

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

#### A SHORT HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE NOVEL

##### (i) *The First Appearance of the Novel*

The Novel appears very late in the world of literature, long after the Epic and the Drama, the Lyric, and the Essay had attained perfection, yet it enjoys a greater popularity and is more widely read than any of these for it satisfies the inborn love of man for hearing a story. The novel in its present form is not more than two hundred years old. Richardson's *Pamela*, which was published as late as 1742, is by unanimous opinion considered the first novel. Yet the foundation of the novel goes back into the very beginning of Man's consciousness. Its seeds are to be found in the myths and legends of pre-historic times. They were succeeded by the ballad, which gave place to romance, which in its turn yielded to the novel. This outline applies in the case of every literature of the world. The same cycle of development is followed in each case.

The novel has this in common with the romantic tales of the Middle Ages that its primary object is also to tell a story, but this is the only thing common to the two. For the rest, the novel of to-day is a very different thing from the romances of earlier times. The first and most important difference is in the material used. Novels are made of the ordinary stuff of life, they are commentaries on the contemporary life, a portrayal of the manners and men of the present date. Their events are such as happened, or can happen to anyone, while romance dealt with things impossible and adventures, and placed its people in an imaginary world and made them perform heroic and

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unlikely deeds. The supernatural always intermingled with the natural destroying every vestige of likelihood.

In older romances little or no attention was paid to "character". In the modern novel it is "character" that is everything. It is in the portrayal of men and women and in the delineation of their thoughts and motives that a novelist's greatness is shown, and it is the study of "character" that makes novels so interesting. The actions are important only as an expression of "character" or as showing the reaction of "character" to them. The understanding and exposing the inner springs of human conduct are what is expected of a novelist. Nothing of the kind was demanded from the romantic writer.

Romances were told in narrative style. They had no definite form like the novel. A well-constructed novel follows, or should follow, the same line in development of plot as the drama, that is the first few chapters should place the "characters" before the reader and explain the situation in which they are shown. Soon it should become apparent that a conflict is likely to ensue if they ever happen to cross each other's path. The bulk of the book would then be devoted to gathering the elements of conflict and the crisis would be reached somewhere in the book corresponding to the third act of a play. If it is to be a tragedy, the crisis should be the failure of the hero or heroine, if a comedy, his or her triumph. The end of the book as of the play would be devoted to the final gathering of threads and smoothing out the tangle. The conflict need not be between the most important "character" in the book and another person, but with circumstances, ideals, situations, anything for that matter as long as it is antagonistic to the smooth running of the protagonist's character. Hence novel writing involves a knowledge of plot-construction, while that of romance needed only a gift of flowing narrative. The novel mirrors and expounds the tendency of the age that gave it birth, that is the eighteenth century,

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which was an essentially realistic and social age. People had begun to get interested not only in what unknown men did in unknown times but what contemporary people did in their daily life. The novel satisfied that growing interest in contemporary affairs and in society.

The same attitude towards life appeared in India towards the nineteenth century as the result of contact with the West, and consequently the novel also made its appearance.

### (ii) *The Development of the Novel*

The novel came into being as the result of a more realistic attitude towards life and was from its inception more democratic in its tone, for it dealt with ordinary people as opposed to romance which concerned itself only with the fortunes of the great. It also brought with it an interest in personality or "character" as opposed to actions. In other words, the novel was subjective while the romance had been objective in its attitude.

With the passing of the years the breadth and scope of the novel has grown tremendously. The belief that literature should represent life has been growing stronger and the novel, which came into being as the result of this attitude, has been the one to be most profoundly influenced by it. Realism has taken on far wider implications than when it was applied to Jane Austen's novel. In her work, realism meant an accurate and detailed description, a faithful rendering of the foibles of society. It became in Dickens the presenting of social evils. Thackeray's realism, though of the same kind as Jane Austen's, was much more stinging; while in connection with Hardy's work, realism means something eternal and frightening; and one is almost unable to face the realism of T. S. Eliot or Huxley.

The novel, democratic from the first, has tended to become more and more so. Richardson had realised that even the

humblest type could be made interesting if its joys and sorrows were treated sympathetically. Novelists of the present day are enthusiastic believers in this. They make the life of the humble a theme of their story, their interest lies with the outcast of society, the under-dog in the social struggle, the down-trodden in the world. It has become a fashion to deal with these at one time neglected strata of society.

But most of all has the novel developed in the conception and presentation of "character". The novel had at once laid stress on personality instead of on action and had taken the attitude that action is only a result of "character" and consequently of secondary importance. This attitude has grown to such an extent that in Hardy or Meredith it is "character" that is fate, "character" the determining factor, "character" the motif spring of actions. The modern novelists do not concern themselves with what a "character" did but why he did it.

Alongside this growing importance of "character" has come the realisation that the division of all mankind into groups of the good and the bad was fallacious. Human nature is much more complex than that, and the impulses of the human heart are strangely contradictory and mixed.

