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the writers of distinction in this strain. Then there are those who lay the stress on character and are, moreover, definitely socialistic in their attitude. Their works foreshadow the revolution that is slowly gaining momentum and is an expression of the tendencies and complications of modern life. They put forward an entirely new set of values and take up an entirely different attitude as regards human conduct and human suffering. Up till now, submission, patience and endurance had been extolled. The slogan of the “Moderns” is revolt and defiance. Prem Chand, Hasan Nizami and Rashid ul Khairi had all shed tears over the fact of the oppressed peasantry, the hard-worked labourer, and the woman deprived of her rights. But they sought by their stories to stir up the pity of their overlords. Rashida Zafar, ‘Ali Sardar Jafri, Hayatullah Ansari and Ahmad ‘Ali aim at rousing the indignation of the oppressed by making them realize the degradation and indignity of their position so that they may strike out against it.

The plots and situations which these authors use have been used several times before, but they present them from an entirely different point of view. ‘Aurat’ in ‘Aurat aur dusre afsane’ is a story about a common enough occurrence, namely a husband contemplating a second marriage on the ground that his wife is childless. The fiction writers of the last four decades have condemned and criticized this cupidity of man. But none of them had the smouldering indignation that is present in Rashida Zafar’s indictment of it, nor had anyone yet succeeded in showing how contemptible were such men as she has. So far authors had been content to show just this one trait in the man’s character, but Rashida Zafar has shown the entire man in his grossness. To present a character is far more difficult in a short-story than in a novel, for one is not allowed to be expansive and yet has to make the “characters” alive and convincing. Rashida Zafar has made Sagir Fatima and Maulvi Sadiq extremely convincing without any undue expansion. The story is written in dramatic form, but is quite definitely not meant for the stage; this form has been used to give it greater force, as it certainly does.

The change in Fatima’s attitude is gradually worked up to a crisis. ‘Aurat’s influence is certainly the decisive factor along with the knowledge that her nominal fault, namely the inability to produce live children, is due to her husband. This like Nora’s discovery of the worthlessness of Helger’s character in the ‘Doll’s House’ turns the scales. Fatima’s husband, like all bullies, the moment he is offered resistance comes off his high horse. ‘Aurat’ is like a subtly conceived impressionistic picture, it suggests endless vistas of thoughts, and its restrained, indignantly jerked out lines put forward a woman’s pitiful condition better than all the elaborately sorrowful tales that have been written so far.

The cause of the poor has been championed in novels and short-stories from the time they appeared in the Urdu language. But they were treated with an air of fatal fateful acceptance. The case of a widow’s son, the only hope and ray of light in her life, dying because there was no money to procure treatment, is bound to be of very frequent occurrence amongst a nation whose average income is less than an anna a day, and it has been as frequently dealt with in fiction.

But in Rashida Zafar’s treatment of the same story there is a fire and a defiance that were not found in the stories that were written on the same theme before. Durghi in it is not shown as submissive like the mothers in earlier short-stories; every fibre of her being revolts against the injustice of fate, against the whole social fabric, against the so-called religious system which also differentiates between the rich and the poor; and in this difference of attitude lies the difference between the new and the older school of writers.

Rashida Zafar’s other stories in the collection are also extremely well written. ‘Red koh safar’ is ironically humorous, it aims at showing to what extent the canker of communal discord has spread and withal how superficial and definitely
engineered is the difference. The free fight between the Hindu and the Muslim women in the ladies’ compartment is an excellent piece of satiric description. The scene can be visualised, it is so detailed and vividly described. In imagination one almost ducks one’s head to avoid getting an undeserved blow, so very real does the scene become.

‘Soda’ is a bitter attack on a society that can reduce its women to a state of degradation in comparison with which even a bitch has a greater freedom. ‘Safrak’ and ‘Pan’ are also scathingly revealing commentaries on the hollowness of society’s claims, the sham and hypocrisy that go by the name of religion.

‘Ali Sardar Ja’fri’s collection of “fasānas” entitled ‘Manzil’ is, if possible, even more revolutionary in tone than Rashida Zafar’s “afsānas” in ‘Aurat aur dīrār afsāne’. Rashida Zafar dared not directly attack British Imperialism or touch the burning question of colour prejudice. ‘Ali Sardar Ja’fri’s “fasānas” ‘Manzil’ and ‘Sipāhi kī maut’ make these his target. ‘Sipāhi kī maut’ is a bitter indictment of colour prejudice. It is a highly improbable, if not altogether impossible, story; but exaggeration in art is permissible if it drives the point home, and it is with this object that Ja’fri chooses an almost incredible incident. An Indian soldier is deliberately given an overdose and killed so as to make room in an overcrowded ward for a European. The irony of it is that the Indian soldier has been wounded fighting the Englishmen’s battle, but even this is not sufficient to overcome the colour bar and he must make way for an English soldier. The chance of the survival of the English soldier is very meagre in comparison with the chances of life of the Indian soldier, but that does not matter, he happens to be of the ruling race and must therefore be given every chance, and the man who had come one thousand and two hundred miles from home to fight the battle of an alien race must be killed off like a fly. Thus is loyalty rewarded!

