

NINASAM

**Sri. Nilakanteshwara Natya Seva Sangha Reg.,
Heggodu, Sagara, Karnataka 577 417**

ANNUAL REPORT 2010-11 (English Version)

submitted before the Annual General Meeting
held on 21 August 2011

Welcoming all the members to the Annual General Meeting, the executive committee is pleased to present before you the annual report for the year 2010-11.

Establishment:

NINASAM (Sri. Nilakanteshwara Natya Seva Sangha Reg.,) was established in 1949 and was registered under the Societies Registration Act of Karnataka in 1956, under Reg. No. 1527:57-58:4-4-1957.

Membership:

There are provisions for annual and life membership in this organisation and the total members at the end of 2010-11 are: Total number of life members: 113 (living 88; deceased 25). Of the living 88: male 67, female 21; of the deceased 25: male 25, female 0

Fixed and Movable Assets:

Ninasam which include its sub organisations -- Ninasam Theatre Institute, Ninasam Chitrasamaja, Ninasam Samskriti Shibira etc.,-- has its land at the place where Bheemanakone, Heggodu and Honnesara revenue villages, converge (Holding - Bheemanakone - 2 acres appx., Heggodu and Honnesara - 1.5 acres - Total 3.5 acres). The buildings include - the equipped Theatre, Shivarama Karantha Rangamandira, The office, a bus shed, Theatre Institute building, Canteen, Guest house with one open well and a tube well, in one part of the land and the Theatre Institute building complex, boys' hostel, girls' hostel, open air theatre in the other part. The movable assets include -- furniture, set-sound-light and other stage equipment, books and audio visual material, a bus, two gensets, a new bus, two pumpsets and materials in the kitchen and guest house.

Part 1:

NINASAM ACTIVITIES - General:

Ninasam Theatre Institute

Ninasam began the Theatre Institute in 1980 with the aim of providing quality theatre arts education in Karnataka, and through the local language of Kannada as the medium of instruction. Offering a 10-month diploma certificate course, which is loosely modelled on the three-year bachelor's course of the National School of Drama, New Delhi, the Institute takes in 15-20 trainees every year. A strictly

residential, full-time activity with an intensive schedule all through its duration, the course places equal emphasis on theory and practice of theatre arts. Recognized by the Karnataka State Government, the Institute receives grants on a permanent basis from the Dept. of Kannada & Culture. The examinations are held by the Karnataka State Board of Secondary Education, which awards Diploma in Theatre Arts to the trainees every year. The Institute has built up essential infrastructural, technical, and library facilities as well as a group of qualified teaching and technical staff. These are supplemented by visiting faculty from outside the institute, experts from both within and outside Karnataka.

Important activities of the Institute during the reporting year were as follows:

- April 29-May 2, 2010: Students of the Ninasam Theatre Institute (NTI) presented their exercise production *Taalikattokkooleene?*, a Kannada play written by TP Kailasam and directed by KV Akshara;
- 7-15 May 2010: A nine-day theatre festival featuring five productions prepared by the 2009-10 batch of NTI trainees and four productions from other centres/groups which had NTI alumnus as directors/actors was organised on these days. The NTI plays were (1) *Neerina Taana*, based on the Japanese playwright Otashogo's *Water Station*, and directed by Shankaran Venkateshwaran (2) *Aashadhada Ondu Dina*, a Kannada version of the Mohan Rakesh Hindi play *Aashadh ka ek din*, directed by Venkataramana Aithala (3) *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a Kannada version of the Shakespeare classic, directed by KR Omkar (4) *Hamlet*, a Kannada version of the Shakespeare masterpiece, directed by Mahadeva Hadapad and (5) *Taalikattokkooleene?*, a Kannada play written by TP Kailasam and directed by KV Akshara. The four productions from other centres/groups which had NTI alumnus as directors/actors were (1) *The Lady of Burma*, a play based on the life of the Burmese leader Ang San Suki, written by Richard Pannon, (2) *Aatankavaadiya aakasmika saavu*, a Kannada translation of *Death of an Anarchist* (3) *Copenhagen*, a play by Michael Freyn (all the three plays were directed by Prakash Belawadi, and performed by Centre for Film and Drama (CFD), Bangalore) and (4) *Kanasinavaru*, a Kannada play by Naa. Shrinivasa, directed by Ganapathi Hobalidar for the Surabhi troupe of Baindoor, Udupi District.
- 27, 28 September 2010: NTI students staged their exercise production of the Greek classic *Medea* by Euripedes; the Kannada translation was by Dr. K Marulasiddappa and the director was Manju Kodagu, an alumnus of the institute.
- 16, 17, 18 December: NTI students presented their exercise production of *Saambshiva Prahasana*, a Kannada play by Chandrashekhara Kambara, directed by Gopalakrishna Deshpande, an alumnus of the institute.
- 12, 13, 14 February 2011: NTI students staged *Saavu mattu raajana kudure savaara*, a production in Kannada of a play by the African writer Wole Soyinka; the play was translated by JN Tejashree and the production directed by Rajeev Krishnan.
- 26, 27, 28 March 2011: NTI students presented *Namagoo nimagoo hrudayada baagilu teredavare illa!*, a theatre production based upon selected poems of SR Ekkundi, a celebrated Kannada poet; script and direction were by KV Akshara.

Ninasam Tirugata

A theatre repertory project, Tirugata was begun in 1985 as a way of continuing and extending the theatre education offered at the Ninasam Theatre Institute. Composed mostly of the alumni of the Institute, Tirugata is a semi-professional troupe with about 20 trained, full-time employed and paid artistes/technicians who tour the length and breadth of the state putting up performances of three/four chosen plays every year.

