

Charan Das Sidhu

Ph D from England on plays of Bernard Shaw, writer and director of more than forty full-length plays in Punjabi, retired as lecturer from Delhi and known for his frank and blunt views on whatever he might choose to speak, Charan Dass Sidhu's *Dramebaazian* is interesting and at times a book that enlightens its reader. While in first part of volume there are some articles about his dramaturgy, second part deals with dramatic and theatrical art of other Punjabi thespians . He boldly tells that though he wrote these articles for certain seminars with sincerity and hard labour, yet none of them has been dictated by his inner-self.

This book is important to understand the weird situation of a Punjabi playwright-director who wishes to sacrifice everything for his arts and still occupies a place in the society that is by no means very respectable. In the opening article he challenges, "if you were a Punjabi playwright and had wished to earn your livelihood from your writing, you would have committed suicide by jumping before a running train. The art that could give nice living to playwrights like Shakespeare, Sophocles or Moliere is not enough to earn money to buy even a glass of *lassi* if you happen to write in Punjabi."

He explains how his friends and well-wishers always insisted upon him to write plays in English, or at least in Hindi. He argues that the sole reason of this state is indifference of Punjabi people towards this art. They are not ready to spend money for theatre unless it deals with vulgarity or religious conviction. The situation is so bad that when Sidhu was to direct a play in English there was a beeline of females to take part in the production; but taking part in a Punjabi production was always seen as if social future of actress is at stake.

Charan Dass Sidhu propagates and supports the secular plays that deal with social problems. Apart from the plays with vulgar themes and sectarian values, he also rejects the plays based upon folk material or historical content: a highly debatable issue. He declares that it's far better to write a weak play with new and relevant content than to have adaptations of foreign plays because that is a material being imposed upon us. Charan Dass Sidhu feels that majority of writers of his language and country are robe-bearers or flatterers whereas the real job of a playwright is to act as a Prophet. But they have stopped reflecting because they are tied in the clutches of feuds and clergy.

Sidhu declares that his education and travels have made him realize that his realm should be where many important personalities live: Nanak, who wished to eliminate desolation and always engaged himself into a dialogue; Socrates who gave his life for mental freedom; and likes of Kalidas, Chekhov, Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Tolstoy etc. He is grateful to his teachers who taught him many languages and cultures and helped him to expand his horizons. But at the same time he clearly knows that everything his parents or teachers taught him is not to be accepted, it may be liable to rejection. He wishes to approach his dramaturgy as a sociologist and his major concerns are the blind faiths of people and their greed to run off with the rights of others.

To know more about his life, process of writing- direction and his frank views about contemporaries like Aulakh, Gursharan Singh, Sethi, Atamjit etc. please intermingle with *Dramebazeeaa(n)*