THE BEGINNINGS IN "AVADH PANČ"

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 Panč" 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. Navâb Sayyid Muhammad's series of sketches, 'Naî Raushnî ke Naîme Payām' and 'Purânî Raushnî ke Naîme Payām' are very like the Roger de Coverley sketches as in these also the same hero appears in different situations.

"Avadh Panč" 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 Panč", 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 Ḥālī, the authorship of 'Gulzâr i Naṣīm', and the merits of Dāg, were the precursors of literary criticism. But the tone of "Avadh Panč" 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 Panč" still savoured too much of the "Navâbī" 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 "Makhzan" under the editorship of Sir 'Abd ul Qâdir 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 Sajjâd Ḥaidar Yıldırım, Khâjâ Hasan Niğâmî, Sulṭân Ḥaidar Josh, 'Abd ul Majîd Khân Şâlik and Râshid ul Khâiri, were introduced to the public at first through the pages of "Makhzan".

"Makhzan" was soon followed by numerous other magazines, amongst which those with any literary merit were: "Urdu e Mu'allâ", which came out under the editorship of Ḥâsrat Mohâni, "Tamaddun", edited for a time by Râshid ul Khâiri, "Nizâm ul Mashâikh", edited by Mullâ Muḥammad Vâhîdî, "Kakhkashâp", edited by Sayyid Imtîyâz 'Alî Taj,
their namesakes of a thousand years ago, only Lailâ now goes about in a cart instead of a “mahmil” and Majnûn follows her on a bicycle instead of on foot. The tyre of the bicycle gets a puncture, and this, instead of foot soreness, prevents him from following Lailâ. The modern Lailâ is ordered electrical treatment instead of the opening of veins (“faṣd”), but the modern Majnûn’s reaction to his beloved is the same. At the moment she is undergoing the treatment he falls into a fit, as Majnûn of old began bleeding when Lailâ’s “faṣd” was opened.

As the other Majnûn caught hold of the wild deer and kissed their eyes because they were like Lailâ’s, so does this Majnûn, only he has to go to the local Zoo to find deer with Lailâ-like eyes, there being no wildernesses now to rush out to. This Majnûn also like his namesake is taken to Mecca by his father to pray on the door-steps of the Ka’ba so that he might be delivered from his obsession, and there like that Majnûn, and the Majnûns of all times, he prays that his sufferings might never be lessened:

اور قیس بن دست دعا اکھا اور احسانی حبیب ، خاتم
تضرع سے ، اعیان دل سے تکلیف وائی صدا سے دعا مانگی ، مکرکا ؟
وہی جو آسے سے سبکروں برہہ مانگکی نہیں ، اور جو حیر
قیس طبیعت ، چاہو کہ کسی اور کسی زمینمیں مسیح ، مانگکا ؛
مس حس میں خدا کرے وہ کہ کہ اگنی کا نہیں هو ہو ۔

Sajjād Haidar mostly wrote romantic stories. These possess a high quality of imagination and are touched with poetic beauty. "Khoyālistān" is perhaps the most typical and the best of his short-stories in the romantic vein. It has the eternal longing of the man for his mate and the woman for hers as its theme. Nasrin, a girl, and Khārā, a boy, are brought up in different islands, where neither sees anyone of the opposite sex. Nasrin’s mother and Khārā’s guardians are equally determined
that their charges should not come to know of love and the misery that is attendant upon it. Näsün and Khārā grow up unaware of life's greatest mystery and for some time are quite happy. But after a while vague longings begin to stir in them both and life becomes dull and meaningless. Khārā lets himself drift on in a rudderless boat which anchors at Näsün's island. And thus the plans of their parents and guardians come to nought. The language of 'Khuyālistān' is almost that of poetry; it is in fact a prose-poem.

Sajjād Ḥaidar's social stories are also excellent. 'Nikāh i Šānī', 'Azdawāj i Muḥabbat', 'Suḥbat i Nājīnā' are each perfect specimens. 'Suḥbat i Nājīnā' is a study of incompatibility of temperaments. It is extremely well done; the reader himself begins to share the nervous strain the girl is undergoing. The story consists of two letters written by two girls in which each of them tells the other of her mental sufferings due to the difference of temperament between herself and her husband.

