

the writers of distinction in this strain. Then there are those who lay the stress on character and are, moreover, definitely socialistic in their attitude. Their works foreshadow the revolution that is slowly gaining momentum and is an expression of the tendencies and complications of modern life. They put forward an entirely new set of values and take up an entirely different attitude as regards human conduct and human suffering. Up till now, submission, patience and endurance had been extolled. The slogan of the "Moderns" is revolt and defiance. Prem Cand, Ḥasan Niẓāmī and Rāshid ul Khairī had all shed tears over the fact of the oppressed peasantry, the hard-worked labourer, and the woman deprived of her rights. But they sought by their stories to stir up the pity of their overlords. Rashīda Zafar, 'Alī Sardār Ja'fī, Ḥayātullāh Anṣārī and Aḥmad 'Alī aim at rousing the indignation of the oppressed by making them realise the degradation and indignity of their position so that they may strike out against it.

The plots and the situations which these authors use have been used several times before, but they present them from an entirely different point of view. 'Aurat' in 'Aurat aur dūsre afsāne' is a story about a common enough occurrence, namely a husband contemplating a second marriage on the ground that his wife is childless. The fiction writers of the last four decades have condemned and criticised this cupidity of man. But none of them had the smouldering indignation that is present in Rashīda Zafar's indictment of it, nor had anyone yet succeeded in showing how contemptible were such men as she has. So far authors had been content to show just this one trait in the man's character, but Rashīda Zafar has shown the entire man in his grossness. To present a character is far more difficult in a short-story than in a novel, for one is not allowed to be expansive and yet has to make the "characters" alive and convincing. Rashīda Zafar has made *Saqir Fāṭima* and *Maulwī Sāhib* extremely convincing without any undue expansion. The story is written in dramatic form,

but is quite definitely not meant for the stage; this form has been used to give it greater force, as it certainly does.

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

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

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

Rashīda Zafar's other stories in the collection are also extremely well written. 'Rel kā safar' is ironically humorous, it aims at showing to what extent the canker of communal discord has spread and withal how superficial and definitely

engineered is the difference. The free fight between the Hindu and the Muslim women in the ladies' compartment is an excellent piece of satiric description. The scene can be visualised, it is so detailed and vivaciously described. In imagination one almost ducks one's head to avoid getting an undeserved blow, so very real does the scene become.

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

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

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

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

Ḥayātullāh Anṣārī's 'Anokhī muṣṣibat' has "fasānas" in the same revolutionary vein, but a thin veneer of humour makes them less bitter than the "fasānas" in 'Manzil' and 'Aurat'.

'*Anokhī muṣibat*' is the first expression in the Urdu language of that realistic tendency of European literature which does not exclude any subject from being dealt with in literature. It is also very significant from this point of view that its hero, who is shown in an extremely undignified and embarrassing position, is made a member of the I.C.S., one of the demi-gods and heaven-born of Imperialist India. To show the feet of clay of these idols is the object of '*Anokhī muṣibat*'.

'*Kamzor paudā*', like '*Pāp*' and '*Adamzād*', tries to show the injustice of such social codes which exonerate the man and condemn the woman alone, and the helplessness of the poor against the might of the rich. The poor dare not even accuse the rich :

کسی کا نام کیوں لیتے ہو، اپنی قسمت کو کہو

say all the villagers when driven to desperation. *Dulārī's* parents say just this much :

بشیرمیاں کا تو کچھ نہیں گیا، اس کبخت کی زندگی خراب کردی۔

The story is told so simply and so effectively. How gradually and by what process *Dulārī* comes to fall in love with *Bashīr* ; how innocent she was ; how unsuspecting and without intention of doing wrong or harm to herself or anybody else ; how she gets trapped by her very innocence—all this is brought out extremely well. What to *Bashīr*, because he was a man, was midsummer madness, a holiday episode, became for *Dulārī*, because she was poor and a woman, the ruin of her life and the blasting of her hopes. Hundreds of similar tragedies are taking place every day in the tumble-down cottages and congested slums of the poor. To present this tragedy to the poor, to make them aware of it, is the object of "*fasānas*" such as these.

