



# Bharatanatyam in Ballet Shoes

words by  
Mahak Jain

pictures by  
Anu Chouhan



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© 2022 Mahak Jain (text)  
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This book is dedicated to the hereditary  
dancers of the South Asian subcontinent.

—M.J. & A.C.



Paro was excited to learn a new dance, but on the first day of ballet class, she was worried.

“What if I’m terrible?”



“You won’t be,” Paro’s mother said. “You come from a dancing family.”

“But we don’t dance ballet. It’s not the same.”

Paro peeked inside. Dancers were twirling and swirling like little fairies. Her tippy-toes started tingling. Her toes weren’t nervous!

Paro watched two dancers show off their moves.

Marco said he learned ballet as a baby. He could already pirouette.

"My mother taught me."



Paro's mother was a dancer too, and Paro hadn't learned ballet either.

She showed Marco and Dana what she could do.

She walked, like a Bharatanatyam dancer.



Dana said she never learned ballet. She could helicopter, though.



"I learned by watching breakdancing videos."

Marco and Dana were confused.

"What's the dance move?"

"I think she was walking."



Paro's face burned. She wanted to show she could dance, but they thought all she could do was walk.

Dana tried to walk like Paro. "I feel like a supermodel!"

Marco walked too. "We're supermodel dancers! Supermodel with us, Paro!"



Paro's smile returned. Dana and Marco wanted her to join! They walk-danced in circles around the room.



"Anna Pavlova is my favorite dancer," Marco said.

"My mom likes to eat pavlova," Dana said.

"You can't eat Pavlova!"

Dana giggled. "It's my mom's favorite dessert."



"My favorite dancer is Rukmini Devi," Paro said.

"Who's that?" Marco said.

"Can you eat it?" Dana said.

Paro blushed and shook her head. She wanted to show she knew dancers too, but Dana and Marco had never heard of Bharatanatyam dancers.



Dana sniffed her tutu.  
"I wish I was a dessert."

"You are. You are Dana Doughnut,  
and I'm Marco Marshmallow.  
We're the dessert dancers!"



"A pudding," she said, because her worries were puddling all around her.

There was so much about dance she didn't know.

Dana spun like a doughnut,  
and Marco wiggled like a  
marshmallow.

"Paro, what are you?"

