CHAPTER V

AMATEUR THEATRE

Circumstances:

If 'necessity is the mother of invention' in the field of science, it is perhaps the mother of innovation with regard to the progress of arts and particularly the theatrical art. It is true that both invention and innovation draw on the vitals of the old and former forms and substance, but while the former suggests an entirely new creation, the latter seems to keep a more intimate link with the past. Innovation in the field of the theatrical art when viewed from this angle, strikes essentially a revolutionary deviation from the established and perhaps 'hackneyed' standards. It would aim at an improvement on the existing phase and providing a new interpretation of it, all owing to the necessity of a situation of considerable dissatisfaction; a dissatisfaction that alone could move the theatre a step further in the path of its progress.

Thus the milestone reached by the theatre is what is commonly called "the amateur phase" which lays emphasis on non-professional and non-commercial performances.

The Amateur theatre is hardly a century old in India. Its birth in the Kannada speaking land about four decades ago seems to be essentially due to three
fundamental factors that acted and reacted disturbing the
call pervading unhealthy apathy and providing new thoughts
and visions of theatrical progress. The factors could perhaps
be classified as the excesses of the professional theatre,
the influence of the study of the west and finally, the
tendencies of the modern times.

In the eye of the 'classes', the professional theatre
was essentially catering to the 'masses'. Many an aspect
of the professional performances did strike as crude and
primitive from the western standards and the professional
excesses came to be ridiculed and jeered at by the leading
writers of the Amateur stage. Plays like 'Neakapam' of
Shri T.P. Kailasam, 'Natargambo Natak' of Karanth and
'Gopuva Ramanova' of Srinaga all in the same tone gave
rich and loud entertainment by demonstrating the odds and
excesses of the professional theatrical methods, with which
modern mind could not reconcile. The situation was in a way
similar to the one prevailing in Russia before the advent of
the Moscow Art Theatre and the protest was similar in nature.
It was a protest against "the customary manner of acting,
against theatricality, against bathos, against
declamation, against over-acting, against bad manner
of production, against the habitual scenery, against
the star system which spoiled the ensemble,
against the light and farcical repertoire,....."1

More than even these, it was a protest against the themes

1. Stasovinsky, Father of the Moscow Art Theatre: quoted
by R.K. Yajnik. The Indian Theatre, p. 240
of the professional plays, the stage-music and odd settings, scenery and presentation. The professional could no longer serve a particular section of the society which was fast changing its tastes owing to the inevitable influence of the impact of the western ways of life and letters.

The impact of the English language and a study of the western methods of the theatre added considerably to the growing urge. It disturbed to a considerable degree, issues the time honoured faith in several, including the accepted methods of theatrical production. The hard practicalism coupled with a sense of scientific investigation — a gift of the study of the west — penetrated into every aspect of life and art to uproot the established things and question the accepted standards. The new age marked a clear cut difference between the class and the mass and the former, which had the benefit of the study of the west imbued a pronounced enthusiasm for experiment. It loved the stage for the sake of self enjoyment rather than for financial considerations and dubbed the professional theatre as outmoded. The age of traditions and customs was fast dwindling. Mythological and historical themes were soon losing their hold, as they were dubbed incapable of catering food for thought. It was considered, not wrongly after all, that the financial aspect of the professional theatre was entirely responsible for rendering the stage subservient to the undefendable tastes of the audience. The Amateur stage is, to a considerable extent, the result of an all round attempt
to extricate the dramatic art from the grip of commercialists in order to add grace, honour and dignity to that 'debased' profession. Thus, a new consciousness was awakened and the talented representatives of the classes desired to bring the benefit of the western study on to the Kasmade stage in spite of the inevitable opposition projected by the conservative section of the society.

Thirdly, a fundamental character of the modern age is the scramble for time. The individual with his multifarious activities could hardly afford time for long entertainment as his leisure was most rigidly limited. He could not spend, as in the past, long hours in the theatre witnessing a professional play. He desired to have an alternative which could give him a rich entertainment within the shortest span of time, and possibly without involving him in much of expenses. The amateur theatre could meet these demands as much as it could be the ideal platform for the accomplished and educated artists who had a flare for the histrianic. To them, the stage could be a hobby for they pursued different occupations. Thus, the amateur stage was the result of a general demand for something new and something different from the heavy, 'out moded' professional plays. Thus, the dissatisfaction of the conditions
obtaining in the professional theatre, the new light thrown by the study of the west and the fundamental urge for self-expression of the modern intellect leaning towards histrionic art, all together brought about a deviation from the professional theatre and assured the birth of a new mode of the theatre of the avant-garde - the Amateur Theatre - which perhaps unlike the professional theatre could more easily co-exist with the cinema.

Characteristics.

Amateur theatre, the result of a renaissance assumed some new characteristics while shedding off some of the characteristics that were considered fundamental for the professional stage. The new stage laid a great emphasis on an intellectual treatment of a theme backed fully by reason and logic and so, the amateur play and its performance strikes essentially as a prose-play devoid of the colour, costumes, settings and music of the professional drama. It was meant essentially for the entertainment of the intelligent and, so, often the play was symbolic and highly intellectual. It had the tendency to serve as briefly as possible to the hurrying audiences. As for the artists themselves, the stage was a much loved hobby for them. They had a keen desire for experimentation in themes, forms and presentation and they aimed at controlling and fashioning the taste of their spectators rather than serving to it what ever be its level. This could be achieved to a considerable degree, for the art was cultivated more for art's sake than
for the sake of money. This very motive granted considerable independence to the performers and scope for their theatrical experiments. Unlike the fortified tank of the professional theatre, the amateur stage aimed at remaining a stream of art transmitting always floods of fresh water. It became a frank critic of the odds and ends of the society and established itself as an inevitable mirror to its grotesque and distorted face. It concentrated on the purity and simplicity of visual art; the best use of words and voices, profitable employment of thought and criticism and finally, revolution in ideas in the interest of the promotion of the progress of the society. While the performance of the professional stage invariably emphasised the physical showmanship, the amateurs' play stressed on an intellectual interpretation of themes and problems and their performances attempted at impressing through simplicity in portrayal. It is true that the amateur play came to be criticised as being very light and also to have lost the essential limbs of a drama—like dance, music and even acting—but the justification for the amateur stage is in the new light of its eye and the rare refined capacity to capture the modern unwilling intellect. The Amateur theatre in this sense remained an improvement on the professional theatre for it was the product of intelligence, practical considerations and agreeable taste.

Manifestations:

The gift of the amateur theatre to the
dramatic literature in modern Kannada is both bountiful and varied. It looks as if it has completely discarded the once supreme mythological and even historical themes but for an occasional interpretation or a parody, for, the emphasis now is definitely placed on the social theme. In order to cater the best and the brightest within the shortest time, the theatre has evolved the one-act plays and the total number of one act plays written within the span of three decades and scattered over the Kannada country has perhaps exceeded three hundred at least. Successful experiments have brought in streams, new themes and forms like the Improptu play; Opera, Dream play, Mime, Fantasy, Shadow play and Radio-play. This rich variety in themes and forms necessarily brought about a rare strength to the new mode of the Kannada theatre and because of its initiative and experiment the Amateur stage came to stay.

A number of amateur troupes maintained regular rolls of members, actors and patrons and like the professional troupes, toured round the Kannada country. Some of the artist-bands like the famed Amateur Dramatic Association and Chhaya Artists of Bengaluru and Kalopasak Mandel of Bhawan went far from the home-town and visited different parts of India staging plays. Such amateur troupes came up in every important city of the Kannada land in the last three decades though not

1. In 1941, the total number of Kannada one act plays was estimated to be over 200. K.V. Sastri Puliginti: "Kannada Ekanka Mattuk". "Sambhavane", 1941, p. 446.
many of them lived long. A number of amateur groups came up in association with the Karnataka Sanghas of the different cities or colleges and other social, literary and educational institutions. Many of them, like the student groups of colleges and high schools usually came up on the occasion of special celebrations for the sake of staging a play or two and vanished soon after. Staging of a play soon became an inevitable item of the programme of almost every social gathering, festival and conference with the result, considerable stamina and tempo was continuously gained by the Amateur stage. 'Drama -- Conferences' became a part of the annual Kannada Sahitya Sammelana wherein the problems connected with the stage were discussed by experts in order to promote the theatrical art. Strictly speaking, it is essentially the regular bands of amateur artists with rolls of memberships -- artists and patrons -- that should be considered as the solid strength of the amateur theatre. A peep into the history of the representative amateur troupes would reveal their qualities and status. It would also indicate at the fact that the glory of the Kannada amateur theatre is in its voluminous output of a variety of themes and forms provided by the genius of the enlightened playwrights of modern times rather than in its troupes, actors or performances.

AMATEUR TRoupES:

North Karnataka:

The seeds of the amateur stage of north Karnataka soon to have been sown by the "Prachya Kreeda Samvadikaka Mandali" of Madhale in the suburbs of Dharwar.
It had become a custom with the Mondsli by the year 1896 to stage a drama on the occasion of the annual Ganapati festival. Soon the Mandali relieved the performance from its religious tone and gave it a cultural and social character by staging a play a year in which the representative artists of the locality took part. Experience of the annual performance gave the promoters of the Mandali the necessary nerve and they established at the initiative of Shri Mudavidu Krishnasa, (who was inspired by the Padami Amateurs), a talented troupe true to the spirit of the Amateur theatre in 1904, and called it "Bharata Kalottejaka Sangeeta Samaja". The actors of the Samaja took to the stage as a voluntary vocational occupation and staged in two installments, Churnari's "Shakuntala" in February 1905 at their first attempt. A little later, when Shri Mudavidu Krishnasa became the guiding star of the troupe it staged 'Sambhadra' and 'Samarajya Vyoga' both translated from Marathi by Shri Mudvidu himself - "Mrdosakatika" (translated by Ulnvesha Kavi) followed and brought unstinted encouragement and patronage from the elite and the artistically inclined. Deekhende Thirumala Nco who came from a family of reputed musicians

1. "A few years before" the Samaja came into existence, a few musicians of Badami had formed an amateur troupe under the leadership of Mugali Shrinivasarao, a local Vakil and staged 'Shakuntala' of Churnari not only in Badami but in Bijapur and Bagalkot also. The Badami troupe inspired Shri Mudavidu to initiate the Bharata Kalottejaka Sangeeta Samaja.

Shri Mudavidu; Introduction - Shakuntala Nataka (1934), pp. 31-32.
of Dharwar played the leading roles and remained the pivot of the troupe. 'Vaidya' Subbaresa, 'Avadhuni' Tammannacharya, Sambal Iroppa and Hadambhavi Venkatarama came to be well known as actors of outstanding abilities. The Association would perhaps have continued to function but for the rude shock rendered to it by the shifting of the Railway Headquarters from Dharwar to Madras. Many of the artists who were employed in the Railway Office had to leave for Madras. The Association could never find its feet again in spite of all human efforts by Deshpande Tirumalarao and Mudavidu Krishnarao to revive it.

The Association flourished just for a decade, staged the full length plays of the time with the same current "crude manners and methods" of professional troupes but it lived true to the spirit of the amateur phase of the Karnataka theatre and lived in its name to inspire the troupes that came into being in the years that followed.

North Karnataka witnessed the working and premature death of scores of amateur troupes from the times of the BharataKalotjaka-Sangeeta Samaja, but a handful of them at least could be reckoned to have done yeoman service to the theatrical art. Some of them as narrated by Shri Mudavidu Krishnarao.

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have lived long and gloriously. Particular mention may be made of "The Youngmen's Football Club Amateurs" of Gadag, "Vasudeva Amateurs" of Bagalkot, "Bharat Sevak Samaj Amateurs" of Bijapur, 'the Karnatak College Amateurs', 'Kannada Natya Vilasigala Sangha' and 'Kalopasak Mandal' all the three of Dharwar, as some of the amateur troupe that held the banner of the theatrical art of north Karnatak from 1920s. An examination of these troupe, their writers and plays, artists and showmanship reveals the fact that each one of them owes a good deal of its strength and reputation to a particular playwright, his dramas and direction.

It is significant that the city of Gadag which sponsored the very first of the professional troupe of north Karnatak - the acclaimed 'Kritispur Nataka Mandali' of Shantakari - gave also the first influential amateur troupe of north Karnatak in modern times. "The Youngmen's Football Club Amateurs" of Gadag was clearly the outcome of the influence of Bharat Kalotejak Sangeeta Samaja

1. Shri D.R. Bendre - 'Sahitya Sansodhane', p. 117
settings and portrayal. He proved to be the earliest 'progressive among the conservative' and his plays as presented by the Gadag Amateurs remained highly popular for decades.

The Gadag Amateurs invariably staged a new play a year. Between 1916 and 1925, the troupe staged several of Shr. Narayanrao's plays including 'Premarjuna', 'Kanskavilasa', 'Vajramukuta', 'Kumara Rama', 'Vidyaranya', 'Bharata Sandhana', 'Streetharma Rahasya', 'Shrikrishna Sandhana' and 'Patitoddhara'. His later plays like 'Streetharma Rahasya' and 'Shrikrishna Sandhana' became very popular in spite of exaggerated portrayal and attracted the attention of the progressive reformers and the educated who aimed at the emancipation of women to an equal status with men. Though these plays are parodies with rollicking loud humour on the new influences, they preached a method of moderation in meeting the new and discarding the old. 'Bharata Sandhana' written at the time of the 'Home-rule Movement' launched by the great Bal Gangadhar Tilak, has in it a specific purpose towards achieving the rightful freedom from the foreign masters. Unlike the Marathi play 'Sairandhri' of the late Khadilkar which came to be penalised by the then Government for sponsoring a similar purpose, "Bharata Sandhana" survived with a triumph, bearing a rather glaring symbol and suggestion of its patriotic purpose. The Gadag Amateurs earned a name for their well rehearsed and impressive performances, visited important cities in North Karnataka and donated their income to social and educational causes.

The Vidyadana Samithi High School of Gadag, a creation of
such a philanthropy proclaims the working and purpose of the troupe.

The Bagalkot Amateurs came into being in January 1927 under the title "Vasudeva Vinodini Sabha" named after Shri Kerur Vasudevacharya, a noted playwright, novelist, short story writer and journalist of north Karnataka. Shri Vasudevacharya was one of those who continued the tradition of translating into Kannada well known plays from English - a tradition set by Gundeas Shurender and Gadigaya Somapurnam of north Karnataka. Some of the well known adaptations of Shri Kerur are 'Vasan'savayalini Swarna Chamatkara' (Midsummer Night's Dream), 'Suratnagarada Shresthi' (Merchant of Venice), 'Ramsh - Lalita' (Romeo and Juliet) and 'Pati Vasheekorena' (Goldsmith's 'She Stoops to Conquer').

