

Telugu Theatre in Hyderabad : the Post-Independence era

- Prof. N. Nagabhushana Sarma

Theatre activities in Hyderabad and Secunderabad during the days of the Nizam's rule were sporadic without any direction and leadership. Visiting professional teams from the coastal Andhra and Bellary provided ample theatrical fare to the Telugu residents of the twin cities. Secunderabad was the centre of Telugu theatre activities as a large number of Telugu-speaking people resided there. There are records to show that even by 1912-13 there existed a theatre group called "Vani Vilasa Sabha", run by C.T. Mohanarangam Pillai. They performed popular plays of the time, such as *Gayopakhyanam* and *Harischandra* at Raja Naganna Devidi (where Chitra Talkies is situated now). Pillai took up all the major lead roles and one K. Seshaiyah donned the female roles. A.T. Ramanjulu Naidu, a veteran Hindusthani instrumentalist served this company as its music director before he was employed by the Malavaram Company. It not only performed in the Telangana Region, but travelled to Guntur and Vijayawada to present plays. Among other theatre associations that sprang up in due course, mention must be made of Saraswathi Sabha, Sri Krishna Manollasini Sabha, etc. Both of them merged into one by about 1920 and performed extensively, donating the proceeds to educational, spiritual and national institutions. Another noteworthy association was Krishna Vilasini Sabha run by Dharmavaram Gopalacharyulu. In course of time came Hyderabad Amateurs and Friends Union, both performing plays in Telugu as well as in English.

By 1940's several theatre-interested Telugu young men migrated to the then Hyderabad state to seek job opportunities. Some of them joined together to form amateur associations. Noteworthy among them were Vistruti Natya Mandali and Kalidasa Kala Samithi of Secunderabad. Both of them were active and engaged themselves in producing modern social plays unlike the earlier pauranic musical plays.

However, the first major association that had attracted wide acclaim was the Indian National Theatre, which served as a branch of the All-India Indian National Theatre, with Bombay as its headquarters. Several influential officials and non-officials were on its committee, with Shankarji, a long-time friend of the arts and education and President of the Exhibition Society as President of INT and A.R. Krishna and K. Kameswara Rao as its chief functionaries. Earlier stalwarts like Narayana Das were involved in its activities. Besides presenting plays like "Adhikari" and "Bali", they also held seminars and annual festivals. They also acquired some land allotment from the Government of Andhra Pradesh due to the good offices of J.V. Narasing Rao, Madan Mohan and some other Ministers and built an open-air auditorium in the labour colony adjoining Chikkadpalli with K. Kameswara Rao and Badrinath as Secretary and Joint Secretary. INT worked studiously for the promotion of Telugu theatre in Hyderabad in 60's and 70's. Later, however, its activities dwindled and their open-air place covered now with cement sheets is given on rent for rehearsals.

Andhra Pradesh Natya Sangham

The Natya Sangh was for three decades the premier institute in Andhra in general and Hyderabad in particular. An Andhra adjunct of

Bharatiya Natya Sangh, which itself was a member to the International Theatre Organisation, affiliated to UNESCO, its Andhra branch had several luminaries who shouldered unassumingly the burden of spearheading a theatre movement that was seen only in the late 1920's in the Andhra region. M. Chenna Reddy, who took time off in his multiple avocations of politics both in Telangana and New Delhi, M. Anandam, a politician - Chartered Accountant and son of the illustrious educator Sri Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiah served the Natya Sangh as President and Vice-President. That inimitable visionary and organizer A.R. Krishna was its strong man who served it as General Secretary and brought name both for the organization and himself. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, the guiding spirit behind all meaningful cultural activity in pre-independence and post-independence India, was mainly responsible for the multi-channelled activities of the Natya Sangh.

Started in 1954 as a regional unit of the Bharatiya Natya Sangh, the Andhra Pradesh Natya Sangham was originally intended to be a State Federation of theatre groups comprising Indian National Theatre, Kala Mandal, Sadhana Sangh, Natya Kala Niketan and Navya Kala Kendra. Eventually other theatre groups also joined Natya Sangh and strengthened it. It was visualized essentially as a service centre, which seeks to provide training facilities in dramatic arts and help the organizations by giving theatrical equipment and provide technical aid. Its other chief aim was to achieve coordination in the theatre activities in the State.

In order to facilitate service operations, the Natya Sangh started 5 Zonal centres clubbing the theatre organizations of the zones.

The better working of these 5 centres in their fullest capacity would have generated a state-wide interest in theatre, but paucity of funds had fructified this noble aim.

