Art is the product or process of deliberately arranging items in a way that influences and affects one or more of the senses, emotions, and intellect. It encompasses a diverse range of human activities, creations, and modes of expression, including music, literature, film, photography, sculpture, and paintings. Generally, art is made with the intention of stimulating thoughts and emotions. M. Hiriyanna defines art as “a kind of representation that is purposive in itself and, and though without an end, nevertheless promotes the cultivation of the mental powers for social communication” (1997:15). He, in his book *Art Experience*, describing the aims of art and poetry, says about a poet:

“The common view of the poet is to regard him as a creator or maker; but there is also another, according to which his foremost aim is not to invent anything new but to represent life as it is –‘to hold mirror up to nature’ as it is said. … The poet as conceived here is not to rest content with merely copying Nature or life. His skill does not consist in selecting the salient features of an existing situation and portraying them exactly as they are, but rather in creating new situations” (1997: 17)

His comment about the aim of a poet is also pertinent in the context of drama in general and Indian drama in particular. This study aims to discuss two of the most prominent playwrights of India, namely Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar, in light of the above statements in particular, in the appropriate time frame and contexts. However, before the focus is placed on them, it would not be
incongruous to have a glance at drama in general and at the present scenario of Indian English play in particular to have a better understanding of the two creative writers under the marker.

The term drama comes from a Greek word meaning ‘action’. It is in a way a composition in verse or prose intended to portray life or character or to tell a story usually involving conflicts and emotions through actions and dialogue and typically designed for theatrical performance. In simple terms drama is a literary composition involving conflict, action crisis and atmosphere designed to be acted by players on a stage before an audience. Lemon Lee T. describes drama as “a narrative in prose or verse, usually but not necessarily intended for stage presentation; as such, it involves the participation of actors who represent the various characters, reliance on dialogue and movement to advance the story, and, frequently, the use of stage scenery, lighting, props, and whatever else may aid in the creation of the dramatic illusion.” (1992:3) In other words, drama is a composition in verse or prose intended to portray life or character or to tell a story usually involving conflicts and emotions through actions and dialogue and typically designed for theatrical performance. As a mirror of the society, it portrays what is going on in a society in such a way that we can see and understand our lives. It has also been a unique way of spreading morality in the society. It learns from and teaches to society. All the different types of drama like comedy, tragedy, problem play, farce, comedy of manners, fantasy, melodrama, chronicle play, masques, symbolist drama, expressionist drama, tragicomedy, opera, pantomime, comedy of humours, theatre of absurd, have been used in
various centuries in different countries in various ways to make the field of drama rich, entertaining and moralizing. Drama and dramatic art have been most potent factors in the education of mankind. Abstract philosophy is vague to many minds; preaching too often clashes with our self-esteem; the lessons of common experience are wrapped in mists of fearful doubt and clouds of pain and passion; but the contemplation of the woes of others, and the pictured joys we are not jealous of, awakens the vibrations of that chord of sympathy which makes the whole world kin; the Brotherhood of the common heart that beats as one beneath the ebb and flow of changing circumstance. Carried out of self, we achieve with the hero; die bravely with the martyr; and are jubilant with the delight of pure innocence, and watch with breathless strain the issue of the conflict between light and darkness in the soul of man. This is the ideal mission of dramatic art. The great drama pictures the operations of the Law and the causes and motives at work in life. Thus we often perceive moral values more clearly than in the midst of the struggles and emotions of our personal experience. The light of truth was conveyed to the people of old time by the dignity and grandeur of the true mystery-play. Drama has and always will be one of the best ways to inculcate morals. This is the reason that many schools have included drama and theatre as a part of their curriculum.

Types of Drama:
Drama has been classified into various types by different scholars and theorists, according to the script and the story that the drama follows. Different types of drama emerged in different eras. These drama types can be classified as follows:
Tragedy -- Tragedy was the earliest form of drama created by the ancient Greeks during the sixth century BC. In general, tragedy involves the ruin of the leading characters. To the Greeks, it meant the destruction of some noble person through fate, To the Elizabethans; it meant in the first place death and in the second place, the destruction of some noble person through a flaw in his character. Today it may not involve death so much as a dismal life; Modern tragedy often shows the tragedy not of the strong and noble but of the weak and mean.

Comedy, as a dramatic term, does not necessarily imply the presence of the laughable; especially among critics influenced directly or indirectly by Aristotle, comedy frequently refers to any drama that lacks the seriousness of tragedy because of the insignificance of its characters, lack of serious threat to the established state of religions, concern with individual foibles rather than with civic and religious virtues, a triumphant conclusion in which normal social values are restored, etc. (Lemon 1992: 16) In other words, comedy is lighter drama in which the leading characters overcome the difficulties which temporarily beset them. In comedy a character’s problems may seem serious to him but not to the audience; comedy is tragedy that happens to someone else. Even death may wear a comic mask.

Problem Play is a drama of social criticism discusses social, economic, or political problems by means of a play, whereas, it is called farce when comedy involves ridiculous or hilarious complications without regard for human values, it becomes farce. Farce in general is highly tolerant of transgressive behavior, and
tends to depict human beings as vain, irrational, venal, infantile, neurotic and prone to automatic behavior. In that respect, farce is a natural companion of satire. Farcical plots are often full of wild coincidences and seemingly endless twists and complications. Elaborate comic intrigues involving deception, disguise, and mistaken identity are the rule. Farce and slapstick both rely largely on physical humour, and though both are dramatic terms chiefly, either may be applied to other kinds of literature. (Lemon, 1998; 17) Comedy of Manners wittily portrays fashionable life is a comedy of manners, and fantasy is a play sometimes, but not always, in comic spirit in which the author gives free reign to his fantasy, allowing things to happen without regard to reality. Such drama creates an imaginative world that we would like to be a part of. Melodrama literally means drama with music. Within the history of Western culture, tragedy has been a rare phenomenon. Most serious dramas never reach the heights of tragedy. The vast majority of plays and films which treat serious subjects fall into another dramatic genre called melodrama. Melodrama thrives on thrills, excitement, suspense, close calls, and last-minute rescues. Melodrama is essentially a form of wish-fulfillment, presenting the world as we would like it to be. Chronicle plays, also called chronicle history or history play, deals directly with historical scenes and characters. Plays of this type typically lay emphasis on the public welfare by pointing to the past as a lesson for the present, and the genre is often characterized by its assumption of a national consciousness in its audience; whereas, masques, usually allegoric in nature, are slight plays involving much singing and dancing and costuming.
Tragicomedy is yet another type of play. It should be noticed that not all plays fit neatly into a single category; in fact, most plays consist of elements from two or more genres. In his comedies Aristophanes expressed his views through biting political satire, but he mixed this serious criticism of his contemporaries with lowbrow farce, dirty jokes, and slapstick humor, techniques seemingly not in keeping with the weightiness of his subject matter. Shakespeare frequently inserted a comic scene after one of great emotional intensity. The term "tragicomedy" is frequently used to describe plays which combine elements from tragedy and comedy. A more popular form, opera, Western opera in particular, is a dramatic art form, which arose during the Renaissance in an attempt to revive the classical Greek drama tradition in which both music and theatre were combined. Being strongly intertwined with western classical music, the opera has undergone enormous changes in the past four centuries and it is an important form of theatre until this day. Pantomime is yet another form where stories follow in the tradition of fables and folk tales, usually there is a lesson learned, and with some help from the audience the hero/heroine saves the day. These plays usually have an emphasis on moral dilemmas, and good always triumphs over evil, this kind of play is also very entertaining making it a very effective way of reaching many people.