‘Sipāhi kī maut’ is written in that exaggeratingly cynical vein of the post-War dramas such as ‘Post-mortem’, and ‘Within the Gates’, ‘Journey’s End’, and others. They leave a bad taste in the mouth, and are extremely depressing, but are significant as they indicate that all is not well with the age in which its youth is disillusioned so bitterly and so early. ‘Manzil’, the “fasāna” that gives its title to the volume, is a skit on the Indian officials of the British Indian Government. Their implicit obedience, their blindfold loyalty and devotion to what they consider their duty is the subject of bitter attack in ‘Manzil’. Of course it is one-sided and unjust. But it is meant as an attack on and not a fair summing up of the position of the officials. To those on the other side such compatriots of theirs no doubt appear to be extremely contemptible as they are helping an alien Government in the forging of the chains that keep them in bondage. They cannot see that in their putting aside their personal feelings and serving the cause they consider justified, there is something fine also. They cannot see this, and cannot be expected to see this. Such “fasānas” as ‘Manzil’ are extremely suggestive of the conditions prevailing, for only when tendencies become crystallised do they find their expression in literature.

The other “fasānas” in this collection are ‘Bāra āne’, ‘Pāp’, ‘Masjid ke zer i sīya’ and ‘Adamzād’. Each of these shows in utter nakedness some aspect of the social system that cries out to be remedied. The degradation of poverty, the depth it forces people to sink to, the corrosion it produces in their soul, are laid bare in ‘Bāra āne’ and ‘Masjid ke zer i sīya’. ‘Pāp’ and ‘Adamzād’ show the one-sidedness and injustice of a man-made society where a woman pays the supreme penalty for her weakness while the man goes free.

Ḥayāṭullāh Anṣārī’s ‘Anokhī muṣṣabat’ has “fasānas” in the same revolutionary vein, but a thin veneer of humour makes them less bitter than the “fasānas” in ‘Manzil’ and ‘Aurat’.
maid by the housekeeper, who in her turn finding it uneat- able gave it to a fakir. The fakir threw it away in the road. It was gathered up by a labourer who had been out of work. It brought to his starving family the satisfaction of a full meal.

"Ḍhārī ser āṭā"! When had they had so much āṭā for a single meal? The occasion must be celebrated. An anna-worth of oil is brought and a frying pan borrowed from the neighbour and "pūris" are made. The children wait with eager eyes round the "cūlā", they can scarcely wait, the parents themselves are as eager as the children. The scene is painted so sympathetically; it brings out the emptiness and the poverty of a labourer's life so poignantly.

"Adā yā qaẓā" is perhaps the best story of the collection. For its understanding and rendering of character, for its delicate nuances and implications, it stands out. The whole story is told and the reader cannot gather what the underlying idea is; it is not even expressed in so many words at the end, but on concluding it, the meaning of the title becomes clear and that is the meaning of the story. "Adā yā qaẓā"—did the "Haḳim" miss the prayer, or because he missed it as he was busied in saving the life of a man, should it be considered as performed? But the fact that the author is leading up to this conclusion is not guessed in the reading of the story; it becomes apparent only on one's finishing it. "Bhare bāsār mā" is merely satirical and humorous. It is this incorporating of humour which makes Ḥayāṭullāh Anṣārī's work less bitter.

Ahmad 'Āli was one of the authors of 'Angāre', the collection of short-stories that were proscribed by Government for their extremely revolutionary ideas and immorality of tone, though they were regarded by some critics as having great literary merits. The other authors of 'Angāre' were Sājjād Žāhir and Rashīdā Žafar, each of whom has since published a separate volume of work, but the title of Ahmad 'Āli's alone is reminiscent of 'Angāre' as it is called 'Sho'le'.
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Alīmad 'Alī's stories are in the same vein as that of the other writers of this group. They are socialistic in their philosophy, bitter, cynical and a good deal more frank than authors in Urdu have yet dared to be. But in spite of this the stories in ' Sho'le ' are not as fiery as the title would warrant.

'Tasūr ke do rukh ', 'Gulāmī ', ' Nauroz kī rāt ', are much less bitter than Rashida Zafar's 'Aurat ', 'Soda ', 'Pun ', or Sardār Ja'frī's 'Masjid ke zer i sīya', 'Pāp ', 'Bāra āne ', etc.

'Mazādūr ' is the most bitter of his stories. To lead us to realise the implications of those things which we have been taking for granted is the object of these writers. These stories show what the labourer feels, they put his point of view. In 'Mazādūr ' we are shown the thoughts that pass through the mind of a "mazādūr " as he works overtime, hungry and under fear of dismissal; how these people are bullied and how involved are the forces that tyrannise over the unfortunate creatures. The greatness of these younger writers is that they do not waste words, they do not go in for lengthy discussions, but can suggest all that they mean to with one significant word or phrase.