The project, which recently completed 26 years, has, over these years, staged in all 85 productions covering a wide range of genres, styles and source-languages. Of these 85 plays, 28 have been original Kannada plays, 8 theatre adaptations of original Kannada literary works, 19 plays from other Indian languages, and 30 translations or adaptations of Western dramatic/literary works.

Around 300 artistes/technicians have been members of the troupe so far. Most of them were trained at our theatre institute, and they represent virtually every part of Karnataka. So far, Tirugata has performed at more than 260 centres in all, out of which roughly 80% have been rural or mofussil ones. Tirugata has so far travelled about 2,50,000 kilometres visiting all districts of the state, and putting up around 3400 shows. About 20.27 lakh people have watched these shows.

The plays that Tirugata 2010 performed during its tour schedule from 10 October 2010 to 19 April 2011 were: (1) *Othello* (a Kannada translation of Shakespeare's play, directed by Jehan Maneckshaw and (2) *Shoodra Tapaswi* (a Kannada play by Kuvempu, directed by Manjunatha Badiger.

Anusandhana:

Culture Sensitisation Classes for Roopasri College Students

As a voluntary cultural organization working in the field of arts for over five decades Ninasam has always felt that art-appreciation training for the youngsters who make up the college students community is an urgent need of the hour. These students are subjected to a generally dispiriting kind of book-centred, exam-oriented curricula, which, instead of stimulating their intellectual and artistic faculties, turns them into mechanical morons. Besides, the modern media, especially the electronic forms, blunt the natural powers of discrimination of the youngsters by constantly bombarding them with sensationalised news, glamorous images and addictive trivia. As a result of this sad impoverishment of their mental life, this generation remains largely ignorant of, and uncaring about the really significant historical events and processes that shape their own present and future.

As a way of countering this deleterious impact, Ninasam has been planning and executing, in its own modest way, several projects for the student community. An important addition was made to these projects this year, with Ninasam conducting a series of culture sensitisation sessions for a group of 55 selected students (40 girls and 15 boys) of a local college, the Roopashri Junior College, Heggodu. Titled 'Anusandhana', the year-long project, which ran from 15th July 2010 to 12th February 2011, consisted of 3-hour sessions held every week, mostly on Saturdays and sometimes even on Sundays. These sessions, which the college authorities incorporated as an integral part of their regular academic time-table, aimed at introducing students to the basics of appreciation of theatre, cinema, literature, music and visual arts. All the classes were either activity-oriented or made substantial use of audio-visual material. Apart from the Ninasam staff and volunteers, some of the visiting faculty who were at Ninasam on other assignments when the sessions were being held also offered their services as resource persons at these sessions.

Both the participating students and the college authorities found the project extremely useful, and they have requested that it be continued in the year 2011-12, too.

Oorumane Utsava (The neighbourhood Festival)

5, 6, 7, 8 March 2011: *Oorumane Utsava*, a neighbourhood cultural festival begun four years ago, was held under the auspices of Ninasam on these days. Artistes and cultural groups from Ninasam's immediate surroundings presented a large variety of items that included folk songs, dances, ritual observances, classical dance and music recitals, plays, exhibitions of photographs, paintings and art and craft works. As in the past years, this created an atmosphere truly festive, attracting as it did a phenomenal number of people from the local community both as presenters of programmes and audience.

Other Programmes held under the auspices of Ninasam:

- 11 May-8 June 2010: A summer theatre camp was held under the directorship of S Raghunandana, Bangalore, and 32 enthusiasts from different parts of Karnataka took part in it. Two productions were prepared and staged as part of the camp, and these were *Bhagavadajjokeeyam*, directed by Mahadeva Hadapada and *Payanada Kathe*, directed by Manju Kodagu.
- 5 July 2010: Janamanadaata, an amateur theatre troupe based in Heggodu presented *Oorukeri*, a theatre production based on an autobiography of the same name of the Dalit Kannada writer-activist Dr. Siddalingaiah.
- 16 July 2010: A special programme, now an annual feature on the Ninasam calendar, was held in memory of late KV Subbanna, a co-founder and the guiding spirit of Ninasam, who passed on this day five years ago. The programme consisted of a special lecture on the topic Kalidasa-Abhijnaana by Vidwan Umakant Bhat, a Sanskrit scholar and two performances, on 16 and 17 July, of *Agalida Alake*, a theatre production based on a composite form of selected portions from several Kalidasa plays, staged by the Ninasam amateurs troupe and scripted and directed by BR Venkataramana Aithala.
- 29, 30, 31 July 2010: A series of *taalamaddale* (a local performing art) sessions were held on these days, for the benefit of the new entrants to the theatre institute and the theatre repertory members as well as the general public. *Bheeshmavijaya*, *Krishnasandhaana*, *Taamradhvaja Kaalaga*, *Shambookavadhe*, *Paadukaapradhaana* were some of the episodes dealt with at these sessions which were presented by a group of invited artistes.
- 22 January 2011: Ninasam hosted *Kasturba*, a one-woman show by Smt. Shashikala, Mysore, an alumna of the NTI; Shashidhara Bharighat was the director.
- 18, 19 February 2011: A programme consisting of an exhibition of photographs taken by AN Mukund, Bangalore and a screening and discussion of two films –*Colour of Paradise*, by Majid Majidi (Iran) and *Mukhaputa*, by Roopa Iyer, Bangalore, was held. Mukund and Roopa Iyer interacted with the audience.
- 9 March 2011: Ninasam hosted a performance of Moliere's *Tartuffe*, in Kannada, directed by Prasanna and enacted by Charaka, a self-help group based at Bheemanakone, a neighbouring hamlet.
- 10 March 2011: A yakshagana performance of Kalidasa's *Meghadoota* was presented by a local all-women's troupe from Gotagaru, a nearby village.
- 11 March 2011: A yakshagana group of the neighbourhood presented a programme of yakshagana bhagavatike (singing and narration).
- 29, 30, 31 March 2011: Ninasam organised a series of special lectures on *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana* by Lakshmeesha Tolpadi, a renowned Sanskrit scholar.