Comedy of Humours -- The comedy of humours refers to a genre of dramatic comedy that focuses on a character or range of characters, each of whom has one overriding trait or 'humour' that dominates their personality and conduct. The term derives from the Latin humor, meaning "liquid," and theatre of the absurd
relies heavily on existential philosophy, and is a designation for plays of absurdist fiction, written by a number of playwrights from the late 1940s to the 1960s, as well as the theatre which has evolved from their work. It expressed the belief that, in a godless universe, human existence has no meaning or purpose and therefore all communication breaks down. Logical construction and argument gives way to irrational and illogical speech and to its ultimate conclusion, silence.

With all such types have made the field of drama rich and entertaining and have existed during various historical eras. Drama has been a part and parcel of human life right from its existence. In various parts of world drama originated at different time in different ways. In order to place and understand the genre and the playwrights under consideration comprehensively, it would not be incongruous to study the genre right from its inception to its recent form and structure. The process and progress from the origin to our time can be explained as follows.

**Ancient Drama**

The origins of Western drama can be traced to the celebratory music of 6th-century BC at Attica, the Greek region centered on Athens. Although accounts of this period are inadequate, there are traces of poet Thespis developing a new musical form in which he impersonated a single character and engaged a chorus of singer-dancers in dialogue. As the first composer and soloist in this new form, which came to be known as tragedy, Thespis can be considered both the first dramatist and the first actor. Of the hundreds of works produced by Greek tragic playwrights, only 32 plays by the three major innovators in this new art form has
survived. Aeschylus created the possibility of developing conflict between characters by introducing a second actor into the format. His seven surviving plays, three of which constitute the only extant trilogy are richly ambiguous inquiries into the paradoxical relationship between humans and the cosmos, in which people are made answerable for their acts, yet recognize that these acts are determined by the gods.

Classical Athenian Drama

Western drama originates in classical Greece. Although a part of ancient era classical Athenian drama developed differently from the Greece drama. The theatrical culture of the city-state of Athens produced three genres of drama: tragedy, comedy, and the satire play. Their origins remain obscure, though by the 5th century BCE they were institutionalized in competitions held as part of festivities celebrating the god Dionysus.

Medieval Drama

The medieval time of history spans a period of more than 700 years, beginning around the year 800. During this time, there were key advances in society, government and religion. One of the most interesting time periods of Drama was the medieval times. Some of the greatest and most influential playwrights including Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare among the others belong to this period. During this period drama really started to flourish and become one of the most defining time of history.
In a way, it was a new creation rather than a rebirth, the drama of earlier times having had almost no influence on it. The reason for this creation came from a quarter that had traditionally opposed any form of theater: the Christian church. In the Easter service, and later in the Christmas service, bits of chanted dialogue, called tropes, were interpolated into the liturgy. Priests, impersonating biblical figures, acted out minuscule scenes from the holiday stories. Eventually, these playlets grew more elaborate and abandoned the inside of the church for the church steps and the adjacent marketplace. Secular elements crept in as the artisan guilds took responsibility for these performances; although the glorification of God and the redemption of humanity remained prime concerns, the celebration of local industry was not neglected.

Undoubtedly, during medieval times, Europe was very different and many contemporary events were experienced and beholden by people during those eventful time were later incorporated into drama, such as The Hundred Years War, The Wars of the Roses, the Trojan War, just to name a few. Many of these incidents have immensely influenced everyday life as well as the theatrical world. One of the major influences was that of Latin. Playwrights constantly used Latin plays, Gods, and ideas as inspiration for their plays. Another common use of inspiration from this time period was the Bible. Religious plays were very common, because religion was such a huge part of everyday life in Medieval Europe. Another aspect of everyday life that was used in plays was proverbs.
Noticeably, contrary to popular belief, people of this period didn’t really use the theatrical archaic language in their day to day lives, but the playwrights tended to exaggerate a little to make their works more interesting to their audience.

There were five basic characteristics of early medieval drama. First, drama was only occasional, normally for folk rites, feasts, or for visits from important people. It wasn’t until later that it became a main source of entertainment. Second, dramatic performances were usually sponsored. Churches or very rich people would sponsor the performance to make them more well-known. Therefore, the audience could usually see the show for free. Third, they were adjunct to worship, sponsors, civic order, and authorities. Fourth, the places where they preformed were only temporary staging, such as churches, streets, or halls owned by the town or individuals. Stages didn’t appear for a while. Fifth, the plays were very participatory. There wasn’t much of a distinction between the actors and the audience during much of the plays.

**France**

Drama did not developed uniformly all over Europe as well. French drama was one of the first to start to get popular in the Medieval period. Much of the texts of the first French plays alternated from French to Latin drama started to flourish in a town called Arras. Many famous French plays came from this town. As early as the 16th century, professional acting troops, like the theatre companies of England and other countries were already on rise. Around 1548, unreligious plays were banned in France, but many places preformed them anyway. French
medieval drama has influenced other more modern drama as well, including Moliere, a famous French playwright.

Germany

While all this was going on in France, the same developments were happening in Germany. Germany also had many religious plays. In Germany, there were five main types of drama, Easter season plays, Christmas plays, saints plays, morality plays, and eschatological plays. Two famous German playwrights from the 16th century were Hans Sachs and Jacob Ayner. Unfortunately, older German drama never became very popular because it lacked the drama and humor of other countries plays.

Folk Plays in England

In England the folk-plays, throughout the Middle Ages and in remote spots down almost to the present time, sometimes took the form of energetic dances. They were popularly called Morris dances through confusion with Moorish performances of the same general nature.

Others of them, however, exhibited in the midst of much rough-and-tumble fighting and buffoonery, a slight thread of dramatic action. Their characters gradually came to be a conventional set, partly famous figures of popular tradition, such as St. George, Robin Hood, Maid Marian, and the Green Dragon. Other offshoots of the folk-play were the 'mummings' and 'disguising,' collective names for many forms of processions, shows, and other entertainments, such as, among the upper classes, that precursor of the Elizabethan Mask in which a
group of persons in disguise, invited or uninvited, attended a formal dancing
dance. In the later part of the middle ages, also, there were the secular pageants,
spectacular displays given on such occasions as when a king or other person of
high rank made formal entry into a town. They consisted of an elaborate scenic
background set up near the city gate or on the street, with figures from allegorical
or traditional history who engaged in some pantomime or declamation, but with
very little dramatic dialog, or none.

But all these forms, though they were not altogether without later influence, were
based on minor affairs, and the real drama of the middle ages grew up, without
design and by the mere nature of things, from the regular services of the Church.
It would be worthwhile, in the first place, to realize clearly the conditions under
which the church service, the mass, was conducted during all the medieval
centuries.

Early in the sixteenth century, the Morality in its turn was largely superseded by
another sort of play called the Interlude. But just as in the case of the Mystery
and the Morality, the Interlude developed out of the Morality, and the two cannot
always be distinguished, some single plays being distinctly described by the
authors as 'Moral Interludes.' The various dramatic forms from the tenth century
to the middle of the sixteenth—folk-plays, mummings and disguising, secular
pageants, mystery plays, moralities, and interludes—have little but a historical
importance.

Renaissance Drama
Renaissance is the term used to describe the period of European history that saw a renewed interest in the arts. The term renaissance, literally means ‘rebirth’. The Renaissance was a cultural movement that spanned roughly the 14th to the 17th century, beginning in Florence in the Late Middle Ages and later spreading to the rest of Europe. The term is also used more loosely to refer to the historical era. As a cultural movement, it encompassed a flowering of literature, science, art, religion, and politics, and a resurgence of learning based on classical sources, the development of linear perspective in painting, and gradual but widespread educational reform. Traditionally, this intellectual transformation has resulted in the Renaissance being viewed as a bridge between the Middle Ages and the Modern era. By the advent of the Renaissance in the 15th and 16th cent., most European countries had established native traditions of religious drama and farce that contended with the impact of the newly discovered Greek and Roman plays. Little had been known of classical drama during the Middle Ages, and evidently the only classical imitations during that period were the Christian imitations of Terence by the Saxon nun Hrotswitha in the 10th cent.