The "mazādūr " is working overtime; it is seven o'clock, he is hungry and tired, the wire keeps on getting knotted as he tries to fix it. The "jama'ādar " comes along after a few curses, and wants to know why he is so long about it. The "jama'ādar " has just given him an increase not because he is good at his job but because he works out of hours for him; just this much is said, but it brings the point before the mind that these poor devils get no chance. They have not to serve one but several masters, each of whom is merciless in his demand from him, and the offending of any of these means unemployment or a fine. It is this thought that makes the "mazādūr " shudder, for he thinks:

The indifference and callousness with which even the death of the poor is treated by the rich is shown in this as well. There was a little commotion, a little curiosity, but when it was realised that it was only a "mazādūr " everyone went back.

This might be an exaggerated picture, but it is not far from the truth. Life is valued in the present state of society owing to its worth in sterling and the eagerness to save it is in proportion to what it will bring in terms of pounds, shillings and pence. Even the gratitude of the rich is golden, while a poor man's
thanks are, to quote Shakespeare, his only coin by which he can pay his friends and as valueless as the money of the country whose credit is lost.

The other thing which is common to all the writers of this group is their attitude towards sex. They, like the post-War writers in English, are extremely frank in their discussion of it and regard it of crucial importance in life.

'Shādī', 'Us ke bagair', 'Motor laivy kā safar', 'Chapan-khaat', 'Us ke tuhfe' are studies of sexual impulse.

(ii) The Other Modern Writers

Besides the young writers with socialistic tendencies and the imitators of Prem Chand there is a group whose style of writing and subject matter are different from those of the two schools. For want of a better term they can be called writers of love stories, as the predominant theme of their stories is love. They take their characters mainly from the petit bourgeois, though sometimes they allow themselves to go to the villages for their material. Their stories mirror the state of a society in transition and their plots rise out of the complications that are to be found in such a society.

Most of M. Aslam's stories—'Tafṣīr i Ḥayāt', 'Kāravān i Ḥayāt' and 'Gunāh kī rāṭe'—are illustrations of the unstable condition of a society where neither the old law prevails nor the new. 'Ābid 'Ali's 'fasānas' in 'Ṭilismāt' and 'Ḥijāb i Zindaqā' are less consciously didactic, but show the same state of things. If taken as a whole, the work of these authors ranks much below that of the young socialists or of the imitators of Prem Chand. They do not have the sincerity, simplicity and high quality of imagination which are to be found in the former. Neither does the characterisation show the same excellence. There is an extreme monotony in the characters of the heroines of the twelve 'fasānas' of 'Gunāh kī rāṭe'. Indeed it is difficult to realise that it is not the same person each time. In their power of suggestiveness and in their capacity to gain the readers' sympathy also they are much inferior, taken as a whole; that is, now and then there is a 'fasāna' that stands out by its quality of imaginativeness and its general excellence, like 'Zūd Pashemān', in the collection entitled 'Tafṣīr i Ḥayāt'; its plot is original, the characterisation good, but the best and the most touching theme in the story is the love of the old man for the little child. The most poignant passage of the story is the dialogue between the two.

The things that spoil the most tragic scenes in Urdu novels and short-stories are want of restraint and over-elongation. This pitfall has been avoided in this case. The 'fasānas' in 'Gunāh kī rāṭe' are extremely poor, the plot and 'characters' show a singular lack of originality; the object of these stories is to show the dangers of the undue freedom that is now being given to women and especially young girls. This freedom, coupled with a lack of religious education or any sort of training of character, is bound to produce extremely regrettable consequences. 'Gunāh kī rāṭe' is an illustration of such consequences. It does not make pleasant reading.

Each of these stories is told in the first person, and so alike are the various heroines that it is difficult to remember that they are not one and the same person. Their values, their reactions, their weaknesses of character are identical.

'Ābid 'Ali's 'fasānas' in 'Ṭilismāt' are as uneven in quality as M. Aslam's in 'Tafṣīr i Ḥayāt'. His object is not to condemn the undue freedom of women, but rather to chafe against the restrictions that still come between them and the living an entirely free life. But the picture they both draw is the same though from a different point of view, because the old restrictions and values are no longer held by the girl of to-day. Such incidents as are described in 'Shab Nigūristān', 'Bandān' or 'Bahār' or 'Dag i rāṭamān' can take place. But under the influence of the new school of thought the
modern Indian woman has ceased to be as modest and virtuous as she used to be, yet it is not possible for her to travel in the “Primrose Path of Sin” without any hindrance, and so very often the romances are nipped in the bud as in ‘Dāy i nātāmām’; or remain only a memory as in ‘Shāb Nīqāristān’; and this is what ‘Ābid ‘Ali condemns, that is, the restrictions in the path of romance, though his condemnation is implicit and less obvious than that of M. Aslam’s. ‘Ābid ‘Ali’s style lacks the simplicity and sureness of touch that is to be found in Qāsmi or ʿUsainī. He over-elaborates and cannot succeed in transmitting his vision. His subject is lost in a plethora of words. In “fasānas” such as ‘Shabab i tāza’ it is difficult to understand what he wants to convey.

