CHAPTER II
ACHARYA SHARMA: AS A PLAYWRIGHT

Acharya Sharma's Plays:

There are at least three collections of plays of Acharya Devendra Nath Sharma which have been published and available. They are (1) Parijat Manjari, (2) Vikshhari Saritiyan, and (3) Shahjahan Ke Ansu.

(1) Parijat Manjari consists of the four one-act-plays. (a) Parijat Manjari, the title of the book itself, (b) Ganodaya, (c) Anupap, and (d) Babur Ke Masta. Parijat Manjari is a place occurring in the Kadambari, the famous work of Bambhatya, the court poet of of Samrat Harshvardhan. Ganodaya is related to the important event in the life of the great Hindi poet, Mahatma Tulsi Das. Anupap is the repentance of Salim before his emperor-father, Akbar the Great. Babur Ke Masta, as its name suggests, is the love and affection of Babur to his beloved son, Humayun.

(2) Vikshhari Saritiyan: It includes the five one-act-plays of Acharya Sharma. These plays are historical revealing some special characteristics of the five great figures of history, who were scattered beginning from directly Epic Age to the First Great Struggle for the independence of India in the middle of Nineteenth century. They are Acharya Drona, Shershah, Sujan, Akbar and Rani Laxmibai. The titles of the plays are on the names of their principal
(3) *Shahjahan Ke Aansu* is a collection of six one-act-plays of Acharya Sharma of which four belong to the *Parijat Manjari* and the *Vikşari Smritiyan*. *Anutap* and *Babur Ki Manta* had been published before in the *Parijat Manjari* and *Shershaah Akbar* was included in the *Vikşari Smritiyan*. So, in this collection, that is, *Shahjahan Ke Aansu*, only two plays named *Shahjahan Ke Aansu* and *Phool Ya Kantak* are new. These themes of all the six plays are from the Mughal India.

All the three collections of the plays by Acharya Sharma had been successfully published in 1949, 1957 and 1964 by Ajenta Press Private Limited, Patna-4 and Delhi Sahitya Sansar, Delhi-6, Patna-4 respectively.

**Sources and Background of Acharya Sharma’s Plays:**

Acharya had to write plays, of course, One-Act-Play, for Radio Programme. So, he turned to the pages of History, for writing on the current topics would be a risky one and would be taken to be axiologically as well. Historical facts, he might have thought, would be less criticism-inviting, if they are rightly chosen and properly dealt with. The sources of Acharya Sharma’s plays are historical figures.

Shri Sharma’s plays were well welcome by the Radio Programme listeners and had been fully popular before their publications as a
book. This is "an undoubted proof of their final worth and value" as Raghu Pati Sahay has told in the introduction to Wordsworth, a critical study by Sri K.K. Sharma.  

The technique and plot - contrivance of the play:

Acharya Sharma’s plays are mostly personality-oriented. He has beautifully searched out the famous figures from the ancient and medieval period of the Indian History. The personalities whom Acharya Sharma has picked up are well-known to the audience before hand. So, Acharya a Sharma’s task becomes very easy to let the audience be fully absorbend in and be convinced what does he mean to say, because the story related to the person or character concerned is already known to them. Acharya Sharma’s emphasis is not on the story-telling, which would otherwise be required had he or she not been historical, rather he emphasises on the typical tract or point in the person’s character or happening respectively resulting to a forceful and impressive end of the dramas. And the beauty of an one-act-play lies here. Let us examine and estimate them separately.

We are passing through a age which is full of divergences in every walk of life, so in the different branches of literature too, on the one hand, and tending towards specialization on the other. In this connection it is apt to quote the lines of Professor Louis Cazenian wherein he has

beautifully defined the trends of the modern literature in the book — A History of English literature under the caption 'Literary Individualism'. The lines are as follows:

'The division into literary kinds is the only practicable order
...... . Never were these categories more external. Never did the personality of each writer count for move, as compared with the general form of expression. And never did temperaments more forcibly refuse to comply with a common style, one method, one programme.'