Ninasam Mathukathe

'Ninasam Mathukathe' is a quarterly house journal that Ninasam began publishing in 1987 with the aim of circulating news about its activities amongst its members and friends as also of sharing with them some of the writings/debates it considered were significant to our times. Now in its twenty-fifth year of publication, the little magazine is distributed free to members of Ninasam and its regular resource persons while for others it is available for a modest annual subscription.

Part 2:

NINASAM ACTIVITIES - Hivos Funded

Project 1: FELLOWSHIPS

This part of the project awards fellowships to experts from outside Ninasam for teaching/working at Ninasam and it also has provisions for sending teachers employed at Ninasam for specific training activities outside Ninasam. During 2010-11, we used the funds under this head to invite ten persons (4 for senior and 6 for junior fellowships) instead of five as originally proposed. Details of the Fellowship component of the project for this year are as follows:

SENIOR FELLOWSHIPS (4 of 1 month's duration each, as against 3 proposed in the project):

These were awarded to

- Jehan Maneckshaw, a young theatre director from Mumbai, trained in UK and US as a director and theatre administrator, to direct a play for Ninasam Tirugata for its 2010-11 season, during August 2010. He directed Shakespeare's *Othello*, a production which was taken around Karnataka between October 2010 and March 2011.
- Manju Badiger, an alumnus of the Ninasam Theatre Institute, who now works in Bangalore as a freelance theatre worker. Manju Badiger was invited to direct a play for Ninasam Tirugata for its 2010-11 season, during September 2010. He directed *Shoodra Tapaswi*, a Kannada classic play by Kuvempu, which Tirugata performed across Karnataka between October 2010 and March 2011.
- Rajeev Krishnan, well known theatre director from Perch, Chennai. Krishnan was invited to conduct for the students of Ninasam Theatre Institute classes on play-making and improvisation during January-February 2011. Working with the African Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka's play *Death and the King's Horseman*, Krishnan developed a production, which was performed by the students.
- S. Raghunandana, noted theatre director and teacher from Bangalore, for conducting intensive acting training sessions for the students of Ninasam Theatre Institute during January 2011.

SENIOR FELLOWSHIPS:

These were awarded to

- Chandramma R, for a period of 10 months. Chandramma, an actress who has worked with Ninasam Tirugata for the last several years and is also an alumna of NTI, was invited to be with Tirugata, both as an actress and as a 'rehearsal coordinator'. She worked with the Tirugata group all

through its tour, overseeing the rehearsals every day, making elaborate notes, sharing with each actor her observations on the quality of his/her performance, and thereby helping towards an improvement in the overall quality of the troupe's performances.

- Gopalakrishna Deshpande, for duration of 6 months. Deshpande, an alumnus of our theatre institute and also an actor with our repertory for the last several years, worked as an assistant director with Jehan Maneckshaw during his production of *Othello* with Ninasam Tirugata. He later worked with the students of the Ninasam Theatre Institute, directing a play, *Sambashiva Prahasana* by noted Kannada playwright Chandrashekhara Kambar, for them during December 2010.
- Yatish N., for a period of 6 months. Yatish, an alumnus of the Ninasam Theatre Institute and an actor with our repertory for the last several years, worked as an assistant director with Rajeev Krishnan during his production of *Death and the King's Horseman* with Ninasam Theatre Institute. Yatish also worked with the students of the Theatre Institute on acting training.
- Mahadeva Hadapada, for a term of 3 months. An alumnus of the Ninasam Theatre Institute, Mahadeva now works as a teacher with the Sanehalli Shivakumara Theatre School. Mahadeva was invited to conduct a one month workshop in the small village of Hebbail, near Heggodu, for a local villagers' group. He worked with the group during February-March 2011, where, apart from conducting theatre games and various other basic theatre exercises with villagers who were going on stage for the first time in their lives, he also prepared an hour-long abbreviated version of Bertolt Brecht's *Three Penny Opera* with them. The production was staged at *Urumane Utsava*, the neighbourhood festival that Ninasam organised in April 2011.
- Susheela M.P., for a term of 3 months. Susheela, an alumna of the Ninasam Theatre Institute, now works as a freelancer. As a junior fellow with Ninasam during the previous years, Susheela helped organise our costume and property departments. This year, the departments needed some more organising work – such as arrangement of props – and Susheela carried out the task.
- Dakshayani Bhat, for a period of 3 months. An alumna of the Ninasam Theatre Institute, Dakshayani Bhat now works in Bangalore as a freelance theatre worker. As fellow, Dakshayani Bhat was invited to conduct a one-month workshop in the small village of Kuruvante, near Heggodu, for a local villagers' group. She had earlier worked with the group during February-March 2010, and the present project was a follow up activity. She worked with the Theatre Institute after this project.

Project 2: CULTURE CONFERENCE 2010

CULTURE CONFERENCE

Held every October, the Culture Conference has been one of our flagship annual events. So far five such Conferences, those of 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010, have been held with Hivos assistance. Here is a report about the 2010 Conference, which comes under the reporting year.

CULTURE CONFERENCE 2010

Held from 3rd to 9th October, 2010, the Conference, like its previous editions, composed of two interrelated segments: (1) day sessions, running from 9.30 am to 6 pm, which had lectures, discussions and demonstrations, a large majority of which centred on the theme of the Conference, while the remaining were used for imparting to participants basic skills in art appreciation and sensitising them to

important socio-cultural issues of the day (2) evening sessions, from 7 pm to 10 pm, devoted to performances of various kinds as part of a week-long public cultural festival.

THEME NOTE

Ninasam chose 'Youth Today' as the theme for this year's Culture Conference for a variety of reasons, besides the most immediate reason that over the last many years youngsters have come to form the most significant part of the participants at the Conference. First, world over, there is an unprecedented projection of the younger generation in the present times, leading to a general perception that the world belongs to the 'generation next' like it seldom did before. Second, in India in particular, in almost every field of activity, youth is increasingly being seen as the age-group that can and will redefine and reshape the nation. Third, young technologies and media like the internet, the computer, the cell phone, and television dominate our worldscape and they in turn are ruled over by youth. Fourth, the ever-accelerating speed of life in our world seems to particularly favour the youth brigade, while making those who cannot catch up with it feel disadvantaged. Fifth, there is an exuberant celebration of youthfulness across all media today, as reflected in programming and advertising. Sixth, corporate powers have been constantly trying to turn the constituency of the youth into their monopoly, as evidenced by their relentless wooing of the age-group. At the same time, however, there are views that sharply contrast with some of the ones mentioned above. There is, for instance, a general complaint that today's youth, lost in its own virtual world, shows little concern about the hard realities around it; that the idealism and activism exhibited by the youth in many parts of the world just a few decades ago have either dissipated or transmogrified themselves into soulless materialism and rapacious consumerism of today. Having lost their links with their traditions and communities, today's youth, another observation goes, falls easy prey to manipulators of minds like terror-teachers, lifestyle gurus, market messiahs, or proponents of pure individualism.

What really is 'youth'? Is it a stage of life or a state of mind? Does it relate to the body or reside in the spirit? How far is 'youth' an autonomous category and how much is it attached to other categories? How much does or can 'youth' derive from tradition and how much would tradition be a drag upon it? How accurate are the abovementioned observations and conceptualisations made about 'youth'? What are the challenges that today's youth face, what is unique about them, and what are the possible ways of engaging with them? These were some of the questions that prompted Ninasam to choose 'Youth Today' as the focal point of this Conference.

LECTURES

In her inaugural address Rajni Bakshi, activist and writer of acclaimed books like *Baapukuti* and *Bazaars, Conversations, and Freedom*, outlined some of the challenges and choices before the youth today. At a time when an ecological crisis and a socio-economic crisis seem to be impending, she said, one had to have clarity about one's aspirations and find a via media between the extremes of asceticism and hedonism, two unnatural approaches that some equally foolish groups are peddling today. Using the song *Kisiki muskuraaton pe ho nisaar, kisiki dard mil sake to le udhaar* from the Raj Kapoor film as an emblematic antithesis of the philosophy of pure self-advancement and greed projected by the honcho of the film *Wall Street*, where he says that he will never be content unless he is making more and more money forever, Bakshi pointed out that we cannot make the world a better place even for our own selves without making it so for others, too. Competition, which market economy used for purposes of capture of others and self-gain, she suggested, should rather be used for creativity and sharing of the fruits of creativity. There already were encouraging signs that such a paradigm shift was taking place in

many spheres of life. The insistence of the Greens movement upon a cradle-to-grave responsibility in the case of manufacturers of modern goods was one such instance. Another was the voluntary simplicity movement, which has a strong following even in a country like the USA. Similar signs were evident in some capitalism-driven sectors, too, and there was no better illustration of this than in the approach adopted by such open-source software proponents as the Linux group which was in sharp contrast to the monopoly mentality of Microsoft. Further, the Internet and the World Wide Web, initially created to serve secretive military systems and having now broken their shackles, were now showing unmistakable signs of their democratising potential. They were helping in an unprecedented exchange of information and knowledge across the globe, and were instrumental in an increasing reclamation of the creative commons by the common people. It was true, she admitted, that there were many fundamental problems with the internet revolution, but then, she observed, all technologies were promethean in nature, generating as many dilemmas as the boons they bring to us. It was, therefore, up to us to make discriminating, positive use of them. The youth was, and had to be, an integral part of this exploration of alternatives, said Bakshi, ending with a quotation from a poem by American farmer, poet, and activist Wendell Berry where he says that the job of saving our planet will be humble and humbling, demanding of love and pleasing, where everyone and every act will be too small to be rich or famous.

In his lecture titled 'Youth and Revolution' Sundar Sarukkai, who specialises in the philosophy of science and social sciences, offered an analysis of the history of the relationship between youth and revolutions, in particular over the last one hundred years. The biological young, he said, had allowed their youthfulness to be harnessed for both constructive and destructive purposes in the last century, as testified by transformative events such as the French students' uprising, the anti-Vietnam war protests in American universities, the fight against racism in South Africa, or the several revolutions in South America on the one hand and violent events like the two world wars, the innumerable other little wars, and the countless acts of terrorism, on the other. Even by a conservative estimate, a massive 160 million youngsters had lost their lives in these incidents, fighting for establishments they had little control over and for causes of which they had no full understanding. It was true in a general sense, Sarukkai said, that to be young was to be revolutionary, but its sad inversion was that being young also meant dying young in the case of those unfortunate youth. In recent years, one particular aspect of youth was being highlighted in its different dimensions by different people for diverse purposes. The entertainment and consumer goods industries loved to equate youth with 'idiocy' and supremacy of heart over brain (witness the success of films like *3 Idiots* and the Diesel jeans advertisement campaign which invites one to 'be stupid'). The arts and scientific communities liked to relate the 'stupidity' of youth with uninhibited creativity. Some political sections preferred to read it as a mental disposition that is fresh and unburdened by the past, as reflected in the Indian Home Minister's statement when the Allahabad High Court delivered its recent, controversial judgement in the Ayodhya case where he said that the Indian youth, which now makes up about 70% percent of the nation's population, liked to move beyond the dispute, for the simple reason that, having been born after the Babri Masjid demolition, it carried no memories of the bitter past but dreams about the future. At the same time, however, the idea of 'revolution' itself was getting commercialised, thanks to the growth of consumer culture. Thus, Che Guevara, arguably the most celebrated youthful revolutionary of our times, was found more on the t-shirts of our youngsters than in their hearts and minds. Another danger came from our educational system which by forcing youth into becoming unquestioning, robot-like pupils and careerists reduced their natural 'revolutionary' potential and made shift from being 'youthful' to 'useful'. Further, in the particular case of India, where youth had still not freed themselves of the influence of parents, family,

and tradition to the degree that many other youth of the world had done, it was a point open to debate whether Indian youth could not match the levels reached by their counterparts elsewhere, whether they had to be viewed as a different, unique set of youth or to be measured by the standards set by those others, and whether we Indians as a whole continue to be conservative, Sarukkai concluded.

Manu Chakravarthy, teacher and culture critic from Bangalore, in his lecture on 'Culture Discourse and Youth', provided the participants a perspective on the complexities involved in defining the phenomenon of culture. An inherent problem with most theorisations about culture today, he said, was that, subtly controlled by power relations, they did not pay attention to the multiple dimensions of culture and tended to endorse and promote hierarchic structures. Approaches to culture that attempted to privilege one or the other among the categories of the past and the present, the classical and the folk, the traditional and the modern were all fraught with peril. One has bear in mind that culture is as much a product of discordance and conflict between collectives and individuals as of harmony between them, as indicated in the history of creative acts and processes all over the world where later artists have constantly critiqued, rewritten and reinterpreted long-accepted classics of their communities in order to better articulate the experiences and challenges of their own times. And the challenge of our times, a very new kind of challenge that has emerged post-1990s, Chakravarthy pointed out, was that state, capital, corporate powers were all becoming highly depersonalised and culture had to evolve new means of resisting their attempts to devalue and appropriate it.

Speaking on 'Contemporary Indian Theatre & Young Directors and Artistes', Shamik Bandopadhyaya, a Kolkatta-based scholar with diverse interests, dwelt at length upon the challenges facing young Indian theatre workers today and the ways in which these could be met. The first such challenge, he said, was the increasing homogenisation of theatre forms today. On one side, theatre in pre-colonial and colonial India was characterised by the co-existence of a diversity of forms that had no hierarchy among them; they were all unique but not inferior or superior to one another. On the other side, the distinct variety of modern Indian theatre co-evolved with the Indian freedom struggle, and was therefore, imbued with a sense of national pride and driven by a desire to assert one's cultural identity. Certain developments over the last few decades, however, were threatening to erode the foundations of the above two edifices. First, attempts are being made at the international level to privilege metropolitan theatre over other forms, forcing the latter to try and fit themselves into a standardised format. Second, state agencies and corporate powers have taken to projecting only some theatre forms on both domestic and world stages, thereby turning theatre from being an interactive, interrogative activity into pleasurable spectacle, a commodity of consumption. Such severing of the ties that theatre forms had with their local context, language, and community in order to make them products of global saleability now puts the very soul of the art form in peril. The attempt to convert theatre into a form of business investment, a capitalist enterprise that began in 18th century England now find a continuation in the migration in hordes of the graduates of India's most prestigious state institution, the National School of Drama, to Bollywood and television. Hastening this sad decline is the shocking attitude towards culture shown by the Indian state, as found in the much-trumpeted report of its National Knowledge Commission. The Commission, entrusted with the responsibility of identifying various forms of knowledge and suggesting ways and means of preserving and strengthening them, leave alone consider culture as a possible form and source of knowledge, does not even give it a separate entry. Instead, it lists it under the section title 'tourism', and goes on to discuss it as 'creative industry', a manufacturer of entertainment products that could be commercially exploited. The only way out of this depressing context, Bandopadhyaya passionately argued, was for committed young theatre workers to return to

their communitarian sources, their local bases, much as most acknowledged masters of modern Indian theatre had done when faced with similar crises. The political neutralisation of theatre effected by state and corporate powers could best be reversed through cultural means, he concluded.

In his lecture titled 'Today's Youth: Possibilities and Potentialities', Shiv Visvanathan, social scientist and activist, argued that virtually every knowledge discipline today had utterly failed to understand 'youth' both as a concept and a form of spirit and offered pointers as to how 'youth' could be used to extend the frontiers of human experience and experimentation. 'Youth', Visvanathan lamented, had been hijacked by a set of forces, which were backed either by corporate powers or by fundamentalist outfits, and reduced to being merely a hyphen, a prefix or a suffix. In total disregard for its right to an autonomous existence, 'youth' was increasingly being used as a substitute for or counter to 'age', as a category of consumers, or a source of terror. The 'poverty of times', which is one of the direst forms of poverty of our times (in that it gives us no option but to live with only one, standardised idea of time) was forcing 'youth' to live in a reductionist world that celebrates the ideas of linearity of time, indisputable progress, innovation but denies, even denigrates, a sense of ethics, sense of history, sense of civilisation, and ethics of memory. It was this impoverishment of the imagination that lay, directly or indirectly, behind the tragedies of our times like the Gujarat pogrom or the unbridled consumerism. Such appropriation of 'youth', Visvanathan argued, could be reversed only by giving 'youth' a new hermeneutics, a new set of meanings that go beyond the dictionary meanings and a space where irony and ambiguity are relished and inventiveness and playfulness revered. Further, the fact that 'youth' and 'youthfulness', far from being the preserve of the physically young, manifested themselves even in the aged, often more potently than in the former, should compel us to redefine the very concept of 'youth'. Since 'youth' was not just a stage in life but an incorporation of a variety of aspects like body, time, and language, 'youth' should be encouraged to write its own 'constitution' – a document that would map out its anxieties as well as aspirations, its material preferences as well as ethical concerns, in its own idiom and on its own terms. This process, involving as it would, not only one's imagination but one's imaginary, too, Visvanathan concluded, would teach us all the value of 'multi-verse', a space where life, livelihood, lifecycle, lifeworld, lifestyle, and life-vision would all become interconnected.