'Azrā is a gay, irresponsible, vivacious girl, a regular tomboy. She had had an entirely European education and has no taste for Urdu poetry and no knowledge of Indian literature or music. Her husband, Gayāś, is a heavy, ponderous, uncouth fellow, whose hobbies are horse-racing and cheap music halls. He has had no education and his taste for poetry leaves much to be desired. So, when 'Azrā is playing "Mendelssohn" or "Wagner" he is singing some such doggerel as:

"تَهی صدیق زلمون کے للکان نے والے ہیں دل کو کبھی نہیں بھولے نے والے"

which makes 'Azrā's blood curdle. They have nothing in common, what one likes irritates the other profoundly. Physically and mentally they are quite incompatible. 'Azrā is fastidious to a fault; Gayāś's vulgarity is disgusting; 'Azrā is a fairy-like creature, Gayāś is of "the earth earthy"; and so, 'Azrā wildly writes to Salma, her friend, and asks her in despair what to do:

"اب ان کی تعلیم کا حال سنتے ہیں بھی اپنی بیوی کی نیں حیات ، ہریت میں دخل ذر مغولوں کا شوق سیاہ ابر کی طرح کہر چھا رہتا ہے ، رنگ بنتے ہیں ، مگر میں دسِ ہزار حس کو بھی کان دھر کے کھیس سنتی ہے ، کیا کسی بھر ہوئے گریزی گی؟ کیا میں اس بوجھ کو ہیں ابھانگ گی؟ کیا میں اسی خاوند کی تو میں ہین رکھیں ، اسی خاوند نے چھپتی ہو مگر انسان جونس چاہتا وهو اسی متتا ہے".

'Azrā's contempt for her husband, the revulsion she feels at sight of him, how unbearable his company is to her, her own and Gayāś's personality, all these are crystal-clear to the reader.

But the fate of Salma, the girl whom 'Azrā is writing to, is no better. She is married to a man who irritates her as profoundly as Gayāś irritates 'Azrā. Salma is imaginative, sensitive, and poetic. Ḥamūd, her husband, is dry as dust, cold and hard. Salma lives in a land of dreams, he in one of stark reality. Salma wants fire, colour and romance in life, to her life means love, to suffer and to feel. To Ḥamūd life is a matter of dull routine which nothing should disturb, emotion whether it be of joy or sorrow has no place in his scheme of things. He has never known a quickening of the pulse or what her heart-throb means. Salma's life with her husband, who has as much feeling as a carved statue, is as meaningless as 'Azrā's with a vulgar and uncouth husband. 'Suḥbat i Nājīnā' ranks with 'Madame Bovary' as a study of incompatibility of temperament.

'Azdawāj i Muḥabbat' and 'Nikāh i Šānī' are both extremely well-written stories by Sajjād Ḥaidar. The plot in each case
is good, there is no unnecessary expansiveness, the stories are well-written and completely hold the interest of the reader. "Cīre Cīryāt kī Kahānī", "Hafrat i Dil kī Savāneh "Unmai", and "Saudā e Sangīn" are stories in a more romantic and more whimsical vein, but they are all extremely readable.

Sajjād Haidar’s was the most prominent name in connection with the short-story in the first two decades of the twentieth century; he has not written anything of any literary merit for the last ten or fifteen years.

Khājā Ḥasan Nīgāmī is one of the most interesting figures in Indian public life. Apart from being a religious and political leader and a social reformer, he is the most successful journalist of his time. He was among the first few writers of short-stories which had any literary merit in Urdu. His "fasūnas" have a charm and style of their own. There are three volumes of them: 'Begmāt kī Āsū', or 'Āsū kī Bādā' as they are sometimes called, 'Angrezī kī Āhipā' and 'Jag Bāṭ kāhānīā'. 'Begmāt kī Āsū' and 'Angrezī kī Āhipā' are based on the events of the Mutiny. Each of the plots is based on fact. 'Jag Bāṭ kāhānīā' are purely imaginative and are written in a delightfully whimsical manner which recalls Barrie.

'Begmāt kī Āsū' is a record of what befell the Prince and Princess of the royal house of Timur after the rule of their dynasty was over. It contains twenty-three different stories; each of them is based on truth, but such imagination has been shown in the handling of the matter that the book rivals the best works of fiction in the interest it evokes.

