

## **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PIECE YEARS OF DANCE**

Since the first day that I can recall, I have been influenced by music. But what is music? To me, music is everything that can be. Music is romantic and holy. Music is the essence of life. Wherever we go, we hear music – without it, humankind would be something quite beyond our knowledge. Music is an element in my life that cannot be eliminated – as bedtime treats, I used to not only be read stories, but my mother used to sing to me as well. I have sat in front of the television and watched the magic of Disney, where music is the heart of it all. Yet my real passion for music came when I was five and went on my first holiday. India introduced me to the world of Asian film and art, which I had never seen before, only heard of. Today, Indian music and film is recognized in England, however, a few years ago, this was not so. My trip presented me with the most interesting, movies, dances and music. On return, I decided that I wanted to make dance a part of my life and take it to a point where I would be able to do performances. My dream and fantasy since, has been to be so good in my dancing that it would enable me to qualify for a place in the same film industry that gave me the incentive in the first instance.

I enquired into many Indian classical dance schools, but found that these did not seem very interesting to me. The vigour and energy that I had seen were not present in the classical dances and the idea of learning a single step of *Kathak* or *Bharat-Natya*m for months did not appeal to me. I searched for a modern dance school, and as I did, my view of how to confront my target changed. My mother has a lot of musical background and has the experience of live performances and concerts. She began training me for my first performance – a performance I will never forget.

Diwali is one of the most celebrated Hindu festivals, commonly known as the ‘festival of lights’. To commemorate this special occasion, the local Asian community hold a concert every year and my aim was to prepare a dance and perform at the 1994 show. The day was finally here and the excitement of performing for the first time was overwhelming. I was the centre of attention and my family fretted over me for hours, making sure

that everything was as it should be. My mother personally made my dance outfit, which was a deep orange, long, flowing skirt with a gold scarf to wear on my head and it was exciting to watch my mother bring this all-important costume to life. Despite all the excitement, I was extremely anxious about the performance and felt as though my legs were going to give.

Now there were only ten minutes left before the performance was due to start and I felt like running away. I laughingly told myself, “I cannot even have a nervous breakdown – there isn’t enough time.”

“Mum”, I whispered, “gosh, I am so nervous. I hope I can get through the performance without falling off the stage”.

My mother replied back, “I know you are – the first time is always nerve-racking. Remember, though, that you have worked very hard. Just relax and enjoy it – you’ll be fine.”

I knew that I needed to remain calm. I engaged myself into going over the dance-steps with my mother for the last time.

I heard my name being announced, and I stepped out onto the stage. I hoped that my performance would be as good as I had always wanted it to be. Next, I heard my song being played and I began moving to the rhythm. All my anxieties slipped away. I felt myself smile at the audience and realised that I was actually enjoying myself.

My wish to dance on stage had been fulfilled! It was a ‘once-in-a-lifetime’ experience – nothing could replace it. Even though it was just the beginning of my dream, I felt as though I could do anything in the world. The excitement and fervour I felt while performing was magical. I felt light and intoxicated – my body and mind filled with music and rhythm. For this moment, I was a queen – an almighty queen who could take on the world. My mother supported me and had faith in me – and because of her I was able to achieve my goal.

Following my first performance, I have participated in Diwali functions every year and have also performed at various different events such as weddings, community gatherings, and religious festivals. Due to work commitments, my mother has been unable to help with my dance as much as she did before. Therefore, I joined an Indian Dance Academy and have been taking classes for the last twelve months. They participate in commercial concerts and functions, such as beauty pageants and I have

been chosen to take part in these. The 'Angel Dance Academy' provides 'extras' for bollywood films, especially the ones that are shot in England.

I hope that one day soon, I will also be chosen to perform in one of the film dances. My love and interest in music and dance has already provided me with many happy moments and I hope, will lead me closer to my dreams.