Chapter X

THE MODERN NOVEL

During the last two decades short-stories have gained such popularity that they have almost ousted the full-length novel from its former position. All the writers of literary eminence of this period are short-story writers, and even when they attempt full-length novels, their novels are of an inferior quality to their short-stories.

This is true not only of Prem Cand, whose full-length novels are not at all of the same class as his short-stories, but of others as well. Nyāz Fateḥpūrī, M. Aslam, 'Aẓīm Beg Cugtāī, are all first and foremost writers of the short-story and only tried their hand at novel writing long after achieving fame and position in the literary world as writers of the short-story. The only exceptions are Hādī Ḥasan Rusvā and Mirzā Muḥammad Sa'īd. About Sajjād Ẓahīr, it is too early yet to decide whether he will become pre-eminently a novelist or a short-story writer, as his first novel was published only two years ago, and before that his literary output was merely in collaboration with others.

The modern novels are of a distinctly different character from those of Naẓīr Aḥmad, Sharar and Rāshid ul Khairī, and vastly superior to the works written in imitation of these.

The hero or heroine is no longer a conventionally perfect being, who overcomes all trials and tribulations through strength and integrity of character. But the modern Urdu novelist, like the modern English novelist, attempts to understand and portray those who are condemned at the bar of social morality, to lay bare their struggles and to reveal the causes that go to make them what they are. This attitude is fundamentally different from that of Naẓīr Aḥmad, Sharar,

Rāshid ul Khairī, and others of lesser merit who followed them, and is common to all the modern novelists.

Hādī Ḥasan Rusvā's '*Umrāo Jān Adā*' and '*Ẓāt i Sharīf*', Mirzā Muḥammad Sa'īd's '*Yāsmīn*' and '*Khāb i Hastī*', M. Aslam's '*Nāẓima kī Āp Bītī*', Nyāz Fateḥpūrī's '*Shahāb kī Sarguzasht*', all these have for the hero or heroine a conventionally erring personage.

Hādī Ḥasan Rusvā's '*Umrāo Jān Adā*' is perhaps the best of the modern novels. Though psychologically less profound, it is the most perfect. Or rather in it alone has execution matched inspiration. Others may have a more ambitious conception but they have not been as successful in translating their vision as Rusvā.

'*Umrāo Jān Adā*' alone of the modern novels has that charm of style which one associates with Naẓīr Aḥmad, and it is this which makes it such delightful reading. In spirit it is modern, that is, it is a sympathetic and understanding study of a character condemned by the laws of society. Much ingenuity and originality are shown in the manner the story is told. The bulk of it is in the first person, but in the form of a dialogue and not a diary, which makes it far more vivacious and real and allows for such information to be incorporated into the story as could not have been introduced had it been confined to the first person. Rusvā asks just such questions as a reader feels inclined to ask when reading a novel in the form of a diary. And his questions not only elucidate but make the story very much more real and interesting. The opening chapter is written by the author himself in the first person and deals with a visit he made to Lucknow after the lapse of many years. On that occasion he accidentally met *Umrāo Jān Adā*, a very well-known "*ṭavāif*" of the "*Navābī*" era of Lucknow.

To recall something of the memory of bygone days, it is decided to hold a "*Mushā'ira*" to which *Umrāo Jān* is also asked. "*Ġazals*" and "*ash'ārs*" are recited in the old way,

and *bons mots* and witticisms exchanged. *Umrāo Jān*'s "*gazals*" are much appreciated and much reminiscing takes place, and it strikes Rusvā how interesting it would be if *Umrāo Jāo* could be persuaded to pen her memoirs. *Umrāo Jān* reluctantly agrees, but decides to relate them, leaving the task of editing them to Rusvā. As a matter of fact, Rusvā at first does not tell her that he intends publishing her memoirs but only that he wants her to recount them for his benefit alone.

This method of narration has given the story a lot of elasticity. Though *Umrāo Jān* keeps more or less to a chronological order, on several occasions she retraces her steps, or at times the mention of a person or an incident by Rusvā starts a different train of thought in her mind and she comes back to the chronological order of her story only after several chapters. Similarly, an incident is mentioned long before it appears in its proper sequence; for example, we are told very early in the story that *Umrāo Jān* did meet her family once again, but the actual meeting is not related in detail till much later.

But these irregularities do not detract from the interest of the story, rather they add to it, giving it an air of veracity which could not have been obtained in any other way.

The "character" of *Umrāo Jān* is evolved in a masterly way. The most difficult task in making a hero and heroine tell their own story is to make them convey their character truthfully. Rusvā has got over this difficulty with ease. He never makes *Umrāo Jān* pause and give a lengthy description of herself, as do most authors even when they are relating the story in the first person. *Umrāo Jān* never objectively and dispassionately analyses herself, for Rusvā was psychologist enough to realise that this sort of deliberate objectiveness was most misleading, and that human beings are far too egotistical ever to give themselves away deliberately. So he never makes *Umrāo Jān* give studied and detached descriptions of herself. Rather he lets her see herself in action and gather her own conclusions therefrom. Her warm-heartedness and humanity, her basic goodness of nature and her love of her home and her parents, her humility in connection with her own nefarious profession and her admiration of those women who have what she has unfortunately had to forfeit, all these the reader readily realises as he reads on. The personality of *Umrāo Jān* at each page becomes more and more vivid and alive, and by the time the book is finished *Umrāo Jan* has entered the gallery of those "characters" of fiction who remain our lifelong acquaintances. *Umrāo Jān* is never presented by Rusvā as a paragon of virtue or an exceptional person. She is not endowed with such qualities of mind and heart as are not to be met with in women of her profession. Nor is she capable of such philosophical or metaphysical thinking by which she can justify her position as does *Lailā*, a heroine taken from the same stratum of society in a novel by Qāẓī 'Abdul Ġaffār. *Umrāo Jān*'s character and attitude to life are not at all complex. They are very simple and straightforward. She realises that by all standards of decency hers is a contemptible position. She regrets, and very deeply and sincerely so, the fact that through sheer bad luck she was forced to enter into this profession. But having done so at an age when she knew no better, and at a time when she had no other choice, she accepts and tries to make the best of it.

She can never bring herself to be so utterly mercenary and heartless as *Bismillāh*, and let no warmth or human consideration enter into her transactions. But she is shrewd enough to realise that idealism will take her nowhere, that placed as she is she cannot afford to be idealistic, that it is not expected of her and will not be appreciated. So she does not like *Khurshīd* throw away her chances of success as a "*ṭavāif*", but practises coquetry and shows that deference and politeness which were necessary for her to secure a clientele.

The warmth of her heart, her humanity and her innate

goodness prevent her from being callous and utterly indifferent towards her admirers. She is human enough to feel pleased and be happy when a person as charming as *Navāb Sulṭān Mirzā* comes her way, when she has to deal with those who are cultured and polished rather than with the " *nouveaux riches* ", who only by virtue of their gold claim her time and attention.

Once she has passed her youth and has made sufficient provision for her old age, *Umrāo Jān* straightway gives up her profession ; but here again the balance between her goodness and her common sense is retained. She realises that it will be absurd for her to go into " purdah " and try at this stage to lead the life of middle class respectability ; so she is frank enough to admit that :

اللہ بخشے چاہے مارے ، مجھ سے پردے میں گھٹ کر تو نہ رہا جائیگا .

It is by his realisation of such psychological points that Rusvā has managed to make the " character " of *Umrāo Jān* so human. The conventional morality of the novelist with a purpose would demand that she be made to revert to an entirely pious life. But any one who has observed human conduct knows that such an ending would have been false.

Not only in the sketching of *Umrāo Jān*'s " character " has Rusvā shown his knowledge of human nature and his ability to make a " character " come to life, but his sketches of minor " characters " are also well done. The background is painted with similar deft strokes. The Lucknow society of the period just before the Mutiny comes to life under Rusvā's pen. It is a very small section of society, not its whole surface as in ' *Fasāna e Āzād* ', that is seen in ' *Umrāo Jān* ', but this small section is brought very vividly before the mind's eye ; we are allowed only a glimpse now and then, but whole vistas are revealed in those glimpses.

