they were ready to return to Durban. Their mother was diagnosed with leukaemia. 'She didn't want Prema and me to stop our studies and come back home just because she was sick. She insisted we stay and complete our course, which we did.' (Gangaram 2000: 4). Both sisters were offered several roles in Indian films, but under the circumstances they turned them down and opted to return to South Africa.



Illustration 29: Rani marries Dhanabalan Govender

My parents' love story stems from this relocation and has all the makings of a Bollywood movie. My father was the new neighbour (across the road) of the Nydoo family in Sarojini Crescent, Isipingo Hills and befriended my mother's brothers while my mother was in India. He had heard about my mother, yet only saw her on the day she returned from India in 1966. 'Rani married Dhanabalan Govender, a former deputy director of the House of Delegates in 1968, and they had two daughters.' (Gangaram 2000: 4). True to the proverb from the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare: 'The course of true love never did run smooth' (1998, npn), my mother had to choose between her career and her marriage and family. My father's family did not come from an arts and culture background and did not recognise nor understand the spiritual significance and value of Indian classical dance performance. My mother was asked to continue to teach, but to stop her public performances, which she agreed to. It was one of the hardest choices she had ever made, but never regretted.



Illustration 30: Kathak and Last Performance Pictures of Nydoo Sisters, 1971

My mother's decision to stop performing was bitter sweet, not just for all the tragedy she faced. Ironically, my mother's last public performance in 1971 was my first: '...when my daughter Anusia

was about two years old, I gave my last performance, dedicated to my father, at the M. L. Sultan Technikon.’ (Gangaram 2000: 4). My mother approached my paternal grandfather, and explained that she had been feeling “troubled” that she never got the opportunity to perform the dance forms that Prema and her were studying prior to her father’s passing. She obtained permission to give a last public performance from her in-laws, and had to train rigorously to get into the form she needed prior to becoming a mother. Being a tribute performance, my mother the perfectionist (another of the traits I inherited from her) was meticulous about every detail. She planned and executed each phase of the event and practiced with her sister regularly. The event was called “Dances of India”; reminiscent of their first performance and tour; and took place on 18 September 1971 at the M. L. Sultan Technical College’s “Cane Growers Hall” at 8 p.m. (Appendix 6). The programme included some of the old favourites as well as new pieces including Kathak and Kuchipudi. The performance was an incredible success. A journalist; only acknowledged by the initials P.M.C.; from the *Daily News* of 21 September 1971 wrote:

It is difficult to single out either of the sisters for her performance... I found the street scene, the Dance of Shiva, the Village scene, and the Quawali romantic theme to be among the best. All in all I found “Dances of India” a rare treat, and one which should be staged all over Natal. (npr)

Prema, after my mother’s retirement from the public eye; in her young adulthood; returned to Bombay (Mumbai) where she studied the Banaras Gharana of Kathak in 1974, under the Maestro - world famous Guru and actor, Gopi Krishna (Appendix 7). She finally developed a solo identity, and witnessed several generations of her students achieve “Rangmanch Pravesh”. She immigrated to India with her two daughters in 1993, where she now resides in Pondicherry.

My mother taught Indian dance in its various forms for almost her whole life, including 10 years at Cato Manor Technical College, and as principal of Anavarata Dance Institute in KwaZulu Natal and Gauteng. Her failing health and belief that I was ready to succeed her led to my mother’s retirement from pedagogy. She explains her reason for that choice:

I was diagnosed with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, a hereditary heart condition from which my father died, and was unable to continue dancing. Strenuous exercise and movement would worsen my condition. (Govender in Gangaram 2000:4)

In her twilight years, she continued to research Indian folk dance and introduced newer and varied dance forms to the creative sector in South Africa, via our teamwork, until her passing in 2005.

I often wonder: If my mother had continued as a performing artist, how different would the Indian Classical Dance Art of this country have been? My answer is that it would have been far richer, however, she never stopped, she suspended the outcome until she prepared me to fulfil the rest of the goals and dreams that we wove together.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

True to Swami Sivananda's words- spread dance she did! The Nydoo Sisters are South Asian dance stalwarts who took Indian classical dance to areas of South Africa and spaces that had never previously experienced the art form. They are, whether acknowledged or not, an inspiration to many generations that had ripple effects into present time, as represented by the illustration below, which my interaction with our family archive has revealed, that place Indian Classical Dance pedagogy in South Africa in perspective:

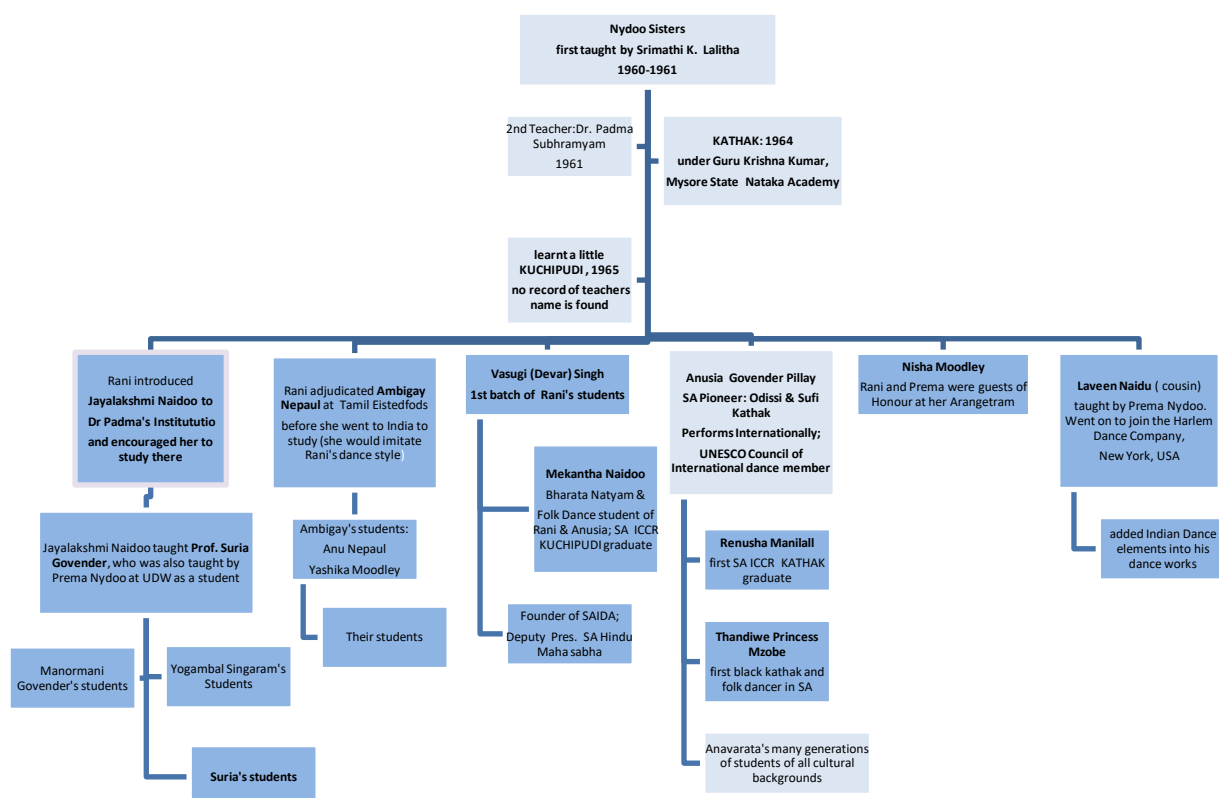


Illustration 31: Indian Classical Dance contribution made by the Nydoo Sisters to generations of South African dance exponents, my own creation.

Notable mentions in contextualising Indian Dance in South Africa (South Asian dancers who have made avant garde contributions to Indian Dance in South Africa are in bold font) are:

In Gauteng, Satya Bhama Kollapen, an Indian national who created outstanding South African exponents of the Bharata Natyam form of dance in Gauteng.

In 1975 Satya Bhama started the Sangeeta Nataka Academy, later renamed the Institute of Indian Art and Culture, in South Africa. ...Before her arrival there were no Bharata Natyam teachers in the then Transvaal and it is through her thorough knowledge and understanding of the intricacies of the artform that this dance style was uplifted... (Sarvavidya Natyaalaya website 2018)

In the North Indian dance styles, **Dr. Ranjit Laloo**, a medical doctor who studied medicine in India,

...had never been formerly trained as a dancer but had dabbled and had been exposed to many different dance styles throughout his life. In the 80's Dr. Ranjit decided to start exploring different ways of moving.... the Jhankaar School of Dance was established in 1986 in an effort to focus on training technically superior dancers....Jhankaar teaches North Indian dance leading to South African Indian contemporary dance. (Jhankaar School of Dance 2014: npn)

In Cape Town, the Vadhini Indian Arts Academy '... was established in 1979 by... Shrimati **Savitri Naidoo**...' (capetowncarnival.com 2014).

On a National platform, I became the first Odissi (1986) and Sufi Kathak (2000) exponent in South Africa. In terms of scholarly work, South Africans that studied in India and returned to South Africa are: **Maya Makanjee**, the first BA graduate in Bharata Natyam; **Manesh Maharaj** was the first male to receive a degree in Kathak, and our Kathak student, the late **Renusha Manilall**, was the first South African to receive an ICCR scholarship to study Kathak at Bangalore University. **Mekantha Naidoo**, a Bharata Natyam exponent and a Folk dance student of ours, became the first exponent to study a full repertoire of Kuchipudi under the ICCR. My mother and aunt were the first to introduce Kuchipudi to the country in 1971(as verified by their performance programme from 1971 in the archive) however they did not study a full repertoire of the style. In terms of cultural integration/ fusion; or multicultural dance **Suria Govender** (1994); **Jay Pather** (1994); and **Jayespri Moopen** (1989) joined our efforts. Their public performances allowed my mother and myself to be forthcoming, in terms of the intercultural work we had been covertly involved in for decades earlier during apartheid,

in our public performances.

This chapter, I believed would write itself. With the archive, all the information is spread out before me, yet ironically, I found this the hardest to articulate by far. It sometimes flowed, and at other times I sat feeling overwhelmed - wordless. Like the carvings on the ancient Indian Temples, all the frozen images in the photos, when placed in a correct sequence, seemed to come alive with movement. I felt as if I had glimpses of their earliest performances. So many emotions churned up as I felt like I was walking this path with them, feeling their passion and heartbreak; cheering them on and knowing what the outcome would be, yet hoping that some of it could be different.

CHAPTER 5: ALTERITY: THE SECOND GENERATION INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCER: THE ROAD TO INTERCULTURAL (AND MULTI CULTURAL) DANCE IN THE APARTHEID ERA AND BEYOND

INTRODUCTION



Illustration 32: Rani and Anusia (kaBizokwakhe in *Randburg Sun*, 2001)

‘Those of us who have made a lifetime commitment to professional careers in dance have come to know the intrinsic rewards and difficulties of this field.’ (Alter 1997: 70). As I engaged with the archive, and with the various video recordings, newspaper clippings, costumes and photographs among the collection of artefacts, I witness my own evolution alongside this nation’s. In terms of alterity, this chapter is an acknowledgement of difference - both cultural and in our approach to Indian dance.

The ‘Indians’, like their compatriots freed from obligatory ethnic affiliation, have become responsible for their actions and decisions as individuals. ... more than ever in the history of South Africa opened a repertoire of choice, of mobility, of transfer for each South African. (Ebr.-Vally 2001: 183).

This chapter is an acknowledgement of our own practice and the shift that occurred – my mother dances in me as embodiment in my body. The writing and process has been an acknowledgement of both the personal and the insight gained from the archive. I acknowledge myself as the heir to my mother’s process, so when I look at the images in the archive, I experience loss, absence, shifts, relationships and the ongoing process of insight and understanding. It includes the values and insights into what the future of dance pedagogy could be.

My journey also became about the desire to pay this unique “reward” forward. This chapter is the most influenced by subjectivity and phenomenology, as it focuses on my observations and lived experience of my dance career and the combined contribution to Indian classical dance (and other dance forms) pedagogy in South Africa by my mother and I. By Ahmed’s (2014) standards, this became the most ‘willful’ expression of Indian classical dance in this country, as I revealed in my interview with *The Independent on Saturday*,

She says she’s danced through her past lives. She says dance invokes a deep spirituality and it’s quite clear she’s absolutely devoted to dance. Judging by her maturity of spirit and the fluidity with which she moves, I can see why Anusia Pillay is the acclaimed dancer she is. Pillay is adamant that dancing is an inseparable part of her being. (Naidoo 1999: 15)

Further, I wish to draw attention to Ntombela’s (2013) statement on the archive in her dissertation, “A Fragile Archive: Refiguring, Rethinking, Reimagining, Re-presenting Gladys Mgudlandlu”, as I am approaching this chapter from a similar standpoint, and not from that of a memoir.

... the function of the archive is a fundamental part of this study. As it is generally known, archives are understood to function as evidence used to support, prove, establish and construct information that can be used towards further research and writing. (p. 9)

Writing this chapter can be equated to enduring a strenuous rite of passage and an acknowledgement of difference. It is the realisation and materialisation of all that had been invested before me. I am constantly reliving the “straddling” of opposing forces - a dance form that instils self-worth and self-belief and a political and social system that said that I and all people of colour were not worthy or deserving of any recognition or acknowledgement. The implications and ravages of growing up during the apartheid system are highlighted through the lens of my dance evolution.

The post-apartheid period is where I believe all my learning, training and education culminated in an artistic “freedom” within the vestiges of a traumatised nation. All of the hurt, anger, and hope was poured into an overt creativity, an almost celebratory view; of the “Gandhian” approach to being the change I wanted to see in the world, starting with South Africa. Neither my mother nor I were complacent with a basic knowledge of any dance form we studied. We made every attempt at empowering first ourselves with the relevant training, research and development on the Indian sub-continent and in global dance development. This kept us relevant and abreast of trends that uplifted the status of our Institute and therefore Indian dance in South Africa, and broke down barriers within the creative sector. During apartheid, and more so post-apartheid our work became “Ubuntu” in the guise of dance. ‘Ubuntu is the essence of being human’. (Buqa 2015: npn).

My mother always told me that I was dancing before I was born. Dance has been pivotal for me in terms of my own identity and development, transforming me from a timid child to a director of productions and performing artist on local and international platforms. Every phase of my development was influenced by dance, which became a buffer to the harsh realities of life and apartheid. This chapter will develop the transition and events that led to the stages of my career and pedagogical choices.

MY EARLY DANCE TRAINING

Being raised in settlements decreed by the Group Areas Act, enabled my family to live in close proximity to each other, allowing the opportunity to foster cultural bonds, and ours was Dance. All the “cousins” of my generation attended the same schools and were therefore involved in various artistic and religious activities as a unit. As a little child, my instinct was to dance every time I heard music. It was as natural to me as breathing, and was never forced on me by my mother. Prema was my first “official” teacher before my fifth birthday, as my mother wanted me to experience what it was like to be part of a group orientated class and learn from someone other than her. I was a quick study and learnt both my class work as well as that of the senior students. Girls 10 years my senior came to me asking for help with lessons they had forgotten or had not practised. It did wonders for my confidence, and being an only child at the time it also allowed me to be sociable. Engaging with

the archive evokes a sense of recognition of growing up as a painfully shy and introverted girl, who suffered from severe asthma. Both the illness and the medication slowed me down and generally excluded me from almost all physical activities that my peers were involved in. I can't relate to that emotion any longer as I have lived a life paved with remarkable achievement that the trait of "meekness" could not have achieved. I learnt the first part of the Bharata Natyam repertoire as well as folk and performance pieces. My training then continued under my mother. I remember her taking the time to encourage my creative development as I grew up and was moulded into a teacher by my Indian Gurus and her.

Indian Classical dance is inextricably linked to Hinduism and it extols the themes of various philosophies and scriptures wherever it manifests in the world. The Indian Diaspora in South Africa is no different. Apartheid and the Group Areas Act meant that the Indian Diaspora was free to practice their collective beliefs in their allocated residential areas without interference. The very laws that appeared to be a unifying force for each racial group also carried a latent destructive force.

In 1976, my family travelled to India. We performed for my mother's dance teacher, as well as the singers and teachers who were at the school when my mother was a student. She regaled us with stories of my mother and aunt. I felt such an excitement during the entire process, realising that our training was no different to the methods used in India. The only difference is that we were taught in English in South Africa. It was so visceral that I can still close my eyes and re-experience it. I knew that I wanted to be a part of the kinship that I felt enveloped in. Being too young to understand it then, I now understand that the Guru-Shishya bond is similar to that of a mother and child. It is something that I have had the privilege of experiencing with my mother and every student. This was a life-changing experience.

Growing up during apartheid, I was constantly aware that my options were limited as a person of "Colour". It was only when I travelled to India for the first time when I was 7 and performed in front of my mother's Guru, Srimathy K. Lalitha, that I realised that I could be more than I was told I was. (Pillay in The Womenz 2017)

I use memory archive to substantiate that as I grew older, India became the reminder that the political system we had been socialised to accept as the natural order of things was far from it.