‘Shabab i tāza’ is, however, in this respect the worst of ‘Ābid ‘Ali’s stories. In ‘Dāy i nātāmām’ a single impression, namely, how soon the fires and dreams of youth die out and fade away and how even a chance reminder of them later in life brings only regret, is conveyed admirably.

‘Khojūt i rangī’ is perhaps the best story in ‘Tālismāt’. This is how the “President of the Mortals” plays with His creatures. More romances are shattered by chance and misunderstanding than anything else. Kalim, a soldier, leaves his fiancée, Nikhat, to go to the war. He does not say farewell to her before he goes for he cannot trust himself to do his duty if she tells him not to. Two years later he comes back, and having sent word that he was returning, goes to see her. He finds her sitting with a young man where he had seen her last. She looked very radiant and the man was saying something softly in her ear. Kalim thinks she has forgotten him and comes away without seeing her.

Nikhat writes to her friend, Akhtar, a letter and tells her the tale of her love. She is not aware that her lover ever came. She had gone out into the garden and waited where she had last seen him. She was radiantly happy because he was coming; her cousin who had just returned from the war was with her. This was the young man Kalim had seen and thought to be his successor. The ill-starred lovers would never know that they had each broken the other’s heart unwittingly. The story has gained in effectiveness from being written in the form of two letters and from its brevity and restraint.

‘Javāni kī muḥabbat’, ‘Musār’, ‘Muḥabbat kī ek shām’, ‘Moṭi Kiran Kapūr’, all have imaginativeness and originality. The plot of ‘Moṭi Kiran Kapūr’ is very ingenious and the dénouement entirely unexpected.

A young man gets into a crowded compartment of a railway train in which some young students are discussing the merits of short-stories and condemning the stories in ‘Alf Laila’ because of their being all improbabilities. The young man joins in and tells them a story which, for strangeness, beats even the tales of ‘Alf Laila’. He swears it happened to him in Egypt and shows them the gold ring which the Princess he rescued from an evil crisis had given him. Everyone is very impressed.

He alights at Bhopal and another person gets in who seems to be an old acquaintance of the young man, for they greet each other before the latter gets out of the train. Those of the passengers who did not alight, immediately begin discussing the strange adventure the young man had told them. On hearing this the man who had got in expressed great surprise, for he stated he was positive that the youngster had never been to Egypt.

It is difficult to decide under what category to discuss the short-stories of Khāja ‘Abd ul Gaffār, Nyāz Fatehpūri, Ḥafiz Jálandhari and Ḥijāb Ismā’īl. Khāja ‘Abd ul Gaffār and Ḥafiz Jálandhari have each compiled only one volume, and the stories in each case are extremely varied in their subject matter and tone. Several of the “fasānas” in Khāja ‘Abd ul Gaffār’s volume entitled ‘Tīn paise kī Chokri’, are free translations from English and Bengali, e.g. ‘Qamīs’, ‘Ghurā’, ‘Fareb’ and others. The plots and “char-
acters” of some are borrowed from history, as in ‘Devīśā kā 
śadga’ and ‘Tīn paissa kī Chokhī’. Some are in socialistic vein,
as ‘Dipty sāhib kā kuttā’, and others mystical. Ḥaftī’s seven 
“fusāns”, called ‘Haft Paikar’, are also quite different from 
one another, and as this is the sum-total of his production in 
this particular line, it is difficult to decide to which school of 
short-story writers he most approximates. In ‘Fasāna dar 
fusāna’ the influence of Prem Chand is apparent, while ‘Soheī 
kī rāt’ is strangely reminiscent of ‘Abd ul Majīd Sālik’s ‘Khāb i 
parishāg’. ‘Hoshyār diwānā’ is an extremely good 
psychological study and ‘Hafta i tāza’ is the type of story that was 
popular in the intermediate period of the development of 
short-stories in Urdu. ‘Khud-kushī’ can be said to be in the 
style of Rāshid ul Khairī though it is much more closely knit 
and effectively told than are his over-elaborate stories. 
Hijāb Ismā’īl has a definitely distinctive style of her own and 
her stories of romantic adventures are in a class by themselves, 
as are the psycho-analytical studies of Nyāz Fatahpūrī.

‘Tīn paissa kī Chokhī’, the story that gives its name to 
the collection of Khāja ‘Abd ul Gafrā, is based on Roman 
history. Such instances of studied cruelty and licentiousness 
had become very common in the last days of the Roman 
Empire. This short-story of Khāja ‘Abd ul Gafrā is, with 
general consent, regarded as a great thing amongst Urdu 
short-stories. It is difficult to find out why the story is written 
in the same style as his novels ‘Lailā ke Khudā’ and ‘Majmūn 
ki Diary’, that is to say, in a style that conveys the fact that 
the author is deliberately trying to produce an effect, and 
because of this conscious deliberation is failing to do so. 
There is very little substance under the rhetoric of words. ‘Tīn paissa kī Chokhī’ is perhaps intended to carry a sense of the extreme 
irony of fate and a feeling of nausea at the heartlessness of 
Theodore, the erstwhile chorus girl who becomes Queen. 
But this feeling is not roused. The reader feels something 
lacking in the story and does not respond.