Natya Sangh initiated activities with a grand regional festival of theatre in 1954. It invited another premier body, Andhra Nataka Kala Parishad to hold their annual competitions at Hyderabad in 1955.

In the year 1959 Natya Sangham conducted a unique festival of dance, drama and music for 40 days in coordination with the newly - formed A.P. Sangeet Natak Akademi and Andhra Nataka Kala Parishad. Again in 1963 it sponsored the Andhra Nataka Kala Parishad's competitions for the third time. It also sponsored theatre groups from abroad including Wayne State University Theatre Group from U.S.A. in 1958 and Oxford Play House from U.K. Thus it stood as the major cultural bridge between Telugu theatre and to theatre outside Andhra.

Training and Theatre Education

Natya Sangh also took active initiation in sponsoring theatre activists for higher studies. Theatre practitioners who later became important functionaries who were thus sponsored included Bhakshi Sri Ram and K. Prasada Rao, S.R. Mantri and S. Gopala Murthy to study at NSD, New Delhi and Natya Vidyalaya respectively. A.R. Krishna, Chatla Sreeramulu and Govind Chowdary attended the British Drama League courses.

Natya Sangh also started in 1959 an experimental course for a period of 6 months in its school, Natya Vidyalaya under the directorship of the veteran Director, Abburi Ramakrishna Rao. It had later restructured its course work with a two-year diploma course and continued its activities in one guise or the other. In later years Krishna headed the Andhra Pradesh Theatre Institute and Repertory, a continuation of the work he had undertaken at the Natya Sangh.

Natya Sangh also produced its own plays. Some of them became trend-setters in their own way. Kanya Sulkam, Prataparudreeyam, Adhikari and several others became instantaneous successes. It had also initiated monthly programmes of dramatic performances not only by its own members but also by other major groups. The twenty five years it was active it had spearheaded several important programmes and had given Telugu theatre a vision and direction.

Cultural activities in Central Organizations

When the erstwhile Nizam State was merged with the Indian Union, several Central Government offices started functioning in the newly-formed Hyderabad State. AG's Office, RBI, HAL and Railways are the major ones. Telugu employees who were either transferred from the neighbouring states or freshly recruited took the lead in starting cultural activities in these and other organizations, thereby providing entertainment to its employees. Though all these Central Government Offices' Cultural organizations served the interests of their parent organizations, they were also open to members of other organizations and

the general public as well. As this new phenomenon caught up the imagination of the Telugu - speaking people in the twin-cities, they became very popular. Later joined the BHEL Cultural Association which, after a while, initiated drama competitions that became popular. So is the case with RTC cultural unit and Railway's Lalita Kala Samithi, two major cultural outfits that are still active.

The most notable among them is the theatre wing of the AG's office, Telugu Nataka Samithi. With the help of several officers, the Samithi's functionaries like Garimella Rama Murthy, M.V. Ramana, K.V. Sastry, Bhajarappa and Paruchuri Venkateswara Rao worked vigorously to make it one of the foremost theatre organizations. Like in all central and state department organizations, it has had a mammoth cultural week and they sponsored the best plays available in Andhra at that time to packed houses. In due course it also started its one - act play competitions and it has become prestigious to participate in the competitions and win a prize. Their own productions are of a high quality. Directors like Krishnaji helped the parent team to produce quality based experiments.

These annual theatre activities, though opened for everyone, helped to create a proper cultural atmosphere and promoted theatrical awareness among those young employees who were hitherto uninitiated. This paved the way for the success of such amateur organizations which sprang up in large numbers when the state was formed in 1956.

With the formation of Andhra Pradesh as a combined state of the Telugu-speaking people, the aspirations of the people have taken an

assertively positive direction. The New State has created a new cultural atmosphere in the over - all celebratory bravado of oneness which gave a further fillip to such activities. Three types of organizations sprung up in almost three or four years and there was activity all around. The first type was the Government's own programmes to promote theatrical activity either on its own or in collaboration with other state-wide organizations. The founding of the Andhra Pradesh Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1963 ushered in a new era of entrepreneurship for it either conducted drama festivals on its own or encouraged other organizations to hold festivals, seminars and competitions. Manned by very eminent people like R.B. Ramakrishnam Raju, Rallapalli Ananthakrishna Sarma and Sthanam Narasimha Rao, it soon sprang into action. In coordination with Andhra Pradesh Natya Sangham and Andhra Nataka Kala Parishad, it conducted annual theatre festivals, with select plays of well-known groups, besides honouring eminent practitioners with lists and awards and conducting seminars and workshops. Besides the common activities expected of an Akademi, its work in bringing out a monthly journal, *Natya kala*, a prestigious journal which presented a rich fare of dramatic criticism. Another of its activities was to organize production - oriented workshops. Such a workshop, organized at Warangal, produced an experimental play, *Trijaki Yamadarsanam* directed by Chatla Sreeramulu. The Akademi undertook an extensive survey of the existing theatre associations, actors, directors and patrons, which was unfortunately not completed. In later years when the Akademi was trifurcated and Andhra Pradesh Natak Akademi under the presidentship of the cinema actress Jamuna was started,

