Rāshid ul Khaiřī, though she began as an imitator of Nażīr Ahmad, she soon evolved a separate style and so is entitled to be regarded individually.

Nażīr Aḥmād can, however, lay claim to have influenced nearly all the women novelists inasmuch as they wrote—most of them, at least—domestic novels, devoid of love interest and having for their object the reform of social evils. In some instances, however, the imitation was conscious and acknowledged by the authoress, as in the novel ‘İslâh ʿun Nisâ’ by Vâlida e Muḥammad Sulaimân.

‘İslâh ʿun Nisâ’ is an extremely readable book, and has for its aim the reforming of those multifarious customs attendant on marriages, births, and deaths. Avowedly didactic in purpose like all domestic novels, it achieves in places excellent characterisation, and has lively scenes and good dialogue. The characters are well drawn, especially the sycophant servants, such as Shabrâ’ān. The domestic intrigues and petty jealousies are well brought out; the story of how unscrupulous people take advantage of the ignorance of others for feathering their own nests is, though a common enough one, convincingly told.

The authoress has avoided the fatal temptation of making the scene of the story Delhi,—fatal without a first-hand knowledge of Delhi. She has located her “characters” in Bihar and hence succeeded in painting their environs in a manner that carries conviction.

‘İslâh ʿun Nisâ’ can lay claim to having more body and spice in it than most of the novels written in imitation of Nażīr Aḥmād, and the field of competition was by no means narrow.

Chapter VIII
RĀSHID UL KHAIRĪ

Rāshid ul Khaiřī was the most prolific of the Urdu novelists. He has left no less than eighty books, which include novels—social and historical, short-stories and collections of essays.

His special forte was tragedy, or rather the depicting of the tragic consequences of such social evils as polygamy, marriage without the consent of the parties concerned, usurpation of women’s rights, headlong and ridiculous imitation of the Western mode of life, etc. But he attempted, especially towards the end, to write in a lighter vein too. He also wrote historical novels in the style of Šhârâr, and half-realistic half-imaginative romances in the style of Ḥasan Niğmî.

Rāshid ul Khaiřī is generally regarded as the chief and the most successful imitator of Nażīr Aḥmād. Except for the fact that they both use the same material, that is to say, that they deal mostly with the middle class Mohammedan family of Delhi, they do not have much else in common. Their technique and the way of handling the material is entirely different, as also is the tone of their work.

Rāshid ul Khaiřī is the more consciously didactic of the two. When Nażīr Aḥmād wrote, the public were only dimly aware of the existing social evils, no drastic change was desired or thought necessary. By the time of Rāshid ul Khaiřī the movement of social reform had gathered full force. Sweeping changes were being advocated and existing customs severely criticised. Hence the stronger didactic note of Rāshid ul Khaiřī’s novels. Besides which there is a good deal more sadness and sorrow to be found in his works than in those of Nażīr Aḥmād. This earned for him the title “Muṣawâvir i Ādam”.

Nażīr Aḥmād’s ‘Mirāṭ ul ‘Arūs’, ‘Banāt un Naʿsh’, are very much of the “God’s in His Heaven, all’s right with
the world" kind of books, and even in 'Taubat Un Nāsūh' and 'Fasāna e Mubtalā' the tragedy is not so harrowing and heartrending as it is in nearly all the works of Rāshid ul Khairī. Excellent dialogue is to be found in both, they can both render the snappy back-chat of the Delhi women extremely well, weaving in the idioms and everyday sayings so well that in reading them one gets transported to an old Delhi house in imagination. But there is no such wit and humour to be found in Rāshid ul Khairī as in Naẓīr Ahmād. His work is not lit up every now and then with a flash of wit and humour like that of Naẓīr Ahmād. Not even when he is consciously trying to be humorous can he succeed in achieving the effect the latter almost unconsciously achieves. His humour is of a boisterous, broad kind, which often degenerates into utter ridiculousness, and never reaches the realm of pure wit.

But there is much to commend him in his own realm. His work falls under several categories. The social novels form the biggest group, then there are the short-stories and the historical novels, several biographies such as 'Az Zahrah' and 'Sayyida kā Lāl' and 'Āmeenā kā Lāl', and numerous stories and essays, which are all being collected and published by his son, Rāziq ul Khairī.

