

REVIEW

By Shyamon Jayasinghe

Over the last two years Melbourne has seen some laudable attempts by younger artists to create and bring out original plots onto the stage. Previous to these efforts the ground for theatre had been largely laid by the indefatigable efforts of the late Malini Jayasinghe who reproduced a dozen established plays with local talent and presented them to Melbourne audiences. In those days there was some unease about presenting originals for the reason that it was feared that it would be hard to get audiences. Since then, we have had the Yasa-Kusumsiri duo (who also run a drama school), Tharanga Dandeniya, and now young artist Gayan Kanishka. Gayan impresses me

GAYAN KANISHKA'S PLAYS

as someone deeply committed to theatre and he has sacrificed his meagre personal earnings here in that cause. He has already won awards in drama in Sri Lanka and it is hard to suppress his stage instincts.

On the 26th of February 2011 we watched Gayan Kanishka's three short plays-Koheda Yanne Horek Wage, Wathura Natanawa Mawa Gannako, and Sanjana presented at the Kel Watson Theatre, Forest Hill Melbourne. I must admit I am no pundit in theatre although I bear a theatre reputation in modern Sinhala Drama's launching era. Due to my subsequent career demands in the Public Service I had little time to focus on the study of drama although I had even then been unavoidably drawn to it by the great Guru, Sarachchandra. What perhaps qualifies me to write about Gayan Kanishka's plays is the experience I had gathered under a preeminent master. In the Sarachchandra days theatre was



restricted to the stage and the stage was the thing. That line of approach may be called pure theatre and it demanded of producers and writers considerable skills in communicating to audiences with the use of dialogue, lyric, music and acting. The rise of technology has since had enormous impact on theatre producers who began exploring the extension of technology to the stage (video clips, digital sound, laser lighting etc) and fusing it with the stage setting. I see this kind of usage in Melbourne's Sinhala theatre for the first time in Gayan's plays where visual and cinematic modes were adopted. There would be critics of this multimedia approach. In my view as long as the stage still is supreme such use is permitted within the genre known as drama and there is no point splitting hairs about that. Except for the questionable employment of recorded songs sung in the background as a mood generator Gayan Kanishka has exploited this fusion method very effectively to create impact. In this sense Gayan stands as an advanced stage technician and the road he has opened up is something worth exploring by travel.

The play Sanjana also brings to the Sinhala stage the technique of fantasy-maybe for the first time. Here, Rumes (Darshana Anthonige) reminisces over his car accident and drifts to a dream world where he imagines a love relationship with the victim. (Sewwandi Meegahakotuwa). The mental float to a love

relationship may be criticized as being rather inexplicable. On the other hand, it is valid when perceived as a Salvador-Dali-like surrealism. Basically, Sanjana seeks to penetrate into the inner world of the mind. This elevates the conceptual level of the play. The audience is given a challenge to interpret the post-accident reverie. Probably a little more skill in communication would have done wonders to a play like Sanjana. We saw a new star on our stage that night- Sewwandi Meegahakotuwa- whose acting was brilliant and inspired. Sewwandi projected a mystery and complexity in her portrayal that was just excellent. Darshana Anthonige and Bhanuka Manorathne performed their more straightforward roles commendably. The use of the flower stand and the mobile chair was great.

In my view the next play, Wathura Natanawa Mawa Gannako, was the best of the three plays as evidenced by the good audience response. The sim-

ple idea of a control freak- mother who involuntarily ruined the life of her son, Sathish (Rukmal Nirosh) is zoomed in and magnified to reveal its significance. The technique used is to get Sathish's friend (Gayan Kanishka himself) to disclose Sathish's mind. The prop for the mother was borrowed from the movie Psycho. Although that is permissible I guess a different device would have been better. The Psycho borrowing suggests an eeriness that is more suitable in a murder context. Rukmal Nirosh, one of our very talented actors, handles a most difficult role well but I wished he had turned his back less to the audience and thought of other ways of expressing the psychosis that gripped the mind of his character.

The final play, Koheda Yanne Horek Wage is another slice of life and is based on a most topical and wonderful idea, namely that of Sri Lankan boatpeople attempting to sneak into Australia. Like in Kelani Palama we observe a most intriguing interplay of seven characters - Sidni (Gamini Ranasinghe), Gammana (Bhanuka Manorathne), Dasun (Manjitha Chandrajith), Tasi (Sudesh Godahenage), Batta (Gayan Kanishka), Despal (Ajith De Silva), Ranathunge (Lalith Chularathne) and Sidney's Wife (Rathna Gurusinghe) artificially forced into a social network during a makeshift situation. The actors interacted perfectly and their leader, Gamini Ranasinghe, handled an attractive role memorably. Thrust together in desperation the worst comes out in human beings as is exemplified when two of the characters revile each other in racial terms. The props of export chests for the stage gave an air of authenticity more than words good tell.

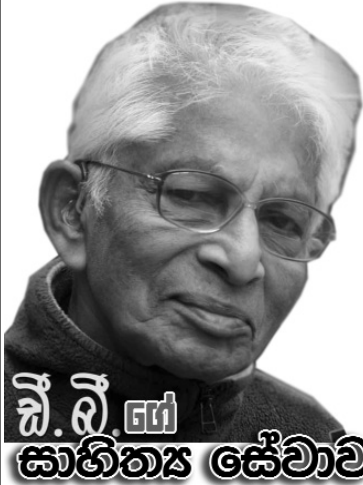
Gayan Kanishka is blessed with two abilities in a special way that can turn him out to be an exceptional dramatist. He possesses a natural stage sense. Secondly, he shows a depth of mind that can peep into life. The latter quality explains the high conceptual level of his plays. Drama is an existential art; it is about life, about men and women and about events in which the latter are entwined. It is an intellectual art that can see beneath smokescreens. If he would spend a little more effort in giving more clarity to his scripts Gayan Kanishka would accomplish as a notable script writer, too- a shortage skill in Sinhala theatre today.

