

# Pandit Birju Maharaj

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**In news**— Legendary Kathak dancer Birju Maharaj has died at the age of 83 recently.

## **About Pandit Birju Maharaj-**

- Brajmohan Maharaj or Birju Maharaj was an Indian dancer, composer, singer and **exponent of the Lucknow “Kalka-Bindadin” Gharana of Kathak dance in India.**
- He was a descendant of the Maharaj family of Kathak dancers.
- He was born in 1937, in the house of Kathak exponent, Jagannath Maharaj, popularly known as **Acchan Maharaj of Lucknow gharana**, who served as court dancer in Raigarh princely state.
- He was trained under his father and guru Acchan Maharaj and uncles Shambhu Maharaj and Lachhu Maharaj.
- He also practised **Hindustani classical music and was a vocalist.**
- He has several **contributions to the film industry**, including his legendary choreographies for films like ‘Devdas’, ‘Vishwaroopam’, ‘Dedh Ishqiya’ and ‘Bajirao Mastani’.
- After working along with his uncle, Shambhu Maharaj at Bhartiya Kala Kendra, later the Kathak Kendra, New Delhi, he remained head of the latter for several years, till his retirement in 1998 when he opened **his own dance school, Kalashram**, also in Delhi.
- He is **a recipient of the country’s second-highest civilian award, Padma Vibhushan.**

## **Kathak dance—**

- Kathak is one of the eight major forms of Indian classical dance.
- The roots of this dance form trace back to Sanskrit

Hindu text on performing arts called '**Natya Shastra**' written by ancient Indian teatrologist and musicologist Bharata Muni.

- Its origin is traditionally attributed to the traveling bards in ancient northern India known as **Kathakars or storytellers**.
- The term Kathak is derived from the Vedic Sanskrit word Katha which means "story", and Kathakar which means "the one who tells a story", or "to do with stories".
- It evolved during the Bhakti movement, particularly by incorporating the childhood and stories of the Hindu god Krishna, as well as independently in the courts of north Indian kingdoms.
- Kathak is **unique in having both Hindu and Muslim gharanas** and cultural elements of these gharanas.
- Kathak performances include Urdu Ghazals and commonly used instruments brought during the Mughal period.
- It is found in **three distinct forms, called "gharanas"**, named after the cities where the Kathak dance tradition evolved – **Jaipur, Banaras and Lucknow**.
- While the Jaipur gharana focuses more on the foot movements, the Banaras and Lucknow gharanas focus more on facial expressions and graceful hand movements.
- Stylistically, the Kathak dance form emphasizes rhythmic foot movements, adorned with small bells (Ghungroo) and the movement harmonized to the music.