If the words are literally true there is no less scope in the field of one-act-plays where individuality cannot move freely and play extensively. I think, the field of one-act-play, as an important branch of literature which offers more chance for the writers of different moods and temperaments to play their distinctive individual role. For example, 'Aurangzeb Ki Akhiri Rat' of Bana Kumar Verma is retrospective in nature while 'Shap Aur Var' of Seth Govind Das is a cathartic play. In both of the plays there are only two important characters. In Aurangzeb Ki Akhiri Rat Aurangzeb looking too old to handle his past events in his life and surrenders to the destiny before the only sub-stage attendant has his daughter. While in Shap Aur Var the wife has her life-long suppressed feelings ventilated before her dumb and meek husband. In many respects the plays are similar.

Similarly Acharya Sharma has also exhibited and asserted his individuality in free and arbitrary selection of the theme and plot of his plays. To make it clear, he selects for his subject the very lowly, little and trivial uncommon but human points, facts or ideas, rarely dealt so far, from the vast field of history. For example, in Parijat Manjari he picks up the transitory love-affair of Pundarika and Mahasweta from the numberless important references in Kadambari.

The development of love between Pundarika and Mahasweta is due to the wonderful fragrance of the Parijat Manjari. This is the speciality of this play. Neither Pundarika nor Mahasweta fell in each other's love due to their physical or spiritual beauty or quality respectively. The exhibition of the intensity of love might be the goal of the play. 1

Parijat Manjari is one of the four plays included in Parijat Manjari, the title of the book.

In Parijat Manjari there are five scenes and the characters too are five in number. Pundarika and Mahasweta are hero and heroine of the play respectively. The other three plays are Ganodaya, Anutap, and Babur Ki Manta.

In Ganodaya there is only one scene and Ratnavali, the consort of the great poet Tulsi Das, and Tula Ram are the two characters only.

1. Hindi Aur Assami Ke Pauranik Natak by Dr. Dharam Deo Tiwary, p. 302
The story of Amstęp is stretched into four scenes and character-number is enlarged up to eight.

And in Babur Ki Mamata the number of scenes are two and characters are five.

B. **Bikhari Saritiyan**:

'Bikhari Saritiyan', as it has been indicated before, includes five plays of which Acharya Drona belongs to the Epic Age whereas Sherahah, Sajan, Akbar and Rani Laxmibai to the period of Mediæval period.

The story of Acharya Drona is distributed among four scenes and there are eleven characters in it. In Sherahah there are four scenes and sixteen characters of which three are female characters. The play called Sajan consists of two scenes and characters are seven in number. The story of Akbar prolongs into three scenes and characters are about thirteen. Rani Laxmibai concludes in three scenes and five characters.

**Shahjahan Ke Amsu**:

In Shahjahan Ke Amsu there are six historical plays of which Phool Aur Kanta and Shahjahan Ke Amsu are the only two new plays, and remaining other four are included in Parijat Manjari and Bikhari.
In Phool Aur Kanta there are five scenes and five characters, and in Shahjahan Ke Aansu is ended with one scene having four characters only.

*Naya Ekmat*: It is a book consisting of nine One-Act-Plays by different writers along with Acharya Sharma's Babur Ki Namata published in 1968 A.D. by Vishwavidyalaya Prakashan, Benares. Besides, Acharya Sharma's many one-act-plays are unpublished.

However, his almost all plays are sentimental or emotion-arousing. Acharya Sharma seems to hold the view that the end of the dramatic plot should be cathartic (Rasa-Nishpati) which he has plainly accepted in the preface of Shahjahan Ke Aansu as follows:

All the plays are historical but this does not mean that they are history. The poetic truth is different than the historical truth and from the cathartic standpoint to change in history the writer has the right.\(^1\)

As it has been indicated in the previous paragraph all plays of Acharya Sharma generally, except in one or two cases, touch or quicken certain fine sentiment such as, torture of love, remorse of the audience in sympathy to the hero or heroine of the play at the final stage. For example, you cannot remain unstirred, unaffected at the death of Pandarika due to the pang of love to Mahastveta in Parijat Manjari.