Silhouetted against this larger background of Lucknow

society is the underworld of a courtesan's life. Here the etchings are deeper, the tones more vivid and more details are filled in. In this world the towering figure is that of the *Khānam*, the mistress of all these courtesans. Though only a " *ṭavāif* " *Khānam* has a dignity which many a lady of gentle birth may envy. In her world she is the queen, her girls live in mortal fear of her, the tutors dare not trifle with her, the admirers of her " girls " all defer to her wishes, and even the " *Begams* " appeal to her to restore to them their erring sons and husbands. Notwithstanding all this, she has no illusions as to what her real status is. With what deference and politeness she talks to the *Begam*'s maid and in what scathing words she describes herself and her fellow-workers to the *Navāb !*

The degradation and humility as well as the attractions of this sort of life are truthfully portrayed by Rusvā. How these girls who were brought up by an older courtesan were more or less her slaves. They had to obey her implicitly and had no voice or choice in selecting or rejecting admirers. They remained for ever financially dependent on their mistress. Petty jealousies and intrigues were rampant amongst the girls.

All these become apparent as one reads ' *Umrāo Jān* ', but not once does Rusvā point out the moral with a heavy hand, go out of his way to draw the attention of the reader to any of the lurid details. Rusvā is an artist and not a moralist. He draws his picture faithfully, showing the lights and shades. No prejudice blinds him to the fact that there is much that is attractive, especially for youth, in it, music and colour and every luxury that money can buy. Not only this, but amongst the so-called bad people, there is a great deal of goodness, charity and mercy. They have their own code of morality and honour which they faithfully keep, as is shown in the case of *Buā Ḥusainī* and the *Maulvī Ṣāḥib* and the old admirers of *Khānam* or in *Umrāo Jān*'s own devotion to *Gauhar Mirzā*.

There was more of the milk of human kindness amongst these than amongst the so-called good people. The girls, though virtually slaves, were not ill-treated, but brought up with greater gentleness than the slave-girls in "respectable households".

The masterly portrayal of "character" and background, the vividness and charm of narrative, the psychological knowledge shown in '*Umrāo Jān*', rank it as one of the best novels in the Urdu language. It passes the test as to whether or not the book is a classic, namely, whether it can be read and re-read. '*Umrāo Jān*' can, like all works that rank as classic, be read each time with greater enjoyment. Its "characters" have that larger humanity which makes them interesting to every succeeding generation.

The other significant point in connection with '*Umrāo Jān*' is that it has had a host of imitators. If in life imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, in the case of fiction it is the unmistakable sign that a book has attained to classical rank. Courtesans and actresses have been chosen as the heroines of their novels by a number of authors in imitation of Rusvā, the best known among them being Qāẓī 'Abd ul Ġaffār and M. Aslam.

'*Umrāo Jān*' can be regarded as a novel of transition; it is modern inasmuch as it is not didactic in its aim and has endeavoured to show that persons commonly described as immoral can have a good deal of humanity in them, if not goodness also. But it has the straightforwardness and directness of the older school. It is not analytical, and its "characters" are not complex and are not given over to introspection. It also has a nicety of style not to be met with in the works of the later modern novelists.

Mirzā Rusvā has written several other novels besides '*Umrāo Jān*'. But none of these are as charming or as delightful as '*Umrāo Jān*'. '*Zāt i Sharīf*' has something of the same piquancy of style as makes '*Umrāo Jān*' such

pleasant reading. The situations have the same air of veracity and are described with a similar eye for telling details. The same knowledge of human nature is also shown, as for instance, when *Khudā Bakhsh* is trying to find an opening for conversation with *Mehrī*. The description of *Mehrī* is also extremely good:

امامن کا سن وحال ایسا نہ تھا کہ ان پر کوئی عاشق ہوتا، جوانی کو رخصت ہوئے ایک مدت ہوچکی تھی، گرچہ یہ ابھی تک ہربات میں جوانی کی کسم (قسم) کھایا کرتی تھیں.

This sarcastic comment also reveals more of *Mehrī*'s character than would a stereotyped statement about a middle-aged person. It suggests what was to her a source of pain. There are several such extremely well-written descriptive passages in '*Zāt i Sharīf*'. They show Rusvā's capacity for descriptive writing; but nevertheless it is a much inferior work to '*Umrāo Jān*'. It has not the same qualities of uniformity and excellence. Its main "character", *Chote Navāb*, is not so convincingly drawn as *Umrāo Jān*, and though doubtless at that time in Lucknow such incidents and swindling did take place as are described in '*Zāt i Sharīf*' and people did believe in necromancy, yet it seems incredible now and in consequence this takes from the merits of the story.

Its sequel, '*Sharīfzāda*', is the story of a poor young man who by reason of steadiness and integrity of character achieved success in life, as opposed to *Chote Navāb* in '*Zāt i Sharīf*' who, through his stupidity, reached the stage of becoming dependent on a "*ṭavāif*".

'*Akhtarī Begam*', another novel of Rusvā, lacks the humour and vivacity of '*Umrāo Jān*', even of '*Sharīfzāda*' and '*Zāt i Sharīf*'. It is the story of intrigues against *Akhtarī Begam*, an orphan girl with a great deal of property. The enemies of *Akhtarī Begam* are foiled in the end.

'*Khūnī Bhed*', '*Khūnī 'Āshiq*', '*Rūs kā Shāhzāda*' are

novels lacking in any merit. Their plots are drawn from cheap English and French novels, and they are written in the style of the imitators of Sharar and Sarshār.

With Mirzā Muḥammad Sa'īd's '*Khāb i Hastī*' and '*Yāsmīn*' the analytical novel made its appearance in Urdu. The subject, if looked at superficially, seems a very hackneyed one, viz., the evil effect of Westernisation on Indian youths, and the consequences of straying from the path of marital fidelity. But there is a world of difference between the way Mirzā Sa'īd has treated his subjects and the manner in which it has been treated by Rāshid ul Khairī, or any of those myriads of lesser novelists and short-story writers. Until now the treatment was from without, that is to say, the novelists were content to catalogue the evils of Westernisation or of illicit liaisons, not accounting for them or at best putting them down as the result of the hero's or the heroine's association with undesirable characters.

Mirzā Sa'īd's approach is totally different. He has attempted to analyse and understand the minds of this unfortunate generation which finds itself in the twilight of one civilization with the dawn of another yet afar, which is lost between two worlds, one dead and one yet unborn.

He has understood and tried to convey the tragedy of youth. Youth, which is regarded by superficial observers as a period of thoughtlessness and animal pleasures—and so it is in the case of the average person—in the case of a sensitive soul and an imaginative and thinking mind is the period of doubts and disillusionment, of self-reproach and longing for better things. It is the period when the house is divided within itself, and when the attempt to follow one's ideal lands one in greater depths of degradation. That it sometimes happens that youths who are seen to make a mess of their lives, do so only because they are seeking for a peace in beauty that is lacking in their lives, is a psychological fact.

'*Khāb i Hastī*' and '*Yāsmīn*' are both studies of this

inner conflict of youth. The hero of '*Khāb i Hastī*', '*Uṣmān*, is a young man of ideals, and has a sensitiveness of soul and is gifted with a quality of poetic imaginativeness which make him dissatisfied with the existing order of things. Though he has all the material comforts of life, he feels a lack of something. He feels that there is something wanting not only in his own life but in the existing order of society. He finds religion as practised and preached by the "*Maulvīs*" wholly unsatisfying and inadequate. His soul is in search of something he himself cannot define, but which would give him peace and assuage his thirst.

He wants colour and poetry in life, which the "purdah" system does not allow for, except in circumstances that cannot be considered above reproach. But his desire for romance is so strong that it forces him to disregard the conventional morality, though not without much inner conflict.

The character of '*Uṣmān*'s father, *Isḥāq*, contributes towards the state in which '*Uṣmān* finds himself, as does the character of *Akhtar*'s father in '*Yāsmīn*' towards *Akhtar*'s ruin. The cold, impersonal and self-satisfied attitude of *Isḥāq* in '*Khāb i Hastī*' and of *Ghaẓanfar 'Alī* in '*Yāsmīn*' is a challenge and a provocation to the romantic, artistic and poetic temperament of their sons. '*Uṣmān*'s restless mind refuses to accept life as readily as his father does and as most people do. The nobility of character and singleness of purpose of Adrian, his best friend, evoke his admiration, but Adrian does not exercise sufficient influence on '*Uṣmān* to give him that stability and balance which he lacks. He has to go through the "ordeal by fire" himself before his soul is redeemed.