it continued all the activities initiated by the combined Akademi. One special service it did for theatre was to sponsor a theatre institute and a Repertory, which remained so far an unfulfilled dream of theatre enthusiasts all over Andhra. A.R. Krishna, the veteran director-writer was its director under whose stewardship, it produced several major plays of lasting significance. *Abhijnana Sakuntalam*, *Mrichakatika*, *Maa Nanna Kavali* and *Kanya Sulkam* formed its repertoire. However, its major productions were two dramatized versions of novels - Unnava Laxminarayana's *Malapalli* and G.V. Krishna Rao's *Keelu Bommalu*. It also gave special emphasis on producing experimental plays like Kundurti's *Aasha*, a poetic play, Gora Sastry's *Aasa Kharudu Ana* and *Samrakshakudu* an adaptation of Samuel Becketh's *The Caretaker*. But along with the cancellation of the Akademis in 1984, the Repertory was also wound up all of a sudden and a very active journey had seen abruptly wound up.

Another important outcome of the formation of Andhra Pradesh was the consolidation the Telugu creative and dramatic talent through the various State Government's Departments and other public services like the State Bank of India and State Bank of Hyderabad. In the early sixties, almost every Government department had a dramatic wing whose members were given special casual leave facilities to participate in State-wide dramatic competitions. The most important among them, of course, was the Secretariat Cultural Association, started immediately after the formation. Its office-bearers have always been recognised actors. Such a list will be very large and include veterans like K. Veeraju, Shyam Sunder, B. Narayana, Sambasiva Rao, Komaraiah and many others. Especially

landable were their attempts to take standard plays like *Alexander* and *Lepakshi* even to district centres and perform. Both the SBI and SBH dramatic associations were for long centres of creative activity in which young employees vied with each other in a sportive friendly competition. R. Vidya Sagar, Kota Srinivasa Rao and others were behind the successful conduct of the annual one-act play competitions which were a high profile event! They invariably brought famous cinema actors to give away prizes on the last day which had an added attraction!

The third front of dramatic activity is provided by the several amateur organizations that were started in the early sixties. One of the reasons for the proliferation of such organizations was the inner conflicts that arose in the cultural organs of the public sector and Government institutions. The second reason was the growing popularity of the so-called "*Parishads*" - i.e., competition - organizing associations - all over Andhra. Good or bad, they provided a platform for the actors and directors and so the amateur actors formed into convenient groups to compete! But, some of them had higher and more sustaining aims. Among such successful and resourceful associations mention must be made of Vidyanagar Cultural Association, Navodaya Arts, Sri Kala Niketan, Murali Kala Nilayam, Adarsa Yuva Bharati and Kalaradhana.

Among these, a pride of place must be given to Vidyanagar Cultural Association headed by veteran actors like J.L. Narasimha Rao, B.V. Rama Rao, G.V. Subba Rao, Garimella Rama Murthy, D. Someswara Rao and E.L. Narasimha Rao. The association chose Chatla Sreeramulu as its

director and under his creative eye several important plays were performed. Under the strict disciplined supervision of J.L. Narasimha Rao, himself an able and front - ranking actor and under the directorial supervision of Chatla, one of the front - ranking directors of post-independence Andhra, VCA has mainly concentrated on plays with either strong social content or plays which require a new technical orientation. VCA has also gained instantaneous recognition for its experimental plays as it participated in all the major competitions all over Andhra and won coveted prizes.

It presented such varied plays as *Arani*, an out and out realistic play, *Maro Mohenjadarro*, a successful experiment in symbolistic presentation and has since been considered a classic, both by N.R. Nandi, *Lava Lo Erra Gulabi* by Gollapudi Maruti Rao which showed the psychological manouerings of a disabled man, completely hooked to a wheel chair, *Satyam Gari Illekkada*, by Maruti Rao, an adaptation of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, *La Okkintayu Ledu*, an adaptation of Bertolt Bruch's *Exception and the Rule* by D. Prabhakar with its mime, songs and known for its alienation effect. In later years, VCA repeated many of its popular plays with changed cast and still retained its original mark of competence.