‘Dipty sāhib kā kuttā’ is the best story of the collection. 
It is written with a seemingly unconscious irony which makes 
the point go home. The Dūroga, a typical bully, is drawn so 
convincingly that he remains fixed in the mind. He is insuffer-
ably insolent towards the simple villagers as he goes his daily 
rounds, bullying and making uncalled for rude remarks. 
His dignity is touched if a dog barks at him. Absurd as it may 
seem, the idea of their own importance that little tin-gods 
such as the Dūroga get is really incredible. He has the poor 
dog thoroughly beaten, and while it is still crying in pain 
somebody mentions that it might be the Deputy Sahib’s dog; 
and lo and behold, the whole tone changes! The Dūroga is 
indignant that these people did not tell him of this before. 
The dog immediately becomes the nicest of animals and the 
Dūroga himself will take it to the Deputy Sahib’s house. 

’Svātgrasana’ has another such tin-god for its character. 
It subtly ridicules the pompousness and self-importance of 
petty officials. The stupidity and pomposity of the Dūroga 
are both exaggerated, but exaggeration is always permitted, 
especially if it helps in creating the effect that is desired by the 
author; here the effect desired was to show how inefficient 
and stupid were those officials who made such a brave show of 
their dignity and intelligence. By exaggeration this effect is 
achieved. ‘Natiṣa burā hai’ is an amusing sketch of a village 
schoolmaster whose character is made extremely convincing 
and real. The ponderous, simple-hearted schoolmaster, whose 
pet phrase of admonition was “natiṣa burā hai”, used it on 
every occasion that his pupils failed to comply with his 
orders. In spite of his unprepossessing exterior, he seemed 
to have been very susceptible and landed himself in matri-
mony. A change came over him after this and he made pathetic 
atttempts at polishing himself up. And yet his wife was not 
pleased, and soon left him. This was too much for the Master 
Sahib, who disappeared no one knew where. When 
Ahmad, one of his pupils, married, he is supposed to have seen
him in a dream saying "natiya burā hai"! It is a story in the style of Prem Chand.

The name of Ḥafiz is connected with Epic poetry in recent years and it is not generally known that he wrote excellent short-stories as well. They were written mostly during the time he was editing the new "Makhzan" and they have been collected and published under the title of 'Haft Paskar'. There are seven of them. Intyāż 'Ali Tāj, in his Preface to them, ranks them very high, and they are undoubtedly very well written. In 'Fasīna dār fasīna' the interest is heightened by the manner in which it is told. It also gains much greater plausibility thereby. The story is told by an old woman to the author's wife as an illustration of what a responsibility girls are. The author lies tossing feverishly in his bed while the woman tells the story.

His feelings of distaste for the old hag and his own train of thoughts mingling with the thread of the narrative make it extremely realistic. This story illustrating how undesirable girls are is really an inset in one concerning the subconscious regret in the author's mind that he only had girls, the regret that was responsible for his dislike of the old woman because she expressed a feeling of his which he was ashamed of, but all the regret is for ever laid to rest and the gloom created by the old woman's presence and her tale are chased away by the musical laughter of one of his little girls, and he goes to sleep listening to this sound and gets up cured.

'Hoshyār Dīvāna' is a cleverly done psychological study. The half-clear mind of the insane is analysed in a superb way. The inner workings of a madman's brain, how to himself he appears extremely sane and even cunning and thinks that he is deceiving the world, are shown. And the remarkable thing is that without the story being once shifted from the first person, the fact that the man is insane is conveyed also. The horror and darkness of his mind and soul, the intensity of his passion and hate, the story of his life are all communicated through his own assertions. In 'Khud-kushā' is shown the chaos and tragedy among the lower middle class, the brutality of the step-father, the helplessness of the mother, which result in the children's nerves and life going to pieces.

Nyāz Fatahpūrī is the most consciously psycho-analytical amongst the Urdu writers of fiction. His short-stories and his full-length novels are nothing but studies in psychology. There is little or no plot in them; they aim at depicting the moods or reactions of men and women under certain circumstances or presenting studies in egoism, jealousy, sensuality and other passions. Nyāz often goes to the past for his "characters", but his "fasīnas" are by no means historical. They do not aim at being historical. The past of Nyāz is mythological and imaginary, not one of actual history.