The company of such people as *Baẕl ul Ḥasan* and *Yūsuf*, adds fuel to the already smouldering fire of '*Uṣmān*'s discontent, their easy morality helps him to shed his already weakened resistance. He is introduced to *Shamīm*, an actress, by *Baẕl ul Ḥasan*; her vivacity captures him completely, and she flatters his vanity, and in his infatuation it seems to '*Uṣmān*

that she is the first person who has understood the yearnings of his soul and his poetic temperament. This liaison, however, is of very short duration. *Shamīm* soon finds a more eligible admirer and throws *'Uṣmān* overboard. This gives a rude shock to *'Uṣmān*'s credulity and trustfulness, but nevertheless he escapes from this episode with nothing worse than a shock that makes him seriously ill for a while. Psychologically also it is not of much significance. It is amongst such incidents as come the way of most young men. Its interest lies in the fact that Mirzā Sa'īd has endeavoured to account for it in a way different from the one employed by all novelists so far. Mirzā Sa'īd's attitude is—and it is the modern and most sympathetic attitude—that more often than not it is idealism rather than anything else that causes such lapses.

'Uṣmān's love for *Ḥusn Afroz* is the pivot of the story. *Ḥusn Afroz* is a dancing girl, but Mirzā Sa'īd endows her with a simplicity and devotion rarely to be met with even in girls of gentle birth. She falls in love with *'Uṣmān* deeply and truly and *'Uṣmān* with her; they brave the convention and marry. This evokes the anger of *'Uṣmān*'s father, who refuses to have any further dealings with his son. In his newly found bliss, *'Uṣmān* is not much troubled by his father's disapproval; but this bliss is short-lived. *Ḥusn Afroz* dies and *'Uṣmān* is plunged into an abyss of despair.

His gropings in the valley of darkness provide perhaps the most interesting and significant chapters in the book. *'Uṣmān*'s struggle for light is like youth's search for an answer, a solution, to the riddle which is life. They find the accepted panaceas to be of no use and fail to find any new ones that would satisfy. They are seeking beauty and romance in a society where they could be had as the wages of sin, and are baffled and baulked by powers stronger than themselves and have no refuge or source of strength.

'Uṣmān emerges from the slough of despondency through almost supernatural intervention. He has a dream which

explains to him the mysteries of life, which gives him a measure of calm and peace. Adrian and his wife, of course, contribute greatly towards the healing of his soul. The spectacle of their calm happiness stills the mad desire and urge of his own tumultuous soul, and the dream itself is an indirect result of his talk with Adrian and his wife. Except for the " character " of *'Uṣmān*, ' *Khāb i Hastī* ' is not an interesting novel to read. The author's conception and theme are good, but his execution is not on a par with his inspiration. He does not handle his material with ease but with difficulty. *'Uṣmān*'s character is so subtle that in its presentation the author had to put forward all his skill, and consequently the other parts of the novel suffer. The minor " characters " have been done in a very sketchy manner; even such important ones as *Shamīm* and *Ḥusn Afroz* receive but scanty treatment. The only well-drawn minor " character " is that of *Isḥāq*, *'Uṣmān*'s father, who by a few deft strokes has been made a very convincing figure. The handling of the plot is also not very good, but despite its defects ' *Khāb i Hastī* ' deserves to rank very high among Urdu novels as it is the first psychological study of character and analysis of motives and comprehension of the conflict of soul of youth born in an era of change and uncertainty.

' *Yāsmīn* ' is the second novel of Mirzā Sa'īd. Its avowed purpose is to point out the dangers that lurk in the emancipation and the higher education of women. Here again a common enough theme has escaped becoming hackneyed owing to a difference of approach and treatment. It is in fact, like ' *Khāb i Hastī* ', a study of the conflict of mind of the hero, and the heroine does not get as much attention as she should. The story is built round the hero and not the heroine, though from the introduction of the book one would expect that it would be otherwise.

The character of *Akhtar* is very similar to that of *'Uṣmān*, except that for a long time *Akhtar* is not consciously aware of

anything lacking in life and feels no discontent with religion or the existing order of society. He has been brought up in monastic seclusion by his father and never had much to do with women. He has an innate sense of beauty which finds an outlet in painting. He is himself unaware that his soul is seeking romance and beauty, till the sight of a painting, " A Maiden's Dream," stirs his imagination. But even after the incident he is only half-aware of the change that his soul is going through, and readily and dutifully agrees to marry the girl of his father's choice.

The young innocence and the beauty of this girl stir his imagination, and for a while he is happy. But a few months are enough to satiate him, for *Ṣafya*, his wife, was not sophisticated enough and was not aware of any of the tricks of coquetry by which to hold his wavering fancy. At this critical moment he finds out from his friend, *Mas'ūd*, that the painter of " A Maiden's Dream " is a young girl who lives in Calcutta. This discovery, though he does not even acknowledge it to himself, makes him take a trip to Calcutta.

There he stays with an old friend of his father's, and Fate so decrees that he finds that *Yāsmīn*, the girl who had painted " A Maiden's Dream ", is a niece of his hosts and lives with them. An immediate infatuation springs up between the two and they elope together. A few weeks of bliss follow. But they are brought to an end by *Akhtar*'s getting smallpox and losing his good looks. *Yāsmīn*'s love cannot withstand this change, and she leaves him for another admirer of hers. The shock is staggering for *Akhtar* who, not caring what becomes of him, goes to a gambling den and there is drugged and thrown into the street. He is taken to prison, and in the court meets his old friend, *Mas'ūd*, who, after standing bail for him, takes him to his house and persuades him to return to Lucknow, and to his home. *Akhtar*, after some hesitation, agrees on the understanding that he would return to Lucknow, but that the return to his home be left to his own discretion. After a few weeks' stay at *Mas'ūd*'s, the love of his child and the news that the boy whom *Yāsmīn* had gone off with has committed suicide as a result of her having forsaken him also, make him one day wend his way towards the garden of his old home.

The plot in ' *Yāsmīn* ' is better constructed than in ' *Khāb i Hastī* '. The grip on the material is surer and the " character " of *Yāsmīn* gets greater attention than did the " character " of *Shamīm* or of *Ḥusn Afroz*. *Yāsmīn*'s " character " has a definite reaction on *Akhtar*'s; *Shamīm's* and *Ḥusn Afroz*'s left *'Uṣmān*'s untouched. Mirzā Sa'īd avowedly set himself to depict the evil and not the good effects of female emancipation, and the character of *Yāsmīn* is drawn to support his theory. He has shown *Yāsmīn* as utterly egoistical, selfish and callous, vain to the core and desiring only admiration and adulation from men. She is as hard and as brilliant as a diamond. There is no gentleness in *Yāsmīn*, no charm of femininity at all. Her actions are all studied and calculated ; even when she goes off with *Akhtar*, she does give the impression of being swept off her feet. *Yāsmīn*'s attraction for *Akhtar* is due to her vanity ; having more or less a dependent position in *Anīs ud Daula*'s household, she feels greatly flattered at the idea of having attracted a man of *Akhtar*'s status. That an inferiority complex is at the root of all her arrogance is quite apparent ; though she loathes *Faiẓ 'Alī*, yet her vanity is tickled at his dog-like devotion to her, and she gets pleasure out of torturing him and setting him such tasks as would endanger his life, because it further satiates her vanity. She is elated when she sees *Akhtar* bully *Faiẓ 'Alī*. Here again her vanity is soothed. She might be the daughter of a woman of no social position but men thought her worth fighting for.

That she at all agrees to live a life of arcadian bliss even for a few weeks is what appears incredible and inconsistent with her character. Romance was not in *Yāsmīn*'s make-up, but perhaps the fact that it was so romantic somehow

satisfied her insatiable vanity. But even before *Akhtar*'s illness the gilt was off the gingerbread, the attraction had begun to wane and the loss of *Akhtar*'s beauty precipitated what would have occurred anyhow.