Rāshid ul Khairī has dealt with every social evil which might be found in Mohammedan society. Widows’ remarriage is advocated in 'Nauha e Zindagi', while 'Fasāna e Sa’id' shows the other side of the picture, that is the suffering of children in marriages where the step-father gains complete control over them. 'Sanjog' shows results of the common enough mistake of marriages made for the sake of wealth; 'Saunkān kā Jālāpā' shows the tyranny and torture women have to suffer in consequence of polygamy; and 'Maujda' the injustice of denying a girl an equal share of the property with the boys. 'Tūṣān i Ḥayāt' is a tale of evils from the extravagances in the observance of ruinous customs; 'Sarāb
to remarry so as to suit their own convenience, as in ‘Fasāna e Saʿīd’, are thoroughly unpleasant people. That it may be possible for someone to be relentless in matters about which he at least is convinced that the right is on his side, and yet have normal affections and feelings towards other things, is lost sight of. Seeing that the first object of these books was to raise the feeling of indignation and horror against the perpetuators of such social crimes, it is understandable why their characters were denied mollifying touches of humanity. Yet it is a fault artistically speaking. However, though their one great error or obsession overshadowed their entire behaviour, the “characters” of Rashid ul Khairi are not entirely devoid of good feeling. Both Maudūd in ‘Maudū’ and Șafyā’s father in ‘Nauha e Zindagi’ have real affection for their sons and their wives. Very little is said, but somehow the idea is conveyed that between Maudūd and Muhsina there existed a very real bond of affection and understanding regarding every matter except that of his treatment of Maudū. Though hating and tormenting his daughter because she would be the means of having his property split, he is considerate towards his wife, hence he is no woman-hater. In fact, like Șafyā’s father in ‘Nauha e Zindagi’, Ahmad in ‘Sūt Rāhōn ke ‘Amal Nāme’ and Isfahān ud Daula in ‘Tarama e Shaiḵānī’, he is a victim of a social code. They do wrong but they think they are upholding what is right and proper. They are being cruel and ruthless and unjust, but the fault is not theirs but that of society. Because it is their nature to be thorough, they carry out its dictates with a ruthlessness which less thoroughgoing “characters” are not capable of and hence tragedy is avoided. But the codes have in them the germs of disaster and whenever a strong “character” is subjected to them by another equally strong “character”, chaos follows.

The social evils dealt with by Rashid ul Khairi are those that mostly concern women, or rather those whose victims

RASHID UL KHAIRI (1870–1936) are women. Hence polygamy is dealt with repeatedly: ‘Saukān kā Jalāpā’, Qudsiya’s story inset in ‘Sanjóy’ and Qaisrān’s in ‘Ṣūt Rāhōn ke ‘Amal Nāme’ and Ṣāleḥa’s in ‘Gauhar i Magṣūd’ are all condemnations of polygamy. They show the injustice and indignities that the first wife has to suffer after the husband’s remarriage, her helplessness against his tyranny. And he severely indict the society in which it is possible to discard a wife as easily as a pair of old slippers.

The fate of children at the hand of the step-mother is another oft-repeated motif of Rashid ul Khairi’s novels. It appears again and again as the main theme or as a side-issue.

Rashid ul Khairi loved the old order of things, loved and admired the gentle, long-suffering, patient women of old India, and regretted—intensely regretted—their passing away. Some of the best lines in his books are those in which he describes them. They are prose poems:

نشتة ترقب ك سرشار جوانا غور سى ديكه‌پى لو، دينا ان كى صورتون كورتىگي، آکه‌کون په‌پور په‌پور دیکه‌پى اور يه مکه د نظرة آينيگي. يه صيحت حتم اور ياه سان پرمنا يى وى اه‌رودون چين كى هر‌د ره‌س چندا يى اى اى يان کيان مين آنگي، يى وى اه‌رودون چين كى مين پر والدن كى خدمت نى دعاون كى ياه پر قربان كى، چين كى ودای پر عزمون اور پلوکاون كى آکه‌کون يى آنسو گرگان. . .