'Kōpād aur Sūk̪hī' is based on the Greek legend of Psyche's love for Cupid. Nyāz has further elaborated the story and made it much more interesting. 'Rūh kā furuhkāryā' is a psychological study aiming at analysing the relationship of love to truth. It is not easy to follow the thought in Nyāz's stories as it is extremely complicated. 'Qurbāngāh i Husn' is a study of a woman's egotism and pride and an illustration of the fact that such a woman can exercise immense fascination and power over men. 'Sati' is probably the only "fasīna" in Nyāz's collection, 'Nigāristān', which can be said to have a plot. The plot is not an original one; a girl giving up her lover to another often occurs in the Urdu short-stories, but it is treated in Nyāz's particular manner.

'Ek mūsawvr', 'Ek shab kā qīmat', 'Apane cānd se', 'Muhābbat kā devo', 'Ek mūsleḥ but-tarāsh', are studies of a single mood, they present just one strain of thought. They show the character under the influence of some one idea, on the verge of some tremendous change in spiritual and moral values. Nyāz is regarded as one of the best short-story writers in Urdu, as the introducer of a new technique and a new mode of approach. 'Nigāristān' and 'Jamālistān'
are described as collections of Nyāz’s best “fasānas”. It seems a misnomer to call them “fasānas” and him a “fasāna”-writer, as most of them are articles, some are studies of moods of one character, and only a few fulfill the requirement of plot.

Majnūn Gorakhpuri, like most modern writers of short-stories in Urdu, has been greatly influenced by English writers. Several of his “fasānas” are translations from English, French, or Russian sources. ‘Hattiya’ is the author’s own acknowledgment written with Hardy’s ‘Tess’ in mind.

Majnūn Gorakhpuri, in his Introduction, says that except for ‘Jashn i ‘Aρūsī’, which is a translation of Byron’s ‘The Bride of Abydos’, and ‘Buskāpā’, which has been borrowed from Tolstoy, and ‘Kulšūm’, the idea for which has been borrowed from the story of ‘Chekāt’, others cannot be regarded as translations as they have such a large element of his own thoughts and observations in them. And it is a fact that in ‘Husain kā anjām’ one would not recognize Tolstoy’s ‘Resurrection’, or in ‘Murād’ and ‘Muḥabbat kā dam i nēpē’ recognize the exact features of any known short-story. Majnūn is indebted to European writers in this much only that more often than not a train of thought which has taken the form of a short-story has been started by reading some masterpiece or other of theirs.

Majnūn has also written “fasānas” that are the entire product of his own imagination, but the fact that some of his best works cannot be regarded as strictly original entitles him to a much lower place than on the intrinsic merits of his “fasānas” he should have. It is of course a debatable point whether this attitude is a correct one or not.

The last few years have seen a tremendous development in Urdu short-stories. Such excellent work is being produced that writers who in the intermediate period of development could have been regarded as extremely good, are now considered mediocre. Kauzār Cāndpūrī, Nasīm Anhōnāvī, Bāqār Malik

Rizvānī, Ḥāmid ‘Alī Khān, and Fażl Ḥasan Quraishi are all eminent writers of the present day; they have written enough for collections to be published of their works. Their stories show ingenuity in plot and construction, but they are in no way intrinsically different from the “fasānas” that every day appear in the numerous magazines, and therefore, interesting as they are and though they make excellent reading, it cannot be said about them that they will be read twenty years hence. As immortality is the test of literature, they cannot be regarded as having any literary merits. It cannot be said about M. Aslam, or Majnūn Gorakhpuri or Nyāz Fatēhpūrī that any of them will be read twenty years hence. Their intrinsic merit does not warrant their being so, but they might be read for their historical interest, as representing the type of “fasānas” that were popular in 1930, and it is on this ground that they have been criticised here in detail.

(iii) Ḥiḥāb Ismāʿīl

Ḥiḥāb Ismāʿīl, now Mrs. Imtīyāz ‘Alī Tārī, made her début in the literary world ten years ago. In this short time she has gained for herself a very definite place in it and is ranked amongst the successful young short-story writers.

Ḥiḥāb Ismāʿīl’s style of writing is entirely different from that of any other contemporary writer. It is a personal and intimate one, and she creates an atmosphere suffused with romance as the background for her stories. All Ḥiḥāb Ismāʿīl’s short-stories are links of a single chain, they are the different incidents and adventures that come the way of the wild, romantic and beautiful Rābī. They are all related in the first person, that is by Rābī herself. The setting has all the voluptuous richness, romance and colour that one associates with Oriental harems. It is also suffused with the luxurious modernity of Fifth Avenue. By blending the two seemingly
contradictory atmospheres Hijab Ismail has succeeded in conveying an impression of an extremely colourful and luxurious existence, but an utterly unreal one.

The tendency among the young novelists and short-story writers in Urdu is more and more towards realism, not only towards realism of the type of Dickens, Galsworthy and Balzac, that is to say, realism tinged with sentimentality, softened by pity or transformed by idealism, but realism of the type of Huxley, D.H. Lawrence and T.S. Eliot, merciless, unvarnished and bitter realism; but amongst these one finds an entirely escapist writer like Hijab Ismail.