To *Akhtar*, *Yāsmīn*'s attraction lay in her sophistication. Naïve as he himself was, he found *Yāsmīn*'s sophistry intriguing. His vanity was also flattered at the idea of having a woman so obviously attractive and sought after attracted by him. Besides which *Yāsmīn*'s stage-management was too much for him; she had made up her mind that she would captivate *Akhtar* and he did not stand a chance against her. Had he been allowed a little more latitude by his father and known something more of women, he would never have been such an easy prey. His father's attitude is directly responsible for *Akhtar*'s misfortune. The unnatural hot-house upbringing that he had had was bound to have some such reactions.

The "character" of *Ṣafya*, *Akhtar*'s wife, has been drawn as sympathetically as *Yāsmīn*'s has been unsympathetically. *Ṣafya* embodies in herself all the traditional virtues of Indian womanhood; she is as simple and unsophisticated as *Yāsmīn* is blasé and sophisticated. Because of her simplicity she does not have such allure for *Akhtar* as *Yāsmīn*, for being extremely naïve himself *Akhtar* is attracted by sophistry. The contrast between *Yāsmīn* and *Ṣafya* is well brought out. The calm steadfastness of *Ṣafyā*'s love stands out against the heady stream of *Yāsmīn*'s infatuation, *Ṣafyā*'s femininity and gentleness against *Yāsmīn*'s hard-headedness, and, most of all, the technique of *Ṣafyā*'s love (which is so direct, so pure and sincere that even the word 'technique' does injustice to it as it conveys the impression of artificiality) against the technique of *Yāsmīn*'s.

The only other minor "character" with any individuality is *Phūl Candr*, another of *Yāsmīn*'s admirers. He is a realistic sketch of the Indian who is an entire product of Western culture; because he came from a class which did not have any

traditions or roots itself he is indebted to Europe entirely for all his mental equipment. Yet being an Indian and having Indian blood he cannot readily accept those alien standards and goes through life without having ever acquired any certainty about the values of life.

'*Khāb i Hastī*' and '*Yāsmīn*', because of the new approach of their author, are landmarks in the development of the Urdu novel. They heralded a change that has now become more apparent and is seen more prominently in the novels and the short-stories of the last few years, such as, '*Shahāb kī Sarguzasht*' and '*London kī ek Rāt*', and the short-stories of Rashīda Ẓafar, 'Alī Sardār Ja'frī, Aḥmad 'Alī and other socialist writers.

'*Shahāb kī Sarguzasht*' is considered Nyāz Fatehpūrī's masterpiece. It is a Huxleyan type of novel, having the same tone of bitter cynicism as is to be found in Huxley's works. The hero is *Shahāb*, an ultra-sensitive man who is given to much thinking and analysing of his own and other people's motives. His penetration is so keen and he can see through the shams and pretences of society so clearly, that he has little or no illusions left about anything. Like the heroes and heroines of modern English novels *Shahāb* is prone to be mercilessly truthful, his strictures on society and religion are scathing, he does not subscribe to any code of morals. Yet, as is usual with this type of character, *Shahāb* has an extremely kind heart and is generous and good to those simple folks who are the unwitting victims of a complicated system of society.

'*Shahāb kī Sarguzasht*' has no story properly so called; it is really a study in psychology, an illustration of a theory; the theory being, as far as can be gathered, that marriage and true love are quite incompatible, that the passion of true love should never be consummated; if it is, it will sound the death knell of love. Marriage should be undertaken, if it must, quite dispassionately and with some such object in view as

the desire to be of help to each other or effect some social reform. *Shahāb* makes just such a marriage by way of illustration.

Shahāb violently opposes *Maḥmūd*'s marriage to *Sakīna*, because in his opinion, as they are truly in love with each other, marriage will destroy it. For marriage by securing the loved one for the beloved takes away all the elements of doubt, uncertainty, and struggle, which are necessary for the existence of love as well as for the poetic life of a person. And as *Maḥmūd* is both truly in love and also has a soul worth saving, he, that is *Shahāb*, tries his best to save *Maḥmūd* from marriage, which, according to *Shahāb*, will be the end of his love and the poetry in him.

There are other theories discussed alongside this and intertwined with it; not all of them are brought to a logical conclusion but are just the side-issues of the main line of thought.

There is in '*Shahāb kī Sarguzasht*' the same sort of bitterness that the modern youth uses as a shield to cloak his real feelings and to prevent himself from getting hurt. In it is expressed the same sort of dissatisfaction with the over-civilization of human beings that has resulted in killing all spontaneous and natural feeling and in making life so complicated. *Shahāb* and *Maḥmūd* and *Ṭufail* and *Akẖtar Bāī* are all seeking somehow to get away from its trammels, to somehow achieve the pristine simplicity of existence. They snatch up pleasure or seek refuge in licentiousness, they cut themselves off from other human beings, all because they feel themselves out of tune with life. The vain chase after happiness is the other main theme of this novel.

Much philosophical and psychological thought is found in the book in this connection as well. No decisive conclusion is reached, nor any definite answer given to the numerous questions that are discussed. The reader is left dissatisfied and disturbed, not "calm of mind, all passion spent".

But as the modernistic tendency in poetry, sculpture and

painting is to leave the reader or spectator perplexed, this cannot be considered a defect in '*Shahāb kī Sarguzasht*', but rather its merit. It has been said that the chaotic style of James Joyce in 'Ulysses' expresses the chaos within his mind, and therefore the fact that modern art succeeds in confusing rather than elucidating can be regarded as having succeeded in attaining its object, which is to convey the confusion and complexity of an overwrought civilization. '*Shahāb kī Sarguzasht*' certainly does succeed in conveying a sense of inner struggle and a state of tension in its hero and the other "characters".

The story, if it can be called so, is this: *Shahāb*, an ultra-sensitive young student, advises his friend, *Maḥmūd*, not to marry *Sakīna*, the girl he loves, and tries his best to dissuade *Maḥmūd*. *Maḥmūd*, however, in spite of the fact that he has the greatest affection for *Shahāb*, does not take this advice and marries; his attempts at reconciliation with *Shahāb* are brutally rejected.

During this period, *Shahāb* meets an actress called *Akẖtar Bāī*, who falls in love with him, but is repulsed with contempt, for *Shahāb*, according to his views, has too much knowledge of why such love comes into being to be moved by it. He falls ill and at this juncture *Maḥmūd*, having got fed up with his married life, returns to Bombay and to *Shahāb*. *Akẖtar Bāī* nurses *Shahāb* with the greatest devotion and he recovers, but the first thing he does on recovery is to send *Akẖtar Bāī* away, and she in despair begins a liaison with *Maḥmūd*.

While this is going on, *Shahāb* has met a young boy whose mother has been left a widow with four little children and, as an illustration of his theory that marriage to be a success ought to be undertaken dispassionately with a view of serving society, he marries this woman.

Akẖtar Bāī's and *Maḥmūd*'s relationship, built on either side as it was on the foundation of injury received from another person, soon cools down. *Akẖtar Bāī* by chance reads a

letter of *Sakīna* in which the latter readily and gladly accepts the fact of her husband's love for another woman, and is prepared to receive both of them in her home so that she can at least be near *Maḥmūd*. The example of such a pure and unselfish love has a tremendous effect on *Akhtar Bāī*; it seems to open up the meaning of life to her and she leaves *Maḥmūd* immediately to lead a life of usefulness to others. *Maḥmūd* returns to *Sakīna*.

'*Nāẓima kī Āp Bītī*' can only chronologically be regarded as modern. Its author's approach and attitude are more akin to those of the older novelists with a purpose than those of the modern psychologistic novelists. His attitude is modern in this much only that he blames the society and its mistaken philosophy of life rather than his heroine for her downfall.

