

# Kathakali

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**In news :** Chemancheri Kunhircman Nair, Maestro of Kathakali is no more

## About the Kathakali

- It is one of the six classical dances of India
- It is a story, a dancing tale woven in a classical format, based on stories of Hindu mythology.
- The story is enacted purely by the movements of the hands (mudras), facial expressions (rasas) and body movements – there are 24 basic mudras. Some characters adorn their left fingers with long steel or silver nails to enhance the clarity of the hand gestures
- **Etymology:** The term *Kathakali* is derived from *Katha* which means “story or a conversation, or a traditional tale”, and *Kali* which means “performance and art”. **The dance symbolises the eternal fight between good and evil**
- It is a dance that brings out deft movements, highly evolved gestures, strenuous exercise and practice, colourful elaborate skirt-like costumes, and make-up that involves extensive face-painting
- **State:** It comes from southwestern India, around the state of Kerala
- **Performers:** It is traditionally performed by boys and men, even for female roles. But in modern compositions, Indian Kathakali troupes have included women artistes
- **Costumes:** The costumes and makeup are especially elaborate, with faces made to look like painted masks and enormous headdresses.
- **Origin:** Elements and aspects of Kathakali can be found in ancient Sanskrit texts such as the *Natya Shastra*. The Kathakali is attributed to sage Bharata,
- Kathakali synthesizes music, vocal performers, choreography and hand and facial gestures together to

express ideas.

- Themes: The themes of the Kathakali are folk mythologies, religious legends and spiritual ideas from the Hindu epics and the Puranas

## Styles

Kathakali has lineages or distinctive schools of play interpretation and dance performance called Sampradayam. These styles are:

1. **The Kidangoor style** is one of the two, that developed in Travancore, and it is strongly influenced by Kutiyattam
2. **The Kalluvazhi style** is second of the two, which developed in Palakkad (Olappamanna Mana) in central Kerala, and it is a synthesis of the older Kaplingadan and Kalladikkotan performance arts

## How is it different from other classical dances?

- It incorporates movements from ancient Indian martial arts and athletic traditions of South India
- Kathakali also differs in that the structure and details of its art form developed in the courts and theatres of Hindu principalities, unlike other classical Indian dances which primarily developed in Hindu temples and monastic schools.