

NAATYA ADHYAYANA GURUKULAM 2010

April 25th – May 4th at Salagramam Ashram, School of Bhagavad Gita,
Thiruvananthapuram

Under the direct supervision of Bharathanatyam legends

Sri. V.P. Dhananjayan & Smt. Shanta Dhananjayan

The serene locale of Salagramam Ashram in Thiruvananthapuram was the venue for the Naatya Adhyayana Gurukulam held from the 25th of April to the 5th of May 2010.

The partners to this unique event which revoked the atmosphere of the *gurukulams* of yore, were Salagramam, the headquarters of School of Bhagavad Gita, functioning under the Directorship of Swami Sandeepananda Giri and BHARATHAKALANJALI, steered by the Dhanajayans, the living legends in Bharathanatyam. When this confluence of the best in spirituality and the performing arts happens, - as is naturally meant to happen in the Indian cultural tradition- something deeply positive and creative is bound to emerge.

Inaugurated by Princess Gauri Parvathy Bayi of the Travancore royal family, the fully residential gurukulam offered a rare experience of the *guru- sishya parampara* to the 60 odd participants who came from many parts of India and abroad. The curriculum of this 12 days' fully residential camp included the practical and theoretical aspects of Naatya and music, Yoga, Bhagavad Gita, Bhajans, talks on contemporary topics and interaction with personalities from different walks of life. Apart from the Dhananjayans, their guru, Prof. N.S. Jayalakshmi, Smt Kala Ramesh, Prof. P.P.Ramakrishnan, Sri. Deepak Majumdar, Smt. Girija Chandran, Smt. Pavitra Srinivasan, and Shri.Gopukiran were the senior experts and teachers who enriched the camp with their knowledge and guidance.

A typical day began early with yoga and moved on to theory and practical Bharathanatyam classes that were grouped according to the levels of the students whose ages ranged from ten to thirty plus. Afternoon sessions also included lessons in spoken Sanskrit and Carnatic music. By dusk, it was a happy group that settled down for *bhajans* which was followed by either a talk or a performance by guest faculty and winding up with impromptu talent shows by the students. Talks by Dr. Rajesh and T.V. Satish, and Hindusthani music recital by Kum. Amala Mohan were some of the special programmes included.

The enthusiasm of the participants was increased manifold when they prepared for a presentation of the items learned, to be put up at the end of the camp. "Kaal maari aadina kanaka sabhesha" in kunthalavarali, a padam and thillana were the pieces taught alongside with training in *adavus* and *abhinaya*. Deepak Majumdar

who came from Mumbai along with his disciple taught an *abhang* of Sant Jnaneshwar in Bharathanaatyam style. Thus it was quite a repertoire that the participants carried home within a short span of twelve days!

Swaroopa Unni from Calicut speaks thus about the Gurukulam "It was wonderful to be able to dedicate about 10 days totally to dance and a rare chance to master a few items in such a short period. For me, to learn under Shanta Dhananjayan a dream come true. The Dhananjayans are so approachable!" . Anita Illicitir from Yugoslavia shares Swaroopa's views. " The camp also provided a platform for interaction at different levels", she adds. Anita has been training in Chennai under gurus Ambika Buch and N. S. Jayalakshmi and has been in India for the past year and a half. She particularly enjoyed the ambience of Salagramam Ashram and the ethnic vegetarian food.

A visit to the famous Padmanabha Swamy Temple, ayurveda treatments, participating in the local temple festival etc, were the those 'extras' that the campers thoroughly enjoyed .Thus for the students this fully residential camp offered a chance to widen their horizons, interact and to observe and imbibe the values of Indian heritage.

The Valedictory function with the students' presentation was held on the evening of May 4th .

Justice Hariharan Nair who was the Chief Guest honored the gurus and expressed his happiness that Salagramam was providing the forum for such creative programmes that sought to bring our cultural heritage to the present generation and the very remarkable contribution that the Dhananjayans were making in this arena. Swami Sandeepananda Giri, Director, School of Bhagavad Gita, who presented the certificates to the students opined that Bharathanatyam, as with any art form in our land was a yoga and a means to discover one self. Swamiji congratulated the Dhananjayans on their very positive effort done in an attitude of service.