# Avalon’s ‘Magnum Opus’- Krishna: Where devotion embraces innocence



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They may not know “lights, camera, action!” They may be unaware of the complicated stirring terms, ‘spotlights, props and stage angles,’ they may not have heard of prolix ‘gestures and postures and the so-called methods of acting’ but one thing that they seem to have earnestly grasped is – ‘KRISHNA the makhanchor.’ The little children of Avalon Heights International school (Vashi – NAVI MUMBAI) displayed a savant innocent wisdom beyond compare when on the auspicious occasion of Jaya Ekadashi 8.2.2025) they presented a play (in Vishnu Das Bhave auditorium-Vashi – Navi Mumbai) on the divine endearing Lord of countless people, the one and only ‘Sri Krishna’ who resides in the hearts of his devotees like the spirit dwells in the body.

One in a million times do you see such a remarkable exhibit of excellence with the children understanding their roles with such immaculate precision that it becomes easy for the spectators to admire their cuteness mixed with their truly

amazing understanding of the characters. This identification with the roles that they were playing made their performances assume appreciable quality beyond words.

From the beginning with the apt Ganeshvandana with which the tiny tots of nursery began followed by a rendition of Bhajans of Rama and Krishna, the children ideally set the platform for this devotional play; mind it…it was not a religious drama. It was a presentation anointed with the adoration for a LORD who has been our friend, philosopher and guide since time immemorial.

The play begins with the introduction of THE ATYACHARI KANSA who is more than a villain, a demon with merciless traits. He enjoys torturing one and all. This inception sets up an ideal stage for the audiences to wait for justice. The Kroor Kansa-dances with huge strides complementing each word of the song recital that recounts his demonic character. It is done with such exactitude that it becomes almost impossible to underestimate the little boy playing the role as merely a child artist; he is the formidable, the awe-inspiring KANSA indeed!

Thus, when the actor exudes both pride and selfishness of Kansa who does not hesitate to imprison his sister and brother-in-law when he learns that their 8$^{th}$ son would be responsible for his death, it becomes highly credible for the audiences. Moreover, the next scene where Devaki and Vasudeva's marriage is being interrupted by an Akashvani or the divine forecast and Kansa imprisons both of them, the play gives us the reason that at times, evil does become indomitable and all we need to do is to wait for the Lord to restore Dharma and destroy the invincible evil.

Followed by the same is the birth of Krishna in jail transported by Vasudeva to Nandbaba's house wading through the powerful and thunderous Yamuna overflowing due to the tumultuous rain. The children make it sublime with the snake-

God entering and providing a shade on to the newborn Krishna until he is deposited safely to Nandbaba's home. When he carries the newborn yogamaya to Mathura in Kansa's domain and she manifests herself as the omnipotent Goddess informing Kansa about the birth of Krishna.The presentation becomes awe-inspiring with the same being telecasted as an audio-visual representation on the stage.

The BALLILAS of Krishna become the highlight of the play. Pootnas…both pretty and ugly become the show stoppers! The unparalleled wickedness they bring in their dialogue recital and body language is what I found the most unbelievable! Especially, pretty putana's vicious facial expressions and admirably cute gajagamini walk, certainly hypnotic. Another exciting feature was the choice of the song for introducing Pootana. The song said it all! She was insanely cruel and devilish and the small little girl dancing wildly aped the scariness ingrained in the song so well that she almost manifested the demoness in front of the eyes. Her destruction comes as a pleasant relief as she comes twirling around from behind a tree with the baby Krishna on her chest whining in pain. Beautifully executed! Followed by this is Krishna killing the other demons sent by Kansa. The story is displayed with the use of dance-dramatic presentation and adds echoes the ancient Indian theatrical tradition of sangeeta natya.

The Lila's or magical deeds of the slightly grown-up Krishna bring an incredible glory to the play. We want to sing in praise of the Lord when Yashodamaiya becomes witness to his immensely powerful all-encompassing form wherein he shows himself as the master of the universe by opening his small mouth as his mother scolds him on eating mud. This scene, once again depicted using the audio-visual form appears majestic on the screen. Furthermore, the introduction of Krishna as the natkhat butter thief, makhanchor forming a human pyramid and stealing butter from the houses of the Gopis brings a smile on our face when the little girls in their glittering costumes

and jewelry walk through the stage adjusting their ghaghras and uttering their dialogues so adorably “Yashoda, tere gharme makhan ki kami ho toh keh dena, aur bhijwa doongi.” And, the tiny Yashoda maiya looks equally attractive with her colorful blue and golden apparel and trinkets, especially the elongated nose ring that makes her look exactly as we conceive Yashodamaiya in all her glory.  Her astonishment on listening to the complains of the Gopis about her Lalla- (her son) seamlessly convinces us that a mother can be both, stringent as well as benevolent at the same time. The same is the preaching that we hear as the child playing Lord Vishnu appears on the stage standing inside his lotus throne and saying, “Ma ke pyar ki koi seema nahi hoti…apni maa ki daant ka bura nahi manna chahiye.”