The plays have been impressive particularly as early adaptations in spite of the language not reaching down the colloquial standard. The troupe started with plays written by Shri Kerur and later it began to stage plays of representative writers of north Karnataka particularly of 'Shrirange'.

A report of the Amateur Association issued in 1953 on the occasion of its Silver Jubilee celebrations indicates that since its inception, the Association staged 95 longer dramas and 132 one-act plays in different parts of Karnataka. It specialised in staging prose-plays aided by the excellent talent of amateur actors like C.H. Bennur, S.H. Parvati and Dambal. The troupe remained a training ground for young talent and though not very active in recent years as evidenced by the report given on the occasion of its
anniversary celebrations conducted in the month of September 1954, it has had a good past and a promising future, particularly because of the grant of money made to it by the Government of Bombay for motivating theatrical activity in rural areas. The enthusiastic artists—old and young—of this troupe project a hope that it stands equal to the demand of the modern time and theatrical art.

The Karnatak College of Bharvar built up a band of talented artists consisting of students and members of the staff and staged from 1920s impressive performances of plays starting from Masti’s 'Talikote', Kerur’s 'Murtanagarad Shresti' and Hudgol’s 'Srestharm Raksaya'. The troupe could hardly remain consolidated owing to the annual change in the student-artists and yet, on the occasion of the annual gathering there came a vivid expression of the theatrical heritage of the college. After the entrance of Shri N.V. Jagirdar (Shriranga) as a member of the staff, the amateur talent got a great fillip and staged a series of his one-acts. Even to-day, the student-amateurs of the Karnatak College seem to stand on safe grounds of their talents to challenge the performances of their sister colleges in North Karnatak. Their advantage is a most receptive, sympathetic and cultured audience and yet quite critical. The recent successes of the college dramatic troupe in staging 'Nuttadalli Nutta' (Kailasa) and 'Bhagamanayoaka' (Garud Chadamvara) gave a hope of the future of the student-amateurs if the rich but young talent is harnessed in the way it is done hither to.
"Karnada Nata Vilaasigala Sangha" and "Kalopasak Mandal", both from Dharwar are among the well established and talented amateur troupes of north Karnataka. The former was initiated in 1930s by Shrirang, the well known playwright and it is said to have put on the stage all the full length plays and one-acts of Shrirangas for their first shows - as its privilege. The troupe specialised in prose-plays and visited apart from the important cities of Karnataka, Poona, Bombay and Hyderabad. It had a successful tour of the Kamada country collecting money on the occasion of the Sexcentenary Celebration of Vijaynagar. The troupe has not been quite active recently and yet when it put on the boards the symbolic play 'Choka Chakra' of Shriranga a year ago, it gave a glimpse of both its inherent histrionic qualities and a good understanding of the technique of simple but impressive showmanship.

"Kalopasak Mandal" of Dharwar though recently started in 1943, has made a good mark by staging plays like 'Odhara - Hosa Samagra' (Shri D.K. Bendre), 'Phayyashri', 'Parivartana' (Shri L.J. Bendre), 'Patitodhara' and 'Bharata Sandhara' (Shri Narayana Rao Huigol). With a band of educated and talented artists drawn from Dharwar, Gadag and Bagalkot, the Mandal has staged plays at Poona and other important cities of north Karnataka and Mehrashtra. The Mandal has put on musical plays set to stage by versatile like Bhimaen Joshi.

With the coming up of new colleges at Belgaum, Bijapur, Bagalkot, Hubli and Sholapur there is a new gush of life into
the amateur performances and apart from these every important city in north Karnataka and Mysore Karnataka has its own amateur troupes which strive to continue the dramatic tradition of the Karnataka theatre. The real hope seems to be centered not in the college troupes but in the amateur associations of cities with artists extending honorary and voluntary co-operation and so, the Amateur theatre of north Karnataka depends on the enthusiastic work of associations like — 'Vasudeva Vinodini Sabha', 'Natya Vilas Sangha' and 'Kalpana Mandel'.

**Mysore**

Perhaps the oldest and undoubtedly the most influential of the amateur troupes of Mysore State was the Amateur Dramatic Association (A.D.A.) that came into being in 1909 owing to the enthusiastic efforts of some of the talented lawyers, teachers and merchants of Bangalore. The Association aimed at running on the lines prescribed by the famed 'Kurma Vilasa Sabha', "the premier amateur dramatic organisation of South India", and did succeed in standing as a model on an equal footing with the established

1. Particularly Kollur, Reichur and Hyderabad.
2. Kannada plays also were being staged under the auspices of Suguna Vilasa Nataka Sabha of Madras on account of the efforts of the late Shri Benegal Ramarao who was the Oriental Translator to Madras Government. He was a playwright and actor himself.
professional companies like the Ratnavali Company of Varadachar and the Chamrajendra Kannata Kathakal Samskar Sabha, patronised by the Mysore Palace. With a planned method of organisation and administration, the paying membership of the troupe was steadily increased placing the Association on a firm footing. The A.D.A. sponsored the healthy method of organising drama competitions offering prizes to the best of the plays received. In 1919, Kailasam, 'the Father of the modern Kannada drama' wrote out his first play 'Tallu-Gatti' for the competition and was rewarded with the first prize. The credit of discovering one of the greatest of modern playwrights in any language, thus goes to the A.D.A.¹

Prize winning plays were staged by the Association with particular preparation. The great successes of the troupe in various centres of Andhra, Hyderabad and Bangalore earned a reputation for it and later brought continuous and munificent royal patronage from the Mysore Palace, particularly after the Yuvaraja Kamtheerava Narasaraja Wodeyar became a patron of the Association.

T. Raghavachari of Bellary, one of the most brilliant of the stage artistes of Karnataka and Andhra was the luminary of the Association. Under his leadership, selected members of the Association took frequent 'week-end-trips' to near about cities and often to Bellary and Madras staging plays in Kannada, Telugu, Hindi, Sanskrit and English.²

In May 1931, a select band of artists went on a short tour of North India under the leadership of T. Raghavachari
"visiting Bombay, Simla and Calcutta and giving three or four of their masterpieces in Hindi, Telugu and English in each centre. On the whole the tour was a distinct artistic triumph and the amateurs came with flying colours from the critical and discerning theatre-goers of North India."

The Association got plays mostly written by Marti Venkatoshia Iyengar ('Pulikote', 'Sharla'), V.J. Venkataramiah ('Manogvari', 'Nayikita'), Pandit Taranath ('Deenabandhu Kabir'), Dallave Narahari Sastri, Ssraale Ganapuori Sastri, A.N. Krishnaraao and Kailasan. Apart from T. Raghavachari, the Association could be well proud of a galaxy of brilliant artists that included K. Bhimasenrao, who played the main opposite roles to Raghavachari, K.C. Vasudevarao who portrayed lady-roles with a distinction, the irresistible Naidu brothers, the dominant M.L. Srinivasa Sastri and B. Muddu Krishna. A little later, the Association had the honour to have Jovadu Narasimha Sastri, Motgenhalli Subrahmanya Sastri, Kanakalekshana, Annapoorna, Padmasvati and other talented artists on its roll.

The Association published a bright Kannada Monthly - the illustrated 'Rangabhoomi' edited by Sri D.K. Bharadwaj. Later,

1. 'Othello' and 'Chitra' in English; 'Kabir' in Hindi and 'Ramesh' in Telugu.

in March, 1931, it came forward with an English quarterly—
'Theatre' edited by Sri V. Shankaran assisted by G. Venkatachalam
and K. Sampathgirirao. 'Theatre' was the first of its kind
in India 'devoted mainly to an authentic interpretation —
towards a correct understanding of the renaissance of the
Indian dramatic art in all its manifold expression and
grandeur'. The Association steadily built up a good library
and by 1931, it was receiving 47 journals and newspapers on
an exchange with 'Kangabhoomi'. In addition, the Association
ran a Music class, weekly Reading classes and discussions
on subjects connected with the theatre with continued res­
pponse. Public lectures were frequently arranged. The
Association registered itself formally, regularly elected
its office bearers, published its detailed annual reports
and also synopsis of plays whenever staged. Two Art-Festivals
and a Drama Conference came to be organized by the associa­
tion and those celebrations attracted the critics, playwrights
and actors from all over India. The Art Festival of 1919 was
inaugurated by Rabindranath Tagore. The All India Dramatic
Conference was presided over by Srimati Sarojini Naeda.
Scholars like C.P. Ramaswami Iyer, Dr. and Mrs. Cousins and
Dr.C.R. Reddi took part in the deliberations of the conference.
Mahatma Gandhi witnessed the performance of Deenabandhu Kabir
in Hindi (written by Tarunth) on 19th July, 1927, and expres­
sed great satisfaction at the performance and the laudable
work being done by A.D.A. He wrote a short introduction to
the play.

1. Annual Report of the A.D.A. 1930-31, p. 4
The Association lost its vitality in the death of F. Bhashavachari in 1946 and could not be revived to its strength and stability in spite of all-round efforts. The illustrious service of the Association to the dramatic art for almost three decades made it an established symbol of the ideals of the amateur theatre of Kannada. The Association was in a way, entirely responsible for making the people theatre-minded and elevating the stage to a position of honour with its imposing and tasteful performances. It brought about a new consciousness among the people with its play-competitions, art festivals and dramatic conferences, in which artists, critics and well-wishers were brought together to discuss issues connected with the prosperity of the stage. It heralded the banner of the theatrical art of Kannada outside the home, and more than anything, it preserved the story of the contemporary stage of Kannada in the columns of 'Kangabhoomi' and 'Theatre', the story that is fast assuming the position of history so far as the land's professional theatre is concerned.

L.D.A.

The Literary and Dramatic Association of Mysore that came into being in 1919 clearly cherished the ambition of the L.D.A. of Bangalore and aimed at an equal popularity and stability. Sri D.Lakshmanaya, one of the most imposing character-actors of Mysore was the soul of the association. He was later joined by C.R.Subba Rao and C.Anander Rao for the immense profit of the troupe. C.Anander Rao in particular, was highly popular in his times for his humorous roles. He, with a histrionic genius and strenuous efforts increased
the roll number of subscribers to the L.B.A. to a total of eighty. Starting with the available mythological plays, the Association did well in its performances of 'Hinda Sank' (an adaptation by Madhwanayya of Sheridan's 'School for Scandal'), 'Vidyanayya' and 'Levalusa' but could not earn sufficient money to ensure its stability. Owing to poverty and differences of opinion among its members it came to a close in 1938 but was revived again in 1941 - under the title 'Mysore Nataka Sangha' guided by the noted playwright - Hanumangud Srikanta Sastri. Plays like 'Ahalyabai' (historical), 'Rani Devaladavli' (historical) and 'Samaja Sandhye' (social) were staged with some success. The Association organised dramatic competitions in Mysore in the years 1943 and in 1944 inviting all the amateur troupes of Mysore to stage their masterpieces. This effort brought together the leading amateur troupes of the time like 'Sri Saraswati Sangha', 'Mayura Artist', 'Vasanta Institute Amateurs', 'Students' Dramatic Association', 'K.R. Mills Amateurs', 'Karnatak Samaja Seva Sangha' and the 'Ittigegud Amateurs'. In spite of ceaseless efforts of enthusiasts like N. Srikanta Sastri and C. Anandarao, the Association did not meet tangible material encouragement and soon after the competitions in 1944, it went out of existence due to financial stringency and inevitable internal splits.

Ghanta Artists:

Ghanta Artists of Bangalore made out an era in the amateur dramatic movement. The troupe blossomed out of the dramatic traditions fostered by the 'Old Boys' Association' of the National
School of Bangalore and the Malleswaras Dramatic Association. The two wings joined together in 1937 under the title 'Karnatak Hindi Amateurs' and made an extensive effort to popularise Hindi and to provide healthy entertainment to friends and families. In 1943, the troupe assumed the title of 'Chaya Artists', with its soul and spirit in the talented and enthusiastic B.S.Venkatram and his brothers. The Chaya Artists soon spread its wings and became the leading amateur troupe of Mysore State with a band of excellent artists like Prof. K.Gururaja Rao, Prof. A.Rama Rao, and the 'Shastra triumverates'. The troupe specialised in staging plays of Faiz and earned a great reputation at that. In later years it put on boards the social plays of Parvatavani, one of the leading writers for the amateur stage. Its performances of 'Bahaddur Ganda' and 'Mndadi Ganda' became a byword for the best of amateur productions. It may be mentioned that this is the only amateur unit, which staged 120 consecutive shows in Bangalore of Parvatavani's 'Bahaddur Ganda'- to capacity houses. The troupe has been hailed as 'the best of talented amateurs in the field of theatrical art'; it has remained an effective training-ground for the young and enthusiastic and it has toured round the Mysore State extensively making available the proceeds of its performances to various deserving institutions and causes.

1 The name 'Karnatak Hindi Amateurs' was transferred to the amateurs of the Mysore branch of the Hindi Prachar Sabha at the request of Sri Siddamath Part, Secretary of the 'Karnatak Pratiya Hindi Prachar Sabha'- a brief introduction to the Chaya Artists. (MIS).

2 Ibid.
Though rather faded out in its theatrical activity in recent years, the Cheya Artists can be sure of their stable position. They are now busy under the guidance of Sri Venkatarao in establishing an 'Arts Academy' in Bangalore with the aid of the State Government.

Mention may be made of the Varadachar Memorial Association started in 1924 at the initiative of the disciples and admirers of Varadachar, which, with an ideal of collecting funds for creating a theatre in Bangalore to commemorate the great dramatic genius, undertook an extensive tour of the Kannada Country from time to time. The troupe was headed by Smt. Kanakalaxamana and R. Nagendra Rao. The plays were 'professional' in nature but the spirit was typical of amateurs. The Association visited Bombay, Poona and other distant cities and collected money. It is now reported that the work of the Varadachar Memorial Theatre is being pursued. The United Artists of Bangalore under the leadership of G.K. Nagaraj Rao and Chi Sadashiviah has proved to be a very impressive amateur troupe particularly with their impromptu plays. The Sugar Town Amateur of Mandy has a number of talented artists as revealed by its performances of 'Indadi Gunda', 'Viparyasa', 'Ashadhabhooti', 'Bhakta Ramaji Sant', and 'Daalat'. The rare talents of the Association are amply rewarded by public encouragement and have inspired amateur dramatic associations of workers in factories into existence and a prominent among them is the Amateur of the Krishnarajendra Mills, Mysore.
Bellary and Mysore:

Bellary and Mysore made considerable contribution to the amateur theatre. Bellary by building up a great tradition of the amateur stage and Mysore by trying a number of theatrical experiments guided by Sri K.S. Karanth. Sri Madavidu Krishnarao recalls the names of great amateur playwrights-com- 
actors of Bellary like Bellary Venkatacharya, Tulasi Ramacharya of Adoni, Bellary Basappa and Bhattappa who earned considerable fame as recently as 60-65 years ago. Later 'Ciriara Vinodini Nataka Sabha', an amateur association started by the famed D. Krishnamacharu of Bellary early in 1960s, staged its first plays in Kannada before it switched over to Telugu plays. A number of amateur associations like "The Art Lovers' Association" and 'Jogadavasahi Mitragmandali' came up to Bellary in-keeping with the great tradition of theatrical art initiated by D. Krishnam-
acharu and Bellary Raghuvachari.