After a while, I was enrolled at the same modern dance and Jazz class as my cousins under the tutelage of Vera Pickering in Isipingo. I enjoyed different forms of dance to what I had grown up with, including witnessing my parents and extended family members learn and perform Ballroom and Latin American dances in social settings, learning some of the style by dancing with them. After the rigorous and extremely disciplined style of Indian Classical dance, I learnt that the body could be used in various ways. I did not feel challenged in the same way that my classical training had done - the western formats seemed light and more like “play” to me. The most interesting aspect of this phase was our production of “Lil Abner” at the Durban City Hall which was the first totally mixed race performance in Durban and ran for a week. Being part of my first professional experience of Western Theatre was exciting and scary. The archive contains artefacts that commemorate this event; however they have been misplaced in my several relocations. In addition to dance, I was enrolled in drama classes at the Upstairs Theatre in Durban to rid me of a pronounced lisp. My introduction to theatre had a lasting effect and spurred me on as a teacher to develop dance theatre that motivated young artists in the similar manner.



Illustration 33: Multicultural dance at Anusia's school concerts

The late Mr. N. T. Moodley, the principal of Isipingo Hills Primary School, was an arts and culture enthusiast and instituted an annual concert that ran for a week. He, my mother, and the annual play's director would create scripts that always incorporated dance, and I became known as "the school dancer". As I got older this inspired me to become more involved in choreography and the design of my performances. My solo performances over and above involvement in the choir; dramas and group dances included: Kathak as a court dancer in "The Maharajah is bored" (a "Cinderella" story in 1978 and 1981; this was a very new experience for the audience at the time); in the same play my mother's "Snake charmer dance" was converted to a snake dance for a village scene (1978); and I performed a Japanese fan dance in a kimono for a version of "Aladdin" as a special tribute to Mr. Moodley on his retirement (1981). Negotiating various cultural forms of dance came naturally to me as I never saw them as different, merely as a transition in music and rhythm. It was all dance and that's what mattered to both my mother and I. The challenge was in maintaining the authenticity of each culture and style. Around the same time, in 1979, at the grand opening of the Hyperama at Prospecton I won the "I & J dance competition" which was unusually open to all races at the time. I was stunned; actually I think my whole family was surprised. This is also where I realised that the ingrained idea that anything that wasn't considered "white" was inferior; was in fact untrue.

MOTHER-DAUGHTER TEAM: "INTERTWINED SOULS"

In a television interview on SABC 3 my mother referred to the two of us as 'intertwined souls' (Free Spirit 2001). That theory was constantly proven true, not just as family, but also as colleagues and artists. This interview is on videotape, stored away in a "shrine" to my mother.

Although I'm now a dance teacher and touring internationally, I always credit my mother for being my inspiration. What I think is so special is that all my basic dance training came directly from her. (Pillay in Naidoo 1999: 15)

I began assisting my mother in teaching since the age of 12 at classes held at our home in Isipingo Hills, as I wanted to understand the technique behind the transference of the knowledge. My training continued in India and with my mother. I became more involved with Ballroom and Latin American dance over this period. My passion for dance required an outlet. At 17 years of age I still saw Eurocentric dance forms as leisure activities and my Indian dance as a hobby.



Illustration 34: Dance Gurus: From Left to right: Top row: Rani and Anusia with Smt. K. Lalitha: first Bharata Natyam teacher; Anusia and students with Dr. Padma Subramanyam; Rani and Prema with first Kathak Guru Krishna Kumar. Bottom row: Guru Gopi Krishna, Prema's Kathak teacher; Anusia with Kathak Guru Rajender Gangani; Rani and Anusia in class at Kathak Kendra, New Delhi

My mother and I were taught, and in turn taught our lineage, as all gurus of Dance in India did, in the oral tradition. It is the foundation and the direction that every Indian classical dancer who completes their training in a full repertoire of Bharata Natyam takes, and is endowed/bestowed with their Guru's title. Mine, like my mother's and aunt's and their Guru before them, is "Natya Thilakam" (meaning Dance excellence or eminence). Further, the title "Kumari" is not related to dance as is a general South African misconception, but rather to an unmarried woman in the vernacular. This is yet another reminder that those born in South Africa are not Indian; and is a consequence of a lack of consistent diplomatic and cultural ties to the Indian sub-continent.

She trained her daughter in Bharata Natyam and Kathak from an early age, who added a third classical style, Odissi, to her repertoire. Both have travelled to the rural areas of India to research the people and folk art there, thus being able to introduce new folk dances into South Africa. The Institutes' repertoire now consists of 25 different Indian folk dances. (Hathway 1998: 10).



Illustration 35: Anusia's varied training and certificates in dance

Both my mother and I advanced our Kathak knowledge under Guru Rajender Gangani of Kathak Kendra, in New Delhi, the son of Guru Kundanlall Gangani of the Jaipur Gharana, and his brother in the Lucknow Gharana. Kathak was still shrouded in “ill-repute” from the courtesan traditions in India that were still portrayed in popular Indian films. The Indian Diaspora in South Africa had lost sight of its secular origins. Embracing all 3 gharanas, positioned my mother and I uniquely as the only South African dancers to have achieved this. We were therefore in a position to clarify and dispel those taboos, and introduce a sophisticated well-grounded pedagogy that restored the dance form's dignity to first our students and then audiences. I became the first South African exponent of Odissi; adding yet another layer to the South African Indian dance experience in 1986 and Sufi Kathak in the 1990's, allowing us to broaden our repertoire, as well as being more inclusive of other religions in our training within the Indian Diaspora.

Prema taught Kathak at Durban's Sastri College for several years before we joined her. With Bharata Natyam already sufficiently entrenched and the Bollywood film industry well represented in South

Africa, students' curiosity turned to the Kathak form. The student base was growing and there were no other suitably qualified Kathak teachers at the time except my mother. My aunt coaxed my mother out of retirement under the proviso that I would complete my teacher training under her supervision and execute practical training due to her ill-health. Initially it was agreed that both our classes would teach the same syllabus, however, after the first year we realised that our training was more intensive, and approached the management to pursue our own syllabus, adding folk dance to our repertoire. By the time I was 19, I was running my own class and my mother and I were officially acknowledged as a teaching team.

My mum and I were offered part-time lecturing positions in Indian Classical (Kathak) and Indian Folk Dance- in my first year of University, which I continued until after my academic graduation. In all that time, we organised International Tours to Mauritius and Malaysia with no governmental support, created syllabi in dance for secondary/ tertiary institutions for our National Education Department, and began creating a branding and awareness of the “professionalism” of Indian Dance by holding the first Indo-African performance in South Africa, amongst others. (Pillay in The Womenz 2017: npn)



Illustration 36: Princess Thandiwe Mzobe

This is where the first “Black” Kathak dancer in South Africa, Thandiwe Princess Mzobe began her

training. She was the daughter of the College's custodian and used to come to our window and watch our classes. An article from the archive bears this out:

It was the tinkling bells and lively music that first attracted college caretaker's daughter, Princess Mzobe, to Kathak, the North Indian classical dance. ... And even though she had never had any lessons, Princess tried to imitate the intricate body movements. ... That was six years ago, and now 13-year-old Princess - the first African doing Kathak dancing in the country - has earned a reputation as a "brilliant and excellent" dancer. (Cole 1998:8)

She was also exposed to our folk dance class and took to the dance forms with relative ease and although a bit reserved at first she began to blossom as a dancer. She was so enamoured with the dance form that she began to study the Hindi language at school so that she could understand the songs she was performing to, even though we ensured that the songs were translated for all our students. Later her brother Leo joined us.

We were with the College for 9-10 years, and were aware that several of the students who wanted to attend dance classes were from the nearby low-income area of Springfield but could not afford the fees. We made the decision to leave the College and relocated our classes to the Springfield Hindu Primary School that was almost a hundred years old at the time. Our students followed us and new students were attracted by our low fee which was decided on to make the class accessible to all. My mother and I continued with the Nydoo Sister's tradition of Dance by renaming the school in 1993, to Anavarata Dance Institute. 'Anavarata' means 'eternal' and describes the dance of Lord Shiva – without beginning or end, and is a registered community-based, non-profit organisation. 'We have strived to create an institute that has no linguistic, cultural or racial barriers where we provide for the holistic development of the student...' (Pillay in Northside Chronicle 2005: 14). The clientele, unusually for that time, also attracted young "Indian" boys. Our students have included dancers from all races, religious affiliations, cultures and sexual orientation. We have worked with able-bodied and the physically challenged. Age was never a limitation with our youngest student being 2.5 years old and the oldest being in their 60's. I have had the privilege of teaching and performing with all of them. The secret to their attraction and retention has been acceptance and respect.

The decision to go back to an independent training institution format proved rigorous in terms of

physically having to clear a classroom and reset it after class, exactly as it had been originally. The hours were longer, yet the student development, motivation and satisfaction levels were higher as they took ownership of the change and success. There were no limitations on the syllabus taught - it was more inclusive of other cultural influences, with Indian Classical dance at the core. We were able to provide longer hours of training without an extra fee. The learning process was accelerated as we were able to combine the junior and senior students, providing a greater sense of cohesion and confidence. This precipitated speedier performance readiness and more performance opportunities for all levels of students. The senior students were able to hone their skills and move into advanced training by taking classes with the juniors under my supervision. It also facilitated production and tour preparation. As teachers we felt empowered and won the support of the school and the community to the point that we were visited by activist and Mahatma's grand-daughter Ela Gandhi, who praised the inclusivity of our work. The success came in many forms, a most significant one being honoured by the Indian Government. 'The Institute was recently honoured with a prize from the Indian Consulate as part of India's 50th Independence Day celebrations' (*Southlands Sun News* 1998: npn).



Illustration 37: “Celebrate South Africa” at Wits Great Hall, 2004. Left to right: (top) Shangaan; S’pedi; (bottom) Sesotho and Afrikaner Volkspole

In 2001 the “Maru E Africa” (meaning “Skies of Africa”) performance wing of the Institute was created to commemorate our work in the townships of Gauteng.

Maru E Africa is a core group of dancers from largely previously disadvantaged communities who are trained in dance and theatrical performances. The dancers hail from all cultures and traditions in South Africa, especially from the Soweto area. The aim is to hone the skills that each artist enters the organisation with, and develops, a cohesive, professional performance arts troupe that is endowed with the appropriate attitudes, ethics, behaviours and mindset to the art form. ... The troupe also forms a job creation project for these dancers. (Pillay in *Northside Chronicle* 2005: 14)

Training at this point occurred in separate areas according to the old Group Areas Act. We started introducing rehearsal sessions in Mayfair in Johannesburg with both the Indian and African groups together until there was a sufficient level of “comfort”. We then began building up to “Celebrate South Africa” in 2004 marking the 10 years of democracy at the Wits Great Hall. This was a successful pilot project in Gauteng and led to another in 2005 of a similar nature. That unfortunately did not go as well; as a group of parents from our Benoni class stated that they would not allow their daughters to perform with the male dancers from Soweto, due to allegations of inappropriate behaviour. I could understand that, but refused to bow to their pressure when I was told that I should not work with the Soweto group any longer, in spite of the disciplinary measures I instituted against the transgressors. I lost a large number of “Indian” students from the group; however, the Soweto group grew in strength.

We did however face a few challenges from our township students. They eagerly embraced all dance styles from Hip Hop to Indian Classical dance, yet some avoided their own traditional forms of dance. This was more than a decade ago. In order to instil a sense of “African” pride, I got them to learn both modern and traditional styles and merge gumboot with Hip Hop and Krumping dance. We also used the remix version of Miriam Makeba’s “Pata Pata” to teach the Ndlamu traditional format with a modern “twist”. The balance of serious pedagogy with enjoyment and spontaneity, and a hint of challenge has, in my experience worked with every one of my students. We overcome those challenges together and with peer support. The other challenge was suspicion of me being of a different culture. The race issue was allayed by time, understanding, communication and effort on my part to prove that it was not a barrier to the training process in our class.

Watching dancers like Princess, and other young black artists excel at ballet, contemporary and any other previously “western” style of dance was heartening for my mother and I. Yet, we wanted to achieve something more than merely embracing a previously “colonial” dance form. With the vast repertoire at our disposal, we embarked on expressing our “South African-ness” through our curriculum and performances, in a manner that was not just “tokenism”. We incorporated elements of all styles, beginning with Indo-African; an example of which was a tribute to rural life in both cultures; where we took a North Indian village scene and merged it with S’pedi dance. It was first performed at “India Day” celebrated annually on 15 August, and had the audience dancing and screaming their support, as documented by Hassen (2017) in the archive.



Illustration 38: Intercultural Teacher Training for U.S.A. Project

I also supervised my senior black dancer’s training of three young Indian dancers who had been selected to represent the South African Tamil community in San Francisco.

... Carly Tlhapa, assisted by Naomi Hlongwane and Bridget Mashimbye ... form part of the “Train the Trainer” programme... have been involved in the training of Devani Poonsamy, Sailesha Padayachy and Venita Govender in a Indo-African fusion performance commissioned for the Diaspora Tamil Education Conference 2012 in the San Francisco Bay Area. ... choreographed by Anusia Govender-Pillay ... (Indianspice 2012)

Social Cohesion, Multi- and Intercultural Dance became a staple format of our training, and in this instance was utilised to music based in the Tamil language. Again we utilised various styles from our dance arsenal, as described by Khan (2012) in his article in the archive:

Popular “Township Jive” rhythms are laced with mesmerising Tamil verse reminiscent of the rich and earthy drum beats that are common to both the Indian and African cultures. Anusia goes on to say, “the African movements of South Africa’s Northern tribes are interwoven with Bharata Natyam, a sprinkling of Yoga, Odissi and Kathak movements. Reflecting our commitment to promoting conservation of our animals and the Earth, as well as our diverse cultures the costumes include proudly South African hats, African shakers and animal print fabric in the costumes.”.... This undoubtedly reflected the ambassadorial and nation building principles Anavarata utilises to empower the South African youth. (2012: npn)

I introduced Malaysian and various folk, tribal and martial arts styles of dance - all utilised for social change and transformation amongst the Youth in South Africa. This also became a major lesson for me as a teacher, by imbibing the philosophy of these traditions into our teachings.

Over the ages nothing has brought man closer to man as cultural exchange between countries. ... Setting an example among monarchs was Asoka the Great, who had sent his daughter to Ceylon and the Buddhist monks to Central and South – East – Asia to promote the cause of humanity. Reciprocating similarly were other countries, some of them European. The world, since then, has become a smaller place indeed. Be it for Art, Science, the physical borders separating nations a mere formality in cementing ties between the people. (Sakakibara 1992: npn)

Being selected as the first South African trainer of the official Malaysian Cultural Dance troupe in South Africa, I received training, over 2 weeks, by the Malaysian Arts and Culture Department in Kuala Lumpur in 2001. I was part of a group of 33; a couple from each country except South Africa. I had to learn both the men and women’s roles, which was challenging as the music system and styles were very different from Indian dance, and all the various styles that I had learnt up to that point did not prepare me for the speed, intricacy and pace of the sessions. I was able to take notes and film sessions so that I could study and revise. Malaysian dance consists of 3 main cultures: Malay (Islamic in nature), Chinese and Indian. The other forms include folk and tribal dances, as well as Thai, Indonesian and Portuguese.

The Asian countries ...are the so called treasure houses of Oriental Dance. They are the countries that have grown important dances which are great cultural assets, as these are replete with Asian symbolism. (Sakakibara 1992: 99)

I returned to Johannesburg and in conjunction with Tourism Malaysia established a troupe of all races and dance genres. We began training sessions until a change in Government resulted in a change of

policies and suspension of the troupe's work, however, I continued training my students and still provide services to the Malaysian High Commission as recently as the commemoration of 25 years of diplomatic ties with South Africa at Department: International Relations and Cooperation in Pretoria on 19 November 2018.



Illustration 39: “Thillana” by township students

The lesson I took away from this experience is that the leisurely pace of Indian Classical Dance training did not necessarily work in the “real world”. I had to devise ways of reconfiguring the students’ training so that they would be prepared for professional auditions, and introduced speedier teaching techniques into the training for other dance forms, including the Indian Classical Dance format. This training found expression in ‘Thillana’ prepared for our 50th Anniversary performance. We began training 10 months prior to the staging. This may seem fairly average a time for the trained choreographer, however, when one considers that this item is usually the culmination of the Bharata Natyam repertoire after 5-7 years of training, one can begin to understand that a trained classical dancer would consider this an impossibility (almost blasphemous). I took it on as a challenge, and unashamedly withheld this information from my dancers. We approached it as we did any performance piece. The dancers did find it difficult at first, but I persisted in finding ways of breaking the teaching down to relatable pieces. It was only midway through the teaching process that the

students were filled in on the theoretical background to the piece. What started out as difficult was transformed into a sense of achievement, and spurred them on to produce a performance that had Indian dance connoisseurs in the audience convinced that they had indeed completed the requisite number of years of training down to the minutest expressional details. All of this by a group of 4 African dancers from Klipfontein View in Midrand.