English Renaissance drama grew out of the established medieval tradition of the mystery and morality plays. These public spectacles focused on religious subjects and were generally enacted by either choristers and monks, or a town’s tradesmen. At the end of the fifteenth century, a new type of play appeared. These short plays and revels were performed at noble households and at court, especially at holiday times. These short entertainments, called Interludes, started the move away from the didactic nature of the earlier plays toward purely secular
plays, and often added more comedy than was present in the medieval predecessors. Since most of these holiday revels were not documented and play texts have disappeared and been destroyed, the actual dating of the transition is difficult. The first extant purely secular play, Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucre*, was performed at the household of Cardinal Morton, where the young Thomas More was serving as a page. Early Tudor interludes soon grew more elaborate, incorporating music and dance, and some were heavily influenced by French farce.

Not only were plays shifting emphasis from teaching to entertaining, they were also slowly changing focus from the religious towards the political. “The first history plays were written in the 1530's, the most notable of which was John Bale's *King Johan*. While it considered matters of morality and religion, these were handled in the light of the Reformation.” (Allardyce, 1957: 95-98) These plays set the precedent of presenting history in the dramatic medium and laid the foundation for what would later be elevated by Marlowe and Shakespeare into the English History Play, or Chronicle Play, in the latter part of the century. Not only was the Reformation taking hold in England, but the winds of Classical Humanism were sweeping in from the Continent. Interest grew in the classics and the plays of classical antiquity, especially in the universities. Latin texts were being ‘Englysshed’ and Latin poetry and plays began to be adapted into English plays. Writers were also developing English tragedies for the first time, influenced by Greek and Latin writers. Among the first forays into English tragedy were Richard Edwards' *Damon and Pythias* and John Pickering's New Interlude of vice
containing the History of Horestes. The most influential writer of classical tragedies, however, was the Roman playwright Seneca, whose works were translated into English by Jasper Heywood in 1589. Seneca’s plays incorporated rhetorical speeches, blood and violence, and often ghosts; components which were to figure prominently in both Elizabethan and Jacobean drama.

Italy

The translation and imitation of the classics occurred first in Italy, with Terence, Plautus, and Seneca as the models. The Italians strictly applied their interpretation of Aristotle’s rules for the drama, and this rigidity was primarily responsible for the failure of Italian Renaissance drama. Some liveliness appeared in the comic sphere, particularly in the works of Ariosto and in Machiavelli’s satiric masterpiece, La Mandragola. The pastoral drama—set in the country and depicting the romantic affairs of rustic people, usually shepherds and shepherdesses—was more successful than either comedy or tragedy. Notable Italian practitioners of the genre were Giovanni Battista Guarini and Torquato Tasso.

The true direction of the Italian stage was toward the spectacular and the musical. A popular Italian Renaissance form was the intermezzo, which presented music and lively entertainment between the acts of classical imitations. The native taste for music and theatricality led to the emergence of the opera in the 16th cent. and the triumph of this form on the Italian stage in the 17th cent. Similarly, the commedia dell’arte, emphasizing comedy and improvisation and
featuring character type's familiar to a contemporary audience, was more popular than academic imitations of classical comedy.

France

Renaissance drama appeared somewhat later in France than in Italy. Estienne Jodelle's Senecan tragedy *Cleopatre Captive* (1553) marks the beginning of classical imitation in France. The French drama initially suffered from the same rigidity as the Italian, basing itself on Roman models and Italian imitations. However, in the late 16th cent. in France there was a romantic reaction to classical dullness, led by Alexandre Hardy, France's first professional playwright. This romantic trend was stopped in the 17th cent. by Cardinal Richelieu, who insisted on a return to classic forms. Richelieu's judgment, however, bore fruit in the triumphs of the French neoclassical tragedies of Jean Racine and the comedies of Molière. The great tragedies of Pierre Corneille, although classical in their grandeur and in their concern with noble characters, are decidedly of the Renaissance in their exaltation of man's ability, by force of will, to transcend adverse circumstances.

England

The English drama of the 16th century showed from the beginning that it would not be bound by classical rules. Elements of farce, morality, and a disregard for the unities of time, place, and action inform the early comedies *Gammer Gurton's Needle* and *Ralph Roister Doister* and the Senecan tragedy *Gorboduc*. William Shakespeare's great work was foreshadowed by early essays in the historical
chronicle play, by elements of romance found in the works of John Lyly, by revenge plays such as Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*—again inspired by the works of Seneca—and by Christopher Marlowe's development of blank verse and his deepening of the tragic perception. Shakespeare, of course, stands as the supreme dramatist of the Renaissance period, equally adept at writing tragedies, comedies, or chronicle plays. His great achievements include the perfection of a verse form and language that capture the spirit of ordinary speech and yet stand above it to give a special dignity to his characters and situations; an unrivaled subtlety of characterization; and a marvelous ability to unify plot, character, imagery, and verse movement.

With the reign of James I the English drama began to decline until the closing of the theaters by the Puritans in 1642. This period is marked by sensationalism and rhetoric in tragedy, as in the works of John Webster and Thomas Middleton, spectacle in the form of the masque, and a gradual turn to polished wit in comedy, begun by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher and furthered by James Shirley. The best plays of the Jacobean period are the comedies of Ben Jonson, in which he satirized contemporary life by means of his own invention, the comedy of humours. (Allardyce 1945: 110)

Eighteenth-Century Drama

The influence of Restoration comedy can be seen in the 18th cent. This century also ushered in the middle-class or domestic drama, which treated the problems of ordinary people. The political satire in the plays seemed to offer a lot more
interest to people. The Sturm und Drang in Germany represented a romantic reaction against French neoclassicism and was supported by an upsurge of German interest in Shakespeare, who was viewed at the time as the greatest of the romantics. Gotthold Lessing, Friedrich von Schiller, and Goethe were the principal figures of this movement, but the plays produced by the three are frequently marred by sentimentality and too heavy a burden of philosophical ideas.

The theaters established in the wake of Charles II's return from exile in France and the Restoration of the monarchy in England were intended primarily to serve the needs of a socially, politically, and aesthetically homogeneous class. At first they relied on the pre-Civil War repertoire; before long, however, they felt called upon to bring these plays into line with their more refined, French-influenced sensibilities. The themes, language, and dramaturgy of Shakespeare's plays were now considered out of date, so that during the next two centuries the works of England's greatest dramatist were never produced intact.

The resurgence of Puritanism, especially after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, had a profound effect on 18th-century drama. Playwrights, retreating from the free-spirited licentiousness of the Restoration, turned towards sentimental comedy and moralizing domestic tragedy. Satire enjoyed a brief revival with Henry Fielding and with John Gay, whose The Beggar's Opera met with phenomenal success. Their wit, however, was too sharp for the government, which retaliated by imposing strict censorship laws in 1737. For the next 150 years, few substantial English authors bothered with the drama.
Nineteenth-Century Drama

The Romantic Movement did not blossom in France until the 1820s, while in England great Romantic poets had not yet produced any significant work. Burlesque and mediocre melodrama reigned supreme on the English stage. Although melodrama was aimed solely at producing superficial excitement, its development, coupled with the emergence of realism in the 19th cent., resulted in more serious drama. Initially, the melodrama dealt in such superficially exciting materials as the gothic castle with its mysterious lord for a villain, but gradually the characters and settings moved closer to the realities of contemporary life.

