

Published: July 24, 2014 20:53 IST | Updated: July 24, 2014 20:53 IST

Sorrow so exquisite!

B. RAMADEVI



Beauty and visual appeal were the hallmarks of the CCA's 'Meghadootam.'

A lovelorn yaksha, banished from his city Alaka by Lord Kubera for negligence of duty, stays alone on Mount Ramagiri and pines for his wife in solitary exile. The beginning of the monsoon increases the longing for her. He knows she too is equally miserable and wants to send a message to console and comfort her. That, in short, is 'Meghadootam: The Cloud Messenger', the renowned work of the 5th century poet Kalidasa, which was dramatised and staged recently at the PSG College of Arts and Science Auditorium, Coimbatore.

Conceived and produced by the Cleveland Cultural Alliance (CCA) and commissioned by AIM (The All India Movement) for Seva, the eponymous operatic dance ballet, made one wonder how so much beauty could be packed into such a sad story.

Cloud as the messenger

Spotting a cloud that sits on the Ramagiri, the yaksha requests it to carry his message to his wife, describing the sights and scenes he comes across on his way. The cloud obliges and as it passes through various cities and villages, making friends with birds and animals and partaking in human festivities, it begins to feel like the yaksha. What he sees and hears along the way increases his yearning for his beloved. The wind assists him in his travel, the mountain gives him place to rest during his long journey and the objects of Nature try to refresh his mind. Finally, he reaches Alaka and enters the yakshi's house. Her misery vanishes and her spirits lift as she senses the presence of her beloved. The play concludes with the souls of the yaksha and yakshi coming together, despite being separated by distance.

Having absorbed the spirit of Kalakshetra, Chennai, choreographers Shijith Nambiar and wife Parvathy Menon have made this dance ballet a colourful journey by exploiting the beautiful aspects of 'Meghadootam'. Each one of the dancers — Pavithra Srinivasan, Aarabhi Badri, Bhavajan Kumar, Sudharma Vaithiyanathan, Sharanya Varma, Bhagyalakshmi, Season Unnikrishnan and K.M. Jayakrishnan — exhibited admirable team spirit and flitted across the stage with grace, donning various roles.

Beauty and visual appeal were the hallmarks of this production. The chathaka birds, waiting for fresh rain water (their only food), the dancing peacocks that reward the cloud for the enjoyable rain, the devotees of Siva who dance in front of the Lord to fast beat of the drums — innumerable scenes brought out the beauty that lay between Central India and the Himalayas. Shijith Nambiar as Megha was as light-footed as the cloud.

Bombay Jayashri Ramnath, who had composed and directed the recorded background score, added rich dimension with her impressive music and voice. She had chosen the right ragas and used instruments intelligently to convey the various moods. Deepu Nair and Sathyaprakash added strength with their voice. The way the shlokas were used and pronounced spoke of the involvement and care that had gone into the production.

The lucid narrative by Baradwaj Rangan and excellent narration by Rajiv Menon, Arvind Swami, Bombay Jayashri and Parvathy Menon, brought out dazzling samples of Kalidasa's imagination and imagery.

The poet introduces beauty in unimaginable ways. A thirsty creeper sends its roots into the river to drink water but is surprised it is salty. It soon learns that the tears of a Yaksha have lent that saltiness to the normally sweet river water. The lotus covered with dew drops can be a normal sight to ordinary people. But Kalidas says it is covered with tears of longing for her beloved Sun, and once he appears in the morning and dries them with his hands, she smiles brightly, opening up her petals.

Commitment was seen in every little aspect of the production. The aesthetic, elegant costumes, designed by Lakshmi Srinath, suited the mood of the play while the lighting and sound came together to enhance the effect. Kudos to the team for bringing alive a great literary work that was, hitherto, just a name in the minds of most spectators.

'Meghadootam', an event by *The Hindu* and curated by Alaap, truly carried the message that 'a thing of beauty is a joy forever.'

Keywords: [Meghadootam](#), [Kalidasa](#)