

Two things have shaped my life - my love of dance and my Indian-American identity. As a young girl in Helsinki, Finland, I stood out with my bright Indian clothes among all the neutral blazers on the way to school. However, within these differences, I found strength in blending the rhythms of my ancestral dances with those from around the world.

Whether performing the intricate Indian dance Kathak or a modern style, I moved like the fierce warriors and captivating temptresses from Hindu mythology. On stage, my fierce strikes were like the defiant Draupadi, my noble gestures reminiscent of regal Kunti. Yet I also adapted the powerful Indian techniques to Finnish ballet's graceful, airy movements through a diverse lens.

This cultural fusion showed in my everyday life, too. At breakfast, Hindu mantras played alongside Sibelius symphonies. Family gatherings featured traditional Indian wear and casual Finnish fashions. I devoted myself to mastering the 9 emotional ranges of ancient Sanskrit texts and also studying Western theatrical theory.

My identity lies not in favoring one culture over another but in embracing the interconnected roots of creative expression across humanity. I find common philosophies, whether studying India's system of archetypal "rasas" or Western art concepts tapping into our "unity of experience" - both celebrate the timeless resilience of dances, myths, and songs constantly reinventing themselves.

These cultures within me transcend being artifacts to become living artistic languages for understanding the human experience. As I continue fusing these influences through the metaphor of choreography, the fire of my Indian heritage burns brighter, shaping my future self as a global citizen. I will always aim to blend different perspectives into harmony, welcoming the world's diversity to share in the dance of life on this earth.