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# 15-YR-OLD GURGAON GYMNAST BRINGS HOME GOLD

# Delhi Times

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INDUSTRY PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

OF INDIA

Photo: Ajay Kumar Gautam



**THE CLASS XI STUDENT WON THE MEDAL AT THE INTERNATIONAL EMIRATES CUP OF RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS 2017 AND HAS NOW SET HER SIGHTS ON THE UPCOMING ASIAN GAMES AND THE 2020 OLYMPICS**

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Lavanya Jain, a Class XI student from Gurgaon, shows us her routine and poses with her first international gold medal

Abhimanyu Mathur  
@timesgroup.com

Lavanya Jain might not be a household name yet, but the young gymnast from Gurgaon has started her journey to fame in the form of an international gold at the age of 15. The South City II resident won the gold in floor exercise (category C, seniors) at the International Emirates Cup of Rhythmic Gymnastics 2017 held in Dubai earlier this month.

For the 15-year-old, this was her first international competition, and she says she wasn't expecting to win. "It was an invitational competition, so we had to apply for participating. But I had only a month to prepare and wasn't expecting much. I just went to participate and for the exposure. I never thought I will end up on the podium, let alone win the gold," she says.

But for Lavanya, the highlight of the Dubai trip wasn't the gold medal. She is happier about the fact that she got to meet and train with her idol, Russia's Margarita Mamun, Olympic gold-medalist and winner of seven World Championship golds. An excited Lavanya says, "Dubai was amazing because for the first time, I saw an international floor and got to perform in front of my idol Margarita Mamun. We even got to train with her for two days. Winning the gold was special but training with my idol was the greatest feeling ever."

The young gymnast says that she bases a lot of her routines after going through the Russian's routines on YouTube, which is why it was extra special to learn from her. "The most important thing I learnt from her was that we need to be focused and serious when we are on the floor and you have to always work in a team. Throughout the training, she was always with her team. They did everything together. She didn't laugh or joke around during practice. It was a serious matter for them. All the fun and games were reserved for when the practice ended."

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# 'Gymnastics was just a co-curricular activity for me till I qualified for the nationals'

Pics: Ajay Kumar Gautam



Lavanya performs a rhythmic gymnastic routine with a hoop

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...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Incidentally, gymnastics was never Lavanya's first love and was introduced to the sport as just a co-curricular activity at her school. She says, "I was introduced to gymnastics quite late. Usually kids begin when they are five or six, while I was twice as old as that. Actually, I never wanted to do gymnastics. A few years ago, Abhishek sir from the sports department in my school encouraged me to take it up because he thought I had the capability of being a gymnast. In fact, till I qualified for the nationals when I was in Class VII, it was just another co-curricular activity for me. But since then, it has been fun and amazing. That was the first time I realized I can compete at the top level."

A student of Class XI at Suncity World School in Gurgaon's Sector 54, Lavanya credits the role of her school and teachers in helping her juggle between gymnastics and studies. She tells us, "My school has been really supportive. Often, I have been allowed to take leave after half day so that I can practice before major tournaments. The teachers and my classmates also help me with homework and catching up on studies. Training for rhythmic gymnastics isn't easy because there are not many facilities for it in India, so any support that you get is good."

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She also doesn't forget to mention the role of her family – her parents, sister, and grandmother. She says, "My dad used to play badminton at the national level, so he always supports my ambition of being a professional sportsperson. My mom is a great support too, and travels with me to competitions and makes sure everything is in order so that I don't get stressed."

Currently, Lavanya is among the top 10 rhythmic

gymnasts in the country, and is aiming to qualify for the Asian Games to be held in Indonesia next year. "The top four get automatic qualification for the camp for Asian Games, but I am ranked 9th so if I want to make it, I will have to take part in separate trials that will be held later this year. I am trying to practice every day now so that I can make it to the Asian Games," she says. Ask her if she has her eyes set on the 2024 Olympics, and she promptly replies, "Why not the 2020 Olympics? I believe that if you set your goals low, you will achieve even lower. So, you should aim higher than even your expectations."

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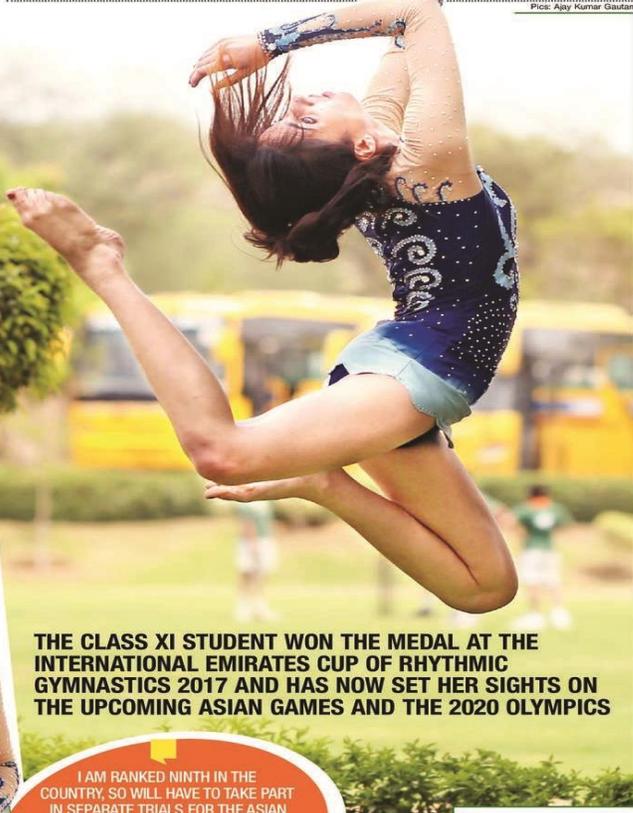
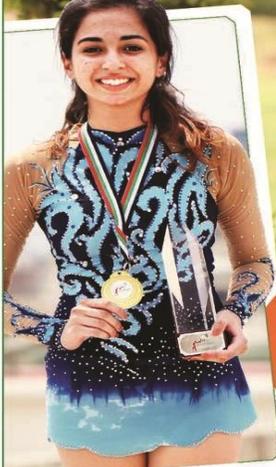
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