لو هيچار هو، مجلس فنان قرب آگي كى دل بور كى ديكه‌پى لو، جاند مده‌ها، جاندی په‌پور گي، ناره جهلمگي، جراج‌نشیت‌ها، ران كورت‌گي، اور په‌پور جوس‌وارين ران همايب مرجعت هى هين. ار يى سادگي پر نه جاوه، ار من كي باتون پر نه هنسو، يى ديني نسوان كى وى.
panies her mother on her unostentatious errands of charity, and hence gets an early lesson in sharing and being sensitive to another’s pain. She is married to a comparatively poor man, as girls of her kind are not much in demand nowadays, suffers much at his hand, but never loses courage and wins through in the end. Her life in the end has more real peace and happiness in it than the stormy and glamorous one of Shāhīda. Whether Zāhida is or is not the typical old-fashioned girl, not all are as good as she. Shāhīda certainly is the half-baked, ill-educated modern Indian girl. In drawing Shāhīda, Rashid ul Khairī has picked out just those traits of character which make the average modern Indian girl such an unpleasant person in spite of her surface smartness and gaiety.

Shāhīda is early shown as insensitive to human suffering. She turns with distaste from the sight of a poor beggar, and says these people should be made to work—a typical example of the muddle-headedness of the pseudo-moderns and their flaunting borrowed ideas. Unaware of the sufferings of, and unwilling to do anything to provide work or shelter for, the unfortunate, they are ready with the cliché “we must not encourage begging”. In showing Shāhīda at an early age of this mind Rashid ul Khairī prepares us for the subsequent intense harshness and selfishness of her character. He also shows his knowledge of human nature by it; he or she whom the sight of suffering cannot move will stop at nothing. And this foreboding is amply justified!

In her treatment of her maid, and later of her child’s nurse, Shāhīda is very typical of her kind, who are extremely selfish, unwilling to put up with even the slightest inconvenience and at the same time not quite realising the extent of damage they are doing. When Shāhīda sent the police to search the house of old Rāhīmān, she never realised that it would mean such disgrace to the old woman as she would never be able to live down. No, so far have these people removed themselves from the lives and thoughts of their poor old-fashioned
neighbours that they do not know them at all, which in itself is a condemnation.

Shahida’s marriage is happy for the first couple of years, but as soon as things begin to go wrong a bit, all her latent selfishness comes out and makes both their lives a misery— to what extent is shown when, after a slight quarrel, she takes the drastic step of deserting Hasan, a step which involves her in a great tragedy. She spends her life chasing shadows and misses the substance, and is in the end a disappointed, disenchanted failure. She ridicules the “lāt dhulār”, jeers at “māiyā”; objects to “roza kushā”; in fact, behaves in the petty, supercilious, irritatingly superior way of those who are rather unfortunately described as “the newly educated women”. Shahida is perhaps one of the most convincing of Rashid ul Khairi’s “characters”.

In ‘Sarab i Magrib’, similarly, the contrast between the old and the new, the real and the imitation, is brought out. How far from real progress are the so-called progressive people, how, in fact, they are degenerating, is shown by small incidents, like Mir Achoam’s stopping the pension of his old nurse, his being a party to the closing down of Sarab’s “maktab”, and his being absent at the time of his mother’s death.

The pathetic attempt at being modern is well brought out in ‘Sarab i Magrib’. The “character” of Akram Jahan, however, is not well defined. She is not as alive as Shahida, nor is she quite so unpleasant. She is shown as hesitating in giving her photo to Hamid. She repels his advances. She has been schooled to be modern, but is not naturally so bizarre. Not much is said of her mother, Ashraf Jahan, either, but one gets the impression of her being one of those gentle, lovely women who form the background of their family. Rashid ul Khairi was particularly successful in depicting them. Muhsina in ‘Masada’, Sojda in ‘Jauhar i Qadamat’, Shaktiras in ‘Manazil us Saira’, are all of this type. They go about their humdrum but by no means easy tasks with forbearance, courage and dignity.

Ashraf Jahan tried to be modern and gave up all the beliefs of her girlhood because her husband wanted her to do so, not of her own accord, and so was in reality a very orthodox woman.

The old-world ideal of “honour”, the premium that was put upon it, the values of a bygone age that put noble blood before everything, all these are extolled in ‘Sarab i Magrib’.

In ‘Sarab i Magrib’, as also in ‘Bint ul Vaqil’, the mockery and farce of social service is revealed. How far from feelings of true charity and a real sympathy for suffering are those who pretend so noisily and loudly to be working for the alleviation of misery is shown by such instances as of Ikrumis Begans’s refusing help to a poor decrepit woman, while in the same breath claiming to serve the ill-starred community. Rashid ul Khairi has brought out the mockery of it all by putting the usual cliche of her kind in her mouth, in reply to the pathetic appeal of a helpless, infirm old woman. It is often done and the absurdity of it not seen by those who perpetuate it, but somehow it strikes home as put by Rashid ul Khairi. Just a shade stressed, perhaps, but it serves the purpose of driving home the point. In ‘Bint ul Vaqil’ the hollowness also of such claims is revealed when Farkhunda hurries off to a meeting leaving her husband in high fever. She speaks often and at length on the need of reform and on the defects of uneducated women, but is completely oblivious of her own glaring faults.