The survey of the careers of some of the representative amateur troupes of Karnataka suggests some of the fundamental impediments that broke the troupes or blocked their progress. Some of the very influential and well organised troupes like even the A.D.A., L.D.A., and the Chaya Artists seem to revolve around individuals. Normally, an amateur troupe has no reason to go defunct or fade out after the death or withdrawal of an individual member, for it is not a proprietary concern, but its being so, indicates clearly that even the amateur troupes - like the professional companies -

2. Ibid.
depended entirely on an individual member or two. A second reason for the sudden stand still is the inevitable transfer of the actor-members of the association from place to place as in the case of the artists of 'Bharata Kalottajaks Sangoeta Samaja'. The worst drawback—inevitable as it is—is perhaps the lack of training and rehearsals, for, unlike as in the professional companies—there is no proper hold on the artist who is educated and who feels independent of any obligation to the troupe. More often than not a member, though artistically incapable is given the leading role because either he is a prominent officer or because he enjoys a high social status. The lack of preparation and sometimes a foolhardy self-confidence of the individual members—naturally came to be criticised bitterly. The troupe had to realise that the dramatic art, like any other art, needed strenuous training for its perfection. They needed able and controlling directors. They needed training in the art of make-up and a close study of the western stage for impressive methods of portrayal. Many amateur troupes came into being merely because of the enthusiasm of individuals and went defunct, for want of an understanding of the technique of the stage and training in portrayal. It was true that many a troupe went defunct for want of financial stability, but more than even that, they needed faithful, understanding and painstaking artists who would sacrifice their individuality for the sake of the team in the interest of the stage.
It is the PLAYWRIGHT more than the actor and the producer that is responsible in a large measure for shaping and sustaining the amateur stage. It is the theme and technique of plot construction that condition the showmanship and so, the play has assumed greater importance than portraiture. The professional pomp in play-production is missing on the amateur stage; the importance given to the individual actor and the scope provided for his histrionic talent has steadily declined. The cry for realism in settings, scenery and costumes has influenced the performance into utter simplicity to the extent that sometimes the actor appears on the stage in a social play, in his daily clothing. The amateur stage finds no necessity for elaborate make-up, nor does it provide any scope for stage music, dance, transfer-scenes or anything spectacular. And yet, the play holds the audience because the miracle is performed by the PLAYWRIGHT with his penetrating social themes, his sweep of ideas, his humour and his simple but new technique of play and its writing. The playwright is the architect of the amateur stage; he inspires and directs it. Thus the history of the amateur stage is essentially the story of the playwright and his contributions.

The amateur stage inaugurated the age of social drama and even the occasional mythological and historical plays bear the stamp of the Renaissance. The dramatic language even in its writing became closer to the spoken dialect; a great difference from that of the professional stage. The play itself
shed off some of its time honoured characters like 'Sootradhara', 'Matī' and 'Vidushaka', finding no justifiable utility in them.¹

A new and agreeable style of blank-verse came to be employed as the vehicle for heavy and dignified themes. The era of the Amateur Theatre brought in new values into dramatic literature. It is essentially the age of interrogation and experiment and as such, became the age of new creation in theatrical themes and forms. The playwright stood equal to the expectations and gave a new status to the modern Kannada dramatic literature with its growing volume and variety. Almost every man of letters of note—be he a poet, a novelist or a short story writer—has invariably contributed plays also to the amateur stage. A look into the contributions of the leading playwrights of the new era, would give a picture of the amateur stage itself: with its tastes, aims and aspects.

The New Path: The leader of the new era, as mostly accepted is Sri B.M. Srikantiah. Enlightened by a keen study of the western dramatic literature and realising the lack of literary worth in the professional stage-plays, Sri Srikantiah aimed at writing plays essentially for the intelligent and the learned. He introduced new forms infusing them with rich literary merit. The

As an architect and well-tamer of Kannada language be cherished

¹ Exceptions are to be seen in some of the plays of K.V. Puttappa where in celestial characters like 'Yaksha' and 'Yamadoota' (in 'Yamana Selu'), 'Kinnara' and 'Yaksha' (in 'Maharatni'), 'Kali' and 'Dvarapala' (in Sanshara Kurukshetra) are very artistically introduced to provide a beautiful frame-work for the plays and also to move the play into progress.
the ambition of enriching it— even in the face of early opposition. 'Gadgovuddha', a dramatization of Rama on the patterns of Greek tragedies was accepted without a demur, but 'Asvathama' brought about a stir. The theme is taken from the Saupendaka Parva of Mahabharata and is put in Sophoclean structure, for the theme, impression and even details tallied with 'Ajax', a play of Sophocles, the hero of which— like 'Asvathama' who murdered the Upa Prudevasa mistaking them for Pandavas—slaughtered some cattle mistaking them for the followers of Odysseus his rival. The structure of the play was a daring deviation from the established professional methods and apart, Sri. S. M. S. shook some of the establishments of our mythology and naturally came to be criticised. Still, the play had to be valued on a revised scale— "The drama itself is unique in its constructional daring and its uncompromising loyalty to higher literary truth and beauty. Orthodox observers are no doubt struck agast with that appears to them as gross impiety and even—impudence. But here is a work of art which challenges close study and demands to be judged on its own merits and with a revised scale of values." 

1 'Gadgovuddha' was staged for the first time in 1925 with Prof. H. S. Narayana Sastri as 'Duryodhana. Since then it has had repeated performances on the college stage in Mysore and Bangalore.

2 Drona who is believed to have been born out of an un is made to be the son of Shangavi; Bhavavya (originally a huntsman) is made a cousin of Asvathama (a brahmin); Asvathama, an invincible bachelor in the original is made the father of Radreschiti and finally, Krishna is brought down to the level of a mere human being.

3 V. Sitaramiah: 'A Modern Kannada Drama', Theatre I. I. March, 1931. p.66
is in the truest sense 'classical' boldly created a new tradition and helped to release talents from the shroud of every kind. With a surpassing intensity and tragic climax, the play could live for times to come mainly on its merit of a treatment of an ancient oriental theme in the classical occidental methods.

'Parasikaru' is another play, a rendering into Kannada of 'Persians' of Aeschylus. The theme of the battle of Salamis may have kindled the patriot in Sri Srikantish, for he provides in this play, a vision of the deplorable conditions of our country under the foreign domination. Like 'Kawthaman', 'Parasikaru' is intense in effect and substantial in literary merit but does not seem to be essentially theatrical. It would demand a strenuous effort for success and the amateur troupes did not brave to take these plays in their entirety. The college amateur groups contented themselves in staging scenes and sections of the plays from time to time.

Sri Masti Venkatesha Iyengar and Sri K.V. Puttapra provided the Amateur stage with a new and charming style—the blank verse as the befitting vehicle to carry the heavy and dignified themes. They treated mostly the mythological and historical subjects but presented them with a directness and in rich beauty of lucid poetry. The A.D.A. of Bangalore staged some of the historical plays of Masti like 'Talikote' and 'Shiva Chattrapati' 'Mirupeni' and 'Yashoda', yet remain off the stage in spite of their immense beauty, charming poetry and theatrical appeal. Puttapra created on the amateur stage pictures of grand imagery and rational insight. The student amateurs are not tired of staging his 'Yamana Solu' and 'Valmikiya Bharya'. His 'Jalagar' like
'Timuponi' of Masti probed into the problem of untouchability and was considered 'revolutionary' in the eye of the conservative when staged by the amateurs of Mysore as recently as even a decade ago. His later plays like 'Beralge Koral' and 'Shoodra Topasvi' which re-interpret epical characters and situations with a colossal imagery seem to be far beyond the capacities of the amateur stage and are neither risked by the professional troupes. His 'Raktakshi' is a grim tragedy based on a theme of historical bearing couched in Shakespearean technique. It has been attempted with success both by amateur and professional stage. Sri C.K. Venkataramiah continued the traditions of pursuing mythological themes and gave two brilliant plays 'Nagikota' and 'Hondodari' which were continuously portrayed with grandeur by the A.D.A.

Many a modern writer wrote on historical themes but the amateur stage did not take to them in a worthy manner. The most impressive of modern playwrights on historical themes was SAMSA (A.N. Swami Venkatadri; 1899-1932) who is reported to have written twenty-three full length plays on different facets of the history of Mysore, but only six of them are available. Out of them 'Vigada Vikramaraya', 'Suguna Gambhiraj and Birudenthabara Gandi' have been staged essentially by the student-amateurs of Mysore. These plays with their v._gour


and supreme theatrical grandeur capture the audiences in spite of the meagre efforts put in by the amateurs. Sri Ajimpur Seshagirirao, a wild genius, an eminent actor and playwright wrote operas and plays in blank-verse on mythological and historical themes and staged them himself. 'Bialadi Selvi,' a charming social love-play in music; 'Bedara Kannappa' and 'Kurubam Moksha' devotional plays in lyrics and lofty prose held the amateur stage—but only for a short while. The age was the one of the social drama and the amateur troupes which were busy staging Kailasa and Shriranga almost ignored the new experiments in mythological and historical themes, though a few plays like 'Valmikiya Bhagya' and 'Yamana Sule' held the stage because of their small number of roles and easy production.

**Social Themes:**

After the initiation given by Ferrur Vasudevacharra and G.P. Hailgol in North Karnataka and by B.M. Srikantish in Kycore, scores of plays were written which proved to be fundamentally different from the professional plays, particularly in the treatment of the theme and manner of expression. The theme was social and often intently topical and the language of expression, colloquial. Further, the play provided scant scope for anything spectacular on the stage. It was the play of IDIAS.

The earliest available play in this regard is 'Iggaop Hornadaya Vivaha Prabasana' written by a 'well wisher of the Havika'—(possibly by Suri Venkataramana Shastri of Karli, M.Ganana). The play dealt with the topical theme of the sale
of young brides to aged 'bridegrooms' for money, an unfortunate social evil that prevailed in the coastal area 'particularly among the Haviks, a section of the Brahmin community'. The play was first printed in Bombay in the year 1887 and employed the colloquial slang of the Haviks even in print. There is no evidence of its having been staged and it is improbable that it was ever staged, except in very recent times for fear of social wrath. Many a play starting from the above mentioned Probasama broke its shackles with the old times but yet could not appear on the Amateur stage for either it did not meet the demands of the new age or because amateur troupes did not pick it up for fear of becoming too glaring in contrast with the established.

The Golden Age of the amateur stage opened with the contributions of eminent and enlightened playwrights like Kailasam, Srinaga, Shivarasa Karanth, D.R. Bendre and A.R. Krishnasa who brought about a revolution with their new approach to social themes. They achieved a happy harmony between the internal worth of the play and its theatricality through a beautiful temper given by humour. Kailasam gave vent to the outburst of the gold stream in Mysore, Srinaga and Bendre in North

1. The play is reprinted and published by Lingasa Shams of Kunta in 1953. The play itself attacks the social evil squarely, is gripping and rational in the plot construction and is impressive with natural and effective climax with the deserved punishment to Vasappa Hegde who proved false to his friend Iggappa by leading a life with Savitri, the latter's young wife. It is a morality play but may become 'indecent' on the stage in the eye of the conservative.
Karnatak and Shivarasa Karnataka in South Karnataka. They paved the path for quite a number of younger playwrights to tread, the prominent being Parvatavani, Keheerasagar, Kaulwar Raja-rao, H.H. Kamesh, N.K. Kulkarni, D.J. Pendre, Chi Vasudevaiah, and M.N. Babu. Most of them starting with Kailasa remained potential stage-artists also and they associated themselves with particular amateur troupes, guided them and acted with them—unlike the playwrights of the professional stage.

K.P. Kailasa:

As reflected by his play 'Masakospani', a searing satire that evoked astringent ridicule at the excesses of the theatrical art, Kailasa came on the literary scene and dramatic stage in 1919 to occupy it fully and cleanse it thoroughly.

He came as a reformer to bring about the belated change and as an architect, he built up a hitherto lacking harmonious blend of the arts of the theatre and literature. Before his advent, the dramatic language was too pedantic and the colloquial when employed, sounded vulgar. In his view, mostly the debased versions of Pauranic themes were presented by the professional companies whose actors invariably had in abundance, affected and excessive manners of portrayal. Kailasa jeered at the professional companies and their crowding spectators. He desired a change even from the good if it was really good, for it was too monotonous. With a cutting brilliance he revolutionised the stage and revitalised it replacing the mythological

1 "हलसुमारं धृक्कां ज्ञात साजतीया ऋतुकाळ कालाधिकारं यारोपा साधु किसारान्धुरं दिलेकरं एकस्त्रयां विस्मयं \\
हुन्यां विलंब योगसमान कसर्वकरणे।"

२००५ एन. झुठडमारां 'रजस्ता'त्रिधात शुभो शुभो नामां कर्माणि।
themes with dynamic social and domestic plots. He replaced ordinary
the original puffed up stage-hero with an individual, perhaps
a victim of social tyranny or of a domestic conflict. Seeing
a drama perhaps in every home and an actor in every individu-
al, Kailasam made a grand effort to picture them in his
plays. Thus like Ibsen, he chose his heroes and heroines from
the common people and made them speak their own colloquial-
slang. The innovation did meet with some opposition from those
that considered the stage too sacred for domestic themes and
colloquial language, but soon, the society realised that Kailasam
had come to stay for its own benefit and delight.