The "fasūnas" are told in different ways. Some of them are just plain narrative, but even these have a charm of style and directness that make it a pleasure to read them, e.g., 'Bint i Bahādur Shāh' or 'Shāhzādī kī Āhipā'. These are in the first person and are told with utter simplicity. In 'Shāhzādī kī Āhipā', Princess Sultān Bāno, a granddaughter of Bahādur Shah, begins her story in these words:

Sentiment never falls in it or in any of these narratives that are in the first person. There is no mawkishness or plea for pity in them. They have the dignity and restraint of true tragedy.

But only a few are direct narrative. In most of the others incidents are selected and arranged by Ḥasan Nīgāmī with a view to dramatic effect.

'Bocārī Shāhzādī kā Khākī Chaparḵhāt', 'Khafrī', 'Faqī mē Rosa', 'Yatīm Shāhzādī kā 'Id', all have their pathos heightened by the manner in which the story is told.

Khājā Ḥasan Nīgāmī is a true artist and knows just how to present a story to gain the maximum of effect. In 'Bocārī Shāhzādī kā Khākī Chaparḵhāt' nothing is said of what happened to Gul Bāno after the Mutiny or how she came to die of cold and hunger at the foot of her father's tomb. Only the scene of her early luxury is described, but with such vividness and imagination that it becomes one we might have witnessed with our own eyes:

جب گل بانو یہ پندرہ ہویں سال میں قدم رکھتی ہو شباب

ئین چپین کے خداوادا شرارتیں تو رختست کر گئیں، مگر دلیانی

کی گوشیاں اس قسم کی تھیں کہ عمل کا مفتی جی خیہ یہاں مانگتا ہیں.

سون چی چھبرکھت یہ دوشاله نانکر سویا کریں نہ آنے ۔ شام کر
And after it just a few paragraphs tell us of her “Khāji Chaparkhāt”. By this juxtaposition of the two an effect is created which would not have been achieved had Khāja Ḥasan Niẓāmī related in detail what befell Gul Bāno till the time of her death.

Some “aṣfānas” begin with a scene from the early life of the hero or heroine. As for instance, ‘Kafni’ opens with a description of Māh Jamāl, being aroused with great ceremony by her slave-girl. Then comes the story of the reversal of her fortune in detail. Māh Jamāl loses her mother, and her wealth, and even the people she has taken shelter with are killed. She is taken in by a milkman, and on her first morning there she is aroused from sleep by the milkman’s wife with these words:

The reader at once remembers the earlier scene and how Māh Jamāl used to be awakened from her slumbers, thus:

In the eleventh “fasāna”, ‘Fāqe mē Roza’, the pathos in Mirzā Shahzor’s being forced to accept the “ifār” of charity becomes, because of its contrast with the description of the sumptuous “ifār” of his pre-Mutiny days, more significant.

Some of the “fasānas” open with a scene of great humiliation for the hero, e.g. ‘Thelevālā Shāhzādā’. In this first comes description of an accident between a “thaṭa” and a car which resulted in the Thelevālā being beaten by the driver of the car. The Thelevālā does not submit to this insult and thrashes the driver in return. The case is brought before a magistrate and there the Thelevālā makes this sensational statement:

Mira Naam Zafar Sultanī, Mira Naam Zafar Sultanī...
probable or very likely an actual incident and woven a pathetic story round it. The scenes of Yūṣuf’s interviews with the Maulvi Sāhib and with the Mutineers are obviously imaginary ones, as is the farewell scene between Yūṣuf and his bride. This has such pathos in it that it cannot be read without tears. Ḥasan Nizāmī never gives harrowing details, he does not ladle out his tragedies, he knows the secret of the economy of words, and consequently his description has greater poignancy:

The detailed story of his life comes after that.

Some “fasānas” are dealt with more imaginatively than others. Most of them are confined more or less to the actual happenings and imagination is used merely in the grouping of them. Others are more freely dealt with.