Vying with Vidyanagar Cultural Association's acumen in presenting parishad-oriented plays is "*Kalaradhana*", another important association with Bhanu Prakash, an actor with a considerable command on speech and diction as director and R.V.S. Ramaswamy as playwright. Their plays like *Galivana*, *Keratalu* and *Velluva* won prizes in the Andhra Nataka Kala Parishad competitions. Navodaya Arts with D.S.N. Murthy as the director

has also had some creditworthy productions to its credit. Their maiden production of *Yadha Praja Tadha Raja* by Korrapati Gangadhara Rao, won laurels in the competitions and won critical acclaim. Another front-ranking association is Sri Kala Niketan with N. Taraka Rama Rao as its guiding spirit, which specialized in performing his own plays. Among its noteworthy productions is *Janamejayam*, a play based on the Mahabharata story with an obvious referential pointer towards arms race in the present-day world and its consequential disasters.

The work of "Murali Kala Nilayam", first under an ace actor Rallapalli and then under T. Sundaram and "Adarsa Yuva Bharati" under Amarendra, Vaidyasagar and Ramana is also commendable. Meanwhile some Public Institutions also developed interest in theatricals. The "A.P. Road Transport Recreation Club" with Sarath as the central actor has done some worthy plays which won awards in competitions. The "High Court Cultural Association" with M.S.K. Prabhu as the chief actor needs a special mention. "Bhoomika" is another important organization founded by Udaya Bhanu and engaged in meaningful experimental work.

The association that has come into prominence in the last decade is B.P. Prasad's "Vamsee Niranjana Kala Kendram", which specializes in producing Prasad's own plays including *Pratispandana* and *Punadi* which won the prestigious Nandi awards. Prasad has an edge over others because he is often the author of the play and its chief actor. The association was guided by late Sri T. Sivaramakrishna Rao and after his demise Prasad

took over the directorial responsibilities also. With limited characters in the cast and a strong psychological conflict in the story, his plays have a melodramatic appeal. Yuva Kala Vahini, besides conducting cultural activities including drama competitions, produces its own plays. Their major thrust is on the lives of great personalities of India including Swamy Vivekananda and Alluri Seetarama Raju.

Universities and Theatre Education

The importance of theatre education in imparting scientific education has been recognised all over the world. In the changing trends in using technical tools, theatre education has a definite say. In contrast with the amateur theatre activities which often tend to produce straight realistic plays, the plays produced in the University departments of Theatre Arts have been largely experimental and from the classical repertoire of historical importance.

Andhra University started a diploma course in dramatic arts as early as in 1966 and the Andhra Pradesh Natya Sangh also started Natya Vidyalaya in 1966 and a theatre institute and Repertory in 1978. But a full-fledged P.G. course came into existence in 1982 at Osmania University with Dr. M. Nagabhushana Sarma as the Professor and Head of the Dept. of Theatre Arts. He was ably assisted by Chatla Sreeramulu and Raja Ramdas. The course work includes a strong theoretical base exemplified by an equally sensible performance orientation. Its workshops and seminars by illustrious scholars, actors and directors brought the department an all-India importance. Besides regular in-house productions

by students, the department put on boards semester - end productions directed by staff members or guest directors. Among the most prestigious productions undertaken by the Osmania Department, mention must be made of the following : *Raja Oedipus*, a Greek Classic translated and directed by Prof. Sarma, *Prajala Manishi*, a translation of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, also directed by Sarma, *Papam Uri Teestaru Kabolu*, an adaptation of *Twelve Angry Men* directed by Chatla Sreeramulu and *La Okkintayu Ledu*, a Brechtian play in Telugu directed by Bhasker Shewalkar. The department also laid equal importance to translations from Sanskrit and modern Indian drama which include *Ashadha Megham*, *Nissabdam Court Nadustondi*, *Uregimpu* and several others. Premier shows of several important plays were received with great enthusiasm. *Mammadhudu Mallee Puttadu* a fantasy on the ideal of beauty written by Prof. Sarma and directed by Chatla, *Dora! Nee Saavu Moodindi*, an adaptation of Eugene 'Neill's *Emperor Jones* set in a Girijan forest background and used several folk forms for narration written and directed by Prof. Sarma, Tanikella Bharani's street play *Go Grahanam* directed by Sundaram and *Neeli Deepalu* by Chiranjeevi and directed by Chatla are but a few of the plays who had their premier productions on the Dept's stage.