OUR BRAND OF INDIAN DANCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

There was a considerable lapse of time between my mother becoming a pedagogue of a full Indian Classical dance repertoire and any other dancer being able to offer the same service to the Indian Diaspora in South Africa. The Nydoo Sister's return to India to further their study, left an opportunity for their fans and the general public to find their own expressions of what they had witnessed, learnt and in the case of their students, had just begun practicing. The return of dancers such as Jayalakshmi Naidoo who had trained under my mother's Guru, Padma Subrahmanyam, to South Africa in the latter 1960's began to meet the growing demand for Bharata Natyam performance and pedagogy in Natal at the time. My mother was one of the happiest to see the development on the foundation that the sisters had begun, however with her performing absence and demand for the dance form and the celebrity associated with it, to some extent quality began giving way to quantity. Her comment on this issue in a press interview in the archive was as follows:

In the '70s a host of dancers returned from India some having studied for only a few months. The sad thing about this is that the quality of dance deteriorates because people are eager to finish their studies quickly and dance schools are popping up like mushrooms. (Rani Govender cited in Gangaram 2000: 4)

My mother was therefore adamant that I should receive the best quality dance education in all the forms that I was pursuing as she was aware that when I assumed leadership of the Institute we had built together, I would do so having established myself as a professional performer and pedagogue of substance, not just as her daughter. I very willingly and consciously became her legacy.

The media reflected South Africa's identity politics during Apartheid and is still doing so after the installation of a democratic government. Under Apartheid Natal local newspapers in towns with a large number of 'Indian' inhabitants carried supplements with 'Indian' news. (Ebr. -Vally 2001: 180)

As a child I was exposed to the halls of the SABC in Durban, as my mother was a regular participant on SABC radio and featured in newspapers. The Indian Diaspora could not locate themselves on SABC Television until the 1990s when our dance work began to feature in regular inserts.

The national television and radio programmes that reach the majority of 'Indians' are *Radio Lotus* and *Eastern Mosaic*... a weekly TV programme broadcast. ... The sense, and the reality, of being a minority, as well as the need to take pride in Indian roots were behind the launch of *Eastern Mosaic*. (Ebr.-Vally 2001: 181) (Italics in original)

Devi Sankree Govender ("Carte Blanche") began her career as a presenter on "Lotus FM" in the 1990s. One of her regular features initiated by listeners on her talk show was the state of Indian Dance schools and the costs of "Arrangetram" ceremony. Teachers were demanding exorbitant amounts of money, and insisting on paying live musicians as opposed to using recorded music. A teacher was singled out for demanding expensive saris from her students and embarrassed them if they did not comply. My mother and I were often either guests on Devi's show or contributors to such topics. We regularly challenged these perceived stereotypes and beliefs vociferously. I chose to have neither an "Arrangetram" nor "Rangmanch Pravesch", but rather to utilise those funds to further my dance education in India. My mother and I decided that rather than put our students and their families through financial challenges, we would provide them with sufficient performance opportunities throughout their training to warrant proficiency and acumen that superseded a basic "Arrangetram" or "Rangmanch Pravesch" ceremony. We did not shy away from the standpoint that the quality of the training and education of the art form should take precedence over the "pomp" and "status" of an extravagant production, as controversial and revolutionary as the idea may have seemed at the time. We believed that the proof of one's ability and prowess is in the training provided; the calibre of self-development of the performer and their work presentation.

Dance research was a weekly and sometimes daily occurrence in our home. Part of the archive is a huge collection of books on dance that we would devour and discuss. A large number have been utilised in this study. My mother and I gave regular radio, television and press interviews. We wrote a few articles on Kathak and Folk dance for the Sastri and later Cato Manor Technical College's

publication, *Techniscope*. This excerpt from our article, 'Indian Folk Dance: Beauty, Charm and togetherness' from the archive, sums up our approach to folk dance pedagogy in South Africa:

A few years ago we introduced Ghumar, Koli and Bhangra-Giddha to our students. The Indian film industry has also been an important medium of introducing folk dancing to the South African audience. We should, however, note that while some imparted useful knowledge and examples of 'pure' folk dancing others were performed merely for its spectator appeal. A number of South Africans have imitated these dances and called them folk dance, when in reality, they are not. One requires the knowledge of the peculiarities of each dance, including their history... (Govender & Govender no date: 7)

Our work developed in the direction of "edutainment", once again filling a gap in the Indian Diaspora's cultural growth. The production that we created to tour Mauritius and Malaysia followed this aim, as evidenced in the archive:

"We have to educate the people." says Rani. "Children here watch films and see dancing and they call this folk dancing. It is not." She explains that the dances featured in most Bollywood films are an amalgamation of different kinds of folk dance, and a few other things besides. (Blaine 1998: 8)

What does it mean to be a dancer? What does it mean to be a professional dancer? What is the process of tuning the instrument and coordinating the body, soul and spirit into one beautiful, flowing, harmonious whole? (Luigi & Wydro 1981: 7)

There were no specific manuals to Indian dance teacher training. Like my dance training, it was a series of oral tradition, observation, research and practice. A sense of ownership and belonging is vital as I have witnessed my mother do this, and I continue to cultivate it in my students and myself. 'I like greeting my students as friends and as part of the family. ... More than being a teacher in front of students, I like being a human being first.' (Luigi & Wydro 1981: 11). Since my teacher training days we begin and end our classes, rehearsals and performances with a discussion, evaluation and prayer circle.

'... professional Indian dance doesn't get the attention it deserves in South Africa. "Dance in India is a way of life, and it has a deservedly earned high status in the artistic world there."' (Pillay in Naidoo 1999: 15) South Africans were, and in some ways are still, coming to terms with the vastness and complexities of Indian Classical dance. It's a powerful artistic form that's highly respected. My mother at first used the Indian style of teaching, which is rigorous, disciplined and often felt like "military training" that sometimes dissuaded young children from the dance form, but over time and

generational evolution, we had to change our approach and attitudes to make the format relevant to the young minds and bodies we were shaping. We found that in South Africa by teaching classical dance in an “incidental” manner through the use of first folk dance and then relevant Bollywood dances to songs each generation could relate to, we could and did make an arduous task for a young child with little or no exposure to the dance form, a pleasant one attached to a sense of achievement. Realising that an exam format would detract from the enjoyment and positivity that the class generated, my mother and I opted for an annual assignment, with academic requirements rather than examinations. To date, the programme that I have designed uses the practise of dance to train, and theoretical manuals are created and provided to students to educate them.

The Institute’s syllabus and repertoire, although firmly grounded in Indian Classical and folk dance, ensured that our students were exposed to as broad a dance base as possible. This was and still is reflected in the assortment of themes and performances we embraced. On 4 September 1999, the Institute hosted a workshop on “Cross-cultural similarities – An experience of Unity in Diversity”, with the world-renowned Emmanuel Gommado of “The Odehe Dance Company” from Ghana, accompanied by an American drummer. We focused on the similarities and differences in Indian, East African, and South African folkdances, as well as their symbolism and meanings (Appendix 8). Many revelations in the kinship that our styles share; such as the rhythmic drum accompaniments, the emphasis on footwork and the cultural significance of story-telling through the medium of dance; arose out of this. It was a micro-example of what can be achieved in our country on a macro-level, with the assistance of arts and culture, and dance in particular. The Institute also invited my cousin Laveen Naidu of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, New York, now Artistic Director at BalletNova in Washington, to share his ideas on Ballet and dance diversity as his roots are also in Bharata Natyam. He shared his experience of Indian and western dance with our students, and the fact that he had worked aspects of it into his ballet choreography. He was especially impressed at the level of performance maturity and grasp of the complex rhythms, variations and pirouette precision that our 4-7 year olds displayed. He stated that at the same age the little ballerinas were displaying very basic

skill and were focused on play rather than the very technical aspects of the dance form where he taught. This reinforced the value of our training techniques for both our students and us.

Our thirst for dance knowledge did not stop at the workshop format. In our research, we identified dance styles and concepts that excited us, and designed our travels around it. We invested time and finances in ensuring that every aspect was meticulously recreated. Apart from Indian dance we used every opportunity to learn and expand our teaching repertoire, to the point where I learnt Ethiopian folk dances from exchange students in India. I researched the costume and jewelry and reproduced them on my return home. The piece was performed at our 50th Anniversary celebrations in Newtown, and Heritage Day flash mobs at the Suncoast Casino in Durban (2012).

I have been training, choreographing, directing Dance theatre productions and performing for my entire life in the area of Indian; Multi-cultural; Intercultural and World Dance forms; with an emphasis on the diversity that South Africa's Heritage is composed of. The difference between our application and that of other dance organisations is:

- The ability to seamlessly merge various dance forms to create a new and fresh flavour to the South African dance menu (Intercultural).
- The vastness of our repertoire and therefore dance vocabulary at our disposal exceeds the usual Indo-African expectations.
- We maintain a dance troupe that is trained in every aspect of our repertoire from the basics, and is therefore consistent as opposed to being part-time performers or dancers that work with various different entities. This provides the longevity and foundation to our unique style and approach.
- Our programme is not just focused on Dance, but a "life experience" that includes the joy of sharing my students' first local and international flight with them; introducing them to the concept of staying at a hotel; and watching them see themselves on television for the first time.

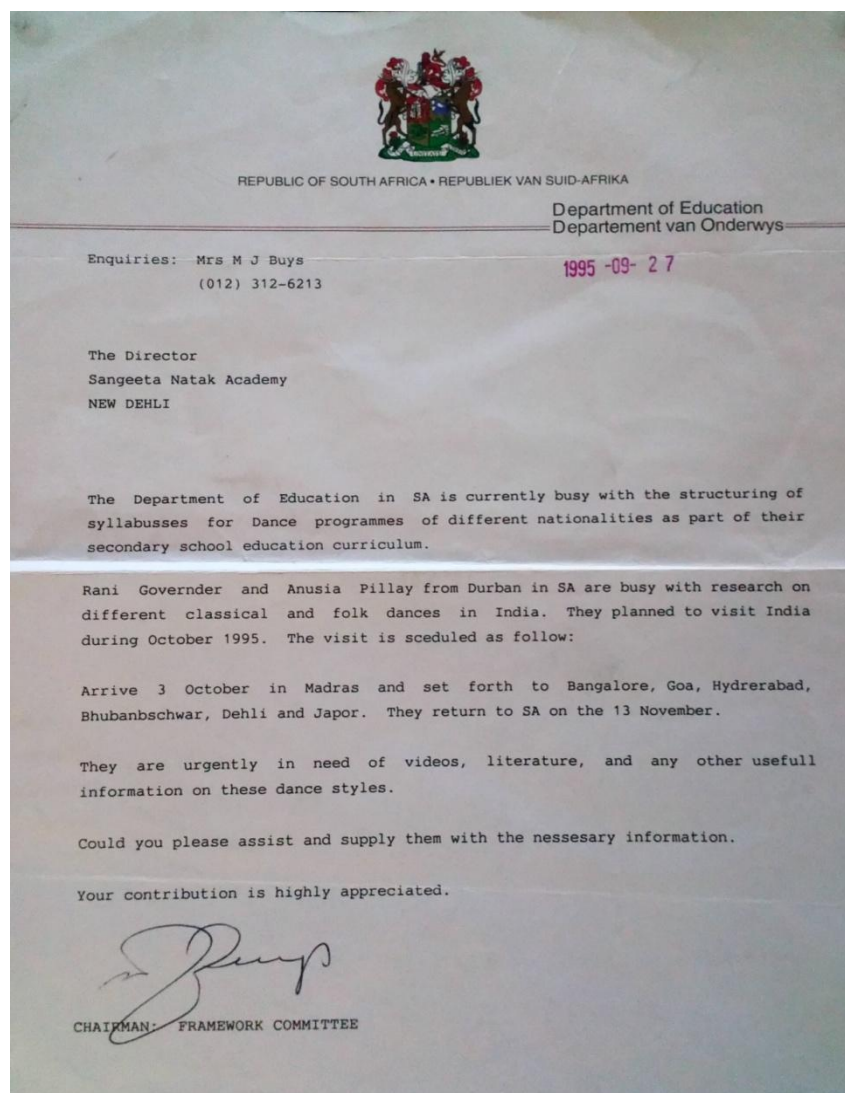


Illustration 40: NED letter to research **Curricula** in Indian dance in India

My mother and I compiled syllabi for the Republic of South Africa Post-School Vocational Education at Technical Colleges under the auspices of Eastside College. They were at National Intermediate certificate level for Bharata Natyam, Kathak and Indian Folk Dance (N2). This Syllabus was meant to be implemented in January 1997, with the first examination taking place in November of the same year. My mother and I travelled to and researched the viable options and resources in India. The other project, that never materialised, was the Gauteng Education department's pilot project for secondary schools in Indian Classical and Folk Dance in 2000. The approach to this project was different in that a group of prominent South African dancers made contributions to the Bharata Natyam Syllabus, while I compiled both the Kathak and Folkdance syllabi. The coordinator was a dancer, educator and a friend, Sumaiygai, who passed away suddenly a few months before

implementation. The project was then shelved. Although these academic forays have been made, they were firstly expected to be voluntary, and secondly, never utilised the practical expertise of dancer/s that helped create these programmes to share in its execution. Thus leaving the promise of formalisation of Indian dance unfulfilled in South Africa. Again, Eurocentric and now Afro-centricity in dance has taken centre stage, minority dance forms are still not invited to “sit at the dance pedagogy table”.

Universities in South Africa have renewed their dance studies in the last few years. During Apartheid they were mostly Ballet schools. Now different dance degrees are offered on their programs and there is also research on dance. At the Cape Town University, School of Dance choices can be made between three degree programs: ballet, Modern Dance and since 1998 African dance. Combined studies in dance and cultural anthropology are quite common. For a long time suppressed African culture becomes an important issue of research programs. And there is no time to lose; African traditional culture is changing and disappearing very fast in this modern world. Nowadays in South Africa, this research is done by young Africans who are looking at their own culture and with the colonialist point of view of a foreign scientist. (Holzhausen 2002: npn)

One wonders how much more is required for any serious pedagogy in Indian/ South Asian dance to take place or for the calibre of our contribution to be given equal acknowledgement whether as pedagogy or performance.

The last decade of my professional career has focussed on training trainers. The students of our Institute have proved their mettle as performing artistes and have begun the process of choreography, training and directing productions in the multi and intercultural genres. We had to develop our own training methods in line with the concept of inclusion and decolonisation, a culmination of all the lessons that we were learning in the process of being and becoming dance activists. Our multi-cultural and intercultural train-the-trainer programme evolved from that process, ensuring that the next generation is placed centre-stage in the global dance arena. The pedagogical legacy that I leave behind is the longevity of the work begun by my mother, so that it does not end with me.

A CAREER OF DANCE DECOLONISATION

Our career path is not a mere listing and reminiscing of achievements from the archive. It is also what I experience when interacting with the archive in terms of the shifts and changes we lived. Our body

of work serves to record and highlight our approach to Indian dance as a systematic and deliberate attempt at decolonising dance in South Africa. Indian Dance in particular was taking a more prominent role in events and arenas where it had historically been excluded or treated as an “inferior” dance form, towards the end of apartheid and in post-apartheid South Africa. Artistic and corporate events alike began the slow journey towards an inclusion of minority cultures. We had the opportunity to actively participate in this process. It should be noted that we were not the only ones to do so, but were often located and acknowledged as the most experienced in the field. The archive contains innumerable examples of the direction and activism that were created as a result of evolving the attitudes, training and handling of Indian dance in South Africa. According to Rosenberg (2009), ‘Activist art means community or public participation as means of effecting social change and promoting social justice.’ (Shapiro 2016: 19). Further explaining that

Activist art, in both its forms and methods, is process - rather than object - or product-orientated. Activist art takes place in public sites rather than within the context in art-world venues. As practice it often takes the form of temporal interventions, such as performance or performance-based activities, media events, exhibitions, and installations. (Rosenberg in Shapiro 2016: 20 - 21).