These elements which were found in the novel from the first have attained great heights during the last two hundred years. Richardson was not aware when he wrote *Pamela* that he had created a new form and that his ponderous and sentimental stories would bring to life such masterly studies in psychology as *The Idiot* or *The Brothers Karamazov*, that the creation of *Pamela* would be followed by the creation of such personalities as *Emma Bovary*, *Anna Karenina*, *Tess* and *Hester Prynne*, and that the novel would be able to reveal the innermost thoughts of the mind, and the deepest recesses of the soul and the subconscious impulses of nature.

The novel was born in England and some of the greatest exponents of the possibilities of the novel have been English. The perfect miniature paintings of Jane Austen have as yet

not found a peer; Fielding, Smollet and Sterne, Scott, Dickens and Thackeray, George Eliot, Emily Bronte, Meredith and Hardy, Wells, Arnold Bennett and Galsworthy—they make a fine array, and in recent years there have been D. H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. Every type of humanity is represented in the gallery of "characters" that the genius of these novelists has created. Thackeray and Jane Austen have held up the mirror to society. Dickens, Bennett and Wells have shown the middle classes in their smugness and morality. Scott has given unforgettable pictures of the past. Fielding, Smollet and Sterne have provided the language with the best examples of the *picaresque* novel. George Eliot began the psychological novel, Hardy and Meredith have made it their special *forte*. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure*, *The Return of the Native* have the greatness and austerity of a Greek tragedy. Meredith's *Sir Willoughby* is a study in egoism that cannot be surpassed and *Wuthering Heights* is a unique study of passion.

It is an achievement to be proud of, but though born in England, the novel has attained its greatest heights on the Continent. Beside Balzac Dickens appears lacking in substance. There is not such a study of woman's soul as *Madame Bovary*. Scott's historical novels can be placed beside Dumas', but there is no *Lady with the Camelias* amongst them. D. H. Lawrence has analysed the sub-conscious, but not as Marcel Proust.

But it is in Russia that the novel has really achieved perfection. E. M. Forster declares that "no English novelist is as great as Tolstoy, that is to say, has given so complete a picture of a man's life both on its domestic and its heroic side. No English novelist has explored man's soul as deeply as Dostoevsky"; and that even works such as *Jane Eyre*, *The Heart of Midlothian*, *Richard Feverel* and *Cranford* appear as little mansions against the colonnades of *War and Peace*, or the vaults of *The Brothers Karamazov*.

(iii) *The Structure of the Novel*

The plot, "characters," style of writing and the point of view or the philosophy of the author, are component parts of a novel. The division is of course arbitrary, they do not exist in separate compartments but are interspersed with each other and altogether go to make a novel good or bad.

The plot is nothing but incidents with a causal connection and a logical sequence between them. The incidents must be such as to be interesting to the average reader, and they must have the power of evoking and holding interest.

There must be originality as well as plausibility in the incidents chosen. It is not necessary that the incidents described in a book must have their counterpart in real life, but that in the circumstances and according to the background of the story they could have happened.

Realism is a relative quality; if the story is written in a period which believed in ghosts and spirits, their introduction would be considered as realism, while the introduction of aeroplanes or telephones would, in that background, appear as incredible and impossible. The incidents chosen by the novelist must be significant, and presented in all their implications. The author must create an illusion of reality. This will be achieved in proportion to the imaginative power of the author; what he describes need not be his personal experience, or what came under his observation, but he must have the imagination to visualize it and to convey his vision to the readers.

The best illustration of how far an imaginative writer can succeed in creating an illusion of reality is that Defoe's Robinson Crusoe was taken to be an actual person and people were eager to meet him.

If historical incidents or geographical characters are incorporated into the story, they should be treated with absolute accuracy. The incorporating of geographical details

of a place has been the chief forte of Hardy, whose novels, because of the fact that the local colour of Wessex is so much a part of his stories, are called the Wessex novels. It has been used before by Fielding in *Tom Jones*, and Yorkshire moors in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* have the same significance as Egdon Heath in *The Return of the Native*.

In the arranging or grouping of his incidents the novelist should bear in mind that there is no gap, no missing link in the chain of sequence. The issue or *dénouement* must not be a false one, but rise naturally out of the sequence of events.

Novels are divided into two groups by Muir, as novels of Action and novels of "Character". There is also a third type of novel, which Muir calls the Dramatic novel. Novels of action are more closely allied to the earlier romances; in these the stress is on the action rather than on the "character". "Characters" are made to fit into the scheme of actions and their conduct definitely contributes towards the plot. Scott's and Dumas' novels are of this type. (In Urdu Sharar and Sarshār can be said to be the writers of novels of action.) In the novels of "character" there is no causal connection between the incidents of the story, except that they happen to or are the experiences of the same "character" or "characters" of the book. *Vanity Fair* is the most perfect example of a novel of "character". All novels presented in the form of letters, diaries or autobiographies will be necessarily novels of "character".

In the dramatic novels "the characters are not a part of the machinery of the plot, nor is the plot merely a framework round the characters. On the contrary, both are inseparably knit together." The dramatic novels approximate closely to poetic tragedy. Hardy's *Tess*, Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* and Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* are dramatic novels.

