

PROFILE of The Week

By Dr. DHANPAUL NARINE

Jayanta Bhagawati:

An Indian Treasure in Guyana!

Jayanta Bhagawati has made an indelible contribution to the culture of Guyana. He was sent in 2015 by the Government of India to teach classical dance to Guyanese. Jayanta was based at the Indian Cultural Center (ICC) in Georgetown but he traveled around Guyana to meet with the people and to get them interested in dance.

The ICC is India's oldest outpost in any of its Mission abroad. It is more than forty years old and it has produced wonderful talents during its many years. The classes are open to all Guyanese and Jayanta is proud of its achievements.

It is the ICC that produced some of the greats in Indian classical dance in Guyana. They were Marilyn Bose, Philip McClintock, Mathadaya Persaud, Indranie and Nadira Shaw, Muntaz Ali, Devika Singh, Mark Westford, Donna Mendonca and Andre Sobrian, among others. The dance teachers at that time were Pratap Pawar and Durga Lall. Another great that studied in India was Gora Singh who mesmerized audiences.

Marilyn Bose went on to teach dance at the prestigious Modern School in Delhi. She was part of India's Deputy Prime Minister Shankar Dyal Sharma's team when he visited Guyana for the 150th anniversary of East Indian migration to Guyana.

Over the years, the ICC has continued its mission to spread the

arts in Guyana. Jayanta Bhagawati is a long list of teachers that have made a wonderful contribution to bring India closer to Guyana. He was born in Mazuli, in Assam, and its greenery reminds him of Guyana. The people of Assam are interested in the arts and culture and the state has a seventy percent Hindu population.

Mazuli is a river island on the Brahmaputra and its classical dance is known as Sateriya that

of Jayanta and said that the young man had a great future. Jayanta describes Goswami as 'a perfect dancer. He has the temperament and he was made for dancing.'

It was in 1986 that their relationship began and it lasted for two years. During that time Jayanta mastered the 'Shiva Tandab' a dance made famous by his guru. In 1988, Jayanta moved to Lucknow to further his studies. He went to Bhatkhande College of Hindustani Music for nine years to perfect his skills. He graduated with his Master's in Dance there and was

from Assam as well. As it happened, Jayanta was staying with the legendary Birju Maharaj when he met Pranaame. They were married in Assam in 2002 and the union

Maldives.

In November 2014, Jayanta was posted to Guyana. How did he feel? He said, 'I didn't know anything at that time about Guyana. I

has visited.

According to Jayanta, 'the Guyanese people are wonderful. I spent 3 years and 5 months in Guyana and it was one of the best times in my life. Guyanese live under one umbrella and they have a beautiful nation. Guyana balances tradition and modernity well. The people have a heart of gold and they are renowned for their hospitality. Ram Raja exists in Guyana. My memories of Guyana will be unforgettable. I have made many friends. I say Namaste with my folded hands to all Guyanese, from the core of my heart.'

Clearly,

Guyana has left an unforgettable impression on Jayanta. The re-

sponse on social media to his work and contribution has been equally effusive. He has been described as an Indian treasure and an asset to Guyana, in various online sites, and by the local community.

The future looks bright for Jayanta. He has since returned to India. He will continue to pursue a career in dancing, accompanied by his wife and daughter in their music school, the Amrapali Institute of Arts. You can follow their progress on <http://amrapali.org.in/> on Youtube and on his Facebook page. We wish Jayanta, Pranaame and Wamiel all the best in the future.



One of India's treasures in Guyana! Jayanta Bhagawati trained Guyanese in classical dance at the Indian Cultural Center in Guyana



Jayanta and his wife Pranaame at a recent performance. They run the Amrapali Society for the Arts in India.

is derived from the Sattriya temple. Jayanta says that the music is pure and that he was dancing from childhood. He did the Sateriya dance and he did well. As he progressed, he received encouragement from the elders. His guru Krishna Goswami saw the talent

awarded the Nritya Visaharad and Nritya Nipun in Kathak dance. This is the highest award from the college.

In 2002, the Jayanti's life was changed forever. He met a beautiful young lady in Delhi. Her name was Pranaame and she was

has produced a daughter, Wamiel.

Jayanta was awarded two degrees in his career. He is recognized as a Master of Dance Teacher. The Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations have accorded him this high honor.

Jayanta began performing on a wider scale in India and his name was well known in the dancing community. He impressed the Council and his name was placed on a list. This meant that he could serve abroad. One of the first places that he went to was the

had to look at a map to find it. I traveled to Guyana on my own. After the first week I was impressed with the country. It looked just like Assam. It was like going home.'

He duly started his classes and it did not take him long to conclude that Indian culture was alive and well in Guyana. In fact his wife Pranaame stated that the Indians in Guyana 'are more serious about Indian culture than Indians in India.' Jayanta plans to write a book about his experiences in Guyana. He has taught hundreds of students in Guyana and some of them have perfected their skills in India as classical dancers. Jayanti said that Guyana is one of the most beautiful places he