



DIRECTOR'S NOTE ON NARAJAATI CHARITRA SAMASTHAM...

- Modali Nagabhushana Sarma

NARAJAATI CHARITRA SAMASTHAM is conceived as an expressionistic folk play. Like Eugene O' Neill's Emperor Jones, on which part of the play's theme is based, it is the story of a person who becomes an emperor in an unspecified primitive world and is pursued by the tribal people when they come to know what kind of a man he is. Again, as in Emperor Jones, the protagonist in this play creates a myth that he will die only by a silver bullet that is in his possession.

But unlike in O'Neill's play in which Jones goes back into his racial past in his nightmarish journey, Dora goes back into the past of his personal life in which he has committed several crimes and exploited several people. In the context of the present-day political manouverings all over the world, I think I gain by this change: firstly because my purpose is to bring to light the negative aspects of authoritarianism and autocracy of every kind and secondly because today's political leadership, by and large, has emanated from exploitation of, and hypocrisy and hatred towards fellow beings in a bid to acquire power and money. Thus the basic concern of the play is to condemn the materialistic manipulations in life and to uphold humanitarian principles in order to create a world free from such hypocrisy and exploitation and where social justice and love would reign.

The play operates on two levels; at the realistic level, the tribal people, having come to know of the atrocities of the Dora, chase him; and at the level of fantasy, the exploited and dead characters from the the Dora's past life haunt him when he runs away for fear of his life. This dual attack on him—his past and present—is alternated throughout the play.

"Expressionism", a post-world war - 1 literary phenomenon in all the countries of Europe which tried to present realism from a subjective point of view had many practitioners in drama and theatre. As the style conscientiously follows a pattern of exaggeration and distortion of reality for specific artistic ends, it exactly suits my purpose here. The expressionistic tendencies suggested in the play are varied and numerous.



As the play is message-centred most of it is organised through idea and motif rather than on a cause and effect relationship among incidents.

The protagonist - antagonist is, in fact, the only character in the play whose entire life is focussed during one night - from the time he started to run away from home at 6 O'clock in the evening until his death at 6 O'clock in the morning. His night-sojourn is a symbol of his entire dark life.

This is also a one-man story in which the man's hypocrisy, materialism and hatred bring doom on him.

All other characters epitomize various social attitudes and human types: the businessman - a lesser cheat, the tribal leader ; the old woman etc. Even the fantasy characters - the Jailor, the beloved, the Friend and the Mother - are broad universal types. Thus every element is reduced to its essentials. For example, 'the plot demonstrates a thesis. Most of the characters are generic. Gesture and patomime are included to evoke intense feeling of suffering and anger. Events are bizarre; ghosts and fantasy characters appear.

All the fantasy characters wear masks; the nearer the characters are to the consciousness of the hero the farther they are in concrete details in hero's subconscious mind. Thus the recently exploited characters-the tribal people — wear full distorted masks. The character who has come into the Dora's life earlier than the tribal people-the Jailor--is less unspecific and so wears only mask-like makeup. The friend whom Dora deceived wears a neutral death mask. But the two characters that had a strong impact in the Dora's early life and so remain strong in his consciousness wear only half-masks which are nearer to reality.

The overall impression that the audience are supposed to take home with them is one of allegory clothed in several nightmarish experiences of the Dora, with a strong impressionistic thrust on the nature of ill-motivated power, and tensions of exploitation, injustice and their total impact on society.

A note on the folk and tribal elements, which form the other half of the play, I am sure, is not unwarranted. I have drawn these elements from several sources- especially the ballad styles of the tribal and folk people of Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere-those of the Veeramushti, the Sarada, the Oggu, the Gond (Thonti) narative Styles to be specific and the song-patterns from folk and tribal lore.



Three different drum patterns are used: The haunting drum is a "Dandora"; the ritual duphs; and the "dolu" for the narration of the ballads. The costumes have an atypical thrust with suggestions of several tribal pieces from the Nagas to Koyas.

Since all these elements are exploited for a theatrical use, they are modulated towards a greater synthesis of the varied rhythms, without losing their native strength and originality.