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Similarly, we can not help sharing Ratnavali's chastisement to her husband in Genodaya. Similarly, the remorse-stricken heart of Salim in Amutap, the affection and sacrifice of Babur to his son Humayun in Babur Ki Manata, the struggleful life's tragic end of Shersheh, Akbar's love and regard for Jat and learning in Akbar. Salim's dogged pursuance of his love to Mehru in Naool Ya Kanta, the heart-touching tragic scene in Shahjahan Ke Aamsu and the reaction of Acharya Drona to his insult caused by Drupad and at length his forgiveness all these feelings and experiences are not futile or meaningless. They can neither pass unnoticed, without leaving the audience absorbed and be purged nor without any reaction in the mind.

I think it is not very useful to narrate the stories of Acharya Sharma's plays which will be only the enlargement of the size of the present book. So, it has been emphasized on their real findings only.

The characters of the plays:

Acharya Sharma like his plot construction has shown his dramatic skill equally in the selection of the dramatic personae. His characters are real and well popular persons of the Indian history of whom no elaboration is essential. They are popular not among the Indian only, they are popular beyond the boundaries of India too.
Babur, Shershah, Akbar, Rani Laxmibai are not ordinary characters.
They are quite known to the foreign lands. They know what and who
are they. This makes Acharya Sharma's task more easy and at the
same time more difficult. Easy in the sense that no details are
necessary for their acquaintances; and difficult in the sense that
something unknown and peculiar are to be found out in addition to
the known facts relating to them to make their perusal of some work.
And Acharya Sharma has succeeded in his mission unfalteringly. Making
it more clear Acharya is brief where history is outspoken, and where
history is mum he speaks much. The characters of history in his
plays become more lively, impressive, memorable and even loveable
than their historical existence and identity. This is the special
of
characteristics of the plays/Acharya Sharma.

Dialogues:

Dialogues are the very essence of any dramatic performance. It
is through them a playwright does arrive his designed goal or pur-
pose to reveal the reactions of the characters to each other and their
feelings, sentiments or attitude to life and the world disinterestedly,
without his personal comment on them. In other way speaking dialog-
gues are the touch-stone to test the dramatic skill of a playwright.
So, one should be very cautious regarding the abuse of dialogues.
Dialogues must be very pert, lucid, compact and according to the standard of the characters. They must not be boring and lengthy. Neither they should be equivocal nor axer-bigerous. An uneducated and illiterate dramatis personae should not speak a highly polished literary and circumlocutory dialogue.

Besides, dialogues should be natural, undecorative and relevant to the situations, happenings, facts, ideas or circumstances.

Acharya Sharma's mastery in this regard must not be ignored. His dialogues possess all the qualities of a good dialogue like Acharya Drona. The fine, polished, gentleman's sanskrit used by Acharya Drona,\(^1\) revives the Epic Age before the audience. Similarly, Urdu used by Salim in Aamutap and Phool Ya Kante represent the Judicial period in history.

These dialogues are according to the post, position and the age of the characters, and dramas as well. They are simple to understand and are not boring by deliverance of long, dry and tasteless speeches or soliloquies. Acharya Sharma is a well-versed scholar of sanskrit and Hindi literatures, besides his knowledge of some foreign languages. Still, he has control over his passions which might have easily persuaded him to use difficult terminology. It can be proved easily by

\(^1\) Acharya Drona : Acharya D.N. Sharma
going through the first, second and fourth lines of the second paragraph in the prologue to Hindi Bhasha Ka Vikas. Acharya Sharma is never pretentious, rather his chief aim is to make the subject understandable instead of showing his scholarliness. So the dialogues of in his plays are brief, simple and readable. This can be observed everywhere in his plays.

**Time, place, environment and action or consequence of the plays:**

Acharya Sharma may not be maintaining strictly the discipline of the unity of time, place and action as Dr. Dharma Deo Tripathi mentioned in his thesis, however, he is using cautious about the age, place and environment of his narratives. Almost all plays of Acharya Sharma somehow or other related certain historical events, facts and figures. That is why he is very particular and cautious to deal his subjects in the context of the period, place, and environment related to them closely. For example, his Muslim characters in dramas of Mughal period speak Urdu, instead of Sanskrit or any local dialect prevalent at that time whereas the Hindu characters are in habit of speaking the then Hindi inclining more to Persian like Urdu or Rekhta. And this difference is due to the influence of the different social environments affecting the characters concerned. Similarly, Acharya Sharma has taken up the issue:

of the contemporary situations and events to deal in his plays. May it be an affectionate father’s love to his son, the worship of cupid, personal ambition or lust for throne, revenge to gratify one’s vengeance, remorse, the well-being of the people, patriotism etcetera, are from the contemporary life. The writer’s view is a realistic one based upon the broad view of the maxim good, truth and beauty.

