

**Speech by Ambassador Nagma M. Mallick at the cultural
programme “KathaGatari”
27 January 2026**

**Your Excellency Mr. Tadayuki-san, Chief of Protocol, MoFA,
Ambassadors and Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
members of the media, and
dear dance and music lovers of Tokyo,**

Namaskar and welcome to this special cultural programme “KathaGatari” to celebrate the 77th Republic Day of India.

We chose the title “KathaGatari” to salute the origins of the dance form Kathak that you will witness today. Kathak, perhaps India’s best-known classical dance among the 8 established classical dance forms, began over 2000 years ago with travelling storytellers called *Kathakaar* who narrated stories from the ancient Hindu epics using gesture, expression and music. Katha in Hindi means story.

Over the last few hundred years, Kathak evolved in royal courts across north India, when dance maestros added dazzling elements to the dance, like pirouettes, rapid footwork and close alignment with the percussion instrument that was developed in India from the 12th century onwards, called the tabla. New musical influences from Persia infused the classical music that accompanied this dance, making it more complex and richer.

Today, Kathak continues to develop, rooted in tradition and also innovating. While items depicting pure dance or *nritta* will dazzle you today with their footwork and rapid pirouettes, the Kathak dancer continues to be a storyteller – especially depicting stories from the epics as we will see today. Hence, the kathak dancer continues to be a “*Monogatari*,” or storyteller.

We are honoured this evening to present a performance led by Guru Rajendra Gangani, one of the best known dancers of India. He belongs to the famous Jaipur Gharana, or Jaipur style of Kathak. Guru Gangani has devoted his life to the preservation and global promotion of his dance. He has won every dance award in India. Today, he performs with his troupe *Nritya Ananda Parv*, with

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other talented dancers and accompanying musicians on the tabla, sitaar, flute and vocals.

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations has sent this troupe to Japan to mark our Republic Day. Our sponsor in Japan is Mitsui OSK Lines – I thank them for their valued support without which this show would not have been possible. Guru Gangani will perform in Kyoto and Kobe in the rest of the week.

Dear dance lovers, I welcome you to *KathaGatari*.