It might seem that Rashid ul Khairi is contradictory in his books, that at times he is advocating greater freedom for women and at times condemning it; but a closer study shows that there is no such contradiction. In fact, he is one of the few writers in Urdu who have written enough and been sufficiently consistent in their writing to enable one to form a definite opinion on their philosophy and style.
Rāshid ul Khairī admired the women of the old India, women with courageous hearts, with pure souls, with strength and nobility of character. It is wrong and unjust that such women should be deprived of their rights, denied the liberty given them by their religion. But this does not mean that Rāshid ul Khairī thought it justified that they should throw all restrictions to the wind and answer cruelty by infidelity, forced marriages by elopement, disinheritance by unfilial conduct. This is clearly put forward in 'Tafṣīr i 'Iṣmat'. To his mind it was a much greater pity that women should change their religion, elope and break the code of decency their society has formulated, than that men should usurp and tyrannize and dominate. In fact it was to him a tragedy that women should do so. A much greater moral harm, a much greater spiritual injury is suffered by a nation in the weakening of the moral fibre of its women than from depravities on the part of its men. Hence his equal condemnation of men's usurpation of women's rights and women's resistance to it. In short, he wanted the rights of women to be restored by men, but he did not advocate or admire their fighting for them. He thought it took away from their gentleness and charm of character. In his later works he became more urgent in his demand for women's rights, for he realised that the denial of them any longer was now fraught with grave danger and not merely an act of injustice resulting in human suffering. Women were taking extreme measures, such as change of religion, elopement and suicide, in their determination not to be dominated. Rāshid ul Khairī never could admire such conduct. No, his ideals were women who died without a murmur, who suffered without a sign. Those, who as he says:

But if the metal was not the same any longer it was better, far better, to give them every right they demanded and still keep them in the fold than to run the risk of their being completely lost. That is what makes him, especially in his later years, almost desperately champion the right of "khul'a" for women.

Being a deeply religious man he was profoundly moved by the instances of apostasy that took place in 1926. Amongst the stories in which he directly or indirectly advocates the right of "khul'a" for women the best is 'Tafṣīr i 'Iṣmat'. In this novelette, he has shown great insight into human
nature in the drawing of the “character” of Hashmat as well as of Miss Berna(r). Hashmat, driven to desperation by her husband’s conduct and goaded to frenzy by the insulting behaviour of the lawyer and his wife to whom she goes for help, takes the bold step of declaring herself to have embraced Judaism, as this, according to Mohammedan Law, would dissolve her marriage with Ashraf. She does this merely as the only way of escape open to her and not from any conviction. Yet that she could contemplate such a step at all shows that she had come very much under the influence of the line of thought called “Liberalism”.

She finds that even that is not sufficient to ensure her freedom and her remarriage with one of her new faith is required for it. She agrees to go through a marriage ceremony which her Jewish teacher assures her is purely nominal. When she finds that it is not so, her indignation is aroused and she attempts to kill the supposed husband. It is in Hashmat’s revolt at the idea of remarriage that Rashid ul Khairi has shown how well he understood the mentality and character of Indian women. Perhaps from modern standards it might be difficult to understand such conduct, but to those familiar with Indian ideals it is perfectly comprehensible. More than a couple of decades of Westernization is necessary before it is possible for Indian women to face such things with equanimity. The force of the traditions of generations is not shaken off in a day, they are too deeply ingrained for that. To think that it can be done is a mistake and results in tragedy. Illustration of this psychological point is the most interesting thing in ‘Tafsir i ‘Ismat’.

