CHAPTER VII

ACTING IN PREMJI'S DRAMAS
CHAPTER VII

ART OF ACTING

Acting seems to have originated the day man learnt to express his feelings through signs, gestures and postures or movement of his limbs. Acting is the art that creates the impression of reality or realism in the spectators/audience. Acting is a means of communication of one's ideas and feelings to other people.

"ABHINIYAYA ITI ABHINAYA" acting is the thing/art by which drama is presented before the audience in concrete form. While in other forms of literature, the reader thinks over the probability or improbability of a thing or action, drama gives an idea of its finity or certainty. Indians scholars have divided acting into four parts: (a) 'Aangik', (b) 'Vachik', (c) 'Anahaya' and (d) 'Satvik'.

In the 'Aangik' acting the desired effect is produced (RASODABHAVA) by different gestures and postures. It is said to be of three types; (i) 'SHARIRIK', (ii) 'MUKHAY', (iii) 'CHESTAKRIT'. In the 'VACHIK' type of acting is done/performed through dialogues and speeches. In the 'Anahara' type, attempt is made to transport the audience to the main situation or into the desired environment through appropriate dress and make-up (of the actors/actresses). Make-up or decoration is of utmost importance because former appearance is very helpful in the expression of desired feeling. In the 'SATVIK' type of acting, expression or mode of expression of thoughts and feelings is of paramount importance. They include 'ROMANCE, AHMRI, SWADADI'. About acting Dr Shyam is of opinion that acting is an inseparable part of drama and, without this, dramatic art is imperfect. Besides from acting all sections and classes of people get pleasure and are influenced. By reading or

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1. Hindi Natya Darpan, p. 332
study only scholars can get pleasure ..... Jai Shankar Prasad, who did not take into consideration the importance of acting in his dramas, also concedes that the stage itself should be made to suit his dramas. As such necessity of acting in dramas is beyond doubt and dispute.¹

Acting in Premijee's dramas:

Premijee has laid stress on acting and he says in this connection that if a drama is written, it ought to be staged and only that kind of drama should be written which is fit for being staged. He has the satisfaction that his dramas have been staged in different parts of the country.² About the popularity of his drama, Premijee says, 'PATAL VIJAY KE BAD LIKHA GAYA ..... MUNNE PROTSAMAN MILA.'³ Dramatist Premijee is very conscious about the quality or merit of his dramas presentation on the stage and it is due to such concern and consciousness that almost all his dramas have been staged. Publication of the thirty-sixth edition of his 'BANSHA-BANDHAN' speaks of the popularity of his dramas. Dr. Suresh Chandra Shukla says, 'Premijee KE ADRIKANSH NATAK ..... SARAL AUR NATKOCCHIT HAIN.'⁴ Hews-a-days some critics say that there should not be songs, soliloquies, stage-setting etc. in dramas. But if we accept that dance, song, art, painting, poetry etc. have

¹ Kindi Natak : Samaj Shastriya Adhyayan, p. 55, Sitaram Jha.
² Shataranj Ke Khilari, Preface, Premi
³ Shiva-Badhana, Preface, Harikrishna Premi
⁴ Hindi Natak Aur Natakhar, p. 120, Dr. Suresh Ch. Shukla.
all been incorporated in dramas, in that case the above mentioned restrictions do not seem necessary and proper; of course 'ATI SANKATRA VARJAYAT' ought to be adhered to. Success of the presentation of a drama on the stage depends on how far stage-setting or scenery sequence is fit for the stage, whether it can be acted/reproduced on the stage properly, whether the dialogue/speeches are brief, simple, lively, natural and fit for the characters and whether the drama has precise bulk/size and whether its colour-symbols have been properly utilised. We shall discuss Premji's dramas from these angles:

(a) Scene-sequence/backdrop of the scene:

