

Arts » Theatre

Published: November 3, 2011 15:51 IST | Updated: November 3, 2011 15:51 IST

Talent to the fore

S. SIVAKUMAR



ABSORBING SHOW: Puravalan in mono-act mode in Bhishma. Photo: R. Ravindran

“Whatever is here is found elsewhere. But whatever is not here is nowhere else.” --

Anyone would recall these words with reverence when they broach the many issues raised in the Mahabharatha. Bhishma is perhaps the most pivotal and the most righteous and yet the “most subdued” of characters, depicted in this great universal epic. Rajaji called him “the perfect knight.” This venerable grandsire was brought alive on stage through his conundrums, sans huge sets, relying to the fullest extent on a flowing, well-carved and well-executed script and a powerful and expressive portrayal by Puravalan, who peaked primarily as Bhishma.

A couple of examples of the dialogue: “Time, in its own manner affords its ebb, its flow to life and still acts as though it knows nothing of it.”

“Where his (Arjuna’s) vision rests, his arrows reach.”

That this actor (Puravalan) could cast himself as Sakuni, Draupadi, Arjuna, Duryodhana and perform roles of wide and immense variety without the slightest change in costume, internalise their mindsets and deliver ‘dialogue’ from their perspectives credibly -- vouched for ability, industry and assimilation. Panache, evidently! Was our Therukkoothu the inspiration?

The narration was split into two parts where the first was entirely in Tamil, dialogue coming forth with an amazing clarity. Here Bhishma reminisces about the journey of his life, how “he fell and faltered.” The second part followed, after a gap, in chaste English where he introspects, repents, indulges in intense soul-searching and questions and justifies his deeds and misdeeds, actions and inactions, at critical points in his life. Yes! He was forced to take a vow to be a bachelor to consummate his father’s love-life, had to behave with a sense of gratitude to Duryodhana aligning and remaining on the side of evil. He had to perforce admire Arjuna’s archery even though it caused his very death, was pained inconsolably at the treatment meted out to Panchali but never contemplated a single step to intervene to put an end to such a dastardly act of the Kauravas.

Karna is aware that he is the eldest of the Pandavas, but remained tight-lipped on this too -- choices made wilfully. He even meets with his arch rival Sakuni who exults on seeing Bhishma lying on a bed of arrows -- the unconquerable now at destiny’s point of no return. Bhishma finally confesses: “There may be many players, including Sakuni, in the human drama but the biggest player is the one above, who conducts us to play to his will.” Bhishma was “a man who had the liberty to choose his own death but still, decided to live the most difficult moments and end his life on a humble request.”

A sound script rich in its intellectual heft and emotional content served to illustrate and develop the characters comprehensively. Customary punch lines and meaningful dialogue augmented the strength and stance of the characters. Lighting had an enhancing part to play and so did the effectively used relevant projections that were

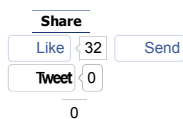
displayed on the screen as backdrops -- the listing of the 100 Kauravas, presenting Draupadi and showing 'jwaala' (fire). The BGM jelled soothingly, with the mood of the characters, though at times it made the dialogue a tad unintelligible, especially the episode involving Sakuni.

The play has been produced by Manu and Manu Arts and enacted by Avant Theatre and Language. Selva, the director said, "There is a Bhishma in everybody; it is just a matter of realising and identifying him. The presentation style of both the versions of Bhishma was challenging and the text suited the context of the parts." The script was by Elavazhagan, who made a remark and a plea. "My interest in the Mahabharatha and its stories arose because of my mother whose story telling captivated me. I make an appeal to all mothers to make their children evince interest in stories. That would build their character."

In sum, an enlightening and purposeful evening!

(Earlier in the afternoon, the drama was enacted to about 200 physically and mentally challenged children, from RASA, Spastic Society, Andhra Mahila Sabha and Srishti. Actor Rajnikanth was present throughout this presentation)

(sivakumar2004@gmail.com)



[Ads by Google](#)

[Auditions In Singapore](#)

Central School of Speech & Drama London. Auditions Open for Students

www.cssd.ac.uk/Auditions