In the drawing of Miss Berna(r)’s “character” also penetration into and understanding of human nature are shown. Though Miss Berna(r) is a missionary, she is deeply shocked at Hashmat’s easy abandonment of the religion she was born in. For Miss Berna(r) realises that the religion of one’s father is part and parcel of oneself; that it cannot and should not be easily discarded, and that if it is discarded, it speaks of a deterioration of character and a weakening of moral fibre in the person who does so. This is not the usual point of view of a missionary, but is a view consistent with a character like that of Miss Berna(r). Somehow one believes it implicitly that a woman such as she could never approve of the kind of step that Hashmat was taking. Rashid ul Khairi should not have made Miss Berna(r) write that she was a Mohammedan at heart, for that mars his true conception of her. She was objecting to Hashmat’s change of religion, not because she herself was a Mohammedan but on the ground that religion was too intertwined with one’s obligation to one’s community to be changed because of personal idiosyncracy.

The introduction of the unnecessary humorous element spoils this otherwise excellent study of two unusual “characters”. It was not at all necessary; it does not fit in with the tone of the rest of the story; and what is more, it is not really witty—just farcical. The same can be said about all his humorous stories; he can never be truly witty. His humour is that of the broad farcical kind that relies on absurdities of dress, appearance and situation for invoking laughter. Even this would not matter, as this is a sort of humour also, if he did not make the situations utterly fantastic. A humorist is entitled to the same liberties as a caricaturist, that is, of exaggerating the points, but Rashid ul Khairi went beyond the recognised limits of exaggeration. In ‘Nani ‘Asho’, which is considered his most humorous sketch, he is being utterly incredible when he makes Nani ‘Asho ride on the back of the “Mujavir” and makes a group of “purdah” ladies allow her to appear in their midst in that manner.

The absurdities of ‘Rafa’i’ are also beyond the bounds of credulity, and the sudden turning of a farcical sketch into a tragedy is bad workmanship. In ‘Sajda o Nadima’ the humorous situations are not as absurdly improbable but of a
believably exaggerated type, but the mixture of tragedy and force in it also, as in Tāmga e Shāhtānī, spoils the otherwise penetrating “character” sketches.

His historical novels, also, are very poor stuff. The “characters” never come to life. No knowledge of the social conditions of the time is shown, and the reader can glean no information regarding the manners and customs of the period and country in which the incident is supposed to be taking place. In Māh i ‘Ajam, for instance, the scene is laid in the Persia of the first “Hijra” of Islam, but except for the names there is nothing that would make a reader think that it was about Persia and the Persians. No knowledge of the country or of customs of that period is shown at all, and from the very fact of its being on ground with which he was not familiar, his characterisation is very poor. His historical “characters” never come to life, they are mere names. Though he deals with such interesting personalities as Māmūn and Malka Zubaída and Ẓāliḥ ‘Omar and Shahr Bānu, the daughter of Yazdiyār, personalities essentially romantic and glamorous, yet he cannot invest them with as much interest as a plain reading of history endows them with. In his fictitious “characters” he is not any more successful. Isabella, in spite of all her misfortunes and adventures, never comes to life, or succeeds in evoking the sympathy or liking of the reader.

‘Arūs i Karbalā’, generally regarded as Rāshid ul Khāirī’s best historical novel, is not very much better than Māh i ‘Ajam. A certain amount of ingenuity is shown in the manner in which the fictitious element in the story is placed within the historical frame. But the “characters” are sketchy, the background is indefinite and the story as unsatisfactory as ‘Māh i ‘Ajam’.

The tragedy of “Karbalā”, looked at from the point of view of a dramatist or an artist, is one that can furnish either with many a subject. Imagination can find many tragedies, many shattered romances, many deeds of heroism and valour that history does not specifically mention. The life of any one of those seventy-two loyal followers of Ḥusain can be dealt with imaginatively and the story, at once tragic and noble, woven round it.

Any movement of momentous consequence, such as the French Revolution, or the Napoleonic Wars, or even the Rebellion of 1745 and the plots to restore Mary, Queen of Scots, to the throne, serves to bring to the surface the latent nobility of men, and therefore alongside the record of the nation’s struggle are found the pages of its golden deeds. World history cannot show an event as tragic and as heroic as the tragedy of “Karbalā”. The thoughts and reactions, the dreams and ideals of the handful of men who staked their all for the sake of right, and who gave up all the world had to offer for just a dream, just an ideal, are most befitting subjects to be celebrated through history, legend, tune and song! But respect for the sanctity of character of “Karbalā”’s heroes has not permitted the writers to allow their imagination a free run. Though “Mersiyas” have endowed the characters with humanity to a large extent, yet purely imaginative work with the tragedy of “Karbalā” as its centre has not been written. ‘‘Arūs i Karbalā’’, therefore, is a very important landmark, for in it the “characters” Rose and ‘Ubaīd are entirely fictitious, as are also ‘Āṣām and Khālid, Sa‘īd and Mu‘āwiah and several others. History has no warrant for any of them but it is not only credible, it is even extremely likely, that such events did take place.

