

## Story Told Through Dance: Wildcard Exhibit

<https://youtu.be/YINGu03dT5w>

“Neer bharat jamuna tat par  
Tab bhar bhar neer uthaayi gagar  
Jab dagar chalat, mohe chedatha langar  
Hato jao ji kunwar, phooti jat gagar  
Mohe chhod chhod maadhav, maadhav, maadhav  
Mohe chhod chhod maadhav, maadhav, maadhav  
Mohe chhod chhod maadhav, maadhav, maadhav”

(While fetching water from the bank of the Jamuna river, Radha sees Krishna, who makes an effort to gain her attention by playfully teasing her, and ultimately breaking her water pot.)

They say the relationship between Radha and Krishna transcends our mortal understanding of love. Their bond is celebrated through pujas (acts of worship), children’s stories, and even as ideal examples for the perfect relationship. In this, dance is no exception. Kathak, as mentioned before, was originally a temple dance where dancers would convey the stories of the Gods, including the loving relationship between Radha and Krishna.

The affection described in the stories of the two, however, is complex and often hard to understand. Krishna, as a child, was shown to have an outgoing and mischievous nature, while Radha was dignified and delicate. As the two grew up as close companions, there were times when Krishna would playfully tease Radha to gain her attention. While this sometimes meant

simply bothering her, other times, it meant breaking her pot full of water on the way home, destroying her hard work.

However, one of the most important details is Radha's reaction to Krishna's behavior. Initially, she would feel frustrated and annoyed by his antics, but because of her interest in Krishna, she can not help but enjoy the attention. It becomes a challenge for the dancer to showcase these complex emotions through expression and movement. Whether it be expressing Radha's slight frown that turns into a shy smile when she is being teased or embodying Krishna's unmatched lively nature.

In my wildcard performance, I present the same complexity of emotions through a story of Krishna's frivolous behavior. The song title, "Kanha Maane Na", literally translates to "Krishna does not listen" and the lyrics describe how Radha and all the gopis (village women) tell Krishna to stop with his antics. In the end, not only does he refuse to listen but, the gopis can not reprimand him because he is too enchanting.

This choreography is extremely close to my heart because it was the first time I decided I wanted to focus on the storytelling aspect of Kathak. While I could not let go of the pure dance aspect of the form, as seen in the many turns and swift movements, I put more effort into my expression and the manner in which I conveyed the meaning of the lyrics. Today, after many years of working towards finding the correct balance of both elements of the art I am able to confidently say expression is not only one of my favorite aspects of Kathak but it is one of my fortes as well. My love for technique no longer hides the storytelling aspect of Kathak, but instead, my ability to depict the narrative has been elevated through my years of technique practice.

# ISHIKA MEHTA- WILDCARD



**LINK TO VIDEO:**

<https://youtu.be/YINGu03dT5w>