'*Dhār ser ātā*' is a poignant and realistic little story. "*Dhār ser ātā*", because it had gone bad, had been ordered to be thrown away by the lady of the house. It was given to the

maid by the housekeeper, who in her turn finding it uneatable gave it to a fakir. The fakir threw it away in the road. It was gathered up by a labourer who had been out of work. It brought to his starving family the satisfaction of a full meal.

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

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

Aḥmad 'Alī was one of the authors of '*Angāre*', the collection of short-stories that were proscribed by Government for their extremely revolutionary ideas and immorality of tone, though they were regarded by some critics as having great literary merits. The other authors of '*Angāre*' were Sajjād Zāhīr and Rashīda Zafar, each of whom has since published a separate volume of work, but the title of Aḥmad 'Alī's alone is reminiscent of '*Angāre*' as it is called '*Sho'le*'.

Ahmad 'Ali's stories are in the same vein as that of the other writers of this group. They are socialistic in their philosophy, bitter, cynical and a good deal more frank than authors in Urdu have yet dared to be. But in spite of this the stories in 'Sho'le' are not as fiery as the title would warrant.

'*Taşvîr ke do rukh*', '*Gulāmî*', '*Nauroz kî rât*', are much less bitter than Rashida Zafar's '*Aurat*', '*Soda*', '*Pun*', or Sardâr Ja'fri's '*Masjid ke zer i sāya*', '*Pāp*', '*Bāra āne*', etc.

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

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

اور غریب مزدور نے بٹے کا خیال کیا، جسے اس کو پچاس

رویہ دینے تھے . بٹے نے بھی اسے گالیاں دی تھیں، اور جیل بھجوانے کی دھمکی دے کر سود چوگنا کر دیا— بے ایمان کس طرح ناک میں دم کرتے ہیں— قطرہ قطرہ لہو چوس لیتے ہیں لیکن حاجتمند بیچارہ اگر ان کے پاس نہ جائے تو کیا کرے . مزدور کی لڑکی بارہ برس کی ہو گئی تھی . لڑکوں کے ماں باپ بہت زیادہ رویہ مانگتے تھے، اور اس کے پاس پھوٹی کوڑی بھی نہ تھی . برادری نے اس بات پر اس کا حقہ پانی بند کر دیا . برہمنوں کو روپے چٹا کے برادری کو منانا لازمی تھا . اس کے لئے سو آدمیوں کو کھانا کھلانا تھا . اس کے علاوہ شادی کے دیوتا کو بھی بھینٹ چڑھانی تھی . دیوتاؤں کو بھی رویہ کی ضرورت تھی . وہ بھی بٹے تھے . اور وہ سال بھر سے زیادہ خالی بیٹھا رہا . برہمن نے صرف مندر میں پھول بتاشہ چڑھانے کے دو رویہ لئے . برادری کو کھانا دینا ضروری تھا . اور اس پر شادی . ہر چیز میں رویہ کی ضرورت تھی . اور غریب کا پیٹ کاٹ کے بٹے موٹے ہوتے ہیں :

and this is the cause of his fall.

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

This might be an exaggerated picture, but it is not far from the truth. Life is valued in the present state of society owing to its worth in sterling and the eagerness to save it is in proportion to what it will bring in terms of pounds, shillings and pence. Even the gratitude of the rich is golden, while a poor man's

thanks are, to quote Shakespeare, his only coin by which he can pay his friends and as valueless as the money of the country whose credit is lost.

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

'*Shādī*', '*Us ke baqair*', '*Motar lāwry kā safar*', '*Chapar-khaṭ*', '*Us ke tuḥfe*' are studies of sexual impulse.

