jān i lāy rā * Balā e furtā i purdāh o subbat i purdāh*, and his other sketch ‘Khiż ko dekh ke kahā hai sab sa e khat i yār * Bhalā jo cāhā cālī āo apnā rāh lye’ which contains the dialogue between Kalt Bīvī and Gori Bīvī, and ‘Muhazzab Gentleman’, are in the nature of short-stories.

In sketches such as Misrāzā Macchū Beg Sitām Zarī’s ‘Vaqeenā Rabbanā ‘Azāb an Nār’, ‘Income-tax aur Myān Bīvī’, and ‘Bāt kā Batanggar’, the features of the short-story can even more clearly be discerned. There is definite characterization in these, though not plot. The character of each type of wife, the quandary of the unfortunate husbands, the state of tension in the household, the interference of maidservants and the hollow sympathies of the neighbours, all are portrayed in the ‘Vaqeenā Rabbanā ‘Azāb an Nār’. Nothing need be said of the humour in it which by itself would make it a gem of literature.

‘Bāt kā Batanggar’ approximates still closer to what we now regard as a short-story. It can even be said to have a plot. The whole trouble rises out of a wife’s misunderstanding of the word “canda” which she takes to be the name of some woman. The husband leads her on to believe that it is so, and only when the situation appears to be getting very serious does he explain that by “canda” is meant subscription and not a woman.

The dialogue in this is perfectly delicious:

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THE BEGINNINGS IN "AVADH PANC"

The 'Purānī Raushnī ke Nāme Payām' and 'Naī Raushnī ke Nāme Payām' are a subtle ridicule of the "W.O.G." (a term of contempt for the Westernised Oriental Gentleman used by Anglo-Indians). The position is put from their point of view, but in such a manner as to make its absurdity obvious. Yet unlike similar satires it tries to do its victims justice inasmuch as it puts the case from their side and shows how reasonable and laudable appear the things that seem so ridiculous to others.

Each of these letters is to all intents and purposes a short-story. It contains a special situation and describes the reactions of the various characters to it. The entire workings of the mind of the hero, who is the writer of the letters, is revealed. As for instance, from one of the letters from the series entitled 'Naī Raushnī ke Nāme Payām', the following story can be gleaned. Sa'īd Azali is a Westernised Indian, a type very common in the late nineties, that is to say, he has been, to quote a slang expression, "completely bowled over" by the Western mode of life, and finds every custom and every idea of his own country ridiculous. Despite the fact that all his values have changed he has very genuine affection left for his wife, 'Ifsat Begam. He is writing this letter to her to try and get her to see his point of view so that when he returns from England she will be a suitable companion for him. Nothing is said about what the wife's reactions were to this suggestion, but her character is conveyed so admirably that it is not difficult to guess what they must have been. Consequently, Sa'īd Azali's letter to 'Ifsat Begam can be said to
contain the rudiments of a plot which, for the last forty years, has been the most popular and the most used, namely, the tragedy that follows when boys after their return from Europe cannot take up the thread of life where they left it.

The sketches of "Avadh Pance" have the same place in the development of the Urdu novel and short-story as the Roger de Coverley sketches in the "Spectator" and the "Tatler" have in the development of the English novel. Navāb Sayyid Muḥammad's series of sketches, 'Naḥ Raushnī ke Nāme Payām' and 'Purāṇ Raushnī ke Nāme Payām' are very like the Roger de Coverley sketches as in these also the same hero appears in different situations.

"Avadh Pance" can be regarded as having laid the foundation not only of literary journalism in Urdu but of its necessary appendage, the short-story, as well.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SHORT-STORY IN URDU FROM 1900 TO 1925

"Avadh Pance", it cannot be denied, laid the foundation of literary journalism as its character sketches prepared the ground for the writing of the short-story, and its scathing articles in connection with the poetry of Ḥālí, the authorship of 'Gulzār i Naṣīm', and the merits of Dāg, were the precursors of literary criticism. But the tone of "Avadh Pance" was too light and its attitude too frivolous and far too personal for it to be regarded as a serious literary organ. The style of writing of the contributors of "Avadh Pance" still savoured too much of the "Naḥābī" courts of Lucknow. The laughter was loud and long, the jokes full-blooded and vulgar, and the criticism highly offensive and of a personal nature.

Literary journalism having the dignity and the seriousness of tone and impersonality demanded by modern standards can be said to have started with the coming out of "Makhsan" under the editorship of Sir 'Abd ul Qādir in 1900. Short-stories have appeared in each language in the wake of the magazine and the same happened in the case of Urdu. The works of Sayyid Sajjād Ḥaidar Yiklarīm, Khājā Ḥasan Niqāmī, Sulṭān Ḥaidar Josh, 'Abd ul Majīd Khān Sālik and Rāshid ul Khāri, were introduced to the public at first through the pages of "Makhsan".

"Makhsan" was soon followed by numerous other magazines, amongst which those with any literary merit were: "Urdū e Mu'allā", which came out under the editorship of Ḥāsrat Mohānī, "Tamaddun", edited for a time by Rāshid ul Khāri, "Nīzām ul Mushāikh", edited by Mulla Muḥammad Vāhindī, "Kakhkashān", edited by Sayyid Imtyāz 'Alī Taj,