

Reviving the glory of theatre

THEATRE has witnessed a steady decline in the latter half of the 20th century mainly because of the onslaught of cinema and TV. But Osmania University's Department of Theatre Arts is striving hard to restore Telugu drama's glory since its inception in 1982. Mr. Modali Nagabhushana Sharma, head, Department of Theatre Arts and Mr. Chatla Sreeramulu, lecturer, are struggling, despite many obstacles to promote theatre arts. Both Mr. M. N. Sharma and Mr. Chatla have a lot of experience in the field and have successfully handled different genres of drama.

Though many consider theatre arts as a dying form Chatla thinks that theatre is a launching pad for most actors.

It is an embodiment of dance, music, painting, etc and according to Chatla, radio, TV and films have evolved from theatre. A drama is played for the audience where the actors act and the audience reacts. Audience purge out all excess emotions.

The department was set up to promote theatre arts and to encourage professionalism. It offers a two-year P.G. diploma in theatre arts. And the candidates opting for this course must undergo a written test apart from possessing a certificate in performing arts from a reputed cultural organisation. There are 20 seats in the department. The students are given intensive training in acting, script writing and direction. The students are exposed to Indian and foreign theatrical styles and learn different techniques. Apart from this the students have to perform three dramas in a year to prove their mettle. Thus students are given, both theoretical and practical training.

Some experts in the field of theatre arts also quite often take classes. The department consists of only two teachers. Certainly they need at least two more staff members.

The theatrical works of the de-

partment include extensive lectures, dialogues, elaborate workshops by theatre luminaries, both national and international.

From its small world of theatre, the department has brought out a wide range of productions from the classics to contemporary drama, to small-scale productions and avant garde writing. The department's reputation for excellence for its productions such as *Raja Oedipus*, *Ashadha Megham*, *Papam uri teestharu kabolu*, *Gog-*

dio-vidual centres. P. S. N. Prasad, another student, is of the opinion that the course enables students to comprehend theatre arts thoroughly and make them dextrous. K. Sreenivasa Vittal, another student, says "Art is gold given by god. Man makes it shine with his efforts". He further says that he joined the course to improve his artistic talents. All of them are of the opinion that an artist derives immense pleasure while performing on stage. Irrespective of their

of Drama, Mr. Chatla said, NSD gets Rs. 75 lakh per year in contrast to the Rs. 26,000 which the department gets and which is not sufficient even for a single production.

When asked about UGC assistance M.N. Sharma, head of the department, said that they have submitted proposals for the grant of Rs. 30 lakh and are still awaiting a reply. In case they get monetary assistance from UGC, which they are quite optimistic about, they are

a reality will give rebirth to theatre arts in Hyderabad.

The State Government is turning a Nelson's eye towards theatre arts. In fact the government itself initiated this department and promised it one lakh rupees a year, but it is not being implemented. In other states like Manipur, Maharashtra and Karnataka the government is encouraging theatre arts. In Karnataka the government lets out its auditoriums to cultural organisations for a nominal rent of Rs. 400 whereas in our State the government charges Rs. 1000 for giving Ravindra Bharathi without any facilities like lighting, etc.

"Without the government's encouragement" said Mr. Sharma "theatre arts will not flourish". The main drawback of theatre arts in AP is it lacks a centre like Pune for Maharashtra. Mr. Sharma said that Hyderabad was never a cultural centre for Andhra. To some extent Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam were cultural centres. "If we want to make Hyderabad a cultural centre, the government has to make efforts for 100 years," said Mr. Sharma.

As a matter of fact both Mr. Chatla and Mr. Sharma are very ambitious. Their efforts are already yielding fruit. Even the students have a bright future as they get opportunities in TV, and films. "In fact there is not a single Telugu programme on TV without the contribution of theatre arts students," said Mr. Chatla proudly.

Mr. Sharma said "every drama has a message and people take the message when you give it through action and dialogue and it helps in bringing about social awareness by exposing various social problems to the people. "If any government department approaches us to spend their message, we are ready to enact plays on their behalf."

Jayapal Reddy Challa



Raja Oedipus: a production by the Department of Theatre Arts, O.U.

rahanam, *Ippudu Veeshunna Gali* and many other dramas were acclaimed by the audience. And recently the department staged successfully *Nara Jati Charitra Samastham*... It also held a five-day festival of Acharya Atreya's plays, in which they enacted all the plays of Atreya.

A. Muralikrishna, a student who has just completed his first year sees bright avenues for employment in TV, radio, Song and Drama Division and different au-

occupation they want to remain as artists.

Mr. Prasad Reddy, Telugu news reader in Hyderabad T.V. and an ex-student of this department, said that the department helped him in improving his pronunciation since the department also teaches diction.

The department, of course, is not without shortcomings. Though it was set up in 1982 the department lacks necessary equipment. Compared to the National School

planning to construct a separate building for theatre arts in Nizam College grounds with an auditorium. They also want to let out the theatre for commercial purposes to meet the department's expenditure.

The department is also planning to have a repertory so that it can perform plays in different parts of the State. The repertory team consists of professionals and actors on pay roll. Mr. Sharma is nursing an ambitious idea which, if it becomes