

Stouffville Teen Masters Classical Indian Dance Form

SDSS student had to juggle school schedule, studies and dance practices to achieve her goal



"I am able to escape into another magical world through dance," says Stouffville teenaged dancer Elekia Raveendran

By Kinjal Dagli Shah

Elekia Raveendran has been a busy 17-year-old lately. The Stouffville District Secondary School student just completed her graduation ceremony in Bharatanatyam, an Indian classical dance form, under the tutelage of Rajani Mathivaran, a Stouffville resident who runs the Natya Samarpana Kalai Koodum dance academy.

"I started going to Bharatanatyam classes when I was five years old. After twelve years of training, I was ready to graduate with a dance recital known as the Arangetram (a debut on-stage performance)," said Elekia, who trained for one year for her graduation performance. "I took the decision to do my Arangetram after much thought. It's a time-consuming process and requires effort and dedication. I wanted to give it my best."

Elekia admits she had to juggle many things including school schedules, homework and dance practices in order to achieve her goal. "Throughout my experience in Bharatanatyam, I have learned discipline and the importance of maintaining culture. I got a chance to learn more about my culture through this dance. In my past years of experience in this dance form, I have been able to show various

kinds of emotions and express myself in a whole new way. I am able to escape into another magical world through dance."

The journey wasn't without its share of stress for the teenager. "It is a bit stressful when you have to keep up with several things. But once it's done, you feel like you've accomplished a lot," said Elekia, who hopes to continue one more year of dance to complete the teacher's grade, which would then enable her to teach Bharatanatyam. "My parents have been a great support for me and without the guidance of my teacher, I would be nowhere."

Her teacher couldn't be happier. "I am very proud of her," said Mr. Mathivaran, who said he has seen Elekia blossom into a dedicated dancer as she has grown from a little girl into a teenager. "One of her best qualities is that she follows my suggestions and instructions immediately and precisely. Her family is also very nice and has supported her throughout her years learning this art form. Elekia has set an example for everybody with her commitment towards learning Bharatanatyam."

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