104-year-old Ustad Abdul Rashid Khan, a noted Hindustani classical vocalist, in a tête-a-tête with City Express during his visit to the city for him, age is just another figure. This could be the pulling force which keeps him going strong even at the age of 104. Showing no sign of fatigue, Ustad Abdul Rashid Khan is still rendering his voice capable of capturing many music-loving hearts.

A maestro of tremendous versatility and a noted Hindustani classical vocalist, Ustad Abdul Rashid Khan started learning music at the age of five.

For almost a century now, he has successfully been carrying forward the hereditary traits of the music tradition.

With more than 5,000 programmes to his credit till date, Ustad Abdul Rashid Khan has not just made his presence felt through those numerous concerts across the world but has gracefully carved a niche of his own.

“We still follow the guru parampara system,” says the legendary singer.

He concentrated only on Hindustani music and after learning it for 22 years, gave his first performance at the age of 27.

The veteran singer is reluctant to give up singing and is presently instilling the love for music in more than 100 students at the ITC Sangeet Research Academy in Kolkata.

Over the years, the singer-cum-musician has been honoured with various awards owing to his tremendous achievements. Sangeet Natya Akademi Award, Sangeet Samman Award, Kashi Swar Ganga Award and Sangeet Maharishi Award are a few in the list.

Apart from music, the ace singer has also proved his mettle in instruments like harmonium and tabla and has composed over 2,000 songs.

Ustad, though regularly gets invitations from abroad, has been rejecting them for a while. However, his music albums and documentaries have garnered a cult status for him in many countries.

Quiz him on his fitness mantra, he smiles, “I do not follow any special regime to stay fit. However, I live a disciplined life.”

Performing namaz five times a day and teaching music for four hours to his disciples forms his daily routine. He has long back restricted himself from having food for more than a time a day.

Belonging to the 23rd generation of renowned Hindustani classical music composer and musician Tansen, Ustad has been inculcating the nuances of music to his grandson Bilal Khan for the last 20 years. “Now, I’m looking forward to teach music to my great grandson, who is just one-and-a-half month old,” he quips.

So who are his favourite singers or how many of them mesmerised him with their performances? “I find equal talent in all singers and a comparison is difficult.”

He considers all his performances as close-to-heart experiences. “Each and every performance of mine was memorable and I cherish them,” says the proud singer.

He has recently performed at the India International Centre in Delhi and the Sangeet Natya Akademi in Chandigarh. His next performance is on October 4 at the Kamani auditorium in Delhi.

One of the living legends of Hindustani music, Ustad Abdul Rashid Khan was in the city to perform a concert at Isha Yoga Centre. “This is my first concert in Coimbatore and it will stay special,” signs off the singer who possess an unmatched legacy.

- Thinkal V Menon