11 MY FIRST ROLE IN LIFE

A. WARMER

Have you ever acted in a play? When and where was it? What role did you play? Share your experiences with your classmates.

I was in class IV when I gave my first stage performance in my school. The name of the play was 'Shrawan Kumar', and I was playing the character of Shrawan Kumar. The director was a student of class IX. The spectacles that he wore were enough to impress me with his capabilities. At his command, all of us, acting in the play, had brought dhotis and saris of our mothers and sisters in order to decorate the stage and give the effect of a flowing river.

A bucket full of water was kept at the place where Shrawan Kumar went to fetch water for his old blind parents. Two boys played the role of the blind parents of Shrawan Kumar. They had been instructed to keep their eyes closed all the time and to sit together in the centre of the stage, facing the audience. One of them, Bodhraj, playing the role of the mother, wore his mother's sari, the *aanchal* of which would slide down many a time.

The curtain rose. On hearing the command of the blind parents – "Beta Shrawan Kumar, we are very thirsty" – I took a *lota*, touched their feet and walked towards the river. King Dasharath, entered the stage from behind the curtain. He moved about and twisted his moustache. On hearing some sound, he took out an arrow from the quiver on his back and exclaimed "Which animal is polluting the river water?"

I saw the arrow going straight towards the roof and I fell flat on the stage and started crying:

O cruel! what harm had I done to you?
Why did you strike the arrow in my bosom?
What wrong after all had I done to you?
Wretched! You shot me while fetching water.

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The high pitch of my voice stunned the audience in the hall. I kept singing uninterruptedly but the song was so long that it seemed there was no end. Meanwhile, king Dasharath stood still like a statue with one leg in front and another at the back. He was waiting for me to complete my song, his bow facing me. If he had shot another arrow from his quiver, it would have corrected his earlier mistake but the director had instructed him to shoot only one arrow which he had already done.

I had hardly sung half the song when my voice went hoarse. I could see the audience laughing.

The blind parents of Shrawan Kumar were finding it difficult to keep their eyes closed. Sometimes one and sometimes the other would open their eyes. On seeing this, the audience started giggling and remarked, "See, he has again opened his eyes."

Suddenly the audience burst out laughing when they saw the "Pallu" of the saree falling down from the head of Bodhraj who was playing the role of Shrawan Kumar's blind mother.

The shaven head of Bodhraj became visible. After a while when one of the parents of Shrawan Kumar was seen opening his eyes, somebody in the audience shouted:"Look, look again, he can see".

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Time and again laughter arose in the hall and noise of clapping could be heard. Then I stopped singing and acted as if dying in pain. The hall applauded with clapping. One teacher of my class who was part of the audience told my brother Bal Raj "Look, what your brother is doing?"

After my death as Shrawan Kumar, a few more dialogues had to follow, King Dasharath speaking to my old parents and the old parents cursing the king. But I forgot everything and at once got up. The audience burst into peels of laughter. Somebody taunted, "Keep lying, keep lying."

But I got so confused that I didn't know what to do. I again lay down. This led to clapping which didn't seem to end. Whistling, clapping and laughter and different sorts of sounds continued for long time to come.

This was my first role in life.

(Excerpted and Translated from Bhisma Sahni's memoirs)

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

spectacles (n) : pair of lenses in a frame resting on the nose and ears चश्मा

fetch (v) : to go and bring something लाना

audience (n) : assembled listeners श्रोता, दर्शक

quiver (n) : case for arrows तरकश

wretched (adj) : of bad nature/ contemptible दुष्ट, खल

bosom (n) : a person's chest छाती

hoarse (adj) : rough and harsh कर्कश, खुरदरी

B. LET'S COMPREHEND

B.1. THINK AND TELL

Answer each of the following questions in a word or phrase:

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1. What was the name of the play?
2. Who played the role of shrawan Kumar?
3. Name the director of the play.
4. From where did King Dasharath appear on the stage?
5. Who were playing the role of the blind parents of Shrawan Kumar?

