

DANCE

Telling Tales

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DR , DECEMBER 19, 2019 15:52 IST

UPDATED: DECEMBER 19, 2019 16:33 IST

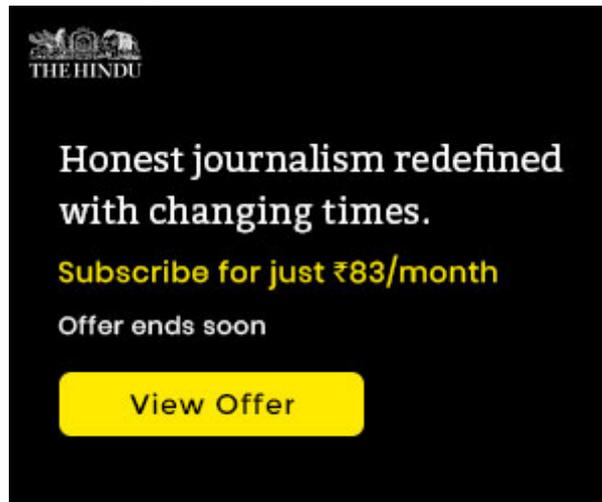
Seasoned choreographer Dr Ananda Shankar Jayant's latest ballet aesthetically captured the tangible and intangible aspects of Shiva



The title “Tales from the bull and the tiger” sounds like one springing out of the Panchatantra tales. Isn’t it? The tiger and the bull form the ‘sutradar’ (narrator) duo as well as symbolic of goddess Shakti/Parvati and Shiva since the two strong ones are also the ‘vaahan’ (bearer) of both the deities. Shankarananda Kalakshetra’s ballet, under the stewardship of guru-choreographer Ananda Shankar Jayant, envisages a divine family that correlates to our complete family – the householder, his wife and children and their respective accessories. Here Shiva comes closer to us because His family picture is complete in every way.

At the very outset, the audience is greeted by the cute 'mooshika' (mouse-vehicle of Ganesh) dancing and prancing to sheer music, just out of the barn as it dawns. The child dancer, dressed in grey and black Bharatanatyam costume, tickled the audience's interest in how the theme unfolds. And not to disappoint the viewers' expectations, the story moved forward in a phased manner, introducing the characters (patra pravesha), establishing a relationship with other characters and getting the entire lot involved in the story.

The ballet moved at various levels, adhering to the traditional Bharatanatyam format without missing on the drama/story elements



The Kalakshetra style of dance where aesthetics dominates, be it in costumes, colour scheme, stage lights, design, made it a wholesome fare.

As the mooshika dances in the foreground, the spotlight shifts to the pedestal appended to the backdrop. Here, we view lord Ganesh, rightful owner of the mouse, splendidly flanked by three dancers on either side. The digital screen partially lighting the backdrop shows a window with bars as if indicating our shuttered world from where we have a view to watch the divine drama.

The seven-headed/bodied Ganesh springs into a rippling dance giving way to the next young hero-Kartikeya (Murugan), his brother, who is flanked by peacocks (his mount).

The group was perhaps the best with its shaded peacock-hued costume, all dancers looking similar in height and weight strutting around the stage to the beat of the taal in complete synchronisation as they danced to the mnemonics of alarippu (the first formatted piece in Bharatanatyam repertoire).

Carefully crafted

Coming to the protagonists' alter egos, viz. Nandi (bull) and Simha (tiger), the solo by both with their respective hasta mudra and a very carefully crafted colour coordinated costume was suggestive of the masculine strength and the feminine ferociousness. The Shiva-Parvati celestial wedding is the beginning of the story told by Nandi and Simha to the children (Ganesh and Murugan) obviously unaware of their parents' superhuman qualities.

Every scene in this ballet has been sculpted with the utmost sensitivity and artistry that made it quaint and memorable. For the wedding scenario, the group dancers clad in green, red and yellow were evocative of auspiciousness of the occasion.

Ananda as Parvati and Mithun Shyam as Shiva once again established their excellence in dance. Their dance accompanied by the bull and tiger to sheer mnemonics was impressive. The story steadily moves from the tangible to the intangible aspect of Shiva. Herein was brought the story of the fire pillar that had neither a beginning or an end while Brahma and Vishnu fought over their supremacies in the world – a war of egos among gods.

Cajoling tunes

Here the pillar of light was dropping down from the ceiling of the centre stage which was awesome. Apt verses in Sanskrit and Tamil shifted and sifted varied facets of Shiva like the Chidambara Nataraja while Shakti danced to the tunes of Mahishasura Mardhini.

The finale ushers in the night, a time to go to bed for the two sons of this divine family and to the cajoling tunes of Nilambari, we see the mother goddess gently putting them to bed on her lap on either side as others look on. The music (Venu Madhav) and costumes (Ganesh Nallari) were added assets to this beautiful ballet presented by Sonal Mansingh at Kamani auditorium.

Read on Ananda Shankar Jayant's interview on the eve of her ballet "Tales of the bull and the tiger" in Delhi



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Printable version | Jan 23, 2021 4:17:10 PM |

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