(ii) *The Other Modern Writers*

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

Most of M. Aslam's stories—'*Tafsīr i Ḥayāt*', '*Kāravān i Ḥayāt*' and '*Gunāh kī rātē*'—are illustrations of the unstable condition of a society where neither the old law prevails nor the new. 'Ābid 'Alī's "fasānas" in '*Ṭilismāt*' and '*Ḥijāb i Zindagī*' are less consciously didactic, but show the same state of things. If taken as a whole, the work of these authors ranks much below that of the young socialists or of the imitators of Prem Cand. They do not have the sincerity, simplicity and high quality of imagination which are to be found in the former. Neither does the characterisation show the same excellence. There is an extreme monotony in the characters of the heroines of the twelve "fasānas" of '*Gunāh kī rātē*'. Indeed it is difficult to realise that it is

not the same person each time. In their power of suggestiveness and in their capacity to gain the readers' sympathy also they are much inferior, taken as a whole; that is, now and then there is a "fasāna" that stands out by its quality of imaginativeness and its general excellence, like '*Zūd Pashemān*', in the collection entitled '*Tafsīr i Ḥayāt*'; its plot is original, the characterisation good, but the best and the most touching theme in the story is the love of the old man for the little child. The most poignant passage of the story is the dialogue between the two.

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

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

'Ābid 'Alī's "fasānas" in '*Ṭilismāt*' are as uneven in quality as M. Aslam's in '*Tafsīr i Ḥayāt*'. His object is not to condemn the undue freedom of women, but rather to chafe against the restrictions that still come between them and the living an entirely free life. But the picture they both draw is the same though from a different point of view, because the old restrictions and values are no longer held by the girl of to-day. Such incidents as are described in '*Shab Nigāristān*', '*Bandān*' or '*Bahār*' or '*Daḡ i nātamām*' can take place. But under the influence of the new school of thought the

modern Indian woman has ceased to be as modest and virtuous as she used to be, yet it is not possible for her to travel in the "Primrose Path of Sin" without any hindrance, and so very often the romances are nipped in the bud as in '*Dāg i nātāmām*', or remain only a memory as in '*Shab Nigāristān*'; and this is what 'Ābid 'Alī condemns, that is, the restrictions in the path of romance, though his condemnation is implicit and less obvious than that of M. Aslam's. 'Ābid 'Alī's style lacks the simplicity and sureness of touch that is to be found in Qāsmī or Ḥusainī. He over-elaborates and cannot succeed in transmitting his vision. His subject is lost in a plethora of words. In "*fasānas*" such as '*Shabāb i tāza*' it is difficult to understand what he wants to convey.

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

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

Nikhat writes to her friend, *Akhtar*, a letter and tells her the tale of her love. She is not aware that her lover ever came. She had gone out into the garden and waited where she had last seen him. She was radiantly happy because he was coming; her cousin who had just returned from the war was with

her. This was the young man *Kalīm* had seen and thought to be his successor. The ill-starred lovers would never know that they had each broken the other's heart unwittingly. The story has gained in effectiveness from being written in the form of two letters and from its brevity and restraint.

'*Javānī kī muḥabbat*', '*Musāfir*', '*Muḥabbat kī ek shām*', '*Motī Kiran Kapūr*', all have imaginativeness and originality. The plot of '*Motī Kiran Kapūr*' is very ingenious and the *dénouement* entirely unexpected.

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

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

It is difficult to decide under what category to discuss the short-stories of *Khājā* 'Abd ul Gaffār, Nyāz Fatehpūrī, Ḥafīz Jālandharī and Ḥijāb Ismā'īl. *Khājā* 'Abd ul Gaffār and Ḥafīz Jālandharī have each compiled only one volume, and the stories in each case are extremely varied in their subject matter and tone. Several of the "*fasānas*" in *Khājā* 'Abd ul Gaffār's volume entitled '*Ṭīm paise kī Chokrī*', are free translations from English and Bengali, e.g. '*Qamās*', '*Ghorā*', '*Fareb*' and others. The plots and "char-

acters" of some are borrowed from history, as in 'Devtaō kā ṣadqa' and 'Tīn paise kī Chokri'. Some are in socialistic vein, as 'Dipty ṣāhib kā kuttā', and others mystical. Ḥafīz's seven "fasānas", called 'Haft Paikar', are also quite different from one another, and as this is the sum-total of his production in this particular line, it is difficult to decide to which school of short-story writers he most approximates. In 'Fasāna dar fasāna' the influence of Prem Cand is apparent, while 'Sohāg kī rāt' is strangely reminiscent of 'Abd ul Majid Sālik's 'Khāb i parīshān'. 'Hoshyār dīvāna' is an extremely good psychological study and 'Hayāt i tāza' is the type of story that was popular in the intermediate period of the development of short-stories in Urdu. 'Khud-kushī' can be said to be in the style of Rāshid ul Khairī though it is much more closely knit and effectively told than are his over-elaborate stories. Hījāb Ismā'il has a definitely distinctive style of her own and her stories of romantic adventures are in a class by themselves, as are the psycho-analytical studies of Nyāz Fatehpūrī.