Krishna, destroying the Kaliya Naga- the dangerous snake of Yamuna and saving the lives of the brijvasis as well as his avatara as Govardhandhari who demolishes the vanity of the majestic Indra sitting on his airavat (the elephant) and challenging the prowess of the Lord indeed appears admirably grand. The scenes have been conceived with such theatrical skill that one hardly wants to reckon that it is just an enactment with artificial cut outs of the venomous Kaliya snake and Indra’s elephant far from being real. Similarly, Govardhan Parvat made artistically out of the available props by the art team of the school appears real on the stage not because it is designed with any special technical adjustments but simply because the little Krishna who seems to be holding it on his little finger seems to be the resurrector of the entire humankind; what an aplomb and style does the boy portray the scene with! It is more than a wonder…it is something that only someone who is truly blessed by the Lord himself can execute with such confidence!

The play gives a rewarding treat to the eyes parallelly with Radha and Krishna’s extremely honorable adoration. Radha’s first visit to Krishna’s abode during his birthday and her

offering him a rose as a gift is the introduction of the innocence ingrained in their love that is unmatched with the worldly feelings of love. As Krishna receives the rose fondly and treats it as supreme among all other gifts, the scene entrenches purity and divinity of true love in the human world. Followed by it is the beautiful dance rendition that displays the celebration of this lovely pair Radha and Krishna. The play does not bring the rasalila or Krishna's divine dance with Radha and the gopis but this dance serves to be an apt delegate of the same.

Kansa Vadha or the slaying of Kansa is kept very simple. Kansa invites Krishna for a mallayuddha or a duel and first Krishna destroys his attendants and later he kills Kansa. Though the scene has nothing spectacular apparently, the finale steals the heart. How beautifully does the scene imbibe Krishna's philosophy, 'Your Karma' is responsible for what you endure in life.' As he kills Kansa, Krishna makes him remember every evil deed of his and finally destroys him. Kansa is shown to have realized his mistakes and dies. The death of Kansa is the death of the vice and the evil that consume humanity. Vishnu thus appears and gives a loud and clear message making the spectators brood over whether they would like to choose the path of dharma or endure a fate like Kansa by choosing to do evil; the choice lies with the people. Vishnu's concluding lines are evidence of the fact that we have the freedom to decide the way we want to shape our life. Thus, the play does not give any fixed doctrine of dharma despite Krishna being the ambassador of righteousness. It retains the beauty of Lord Krishna's endeavors to make people own their deeds and be ready to accept the outcome.

The play ends with the death of Kansa but we are not contented and we want more as it closes it generates a greed – of Krishna's eventual journey towards the *Mahabharata* and his most serene preaching of the Bhagwadgita. It is only because performance of the children keeps resounding in our minds that

we do not want to accept the closure so easily.

Overall, from Kansa's loud voice projection that echoed peril in the entire auditorium to Pootna's heightened cruelty to Indra's unrelenting presumptuous attitude, to Devaki and Vasudeva's poignant emotional outburst, to the little Narada's pleasing rhythmical NARAYAN NARAYAN, to Yashoda maiya and Nand Baba's sober motherly and fatherly affection, to the gorgeous Radha's lovely love, to the staid akruraji's serious expressions that were enough to convey Krishna must not go to meet Kansa – each actor appeared fully immersed in one's role. Such inseparable oneness with one's role is doubtlessly an achievement par excellence. The supporting dancers who entered intermittently all decked up with dazzling apparels and make-up on the stage served to enhance the aesthetic splendor of the production. The lights were aptly managed and the amazing backstage duty doers who appeared after each black out on the stage adjusting different props for every upcoming scene did a commendable job; after all it was not easy to show the change of place so easily without a circulating stage. The only one thing that could have been taken care of is that the backstage prop adjustors could have appeared in Indian costumes and that would have made the overall appearance of the play organically 'Indian.'

On today's auspicious occasion of 'Jaya Ekadashi' Avalon's presentation made this religiously special occasion truly special. The play was indeed a treat to the eyes. Ms. Aarti Patt's hard work and dedication to her craft is truly visible; together the music and dance team excel in their creation. A must watch!

Dr. Payal Trivedi

For comments if any, please write it the comment box given below: