



Unit - 1

Modern and Contemporary Indian Theatre

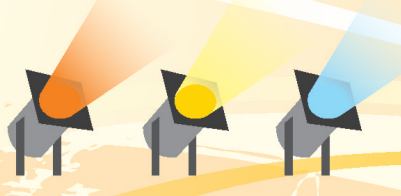
Medieval Indian literature was glorious, but it was an era of devotional poetry, which was a little indifferent to secular representation of life on stage. After the 10th century, Sanskrit drama lost its tenor as no longer strived through symbol and gesture to realize the truth behind human experience. Religious and social taboos against such forms of entertainment was also responsible for the decline of Indian theatre, and, therefore, drama remained in a state of oblivion. However, folk plays continued to entertain the audience.



With the advent of the modern period and the impact of western literature, drama took a new turn and developed as a form of literature. The Parsi theatre, around 1850, started staging plays based on Indian mythology, history and legends. The troupes, were travelling to different parts of the country, and made a tremendous impact on their audience. Agha Hashr (1880-1931) was an important playwright of the Parsi theatre. But Parsi plays were mostly commercial and crude. In fact, modern Indian theatre grew mainly as a reaction to its initial crudity and superficiality. Barotendu Harish Chandra (Hindi), Girish Chandra Ghosh (Bengali), Dwijendra Lal Roy (Bengali), Dina Bandhu Mitra (Bengali, 1829-74), Ranchodbhai Udayram (Gujarati, 1837-1923), M.M. Pillai (Tamil),

Learning Objectives: The learner would be able to:

- Know about the various personalities who helped in the growth of drama literature.
- Know about the theatre scene after independence
- Know in detail about the contributions of:
 - Bhartendu Harish Chandra
 - Rabindranath Tagore
 - Vijay Tendulkar
 - Mohan Rakesh
 - Dharamveer Bharati
 - Badal Sarkar
 - Girish Karnad
 - Dr. Shankar Shesh
- Know the details of some prominent plays:
 - Andheri Nagari Chaupat Raja.
 - Dak Ghar.
 - Ghashiram Kotwal.
 - Adhe Adhure.
 - Andhayug.
 - Evam Indrajit.
 - Hayavadana.
- Understand the importance of various art and cultural institutions which played an important role in progress of Indian theatre namely:
 - The Sangeet Natak Academy
 - National School of Drama
 - Zonal Cultural Centers
- Acknowledge the works of major theatre practitioners, who revolutionised Modern Indian theatre scene:
 - Ebrahim Alkazi
 - Habib Tanvir
 - Ratan Thiyam
 - K.N. Panikkar
 - B V Karanth
 - Bhanu Bhart
 - D R Ankur

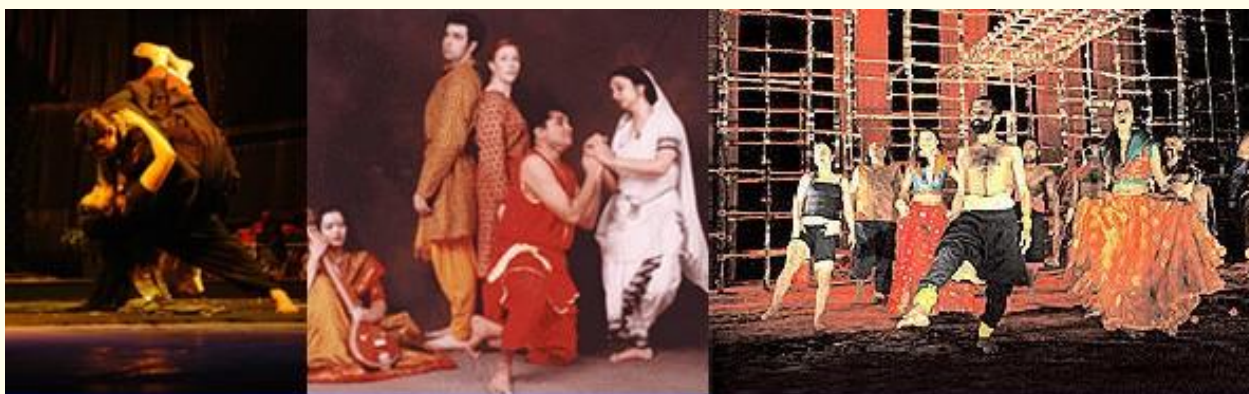




Balvant Padurang Kirloskar (Marathi, 1843-1885) and Rabindra Nath Tagore, delved into Indian folk tradition to create plays to protest against colonialism, social injustice and westernization. Jaishankar Prasad (Hindi) and Adya Rangacharya (Kannada) wrote historical and social plays to highlight the clash between idealism and the harsh realities by which they were surrounded. P.S. Mudaliyar gave Tamil stage respectability and a new direction. But in all, Indian literature before Independence was generally poor in drama. The making of modern theatre became complete only after India achieved independence in 1947.

The Indian Theatre after Independence

After independence, in the fifties, the disillusionment became more vivid because of the pressure of the disintegration of society and a broken relationship with India's past heritage. In 1946, India witnessed the worst bloodbath in the memory of the sub-continent, just before it became independent, after the partition of the country. India's nationalism at that juncture was a nationalism of mourning. At that time, a majority of new writers portrayed a dreadful artificial world, based on the formulas of western modernism. There were experimentalists who were concerned about the inner reality – intellectualism entered the realm of modernity. In a culture like India's, the past does not pass away. It keeps providing paradigms for the present, but the rhythm broke down because of modernistic experimentations.



So, when Mohan Rakesh's *Aadhe Adhure* premiered in Delhi in the late 1960s, the shock waves in the auditorium were palpable. Savitri, the central protagonist of *Aadhe Adhure*, unlike her mythological counterpart after whom she is ironically named, is the modern *grihalaxmi* (housewife). Not only does this restless and dissatisfied middle-aged mother of three grown children break out of the confines of the family home to enter the public space, she also becomes the breadwinner, reducing her unemployed husband to a redundant cipher. With this example play, Mohan Rakesh exploded the myth of the idealized and hallowed institution of the Indian marriage, perpetuated endlessly in novels, paintings or on stage.

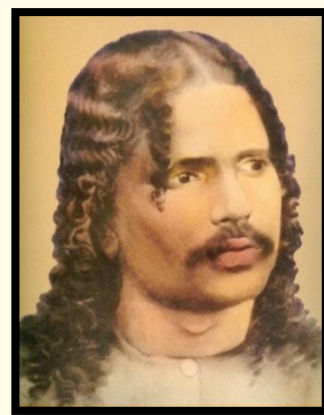




The underlying tone of despair in *Aadhe Adhure* seemed to unleash a remarkable spate of plays from the 1960s onwards by playwrights like Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad, Dharmveer Bharti, Badal Sircar, Adya Rangacharya, Mahesh Elkunchwar and Satish Alekar. Influenced by such diverse European and American writers as Henrik Ibsen, Anton Chekhov, Tennessee Williams, Harold Pinter, Samuel Beckett, Albert Camus, Luigi Pirandello and Garcia Lorca, new experiments in playwriting began to emerge. The following are the most notable playwrights who changed the modern and contemporary scene of Indian theatre:

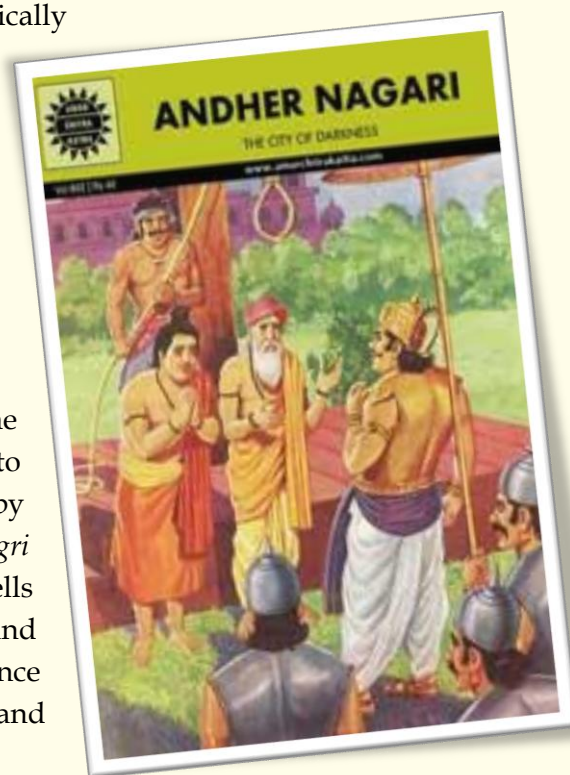
Bhartendu Harish Chandra

The early development of modern Indian theatre can be traced to the work of Bhartendu Harish Chandra (1850–1885), a theatre actor, director, manager, and playwright based in Varanasi (Banaras), who is also the father of modern Hindi literature as, in his short life of 35 years, he wrote eighteen plays. He always tried to represent India's poverty, sufferings of the people, human need and dependency, cruel exploitation and the middle class confusions through his great writings such as the journalism, several dramas, essays, poetry and short stories. Well-versed in folk theatre styles and oral literary traditions of the region, however his principle influence was the ancient Sanskrit drama, many of which he translated and established a stream of dramaturgy which has run parallel to the development of the Western drama, though he even translated a Shakespearean play. Rooted in the rising tide of Indian nationalism, he is most noted for his politically charged plays like, *Andheri Nagari* (City of Darkness) written in 1881, a clear satire on the British Raj, as it implied that a society, which tolerates a lawless state is doomed to fail, and *Neel Darpan* (Indigo Mirror) on the plight of indigo-plantation workers under the British Raj, which used the Dramatic Performances Act of 1876 to ban many such subversive plays.



Bhartendu Harish Chandra

Andheri Nagari Chaupat Raja: A boy once seeks the advice of his guru about going to a certain country to seek his living. The guru tells him not to go there by saying one line about that country "*Andheri Nagri Chaupat Raja; Takeh Ser Bhaji, Takeh Ser Khaja*". He tells the boy that there is a fixed price for spinach and dates and everything. The citizens lack intelligence and it is an undesirable place to live. The young and unwise boy goes away.





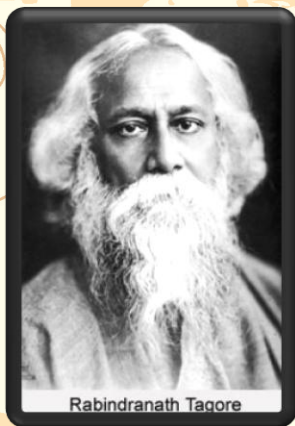
In this strange land, one day the wall of Kallu's house falls down and a goat of neighborhood gets killed by the falling bricks. The owner of the goat gets angry and files a law suit in the court. In arguing the case before the judge, he claims that his goat was merely falling it's nature and the wrongly constructed wall cause it's death, for which the house owner Kallu is liable. The judge following the strange code of justice asks the house owner why he should not be sentenced to death for the loss of the goat's life. The frightened homeowner uses the defense that, those who constructed the wall are the guilty party and thus the court frees him. The bricklayer is then summoned to the court and he says it is not his fault as he done his job well and the cement must have been of poor quality. The wrath of the judge and his distorted justice then descends on the cement mixer. He is accused of pouring too much water during the mixing. The cement manufacturer admits that it happened, but attributes it to his talk with and greeting of a passing *mullah*. While greeting the mullah, he forgot the mixing ratio of the cement and thus diluted it into a weak cement mixture. The judge calls the *mullah*. The honest man has no excuse and the judge pronounces death by hanging for the convicted *mullah*. The country's legally fixed size noose is brought to hang the guilty offender. Whatever the fault of the *mullah*, he is a god-fearing man who has not committed any sin. He is quite lean. His neck is thin and his head on the small side. The noose kept slipping off his head and neck. The irritated judge then gives a decision that since the circumference of the noose is unalterable by the national code, the only way for justice to be done, is to hang the first person whom the noose fits.

The newly arrived fat boy, feasting on the cheap dates is watching the show. His stout neck fits the noose. He is to be hanged in the public square the next morning. The desperate disciple boy sent an urgent message to his guru. The guru quickly arrives early morning at the public square and causes uproar by insisting that he be hanged instead of his disciple. The judge was taken aback at this strange demand, and, even the mullah suspected something mystery. They kept asking the guru for the reason and he refused. The judge then threatened him that if he refused he would be beheaded. The guru pleaded that he must be hanged. The guru confessed that on this day of the new moon, anyone who is hanged goes straight to heaven. The judge, then insisted since he is the judge, he has to decide who should be hanged. The judge decides 'he' (judge) be hanged himself. In the meantime, the news reaches the king. He changes the scene and directs that his monkey be hanged. The relieved guru and disciple promptly cross the border of the strange kingdom, vowing never to return. The play was translated in English by S S Misri.

Rabindranath Tagore

At twenty, he wrote his first drama-opera: *Valmiki Pratibha* (The Genius of Valmiki). In it, the sage Valmiki overcomes his sins, is blessed, and compiles the epic 'Ramayana.' Through it, Tagore explores a wide range of dramatic styles and emotions, including usage of revamped *kirtans* and adaptation of traditional English and Irish folk melodies as drinking songs. Another play, '*Dak Ghar*' (The Post Office), describes the child, Amal defying his stuffy and puerile confines by ultimately 'fall asleep', hinting at his physical death. A story with borderless





Rabindranath Tagore

appeal—gleaning rave reviews in Europe—*Dak Ghar* dealt with death as, in Tagore's words, "spiritual freedom" from "the world of hoarded wealth and certified creeds".

Tagore's other works fuse lyrical flow and emotional rhythm into a tight focus on a core idea, a break from prior Bengali drama. Tagore sought "the play of feeling and not of action". In 1890 he released what is regarded as his finest drama: *Visarjan* (Sacrifice). It is an adaptation of *Rajarshi*, an earlier novella of his. "A forthright denunciation of a meaningless and cruel superstitious rite", the Bengali originals feature intricate subplots and prolonged monologues that give way to historical events in seventeenth-century Udaipur. The devout Maharaja of Tripura is pitted against the wicked head priest, Raghupati. His latter dramas were more philosophical and allegorical in nature; these include *Dak Ghar*. Another is Tagore's *Chandalika* (Untouchable Girl), which was modelled on an ancient Buddhist legend describing how Ananda, the Gautama Buddha's disciple, asks a tribal girl for some water to drink.

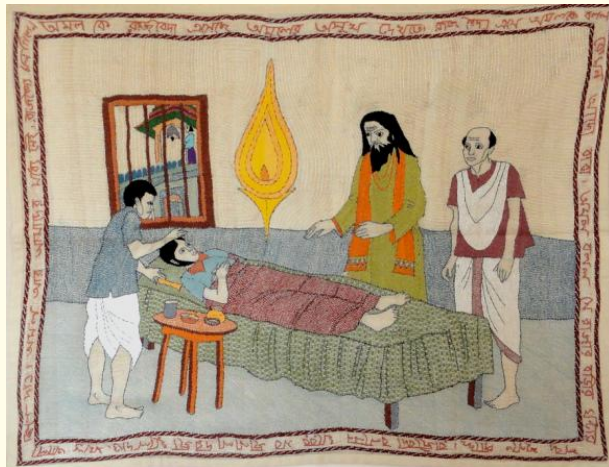
In *Rakta Karabi* ("Red" or "Blood Oleanders"), a kleptocrat rules over the residents of Yakshapuri. He and his retainers exploit his subjects—who are benumbed by alcohol and numbered like inventory—by forcing them to mine gold for him. The naive maiden-heroine, Nandini, rallies her subject-compatriots to defeat the greed of the realm's upper class—with the morally roused king's belated help. Skirting the "good-vs-evil" trope, the work pits a vital and joyous *lesemajeste* against the monotonous fealty of the king's varlety, giving rise to an allegorical struggle akin to that found in *Animal Farm* or *Gulliver's Travels*. The original, though prized in Bengal, long failed to spawn a 'free and comprehensible' translation, and its archaic and sonorous didacticism failed to attract interest from abroad. *Chitrangada*, *Chandalika*, and 'Shyama' are other key plays that have dance-drama adaptations, are known as *Nritya Natya*.

Dak Ghar: The story is about Amal, an eight year old boy who is terminally ill but confined indoors by the family physician. His only contact with the outside world is through his window. From there he watches village life, engages papers-by in eager conversation from the vantage of his open window and, fascinated by a new post office visible in the distance, gives his toys to some boys so that he may see them playing from his window, and is promised by the flower-seller's daughter, Sudha, that she will bring him some flowers. From the watchman, he learns that the big building with the flag is His Majesty's new Post Office, and, the watchman suggests, the King himself may send Amal a letter. He develops a fancy that he will receive a letter from the King, an obviously allegorical personage; He makes a new world for himself, by his imagination and insatiable curiosity. The village headman hands Amal a blank sheet of paper, which he claims to be a letter from His Majesty. Amal dreams of being a royal postman himself, delivering the King's messages all around. While he awaits a visit from the King, another doctor comes and orders doors and windows to be opened, so that the stars may shine in. As Amal slowly falls asleep, perhaps to die, Sudha keeps her promise, and brings him some



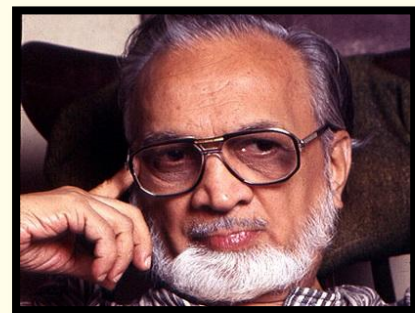


flowers. Amal represents the soul that has received the call of the open road. The play is a poignant tribute to the human spirit that gathers hope, even where there seems to be none. It symbolizes the whole human experience of the uncorrupted soul with its yearning and flights of imagination being trapped in the limitations of the body.



Vijay Tendulkar

Vijay Tendulkar was born on 6 January 1928 in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, where his father held a clerical job and ran a small publishing business. The literary environment at home prompted young Vijay to take up writing. He wrote his first story at age 6. He grew up watching western plays and felt inspired to write plays himself. At age 11, he wrote, directed, and acted in his first play. At age 14, he participated in the



Vijay Tendulkar

Indian freedom movement, leaving his studies.

The latter alienated him from his family and friends. Writing then became his outlet, though most of his early writings were of a personal nature, and not intended for publication.

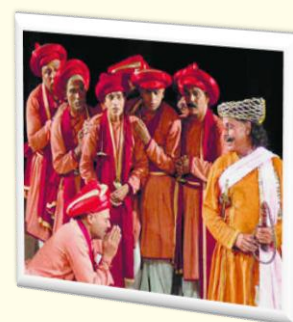
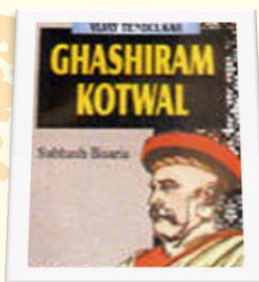
In 1972, Tendulkar wrote the acclaimed play, *Ghashiram Kotwal*, which dealt with political violence. The play is a political satire created as a musical drama set in 18th century Pune. It combined traditional Marathi folk music and drama with contemporary theatre techniques, creating a new paradigm for Marathi theatre. The play demonstrates Tendulkar's deep study of group psychology. '*Ghashiram Kotwal*' remains one of the longest-running plays in the history of Indian theatre.

Ghashiram Kotwal: Ghashiram Kotwal a play by Tendulkar showcased the corruption in the society during the Peshwa regime. His character of Ghashiram is a depiction of the working class in Pune and how the Brahmin supremacy prevalent then lead to the oppression of the lower classes. Tendulkar has subtly shown what power does to men and how they become





inhuman and greedy just to achieve it. The play has a historic context. The story begins with Ghashiram, a Kanauji coming to the city of Pune to try his luck and gain some money from the then rich city. His first appearance is in Bavankhanni, Pune, where he is dancing as a foil to Gulabi, a *lavani* dancer. Beginning as gulabi's servant, he graduates to becoming the servant of Nana Phadavnis, the antagonist who is the Chancellor of the Peshwa. Initially, Ghashiram is portrayed as an obedient servant to Nana but as time goes by, due to the ill treatment he gets from Nana, he becomes power hungry. He goes to the extent of sacrificing his teen daughter, Lalitagouri, to the old Nana only to secure the respectable post of the Kotwal.



Scenes from the performance of *Ghashiram Kotwal*

Ghashiram who is oppressed initially now becomes the oppressor as power evokes a need for the dominance in him. Tendulkar portrays the evils in the society during the Peshwa rule, corruption, power structure and the ignorance of the masses.

All in all, Ghashiram Kotwal is a timeless piece of writing. The issues that are primarily dealt with in the play still remain the same even after so many years. Women still continue to be the ruled ones and the caste conflict has now become the class conflict, where the rich dominate the poor and the cycle continues. It highlights the harsh reality that even when times change, human nature remains the same. Greed for money was, is and will always a part of human nature.

In 2004, he wrote a single-act play, 'His Fifth Woman' his first play in the English language as a sequel to his earlier exploration of the plight of women in 'Sakharam Binder'. In his writing career spanning more than five decades, Tendulkar has written 27 full-length plays and 25 one-act plays. Several of his plays have proven to be Marathi theatre classics. His plays have been translated and performed in many Indian languages.

By providing insight into major social events and political upheavals during his adult life, Tendulkar became one of the strongest radical political voices in Maharashtra in recent times. While contemporary writers were cautiously exploring the limits of social realism, he jumped into the cauldron of political radicalism and courageously exposed political hegemony of the powerful and the hypocrisies in the Indian social mindset. His powerful expression of human angst has resulted in his simultaneously receiving wide public acclaim and high censure from the orthodox and the politically powerful. Many of Tendulkar's plays derived inspiration from real-life incidents or social upheavals.





PLAY - Silence! The Court is in Session (*Shantata! Court chalu aahe.* - Marathi)

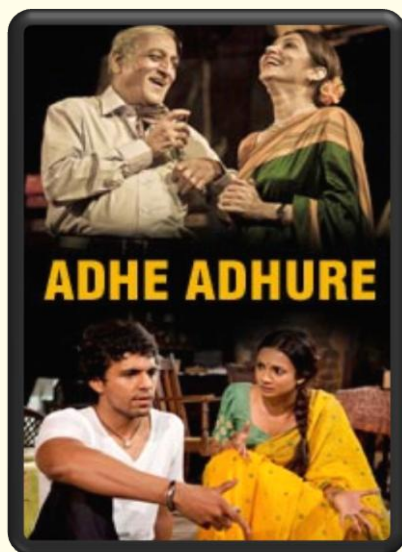
The play has since been translated into 16 languages in India and abroad. The BBC showed its English version, filmed by Satyadev Dubey. Actor-director, Om Shivpuri, directed the Hindi translation of the play as *Khamosh! Adaalat Jaari Hai*. The play had his wife Sudha Shivpuri in the lead role and is considered an important production in the theatre history of India.

Mohan Rakesh

Mohan Rakesh was born as Madan Mohan Guglani on January 8, 1925 in Amritsar, Punjab. His father, a lawyer, died when he was sixteen. He did his M.A. in English and Hindi from Punjab University, Lahore.

He started his career as a teacher, and he taught in two colleges and a school, edited a short story magazine before deciding to write full-time. His play, *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* (One Day in Aashad) (1958), played a major role in reviving Hindi theatre in 1960s and *Adhe Adhure* (The Incomplete Ones or Halfway House 1959) are highly regarded. His debut play *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* was first performed by a Kolkata-based Hindi theatre group *Anamika*, under director, Shyaman and Jalan (1960) and subsequently by Ebrahim Alkazi at National School of Drama, Delhi in 1962, which established Mohan Rakesh as the first modern Hindi playwright. His plays continue to be performed and receive acclaim worldwide.

'Leheron Ke Raj Hans' (The Swans of the Waves), the most noted play of Mohan Rakesh, an ancient Buddhist tale on the renunciation of the Buddha, and its after effects on his close family. His struggle over different versions of the play lasted for nearly 20 years, before creating his masterpiece. Prominent Indian directors Om Shivpuri, Shyaman and Jalan, Arvind Gaur and Ram Gopal Bajaj directed this play.



Scenes from *Adhe Adhure*

Mohan Rakesh's three plays *Ashadh Ka Ek Din*, *Laharon Ke Rajhans* and *Adhe Adhure* are famous; they were a rage in the world of theatre. His plays were the first choice of the directors of that time.

Play - *Adhe Adhure*: Mohan Rakesh's *Adhe Adhure* is probably one of the most significant plays to have been written in the Hindi language. Its appearance on the theatre scene in 1968 not only caused a minor sensation, but also gave rise to a new trend in playwriting.

The play is about a five-member family caught in the vicious net of destitution. Unable to come to terms with the situation, they become tearing, ranting sub-humans almost living off each other's misery.



Mohan Rakesh

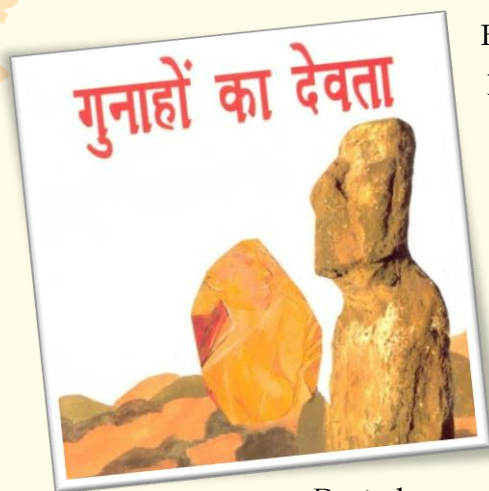




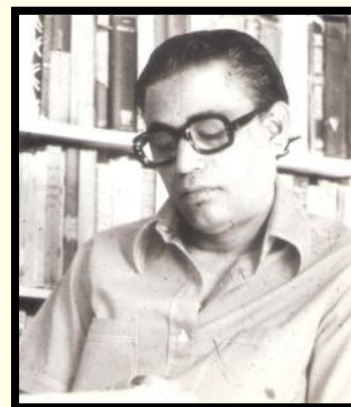
While the treatment of the situation is dramatically powerful, it is the searing language, the use of poignant silences pierced by verbal whip-lashes that is Rakesh's creative contribution. The play has been enacted in many languages besides Hindi. But so overpowering has been the form, that no director has ever attempted a reinterpretation of the content for fear of sacrilege. *Adhe Adhure* is a tragic comedy on the life of middle class people.

Dharmveer Bharati

Dr. Dharamvir Bharati was born in Allahabad on 25 December 1926 was a renowned Hindi poet, author, playwright and a social thinker of India. He did his MA in Hindi from Allahabad University in 1946 and won the Chintamani Ghosh Award for securing the highest marks in Hindi.



He was the Chief-Editor of the popular Hindi weekly magazine *Dharmayug*, from 1960 till his death in 1997. Dr.

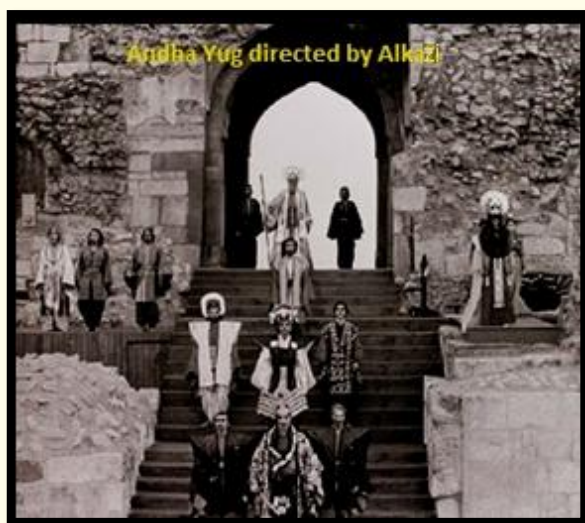


Dharamveer Bharti

Dharamvir Bharati made a deep impact on Hindi literature and is considered as one of the most renowned Hindi poets and writers of India.

Bharati was awarded the Padma Shree for literature in 1972 by the Government of India. His novel *Gunaho Ka Devta* became a classic. Bharati's *Surajka Satwan Ghoda* is considered a unique experiment in story-telling. *Andha Yug*, a play set in the time immediately after the Mahabharata war, is another classic that is enacted very often by drama groups. He was

awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in playwriting (Hindi) in 1988



Performance of *Andha Yug* at Purana Quila, New Delhi

Play in Poetry "Andhayug": *Andha Yug* (The Age of Blindness): Poetic play, structured on the events in the Mahabharata, *Andha Yug* focuses on the last day of the Mahabharata war. It is a powerful metaphorical theatrical work, performed by Ebrahim Alkazi, M. K. Raina, Ratan Thiyam, Arvind Gaur, Ram Gopal Bajaj, Mohan Maharishi, Bhanu Bharti and many other Indian theatre directors.

Andha Yug, the play begins on the eighteenth and last day of the Great Mahabharata War, which devastated the kingdom of the Kauravas,





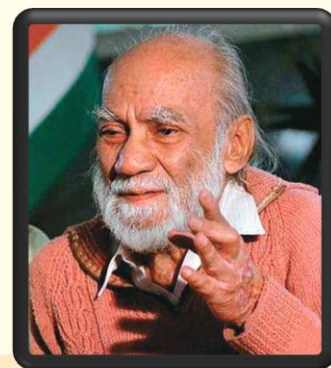
the feuding cousins of the Pandavas. Their capital, the once magnificent city of Hastinapur lay burning, in ruins, the battlefield of Kurukshetra was strewn with corpses, and skies filled with vultures and death lament. Fatalities were on both sides as the cousins killed each other. The survivors were left grieving and enraged as they continued to blame each other for the destruction even divine will, yet no one was willing to view it as a consequence of their own moral choices.

Just as Ashwatthama, son of guru Dronacharya, in one last act of revenge against the Pandavas, releases the ultimate weapon of destruction, the Brahmastra, which promises to annihilate the world, yet no one comes forward to condemn it. Ethics and humanity have been the first casualties of the war. Krishna, who mediated between the cousins prior to war, remains the moral centre of the play. Even in his failure he presents options that are both ethical and just and reminds that the higher or sacred way is always accessible to human beings even in the worst of times. The play ends with the death of Krishna.

Andha Yug highlights the perils of self-enchancement in his anti-war allegory. It explores human capacity for moral action, reconciliation, and goodness in times of atrocity and reveals what happens when individuals succumb to the cruelty and cynicism of a blind, dispirited age. When a ruler, epitomized by a blind Dhritarashtra, both physically and also by his ambition for his son Duryodhana, along with an equally blinded society, fail to recognise its own shadow side and that of their loved ones. It also elaborates on the consequences, when a society fails to step out of the cycle of revenge and instead chooses a redemptive path, which is always available even in worst of scenarios, as shown by Krishna's presence amidst the mindlessness of fellow human beings. It was only when they collectively reject the voice of wisdom that denigration of war step upon them, leading to a large scale bloodshed, hinting at the perils that await a society that turns away from its wisdom and instead succumbs to the logic of the moment that can be easily swayed by emotions. Bharati uses the war of Mahabharat to make an anti-war statement but also raises questions regarding moral uprightness in the wake of Partition-related atrocities, loss of faith and national identity. Some directors have even used it to bring out contemporary issues like the role of diplomacy in the present world.

Badal Sarkar

Badal Sarkar (Badal Sircar, born in 1925) is an influential Indian dramatist and theatre director, most known for his anti-establishment plays during the Naxalite movement in the 1970s. He has written more than fifty plays of which *Ebong Indrajit*, *Basi Khabar*, and *Saari Raata* are well known literary pieces, a pioneering figure in street theatre as well as in experimental and contemporary Bengali theatre with his egalitarian "Third Theatre", he remains one of the most translated Indian playwrights. While working as a town planner in India, England and Nigeria, he entered theatre as an actor, took up direction, but soon started writing plays, starting with comedies.



Badal Sarkar





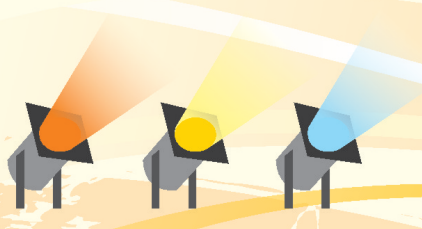
BadalSarkar did experiments with theatrical environments such as, stage, costumes and presentation and established a new generation of theatre called the "Third Theatre". In Third Theatre approach, he created a direct communication with the audience and emphasized on Expressionist acting along with realism. He started his acting career in 1951, when he acted in his own play, *Bara Trishna*, performed by Chakra, a theatre group.

Eventually, still employed in Nigeria, he wrote his landmark play *Ebong Indrajit* (And Indrajit) in 1963, which was first, published and performed in 1965 and catapulted him into instant fame, as it captured "*the lone liness of post-Independence urban youth with dismaying accuracy*". He followed them with plays like *Baaki Itihaash* (Remaining History) (1965), *Pralap* (Delirium) (1966), *Tringsha Shatabdi* (Thirtieth Century) (1966), *Pagla Ghoda* (Mad Horse) (1967), *Shesh Naai* (There's No End) (1969), all performed by Sombhu Mitra's Bohurupee group.

In 1967, he formed the "Shatabdi" Theatre group, and the first production he directed was *Ebang Indrajit* in 1967, a play about three people - Amal, Bimal, Kamal and a loner Indrajit. In the next five years of its existence, the troupe performed several of his plays and had a profound impact on contemporary theatre, especially after 1969 when it started performing plays both indoors and outdoors amidst people, and evolved the *angan manch* (courtyard stage) and inspired by the direct communication techniques of Jatra rural theatre form, to eventually become his "Third Theatre", a protest against prevalent commercial theatre establishment. Often performed in "found" spaces rather than rented theatre halls, without elaborate lighting, costumes or make-up, where the audience was no longer passive, rather participatory. It added a new realism to contemporary dramaturgy, retaining thematic sophistication of socially committed theatre all the while, and thus started a new wave of experimental theatre in India. In 1976, his group Shatabdi, started performing at Surendranath Park (Curzon Park), Kolkata on weekends. These open-air and free performances led to his troupes travelling to nearby villages on other weekends, where it used minimal props and improvised dialogues to involve the audience further into the performance.

Though he continued to hold his job till 1975, as a playwright, he rose to prominence in the 1970s and was one of the leading figures in the revival of street theatre in Bengal. He revolutionized Bengali theatre with his wrath-ridden, anti-establishment plays during the Naxalite Movement.

His plays reflected the atrocities that prevailed in the society, the decayed hierarchical system and were socially enlightening. He is a proponent of the "Third theatre" movement that stood ideologically against the state. The Third Theatre involved street plays, with actors being attired no differently than the audience. Also the formal binding of the proscenium theatre was given up. Sarkar's "*Bhoma*" is an example of a third theatre play, set as always, in an urban background. Starting with *Sagina Mahato*, which marked his advent into arena stage, his subsequent plays, *Michhil* (Juloos), *Bhoma*, *Basi Khobor*, *Spartacus* based on Howard Fast's





historical novel by the same name, were performed in parks, street corners and remote villages with the audience sitting all around.

Sarcar directed his last play in 2003, and after that his movements were restricted after a road accident, but even after eight years, in 2011, he continued performing at play readings and writing new works like adapting William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Sarkar was diagnosed with colon cancer in April 2011. He died on 13 May at Kolkata at the age of 85.

Badal Sarcar's *Evam Indrajit* as a play in the Absurdist Tradition

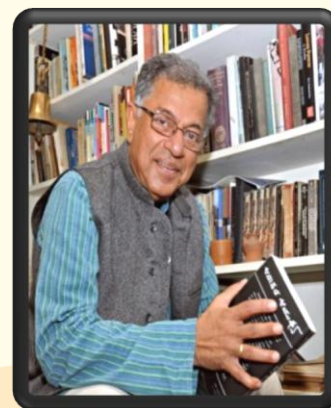
It is a typical absurd play such as Ionesco's *Amedee* or Beckett's "*Waiting for Godot*" in that it exemplifies the hollowness and futility of a pseudo-modern existence. The play keeps on echoing that "*our existence is a pointless particle of dust*". Therefore the play is unconsciously coloured with Sartrean Existentialism. The theme is evolved through the dreams, despair and disillusionment of the protagonist Indrajit.

The theme of identity crisis is echoed by the very title "*And Indrajit*". He is"*And Indrajit*", a part of the whole. "He" is described in terms of society, and not in terms of his own existence. He prefers to be called Amal, Kamal or Vimal, and conforms to the dictates of society or the doctrines of tradition. His identity is yet again questioned by his teachers by a mere roll number and He can therefore easily pose as Amal and answer his roll-call.

Therefore, the play is in the absurdist tradition in that, we do not comprehend anything significant, meaningful and traditional in it. Neither does it possess a logical or coherent plot. The inadequacy of language echoes the lack of meaningful human associations. The language verges on word-play and is playful at times. The dialogue becomes purposefully elliptical. Like Pirandello, Sarcar utilizes meta-theatrical techniques of writing a play within the play, and discovering the apt hero for the play. In *Rhinoceros*, Berenger remains the only human on Earth who hasn't turned into a rhinoceros and refrains from conforming like Indrajit. There is no realism, and the play rather portrays a psychological realism, where external conflict reveals internal chaos. There is no concrete characterization. The various characters around appear to be the projection of the protagonist himself.

Girish Karnad

Born on May 19, 1938, in Mathern, Maharastra, Girish Karnad has become one of India's brightest stars, earning international praise as a playwright, poet, actor, director, critic, and translator. His initial schooling was in Marathi. In Sirsi, Karnataka, he was exposed to travelling theatre groups, Natak Mandalis as his parents were deeply interested in their plays. As a youth, Karnad was an ardent admirer of Yakshagana and the theatre in his village. His family moved to Dharwar in Karnataka when he was 14 years old, where he grew up with his two sisters and niece.





After working with the Oxford University Press, Chennai for seven years (1963–70), he resigned and began writing full-time. Karnad is known as a playwright. His plays, written in Kannada, have been translated into English and some Indian languages.

His first play, *Yayati* (1961) chronicled the adventures of mythical characters from the Mahabharata, was an instant success and was immediately translated and staged in several other Indian languages. His best loved play, however, came three years later. By the time *Tughlaq*, a compelling allegory on the Nehruvian era, was performed by the National School of Drama, Karnad had established himself as one of the most promising playwrights in the country. He soon gave up his post at the Oxford University Press, deciding to focus all of his energies on play.

For four decades, Karnad has continued to compose memorable plays, often using history and mythology to tackle contemporary themes.

Hayavadana: *Hayavadana* is a 1971 play which drew thematic influences from Thomas Mann's 1940 novella 'The Transposed Heads.' Karnad has skillfully adapted the thematic plot to the Indian context, using the eleventh-century book of Indian legends, the Kathasaritsagara. The play seeks to question – *where does the 'self' sit*: In the mind or in the body? Hayavadana, a man with a horse's head, is trying to seek 'completeness' by fully emerging as a man. He is the offspring of a Celestial Being and a Princess, who seem to loathe his appearance. Hayavadana thereby becomes symbolic of a fragmented identity, which is very relevant today. Karnad explores existentialism by intensifying the motif of incompleteness by a broken tusk and a cracked belly – whichever way you look at him he is the embodiment of imperfection, of incompleteness.



Performance of the play *Hayavadana*





By setting an Indian myth or folk tale or even an incident from the Mahabharat or Ramayana in a very contemporary and light manner through traditional Indian Theatre forms, Karnad has made literature easily accessible. He has blended issues such as love and identity with folk culture and his imagination. He provides us with a glimpse of the past as well as its relevance in the understanding of the contemporary world.

Tuglaq: This play presents the story of a monarch who came to throne by murdering his father and brother and ruled over India for about twenty years. In the play he is depicted as a wise and foolish, kind and cruel, impulsive and farsighted emperor in one breath. His two major decisions- shifting of his capital from Delhi to Daultabad and change of currency- backfire and render him and his subjects homeless. In order to prove himself a just and kind emperor sometimes he behaves in an unjust way. He kills some of his associates including his step mother thinking they are traitors to him. At the end he is totally shattered as a ruler. The characters like Aziz, Aazim, the step mother and the Prayer Scene are the dramatic inventions of the playwright designed to match his purpose.

Dr. Shankar Shesh

Dr. Shankar Shesh was born on 2nd of October 1933 in Bilaspur (M.P.). He completed his B.A (Hons.) in 1956 and Ph. D in 1960 from Nagpur University. He completed M.A. with 1st division in 1976 from Mumbai University. He worked on many posts in his life. He was the Investigation Officer in (Aadim Jati Anusandhan Kendra, M.P.) and also worked as a chief officer in Rajbhasha Department of State Bank of India from 1974 to till his death. His article 'Badhka Pani', 'Chandanke Deep' and 'Bandhan Apne-Apne' were awarded by Madhya Pradesh government.

Role of Institutions

The Sangeet Natak Akademi

India's national academy for performing arts like music, dance and drama - is the first national academy of the arts set-up by the Government of India. It was created by Ministry of Education, Government of India, dated 31 May 1952

Since its inception the Akademi has been functioning as the apex body of the performing arts in the country, preserving and promoting the vast intangible heritage of India's diverse culture expressed in the forms of music, dance and drama. In furtherance of its objectives the Akademi coordinates and collaborates with the governments and art academies of different states and Union Territories of the Union of India as also with major cultural institutions in the country. The Akademi establishes and looks after





institutions and projects of national importance in the field of the performing arts. The Akademi Awards are the highest national recognition conferred on eminent artistes.

The Akademi also confers fellowships and scholarships, their numbers being restricted to 30 living recipients. To subsidize the work of institutions engaged in teaching, performing or promoting music, dance, or theatre, the Akademi gives grants-in-aid for research, documentation, and publishing in the performing arts; organizes and subsidizes seminars and conferences of subject specialists; documents and records the performing arts for its audio-visual archive. Comprising of audio/video tapes, photographs and films which is the largest in the country and is extensively drawn upon by the scholars for research on the performing arts.

The Akademi maintains a reference library consisting of books in English, Hindi and some regional languages. The Akademi has a gallery of musical instruments in Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi, where more than 250 musical instruments are displayed. It also has a documentation unit, which has collected and recorded works of maestros in the field of music, dance and theatre on audio and video to format help researchers in the field and a gallery of musical instruments, and publishes literature on relevant subjects on a small scale.

As the apex body specializing in the performing arts of the country, the Akademi also renders advice and assistance to the Government of India in the task of formulating and implementing policies and programmes in the field. Additionally, the Akademi carries a part of the responsibilities of the state for fostering cultural contacts between various regions in India, and between India and the world.

National School of Drama

The National School of Drama is one of the foremost theatre training institutions in the world and the only one of its kind in India. It was set up by the Sangeet Natak Akademi as one of its constituent units in 1959. In 1975, it became an independent entity and was registered as an autonomous organization, fully financed by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. Training in the School is highly intensive and is based on a thorough, comprehensive, carefully planned syllabus which covers every aspect of theatre and in which theory is related to practice. As a part of their training, students are required to produce plays which are then performed for the public. The syllabus takes into account the methods of great theatre personalities who have shaped contemporary theatre in all its variety. The systematic study and practical performing experience of Sanskrit drama,





modern Indian drama, traditional Indian theatre forms, Asian drama and western dramatic protocols give the students a solid grounding and a wide perspective in the art of theatre.

Besides its 3-year training programme, the School also explores new vistas in the areas of children's theatre and decentralization of theatre training through workshops under the Extension Programme. The School has two performing wings: the Repertory Company and Theatre-in-Education Company.

The Repertory Company was started in 1964 with four artistes Shri Ramamurthy, Ms. Meena Williams, Ms. Sudha Shivpuri and Shri Om Shivpuri - with the objective of providing a platform where graduates of the school could perform plays professionally. Over the years it has presented works of playwrights and directors who have been associated with it and has evolved into one of NSD's major institutions, working on contemporary and modern plays as well as introducing experimental work on a regular basis. In addition to doing productions, it organizes its own festival, where past and new productions are introduced and staged in summer. NSD's Repertory Company also tours and performs extensively in India and abroad.

The Theatre-In-Education Company (Sanskar Rang Toli) was established in October 16, 1989, and is one of the most important theatre education resource centres in the country. It consists of a group of actor-teachers working with and performing for children. The major focus of the TIE Company is to perform creative, curriculum-based and participatory plays in schools, specially designed and prepared for student of different age groups. The major thrust of the plays is to create an atmosphere that encourages student to raise questions, take decisions and make choices with an awareness of themselves within the larger social context. The TIE Company has done more than 800 performances of 26 plays in Delhi and other parts of the country. More than 5.5 lakh school student, apart from college students, teachers, parents and theatre lovers, have witnessed these plays.

In addition to these two wings, the school also has an active Extension Programme, a publication section and a literary forum named Shruti. The Extension Programme, under which NSD faculty and alumni conduct workshops in various parts of the country, was launched in 1978 and since then has conducted workshops and programmes for adults and children across the country and in Nepal, Sikkim, Laddakh and Bhutan as well. The Traditional Theatre Project, initiated in 1980, has facilitated creative interaction between traditional and contemporary theatre artist on a regular basis. Along with an introduction to theatre, these workshops also seek to develop personality and expand the emotional horizons of the participants.

The publication unit of the National School of Drama is responsible for publishing text books on theatre, arranging for the translation of important books on theatre from English into Hindi and bringing out other important books on theatre.

Zonal Cultural Centres

Zonal Cultural Centres were conceptualized with the aim of projecting cultural kinship which transcends territorial boundaries. The idea is to raise awareness of the local cultures and to





show how these merge into zonal identities and eventually into the rich diversity of India's composite culture. These centres have already established themselves as a premier agency in the field of promotion, preservation and dissemination of culture in the entire country. They are not only promoting performing arts but also making a significant contribution in the associated field of literary and visual arts.

The seven zonal cultural centres were established under this scheme during 1985-86 at Patiala, Kolkata, Thanjavur, Udaipur, Allahabad, Dimapur and Nagpur. From 1993 all the Zonal Cultural Centres have been sending their folk artistes for participation in the Republic Day Folk Dance Festival. This festival is inaugurated by the Hon'ble President of India every year on 24th/25th January at the Talkatora Indoor Stadium. The festival provides a unique opportunity for folk artistes to perform at the national level. A crafts fair is also held in the various zones along with the Republic Day Folk Dance Festival. Master craft persons and artisans from various ZCCs participate in this Fair. The Crafts Fair has been providing a valuable opportunity for crafts persons from different parts of India to exhibit their products as well as their process of manufacturing directly to the customers.

Documentation of various Folk and Tribal Art forms especially those which are rare and on the verge of vanishing, is one of the main thrust areas of the ZCCs. Under the National Cultural Exchange Programme (NCEP), exchange of artists, musicologists, performers and scholars between different regions in the country take place to promote different tribal and folk art forms in different parts of the country, and thus a very useful expression of the concept of unity within diversity of our country.

A scheme of Theatre Rejuvenation has been started to provide an opportunity to students, actors, artists, directors and writers to perform on a common platform and to interact with each other. To promote new talents in the field of music and dance a scheme of Guru Shishya Parampara has been introduced, where masters will be identified in the zone, pupil assigned to them and scholarship provided for the purpose.

The ZCCs also provide promotion and marketing facilities to craftsmen through Shilpgrams. ZCCs have also started a new scheme for recognition and encouragement of young talents in which each ZCC will identify the different performing/folk art forms in their area and select one or two talented artists in each of the fields.

Practitioners of modern Indian theatre

After Independence, in 1947, in their efforts to create an 'Indian' theatre that was different from the Westernized, colonial theatre, Indian theatre practitioners began returning to their 'roots' in classical dance, religious ritual, martial arts, popular entertainment and aesthetic theory. The Theatre of Roots - as this movement was known - was the first conscious effort at creating a body of work for urban audiences combining modern European theatre with traditional Indian performance while maintaining its distinction from both.

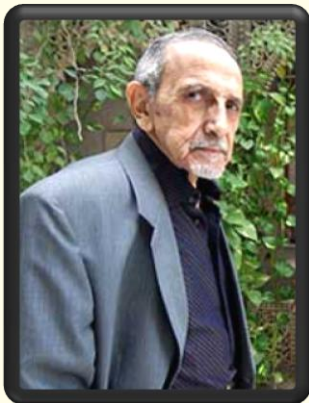




By addressing the politics of aesthetics and by challenging the visual practices, performer spectator relationships, dramaturgical structures and aesthetic goals of colonial performance, the movement offered a strategy for reassessing colonial ideology and culture, and for articulating and defining a newly emerging 'India'. The theatre of Roots presents an in-depth analysis of this movement: its innovations, theories, goals, accomplishments, problems and legacies.

Indian Theatre expands the boundaries of what is usually regarded as "theatre" in order to explore the multiple dimensions of theatrical performance. From rural festivals to contemporary urban theatre, from dramatic rituals and devotional performances to dance-dramas and classical Sanskrit plays, this era is a vivid introduction to the colourful and often surprising world of Indian performance. Besides mapping the vast range of performance traditions, the book presents representative genres, including well-known forms such as Kathakali and Ramleela and little-known performances such as "tamasha", explains the historical background of the theatre form and interprets its dramatic literature, probes its ritual or religious significance, and, where relevant, explores its social and political implications. The most prominent theatre practitioners who revolutionized the Modern Indian theatre scene, include:

Ebrahim Alkazi



Ebrahim Alkazi

Ebrahim Alkazi was born on October 18, 1925, near Pune, Maharashtra, a doyen of contemporary theatre in India and one of the country's leading theatre directors. In the immediate post-Independence era, the need for a national theatre was an obsession. If we were to choose an individual who formed the concept of Indian theatre, it would almost certainly be Ebrahim Alkazi.

The Young Alkazi began his theatrical career in the English-language Theatre Group of Sultan "Bobby" Padamsee, a pioneer of the English theatre movement in India. A graduate of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London, he spurned several offers to work in the UK and returned to Mumbai to start his own theatre. When Alkazi initiated his own Theatre Unit in 1954, he began to revolutionize Indian theatre by taking a professional and technically informed approach to all aspects of the craft, from stage management to character delineation to lighting and props. Later, as the Director (1962-77) of the National School of Drama in New Delhi, Alkazi catalyzed its emergence as India's premier theatre training institute. He introduced cutting-edge training methods, academic rigour, technical discipline, and international standards in an attempt to professionalize the already-vibrant Indian theatrical scene.

His fundamental contribution was to devise a methodology of theatre training which has continued after him, and to create a body of actors and directors which transformed the notion of theatre at the grassroot level. It would be no exaggeration that the concept of a professional director was unknown in most parts of India until Alkazi's students began to return home in the





'60s, carrying with them a new sense of expertise and dedication. Alkazi's stands as a flag bearer of the theatrical tradition from the 1950s through the 1970s. Initially, in Bombay and later in Delhi, he developed a good reputation as a director who brought a new sense of realism and purpose to Indian drama, and as a teacher who nurtured some of the leading talents of the era

Alkazi directed more than 50 plays, including works by celebrated Indian playwrights such as Mahesh Elkunchwar and Girish Karnad and several adaptations of Shakespeare. Among Alkazi's critically acclaimed directorial ventures are Dharamvir Bharati's **Andha Yug** (published 1953; The Blind Age), Samuel Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot' (1952), Mohan Rakesh's *Ashadh ka ek din* (1958; One Day in Ashadha), and Karnad's *Tughlaq* (1964), the last of which is generally considered to be Alkazi's finest.

For his contribution to Indian arts, Alkazi received several awards, including the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for Direction (1962) and three Padma awards (which are among India's highest civilian awards): the Padma Shri (1966), for distinguished service; the Padma Bhushan (1991), for distinguished service of high order; and the Padma Vibhushan (2010).

Habib Tanvir

Habib Tanvir was born on 1 September 1923, one of the most popular Indian play wrights, a theatre director and actor. He is the writer of plays such as, Agra Bazar (1954) and Charandas Chor (1975). A pioneer in Urdu, Hindi theatre, he is most known for his work with Chhattisgarhi tribals, at the Naya Theatre, a theatre company he founded in 1959 in Bhopal, and went on to include indigenous performance forms such as Nacha, to create not only a new theatrical language, but also milestones

such as Charandas Chor, Gaonka Naam Sasural, Mor Naam Damadand Kamdeo ka Apna Basant Rituka Sapna.



Habib Tanvir

In 1955, Habib moved to England, he trained acting at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA) and in direction at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School (1956). For the next two years, he travelled through Europe, watching various theatre activities. One of the highlights of this period, was his eight-month stay in Berlin in 1956, during which he got to see several plays of Bertolt Brecht, produced by Berliner Ensemble, just a few months after Brecht's death. This proved to be lasting influence on him, as in the coming years, he was also used local idioms in his plays, to express trans-cultural tales and ideologies. This over the years, gave rise to a 'theatre of roots', which was marked by an utter simplicity in style, presentation and technique, yet remaining eloquent and powerfully experiential.

For him true 'theatre of the people' existed in the villages, which he strived to bring to the urban people, employing both folk performers as actors, alongside urban actors. During his lifetime he won several national and international awards, including the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1969, Padma Shri in 1983, Kalidas Samman 1990, Sangeet Natak Akademi fellowship in 1996, and the Padma Bhushan in 2002; apart from that he had also been nominated to become a





member of the Upper House of Indian Parliament, the Rajya Sabha (1972–1978). His play *Charandas Chor* (Charandas, The Thief) got him the Fringe Firsts Award at Edinburgh International Drama Festival in 1982, and 2007.

In 1954, he worked with Qudsia Zaidi's Hindustani Theatre in Delhi, and also worked with the Children's Theatre, and authored a number of plays. Later in the same year, he produced his first significant play *Agra Bazar*, based on the works and times of the plebian 18th-century Urdu poet, Nazir Akbarabadi, an older poet in the generation of Mirza Ghalib. In this play, he used local residents and folk artist from Okhla village in Delhi and students of Jamia Millia Islamia, creating a palette never seen before in Indian theatre, a play not staged in a confined space, rather a bazaar, a marketplace. This experience with untrained actors, and folk artist later blossomed with his work with the folk artists of Chhattisgarh.

Habib took to directing full-time in 1958. He produced, *Mittiki Gaadia* post-London play, based on Shudraka's Sanskrit work, *Mrichakatika*, It became his first important production in Chhattisgarh. This was the result of the work he was doing since his return, with six folk actors from Chhattisgarh. This led to the foundation of '*Naya Theatre*' a theatre company he founded in 1959.

In his exploratory phase, 1970–73, he broke free from one more theatre restrictions. He no longer made the folk artistes with whom he had been performing all his plays speak Hindi, and instead switched to Chhattisgarh, a local language, they were more accustomed to. Later, he even started experimenting with 'Pandavani', a folk singing style from the region and temple rituals, making his plays stand out amidst the backdrop of plays which were still using traditional theatre techniques like blocking movements or fixing lights on paper. Soon spontaneity and improvisation became the hallmark of the new style, where the folk artistes were allowed greater freedom of expression.

A further evolution was seen in 1972 with his next venture with Chhattisgarhi Nach style, a play titled '*Gaon Ka Naam Sasural, Mor Naam Damaad*, based on a comic folk tale.

He continued to experiment with the form of his new theatre in the 1960s and 70s. He moved away gradually from scripted and standardised plays towards improvised theatre that allowed more freedom for unschooled folk artists. In 1975, he wrote and directed *Charandas Chor*, the story of a thief who is also a man of his word. Tanvir is best known for this play, a marvellous example of his layered, humanistic vision of the "common man", which immediately created a whole new idiom in modern India theatre; whose highlight was Nach - a chorus that provided commentary through song. The play won him an award at the Edinburgh festival in 1982.

He also had a genius for framing the universal impulse in every story within the hopes and fears of the local context. And so The Good Woman of Scheswan became *Shajapur Ka Shantibai* and Shakespeare's songs in A Midsummer Night's Dream metamorphosed into folk melodies in *Kamdeo Ka Apna, Basant Ritu Ka Sapna*.





His Chhatisgarhi folk troupe, surprised again, with his rendition of Asghar Wajahat's *Jisne Lahore Nahin Dekhya* in 1992. Then in 1993 came, *Kamdeo Ka Apna Basant Ritu Ka Sapna*, Tanvir's Hindi adaptation of Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. In 1995, he was invited to the United States by the Chicago Actors Ensemble, where he wrote his only English language play, *The Broken Bridge*. In 2002, he directed, '*Zahareeli Hawa*', a translation of 'Bhopal' by the Canadian-Indian playwright Rahul Varma, based on the Bhopal gas tragedy. During his illustrious career he brought works from all genres to stage, from ancient Sanskrit works by Sudrak, Bhasa, Visakhadatta and Bhavabhuti; to European classics by Shakespeare, Molière and Goldoni; modern masters, Brecht, Garcia, Lorca, Gorky, and Oscar Wilde, Tagore, Asghar Wajahat, Shankar Shesh, Safdar Hashmi, Rahul Varma, stories by Premchand, Stefan Zweig and Vijaydan Detha, apart from an array of Chhattisgarhi folk tales.

Ratan Thiyam

Ratan Thiyam was born on 20 January 1948 is an Indian playwright and theatre director, and the winner of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1987, one of leading figures of the "Theatre of Roots" movement which started in 1970s. Ratan Thiyam is known for writing and staging plays that use ancient Indian theatre traditions and forms in a contemporary context. A former painter, and proficient in direction, design, script and music, Thiyam is often considered one of leading contemporary theatre gurus.



RatanThiyam

Ratan Thiyam graduated from National School of Drama, New Delhi in 1974. He is also the founder-director of 'Chorus Repertory Theatre', formed on the outskirts of Imphal, Manipur in 1976. He was awarded the Padma Shri by Government of India in 1989. He was awarded the 2012 Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship, the highest honour in the performing arts. A son of Manipuri dance master, for a time, Thiyam studied painting before turning to writing. He published his first of six novels in 1961 at the age of 22, wrote poetry and reviews. Writing led him to theatre.

His works profess a deep concern for social welfare and spiritual yearnings in the midst of the political chaos in the modern world. His plays infuse rationalised and multifaceted analysis of myriad perspectives. Using ingenious theatrical stagecraft, his plays are tinged with literary beauty and meaning. Most of Ratan Thiyam's plays are thematically Indianised and are profound plays with universal appeal. Renowned for its disciplined performance practice, spectacular aural and visual aesthetic, and strong thematic explorations, Thiyam's work has placed him in the company of such figures as Suzuki, Brook, and Grotowski.

His works are strongly influenced by Natya Sastra, an Indian theatre style propounded by Bharata during the second century B.C., as also ancient Greek drama, and the Noh theatre of Japan. His approach to theatre has been shaped by years of study under the tutelage of several





major exponents of the traditional Manipuri performing arts. Thiyam is also known for his use of traditional martial arts, of Thang-Ta in his plays, such as in *Urubhangam* (Broken Thigh), of Sanskrit playwright Bhasa itself based on an episode from the epic, the Mahabharata, which along with *Chakravyuh* (Amry Formation) is considered one of his finest works. In 1986, he adapted Bertolt Brecht's *Antigone* as *Lengshonnei*, a comment on the personal behaviour of politicians, failing to handle political situation in the state. *Uttar Priyadarshi* (The Final Beatitude), an adaptation of Hindi verse play by playwright and poet Agneya in 1996, based on a story of redemption of King Ashoka, a man's struggle against his own inner dark side and a plea for peace, knowing its impact on future generation. His play *Andha Yug* (The Blind Age), known for creating an intense and intimate experience, around the epochal theme. His major plays include *Ritusamharam*: The work seeks solace and sanity amidst chaos and violence of today's world.

K. N. Panikker



K. N. Panikker

Kavalam Narayana Panikker born on 28 April 1928, is an Indian playwright, theatre director and poet. He has written over 26 Malayalam plays, many adapted from classical Sanskrit drama and Shakespeare, Panikker is the Founding Director of Sopanam. His theatre is in constant dialogue with folk and classical traditions of Indian theatre as described in Bharat Muni's *Natya Shastra* reflecting contemporary social problems and moral values of the present day society. Most significant part of his theatre idiom is the culmination of living traditions, rituals and practicing art forms with modern sensibilities, which establishes him as the seminal theatre personality of our country.

His plays include *Sakshi* (1964), *Avanavankadamba* (1975), *Ottayan* (1988), *Karimkutty* (1983), *Koyma* (1986), *Arani* (1989), *Theyya Theyyam* (1990), and *Poranadi* (1995). He has directed his own plays as well as the plays of Bhasa (*Madhyama Vyayogam*, *Urubhangam*, and *Karnabharam*) and Kalidasa (*Shakuntalam* and *Vikramorvasiyam*). His awards include the prestigious Kalidas Samman Award for Theatre (1996), the National Award from the Sangeet Natak Akademi for Theatre Direction (1983), the Kerala State Sahitya Akademi Award for the best Malayalam Playwright (1974), the Critic Circle of India Award for Theatre Direction (1982 and 1984), and a Ford Foundation Fellowship. His productions have been presented in Greece, Japan, Austria, the United States, and the former Soviet Union.

B. V. Karanth

Babukodi Venkataramana Karanth was born on 19 September 1928, a renowned theatre personality from India. Throughout his life he was director, actor and musician of modern Indian theatre both in Kannada as well as Hindi, and one of the pioneers of Kannada and Hindi

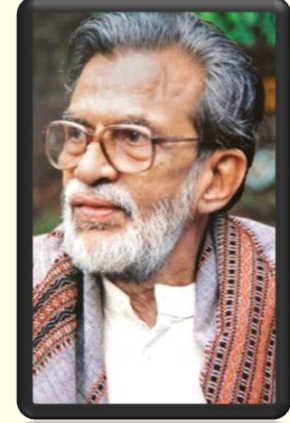




new wave cinema. Karanth's passion for theatre started at an early age. His first tryst with theatre was when he was in standard III - he acted in Nanna Gopala, a play directed by P.K. Narayana.

He was an alumnus of the National School of Drama (1962) and later, its director. He has directed a number of successful plays and award winning Kannada movies. The Government of India honoured him with the Padma Shri.

Karanth directed over a hundred plays, more than half of which were in Kannada with Hindi close behind. He also directed plays in English, Telugu, Malayalam, Punjabi, Urdu, Sanskrit and Gujarati. *Hayavadana* (by Girish Karnad), *Kattale Belaku*, *Huchu Kudure*, *Evam Indrajit*, *Oedipus*, *Sankranti*, *Jokumara Swami*, *Sattavara Neralu*, *Huttava Badidare* and *Gokula Nirgamana* are some of his most popular plays in Kannada. Of the forty or so plays he directed in Hindi, 'Macbeth' (using the traditional Yakshagana dance drama form), 'King Lear,' *Chandrasahsa*, *Hayavadana*, *Ghasiram Kotwal*, *Mrichha Katika*, *Mudra Rakshasa*, and *Malavikagni Mitra* are some of the more popular ones. Karanth also revelled in directing children and directed several children plays like *Panjara Shale*, *Neeli Kudure*, *Heddayana*, *Alilu' Ramayana'* and 'The Grateful Man'.



B. V. Karanth

In 1974, Karanth started Be Na Ka a repertory in Bangalore. Benaka was an acronym for Bengalooru Nagara Kalavidaru. Benaka stages several popular plays like *Hayavadana* all across Karnataka and even overseas. At Benaka, Karanth also took a special interest in children's theatre and directed several plays with children. This group has been taken care of by Prema Karanth, Karanth's late wife and a noted theatre personality in her own right.

Karanth was largely responsible for starting the New Theatre Movement in Madhya Pradesh. As director of the NSD, at the invitation of the Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal, he organised a training-cum-production camp in 1973. In the 1980s, he returned to set up the Rangmandal repertory in Bharat Bhavan. This was to be the first-ever repertory in the state and he became the main creative spirit behind the now legendary Bharat Bhavan.

Rangmandal, for the first time, folk professionals were used for training contemporary actors, and the repertory also included folk performers among its members. Apart from Hindi, plays were also produced in dialects such as Bundelkhandi, Malavi and Chhatisgarhi which created huge ticket-buying audiences for the Rangmandira

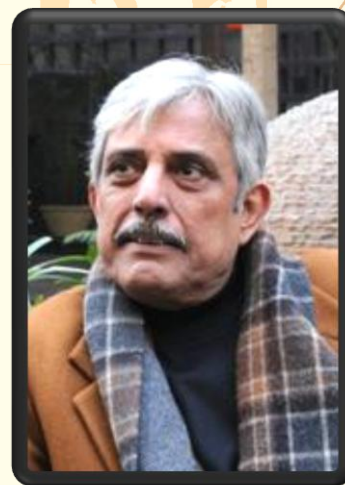
With the integration of Alarippu and National school of Drama-New Delhi, Karanth had contributed three great plays in Telugu. Collaborated with Surabhi theatre of Andhra Pradesh, Karanth conducted three workshops respectively 'Bhishma' in 1996, *Chandipriya* in 1997 and 'Basthidevatha Yadamma'. His dedication led him to spend his time during the workshops in corner villages of Andhra Pradesh to bringup the dramas.





Bhanu Bharti

One of the most eminent personalities in the theatre world of India today is Bhanu Bharti, born in Ajmer, Rajasthan in 1947. He is a renowned Indian theatre director and playwright, and the founder-director of AAJ Rangmanta Theatre Group. He graduated from the National School of Drama in 1973, bagging the Best all Round Student and the Best Director awards. Later, he studied at the traditional theatre of Japan, University of Tokyo. He is known for his theatre productions and choreographies with tribal and folk artistes, including *Pashu Gayatri* by K.N. Panikkar, *Kaal Katha* and *Amar Beej* all based on GAVRI, rituals of the Bhil tribe of Mewar region Rajasthan.



Bhanu Bharti

He has over fifty productions to his credit. His major works are: Chandrama Singh Urf Chamku, *Ras Gandharva*, *Azar Ka Khwab*, and *Yamgatha*. His productions like *Pashu Gayatri*, *Kai Katha*, and *Amar Beej* are based on his study of the performances and rituals of the Bheel tribe.

Bhanu Bharti headed the Drama Department of Rajasthan University, Jaipur, from its inception in 1976 till 1978. He has also taught dramatic literature, scenic design, and acting in many renowned institutions, including NSD. He has served as the Director of the Shri Ram Centre for Performing Arts, Delhi, and headed Bharatiya Lok Kala Mandal, Udaipur and worked with Bhil tribesmen of the Gogunda belt near Udaipur. He was also the Chairman of Rajasthan Sangeet Natak Akademi and the Rajasthan Sahitya Akademi.

An artist who is perceptive enough to reveal inner psychological world of characters and the inherent philosophic and mythical undercurrents of drama, Bhanu Bharti had directed a number of plays to provide his view point on many relevant social issues and worked with both rural and urban breed of actors and thus, gave Indian Theatre a new meaning altogether. Bhanu Bharti is now viewed as one of the most innovative directors of his time.

Bhanu has directed more than 70 plays in his theatrical career spanning nearly 40 years. Apart from his deep grounding in various aspects of Indian traditional and contemporary theatre, he joined University of Tokyo to study traditional theatre of Japan. He spent time studying the life and ritualistic art of the Bheel tribe of Mewar region of Rajasthan. In spite of his exposure and exploration and experimentation with theatre traditions of India, Japan and ritualistic theatre of tribals, he has not made any conscious attempt to transplant these diverse forms into his art. He has internalised these forms and styles, from Japanese theatre and assimilated elements like the use of space, the rhythm of performers and the use of silences.

During his stay with tribals, he produced K.N. Panikkar's *Pashu Gayatri*, a Malayalam play, with tribal performers. *Pashu Gayatri* was hailed as an imaginative theatrical piece which is truly Indian in sensibility and content as well as form. After *Pashu Gayatri* Bhanu has remained in





the national focus with his productions like *Chandrama Singhurf Chamku Das*, *Yamgatha* and *Aks-Tamasha*. His three productions - *Pashu Gayatri*, *Kaal Katha* and *Amar Beej* - are based on rituals of the Bheel tribe.

Bhanu Bharti is proud, and rightly so, of his work in experimental theatre which he has drawn from various forms and styles of dramatic presentation. This genre of his plays stands testimony to both his capacity for innovation and his skill as a director. He remains unfettered by influences, and bound to no one style, for no style can be complete in itself. So while critics would love to label him, he has escaped their trap. But there is consistency in his thematic content and conviction, in the powerful portrayal of women. In seeking an understanding between urban and rural sensibilities in the creative passion necessary for renewal and discovery in theatre. At A.A.J. Rangmandal, there is a continuous soaking in of the traditional and the ritualistic expressions of the Bheel tribe of the Mewar region of Rajasthan. In addition, its creative dialogue between contemporary and traditional theatre has led Aaj to develop a performance space with a spectacular juxtaposition of urban and tribal actors in productions that have gained repute both in national and international theatre.

D. R. Ankur

Dr. Devendra Raj Ankur, this man of several acts has been a teacher, director, a critic, a playwright and an actor par-excellence. Having created a completely new genre of Modern Indian Theatre called *Kahaani Ka Rangmanch*, he has penned over 400 stories and novels in all Indian languages. He feels that there is nothing in this world better than the thrill of performing live. A recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 2003, his depth of knowledge and breadth of vision is simply immense.

His basic aim was to put the literary text across on stage. He took up stories, novels and autobiographies which are not written in dramatic text and while putting them on text, he did not use a script. The original text became the script. He started this work in 1975 with the Repertory Company of NSD. His first work was called 'Three Texts in Solitude' by Nirmal Varma. It is called *Teen Ekant* in Hindi. This was a new form of theatre where you don't have to adapt. If a text not written for stage, presents a theatrical experience within the structure of its own text without being adapted or transformed into a dramatic adaptation, you get *Kahaani Ka Rangmanch*. It's been 40 years since he started this form of theatre. He has done 400 stories and novels in all the Indian languages.

Adapting novels or literature into plays has always been a regular feature all over the world. But Devendra Raj Ankur has always believed in presenting literature as it is on stage, without adapting it in a conventional play form. He has also been successful in his unique style.



D. R. Ankur





Summary

- ➔ Sanskrit drama after the 10th century lost its tenor.
- ➔ With the advent of the modern period and the impact of western literature, drama took a new turn and developed as a form of literature.
- ➔ In 1946, India witnessed the worst bloodbath in the memory of the sub-continent, just before it became Independent, after the partition of the country.
- ➔ In this unit, we have studied about the most notable playwrights who have changed the modern and contemporary theatre scene of Indian theatre;
 - Bhartendu Harish Chandra
 - Rabindranath Tagore
 - Vijay Tendulkar
 - Mohan Rakesh
 - Dharamveer Bharati
 - Badal Sarkar
 - GirishKarnad
 - Dr. Shankar Shesh
- ➔ Early development of modern Indian theatre can be traced to the work of Bharatendu Harish Chandra (1850–1885), a theatre actor, director, manager, and playwright based in Varanasi (Banaras), who is also the father of modern Hindi literature as in his short life of 35 years, he wrote eighteen plays. At twenty he wrote his first drama-opera: Valmiki Pratibha (The Genius of Valmiki). In it the sage Valmiki overcomes his sins, is blessed by Saraswati, and compiles the Ramayana.
- ➔ Vijay Tendulkar was born on 6 January 1928 in Kolhapur, Maharashtra. He wrote his first story at age six.
- ➔ Mohan Rakesh was born as Madan Mohan Guglani on January 8, 1925 in Amritsar, Punjab. He started his career as a teacher, and he taught in two colleges and a school, edited a short story magazine before deciding to write full-time.
- ➔ Dr. Dharamvir Bharati was born in Allahabad on 25 December 1926 was a renowned Hindi poet, author, playwright and a social thinker of India.
- ➔ Badal Sarkar (BadalSircar, born 1925 is an influential Indian dramatist and theatre director, most known for his anti-establishment plays during the Naxalite movement in the 1970s.
- ➔ Born on May 19, 1938, in Matheran, Maharastra, Girish Karnad has become one of India's brightest shining stars, earning international praise as a playwright, poet, actor, director, critic, and translator. His initial schooling was in Marathi.
- ➔ Dr. Shankar Shesh was born on 2nd of October 1933 in Bilaspur (M.P.). He completed his B.A (Hons.) with 1st Division from Nagpur University in 1956 and also Ph. D in 1960 from same University. He completed M.A. with 1st division in 1976 from Mumbai University.





→ The art and culture institutions which played an important role in progress of Indian Theatre:

- The Sangeet Natak Academy
- National School of Drama
- Zonal Cultural Centers

Comprehension Questions:

Q.1. Answer the following in about 15 words:

- 1) Medieval Indian literature was an era of _____.
- 2) Around 1850, the Parsi theatre staged plays based on _____.
- 3) Why did drama remain in a state of oblivion during medieval India?
- 4) Name one important playwright of Parsi theatre.
- 5) State two characteristics of Parsi theatre.
- 6) What promoted the growth of Indian theatre?
- 7) What does Ravindra Nritya Natika comprise of?
- 8) Give three important plays of Mohan Rakesh.
- 9) Which was Mohan Rakesh's debut play?
- 10) Of which famous magazine was Dr. Dharamveer the Chief Editor?
- 11) What are the awards won by Dr. Bharti?
- 12) What were Badal Sarkar's plays best known for?
- 13) When was the first National academy of the arts set up by the government of India?
- 14) To how many activities does the Sangeet Natak Academy confer the fellowship and scholarship to how many recipients?
- 15) What are the two performing wings of the National School of Drama?
- 16) What is the duration of the training programme offered by NSD?
- 17) Name the literary forum of NSD?
- 18) When did NSD become an independent entity?
- 19) Who formed the concept of Indian theatre?
- 20) Name the writer of "Agra Bazar" and "Charandas Chor".
- 21) Name the Indian playwright and theatre director who won the Sangeet Natak Academy Award in 1987.





- 22) Who is the founding director of Sopanam?
- 23) Name the famous play directed by B.V. Karanth in which he used the traditional Yakshagana dance drama form.
- 24) Name the founder-director of the 'Chorus Repertory Theatre'.
- 25) D.R. Ankur had created a completely new genre of Modern Indian Theatre. What was it called?
- 26) Of which theatre group was Bhanu Bharti is the founder -director?
- 27) What is 'Three Text in Solitude' by Nirmal Varma called in Hindi?
- 28) Who is often considered as one of the leading contemporary theatre gurus?
- 29) Whose theatre productions have been presented in Greece, Japan, Austria and the United States?

Q.2. Answer the following in about 50 words:

- 1) Mention a few prominent Indian playwrights of the pre Independence era and what their work highlighted.
- 2) Describe the Indian drama scene immediately after independence.
- 3) How did Rakesh Mohan's *Adhe Adhure* break the stereotype image of the Indian woman?
- 4) Write a short note on - 'Silence-The Court is in Session', by Vijay Tendulkar.
- 5) Many of Vijay Tendulkar's plays derived inspiration from real life. Do you agree? Why / why not?
- 6) Briefly write about the early years of the career of Mohan Rakesh.
- 7) Write a short note on Dr. Dharamveer Bharti?
- 8) Is it right to say that the plays of Badal Sarkar started a new wave of experimental theatre in Indian theatre. Why/ why not?
- 9) As the apex body specializing in the performing arts of the country, what role does the Sangeet Natak Academy play?
- 10) What does the Theatre-In Education Company focus on?
- 11) How is National Cultural Exchange Programme (NCEP) useful?
- 12) What was the objective behind The Theatre of Roots movement?
- 13) Which is the most significant aspect of K. N. Panikkar's theatre?
- 14) Write a short note on the New Theatre Movement started by Karanth.
- 15) Name the three workshops conducted by Karanth in 1996 and 1997.
- 16) Name the three productions of *Bhanu Bharti* based on rituals of the Bheel tribe.





Q.3. Answer the following in about 75 words:

- 1) Give an insight into the writing of the Father of modern Hindi literature.
- 2) How is the play '*Andheri Nagari Chaupat Raja*' a satire on the British Raj?
- 3) The works of Ravindranath infuse lyrical flow and emotional rhythm into a tight focus on a core idea which is a break from prior Bengali drama. Substantiate.
- 4) Vijay Tendulkar's plays portrayed the social evils that existed in the society. Comment with reference to the play *Ghashiram*.
- 5) *Adhedhure* is a tragic comedy on the life of the middle class. Explain.
- 6) Most of Ratan Thiyam's plays are thematically Indianised. Explain.
- 7) Write a short note on Benaka, the repertory started by Karanth.
- 8) How did Bhanu Bharti prove his mettle in experimental theatre?
- 9) What are the objectives of The Sangeet Natak Academy?
- 10) What does the syllabus of the National School of Drama comprise of?
- 11) What is the aim behind the conceptualization of Zonal Cultural Centres?
- 12) What functions has The Repertory Company performed over the years?

Q.4. Answer the following in about 150 words:

- 1) Compare and contrast the theme of the two plays written by Vijay Tendulkar in 1972.
- 2) With reference to the play *Ghashiram* bring out the parallelism in the social evils that existed during the rule of the Peshwas and those that exist in the society of today.
- 3) Analyse how the play *Adhe Adhure* set a new trend in the writing of plays.
- 4) Highlighting the contribution and achievements of Ebrahim Alkazi, justify the statement- "*Alkazi-the flag bearer of the theatric tradition from the 1950s, through the 1970s*".
- 5) Habib Tanvir had a genius for framing the universal impulse in every story within the hopes and fears of the local context. With reference to his work especially his famous play *Charandas Chor* elaborates on his style of writing.
- 6) What is B.V. Karanth's contribution to modern Indian theatre?
- 7) How has Bhanu Bharti proved that he is one of the most innovative directors of his time?

Activities:

- ➔ Prepare a song from the play *Andher Nagri* with enactment
- ➔ Prepare a scene from the play *Andher Nagri* in different style of play production

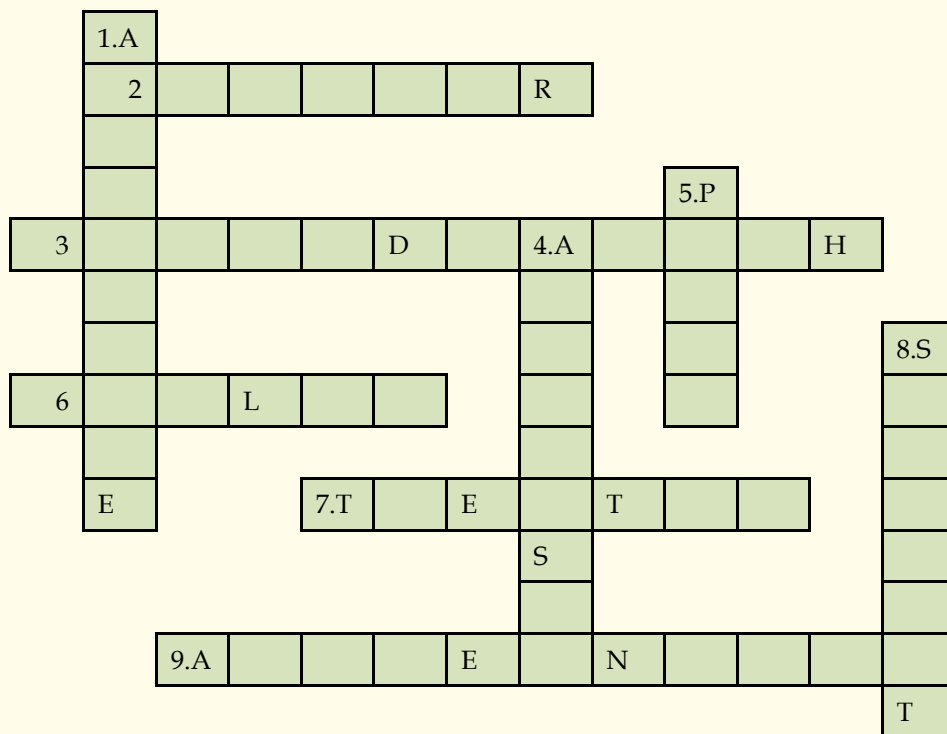




- ➔ Discuss the interpretation of *Andher Nagri* in a group discussion
- ➔ Read the play *Evam Indrajit*
- ➔ Write a note about Maharishi Valmiki
- ➔ Script a scene about RabindraNath Tagore
- ➔ Arrange a reading of *Dak Ghar*
- ➔ Write a note about *Rakt Karbi* and share it with the class.
- ➔ Discuss the writing of Vijay Tendulkar. the concept, text and the problems he raised in his plays
- ➔ Collect the facts and clippings about Manipuri folk from Chhau
- ➔ Collect the clippings about the folk style Gaveri from the Bhil tribe of Mewar, Rajasthan
- ➔ What are rituals, make the presentation as a group.
- ➔ Create a story and perform it for the class.

Crossword Puzzle - 1

Solve the crossword with the given clues:





Across

2. The play describes the child, Amal defying his stuffy and puerile confines by ultimately 'fall asleep', hinting at his physical death.
3. At twenty, he wrote his first drama-opera: Valmiki Pratibha (first name only)
6. The play presents the story of a monarch, who came to power by murdering his father and brother and ruled over India for 20 years.
7. This word came from Greek word called "Theatron" which means "a watching place" or "a viewing place"
9. Play also called city of darkness by Bhartendu Harish Chandra

Down

1. a tragic comedy on the life of middle class people by Mohan Rakesh
4. an important playwright of the Parsi theatre (1880-1931)
5. The _____ theatre, around 1850, started staging plays based on Indian mythology, history and legends
8. _____ drama after the 10th century lost its tenor