Hijab Ismail's stories are romances pure and simple, they do not show life as it is, in its true colours. They take the reader into a dream world, into a land of heart's desire, into an atmosphere of "night and light and half light". Her "characters" are far removed from the cares and worries of the everyday world. They have their sorrows, but even their sorrows are as far removed from reality and as romantic as their joys.

The true effect of Hijab's romances cannot be got by reading just one or two of them. It is by reading a dozen or so of them that the richness and luxuriousness of the background are fully appreciated by the reader.

The romances are supposed to be pages depicting fragments of Ruh's life crammed with fun and adventure. The answer to the question:

"Who is Sylvia, what is she,
That all our swains commend her?"

is that Ruh was first introduced to the literary world in 'Meri nataamam muhabbat'. In this she was described as the granddaughter of a Turkish Princess, who lived in an island of great natural beauty, in a palace which had every luxury that money could buy. Her childhood was as gay as could be, but early in youth she experienced the blasting of her hopes and the first romance that Ruh relates is the story of this young love of hers.

Sir Ja'far, Sir Harley, Doctor Gor, Ruh's school friend Jasai, and her old nurse Zunais, a martinet of a grandmother, are "characters" that repeatedly appear in these magazines. All of these have a romantic halo round them, even the old nurse, Zunais, is extremely picturesque. The romances, though all have the same richness of background, is to say, take place in the romantic world of Ruh, are different in character. Some are tales of her "amours", others relate to the romances of her friends, and yet others are amongst the adventures that come Ruh's way in her wanderings.

Lately Hijab Ismail has more and more turned her attention towards the adventurous type of romances. Her two latest publications, 'Lash aur dusre afsane' and 'Kawnt Ilyas ki maut', contain only this type. The romances with the greatest human appeal were those in which Ruh recalled some escape of her childhood or girlhood. These were told with such vivacity and such a wealth of detail that one could almost see the mischievous faces of Ruh's cousins, of the spoilt Khailid and Muhbub and Jasai.

The fact that on their first appearance in the magazines these romances were taken to be true recollections of Hijab Ismail's own childhood shows how very lifelike she has succeeded in making them. These romances had plenty of humour in them as well. They were in the form of mere recollections, but their vivacity and humour and deft characterisation made them extremely interesting reading. They have just recently been collected and published as 'Tulfe aur dusre shaqatlu afsane'.

'Meri nataamam muhabbat aur dusre afsane' contains accounts of Ruh's "amours". The first is 'Meri nataamam muhabbat'. This is the "fasana" that introduced her to the literary world. In it she is shown as engaged to her worthless
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'Sanobar ke sāke', is the story of a "mallāh" who lived in a hilly tract in some far-away land where Rāhī and Jasūṭi spent one of their holidays. While the old man was rowing them across, they asked him where he lived. He replied:

They beg him to tell them his story and he, after some hesitation, complies. The story is a tragedy of misunderstanding and jealousy. 'Andhī muḥabbat' is another romance in which Rāhī herself is the heroine. In this she meets with an accident and loses her eyesight; she is treated by a young doctor who falls in love with her and she with him and they get married. After the marriage he is successful in operating on her eyes and restoring her sight. She is, on the recovery of her sight, presented to an extremely ugly person and is told that that is Doctor Shaidī, her husband. She is terribly shocked, but her love for him is so strong that she tries to make herself blind again so that her romance may not be shattered. Just as she is opening the cork of a bottle of acid to put in her eyes, someone knocks the bottle out of her hands and a voice she knows very well to be that of Doctor Shaidī tells her not to be a fool; on turning she finds the handsome assistant of the doctor by her side. He is not the assistant but Doctor Shaidī himself. He was trying to test her love.

'Mak̄hūm Būvī' is a most ingenious story about a friend of Rāhī. 'Najīmī kā wazīyat' was told by a strange man at a book-stall. 'Sabā ḍākh' is a story with a most surprising ending. One of Rāhī's exciting adventures, 'Tūlā' o qurūb', is yet another story of her love affairs. The background of this romance is exactly the same as that of 'Merī nālamān muḥabbat'.