The concern for generating excitement led to a more careful consideration of plot construction, reflected in the smoothly contrived climaxes of the ‘well-made’ plays. Realism had perhaps its most profound expression in the works of the great 19th-century. Many of the Russian dramatists emphasized character and satire rather than plot in their works. Romanticism was yet another of the characteristics of the 19th century drama. In its purest form, Romanticism concentrated on the spirituality, which would allow humankind to transcend the limitations of the physical world and body and find an ideal truth. Subject matter was drawn from nature and "natural man" such as the supposedly untouched Native American. The Romantics focused on emotion rather than rationality, drew their examples from a study of the real world rather than the ideal, and glorified the idea of the artist as a mad genius unfettered by rules. Romanticism thus gave rise to a vast array of dramatic literature and production that was often undisciplined and that often substituted emotional manipulation for substantial
ideas. Romanticism first appeared in Germany, a country with little native theatre other than rustic farces before the 18th century. By the 1820s Romanticism dominated the theatre of most of Europe. Many of the ideas and practices of Romanticism were evident in the late 18th-century. The plays of the French playwright René Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt paved the way for French Romanticism, which had previously been known only in the acting of François Joseph Talma in the first decades of the 19th century.

Twentieth-Century Drama

During the 20th cent., especially after the World War I, Western drama became more internationally unified and less the product of separate national literary traditions. Throughout the century realism, naturalism, and symbolism and various combinations of these continued to inform important plays. Among the many 20th-century playwrights who have written what can be broadly termed naturalist dramas are Gerhart Hauptmann, John Galsworthy, John Millington Synge and Sean O'Casey (Irish), and Eugene O'Neill, Clifford Odets, and Lillian Hellman (American). An important movement in early 20th-century drama was expressionism. Expressionist playwrights tried to convey the dehumanizing aspects of 20th-century technological society through such devices as minimal scenery, telegraphic dialogue, talking machines, and characters portrayed as types rather than individuals.

The World War II and its attendant horrors produced a widespread sense of the utter meaninglessness of human existence. This sense is brilliantly expressed in
the body of plays that have come to be known collectively as the theater of the absurd. By abandoning traditional devices of the drama, including logical plot development, meaningful dialogue, and intelligible characters, absurdist playwrights sought to convey modern humanity's feelings of bewilderment, alienation, and despair—the sense that reality is itself unreal. In their plays human beings often portrayed as dupes, clowns who, although not without dignity, are at the mercy of forces that are inscrutable. Somewhat similar to the theater of the absurd is the so-called theater of cruelty, derived from the ideas of Antonin Artaud, who, writing in the 1930s, foresaw a drama that would assault its audience with movement and sound, producing a visceral rather than an intellectual reaction. After the violence of World War II and the subsequent threat of the atomic bomb, his approach seemed particularly appropriate to many playwrights. Elements of the theater of cruelty can be found in the brilliantly abusive language, in the ritualistic aspects of some of Genet's plays, in the masked utterances and enigmatic silences and in the orgiastic abandon

During the last third of the 20th century a few continental European dramatists stood out in the theater world. However, for the most part, the countries of the continent saw an emphasis on creative trends in directing rather than a flowering of new plays. In the United States and England, however, many dramatists old and new continued to flourish, with numerous plays of the later decades of the 20th cent. And in the early 21st century, echoing the trends of the years preceding them. Realism, in a number of guises, psychological, social and political continued to be a force in British works. In keeping with the tenor of the
times, many of the works of the period were marked by elements of wit, irony, and satire. A witty surrealism also characterized some of the late 20th century's theater, particularly the brilliant wordplay and startling juxtapositions of the many plays of England. The late decades of the 20th century were also a time of considerable experiment and iconoclasm. Experimental dramas of the 1960s and 70s were followed by a mixing and merging of various kinds of media with aspects of postmodernism, improvisational techniques, performance art, and other kinds of avant-garde theater. Thematically, the social upheavals of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s—particularly the civil rights and women's movements, gay liberation, and the AIDS crisis—provided impetus for new plays that explored the lives of minorities and women. Drama by and about African Americans emerged as a significant theatrical trend. Feminist and other women-centered themes dramatized by contemporary female playwrights were plentiful in the 1970s and extended in the following decades. Gay themes, often in works by gay playwrights, also marked the later decades of the 20th cent. Homosexual characters had been treated sympathetically but in the context of pathology in earlier 20th-century works Gay subjects were presented more explicitly during the 1960s. In later years gay experience was explored more frequently and with greater variety and openness.

**Modern Drama**

From the time of the Renaissance on, theatre seemed to be striving for total realism, or at least for the illusion of reality. As it reached that goal in the late 19th century, a multifaceted, anti realistic reaction erupted. Avant-garde
Precursors of Modern Theatre Many movements generally lumped together as the avant-garde, attempted to suggest alternatives to the realistic drama and production. The various theoreticians felt that Naturalism presented only superficial and thus limited or surface reality—that a greater truth or reality could be found in the spiritual or the unconscious. Others felt that theatre had lost touch with its origins and had no meaning for modern society other than as a form of entertainment. Paralleling modern art movements, they turned to symbol, abstraction, and ritual in an attempt to revitalize the theatre. Although realism continues to be dominant in contemporary theatre, television and film now better serve its earlier functions.

The pivotal and innovative contributions of the 19th-century Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen and the 20th-century German theatre practitioner Bertolt Brecht dominate modern drama; each inspired a tradition of imitators, which include many of the greatest playwrights of the modern era. Other important playwrights of the modern era include August Strindberg, Anton Chekhov, Frank Wedekind, Maurice Maeterlinck, Federico García Lorca, Eugene O'Neill, Luigi Pirandello, George Bernard Shaw, Ernst Toller, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Jean Genet, Eugène Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Dario Fo, Heiner Müller, and Caryl Churchill.

Indian drama

India with its one of the most ancient literary traditions, can boast of a distinguished drama and theatrical tradition, staying wholly unemotional towards
any kind of foreign influence. Indian drama and theatre is perhaps as old as its music and dance. The term ‘unity in diversity’ finds an eloquent utterance in Indian drama and theatre which has verily been considered one of the oldest forms of art. Bharata believes that the objective of ‘natak’, an Indian equivalent for drama is, in addition to giving rasanubhuti, to instruct how to attain dharma, artha, kama, moksha. The first three are related to worldly life and the last with what is beyond the worldly life.

The earliest form of Indian drama, the Sanskrit drama had appeared after the development of Greek and Roman drama and before the development of theatre in other parts of Asia. It emerged sometime between the 2nd century BCE and the 1st century CE and flourished between the 1st century CE and the 10th, which was a period of relative peace in the history of India during which hundreds of plays were written. During this period drama was looked at as the most popular and accepted means for the concerns, foils, foibles, leisure, amusement and all other human emotions.

The earliest-surviving fragments of Sanskrit drama date from the 1st century CE. The major source of evidence for Sanskrit theatre is A Treatise on Theatre (Nātyaśāstra), a compendium whose date of composition is uncertain and whose authorship is attributed to Bharata Muni. “If the Vedas do incorporate the whole of the human cultural heritage of their epoch it is natural to derive from them theatre which is the most comprehensive art. This is the real meaning of Bharat Muni’s Natyopatti adhyaya or the natyashastra.” (Muni Bharat 1984: 32) The Treatise is the most complete work of dramaturgy in the ancient world. It
addresses acting, dance, music, dramatic construction, architecture, costuming, make-up, props, the organization of companies, the audience, competitions, and offers a mythological account of the origin of theatre. The myth says that Bharat Muni was taught the art by lord Natraj himself. Ancient theatre was regarded as a sacred art descending directly from heaven to earth. Initially the theatrical performances were held at palaces and temples. It is difficult to trace out when the first theatre was built. But as a general practice, the auditoriums were usually divided by four pillars painted in four distinct colours like white, red, yellow and blue, and the viewers, based on their caste would occupy their seats in the subsequent areas. Although paintings and carvings were used as decorations, no other properties were used and change in scene or backdrop was usually indicated through dialogues.

