

City needs more dance festivals

Says Bharatanatyam danseuse Vani Ganapathy, who will perform in Hyderabad

Priya Ramachandran

More than two decades after divorcing Kamal Haasan, danseuse Vani Ganapathy still has to field questions about her ex-husband. "Twenty-odd years later, both Kamal and I have forgotten it all, but looks like everyone else hasn't!" exclaims a candid Vani, who doesn't let this aspect of her life "bother" her anymore.

"It's a little odd that people still associate our names together, but of course, it doesn't affect me anymore. I bear no ill feelings and grudges. Now, I even go watch his movies, not because he is my ex-husband but because people are talking about the film," says the celebrated Bharatanatyam dancer, who is in the city to perform "Colors of Krishna", a dance production on the many roles taken on by Krishna.

"Be it as a naughty child, a passionate lover or a dear friend, Krishna has been the muse for many. I have strung all these facets of his life together and dramatized the storytelling process with songs from five languages — Krishna as a lover in Telugu, as a child in Kannada, as the divine in Sanskrit and so on... The songs are written by well-known composers," says Vani.

The danseuse says she is happy to be in Hyderabad again. "I have great memories of performing in this city,"

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says Vani, adding, "Earlier however, there were a lot more dance festivals in Hyderabad — it the Qutub Shahi Festival or the Kakatiya Festival — where I performed. But right now, looks like the focus of the city is theatre."

At a time when the word 'dance' translates into everything Bollywood, Vani is a picture of old school elegance. "I stick to only traditional pieces in my performances. And thankfully, many youngsters, who are tired of this overdose of Bollywood, are realizing its value too. Yes, the West's special interest in our classical dance forms has made them more fashionable. But it doesn't matter who is showing us the way back. What's important is, it's a trend," she adds.

Vani, who hasn't taught any new students in the past three years because she has "no time" says, "The dancer in me consumes a lot from me. And since I don't even dance to music from CDs, I have to put together live music for every performance of mine. Coordinating with musicians, choreographing new pieces, rehearsing for old ones pretty much uses up all my time. It's only when I get relatively free, I dabble in interior designing."

But she wouldn't have it any other way. "The beauty and fun of Bharatanatyam is that I can keep innovating. And with every performance, I'm still learning," says Vani.

