

Who on earth is Karna, who gets killed by Arjun in the war of Kurukshetra? And what was Krishna doing before the war broke out? Oh yes! He was mentioned by Panchali, when she was being disrobed by one of the Kauravas, after the famous dice game. These are only a few of the questions that arise while watching *Pandavas*, Penta-media Graphic's 3D animation film adaptation of the *Mahabharata*. Thank goodness for being an Indian — a true-blue Indian and not an NRI. So you know the story. And figure out why Dhuri, the villain, has a close familiarity to Duryodhan of the epic.

There was a lot of hype about the closing film of the international digital film festival in the Capital. More so since the 90-minute film bagged the controversial National Award for the Best English Film. There are good reasons for

A great epic, forget the movie

Pandavas won the Best English Film at the National Awards. Mohua Chatterjee understands why it is so controversial

the controversy. The glaring bias in favour of the Pandavas, for instance, quite unlike the epic. So, excepting the war sequence, the key characters of Karna and Krishna find no mention. Then, Duryodhan — who, for some odd reason, is called Dhuri — is shown as a worthless warrior, when he and Bhima had trained to become the best wielders of the mace, giving rise to a lot of complications in the original Vyas. Quite clearly the film is made for an NRI audience — just note the NRI accents, and the shortening of names for those who cannot pronounce them. Isn't

it all the more reason why it should be flawless?

But the biggest letdown is the unwillingness to utilise the magic of a medium like animation. The characters all look the same, they differ only in the colour of their dresses. And the colours? They are loud and without a trace of subtlety. Special effects are conspicuous by their absence. The little that there is, is of a crude variety. Why use an expensive — and fun — medium as animation, with no animated take-offs?

However, the closing day offered at least three other films

worth mentioning. *Pappa & Jag* by Linda Vastrik, a 39-minute feature from Sweden (in German), was an interesting look at a father-daughter relationship. It is an uncompromising, and brave, true life story of a young woman who seeks to confront the trauma of her father's absence in her life. An interesting use of cinema to dwell on a very contemporary problem.

Kalama Sutta, a 96-minute experimental documentary, devolves around a trip to Myanmar. Holly Fisher transforms it into a gripping real life story of human rights violations ever since the country

came under military rule. An admirable statement on the nation under siege as the American filmmaker unspools footage of forced labour, killings on the streets of Rangoon and Mandalay, refugee camps of the Army generals who are into drug money laundering. A large part of the film has been shot under cover, with interviews of student leaders who are preparing for the revolution. An exhilarating use of the digital medium.

The pick of the day, however, was Neeraj Bhasin's *My Friend Su*. Two young men engage in an interesting conversation about life, art, sexuality. The sexuality of a man trapped in a woman's body is in focus, yet, stated so casually, it becomes an exemplary portrayal of sensitivity and maturity in handling the subject. As too the medium. A beautifully crafted film, shot entirely in Delhi, by the producers, Digital Talkies.