'Kawānt Ilyās kā maut' and 'Lāsh aur dāsre afšāne' are stories of a semi-romantic and semi-adventurous kind. They are written in imitation of English and American stories of blood and horror, but even in these Hijāb Ismā'īl continues...
to paint the background in romantic colours. Strange and fairy islands, ruins and haunted castles, the outskirts of African and American deserts, are chosen as scenes for these eerie stories of murder, poisoning and intrigue. The plots in them are extremely well constructed and the ending is always an unexpected and surprising one. In most cases it turns out that the strange happenings that have given rise to such fears are traced to some quite harmless cause. In ‘Shaitān’, the disappearance of food, the upsetting of traps, the snatching away of things and strange shadows, are all the handiwork of a monkey; the shrouded figures are nothing more than beggars who had adopted this means of getting people to grant their demands. In ‘Murde kā ṭīk’, the unearthly cry is caused by the wind rustling through two branches of a palm which have got somehow entwined. The shadowy figure in the dark that wounds Rāḥī turns out to be nothing more than a wild cat. But in some of the stories strange things do take place and she does come across some very strange people, as in ‘Lāsh’, in which Rāḥī has been staying in an old eastern city where she gets frightened by the constant staring of a strange-looking old man on the bridge. He looks at her with eyes that are so tragic and pathetic that it makes her ill every time she meets him. She goes away to the island of Shorak to get away from those staring eyes and there, except for her meeting with a strange artist who shows her a picture of a girl who is exactly like herself, nothing else happens. After some time she returns to the old town and again the same pair of tragic eyes follow her about. She gets a letter begging her to come at a certain time to the bridge. She does not reply to it, but when one day by accident she is that way, she is accosted by the man with the sad eyes who begs her to listen to his story. Rāḥī is so moved to pity on hearing it that after consulting her fiancée, General Hardy, she allows him to come and stay with her. The old man brings with him only one box, it looks like a musical box, and indeed he says it is one. But no one ever hears him play any instrument, though Rāḥī often asks him to do so. Zunāsh one night starts up and says that she has seen Rāḥī’s corpse. Rāḥī ridicules her but her curiosity is roused. She stealthily goes to the room and opens the round wooden box and on lifting the lid seems to be looking at her own corpse. Her strange guest appears at that moment and she faints away. Later in the evening, he tells her a story; it is a strange tale of love and hate. He loved a young girl in Baghdad, who did not care for him and was engaged to another man. On the eve of her wedding, he persuaded her to come for a walk with him and killed her and ran off with her corpse. Ever since he has been wandering about with this corpse; that is his only possession in the world. The intensity of his love made him commit this crime, he says. That was the only way he could possess her. Nine years after this incident he saw Rāḥī and she was the exact image of his beloved; that is why he has been following her and now begs to be allowed to continue adoring her and seeing her. He takes off his disguise and Rāḥī finds that he is none other than the artist at Shorak. General Hardy has found yet another rival!

‘Shāmat i a‘māl’, ‘Murde ne kyā kā’, ‘Kavī Shītās kī maūt’, ‘Muḥabbat yā hiākat’, ‘Nilā lišāja’, ‘Khān kā pul’, ‘Is kā ek hāth kyā huā thā’, are accounts of happenings to Rāḥī in strange and out of the way places. They are tales of unpunished murderers pursuing murdered ones, love crying out from the grave, minds so darkened and tortured that they do not know what strange things they are doing. Hijāb Ismā‘īl is extremely good in conveying atmosphere and these stories produce a truly uncanny feeling. She is equally far from realism. She makes her imaginary background and extraordinary “characters” appear real and carry conviction by describing them in very minute detail and by mentioning their extremely commonplace actions. This always has the effect of creating an atmosphere of reality.
In her style Ḥijāb Ismā’īl is regarded as amongst the first-rate writers of short-stories in Urdu, yet her work is in direct contrast to that of the young socialist writers, and it cannot be considered as good as theirs for though escapist literature has its uses, literature that has a criticism of life and which tries to deal with its complexities and problems is the better and the more enduring. Ḥijāb Ismā’īl’s stories make one forget the realities of existence, but they cannot be forgotten for any length of time. Literature that can help us to face these realities or to understand them is the superior of the two.

Chapter XVII

THE HUMOROUS WRITERS

The foundations of the short-story in Urdu were laid by the humorous sketches of “Avadh Pano”, but in the intermediate period of its development the Urdu short-story became extremely serious in tone. Writers of this period were so deliberately didactic in their aims that humour found no place in their works. The only short-story writer of the period who sometimes allowed himself to write in a lighter vein was Sayyid Sajjād Ḥādīr. ‘Ḥaẓrat i dīl kī Sauvāneh ‘umrī’, ‘Cīre Cīryā kī kahānī’, ‘Mujhe mere dosō se baacāo’ are facetious, if not actually amusing. But the rest, that is to say, ‘Abd ul Majīd Sālik, Sultān Ḥādīr Josh, Aḥnād Shuja’, were all extremely serious in their tone.

The possibility of humour being used as an instrument for the correction of social evils has been realised only by the modern short-story writers, and in recent years stories of great literary merit have been written in a humorous style. The humorous short-story has attained such popularity that serious writers have tried their hand at it, but the well-known names in this line are ‘Āzīm Beg Cūgtāi, Shaukat Thānnavi and Mirzā Farhatullāh Beg.

Sayyid Imtīyāz ‘Ālī Tāj has introduced Caaō Chakkān, whose humorous character and anecdotes furnish the plot for many stories. This has been extremely popular and M. Aslam, Mulla Rumūzī and ‘Āzīm Beg have created “characters” in imitation of Caaō Chakkān.

Humour in modern Urdu literature differs in several aspects from the earlier variety. Humour in “Avadh Pano”, like that of Shakespearean literature, was of a broad and coarse variety, while, like the humour of Pope and Dryden, that