



## Vanchiyar Kaandam bestows a new facet to Silapathikaram

### Description

Silapathikaram is a story which has been told and retold by many, mostly upholding the moralistic tone in it or stressing the lesson of an all forgiving and chaste wife who in spite of the adultery committed by her husband to her, dares to stand even against the king to take revenge on his death. But Vanchiyar Kaandam by writer Pralayan takes the epic to a newer and more powerful level simply by disrobing the epic of its holiness. Pralayan simplifies the story to present Kannaki as an ordinary girl, with dreams and expectations of a newly married, the wife jealous of the other woman who had attracted her husband, and as a woman who pacifies her mind saying that may be she was less beautiful or under qualified than her husband's lover. The play inspired by the South Indian epic Silapathikaram (100-300 CE) narrates the story Kannaki through the eyes of those characters whose role had been mediocre in the epic.

While Silapathikaram conveys the story of Kannaki's anklets; vicious plotting by adulterous courtesans who were after the wealth of Kannaki's husband Kovalan which resulted in his death penalty. Unlike the epic, the play "Vanchiyar Kaandam" revolves around three characters Kaavarpandu- Kannaki's stepmother and wet nurse (a slave bought by her father), Kannaki's friend- Thevanthi and Aiyai- the daughter of Madari, the women who gave asylum to Kannaki and Kovalan at Madurai. The play is about their remembrance of Kannaki as a woman who was forced to tolerate hardships of life including her husband's adultery.

"The conflict they find as they see the deified image of Kannaki and the recollected image of real Kannaki whom they lived with is the essence of the play", Says the playwright of the drama, Pralayan. Who is the founder convener of Chennai based theatre group Chennai Kalai Kuzhu, which is spearheading the open-air political theatre movement in Tamil Nadu.

The director of the play, R. Raju says that the performers and participants of the play come from different walks of life. "The participants of the play include scholars, load man, painter, service professionals etc. They are participants of a one-month long intensive production oriented theatre workshop which was conducted by the National School of Drama, (Regional Resource Centre), Bangalore in collaboration with the South Zone Cultural Centre, at Tanjore.", he said. Even the main characters had been amateurs in the field. To which R. Raju says, "Where could we get seasoned women actors in the field of drama?

The opportunity to watch the play was bestowed on the reporter when the valedictory session of “Vanchiyar Kaandam”, was held here at Pondicherry University Convention-cum-Cultural Centre. This was a chance for many to re-read the story of Kannaki and her anklets.

One of the audiences of the play P. Bhuvaneswari told that the retelling such an epic in the current context is very relevant. “It so happens that in idolizing the strugglers or the victims, we are in fact diluting the hardships they had to face. We take the stories of Gods for granted as we believe they are immune to hardships. Only real characters in real contexts could make us realise their pain. Only then could the genuine intention with which the artists’ conceived their art could be fulfilled.”

The play was performed around the State and outside and had been applauded for the difference in the stream of thought. Demystification of a godly character itself had been a challenge and to successfully uphold it as the story of any woman who passes through a similar context is praiseworthy.

The valedictory function was presided by T. Parasuraman, President of Progressive Writers’ Artists’ Association, Puducherry and Professor Chandra Krishnamurthy, Vice-Chancellor, Pondicherry University gave the special address.

Shruthy  
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