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**An evening of dance, Indian dancers to perform first public recital Saturday**

**By Andrea Berninger**

When dancer Mousumi Bhandary pirouettes and bends, it's difficult to decide what to watch. First, there's her hands. Outstretched and colored with red powder, they flutter like hummingbirds. Other times they overlap quickly, looking like a small waterfall. Her feet are busy too. With ankles embraced by bands of silver bells, she points her toes, stamps and jingles. Then her traditional Indian regalia catches the eye. Red silk woven with minuscule gold strands glints in the spotlight as she spins.

The audience can choose what to feast their eyes on Saturday when Bhandary, her four young apprentices and guest dancer Jayantee Paynee present "Anjali -- An Evening of Dances from India." It will be the group's first-ever formal recital. The word "anjali" means "an offering" in Hindi, and Bhandary sees Saturday's performance as her gift to the public. "I've gotten a lot from this community, both the Indian community and all of Fargo," she says. "I thought I should give something back, and dance is the best thing I can offer." Teaching a tradition Encouraged by her musical family, Bhandary took her first dance steps when she was five years old in her native Calcutta, India. She began formal lessons, studying Indian folk and modern dance, Western ballet and kathak, in which she achieved mastery. Bhandary also performed with the Uday Shankar India Culture Center, a well-known professional company in India.

In 1991, Bhandary married and moved with her husband to Fargo. Her new home didn't immediately present an outlet for her art, and she didn't dance publicly until the following year during a Diwali holiday celebration for the Indian community. "They liked it, and everyone asked me if I could teach their kids, so I started," says Bhandary, who also works as a geographer at NavTech and has two children. Her efforts are appreciated by the 50 or so families comprising the local Indian community. "I think Mousumi has provided that bit of diversity, by teaching (our children) something that was so Indian," says Indu Agarwal of Fargo, whose daughter Divya studies with Bhandary. "We feel really indebted to her." Grants support study Bhandary has taught children from the Indian community as well as offered classes at The Spirit Room in Fargo, but her main focus is the four young women performing Saturday. When the quartet began studying with Bhandary 10 years ago, all were around kindergarten age.

With the help of two grants from North Dakota Council on the Arts, Bhandary and her four pupils became much more devoted to perfecting the dances and started performing. "Especially since we got the grants, we've been doing it really seriously," says student Mayuree Rao, 15. "I think it's really cool." In the last two years, the group performed locally at international fairs and the Indian community's Diwali programs. Bhandary has also appeared at festivals in Minneapolis and Winnipeg. And two students, Anita Kalra and Divya Agarwal, choreographed a dance for the Anjali recital. "I think we all had dance in our blood," says Mitra. "They've bloomed over the years," Bhandary says. "Now they're reached their potential and they're ready to give their own performance." The recital is sponsored by the North Dakota Council on the Arts, the Creative Arts Studio, the Downtown Fargo Rotary Club and the Indian Community of Fargo-Moorhead.

If you go What: "Anjali -- An Evening of Dances from India." When: Saturday. Where: Fargo South High School Auditorium. Time: 7-9 p.m. Admission: Free. Recital to celebrate several different styles of Indian dance By Andrea Berninger The "Anjali" recital promises a tour of India through classical and folk dances. For 4,000 years, Indian dancers have executed some of the steps and postures that will be performed Saturday. It's one of the oldest art forms in the world. Most Indian dance originated in places of worship, but eventually moved to the public courtyards as people began gathering socially to share stories and dance.

Traditional dance forms grew more entertaining, developing distinct styles in different regions of the country. The recital will feature several of those styles. - Guest artist Jayantee Paynee, a Washington, D.C.-based dancer who has performed around the world, will showcase odissi, a traditional Indian dance based on specific postures and facial expressions. - Local instructor Mousumi Bhandary will dance in the kathak style, an expressive classical form emphasizing body language and rhythm. - Four of Bhandary's advanced students will perform joyful, rigorous folk dances from several regions of India. - There will also be brief presentations on the dances and Indian culture. Dance in modern India is more a cultural expression than a form of worship, Bhandary explains. "It's the main way we express happiness and joy," she says. "They have so many problems (in India). Music and dance are salvation from it. They bring joy overall." For children of Indian descent in the United States, the dances bring a tie to their heritage. "It's a connection," says student Durba Mitra. "It provides us with an opportunity to find our culture."