Acharya Sharma’s literary tenets may be abridged in the following famous maxim — His art is meant for life not for art. In this connection Acharya Sharma boldly clarifies his point of view so far the after effect of a drama is concerned. Any dramatic piece must be bliss-producing, that is, bliss-creating. Bliss or bliss is an indispensable element of a play, he says. He further explains that the simple meaning of Rasa is bliss. May it be any branch of literature, if it lacks the very quality of bliss-producing its graspability will be ever doubtful. This view of Acharya Sharma regarding the consequence, that is, out come of a play is not very far from the Aristotelian view of the purgation of emotion or the Catharsis of emotion. Emotion cannot be purged or purified unless it is fully absorbed in experiencing or feeling such emotions deeply such as, pity and fear.

Any sort of dramatic effect depends upon the mastery of the use of dialogues and the beauty of dialogues depend upon the art of using

1. Shahjahan Ke Amsu : Do Shahda (Preface)
2. The Reader’s Companion to World Literature by Hornstein, Percy, Brown, p. 357
words befitting to the nature of a character, place, circumstance or an event. This otherwise may be known as the scholarliness of language and literature. For this a playwright or a poet must have control and command over the words to be used. Acharya Sharma is undoubtedly highly proficient in this art. He is the master of diction. He can use all sorts of language in various styles. He can use epigrammatic, metaphorical, figurative, simple, enigmatic, idiomatic languages well. His aim of all dialogues are proof of that. Besides, he is fully convinced that love, pity, and remorse etc. are certain sentiments which have their leading role in the art of theatre. In the name of an artist they become Ras-creating source and force as well. That can be provedly the fact that the themes of the majority of his plays are tragic somehow or other, and this tragic element in his plays is highly successful to accrue sympathy from the audience easily. To make a play pleasant, able to purify emotions, is not to be bounded by any literary principle or rule. Rather, it requires certain extraordinary quality which can not be imparted by another as Aristotle says of poetry of which tragedy is a form. ¹ "It is a mark of genius", he continues, Acharya Sharma's power of expression and command over language is fully realized and appreciated by a scholar no less than Rahul Senkritisvan. He writes ...... Besides these quality, he has well command over words, on sentences more. His language is ever capable of producing

¹The Reader's Companion to World Literature, p. 356.
limitless effect.² "Buddha Garden" is an attack on the love of imitating nature of the Indian Mind. The writer is so offended at the English pronunciation of Buddha instead of Indian in which the vowel "a" is short, and "Garden" for Bagh-e Udyan that he fully forgets the very purpose of a visit and enjoying the beauty of that park and began to ponder over the deterioration and short-sightedness of the Indian outlook. How is it that we Indians never feel shame, even after four decades of the departure of the English people for the affection to the English culture, fashion and way of speaking our own mother tongue to our brothers even. So, out of anguish he says "Lord Buddha would never have imagined that from the mouth of the imitation-expert Indians his name would be unfamiliar." Acharya Sharma is a great lover of India, her culture and her glory. So, he is unable to tolerate anything which goes against her prestigious glory. Besides, the slavish mentality of the Indians and their irrational and useless running after westernisation, imitation of the English in every walk of life and step-motherly treatment with every thing that is Indian is the great cause of his annoyance. He cannot excuse anyone, who ever he might be, who has any one of these shortcomings. This is why, he pounces upon the folly and short-sightedness of the fathers of Indian Constitution in explaining the most ancient world-wide familiar name of this country called "Bharat" with the

2. Preface, Parijat Manjari.
help of the comparatively infantile English terminology. The line in the constitution on which Acharya Sharma comments is "Bharat that is India," p. 79 — "the sign of Slavery could not be removed even from the constitution of free India." p. 79.