The title of the play:

The original title of the play is "Dora" Nee Saavu Muudindi!!". We have rehearsed the play with this title in mind and I told the actors that the spine of the play is a "hunt" to capture the Dora, the protagonist of the play, whose crimes and oppressive authoritarianism was the cause of the misery of the innocent victims.

One day, when the music rehearsal was going on, my close friend and a visiting Professor at the Department dropped in . He enthusiastically saw Chukka Sattaish and Mahesh yadav leading the singers and enquired casually about the name of the play. Chatla Sreeramulu, who was designated "Producer" of the play and a very dear colleague told him "Dora ! Nee Saavu Muudindi!!"

Appa Rao, an old-fashioned man and scholar, jumped at his feet with a seemingly disturbed mind, called for me. He complained that the title is anything, but commendable to a university production. "You must change the title. Such an openly Madical title will bring you and your department into disrepute." He went away with this advice. I gathered my friends - Chatla, V. Rama Murthy, P.S. Rama Rao, Adabala and others. All of them advised a safer, middle way approach to the title.

The next day, I came up with the present title "Nara jaati Charita Samastham" and everybody is happy and even Appa Rao seem to be pacified. The present title is an excerpt from the well-known Progressive writer Sri Sri's famous poem " Desa Charitra. " The poem's opening lines are famous :

"Ye Jaati charitra chuchina
yemunnadi garva kaaranam?
nara jaati charitra samastham
para peedana parayanatvam"



(What is there to be proud of any nation? The whole history of Mankind is Nothing but an unending woe of oppression.)

I know this subtle and suggestive title did not go well with my actors. (When the play was to be directed by the main singer of the play and my beloved actor, he was changed the title to a more mundane "Anaganaga Oka Raju" (once upon a time, there was a king)

Technical Support :

The play is backed by a specialist technical support. P.S. RamaRao, a well-known expert in stage craft, who had training in Germany is the director of stage design. He made a stage and the environs with peeled bamboo recks which exactly looked like a forest dwelling.

The Lighting Department is headed by The Veteran V. Rama Murthy , an internationally - known expert. He weaved the light and shade nuances as needed for an expressionistic play. Prof. Shareef of the Dept. of Art, JNTU prepared the three varieties of masks.

Our visiting lecturer Mr. T.R. Adabala is in-charge of Make-up and costume. The remaining technical support is being provided by our students of the Department. The songs and the music accompanying it is the most important part of the play and our student S. Mohan, who has a flair for folk music; is our main singer, assisted by M. Francis and Srinivas Vittal.

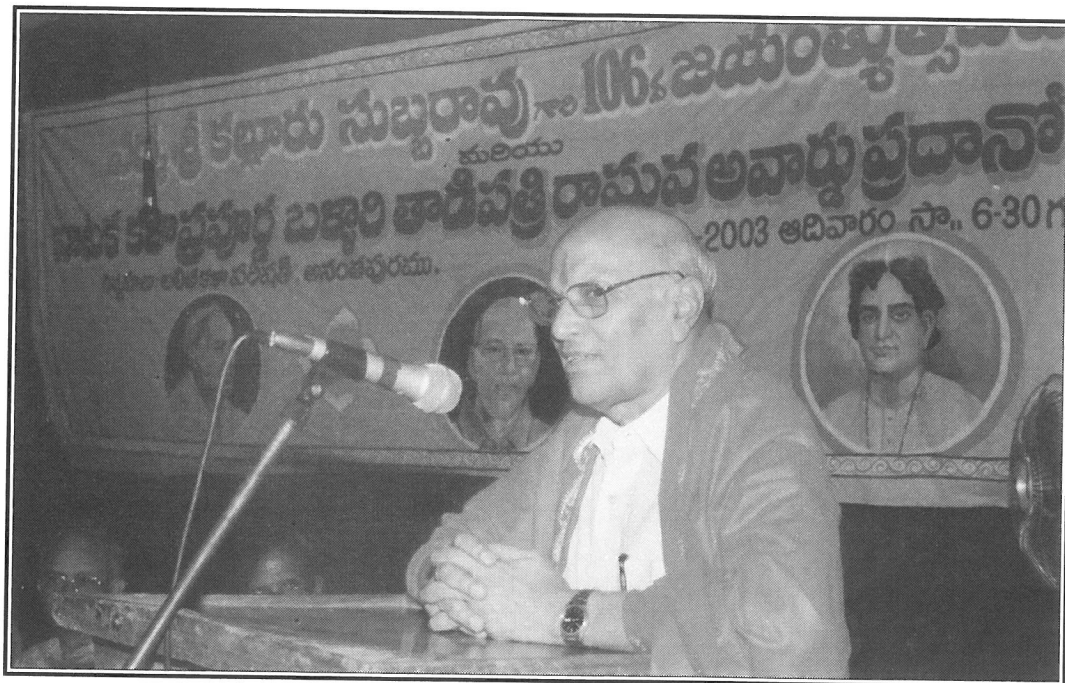
A word about the actor who plays the role of Dora, the propagonist N. SarathKumar has assiduously understood the nuances of the role and has put in an untiring effort.