UR Ananthamurthy, director of the Conference right from its beginning, typified, at the age of 78, youthful vitality in a manner that no teenager could hope to match, both through his two lectures and his interventions at other sessions. While his interventions forced the speakers and the audience to dig deeper into their resources, his lectures set standards that no intellectual-ethical enquiry could ignore. His lecture on *Koopamandooka*, a celebrated poem by Gopalakrishna Adiga, a great modernist Kannada poet was a master class in both practical criticism and culture studies. Adiga, Ananthamurthy recalled, was facing a deep crisis of creativity when he came to write the poem, which even as it represented utter powerlessness and bitter self-criticism also dug a way towards self-diagnosis and self-regeneration. It was this capacity for self-rejuvenation even in the most frustrating circumstances that made writers like Adiga relevant to youth of all ages, said Ananthamurthy. In his valedictory address, referring to the several crises afflicting our times, Ananthamurthy observed that these were not just social, economic, and political crises but civilisational, cultural and ethical crises. With utilitarianism taking hold of India now, every sphere of life was being desacralised. Corruption and criminalisation were leading to a progressive depoliticisation of politics; consumerism was forcing an irreversible degradation of the environment; the unchecked rise of corporate power was threatening to devalue both agriculture and culture; and the commercialisation of religion was turning us into vacuous spirits. With the state itself playing agent to global financial forces, the very fabric of democracy and autonomy were

in peril. The demons of fundamentalism, communalism, and terrorism were denying even the most basic dignity of life to the common people. Still, not all hope was lost, Ananthamurthy observed, because certain civil society initiatives were raising hopes of renewing our old battles with anti-democratic, anti-life forces. The youth, he said, had to shoulder a major responsibility in this fight, and also in reinventing and reshaping our common future. Youthful zest and idealism had shown just such a capacity for social transformation in many instances in the last century, but they had also degenerated after a period of promise. Yet, despite all its roughness and blundering, youth had the kind of immense dynamism that was beyond the wise, but mostly static age. Today's youth, Ananthamurthy concluded, had to season its raw energy and spontaneous action with an understanding of the shortcomings of those failed revolutions, so that it could better contribute to the cyclical evolution of the human, and a humane, civilisation.

LECTURE-DEMONSTRATIONS

There was one lec-dem session at the Conference this year. TM Krishna from Chennai, who gave an outstanding Carnatic vocal recital at the cultural festival, interacted with the participants the following morning in what turned out to be an equally remarkable session. Sharing some most interesting anecdotes and personal experiences with regard to music and musicians, Krishna offered brilliant insights into the way generations of youth can, and have negotiated with the tradition of classical music and the manner in which an old performing art keeps revivifying itself through the infusion of young blood.

OTHER THEME-SPECIFIC SESSIONS

Beside the lecture-and-discussions on the theme of the Conference, there were three other sessions focusing on the same theme but in a different way. They were panel sessions where young writers, all under forty years of age, read some of their creations or parts of them and responded to questions and observations from the participants and resource persons. These were

- Ja. Naa. Tejashree, Arif Raja, 'Phoenix' Ravi, all Kannada poets
 - Ram Ganesh Kamatham, Indian English playwright and Asaram Lomte, Marathi short story writer
 - Raghunatha Cha. Ha., Kannada writer and journalist and Anindita Sengupta, Bengali writer
- All the three sessions were moderated by Vivek Shanbhag, a well-known Kannada writer and editor of 'Deshakaala', a Kannada literary quarterly

(Even a majority of the performers/directors/filmmakers featured at the Conference were consciously chosen on the basis of their being under forty. For instance, Manjunatha Badiger and Jehan Maneckshaw, who directed, respectively, 'Shoodratapaswi' and 'Othello', two of the three plays put up by Tirugata, the Ninasam theatre repertory, were both sub-forty. So were T M Krishna, Carnatic vocalist and Nagabhooshan Hegde, Hindustani singer, who performed at the festival. Abhaya Simha, director of the award-winning Kannada feature film 'Gubbachchigalu', belonged to the same age-category while the short documentary films that Gowtham Sonti and Sanjay Mattu, both filmmakers and film teachers screened and discussed at the Conference were all made by artists/activists below forty.)

THEATRE SESSIONS

In addition to the plays performed at the evening-time cultural festival, three other plays were presented during the day-schedule of the Conference. These were

- 1) *Oorukeri*, a production based on the autobiography of Dr. Siddalingayya, one of the most acclaimed Dalit writers in Kannada and performed by Janamanadaata, a theatre group based in Heggodu;
- 2) *Copenhagen*, a play by Michael Freyn and performed by CFD, Bangalore; and
- 3) *Kira Kolambu*, enacted by PERCH, Chennai.