The novel is written in the form of letters. The relationship of the addressee to *Nāẓima* is not brought to light till the end of the story. In the earlier chapters one is led to think that *Bashīr* is a mere friend, whose efforts have succeeded in bringing *Nāẓima* back to the folds of respectability. It is only in the last chapter that it transpires that *Bashīr* is *Nāẓima*'s fiancé. This is a clever bit of plot-construction for as one reads letter after letter of *Nāẓima*, curiosity is aroused and sympathy is excited and one wonders how *Nāẓima* has eventually managed to come back to the path of righteousness. What part exactly did *Bashīr* play in bringing her back? This suspense continues right through to the end and the mystery is only then unfolded and the part *Bashīr* has played in *Nāẓima*'s life brought to the reader's knowledge. Had the author placed this information at the beginning or even in an early chapter of the book, this effect would not have been achieved.

'*Nāẓima kī Āp Bītī*,' as its introduction informs us, is written with the definite object of showing the dangers a woman is exposed to on leaving "purdah" in a society which has not learnt to respect her. It also aims at bringing to light the shortcomings of girls' schools, the consequences of the

want of proper supervision and the failure to ascertain the character of the mistresses, which result in the ruin of the young girls' lives.

'*Nāẓima kī Āp Bītī*' is a true enough picture of the state of affairs prevailing among the pseudo-Westernised Indians, especially in the Punjab. The story of *Nāẓima*'s life is told in retrospect in her letters; it begins with her schooldays; the atmosphere of the school as described by *Nāẓima* certainly cannot be called academic. It seems more like a cinema studio; the girls come decked out in their finery and each takes stock of the others' make-up and dress. Risky jokes are exchanged and novels written about subjects hardly suitable for young girls surreptitiously lent to each other.

Nāẓima, though coming from a strict home, soon loses a good deal of her shyness and modesty in this atmosphere and it was not long before she, like the others, started an affair with a young student. The first meeting was brought about without the knowledge of *Nāẓima* by the machinations of one of the schoolmistresses. But soon *Nāẓima* began to meet the boy of her own accord, helped on in this decision by her friend *Fīroza*'s advice.

Nāẓima's escapade is brought to a speedy and an abrupt end by her being discovered by a cousin of hers while having tea with that friend in a hotel. Her mother, on this discovery, takes her from school, leaves that town and goes to live with her brother in Lahore.

Soon *Nāẓima* is married to a Westernised young man. *Zamāṇ*, *Nāẓima*'s husband, forces her to give up "purdah", to which she consents after some reluctance. He introduces her to all his young friends, amongst whom the two she meets most frequently are *Akhtar* and *Ryāẓ*. *Akhtar* begins writing letters to *Nāẓima* vaguely hinting that *Zamāṇ* is going downhill and asking her to meet him in secret so that he could be more explicit about it. *Nāẓima* refuses to meet him, but does not tell her husband about the

letter. He continues to write in the same way. Soon it becomes apparent to *Nāẓima* that all is not well with her husband and that he is in some serious financial difficulties, and also that his friendship with *Akẖtar* and *Ryāẓ* is far from being sincere. They take a trip to Delhi where she, by chance, meets her old friend *Fīroza*, who is now married to the young student with whom she was in love in her schooldays. She is, however, still in "purdah" and criticises *Nāẓima* for having discarded it.

When they returned from Delhi, things got worse rapidly. *Nāẓima*'s jewellery and property are sold, but even that does not succeed in extricating them from the financial muddle. *Zamāṉ* commits suicide. After her husband's death, *Nāẓima* finds herself in great difficulty. She moves into a small house and tries to lead a quiet and retired life. But both *Akẖtar* and *Ryāẓ* seek her out in turn and embarrass her with their improper attentions. She cannot get a job and in desperation goes away to Delhi to her friend *Fīroza*. There the idea strikes her that she can become an actress, and so begins her life on the stage.

Her experiences in connection with the stage are of the usual kind. Some years pass away in this manner and she becomes a very well-known actress. One night she is attacked by some ruffians and rescued by *Bashīr*, a poor clerk. They fall in love with each other. But *Bashīr*, because of his poverty, hesitates for a long time before he agrees to marry *Nāẓima*. The letters are written during this period of hesitancy in *Bashīr*'s mind.

Nāẓima, as she reviews her life, comments freely on it, or rather the author speaks in her name. When the author has thus to address directly the readers and try to win their sympathy by obviously advocating his own views, it is an admission that his craftsmanship is not perfect. Every work of art and literature has a message, but the message must be incorporated in the art and not require to be written under it as an explanatory note. M. Aslam desired to show

the rottenness of modern Indian society. He wanted his readers to agree with him that this unthinking imitation of the West, in conditions which are very different from the West, can only mean disaster. But he was not sure that he would be able to evoke this response merely by choosing his incidents in such a way that they themselves become arguments in favour of his point of view.

The characterisation is very poor. The minor "characters", including even *Bashīr*, never take on the semblance of reality. They remain from beginning to end just names; *Nāẓima*'s "character" itself is not drawn with any consistency. One can never come to any definite conclusions about how far her escapades were beyond her control and how far she was responsible for them. In the early affair with the student she is largely, if not entirely, to blame. She connives at his letters, and though the first meeting is accidental the others that followed were with her consent. Therefore her attitude when *Zamāṉ* desires her to bring her out of "purdah" is incomprehensible. She is there made to behave with a reluctance which cannot be expected from a girl who, while in school and in "purdah", has had the nerve to do what she had done.

Her attitude after her husband's death and later on the stage is inconsistent. She encourages her admirers but repulses them when they become too pressing in their suit. If Aslam wanted to present a conflict in *Nāẓima*'s mind or the contradictory impulses of the human heart, he has not been able to do so. He has merely succeeded in drawing a character with flagrant inconsistencies.

Mulk Rāj Ānand, speaking at a meeting of the Indian Majlis at Cambridge, declared '*London kī ek Rāt*' to be the best work of fiction in recent years in contemporary literature of the world. It is supreme praise, but '*London kī ek Rāt*' deserves it. In conception and execution it is an entirely new thing in Urdu literature.

It is difficult to tell what is the story of '*London kī ek Rāt*'

or wherein its merit lies, for properly speaking there is no story; it is just a description of an ordinary "Bottle Party" in Bloomsbury in the rooms of an Indian student, the sort of party which is common amongst Bohemian circles in London: young men and girls talking, dancing, arguing together, somebody comes late, somebody gets drunk, someone is singing communist songs in a loud voice, some are loudly discussing politics in a corner, some are making love in another; the atmosphere is thick with cigarette smoke, there is an indescribable noise and din of jazz music and singing of popular songs; with the party finally breaking up in the early hours of the morning. In short, a very typical "Bottle Party"! But it somehow manages to show the heart and mind, thoughts and reactions of each of the "characters" present. These young men are born in a nation that has lost its values and is living in outer darkness. Products of a hybrid culture they are vainly trying to evolve a philosophy of life. '*London kī ek Rāt*' gives a glimpse into the minds and hearts of these unfortunate youths; they are so like the students one meets in the University towns of England and round about Gower Street and Bloomsbury. Each type is represented in *Na'īm*'s "Bottle Party".

'*Aẓam*, whom we meet standing at Russell Square Station waiting for his girl, is consumed in his passion for her. His mind cannot take in any topic other than that, his thoughts are concentrated on it and nothing else. She is again late and he is in agony. She does not love him nor ever has loved him, she is only playing with him, he thinks; but then why not break it off with her and tell her what he thinks of her? He feels annoyed at his own cowardliness and want of self-respect. He stands furiously thinking all this when *Rāo* comes out of the tube. *Rāo* is a happy-go-lucky fellow. He has a mind that is crystal clear but he is a cynic. He does not hope or expect ideals to be translated into life; his attitude is not intense, he takes life lightly. He persuades '*Aẓam* to

come to *Na'īm*'s house, and says that Jean would join them as she knew the address.

They enter a pub before going to *Na'īm*'s house. There has been some shooting in India that day, and the men in the pub were discussing that and the rights and wrongs of India's demand for freedom. With that exasperating patronage which alone the taxi-drivers, bus-conductors and shop-girls in England are capable of showing towards "natives" and which, though meant good-naturedly, is maddeningly irritating, '*Aẓam*'s and *Rāo*'s opinions are asked on the subject. Someone calls out from a corner: How is Gandhi and his goat? *Rāo* and '*Aẓam* became furious and left the pub and proceeded towards *Na'īm*'s room.