I have selected the following highlights from our work as they have social, political, economic and cultural implications for the manner in which South Africa, and our approach to dance pedagogy and performance, was evolving from apartheid into a democracy:

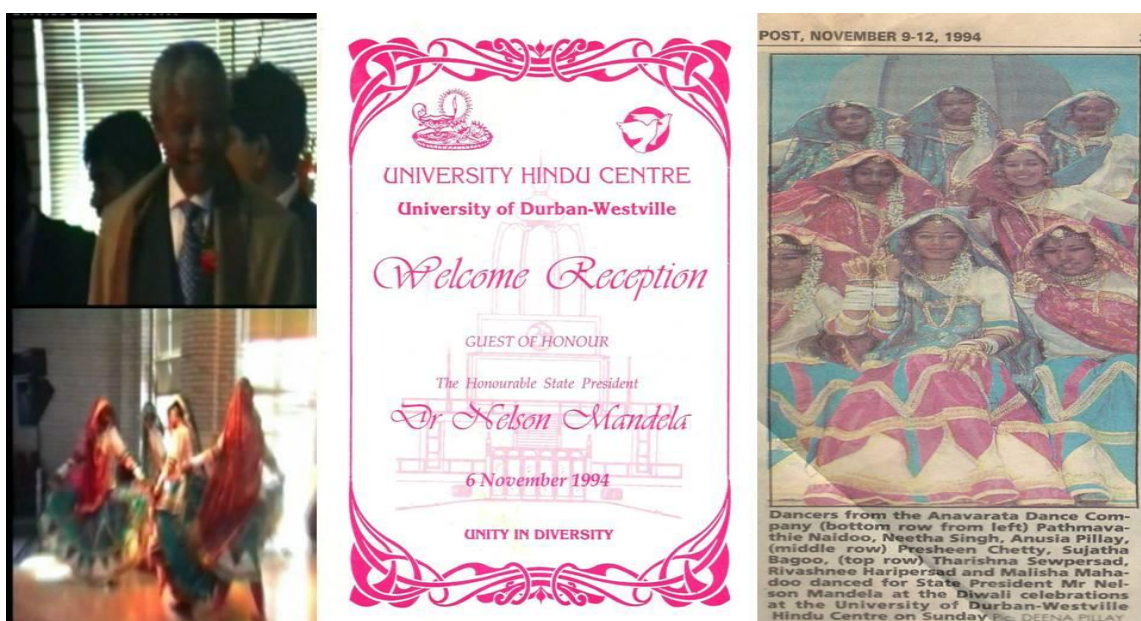


Illustration 41: Nelson Mandela Performance (Pillay in POST 1994: 3)

1994 wasn't just the year of South Africa's achieving democracy; it also was the year we '...danced for State President Mr Nelson Mandela at the Diwali celebrations at the University of Durban-Westville Hindu Centre ...' (Pillay in *POST* 1994: 3). I had the opportunity to meet and talk with him.

I had been part of the Mass Democratic Movement's (MDM) peaceful marches and protests on the University of Natal, Durban campus for Mr. Mandela's release, and will never forget the elation in our home when his release from prison was televised. The thought of being in his presence was overwhelming. My mother and I made reconciliation through dance our conscious mission after this experience.

After being imprisoned by the white regime for 27 years of his life, he walked out a free man in 1990 and became the first president of the Democracy in 1994. From the outset, his approach was reconciliatory (cf. Guelke 1999:192) and his words and actions were proof of that (De Klerk in Oliver & Oliver 2017: 6)

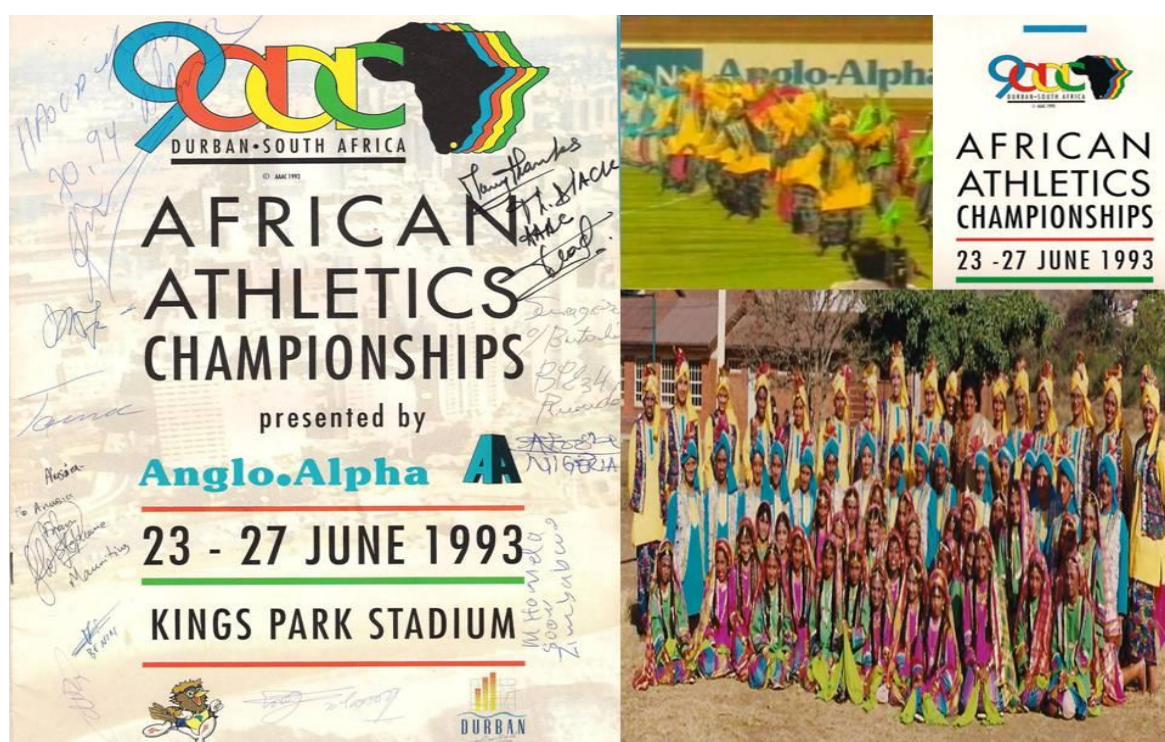


Illustration 42: 9th African Athletics Championships

Prior to this, the 9th African Athletics Championships took place at Kings Park Stadium (23-27 June 1993). We were approached by the organising committee, 6 weeks prior to the opening ceremonies to perform an Indian dance. They disclosed that other leading dancers had been approached and had

refused on the basis that it could not be done in so short a period. My mother and I agreed that we would perform a “Bhangra-Giddha” folk dance from Punjab, including dancers from other classes at the Cato Manor Technical College to form a group of 80 dancers. Duties were divided up - my mother was in charge of mothers who attended rehearsals with sewing machines to create the costumes, while I was on the College’s field in Springfield from morning until late afternoon training students and teachers the routine over a bull horn.

On the opening night the atmosphere was electric. After our performance the athletes began requesting photographs and autographs. The organisers requested a performance at the closing ceremonies too. At that point our performance was screened on every News, sports and cultural programme on national and international television, considering that this was one of the most prestigious sporting events that South Africa had hosted since sanctions were lifted. This event cemented the beginning of inclusivity for and within South Africa, and our belief that our work was both recognised and appreciated on an international platform; resulting in the arduous task of undertaking International tours.

NeighbourNews **3**
 Wednesday, February 22 1995



Indian-Zulu fusion dance

FAROOK KHAN
 NeighbourNews Reporter

IT was the perfect mix — Indian and Zulu dancing enthralled a capacity audience at the Arena Park regional hall, Chatsworth, at the weekend.

The Anavarata School of Dance of Isipingo and the Woza Africa Dancers are due to go on a tour of Mauritius as part of a cultural programme.

The proceeds of the Chatsworth concert and donations from members of the public are to go towards the cost of the historic trip to Mauritius.

Mrs Rani Naidoo, who is leading the group, said today that they

would leave on March 2 and spend two weeks on the island.

"During this time we will give seven performances before returning," said Mrs Naidoo.

On Saturday night, the dancers turned on the charm and precision and the Anavarata School members drew loud applause for their "Salam" dance, which was once popular in the Moghul courts of India. It is also hailed as one of the early kathak dances which is extremely popular even now.

The Woza Africa Dancers were not to be outdone and the fast-moving, high-stepping routine virtually had people on their feet in the first India-Zulu dance fusion concert in Chatsworth.

Points to avoid alarm system pitfalls

TO avoid the pitfalls of wasted money and endless problems of false alarms or alarm failure, consider the following points in this three-part series:

- If you are planning on building a new house, the alarm system must be considered in the design stage so that its requirements can be planned and

SECURITY
ZAREENA AHMED

incorporated into the electrical drawings.

- If the alarm in your home is old and has not been professionally maintained, then you should have it serviced, upgraded and if necessary modernised.
- At all times, deal

with a reputable supplier. Consult with your insurers to make sure the alarm meets with their and your own requirements. Obtain specifications with full details in a quotation.

- Make sure the installation of the alarm is carried out by trained and qualified craftsmen. Give plenty of notice as to when the alarm can be installed and do not rush

Picture: NIRRY JUGATH

TOP: The Anavarata School dancers (from left) Surana Sarjoo, Levanya Paramanand, Renisha Manilali, Nerisha Naidoo and Savina Rugnath performing the Salami dance at the Arena Park regional hall.

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Illustration 43: First Intercultural Dance Performance in Chatsworth

The post apartheid transition was not an easy one. In 1994, after the African Athletics Championships, we began negotiations to tour Mauritius as part of the country's Independence Day celebrations. We were hopeful that a new political dispensation in our country would enable the support of this prestigious opportunity, even writing to the State President. Our attempts at attaining governmental funding to realise the tour were met with closed doors. Fundraising concerts were held at community centres around Durban to raise funds for our dancers to travel. Hospitality was provided by the Mauritian government and civil organisations. One of the highlights was the first joint Indo-African performances in Chatsworth. Journalist, Farook Khan, in the archive, described it in the following manner:

It was the perfect mix – Indian and Zulu dancing enthralled a capacity audience at the Arena Park regional hall, Chatsworth, at the weekend. ... the Anavarata School members drew loud applause... the Woza Africa Dancers were not to be outdone and the fast – moving, high – stepping routine virtually had people on their feet in the first Indian-Zulu dance fusion concert in Chatsworth. (1995: 3)

le mauricien **a c t**

Au MGI dimanche dernier

Brillante performance du groupe Anavarata de l'Afrique du sud



Mme Rani Gavender

Le 'Anavarata Dance Group' du collège technique Cato Manor, Durban, Afrique du sud, a produit une performance remarquable de deux heures à l'Institut Mahatma Gandhi dimanche dernier sous l'égide du Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund. C'était la première d'une série de programmes culturels proposés par le groupe dans le cadre des célébrations marquant le 27^e anniversaire de l'indépendance de Maurice.

Le groupe Anavarata est dirigé par Mme. Rani Gavender et sa fille Mme. Anusila Pillay, toutes deux enseignantes de danses folkloriques au collège technique Cato Manor. Le spectacle était coordonné du côté sud-africain par Mme. Meena Paramanand et du côté mauricien par M. Ramkumun Jakhoo.

Le programme débute avec une valse indienne (danse de la prière) dans un style purement kathak, suivi d'autres danses folkloriques et classiques. Les 27 étudiantes âgées de 8 à 20 ans, ont exécuté des danses venant de l'Etat indien d'Andhra Pradesh, de Rajasthan et du Punjab.

Le 'Salaami' montrant les mouvements gracieux du corps et des pieds dans le style kathak était exécuté par trois

petites filles de 8 ans, dont la petite princesse Mkohe, la première fille africaine à avoir appris la danse indienne au collège technique Cato Manor. Les filles ont aussi exécuté une danse zoulou sous la direction de Levanya Paramanand. Une danse qui reflète les efforts déployés des Indiens de l'Afrique du sud à intégrer harmonieusement la nouvelle nation sud-africaine. Cependant, le clou de l'après-midi était la danse de l'illumination, dédiée à la nouvelle Afrique du sud.

De plus, le public a eu droit à trois chansons de Sangeeta Deepaul, de quelques ségas de Roland Roy et des chansons en bhojpur par M. R. Jakhoo.

NA



2 NeighbourNews
Wednesday, February 15 1995

Cato Manor dancers off to Mauritius

BRONWYN PUTTOCK
NeighbourNews Reporter

THE Cato Manor Technical College Dance Troupe have been invited to perform in Mauritius from March 3 to March 15.

The 27-member group will dance at Mauritius's Independence Day celebrations — performing Indian dance, and also some vigorous Zulu sequences.

To raise money for the trip they are hosting a fund-raising dance and music extravaganza at 7pm at Arena Park Hall, Chatsworth, on Saturday. Tickets are available from the college at R10, R15 and R20.

For more information, call Mrs Rani Govender, a Kathak and folk-dance lecturer at the college, on 902-2805.

People and companies who can assist the troupe may contact Mrs Govender or the Cato Manor Technical College.

Most recently the troupe performed at the Playhouse Company's festival of Indian dance, Natya Mala.



Illustration 44: Tour of Mauritius, 1995

This concert inspired an inclusion of a Zulu dance routine by our junior students to a “Mahlatini and the Mahotella Queens” song in the Mauritian Tour programme. The response to it was phenomenal, as evidenced by a review in a Mauritian newspaper:

The other enthralling items were a Zulu dance by twelve girls aged ten to twelve It reflects a remarkable effort made by Indians in South Africa to integrate harmoniously the New South African Nation. (Boodhoon 1995:6)

The staff of Cato Manor Technical College and the Palmiet Primary School managed to raise the necessary funds for Princess Mzobe. The parents of the students and my family achieved this tour independent of any governmental support or funding, bearing in mind that ours was the first, independent, international Indian Dance Tour from South African shores. David April, member of the Artistic Committee of the National Arts Festival has this to say:

There is a future for dance, albeit a difficult one. We need more government funding, private interest and other support structures to build dance. Somehow, our resilience allows us to keep on and has not prevented the performing arts from expanding and producing elite, multi-skilled and employable artists for the local and international industry. (2018: npn)

Ironically, at our first performance at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, we were asked to join the South African Ambassador and Mauritian government officials to hoist the flags of South Africa and Mauritius while the national anthems were sung. We ensured that cultural exchange took place by learning the “Sega” dance from our hosts.



Illustration 45: Tour of Mauritius and Malaysia, 1999

The organisers of the Tour in Mauritius were so satisfied with the return on their investment that we were invited to tour Mauritius and Malaysia for a month in July 1999, again independent of governmental funding or support.

Our choice to decolonise Indian dance, the classical form was not always well received by the so-called “purists”. Yogan Devan (2016) voiced the opinion of the portion of the Indian Diaspora’s collective resistance to change.

The standard of Indian dance has hit an all-time low. But for some pockets of excellence, Indian dance has largely become meaningless. Centuries-old dance forms have metamorphosed into instant creations that just do not click – even with the infusion of some pure dance sequences. The gentle repose of Bharatanatyam and Kathak has been forsaken for overt narratives which play to the gallery. Bollywood and Kollywood have not helped the situation. Not only in South Africa, but in India, America and other places where Indian dance flourishes, the art form is being sucked into the vortex of globalisation. (Devan 2016: 15)

Dancers who chose to “break” tradition faced censure in various forms. We faced censure: as a non white dancer of a “native” genre of Dance; as a non-white dancer of Eurocentric dance; as an Indian dancer who crossed Indian linguistic and dance styles; a dancer who stepped outside of my linguistic or cultural boundary - as a South African of Indian origin who embraced the African styles and

people. I have been described as a South African Indian who dances with black people by Indian nationals (not in a complimentary way). It was finally during the filming of “Homelands” for SABC 2 in 2012, that I realised that I am all of these and none of these at the same time and could fully embrace the meaning of what my mother and I sought to achieve through dance. The director/interviewer, Beathur Magoza Baker, referred to me as a “cultural activist” - someone who used dance to create social change and challenge the status quo.

Some members of the Indian dance community felt and still do, that we were “diluting” the dance form by both including dancers of other cultures and merging the form with other dance styles. It became termed “globalisation” of Indian classical dance. ‘...Malcolm Waters describes globalisation as being the ‘direct consequence of the expansion of European culture across the planet via settlement, colonization and cultural mimesis’ (cited in Hawley, 2008: 10). My mother and I shared an aversion to poorly crafted displays of “tokenism” for the sake of it. The aversion was to the misuse of artistic licence to appease “political” pressure. We had to agree with the standpoint that Devan purported:

One can get experimental and introduce novelty but shouldn’t name it after a great tradition, especially when the hybrid dance deviates from its pure spirit and becomes an eclectic, free-for-all sort of form. In a multicultural country such as South Africa, it is good to appreciate and be inspired by everything around you, but it is essential to maintain the identity and sanctity of your art. We have no right to tamper with the rich legacy handed to us for safekeeping for the future. ... With dance being such an integral part of the community’s life, it is only correct that every effort is made to supervise the well-being of the art to ensure it is not dumped or vulgarised. (Devan 2016: 15)

Our considerable and consistent training and respect for each tradition and culture made us extremely sensitive to this when we wove all the different influences into our choreography and mounted each of our productions. We took great care to maintain the age-old traditions and be honest with our integration process, which prevented confusion.

