

Throughout the period he is concerned about *Safya* and her husband, and wonders how they are getting on. On his return, he finds them quite happy; but that very evening they have a row and, to his surprise, the maid who has been in the house for some time accuses him of being the cause. "How am I the cause?", he asks indignantly, "I am sick and tired of acting as a go-between". The maid replies:

ماما نے کہا، میں برا مانویا بہلا، تمہاری ہی وجہ سے لڑائی ہوئی۔
وہ جانتے ہیں کہ ہم لڑیں بھڑینگے ماموں ملاپ کرا دینگے،
تو وہ لڑتے ہیں۔ اب مہینہ بھر تم نہ تھے تو ایک دفعہ بھی
لڑائی نہیں ہوئی۔

There is nothing in itself amusing in Mirzā Farḥatullāh Beg's stories, it is the way he tells them that makes them so.

There is no short-story writer with an ironical type of humour. Rashīd Aḥmad Ṣiddīqī is the exponent of this, but he always uses essays as his medium. The most popular form of humorous stories of that kind are those written in imitation of the English. They use the method of the caricaturist and the cartoonist and by exaggeration and enlarging of defects aim at reforming them or at least at making the owner aware of them.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FUTURE OF THE SHORT-STORY AND THE NOVEL COMPARED

To prophesy is always risky. There is the likelihood of unforeseen developments which might alter what now appears to be the only likely course. But one can be sure of not making a mistake in predicting a brilliant future for the novel and short-story in the Urdu language, for they have without any doubt chances of great success. It is not yet eighty years since the first Urdu novel, that is, '*Fasāna e Azād*', made its appearance in the language, and since then, hundreds of novels have appeared. Though there have been very few of literary merit, yet every type has made its appearance in Urdu; the domestic novel, the historical, the psychological, the novel with a purpose, novels without plots, romantic novels, novels of adventure, detective novels, all are to be found.

It is true that perfection is not reached in each of these types, and one cannot emphatically declare that more than half-a-dozen of the novels written within the last eighty years will be read fifty years hence for the sake of pleasure and not for their historical interest as landmarks in the development of the Urdu novel. But still, '*Mirāt ul 'Arūs*', '*Taubat un Naṣūh*', '*Gūdar kā Lāl*', '*Umrāo Jān*', '*Shaukat Arā Begam*' and '*Landan kī ek Rāt*' are works that can be put beside the best in any language, and to have produced even half-a-dozen novels of such excellence and merit as these is not a mean achievement for a language that is not more than two hundred years old, and which has been denied the status of being the medium of instruction and is consequently not known by a large number of educated people in its own country.

Though a latecomer the novel has ousted all the earlier

favourites from their cherished positions. Poetry, especially the "gazal", the composing and reciting of which was the favourite pastime of the intellectuals, has been superseded by the writing and reading of novels and "afsānas".

The "afsāna", a still later arrival, is even more securely established, and its achievements have been even more remarkable. Several excellent collections of short-stories have come out in the last few years and there has been a far greater number of moderately good short-stories than of moderately good novels. The average level of excellence in short-stories is much higher than in novels. Short-stories have been written by a greater number of people than novels.

These factors might lead one to think that the short-story has a more promising future than the novel. The former also has the advantage of getting published immediately it is written, a factor which has been largely responsible for its greater popularity. The importance of this factor is not fully realised. Economic conditions govern the production of literature to an extent that is not fully realised. For a young author to get his book published is a difficult enough task in European countries, it is almost an impossibility in India. Whereas the writer of short-stories has not to bother about their publication; they get published in various magazines; and when he has achieved popularity through the pages of various periodicals, it becomes a much easier task for him to get a publisher to agree to publish a collection of his works.

But as against these advantages of the short-story the novel possesses several intrinsic merits. The short-story can never render more than a phase or an incident, it cannot portray the history of a life-time or even of generations as the novel does. Its scope is very limited and its field narrow. It can but barely touch on a subject, never discuss it to the full. As in the "afsāna" of the socialist writers, only one aspect of a question can be put before their readers. It is a most

illuminating and significant incident that is chosen by the writer of the short-story, but even so, one solitary incident, however significant, cannot convey all the implications of the question. The coming years will bring so much that will need explaining, analysing and discussing. The few pages of the short-story will not be enough for it. Novels will have to be the means.