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

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

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

him in a dream saying " *natīja burā hai* " ! It is a story in the style of Prem Cand.

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

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

' *Hoshiyār Dīvāna* ' is a cleverly done psychological study. The half-clear mind of the insane is analysed in a superb way. The inner workings of a madman's brain, how to himself he appears extremely sane and even cunning and thinks that he is deceiving the world, are shown. And the remarkable thing is that without the story being once shifted from the first person, the fact that the man is insane is conveyed also. The horror and darkness of his mind and soul, the intensity of his passion and hate, the story of his life are all communicated

through his own assertions. In ' *Khud-kushī* ' is shown the chaos and tragedy among the lower middle class, the brutality of the step-father, the helplessness of the mother, which result in the children's nerves and life going to pieces.

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

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

' *Ek muşavvir* ', ' *Ek shab kī qīmat* ', ' *Apne cānd se* ', ' *Muḥabbat kī devī* ', ' *Ek muşleḥ but-tarāsh* ', are studies of a single mood, they present just one strain of thought. They show the character under the influence of some one idea, on the verge of some tremendous change in spiritual and moral values. Nyāz is regarded as one of the best short-story writers in Urdu, as the introducer of a new technique and a new mode of approach. ' *Nigāristān* ' and ' *Jamālistān* '

are described as collections of Nyāz's best "*fasānas*". It seems a misnomer to call them "*fasānas*" and him a "*fasāna*"-writer, as most of them are articles, some are studies of moods of one character, and only a few fulfil the requirement of plot.

Majnūn Gorakhpūrī, like most modern writers of short-stories in Urdu, has been greatly influenced by English writers. Several of his "*fasānas*" are translations from English, French or Russian sources. '*Hattiyā*' is the author's own acknowledgment written with Hardy's '*Tess*' in mind.

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

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

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

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

(iii) *Hijāb Ismā'īl*

Hijāb Ismā'īl, now Mrs. Imtyāz 'Alī Tāj, made her début in the literary world ten years ago. In this short time she has gained for herself a very definite place in it and is ranked amongst the successful young short-story writers.

Hijāb Ismā'īl's style of writing is entirely different from that of any other contemporary writer. It is a personal and intimate one, and she creates an atmosphere surcharged with romance as the background for her stories. All Hijāb Ismā'īl's short-stories are links of a single chain, they are the different incidents and adventures that come the way of the wild, romantic and beautiful *Rūhī*. They are all related in the first person, that is by *Rūhī* herself. The setting has all the voluptuous richness, romance and colour that one associates with Oriental harems. It is also surcharged with the luxurious modernity of Fifth Avenue. By blending the two seemingly

contradictory atmospheres Hijāb Ismā'il has succeeded in conveying an impression of an extremely colourful and luxurious existence, but an utterly unreal one.

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

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

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

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

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

is that Rūhī was first introduced to the literary world in 'Merī nātāmām muḥabbat'. In this she was described as the granddaughter of a Turkish Princess, who lived in an island of great natural beauty, in a palace which had every luxury that money could buy. Her childhood was as gay as could be, but early in youth she experienced the blasting of her hopes

and the first romance that Rūhī relates is the story of this young love of hers.

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

Lately Hijāb Ismā'il has more and more turned her attention towards the adventurous type of romances. Her two latest publications, 'Lāsh aur dūsre afsāne' and 'Karant Ilyās kī maūt', contain only this type. The romances with the greatest human appeal were those in which Rūhī recalled some escapade of her childhood or girlhood. These were told with such vivacity and such a wealth of detail that one could almost see the mischievous faces of Rūhī's cousins, of the spoilt Khālīd and Maḥbūb and Jasūtī.