Reflecting on unity in diversity and diversity in unity is a vitally critical need in the post-1994 South Africa where leadership is looking for approaches to move towards building a new South Africa. Given the fact that South Africa has always been a multi-cultural society, one would have expected a rich and strong tradition of philosophical reflection on diversity. However, it is not a case, due to the past discourse of apartheid and colonial rule. We appear to be scared of diversity in ethnicities, in religious faiths and in political and ideological points of view. (Buqa 2015: npn)



Illustration 46: “Illumination”: NNTV “Blasé” Shoot, 1995

The process of integration was recognised in 1995, when immediately after our successful Mauritian Tour, we were approached by NNTV to produce an insert of the contemporary piece called “Illumination” which was the finale of our production. During our tour, journalist, Sarita Boodhoo, for a Mauritian newspaper wrote:

...the forte of the afternoon was the **Illumination Dance**, a dedication to New South Africa. The dancers all in black carry headgears lit up with dozens of candles make a dramatic entry on the stage. The dark stage is lit up. It comes to life and light suddenly. This captivating dance is a conscientious effort to bring together a number of dance styles from all over the world, East and West, and rightfully known as **Fusion Dance**. (Boodhoo 1995: 6) (Bold in original)

The piece was choreographed by my mother and me, to be performed by 12 dancers in silhouette. It was symbolic of the lighting of a brighter future for our Nation. We incorporated classical Thai; Indian; African; contemporary and modern dance; as well as the Viennese Waltz to represent the eclectic nature of our “rainbow nation” in group formations to a semi-classical Indian instrumental composition.

... dance can communicate and transfer certain aspects of culture, promote intercultural understanding and respect, and bring about reconciliation between the 'self' and the 'others'. The intervention can serve as good example of promoting understanding, awareness and intercultural tolerance. Dance cannot, however, claim to be the only method to bring about change, intercultural tolerance and reconciliation. (Manenye 2014: 92)

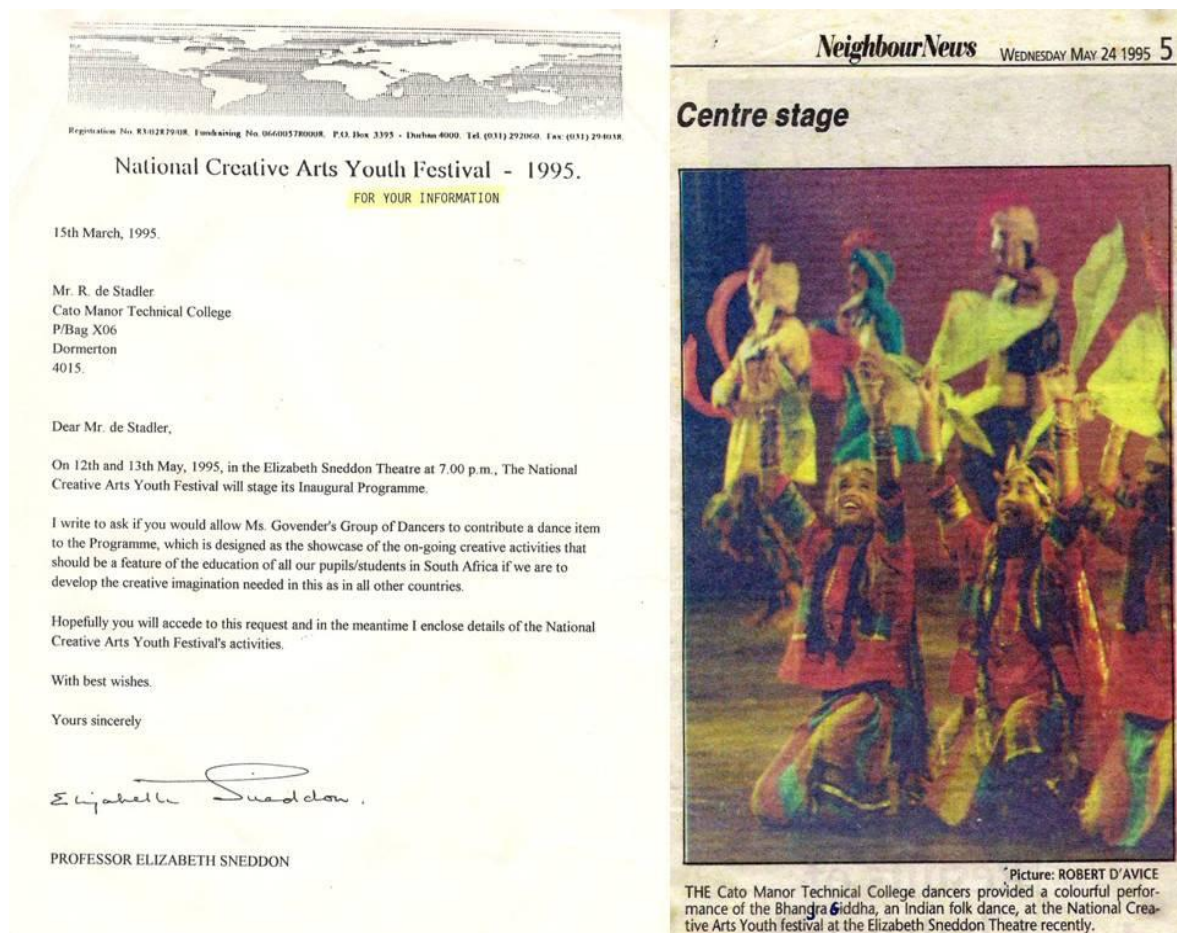


Illustration 47: Prof. Sneddon and Youth Festivals

In April and May 1995 we spent 3 days on shooting performances and interviews to produce a rather unique insert. After the segment aired on National television in August of the same year we were invited by Prof. Elizabeth Sneddon to perform at her National Creative Arts Youth Festival, which in subsequent years became known as "Love of Dance" (1996 and 1997, Appendix 9).



Illustration 48: Pepsi Concerts, Durban

In 1996, post-apartheid saw the renewal of diplomatic ties with various nations and international lifting of economic sanctions in our country. This had positive consequences for not just the economy, but also for the performing arts. The historic re-launch of Pepsi Cola in a series of free Beach concerts as part of “Ocean Action”, was one of the first major internationally backed local collaborations in Durban post-apartheid, and our students ranging from 6 to 16 years of age and I were eager to be a part of such a prestigious event.

India’s acclaimed Lambadi folk dancers are among a multi-cultural array of artists turning Durban’s Golden Mile into a melting pot of music and dance ...the Anavarata Dance institute run by reputed local dance teachers Mrs Rani Govender and Mrs Anusia Pillay, are performing with 28 local South African bands on Bay Beach, opposite the amphitheatre, from tomorrow (Thursday) until Saturday, each day between 6pm and 9pm. ...Other artists performing ... include The Core and African Jazz Connection..., Darius Brubeck, Basanth Ramchandra, Saraswathie Shainaaz and Dr Victor..., Mango Groove and Urban Creep..., Squel, Bayete, Q Cumba Zoo, Busi Mhlango and Boom Shaka. (POST 1996: 15)

Meeting their idols and performing on the same platform gave the young students a newfound confidence in their abilities as they were treated as equals. An important note to make is that on our final night, we performed a lively 8-minute Kathak dance-drama based on an episode of Lord Krishna's childhood, which described the bond of love between Krishna and his mother Yashoda. The massive audience was predominantly non-Indian, and their roaring response was heart-warming, proving yet again that neither race nor culture is a barrier to the human connection.

LIQUID BLUE
RUNNING ORDER - DANCERS

- 1 CARMEN GOVENDER
- 2 LUCILLE SOPHIE MAPALAM
- 3 SEISHINI NAIKER
- 4 REBECCA WALLIS
- 5 PAUL BOTHA
- 6 BRANDON BRETT
- 7 LOUISE WOLMARANS
- 8 THEUNIS NEL
- 9 LINDA LAMPRECHT
- 10 CAROLINE & DEBBIE
- 11 KARIEN INGELAMP
- * 12 COLLEEN EITZEN
- 13 DOLPHIN SHOW
- 14 WINNING DESIGNER RANGE
- 16 FINALE

BROWNYN
VIOLINS INTO POSITION
DANCERS INTO POSITIONS BACKSTAGE
DANCERS ENTER

THE ORGANISERS

Producer - Deon Redman (Fork Production)
Event Coordinator - Taryn Johnstone (The Independent on Saturday)
Advertising - Priscilla Camitsis
Production Coordinator - Ondine Jones (Fork Production)
Production Assistant - Renton Strydom (Fork Production)
Seaworld Liaison - Margaret Hamilton
Gear provided by Gearhouse
Models by - Fork, Leigh Downing and Models International
Graphic Design - FUEL
Judges - Suzy Bell, Gideon, Roseanne Cartwright, Tim Thabethe

THE PERFORMERS

Opera Singer - Bronwen Forbay
MC - Kevin Minter Brown (East Coast Radio)
Tabla - Richard Ellis of Earthward Drummers
Drummers - Adrian & Lauren Pole, David Haigh - Earthward Drummers
Choir - Northlands Girls High
String Quartet - The Tekweni String Quartet
Dance Choreography - Anusia Pillay
Dancers - Anavarata Dance Institute
- Musa Mhili and Eric Tshabalala from Sivele Zonke Dance Co.
Musical Director and Show DJ - Toine Scholtz
DJ Equipment - Forbidden Worlds
Entrance Band - Ottawa Morumba Drummers
Make-up - Aldytha Wheeler
Swimwear - Haroun Hansrot
Hair - Terry Scott Hairco

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Illustration 49: "Liquid Blue", Durban

In 1999, I was commissioned to choreograph the introduction for the guest designer, at the *Independent on Sunday*'s annual designer competition at the Durban Dolphinarium called "Liquid Blue". I received a cassette with 1 track on it and the duration for my piece. My choreography was eclectic: Contemporary dance's "contract and release" movements combined with a combination of "ballet-esque" postures and hand movements; Indian Classical Dance was a combination of story-telling elements dance movements of Bharata Natyam; Kathak's pirouettes and fast footwork;

Odissi's classical “chauka” (square) variations of hand and foot movements; and the Bhangra Folk dance movements which morphed into almost a contemporary feel. The music was set to samples from Henryk Mikolaj Gorecki's classical music reworked by British band “Lamb”. Its orchestral arrangement included the tabla (Indian drum), and haunting English lyrics.

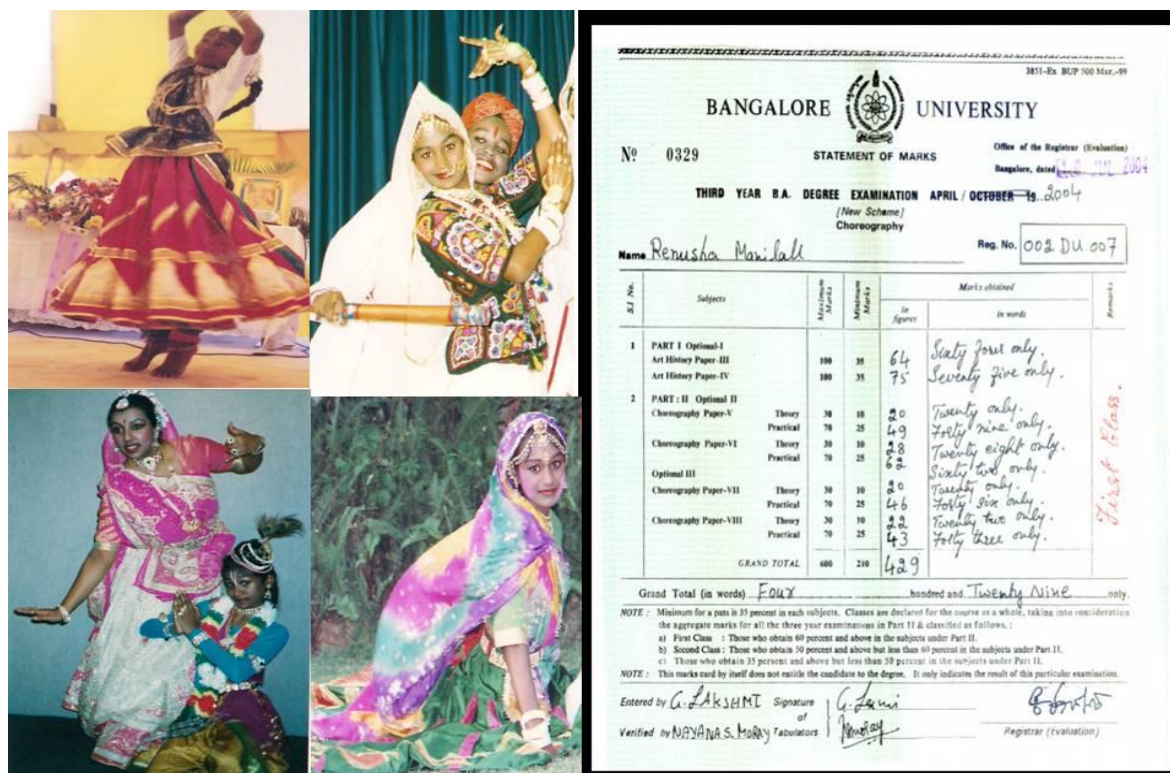


Illustration 50: Renusha Manilall

This was my first corporate performance of my brand of Intercultural Dance, usually reserved for productions. We were to utilise the edges of the pool to enter, and perform on the platform where the dolphins lay at the front of the pool, dressed in white, along with 2 male dancers from Siwela Sonke. My late student, Renusha Manilall and I were given 6 hours to work with Musa Mbili and the late Eric Tshabalala. Renusha was also my “daughter” who I co-parented with her single mother, Renuka. She was the first Kathak exponent to receive a scholarship from the ICCR in Durban and received a degree in dance from Bangalore University. She gained many accolades and as her final performance exam, utilised our multi-cultural training to present a dance drama based on Nelson Mandela’s life and release from prison. She worked with world renowned Salsa dancer Lourd Vijay in Bangalore, and danced in the film “The Myth” with Jackie Chan. She returned to South Africa when she was

diagnosed with lymphoma at 21. She always told me that her fight against cancer was as a result of the dance training she received from my mother and me. She passed away at 27 years of age, still involved in training and choreography with me and the urge to recover so that she could dance again. As sentimental as this re-telling is, it is evidence of the efforts of my mother and I to create quality students and proficient future bearers of a Dance legacy.

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GENERAL NEWS



Dance troupe performs for the Queen

DANCERS of the Anavarata Dance Institute, led by Anusia Pillay, performed for Queen Elizabeth on 13 November 1999 at the Durban City Hall, in what was a colourful exhibition of South African traditional talent.

This was part of the official reception in Her honour and formed part of the CHOGM Conference hosted by the City of Durban. According to Anusia, it was an incredibly exciting experience.

"The ADI has just completed a successful tour of Mauritius and Malaysia in July and have also been invited to tour USA early next year," said Anusia. They will be open for new enrolments from 30 November 1999. For further details contact Anusia Pillay on 9036813.

Pic: Dancers who performed for the Queen: (L-R) Nitasha Ramnath, Renusha Manilall, Pratisha Hariparsaad, Selisha Maharaj, Divaksha Naidoo and Anusia Pillay.

Centre: Minoli Naidoo as Krishna.

MAYOR'S PARLOUR
Durban Metropolitan Council

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YOUR REF
ENQUIRIES

11 November 1999

OUTSIDE ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMME FOR HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN'S RECEPTION : CHURCH WALK, DURBAN CITY HALL : SATURDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 1999

Posmons Spm

17h30	Family Singers	
17h40	Anavarata Dancers	☒
17h45	Really Happy Singers	
17h55	Family Singers	☒
18h05	Anavarata Dancers	☒
18h10	Really Happy Singers	
18h20	Family Singers	
18h30	Really Happy Singers Anavarata Dancers Family Singers	☒ ☒ ☒

} 1 minute each for Her Majesty The Queen's benefit



City Hall
West Street
Durban 4001
Box 1014
Durban 4000
Tel (031) 300 - 4615
Fax (031) 300 - 6306
Website address -
<http://www.durban.org.za>

Illustration 51: Performance Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, CHOGM, Durban

Dancers of the Anavarata Dance Institute, led by Anusia Pillay, performed for Queen Elizabeth on 13 November 1999 at the Durban City Hall, in what was a colourful exhibition of South African traditional talent. (*The Gazette* 1999: 7)

Apart from work with various High Commissioners to South Africa from India, Malaysia and Sri Lanka, we participated in several high-profile events for various Heads of State and dignitaries: the first Presidential Inauguration of Jacob Zuma in 2009, where we performed under the banner of a Soweto based talent agency; Tourism Malaysia's event for Deputy Ministers of Tourism of Malaysia and South Africa in Sandton in 2009; the launch of 20 years of Democracy at Freedom Park on 3 June

2013; and most recently Indian Prime Minister Modi's South African reception in Johannesburg on 8 July 2016 (Appendix 10).