With perhaps the exception of 'Sattavana Santara' and
'Soodle', all the others of about 20 plays of Kailasam have
been repeatedly staged for years by amateur troupes all over
the Kannada land, and particularly by the A.D.A., the Chayr-
Artists of Bangalore and the Old Boys Association of the-
Maharaja's College, Mysore. His plays came to be well known
call over Karnataka and particularly because they are widely
read for the sake of humour if not for understanding; Kaila-
sam's masterly technique of probing into social problems
without an exception his plays are charged with emotions. More
than even the construct: of plot, the genius of Kailasam is
seen in the brilliant wit and humour that manifests adequately
in the conversations; but below the surface there is always an
over-flowing under-current of a specific purpose that adds
weight and sustenance to the play. These characteristics,
typical of Kailasam could be clearly seen in plays like -
'Anuvragna' providing parallel pictures of unequal domestic scenes; 'Talikkottukuline' in three parts, providing parallel pictures again, of glaring contrast between the respectable traditional training and the ways of the sophisticated highbrow breeding; 'Rasamvalayilada Rodevi' and 'Sama Rula' soothing parodies on artificialities of living; 'Man Chabbu', a joke on the highbrow fashions; 'Jan Brahmanika', a parody on the picrohood and 'Puttadalli Hatta' a picture of planned exploitation of the dull by the clever. All his plays and particularly those mentioned above speak for the capacity of Kailasam to caricature the twists and turns of the society and to magnify them from the angle of humour. As often said, Kailasam pictured and solved the riddles of life with his inimitable humour. The sailing boat of his humour got better of the waves of grief and misery and moved steadily across the life's long ocean of tears.

A substantial theme and a glaring motive matrices away the emphasis from humour in plays like 'Polli Kitty' that stands to honour service as against show; 'Tollageetti' that portrays in relief the triumph of intrinsic worth over academic education; 'Sooli', the intense tragedy that presents womanhood in three generations dogged by the hideous stigma of prostitution, 'Vaidyana Wundhi' that provides a penetrating picture of the major disease of the doctor who pretended to cure the minor ailments of his neighbours and 'Gandhakatri', a compact one-act revealing the crooked in woman's nature in all its nakedness. Kailasam proved that he could draw not merely smiles but tears as well from his spectators by -
writing 'Babishkara', which, like 'Naseya Hase' of Benie, is by far one of the most intense and scathing tragedies in the modern Kannada dramatic literature. Though topical in theme, the play lives sheer on the merit of its dramatic qualities with the self-sacrificing Narasu attaining a classical status of a tragic heroine in the true Greek sense. Kailasam gave the golden touch of his magic hand to mythological themes also, but wrote them in English for inexplicable reasons. 'Karna' recreated the greatest of the tragic heroes of Mahabharata while 'Purpose' retold the story of 'Kalavva', "a victim of the Brahmin's curse", and 'Burden' dealt with the tragic impact suffered by Bharata when he returned from Mandigrama to the ruined Ayodhya. Kailasam's 'Keeshaka' rebuilt by Sri C.P. Rajaratnam on the basis of the memory of Shri B.S. Ramasar presents a great imagery but misses the magic touch of the wizard-playwright, particularly in the method of expression.

If Kailasam is sentimental in 'Babishkara', he is didactic in 'Soolo', is rebellious in 'Naabramanka' and 'Patu Tavaram', is moralising in 'Polikitta', and 'Polu Gotti' and he is sarcastic in 'Sattavana Santara' as in 'Veidyana Vyashu'. Whatever be the sentiment roused, his pictures of families and individuals are sharp and striking in features, ineffaceable in colour and convincing in purpose. Many of the images and examples created by him are long standing, for, they will live in the society in all reality. Yet, a creation like 'Kumala' in the play 'Amaavraguda', 'Kittu' of 'Poli Kitti', Lakshmidevamma in the play 'Patu Tavaram', 'Ramanna' of 'Home Rule' or Keppanna of 'Huttadalli Ratta'
alerts the society to the fundamentally good or evil and
makes it contemplate with a smile on the lip and tear in the
eye. Kailasam is a moralist, but he is so subtle. His un-
bounded respect to womanhood and particularly the mother,
and sympathy to the suffering express itself in spite of
him in situations like the mother even in her desperate
situation bothering of the health of her aged son, or
while the "hard hearted" Nagarat bursting out with grate-
tful tears at the small present given to her. He drives
deep some of the fundamental epic-morals in simple homely
words but vitalises them with reason and passion. Kailasam's
preferences to the traditional but reasonable aspects of
living added considerable grace and also, original and
oriental touch to the amateur stage of Mysore. Kailasam made
the stage live again. He gave the spoken language the status
of literature. He pioneered the satirical social play which
proved that a powerful prose with penetrating humour, satire
and wit could substitute music, settings and costumes; what is
more, with his plays he improved the popular taste, revolu-
tionised the popular idea regarding the stage and set a fashion
for the posterity.

His plays have been considered to have some inherent draw-
backs. Long passages as found in his later plays like
'Vaidyana Vyanâhi' and 'Soole' did present theatrical diffi-
culties. His employing the colloquial language - a sort of

1 "సం‌ప్రతితృవ్యాహం పం‌చిస్తుంటాయి తీస్తుంండి కాలీత్రయామం - శిఖ్రు - రక్తం దు మ

2 "సం‌ప్రతితృవ్యాహం పం‌చిస్తుంండి తీస్తుంండి కాలీత్రయామం - శిఖ్రు - రక్తం దు మ

3 "ఈ ప్రమాణం ప్రతికీ తీస్తుంండి కాలీత్రయామం శిఖ్రు వైపు ప్రతి సం‌ప్రతితృవ్యాహం పం‌చిస్తుంండి తీస్తుంండి కాలీత్రయామం - శిఖ్రు - రక్తం దు మ
colloquial Kannada ridden with English words - called 'Anglo Kannada' by Kailasam himself - incurred strong criticisms and raised doubts regarding the longevity of his plays on the one hand, and their capacity to impress on the audiences outside the Mysore State. Long reels of alliteration often found in his plays are considered to be superfluous artificialities. Some of his plays including 'Babishkara' in particular, are considered to be too topical in their themes to cross the borders of a specified period. Judged on their individual merit, his plays seem to survive in spite of some of their drawbacks, and Kailasam stands to receive the first credit for fashioning the modern Kannada drama and setting the Amateur theatre of Mysore in particular, on firm footings.

But out of all the good came one inevitable but undesirable result; and it was at the hands of his successor-playwrights who could not avoid the influence of Kailasam. The Amateur stage became a source only of humorous plays, often with thin themes to support. The modern Kannada stage almost lost a fundamental aspect of its colourful and influential personality in giving up the serious and heavy plays. Certainly, — Kailasam is not to blame for this — but the fact only reveals his immense influence on the later playwrights of Mysore who could not avoid imitating him in his dramatic language, and to an extent, his method of plot-construction.

1 "నానా మనముడి గారా పారిందానికి, అంది స్వభావం,
మనముడి పక్షిమానికి లభించేది కంటా?
పోగతం బలము మాము."

ప్రామాణిక పత్రము.
He remained the pioneer and is often called the Father of the Kannada drama and an 'inimitable playwright'. The titles justify themselves when it is seen that Kailasam, like Bernard Shaw shifted the theatrical emphasis from the actor to the playwright. From his time the playwright, and not the actor began to reign over the stage and he stood as the leading pioneer of the Amateur theatre providing wholesome entertainment to city audiences.

Sriranga:

While Kailasam pictured the middle class life of Mysore, Sriranga portrayed the middle class life of North Karnataka with keen dramatic insight. Like Kailasam he had the deep impression made by the western thought on the handling of dramatic themes and technique of production. Several factors like the choice of a situation drawn mostly from the life of the society, a free and forceful usage of the spoken language and a mastery over subtle wit and scathing satire and an inimitable technique of animating ideas earned for his plays, a status in the Kannada dramatic literature. His triumph is the brilliance and power of his dialogue with which he turns any idea and any situation into a drama. Even though his plays may lack in their emotional content, they sustain because of their dialogues. Like Kailasam, Sriranga is a potential stage-actor and as such has seen in the theatrical

1. "ಸ್ರಿರಂಗ: ಕನ್ನಡ ಹಾಗು ಸಾಹಿತ್ಯ"

2. "ಸ್ರಿರಂಗ: ಕನ್ನಡ ಹಾಗು ಸಾಹಿತ್ಯ"
suitability of his plays. Like Kailasam again, he stands to credit for bringing about a revolution on the Kannada stage and giving a shape to the Amateur theatre. He had to face more bitter opposition because of his method of an open attack against the blind beliefs, unreasonable traditions and disturbing social evils including caste system and untouchability. If Kailasam treated his cases with a pity, a tear and a sigh, Sriranga believed in drawing the sword against them; he is ruthless because he sees relief in mutilation. All his wit, humour and inventiveness seem to be harnessed to a single purpose of exposing " of cowardice and hypocrisy that masquerades under the name of virtue and religious tradition."

Sriranga's contribution starting from the play 'Idara Vaivagya' (1929) is bountiful both in volume and variety— with sixteen full length plays and about sixty one-acts, mostly on social themes through with an occasional touch of the historical like 'Parameshwar Pulakeshi' and mythological for a parody like 'Yasana Sain'. 'Harijanwar' is perhaps the best known of his plays which brought him both high praise and bitter criticism. It gives a moral thrashing to the 'self regarding professional reformer'. 'Panipat' (a jeer at the antiquated myth of the sanctity of the joint family system), 'Morarkadalli Narasimha' (an attack on the social and moral impotence of the youth of the country), 'Mukkanna Virataparashu' (an initiation of a new vision about women as a potent power) and his later plays- 'Kanada Patuke'.
and 'Shokacharya' (unconcealed knocks at the moral hypocrisy) and self deception in political leadership) stand as some of the representatives of his thought-provoking plays. A cutting satire like 'Ahalyodhara' which considers it a noble liberation when a youth elopes with the young wife of an aged man or 'Asgadha' a bitter picture of the helplessness of a father in finding a husband for his daughter, though based essentially on topical themes live beyond the borders of their time owing to their entertaining qualities and theatrical sustenance.

Thus the method of Sriranga not only held the mirror to the face of the society but aimed with a determination at reforming it. A thinker essentially he is and his thought process is highly logical but often it is so critical and frank that the contemporary society got offended. His outbursts on temples, religion and God were too open and attacking than convincing the society.

Himself a gifted artist, Sriranga collected some of the young enthusiasts of Dharwad and trained them in the art of acting and play-production. The 'Kannada Natya-Vilacigala Sangha' is privileged to have staged almost every play he wrote and it toured extensively from time to time in the representative cities of North Karnataka. The performances are simple and effective without any ado of pompous settings.

1 .... 

".... വശാരാധികാരം വശ മാതൃക പ്രാദേശിനി
അർത്ഥം ബാളിയ അറിഞ്ഞോ യുക്തി പ്രാദേശിനി
....
.... ".... വശാരാധികാരം വശ മാതൃക പ്രാദേശിനി
അർത്ഥം ബാളിയ അറിഞ്ഞോ യുക്തി പ്രാദേശിനി
...."
and scenery, though occasionally a new stage device or a shadow effect may be presented as in 'Shokachakra'. Like Kailasam again, he gave a new turn to the drama of North Karnataka by banishing "Music (except in Udara Vairagya), sugary sentiments, hackneyed themes and unrealistic character types from the theatre-boards" and by galvanising the drama into a dynamic art-form. It was natural that his plays toned up and gave a new power and brilliance to the amateur stage of North Karnataka.

Karanth:

What Kailasam gave as a pioneer to the Mysore amateur stage and Sriranga to that of North Karnataka, Sri Sivaraja Karanth gave to South Canara or Madras Karnataka. He created for South Karnataka an amateur stage and made its life colourful and influencing with the rich results of his own undoubted experiments in themes and forms of drama. Drawing his themes from the mythologies, history, society and folklore, Karanth presented them in several different forms as full length plays, One-acts, Operas, Shadow plays, Mimes and Dance plays. Like Kailasam and Sriranga, Karanth also aimed at uprooting the artificialisation of society with sharp weapons of Satire and soothing humour. Himself an actor and trainer of immense understanding and capacity, Karanth influenced the Amateur stage of Karnataka in general, in making it a potent media of rich entertainment and social reform.
Two of his prominent full length plays reveal bitterness to the vagaries of the moneyed and monasteries. 'Battida Bela'- a play in five acts is a telling satire on the social tendency of treating the poor as the subservient hang on to the economically well placed. Though with long passages of conversation and rather an unartistic tragic end, the play is unequivocal in its purpose and fulness of emotion. 'Garbhojadi' is both more realistic and artistic in its development and impression and none the less powerful than the former. It is a sweeping attack on the tendencies of exploitation of some of the corrupt institutions and their administrations in the name of Religion and God. It is a convincing creation in spite of the celestial sage Kashya's coming down to earth, and surtains well with sharp and witty dialogues. In spite of the springs of humour, there is a serious temper in the plays owing to the under current of pity to the destitute and to the exploited. Like Kailasam, Karanth is potentially human and practical in his approach to the problems of social victims. 'Hatakevamba Natka' is a powerful satire typical of Karanth sledgehammering the excesses and affectations of the professional theatre. 'Kirti Kannya Chali', 'Dristi Sangoma', 'Katte urana' and other social plays have their main purpose in entertainment with humour and satire.

Karanth brought about a new consciousness in South Canara about the theatre. Almost all of his plays including the operas and mincas have been staged continuously by student-groups of Mangalore and he is an undoubted pioneer in conducting successful experiments in various dramatic forms which could
be examined later. Thus Kailasa, Srinanga and Karanth combined in them unique qualities of the playwright and performer; employed the same weapons of humour and satire though with a difference in degree and methods of use and championed the cause of the theatre in the three main regions of Karnataka. Together with Sri Bendre and A.R.Krishnarao they formed a formidable strength and achieved a new theatre, the AMATEUR THEATRE for Karnataka.

D.R.Bendre:

A most leading and expressive of the poets of Karnataka, Sri D.R.Bendre is also a noted playwright of immense suggestion, wit and power. His humour in its pristine purity and with all its slashing shades of suggestion and subtlety marks itself highly enjoyable, and makes his plays loved. Hilarious situations pictured in a play like 'Tirukara ridugu', 'Sayo Ata' and 'Devvana Mane', mark out the magnificent methods and manifestations of his humour and brilliant bubbling wit. Plays like 'Uddhara', 'Nageya Noge' and the recent 'Hosa Kusara' (in two parts) reveal Sri Bendre's logical and psychological probe into serious social and domestic problems. It is invariably an undersurface thought and meaning that sprouts his humour and his triumph is supreme when dealing with a thoughtful theme. Amateur troupes like the Kalopasaka Mandal of Dharwar and Karnataka College Amateurs have staged his plays in different parts of North Karnataka with good credit. His one-acts like 'Tirukara ridugu' have crossed the borders of North Karnataka to appear on the stage all over, particularly
Thus a bright wit and humour is an important contribution of Bendre to the Amateur stage of North Kannatak; but more significant than even that is his starting the tradition of the one-act play in North Kannatak with his 'Goal'. Equally significant is the contribution of the 'mono-play' to the Kanada dramatic literature—with his 'Tirukara Pidugu'. 'Tirukara Pidugu' is a hilarious picture, but has a more significant purpose than even its first rate humour—in its revealing the thousand faces in which the hunger and poverty of our country manifests itself. It also caricatures symbolically the superficial air of the well-to-do. The play is a deviation from the normal in that a single artist on the stage reflects on each individual of the long procession of the baffling types of the needy. 'Tirukara Pidugu' is a unique contribution to the Amateur stage as a masterpiece of mono-acting.