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

'Merī nātāmām muḥabbat aur dūsre afsāne' contains accounts of Rūhī's "amours". The first is 'Merī nātāmām muḥabbat'. This is the "fasāna" that introduced her to the literary world. In it she is shown as engaged to her worthless

cousin, *Shahbāz*, whom she loathes. Without almost realising it, she falls in love with her grandmother's A.D.C., Captain *Fikrī*, who is much older than she and has been her best friend. He does not even suspect it, nor does any one else, for a long time. As the preparations for the marriage are proceeding, *Rūhī* is withering away. Her secret is at last discovered and Captain *Fikrī* thinks it best to go away, so as to give the girl a chance of forgetting him. The shock of his departure makes *Rūhī* fall ill seriously and the marriage has to be postponed. *Shahbāz* who has never been in love with *Rūhī* at all marries *Sho'la*, the slave-girl who has been in love with him all the time he was engaged to *Rūhī*. Madame *Subida* dies, and *Rūhī* reads in the papers that Captain *Fikrī* has committed suicide. Thus ends her first love.

The very next "*fasāna*", strangely enough, is also the story of *Rūhī*'s first love. But though in this too the background is the same, and even some of the "characters", the story is quite different. *Rūhī* in this also is engaged to a cousin with whom she imagines herself to be in love though she has never seen him. On her visit to her uncle, the father of this cousin, she meets the debonair and attractive Captain *Navaid*, who is an A.D.C. to *Navāb Ma'mūr*, her uncle. *Rūhī* and *Navaid* become great friends. *Navaid* tells her about her fiancé who, he says, is extremely hideous and unprepossessing in appearance. *Rūhī* naturally refuses to believe it. A battle royal starts between them on this, in the course of which each falls in love with the other. *Khālid* appears, and proves really very unattractive. *Rūhī*'s idealism gets a shock, but Captain *Navaid* is there and it is to be hoped that he succeeds in persuading her to forget her early dream. '*Māherīn i fan*', another story in this collection, is an amusing anecdote about *Rūhī*'s romantic love, and '*Nārangī kī kalyā*' is the strange story of Colonel *Jazīb*, a friend of her father.

'*Sanobar ke sāe*' tells of romances *Rūhī* comes across on her travels in search of excitement and pleasure. The "*fasāna*",

'*Sanobar ke sāe*', is the story of a "*mallāh*" who lived in a hilly tract in some far-away land where *Rūhī* and *Jasūtī* spent one of their holidays. While the old man was rowing them across, they asked him where he lived. He replied :

کیونکہ میرے خواب اس کے تلے دفن ہیں۔

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

'*Marhūm Bivī*' is a most ingenious story about a friend of *Rūhī*. '*Najūmī kī vaṣīyat*' was told by a strange man at a book-stall. '*Sabz ākh*' is a story with a most surprising ending. One of *Rūhī*'s exciting adventures, '*Tulū' o qurūb*', is yet another story of her love affairs. The background of this romance is exactly the same as that of '*Merī nūtamām muhabbat*'.

'*Kavut Ilyās kī mauṭ*' and '*Lāsh aur dūsre afsāne*' are stories of a semi-romantic and semi-adventurous kind. They are written in imitation of English and American stories of blood and horror, but even in these Hijāb Ismā'il continues

to paint the background in romantic colours. Strange and fairy islands, ruins and haunted castles, the outskirts of African and American deserts, are chosen as scenes for these eerie stories of murder, poisoning and intrigue. The plots in them are extremely well constructed and the ending is always an unexpected and surprising one. In most cases it turns out that the strange happenings that have given rise to such fears are traced to some quite harmless cause. In 'Shaitān', the disappearance of food, the upsetting of trays, the snatching away of things and strange shadows, are all the handiwork of a monkey; the shrouded figures are nothing more than beggars who had adopted this means of getting people to grant their demands. In 'Murde kī cākh', the unearthly cry is caused by the wind rustling through two branches of a palm which have got somehow entwined. The shadowy figure in the dark that wounds Rūhī turns out to be nothing more than a wild cat. But in some of the stories strange things do take place and she does come across some very strange people, as in 'Lāsh', in which Rūhī has been staying in an old eastern city where she gets frightened by the constant staring of a strange-looking old man on the bridge. He looks at her with eyes that are so tragic and pathetic that it makes her ill every time she meets them. She goes away to the island of Shorak to get away from those staring eyes and there, except for her meeting with a strange artist who shows her a picture of a girl who is exactly like herself, nothing else happens. After some time she returns to the old town and again the same pair of tragic eyes follow her about. She gets a letter begging her to come at a certain time to the bridge. She does not reply to it, but when one day by accident she is that way, she is accosted by the man with the sad eyes who begs her to listen to his story. Rūhī is so moved to pity on hearing it that after consulting her fiancé, General Hardy, she allows him to come and stay with her. The old man brings with him only one box, it looks like a musical box, and

