**Kanthi—the real radiance of love!:Rajitha Saleem**

Kerala Cultural Welfare Association UK’s 40th Onam celebration concluded with an unprecedented event on stage in the history of KCWA in Croydon, London.. Kanthi was presented by VbeatsUK, the London based art company in association with KCWA, Almost 50 artists lived their roles through the various film characters in Malayalam cinema with emphasis on the love travails a woman has to undergo.

What made the characters special was that they were portrayed by people who came with no formal training in acting or dance drama. A formally trained nurse donning the role of one of the most famous characters of erstwhile cinema –Neeli from Neelakuyil, a media professional transformed as Karuthamma, a software engineer changed into the father of Malayalam Cinema--JC Daniel, another engineer portraying Thamara/Desdemona from Kaliyattom….the list goes on. The ensemble included nurses, students, pharmacists and you- name- it-all, from not only Croydon, but from all over UK, who came together so that one man’s dream of portraying `Kanthi’, a dream concept where man and woman complements each other with their equality and love, can come true.

All these men and women, which included many young artists too, have come together on the request of the famous, writer-director, tabla artist Manoj Shiva, and have dedicated their time and effort so that the concept of Kanthi can come alive on stage. Mira Mahesh, the much acclaimed classical dancer who adorned the role of Kanthi herself, provided the required directions in terms of dance and acting. It was with awe and surprise that the packed audience at the Lanfranc Academy at Croydon witnessed these 50 artists performing as though they were seasoned actors.

The credit goes to the community feeling expressed by Malayalees of UK, especially those of Croydon whose collective effort saw success on September 6, 2015—with some providing food for the rehearsals, others contributing their infrastructure and everybody putting in their 100 percent into `Kanthi.’

It is again the commitment of the artists involved which developed Kanthi, which was earlier staged at a duration of 45 minutes, into a full-fledged stage production spanning 3.5 hours. Many of the dances in the selected five films were recreated as such, much to the enjoyment of the audience, who could relive the period they saw them on screen. The heartening fact was that the audience waited till the late hours of a Sunday mainly because at least one member from each family would be on stage.

Kanthi had the blessings of some prominent personalities such as the famous songwriter-composer JayaVijayan, and the veteran actor Madhu. The much appreciated lyrics of the promo was penned by the noted poet Meera Kamala and the music was composed by the upcoming talent Sachin Mannath.

The concept of Kanthi revolved around the conflicts a woman character endures during her life—her love, her dedication to its consummation and the betrayals involved which in the end marks her downfall. Kanthi finds these women and leads them to a new world where there is love without its betrayals and equality in a relationship which is the ultimate freedom. Mira Mahesh excelled as Kanthi along with the haunting music by Sachin.

But the performance unparalleled was by Manoj Shiva who portrayed `Kannan Perumalayan’/Othello, the misled lover who had to kill his wife whom he dearly loved. Every moment he was on stage, his face emanated the struggles Perumalayan faced in making the decision and his unending love masked by the green eyed monster. Manoj Shiva gave the play Kanthi, the fitting final performance, which left the audience in much amazement. Kanthi was produced by VbeatsUK, the London based art company in association with KCWA, and provided the grand finale of this year’s Onam celebration in London with its message, presentation and span.