Na'īm is a good-natured, sympathetic, extremely lazy fellow, who is supposed to be writing a thesis. But when asked how far he has proceeded with his work, his answer for the last five years has been that he is doing the eighth chapter and would soon be finishing it; but it did not seem that he would ever finish it. Nevertheless, he was a good-natured chap, always being imposed upon by his friends, always protesting against but complying with their monetary demands. He was the person in whose room the "party" was to be held.

But before any of his friends had put in an appearance there came a girl *Na'īm* had never met before. She said that her name was Sheila Green and that *Rāo* had asked her to come. *Na'īm* was very shy of girls, was very afraid of them, because he was ugly and not at all clever in talking; but anyhow he was getting on very well with Sheila Green. They had slipped into a discussion about life and poetry. Sheila thought that poetry was an opiate while struggle was the only thing that made life worth living. But their pleasant talk was interrupted by two more arrivals, '*Ārif* and *Karīma Begam*.

These last are extremely well-drawn "characters", smug and self-satisfied and dull, but thinking themselves to be extremely

clever. Earnest and plodding *'Ārif* was one of those people who have been aptly described as knowing the price of everything but the value of nothing. *'Ārif* was preparing to appear for the I.C.S., he was extremely pro-British, he tried to speak English with an affected accent and tried to worm his way into the favour of the English. He kept away from the associations and meetings that discussed such questions as whether India should be free or not. He kept away from *Na'īm*'s group as a rule, but by chance he was there that day.

Karīma Begam was his female counterpart. The spiritual equivalent of the suburban lady who pretends to be genteel, she was the sort of person whose arrival casts a gloom on a party and who lives to make nasty remarks in a seemingly innocent way. Their arrival immediately strikes a note of discord in the pleasant talk between Sheila and *Na'īm*.

Soon there were ten or twelve people in *Na'īm*'s room and dancing had started. *Aḥsān*, young and enthusiastic, had started an argument with *Karīma Begam*, who was enraged at not being the centre of the party and was trying to be moral only because of convention and not of conviction, and whose criticism of what she called European ways was based merely on narrowness, and jealousy of English girls. There was *Khān*, who was dead drunk and was talking in the manner of a drunkard, singing Urdu "*gazals*" and English songs indiscriminately and boasting of his "conquests" in a loud voice. There was another little English girl besides Sheila —a silly, brainless thing. *'Ārif*, snubbed by Sheila, was trying to make an impression on her. *Na'īm* danced with Sheila a few times, and exchanged a few more sentences with her.

When the party was in full swing, *'Aẓam*'s girl, Jean, arrived also, and after some display of annoyance *'Aẓam* made it up with her.

The party broke up as the landlady could not stand the din any longer; each of them went his way. *Aḥsān* and *Rāo* went away together, *Aḥsān* still talking in the same manner, so

sure of the correctness of his point of view, breathing fire and destruction against the effete structure of the present society; and *Rāo* cynical, amused, detached and objective, understanding and sympathising, yet not taking the same attitude as *Aḥsān*. *'Ārif* left with the fluffy English girl, still hoping that she would fall a victim to his charms, but his calculations about her were to fall through. She first disappointed him by purchasing the *Daily Worker* and then, contrary to his expectations, left him suddenly. *Khān* was taken in charge by some friends. *Karīma Begam* correct to the last went home in a taxi.

Sheila and *Na'īm* were left alone, and Sheila tells him her story. She had loved an Indian boy; they had met in Switzerland and spent some happy weeks together. They loved each other deeply and sincerely; that was a year-and-a-half ago. He was in India, but she never heard anything from him; he was a lover of freedom, and lovers of freedom were not safe in countries that were not free. The light of early morning steals into the room as Sheila finishes her tale. She says goodbye to *Na'īm*, who asks, "Shall we meet again?" "We might", was the reply she gave as she went out. That is the outline of the story—the plot, if it can be so called. But no criticism can convey the superbness of Sajjād Ẓahīr's characterisation; how he has the knack of revealing the very soul of a person just in a few lines; how he never elaborates matters but can drive his point home; how in the short space of a few hours he has managed to convey the thoughts and feelings, reactions and values, of each of his "characters"!

'London kī ek Rāt' is an entirely new thing in Urdu literature. It gives a picture of the life of a section of Indians whose feelings have hitherto not been discussed by any writer. *'London kī ek Rāt'* is the first really modern novel in Urdu, the first novel the reading of which gives the same quality of satisfaction as the reading of poetry or listening to music. It has a quality of

terseness, of reality which was so far lacking in Urdu fiction—the quality which is found in the stories of Rashīda Ẓafar and in Aḥmad 'Alī's short-stories. Sajjād Ẓahīr belongs to this group of progressive writers. '*London kī ek Rāt*' is the first novel published by an association; it makes one hopeful about the future of the Urdu novel.

'*Lailā ke Khuṭūṭ*' and '*Majnūṉ kī Diary*' are two novelettes written by Qāẓī 'Abd ul Ġaffār. They created a great stir on their appearance. They were regarded as extremely good psychological studies and commentaries on the spiritual bankruptcy of the society.

'*Lailā ke Khuṭūṭ*' are the letters of a disreputable woman addressed to one of her admirers. They are very strange and very bitter. *Lailā* does not mince her words or spare the feelings of her admirer. Her experience of life has not been such as to make her take a kindly view of life. All idealisms, sensitiveness, and decency had been crushed out of her. Now she takes pleasure in accentuating her degradation and in exulting in her shamefulness. She refuses to allow any false pretexts to enter into her relationship with men. She realises only too well why they come to see her and will not be deceived and allow them to entertain the idea that there is any hint of romance in the situation. Thus she tramples on *Majnūṉ*'s protestations of love ruthlessly and ridicules his proposal of marriage. It seems to her to be another manifestation of the man's instinct of possessiveness, an illustration of the fact that he does not wish women to have a separate personality. *Lailā* does not seem to believe in any of society's institutions, in sincerity, honesty or decency.

'*Majnūṉ kī Diary*' is very similar in tone. *Majnūṉ* is supposed to be the typical man about town. He has long ago said good-bye to all religious or moral codes. The satisfaction of his ego has been his code of existence. He feels baffled by *Lailā*, for in her he finds some one even more self-centred and cynical. His 'Diary' is a record of his observations on life and the relationship between men and women, on religion, on morality, and his reactions and his moods. '*Lailā ke Khuṭūṭ*' and '*Majnūṉ kī Diary*' are like '*Shahāb kī Sarguzasht*'—just studies in character; they do not aim at plot-construction nor in achieving a *dénouement*—only at throwing light on the inner working of the mind.

The style of '*Lailā ke Khuṭūṭ*' and '*Majnūṉ kī Diary*' is incoherent, the philosophy superimposed and the attitude affected. The writers of letters or diaries are not supposed to be writing for the public, but are just disclosing their thoughts to their own friends. Consequently, these ought not to be so studied and deliberate as '*Lailā ke Khuṭūṭ*' and the passages of '*Majnūṉ kī Diary*'. These two are definitely "playing to the gallery", they are writing for the public. This is a fault artistically. If a message is to be conveyed in some art form, its conventions must be respected, it should not be delivered as a sermon. Since Qāẓī 'Abd ul Ġaffār had decided to express his views through the medium of a novel written in the form of letters, the letters should not have been as affected as those in '*Lailā ke Khuṭūṭ*', nor the passages of '*Majnūṉ kī Diary*' so deliberately studied.

Prem Cand, though pre-eminently a short-story writer, has written several novels as well. '*Bāzār i Ḥusn*' was his first full-length novel; it was followed by '*Beva*', '*Nirmalā*', '*Caugān i Hastī*', '*Ġaban*', '*Gosha e 'Āfyat*' and '*Maidān i 'Amal*'. Prem Cand's novels did not achieve the popularity of his short-stories, and, as a matter of fact, they are not as good, but there is more substance and thought in them than is generally found in most of the Urdu novels.