'Perjū Ghasyārē', 'Gadar kā Zaccā', 'Gadar kā Sāidānī', 'Kafnī' and 'Gadar kā binā Galafahmīā', are stories with a plot based on actual fact. But the author has used his imagination in the development and the dénouement of the story. 'Gadar kā binā Galafahmīā' is the story of a young man named Yūṣuf who is persuaded by the Mutineers to help them to break into the artillery magazine and get some secret documents. He is led to believe that he would be serving his religion and country by doing so. He is completely ignorant of the Mutineers’ intentions and was a mere tool in the hands of the designing villains. But after the Mutiny, on account of his being an accomplice, he is arrested and hanged.

No doubt this is what happened in many cases and in the case of many innocent persons. Ḥasan Nizāmī has used a
extremely pathetic but do not come anywhere near 'Begmāt ke Āsū' in charm, pathos or characterisation. 'Jag Būr Kakhānīā' has eight "fasānas" in it. They are all written with extreme whimsicality and do not follow accepted lines of delineation of character and construction of plot; nevertheless, they make delightful reading and have the charm of originality. Some of them are in the first person, e.g. 'Āsoū kā Jhulā'. It escapes being just narrative as it has the delineation of a mood of wistfulness as its objective. The mood of wistfulness that comes over those who have once known happiness in certain scenes and seasons recalls those days. "Barsūt" in India has the same significance as Spring in England. It is the season when Nature is reborn and this spectacle of perennial youth brings a measure of hopefulness to the human heart as well; songs are sung and swings are put up under trees, but those which Gāvār Begām puts up are swings of tears, and that is how the title of the "fasāna" is derived.

'Furniture Merchant kā Pahlā Tār' is a humorous sketch showing what extravagance leads to. When looking through his papers before his furniture is auctioned, a man finds the first cable from a firm intimating to him that goods worth ten thousand rupees have been sent as per order. This brings to his mind his early simple life in the villages; he remembers his first trip to town and his own faux pas on that occasion. The glimpse of the elaborate life of the city-dweller stirs up in him a longing for a similar life. The encouragement of his friend strengthened his resolution to come and live in the city. A house was bought and an order placed with a firm of decorators and furnishers to furnish it. This was the one that informed him that his house and furniture were ready. This was the beginning of the extravagant life which had brought him to bankruptcy, and this, and ironically this first, memento of extravagance comes to hand on the day he is paying the final price of his foolishness.

'Faqīr Shāhbad kā Daulāt', 'Jāzīb kāgaz kā Āfsāna' and 'Shām mā do Bīlāl' are stories with an admixture of realism and whimsicality. The whimsicality is really due to the introduction of the doctrine of "tasāwwuf". The fact that the mysteries of "tasāwwuf" are an accepted thing by the Muslims of India brings the story quite within the compass of probability. 'Jāzīb kāgaz kā Āfsāna' explains the mystery of "majzū-bārāt" in a most original manner in connection with the plot of the story. A Raja brings a case against a Shāh Shāhīb (that is, a sainly man) for having attempted to poison his wife. But the case is disproved by means of the evidence of some writing on a piece of blotting paper. Blotting paper is called "jāzīb" in Urdu and the words "majzūb" on it were "majzūb" words. The Shāh Shāhīb when called upon to give his defence takes that as an example to explain to the court what a "majzūb" is. "Majzūb", he said, "are like those half-written words on the blotter that have their use some time". The plot of this "fasāna" is an ingeniously constructed one and the dénouement has all the necessary elements of surprise.

Most of the "fasānas" of these three volumes were published in various magazines from 1900 to 1920 and were later collected in book-form. They had an enormous popularity, 'Begmāt ke Āsū' having gone into fourteen editions, and have been translated into several vernaculars.

'Āsoū kā Bādā' is of interest from a point of view other than that of its being one of the best collections of short-stories in the Urdu language. It contains the best historical stories as well. History has been approached by numerous authors since Shārār for plot and character, but not one author has succeeded in painting the period he has chosen with such vividness or conviction as to make it live. Nor have any managed to endow their "characters" with any semblance of reality, the reason being their lack of knowledge of the period coupled with the poverty of their imagination.
Khāja Ḥasan Nizāmī has a thorough knowledge of the period he chose to write his stories about. He had made the study of the causes of the Mutiny his subject and had met hundreds of people who remembered it. His family had connections with the royal house of the Moguls and from his earliest childhood he knew numerous first-hand anecdotes about the various personages of Bahadur Shah’s family. Thus, like Walter Scott, he was thoroughly familiar with his period and has, therefore, succeeded in making it alive and interesting for his readers. It is to be regretted that he did not attempt a full-length novel of this period. Like Sayyid Sajjād Haidar Khāja Ḥasan Nizāmī also has not written any fiction for the last fifteen years or so.