Illustration 52: First Durban Diwali Festival, 1998

Diwali festivals since the late 1990s were ideal to cement our unifying repertoire of dance forms, to promote a South African-ness. In light of the fact that our ancestors were “prevented” from celebrating Diwali when they first arrived in South Africa, our organisation more than made up for the deficit and participated in every Diwali Festival in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town that we had the opportunity to. We brought our unique repertoire and treatment of Indian classical dance to the public, beginning with the first ever celebration on the Durban Beachfront on 10 October 1998. The Newtown Diwali Festival in Johannesburg had its inaugural celebrations in 2005 and we performed each year, including 2006 and 2007, as reflected in the archive:

This Saturday at the annual Diwali festival in Newtown, performers from the Soweto dance group Maru E Africa, wowed the crowd. The group displayed an array of Indian folk, tribal, classical and Bollywood dance styles to popular Indian songs. Judging from the applause of almost 250 000 people, the group has earned their honours. (Kharsany 2006: 17)

The Cape Town Diwali Festival in 2011, 2012 and 2014 respectively saw Anavarata become the anchor act. We facilitated an Indian Dance workshop at the festival in 2011 (Appendix 11).

In 2000, I made the difficult decision to leave KwaZulu Natal to relocate to Gauteng. My work with the Indian consulate, in Johannesburg, to promote India dance culture through workshops and solo performances, led to me being approached to start a Kathak class in Midrand. Change became my constant companion, as the Indian dance milieu was very different from Durban. My mother and I were featured on SABC 3's "Free Spirit" insert on the spirituality of Indian dance in 2001, enabling our movement towards work in the townships.



Illustration 53: Ibumba International Festival, Bulawayo

In 2011, after our collaboration with Kwabatsha Dance Company at the Arts Alive Festival, we broke box office – records at the “Ibumba International Festival” in Bulawayo. This co-production stemmed from work that I engaged in with Zimbabwean refugees who became students of ours in Johannesburg. Among them were Trust Madolo, who later returned to his country and created the Kwabatsha Dance Company and Bhekumuzi Ncube, reflected in the archive:

The meeting of the traditional Indian oriented dance group and Kwabatsha, which earlier on declared to deliver to their fans, lived up to expectations. The colourful dance group, Anavarata, stole the show as they performed something new to revellers who were not used to the traditional dances of the Indians. Revellers were seen clapping hands time and again when the groups were belting out their stuff. (*Saturday Chronicle* 2009: npn)



Illustration 54: Senegal Performance

From 25-27 November 2016, our most recent African performance took place at the 8th Edition International Gorée Diaspora Festival in Senegal. The theme of the festival was “Memory and Resilience, from the past to the present, how can we heal the divides in human society?” Gorée Island of Memory is a space for reconciliation as a heritage site bearing witness to the slave trade. The festival provided an opportunity for citizens of Africa and the Diaspora to express their cultural diversity and aspiration for greater social justice. The National Arts Council invited submissions to showcase original, outstanding indigenous and contemporary South African art forms at this prestigious platform. Proposals by 44 groups were submitted for consideration - only 4 were selected nationally. We performed a 15-minute piece called “Evolution of the Rainbow” on the night of the 25th. We incorporated the various cultures; languages and heritages of South Africa. All our training had already been focussing on the enslavement heritage of our country. Our teaching; artistic interactions; repertoire development and lived experience with dance in general gave me the sense that we were dealing with an extremely dark, contentious and often barbaric subject that led to untold suffering. Drawing from my own experience with a background of indenture, I approached the

subject of how I would want my legacy remembered - the answer was celebration. I was able to channel the feelings of disenfranchisement and exclusion to include all the so-called minorities of our country that constituted the other, and create an abstract piece that incorporated traditional and contemporary elements of South Africa. I created a character called “The Spirit of the Rainbow” that utilised poetry to merge the ideology together. The message was clear: “Dance not subjugate”. The international audience cheered and danced with us.

All of the accolades and achievements are due to a supportive family, which enabled our career development. Like the Nydoo Sisters’ performances and tours, family involvement is vital at every level. Our backstage crew and management were ably handled by our family, as is costumes, props and all aspects of production are dealt with in-house with students and cast members too. My niece, Savera, is a natural performer and artist. She took the curtain call with me at our 50th Anniversary celebrations at 2 years old, and most recently, in July 2018 presented certificates to our trainee trainers at the Roodepoort Theatre in my mother’s stead. She is thrilled to be part of a legacy that she is familiarising herself with through this study. In a 2017 interview “The Womenz” asked me about how I manage with both dance and family. My response was:

My Dad lives with me and is 73, so over the years I have worked at creating a balance of family and work. Being in this Industry, my family has learnt that most of my work is weekend based and I have no social pressure from them. We juggle roles, responsibilities and travel very successfully. Having a supportive family and community structure help... (nnp)

DANCE: HEALING IN DIVERSITY

My mother and I learnt natural and energy healing modalities in India, and had been long-time practitioners of yoga and meditation. Like yoga and meditation, dance was designed to heal, balance and replenish the body, mind and spirit using the energy anatomy. Some examples of this are:

- Dance balances out the body and brain - what is executed on the right side is also executed on the left side.
- Chakkars or pirouettes, i.e. spinning in a clockwise direction cleanses the aura, while spinning in an anti-clockwise direction energises the aura.

- Mudras or symbolic hand gestures are specific to meridians in the body and fine and large movements activate the energy centres in a human, that is the chakras.

Folkdances in the rural areas in India and Africa, and the slaves in America and the South American countries recognised the value of dancing as a means of soothing aching muscles and spirits - after a long day of toiling in the fields, they would dance. This was passed down the generations by oral tradition.

Our natural conclusion was that if the process of dance practice and performance could create such favourable outcomes for individuals and collectives - why not a nation? To heal a nation we believed that we needed to materialise it, see it, feel it and transmit it, thereby making dance and its unifying power tangible.

There are not many countries worldwide with a wider gap between the rich and poor, as in South Africa. The testimony of more than 50 years of Apartheid is perceptible everywhere and still visible in many places. South Africa still has a long way to go, to become a democratic nation with the same chances/opportunities and respect for all its citizens.... The huge majority of the non-white population still live in the Apartheid system designed "Townships" ... (Holzhausen 2002: npn)

We were seeing dancers in the late 1980s and early 1990s make attempts and inroads into having cultures co-exist on stage. From my experience and reading of various sources, this is referred to as trans-cultural or cross-cultural, where two or more cultural areas are compared. There appeared to be a pattern of different cultural groups in their own unique traditional costumes doing their own unique form of dance, usually merged by choreography that included circles, inter-laced lines and to an extent a limited portion of "imitation" of each other's cultural movements. We were all buying into the promotion of the concept of "unity in diversity". We were more interested in multi-cultural dance, where our repertoire and curriculum contained and related it to several cultural and ethnic dance styles, which we reworked and deconstructed to have a new and completely different dance form emerge - intercultural dance. Professor of Performance Studies, Richard Schechner (1982), believes that

...intercultural exchange takes a teacher: someone who knows the body of performance of the culture being translated. The translator of culture is not a mere agent ...but an actual culture-

bearer. This is why performing other cultures becomes so important. ...So that “them” and “us” is elided, or laid experientially side-by-side. (Cited in Schechner 1984: 247)

The audience reaction to our performances in such varied scenarios also became a valuable tool in determining the acceptability and direction of our course development.

... audiences exercise their power through a number of mechanisms including (non)attendance and vocal responses...amongst other diverse forms of feedback. Audiences are consequently very powerful and frequently poorly considered in the creative act of dance production. (Samuel 2016: 164)

We actively sought audience feedback, to the point of filming their critique after our production launches, and inviting them to utilise social media to register their feedback.

My family, mother and I were already practising inclusion for decades before, and wanted to go beyond to generate a lasting impact, resonance and legacy of peace. We took our lead from a similar approach by teacher and mentor, Dr. Subrahmanyam, toward diversity in India, who subscribes to the principal of “Unity in Variety”. Her research revealed the substantial variety of unity there has been in the Asian subcontinent for a few thousand years.

Culture is just not a set of books in the library or just some monuments which you sometimes go to see or just some drill that is being performed as dance on the stage, but it has a soul. Behind all these arts there is just not the physical outline apart from the physical framework there is a soul for all these arts. ... Performing arts mirrors life in the Universe. So the theatre becomes a microcosmic space; this is how the performing arts have been seen in India. (EML by Dr Padma Subrahmanyam 2014)

There is a familiar resonance with the array of languages, customs and traditions that South Africa comprises of. I had been utilising social work, dance and the arts to create social cohesion, peace and nation building; healing, levelling the playing fields and de-politicising the arts in the previously disadvantaged communities I work in.

We began focussing more on developing relationships - with the students and amongst them. Developing good social skills - whether it was ambassadorial or buffet etiquette and table manners. Teamwork was not just about group choreography, but utilising it to connect with each other in a meaningful way. As Adrian Flores (2009) states: ‘The skills you learn on the dance floor will translate to a broader base of support for yourself and others in your life’ (p. xviii)

Indian dance is still struggling to locate itself in the South African context.

South Africa has both, a strong European as well as an African cultural life and tradition. These are the base of a very interesting and sometimes explosive mixture that is searching for an artistic expression of the gap between a highly developed consumer's world and the traditional life of African communities and their rituals. (Holzhausen 2002: npn)

I always made a point of being actively involved in the communities of the townships that I ran classes in. Networking with schools, churches and sports organisations meant support and ownership of and by the community structures. In Soweto I became actively involved in the work that “Mo Afrika Itlhokomelo” was doing with ex-convicts’ rehabilitation and re-integration into society. This body was established by six ex-convicts, and worked closely with the department of correctional services programmes within correctional centres.

Pillay believes that dance must include people of all races, cultures and religions, to be fully representational of South Africa and therefore she focuses on multi-cultural dance. (Kharsany 2006: 17)

The purpose of founding Anavarata Dance Institute is to heal the hurts of our country's past through the medium of arts and culture - unity in diversity in practice. It utilises the strengths of the Community to build on, rather than its weaknesses. This relates to Appreciative Inquiry which ‘... has been found to be a useful tool for leadership educators, as its foundation in social constructionist philosophy aligns with contemporary leadership and learning theories.’ (Priest et al 2013: 18). We promoted Unity in Dance by emphasising a strong sense of nation-building in previously disadvantaged communities where, the Institute provides training and skills development in dance and theatrical performances in the greater Gauteng area,

... our work is based in the “townships” of South Africa and we focus on the previously disadvantaged communities by offering training and bursaries FREE OF CHARGE. Africa is a country of rhythm, the challenge is that most Dance styles utilise the macro muscles, whereas Indian Dance requires the use of micro muscles as well - from head to toe. So we ease into it and because we are multi- and Intercultural dance based we use other styles to introduce the basics. At this point our dancers are proficient in Bharata Natyam; Kathak; Odissi; Mohiniyattam and various Indian folk and tribal dances, as well as Global dance styles. (Pillay in The Womenz 2017: npn)

This group has been exposed to dance workshops on a regular basis and experienced the continuity of my studies via workshops at the Indian Consulate and ICCR in Johannesburg. This included Kathak where they danced with a disciple of Guru Rajender Gangani's; and were part of the workshop in Johannesburg where they were introduced to one of my mother's Bharata Natyam Gurus Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam. This was confirmed by "Indianspice", an online magazine, after a workshop by Dr. Subrahmanyam in Johannesburg (Illustration 34).

Subrahmanyam's face lit up at this historical moment as she had the opportunity to meet the daughter of her student, Rani. ...The workshop's attendees broke out in applause of this discovery of the generation of Subrahmanyam's teachings were being taught here in South Africa. (Khan, N. 2011: npn)

Existing dance companies, dancers and choreographers of divergent genres are involved in community development work in previously disadvantaged communities around the country, both during and post-apartheid. According to Holzhausen (2002) this was done by white choreographers and teachers who were active on the following three levels:

- The professional dance company is performing in and outside South Africa. All the time keeping a high technical and artistic level and keeping itself remarked throughout their home cities.
- Each company offers a training program, sometimes a real dance formation. It is providing young dancers for the company. At the same time they give many poor and less privileged children the possibility of learning and spending their free time in an intelligent way. The support of those young dancers goes often far beyond dance training. ...
- The companies also teach dance classes in less-privileged communities. Normally company members visit Townships regularly. They are trained to pass on the information and knowledge they gained through their own training. The companies try to multiply their work and let the highest possible number of people profit from it. (npn)

During apartheid Indian dance participation at recognised National festivals and platforms appeared not to be considered. The "magic" of 1994 only really took effect a few years later for us, and even the "reconciliatory" work we were doing in KwaZulu Natal, was not covered by television as was the case of those entities based in Johannesburg.

In the 1990s, we were part of the first "Dance Shongololo", "The Dance Umbrella's" Durban edition at the Playhouse. Attempts to engage with the Johannesburg edition to bring Indian dance into the contemporary arena appeared to be inaccessible despite claims that it was a platform for all dances. The news last year that this giant of the South African dance landscape was permanently closing

down felt like a death knell, and begs the question of the position of Dance in general in South Africa. Further to that, if this is the position of established dance forms in South Africa, what is the future for Indian dance then? The Dance Umbrella did evolve ‘in synergy with democratic change’ (Ferreira 2018: 14) and will be missed. I cannot help but agree with Georgina Thompson’s farewell comments:

... in order for the dance industry to survive and prosper, collaboration among artists and organisations was key. Dance bodies needed to work in alliance, form partnerships and become united in collectively taking ownership of their industry. ... the dance community needed to become a unified support structure with a common goal to make dance the national priority it deserves to be. ... great diversity in South African dance was something to be treasured. Diversity had been a defining characteristic of Dance Umbrella, which consistently presented new approaches to dance. (cited in Ferreira 2018: 14)

TORCH- BEARER OF A DANCE LEGACY

My mother’s retirement was done in a very subtle manner, where she slowly stepped back and allowed me to take the reins. Our last “Gurupurnima” together was extremely poignant. It is believed that the spiritual teacher is the “face” of God or God’s representative on the earthly plane, after one’s mother and father – “Mata Pita Guru Daivum” (Mother, father, teacher, God). “Gurupurnima” was observed at the Actonville Seva Samaj in July annually, and my students and I were invited to participate. On this auspicious day students make offerings to their Guru, for imparting the abundance of their knowledge, that take the form of cash or kind, such as flowers, fruit or gifts. Even the offering of “oneself” is considered a worthy gift. On my return home, I presented all of the student’s tributes to my mother touching her feet, as my first and consistent Guru and thanked her for giving me the source of greatest purpose and pleasure in my life. She embraced me in tears and proclaimed ‘You are now ready to take over from me!’

A few weeks later my mother was admitted to hospital and passed away on 30 July 2005. My world seemed to collapse around me, and ironically it was the work ethic that she instilled in me that pulled my family and me from the depths of despair. We had been planning a stage production for August that year, and had to fulfil the contractual requirements of funding from the National Arts Council. My family, students and friends rallied together for the performance in her memory, as evidenced in the archive:

The troupe recently performed the Oneness: A folk dance experience of Asia and Africa project at the Walter Sisulu Hall in Randburg. “ Apart from being a tribute to the life and work of our founder – director, Rani Govender, who sadly passed away on 30n July, it was her dream in the making as we are committed to the growth and development of ethnic art forms that give us strong roots.” says Anusia. (*Northside Chronicle* 2005: 14)



Illustration 55: Cast Of “Oneness” at “Morning Live” Heritage Day Shoot, Emmarentia Dam on SABC 2

The healing nature of dance was once again confirmed. The purpose and direction that both my mother and dance provided became my fortitude. The production was attended by the Indian Consulate-General at the time, Mr. Goel, and his wife as our guests of honour. They were so impressed by the quality and concept of the production that they asked to meet me at the production’s interval and heaped praise upon the work we were involved in. The inclusive nature of our productions such as “Oneness” resulted in the cast being invited to perform and with SABC 2’s “Morning Live” team at Emmarentia Dam for their Heritage Day Celebration on 21 September 2005.

Mr. Fakir Hassen, an International author, journalist and retired SABC staffer has researched this phenomenon thoroughly and claimed at the awards ceremony that he instituted to commemorate 100 years of Bollywood in South Africa, that Anavarata Dance Institute is the oldest Indian dance-based institute in South Africa and on the continent of Africa, celebrating 58 years of existence in 2019. He was also present at our 50th Anniversary celebrations as part of Johannesburg’s International Arts Alive festival, and wrote about it in his book *A Thousand Inspirations* (2011), part of the archive, in the following manner:

Fifty years after her mother Rani and aunt Prema established the first Indian dance school in South Africa following their training in India, Anusia Pillay marked the golden jubilee of the Anavarata Dance Institute with a special performance of three shows at the Dance Factory in Newtown, Johannesburg in October 2011. Teaming up with Kwabatsha Dance Company of Zimbabwe, the shows featured a variety of dances from India and Africa. The internationally renowned institute continues to thrill audiences with its innovative Indo - African styles. (p.230)

He has covered and documented many events that we participated in, and further describes his experiences of these performances in the following manner:

In 2012, the dancers of the Institute had thousands of people screaming out their support as the all- Black troupe performed a number of popular Bollywood dances, effectively making them the stars of the show at the Mzansi Diwali Festival at Gold Reef City. The Institute is also the only Indian dance group to have joined hundreds of performers from all over the world at the annual Tattoo at Montecasino in Fourways. (p.230)

Assistant editor of the *Sunday Times*, Gillian Anstey tweeted that we were the best act of the Tattoo for that year, and the response from the members of the Indian and Malaysian High Commissions was highly complementary. Our choreography, while military in nature was steering away from aggression toward a celebratory or victorious attitude.