Scene-sequence or scene-setting in Premji's dramas is very practical and it is suited to dramas. The background or scene of the first act of the drama 'RAJSHA-BANDHAN' is like this: (i) Palace of Maharana Vikramaditya of Mewar; (ii) narrow strip of path in the forest of Mewar; (iii) Palace-garden; (iv) Palace at Mandu; Bahadur Shah and Mallu Khan; (v) Maharana Vikramaditya's palace; (vi) the inner apartment of the Chittor fort. Among these scenes only the fourth and the fifth ones are lengthy and are on the heels of one another. But there is not much difficulty in showing them on the stage. Removing or by adding a few things more on the stage in the fourth scene the fifth one can be quickly arranged or behind the fourth scene the fifth one can be arranged/set up and just when the fourth scene ends the curtain can be raised to bring forward/into view the next scene. The first scene in the second act is Dhamadas's house, second scene is camp of Humayun's army at the bank of the Ganges, the third scene is a humble cottage (KUTA) in a forest area of Mewar, the fourth scene is Army-camp of Bahadur Shah at the door of Chittor, the fifth scene is a road in the rural area of Mewar, the sixth scene is Haruvati's palace, the seventh
Scene is an area a little away from the damaged fort of Chittor. The first scene in the third act of the drama is Dhandas and Mauji Ram loitering in the verandah of their house, the second scene is Humayun's camp on the bank of the Chambal, the third scene is Karnavati's palace, the fourth scene is of a road near the village of the Hills of Mewar, the fifth scene is of the inner apartment of the Chittor fort, sixth scene is of a strip of road in a forest in Mewar, seventh scene is of the royal palace of Chittor and the eighth scene is of the palace in Chittor where the pyre of 'JAMAR' had been set up.

From the scene-sequence of background scene of the above mentioned second and third acts, it appears that there would be no difficulty in staging them. The fifth and the seventh scenes of the third act are lengthy but impressive. Both are the same scenes and from the scene-setting of the fifth scene, the seventh scene too can be managed. As such from the viewpoint of background scene or scene-sequence, it is a very good drama.

The scene-sequence in the 'Uddhar' is appropriate, simple and dramatic. The scenes of its first act are: first scene; A rural field in the hilly area of Mewar, second scene; palace-garden; third scene; a chamber in the

1. Raksha-Bandhan, p. 97, Premi
2. -do- p. 98, -do-
3. -do- p. 100, -do-
4. -do- p. 105, -do-
5. -do- p. 109, -do-
6. Uddhar, p. 9, Premi
7. -do- p. 14, -do-
8. -do- p. 17, -do-
royal palace; fourth scene¹; royal garden; fifth scene²; Sudhira's humble cottage; sixth scene³; foot of a mountain; seventh scene⁴; royal court. In all these scenes there is nothing that can create any hindrance in staging the next scene. Some of the scenes are such that they need no preparation. Before the royal palace there are scenes of garden or forest which afford enough time to turn them (garden/forest) into royal palace. Scenes in the second act are; first scene⁵; Chamber of a royal palace, second scene⁶; royal garden, third scene⁷; a forest, fourth scene⁸; verandah of the palace, fifth scene⁹; a raised ground, sixth scene⁰; palace, seventh scene¹¹; a humble cottage, eighth scene¹²; a royal garden, ninth scene¹³; a humble cottage. In this act the scene-sequence or back-ground scenes are like that of the previous act and except the garden, cottage and palace scenes, all other scenes can be arranged among themselves with slight changes and adjustment. The scenes in the third act are like this: first scene¹⁴; a humble cottage, second scene¹⁵;

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palace-garden, third scene\(^1\) - palace garden, fourth scene\(^2\) - a cave, fifth scene\(^3\) - a royal garden, sixth scene\(^4\) - a narrow strip of road in the forest, seventh scene\(^5\) - a prison house. In the third act also the scenes are like that of the first and second acts. The second, the third and the fifth scenes are similar, and thus we see that from the view-point of scene-sequencing or background scenes, 'Uddhar' is a very successful drama.

In the preface to the drama 'PRAKASH-STAMBHA' Premjee says, "IS \(\text{DATAK KA RACHANA-KAUSHAL ..... IS MHN THORI HAI}^6\). In the drama the scenes that the dramatist has introduced are like this: bank of river (in both scenes of first act), cave-scene (in the three scenes of the second act) and in the third act also this very scene continues. In this way, this drama is superior to other dramas in scene-setting. Premji's social dramas are more close to stage. In this way from the view-point of scene-setting and arrangement, Premji's dramas 'CHHAYA' and 'RANDHAN' are ideal examples of simple scene-setting when compared to other dramas. The drama ends in mere two acts; one, house of a middle class peasant and the other, an humble cottage ('JHOPARI') in a village and other scenes are of river, garden, forest etc. which do not require any special arrangement.