Rāshid ul Khairī, though later in life he wrote mostly novels, made his début with short-stories. His short-stories are of the same style and on the same subjects as his full-length novels—the subjects being either a portrayal of the unfortunate life of women or the consequences of the headlong imitation of the West: around these two motifs most of his short-stories are written. They have the same merits and demerits as his full-length novels, that is to say, the tragedy is of a highly emotional, harrowing type, the “characters” are painted white or black and not with any certainty. They are obviously didactic in aim and sometimes strain the credulity of the reader—so unnaturally good are his good “characters” and so fundamentally bad are the bad ones.

Nevertheless, they were extremely popular and it cannot be denied that they are very readable. The style is attractive for the Urdu is the choicest Delhi Urdu. Rāshid ul Khairī’s dialogue at times was extremely good and sometimes a phrase or a sentence would lift the story to a tragic plane. His earlier stories have been published in the collections “Jauhar i ‘Īsmat” and “Qatrat i ‘Ashk”. These were the ones that appeared in “Makhzan” and other magazines in the first quarter of the twentieth century. These stories are better knit and carry more conviction than those written in his last years. The stories written in his later years have also been published in several volumes: ‘Sa’ilāb i ‘Ashk’, ‘‘Ṭafān i ‘Ashk’, ‘Vilayat ‘Nanā’, ‘Nūr ‘Ashk’, ‘‘Arūs i Mashriq’. These were written under pressure of demand and after the author’s genius had begun to flag.

Though still a young man and belonging to the group of the modern writers of short-stories, yet Intyāz ‘Ali Tāj produced some of his best work before 1925 and must therefore be classed amongst the writers of the first two decades of this century.

Intyāz ‘Ali Tāj began writing at the age of fifteen, and some of his best short-stories, such as ‘Tārā’, ‘Māyūs’, ‘Anna’, ‘Salma’ and ‘Lavārīs Bāchā’, were written before he was twenty. In recent years he has turned his attention to drama and other forms of literary composition; but the short-stories of his earlier period show such mastery of technique, such excellent characterisation and such maturity that it is a pity he did not continue along this avenue.

Among all the younger writers his works approximate closest to Prem Chand’s in style. His stories are of domestic interest and he has chosen his “characters” from the same strata of society as Prem Chand. ‘Anna’, one of his short-stories, has a definite resemblance to Prem Chand’s short-story called ‘Bhāri Kākā’. ‘Anna’ is a story of the devotion of an old nurse to her ungrateful charges. Anna had brought up Māhmūd, she loved him with all her heart and soul. She was now very old, her mind had begun to wander; her old master and mistress, the parents of Māhmūd, were dead. They had respected her and knew the value of her love, but Māhmūd had no use for her. Māhmūd and his wife, Ḥashmat, were too busy and too happy in their present life to spare any time for memories of the past. Anna lived alone and neglected in a small outhouse.

A new ray of hope shone at the birth of Māhmūd’s son.
She knew nothing of it and only when the callers began to arrive did she realise that something was afoot. When she heard that a son had been born to Ḍaḥmūd, her joy knew no bounds. Ḏhashmat had fallen ill after the child’s birth and so none interfered with Anna, who took charge of the child completely. Life once more took on meaning for her and she was extremely happy. When Ḏhashmat recovered, she began to ponder how to transfer the child from old and untidy Anna to a spick and span nurse. Alleging as excuse a slight cold she took the child away. The light of Anna’s life was once more extinguished, now never to be lit again.

This simple story is told by Imtīḍā Ali in a manner that brings tears to the eyes. The pathos of Anna’s position is brought out so well, the loneliness and the darkness of her life are contrasted subtly with the richness and fulness of that of Ḍaḥmūd and Ḏhashmat. The stupidity and utter insensibility of the two young people are also conveyed admirably. In short, ‘Anna’ is a masterpiece of its type.