We try to merge the traditions of various regions of India with something from South Africa ... We wanted to move away from the warrior situation to show peace and unity in diversity through dance and to also show how we can live side by side harmoniously” (Pillay in Hassen 2011: 230).



Illustration 56: Anusia in Disney Productions

I longed to be part of outstanding productions of any genre, and refused to limit myself to Indian dance only. Apart from creating my own opportunities, I worked on two of Disney's stage

productions in South Africa namely the “The Lion King” in 2006/7 as Head of “Cub School” and acting coach to the group of 47 young “Simbas” and “Nalas”, who were being prepared for the international director’s selections. “Beauty and the Beast” followed in 2008/9. I also served as a judge at Johannesburg legs of international dance competitions “Dance India Dance” on ZEE TV in Gauteng 2010 and “Dance Deewane” on Colours TV in 2018. All of these experiences have led to our students receiving the most varied and very South African dance education, making them proficient torch bearers of my mother’s dance legacy.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

South Africa is a vital and vibrant country, despite its chequered history, that has made enormous strides in attempting to transform itself from colonialism into a more diverse and inclusive society - a “rainbow nation”.

This designation was given to the nation in 1994 by the then Archbishop Desmond Tutu (cf. Brits 2012:550) and was quoted by Dr Nelson Mandela in his inauguration as president of South Africa, when he said: We have triumphed in the effort to implant hope in the breasts of the millions of our people. We enter into a covenant that we shall build the society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity – a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world. (Oliver & Oliver 2017: 5)

Our work has been based on the ideal of Madiba’s words: “Society without The Arts has no soul” (Source unknown).

South African society is undeniably in dire need of more effective strategies to bring about social change, “heal the divisions of the past” (Constitution, 1996, p. 1243), and restore the dignity of all citizens. (Marx & Delport 2017: npn)

My interpretation of several experts’ opinions on the subject can be represented in a simplistic way:

Art = creativity = innovation.

We don’t teach math solely to create mathematicians, and we don’t teach writing solely to create the next generation of novelists. The same holds true for the arts. We teach them to create well-rounded citizens who can apply the skills, knowledge and experience from being involved in the arts to their careers and lives. (Bob Morrison in Robinson & Aronica 2018: npn)

My mother and I began asking questions such as: What will it take to see each other as one entity?

How do we achieve cohesion? How do we use our uniqueness to foster peace and understanding?

How do we set aside eons of social injustice and violence? How do we resurrect Joy?

The answer: Through the medium of dance. This is a view shared by Sir Ken Robinson, patron of the London School of Contemporary Dance:

What is dance? It is the physical expression through movement and rhythm of relationships, feelings and ideas. Nobody invented dance. It is deep in the heart of every culture throughout history; dance is part of the pulse of humanity. It embraces multiple genres, styles and traditions and is constantly evolving. Its roles range from recreational to sacred and cover every form of social purpose.... (Robinson & Aronica 2018: npn) (Bold in original)

In our education, are we losing sight of the fact that art teaches individuals to reason, to use their sensibilities? The arts gives the individual the tools to think and act freely and independently.

Through this chapter, it is evident that it most certainly is the gift that was passed down our dance lineage – the gift of ‘willfulness’ (Ahmed 2014) - that in challenging ourselves, the individual and group to think and act beyond their own limitations, we challenge a nation to go beyond the limitations of the status quo; no matter what the medium of challenge is.

Our Indian dance history cannot be viewed in isolation. It is intrinsically interlocked with the fortunes and evolution of South Africa. I am part of a continuum that began millennia ago in India and spread to various parts of the world. Our part in this “relay” is my mother taking the baton in South Africa and passing it on to me. I therefore am located as part of a process that has shaped and been shaped by the internal and external workings of historical and global events - a process of which our students are a vital part.

“Anavarata gives us an opportunity to extend what we have learnt at home from our mothers and grandmothers and to show other communities that we have the same kind of roots,” said Zanele Phillibane, one of the dancers. (Hassen 2011: 230)

To this end my mother and I challenged our dancers and ourselves by taking on unusual and ground-breaking performances and events, as evidenced by our training milestones and career highlights in the archive. This became and remained one of our hallmark competencies.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

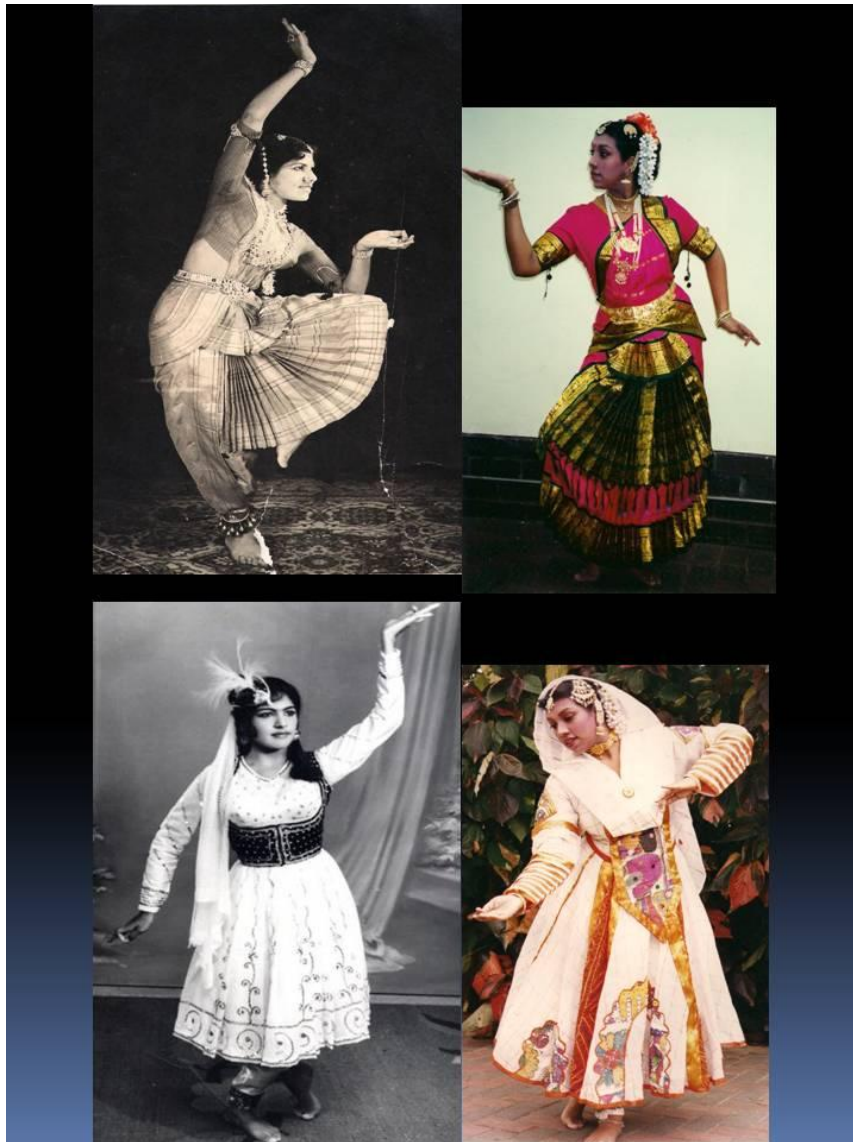


Illustration 57: Rani and Anusia, 2 generations of Indian classical dance. Top: Bharata Natyam; Bottom: Kathak

An artist is first a human being,
One who shares and not keeps to himself selfishly,
One who leaves something behind. (Luigi & Wydor 1981: npn)

This thesis is based on the issue of legacy. Here, I have demonstrated how Indian classical dance in its proper documentation has value and contributes to the dance form and South Africa. The family archive that carefully documented the origins of Indian dance in India and its subsequent migration to South Africa clarifies any misconceptions that had previously existed with regard to its accurate recording. My family's and mother's contribution, and my recording of it in this thesis, through our

lived experience, positions the archive as a plausible lens through which the dance form, its pedagogy and decolonization was shaped. Here the thesis

“ .. emerges as a response to a need to critically reflect on the history of artists whose position in history have for a long time been overlooked... Such an exercise allows for future exploration of history to be challenged from a perspective of art historical recording that changes over time.” (Ntombela 2013: 103)

The archive has played a vital role in “reconfiguring” Indian classical dance in the South African context. My interaction with the family archive has allowed this thesis to address the contradictions about Indian Classical dance in South Africa that have remained unchallenged.

Literature, landscape, dance, art and a host of other forms offer archival possibilities capable of releasing different kinds of information about the past, shaped by different record-keeping processes. In short, many established ideas about the nature and location of the archive are under challenge. (Hamilton et al 2002:10)

It should be noted that portions of the archive have been copied and retained at the Documentation Centres at UDW and Derby Street, now the 1860 Museum, in Durban. I was told by the curator that almost all of their items were discarded, and they have had to re-start the process of archiving the information. This thesis seeks to go beyond the storing, to the use of artifacts to develop understanding. Uttara Coorawala emphasises that those ‘... who understand their own cultural hybridity, arguing that only such researchers are in a position to represent the wholeness of others.’ (in Kealiinohomoku 2001: 90).

Jacob Cloete, a PhD candidate, presenting at the “Reframing Africa 2018” workshop at The Market Photo Gallery, spoke about dance and the archive in a manner that resonated with me. In his biography he wrote:

What can dance possibly offer in “thinking about the question of restructuring the self as part of a decolonising project using the archive as a resource”? Derrida famously argued: “there is no political power without control of the archive, if not memory” (Wits School of the Arts and Market Photo Workshop 2018)

The ‘willfulness’ archive that Ahmed describes , takes on the form of my becoming ‘a pesky woman with a very strong voice’ (Grau 2013), in the same way that dancer-activist, Nobel Peace Prize nominee, Mallika Sarabhai referred to herself during her 2009 election campaign. Writing about the archive has helped me find my suppressed voice. One that once I began writing, refused to be stemmed. I am the embodiment of the archive. It has bearing on my emancipation and self-

determination. 'Our notion of self is also constituted through the accounts others give us' (Coullie et al 2006: 3).

Dance and the body can offer much in rethinking and decolonising the archive. Dance "preserves the records of the past and embodies the promise of the present to the future; using the body as a "repository and collection" 'facility.' Colonialism and apartheid tried to eradicate the African archive and thus attempted to destroy a nation. ... I ... argue that 'archivization' also takes place in the body, especially since "archivization produces as much as it records events" (Manoff in Wits School of the Arts and Market Photo Workshop 2018)

Indian classical dance forms are ancient, varied and intensive in their training and transmission. One who has not experienced the process themselves is usually overwhelmed. Detailing the intricacies of our training experience was vital for the reader to understand and undergo the dance journey that my mother and I had to undertake to achieve the level of expertise required to "translate" the dance form from India into this country. This historical registering may appear as a treatise, however, when viewed in relation to the subsequent chapter a kinship of colonialism and hegemony appears to reveal that both countries and Indian classical dance faced similar challenges. Ironically, India faced a similar difficulty in formalizing classical dance pedagogical study, and recognition in comparison to other art forms, as we currently do in South Africa. Our career has been an exercise in decolonizing Indian dance in South Africa.

Class distinctions in both India (caste system) and South Africa (apartheid) have had significant bearing on the decline and renaissance phases of Indian Classical dance. As Gayatri Spivak believes,

The colonisers had the means and power to write themselves into history. The colonised were denied the power to write themselves into that same history and were ultimately (mis)represented by the coloniser. Autobiography, therefore, aims to include in history the voices of the previously colonised ...who suffered race and gender based discrimination. This strategy gives women the platform to write their own histories according to their own voices and perspective (2011:39-40). (Malatjie in Pillay 2014: 135)

Indians and their Diaspora learnt how to transmute the anger, betrayal, and disappointments of the eras into creativity.

Apartheid, bred of colonialism, was one of the most psychologically destructive and insidious social engineering experiments in world history... the social and political identity of South African Indians (has to be understood) within the context of the systematic processes of socialising them as a distinct, separate and inferior population group within the racially divisible 'nationhood' (Moodley in Pillay 2010:125)

We became so accustomed to not expecting recognition, acknowledgement or accolades, that we found ourselves in a perpetual state of resigned acceptance to the fact – so much so that we forgot to recognise how remarkable and noteworthy our contributions to both the Indian Diaspora and the South African artistic landscape was. For my mother and myself, the recognition began growing after 50 years of the first formal training in Bharata Natyam began. The growing value of scholarly achievement led to the time honoured tradition of “Guru – Shishya Parampara” and lived experience gradually becoming “devalued” and insignificant. Where others remained sedentary with fear, we fearlessly charged in where other dancers feared to tread. With the attitude of “Someone had to do it!”

Colonialism, indenture and Indian Diaspora’s influence on the development of Indian dance forms in South Africa were profound. The strife, deprivations and oppression that the Indian Diaspora experienced are the architects of how Indian Classical dance evolved in South Africa. The importance of this chapter lies in the words of Shapiro (2016)

Historically, the arts have always played a critical role in helping to see ‘what might be’. Dance, particularly, has provided us with ways of understanding culture, history and human desires seeing both who we are and who we might become. (p. 19)

Thavamani Pillay (2014) raised several valuable issues in her MA thesis based on South African Indian women artists that have direct bearing on the slow advancement of the dance form in this country, as opposed to the various other Indian communities around the world,

... one of the reasons for this can be found in the tenuous position of Indians in South Africa who only became permanent citizens in 1961. Indians had always been regarded as ‘Indian citizens’ although as second or third generation settlers they had no contact with or recollection of India (p.129)

Like Pillay (2014), I referred to the Indian Diaspora’s advent in this country in the following way:

Initially I provided a brief history of Indians as a subject race - first as British colonial subjects who were brought to Natal as indentured labourers and then as they became part of a racial minority group in apartheid South Africa.(p.125)

My mother and I have always claimed to be identified as South African first and then as “Indian”. Our Indian cultural traditions and practices still are integral to our identity.

...by articulating the need to be culturally identifiable, they (Indians) extend the insulation and isolation of the Apartheid regime and write themselves into a new racialised politics for

minority recognition within the new dispensation. On the other hand, there is a strong desire for Indian South Africans to be seen as South African first and as Indian second, which unfortunately is a seemingly impossible process, as contemporary South Africa perpetuates race-based thinking (Moodley in Pillay 2014: 130).

Not negating the efforts of the Indian Diaspora to develop their cultural identity, the likes of Mr. B. R. Naidoo (1986) attempted to keep the Diaspora acquainted with their roots by writing *Our Glorious Heritage: a Dravidian experience* (in the archive). However, too often these authors seemed to regurgitate the prominent writers of India, rather than develop the South African scenario, especially where dance was concerned. The archive contains many original documents which help in understanding the local experience and in correcting misinterpretations of the development of Indian Classical Dance in South Africa.

What I found most interesting in looking at the debut performance programmes, in the archive, of young dancers who returned to South Africa from India from the late 1960s onward, is that firstly, each introduction was more extravagant than the next. Secondly, each seemed to create the “illusion” of there being no predecessors, or rather any dancers in the form after Dr, Thiruprasundari and Mrs. Sharda Naidoo. Finally, there appeared to be a “professional” rivalry developing within the small and, at the time, exclusive Bharata Natyam “club”. Whether that was due to my mother and aunt’s absence due to their return to India is yet to be established.

Another gross misconception relating to debut performances is that it signified the dancer’s ability to teach the dance form. The “graduation” ceremony means that an artist is a proficient professional performer. Like any education system, dancers require teacher training and an internship period under a “qualified” trainer in order to become a certified trainer. This approach ensures that the transmission of knowledge does not become diluted for the next generation of trainer. This has unfortunately been the case in South Africa, with the exception of those that have been trained in India.

Organisations like South African Indian Dance Alliance, Hindu Maha Sabha and the various linguistic-based bodies are seen as cultural repositories, perpetuating the eisteddfod tradition. What

role should they play? How can scholarly work in Indian classical dance assist in keeping the ideologies they perpetuate relevant and updated? The other question one needs to ask is will they be receptive to new developments or remain bogged down by dogma?