Sri Bendre made yet another contribution to the Amateur stage by providing a new vision of looking at themes as in his recent play 'Hosa Sannaga', which, in self sufficient compartments presents on a psychological treatment of a subject like Love with its manifestations and methods of working. The play is a peep into the human mind, especially the subtle and flashing mind of the woman. The play, replete with humour, with its heroine—Mendakini, reveals threadbare the story of little suspicions, nursed to become a hundred hooded hydes to breath out poison into the entire domestic atmosphere.

1 See S. K. V. "Soodvaradha Sannaga", Samskrutiki, p. 584, 1938.
Sri Bendre’s contribution to the dramatic literature of the amateur stage of North Karnataka is comparatively small in volume, but is considerable in the variety of themes and consummate in the total impression. Tempered with a rare genius of wit and humour and based on the solid root of logic and psychological treatment, his plays have added considerable colour and meaning to the Amateur stage of North Karnataka and set new fashions to follow.

Sri A.N.Krishnarao, Sri V.K.Gokak and Sri R.S.Hugal, all the three, well known for their substantial and merited contributions to Kannada literature have written plays of considerable worth. A.N.Krishnarao’s early plays like 'Madhyeva Manehale,' a bitter ridicule on the marriage of aged men, 'Abhuti,' a love-tragedy, 'Somukhe Vyaghra,' dealing with the problem of unequal marriages and his brilliant one-acts including 'Balu' assured his place in the field of Kannada drama. The A.D.A. of Bangalore continuously staged his plays. A.N.Krishnarao’s choice to flourish as a novelist has perhaps rendered a bad loss to the Amateur stage. Sri V.K.Gokak, one of the most imaginative and purposeful of the playwrights of the Kannada country earned a name by his social plays like 'Yugantara,' 'Kanakadalli' and 'Janamagaka.' Sri R.S.Hugal tried more experiments in the forms and themes of the modern Kannada drama. His 'Javane Pravega' could be a visual picture of sheer poetic grandeur. 'Aksecitapadavi' and his ten one-acts, collected in 'Etida Kali' and the social satire 'Hamadhari' provided hopes for the Amateur stage; but apart from the one acts of Sri Hugal others are more widely read than staged.
Of the junior playwrights who invariably came to be influenced by one or the other of the pioneers like Kailasam, Srinanga, Bendre and Karanth and who wrote full length plays, mention may be made of Sri L.J. Bendre of North Karnataka, author of some of the intensely theatrical and impressive social plays like 'Bhagyashri', 'Parivartana', 'Kalutota' and the recent 'Jooja' an impressive adaptation from the Marathi original by name 'Jagar'; and mention may also be made of Parvatavani of Bangalore who is hailed as a true successor of Kailasam. Apart from his very popular renderings of some of the representative western plays like 'Taming of the Shrew' (Bahadur Gonda), 'She Stoops to Conquer' (Undadi Gunda), Comedy of Errors (Viparyasa) and 'The School for Scandal' (Bannad Bombe), his own original ones like 'Meena Maduve' and 'Varshikotsava', replete with humour and infused with a weighty purpose have brought him recognition as a promise to the amateur theatre of Karnataka. L.J. Bendre and Parvatavani seem to be responsible for supplying the lifeline of two of the leading Amateur troupes of Karnataka, Bendre for the Kalopassaka Mondola of Bharwar while Parvatavani for the Chaya Artists of Bangalore.

1 Kailasam is reported to have said after seeing the performance of a play of Parvatavani.
The One-Act Play:

The Amateur stage in the recent two decades seems to have thrived essentially on the One-Act plays, and almost every one of the leading playwrights of Kannatak wrote the one-acts in addition to full length plays. They gave it a status, a refinement and brevity. The One-act is essentially of a recent origin, about thirty years old on the Kannada stage. It is possible that the ancient Sanskrit dramatic literature had some analogous forms of the One-act in - 'Vayoga', 'Dhana', 'Janki' and 'Vesthi' mentioned in Natya-Shastra (II.1). It is a play-form revived in Kannada centuries after Bhasa.

The One-act is the result of a specialised technique of composing a short but wholesome and unified but impressive mode of drama. The difference between a full length play and the one-act is essentially in the size and stature. If the full length play is the colossal image of Gomateswara, the one-act is the Siva-Dolike of Belur. It is a straight, direct and fast running short play with its own special characteristics like the unity, speedy action, sweep of emotion and passion, economy of expression and a final impressive climax. A particular act detached from a full length play cannot become a One-act play. It is like a golden ring rather than a detached link of a gold chain of the full length play. It should have a dramatic theme for its first requisite and it should bring within a much shorter span of time all the emotion and satisfaction that could be had from a full length play. It may be in one scene as 'Yamana Solu' of Srinaga, or
in more as 'Uddhara' of Sri Bendre. It would perhaps demand a full satisfaction of the three unities of the Greek drama to become an ideal one-act.

Inaugurated by 'Tollu Gatti' of Kailasa in Kustre and by the play 'Gosil' of D.R.Bendre in North Karnata, the one-act has been perhaps the most popular of dramatic forms in the age of the Amateur theatre. It comes in handy on celebrations and festive occasions with a small number of roles for a short duration of about forty to sixty minutes and more than all, it would usually provide no problem in production. It is essentially social in theme, humorous in nature and often intellectual in import. Kailasa, Sri-rang, Karanth, D.R.Bendre, A.H.Krishnasaro, R.S.Mugali and other senior and leading playwrights wrote out a good number of one-acts. The prominent among the more recent but established playwrights of one-acts are Kesharangara, who, with a mastery of witty exploitation of humorous dramatic situations gave some of the popular plays for the Amateur stage like- 'S棚amamma Sahosa', 'Nicchitartha', 'Desapadi' and 'Kashiyastra'; Kaveri Paramara who excelled himself in homely dialogues of rare charm rather than intense dramatic situation or characterisation in plays like 'Gandakajumane', 'Patrapremaa', 'Bengasara Bandaya', 'Premma Pariksha' and others; N.K.Rukkam, a popular playwright of North Karnata well known for his keen eye for the odd and witty exposition as reflected in the plays 'Nadumeyalli', 'B.T.Boddhivanta', 'U.T.C.Pariksha' and 'Her Room'; K.V.Polu, author of some of the penetrating plays that would draw both a smile and

a tear at the same time - like 'Raghunama Ratha' and also of loud hilarities like 'Ragige Masa', 'Gurubhayamkara' and 'Cinema Aliya', and also M.V. Seetharamiah, N. Paturi, M.N. Kamat, Tengat Govindrao, D.G. Kulkarni, H.N. Kulkarni, Krishna Kumar and Ch. Sadashiviah. One-act plays have flooded the amateur theatre with obvious benefits and drawbacks.

On the one hand, the one-act has proved to be the ideal for the modern times and has enabled the stage thrive along with the cinema owing to its compactness and short duration. It has been the most popular with the student amateurs. It has grown considerably both in volume and variety covering almost every aspect of modern life, for one-acts are written on themes of education ('Tolupattu', 'B.T. Buddha - wanta', 'Adhuta Shikshana' and others), of Evils of ignorance ('Kattupurana', 'Adidenu', 'Poovvarnga' and others), of Unemployment of the educated ('Saravinka Saraswati', 'Bar Room', 'Trisula', 'Namadella' and others), of problems of women ('Anuvrazanda', 'Aswamedha', 'Hennina Tadalu'), of Social evils ('Balishkara', 'Balkmaya Miskachi' and others) and of some of the eternal domestic problems - ('Home Raka', 'Prapancha Iravaha' and others). Within these three decades, the number of one-acts written may have well surpassed a total of three hundred.

The evil of the one-act is obvious and is two - folds. Its technique seems to be much misunderstood as seen from ⁴

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considerable portion of the voluminous output, and secondly the amateur stage seems to be too much satisfied with the one-act, as perhaps it is the easiest to stage. It has given room to a feeling that its service is false and often undignified. This feeling is partly due to the fact that the one-act and sometimes even the full length social play is incapable of building up a 'classical' atmosphere of dignity and sustenance availing of all the fine arts that go to make a true drama. It is not far from truth either, that the lofty institution of the theatre is made to hang on to the thin purpose of light humour. There are brilliant exceptions of course, like 'Bahishkara', 'Kapatanataka', 'Nadumaneyalli', or 'Hsa Samsara', for but such exceptions one has to go back to the pioneers alone. Many an other social play is incapable of giving any intensity of emotion. As suggested by K. Anantakrishna Saarma, the modern social play, particularly the one-act lacks in the weight of ideals and intensity of emotions and so, naturally becomes too light sometimes to be taken seriously.1

The social play has to make efforts to regain the lost weight and dignity. At the time of the opening of the new era, the social themes championed specific causes like those

1 1925 సంవత్సరంలో అచ్చిలీ మహా సాహిత్య రక్షణకం చేసిన ప్రముఖ శిఖరాయినప్పటి కేసరీ కామంధ్రాణి జె.ఏ.ఆర్.ఎఫ్. ఆంచన వెంకటేశ్వరాయ్ కేసరీ ప్రతి పరిశోధనని సాంస్కృతిక ప్రయోగాలు చేసి తినాయి. అయితే ఇన్ని ప్రయోగాలు ఎందుకందండే మనం ప్రత్యేకంగా ఈ పరిశోధనను గొప్పం కాబట్టి అభివృద్ధి చెందాయి. అందుకే మన సాంస్కృతిక ప్రయోగాలు నియమితంగా ప్రారంభించాయి.
of social victims, the oppressed and the discriminated
to set the people to think seriously. In this regard the
Amateur stage hit a mark that was missed even by the pro-
essional theatre, for its plays were virtual classics—
though on social themes. Such a noble purpose should re-
vitalise the theme again and in order to avoid catering
only to a particular section of the society— the intellec-
tual section— the modern drama will have to reconsider on
rational lines its relations with the common man both in
the city and the village.

PRESENTATION AND ACTING:

The production of the amateur play is made so easy and so
simple that if it becomes impressive in showmanship, it is
only in exceptional circumstances. The soul of the new play
centres in the IDEA, the scene construction and humour rather
than in the production-possibilities. The play looks comple-
tely shorn of any worthy weight and often even dignity, -
contributed to by a harmony of music, dance, impressive
acting, settings, scenery and make up. That the professionals
overdid, the amateurs seem to omit in its entirety. The reason
is that the modern social play provides almost no scope for
anything strikingly visual; its appeal is to the mind. -
Settings and scenery became symbolic at the hands of the
Amateurs, for, the same type of plain curtains came to be
used to provide the necessary background for different
settings like a home, a garden, or a street, which alone
were the usual scenes found in the modern social play.

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The art of make-up 'a specialised technical science', which is still in its grand glory in the folk theatre is almost totally neglected by the Amateur stage, for there is perhaps no need at all to put it into use. The artist, if he is quick, paints his face and gets ready within five minutes with the glued moustache sticking on his upper lip. It is usually a thin water-paint that provides the foundation colour, and sometimes used without much discrimination for roles like a servant or even an old widow. It is only the lady-roles that are paid some attention to with regard to make-up; and yet it should be accepted on all hands that it was a great relief to see that girls took some interest in the amateur drama and appeared on the stage without much reservations. The advent of women on the stage further simplified the method of make-up. Indeed, an easy 'make-up' is a consideration for convenience; but the total absence of a scope for make-up in the amateur theatre has taken away considerable visual impression. It would not be in the interest of the theatre to allow to decay fine arts like the art of make-up or the art of arranging tasteful and suggestive settings which are so intimately connected with theatrical illusion. For the sake of convenience, it would not be desirable to discard a difficult but worthy tradition and so, the Amateur theatre may as well concentrate on an occasional mythological or historical play to bring a change in the monotony of social themes and also for retaining and developing the fine arts connected with the stage and its colourful production. The Amateur theatre is doing
essentially for the intelligent if not for the intellectual but still, it may hit the mark by aiming to cater not only to a particular section of the people but to all tastes. This would be in the interest of its own influence and longevity.

The amateur actor is no more pursued by the stigma that dogged the professional actor for centuries — as 'Kashelawa', the 'immoral'. The educated actor of the amateur stage is invariably a man of high social standing with an obligation to the morality, good taste and honour of the stage. He has, from this angle resurrected the art of the theatre from its unpopular state. Even the professional actor is now looked at with some consideration though, what T. Raghavachari said two decades ago about the dangers of stage as a profession, has not changed much in its import even to-day. As suggested, the educated women enthusiasts have added considerable grace to the stage by their interest and artistic potentialities and have made the amateur theatre look natural. 'Family women' appear on the stage along with members of their families and this happy and encouraging tradition seems to have been first laid down by the A.V.A. of Bangalore on the path paved by 'Suguna Vilasa Sabha' of Madras, a leading amateur troupe of South India.

The amateur theatre has its great advantage in its playwright who is invariably a potential actor. Luckily for
Karnataka, its pioneers, including Kailasam, Sriranga and Karanth being actors of consummate skill, were able to prescribe methods of production of their plays. The leading amateur troupes enjoyed the services of artists who could compare favourably with the leading professional artists of any region. T. Raghavachari was a flourishing lawyer and Devudu Narasimha Sastri a noted writer, but both, with their bountiful talent gave a status and career to the Amateur Dramatic Association of Bangalore. D. Lekshmanayya, an advocate and C. Anandarao, a Palace Official, came to be noted for their rich histrionic talent as seen from the performances of the Literary Dramatic Association of Mysore. Dr. M.C. Narayana Sastri, Dr. A.M. Natesh, T.M. Ancer, V.K. Srinivasam, C.B. Jayarao, B. Krishnamurthi and other senior members of the Old Boys Association of the Maharaja's College, Mysore, compared well with the best of the professional artists of their times with their brilliant performances in 'Sadayuddha' of E.M. Sreekanthiah, 'Ashadhabhodi' of A.M. Moorthirao, 'Yamansulu' of K.V. Puttaga, 'Savina Samasya' of Vembir Venkatacharya and other plays H. Kasturi, C.K. Nagaraj Rao, Chi Sadashiviah of Bangalore, S.I. Parvati and C.S. Benur of Bagalkot, Bhima Joshi, a distinguished musician of Gadag, K.C. Halsigi of Dharwar and other potential actors added considerable lustre to the Amateur stage of Mysore and of North Karnataka. Though in the Amateur theatre, the actor has forfeited his own lofty place in favour of the playwright unlike as in the professional stage, he has still to play a vital role for its success. With a discretion and moderation, it is after all, the actor who
brings home the full import of the modern 'intellectual' play and in this regard, it may be said that the amateur theatre of Karnataka seems to be fortunate.