1. Uddhar, p. 96, Premi
2. -do- p. 101, -do-
3. -do- p. 104, -do-
4. -do- p. 111, -do-
5. -do- p. 118, -do-
place on the stage and can be managed with appropriate screens. In the 'BANDHAN' also only two tents serve the purpose; - a chamber of the rich, a conference room of the rich and the other hourse of the poor, all other scenes are extraneous. About the drama 'MAMATA' Premji has to say, 'IS NATAK XI RACHANA SHAILY ..... DIKHAYA JA SAKATA HAI.' All the incidents of this drama can be shown as occurring at the house of Rajanikant. Thus the scene-sequence of 'Mamata' is very systematic and simple. 'CHHAYA' and 'BANDHAN' have simplicity but scene-sequences change very quickly which cannot be termed good from the view point of acting. Scene-setting in the drama 'HAL-RAH' is also very simple and successful. All the incidents occur either at the house of 'KANORI-MAL' or in nearby lanes. Scenes in the drama 'SAMARAKSHAN' are bed room in the royal palace, forest areas, big rooms/chambers, fields, river bank, royal court, These scenes are of the first act and do not seem to be very akin to one another. But with some efforts and imaginative arrangement these can be made so. In the second act the first scene is of fields, second of battle field in which there is use of 'behind the screen' activities 'NEPATHYA KA PRATIG'), and hence there is no need to show them on the stage. The third scene is of royal palace and the fourth is of river bank. The fifth scene is of royal court. In this way the third and the fifth scenes can be managed with one scene. The scenes in the third scenes are like that of the first and the second acts. The drama 'VIDA' has also been composed with an eye on the stage. Scene-sequence in the drama 'VISH-PAN' also are acting - oriented. Its scene-settings are simple and require little labour to achieve the goal. Garden, royal palace, narrow strips of reed, bank of the lake, royal court etc have been placed in it and one after

1. Mamata, Preface, Premi
another these scenes can be shown on the stage very easily and successfully.
In the preface of this drama the dramatist has deliberated in details on the
stage-craft or merit of stage-representation of dramas. In the drama 'PRATI-
SHODH' most of the incidents take place in the royal palace or forests. There
would be no difficulty in presenting one scene after another in this drama with
a little trouble and care all these scenes can be produced. With the help of
screen scenes of river bank, temple and Red-Fort 'Aahuti' is also on the pattern
of 'Pratisbodh'. Scene-setting in the 'Shataranj Ke Khilari' is also very simple.
All the scenes contribute in the presentation of one another on the stage. In
the first act, the first scene is royal palace, the second scene is a road
through a desert, third scene is forest, fourth scene is garden, fifth scene
is a chamber in the royal palace, sixth scene is garden, seventh scene is Kali
temple, eighth scene is a road through a forest and the ninth scene is a castle,
These scenes have been so arranged that these can be very easily created on the
stage. If there be difficulty in the Kali temple on the stage, it can be managed
the screen also. Similar are the scene-sequences in the second and the third
acts also.

Like other dramas the 'Kriti-stambha' has also been divided into three
acts and several scenes. Premji is of opinion that by the scenes of Acts in a
drama more actions and incidents can be shown on the stage and this greater and
better compactness and motion in the drama. There is not a single scene in this
drama that cannot be shown on the stage. Royal palace, temple, forest areas etc
can be shown with the help of screen. For showing elephants, horses, animals and
birds one can use card-boards and records can be used to produce their sound. 1

The drama 'Saupon Ki Srsthi' is very suitable for stage. The duration of events of the drama is very brief and all the incidents take place at Delhi and Gwalior. There are four scenes in the first act and three in the second and two in the third. There is gradual decrease in the number of scenes. All the four scenes in the first act are of the same place and so the question of the change of scene does not arise. This is the condition of other scenes also. In the first act of the drama 'SHAPATH' are garden, inner apartment, way through the forest, military camp, orchard, sleeping room, cave door etc. Some of these scenes can be shown with the help of screen, some can be substituted in the other and this in other acts also the situation is more or less the same. The four scenes of the first act in the drama 'SHISHDAN' take place at the house of Singer Ajijan and so there is no need for drop scenes and with one effort an arrangement all the four scenes can be managed. In the second and third acts all the scenes are of the lawn and raised plot of land and one scene can be used on several occasions and thus its scene-setting is very simple.