There was a good crowd that evening but I have seen generally poor audience attendance to support the great work that these young gifted artists are doing. Most adults seem to be reluctant to come for drama unless their kids are performing. This is not satisfactory as our community here have to develop a life of their own deriving entertainment from local talent and creations. Our media can play a better role in improving this situation.

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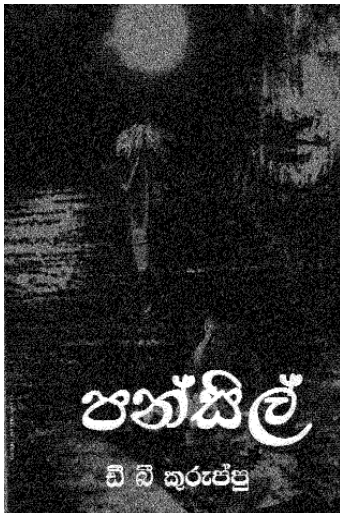


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වූ මේ මනාතර ඒ ඒ කතුවරුන්ගේ ඉන්ටර්ලින් ඉතා ඉර ලෙස උපුටා දැක්වීම මේ පොතේ තැනින් තැන දක්නට ලැබේ. දුලබ දැමී, කීවි නාන් හාන් ගීතියන්, කුලනෙදි පියදැසි ගී ම ආදී වගන් ලේඛකයන් පන්සිල් කෙරෙහි දැක්වූ අවධානයන් මවුන් පන්සිල් කෙරෙහි දැක්වූ ආකල්පයන් පාඨකයා තුළ විවිධාකාර සිතිවිලි පුද්ගලික ආකාරයට උපුටා දැක්වීම නිසා මේ පොත පාඨකයින්ගේ විවිධ මුද්දිය නියුතු කරන ලිපි සංග්‍රහයක් ලෙස මට පෙනී ගියේ.

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පන්සිල්



යන්න කෙරෙහි අවධානය යොමු කරයි. මේ ප්‍රයත්නය නිසා තම සිතිවිලි රටාව ගැනත් නිතිපතා කරන කියන දේ ගැනත් විමසිල්ලෙන් සිතා බලන්නට

කතුවරයා පන්සිල් පද විමසුමට ලක් කිරීමේදී විවිධ බටහිර හා පෞද්ගල ලේඛකයන් ප්‍රායෝගික බුදු දහම පිළබඳ දැක්වූ අදහස් කෙරෙහි පවුල අවධානයක් යොමු කර තිබේ.

අවධාරණ වලඹුණු බව කතුවරයා පවසයි.

ඩී. ඩී. පලමුව අවධානය යොමු කරන්නේ පන්සිල් පද පහේ තේරුම කුමක්ද යන්නටය. ඉන්පසුව පන්සිල් පද පහ වෙත වෙතම ගෙන එක් එක් පදය ගැන අවධානය යොමු කරමින් දීර්ඝ මෙන්ම පාඨක සිත පුද්ගලික විශ්ලේෂණයක් යෙදෙයි.

කුරුප්පු මහතා එක් එක් පන්සිල් පදය විමසුමට භාණ්ඩාගාර කරන අයුරු තර්කානුකූලව එම විමසුම හවිඳි විද්‍යාත්මක චින්තන ක්‍රමයට අනුකූලය; අපගේ දෛනික සුලභ අත්දැකීම්වලට සමානය; අප නොසිතාම දිනපතා යෙදෙන ගනානුගතික ක්‍රියා කෙරෙහි නව මානයකින් බැලීමට පාඨකයා පොළඹවන සිතිවිලි සංග්‍රහයක් ලෙස මේ පොත් පියවි ගැඹුණුවීමට පුළුවන.

කතුවරයා පන්සිල් පද විමසුමට ලක් කිරීමේදී විවිධ බටහිර හා පෞද්ගල ලේඛකයන් ප්‍රායෝගික බුදු දහම පිළබඳ දැක්වූ අදහස් කෙරෙහි පවුල අවධානයක් යොමු කර තිබේ. විවිඳ සමාජ ආර්ථික පසුබිමක් ඇති රටවලින් උකහාගත් දැනුම හා අත්දැකීම් මත පදනම්

කිරීමට දරා ඇති ප්‍රයත්නය ප්‍රශංසානීයයි. ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ ව්‍යාප්තිය පිටිනායේදීත්, තම පොද්ගලික පිටිනායේදීත් හා මෙල්බර්න් නුවරදී දැන් අත්දැකීම් මේ පොත තුළින් මතුවන්නේ කිසියම් උපහාස රසයක්ද මතු කරමිනි. 'පන්සිල්' රසික බොද්ධියක් කරන කියන දෙයක හැටි වැනි සැසා ගිහාවක් පාඨකයාගේ මුට්ටට හැරවීමට ඩී. ඩී. සමත් වෙයි.

බොද්ධියක් අප අප නිතිපතා කරන කියන දේ අඩු කරමින් ප්‍රායෝගික බුදු දහමේ පදනම ලෙස සැලකිය හැකි පන්සිල් පද පහට අනුකූල වන්නේද? ඩී. ඩී. කුරුප්පු මහතා මේ පොත් පියවීමේ අපගේ අවධානය යොමු කරන මූලික ප්‍රශ්නය මෙයයි. පාඨකයා නිවහල් සිතුවම් පැහැමි ධාරාවක් පවා යොමු කරවන අනෙකු පොත් පියවීමක් 'පන්සිල්'