Some scholars believe, “The Ramayana and Mahabharata can be considered as the first recognized plays that originated in India. These epics provided the inspiration to the earliest Indian dramatists and they do even today.” (Iyengar, 1997: 137) With the Islamic conquests that began in the 10th and 11th centuries, theatre was discouraged or forbidden entirely. Later, in an attempt to re-assert indigenous values and ideas, village theatre was encouraged across the subcontinent, developing in a large number of regional languages from the 15th to the 19th centuries. Modern Indian theatre developed during the period of colonial rule under the British Empire, from the mid-19th century until the mid-20th.
This formal theatrical genre called the Sanskrit drama conformed to the rules laid by the *Natyashashtra*, including the use of lyrics, songs, dances and proper beginning and end. *Rasas* – moods were the hinges around which majority of Sanskrit dramas moved. The diction and dialogues were a mixture of verse and prose. The characters like gods, kings, learned upper class people and Brahmins used to speak in classical Sanskrit whereas Prakrit was used by women, children, people of lower birth and other similar categories. Thirteen plays by Bhasa, written in the 3rd century AD, are the ancient most surviving plays available in Sanskrit. Most of his plays are based on the episodes of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Besides Bharata, some other names that merit our attention are Kalidasa, Śudraka, Asvaghosa, Bhavabhuti, Daṇḍin Emperor Harsh among the others. However, around the beginning of the 8th century, the glorious tradition of Sanskrit drama was on a wane. As Kironomy Raha observes:

Creative involvement with Sanskrit drama, however, was confined to the elitist crust of society, and patronage for production of such play to the princely courts and aristocracy. Classical Sanskrit drama, in any case had declined by the end of the 7th century AD after the Muslim invasion it ceased to have whatever little patronage it might have enjoyed earlier. The plays were read or recited by the successive generation of students of Sanskrit but there is no evidence of their being performed with any regularity before any except cloistered audience. (1978:1)

However, with the gradual emergence of the local languages, the theatre also re-emerged in the form of folk theatre or regional theatrical performance. Bhartendu Harishchandra, discussing all the traditional types of dramas of his time, talks about some new development in the genre. According to him, the main objective...
of these new types of plays is to arouse feelings of *Shringar, Hasya, Adbhut*,

social awareness and love for nation. (Sharma 2000: 23) Commenting on

Bhartendu’s views on *natak*, Ranjana Argade states, “In social plays, it is

essential to portray the ugly trends of society. For example, with the expansion of

education, there was awareness against social evil like child marriage. Hence it

became necessary to re-arrange old themes logically with the purpose of

progress of society.” (2005: 333). *Saviti-Chavit, Dukhini Bala, Balya Vivah, Vivah-Vidushak Jaisa Kam Vaisha hi Parinam* are some of the instances, discussed by

Bharatendu in his essay, that deal with contemporary social issues; whereas as

plays like *Bharat Janani, Neel Devi, Bharat Durdasha* depicted nationalist fervor.

It should be noted that during the colonial period, besides, social issues, discourse of resistance, and re-inventing history and myth, classical theatre traditions continued to influence modern theatre in regional languages. Among

all the languages, Hindi, Marathi and Bengali theatres have kept flourishing and demand for them has not subsided by the drama aficionados. Some of the older traditional features of Indian Drama, like a prayer at the beginning, umpteen lyrical scenes, stock figures, such as the proficient courtesan, the jester, the humble confidant, or the immediate companion of the hero, stock comic situations, just like the complaint of the obstinate servant and almost deriding anguish over the death of a wealthy relative. Other devices and elements of the stage, such as the play within a play, the discovering of hidden letters and the capers of drunken men, among the others continued to be a part of the theatre of the colonial period.
Modern Indian Drama in English:

As K. R. S. Iyengar describes, “Modern Indian dramatic writing in English is neither rich in quantity nor, on the whole, of high quality.” (2005: 226) According to him, “Enterprising Indians have for nearly a century occasionally attempted drama in English – but seldom for stage performance.” (Ibid. 226)

Commenting on the paucity of Indian English drama, K. R. S. Iyengar makes the pertinent observation that drama, as a literary genre, can flourish only in the natural soil where it is the ‘Lingua franca’:

   Indo-Anglican Drama’: isn’t it like talking about ‘snakes in Iceland? Not quite – but the problem is there, for while poetry, novels and non-fiction prose can be read in the silence of one’s study, drama can come to life only in the theatre. (1997: 730)

In Indian literature, drama in English is yet to register an appreciable growth, though several English translations of plays in vernacular have come out. M. K. Naik cites a number of factors which have been responsible for the slowness of the growth of Indian English drama. The following comment Naik makes on drama resembles the earlier one of Iyengar, as, to Naik, again, drama is,

   …a composite art in which the written word of the playwright attains complete artistic realization only when it becomes the spoken word of the actor on the stage, and through that medium reacts on the mind of the audience. (1997: 180)

Further,
A play, in order to communicate fully and becomes a living dramatic experience... needs a real theatre and a live audience, ... “He [The Playwright] must communicate or he will die”. (181)

A playwright, hence, needs a living theatre to stage his plays, evaluate their total effect on the audiences. Actors too can easily improvise in them, thereby giving vent to their histrionic talents in a natural and uninhibited way. Early Indian English playwrights could not enjoy the patronage of an English-knowing, elitist audience and, hence, the growth of Indian English drama remained, for a while, lethargic. English, being a foreign language, was not intelligible to the masses, and playwrights, too, found it difficult to write scrip, natural and graceful dialogue in English. Since they did not grow up in an English environment, and they had acquired their Knowledge of English only at a fairly advanced age, the dialogues they wrote proved to be somewhat stilted and artificial.

As mentioned in a studied volume on Plays, N. S. Dharan notes, “Despite these obvious limitations, some Indian English playwrights did make an earnest endeavour to write plays in English. Krishna Mohan Benerji wrote the first Indian English play, *The Persecuted or Dramatic Scenes of the Present State of Hindoo Society in Calcutta*, in 1831, the first well – known Indian English play. It is social play which presents the conflict between Indian orthodoxy and the new ideas which came from the West. It exposes the hypocrisy of the affluent in Hindu society. It is the earliest play on the historic theme of East – West encounter.” (1999: 16)
Michael Madhusudan Dutt is another name that merits our attention in the field of Indian English plays. He translated his play *Ratnavali* (1859), and *Sermista* (1859), originally written in Bengali, into English. He also wrote a play in English, *Is This Called Civilization?* (1871) Ramkinoo Dutt wrote this *Manipura Tragedy* in 1983. Indian English drama, thus, one might venture to add, made a humble beginning in the nineteenth century Bengal. Writing of the early phase of the Indian English drama, in this regards, Naik observes:

> Owing to the lack of the firm dramatic tradition nourished on actual performance in a live theatre, early Indian English drama in Bengal, as elsewhere in India, grew sporadically as mostly closet drama; and even later, only Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, and H.N. Chattopadhayaya produced a substantial corpus of dramatic writing. (98).

It is important to recognize the fact that Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and H. N. Chattopadhyaya, popularly known as the ‘big three’ amongst English-knowing Indian audience, made an epoch-making and abiding contribution to the development of Indian English drama. Tagore’s play *Chitra, The Post Office, Sacrifice, Red Oleanders, Chandalika, and Mukta – Dhara* are now available to us in their English versions. Some of them were translated by Tagore himself from Bengali, while the others by Indian and English translators.