FILM SESSIONS

The film segment had two components. The first one consisted of a screening and discussion of a Kannada feature film, *Gubbachchigalu* (Sparrows), a best children's film national award winning work by Sri Abhaya Simha, a young director. The second component focused on non-fiction films made by very young, upcoming Indian artists/activists. Filmmakers and film teachers Dr. Sanjay Mattoo and Sri Gowtam Sonti, who handled this session, presented four short films made by amateurs as well as professionals. These works dealt with some of the basic issues of today's youth, like student body elections; violence that cynical, entrenched politicians unleash against student leaders who are growing into public fighters; the sense of liberation that even an ordinary trekking trip can bring to a group of young middle- and lower-middle class girls, so far confined to their homes, domestic chores, and tradition-imposed personality modes; the immense suffering and hesitation that a boy experiences when he decides to reveal to his mother that he has homosexual preferences and the initial shock and anguish and the later reconciliation and acceptance of a new reality on the part of the mother. The films about students-and-politics, in particular, generated an engrossing debate about issue. While there was divided opinion amongst the participants, who, to repeat yet again, came from different age-groups, over such questions as whether students should restrict themselves to academics or engage actively in politics or try to evolve an alternative mode of cultural politics, over such apparently negative developments as the criminalisation of politics, the exploitation of students for selfish ends by politicians, the creeping in of corruption even in high academic institutions, the whole debate was given another, larger perspective by resource persons Sanjay Mattoo and Shamik Bandopadhyaya, who located not only the films shown at the Conference but also the entire genre of independent and documentary films on sensitive issues in the wider socio-political context.

PHOTO EXHIBITION

There was also, as with last year, a photo exhibition, titled 'Young Photographers' held on the sidelines of the Conference.

INTERACTIVE SESSIONS

(1) EARLY MORNING SESSIONS: The early morning sessions, added to the regular schedule of the Conference last year, where participants got to spend the time more creatively than merely taking a constitutional or enjoying the rural scenery or stretching their limbs upon cold, drizzly mornings were continued with this year too. Here the delegates had a chance to sharpen their skills in three different fields of activity according to their passion—theatre, dance, and photography. Experts KS Rajaram and AN Mukunda (photography), Channakeshava (theatre), and Charan (dance and movement) volunteered their services at these sessions whose informality itself proved to be their great strength. As has been the case with most of the sessions at all our Culture Conferences, these sessions, too, lasted longer than the stipulated period, spilling over into the breakfast time, lunch and tea breaks, and leisure hours. Also, each of the three groups put up a performance/exhibition showcasing what it had imbibed over the week.

(2) DISCUSSION OF PLAYS: As every year, the Conference had specific time-slots where the plays put up at the evening cultural festival were discussed in an open-house session the following morning. As always, these sessions were some of the liveliest and enriching ones, mainly because of the completely manner in which they were conducted. Participants – forming one of the most heterogeneous groups to be found anywhere at such courses – were invited to share their responses to the plays, to pose questions or seek clarifications about them in a free manner; knowledgeable moderators controlled the proceedings with as much good humour as discrimination; resource persons and special invitees contributed with their own observations and questions at nodal points of the discussion. All this made for an invigorating blend of spontaneity and variety, innocence and experience, youthful zest and mellowed wisdom.

CULTURAL FESTIVAL

The programmes presented as part of the cultural festival held in the evenings of the Conference were as follows:

1. *Shoodratapasvi*, a Ninasam Tirugata theatre production of the play by Kuvempu, one of the foremost writers and thinkers of modern Kannada; directed by Manjunatha Badiger, an alumnus of the Ninasam Theatre Institute,
2. *Othello*, a Ninasam Tirugata production of William Shakespeare's play, directed by Jehan Maneckshaw, Mumbai,
3. *Agalida Alake*, a theatre production based on a composite form of selected portions from several Kalidasa plays, performed by the Ninasam amateurs troupe, scripted and directed by BR Venkataramana Aithala, an alumnus of the Ninasam Theatre Institute and presently a teacher there,
4. *Miss Meena*, a production by PERCH, Chennai, based on Durenmatt's *The Visit*, directed by Rajiv Krishnan,
5. Carnatic vocal recital, by Vidwan TM Krishna, Chennai,
6. Hindustani vocal recital, by Pandit Nagabhooshana Hegde, Sagara,
7. Kuchipudi dance, by Smt. Vyjayanthi Kashi and troupe, Bangalore,

A statistical overview of the people involved in the Conference:

- Total number of Participants: 171
- Male 103; female 68
- Students 121; Teachers 16; Professionals 24; Others 10
- Resource Persons: 30 (male 25; female 5)
- Performing Artists: 41 (male 29; female 12)

Project 3: EXTENSION WORKSHOP

Through this project, Ninasam, which has so far been imparting theatre training mostly in a highly formal mode, proposed to do the same in a less formal, yet equally committed mode as well, so that, besides expanding the range and nature of its work, it could also meet a long-standing need of a very large section of the Kannada theatre world today. The intended beneficiaries of this project were socio-cultural and theatre activists working in different parts of Karnataka, who cannot afford the kind of a full-year, rigorous, formal training that institutions like our Ninasam Theatre Institute offer for various practical reasons. The project consisted of an extension workshop focusing on the fundamentals of the art and craft of the theatre medium and addressing the specific needs of these activists. It paid special

attention to the particular needs and aspirations of activists from non-urban centres, who, in their work with various kinds of cultural and social organisations, need theatre training to enhance the quality of their engagement in community development but sadly lack opportunities of receiving even short-term informal training in the theatre medium. The project also set up a platform where groups and activists could rethink the strategies of theatre both as an art form and a tool of mass communication and develop a creative interaction amongst themselves and other like-minded community organisations in Karnataka.

Structure and Nature:

The Workshop was held over 26 days, from 11th May to 6th June 2010, with S. Raghunandan, freelance theatre activist, Bangalore as the director. The resource persons included Umesha Acharya, Geetha Siddi, Girija Siddi, M.P. Hegde. Manju Kodagu and Mahadeva Hadapada, all experienced theatre practitioners.