**NEW EXPERIMENTS:**

Drawing the inspiration from the advanced West and in tune with the development of the various theatrical modes in other parts of India, Karnataka has tried several experiments in recent years, with considerable success in building up different theatrical modes like the Opera, the Impromptu-play, the Mono-play, the Shadow Play, the Dance Play, the Mime and the Children's plays. It may be said that most of the early experiments in the different theatrical modes were conducted by Sri K.C. Koramth of South Canara. The trend is taken up by later writers and theatrical enthusiasts who brought considerable popularity to the different modes.

**The Opera:**

The Opera, a musical representation of drama is a more advanced and refined medium than the spoken-word-play according to the western standards for it is capable of portraying different emotions of different characters at the same time. The opera is inevitably associated with the 'emotional dance' in the West—though not to the extent as in the ballet, and the contribution of the western orchestra to the opera is considerable. The atmosphere built up by the opera in spite of the intense romantic music which is not considered to be
in good taste has earned for it an eminent position in the theatre of the west. The opera in our country is not so closely associated with dance and it is particularly so on the Kannada Amateur stage. It is just a poetical tale or a fiction presented in music and acting, aided by a few musical instruments.

Kannada operas, though small in number are intensely musical and theatrical. 'Asvathama' of Sri B.M. Srikantiah with its scope for action and music provided in lyrics of different metres, attained the status of an opera. 'Pirumpi' of Narli with its rich treasure of Songs and drama is another instance, but neither of them was obviously tried by the Amateur Stage with all the seriousness they deserve and demand.

It was Sri Shivarur Karanth that composed, directed and enacted the opera as to make it a dynamic art-form of the Amateur stage. His operas are marked with simple and sometimes, oft repeated common-place themes but his masterly technique of plot construction makes them live green in the memory of the spectator. Some of them like 'Ritu Yatre' and 'Buddhodaya' provide scope for dance but every one of them allow for intense emotional action aided by appropriate music. 'Jayakusha' and 'Savitri-Satyavan' deal with the well known mythological

2 Exceptions are not rare, particularly on the Sanskrit stage of the 16th century as evidenced in 'Krishnaleela Tarangini' of Teerthannayakaswendi; P. Sambamurthi- 'A History of Indian Operas'- S. Krishnaswendi Iyenger's Commemoration Volume. p.422.
themes while 'Kise Gotani' and 'Buddhadaya' are based on legendary stories. 'Ritu Yatre' gives a picture of the strange but inevitable relation between Mother Nature and the cultivator and like his Lalgudawa (1930) that traces the March of the Father Time, it could be produced as a gorgeous extravaganza of dance and music in spite of the limitations of the amateur stage. 'Somiva Suubhagya' also provides for emotional dancing especially in its first part up to the creation of a grand atmosphere of the marriage of Sri. The opera is a tense tragedy set in rural atmosphere. 'Vane Andara' also is set in rural atmosphere and marks the triumph of Karanth as it achieves a grand shade of satire and humour in the opera; it deals with the methods and manifestations of the village scandal.

All the operas of Karanth including even the long 'Paduka bahada' have been staged though some of them like 'Visasotami', 'Lava Kusha' and 'Savitri Satyavan' have remained highly popular all over Karnataka. Karanth's 'Lava Kusha' in particular, has been staged with equal success as a Dumb show, as an opera and also a Shadow-play. Karanth has proved on the stage with his operas that the emotional intensity could best be expressed through music and gesture. He has himself set tunes to them mostly in appropriate Hindustani classical ragas and also in the folk musical patterns. Some of the operas like 'Somiva Suubhagya', 'Lava Kusha' and 'Savitri Satyavan' have been aided by the Chorus which, with its narrative music moves the story further, reacts to the emotions of the characters and adds considerable strength and beauty to the performance. It looks that the amateur platform is too limited for the grand imagery.
provided by 'Litu Yatre' wherein Nature with all its vigorous
and beneficial aspects takes part in human affairs, yet even
that is essentially theatrical if the Nature is represen-
ted symbolically. His opera may not need colourful and fabulous
settings and scenery but does depend on considerable musical
and histrionic talent and meticulous training on the part of
the artist. This when coupled with the benefits of Karanth's
direction, the opera, as in the past, proves to be a sublime
experience to the spectator.

Sri P.T. Narasimhachar, a noted poet with exceptional
imagery and skill in portrayal, with his considerable sense of
music and drama created grand pictures of divine glory parti-
cularly in his full length gorgeous operas like 'Abhalya' and
'Gokula Nigamana' that would compare well with the 'Grand
Opera' of the West with their themes based on attraction, love
and conflict. His operas are charged with intense emotion and
elevating thoughts and are essentially poetic in atmosphere.

But their demands seem to be beyond the afford of the amateur
stage. If they could ever be done in full, they could provide
a rare and elevating experience to the spectator. Hitherto
however, in spite of attempts to bring them on the stage in
parts, the operas of Sri Narasimhachar have yet remained typi-
cal and ennobling 'Sravya Kavya'.

Sri Keerti D.Kurtalkoti, a rising young poet of a good
sense of drama, music and dance, composed attractive operas

1 එළඹ සංගී දුමුණ ප්‍රියත්නයක් නමුත් නිවැරදී මහාචන්ද
යිති වැදුමේ, පැහැදිලි කාඩා, මෙයි වැදුමේ, මෙයි වැදුමේ
තිරඹුණන්. කාඩාවික අඩු ප්‍රියත්නයක් නිවැරදීදකදිනා.
ක.ඉ. තැබියුටි – 'කාඩාවික' සුදා කුඹාකාව
Like 'Swarnadarshi', 'Ahalya' and 'Shabari'. Like 'Pavana Pavaka' of Sri R.S. Mogul, 'Swarnadarshi' sketches the adventures of an inquisitive mind in quest of 'divine' flame which would burn to ashes the human ignorance and eternal misery. Though simple in nature, his operas impress of their emotional intensity. If Karrutha's operas are essentially dramatic and those of P.T. Varasimshachar intrinsically poetical and imagery, Kurnikoti meets them both half way and blends in his operas their salient qualities. His operas are staged by student-amateurs of Gadag and other cities of North Karnataka.

The Dance Drama:

Close to the opera is the 'Dance Drama' or 'theme dances' being made popular on the amateur stage by modern dancers. Like the western ballet, the 'dance-drama' places an emphasis on dancing and symbolic gesticulation as an additional aid to self-expression, to rouse a sentiment and to convey a set theme. As in the play or the opera, different characters are represented by different persons who, as mostly in Kethakali, represent a regularly set theme with all its complications, conversations and emotions; but the symbols here may not be strictly scientific as in Kethakali though they bring home the full import of an emotion. There is a flare for training the children in dancing in the modern times, particularly within the last decade and the amateur dancers—boys and girls—are fast popularising the 'dance-drama' which is virtually the time-honoured theme-dances of our land. In a way, there is a revival of some of the classical themes—mythological and historical,
like 'Viswanitraw Nonaka', 'Siva Nandini', 'Manmatha Balana' and 'Buddhadeva'. Social themes have also been taken up by progressive enthusiasts like Srinivasa Kulkarni, Meera Heranjal and others of North Karnataka, Prof. J.S. Krishna Rao of Mysore, and K. Shivarana Keranth of South Canara who have composed successful ballets on themes of economic poverty, the evils of drinking and the condition of the Indian labourer.

Light and short dances with characters on subjects like the 'Snake charmer', 'The Hasty lover' or 'The Beggar and the Child' remain side by side with the heavy themes of dance drama. A new trend and a very modern mode is dance-interpretation of meaningful lyrics of the modern poets, a mode which is gaining steady popularity.

The Dance-drama pays perhaps the best attention to make-up and costumes on the amateur stage, though the settings and scenery are comparatively scanty. The performance of each theme will usually cover a duration of about fifteen minutes and is aided by an orchestra of musical instruments both to accompany the 'back-ground-singer' (the play-back artist) and to provide musical effects in support of an emotion. It avails of the benefits of stage-devices, particularly of light and shadow and becomes impressive. It is mostly performed by boys and girls of teen age after meticulous training and but for its serious themes, the dance-drama would be a worthy aspect of the children's theatre. It interests the adults as well, and is fast becoming more popular than the Opera. It is a symbol of the revival of music, dance and gesture, the original fundamentals of the Drama, and to an extent, the classical
themes for modern audiences.

The Impromptu Play:

The Impromptu play which is fast becoming very popular is a recent theatrical node hardly about two decades old, possibly having its inception in the 'staff-plays' produced annually by the members of the Maharaja's College of Mysore to entertain the outgoing students of the college. The busy professors who could not have leisure nor patience to rehearse at length a written play, usually met just on the day of the performance, thought of a theme, discussed the details regarding its movement and climax and straight went on the stage with the necessary make-up of respective roles. The details of the play and its duration depended entirely on the spot ingenuity of the actors who had to react intelligently to all the unexpected expressions, interrogations, twists and turns by each other, yet developing the play to a successful climax. The import of the play would usually be hilarious humour - but its shape could never be sure of till the close of the performance. In a way, the Impromptu play is a challenge to the intelligence and histrionic ability of its actor and its success depended entirely on his genius.

It is true that the seeds of the Impromptu play are seen in the folk performances like the 'Prasanga' and Vakehagnana, but there, the orbit of the theme is clearly defined and the artist's spoken words are essentially by way of interpretation of the poetical composition. The 'Prasanga' is more an intellectual exposition than a regular play like the Impromptu play.
Yet, the said folk performances which have not set their prose into writing, provide scope for inspiration on the spot and expressions deviating from the main. The Impromptu play, however, with its uncertainty even in the theme, and one's own words cannot be compared with the folk performances which obviously stand on a better footing. The very quality of its charming uncertainty has made the Impromptu play very popular both with both the artist and the audience.

Thus initiated by the staff of the Mysore College under the guidance of the talented Sri N. Kasturi and Dr. N.S. Narayana Shastri, the Impromptu play, caught the attention of Karnatak. Several amateur troupes all over the Kannada land tried it with much loved success and it became a test of their ability. 'Impromptu play competitions' became a common and attractive feature of the Kannada Conferences and celebrations of institutions. "Rasabharo Granthi Mala" of Bharwa arranged a competition of Impromptu plays on the occasion of its 'Sahityotsava' inviting the amateur troupes from all over Karnatak. Only the title of the play, and sometimes, a very brief idea of the theme was given to the amateur troupes on the day of the performance. Such competitions resulted into print, substantial plays of intrinsic drama and literary merit. 'Saubhagya', the prize winning play staged by Shri Ch. Sadasiviah and his amateur friends on the occasion of Sahityotsava of Manohara Granthi Mala, 'Chunyavaya Chakchakya' by Shri N. Kasturi and friends staged on the occasion of the Kannada Conference at Shimoga, 'Dharmade Dolu' by the United Artists of Bengalore on the occasion of the Vasanta Sahityotsava of Kannada Sahitya...
Parishat in 1946 deserve particular mention in this regard. Many an other impromptu performance shaped itself into a brilliant one-act when consolidated and printed like 'Gagayana Cadi Eidi', 'Vera Pareeksha' and 'Kadane' of Sri M. Kasturi and 'Panchangachhravanam', 'Bhavishya' and 'Swayamvara' written later by Sri M.V. Sitaramiah.

With all the dangers of slips and odds of the participant during the performance, the impromptu play provides excellent training ground to the artist and alerts his wit and increases the 'dramatic' in him. It is an acid test to his talent, a bountiful entertainment to the audience, and a platform for new creation of plays.

Natyaachata;

Another recent but very popular theatrical form is the monodrama called 'Natyaachata' in North Karnataka and 'Rapatra' in Mysore. Its beauty and impression is in its technical triumph. An individual actor, all alone on the stage creates for himself and for the spectator, by the sheer illusion of his acting, a full experience of a real drama with all its components and particularly the opposite roles. Like a man in the drawing room, carrying on conversation with his woman who is in the kitchen, the actor talks with and replies to all the questions put by his imaginary wife. It is a creation of illusion and the Natyaachata stands for the credit of a clever actor. Its duration is necessarily much shorter than of a one-act lost it becomes monotonous. Its tone is humorous and its method, arresting. Many of the Natyaachata of the type 'Nelliga Chapare' will have charming and sustaining themes, and become impressive
only because of the performer's talents. It does not provide for any intense dramatic action on the stage but it can certainly picture a situation into full climax with a performer all alone on the stage all the time. It is the intelligent use of his voice, articulation, appropriate pauses and a capacity to change the emotions sharply and quickly that brings life and triumph to the Natyachata. Some of the early 'Natyachatas' like 'Nagarapooje' of Kajalgi Hanumantarao, 'Halugadu' of Krishna Rurru, 'Sadaiva Kandeelu' of Srizanga, 'Mallige Chappara' and 'Lawyer Prayana' of Ksheerasagar speak in favour of them as the ideal mode for a short light humorous entertainment. Later writers like N.K. Kulkarni, N.S. Gadagkar, M.N. Babu and a host of others contributed such mono-plays. 'N. Natyachata has further simplified from the one-set, the method of production for it is devoid of any setting and elaborate preparations. Still, when well performed, it brings the import of a wholesome one-act with symbolism and suggestion at full play on the stage.

The Shadow Play

The Shadow play is an interesting experiment as a specialised technique in play-production. It has every accessory of a regular stage-play including a theme- mytho-logical, historical or social-fiction and the assistance of background music. Unlike as in the folk-theatre - wherein the Coloured Image is manipulated into performing the drama, the modern Shadow play is enacted by amateur actors who perform behind a fixed white screen that covers the entire stage and exposed to a powerful lamp that throws a flood of search
light. The shadows of the actors fall on the screen in sharp features. The artist synchronises his words with his acting which is essentially physical and to an extent, exaggerated. Delicate facial expressions would not be of any avail in the shadow play. The actor will have to move his limbs with a planned perfection so that the shadow could convey the desired action. He stands close to the screen with his side to it so as to allow on the screen his shadow in profile and moves only forward and backward along the screen, close to it, because if he came slightly out of his marked tract towards the light, his shadow will suddenly grow in size. He will have to be as careful in the movement of his limbs also, for, a hand half extended may look in the shadow as if it is sticking out of his stomach. The actor here is perhaps more a technician than an artist. An intelligent use of delicate dance poses and movements will bring considerable charm to the movement of the shadows.

The method of make-up is entirely different in the Shadow-play for it is not the actor but his shadow that is to be presented to the audience. Accordingly, there is no colour-make up for the artist and most of his ornaments and costumes are made of thick paper and are tied up with threads.