In fact, Tagore was an actor and a theatre artist, steeped in the great dramatic tradition of India. An ardent admirer of Kalidasa, Shakespeare and Ibsen, he tried to emulate these great forerunners. Yet he wanted his plays to be different.
Basically, poetical in temperament and outlook, Tagore reveled in the employment of imagery and symbolism in his plays. Moreover, Tagore had an intimate knowledge of Indian epics. Being sensitive to Indian tradition, and rooted in the Vedas and the Upanishads, he used his familiarities with them often as starting points. His plays have plots as such, as iyengar remarks:

Tagore could start the play, strike the opening chords, name the characters – and memory and imagination would do the rest. Not the logic of careful plotting but the music of ideas and symbols is the ‘soul' of this drama...[it] kindles the sluggish soul to a new awareness of life’s “deep magics". (123)

Ascetic (1884) was Tagore’s first play. Thematically, his sacrifice (1890) is similar to Sri Auorobindo’s Perseus the Deliverer, for both the plays are aimed at extirpating social evils. In Sacrifice, Tagore condemns the sacrifice of living beings. In Perseus the Deliverer, Sri Aurobindo condemns Poseidon’s thirst for blood. Both advocate compassion and love. Malini (1912) Natir Puja (1926) and Chandalika (1953) testify to Tagore’s fascination for Buddhism. Other plays of Tagore are Chitra (1892), The King of the Dark Chamber (1910), The Post Office (1912), Mukta – Dhara (1922) and Red Oleanders (1925). In The King of the Dark Chamber and The Post Office the theme is man in relation to God. Both plays are symbolistic. The Post Office is autobiographical in the sense that through Amal, the boy – hero, Tagore projects his own boyhood. Tagore’s romantic play Chitra, was inspired by Mahabharata, and, in a way, a succinct version of Kalidasa’s Shakuntala. Tagore incarnates in Chitra the evolution of human love from the physical to the spiritual. Mukta – Dhara is sometimes
referred to as Tagore’s greatest play. Like Gandhiji, Tagore was against the
ruthlessness of the power of technology and its tendency to warp human
personality. His *Mukta – Dhara* is an eloquent protest against the onslaught of
machinery on human civilization.

In short, Tagore wrote more than forty plays of all kinds – social comedies,
allegorical plays, and symbolic plays – spread over more than half a century. As
for Sri Aurobindo, he wrote in all eleven verse dramas. Five of them, *The Viziers
of Bassora, Perseus the Deliverer, Radogune, Eric* and *Vasavadatta* are
complete five – act plays. But *The Witch of Ilni, Achabo and Essarhaddon, The
Maid in the Mill, The House of Brut, The Birth of Sin* and *Prince of Edur* are
incomplete. The size of these plays varies from one scene of fifty – two lines to
three acts. Four of the complete plays of Sri Aurobindo are comedies, and only
one *Radogune* is a tragedy. In all the five, the playwright combines his distinctive
love of romance with his encyclopedic knowledge of words history and culture.

Dharan rightly observes:

Sri Aurobindo’s *Radogune* is a modified version of tragedy of the same
name written by Corneille. As a play, it is grim and serious throughout,
with no element of comic relief. It owes much to Shakespearean and
Jacobean tragedies. Especially, it bears the unmistakable stamp of the
revived Elizabethan tragedy of the late Victorian era. *The Witch of Ilni*
and *The Maid in the Mill* are Elizabethan through and through. They are
modeled on Shakespeare’s romantic plays. *The Maid in the Mill* seems
to present several echoes of Goldsmith’s *She Stoops to Conquer*. *The
House of Brut* recalls Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine*. *Achab and Essarhaddon*
and *The Birth of Sin* are based on the Bible. As for *The Viziers of
Bassora, Sri Aurobindo goes to the *Arabian Nights* for the theme. (1999: 19)

Sri Aurobindo’s longest play is *Perseus the Deliverer*. It was inspired by his participation in Indian struggle for freedom. To Sri Aurobindo, Andromeda was the symbol of total sacrifice and Perseus, the ideal hero – survivor of the nation in travail. Poseidon was the blood thirsty oppressor. The political atmosphere in India was such at that time that the Perseus myth offered to Sri Aurobindo the much needed plot to unfold the agonies, sufferings and travails of the fighters engaged in the struggle of India’s freedom. To Aurobindo, Andromeda was none other than Mother India herself. In presenting the Persues – and – Andromeda narrative, Shri Aurobindo was indebted to Sophocles, Euripedes, Ovid and Corneille. Iyengar has shown how Charles Kingsley’s narrative poem in hexameter, *Andromeda*, impinged upon Sri Aurobindo’s consciousness while he was working at the play. The theme of his final and finest play *Vasavadatta*, depicts the developments of love between Prince Udayan and Princess Vasavadatt. He borrows the theme from Somdeva’s *Kathasaritasagar*, one of the most popular Sanskrit classics. It is said to be the finest product of Sri Aurobindo’s dramatic genius, as it brings out the nature and extent of the influence of Elizabethan romanticism on him. The eleven dramatic works of Sri Aurobindo prove that he has a firm hold on the various aspects of drama. They contain enough evidence to show that they remain, first and foremost, ‘stage plays’. As plays modeled on the Elizabethan masterpieces, they bear such structural features of the Shakespearean drama as indifference to all
considerations of locate and unity of place, and frequent resources to a variety of minor scenes. His plays are also characterized by a proper blend of story, incident and situation. Significantly enough, these elements are related properly to characters. Such a harmony endows his play with inexhaustible human interest and significance.

The following passage from *The Future of poetry* bears ample testimony to Sri Aurobindo’s innermost preoccupation as a playwright:

… drama must have an interpretative vision; the vision must contain an explicit or implicit idea of life; the vision and idea have to seem to arise out of the inner life of characters, and through an evaluation of speech leading to an evolution of action; the true movement and result in all great drama is really psychological. (93 – 34)

However, despite all the stage worthiness of Sri Aurobindo’s plays, they have never been presented on the stage by different dramatic companies, a fact that exposes these plays to the charge of being ‘closet dramas’.

Last of the great Indian playwright trio, Harindranath Chatopadhyaya, has been more eminent as a poet than a playwright, a fact that has overshadowed the true status of his plays. His dramatic output could be classified as devotional plays, social plays, historical plays and miscellaneous plays. His devotional plays deal with the lives of some Maharashtrian saints, all written in verse. They are rather playlets than full-length plays. To this group do belong *Raidas, Chokhamela, Eknath, Pundalik, Saku Bai, Jayadeva*, and *Tukaram*. The last play in the group, *Tukaram*, is said to be the best in terms of characterization as well as the
development of plot. The distinction of this play is that it is effective both as ‘closet play’ and a ‘stage play’. It could be regarded as one of the best Indian plays written in English.

The most significant of Harindranath Chattopadyaya’s social plays are to be found in his collection *Five Plays* (1937). *The Windows, The Parrot, The Sentry’s Lantern, The Coffin* and *The Evening Lamp* are the plays we find in this collection. *The Windows* and *The Parrot* throw the light on the playwright’s acute social awareness. *The Sentry’s Lantern* has for its theme the evils of imperialism. *The Coffin*, a two-act play, is the study of a bourgeois artist and his hollow world, and *The Evening Lamp* is about a Narcissistic youth who has fallen in love with his own shadow.

Sympathy for the exploited, revolt against a stultifying code of morality, insurgence against the brute forces of imperialism, and a plea for purposeful writing constitute the themes of these plays. Hence, they may be called symbolic, didactic or propagandistic plays. Iyengar describes them as “manifestoes of the new Dawn of Realism” (234), for they were written in the days when ‘the Progressive Writers’ Movement’ was gaining momentum in India and elsewhere.

