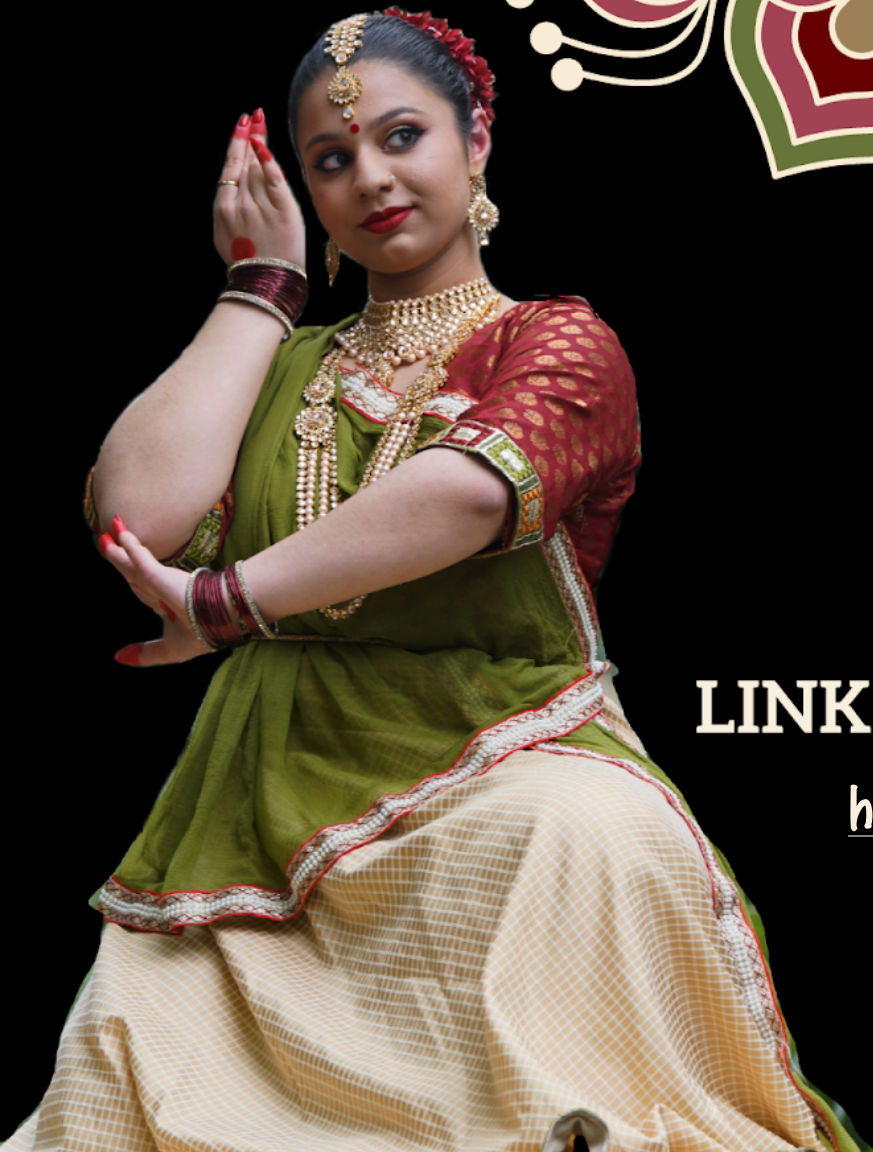


ISHIKA MEHTA- BIO



LINK TO VIDEO:

<https://youtu.be/YINGu03dT5w>

A Story Told Through Words: Biography Video Transcription

https://youtu.be/v6kVLXh_a2w

[FLUTE MUSIC PLAYS IN BACKGROUND]

“There is a famous saying in Hindi, that says “katha kahe, so kathak kahave.” It refers to kathak as the art of storytelling, and as a way to communicate words through dance. kathak was one of the first extracurricular activities I picked up as a child, as an interest.

Growing up, my identity was sculpted by elements of both my American surroundings as well as my Indian. My parents had immigrated from Madhya Pradesh, North India only a few years before I was born and as a result, my life at home and my life at school were drastically different. But the idea of kathak being a way to story tell, allowed dance to be the voice of my Indian identity and it allowed me to find an identity that has the perfect balance of both my cultures.

When I was younger, my parents were aware of the struggles I would face because of my divergent background. I often felt too foreign in school, but then too American when I visited my friends and family in India. Because of this, my parents never forced my sister and I to actively participate in our culture. Sometimes they would tell us when it was a Hindu festival or they would take us to the temple whenever there was a religious event.

But it wasn't until I was around eight years old that I decided it was time to explore the aspect of my identity that I was hiding from, and so, I joined an Indian classical dance class.

Learning kathak gave me the opportunity to stay connected to roots that I very easily could've strayed away from. It taught me the history of the country my parents loved so much.

The dance form began as an art meant to communicate with the Gods, and as the Mughals took

over North India, it progressed to become a form of entertainment. It taught me more about the Hindu religion than much of my time at temples combined. The aspect of spirituality from the religious compositions containing motifs of Hindu Gods added feeling in the way I danced and the more I danced, the more I learned about my religion. It became a cycle of becoming more well-versed in my religion and in turn, becoming a better dancer because of the way I lost myself in the art and devotion.

While I learned about United States history through my many years of American schooling, and I picked up American cultural norms through my friends and peers, my few hours of dance class every week was the only time I was surrounded by four walls in which we would discuss nothing but India and the artistry it offers.

Learning Indian classical dance became the embodiment of my Indian heritage. It became the voice for the aspect of my identity that I often was hiding from or was too shy to showcase. Kathak has given me a voice through its storytelling nature, and I can only hope that I can continue to keep this element of storytelling alive today. Kathak taught me about my culture, it taught me how to mold my two very different identities together, and it taught me how to sculpt one individual being that I am today.

I am Ishika Mehta and this is my English 1102 portfolio.”