‘Lāvārīf Baccha’ has the most ingeniously constructed plot of Imtīḍā Ali Tāj’s stories. Naṣīr, a young man, is returning home after some months. Just one station before his home an old woman gets into the compartment with a baby. She plants the baby in his hands, asking him to hold it for a minute, while she goes and gets her shawl which she has forgotten on the bench. While she is away, the train starts and Naṣīr finds himself saddled with the baby. He does not know what to do with it except take it home. His wife refuses point-blank to allow him to keep it in the house and so he gives it to an old nurse of his. When he returns after giving the child away, he discovers that it is his own child. He goes back to the woman he left the child with, but she has meanwhile gone out to see a sick sister in another village. With the greatest difficulty he finally seeks her out and gets the child back. And all is well again.

Apart from the ingenuity of the plot, the story is delight-fully told. The indignation of the young wife at the sight of the young baby, the predicament of poor Naṣīr, the anxiety of the nurse, are all described so well. The scene in the village where Naṣīr goes to enquire about the address is so typical of village life,—the stolid indifference of the villagers to an outsider, the vague and casual answers given in the intervals of carrying water or smoking the “ bánhkā”!

Imtīḍā Ali Tāj is good at painting loneliness and pathos. In ‘Anna’ he had admirably described the pathos of neglected old age. In ‘Tārā’ he has shown the loneliness of a neglected child. Tārā, because she has no looks, is neglected by her parents, and humiliated by her sisters. Parental embraces, gaily coloured toys, trips to fairs, sweets and flowers, none of these come her way. Her little heart yearns for these, but the cruel and vain mother has no love to spare for the ugly little child.

Tārā grows up and so do her sisters, Sushīṭā and Rādhā. They are prettier than ever and soon get married. Tārā is now more than ever a nuisance to her parents; how are they to get rid of her? At last a marriage is fixed up with a newcomer to the town who already has a wife, and poor Tārā says goodbye to the home which was never her home in the true sense. Her husband is not pleased when he sees how plain Tārā is, and some years of further loneliness follow. But Tārā’s love at last triumphs and her devoted nursing of her husband when ill and deserted by his first wife wins his heart.‘Salma’, ‘Māyūs’, ‘Bin Mā kā Baccha’ are extremely well-written stories and it is surprising that no collection has been published of them.

‘Husn kī qīmat ñur dūse ruwāln’, first published in 1922, is the first collection of stories of the type that has been gaining popularity during the last few years. Short-stories hitherto had been a simple, straightforward recounting of some event or events in the life of one or more persons. ‘Husn kī qīmat’ introduced the psychological and analytical element
into the short-story, and made it the means of presenting and probing into a social problem of the time. In the last few years, the short-stories have been written more and more on these lines and with this object in view. The language of ‘Husn kā qīmat’ was more frank and more direct than authors had yet dared to use; in this respect also ‘Husn kā qīmat’ was a precursor of the modern story.

‘Husn kā qīmat’ is the usual tale of a husband who forsakes his wife in the heyday of his youth, and on losing youth, looks and wealth realises that true love can only be found in the heart of a wife. But this very hackneyed plot has been used by Ahmad Shuja’ in a remarkably original manner. The pivot of the story is the mental and spiritual state of Mas‘ūd and Yūsuf rather than what they actually do. Like Mirzā Muḥammad Sa‘īd’s ‘Khāb i Hastī” and ‘Yāsmīn’, a difference of approach makes ‘Husn kā qīmat’ an unusually interesting story to read. Yūsuf’s philosophy of life is the most significant thing in the story. His creed, though superficially that of every young man of this generation, is in reality quite different. He believes in happiness, in living his life to the full, in tasting all the experiences life has to offer. He cannot brook any restrictions on his ideas and considers all religious and moral codes as just hindrances to a man’s enjoyment of life. In all this he is not very different from the average young man of this generation. But Yūsuf has his own philosophy of life as well, and it is that which saves him from the fate of Jamīl and Mas‘ūd and which enables him to retain his health and good looks and his money in spite of his philanthropies. This is Yūsuf’s “Art of Sin”. He practises what is called sinful living with the detachment of objectivity of a Professor. He merely experiments, never allows himself to be carried away by it. He leads Mas‘ūd into the primrose path of sin. But he had not meant him to become an addict like Jamīl. He wanted him to be as heartless and as detached as himself. He wanted Mas‘ūd to play the game of love-making as light-heartedly as he himself did, to get the best price possible for his money and to give his time and charm to the highest bidder, and that is why he did not take him again to the first girl Mas‘ūd was attracted by. But Yūsuf realised the sentimentality in Mas‘ūd’s make-up and knew that he would not be able to remain as detached and unaffected as himself. So with the coldness of a philosopher or a scientist he experiments with Mas‘ūd. He leaves him at the doorstep of sin and goes away to wait and see how his experiment will end. The fact that Mas‘ūd lost his all in the experiment is of no consequence to Yūsuf. According to his way of thinking Mas‘ūd is richer for the experience he has undergone and Yūsuf has done him a service.