In 'Samvat-Prawartan' the scene-sequence is like this; 
- first scene in the first act- an open field, second scene - royal dining hall, third scene - lawn, fourth scene - camp of the saksas, fifth scene - same as the third scene, sixth scene - royal palace, seventh scene - same as the fifth scene. The first scene of the second act - a solitary place, second scene - place of royal court, third scene - a road, fourth scene - royal garden, fifth scene — a cave. The first scene of the third act --- royal garden, second scene -- cave of the last scene of the second act, third scene -- royal garden, fourth scene -- royal court palace. From a careful observation of the scenes of the three acts it seems that from beginning to end scenes have decreased. There are four scenes in the first act, five in the second act and four in the third. It is a good thing. In this
drama of sixteen scenes, five scenes are of open field, four of royal palace, three of royal garden and in two scenes a cave and in one scene each camp and road have been shown. In none of these scenes will have any difficulty in its presentation on the stage. In the drama scenes should be so systematically arranged that change of scenes can be done easily and nothing should be introduced in these scenes that would not be possible to re-produce on the stage.

The scene-setting in the drama 'Shiva-Sadhana' is like this; the first scene of the first act — Bhawani temple, second scene — open space before the palace third scene — a part of the Bijapur fort in which shahjee is being plastered alive, fourth scene — consultation between Shivajee and Moropant Pingale in Rajgarh fort and its walls being shown on the screen, fifth scene — Mughal palace at Aurangabad, sixth scene — Samartha Pandas composing poem in the forest, seventh scene — Shivajee's consultation chamber at Rajgarh. In the second act the first scene is — Afajal Khan's camp in the forest, second scene — foot hills of Pratapgarh with decorated tent, third scene — Red Fort at Delhi, Fourth scene — fort at Chakan, Mrirajee Marshal standing beside the damaged wall, fifth scene — valley of Pandar Pani, sixth scene — temple of Jejuri. In the third act the first scene is Prabul garh, second scene — Shaishta Khan resting in the Red palace at Poona, third scene — Dewane Khash at Delhi, fourth scene — Rajgarh, fifth scene — Shashbar, Joy Singh's camp, sixth scene — Joy Singh's private camp at Shashbar, seventh scene — Mughal Court at Agra. In the fourth act the first scene is a part of aurangaseb's inner apartment, second scene — Shivpura and the fort where Shivajee was lodged the third scene — a part of the Red Fort at Agra, fourth scene — Rajgarh, fifth scene — outskirt of Singhpargh, sixth scene — Singhpargh. In the fifth act, the first scene is coast line of Janjua island, second scene — Red Fort at Agra, third scene — outskirt of the Salergarh, fourth scene —
a decorated camp at Rajgarh, fifth scene — Rajgarh, sixth scene — Bhawani temple at Tuljapur. This drama of Premji is in five acts and thirty two scenes. Its scene-setting is not like other dramas. It has several drawbacks. The story of this drama covers Agra, Delhi, Bijapur, Raigarah, Janjira island, Poona and Sitara. There has not been adherence to the three unities. The third scene of the first act is the fort of Bijapur where Shajee is being plastered alive in the wall. Again there is fourth scene — Shivajee consulting Morpant in Raigarh. With the change of the third scene it would take much time to remove neck deep bricks around Shajee. In the second scene of the third act — Shaistha Khan is taking rest in the Red Palace at Poona and in the third scene is shown Divane Khass at Delhi. Both these scenes are lengthy and difficult to be arranged on the heels of one another.

In the drama 'Rakta-daan' the scene-setting is like this: first scene of the first act — retiring room in Red Fort at Delhi of Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah, second scene — same as the first scene, third scene — as the previous one. First scene of the second act — as the previous one, second scene — as the previous, third scene — as the previous one. The first scene of the third act — as the previous one, second scene — as the previous one, third scene — as the previous one, fourth scene — as the previous one, fifth scene — as the previous one. In this drama the speciality of its scene-setting is that the scene has to be arranged once only, which lasts from beginning to the end. About this drama the dramatist says, 'YAH NATAK KUL 135 DIN KI GHATI ..... DAN KAR HI AYEJI.' Thus the scene-setting of this drama is very simple, easy and fit for stage.

1. Rakta dan, Preface, Premi.
The scene-setting of the drama 'Aam Ka Man' is like this:— the first act— sandy field of the desert, second act— a chamber of Aurangzeb's palace at Brahmepuri on the bank of the river Bhima, third act— same as the first act. The scene-setting of this drama also has a speciality. This drama ends in three acts and all the three acts have the same scene, screen drops only twice and then at the end. There would be no difficulty in staging these scenes and this scene-setting too is easy and successful.