Jane Austen's novels though not tragic can yet be regarded as dramatic, for in them "character" influences events,

creates difficulties and in its turn is affected and changed by them. In the novel of "character", the "characters" remain static, in the dramatic novels, they change; the end not only resolves the story in the dramatic novel but throws final light on the "characters" as well. We do not know Elizabeth Bennett till the last page of *Pride and Prejudice*. Becky Sharp we know after the first few chapters of *Vanity Fair* and she remains the same till the book closes.

There is yet another type of novel, which is described as the Period novel. It is regarded as inferior to other types as its object is to show only one section of society at a certain period and its "characters" are true only inasmuch as they are typical of the time. Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga* is the best example of this type.

The division of the novel into various groups is based on the difference in the inter-relation of plot and "characters". A plot can to a large extent determine whether or not a story will be interesting, but the greatness of a novel is based on the excellence of its characterisation. The plot is nothing but the record of certain happenings; to whom they happened, and what were their reactions to them and what caused them to happen; these are the most vital thing in the novel. To show the inner spring of actions, to lay open the heart of the "character" is the most difficult task of a novelist.

There are two methods of revealing "characters". "Characters" can be revealed through their actions, manners and speech, or they can be analytically treated. A blend of the two is often found in most novels, but the genius of most authors is predominantly in one direction. Scott, Dickens and Thackeray favour the direct method: they show their "characters" in action. George Eliot and Meredith are introspective and show their "characters" from within.

Besides revealing the motives of the "characters" and showing their thoughts and feelings, a novelist has to make his "characters" likeable and human as well. The division

into groups of good and bad has been long discarded and "characters" are presented in all the complexity and diversity which are to be found in real life. Psychology has revolutionized the conception of "character", and the exploring of the sub-conscious has been the object of all modern novelists. D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce are the most successful exponents of this type of characterization. But though Dostoevsky lived before Freud, he was the greatest and the most successful psycho-analyst. He has penetrated into such recesses of the human mind and has explored such depths of the sub-conscious that it seems almost uncanny.

The third element in the construction of the novel, and one of the determining factors of its greatness, is the point of view of the author, or more correctly his philosophy of life. The important things in a novel are not the various happenings that are recorded in the story, but the author's opinion about these happenings, the significance they have in his eyes. A work of fiction is not a sermon, and no author should deliberately sit down to write a story with the object of illustrating his point of view. If he does, he ruins his work artistically. The philosophy must be implied and incorporated in the story, and not set down didactically and without any relation to it.

Richardson, Thackeray and Dickens are amongst the obviously didactic writers, but they managed, in spite of their obvious didacticism, to produce great works, for the storyteller in them was stronger than the moralist, and though they set out to write a story mainly with the object of illustrating their theories, in the process they created "characters" which were extremely human and likeable, and real. Still it is this super-imposing of the author's didactic point of view which ranks the work of these as inferior to Hardy's or Dostoevsky's. The idea implied in Hardy's work is that an inscrutable and malicious fate presides over the destinies of man. It is forced by its very nature to destroy him, and the impulses of the human heart provide it with the instrument

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of his destruction. Human character itself determines against his happiness, and he is helpless in the determining of his character. The character is in itself largely determined by the social and economic conditions which are beyond control. Thus human beings are entirely helpless and can do nothing but wait till "the President of mortals finishes his game".

And last of all, there is the style of the author. This is what finally determines a novel's success. It is something that cannot be described, or achieved by trying, but is inborn and a gift. Every writer who has attained distinction has been a stylist. It is the fact that what they say "was oft thought but ne'er so well expressed" which lifts their works from insignificance into the ranks of classics. (It is style, the manner of writing which makes Nazir Ahmad's works, in spite of their didacticism, a joy to read, and the lack of it which makes similar works so insipid.)

Lastly, what does the novel aim at doing; what is its object; why is it written? E. M. Forster says that if we were to put this question to the hypothetical person, the man in the street, we would perplex him. He would be likely to reply: What does a novel do? Why, it tells a story, doesn't it?

The first aim of the novel is to tell a story; to satisfy that inborn desire of human beings to be told a tale. Unless it can do that no novel can hope to be read. But besides this, the novel attempts to do a few more things as well, and it is in this difference of object also that a difference between a novel and a romance exists. If a tragedy, it aims at achieving the same results as tragic drama, that is, a purging of emotions, a sublimation of the feelings of fear and pity. It gives imaginative satisfaction and supplies a vicarious thrill. The craving which is inherent in any human being for adventure or romance, and strange as it might seem for tragic experience as well, gets vicariously satisfied through novels. The reader

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identifies himself or herself with the "characters", and shares their experiences.

Didactic novels, whether their purpose is obvious or implied, do help in removing social evils that they condemn. Dickens' *Little Dorrit*, *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby* and *David Copperfield* have gone a long way to remove the appalling conditions in poor-houses and in jails, and to secure better treatment for children and towards the improvement of schools. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was a potent factor in waking the world's conscience to the appalling crime of slavery. The didactic novels of Urdu have played no insignificant part in the removing of social evils and in the spreading of liberal ideas.