The other “fasānas” of this volume are: ‘Arām Shāh kā Beşt’, ‘Andhā Deotā’ and ‘Gunnāh kī Rāt’; they are all distinguished by outspokenness of language and their difference in the presentation and conception of “characters”. The story of ‘Arām Shāh kā Beşt’ is an imaginary legend. These were very popular at the time. ‘Abd ul Majīd Sālik has also written two or three stories of the time. The “characters” are the inhabitants of an entirely imaginary country and the story is placed in a pre-historic era. It had no special significance except as an indication of the trend of that time—a trend that did not develop. ‘Andhā Deotā’ is the ‘Husn kī
qīmat type of "fasāna". The character and philosophy of life of its hero, Aslam, are an unusual and psychological interest, like Yūsuf's. Aslam has searched all his life for love, and when he had almost given up the search, he seems to have found it in the eyes and a single gesture of feminine tenderness of a village girl. This manifestation of love has a profound effect on Aslam. Hitherto he had thought that he would possess the woman he loved; but now he decides that true love should never be possessive but just selfless adoration, and so with a gesture of humility, such as that with which a Brahmin puts a garland of flowers at the feet of the idol, he gives Dhanyā 50,000 rupees and a house as a wedding present.

The conception of the character of Yūsuf and of Aslam, and the whole theory of 'Husn ki qīmat', that "husn", like all other commodities, has a price and that its possessor has a right to demand the highest market price for it, was still a new thing in Urdu literature in 1922. They pointed the way towards the turn the Urdu short-story was taking.

'Abd ul Majīd Sālik was one of the well-known writers of short-stories of this period. He wrote simple, straightforward stories of domestic interest. Their merits lie in the simplicity of their style and their sincerity. These stories also reflect the change that was gradually coming over Indian society, for the plots arise out of the situations that came in the wake of the change. The stories of 'Camā' and 'Ravo shnak Bānu' can both happen only in a society such as existed in 1920. 'Camā aur dāsre afsāne' contain those "fasānas" of Sālik which appeared in 1918 and 1919 in "Khakhshāh", "Nagqād" and "Shabāb i Urdū". He wrote in "Tahjīb i Nisvīnj" and "Mathezan" as well, and some of his best stories are to be found in their pages. In the collection entitled 'Camā', there are many stories of the legendary type which were very popular then; 'Viṣāl i Avrāh', 'Hīmālāya ki Ītāf' and 'Ishq ki Dulhān' are all of this type. But most of them are of social interest. 'Khāb i Parīshān' is the best from the

point of view of plot and successful dēnouement. The incidents are well-knit and it possesses that quality which only the very best short-stories possess, that is, of making a definite impression of character and situation in the reader's mind. Only one incident in the life of the hero and heroine is described but in such a way that the entire background out of which the situation arose becomes quite clear. The whole tragedy was the result of a very trivial action, as so often in life it is.

Masūd and Salma were a newly married couple who were very happy in the first three months of their married life. Then a note of discord appeared through an invitation from an uncle of Masūd who had been on very bad terms with Salma's father. Salma agrees to accept the invitation and promises not to, in any way, show any rudeness, but fails at the actual party to keep her promise and, though she does not openly slight the old people, her extreme aloofness is in itself an insult. This irritates Masūd and when Salma breaks her silence at the dinner table only to warn him not to eat the fish as it does not agree with him, he feels further irritated and deliberately takes another helping. They quarrel on their return and go to sleep without being reconciled.