The shadow play provides for immense possibilities in presentation. Within a split second the little 'dwarf' on the screen could become—by moving towards the light—a fantastically huge figure occupying it entirely like 'Vanessa'. Like in the tricky photograph, both normal and the colossal human figures could be created on the screen side by side, talking and moving, thereby bringing before the eye, a realistic picture of
Alladin and his servant Ghost. Exploiting these possibilities, Sri Kareth wrote and produced three shadow-plays with symbolic characters, but with definite plots and purpose. In his 'Rerta Remiki' that dealt symbolically with unequal economic groups, 'Devi Dehi' that provided a picture of the story of the oppressed woman and her ultimate resurrection, and 'Hiri- ya Devaram' that dealt with the emancipation of man from the shackles of blind faith, Sri Kareth tried successful experiments of Shadow-tricks. One such theatrical illusion was in the play 'Devi Dehi' where the symbolic characters Sumane, Surame and Sujale who were infuriated by the treatment given to them by men rose into a huge stature of immense strength blending themselves into one colossal personality with three heads and six arms. Most of these operas, and particularly 'Levukusha' would suit to be a shadow-play of immense impression. 'Levukusha', took the audience by storms when staged by Sri Kareth with his trained band of artists of South Canara and Mysore in the Bangalore Town Hall about 13 years ago, on the occasion of Nacanta Sahityotsava of Kannada Sahitya Parishat.

For the sake of a change, charming and colossal in fantasy, the shadow play needs every encouragement from the Amateur stage.

The Radio-Play

Though the Radio-play has nothing of a direct connection with the stage, professional or amateur, its indirect influence on the modern playwright, actor and on some aspects of stage-production seems to be emphatic. Radio-play has grown in volume and variety within the last fifteen years bringing an awareness about the worth of different types of themes and also by creatin
a taste for them. Mythological and historical plays are not less popular than the social ones on the air, with an equal emphasis on the different modes like the Prose play, Opera, Folk-play, Fantasy, Children's play and the like, the radio provides a panorama of the various modes of the Karnatak theatre through its own individual technique. 'Radio-adaptations' of many a classical stage play has brought back the old playwrights through the radio-again. The radio has thus done substantially to revive the classical theme thereby contributing towards preserving the old modes on a compromise with the new.

Radio play is essentially a sound picture,- a 'play for the blind'; yet it is capable of providing wholesome emotional experiences through sounds, words and music. It impresses on the artist- who is invariably an amateur artist- of the best methods and benefits of a profitable use of music, voice and words, in the interest of a full expression of emotion. It trains the stage-hero to avoid the usual speaking in one continuous monotone or ranting about and tearing the passion to tatters. The radio-play has been able to construct convincing and colossal pictures- many of which were beyond the stage- mainly by a careful blending of music, sound-effects and calculated methods of speaking. 'Karna' of Keilaam, 'Ritu Yatra' of Karanth, 'Jnoodra Tapasvi' of Puttappa and such other grand pictures of immense imagery could be harnessed and interpreted by the radio rather than the stage. Plays of literary merit and grand fantasies particularly suit the radio and get the best out of it, as much as intimate family pictures.
The compelling conditions of the radio, when applied to the stage production, would necessarily be for the latter's benefit. So far as the playwright is concerned, the radio impresses on him of the benefits of brevity and sharpness of in dialogues; it teaches him the secrets of intelligent arrangement of thoughts and using words. With regard to the theme, the organic development of the plot, characterisation, unity and intelligent dialogues and the total impression, what would suit the radio may as well suit the stage—and that is how many a playwright has written with success both for the radio and the stage.

Children's Theatre:

There is obviously nothing substantial done to cater to the tastes of children in Karnataka, and it looks as though they are most neglected with regard to the benefits of the theatre, in spite of stray plays and minies contributed by some of the champions of the child's cause—like Hysala, Karanth, Bajarang and Panduranga Rao. Until the very recent change in the general outlook—sudden and intense as it was—children had at best to contain themselves witnessing the shows performed by adults for adults. This unfortunate position in our country, particularly in Karnataka is in glaring contrast with the technical amenities provided to children in the West and in Russia. There, the child is served both to its taste and needs by the fully developed Children's Theatre which has assumed the status of a respectable nation building institution. The Children's Theatre takes care to serve differently to children of
different age-groups and the specialist playwright, the actor
and the producer use their best judgement and put in their
best efforts to cater to the growing mind of the child 'the
father of the men'. Shakespeare and other classics have been
re-adopted to suit the children's theatre; new modes of thea-
trical presentations are experimented; new themes of children's
tastes are tirelessly worked on and a very new approach is
made to understand the child's mind and his needs.

Dramatic instinct is inborn in the child and he will have
great fascination for the symbolic representation and in fact,
he prompts it. A broken chair can become a golden throne for
him, and a long stick, a royal steed. The inanimate is his
intimate friend and often he creates dual roles within himself
each talking aloud to the other. This instinct of the child is
to a great advantage of the expert writer and actor who will
have to harness the great sense of the self-abandon in the child,-
cultivate it and fill the pellucid sanctuary of the child's
heart with beauty, grandeur and meaning for the sake of the
child, the art and the nation.

It needs an expert to harness the power of imitating and
mimicry in children. It needs a specialist to entertain and
enlighten them with plays produced especially for them, by
children themselves. Themes and presentation cannot afford to
be beyond their reach; nor can it be a common type for all the
age-groups. Corruption cannot be wrought in the child's pure
innocent impressionable mind by enacting plays which have a sel-
dramatic and sentimental interest. To the child even the immor-
tal 'Shakuntala' may not be of any relish—much less the plays
Before the Amateur stage took on itself to cater to the children, the professional stage did try some experiments. The attempt was just to develop a taste in children to enact plays. Sri G.Veeramma started a children's troupe in 1924 under the name 'Balakala Varshini Nataka Sangha', trained the young boys and girls and ran it on professional lines as a branch of the Cuddi Company for about two decades. The young troupe toured about in different parts of Karnataka staging plays like - 'Sri Krishna Leela', 'Krsna Vadha', 'Rukmini Swayamvara', 'Sri Krishna Parijata', 'Krishna Garudi' and 'Savitri'. On the same lines ran the 'Akka Mahadevi Kripa Yashita Mandal' of Kollegal, a children's troupe organised by G.P.Mallappa and the 'Ananda Sangeeta Natka Mandal' of Easley which paid visits to Bangalore and other parts of Karnataka. These troupes earned money with a professional 'perfection and polish'—rare and rejuvenating—the but certainly did not serve children. The theme was too heavy for them, the dialogue was starchy, music was unnatural and the production, too artificial though pompous. From another point of view, it was virtually a professional troupe 'with all its vices' run by young boys and girls. It was far from a mode of children's theatre.

The amateur stage did try to understand the needs of children. A number of plays were written essentially for them.
and many of them staged. Sri Shivarana Kareth wrote and got enacted by the school children of Mangalore a few impressive pantomimes. "Kamru Gama", a subtle satire on the caste system is recorded to have been a good success on the children's stage. "Goddavara Satya" charmed the children considerably with different animals representing different nations argued and fighting with each other for individual supremacy—leading ultimately to the survival of the fittest. One of the oldest and much relished children's play is "Nanna Copale" of K.V. Puttappa. The charming play pictured in simple and affectionate settings, the glowing moral that pure devotion would always bring the God to one's own threshold. The play has been intensely emotional and is played by children in their gatherings even to this day. "Modemana Tarna", another play of Sri Puttappa is equally popular with the children of Mysore. It deals with a cloud persuading a little boy to stay back at home with his mother. Several short and charming moral plays of hoyasu like "Kalre Silla Mella", "Agilina Magalu", "Magi" and "Vatagi" provided rich entertainment to children. Among many other notable plays that provided pictures of child's life in its different shades and at the same time aimed at entertaining and educating the children, mention may be made of "Shru" and "Babarama Patha" of Kailas Rajarao, "Sampine Sagara" of Chisadashiviah and "Sullina Jolu" of Pandurangarao. All this too meagre no doubt, but at least they have opened the eyes of the society to the needs of the Children's Theatre. There is

1 Printed in 1926.
a new consciousness of the duty and service to the children. Children's films — films of essential interest to children—are now being made in India. Children's festivals are being conducted on a nation-wide scale; extra-curricular activity has been recognized a part of juvenile education — and it is but natural that every town and village takes up the question of the theatre for the children. It is for the benefit of the village itself, the children and also the arts and culture of the land, because the seeds of fine arts sown in the child's heart is in the interest of both the child and the art.

Future of the Social Play:

The Amateur stage of Karnataka seems to have justified itself by fulfilling its specific purpose of catering to a section of the society which was tired of the professional plays. It made an effort to bring down the drama nearer to life to dwell among men and women. It moved to make the drama 'an instrument of national regeneration', displacing it from the position of 'an amusement of an idle hour'. The Amateur stage did create the new play — 'the Play of Ideas' — which was far different from the established drama that had lived too long on epic heights and romantic motifs; it did rationalise the production to a considerable extent in pursuit of realism; it did act as a timely scourge on a social evil; it did conduct successful experiments in new dramatic forms and theatrical showmanship; it did encourage the talented to take to the stage as a hobby and did brave a new path, immaterial of the taste of the audiences.
It has achievements to its credit, but to-day, it looks that the Amateur drama can not claim to be capable of serving to all tastes for it disregarded the very spectacular from the visual art of the stage; it did not always bother about a wholesome theme; it could not claim perfection in its portrayals; it could not command its artists to order when they seemed to treat it with a "light-heartedness," which was an insult even to a hobby. The Amateur stage started with indifference if not contempt to the popular taste and naturally, it came to be treated with the same indifference by the common people.

Surely, the Amateur stage has not outlived its utility but critics gradually gained weight against it. It was in order to make it more influential, more entertaining and more educative that what it has been. Troupes, artists and playwrights of the Amateur stage need to pay heed to the feelings of the time in order to keep the Amateur theatre stable and useful.

The strength and stability of the Amateur stage depends more upon its organised troupes rather than on the college and high school platforms which are too unsteady and impermanent to effect any progress. A well organised and merited troupe could become a potential influence on the society, and the strength of such a troupe is in its artist. The artist will have to sacrifice his ego for the sake of his team and see to it that he makes way to the more talented colleague; and the latter, instead of revelling in personal
triumph must train up the less talented artist by providing opportunities. The Amateur troupe draws its strength from the harmony among its members. The stage need not depend on the brilliance of an artist for perhaps the play provides nothing brilliant for him to perform. The past of the Amateur Theatre warns against a 'brilliant artist' who always drove the troupe to the danger of revolving around an individual. Secondly, the Amateur artist will have to treat the stage with more seriousness with regard to rehearsals, make up, stage settings, and his own contribution to the total impression. He should cease to aim at cheap popular applause but think of art and beauty in his portrayals. May be he is an 'amateur' artist, but still, as many an English amateur actor, he can, with determination and effort come to stand as a symbol of the perfection of the theatrical art of a region.

The modern playwright who supplies the life blood to the Amateur stage has a responsibility to its longevity. He has been brilliant indeed but does not seem to be substantial and long-standing. The modern play has come to be criticised as having narrowed down the scope for theatrical showmanship. It is often too topical to live long and because of its lacking in the element of universality the play breaks like a bubble. Many a play including those of Kailasam written in spoken dialect caters but to a particular area unlike even the professional play which was received well in every part of the Kannada land. The modern play of ideas, thus seems to have limited its scope and to have lost a considerable measure of its
theatrical strength for it caters but to a small section—
the intelligent section—of the society of a particular
area.

This state of affairs should make the modern playwright
reconsider his position, for his play seems to have lost the
support of the people as it started with indifference to their
taste. And it has proved to be too thin even to the elite,
for whom it was proclaimed to be meant. The elite took to
the film rather than to the amateur stage— to enjoy a more
wholesome entertainment with the same old music and
care, gods, demons and saints. The modern play seems to be severely
left alone both by the mass and the elite. The reason is perhaps
that it did not touch the basic primeval fundamental things in
human nature but was content dealing with the problems of day
to day life. Every long lived drama, with all its crudity in
its form gave prominence to “the strong passions, the soaring
idealism, the faith in man’s lofty stature and his proximity
to the gods of the upper air and the bewildering mixture of the
serious and ludicrous”. It is these that make the very life
and account for the theatrical strength of great masters like
Kalidasa, Shakespeare, Aeschylus and Sophocles. Their plays,
even as great artistic creations counted for their strength
and longevity, on popular support. The professional stage—
believed in popular support and catered to its taste, but it
looks that the amateur stage has lost more than gained in
its pursuit for realism. The modern playwright has to take
stock of the situation and must make efforts to get back
again to higher altitudes.
At least in the immediate present it looks that the future of the drama of Kannada depends on Amateur theatricals until such a time 'when the professional theatre of a bigger order comes into being'. The Amateur stage, therefore, needs to consolidate itself. Instead of being 'incidental' as a part of Festivals, Association annals and College gatherings, it has to acquire more strength and attain a higher status by providing wholesome entertainments. It has to revise the false notion of catering only to the classes and should try to find the source of its strength in popular support.
It is said that it is not a healthy condition of mind to glue itself to the pages of the past deeds and past glories. The progress is in LOOKING AROUND and LOOKING AHEAD. Yet a look back now and then may be necessary to assure oneself that the life line is intact.

Such an occasional look back would reveal that the theatre of the Kannada Land could be accounted for a thousand years from now. It must have flourished in the ancient past in two branches, one catering to the common people and the other to the learned audiences of the court. It is possible that the former developed the pure native (Deshi) mode of entertainment while the latter accepted and staged the all pervading Sanskrit Prose drama and sometimes, its translations. In addition, the court developed a particular type of Dance-drama resembling the modern Kathakali; a Dance drama that resulted perhaps out of the intimate contact with the Deshi entertainment of the common people. The particular mode of the people's entertainment seems to have saved its soul through the times in spite of exterior alterations to form the folk theatre of the recent times. The recent Folk Theatre manifested in different theatrical modes and the typical of them, Yakshagana and Doddata inspired into existence the Professional theatre of both Maharashtra and Karnataka. The Professional theatre did lead a life of colour and pomp and contributed to bring about the professional theatres of Andhra and Tamilnad. Later, when a literary revolt swept over the country, the professional theatre came to be dubbed 'out-modeled' by the
'progressive minded people' who took to the new social drama
of ideas which was meant to picture life as life and not as
dream. In the 1940s, the Karnataka theatre seemed to be at
cross ways—depending on new sources of strength for self
sustenance. In accordance with the tendencies of the time
and taste, the theatrical emphasis changed from phase to phase.
If the emphasis has been on the grandeur of portrayal in the
folk stage, it is on the talents of the actor in the professional
stage and the potentialities of the playwright in the amateur stage. All the three phases of the Kareaka
theatre have been living together side by side, each catering
to its own specific audiences.