‘Arūs i Karbalā’ follows history closely in the matter of the struggle between Mo‘āva and Ḥazrat ‘Ali. The tragedy of “Karbalā” is also described with absolute historical accuracy. The fictitious element of the story is the introduction in it of the “character” of Kulṣūm or Rose. Kulṣūm is the daughter of a man who was killed by Mo‘āva’s orders as he had attempted to poison him and thus to remove the cause of the growing rift in Islam. He had left Kulṣūm in the
charge of his brother, Khālid, who adored the child, but the wife was extremely jealous of her and in Khālid's absence she took the child and threw her in a well, thinking that she was sure to die. Kulṣūm, however, was rescued by a Christian couple who brought her up as their child and gave her the name of Rose. On reaching an age to think for herself, she felt drawn towards Islam and rejected several Christian suitors. At this crucial moment she met 'Ubaíd, a young partisan of the house of 'Alī, and it further strengthened her leanings towards Islam. Her foster-parents on divining her predilection for Islam began to illtreat her in many ways. 'Ubaíd happens to arrive at this critical juncture and rescues her. Interspersed in the story of Rose's fortune is the description of the gathering storm against Husain. 'Ubaíd encouraged and inspired by Rose, tries to do his level best to get the "Kūfīs" to remain loyal to Husain, but he is outmanoeuvred by Ibn i Ziād. Rose herself attempts to end the nefarious life of Ibn i Ziād, but is not successful either. She and 'Ubaíd are twice arrested by Ziād, and each time they manage to make their escape. Each is eager to do what he or she can for the "Imām". They reach the field of "Karbalā" independently and try to lay down their lives at the feet of the "Imām". 'Ubaíd is wounded and Rose is taken prisoner by Ibn i Sa'd, the General of Yazīd's army. He falls in love with Rose and wants to marry her. Ibn i Ziād himself, however, was enamoured of Rose, whom he had seen and married with the consent of her foster-father but she had made her escape. They both put their claims before Yazīd, who promptly appropriates Rose for himself.

Rose, as she is being dressed by a lady-in-waiting, is recognised by her as the child for whom she has been carrying a message from her dying mother and for whom she had been searching for a number of years. This message tells Kulṣūm about her parentage and asks her to avenge her parent's death by destroying the treacherous house of Yazīd. Rose hides a dagger in the folds of her dress as she comes to meet Yazīd and stabs him through. Just then 'Ubaíd also appears with the same intention, and the two lovers meet. Rose's foster-parents are somehow also there, and so are Rose's uncle, Khālid, and his cruel wife. There is a general reconciliation and recognition and Kulṣūm or Rose is married to 'Ubaíd with everyone's consent.

The story is extremely involved and disconnected. It is very difficult not to lose the thread and to remember the proper sequence; numerous escapes of Rose from imprisonment are not accounted for, and it is not explained how 'Ubaíd managed to appear at every critical moment in Rose's career. The presence of Maimūna, an ardent partisan of the house of 'Alī, in Yazīd's household as a trusted servant is not accounted for, nor does one know how Khālid and his wife could be there. The incidents are extremely disjointed, there is no logical sequence of action in them. Rose is left in one chapter as a prisoner of her foster-father, in the next she is seen somewhat with 'Ubaíd. How she managed to avenge the death of Ḥasrat Muslih and his two sons, and find access to Ibn i Ziād's palace and again reach "Karbalā" is not explained. Each chapter shows her in a different place and in a different situation. Of course, the chapters do not follow each other, in between comes the description of what is happening to Imām Husain and his followers. Here Rāshid ul Khai'ri follows what history says without any addition of his own. The search of the woman whom Kulṣūm's mother had entrusted with a message for Kulṣūm is interspersed in the two other motives. These small threads of interest in "'Arūs i Karbalā" often get intertwined and it is difficult to distinguish them. Ibn i Ziād and Yazīd are just shown as evil incarnate; there is no psychological study of their "characters". Neither is the "character" of the noble Imām and his heroic followers analysed or presented in a manner to enlist for them that glowing admiration and warm support given to those "characters" of history whom fiction has endowed with humanity. Still the attempt at all to write an