This is an opportunity to acknowledge my grateful thanks to the vice-Chancellor, the Registrar, The Principal of Nizam college and all the friends who worked hard to make the play what it is.

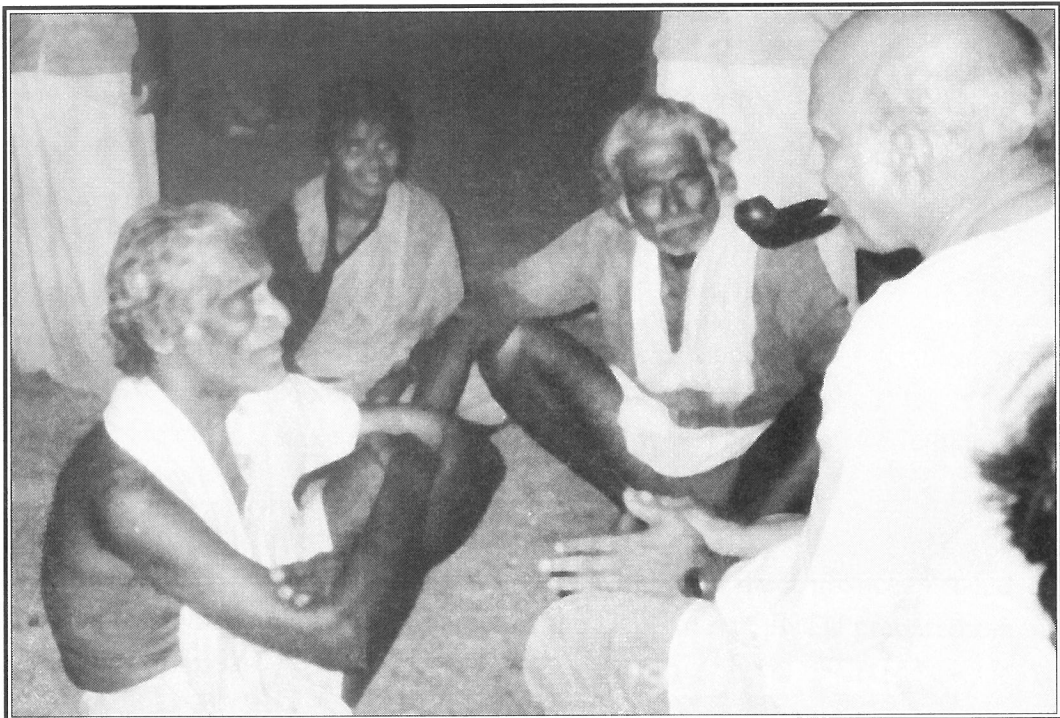




కూచిపూడి నాట్యగురువులతో.....



అనంతపురంలో బిల్లారి రామవ అవార్డు అందుకున్నప్పుడు (2003)



తోలుబొమ్మలాట కళాకారులతో.....



గ్రీసు దేశంలో డైరెక్టర్ ఆఫ్ మోడరన్ పప్పెట్ థియేటర్ 'పాంపెడో'తో (1996)