At night Masūd has a nightmare and kills Salma. For a long time after he wakes he cannot realise that it is not a bad dream and that he has actually killed her. When he does, he commits suicide by drinking a bottle of iodine.

Tremendous improvement in the quality of short-stories in recent years makes the work of 'Abd ul Majīd Sālik appear very ordinary in comparison, but the Urdu short-story had hardly taken shape at the time he began writing, and his stories together with those of Sultan Haider Josh formed a stepping stone in the development of the short-story in Urdu.

Sultan Haider Josh was amongst the group of writers who made their début in the journalistic world through the pages of "Mathezan", and was amongst the prominent writers in "An Nāzīr", "Shabāb i Urdū" and "Zāmān" as well.
His name is still sometimes to be seen in the pages of "Sāqī", "Adabī Dunyā" and other literary organs of the present day. His collection of short-stories was published in 1926 entitled "Fasāna o Josh". There are nine stories in it and four or five articles. Several of the earlier collections of short-stories in Urdu incorporated essays as well, perhaps because the distinction between literary essays and short-stories was not established in the minds of the writers and they were thought of as interchangeable terms.

Some of the stories are written with a didactic aim, e.g. ‘Musāva’ī’ and ‘Umra i Qa'id’. The author addresses the reader direct in these, and uncovers his point of view supporting it with the incidents from the story. They can almost be regarded as articles incorporating real or imaginary stories to give the argument greater force. ‘Musāva’ī’ attempts to show how unpleasant will be the consequence of granting women equality. ‘Umra i Qa'id’ is a most unsavoury story about the immodesty and selfishness of modern girls. ‘Talāsh i Ajīb’ and ‘Taqq i Ādām’ are the two best stories in the collection. They are in a humorous vein and about common occurrences in family life and amongst friends. They are told in a manner which awakes interest, and there is a definite plot in them.

‘Ittisāqāt i Zamāna’, ‘Nargis i Khudparast’, ‘Pahla Gmāh’ and ‘Ijās i Muḥabbat’ are stories without any special merit. ‘Nargis i Khudparast’ is based on a very well-known legend, and ‘Pahla Gmāh’ is the type of story which was very popular in this period. Examples of it are found in Sālik and in Rasheed ul Khairi, and even writers of recent years sometimes write in that vein. ‘Inqilāb i Zamāna’ and other stories that came out in "Makhzan" were in Rasheed ul Khairi's style.

The intrinsic merit of Sulṭān Ḥaidar Josh's work is very little. It has historic interest as it serves the purpose of showing the stages by which Urdu short-stories have achieved their present position.

---

**CHAPTER XIV**

**WOMEN SHORT-STORY WRITERS**

As during the intermediate period in the development of the novel the best works were by the women writers, so in the intermediate period in the development of the short-story also some excellent work was done by women.

‘Abbāsī Begam and Naẓīr i Sajjād Ḥaidar were the best known journalists and novelists amongst the women between the years 1900 and 1925. No collection has been published of their works, but they are to be found in the pages of the old numbers of "Tahziyāb", "Ismā" and "Tasāizzare", and other magazines as well.

‘Abbāsī Begam has written some very good short-stories. ‘Garīfīr i Qafas’ in 1915, which relates the story of "purdah" life in the terms of a caged bird, is a clever bit of inventive writing. ‘Zulm i Bekasān’ is a simple but touching story, showing the injustice and cupidity of men. ‘Do Shāhzāda’ is a delightful tale based on history. It is the story of the two daughters of Prince Shuja, who, because of their father's opposition to Aurangzeb, had lost all their wealth and were living in a small hut on the edge of a forest. Their only friend was a half-witted but extremely jolly boy who did all their work and kept them amused by his silly pranks. The younger of the two princesses was particularly fond of 'Alīa and he specially endeavoured to keep her happy. After a few weeks, however, the local "Navāb" came to know of the princesses' stay in his territory and sent for them. They said good-bye to 'Alīa with regret; the little princess gave him a ring to remember her by.

They were received with great ceremony at the "Navāb's" palace and presented to the "Navāb" himself. The "Navāb"