The workshop covered both theoretical and practical aspects of theatre and included both physical and intellectual activities. The early morning sessions that ran from 7 am to 9 am consisted of physical training through yoga, several folk dance forms and voice exercises. The morning sessions that ran from 10 am to 1 pm were classroom sessions where lectures were given and discussions held on such topics as Theatre Concepts, Communication Theories, Theatre as language; Theatre and other arts; Basic concepts in Aesthetics; History of Drama/Theatre, covering various ages of Western, Indian, and Kannada Drama and Theatre; Realism, Naturalism and Post-realism trends. The afternoon sessions, from 2.30 pm to 4.30 pm, were devoted to presentation of various audio-visual materials related to theatre. The evening sessions, which lasted from 5.30 pm to 9 pm, were practical sessions, where the participants did work, both onstage and offstage, and as two separate groups, over two separate productions. (There were two different productions prepared precisely to enable all participants get some onstage experience) These productions, *Ondu Payanada Kathe*, a play based on Brecht's *Exception and the Rule*, directed by Manju Kodagu and *Sule Sanyasi*, a translation of the Sanskrit classic *Bhagavadajjueeyam*, directed by Mahadeva Hadapada, were both performed before the public at the culmination of the workshop.

Participants:

In all, 32 participants attended the workshop, of whom 12 were women and 20 men. These were chosen from a pool of applicants whose number was roughly 3 times the number of participants. In geographic terms, almost all the 29 districts of Karnataka were represented by these participants, of whom more than 70% hailed from places smaller than district centres. The age of the participants varied between 18 and 37, but a significant number of them were below 30. More than half of the participants were self employed and many of the rest were employed in teaching and other fields. Some of the participants were directly involved with NGOs working on various projects related to development, and a majority had some connection at least with a theatre or cultural group of their small town or village. The class and caste identities of the participants were not recorded, but it was quite evident that they came from varied socio-economic strata. We, therefore, feel a sense of fulfillment in that the project catered to a fairly large cross section of the Kannada community.

Beneficiaries of the activities:

The direct beneficiaries i.e., participants in specific activities held during the reporting period are:

Beneficiaries of Hivos funded projects:

- Culture Course: Total no. of participants: 171 (male 103; female 68)
Resource Persons/Artists: 71 (male 54; female 17)
- Ninasam Theatre Institute: Total no. of students: 20 (male 14; female 6)
- Ninasam Tirugata: Total no. of actors: 21 (male 17; female 4)
Estimated number of audience: approx. 75,000 in 25 districts of Karnataka
- Extension Workshop:
Total no. of participants: 32 (male 20; female 12)
Theatre groups from different parts of Karnataka: about 30
Guests and resource persons: approx. 10

Beneficiaries of other Ninasam projects:

- Oorumane Utsava:
Total no. of artists: 175 (male 85; female 90)
Estimated number of audience: 5,000 (approx. 60% male; 40% female)
- Ninasam Pratishtana Extension Workshops:
Total no. of workshops: 12
Total no. of participants: 744 (approx. 40% male; 60% female)
- Other Programmes:
Total no. of participants: approx. 650 (approx. 60% male; 40% female)

Indirect Outreach / Indirect Beneficiaries of Ninasam projects:

Ninasam Theatre Institute:

- Almost all district centres of Karnataka, and many of the taluka centres, too, have at least one alumnus of the Institute working actively there and this, in turn, has benefited local theatre activities, groups, and audience.
- Many alumni have provided a role model for youngsters of their areas to emulate, with the result that many such young enthusiasts join our institute, or attend our short-term workshops and courses held in their own, or nearby, places.
- A sizable section of the 600-plus youngsters who have passed out of the institute so far are working in media and television as well. They, observers have remarked, bring to their work a unique sensibility and sensitivity, which they sharpened during their training at the institute and this in turn has had a significant influence on general readers and viewers.

Ninasam Culture Conference:

- Delegates from educational institutions and cultural organizations from more than fifty places - most of them small towns – from all over Karnataka attend the culture conference. These groups regularly organise various kinds of socio-cultural programmes in their places and their delegates' experience of our culture course, as they have themselves acknowledged, has helped them in two ways: one, it has acted as a stimulus and a model and two, it has helped them identify a pool of human resources to connect to and draw from.

- In many cases, those who were participants at our culture conference have started new organizations, revived inactive ones or strengthened existing ones in their own places.
- Many of these groups have invited our theatre repertory to perform at their places and hosted our short workshops on literature and socio-cultural issues. Our culture conference has thus become a networking event for about fifty organisations in Karnataka.

The members and audience of these organisations have been the indirect beneficiaries of our projects.

Ninasam Tirugata:

- There has been a steady increase in the number of small towns in the state that have been doing significant theatre activities over the last decade and Ninasam Theatre Institute and Tirugata have been a major impetus behind this development.
- Several groups in Karnataka have started their own travelling theatre projects after the model of Ninasam Tirugata. Prominent examples in this regard are Kinnara Mela, Shivasanchara, Chinna Banna, Janamanadata and Aata Maata. All these groups have a large number of past students from the Ninasam Theatre Institute as their members.
- Ninasam Tirugata's visit, an annual event on the calendar of many small towns in the state for the past many years, has contributed its mite towards infusing a new confidence in the local troupes and keeping provincial towns culturally alive.

Again, the members and the audience of the organisations named above can be termed indirect beneficiaries of Ninasam's activities.

General Acknowledgements:

Ninasam has got help from an innumerable persons and organisations during the current year, including Governmental bodies and officers concerned, starting from the Heggodu Mandal Panchayat to the Govt. of India. We thank them all together here, while concluding this report.

Heggodu
20 Aug. 2011

T. Narayana Bhat
Secretary
On behalf of the Executive Board