The defect of Prem Cand's novels is that invariably his grip of the story becomes loose in the second volume, the tempo of interest begins to get slower and the story begins to drag. He cannot develop his "characters" consistently over any length of time. His touch becomes uncertain and the action and reaction of "characters" cease to be in

keeping with their personality as depicted in the early part of the story. Besides which Prem Cand, in his full-length novels, fails to achieve that unity of impression which he so admirably succeeds in attaining in his short-stories. He introduces extraneous as well as unnecessary elements that do not contribute towards the development of the story or the exposition of character.

Nevertheless, his novels are extremely readable and amongst the best to be found in Urdu literature.

'*Bāzār i Ḥusn*' is the earliest of his full-length novels and very typical. It is the story of a young girl who, through the neglect and unimaginativeness of her husband, is lured into entering the "*Bāzār i Ḥusn*" and is rescued from it by the efforts of a social reformer. *Saman*'s "character" is sympathetically drawn and her conduct made plausible and understandable. The "character" of *Mādho Rām*, through whose efforts *Saman* returns to the fold of righteousness, is the more complex and difficulty type of "character" which Prem Chand became increasingly fond of and dealt with in his later novels, '*Gosha e 'Āfyat*', '*Caugān i Hasti*', '*Maidān i 'Amal*' and others. He is not as successful in the rendering of these as of simple types, but his understanding of the complexities of human nature and motives of conduct is shown in his delineation of them.

Prem Cand's *forte* was the portrayal of domestic scenes. He could describe the insignificant and everyday occurrences of family life in a manner that made them extremely interesting to read; and in his novels it is these detached scenes that are the most interesting and readable. In '*Gosha e 'Āfyat*', the most readable and memorable passages are the scenes of altercation between *Gyān Shankar* and his uncle *Prabhā Shankar*. It is so typical of what happens in so many families. The gentleness, the devotion to the idea of family loyalty, the unselfishness and the unworldliness of the old man stand out against the business-like hard-headedness of *Gyān Shankar*.

The conversation between *Prabhā Shankar* and his wife, referred to in the story as *Baṛī Bahū*, and the relations between the women of the family, are extremely well done in '*Gosha e 'Āfyat*'. But, of course, there is very little of such scenes. '*Gosha e 'Āfyat*' is not a domestic novel; it is a much more ambitious thing. It attempts to show the struggle of the millions of peasants against their overlords—to show what they have to put up with and to expose the injustices that are practised on them. The peasant has no safeguard, no means of protecting his rights. He depends only on the good graces of the landlord. He is forced to work for him without payment, forced to supply him with whatever he demands. He can be turned out any moment by the landlord, he can be made to pay more rent for his land, he can be made to give up any privilege which he may have been enjoying for ages. All this might or might not happen, it depends solely on the good graces of the zemindar. In '*Gosha e 'Āfyat*', the villagers of Lakhanpur have to undergo all this as *Gyān Shankar* is determined to crush them. Not only the zemindars but the Government's hands are also against the peasant. The tours of the Government officials are regarded by the villagers as a visitation. Everything of the peasant is commandeered. The "*caprāsī*", the "*ahlkār*" and the police all combine to ruin and destroy the peasant.

The growing restlessness amongst them, and the realisation of the injustice of it all by a very infinitesimal section of the intelligentsia which is now resulting in a struggle, while up till now there was only submission, are also shown in '*Gosha e 'Āfyat*'. *Gyān Shankar*'s brother, *Prem Shankar*, comes back from America, filled with ideas of improving the lot of the peasant and tries his best to live up to his ideas. This naturally brings him into conflict with his brother. *Manauhar*, *Balrāj* and others are types of the peasants who have begun realising their poor lot and are attempting to improve it.

In '*Gosha e 'Āfyat*' there is yet another thread of interest,

and that is *Gyān Shankar*'s unholy love for *Gyātrī*. In dealing with it, Prem Cand has shown his psychological knowledge to the best advantage.

'*Caugān i Hastī*' is another novel of Prem Cand in the style of '*Gosha e 'Áfyat*'. The subject is more or less the same, that is, the unequal struggle between the peasant and the landlord, the labourer and the mill- and factory-owners.

John *Sevak* tries to buy a piece of land for the erection of his cigarette factory. The land is owned by a blind old man who refuses to sell as that piece of land is used by the villagers for grazing their flocks and various other purposes. As John *Sevak* invokes all the force of the law and all the help he can get from Government he succeeds in obtaining the plot. But *Sūr Dās* fights and fights to the end and, though he is beaten, the victory is really his.

A large part of the book deals with this struggle between the poor and old and blind *Sūr Dās* and the rich and influential factory-owner. Several elements enter the struggle to make it more complicated. The influence of Sofia, John *Sevak*'s daughter, with the District Magistrate, makes *Sūr Dās* almost win the case. Sofia's love for *Vinai Singh*, *Indrā*'s relations with her husband, Raja *Mohindro Singh*, the character of *Rānī Javnī* and of *Prabhū Sevak*, all form the pattern of the story. The complexities and difficulties of this '*caugān i hastī*'' or "playfield of life" is in reality the theme of this novel.

It is only in Prem Cand's novels that one finds "characters" such as *Sūr Dās*, *Manauhar*, and *Balrāj*. Novelists and writers, till Prem Cand began writing, confined themselves to the members of the upper classes. He alone realised that the life of the poor can also be interesting, and what is more, can have elements of heroism in it. And, therefore, he was the first to create "characters" of fiction that are not from genteel classes.

Prem Cand in his last years was genuinely concerned with

India's struggle for independence. His stories and novels of later years all deal with this question.

'*Maidān i 'Amal*', his last novel, also has the struggle for independence and against capitalism as its theme. It has not a well thought out plot and the incidents do not lead up to a climax and then to a logical conclusion, but '*Maidān i 'Amal*' has some excellent bits of characterisation in it.

That genius of Prem Cand which in his short-stories did not allow him to paint his "characters" white or black has in '*Maidān i 'Amal*' enabled him to do justice to *Samar Kānt*'s "character". It is easy to show an unpopular type of character in an entirely unfavourable light. And a "*banyā*" or a successful business man has always been most unpopular. Financial success alienates sympathy and the qualities that are necessary for the achieving of it are not the ones that make a "character" lovable. But despite this, those who are hard-headed and business-like are human too. They too have their dreams, their ideals, their tender spots and their generosities. And *Samar Kānt*, worldly and self-interested though he appeared to his son also, had his human side.

Prem Cand has shown his cupidity, his greed, his contempt for the idealism of youth, but he has also realised the loneliness of such a man and has shown his hopes and fears and dreams as well. Money cannot make one immune from feeling hurt or from being lonely, and these successful business men and "*banyās*" can be very lonely and get very hurt. *Samar Kānt*'s words to *Sugdā* are very pathetic :

ابھی آنے کی کیا جلدی تھی، بہو، دوچاردن اور دیکھ
لیتیں، تب تک خزانہ کا سانپ اُڑگیا ہوتا. وہ لونڈا سمجھتا ہے
مجھے دولت بال بچوں سے پیاری ہے. لیکن یہ جوڑا تھا
کس لئے ؟ اپنے لئے ؟ تو بال بچے کیوں پیدا کئے ؟ اسی لونڈے
کو جوآج مجھے دشمن سمجھتا ہے چھاتی سے لگائے کیوں اوجھے

سیانوں، ویدوں اور حکیموں کے پاس دوڑتا پھرا؟ خود کبھی اچھا نہیں کھایا، اچھا نہیں پہنا، کس کے لئے؟ کنجوسی کی، بےایمانی کی، خوشامد کی، اپنے ضمیر کی ہتیا کی، کس کے لئے؟ جس کے لئے چوری کی وہی آج مجھے چور کہتا ہے!

Prem Cand always voiced the feelings of those who did not get a hearing.

The character of *Amar Kānt*, the hero of the story, was the most difficult to portray and the most interesting. He is a type of those young idealists who are at once very lovable and very irritating. They have a simplicity and sincerity and a genuineness which make them liked and respected. But their uncompromising attitude at times takes on the air of childish obstinacy and can be very irritating. And there is always in their conduct glaring inconsistencies of which they themselves seem to be unaware. Thus *Amar Kānt* sneers at his father for concerning himself with money-making and yet does not hesitate to enjoy the leisure that is the product and result of his father's activities. He does not set out to earn his own living and is not aware of the contrast between his principles and his actions till it is pointed out to him by his father.