Another playwright, T. P. Kailasam, has carved for himself a secure place in the history of Indian English drama. His English plays include *The Burden* (1933), *Fulfillment* (1933), *The Purpose* (1944), *Karna: The Brahmin Corse* (1946) and *Keechaka* (1949). The epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata provides the plot for these days. While the story of The Burden is derived from the *Ramayana,*
those of the others are taken from the *Mahabharata*. When asked in an interview why he chose more episodes from the *Mahabharata* than from the *Ramayana* then for the themes of his plays, Kailasam submitted the following as the sole reason for his choice: “You see, the characters in the *Mahabharata* are all like us, living rooted to this world. They may have their ‘adhyatmic’ ambitions but …they are all human.” (Bhatta 1977: 87)

It appears that Kailasam was quite familiar with ancient Indian literature and his long stay in England inspired him further to contribute something to the field of Indian English drama. Krishna Bhatta quotes Kailasam’s peculiar cause, bordering on the Platonic, for the choice of English as the medium of his plays in response to Sampathgiri Rao’s question as to why he wrote in English: “The Delineation of ideal characters requires a language which should not be very near to us” (Bhatta 87)

Kailasam’s *The Burden* owes its origin to Bhasa’s Sanskrit work *Pratimanatakam* (Statue – Play). But Kailasam transformed the dramatic material in his own unique style. To Iyenger, Kailasam’s *Fulfillment* marks the highest watermark of the artist’s career: “Fulfillment” is almost the crown of Kailasam’s dramatic art.” (1985: 237). *The Purpose* is a play in two acts, which, despite some of its imperfections, remains still one of the greatest contributions of Kailasam to Indian English drama. *Karna: the Brahmin’s Curse* is a play in five acts.
In fact, Kailasam and Adya Rangacharya revolutionized Kannada drama which was deeply entrenched in the mythological tradition, far removed from real life situations. Kailasam blends the best of both the Indian and Western tradition.

Bharathi Sarabhai is yet another name that one cannot miss while discussing Indian Plays in English. Her *The Well of the People* (1938) one could see Mahatma Gandhi’s influence on her with respect to treatment of the theme of untouchability. Sarabhai, though a high caste woman, became an ardent follower of Gandhiji and worked in his Sabarmati Ashram. She also acted as a volunteer under Nehru’s command at the Kumbha Mela at Haridwar, she felt that she had a vision of Mother India. Thus, *The Well of the People* was a direct outcome of Bharathi Sarabhai’s association with Gandhiji and Nehru, and also her participation at the Haridwar Kumbha Mela. It is little wonder then that the play becomes a vehicle of the messages of both Gandhiji and Nehru.

It is interesting to make a brief survey of the development of Indian English drama during the Pre-Independence period and the Post-Independence period. The Bombay Amateur was built in Bombay in 1779. The plays presented here were mainly the comedies of the late Georgian playwrights. This theatre was soon crippled by financial difficulties and was finally sold by public auction in 1835. The Grant Road Theatre was opened a decade later. These early theatres, obviously, had no room for plays originally written in English by Indians. Several European touring companies visited and performed in Bombay during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The plays staged were mostly comedies, farces.
and operas and very rarely tragedies, all imported from Britain. Many amateur
dramatic groups and clubs also flourished during the 1860s and 1870s, notable
the Parsi Elphinstone Dramatic Society, the Kalidasa Elphinstone Society, the
Shakespeare Society of Elphinstone College, the Bombay Amateur Dramatic
Club, the Thespian Club and the Orphean Dramatic Club.

The upshot of such many–sided dramatic activities in Bombay did not result,
however, in any growth of drama in English, but rather gave a fillip to the drama
in Marathi and Gujarati. Annasaheb Lirloskar’s epoch–making production of
Shakuntala in 1880, successfully launched the modern Marathi drama.
Consequently, English drama on the Bombay stage slowly declined in the face of
the challenges from the drama in the vernacular. The story of the growth and
development of modern drama in Calcutta, Madras and Delhi also runs along
similar lines.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the theatre movement in the Indian
languages had already gathered momentum under the influence mainly of the
British drama, whereas the theatre in English received no chance to develop at
all. From 1940 onwards, one finds several dramatic organizations launched, but
none devoted itself exclusively to the drama in English. Notable among these
were the Indian National theatre, established under the leadership of Kamaladevi
Chattopadhyaya during World War II, whose first production was a ballet based
on Nehru’s The Discovery of India, Ebrahim Alkazi’s Theatre unit, and Bhartiya
Natya Sangha affiliated the World Theatre Centre of UNESCO.
Several regional amateur theatres have also flourished from time to time. These include Sombhu Mitra’s Bahuroopi in Bengali, the Hindi Natya Parishad, the Kalakendra, Rangabhooomi and Natyamandal in Gujarat; the Prithvi Theatres and the Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangha in Bombay, The Telugu Little Theatre and the Andhra Theatre Foundation; the Seva Sangha in Madras and Dishantar in Delhi. It is highly significant that the Little Theatre Group was established in 1947 as an English Theatre, but eventually changed over to Bengali in 1953.

In the post-independence period, performing arts were employed as an effective means of public enlightenment during the First Five year Plan (1951 – 54). As a result, the National School of Drama was established under the directorship of Alkhazi. Institutions of training in dramatics were founded in big cities. Rukminidevi Arundale’s Kalakhsetra at Adyar, Madras and Mrinalini Sarabhai’s Darpana in Ahmadabad are notable examples for this kind of theatre. Drama departments started functioning several universities. The Annual Drama Festival was started in New Delhi by the Sangit Nataka Akademi in 1954. Vision of foreign troupes were arranged from time to time by the British Council and the Us Information Service.

With so much encouragement coming from so many quarters, drama begun to flourish in the regional languages, with the singular exceptions of the drama in English. Barring Gopal Sharman’s Akhsara Little Theatre in New Delhi, only occasionally, were Indian plays in English staged even in big cities like Bombay. Paradoxically enough, some of these plays like Gurucharan Das’s *Mira*, Pratap
Shama’s *A Touch of Brightness* and Asif Currimbhoy’s *The Dancer* have successfully been staged in the West. In this context M. K. Naik points to the distinct native trend emerging in the modern English drama in India:

But during recent year vernacular Indian drama has increasingly been tuning to folk forms and tapping their springs of vitality with splendid results, Girish Karnad’s play, *Hayavadana*, and Vijay Tendulkar’s of ‘Deshavatar’ and ‘Khele’ techniques in the Marathi play, *Ghasiram Kotwal*, the adaptation of ‘Bhavai’ in two Gujarati plays, Dina Gandhi’s *Mena Gujarati* and Bahut Tripathi’s *Leela*, the employment of the ‘Jatra’ motif in Utpal Dutt’s *Jokumariswara* and Badal Sircar’s *Evam Indrajit*….are prominent recent examples. (187)

Thus, it is mainly the drama in Indian languages and the drama in English translations that have registered a remarkable growth in recent decades. During the last few years, several plays, originally written in regional languages, have been translated into English. Today, a sizable number of such plays do exist. According to many academics, it is necessary to incorporate these translations into the corpus of Indian English Literature, as they also contribute an important component to it. Such translations of plays forged an effective link between the East and the West, the North and the South of India, and contributed, in no small measure, to the growing harmony and richness of contemporary creative consciousness. Indranath Choudhary, in particular, observes this peculiar, paradoxical, yet charmingly sophisticated emerging phenomenon in Indian literature.
All inter-lingual enquiries in the Indian situation operate within a set of oppositions which may be called the unity – diversity set of oppositions. This unity diversity set of oppositions is otherwise complementary to each other. There is no doubt that we have multiplicity of ideas, multilingualism and multi-level meaningfulness of existence, but at the same time, it is very true that literature in different languages creates visions that transcend barriers of diversities and bring us nearer to one another to point out our basic unity. The problem of relations arising out of this set of oppositions has made the study of Indian literature crucial and meaningful for the modern man. (1993-1994: 17)

According to Indranath Chaudhary, when the Sahitya Akademi was set up in 1954, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan spelt out its objectives as the promotion of the unity of Indian Literature, despite India’s geographical, political, social, and linguistic, Dr. Radhakrishnan gave a slogan to the Akademi that Indian Literature is one, though written in many languages. It now seems certain that we can talk of the entire Indian literature as a single entity.