The "characters" in a short-story can never become as real as those in a novel. No short-story has been able to give to the world Mr. Pickwick, David Copperfield, Maggie Tulliver, Elizabeth Bennett, Sydney Carton and the host of other "characters" of fiction whom we know and love as friends. In its short life of eighty years, the Urdu novel has given to literature such "characters" as *Aşgarī* and *Akbarī*, *Mahmūda* and *Husn Arā*, *Na'im*, *Nasīm* and *Salīm*, *Naṣūh*, *Fahmīda* and *Na'īma*, the charming personality of *Umrāo Jān*, the madcap *Sarvarī* and the inimitable *Khojī* and *Māmā 'Azmat*. No "character" of a short-story can become, as these "characters" from the novels have become, a life-long friend and a household word.

The "characters" of a short-story appear for a fleeting moment or two; they do not leave a definite impression individually but remain in the mind as a part of the general impression the story has produced. The personal appeal of "characters" is such a strong attraction that the novel will always yield a greater satisfaction than the short-story.

There is still another factor in favour of the novel, and that is that it can hold the interest consecutively for a much longer period than a collection of short-stories. A short-story can only evoke a momentary interest, and even if one reads a collection of them together it is not possible to forget oneself in them as in a full-length novel. For each of the stories presents a new set of "characters" and enough is not shown of these to make the reader become interested in them, and even if, as in some cases, the "characters" of a short-story do have the power to awaken the interest of the reader, the

span of that interest is necessarily so short that it fails to give the same satisfaction.

Honours are so divided between the short-story and the novel that it is difficult to decide which in future will hold the foremost place. There is no doubt, however, that the novel and the short-story will be the most popular forms of literary composition of the future. They are suited to the mood and the temperament of the present day and are most fitted to express its tendencies and problems.

The Urdu novel and the short-story have a long way to go yet. While it is possible to find short-stories and novels that are extremely well written, the general level of excellence is much lower than in other modern languages. Those written in Urdu as yet lack substance, there is very little thought to be found in them. Urdu novels cannot yet show such penetrating character studies as are to be found in the works of George Eliot, Meredith, Dostoievsky or Tolstoy. There have been no historical novels in Urdu of the type composed by Dumas, Scott, or Victor Hugo. The Mutiny was as significant and as far-reaching for India in its effect as the French Revolution for Europe, but except for the "*fasānas*" of Ḥasan Nizāmi no other echo of it is found in the literature.

The greatest number of novels in Urdu are didactic in their purpose, but even these lack the breadth and depth in the works of Dickens. The domestic novels have a Jane Austen in Nazir Ahmad, but his is a solitary example. The mental conflict and the emotional chaos attendant upon the cataclysmic changes was a subject that provided great scope for the novelist, but while there have been a good deal of condemnation and criticism of the changes, there has been hardly any attempt at understanding the causes that led to these changes and the influences that were responsible for them, nor has the spiritual state of the younger generations been dealt with as in the novels of Huxley, D. H. Lawrence and other modern English novelists.

There has been very little criticism and assessment of the novel and the short-story. In the last few years there has been occasionally an article or two in the pages of "*Sāqī*" or "*Humāyūn*" on Sarshār, Sharar, Nazir Ahmad or Rāshid ul Khairi, and on the purport of short-stories. Nothing at all has been written about the women writers or the moderns. However, even this is a sufficient indication of the fact that the novel and the short-story are now recognised and accepted as art forms.

Having a by no means negligible achievement to its credit and with all the factors in favour of further developments, the Urdu novel and short-story, it can be safely predicted, are sure of a brilliant future and of world-wide recognition.

Since this Thesis was completed in 1939, several writers have come to the fore and have done some excellent work in enriching the Urdu literature. ISMAT CHUGHTAI is definitely now the best Short Story Writer in Urdu. Her work shows great originality, her delineation of character is excellent, and her style terse and vigorous. Her unconventional attitude and her merciless exposure of shams and hypocrisies have created a stir in literary circles. RAJENDRANATHI BEDI, UPENDRANATH ISHK, and KISHENCHANDER and several other writers have made their appearance in these five years. Their work shows great promise, and I regret I could not include them in my Thesis.

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