The ups and downs of *Amar Kānt*'s character are psychologically most interesting. The struggle between his ideals and the temptations of wealth and luxury, and not only these, but the good will of those whom he loved, make *Amar Kānt* undecided and hesitating. And had it not been for the episode of *Sakīna*, *Amar Kānt* would perhaps never have entered the "*maidān i 'amal*" and have lived and died a parlour-revolutionary.

The conversion of his wife, *Sugdā*, and his mother-in-law and his father to his way of thinking are not quite convincing, yet it is plausible. There have been instances during the Non-Co-operation movement and the Civil Disobedience movement

of most unlikely people having been won over. '*Maidān i 'Amal*' deals with yet another element which is taking shape in modern India and is likely to be of great consequence in the future, that is, the problem of girls and boys of different religions falling in love with each other. Prem Cand has introduced this problem but not attempted to solve it.

The story is wound up more or less arbitrarily. *Amar Kānt*, *Sugdā*, *Samar Kānt*, and *Rāmā Bāī*, are rescued from the jail at the same time. *Sakīna* is married to *Salīm*, a friend of *Amar Kānt* who, having resigned from the Civil Service joins *Amar Kānt* in the work of village uplift. *Munnī*, whose case plays a sensational part in the early part of the book, also meets *Sugdā* in jail and, when released, goes with her to Hardwar to work amongst the villagers.

'*Maidān i 'Amal*' admirably conveys that atmosphere of stress and strain, of turmoil and unrest, which is to be found in India during a period when the political tension becomes acute.

'*Ġaban*' is a domestic novel and, as domestic scenes were Prem Cand's *forte*, it can be considered his best. But in it also the interest begins to flag after the first volume.

The first part deals with the circumstances that lead *Rāmā* to defalcate Government money; the second with *Rāmā*'s fate after running away from home for fear of arrest. The first is by far the more interesting. It is a sympathetic and understanding rendering of the struggle for existence that young men of slender means have to face. The lot of these "respectable poor" is far harder in some respects than the labourer's, for they have to keep up appearances, and it is an attempt to keep up false pretences that lands *Rāmā* in debt and leads him to dishonesty.

The working of *Rāmā*'s mind is described in such a manner that the reader begins to share at first *Rāmā*'s temptations and to feel with him that the debt incurred can be easily paid off, and later to acquiesce in his hazardous attempts to

stem the tide of exposure and disgrace by appropriating the money from the Government Treasury.

To the reader, as to *Rāmā*, what he does appears as the only solution. Thus succeeding in evoking sympathy for his " character " is a great achievement of a novelist.

In the second volume, the story is much less interesting. *Rāmā* is adopted by an old man and his wife ; he is got hold of by the police who, by using his past folly as an instrument, make him agree to give false evidence. *Jālpa*, his wife, seeks him out and tries to prevent his doing this. She had immediately replaced the money and the defalcation had not been discovered, and so there was nothing in the hands of the police wherewith to force him ; they had used bluff and got *Rāmā* to confess his crime. At the eleventh hour *Jālpa* succeeds and *Rāmā* with his adopted parents takes up a new life. Like other novels of Prem Cand's ' *Ġaban* ' also has elements that have no direct relation to the main story, as for instance, the introduction of *Ratan*'s story.

' *Beva* ' is the weakest of Prem Cand's novels. Its object is to show the folly of not allowing widow remarriage, and to show the misery of widows' lives. It is not an original theme and has not been dealt with in a manner to make this in any way different from the numerous other novels on the subject.

The plot is also very weak. In the beginning it seems as if the story is going to rise out of *Dyān Nāth*'s refusal to marry *Rūpā*, as he thinks he will serve the cause of widow remarriage better by himself marrying a widow. But this is not developed and *Premā*'s story is in no way connected with it.

' *Nirmalā* ' is another of Prem Cand's novels on a conventional theme. The marriage of young girls to old decrepit men for the sake of money has been dealt with often. ' *Nirmalā* ' is the saddest of his novels and perhaps the most bitter.

By universal opinion his novels are declared to be inferior to his short-stories and so they are, but amongst the modern novels ' *Gosha e 'Āfyat* ', ' *Caugān* ' *i Hastī*, ' *Maidān i 'Amal* ', ' *Parda e Majāz* ', alone reflect the fact that the struggle between the peasant and the zemindar, the labourer and the capitalist, is increasingly gathering force, and on this account can be regarded as the most significant novels written in recent years. Besides which, though the construction and characterisation on the whole are poorer in his novels than in his short-stories, there is some excellent dialogue, and wherever domestic scenes come in they have that simple charm and attractiveness which Prem Cand's particular style alone can achieve.

There are, besides these, other novels which chronologically can be regarded as modern, but which show no innovation or improvement on the existing types. ' *Shamīm* ' by Fyyāẓ 'Alī is a novel which came out in 1933 and was advertised as

زمانۂ حال کی افسانہ نگاری میں ایک معرکت الآرا تصنیف

but is in reality in no way remarkable. Though written as late as 1933, it shows a marked influence of Sarshār in the conception of the hero's character as well as in the general tone of the book. A love interest is introduced in the manner of the popular writers of the intermediate period of the Urdu novel. *Shamīm*, the hero, and *Nasīm*, his friend, both fall in love on very slender grounds. To *Nasīm* is vouchsafed nothing more than a fleeting glimpse of *Māh Jibīn* as she fled on his sudden appearance in her brother's study. *Shamīm*, in the manner of a Sarsharian hero, performs many deeds of courage and valour in rescuing *Māh Ṭil'at* from fire, and saving the life of the American girl whom also he marries. The part the American girl plays is itself reminiscent of Miss Clarissa and Miss Mida in ' *Fasāna e Āzād* '. In short, except chronologically, ' *Shamīm* ' belongs not to the modern but the intermediate period in the development of the Urdu novel.

' *Māh i Durakhshān* ' is a very recently written novel, and has been awarded great praise by the press. It is avowedly a novel with a purpose and is consequently ponderous in style.

The scene of the story is laid in Egypt and the object is a study or rather an attempt at a solution of the problem of growing irreligiousness. This object is, of course, incorporated in the form of a story, but because of it, the dialogue very often reads like a sermon and the " characters " become personifications of vices and virtues. There are at times successful characterisation and rendering of the moods of wistfulness and doubt. *' Māh i Durakhshān '* also shows a great deal of knowledge of and research in Islamic history. It is a good book, but not typical of the period, the tendencies of which can be summed up as a more realistic attitude towards life and a greater concern with the motives and thoughts of people than with their actions. There has been a growing realisation amongst the serious writers that all is not well with the present society and, what is more, that the solution does not lie in the accepted clichés.

It is in this realisation, that there is no formula of salvation, that the chief difference between the older and the new school of thought lies, and the tendency towards realisation of this is even more marked in the short-story.

PART III

Chapter XI

THE SHORT-STORY, ITS DEFINITION AND ITS APPEARANCE IN EUROPEAN LITERATURE

The short-story, like the novel, has its roots in the distant past, in the tales and fables of the world's childhood. In its present form it appeared even later than the novel. It is the most modern of literary forms and the most popular. Its popularity rivals or rather exceeds that of the novel ; like the latter it is essentially an art of the people. It concerns itself with the life, thoughts and feelings of ordinary men and women. This is what differentiates it from the tales and fables which are its precursors. They, like the larger romances, set out to tell imaginary stories of imaginary folks. Short-stories of today deal only with stark reality. There is not much difference between the novel and the short-story as to their purpose or in the material they use. The objects of both are a criticism of life and a depicting of its panorama, a probing into the mind and motives of man.

But the short-story is not a condensed novel. It is a separate art form. The very fact that it is not possible to make a novel out of each short-story shows that it is something entirely different. The novel deals with a lifetime or even generations as in the ' Forsyte Saga ', while the short-story can only deal with a few hours or at most a few days of a person's life. The task of the short-story is to express a single mood. This is at once more difficult and more easy than the task of the full-length novelists. The short-story writer must interpret the history of a lifetime by a mere incident, he must draw an entire character within the compass of a few hundred words. Of