The Dept. also conducted a week-long Atreya Theatre Festival in Ravindra Bharati, presenting 4 plays and 6 playlets of the illustrious playwright who ushered in the modern realistic movement in Telugu. This was the first - ever Festival devoted to a modern playwright and received great acclaim. The Dept., also brought out an annual Indian Theatre Journal for six years.

The other university that started a discipline of Theatre Arts is the Sarojini Naidu School of Performing Arts of the Hyderabad Central University. Though initiated in 1985 at Golden Threshold in Abids, the residence of Sarojini Naidu, the illustrious poet, it started functioning regularly from 1986 with Prof. M.N. Sarma as the Head (who went to HCU to organise the school) and with Bhasker Shewalkar as a Lecturer, assisted by a large group of experts including P.S.R. Appa Rao, Chatle Sreeramulu, A.R. Krishna, T.R. Adabala and P.S. Rama Rao - scholars and theatre practitioners who were already well-known in the field. It had also the advantage of obtaining the services of Sri V. Rama Murthy, an internationally acclaimed lighting designer. It also had major productions directed by faculty and guest faculty. *Mrichakatiya* by A.R. Krishna, *Kayitam Puli* by M.N. Sarma were the first productions. The Department later had Attili Krishna Rao as the professor.

The Department later grew into a full-fledged P.G. and Research Dept. with Bhaskar Shewalkar, Ananthakrishnam, D.S.N. Murthy and N.J. Bhikshu on the staff. It has also a specialised Production programme by eminent contemporary directors : Prof. S. Ramanujam's directorial venture of *Urubhangam* and Prof. Ramgopal Bajaj's *Andhayug* in Telugu (translated by Prof. M.N. Sarma and Mrs. Saraswathi Sarma) and presented in the 'Arena' production style were some memorable experiments. Though the Dept. has rich resources, in actual practice it has a shortcoming since as a national university its students are drawn from all over the country and so performing Telugu plays will have to be carried on by non-Telugu actors.

A third theatre department was started in Telugu University in 1990 with the veteran actor J.V. Somayajulu as the head and had on its faculty several youngsters appointed on an adhoc basis. Its medium of instruction is Telugu and so often attracts a large number of students. A haven for film aspirants, it also does plays of importance. *Kanyasulkam* directed by J.V. Ramana Murthy is a major production. Teacher-Directors like K. Hanumanthu Rao are active. Some innovating students came out of this University in recent years, including Khaja Vali and Raghuveer. It has the resources of youthful practitioners and if properly groomed, they can become professionally competent actors, directors and scholars.

Several associations specialising in performing musical plays (Padya Natakams) also have had a field day. While the social prose play has come to stay due to the pioneering efforts of Andhra Nataka Kala Parishad and Natya Sangham, several professional Natya Mandali's existed all over Andhra, mainly performing old musical plays like *Udyoga Vijayalu*, *Harischandra*, *Gayoipakhyanam* etc. The style of presentation did not change since the last half a century, which involves elaborate *raga - aalapana* after singing the poem itself. Some modernization is made by Samskara Bharati's Director, V.K. Radha, whose *Varavikrayam* and *Kalidas* earned a name. Other musical play producing associations include Kala Rajyam of Malladi Bhaskar and Sri Satya Sai Arts of Gummadi Gopalakrishna.

"Rasa Ranjani" :

The only organization which made a mark for its overall contribution to the development of theatre activities after Natya Sangh is "*Rasa Ranjani*".

It is a combination of several activities grouped into one. Its major object is, however, to present ticketed shows, though the ticket is just Rs.10/-. The organizers believe that it inculcated a sense of responsibility both in the audience and the actors as well. Rasa Ranjani was started by a group serious - minded theatre people like Prof. M.N. Sarma, Chatla Sreeramulu, Garimella Rama Murthy and D. Someswara Rao with help from like minded officers like H.J. Dora, IPS and K.V. Ramana, IAS. Rasa Ranjani's major activity initially was to present a major play for 5 days a week with a token ticket for Rs.10/-. Started on March 8, 1993, with *Kanya Sulkam* directed by J.V. Ramana Murthy, it kept its promise of a new play every week for an year. It soon found that there were not so many plays worth presenting every week by a new organization. With reluctance it reduced the days of performance to three a week, then two and now to two days a month.