Taking a look back again into the most recent past, one
beholds dark days on the Kannada theatre in the decade that
preceded the Indian Independence: may be, it was the darkness
before the dawn. The Folk theatre was ignored as crude and
monotonous, the professional theatre looked sapped out and the
Amateur theatre was not treated with due regard though it
tirelessly staged social plays at every Gathering and Meeting
on almost every evening. The theatre seemed to have lost its
soil, and yet the country was not wanting in forceful playwrights,
talented stage artists, sympathetic critics or responsive
audience. Each one of them blamed the other like—"The producer
is greedy, the actor selfish, the critic indifferent, the
audience ignorant and every one of them suffers from ego and
jealousy". It looked as if the rejuvenation of the theatre

was far too beyond the country's fortunes. The society looked bored with the seemingly diseased and anaemic patient of the theatre, the then government ignored it and the actor groaned under the heaviness as if under a dead weight.

It is the Indian Independence that brought considerable warmth and new light and the theatre does not look so desperate to-day. After tearing the shackles of foreign bondage, every region of the country seems to have mustered up its strength for preserving and fostering its own art and culture, to present in all its richness, the Indian diversity in unity. The Government also have extended the hand of co-operation to lift up the theatre from the abyss. As never before, the Central and State Governments openly came forward by creating the Song and Drama Unit on Governmental level, by arranging Regional Drama Competitions and the Youth Festival, which have alerted the conscience of the professional and amateur theatres all over the country, and encouraged each region to put forward its best art-form of the theatre vying with the others. This naturally should shake up the theatre of its load of dust. State Governments, particularly of Bombay, have come forward with plans of building Play-houses - mostly open air theatres wherever feasible - in important cities, and the Kannada theatre is bound to benefit by this. The Government of Bombay have extended financial grants to recognised troupes - mostly amateur troupes - in different cities to motivate them into theatrical activity in rural areas. It is laudable again, that the playwright is given a fillip by the competitions arranged by the State and Central Governments.
Thus, a look around brings the light of hope into the eyes of the theatre because of the determination of the Administration to resurrect the 'fallen art.' It is necessary that the three formidable branches of the theatre—need to be dealt with entirely on different footings when extending the much needed support, for each one of them fulfills its own purpose and the three together make up the theatre of Karnataka. A word may be specially said about the professional theatre which can yet remain the most vital of art-institutions if revived and rejuvenated. It is the professional troupe that dedicates its entire life to the cause of the stage. It lives both in the village and the city—interpreting one to the other. It pleads for not placing it on the same footings with the wellfed cinema with regard to the entertainment tax. The Administration which is interested in reviving the theatre at all efforts and expenditure may respond as well, to this desperate cry of the professional stage.

Looking ahead with the light of hope in its eyes, the professional stage pleads for elevating the economic condition of its actor. It is he more than others that slaves for the stage to interpret the arts and culture of the land to the present generation, and to bring the joys of life to the society. It is unfortunate that he has always remained unacknowledged. He has no fixed income to live on; he has no security of service and in fact, he is not treated with any consideration. What of the average actor when great masters like Varadachar, Peer and even Garud ended their days in poverty and hunger! He is not paid sufficiently, he can
ill afford a comfortable family life and it is perhaps true, the saying, that an actor is an actor because he is unfit for any other profession! It is the immediate responsibility of the state and society to stabilise his position, prescribe his income, schedule his hours of work and thus, tone up his health and broaden his outlook.

The economic condition of the playwright is not a whit better than that of the actor. Of course, it is difficult to find a playwright who is not something else in profession because he could not live if ever he depended entirely on the stage. Naturally, he cannot direct all his interest and energy towards writing for the stage which does not pay him. Many an individual who has considerable dramatic in him and theatrical insight, forceful language and mastery in the technique of employing ideas and words chooses to write a novel or even a short story than a stage drama, for, the former earn money for him. The playwright, at best has to hang on dangerously to the professional troupes, — themselves impoverished— for earning his living. He is the interpreter of the country's art and culture; he, with his plays is to infuse the people into new experiences and bring the joys of the theatre to them; he is to move the people into action and guide the society in the proper path, but he is just not cared for by the society, not with any deliberation but with a costly indifference. The society should soon find the substitute for the royal patronage, under the safe wings of which he wrote in the past, plays worthy of the country.
The society has yet to realise that the actor is a part of its own self and stop treating him as a foreign element and jeering at his helpless condition. On the other hand, it has to change its outlook towards him and his profession to add up strength to one of its own limbs, the stage. It has to realise that a sound and healthy theatre brings lustre to the society itself and a new vision to its eyes. Speaking from a practical point of view, if every member of the society determines to resurrect his colleague and determines to witness the professional play but once in the season, paying for it, the economic condition of the theatre should improve considerably, and the spectator will have not lost but gained in the bargain.

The Kannada country has to LOOK AROUND. The professional stage of the very neighbouring Maharashtra has not remained in the condition of its counterpart in Karnataka. It has picked up in spite of the film and the new play. The success is owing to several factors, the prominent of which is the people's own interest, for, they OWN their theatre with a pride and recognise it as a potent institution of the region's art and culture. Both the Press and the critic are very much alive to the theatre. Secondly, the stage is infused with a new look every year by the stage-plays written in response to the annual offering of a good prize in money (Rs. 1,200/-) to the best piece of literary work produced in the year. Thirdly, the Drama Festivals conducted in Bombay bring to the stage, scores of plays - old and new - produced by troupes drawn from all over the region. While providing a feast of talent to the society, the Drama Festival adds to the strength of the stage. Another noteworthy achievement of the Festivals is in its having narrowed down the distance

between the stage and the screen, almost reminding of the
close co-operation between the west and particularly in England. After all, it is the stage that supplies the screen with the playwright, the actor and the musician, and in fact, it is the stage that can be more living with flesh and blood than the shadows of the screen. A co-operation between them strengthens both while the lack of it weakens only the stage. Knowing this, the Marathi stage has seen to it that every noted screen actor and actress remains the artist of the stage also, particularly in the Annual Festival. Artists themselves eagerly avail of the opportunity of appearing on the stage for it brings them the immense joy of a direct contact with the people who adore and honour their talent.

This type of a beneficial intercourse between the stage and the screen is of particular significance to Karnataka where every artist seems to treat the stage as a platform for his basic training which qualifies him for the screen. And when he becomes a screen-artist perchance, he seems to have nothing but indifference to the stage. The stage is not below the dignity of the screen artist. The revolution made by the stage in contemporary times under the guidance of Prithviraj Kapoor, the leader of Prithvi Theatre- an amateur troupe for that matter- clearly indicated that a talented and ingenious artist can always make the stage more attractive and powerful than even the screen. The Kannada land has yet to wait for a savant like Prithviraj who can be indifferent to the screen in preference to the stage, all too rationally.

The social and cultural institutions of the Kannada land should exert themselves to bridge the distance between the stage and the screen.

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1 It is true that Drama Conferences were organised previously in Karnataka starting from 1929 at Dharwar and later at Bangalore, Navalagund and Bellary. It has not been an annual affair, nor has it been on a region-wide scale and the screen artist is far away from it.
The society can further give an impetus to the classical drama in the interest of finding a place for it by arranging anniversaries of the country's noted playwrights and artists—who deserve as lofty a place as the leaders and politicians, for the former also slave for the country's joy and cultural advancement. Anniversaries of playwrights like Shantakavi and Basavappa Shastri and artists like Varadachar and Sandi-gour will bring back their own plays and their own roles on the stage again; they bring the facts of their lives to light again and tone up the theatre of the region.

It is true that there is a need for an influential and representative central institution to guide all these activities in the cause of the theatre, to bring about a nearer home consciousness among the people of their theatre and their duty to it. The aims of the Indian National Theatre and the Theatre Centres are the same. But what ever be the name, it is after all the people that provide the necessary strength to such institutions. When they urge for it in the interest of the art of the country, they are sure to get it, for that is the vogue in a democratic country. What may seem a miracle will surely materialise when the people ponder over it and the need now is to make the people ponder over it. This is to be done by determined individuals be it an artist, a playwright, a civilian or a servant of the State.

Educational and Cultural Institutions owe an obligation to the theatre for the benefit of the art and culture of the country with which they are so intimately connected. Their
service to the theatre could as well be a part of their work. It is true that institutions like the Vidya Varshaka Sangha, Karmada Sahitya Parishat and the various Karnataka Sanghas have put in a considerable effort in the cause of the theatre. Their service is all the more precious now, at a time when there is the opportunity for the theatre to stabilise itself on account of the supporting hand of the Government and the new conscience kindled both in the society and the artist. Educational institutions are to take the initiative in placing the worthy art of the theatre on a befitting pedestal. The theory and practice of drama is a substantial subject of academic interest and such a study may inspire the ambitious to take to the stage. The University of Mysore has inscribed a Chair for the study of Dramaturgy thus giving a formal status of dignity to one of the most worthy of the country's arts.

The cultural institutions and Universities of Karnataka need to preserve the story of the theatre by collecting and publishing plays and other precious material including biographies of eminent playwrights, artists and producers. It will be an academic service to the literature of the region. They have to build up a Museum of the relics of the Karnataka Theatre consisting of scripts and tangible remains; they should have Research Rooms to conduct experiments in the art of colouring, costumes and lighting. They should have libraries with the latest books on dramatic works of the world. All this will bring a grand picture of the great diversity in the unity of the theatre; a grand picture that trains the artist
in the individual.

This brings about another much discussed point as to whether there is a real need for training in the art. It is presumed that an artist is BORN and NOT MADE, and the theatre of a country depends on its luck. It is said that the art of acting is not for academies for, the actor’s University is the world; but treatises and rules must be made for at least the average capacity, though not for the exceptional. Even the Conservatoire of France or the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art of England does not give genius to those who have it not, but they teach the art of employing one’s natural gifts, the conscience of diction, the use of gesture, control and development of voice and penetration into the psychology of a personage and of a part. As Sir Gobm Tree said "you cannot communicate to a flower the secret of existence; you cannot teach a plant to grow; but the careful gardener can, by fostering it, by training it and training it, by plucking up the choking weeds, by lopping up superfluous branches, enables it to develop healthy, to flower in perfect beauty and to bring forth fruit in due season. So we shall hope by means of the School to train the student, to pluck out the dangerous weeds of trickery which set him, to lop of superfluous branches of conventior, so that in due time the nature within him may blossom forth and come to fruition." Such training may make the young man come if not first, first in the line. Every profession calls for study and prescribes training and the art of the theatre, delicate as it is, certainly needs such
training and the Kannada country has to contemplate on an Academy of Dramatic Art. Theatrical enthusiasts of Bangalore are moving in the matter.

The theatre of Karnataka looks ahead to such external support, the fruit of an all round co-operation between the State, the society and the educational and cultural institutions. Its internal strength is to be provided by the artist, the playwright, the producer and the critic. Its glory and the country's benefit depends on those who are so directly connected with it. They have to heed to the warnings of the time.

The professional troupe itself will have to rise in stature befitting the nobility and the sacredness of the profession. As Shaw said, "the Theatre like a Church is a place where people congregate together. If one could not get the people to learn the noblest lessons of life in Church, you must give them a Theatre in which they could learn these lessons." To fulfil this great ideal, the theatre needs stability, a stability that depends on a consolidation of the professional troupes. The troupes will have to organise themselves into a potent strength in order to give better service to the country. Democracy has taught the individual that his strength is in his union with other individuals. Artists of Karnataka, playwrights and producers will have to come together and galvanise themselves into a single beneficial organisation. Through such a unity, the art gains strength; it stabilises the position of the artist and
disciplines his living. The strength of the organisation will be immense when it convinces the country of its sacred cause.

Apart from the central organisation, each troupe, by itself will have to become an organic unit and not hang on to an individual artist or playwright. It will certainly have to CARE for the taste of the people—its patrons, though not CATER to it all too readily. Once the harmonious relation is established with the people on a firm footing, the theatre can GUIDE the popular taste and teach it to distinguish the worthy from the unworthy.

The Theatre, particularly the professional theatre has now to convince the country of its efforts to move further from where it stopped decades ago. It HAS to become aware of the theatrical amenities and technical devices provided by the west and avail itself of them, for it is an imitation all too worthy for self advancement. The theatre can by all means respect the ancient play but not the antiquated methods of portrayal.

Now, in the year 1934, it is to be admitted—the bitter reality, – that the Kannada Land has not got a play-house worthy of its name, let alone a fully equipped stage with a revolving or wagon stage-device. It is a fact that by 1911, London alone had 67 imposing and tasteful play-houses and the United Kingdom had a total number of 738 of them apart from 311 Music Halls. Nearly 46 thousand people earned their living from the stage. England spent
every year well more than £ 25 million on entertainments. This is but an example of the importance given to the theatre by a civilised country. The play-house itself is to be made a worthy hall for the audience to sit and enjoy the performance. This is apart from providing comfortable green-rooms, lounge and ready settings and scenery. If the film could achieve tasteful and comfortable showing houses, the stage can also do it. The beautiful art of the theatre deserves and demands a tasteful showing place if it really has to impress as 'beautiful'.

The playwright, and it is he that CREATES the theatrical art and the artist in one sense. It is profitable for him and the art if he is in close touch with the pulse of the people. He will experiment on new themes and modes indeed, but not at the cost of the extant modes and manners. He will strive harder to make the play "The Thing" as Shakespeare put it. With consideration he brings beauty and force to the art when his approach is gentle, deviation is convincing and his creation is sustaining.

It is true that the NEW THEATRE before the mental eye is glamorous, but it can not be said that it stops within the realm of an ideal dream-land. It can materialise when there is an all round effort and sacrifice on the part of all that care for the art, the State, the society, the

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1 Paper by M.V. Isawa Iyoy, on "The Stage as a Potent Factor" read in the II Drama Conference convened by the A.D.A. in 1921. Reports.
cultural and educational institutions, the troupe itself, the individual artist, the critic and the playwright. Such a co-operative effort will recreate the great institution of theatrical art and particularly the professional stage which makes the bulk of the theatre and stands unique to interpret the culture and art of the region. It links the village with the city and contributes considerably in making the theatre a potent factor in the scheme of NATIONAL EDUCATION. What is being pleaded for is already achieved in other countries and quite visibly, even in other regions of India like Bengal and Maharashtra. The Kannada land has to look around, has to look ahead at least now and recreate its theatre; a theatre worthy of its past and worthy of the glorious art and culture of the region; a theatre that guides the society, exhilarates the artist and ennobles the spectator.