B.2. THINK AND WRITE

B.2.1. Tick (✓) the right options to complete the following statements:

1. The lead character of the play was:

   (a) Dasharath (b) Shrawan kumar

   (c)Balraj (d) Bodhraj

2. Bodhraj played the role of:

   (a) father (b) mother

   (c)uncle (d) grandfather

3. The blind parents were

   (a) nervous (b) hungry

   (c) tired (d) thirsty

4. The high pitch of Shrawan Kumar's voice was:

   a) pleasing b) annoying

   c) stunning d) charming

B.2.2. Answer the following questions very briefly:

1. What role did the writer play? What impressed the writer most and why?
2. How was the stage decorated?

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3. What did the director ask the two boys to do?

4. What did king Dasharath think Shrawan Kumar to be?

B. 2.3. Answer each of the following questions in about 70 words:

1. How do you think the boy might have felt on getting the lead role? What efforts did the actors of the play put in?

2. Why were the audience giggling in the middle of the play?

3. Why did the boy playing Shrawan Kumar get up in the middle of the play?

4. If you were in the role of Shrawan Kumar, how would you have reacted to the giggling of the audience?

C. WORD STUDY

C.1. Correct the spelling of the following words:

performence	thristy.	stoped	audiance
imediately	arow	stoodent	apeared
claping	kurtain	sudenly	whisling

C.3. Pick out words from the lesson which are the opposites of the following words. Then, use them in your own sentences:

bless, denounced, later, remembered, fell

C.4. Fill in the blanks with the words given in the box. You can change their form as needed.

spectacles, command, fetch, laughter, immediately, parents, giggle

1. She _____ at my jokes.

2. My father can't read the newspaper without his_____.

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3. He came to me _____to help me.
4. The commander must _____ in a loud and clear voice.
5. Let me introduce you to my _____.
6. I saw a clown in the circus and burst into _____.
7. In the remote villages of India, people still _____ water from the well.

E. GRAMMAR

Read the following sentences carefully:

1. *I was in class IV when I gave first stage performance at my school.*
2. *A bucket full of water has been put where Shrawan Kumar goes to fetch water for his blind parents.*

You see there are two simple sentences in sentence 1. They are: (1) I was in class IV and (2) I gave first stage performance at my school. They have been combined by using a conjunction 'when'. Similarly sentence 2 also consists of two sentences. They are: (1) A bucket full of water has been put and (2) Shrawan Kumar goes to fetch water for his blind parents. They have been combined by using another conjunction 'where'.Generally, we combine two or more sentences by using such conjunctions. They are: 'and', 'but', 'or', 'because', 'as', 'so', 'therefore', 'when', 'where', 'that' etc. Relative pronouns such as 'who', 'which' and 'that' are also used as conjunctions.

E.1. Combine the following pairs of sentences into one by using appropriate conjunctions:

1. She is poor. She is honest.
2. He worked hard. He passed the examination.
3. I'll phone you. I arrive
4. The boys sang. The girls danced
5. Do. I do

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6. I have a friend. He is an engineer.
7. She thanked me for the book. I gave her.
8. He lives in a house. The house is very small.

E. LET'S TALK

Talk about your favourite actor or actress.

(Hints: name - famous films - style/ mannerism - dress etc.)

F. COMPOSITION

Write ten sentences about a student of your school who has the capability of becoming an actor. Here are some clues:

Tall and smart – black and curly hair – clear voice – good memory – expressive body language

G. TRANSLATION

Translate the following sentences into your mother tongue:

1. The spectacles that he wore were enough to impress me with his capabilities.
2. A bucket full of water had been put where Shrawan Kumar went to fetch water for his blind parents.
3. One of them, Bodhraj, who was playing the role of mother, was wearing his mother's sari.
4. I saw the arrow going straight towards the roof.
5. I fell flat on the stage and started crying.
6. Suddenly the audience burst into peels of laughter.
7. I had become so confused that I didn't know what to do.

H. ACTIVITY

Different communities wear different dresses or clothes. Name some important communities and the dresses that are worn specifically by each one of them only. Also draw pictures of these dresses.

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