indeed he says it is one. But no one ever hears him play any instrument, though Rūhī often asks him to do so. Zunāsh one night starts up and says that she has seen Rūhī's corpse. Rūhī ridicules her but her curiosity is roused. She stealthily goes to the room and opens the round wooden box and on lifting the lid seems to be looking at her own corpse. Her strange guest appears at that moment and she faints away. Later in the evening, he tells her a story; it is a strange tale of love and hate. He loved a young girl in Baghdad, who did not care for him and was engaged to another man. On the eve of her wedding, he persuaded her to come for a walk with him and killed her and ran off with her corpse. Ever since he has been wandering about with this corpse; that is his only possession in the world. The intensity of his love made him commit this crime, he says. That was the only way he could possess her. Nine years after this incident he saw Rūhī and she was the exact image of his beloved; that is why he has been following her and now begs to be allowed to continue adoring her and seeing her. He takes off his disguise and Rūhī finds that he is none other than the artist at Shorak. General Hardy has found yet another rival!

'Shāmat i a'māl', 'Murde ne kyā kiā', 'Kawnt Ilyās kī maūt', 'Muḥabbat yā hilākat', 'Nīlā lifāfa', 'Khūm kā pul', 'Is kī ek hāth kyā huā thā', are accounts of happenings to Rūhī in strange and out of the way places. They are tales of unpunished murderers pursuing murdered ones, love crying out from the grave, minds so darkened and tortured that they do not know what strange things they are doing. Hijāb Ismā'il is extremely good in conveying atmosphere and these stories produce a truly uncanny feeling. She is equally far from realism. She makes her imaginary background and extraordinary "characters" appear real and carry conviction by describing them in very minute detail and by mentioning their extremely commonplace actions. This always has the effect of creating an atmosphere of reality.

In her style Hijāb Ismā'il is regarded as amongst the first-rate writers of short-stories in Urdu, yet her work is in direct contrast to that of the young socialist writers, and it cannot be considered as good as theirs for though escapist literature has its uses, literature that has a criticism of life and which tries to deal with its complexities and problems is the better and the more enduring. Hijāb Ismā'il's stories make one forget the realities of existence, but they cannot be forgotten for any length of time. Literature that can help us to face these realities or to understand them is the superior of the two.

CHAPTER XVII

THE HUMOROUS WRITERS

The foundations of the short-story in Urdu were laid by the humorous sketches of "*Avadh Panc*", but in the intermediate period of its development the Urdu short-story became extremely serious in tone. Writers of this period were so deliberately didactic in their aims that humour found no place in their works. The only short-story writer of the period who sometimes allowed himself to write in a lighter vein was Sayyid Sajjād Haidar. '*Hazrat i dil kī Savāneh 'umrī*', '*Cīṛe Cīṛyā kī kahānī*', '*Mujhe mere dostō se bacāo*' are facetious, if not actually amusing. But the rest, that is to say, 'Abd ul Majīd Sālik, Sulṭān Haidar Josh, Aḥmad Shujā', were all extremely serious in their tone.

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

Sayyid Intyāz 'Alī Tāj has introduced *Cacā Chakkan*, whose humorous character and anecdotes furnish the plot for many stories. This has been extremely popular and M. Aslam, Mullā Rumūzī and 'Aẓīm Beg have created "characters" in imitation of *Cacā Chakkan*.

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