It is clear that the conservative Indian community can and must be challenged to embrace new ways of thinking. ... Indian female artists ... can become role models for other young Indian girls aspiring to become artists. According to many black feminist writers such as Collins, hooks, Malatjie et al, this is the reason why it is imperative to document and write critically about South African Indian artists. (Pillay 2014:134- 135)

In one of the dance debut programmes, contained in the archive, I came across an article titled “The Destiny of Indian Culture in S. Africa” by Dr. B Rambiritch, a Senior Lecturer at University College in Durban in the 1960s, where he cautions:

...too often our cultural leadership is entrusted to people who thrive on status but are themselves culturally bankrupt. Culture cannot make headway in the hands of politicians or leaders of commerce and industry. ... Misdirected flattery can only throw a wet blanket on the cause of Indian culture. (No date: 54-55)

My family and my history have been the subject of some local studies; however our work has not been accurately dated or documented. Thus, leaving the pioneering young women of Indian origin unrecognized for their fearless contribution to the rich and diverse arts and culture heritage tapestry of South Africa, at a time where there were no diplomatic ties between India and our country. Without their efforts Indian Dance would not be as established on our shores, as is the current situation. This area of study and arts heritage in South Africa still remains largely unexplored and unrecognized.

This thesis, emphasises the liminal existence that my mother (and later I) had to embrace in positioning herself first, as someone of Indian origin in South Africa; secondly, as a South African in India; thirdly, as a dancer of the other; and finally as a woman. The fact that my mother was involved in “pioneering” Indian classical dance pedagogy of a full repertoire is established by various authors and sources in the family archive:

The Nydoo sisters paved the way for scores of other dancers from India to learn the Bharathanatyam, Kathak and Kuchipudi dance forms in India. ... Tribute must be paid to the Nydoo sisters, Jayalakshmi Naidoo, Kumari Ambigay, Manormani Govender, Savithree Naidoo of Cape Town, Kantharuby Moonsamy, Yogambal Singaram, Smeetha Maharaj, Vasugi Singh, Jayesperi Moopen and several others ... Efforts by Suriya Govender, Krish Swamivel, Sarveshan Kumar, Yshrene Moodley, Lageshrie Philips, Yashika Mungal, Anusia Govender, Mekantha Naidu, Manesh Maharaj and Sujatha Veeramani and other dedicated

dancers and teachers in Durban, Cape Town, Johannesburg and East London cannot go unnoticed for their efforts to spread and sustain Indian dance. (Devan 2016:15)

Despite the mostly unfavourable conditions, my family persisted in the training of the marginalised, disenfranchised and excluded in terms of dance pedagogy. My family's actions created the opportunity for Indian dance exponents to be considered equally with other dance forms. The interest they generated by touring with Indian classical dance in the 1960s at a time when the dance form was isolated to Natal; was revolutionary in terms of geographical distribution; audiences and fan base of all race and class orientations. They strove to use dance as a common denominator - equality, a strange concept for that era in South Africa. 'This study has drawn on the usefulness of having her history recorded in the first place as a means of gaining insight about ...' (Ntombela 2013: 103) the neglected dance forms in this country.

The passion for dance that was my mother's, is now mine. We both took pride in the pedagogy and performance of South Asian dance, particularly Indian classical dance. As much as Indian dance has been transplanted to various geographical areas in the world, its cultural and spiritual roots run deep in the Indian Diaspora.

...dance scholars need to know and honor the history of their discipline as background for their own studies and to prepare them for future studies. In many fields of dance scholarship, scholars increasingly feel the need to document and preserve the dance treasures of the past. (Kealiinohomoku 2001: 90-91)

I focused on the partnership that my mother and I became in challenging stereotypes pertaining to Indian classical dance and other forms, as well as becoming activists against the division of the arts along race lines,

Saths Cooper, an activist and leading member of the Black Consciousness Movement, claims that in post-apartheid South Africa, "one should have the freedom to assert pride in one's cultural and ethnic background and not be locked into predetermined categories" (Govinden in Pillay 2014: 129)

We embraced culture as a human right and integrated it into our training and repertoire (Appendix 12). We found that the "millennials" are ready to embrace a transformation, as we have seen in our work in the townships. The acceptance of a new format and approach to dance is regularly reinforced by our audiences' reaction indicating a far wider appreciation. We subscribe to the following:

Luwes (2010) supports the idea that the work to promote interracial and intercultural understanding and tolerance is never complete and that it should be an ongoing effort by all. ... the need to find a unifying 'language' for reconciling a nation consisting of different cultural and racial groups transcends the verbal and nonverbal communication systems.(Manyene 2014. 93)

Indian dance in all its forms has and continues to make an impact in uniting a nation fraught with divisions in post-apartheid South Africa.

Democracy is viewed as a system of government that accommodates different cultures, races, religions and ethnicities and which favours tolerance. Percy Zvomuya (2009:24) suggests that '... in South Africa ... racial tensions have subsided, and yet they remain among the biggest barriers to national cohesion'. (Buqa 2015: npn)

Through our training programmes we have attempted to answer questions similar to those voiced by Kealiinohomoku (2001):

How are we dealing with cross- cultural dialogue, with differences in bodily ways of knowing, and with disagreements about research agendas? What ethical considerations should affect cross- cultural field research and writing? (p. 90)

Several scholarly works (Flores, 2009) have reiterated the value of Dance in teaching students about human relationships and, as this thesis reveals, we have made every effort to highlight that aspect in our dance training.

...we can help build a better world. That may sound like an exaggerated claim, but if each person in the world improved their relationship skills and, in so doing, learned to respect others, the world we live in would be a vastly different place. (p. xviii)

We addressed issues of poverty, inequalities and inconsistencies in pedagogy, and had to adjust to accommodate students who were facing hardships yet remained determined to continue the dance training, to facilitate their retention. The challenge of this intervention (Pillay 2014: 131-132) is also to fund and maintain pro-bono tuition for the previously disadvantaged students.

My heritage and career path produced the lessons that determined the trajectory of the decolonizing dance training programmes we created rooted in Indian Classical Dance traditions, even though it was not always evident at the time. Eurocentric dance authorities regularly stated that what I “claim” to do, in my curriculum vitae and production proposals, is impossible in terms of the vastness of my

repertoire. I am happy to state that I have spent the better part of 25 years of my career proving that I can indeed dance the “impossible”.

As dancers, we know that more than just emotions and physical training go into dancing. Cultural knowledge gets passed on through music and dance, particularly for cultures with strong oral traditions. The gestures, stories and symbolisms, passed from generation to generation, and across borders, help us connect and understand our own and others’ histories. (Blumenfeld 2018:1)

Our challenge to ourselves and the rest of the South African dance community is to see Indian classical dance differently; to reconfigure it, present it in an alternative manner, and challenge other practitioners to review their own fields and techniques. Dance pedagogy needs to be used as a tool of decolonisation. Head of the African Dance department at UCT, Dr. Maxwell Xolani Rani, supported this stance in *The Sunday Independent* interview: ‘Decolonising the curriculum...is not something one can academically romanticise about.... Transformation needs to happen as a matter of urgency...’ (Petersen 2018: npn)

‘Dance can transcend and break through many barriers that other things cannot’ (Akram Khan Company Website, 2015), and that is exactly how we utilised dance in ‘...reconstruction and development initiatives, which continually seek ways to involve all South Africans in redressing imbalances of the past and in the construction of the nation’ (Ebr.-Vally 2001: 182). As South African Indians, we were the embodiment of President Cyril Ramaphosa’s “Tuma Mina” spirit, coined at his inaugural State of the Nation address. The archive reflects that we have been “ahead of our time” in terms of decolonising Indian classical dance in South Africa. Like Ntombela, I am

... interested in how sociopolitical aspects of the art of women are positioned.... an attempt to investigate the extent to which South African politics, art trends, social and cultural circumstances influenced their work. It aimed to provide a chronological narrative on the development of black women’s art... (2013: 104)

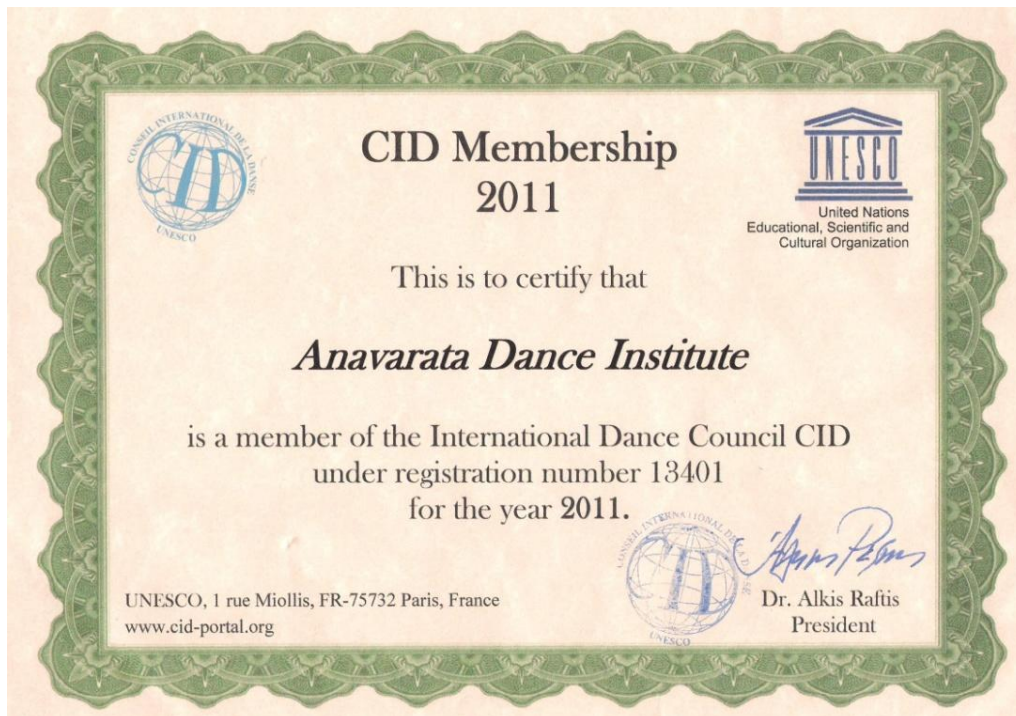


Illustration 58: UNESCO (CID) Council of International Dance Membership Certificate

As a woman, dance ‘...speaks to my own position, visibility and agency.’ (Ntombela 2013: 104). Bharata Natyam dancers like Anita Ratnam and Mallika Sarabhai (referred to in Appendix 2) are standing shoulder to shoulder with their western counterparts in terms of utilising dance as activism, which contributes greatly to its decolonisation. It is my belief that my mother belongs amongst their ranks, and some day, I will join them too. Ironically, we are recognized by UNESCO (CID) Council of International Dance, yet not in our own country.

“In South Africa, the politics of gender need to be discussed in light of race and class” (Malatjie 2011:11). This sentiment is echoed by Patricia Hill Collins who refers to race, class and gender as interlocking systems of oppression (2009:1)... finding employment, especially within the education sector can be difficult for black (Indian) women. (Pillay 2014:132-133)

In this study, I utilised the family archive to ensure that the future pedagogy of South Asian dance and my family archive is secured, where it

... emerges as a response to a need to critically reflect on the history of artists whose positions in history have for a long time been overlooked....Such an exercise allows for future exploration of history to be challenged from a perspective of art historical recording that changes over time. (Ntombela 2013:103)

Recently, we have seen the suspension of vital National dance resources such as: ‘Dance Umbrella’s closure after 30 years of serving the nation’s dance community calls for a reassessment of the value

that the arts hold for this nation.’ (Ferreira 2018:14) At the Gauteng Provincial Government (GPG) sitting on 16 March 2018, with my dance students, all of the artists as well as members of the GPG noted that it is the same artists seen repetitively at national and international levels by our own Department of Arts and Culture, as well as the same individuals receiving funding. My response in a feedback report was:

We actively and for the past 57 years, work at skills and social development to uplift our members to professional status. As a UNESCO (CID) Council of International Dance member, Anavarata receives more recognition internationally than we do in our own country. ... Artists are striving for excellence and healing in South Africa, should the government also not be providing what they demand of the organisations they are funding? (Pillay 2018: 2)

This phenomenon is a deterrent to empowerment of artists who work tirelessly to uplift the calibre of the creative sector in South Africa, and restore humanity to a nation. Georgina Thomson, artistic director of Dance Umbrella states that:

... the dance community needed ... a unified support structure with a common goal to make dance the national priority it deserves to be. She said the great diversity in South African dance was something to be treasured. ... We cannot afford to be indifferent to this. (Ferreira 2018:14)

Thus, this thesis is a reminder of the activism role that my mother and I played via the medium of Indian classical dance, assuming the stance that we cannot and should not merely depend on Government for change and decolonisation. History has proven time and time again that people’s resistance to oppressive forces has led to reform - Why not Dance? I am hopeful that Steve Biko’s words will materialise: ‘In time, we shall be in a position to bestow upon South Africa the greatest gift possible - a more human face’(cited in Buqa 2015: npn)

For far too long, the South African Dance community has depended on and relished in the work of teachers outside academia, with very little contribution to their or the art form’s development. Indian Classical Dance and other dance forms need to be formalised in the education system. They should be introduced as a field of study at secondary level to enable a transference and academic recognition of skills to tertiary level. This will make significant inroads into the decolonisation process. The curricula that my mother and I created for NED is collecting dust in the archive; as is the GDE pilot

project syllabi created by myself and several other South African Indian dancers. These could be used as a foundation, and re-purposed to suit scholarly requirements.

Finally, with negotiation and proper planning, the ICCR and South African tertiary institutions can spearhead pedagogy at postgraduate level; run train-the-trainer courses; certify assessors; and begin with Indian or foreign examiners for this purpose. Finances could be re-channelled to ensure accessibility to South Africans in the country of their birth. This is on par with the other Indian Diaspora around the world. A population majority or minority should not be the criteria, rather the concentration of the Diaspora outside India should be considered. South Africa has for the longest time had the highest concentration of Indians outside India, yet received the least in terms of this type of pedagogical development and support.

Dance in its colonial formats such as ballet was previously accessible at all leading Universities in South Africa. Of late, they have been amalgamated into Drama departments. To an extent, cultures of the other have been utilised in ballet and contemporary pieces. In terms of Indian dance this is usually achieved by collaboration of external independent exponents. This thesis has already noted the artistic, tourism and unifying value of the Indian dance in this country, why then has a permanent academic presence not been established? Alter suggests the extent to which dance education can contribute to society:

... to encourage college dance students to plan beyond a performing career and perhaps specialize in dance-related careers such as dance therapy, dance medicine, dance in the community, dance writing; to help implement excellent sequential creative arts and rigorous dance curricula in the public schools for all children; to interact and interchange with colleagues in dance studios for the purpose of working as a community; and to foster healthy and positive dance experiences for all who want to dance. (1997: 70)

Aamir Khan, a prolific Bollywood actor and filmmaker, recounted the words of an American writer which aptly sums up the philosophy we have taken on our dance journey:

Creative peoples' responsibility does not end with entertainment. They have a responsibility to bring "grace" to society; to strengthen the social fibre of society; infusing good morals into children; creating heroes and to touch the "good" in a person and make it "bloom". (Aamir Khan, Hindustan Times Leadership Summit 2014)

He believes, as I do, that “creatives” should ‘infuse fresh oxygen into the fabric of a country.’ This thesis is my contribution to breathing new life into a neglected area of scholarly work around South Asian dance in South Africa. I am hoping to achieve a level of accountability from the past and current practitioners to the future students and exponents of Dance. It is my fervent goal to see the introduction of South Asian dance at South African Universities, not just as an addendum to dramatic and performance studies, but as a subject that can contribute to interculturalism and a greater understanding of one another. To this end, Joann Kealiinohomoku believes that

...dance scholars need to know and honor the history of their discipline as background for their own studies and to prepare them for future studies. In many fields of dance scholarship, scholars increasingly feel the need to document and preserve the dance treasures of the past. (2001: 90-91)

My mother and I, having lived through so many phases in life, world and dance developments had no clearly defined markers. We had to adapt to and conceive of various ways of coping, developing and honouring the Indian Classical dance forms within an embattled situation – creating a roadmap for generations to come. Rani Nydoo’s “pioneering” contribution to the South African cultural landscape, both for the Indian Diaspora and the greater South African Creative sector, born out of resistance of the status quo, has made a significant and abiding historical contribution. This thesis reinforces that the legacy that I have been given, is to leave a legacy of my own - so that no dance scholar, particularly of Indian classical dance, has to question their roots or history in South Africa - to create a firm foundation for future scholars to build upon. This thesis and I embody an accurate posthumous interpretation and record of an illustrious South Asian and South African dance legacy- ‘willfulness’ (Ahmed 2014) as a familial journey and purpose. Like my mother I will never stop dancing.

The dancing body is a pathway to humanistic expressions that embody epistemological resources for being, perceiving, and feeling in the world. Dance is a potent transmitter of cultural knowledge and public action vital to social justice. (Banks 2009: 364)

On a personal note, my mother and I always wanted to have one last dance together, despite her failing health. I believe that this thesis is our stage for that final performance (Illustration 57). How do I know that it would be a spectacular performance? Because my mother dances in me!