In the drama 'Swapan-Bhang' the scene-setting is like this:— first scene of the first act— Darā's palace, second scene— 'CHABUTARA' in front of the Taj-mahal, third scene— Mughal palace at Aurangabad, fourth scene— 'CHABUTARA' in front of the Taj-mahal, fifth scene— palace at Agra, Roshanara's room, sixth scene— Divane Khush at Agra. First scene of the second act— Aurangabad's camp on the bank of the Kahiya, second scene royal camp at Ujjaini, third scene— Nadīra's room in the Taj-mahal at Agra, fourth scene— royal garden at Agra, fifth scene— royal palace at Agra, sixth scene— Shambhagut field near Agra, seventh scene— Nadīra's room. First scene of the third act— Bīna's humble cottage, second scene— Shahjahān's personal room, third scene— royal palace at Jam Nagar, fourth scene— Roshanara's room, fifth scene— forest, sixth scene— Agra fort, seventh scene— Humayun's tomb. From the view point of scene-setting 'Swapan-Bhang' cannot be called a successful drama. First scene of the first act is Darā's palace and the second scene is of the 'CHABUTARA' before the Taj-mahal. Changing one scene immediately after the other seems certainly difficult, if not impossible. Again, the third scene is the royal palace at Aurangabad. The remaining scenes are alright. Most of the scenes in the drama are of either the interior or exterior portions of the Taj-mahal and these can be easily produced on the stage through the screen. The scene-setting
of the remaining dramas of Premjee are easy and successful. As regards the size of dramas, there is gradual development in Premjee's works. In his earlier dramas there are large number of characters but as he gained in maturity there is decline in their number. Of all his dramas 'Shiva-Sadhana' has the largest number of characters. It has 46 characters. 'Raksha-Baddhan' has 21 characters, 'Aam Ka Man' has 16 characters, 'Swapan-Bhang' has 24 characters, 'Raktadan' has 14 characters, 'Chhaya' has 10 characters, 'Shapath' has 24-25 characters, 'Uddhar' has 18 characters, 'Shatranjan Ke Khilari' has 12-14 characters, 'Saanwad-Pravartan' has 11 characters, 'Nai-reh' has 7 characters, 'Shish-dan' has 11-12 male characters, 'Amar-Salidan' has 13 characters, 'Amar-Aan' has 10 characters, 'Aahuti' has 15 characters, 'Kriti-stambha' has 11 characters, 'Prati-shodh' has 25 characters, 'Bandhan' has 8 characters and 'Namata' has 8 characters. Regarding the large number of characters Premjee says in the preface of 'Shiva-Sadhana', 'IS HATAK KI PATRA-SUCHI ....... RANDEE HUIE MAIN.' In spite of this clarification it has to be admitted that this drama in five acts does increase its size and bulk. From the view point of the number of characters 'Aahuti' is more successful. 'Vish-Pan', 'Uddhar', 'Bhang-Pachir', 'Prakash-Stambha', 'Shapath', 'Sanrakshan', 'Amar-An', 'Amar-Salidan', 'Chhaya', 'Raktadan', 'Nai-reh', 'Bandhan', 'Namata', 'Aam Ka Man', 'Shatranjan Ke Khilari' etc have suitable number of characters. Among the historical dramas of Premjee 'Sampon Ki Sristhi' is the best as far as size or the bulk is concerned. It has three male characters and five female characters whose only three females are important and among the male characters Khijar rarely appears. From the view-point of size 'CHHATA', 'BANDHAN', 'MAMATA' and 'SAMPON KI SRISTHI' can be called best and of these also 'MAMATA' has an edge over the rest.

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1. Shish-Sadhana, Preface, Premi
CONCLUSION:

Thus we come to the conclusion that as regards scene-sequence and bulk of the dramas Premi seems to be moving towards gradual development. Except a few dramas all his dramas can be called successful. While discussing the dialogues are easy, delightful, brief, impressive, satiric, natural and suitable for the characters. This is the opinion of Ram Chandra Shukla also. Of course his didactic dialogues have become at times lengthy. In some of the dramas specially in 'Swapan-Bhang' soliloquies are in large numbers but in other dramas the dramatist has made improvement. In this way, we can say that barring one or two his dramas the rest are fit and successful from the view point of acting.

1. Hindi Sahitya Ka Itihas, p. 376, Ram Chandra Shukla