With such a mammoth production schedule Rasa Ranjani went through innumerable difficulties. Finding tolerably good plays was the first one. Associations willing to perform for a reasonable amount of remuneration is the second. The 'Parishad season' during which time all teams, known and unknown, would be busy and so the non-availability of associations to present plays even if it pays a decent remuneration is the third.

Rasaranjani has a Repertory which produces at least three plays an year. Among its major productions *Kanyasulkam* (Dir : J.V. Ramana Murthy), *Damn it! Katha Addam Tirigindi* (Chatla), *Bommalata* (Satyanand), *Sandhya-Chaya* (K. Srihari Murthy), *Mudra Mkshasam* (M.N. Sarma),

Dongala Bandi (Sundaram), *Kayitam Puli* (M.N. Sarma), *Idemiti* (Someswara Rao), *Natakam* (B.P. Prasad), *Tella Sunna* (Naripatti Raju), *Puli Mallee Vastunda* (S. Mohan), *Maro Mohenjadarro* (M. Francis) *Charandas* (Udaya Bhanu) and many others which were repeated for several weeks.

Rasa Ranjani's productions of *Praja Nayakudu Prakasam* written and directed by Nagabhushana Sarma has a successful innings, having been performed in all the major towns of Andhra and also in Mumbai and Delhi several times. Its production of *Srinadhudu* (Someswara Rao) earned it laurels from even the musical theatre lovers. It gives preference to original plays though its adaptations of major Indian and Western plays were regarded highly both by critics and spectators.

Rasa Ranjani also conducts acting and mime workshops to train its own actors and also helps other associations to come and share the stage with it. It has installed an annual award in memory of one of its founder-members Garimella Rama Murthy. It also represents Andhra Pradesh in several National Theatre Festivals including the Bharath Rang Mahotsav organized at Delhi by the National School of Drama. In the past 15 and odd years of its existence, Rasa Ranjani has put on board about 1000 productions, some their own and others being sponsored plays by other associations.

Nandi Natakotsavalu :

The Government of Andhra Pradesh thought it fit to hold annual competitions in three categories - brose play, one-act play and musical play,

as the only way to promote theatre. Having scrapped the Sangeet Natak Akademi in as early as 1984, it found this an easy way to please theatre artists. The 'Nandi' Natakotsavams were held every year in one of the major cities in Andhra. Hyderabad has already had Akkineni Nataka Kala Parishad and Paruchuri Raghubabu Smaraka Natakotsavams, both of them having achieved prominence. The Film, T.V. and Theatre Development Corporation undertakes to hold competitions every year in a city or town of its choice and distributes Golden, Silver and Bronze Nandis, along with substantial monetary award. Though there is nothing new in the competitions, two areas have improved due to Governmental intervention. One is that wherever it held competitions, the local theatres have been renovated, spending ten to twenty five lakhs on each venture. Thus, we can boast of good auditoria at Visakhapatnam, Rajahmundry, Guntur, Nellore and Nizamabad fully equipped. The second benefit is with regard to the Padya Natakam, which had fallen on evil days, and interest in which has been greatly revived due to Nandi competitions.

New plays in the genre are being written and performed each year. The Padya Natakam, which has hitherto been a neglected area received a boost since, for the first time in its 120 years of existence it has a director who is in charge of the "Production"! But for this, there is nothing to be proud of these competitions, except every other actor and director has made a fashion to attach a tag to himself as "Nandi Awardee".

The work of the Andhra Pradesh Praja Natya Mandali in organizing annual "Street Theatre Festivals" is a welcome feature though it has remained mainly to be a political theatre.

Of late the Surabhi theatre, which has a long history of 120 years as the only "Family Theatre" in India, has been performing at Lalitha Kala Thoranam and has been providing entertainment through its traditional fare.

Other areas such as commemorating great savants of theatre, energizing the young talent through workshops, exploring the possibilities of research work through seminars, disseminating even the scanty information and literature on theatres - are some of the areas completely neglected both by the Govt. and the Universities. The Government pays a deaf ear and the universities are engaged in a day-to-day course work. Lack of a central organization overseeing all the segments of theatre practice, lack of facilities for researching into its past history, making aware of both the audiences, playwrights and actors about the changing trends in national and international theatre practices, lack of exposure to outside theatre, lack of facilities to experiment and perform by coming out of the "Parishad mould" are the evils that hinder Telugu theatre to cross its boundaries of Andhra and make its own mark in Indian theatre!