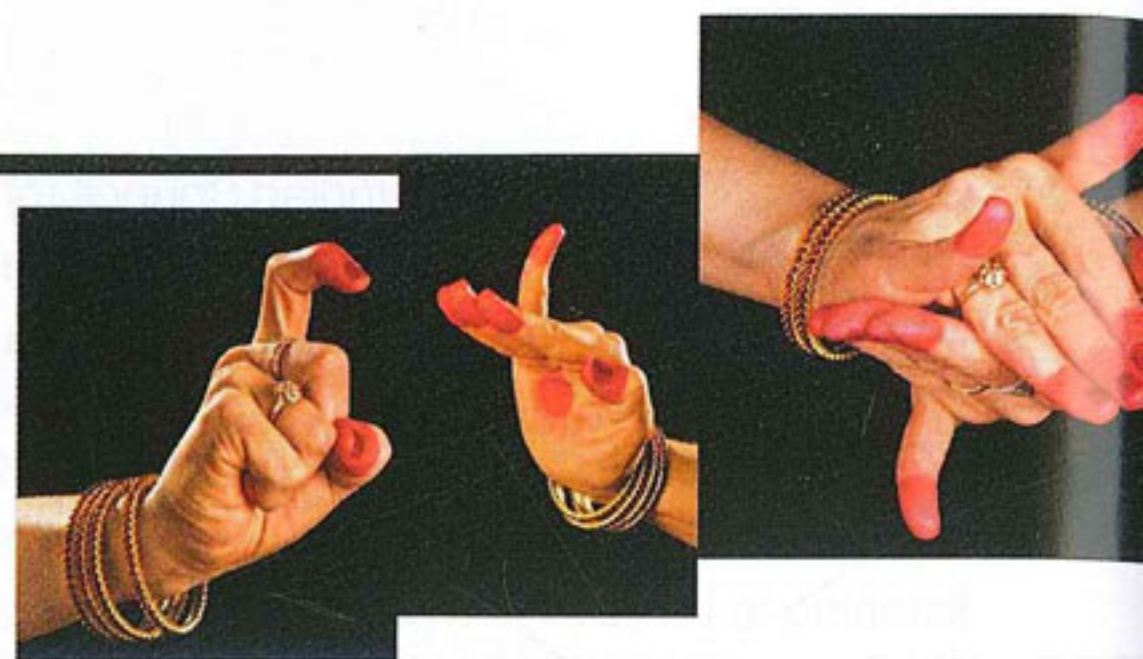


FAS FORWARD

Kathak with heavy metal music or Kuchipudi with Spanish Flamenco is fine as long as Indian classical dancers maintain the purity of style, says danseuse **Shallu Jindal**



FOOT WORK:
A fusion dance
performance by the
writer

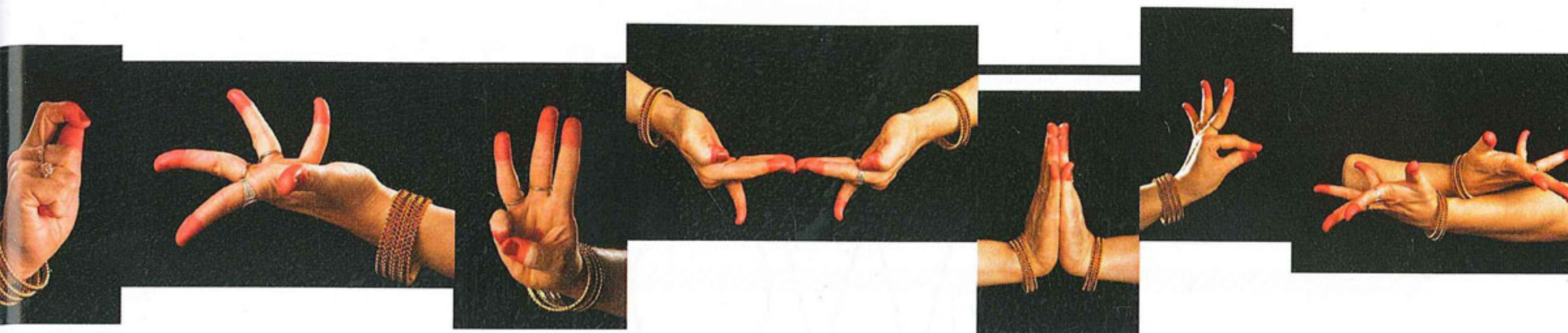


Recently, when I performed Kuchipudi to noted singer Aabida Parveen's Sufi rendition of *Jab Se Tune Mujhe Diwana Bana Rakha Hai*, appreciation poured in from all corners.

Fusion is the new buzzword in Indian classical dance. Today, many classical dancers are mixing the traditional Indian dance forms with styles from different dance and music forms to come up with renditions that are not only visually spectacular but also adding to the dance's popularity.

In Kuchipudi, there have been recent examples of dancers fusing the art form with Spanish Flamenco, Thai traditional dance, English poetry, Western contemporary styles and even other Indian dance styles like Odissi, Manipuri, etc. This has enabled dancers to not only be more creative, but has also endeared the dance form among the youth.

Dance is like a river. Old water flows and merges with the ocean, while new water comes in from the



glaciers. It is good to evolve and move with the times but the essence of the art form should always remain.

Choreographing items of Kuchipudi in different languages like Hindi, English and Urdu is important to get appreciation, but following the rules of the *Natya Shastra* is a given. Dance scriptures like the *Natya Veda* and the *Natya Shastra* have given certain principles and rules for footwork pattern, hand (*hasta*) gestures and face (*mukha abhinaya*) expressions which must be followed. It is even written in *Natya Shastra* that one can choose the language and music of the region to convey the beauty of dance. Dance is a poetic expression which tells stories to people. Kuchipudi is a

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combination of *Tandava* (masculine) and *Lasya* (feminine). This element is very beautiful and unique. Dancers should do fusion but without spoiling the technique of Kuchipudi. The most popular example of fusion in Kuchipudi is the item titled *Laya Vibhati*, choreographed by my gurus, the best known exponents of Kuchipudi, Raja-Radha Reddy and Kaushalya Reddy. In it, they have incorporated five styles of Indian classical dances: Kuchipudi, Odissi, Bharatanatyam, Kathak and Manipuri, presenting them in their own style, albeit in different beats.

Guru Raja Reddy has also choreographed Kuchipudi on an English poem, *The Wisdom Tree*, written by former President of India, Dr APJ Abul Kalam, mixing it with Sanskrit *shlokas* and a rock number *Dancing flowers* by a popular Indian rock band. He has also choreographed Kuchipudi on *Meera bhajans* and on *Madhushala* by Harivansh Bachchan.

However, while doing this fusion, Raja-Radha Reddy have ensured that the sanctity of the classical dance form has not been tampered with. So this is my message: Go ahead and experiment, but remain true to the essential tenets of your dance form.

Fusion
gurus



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The writer is a highly accomplished Kuchipudi danseuse who performs this complex form of Indian Classical dance with rare distinction. Wife of industrialist and Member of Parliament Naveen Jindal, she is also an art collector and is the Vice President of the Flag Foundation of India, President of Open Space Jindal Foundation for Development and also the Founder President of Young FICCI Ladies Organisation (YFLO).