To be precise, drama too has passed through a period of turmoil in independent India. Before the pioneers of modern drama, Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Elkunchevar, P. L. Deshpande, G. P. Deshpande, Girish Karnad, Chandrashekhar Kambar, Prasanna, H. S. Shivprakash, Badal Sarcar, C. J. Thomas, G. Shankara Pillai, Kavalam Narayana Panikar, Bhisham Sahni, Nag Bodas, Manoranjan Das, Balwant Gargi, Manjula Padmanabhan, Asif Currimbhoy, Gurucharan Das among the others, made their presence felt in the theatre. According to K. Satchidanandan, “Indian drama had a realistic phase when it dealt with domestic tensions after the fashion of Ibsen and Strindberg, or
with social tensions and conflicts in Shavian or Chekhovian modes. (2003: 44) According to him, “Indian People’s Theatre Association had spearheaded the Progressive movement in drama in several languages of India earlier dominated by mythological plays.” (ibid 44) Syed Abdul Malik (Rajdrohi) and Uttam Barua (Baraja Phuleshvari) in Assamese attempted a reinterpretation of history in the light of the new social awareness. Ibsen was the major stimulator of the 1950s while Arun Sarma (Ahar) and Basant Saikia (Mrgatsrsna) followed the model of the absurd plays in articulating the frustrations of modern times. Badal Sircar with his plays like Ebam Indrajit introduced the idea of the third theatre in Bengal that ruthlessly dissected the middle-class society as he saw it (Ibid. 44) his plays differed from that of contemporary propagandist plays. Sriranga’s Shoka Chakra and G. B. Joshi’s Kadadida Neeru can be assigned to the navodaya trend in Kannada. The navya (New) drama in Kannada seems to begin with Sriranga’s plays like Kattale Belaku and Kelu Janamejaya where the playwright moves from social criticism to a deeper analysis of the nature of man, using innovative techniques. Girish Karnad merits a place in this category on the virtue of techniques employed by him in Tughlaq and The Fire and The Rain.

In Malayalam, innovation in drama began with the plays of C. J. Thomas like Avan Veendum Varunnu, where he invests ordinary characters with a significance beyond their immediate social reality. Manoranjan Das’s Oriya plays like Jaaban, August Na, Agami, Abarodha, Aranya Fasal, Kathaghoda and Sabdalipi have dealt with society and individual in our historical conjecture. Loss of identity, the impossibility of communication and political disillusionment have

A survey of contemporary Indian drama shows that the works of Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad represent a powerful and resurgent Indian drama. These playwrights have, with their innovative and experimental work of contemporary relevance, given new directions to Indian drama. Although both of them write in local Indian languages, many of their works are transferred into English. Some of them are translated by them only. Their plays also have been staged in many countries and audiences all around the world have loved and appreciated their imagination, experiments and the message their plays gave. One of the things which profoundly unites them is their mutually complementary treatment of the problematic of contemporary Indian subjectivity on the various axes of gender, sexuality, history, politics, tradition, class and socio-cultural change. In past few years Indian Drama has attracted a large number of in-depth critical analysis from critics all over the world. It is in this context that the plays of Girish Karnad in Kannada and Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi assume significance.

Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar
Girish Karnad is not only a playwright of International repute, but is also highly talented film-maker, versatile actor, able cultural administrator, noted communicator and person of wide accomplishments and interests. Based on his serious explorations of folklore, mythology and history, the subject of his plays reflect the problems and challenges of contemporary life, and endeavor to forge a link between the past and the present. His major works include Hayavadana, Yayati, Tughlaq, Anjumallige, Hittina Hunja Taledanda, Agni Mathu Male, and Naag-Mandala among the others.

His eminence lies in his success on the stage as well as among the readers. The use of folk elements is one of the reasons behind Karnad's success as a playwright. Iyengar, commenting on the dramatic technique of Karnad, says, "In all his three plays – be the theme historical, mythical or legendary, Karnad's approach is 'modern', and he deploys the conventions and motifs of folk art like masks and curtains to project a world of intensities, uncertainties and unpredictable denouement." (Iyengar, 2008)

For four decades, Karnad has continued to compose top-notch plays, often using history and mythology to tackle contemporary themes. Karnad's themes, no matter in what garment they are couched or embellished, always contain an unmistakable thread - a comment on contemporary ideas allegorized in whatever form he thinks best. Karnad’s dramas are generally based on the mythological characters or the folk lore of different states of our country. Be it the Naag in Naag-Mandala or Puru and Chitrakha from Yayati or the horse man from Hayavadan, his dramas have always played with the rich mythology of our
country. Although the theme of his dramas is mythology or folklores, his dramas depict the current situation of our so-called modern society. They relate to the people in society and show the real picture of today’s society. Although he uses mythology, he doesn’t lose connection with the reality. His mythological characters help the audience understand their own lives and society. That is the reason why his dramas are so popular among the youth today. His dramas give a huge opportunity to the young actors performing these plays. His characters are a challenge for even the most experienced actors.

Since the staging of his maiden play *Householder* (1955), Tendulkar has come a long way. His plays vary from purely naturalistic plays and stark tragedies to farces, from musicals set in traditional folk modes to absurd drama, from full-length plays to one-acts. Thematically, his plays have ranged from the alienation of the modern individual to contemporary politics, from social individual tensions to complexities of human character, from exploration of man-woman relationship to reinterpretations of historical episodes. The greatest quality, which Tendulkar can claim to himself as a creative writer and dramatist, is his singular ability to simultaneously involve and distance himself from his creations. This endows his work with infinite subtlety. New meanings emerge as one reads his plays in the light of one’s understanding. Two other hallmarks of his creativity are his keen sense of humour and his intense compassion. Vijay Tendulkar’s *Silence! The Court is in Session* (1970) earned him a special place among leading Indian playwrights in the late sixties, while, his *Ghasiram Kotwal* (1972) won him
international awards and fellowship, he is both a venerated and a controversial figure in modern Indian theatre scene.

Many of Tendulkar’s plays derived inspiration from real-life incidents or social upheavals, which provides clear light on harsh realities. He is one of the key figures to place Marathi drama not only on national but international literary map as well. He is rightly called not only one of the pioneers of the experimental theatre movement in Marathi but also have guided and dovetailed it. He experimented with all aspects of drama including content, acting décor, and audience communication. Much of his plays were inspired by real life events, and theatre for him was a means of political expression.

This research aims to critically study major works of Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar from different perspectives. It will analyze and interpret their major works from various angles and point out how effectively they have employed various contemporary issues, themes and techniques in their respective plays. It is also aiming at glossing how they have enriched the tradition by dovetailing it with their respective innovation and radicalism. The study will also discuss the major plays of the two playwrights under the scanner with regard to characterization, treatment of theme, portrayal of women characters, use of myth, history, legends and folklores. This study, without sounding much ambitious aims to contribute to the existing corpus of critical discussion regarding both the playwrights, and provide a platform for further research on them.
References:


